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EVA HUNTINGDON.*

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CHAPTER XIII.

AND now the season was drawing to an end, and the different members of the Huntingdon family, so rarely coinciding in each other's opinions or wishes, agreed at least in looking forward to its close with feelings of sincere regret. Lord Huntingdon felt most reluctant to exchange the gaiety of the town for the dull monotony of the country, whilst to his lady the idea was perfectly abhorrent; the only ray of comfort it admitted, being the hope that she would see her son there, unless indeed some new whim would drive him back to town immediately on their arrival, or what was equally probable, send him on a six months' tour on the continent. Eva, too, who had found the commencement of her London life so wearisome and interminable, now anticipated its close with anything but satisfaction. True, the walks at Huntingdon Hall would be as pleasant, the sunshine as bright as when she had wept so bitterly at leaving them, some months before; but Mr. Arlingford would not be there to welcome her, and another tie would also be wanting,—a tie which had entwined itself slowly, almost imperceptibly around her heart, and whose existence she only learned from the bitter anguish the Chester Rockingham, with all his perseverance and indefatigable ingenuity, had contrived to baffle the vigilance of Mrs. Wentworth, each interview he had obtained with Eva, however brief and measured, had added another link to the close and binding chain he was weaving round her affections.

Ever devoted, ardent, seeking her through difficulties and discouragement, more than repaid for every effort by a word or smile, she saw not, felt not her danger, and yielded without even a passing feeling of remorse, to the happiness she derived from his devotion. Her feelings of satisfaction then were wholly unalloyed, when informed one morning by Mrs. Wentworth, that their stay in town was to be protracted for three additional weeks. The very evening of the day on which Eva had received that welcome intimation, lady Huntingdon was seated in her dressing-room, under the hands of her maid. The costly robe on the couch beside her, the jewels that glittered in her hair, told she was preparing for some gay scene, and yet the clouded, anxious expression of her countenance, harmonized ill with her festal attire."

"Will your ladyship wear pearls or flowers in your front hair?" enquired Willis, breaking in upon her reverie.

"Either," was the indifferent reply. The girl, thus left to her own discretion, decided in favor of the jewels, and whilst she turned away in search of the casket, her mistress leaned her head upon her hand, and murmured with a deep drawn sigh:

"Three weeks to-day since my fourth and last letter left, and yet no reply. Still, why should I feel so depressed, so anxious about him? How often has he permitted double that time to elapse without noticing my communications by a single line: Would that I could cast off this unaccountable and anxious presentiment that hangs around me! Perhaps I would not feel so uneasy, had he

* Continued from page 226.