

Well, well! you'd better have taken me, perhaps, after all—you've made a sorry bargain, Myra."

"O Joel! I love him—I love him beyond every thing in the world. He is so clever, and so handsome, and so good to me. But, I ain't fit for such as he is: I feel it at every turn. I can't talk, nor behave, nor look as he would wish me to do, and"—in a lower voice—"he is ashamed of me, Joel."

Poor Joel has been silently writhing under the mention of his rival's attributes, but the last clause is too much for him.

"Ashamed of you! the d—d villain! he ain't worthy to touch you. Oh, how I wish I had my fingers this moment at his wizen!"

"Hush, Joel! don't say such awful things, but—but—" with a choking sob, "I'm nothing but a worry to him now; he wishes we had never met: he wishes I was dead, and he was rid of me."

"Will you come home with me, or will you not?" shouts Joel, whose patience is thoroughly exhausted. "If you stand there, Myra, a-telling me any more of his insults, I swear I'll hunt him down like a dog, and set fire to every stick and stone that he possesses. Ah! you think, perhaps, that I don't know his name, and so he's safe from me; but it's *Amillon*—there's for you—and if you disappoint me, I'll soon be upon his track."

"O Joel! don't be hard on me: you can't tell how I feel the parting with him."

She turns her streaming eyes upon the cottage, while he, unable to bear the sight of her distress, paces up and down uneasily.

"Then you mean to come back with me, Myra?"

"Yes—yes—to-morrow."

"To-morrow you'll have changed your mind."

"What will there be to change it?" she answers, passionately. "How can any thing undo his words? He says I have been the death of all good things in him; that if it was possible he would wipe out even the memory of me with his blood; with his blood, Joel, think of that!"

"Well, them's insults, whatever they may mean, that you've no right to look over, Myra; and if you won't settle 'em, I shall."

"You would not harm him, Joel!" fearfully.

"I'd break every bone in his body, if I'd the chance to, and grateful for it. But if you'll promise to give him up without any more to-do, and come back home with me, I'll leave him to Providence. He'll catch it in the next world, if not in this."

"I have promised—I will do it—only give me

one more night in the place where I have been so happy."

He is not very willing to grant her this indulgence, but she exacts it from him, so that he is obliged to let her have her way, and passes the next twelve hours in a state of uninterrupted fear, lest *he* should appear to interpose his authority, or, after a night's reflection, *she* should play him false, and decide to remain where she is.

But Joel Cray need not have been afraid.

Myra spends the time indeed no less perplexedly than he does; but those who knew her innate pride and self-will would have had no difficulty in guessing that it would come off conqueror at last.

"He would give me up a thousand times over for his *father*," she keeps on repeating, when she finds her strength is on the point to fail; "he said so, and he means it, and sooner or later it would be my fate. And I will not stay to be given up: I will go before he has the chance to desert me. I will not be told again that I tarnish his honor, and that we had better both be dead than I live to disgrace him."

"I cannot bear it. I love him too much to be able to bear it. Perhaps, when he hears that I am gone, and comes to miss me (I am sure that he will miss me), he may be sorry for the cruel things he said, and travel England over till he finds me, and asks me to come back to him again."

The soft gleam which her dark eyes assume as the thought strikes her, is soon chased away by the old sore memory.

"But he will never come: he only longs to be quit of me that he may walk with a free conscience through the world, and I am the stumbling-block in his way. Oh! he shall never say so again: he shall know what it is to be free: he shall never have the opportunity to say such bitter truths to me again."

And so, with the morning light, the impetuous, unreasoning creature, without leaving sign or trace behind her to mark which way she goes, resigns herself into the hands of Joel Cray, and flies from Fretterley.

When, according to promise, Eric Keir pays another visit to the game-keeper's cottage, there is only old Margaret to open the door and stare at him as though she had been bewitched.

"Where is your mistress?" he says, curiously the expression of old women's faces not possessing much interest for him.

"Lor, sir! she's gone."