

with you always: to leave you neither day nor night: to have the right to share in your pleasures and your pains."

He frowns visibly.

"More pains than pleasures, as you would find, Myra. But it is impossible; I have told you so already; the circumstances of the case forbid it."

"How can I tell, when you are absent, if you are always thinking of me?—if some other woman does not take my place in your heart?"

"You must trust me, Myra. I am a gentleman, and I tell you that it is not the case—and it never will be."

"Ah! but you cannot tell—you cannot tell!" And here she falls to weeping, and buries her face upon the arm of his chair.

"My poor girl!" says Keir, compassionately.

He does not love her—that is to say, he does not love as he thought he did three months ago, when he believed that he was doing a generous and chivalrous thing in raising her from her low estate to the position she now occupies, and swearing unalterable fidelity at her feet—but he feels the deepest pity, both for her and for himself—and he would wipe out the past with his blood, if it were possible.

"My poor girl—my poor Myra!" stroking the luxuriant hair which is flung across his knee—"we have much to forgive each other! Did ever man and woman drag each other more irreparably down than we have done?"

"You have ceased to love me—I know you have!" she continues, through her tears.

"Why should you torture me with such an accusation," he says, impatiently, as he shakes himself free of the clinging arms, and, rising, walks to the window, "when I have already assured you that it is not true? What have I done to make you imagine I am changed?"

"You do not come to see me—you do not care for me—you do not even look at me as you used to do."

"Good Heavens! for how long do you expect me to go on 'looking'—whatever that operation may consist of?"

"O Eric! you cannot deceive me: you know you are sorry that we ever met."

Sorry—ay, God knows that he is sorry; but he will not tell her so. Yet neither will he fly to her embrace, as three months back he would have done, to assure her that she does his love a cruel wrong by the suspicion. He only stands quietly by the open window, and, taking a cigar from his

case, lights it and commences smoking; while she continues to sob, in an angry, injured manner by the arm-chair where he left her.

"Myra! I have but a short time to stay here to-day; why shouldn't we pass it pleasantly together? Upon my word, if you go on like this every time we meet, you will make the place too hot to hold me. Come—dry your eyes, like a good girl, and tell me what you have been doing since I saw you last."

She dashes away her tears, and rises from her kneeling posture; but there is still a tone of sullenness or pride in the voice with which she answers him.

"What should I have been doing, but waiting for your arrival? I should have gone to Oxford, most probably, and tried to find your rooms, if you had not appeared this evening."

"You had better not attempt that," he says, decisively.

"But you neglect me, Eric: even old Margaret remarks it; and the vicar said—"

"The vicar!"—starting. "When did you see the vicar?"

"The day before yesterday, when he called here."

"Who let him in?"

"I did!"—rather defiantly. "Old Margaret was out."

"And what communication passed between you?"

"He asked if my name was Mrs. Hamilton?—and I said 'Yes.'"

"What on earth made you say so?"

"Well—haven't you always called me Mrs. Hamilton? Isn't it the name I go by in the village?"

"Not through my means, Myra. I have never mentioned you to anybody, in Fretterley or out of it. And pray, what had the vicar to say to 'Mrs. Hamilton'?"

"He asked if you were Mr. Hamilton; he has seen you riding through the village, and—"

"Don't tell me that you connected our names together before him!" interrupts Keir, with a look of anger.

"Well!—what was I to say?"

"What were you to say? You knew well enough what to say to get yourself or me out of a scrape, a few months back. But I see through your design, Myra—you want to force me to do that against which you know I am determined."

"I cannot bear this continual separation," she replies; "it is killing me. I cannot live without you."