

"Well, my dear Miss Eva, since you set so much store on your own particular sanction, of course I must wait for it ere I venture on calling you my affianced wife; I trust though, you will not be so cruel as to keep me long in suspense."

They entered the porch as he spoke, and Eva, without a word of reply, passed him with a cold inclination of her head, and hurried to her own room.

"Marry Sir George!" she vehemently exclaimed: "Never, never! neither the threats of my father, the terrible anger of mamma, nor the influence of any power on earth shall force me to it."

The words were spoken with a decision, and energy, that denoted Eva's previous doubts and waverings were entirely at an end; and when Lady Huntingdon's maid entered, some time after, with an intimation that her mistress wished to see her, though Eva's cheek became a shade paler, the determination that was throned on lip and brow never varied for a moment. Saying: "She would be with her ladyship in an instant," she rang the bell to ask Sefton the oft repeated and now despairing question:

"Was there a letter?" Alas! none, and that last faint ray of hope dispelled, Eva silently bent her steps to her mother's apartment. Lady Huntingdon was awaiting her, ready dressed, notwithstanding the earliness of the hour, and after the first greeting, she exclaimed with a rapid scrutinizing glance towards her daughter:

"I suppose Eva, that the ceremony of bringing you here, to give your verbal consent to a measure that has been already tacitly settled between us, is nothing more than a mere formality, one, however, that may as well be fulfilled. Sir George Leland has arrived this morning, are you willing and prepared to receive him as your betrothed husband?"

"Mamma, I am not," was the low-toned but firm reply.

"What! do you still persist in the rebellious course you have entered on?" asked Lady Huntingdon, pushing back her chair, and measuring her daughter from head to foot with a glance that would have caused a more daring spirit to quail. There was a pause, and then Eva rejoined:

"Call it not rebellious in me to refuse the hand of a man for whom the very warmest feeling I entertain is supreme indifference."

"Have I not already told you, I will listen to no romantic nonsense of this kind?" was the stern rejoinder. "What, has a girl of your age or position to do with love or indifference? You have been sought in marriage by one whose wealth renders him a fit alliance for the daughters of our

proudest aristocracy, and yet, you, the portionless daughter of a poor noble; you, destitute alike of beauty, manner, nay, even the common accomplishments of a school girl, presume to demur, to talk about rejecting him."

"Even so, mother, and 'tis the first, the only instance in which I have ever attempted to oppose or question your will. Passively, blindly, have I submitted to your wishes in everything, but on a point on which the happiness or misery of a whole life depends, I will not be so weakly, so criminally passive."

"Then, I tell you, that you shall, Eva Huntingdon, and more than that, that you leave not this room till you have consented to all, every thing that I have required of you. Once before, I deigned to reason, to remonstrate, now, employing the sacred authority with which my title of mother invests me, I command you to obey. I might speak, were you not too inexperienced, too headstrong to attend to me, of the dignity, the splendour, the lofty position that would be yours as the wife of Sir George Leland. I might tell you, how you, who are now but a mere cypher in your own family, an entire dependent on the will and pleasure of others, would then be sovereign mistress of a princely home and retinue, free ruler of your own actions; a being courted and flattered by those who now look down on you with contempt. Girl, girl; if you are insensible to the dreams of ambition, to the desires, the counsels of those whose age and experience qualify them to guide you, display at least some consideration for your own future welfare, your earthly happiness."

"But, mamma," murmured Eva, in a stifled voice: "What would all this splendour be, but gilded misery? Neither loving nor esteeming."

"And, did I marry your father entirely for love?" interrupted her companion with a bitter smile. "Would I have become his wife, had he been poor and humble? Never! I married him, because he was titled, because he was wealthy, and mark me, child, I have never regretted it since, even for a moment. Splendour, rank, the world's smile have all been mine, and the same is now proffered to you. Do as your mother did—accept them, and be content with the same destiny that has fallen to her lot. Listen to me, Eva! I will be patient with you, for you are too young, too ignorant of the world, of life, to even divine the extent of your infatuation. Think you, in pressing your acceptance of young Leland's hand, that I am not seeking to advance your own welfare? Who is to give a thought to that welfare, who cares whether the world's sunshine or gloom will be yours, save your mother? From the