

hand, spoke of an affection deeper even than that with which he had plighted his vows to her at the altar itself. The good seed that Eva had so patiently yet almost hopelessly sown in her sister-in-law's really generous though faulty nature, had at length borne fruit, and to her sweet counsels and example was owing the first step that Carry Huntingdon had taken towards repairing the faults of her early married life. The event, however, so favorable to the domestic peace of the inmates of Honey-suckle Cottage, had produced very different results to the other actors in it. Eva and her mother had arrived at the Hall, thoroughly saturated with rain, and either the exposure, or the agitation of her unforeseen and unexpected interview with her son, had brought on the latter, a dangerous attack of illness. Eva, protected in some measure by the shawl her brother had wrapped round her, was more fortunate and she was even well enough to take her post as occasional nurse in her mother's sick room. The few weeks of toilsome watching that followed were not the only evil results of the visit to the Cottage, for one morning on entering her mother's room, a few moments after the physician had left it, Lady Huntingdon informed her that the latter had recommended, in fact insisted on the necessity of a more southern clime, and as the advice tallied with her own wishes, she intended leaving England as soon as her strength permitted.

Eva was overwhelmed, paralyzed by the intelligence, but neither then, nor at a later period, did she express either surprise or regret. She knew too well how totally indifferent her mother was in all cases to her feelings or opinions, yet not the less bitterly did she mourn the change that was about to separate her from the new ties of love and happiness her heart had formed to itself. If another regret lurked in her breast, adding a tenfold bitterness to those that already haunted her, she neither wished nor dared to analyze it, and not even to herself would she acknowledge that another shared in the many sad thoughts and bitter sighs she lavished on her brother and his wife. With the latter, she now frequently, almost daily, found herself, and it was not entirely the solace of their affection, or a temporary distraction from her own anxious cares that she sought. No, a purer and more unselfish motive actuated her, and that was to ensure the continuance of the perfect peace and happiness that had commenced to dawn for the beings so dear to her, to pour into the now willing ear of the young wife, gentle counsels teaching her how to preserve the love of her husband, and to ren-

der his home the Eden, his boyish imaginings had pictured it.

To Augustus himself she had but little cause to speak. The very depth of feeling, with which he, usually so reckless and volatile, spoke of the un- hoped for change in his wife's character, her generous promises and purposes of amendment, convinced Eva that whatever domestic trials and troubles were yet in store for him, her brother would in all probability, be more sinned against than sinning, and as she listened to his eager though boyish schemes of happiness for the future, his merry jests on the renewed honey-moon vouchsafed to himself and his little Carry, she inwardly thanked the Providence that had preserved their happiness secure, even at the time that her own had been irremediably shipwrecked.

This thought solaced her even in the dread hour of parting, when Mrs. Huntingdon hung round her neck in an agony of tears, and Augustus strained her to his heart with a sorrow not less deep, though more restrained than that of his young wife. Generously thoughtful of their happiness to the last, Eva, in the final moment of farewell, pressed upon her brother, almost despite his will, the greater part of the large remittance transmitted her by her guardians on receiving the intelligence of her approaching voyage; convinced that while she would have always around her the luxuries, Honey-suckle Cottage might yet perchance be deficient in the necessaries of life.

Shortly after, the establishment at Huntingdon Hall was broken up, the servants dismissed, for the family contemplated a lengthened absence, and the *Morning Post*, among its other items of fashionable intelligence contained the announcement that Lord and Lady Huntingdon, accompanied by their daughter Miss Huntingdon, had embarked for France.

CHAPTER XXIII.

For five long years the dust silently accumulated in the stately apartments of Huntingdon Hall, and the spider suspended its web unmolested from the gilded cornices, yet no word came from its careless owners. The neighbouring gentry after a few selfish regrets lavished on the by-gone Christmas festivities of which the Hall had ever been the theatre, and a few wondering conjectures as to what the Huntingdons intended to do with their pretty daughter, whether to marry her to some grey-haired Italian *principe*, or mate her more equally with one of their titled countrymen whom they were likely to meet abroad, troubled themselves no more about them and