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"FORGIVE ME," HE SAYS BARNES. LY, "FOR ALL THAT I HAVE BROUGHT UPON YOU!"

"NO INTENTIONS."

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT.

Author of "Love's Conflict," "Veronique," etc.

CHAPTER X.

"Oh! why did you ever come here?" is the first wailing reproach with which she receives his words.

"Because I could not help it! Much as I have suffered since we parted, I would not, knowing how lame any explanation I can make to you must be, have sought you wilfully; but when the opportunity was pressed upon me I could not resist it, and I am here, and you must listen whilst I speak."

"I need no explanation!" she said proudly.

"Then you are not the woman that I took you for. You are not the woman who once vowed to be my friend and counsellor. Friends do not condemn their friends unheard, Irene."

"You must not call me by that name," she falters.

"I must, and will! for as we stand together now, I know you by no other. But do not be afraid that I shall say one word that you need blame me for. It is not a man who speaks to you! It is a fellow-soul calling on you for God's sake to lay aside for one moment all the hard thoughts you may have cherished of him, and let him say what he can say for himself!"

"Go on," she whispers; but she turns her face away, and, stooping to gather sundry flowers that grow near, weaves them, with trembling fingers, into a little sort of tuft.

It is after breakfast, and they are standing in front of Fea Court watching Tommy play upon the lawn. As the last words leave Irene's lips, Colonel Mordaunt, mounted on his favorite hunter, comes riding towards them from the stables.

"Holloa, Muiraven! I thought you were going over to Chester Farm with me this morning to see that greyhound litter. My man thinks we shall be able to spare you a couple, if you take a fancy to the pups."

"You're very good, Colonel! I should like to go by all means, but won't you give me half an hour's grace after breakfast? If I had a quarter your constitution, I wouldn't ask for it."

The Colonel pretends to laugh at the idea, but he secretly enjoys it.

"And you a bachelor, without a care to interfere with your digestion. Wait till you're married, my Lord!"

"That's complimentary to me," says Irene, who is plucking up spirit with the want of notice accorded to her. And then she turns round suddenly, and goes up to her husband's side and fastens the little bouquet she has made into his buttonhole.

The small attention pleases him: he feels as though the sun had suddenly come out from behind a cloud, and with his disengaged hand he squeezes the fingers basted with his adoration.

"Thank you, my darling!" he says fervently.

At that Irene does, what she so seldom does before another, puts up her lips to kiss her husband.

"Don't be away long!" she says, as she embraces him.

Muiraven hears the sentence with a sigh, and watches the action with a frown; he knows so well what they are intended to convey—that, whatever this woman may still think or feel, he must be loyal to her husband, or she will not listen to him.

"I shall be back within the hour, dear," replies Colonel Mordaunt. "I have only to ride down to the Long Close and see about the draining there, and then perhaps you will be ready to accompany me to Chester Farm, Muiraven."

"I shall be ready by that time," replies the guest with careless brevity, as he switches off a bunch of lilac with his cane.

He never intended to say more to Irene than it would be right for her to hear: there was no need of that kiss to remind him of his duty—it has galled him; and as soon as Colonel Mordaunt's back is turned he lets her know it.

She is watching the retreating horse and rider, more from nervousness at the coming explanation than regret at her husband's departure, when Muiraven's voice sounds in her ear again.

"If you can spare one moment from your matrimonial rhapsodies, Mrs. Mordaunt, perhaps you will fulfil the promise you made just now, and listen to what I have to say."

The sarcastic tone, so unseemly in their relative positions, rouses her to a sense of her own dignity and makes her brave.

"Lord Muiraven, you took me so much by surprise that I hardly knew what to answer. I

