

"Girl! you do not mean, nay, you dare not tell me, that you are my son's wife."

It was now Mrs. Huntingdon's turn to tremble, to wish that the earth might open and cover her. What! she was face to face with the haughty mistress of Huntingdon Hall, the terrible mother-in-law, who had haunted her day and night dreams with more terror and pertinacity than the wildest story of demon or spirit that had ever filled her infant fancy! It was almost too much for her, and as she leaned for support, faint and trembling, against the window-sill, Eva feared for a moment that she would have fainted. Lady Huntingdon, either dreading such a result, or probably, as much agitated herself, made no farther remark, and the party were profoundly silent when the door was impetuously opened, and young Huntingdon dripping with rain, entered the apartment.

"Why, mother! you here!" he exclaimed, starting back in inexpressible astonishment, "Well, though unexpected, believe me, you are sincerely, heartily welcome."

"Reserve your welcomes, Mr. Huntingdon, till they are solicited or sought," was the scornful reply; "Err not so egregiously as to suppose for one moment, that Lady Huntingdon could ever forget herself so far as to become a guest beneath your roof!"

"Well, we will not quarrel with your Ladyship's determination, nor weary you with importunities to change it," he negligently replied, as he turned to a mirror to arrange his thick curls, disordered and damp with rain.

"It was to seek shelter from the storm, that I entered here," resumed his mother in her sternest tones, "but, had I known who were its inmates, I would have braved the wildest fury of the elements, rather than have degraded myself thus."

"Oh! mamma, mamma!" pleaded her daughter, imploringly.

"Silence, girl!" retorted Lady Huntingdon, turning her flashing eyes upon her; "Have you already, during the few moments you have breathed the same atmosphere with your ingrate of a brother, learned to plead for and defend him?"

Eva shrank back, and Lady Huntingdon continued with a laugh of bitter superciliousness.

"And so, Mr. Huntingdon, it was for such a home as this, that you resigned Huntingdon Hall, and its lordly demesne, your princely residence in London, your equipages, servants and valets. It was for such a home as this that you resigned your brilliant position in society, your high-born friends and associates, and oh! climax of madness! it was for you ignorant, insignificant girl, destitute

alike of beauty, manner or talent, that you outraged the love of a devoted mother, trampled on the claims of a marquis' daughter, and the open preference of many a high-born, gifted woman!"

"Enough, Madam," was the stern rejoinder of her son, who had listened with unruffled composure to her reproaches, whilst directed solely against himself; "Enough! Let your Ladyship remember, however great your wrongs may be, that you are now under Mrs. Huntingdon's roof, and do not outrage beyond all bounds, the hospitality that has hitherto kept her silent."

"Mrs. Huntingdon!" echoed his mother in her haughtiest accents; "I neither know nor acknowledge such a person. This roof, short a time as I intend to test its hospitality, belongs to my son, and I have a claim on it that no ingratitude of his, no new and worthless ties can efface."

"That may be, but your Ladyship must respect at the same time the claims of your son's wife."

"Yes, his wife!" she repeated with an hysterical laugh; "His wife! The future Lady Huntingdon! Oh! I knew not, till now, infatuated boy, the depth to which you had fallen, nor the utter worthlessness of the object for which you have erred so madly, so unpardonably! but come, Eva, we have lingered here too long. Evil, indeed, was the chance that brought us hither."

Young Huntingdon glanced towards the window as she spoke, it was still raining heavily. Anxious on her account, but doubly so on Eva's, whose delicacy of constitution, the result of her late severe illness, he well knew, he coldly, but respectfully exclaimed:

"Let your ladyship not deem it derogatory to your dignity or my own, if I ask you, to remain here till the weather is more favorable. The shelter I proffer you, I would proffer equally to the most perfect stranger; hesitate not then, in accepting it."

Lady Huntingdon replied only by imperiously waving him aside, and with a haughty step, swept from the cottage. He seeing it was useless to combat further her determination, hurriedly caught up a heavy shawl belonging to his wife, and carefully wrapped it round Eva, who after a grateful pressure of his hand, and an affectionate glance towards her young sister-in-law, followed her mother. The young man stepped out into the porch and gazed after the carriage till it was nearly out of sight, he then silently and sullenly re-entered the drawing room. His wife was seated near the window, weeping, her face buried in her hands, but her husband was in no mood for consoling her then, and he coldly exclaimed;

"What are you crying for, Carry! Is it be-