

gave him a sort of provisional promise "that if after the expiration of a year, her sentiments had undergone no change, she would become his wife." She also gave him clearly to understand, that the engagement was no more binding on his side, than on hers, and that if during the interval, chance threw him with any one he might prefer to herself, he was perfectly free to transfer at once his hand and homage.

From all this it might naturally be inferred that the young baronet was passionately attached to the object of his attentions, and yet incredible as it may appear, affection had very little to do with it. He certainly loved Eva in a measure, that is to say, he preferred her to any other lady of his acquaintance, the charming Miss Stanton herself, not excepted, and the very difficulty he found in winning her, made him more anxious, more doggedly determined to secure the prize. He knew too that she was gentle, well-bred, and would make in all respects a desirable wife, but that was the extent of his love and when Eva deeming it a necessary duty, gently informed him at their final explanation:

"That, though her gratitude and esteem might be his, she feared her love never could," he most magnanimously declared:

"That, that was quite enough, he should be perfectly satisfied with it."

Lady Huntingdon was as happy as her character would permit, when informed of her daughter's betrothment, conditional thought was. Her worldliness and self love were both gratified by it. She had secured a suitable and wealthy *parti* for her child, and still more signal triumph!—the very man whom she had from the first selected as a son-in-law, and whose rejection had excited so strongly her indignation. This tardy acceptance of him seemed an act of amendment, a tacit acknowledgement of her own superior power and discrimination, and her deportment towards Eva became thenceforth kinder, her manner more friendly than before. Lord Huntingdon, too, was pleased in his indolent way, and he, one night, confidentially declared to his future son-in-law:

"That he was cursed glad, little Evy would soon be out of her mother's dominion, for the latter worried the very soul out of her. To be sure," he added in the same breath, "'twill be all the worse for myself then, for I'll be all alone, to bear the weight of her ladyship's brimstone temper, still, no matter, 'tis time Evy should have a little rest."

When the proscribed year was within a month of its close, Lady Huntingdon issued her mandate that the family should return to England for the

celebration of the nuptials, but this return was sorely against her daughter's will, who opposed it, though vainly, by every means in her power. The change indeed, that came over Eva from the hour the voyage was ultimately decided, was inexplicable, even to herself. The species of monotonous calmness that had for many months fallen to her lot, vanished, and was replaced by a restless disquiet, a vague unhappiness that partook at times of foreboding. With terror, she found, too, that her heart was often insensibly yearning for freedom from the new ties she had contracted, and which she had schooled herself at one time to look on with resignation, nay, cheerfulness.

Equally alarmed was she, by the strange and almost fatal pertinacity with which her thoughts ever recurred to passages in her life, that now she felt 'twere most unwise to dwell upon, to scenes and events, trifling in themselves, but all forming part of that one whole, all connected with that being she wished at once and forever to forget. Even Sir George noticed the change, though of course, without divining the cause, and annoyed by Eva's occasional irrepressible coldness of manner, and singular marked predilection for solitude, he at times murmured, though indeed very low, to himself:

"That after, all, he was not certain he had been so remarkably fortunate. He might have been just as happy with Miss Stanton, whom he was certain, was not by one half as whimsical as her more successful rival."

There were times when but for very shame's sake, Eva would have cancelled the engagement, but the childish inconsistency of such a step, the pain and humiliation it would inflict on Sir George, whose feelings she really feared wounding, and the motive that had chiefly swayed her through life—dread of her mother—restrained her. With such feelings, feelings she had vainly struggled against with all the generous determination of an upright will, it required no sibyl to foretell the amount of happiness awaiting her as Lady Leland.

The only solacing thought connected with her return to England, was the hope of seeing her brother and his youthful wife, but even this expectation was clouded by anxious doubts, for more than four years had elapsed since she had heard from them. Their silence, certainly, was in a measure easily accounted for. The movements of the Huntingdons abroad had been so uncertain and Eva so little taken into her mother's confidence, that it had been utterly impossible for her to give her home friends her address, with any degree of certainty. A letter might have arrived for her at Nice, when she was on