

ous. Shall I send a man to the 'Coach and Horses' for a change?"

"No, thank you. I think I'd better walk back myself. If you will give me a glass of brandy—" But he is shivering as he speaks.

She flies to the bell all excitement and eagerness again, and orders the servant to bring what he desires.

"But that is not sufficient!" she exclaims as he drinks the brandy—"I am sure that is not sufficient. And I am so helpless to do more for you. Lord Muiraven, *do* go home! It seems inhospitable to say so; but I am sure it will be the safest thing to do. Go and get dry clothes on you at once—oh! how you are trembling!—and go to bed, or do any thing that is necessary. You should take care of yourself for—everybody's sake."

He turns and looks at her.

"If I go, may I come again?"

"For the child?"—nervously. "Oh, yes, of course; but he had better wait until to-morrow now, had he not?"

"I should not think of moving him to-day. Till to-morrow, certainly; and perhaps I shall see you before then. Good-morning."

He walks down-stairs almost abruptly, and leaves her to herself. As soon as he is gone she sits down and drinks her tea, and feels as though she had but just wakened from some fearful midnight dream to find that it was morning.

Tommy sleeps quietly for half the day, and is miraculously good the other half. The cut upon his forehead has made his head ache, and he is disinclined for any thing but to lie still and hear Irene read to him; and when he is wearied of that, and closes his eyes in sleep, she sits beside him offering up thanks to Heaven for his preservation, and thinking, not without some qualms of self-reproach, of the man whose claims to sympathy she had almost ignored in her alarm about his son, but who is nevertheless, though she will not acknowledge it, ten thousand times dearer to her than Tommy can ever hope to be. As she sits in the darkened room recalling his features and the sad air with which he greeted her, her heart pleads for him and for herself; and she speaks his name in a fond low whisper, while she entreats him not to think hardly of her for her reception of him. "If you only knew, Eric!—if you only knew!" she keeps on repeating, until her fancied colloquy resolves itself into tears.

In the evening, when Tommy has finished his tea, sitting wrapped up in a shawl upon her knee

by the drawing-room fire, and has been carried back to bed again, her heart leaps to hear Muiraven's step upon the stairs. "How foolish of me," she thinks, as she bolts into the bedroom to ~~re~~ cover herself, "when we shall never, *never* be any thing but friends. O Eric! O, my love!" And then she falls to kissing Tommy till she nearly wakes him up again.

"Mrs. Mordaunt!" says Muiraven through the half-closed door.

"I am coming, Lord Muiraven!" And in a minute she appears before him. "I hope you have taken no harm from your immersion this morning. I have been reproaching myself for my carelessness ever since; but I never thought that you were wet."

"Pray don't think about it again. I am all right. How is the boy?"

"Quite well, thank you. He is asleep. Would you like to see him?" She leads the way into the next room, and they stand beside the bed together looking at the sleeping child. Presently Muiraven stoops down, and kisses him upon the forehead.

"Poor little chap!" he says, softly.

"Lucky little chap, you mean," replies Irene, speaking far more cheerfully than she feels.

"To have you to love him and look after him. Yes."

"He will not have that long. By-the-way, Lord Muiraven," as they return to the sitting-room, "please tell me—I would rather know at once—are you going to take him away to-morrow or the next day?"

"I don't want to take him away at all."

"But under the circumstances, considering that he is—"

"Do you love him very much, Irene?"

"O Lord Muiraven, you need not ask me that! You know—you *must* know—" Tears prevent her finishing the sentence.

"Then keep the child. I have no wish to part you."

She looks up in astonishment with sweet, wet eyes that make him tremble with eagerness to fold her in his arms; but he only moves his chair a little nearer to her own.

"Keep him! But how can I, knowing he is your lawful son? It could not be for long, you see; in a very few years his education, his welfare, his station in life, every thing would combine to part us; and I—forgive me for saying so—but I have had so many partings, I feel as if I could not undergo another. No; it is best it should be as you first intended. He is your heir.