

half an hour on purpose—she looked at Owen suddenly, and, obeying a natural impulse, fell on his neck at once with a great flood of joyous tears.

'My darling,' she said simply, 'I can't bear to say it while you're so sad and troubled. And I'd learnt to love him, too. He was so kind, so fatherly. But, Owen, I can't help it; it's such a relief to me to know you've nothing more to fear. I'm glad it's all over. The strain was so terrible.'

Owen pressed her to his heart, and smoothed her hair with his hand.

'For your sake, darling,' he said, 'I'm glad of it, too—I'm glad of it.'

Ioné laid her head, nestling, upon his shoulder, and sobbed.

'And now, darling,' she went on, in a very timid voice, 'there's no reason on earth——' She paused and trembled.

'No reason on earth why we two, who love one another so well, shouldn't henceforth be one. No, Ioné, no reason.' He kissed her forehead tenderly. 'As soon as you will, dearest.'