

The Governor's Lady

A Novelization of Alice Bradley's Play

By Gertrude Stevenson

Illustrations From Photographs of the Stage Production

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(Continued from last week.)
CHAPTER IV.

Slade wanted Katherine Strickland for his wife much the same as he would have desired a wealthy, clever, influential man for a partner. It was to be a union of ambition. There was no tenderness in his thoughts of her. He was actuated purely and simply by the lust for power and the greed of glory. All the softer, better things in the man's nature were swamped by this torrent of craving for worldly success that was sweeping him on to commit the most dastardly act in his long career of trampling over the heads and hearts of adversaries and opponents.

Even when he was a boy Dan Slade always set his teeth at "You can't do it," or "It can't be done." The very difficulty of a thing strengthened his determination to do. All his life long his success had been punctuated by the ruin of other men. He had not advanced so far without pushing other men back. Now that a woman instead of a man stood in the way, the result was the same. His methods might be quieter, more merciful, but the answer would be the same. Mary's sterling worth, her long years of devotion and sweet tenderness counted for nothing once he became convinced that Mary's dowdiness, her standpoint policy and her arrested development were stop-gaps in his own opportunity for progression. He ignored the fact that the little brown-eyed, patient woman was as much a part of him as were his eyes or his arms or any other very essential part of his being.

It was at just this point in Slade's pitiless reasoning that Mary, peering over the baluster and seeing him alone, hurried down the stairs. "Thank goodness, they've gone," she declared as she came into the room. Then seeing the numerous side lights burning she hastened to turn one after the other down to a glimmer. "I'm so glad you're not going out," she went on, coming over to him and rubbing her cheek against his sleeve. The little movement was a pathetically mute appeal for some caress. "What do they say?" she asked, suddenly, as she realized that her tender yearning met with no response.

But her husband was in no communicative frame of mind. "You're not mad with me, are you?" she questioned, wistfully, very much



"Go Ahead With Your Paper, I'll Take My Chances."

like an eager child who has been repressed. "No," Slade replied, briefly and without much interest. Mary breathed a quick sigh of relief. "Ah, then, we'll have a nice, quiet, pleasant evening," she declared, adding coaxingly: "Let's go upstairs and have a game of euchre. We haven't played for ever so long." Slade looked at her, his eyes drawn into a deep frown. It was true he wasn't angry with her, but he was angry at the thwarting circumstances that were hemming him in. Her very manner irritated him now—her quiet contentment, her calm acceptance of her failure to meet his guests and fill her place as mistress of his home saddened him. He was all the more determined to fight for something else—to begin his campaign for a governorship and another woman that moment.

"You can amuse yourself after I'm gone," he answered over his shoulder. "Then you are going out?" Mary's voice echoed the disappointment she felt. "Yes," Slade continued to be monosyllabic. "But I want to have a talk with you. Mary—we've got to come to some understanding." "Why, what?" Mary began, and then stopped. For the first time she noticed his changed manner and his averted eyes. She started to fumble with her workbasket. "I can't put it off any longer. I—er—" Slade stopped short. He was

finding this attempt at an "understanding" much more difficult than he had anticipated.

"What is it you're trying to say, Dan?" Mary's voice was firmer than his. "What's in your mind? You keep hinting at something lately and you never finish it. What is it?"

"You're a rich woman in your own name, Mary. Are you satisfied with what I've settled on you?" "Why, yes," came the quick response, as Mary's puzzled eyes searched his for a reason for the strange question. Then she added: "You've been mighty good to me, Dan." "How would you like to go and live in the country, Mary?"

Glad surprise filled the woman's eyes. Her thin cheeks flushed as she clasped her hands excitedly. "Oh, Dan, you know I'd like it. You're awfully good, father. I knew you'd back down and give in. This is no place for us."

"You leave me out of the question." And to his credit the man became shamefaced.

"I can't leave you out of the question," she protested quickly, not an inkling of her husband's real meaning having entered her head. In her perfect love and loyalty she was impervious to any hint of neglect or disloyalty from him. Had she known his thoughts her first care would have been to soothe him as one whose brain, overtaxed with affairs beyond her understanding, had suddenly clouded.

For an instant the man was silent. His face was turned from hers and he was looking out the doorway through which the stately figure of Katherine Strickland had just passed and through which he hoped to walk some day—governor.

"I—I—wouldn't go with you, Mary," he finally turned and looked her squarely in the eyes.

"Why—where would you be? Where would you live? Where would you go?" She stopped and then finished, "Pshaw. That's all foolishness, Dan."

"Mary," Slade was firmer now. His voice had a ring of finality, but Mary didn't understand. "I can't go on apologizing for you eternally! You can't have a headache every night! I must either have a wife who can be the head of my household or none."

Into the woman's heart there leaped a sharp fear, followed by the childish idea that perhaps, because she wouldn't go to the opera, she was to be punished—sent away alone—until she was forgiven.

"You're tired of me," she suggested. "If that were true and you filled the bill, we could put up with each other," he returned brutally, "but it isn't so."

"Don't you love me?" she half-breathed the question timidly.

For a brief instant something caught at Slade's heart and tugged and tugged. He turned with a look of infinite tenderness and said, simply: "Yes, Mary, I do." His tone was genuine and sincere.

Mary laughed a little, happy laugh. At the sound Slade's mood changed like a flash. It grated on his already overwrought nerves. It seemed to dismiss the controversy, to end the argument, to ring the death-knell of the dream that had come to him. The careless way in which she apparently dropped the discussion of going away nettled him. Prompted by a sudden impulse, he snatched her workbasket from her lap and flung it the full length of the room. "D—n that basket!" he exclaimed. "Can't I ever see you without it?"

"Dan!" Mary's gasp of amazement was the only sound in the room. It was the first time he had ever been harsh with her. She shrank back hurt and frightened. "Why, good Lord, Dan, you never did that before."

Then, with quiet dignity, she began to pick up the basket, the hated darning cotton, the needles and scissors, and the little worn thimble. Slade, watching her slight, stooping figure, ought to have been ashamed, but his anger was flaming hot and he didn't see much as offer to help.

Mary's mood changed, too. "I believe you're doing it to get your own way," she sputtered, "but you ain't going to get it. I've got as much right to my life as you've got to yours."

As she came up to him, he stood grim and silent, suddenly determined that if she wouldn't go he would. If she refused his offer of a home in the country, then she could have this great house to herself and he would live at the club.

"There ain't anything you could ask of me I wouldn't do—except—" Mary's troubled face was looking into his.

"Except what I ask," he finished, sarcastically, and hurried from the room, curtly ordered his dressing bag packed and then, hat in hand, his overcoat on his arm, came back into the room.

"Did it ever occur to you, Mary, that you're a mule?" he asked. "You're sweet and good tempered and amiable but you'd have given the mule that came out of Noah's ark points on how to be stubborn."

"How often have I felled you in these years, Dan?" "You're felling me now. You won't look at things with my eyes."

"We're not one person, we're two, Dan," she reminded him, quietly.

"Well, that's the trouble, we ought to be one. That's just what I'm getting at. We ought to be of one mind."

"Whose? Yours?" and Mary's sweet mouth puckered into a very little smile.

"I'm done," Slade decided, hopelessly.

"I can remember the time when you would have thought that was cunning," she reproached him.

"I'm going to my club, Mary," he announced, disregarding her playful attempt to smooth things over.

Mary gazed at him, bewildered by his swift changes of mood, hurt by his attitude, almost angry because he was so unreasonable.

Then love came rushing up into her heart. After all he was her Dan. What did this crossness or his nervousness



"Such Didoes; You Kiss Me."

matter? She went up to him, pulled his scarf a bit closer round his throat and as he turned away with a muttered word, waited patiently. Then, laying her hand on his arm—such a thin little hand, with his wedding ring hanging loosely on it—asked: "Shall I wait up for you?"

Slade's face worked convulsively. She didn't understand, poor little soul. He was going away for good, for all time, and she was asking if she would wait up for him. More than once before she had asked that question of him, the question that from a wife's lips, carries with it unspoken, tender pleading. For a space he was torn with emotions he could not define, had hardly expected himself to feel. Something bade him turn back upon ambition and pride and clasp into his arms this little woman who had worked for him, with him, who had had faith in him when he was poor, and who had struggled and cooked and slaved for him that he might rise to his present position.

But he struggled against the feeling, fought it back and conquered. "No, don't wait up for me."

"All right," Mary agreed. "I won't, if you don't want me to," and then, with a roguish smile, "but I will wait up for you all the same."

Slade was touched, but he stiffened his shoulders. Wealth he had won, honors he meant to have—and Katherine Strickland.

"Good-night, Mary," he called, coldly, as he hurried out of the room.

Left alone, Mary stood watching him, a forlorn little figure. "Why, he didn't kiss me." She hurried to the door. "Dan, you forgot something, Dan!"

Slade, hastening to the door, halted, hesitated, turned back.

"You come right back here and kiss me," Mary demanded, affectionately. "Such didoes; You kiss me." She raised her face for the kiss she thought was "good-night" and which he meant as "good-by." Slade stooped and laid his lips on hers, gently, reverently, then hurried out, almost as if he were afraid to stay a minute longer.

"Such didoes," Mary laughed to herself. She looked around the great empty room. It suddenly struck her that she had never really been happy in this room. Riches had proved a burden rather than a pleasure. They had robbed her of Dan's devotion, his confidence, his gaiety. She hastened to turn out the lights, shuddering as she did so. She grabbed her workbasket from the table and suddenly overcome with fright in the great silent shadowy room, fled to the lighted hall, calling: "Susie, Susie—"

CHAPTER V.

Mary Slade sat down to the breakfast table with a certain sense of bewilderment. It was the same this morning as it had been each successive morning since Dan's departure. She could not bring herself to the realization of the fact that Dan had not come home—apparently did not intend to come home.

She had waited up the night he had gone to the club, just as she had waited up every night of their married life, no matter where her husband was or how late he might be coming home. As the night hours lengthened into day she was forced to the conclusion that Dan meant to stay away for the night. That he wouldn't be home at all through the day never occurred to her. She reasoned that a night's sleep would clear his mind and that he would have recovered from his "tantrum" the next day. But Dan didn't "run in" that day nor the next. The days had become weeks, yet neither by telephone nor letter had he sent as much as a word.

Finally Mary had mustered up her courage and telephoned his club. It took courage for Mary to use the telephone on any occasion. She was afraid of the sound of her own voice the moment she began to talk into the transmitter. This time she feared Dan's displeasure and his possible harshness. Mr. Slade was out, had left no message, they did not know when he would return, was the disappointing result as she hung the receiver on the hook.

This morning, as the maid served her breakfast, she resolved to try again. The situation was getting unbearable. It was bad enough to live in the great house—she was surrounded

(Continued on page 7, Col. 1.)

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