

"No—no! I am not in want of it; I have plenty to serve my need."

"All the better for me," he says, laughing. He has recovered his spirits again; clouds are not long in passing with the young.

"Well—good-by," he continues, as he takes the girl in his arms and kisses her, in a fraternal manner, on the cheek. "It's a shame of me to have made those pretty eyes so red! Don't think twice of what I have said, Myra; you urged me on to it with your cross-questioning, and you know I lament this business for both our sakes; but the dark mood will be gone to-morrow. It's nothing unusual after three months of honeymoon, my dear."

She clings to him frantically close, but she says nothing.

"Why, won't you say good-by? Then I must go without it, for I have no more time to lose."

He is moving toward the door, when she flies after him, and almost stifles him in her embrace.

"Oh, good-by, my love!—my darling!—my own, own, dearest love!"

She showers kisses, almost roughly, on his mouth, his eyes, his brow—kisses which he accepts rather philosophically than otherwise, and from which he frees himself with a sigh of relief.

Alas! for the love of one-and-twenty, when it begins to temper its enthusiasm with philosophy!

As, with a cheerful nod, he turns out of the wicket-gate, the woman stands gazing after him as though she had been turned to stone; and, when he has finally disappeared, she gropes her way back to the sitting-room, and casts herself headlong on the floor.

"Gone—gone!" she moans; "all gone, and my life gone with it! Oh, I wish that I was dead—I wish that I was buried—I wish that I could neither feel nor think—I am nothing to him now—"

She lies there for, perhaps, an hour, sobbing and moaning to herself; and is only roused by the entrance of the old woman she calls Margaret, with the preparations for her tea, and whose grunt at perceiving her attitude is half of compassion and half of contempt.

"Lord ha' mussy!" she exclaims, "and whatever are you a lying on the boards for?"

This woman, who is clothed and kept like one of gentle birth, and by whom she is fed and paid her wages, is yet not addressed by Margaret in terms befitting a servant to use toward her mistress. The poor are ever keenest at detecting a would-be lady from a real one.

The familiar tone affronts Myra; she reads in it, not sympathy, but rebellion against her new-born dignity, and she rises and sweeps out of the room, without deigning to notice the presence of her factotum.

But the bedroom is solitary and full of sad remembrance, and in a few minutes she emerges from it, dressed for walking, and saunters in the garden.

It is a queer little nest that Eric Keir has chosen for her; being originally intended for the game-keeper's cottage on an estate which has long since been parted with, acre by acre, and its very name sunk in the obscurity of three or four small farms; so that the cottage stands alone in the midst of wheat and barley fields; and it is through one of these, where the grain, young, and green, and tender, and not higher than a two years' child, springs up on each side of her, that Myra, still burning as under the sense of a deep outrage, takes her way. A resolution has been growing up in her heart during the last hour which, betwixt its pride and stubbornness, it will not easily relinquish—the resolution to part with Eric Keir.

It wrenches her very soul even to think of such a thing, and as she resolves impossible ways and means for its accomplishment, her breath is hardly drawn; but she has a will of iron, and he has wounded her in her most vulnerable part. As she paces slowly up and down the narrow field-path, the jealous, angry tears scarce dried upon her cheeks, she hears a rustle in the corn behind her, and the next moment some one touches her upon the shoulder.

Myra is not chicken-hearted, but she is quick to resent an insult.

"How dare you?" she commences, angrily; but, as she turns and faces the intruder, her tone is changed to one of consternation.

"Lord above!" she continues, faintly. "How did you ever find me, Joel?"

She is so taken by surprise that she has turned quite pale, and the hand she offers him is fluttering like a bird.

"Find you!" exclaims the new-comer (who, it may be as well at once to state, stands in the relationship of cousin to her), "I would have found you, Myra, if you had been at the farthest end of the whole world."

"Aunt's not here, is she?" inquires Myra, with the quick fear that a woman in her equivocal position has of encountering the reproaches of one of her own sex; "you're sure you're alone, Joel?"

"I'm all alone, Myra. Mother has enough to