

### CHAPTER LIII. HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.

After the heat of my anger had cooled, I made two discoveries. One cost me a fee to a messenger, and the other exposed me to the insolence of a servant. I pay willingly in my purse and my pride, when the gain is peace of mind. Through my messenger I ascertained that Eunice had never left the farm. Through my own inquiries, answered by the waiter with an impudent grin, I heard that Philip had left orders to have his room kept for him. What misery our stupid housemaid might have spared me, if she had thought of putting that question when I sent her to the hotel!

The rest of the day passed in vain speculations on Philip's motive for this sudden departure. What poor weak creatures we are! I persuaded myself to hope that anxiety for our marriage had urged him to make an effort to touch the heart of his mean father. Shall I see him to-morrow? And shall I have reason to be fonder of him than ever?

We met again to-day as usual. He has behaved infamously.

When I asked what had been his object in going to London, I was told that it was "a matter of business." He made that idiotic excuse as coolly as if he really thought I should believe it. I submitted in silence, rather than mar his return to me by the disaster of a quarrel. But this was an unlucky day. A harder trial of my self-control was still to come. Without the slightest appearance of shame, Philip informed me that he was charged with a message from Mrs. Tenbruggen! She wanted some Irish lace, and would I be so good as to tell her which was the best shop at which she could buy it?

Was he really in earnest? "You," I said, "who distrusted and detested her--you are on friendly terms with that woman?"

He remonstrated with me. "My dear Helena, don't speak in that way of Mrs. Tenbruggen. We have both been mistaken about her. That good creature has forgiven the brutal manner in which I spoke to her, when she was in attendance on my father. She was the first to propose that we should shake hands and forget it. My darling, don't let all the good feeling be on one side. You have no idea how kindly she speaks of you, and how anxious she is to help us to be married. Come! come! meet her half-way. Write down the name of the shop on my card, and I will take it back to her."

Sheer amazement kept me silent: I let him go on. He was a mere child in the

hands of Mrs. Tenbruggen: she had only to determine to make a fool of him, and she could do it.

But why did she do it? What advantage had she to gain by insinuating herself in this way into his good opinion, evidently with the intention of urging him to reconcile us to each other? How could we two poor young people be of the smallest use to the fashionable Masseuse?

My silence began to irritate Philip. "I never knew before how obstinate you could be," he said; "you seem to be doing your best--I can't imagine why--to lower yourself in my estimation."

I held my tongue; I assumed my smile. It is all very well for men to talk about the deceitfulness of women. What chance (I should like to ask somebody who knows about it) do the men give us of making our lives with them endurable, except by deceit! I gave way, of course, and wrote down the address of the shop.

He was so pleased that he kissed me. Yes! the most fondly affectionate kiss that he had given me, for weeks past, was my reward for submitting to Mrs. Tenbruggen. She is old enough to be his mother, and almost as ugly as Miss Jillgall--and she has made her interests his interests already!

On the next day, I fully expected to receive a visit from Mrs. Tenbruggen. She knew better than that. I only got a polite little note, thanking me for the address, and adding an artless concession: "I earn more money than I know what to do with; and I adore Irish lace."

The next day came, and still she was careful not to show herself too eager for a personal reconciliation. A splendid nosegay was sent to me, with another little note: "A tribute, dear Helena, offered by one of my grateful patients. Too beautiful a present for an old woman like me. I agree with the poet: 'Sweets to the sweet.' A charming thought of Shakespeare's, is it not? I should like to verify the quotation. Would you mind leaving the volume for me in the hall, if I call to-morrow?"

Well done, Mrs. Tenbruggen! She doesn't venture to intrude on Miss Gracedieu in the drawing-room; she only wants to verify a quotation in the hall. Oh, goddess of Humility (if there is such a person), how becomingly you are dressed when your milliner is an artful old woman!

While this reflection was passing through my mind, Miss Jillgall came in--saw the nosegay on the table--and instantly pounced on it. "Oh, for me! for

me!" she cried. "I noticed it this morning on Elizabeth's table. How very kind of her!" She plunged her inquisitive nose into the poor flowers, and looked up sentimentally at the ceiling. "The perfume of goodness," she remarked, "mingled with the perfume of flowers!" "When you have quite done with it," I said, "perhaps you will be so good as to return my nosegay?" "Your nosegay!" she exclaimed. "There is Mrs. Tenbruggen's letter," I replied, "if you would like to look at it." She did look at it. All the bile in her body flew up into her eyes, and turned them green; she looked as if she longed to scratch my face. I gave the flowers afterward to Maria; Miss Jillgall's nose had completely spoiled them.

It would have been too ridiculous to have allowed Mrs. Tenbruggen to consult Shakespeare in the hall. I had the honor of receiving her in my own room. We accomplished a touching reconciliation, and we quite forgot Shakespeare.

She troubles me; she does indeed trouble me.

Having set herself entirely right with Philip, she is determined on performing the same miracle with me. Her reform of herself is already complete. Her vulgar humor was kept under strict restraint; she was quiet and well-bred, and readier to listen than to talk. This change was not presented abruptly. She contrived to express her friendly interests in Philip and in me by hints dropped here and there, assisted in their effort by answers on my part, into which I was tempted so skillfully that I only discovered the snare set for me, on reflection. What is it, I ask again, that she has in view in taking all this trouble? Where is her motive for encouraging a love-affair, which Miss Jillgall must have denounced to her as an abominable wrong inflicted on Eunice? Money (even if there was a prospect of such a thing, in our case) cannot be her object; it is quite true that her success sets her above pecuniary anxiety. Spiteful feeling against Eunice is out of the question. They have only met once; and her opinion was expressed to me with evident sincerity: "Your sister is a nice girl, but she is like other nice girls--she doesn't interest me." There is Eunice's character, drawn from the life in few words. In what an irritating position do I find myself placed! Never before have I felt so interested in trying to look into a person's secret mind; and never before have I been so completely baffled.

I had written as far as this, and was on the point of closing my Journal, when a third note arrived from Mrs. Tenbruggen.

She had been thinking about me at intervals (she wrote) all through the rest of the day; and, kindly as I had received her, she was conscious of being the

object of doubts on my part which her visit had failed to remove. Might she ask leave to call on me, in the hope of improving her position in my estimation? An appointment followed for the next day.

What can she have to say to me which she has not already said? Is it anything about Philip, I wonder?