

oh! how earnestly, how fervently do I pray, that your choice may be a happy one. Ah! my dear Miss Huntingdon, do not deem me presumptuous if I implore you to beware of rashness or inconsiderate haste in so important a step. Of all the follies a silly girl can be guilty of, I think a hasty, and, as in my case, an unequal marriage, is certainly the worst."

"The devil you do, madam! A pity you did not always think so!" exclaimed young Huntingdon, as he sprang through the low window. "A pleasant confession for a husband to hear as he approaches his own door."

Mrs. Huntingdon started and changed colour, but the new comer, without bestowing any farther notice on her, threw himself full length on the sofa, carelessly exclaiming as he turned towards his sister—

"Well, Eva, taking your first lesson in matrimonial bliss. What think you now of that infamous species of domestic monster, familiarly known under the title of husband?"

"That he is very good in general, only a little unreasonable now and then," returned Eva, with a smile, justly thinking it was better to treat the matter lightly.

"Unreasonable! Unhappy you should say, miserable, accursed. Well, well, there is no help for it!" and casting his eyes to the ceiling, he commenced singing some snatch of a comic song, of which the concluding line of each verse, "What a fool I was to marry," was perfectly audible to his listeners.

The deepening color of his wife, the occasional gleams that flashed out from beneath her eyelashes, betrayed that she took the sentiment in a very personal light, and Eva, dreading a further display of hostilities, hastened to divert the storm, by inquiring, as she turned over a volume of poems on the table near her, "If her sister-in-law were fond of reading?"

"About as fond as she is of morning walks," exclaimed her husband, with a satirical curl of his lip.

Mrs. Huntingdon, without appearing to notice the interruption, replied in the negative, adding, that she thought it morally impossible for any woman who attended to her household duties to have any time to spare for books.

"Time to spare, or not," he retorted, "Twould be better for her to give an occasional hour to them. She would then be suited for a companion and comfort to her partner, as well as a house-keeper or cook."

This last thrust was too much for the young wife's patience, and forgetting even the restraint

which Eva's presence imposed on her, she turned to the latter, exclaiming, with uplifted hands and eyes—

"Only hear him, Miss Huntingdon, only hear him! And yet, before our marriage, whenever he saw me with a book in my hand (a thing which I may as well frankly confess, was ever taken up at poor dear papa's instigation, he always repeating, that the aristocracy were literary), Mr. Huntingdon used to make me throw it aside, telling me he hated learning and literary women, and declaring that, once that I became clever, no matter how much he loved me previously, I would then be unendurable to him."

Eva, to whom neither the words nor the sentiments were new, smiled significantly, and her brother, interpreting aright the expression of her countenance, amused, too, by his wife's childish frankness, rejoined with a confused though merry laugh—

"Well, Carry, I believe you have the best of it there, I certainly did say so, and more than that, I one day threw into the fire, when your back was turned, a very learned treatise on Theology, with which you had been adding your poor little brains for some days previous."

Mrs. Huntingdon's pretty lips pouted more sullenly than ever, and she angrily rejoined—

"Yes, sir, you do well to taunt and ridicule me now, but your strain was different before marriage. Then, I was your life, your treasure, your sweet, artless Carry, and now I am only a confounded simpleton, an incorrigible little fool."

"And what else are you?" he rejoined, *sotto voce*. "Ah! I beg ten thousand pardons, my dear Mrs. Huntingdon, I did not mean to say it. An unlucky truth that forced its way, despite all efforts to restrain it."

"Hush! Augustus!" said Eva, hastening to anticipate the angry retort that already flashed in her sister-in-law's bright eyes. "I fear you are as incorrigibly provoking as ever. You are really too bad! My dear Mrs. Huntingdon, will you tell me the secret of the luxuriant beauty to which your honeysuckles have attained?"

"She waters them with the tears wrung from her by domestic misery," rejoined her husband, who seemed to find great mental delight in keeping up a running commentary of epigram and satire on everything that was said; "you may judge how they thrive, with such plentiful and constant showers; but as they do not want any more at present, we may as well make up friends; so come, Carry, we will all take a turn in the garden. 'Twill restore our equanimity, which seems somewhat ruffled just now."