

"O mine freunde! be shust immediadely all of de dime retty, Ton't led your vait vail already, and ton't let de debil git no unter bolts on ye. Vatch and pe retty!"

And August could hear the derisive shouts of Bill Day's party, who had recovered their courage, crying out, "Go it, ole Dutchman! I'll bet on you!" He clenched his fist in anger, but his mother's eyes, looking at him with quiet rebuke, pacified him in a moment. Yet he could not help wondering whether blundering kinsfolk made people blush in the next world.

"Holt on doo de last ent!" continued Gottlieb. "It's pout goom! Kood pye, ole moon. You koes town, you nebber gooms pack no more already."

This exhortation might have proceeded in this strain indefinitely, to the mortification of August and the amusement of the profane, had there not just at that moment broken upon the sultry stillness of the night one of those crescendo thunderbursts, beginning in a distant rumble, and swelling out louder and still louder, until it ended with a tremendous detonation. In the strange light of the setting moon, while everybody's attention was engrossed by the excitement, the swift oncoming of a thundercloud had not been observed by any but Andrew, and it had already climbed halfway to the zenith, blotting out a third of the firmament. This inverted thunderbolt produced a startling effect upon the over-strained nerves of the crowd. Some cried out with terror, some sobbed with hysterical agony, some shouted in triumph, and it was generally believed that Virginia Waters, who died a maniac many years afterward, lost her reason at that moment. Bill Day ceased his mocking, and shook till his teeth chattered. And none of his party dared laugh at him. The moon had now gone, and the vivid lightning followed the thunder, and yet louder and more fearful thunder succeeded the lightning. The people ran about as if demented, and Julia was left alone. August had only one thought in all this confusion, and that was to find Julia. Having found her, they clasped hands, and stood upon the brow of the hill calmly watching the coming tempest, believing it to be the coming of the end. Between the claps of thunder they could hear the broken sentences of Elder Hankins, saying something about the lightning that shineth from one part of heaven to the other, and about the promised coming in the clouds. But they did not much heed the words. They were

looking the blinding lightning in the face, and in their courageous trust they thought themselves ready to look into the flaming countenance of the Almighty, if they should be called before Him. Every fresh burst of thunder seemed to August to be the rocking of the world, trembling in the throes of dissolution. But the world might crumble or melt; there is something more enduring than the world. August felt the everlastingness of love; as many another man in a supreme crisis has felt it.

But the cloud had already covered half the sky, and the bursts of thunder followed one another now in quicker succession. And as suddenly as the thunder had come, came the wind. A solitary old sycamore, leaning over the water on the Kentucky shore, a mile away, was first to fall. In the lurid darkness, August and Julia saw it meet its fate. Then the rail fences on the nearer bank were scattered like kindling-wood, and some of the sturdy old apple-trees of the orchard in the river-bottom were uprooted, while others were stripped of their boughs. Julia clung to August and said something, but he could only see her lips move; her voice was drowned by the incessant roar of the thunder. And then the hurricane struck them, and they half ran and were half carried down the rear slope of the hill. Now they saw for the first time that the people were gone. The instinct of self-preservation had proven stronger than their fanaticism, and a contagious panic had carried them into a hay-barn near by.

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The summer storm had spent itself by daylight, and the sun rose on that morning after the world's end much as it had risen on other mornings, but it looked down upon prostrate trees and scattered fences and roofless barns. And the minds of the people were in much the same *dishvelled* state as the landscape. One simple-minded girl was a maniac. Some declared that the world had ended, and that this was the new earth, if people only had faith to receive it; some still waited for the end, and with some the reaction from credulity had already set in, a reaction that carried them into the blankest atheism and bold immorality. People who had spent the summer in looking for a change that would have relieved them from all responsibility, now turned reluctantly toward the commonplace drudgery of life. It is the evil of all day-dreaming—day-dreaming about the other world included—that it unfits us for duty in this world of tangible and inevitable facts.