

CHAPTER L. THE NEWS FROM THE FARM.

When I next heard from Miss Jillgall, the introductory part of her letter merely reminded me that Philip Dunboyme was established in the town, and that Helena was in daily communication with him. I shall do Selina no injustice if my extract begins with her second page.

"You will sympathize, I am sure" (she writes), "with the indignation which urged me to call on Philip, and tell him the way to the farmhouse. Think of Helena being determined to marry him, whether he wants to or not! I am afraid this is bad grammar. But there are occasions when even a cultivated lady fails in her grammar, and almost envies the men their privilege of swearing when they are in a rage. My state of mind is truly indescribable. Grief mingles with anger, when I tell you that my sweet Euneece has disappointed me, for the first time since I had the happiness of knowing and admiring her. What can have been the motive of her refusal to receive her penitent lover? Is it pride? We are told that Satan fell through pride. Euneece satanic? Impossible! I feel inclined to go and ask her what has hardened her heart against a poor young man who bitterly regrets his own folly. Do you think it was bad advice from the farmer or his wife? In that case, I shall exert my influence, and take her away. You would do the same, wouldn't you?"

"I am ashamed to mention the poor dear Minister in a postscript. The truth is, I don't very well know what I am about. Mr. Gracedieu is quiet, sleeps better than he did, eats with a keener appetite, gives no trouble. But, alas, that glorious intellect is in a state of eclipse! Do not suppose, because I write figuratively, that I am not sorry for him. He understands nothing; he remembers nothing; he has my prayers.

"You might come to us again, if you would only be so kind. It would make no difference now; the poor man is so sadly altered. I must add, most reluctantly, that the doctor recommends your staying at home. Between ourselves, he is little better than a coward. Fancy his saying; 'No; we must not run that risk yet.' I am barely civil to him, and no more.

"In any other affair (excuse me for troubling you with a second postscript), my sympathy with Euneece would have penetrated her motives; I should have felt with her feelings. But I have never been in love; no gentleman gave me the opportunity when I was young. Now I am middle-aged, neglect has done its dreary work--my heart is an extinct crater. Figurative again! I had

better put my pen away, and say farewell for the present."

Miss Jillgall may now give place to Eunice. The same day's post brought me both letters.

I should be unworthy indeed of the trust which this affectionate girl has placed in me, if I failed to receive her explanation of her conduct toward Philip Dunboyne, as a sacred secret confided to my fatherly regard. In those later portions of her letter, which are not addressed to me confidentially, Eunice writes as follows:

"I get news--and what heartbreaking news!--of my father, by sending a messenger to Selina. It is more than ever impossible that I can put myself in the way of seeing Helena again. She has written to me about Philip, in a tone so shockingly insolent and cruel, that I have destroyed her letter. Philip's visit to the farm, discovered I don't know how, seems to have infuriated her. She accuses me of doing all that she might herself have done in my place, and threatens me--No! I am afraid of the wicked whisperings of that second self of mine if I think of it. They were near to tempting me when I read Helena's letter. But I thought of what you said, after I had shown you my Journal; and your words took my memory back to the days when I was happy with Philip. The trial and the terror passed away.

"Consolation has come to me from the best of good women. Mrs. Staveley writes as lovingly as my mother might have written, if death had spared her. I have replied with all the gratitude that I really feel, but without taking advantage of the services which she offers. Mrs. Staveley has it in her mind, as you had it in your mind, to bring Philip back to me. Does she forget, do you forget, that Helena claims him? But you both mean kindly, and I love you both for the interest that you feel in me.

"The farmer's wife--dear good soul!--hardly understands me so well as her husband does. She confesses to pitying Philip. 'He is so wretched,' she says. 'And, dear heart, how handsome, and what nice, winning manners! I don't think I should have had your courage, in your place. To tell the truth, I should have jumped for joy when I saw him at the door; and I should have run down to let him in--and perhaps been sorry for it afterward. If you really wish to forget him, my dear, I will do all I can to help you.'

"These are trifling things to mention, but I am afraid you may think I am unhappy--and I want to prevent that.

"I have so much to be thankful for, and the children are so fond of me.

Whether I teach them as well as I might have done, if I had been a more learned girl, may perhaps be doubtful. They do more for their governess, I am afraid, than their governess does for them. When they come into my room in the morning, and rouse me with their kisses, the hour of waking, which used to be so hard to endure after Philip left me, is now the happiest hour of my day."

With that reassuring view of her life as a governess, the poor child's letter comes to an end.