

YOU KISSED ME.

You kissed me! My head
Dropped low on your breast,
With a feeling of shelter
And infinite rest.

FATHER AND SON:
A Tale of Country Life.

BY R. B. MOORE.

Chapter I.

"I thought it never would be over! I
was ready to sink into the earth, when
I stood up before them all. And this
is what they call leniency! They might
as well have said a thousand dollars at
once; they would be just as likely to
get it!"

"Dear mother, don't cry so! They
could have made it much heavier, if
they had not taken our poverty into con-
sideration. Mr. Gerard won't get his
expenses out of that, Rice tells me."

"No, where can he? Where is all
that money to come from, do you sup-
pose?"

"Here is Tolver coming, mother!
Don't let him see what a trouble this is
to us."

"He must know that, child, if he has
any thought at all. Yes, I don't wonder
you're going, Sam, none of us will
ever be able to face any of the Gerard's
again."

This to a fair haired, sunken looking
boy of fourteen, who has risen from a
seat in a corner, where he has been half
concealed, and who is now making his
way to the door with a hurried slouch.

"I'm not afraid!" he declares, stop-
ping short. "I've nothing to be afraid
of, I never meant any harm."

"Nothing to be afraid of? Don't you
understand that you'll have to go to
prison if we can't pay the money?"

"Well, I don't care!"

"No; you think nothing of the fact
that your poor mother and sister will
be disgraced for ever by it—you think
nothing of the trouble you bring upon
us through the mischief you get into
with your bad companions?"

The boy flushes angrily.

"How was I to tell what would hap-
pen?" he says impatiently. "After
Jesse threw my cap into the brook, and
I had no end of trouble in getting it
out, I saw him going along with the
horses, and just slung a stone at the
first to make it jump and give him a bit
of bother. How was I to tell it would
go straight in his eye and kill it? It was
Jesse I wanted to spite—not the horse."

"And if you had worked your will, it
would most likely have been worse,"
mourns the mother. "The horse would
have trampled on the boy, and he would
have been killed instead."

"Oh, I thought it couldn't be any
worse!" he retorts, in angry sarcasm.
"It would never have happened at all,
if you weren't so fond of ploughboys
and such company." Mrs. Thirkield is
beginning querulously; but here her
daughter interposes—a slender brown-
haired girl, with her mother's delicate
features and large, tender, black-lashed
gray eyes, which must surely come from
some other branch of the family, so en-
tirely different are they in expression as
well as in hue and shape, from Mrs.
Thirkield's pretty childish blue ones.
She has been drawing the curtain a
little lower over the latticed window
that looks out upon the hillside towards
the village and gathering together her
mother's outdoor garments, strewn
about on table and chair as if in un-
availing effort to throw off her troubles
with them.

lies spread out under the June sun;
birds are singing, bees are buzzing
about the hives under the acacia tree,
the south wind blows softly in and ruf-
fles the girl's hair. But the joy of the
summer seems to pass over the two who
stand with clasped hands and anxious
eyes gazing each into the other's face.
He is a brave-looking lad, with broad
shoulders, honest eyes and bronzed
cheeks.

"Tolver, it is very kind of you to
come," the girl goes on, after a few mo-
ments; "but I almost think you had bet-
ter not come in just now. Mother is
upset; she is not fit to see anybody,
and—"

"And you are afraid she will reproach
me," he breaks in. "You need not mind
what she says, Eve; she can't make
me feel it more than I do already; and
if it would be a relief to her to restie
any of our family—"

"Tolver! As if you could help it! It
is really Sam's fault."

"Yes, but my father is taking this
opportunity to wreak his spite. He
wouldn't have dragged young Villiers
through a law court, or one of Rice's
boys. He might have thrashed the boy
—he might have made the father pay
something; but he wouldn't have done
this. It's because of you, Eve!"

The girl meets his gaze in wistful
silence.

"I know, dear, and I think I am
almost sure it would be better for us
to part. We have only brought you
trouble and caused quarrels with your
father. Since this happened, and on a
second or three before, I have wished for
your sake only, that we had never come
to Nutfield."

"For my sake only, Eve? Not for
your own at all?"

The fair haired boy is shaken with
gentle dejection, and then finds a resting-
place on the young farmer's rough
couch.

"Then you need never wish that,
Eve. My life began when first I looked
upon your sweet face."

"But your father—"

"It does not make him less cruel and
malicious because he is my father," he
interrupts, but without impatience.
"I am old enough to feel and to judge
for myself. His prejudices can not be
mine; and I must choose my way and
my wife—with a tender closing of his
clasp about her—without reference to
them. I might listen to sound sensible
advice; but I must turn a deaf ear to
unreasonable prejudice and aversion."

"He would like you to have money
with you when you—"

"Of course," he assents in her pause,
the suspicion of a sneer crossing his lip
for a moment.

"Don't, dear! He is your father,
and has always been very good to you,
as you have often told me."

"Yes, as long as I was clasp in his
hands to mould as he would. But, once
I showed a will of my own. Well,
I haven't slept under the same roof
with him since this affair."

"Tolver!"

"Are you surprised at that? Do you
think I could meet him at meals, and
wash him in the morning in the same room
with him, while he was persecuting the
girl I love? For it is nothing less than
persecution. No; I've stayed down at
the Three Beeches ever since. I should
have liked to get off his land altogeth-
er yet; but I won't go away from
home just yet. I won't leave you at his
mercy."

"Indeed, I hope you will not go away,
Tolver. You are all he has left; while
I, well, there are mother and Sam."

"You mean you are going away?"
catching her up sharply. "I will never
let you out of my arms until you prom-
ise me you won't even if we stand here
till we're both gray!"

Their eyes meet, and they laugh ir-
resistibly.

"You would be very tired of me by
that time," she tells him, stroking his
rough sleeve and looking up at him.

"Of course, I've always looked to
having all the three farms after my
father, and the Three Beeches at any
time; and so it comes about that I
can't lay my hand on even that paltry
sum, in these special circumstances,
since, of course, my father must know
nothing about it. But I've a jolly old
sunt in Boston who'll lend me enough
to make it up, and never ask a ques-
tion."

"You would pay her back, and we
should never repay you. We couldn't
if we stayed on here and went on in the
same way. The work we do only just
keeps out our money, and— Oh, we
could never take such a debt upon our-
selves!"

"A great burden!" he comments with
an attempt at scorn. "Two hundred dol-
lars! Why, it would not be missed if
it was never paid!"

"And you think I would take money
from you to pay a debt we owe your
father?"

Your mother would see things more
sensibly," he tells her, with a little
roughness.

"I fear she would see things differ-
ently," he reiterates. "Well,
what's your plan, then? Not to let
Sam go to prison, I suppose?"

"Of course not!"

"Well," as she does not continue.

"I've, I don't know yet. I have
tried to be able to think, my head is in a
whirl. That dreadful cold, and the
public standing, and mother crying—"

A motherly-eyed woman looks from
the young man's lips. He draws the
girl close still, close to his heart.

"I don't believe even she, or you,
could have felt worse than I did. It
matters. And to think my own father
did it all, and I stood there like a fool
and couldn't stop it!"

"Dear Tolver, don't! It was very
bad of Sam—you know it was. Can
you expect any man to be very merciful
with a naughty boy who kills one of
his horses?"

"That isn't it, Eve. He'd pun-
ish anybody, and so would I, but in a dif-
ferent way from this. It's because it's
your brother because you are poor
and friendless, and pretty enough to
have attracted his only son, and he
can't bear the idea of his money not be-
ing met by more money, the old miser!
There, I haven't any patience to think
about it!"

"The rector of St. Luke's could vouch
for us."

"I know, darling. You've told me
all about yourselves before now, and,
if you hadn't, anybody would know at
a glance that you had sprung from no
common stock. My father knows it all
the time, only he chooses to affect
doubt and mistrust to suit his own
purpose."

But as to money," she goes on
rather wearily, all I can say is that,
with the help of this needlework from
the Boston firm, we have managed to
keep out of debt up to now. I shouldn't
bring you a farthing, dear, as you
know, and never shall; and I should
be ashamed still more so after this.
Dear Tolver, I am afraid it is of no use
for us to think any more of each other."

"It's of no use for me to attempt to
leave off thinking of you," he asserts.

"It couldn't be done. I don't know
about you, with a glance that is sud-
denly severe."

"I shall think of you wherever we go,
Tolver."

"Don't let me hear another word of
this now. If you don't want me to see
your mother go in and tell her what I
propose. You'll tell her, won't you?"

"I suppose I must if you say so.
But I shall—"

"And think out a plan for paying the
money yourself, if you can; and then
tell me I can get away for half an hour.
I'll be at Crab Tree Corner about 4
o'clock."

"I have a plan now—a sort of one,"
declares the girl, her eyes shining as she
looks up at her lover.

"A sort of one!" he repeats quizzic-
ally.

"Not a very good one," she is fain to
confess; "but better than going into
debt, or being under—under obliga-
tions—to you, of all persons!"

She brings this out in a rush, after
much hesitation, with crimsoning cheeks
and drooping head.

"I'll pass over that for the present,"
he says, magnanimously. "Your plan?"

"To sell our furniture and things and
go away, and—"

"And live in bare rooms?"

"Furnished apartments are very dear!
That would, indeed, be wasting your
money. You can live here for less than
half what it would cost you in that
way."

"Oh, Tolver, you are making the
worst of it!"

"That I'm not! Ask your mother—
you'll find she knows more of such
things than you, unwilling though you
are to trust her judgment."

"Oh, Tolver!"—she is unable to re-
press a smile at his tone—"you know it
is only that I fear she would hardly
have strength of mind to—"

"Of course she would be glad to save
her son from disgrace and her family
from hardships that they have not
known yet, poor though they may be.
That would be only showing a natural
affection."

"You want to make me out a mon-
ster, Tolver."

"Not you, but your pride. Don't let
it devour you, Eve—not to speak of
your mother and brother."

"They part a little coolly after this,
each thinking the other in the wrong."

Chapter II.

Later on in the day, over the evening
tea-table, Eve faithfully repeats to her
mother Tolver Gerard's proposal to free
them from their embarrassment; and
Mrs. Thirkield, as she expected, jumps
at the idea and reproaches her daughter
bitterly for opposing it.

"You'd rather see your brother in
prison, I suppose," she tells her queru-
lously.

"The poor little widow is not naturally
peevish, but the hardships and priva-
tions she has gone through since her
husband's death, three years ago, have
impaired her health and soured her
temper somewhat, and this last trial is
overwhelming. It was for her sake that
they came to Nutfield about a year ago,
the doctor having warned them that she
could not live much longer in the close
city lodging to which they had removed
on finding themselves almost destitute.
They looked out for a quiet country vil-
lage where living was cheap, and, tak-
ing a tiny cottage, they eked out their
scanty subsistence with needlework for
a Boston firm. Thus they have just kept
starvation from the door, poor but neat
clothing upon their backs, and Sam at
the public school, where, if he did not
learn much, they at least hoped he
would be kept out of mischief. Be-
yond this they have had no prospect,
no hope, no joy, save that Mrs. Thirkield's
health has certainly improved in the
country air, though she and Eve have
to sit close to the work, and that a cer-
tain manly young farmer has looked
kind and sweet at the graceful girl
with the delicate features and wistful
eyes who is the light and center of the
cottage home, the stay of her somewhat
childish mother, the ad of her rough,
awkward brother, though he is as apt
as most boys at affecting a great scorn
for the opinions and sentiments of his
woman-kind."

"Mother dear, I wouldn't see Sam in
prison any more than you would," the
girl says patiently, "but I want to find
some other way. You know we could
never pay it back, mother."

"Well, and it wouldn't be much harm
if we didn't to your husband that is to
be—"

And the son of the man to whom we
owe it! And, mother, he never will be
mine. I don't see how it can ever be."

You haven't been foolish enough to
give him up, I hope?"

"Not yet, mother; but I think it
must come to that. His father would
never hear of it, you know, and he
has all the money and power on his
side and could leave everything away
from Tolver, if he went against him.
Could we bring all this upon Tolver,
mother, and in addition take all he has
and get him into debt with his aunt,
to free ourselves from poverty and
trouble?"

You take such extreme views of
things, Eve. The old man would come
round in time. Tolver is his only son,
and I've heard he adores him, and the
money would be paid and forgotten."

That is what we should like to
think, mother. But is it really proba-
ble?"

Just as much as the other," insists
Mrs. Thirkield. "And what are we to
do if we refuse to accept Tolver's offer?
How would you get about getting the
money?"

Just the question she could not
answer to her lover!

"Give me time to think, mother," she
says wearily.

But the new day dawns upon faces
unlightened with any fresh hope. Eve
is tired and heavy-eyed as she moves
about the little rooms, sweeping and
dusting and setting in order against
her mother's appearance. Three sad
faces gather round the frugal breakfast
table. The widow has repented of her
anger against her son, and has only
tearful sorrow and reproaches for him
now, which he bears a good deal more
becomingly.

"You haven't thought of anything,
Eve. Mrs. Thirkield says, more as an
assertion than as a question. Perhaps
the girl's dispirited look is a sufficient
reply."

"No, mother; I wish I could."

When the meal is over and the two
women are clearing the table, the elder
sits, in lowered tones, lest Sam, sitting
outside on the garden-seat, chipping
away at a stick and trying to make be-
lieve there is nothing the matter, should
overhear—

"Eve, I must speak to Tolver to-day,
if you won't. They might be coming
for Sam—who knows? Do you know
how long they wait before—"

"I shall see Tolver myself to-day,
mother; I promised to meet him this
afternoon to talk further over it."

"That will do, if you are going to be
reasonable. But I can't let my boy be
taken off to prison to gratify your
pride."

"Mother, do you think I would let
him go, either? But if I could only
avoid this!"

"You won't be so nervous about hand-
ling Tolver's money when he's your
husband, child."

"Mother, that's where it is! He
never will be that; I will never take
him to drag him down into poverty.
His father has everything in his hands,
and it would take Tolver years to get
on if his father turned against him, as
you know he would do if Tolver mar-
ried me. We should take Tolver's
money and get him into debt, and all
because one of our family injured one
of his. We have been dealt with mer-
cifully on account of our poverty and
of your widowhood, mother; and it
seems to me a mean thing to fall back
upon the very family we have injured
to pay the money for us."

"That all sounds very well, Eve! But
what are we to do?"

"Mother, I have racked my brain.
Even if we were to sell our furniture
I'm afraid it wouldn't bring in that
sum."

"I'm sure it wouldn't," agrees the
widow, glancing round upon the shabby
tables and chairs. "And what should
we do without it? We could get some-
thing so cheap as this cottage, I'm sure."

"All our jewelry is gone!" Eve
knew it before, but still she speaks in-
terrogatively, as though hoping against
hope.

"Even my keeper," answers her
mother, beginning to cry as she looks
down upon the forlorn little wedding
ring that shines all alone on her thin

finger. "That was when Sam had that
bad sore throat."

Eve puts the last things away in si-
lence and gets out a large work basket,
from which she takes a pile of strips of
black net worked in varying patterns
by their patient hands. When she has
made up a neat parcel, she says:

"Is there anything we want at the
shop? I must go to the post-office before
I do anything else."

"Plenty of things we want," retorts
her mother, half in impatience, "but
nothing we can afford to have."

"Mother, you're blaming me for
everything now because I have opposed you
in this."

"I don't know what's to become of
Sam, I'm sure!"—and the widow weeps.

"Often I have sat and thought and
worried over it. He is doing no good
at that school—it is fit only for plough-
boys—and who will take him, and what
will he be fit for, unless for such work
as that?"

"Dear mother, don't look too far
ahead; one trouble at a time is
enough."

Eve goes and kisses the poor little
woman; but, with all her strong love,
she is powerless to shield her from life's
bitter blasts. She realizes this, as she
generates to comfort her, with a miser-
able sense of helplessness. For herself
she would not care, she would have on
a crust, and work all day and half the
night and save the money by degrees,
if her creditor would give them time.

But she can not deprive her mother of
anything more than she has already
been deprived of. They have now only
the bare necessities of life, and there
is not a penny to be screwed out, turn
which way they will.

"Eve, do you expect to see Tolver
now?" her mother inquires, when the
girl reappears, with her hat and mended
cotton gloves, and takes up the parcel
to carry to the post.

"No, mother, not until this after-
noon."

"But you might chance to meet him?"

"Not at all likely, mother. But, if
it will ease your mind at all, I will
promise not to talk to him on that sub-
ject until I have spoken to you again."

"It will ease my mind. If you met
him, and rejected his offer in the de-
cided way you have sometimes, Eve,
where should we be then?"

"Where is Sam, mother?"

"Out somewhere. He won't go to
school any more, I think, after this.
What is to become of him?"

Eve descends the hill toward the vil-
lage with a very thoughtful face, though,
when she meets any one, she endeavors
to drive the cloud from her brow and
gives a bright "Good morning" as
though her heart were not weighed
down with anxiety. Eve is proud al-
ways, and the knowledge that the vil-
lage is alive with their trouble and with
curiosity to see how they will get out
of it spurs her on to make a show of care-
less cheerfulness which she is very far
from feeling.

But her courage breaks down at the
sight of a burly figure on horseback
in the village high street that of a
broad shouldered and sunburned far-
mer bearing an odd vague resemblance
to young Tolver Gerard, a resemblance
that is striking for a moment, and then
fades away altogether, as he assumes a
different attitude or as his face changes
expression. Tolver's father, the owner
of the fine cart horse that Sam killed
with one thoughtless movement of his
mischievous hand, the cause of all their
present perplexity their enemy and
persecutor, a fine bluff, good-humored
looking man, with much sense and spirit
and, in a general way, careless kind-
ness of heart! His handsome healthy face
tells all this as he walks his big horse
down the street, turning in the saddle
to shout some concluding remark after
the miller with whom he has been hav-
ing a chat. His deep voice sounds so
good natured that Eve takes heart as
she hears it.

An idea springs up in her mind. She
runs into the postoffice suddenly, hot
and trembling from head to foot, and
deposits her parcel. He has not seen
her. She slipped into the shop while
his head was turned the other way after
his friend the miller. When she comes
out again he is in view in the distance,
making his way leisurely in the direc-
tion of Fairfield, the largest farm of the
three that he owns, and on which he was
born and many of the family before
him. She turns down the lane, break-
ing into a run as she leaves the street.
From there she takes to the fields,
making short cuts until she gains the
road at another point, at some distance
from the village and well on the way to
Fairfield. Looking eagerly up and
down she at first fears that she has
missed her object, but the next moment
the thud of a horse's hoofs reaches her
ears, followed shortly by the appear-
ance of the burly farmer and his big
horse over the brow of the hill.

Her haste in the postoffice and her
run across country have given her no
time to think; now, as she stands await-
ing the near approach of man and
horse her heart fails her. What can
she say, how can she plead with this
stiff-necked man who is bitterly prej-
udiced against them and who would
destroy them all without scruple to save
his son from them? But then her
mother and Sam, what are they to do—
how can she beart to look on at their priv-
ations and not do all she can for them?

Her face is pale, her heart is beating
rapidly; the farmer is quite close now,
and pretending not to see that she is
there. He has almost passed by before
she can command her voice.

"Mr. Gerard."

The voice is louder now, as if in des-
peration. There is no further excuse
for him. He turns, only half checking
his horse, however.

"Miss Thirkield, I believe!" he says,
with strained politeness, and touches
his hat as he speaks.

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