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EVA HUNTINGDON.*

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE door of the cottage was opened by Mrs Huntingdon, herself, who had seen her sister-in-law from the window, and had joyfully hastened to welcome her; but whilst Lady Huntingdon was alighting, Eva contrived to make her sister in law a rapid sign, which she, though imperfectly comprehending, yet, understood sufficiently, to repress the warm words of recognition that rose to her lips.

"Can we remain here till the storm passes?" inquired Lady Huntingdon, with the tone and manner of one conferring, rather than soliciting a favour.

"Certainly, Madam," rejoined the young girl, as she led the way to her humble drawing-room, still bewildered by conjectures as to why Eva wished to remain unknown, and who was the proud, elegant lady, with her. The latter, with all the arrogant *insouciance* of a lady of the great world, threw herself into the one easy chair the apartment contained, even though the needle-work on the table beside it, betokened it was the seat from which her young hostess had just risen.

A silence followed, during which, Eva's embarrassed glance was fixed on the window, whilst her sister-in-law's gaze was bent, half enquiringly, half timidly on herself. At length, Lady Huntingdon, patronisingly exclaimed:

"You have a pretty place, here—your flowers are beautiful."

She spoke with wonderful affability for the one hurried glance she had taken of the cottage and

its mistress, at once told her that the latter belonged to a world so far removed from her own, that no danger could arise from any condescension or familiarity on her part. It was evident too, from her tone and manner, that she looked on her as a mere child, and when after some additional remarks on the luxuriance of the honeysuckles and laburnums, she exclaimed:

"Of course, you have no graver pursuit or occupation to attend to, unless indeed it be your studies," the young wife listened in silence with crimsoning cheek, too much abashed to undeceive her. Meanwhile the storm burst forth in all its fury, peal after peal of thunder shook the cottage, and the blackness of the clouds seemed to foretell that no favorable change was at hand. At length, Lady Huntingdon, disguising as well as she could a wearisome yawn, asked if she might inquire the name of their kind hostess.

"Mrs. Huntingdon, madam," stammered the girl, as if half ashamed of the avowal.

The visitor sprang to her feet, her whole frame convulsed with agitation.

"Mrs. Huntingdon!" she repeated, the angry brilliancy of her flashing eyes rendered still more startling, by the sudden ashy pallor of her cheek: "The Honorable Mrs. Huntingdon!"

"Yes, Madam," was the half-faltering, half-wondering reply.

A short pause followed, and then the guest passionately ejaculated:

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