

not corresponded regularly with me for some time after his arrival in the country. How I long to hear from him—to know what he will say in reply to the information contained in my last, regarding Mrs. Vivian, information which I hope may bring him back to town. Surely it cannot fail at least in making some impression on him, and yet I heightened nor exaggerated nothing. Here every day, himself her constant, her only topic, her blushes, her sighs. Oh! if he could only be persuaded or coaxed into taking her, what an advantageous *parti* in every sense of the word; but no, he is too headstrong, too blindly indifferent to his own interests for that. Well, even so, he will find other matches equally eligible. From the way that little Gaveston blushed when I casually mentioned him the other day, I could at once perceive that very little persuasion would induce her to break off her childish engagement with young Cressingham, in favor of Augustus; and the latter, by the way, seemed a little taken with her whilst in town. Well, I should not wonder if she is destined eventually to be my daughter-in-law; and on the whole, I am very well satisfied, though I must confess to a little aristocratic weakness in favor of lady Mary. Her princely ancestry, her open haughty disdain of all other suitors save the favored one, are both traits that would go far to win my favor."

At this point of her ladyship's reflections a rapid heavy footstep resounded on the stairs; the next moment the door was roughly thrown open. The intruder, who was Lord Huntingdon, motioned the maid to quit the room, and then turning his pale troubled face to his wife, exclaimed, in tones almost indistinct from agitation:

"I have news for you to-night."

"For me? about whom?" she asked, and then her thoughts instantly recurring to the one dear object that ever engrossed them, she exclaimed with pallid lips: "Tis of my child, my darling Augustus, you would speak. He is ill—dying."

"Neither," rejoined her husband, striking the table with a fierce oath. "Neither! but *married!* and married to a beggar—a *parvenue*, a country curate's daughter."

"Married!" shrieked Lady Huntingdon. "You are mocking me. It is not, it cannot be, Oh! in mercy retract your words. See me, here, kneeling before you!" and in the bewildered agony of the moment, she flung herself at his feet, her long black hair floating wildly around her, "Only say that you have spoken in jest, in falsehood, and I will bless—I will worship you."

"By—! madam, I only wish I could; but my information has come from too true a source—from

the former suitor of the new Mrs. Huntingdon, and whilom rival of our only son—the parish clerk himself."

"Huntingdon, you have killed me!" murmured his wife, as her head drooped forward, and with a deep, agonized groan she sank insensible at his feet. Greatly alarmed he hastily raised her and laid her on a couch. She was cold as marble, and her very features wore the contracted, rigid look of the grave. He had once or twice, however, before seen her in a state nearly similar, and he instantly applied the proper restoratives; but it was long ere his efforts were successful. At length the heavy lashes parted and she looked around. The instant her glance fell on her husband, the vague restlessness that had previously filled it vanished, and was replaced by an expression that at once told memory and its maddening stings were hers again. Without replying to his anxious enquiries as to how she felt, she motioned him to the next apartment, murmuring in tones whose hollowness strangely startled him:

"Return in an hour—I will be better then." He obeyed, and she then fell back on her pillow to struggle in silence and loneliness with the terrible and invisible foe that was gathering its deadly crushing folds around her heart. The paroxysm was awful in its length and intensity, and for a time her cruel enemy seemed to have triumphed. Clammy drops bedewed her livid brow, the limbs stiffened out as if in the last mortal struggle,—but Lady Huntingdon's hour had not yet come. After a time the intensity of her sufferings subsided, and she faintly murmured:

"Once again have I escaped, the next will kill me!" For another length of time she lay back motionless, her thoughts as wildly agitated as her earthly frame was calm, till at length her husband, who had been leaning for the previous half-hour against her door, divided between the fear of leaving her so long alone and that of disobeying her injunctions by entering, exclaimed in a somewhat timid voice:

"May I come in, Isabella dear? How do you feel now?"

"Better," she briefly replied. He entered, and seated himself beside her, anxiously, though covertly scanning her features all the while. He was prepared for tears, for agony of look and tone—he saw neither. Lady Huntingdon was calm and proud as ever, nay, if anything, prouder.

The lofty brow bore no tokens of humiliation, of suffering; but, to a quick observer, the fixed look of the eyes, whose dark pupils seemed dilated to twice their natural size, the spasmodic quiverings