

ever been. Bring her back, and all shall be well ; if I live—if I live !” he said, with a wail that was sometimes shrill with hope, and sometimes bitter with despair.

This, however, was not to be. Innocent, paler than ever, blank and passive as she had been years ago, was brought back to him as soon as she could be removed, but only in time to see her husband in his last lucid moments, to receive his blessing, and to bid him farewell.

“ You have been a good child to me, poor Innocent. God bless you !” said the dying man, putting his hand upon her head ; and then he asked feebly and anxiously, “ You forgive me for what I said ? ”

“ I did not do it,” said Innocent, looking at him very earnestly. “ I did not do it.” There was no anger in her eyes, only a firm, almost wild denial, which yet she was anxious that he should believe.

“ I know you did not,” he cried. “ Oh, Innocent, my child, kiss me and forgive me ! you have been as good as an angel to me. It is I that have been unkind, only I — ”

She stooped down over him, her face melting a little, and kissed him—then by a sudden impulse knelt down by his side. Innocent had but one thing that it came into her head to do when she knelt down upon her knees. She said “ Our Father ” reverently and slowly like a child by her husband’s bedside : “ Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that have trespassed against us.” I have heard that there was not a dry eye in the room ; and when she rose up from her knees she kissed him again, and held his hand till he died.

CHAPTER LIII.

CONCLUSION.

SOME time after this last calamity a large party was assembled, one bright October morning, in the drawing-room at The Elms. The house was full of flowers,—it was full of commotion. Many carriages had cut up the orderly little gravel drive round the shrubbery in front,—the door had been standing open all the morning, there were groups of people everywhere, even in the bedrooms, and the maids, in white ribbons, fluttered about the staircase, and bran-new trunks, with shining leather covers, stood in the hall. The dining-room door stood open, disclosing more flowers ; a large, long table, covered with the remains of a feast ; chairs thrust aside, and white napkins lying about as they had been left when the party adjourned into the drawing-room, where they had all gathered to—