

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 IX.

Thirty years of one way of living becomes a habit—so much so that it is almost a human impossibility to adjust oneself to any other mode of life.

As she sat in the little old cottage where with Dan she started out on married life, she experienced a feeling of detachment as if either this were not the right place, but some sort of inferior substitute, or as though the real and vital part of herself were absent.

The room was just the same as it was the day she and Dan had walked out of it to take up their new life in the handsome mansion in town. Not a thing had been changed or disturbed. The same crooked hatrack, with her old knitted shawl dangling on one hook, hung behind the door.

Everything was the same but the atmosphere of contentment that once filled the room; everything the same but Mary's happiness in her husband's love. Outside the window the rose bush Dan had helped her to plant still nodded and blossomed in the sunshine that poured in a flood of golden joy through the windows of the shabby room and emphasized all the worn places in the comfortable old chair where evening after evening Dan Slade had sat reading his newspaper and dreaming of the great future he was confident the fates held in store for him.

In spite of herself Mary's thoughts were of her husband—the first bitter thoughts she had ever harbored against the man. She turned sick at heart at the thought of it. Dan and herself estranged, hopelessly at odds, fighting each other in the divorce court, fighting even over the possession of the little cottage that had

library, when the awful knowledge had been forced home to her that he not only wanted a permanent separation, but insisted on having an absolute divorce. Over and over again a thought came into the woman's mind. It was intuitive, instinctive. Try as she might to silence it, she could not put it out of her thoughts. It was that ever-recurrent feeling that another woman had entered Dan's mind and heart.

From the kitchen came the voice of her maid-of-all-work singing an old-fashioned tune. It was one that in her young days Dan had loved to hear her sing—one whose sweet melody and melancholy sentiment he had loved in the days before his heart had become hard and his mind intense on the cold, hard problems of finances and political advancement. It was the song in which all lovers from the beginning to the end of time find a responsive note: "Nita, Juanita, be my own fair bride."

Conscious of the song, Mary remembered the lamb stew that she had left cooking on the kitchen fire. Dan had always loved lamb stew; that is, her lamb stew. She remembered how heartily he always ate of it, how he never failed to pass his plate for a second "helping," and how he used to look up at her and say:

"This is lapping good, Mary. I think I will have a bit more." Just as if he needed any urging! Mary found her thoughts growing very tender when she suddenly remembered that tonight she must sit down alone at the table, that instead of two she would only serve one plateful of that stew. Her heart contracted with a pathetic, futile longing for things as "they used to be," and grew bitter as she remembered conditions as they were. She sat with her face pillowed on her arms, so absorbed in her unhappy reflections that she didn't hear the door open, didn't hear a step until someone leaned over and kissed her tenderly on the faded cheek that Dan used to pat so lovingly and declare was lovelier than their garden roses.

"Oh, Rob!" Mary exclaimed, starting up in glad surprise. "I didn't hear you drive up."

"I didn't," Bob laughed, good-naturedly. "My car is stranded two blocks back," and he threw his linen duster on the sofa as Mary hastened in her fond little way to take his hand and hover about him.

"It's strange how near town this place seems to be," Bob rattled on. "When we lived here before it was clear out in the country, but with a motor car it's right next door to town."

"Well, aunty," and he stretched himself out in an easy chair, "I suppose it's like heaven to you to get back here to the old home you lived in so many years!"

"Yes," Mary agreed, rather indifferently. "Any of the old neighbors left, I'd like to see them—some of 'em."

"I never noticed before how many questions old neighbors could ask. Rob," Mary sighed, as she recounted the curious visits of her old friends, who had inquired anxiously and repeatedly for Mr. Slade, how he was getting on, and when he would be down, and a dozen other questions in the phraseology of people who, as old friends, take the liberty of coming as near as possible to demanding that you unburden your soul to them on the spot. "You'll kind of have to

dodge 'em, Bob. I don't know when I've lied so. What do you think of a man who forces a woman to lie?" "Well," Hayes hated the old subject, hated the thought of Mary dwelling continually on her unhappiness. "Didn't they know about Slade?" and he began to toy with the spools of thread that Mary had been using for the inevitable sewing that had so annoyed her husband.

"Either they don't know or they want to find out more than they already know," Mary answered, wearily. "So I sit here lying and lying."

"You intend to stick it out and stay here?"

"Yes," Mary answered with a quiet determination. "Well, he can't call this desertion," Hayes went on. "You own this house together. It's your home as well as his."

"Yes," agreed Mary, "but it's awful fighting my husband. What's the matter with you, Bob? You used to tell me a lot about Miss Strickland, and lately you—have you had any trouble?" she asked, kindly, forgetting her own sorrow at the thought of the possible unhappiness of this young man whom she loved as tenderly as if he had been her own son.

"Don't let us talk about her," Bob objected. "All right, Robert," Mary attempted to be cheery as she saw how abstracted and dejected Bob was. "Dinner will be ready in a minute and you can sit right down."

"I won't give in to him!" she declared as she put on an extra plate and knife and fork. "I'll never give him that divorce."

"Don't you ever think of anything else?" Hayes questioned, soberly. "No; it's no use, Robert; I get hot and cold hating my husband when I think how he is treating me. I know it's wrong, but I do! Sometimes when I wake up suddenly in the night and see the old room and remember that he's living at his club and enjoying life and me here miserable, I just get sick hating him."

"Now, aunty"—Hayes was anxious to divert her attention—"I wouldn't think of that. You have the best of him. You've got him beaten. I have a good lawyer for you, and he'll be out to see you today. You know I'd take the case myself, but it wouldn't be professional. You've positively made up your mind to fight the divorce to a finish?"

"Tooth and nail!" Mary's answer came through set teeth.

"Then you've got him. He can't fight a woman in the courts in his position, with his nomination before him."

"I've got him, have I?" Mary was all eagerness now.

"You're sure of it? Was he very mad about my coming here? Has my lawyer seen his lawyer?"

Hayes answered the last of her many questions first. "They met today."

"Did you get me two lawyers, Rob?"

"Yes, I got two. I got a whole firm."

"Do you think I need another—so's to be sure?"

Hayes laughed. "You have all you need, aunty."

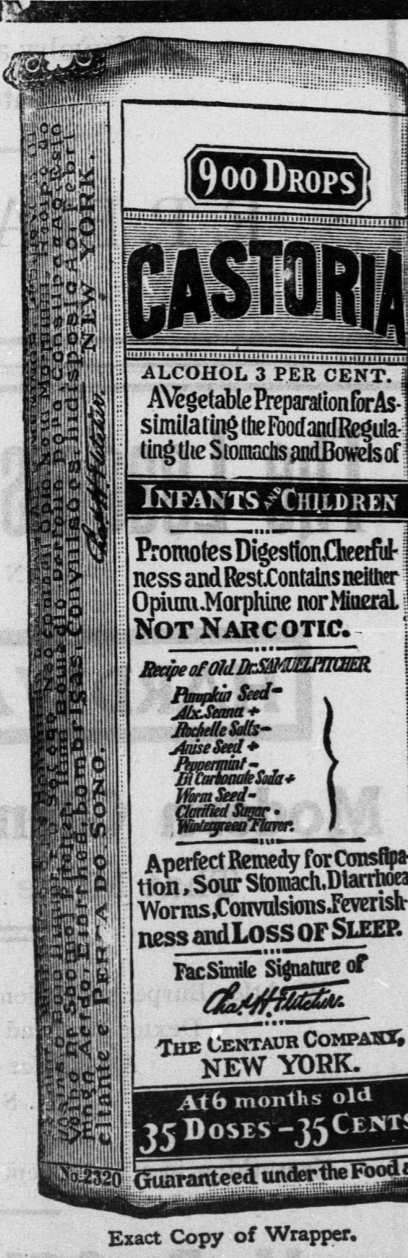
"Thank God, I got the telephone in so they can call me up." Mary was almost feverish in her excitement. "I couldn't go on the witness stand. He doesn't know that, though. Any signs of Dan going back to the house, now I'm out of it?"

The bell that never hesitates to interrupt at any moment rang insistently. Mary jumped about in her excitement. Mary jumped about in her excitement. Mary jumped about in her excitement.

(Continued on page 7, Col. 1.)

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Bob Hayes.

shared in the first happy flush of their youthful love and happiness. This, the only place where she could find peace in her loneliness, Dan was trying to wrest from her. It was too near to town, too near to the scene of his new activities, he had sent word to her. She must vacate. She must go so far away that his charge of "desertion" would stand fire in a court of law.

Face to face with the fact that Dan was trying to drive her even from this shelter, trying to drive her out into a strange and alien world, of which she knew nothing and which knew nothing of her, Mary could scarcely believe that Dan was so changed—that even now he would be willing to snatch away from her the place which held the memory of happier days.

She had not seen her husband since the night in Senator Strickland's

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