

The Governor's Lady.

[Continued from page 6, Col. 2.]

put me aside for a younger woman. Now, no matter what you do, you can't get me back!"

"Now, Mary," Slade begged, beginning to feel that he was losing everything worth while.

"I take off my ring," Mary continued, ignoring his interruption.

"Now it's ended," she finished as she laid the ring on the table.

Slade strode up to her in the manner which had kept her subdued all the 30 years of their married life.

"You put that ring on again," he commanded. "It's yours! You put that ring on."

"No, sir! It's off for good." For the first time Mary's attitude was one of stubborn temper.

She was enjoying complete mastery for the first time in her life. "Wild horses couldn't have got it off yesterday—I thought it was part of my nature! But now, now I'm going to ask you to go. I've got work to do. I'm closing the house. I'm closing it for good—forever."

Mary had said all she had to say. Now that her mind was made up, it was characteristic of her to turn to action.

She started hurriedly and noisily to clear up the table, scraping the plates and piling them up ready to carry into the kitchen.

"For God's sake, Mary, don't!" protested Slade, too bewildered to know what to do or say.

"Go along," urged Mary, as she put the sugar bowl in its place on the sideboard.

"Mary, if you persist in this, I'll go back and I'll smash that house in town—I'll smash it to pieces," she threatened. "I'll sell it. I'll give it away—break it up! That's what made all this trouble! You know that! Trying to live up to that d—d house. You told me not to build it, and this is what I get for it."

"Go back and smash it. You've smashed other things that hurt me worse."

"Mary, you're not going to turn me out of this house where we've lived so long together?"

"You've turned yourself out. Go, now," Mary's wrath gathered force as she repeated her command.

"Ah, come now, Mary—"

"You go," warned Mary, "before I say something I'll regret." She was scarcely hearing what Slade was saying now—her ears were full of the things he had said to her in her own home, and that night in Senator Strickland's library.

"Mary!" The one word was full of protest and a plea for forgiveness.

"Go before I say it!" It was all Mary could do to speak quietly.

"Mary!" again the word spoke volumes.

"No use," she replied, as she picked up a pile of dishes. "You pushed me aside for a younger woman, and now you go," and with both hands full of dishes she kicked the kitchen door open with an angry foot, and proceeded to busy herself at the sink.

"Mary! See here!" he called. There was no reply.

He walked absently to the sugar bowl selected a lump of sugar and started to eat it, brushing one hand with the other, and then, still absent-minded, ignored the napkin within easy reach and wiped his fingers down the front of his coat. It was the old Dan Slade, a reversion to type.

Then he quietly picked up his hat and gloves and coat. Mary heard him going, and came back into the room.

"Dan," she said as she stretched out her hand to him. "I can't hate you—I just can't. We're going to say good-by like two old friends." He took her hand eagerly and held it. After a moment she pulled it away and resumed picking up the dinner things. Slade looked at her longingly for a moment, then quietly opened the door and was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

New York was knee deep in a blizzard that had been raging all day. Sleet and snow swept and eddied in blustering gales at every street corner. Taxicabs and motors plowed their way along, their occupants bundled up to their eyes in wraps and furs. The few pedestrians braving the bitter east wind felt the cold to their very marrow. With their shoulders hunched and their heads bent forward, they hurried along under the lee of the buildings, envying the fortunate who could afford the shelter of a cab.

One woman struggled bravely to keep her umbrella up until she came to the bright lights of a cheap restaurant, where, out of breath and covered with snow, she closed the unwieldy and inadequate protection and went in. In her long fur coat and her trim hat covered by a soft gray veil, she seemed out of place as she made her way to an empty table. All around her were shabby figures, chorus girls having some toast and cocoa after the show, a pair of red-faced chauffeurs, and all the other typical patrons of the griddle-cake restaurant.

Laying aside her wraps and putting her umbrella against the table, mindful of the numerous signs which betrayed the fact that the management was not responsible for lost articles, she ordered a cup of coffee and some crackers and milk.

"Talk about your western blizzards!" exclaimed one of the chauffeurs. "If this is a sample of your

eastern weather I'll stick to my job with Governor Slade and you can keep your job with Governor Sulzer."

"Why didn't you go into the hall and listen to your boss talk?" asked his companion.

"Say, did you ever hear the same speech over and over? It's a great speech, but hearing it ever since we left home—the pause was significant."

"Do you go everywhere with your boss?"

"You bet," answered the other, "but this is the first time we've been East."

"Say, they call your old man the 'divorced' governor, don't they?" queried Sulzer's man.

"Yep." Slade's chauffeur lapsed monosyllabic.

"Great note—a man runnin' for office and being divorced at the same time," came the comment. "But he got elected just the same. Governor Sulzer said he was all right when he put our car at his disposal."

"But you noticed my old man wanted me on the box, too?" chuckled the other. "When I'm not drivin' I'm along jest the same."

"What do you do?"

"Oh, answer questions mostly. He's a great responsibility—a governor is—I have to keep my eye on him."

"Why? Did they ever try to assassinate him?"

"Nope! Nearest they came to it was takin' him through Central park on your New York city pavements. But they did present him with a baby catamount in Carson City. I had to receive it."

"What did Mrs. Slade do?" Sulzer's man was patently more interested in the divorce than any other matter connected with Governor Slade. "Was she a high-stepper?"

"Naw," came the disgusted reply. "Well, what'd he do then that they got divorced."

"Say, are you looking for trouble? Where I come from they don't criticize my old man. He runs things out there. I've had enough of this 'divorced governor' business. I don't know whose fault it is. She wanted it and he didn't, and she got it! When a woman knows what she wants, and he banged his fist down on the table, 'she's going to get it! Now, shut up and have another cup of coffee.'"

The New York driver looked at the raw-boned westerner and then proceeded to become absorbed in the all-important matter of consuming the largest possible number of griddle cakes in the least possible time.

"Well," remarked the sociable waiter, as he brought another cup of coffee, "I guess we don't get any of your crowd tonight."

"You wouldn't get our crowd anyway!" And the westerner inflated his chest. "Our bosses are qual-on-toast boys."

"And champagne, too, I suppose?"

"Nope, my boss don't drink, don't smoke, don't keep yachts or horses,

don't keep wom—"

He stopped as he realized that he was talking loudly.

The little woman quietly eating crackers and milk looked up as she heard the old, familiar formula.

"Why, Jake!" she exclaimed in quick surprise. The westerner jumped up hastily and looked to see where the voice came from. There was only one voice as sweet and gentle as that; it was the voice of a woman who had been the best friend he had ever had.

"Why, Mrs. Slade!" he exclaimed gladly, as he recognized her in spite of the fact that her hair had grown grayer and that she was a much trimmer figure than she had been when he had last seen her.

"I recognized your word," she laughed as he came over to her table.

"I've kind of got that, by heart hearing it so often," Jack stammered. Then turning to his companion, he asked him to go on alone.

"What are you doin' here, on a night like this?" he asked as he drew up a chair beside Mary.

"Oh, I often come here," replied Mary. "It's late, though. I'm glad to see you, Jake; it's so seldom I see a face I know," and she looked at him intently, and Jake thought a bit of her old wistful look crept into her eyes.

"I've been to the meetin' tonight, Jake," she explained. "I wanted to hear Mr. Slade. I saw in the paper he was goin' to speak."

"We kind of—we didn't always know jest where you were," Jake told her, his surprise and pleasure at meeting her so unexpectedly putting him at a loss to know what to say.

"Oh, I drift round," Mary told him. "I live near here. I got tired of hotels, they're public and lonely. And boarding houses—well, people are so inquisitive. So I got a nice, pleasant furnished room and go out for my meals. I come here because it's cozy. Is Mr. Slade well?"

"Yes."

"Very well."

"Yes, the governor's very well."

"Do you make him wrap up nights—weather like this? Do you get him to put on his rubbers?" and her voice was very tender.

"I sure do," laughed Jake. "I make him do everything you did. That's why I'm East with him."

"You're a good boy, Jake," and she reached forward and patted his hand.

"Tell me, does he always get the applause he did tonight?" she asked, eagerly. "I was very proud. He got three times as much as anyone else I found myself applauding, too."

"You bet he does." Jake was very proud of his "old man." "He gets over. The other four western governors were traveling with—they ain't heard. Do you think you'll ever come West again, Mrs. Slade?"

"No," answered Mary, decisively. "I'm pushin' right ahead. I'm going to Europe next. Jake, I'm a citizen of the world now."

[Continued next week.]

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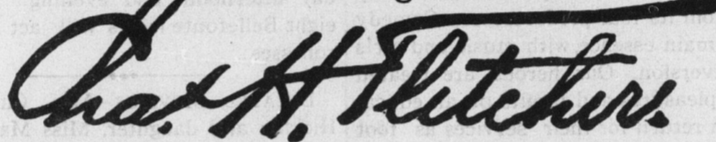
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