

How much the creatures suffer who cannot or who dare not cry! God gave ready tears to women, in consideration of their weakness—it is only strong hearts and stronger minds that can bear torture with dry eyes.

But there is little trace of weakness left on the face of Eric Keir, as, after an hour's hard riding, he draws rein before the village inn of Fretterley. The young collegian seems well known there; for before he has had time to summon the ostler, the landlord himself appears at the front-door, to ease him of his rein, and is shouting for some one to come and "old Mr. 'Amilton's 'orse" while he draws "Mr. 'Amilton's beer."

"Mr. 'Amilton" appears to respond but languidly to the exertions made on his behalf; for he drinks the beer which is handed him, mechanically, and, without further comment, turns on his heel, much to the disappointment of the landlord, who has learned to look regularly for the offer of one of those choice cigars of which the young gentleman is usually so lavish.

"Something up there, I bet," he remarks to the partner of his bosom; "getting tired of her, I shouldn't wonder: they all does it, sooner or later. Men will be men."

"Men will be men? men will be brutes, you mean!" she retorts in her shrill treble; and, from the sound of her voice, the landlord thinks it as well not to pursue the subject any further.

Not afraid of her—oh, dear no! What husband ever was afraid of any thing so insignificant as the weaker vessel?—only— Well, landlord, have it thine own way; it does us no harm!

Meanwhile Eric Keir has walked beyond the village, perhaps a quarter of a mile, to where a small farm-cottage, surrounded by a garden of shrubs, stands back from the highway. He pushes open the painted wicket with his foot, more impetuously than he need have done, and advances to the hall-door. Before he can knock or ring, it is thrown open to him, and a woman flings herself upon his neck.

She is a girl still, though several years older than himself; but a woman is in the glow of youth at five-and-twenty: and this woman has not only youth but beauty.

"I wish you would remember, Myra, that I am standing at the front-door, and reserve these demonstrations of affection for a more private place. I have told you of it so often."

He disengages her arms from his throat as he speaks, and her countenance lowers and changes. It is easy to see that she is quick to take offense, and that the repulse has wounded her. So they

pass into the sitting-room in silence, and while Eric Keir, monarch of all he surveys, throws himself into an easy-chair, she stands by the table, somewhat sulkily, waiting for him to make the next advances.

"Is old Margaret at home, Myra?"

"I believe so."

"Tell her to bring me some claret. I seem to have swallowed all the dust between this and Oxford."

She does his bidding, bringing the wine with her own hands, and, when she has served him, she sits down by the window.

"Come here, child," he says presently, in a patronizing, yet authoritative voice that accords strangely with his boyish exterior. "What's the matter with you to-day? why won't you speak to me?"

"Because you don't care to hear me speak," she answers in a low tone, full of emotion, as she kneels beside his chair. She has large, lustrous, dark eyes, and soft brown hair that flows and curls about her neck, and a pair of passionate red lips that are on a dangerous level with his own. What man could resist them? But Eric Keir's mustached mouth bends down to press her upturned forehead only. It is evident that she has lost her power to charm him. Yet his reply is not only patient but kind.

"What has put that nonsense into your head? Don't make more worries than you need, Myra; we have enough already, Heaven knows!"

"But why haven't you been to see me for so many days, then? You don't know how long the time seems without you! Are you getting tired of me, Eric?"

"Tired!"—with a smile that is sadder than a sigh. "It is early days for you and me to talk of getting tired of each other, Myra. Haven't we made all kinds of vows to pass our lives together?"

"Then why have you been such a time away?"

"I have had business to detain me; it was impossible to come before."

"What sort of business?"

"Engagements—at college and among my friends."

"Friends whom you love more than me!" she retorts quickly, her jealous disposition immediately on the *qui vive*.

"It is not fair for you to say so, Myra. I can give you no greater proof of my attachment than I have already given."

"Ah! but I want more, Eric. I want to be