

CHAPTER XX. EUNICE'S DIARY.

How long a time passed before my composure came back to me, I cannot remember now. It seemed as if I was waiting through some interval of my life that was a mystery to myself. I was content to wait, and feel the light evening air in the garden wafting happiness over me. And all this had come from a kiss! I can call the time to mind when I used to wonder why people made such a fuss about kissing.

I had been indebted to Maria for my first taste of Paradise. I was recalled by Maria to the world that I had been accustomed to live in; the world that was beginning to fade away in my memory already. She had been sent to the garden in search of me; and she had a word of advice to offer, after noticing my face when I stepped out of the shadow of the tree: "Try to look more like yourself, miss, before you let them see you at the tea-table."

Papa and Miss Jillgall were sitting together talking, when I opened the door. They left off when they saw me; and I supposed, quite correctly as it turned out, that I had been one of the subjects in their course of conversation. My poor father seemed to be sadly anxious and out of sorts. Miss Jillgall, if I had been in the humor to enjoy it, would have been more amusing than ever. One of her funny little eyes persisted in winking at me; and her heavy foot had something to say to my foot, under the table, which meant a great deal perhaps, but which only succeeded in hurting me.

My father left us; and Miss Jillgall explained herself.

"I know, dearest Eunece, that we have only been acquainted for a day or two and that I ought not perhaps to have expected you to confide in me so soon. Can I trust you not to betray me if I set an example of confidence? Ah, I see I can trust you! And, my dear, I do so enjoy telling secrets to a friend. Hush! Your father, your excellent father, has been talking to me about young Mr. Dunboyne."

She provokingly stopped there. I entreated her to go on. She invited me to sit on her knee. "I want to whisper," she said. It was too ridiculous--but I did it. Miss Jillgall's whisper told me serious news.

"The minister has some reason, Eunece, for disapproving of Mr. Dunboyne; but, mind this, I don't think he has a bad opinion of the young man himself. He is going to return Mr. Dunboyne's call. Oh, I do so hate formality; I really

can't go on talking of Mr. Dunboyne. Tell me his Christian name. Ah, what a noble name! How I long to be useful to him! Tomorrow, my dear, after the one o'clock dinner, your papa will call on Philip, at his hotel. I hope he won't be out, just at the wrong time."

I resolved to prevent that unlucky accident by writing to Philip. If Miss Jillgall would have allowed it, I should have begun my letter at once. But she had more to say; and she was stronger than I was, and still kept me on her knee.

"It all looks bright enough so far, doesn't it, dear sister? Will you let me be your second sister? I do so love you, Euneece. Thank you! thank you! But the gloomy side of the picture is to come next! The minister--no! now I am your sister I must call him papa; it makes me feel so young again! Well, then, papa has asked me to be your companion whenever you go out. 'Euneece is too young and too attractive to be walking about this great town (in Helena's absence) by herself.' That was how he put it. Slyly enough, if one may say so of so good a man. And he used your sister (didn't he?) as a kind of excuse. I wish your sister was as nice as you are. However, the point is, why am I to be your companion? Because, dear child, you and your young gentleman are not to make appointments and to meet each other alone. Oh, yes--that's it! Your father is quite willing to return Philip's call; he proposes (as a matter of civility to Mrs. Staveley) to ask Philip to dinner; but, mark my words, he doesn't mean to let Philip have you for his wife."

I jumped off her lap; it was horrible to hear her. "Oh," I said, "can you be right about it?" Miss Jillgall jumped up too. She has foreign ways of shrugging her shoulders and making signs with her hands. On this occasion she laid both hands on the upper part of her dress, just below her throat, and mysteriously shook her head.

"When my views are directed by my affections," she assured me, "I never see wrong. My bosom is my strong point."

She has no bosom, poor soul--but I understood what she meant. It failed to have any soothing effect on my feelings. I felt grieved and angry and puzzled, all in one. Miss Jillgall stood looking at me, with her hands still on the place where her bosom was supposed to be. She made my temper hotter than ever.

"I mean to marry Philip," I said.

"Certainly, my dear Euneece. But please don't be so fierce about it."

"If my father does really object to my marriage," I went on, "it must be because he dislikes Philip. There can be no other reason."

"Oh, yes, dear--there can."

"What is the reason, then?"

"That, my sweet girl, is one of the things that we have got to find out."

.....

The post of this morning brought a letter from my sister. We were to expect her return by the next day's train. This was good news. Philip and I might stand in need of clever Helena's help, and we might be sure of getting it now.

In writing to Philip, I had asked him to let me hear how papa and he had got on at the hotel. I won't say how often I consulted my watch, or how often I looked out of the window for a man with a letter in his hand. It will be better to get on at once to the discouraging end of it, when the report of the interview reached me at last. Twice Philip had attempted to ask for my hand in marriage--and twice my father had "deliberately, obstinately" (Philip's own words) changed the subject. Even this was not all. As if he was determined to show that Miss Jillgall was perfectly right, and I perfectly wrong, papa (civil to Philip as long as he did not talk of Me) had asked him to dine with us, and Philip had accepted the invitation!

What were we to think of it? What were we to do?

I wrote back to my dear love (so cruelly used) to tell him that Helena was expected to return on the next day, and that her opinion would be of the greatest value to both of us. In a postscript I mentioned the hour at which we were going to the station to meet my sister. When I say "we," I mean Miss Jillgall as well as myself.

.....

We found him waiting for us at the railway. I am afraid he resented papa's incomprehensible resolution not to give him a hearing. He was silent and sullen. I could not conceal that to see this state of feeling distressed me. He showed how truly he deserved to be loved--he begged my pardon, and he became his own sweet self again directly. I am more determined to marry him than ever.

When the train entered the station, all the carriages were full. I went one way, thinking I had seen Helena. Miss Jillgall went the other way, under the same impression. Philip was a little way behind me.

Not seeing my sister, I had just turned back, when a young man jumped out of a carriage, opposite Philip, and recognized and shook hands with him. I was just near enough to hear the stranger say, "Look at the girl in our carriage." Philip looked. "What a charming creature!" he said, and then checked himself for fear the young lady should hear him. She had just handed her traveling bag and wraps to a porter, and was getting out. Philip politely offered his hand to help her. She looked my way. The charming creature of my sweetheart's admiration was, to my infinite amusement, Helena herself.