

in society on account of his high connexions, though universally despised. I little imagined the fearful interest his name was soon to possess for me. The principal speaker, who I learned from two or three words he had let fall on first entering the vehicle, was a young officer of the name of Warburton, appeared to be a very intimate friend of Rockingham's, and mentioned a letter he had just received from the latter, in which he vaunted in enthusiastic terms, 'his good fortune in having completely triumphed over the affections of some heiress, to whose wealth he had long been paying court. As the young lady had consented to elope with him, they might expect himself and his bride in London the following week.'

'Is the lady's name a secret?' was the laughing enquiry of his companion.

'Well, Rockingham did enjoin me silence,' returned the other, lowering his tones; 'but then to you I may reveal it, and, besides, the whole world will know it in a day or two.'

'Eva, imagine my maddened, my burning indignation, when I heard your name pronounced. I was on the point of felling the vile calumniator to the earth, but the fear of compromising you still further restrained me, and with an effort which drove the blood back to my heart, I fell again into my former position, vowing to myself, however, that he should pay the penalty of his slanders ere the setting of another sun. The conversation still went on—passages of Rockingham's letter were repeated, details of his plans and whereabouts given, so full and circumstantial that a vague, sickening suspicion, terrible as some hideous dream, began to steal over me. In vain I strove to shake it off, reviling myself all the while for even admitting such a thought, in connection with one whose name had ever been to me synonymous with childlike truth and innocence. The idea, however, still followed me, and last night on arriving here, instead of coming up at once to the Hall, as is my usual wont, I stopped at the small inn, which had been mentioned as the temporary residence of Rockingham. The answer to my first question respecting the inmates of the house added fearful confirmation to my fears, and without a moment's delay I asked to be shewn into his presence. What passed between us 'tis unnecessary to recount,—suffice it to say, that he is as mercenary as he is unprincipled, and the remission of a long standing debt between us, aided by a threat regarding the revelation of some disgraceful gambling transaction of his, with which chance made me acquainted, have freed you forever from his importunities, unless, indeed, you

wish it otherwise. I have his written promise that he leaves for the Continent immediately. To his open assertion, that you were betrothed to him, that you had consented to a clandestine union, I had but one reply to give him, and that was to say, 'he lied;' but he sneeringly bade me, if I still continued sceptical, to come here at the hour he would name, and my doubts would be effectually removed. I came, Eva, despite such damning evidence—still trusting, still hoping in your innocence—I came, and found, alas! that Rockingham had spoken truth. Thank God! however, I have saved you from being his wife—from a life of utter wretchedness, of endless despair and remorse, nor will I leave incomplete the work I have commenced. I will see your parents, see Lady Huntingdon, and if my advice, influence or wealth, can avail aught, you will be freed in future from the ill-judged persecutions that have already borne such deplorable fruit. Of the step you had determined on taking, they shall know nothing, at least from me. How could they who had driven you to it, with any degree of justice blame your deed? Now, Eva, before parting, in all probability never to meet again, I have a word to say to you. On receiving your last letter, containing so touching a recital of your wrongs and griefs, indignation against your parents, sympathy and anxiety for yourself, by turns contended for the mastery in my heart. A thousand plans and projects of assisting, freeing, and consoling you, did I form, and yet they were all inadequate, inefficient; for, on dispassionate reflection, what could I, a comparative stranger, do between a child and her own parents? There was but one effectual means—one which would free you at once and forever from their harsh rule, and that means which required only your own consent to be put at once into execution, I resolved on adopting. Eva, can you not divine it? It was to ask you to become my wife.'

With a wild start Eva raised her head, and fixing her dark eyes, flashing strangely in her terrible agitation, on her companion's face, she murmured, more to herself than to him—

"Your wife! what new mockery is this?"

"Eva, it was not mockery, though it may have been presumption," rejoined Mr. Arlingford, in a voice that, despite his utmost efforts, strangely trembled. "I knew not then that your heart was another's; I knew not then that your love had been already sought and won; I but remembered that you were wretched and friendless, threatened with a marriage you hated; and poor as was the alternative, I resolved to offer you my hand. Nor would the marriage have been one of simple cal-