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EVA HUNTINGDON.*

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE indignation excited in Eva's breast by her mother's arrogant tyranny, was surpassed in intensity by another and still deeper feeling, and that was unqualified aversion for the proposal of Sir George Leland. To ever assent to it, was, she felt, utterly impossible, and yet, to oppose the iron will of Lady Huntingdon—to set at open defiance her commands, her threats, was almost more than she had strength or courage to do. In the midst of her doubts and fears, a sudden ray of light flashed upon her, and she murmured, whilst her whole countenance brightened with joy—

"Yes, I will write to my first, my early friend, dear, kind Mr. Arlingford. He will assist,—advise me."

The project was executed as soon as conceived, and Eva, relying on a friendship that had hitherto proved almost infallible, again became calm and cheerful. As the time drew near, however, that was to bring an answer, she began to grow anxious and uneasy; and yet, as she had told Mr. Arlingford all, and explained the pressing necessity of an immediate reply, she had no reasonable grounds to fear that he would fail her. The day which she had carefully calculated, came and brought no letter. Another and another passed, and still no word from him. But one day now intervened between the period mentioned by Lady Huntingdon as that of Sir George's dreaded arrival, and Eva's anxiety had deepened into positive anguish and terror. Too faithfully did imagination represent the sad consequences of disobedience, and her

mother's imperious will—too faithfully did it picture the terrible struggle which she, unaided and alone, must go through, and yet, would not the worst consequences of Lady Huntingdon's anger be preferable to the misery that would be entailed on her by a weak compliance with her wishes! But would she be able to resist successfully that haughty, stern nature, that bowed all other spirits to its own; nay, would she be right in doing so—in resisting the sacred authority of a parent in a matter in which the honour, the welfare of the whole family, were concerned? The more Eva reflected, the more uncertain and difficult did her course appear, the more helpless and hopeless did she feel. One line from Mr. Arlingford, one simple word of counsel or advice, would have been of priceless, of inestimable value—it would have decided her—but it came not, and to her other sorrows was added the bitter certainty that the generous friendship which had almost atoned to her for even a mother's love, had, like the other few rays of sunshine that had brightened her earthly career, passed away. Rockingham, too, who, unsolicited and unsought, had vowed such eternal faith and devotion, had he also forgotten her? It must be, or he would not have allowed so long a period to elapse without making some effort to see, or at least write to her. Distracted between a thousand fears, abandoning in one moment the resolutions framed the preceding—now resolving to brave Lady Huntingdon's power, then acknowledging to herself with a bitter sigh, that resistance was useless, Eva saw the terrible day approach, with the feelings of a criminal who has

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