

praying fervently for Mr. Arlingford's speedy return.

A couple of days after, Sefton, Eva's maid, entered her young mistress' room with a splendid *bouquet* of flowers in her hand.

"For you, Miss Eva," she said, presenting them.

Eva eagerly grasped the flowers, exclaiming:

"How exquisitely beautiful! What a charming selection! Where did you get them?"

Sefton, however, had already turned away, and in the enjoyment of the blossoms themselves, Eva thought or cared little as to how they had been obtained, naturally supposing the girl had been committing depredations in the conservatory. The next day, the latter, in the same careless manner, presented her with another *bouquet*, more choice if possible than the first, and again she evaded her mistress' inquiries as to how they had been obtained, but a few hours after, Eva in passing through the conservatory, discovered, that some of the blossoms whose delicate beauty and perfume had most particularly attracted her notice, possessed no counterpart there.

"Where, then, had Sefton procured them?"

Resolving to delay her intended interrogatory till the following morning, Eva said nothing about it, and on returning to her room, though she again examined the flowers, it was with more curiosity than satisfaction. The next day, when her maid, after adjusting the flowers in a vase, as usual, was hastily leaving the room, Eva ordered her to remain.

"I want you to tell me, Sefton, where you have procured those flowers?"

"Oh! from a very good source, Miss Huntingdon. From a sincere friend."

"But I want to know who the giver is, and if they are intended for me?"

"La! Miss Eva, what a question! Who would think of selecting or presenting such flowers to a poor ignorant girl like me? No, they are for you, and you alone, but I dare not tell you anything more."

"This answer does not satisfy me at all, Sefton, and if you cannot be more explicit, I shall be compelled to refer you to Mrs. Wentworth."

"Oh! you would not do that, Miss Eva. She would go then to my lady, with such a long story, that would get us all into trouble, and rather than such a thing should happen, I will tell you all about it at once. Who then should send you them but one who admires and wishes you well! the handsomest gentleman in these parts—a tall elegant figure, dark eyes and hair, and who rides a spirited black horse."

The woman narrowly watched Eva's countenance as she said this, and, strange to say, the latter was so astonished at this new and romantic proof of the unknown's interest, so puzzled with conjectures as to whether it was given in expectation of anything like a return, or merely to gratify the generous impulse of his own benevolence, that she neither felt nor exhibited any emotion beyond that of surprise.

"If I have ever seen the person to whom you allude, he is a perfect stranger to me, and I cannot conceive how it has happened, that he has ever mentioned my name to you, much less entrusted you with flowers for me."

"It happened this way, Miss Eva. I noticed him two or three times riding slowly past the house, and from seeing me in the garden or on the balcony, he came to know that I belonged to the place. One day that I was entering the avenue, having just returned from the village, he passed, a splendid nosegay of flowers in his hand. 'These are for your mistress, my good girl,' he said, but do not tell her how you have obtained them—this is for yourself! and he threw me a sovereign. 'Which mistress?' said I, pocketing it first, however. 'Why, are you not Miss Huntingdon's maid?' he asked, reddening up. 'Yes, Sir.' 'Oh! then all's right. Come again, to-morrow, to this same spot; you cannot be seen from the Hall, and I'll give you another *bouquet* for your mistress, and another sovereign for yourself.' I made my best courtesy, and was retiring, when he called after me to say, that I was on no account to tell you how I had procured the nosegay, as he knew you would accept no favour, however trifling, even a flower, from a stranger, and he wished, nevertheless, to contribute in some manner or other to your happiness or gratification. He also cautioned me not to mention the circumstance to my lady or Mrs. Wentworth."

"Very improper! Very wrong of him!" rejoined Eva; "but in saying I would accept no favour at the hands of a stranger, he was perfectly right, and let me tell you, Sefton, that you have acted very improperly in giving me those flowers in silence, as you have done, or in accepting them at all."

"Oh! but, dear Miss Eva, for the life of me I could not help it. He said so many fine things about you, declared you were an angel in mind as well as form."

"Mr. Arlingford never said that," was Eva's inward commentary on this speech. The girl went on.

"Yes, those were his very words. Indeed, my dear young lady, I could never remember half of