

no hopes of respite or of mercy. At an early hour she left the couch from which grief and anxiety had effectually banished slumber, and passed out into the grounds to find relief in the fresh morning air, for the burning head-ache that oppressed her. Her torturing thoughts, however, still followed her, and after the lapse of an hour, she was returning to the house, as suffering, as despondent, as when she had left it, when the sound of horses' hoofs, advancing rapidly up the avenue, caused her to turn. The wild, visionary hope, that had flashed for a moment across her, vanished in its dawning, for the rider was Sir George Leland. Springing from his horse, he threw the bridle over his arm, and hastily advanced to meet her. The first greetings over, they proceeded together some time in silence, she pale and silent, he awkward and embarrassed, wavering whether to enter or not on the subject that most interested him, and which he at once divined from the bright but momentary blush that had dyed her cheek on his first approach, and the shrinking embarrassment pervading her whole figure and manner, was not entirely new to her. At last he decided on courageously entering on the matter, and turning from his horse, which he had been caressing and apostrophizing for some time previous, he exclaimed—

"I suppose, Miss Huntingdon, your mother has informed you of the substance of the conversation we had together respecting you, the morning of my departure?"

"Yes, she has spoken to me on the subject," rejoined Eva, the icy coldness of her look and manner contradicting the inferences her companion might else have drawn from the unsteadiness of her tones, and the crimson glow his words had called to her cheek.

"Well, I am glad of it, and of course, dear Miss Eva, you will confirm the assent that Lady Huntingdon has already given?"

"That assent, Sir George, was given without my knowledge, and is of no value whatever. Your offer was too sudden, too unexpected to have permitted of anything like a decided reply, at least a reply in the affirmative."

"Oh, of course," said Sir George, patronizingly, "I would not expect any young lady to say, yes, at once, but Lady Huntingdon's approbation and assent will do just as well. Her Ladyship, who is really a clever, sensible woman, though a little too full of her own consequence, was kind enough to talk a great deal about my generosity, &c.; you know, I have left the decision of the sum to be settled on you, entirely to herself; but, after all, my dear Miss Huntingdon, I only did what I

should have done, what would have been expected from a man of my great wealth. She said also, and with truth, that I might have married girls far higher and richer, I beg pardon, Miss Eva! than yourself, but, as I told her in reply, I did not want more wealth, but an amiable and gentle wife. To speak candidly, I never dreamed of such a thing, till I heard of your brother's marriage. That caused me to first think seriously on the subject, and after a few days' reflection, I decided I would marry. The greatest difficulty, however, was yet to come, and that was the question, who to marry. I had always entertained so invincible a prejudice against the fortune-hunting girls one meets in London society, that I never harboured, even for a moment, the thought of marrying one of them, and to demean myself by an ill-assorted match, such as your brother has been guilty of, was equally out of the question. I do not know what first suggested you to my thoughts, however it one day struck me, that you were just the wife to suit. Your youth, though, was a great objection; in fact, I had always looked on you as a mere child, unworthy the slightest notice, but I remembered, on reflection, that Lady Huntingdon had told me you were seventeen. Another year would introduce you to society, and release you entirely from your school trammels. The very idea of such a thing naturally made me a little curious to see you, and having some business to transact with your father, I thought I would come down myself, instead of sending my agent, as I had previously intended. From the moment of my arrival here, I watched your every word and movement with a rigid scrutiny you never suspected, and the result has certainly been in your favor. Timid, affectionate, gentle, you possess the most estimable qualities that a woman can have, and I do not doubt but you will make as amiable and docile a wife, as you have proved a daughter. The whole tenor of Lady Huntingdon's conduct, from my arrival at the Hall, told me as plainly as words could speak, that she would be most willing to accept me for a son-in-law, and I knew, of course, that the decision of a sensible, gentle young girl, such as you appeared to be, would coincide with that of the parents. The sequel has proved that I was not mistaken; and when, ten days ago, I asked for your hand, it was freely, unhesitatingly, accorded me."

"Yes, Sir George," rejoined Eva, who had listened with mingled contempt and astonishment to this singular tirade. "Yes, it was accorded you by my mother; but again, do I tell you, without either my knowledge or sanction."

Her companion slightly smiled, as he replied: