

Take him away, and rear him to be a comfort to you. I have no longer lot nor part in him."

"Irene! Irene! I cannot bear these tears."

"I am very weak to let them flow. I didn't mean it; but you know how hard it is for a woman to restrain them. Don't let us discuss the matter any more. His clothes are all packed and ready to go, and I—I am ready to resign him."

"You love him almost as well as if you were his mother."

"I think almost as well."

"You have kept and looked after him for two long years, during which, without your care he might have died; and do you think that I will part you now? Never! Irene, you have acted as a mother toward my child. Don't give him up. Be his real mother now."

He has come quite close to her, and got possession of her hand; but the face she turns to his is pained with doubt and misconception.

"Eric, what do you mean?"

"I mean that the barrier that has spoiled both our loves is broken down, Irene: that you and I are free to love."

"Good God!"

"Have you not guessed it? Don't you not understand that the obstacle that kept me years ago from asking you to be my wife was this same marriage-tie which was broken, but not disannulled; which from shame I had kept a secret from the world and my own father, and dared not divulge even to yourself? And can you wonder, after what has passed between us, that, finding myself once more free, you find me here?"

He has clasped both arms around her waist, and flung himself upon the ground before her; and she has placed her hands upon his hair, and, with blurred and misty sight, is gazing blindly into the depths of the violet eyes that are fixed so passionately upon her own.

"Irene, my darling, my angel, answer me. Are you to be mine?"

"Yours?" she says, dreamingly.

"Yes, mine—my wife—my very own forever! Think of the years I have been waiting for this happiness, and don't keep me in suspense."

But she startles him by suddenly leaping from her chair like one possessed.

"Oh, I never thought! I never dreamed," she says rapidly, in a kind of feverish delirium, "that it was *that* that separated us.—Tommy, Tommy, we shall never part again!" and thereupon she leaves her lover standing by himself, and, running to the next room, falls weeping on his child.

Muiraven, with a comical look of disappointment on his face, follows and stands beside her.

"I've not had an answer to my question," he says, presently.

She turns in all her frank, glowing womanhood, and throws herself into his arms.

"O Eric!" she sighs contentedly, "what need of answer? *Why have I loved this child?*"

Have you ever watched the process of knitting one of your own socks? I appeal, of course, to my masculine readers. If you have, I am sure it appeared a very incomprehensible sort of business to you, and, until the work came to an end, and the sock appeared in its proper person, you would have been puzzled to decide how on earth it was ever going to turn into a sock at all. The first few rows, with the exception of a stitch added here or decreased there, go smoothly enough; but when it comes to the toe and heel crisis it is apparently all inextricable confusion, until the last stitch is knitted and the worker *casts off*. Knitting a sock and unraveling the plot of a sensational novel, are two very similar things. It has been difficult at times, I dare say, to trace the reason of some of the actions in this present story, and the "toe and heel crisis" was, I think, a "regular stumper;" but I trust that all has been explained to the satisfaction of the reader. And now the last stitch is knitted, and I am about to cast off, I should like to leave my tale just where it is, and my hero and heroine just where they are; for, since anticipation is invariably better than reality, I am sure they have reached their climax of happiness. But there are other people connected with this story, in whom perhaps some interest may have been awakened, and therefore I will throw myself into the highest condition (all novelists are clairvoyants), and tell you what I see happening in a year to come.

Oliver Mordaunt is living at Fen Court with his aunt Isabella, and they really get on wonderfully together. Since Irene has lived at Berwick Castle he has conquered his antipathy to holding Colonel Mordaunt's property; yet he declares that he shall never marry, but leave it to his eldest son. *Nous verrons*. Doubtless it is not the first vow that Fen Court has seen registered, and broken. One thing is certain, however, Mrs. Quekett's baneful presence will darken its walls no more. The house-keeper is still living upon her dear Lady Baldwin, and other fashionable patronesses, of whose secrets she has become possessed, and will not let them forget the circum-