

## CHAPTER XLIX. THE GOVERNOR ON HIS GUARD.

After leaving Eunice, my one desire was to be alone. I had much to think of, and I wanted an opportunity of recovering myself. On my way out of the house, in search of the first solitary place that I could discover, I passed the room in which we had dined. The door was ajar. Before I could get by it, Mrs. Tenbruggen stepped out and stopped me.

"Will you come in here for a moment?" she said. "The farmer has been called away, and I want to speak to you."

Very unwillingly--but how could I have refused without giving offense?--I entered the room.

"When you noticed my keeping my name from you," Mrs. Tenbruggen began, "while Selina was with us, you placed me in an awkward position. Our little friend is an excellent creature, but her tongue runs away with her sometimes; I am obliged to be careful of taking her too readily into my confidence. For instance, I have never told her what my name was before I married. Won't you sit down?"

I had purposely remained standing as a hint to her not to prolong the interview. The hint was thrown away; I took a chair.

"Selina's letters had informed me," she resumed, "that Mr. Gracedieu was a nervous invalid. When I came to England, I had hoped to try what massage might do to relieve him. The cure of their popular preacher might have advertised me through the whole of the Congregational sect. It was essential to my success that I should present myself as a stranger. I could trust time and change, and my married name (certainly not known to Mr. Gracedieu) to keep up my incognito. He would have refused to see me if he had known that I was once Miss Chance."

I began to be interested.

Here was an opportunity, perhaps, of discovering what the Minister had failed to remember when he had been speaking of this woman, and when I had asked if he had ever offended her. I was especially careful in making my inquiries.

"I remember how you spoke to Mr. Gracedieu," I said, "when you and he

met, long ago, in my rooms. But surely you don't think him capable of vindictively remembering some thoughtless words, which escaped you sixteen or seventeen years since?"

"I am not quite such a fool as that, Mr. Governor. What I was thinking of was an unpleasant correspondence between the Minister and myself. Before I was so unfortunate as to meet with Mr. Tenbruggen, I obtained a chance of employment in a public Institution, on condition that I included a clergyman among my references. Knowing nobody else whom I could apply to, I rashly wrote to Mr. Gracedieu, and received one of those cold and cruel refusals which only the strictest religious principle can produce. I was mortally offended at the time; and if your friend the Minister had been within my reach--" She paused, and finished the sentence by a significant gesture.

"Well," I said, "he is within your reach now."

"And out of his mind," she added. "Besides, one's sense of injury doesn't last (except in novels and plays) through a series of years. I don't pity him--and if an opportunity of shaking his high position among his admiring congregation presented itself, I daresay I might make a mischievous return for his letter to me. In the meanwhile, we may drop the subject. I suppose you understand, now, why I concealed my name from you, and why I kept out of the house while you were in it."

It was plain enough, of course. If I had known her again, or had heard her name, I might have told the Minister that Mrs. Tenbruggen and Miss Chance were one and the same. And if I had seen her and talked with her in the house, my memory might have shown itself capable of improvement. Having politely presented the expression of my thanks, I rose to go.

She stopped me at the door.

"One word more," she said, "while Selina is out of the way. I need hardly tell you that I have not trusted her with the Minister's secret. You and I are, as I take it, the only people now living who know the truth about these two girls. And we keep our advantage."

"What advantage?" I asked.

"Don't you know?"

"I don't indeed."

"No more do I. Female folly, and a slip of the tongue; I am old and ugly, but I am still a woman. About Miss Eunice. Somebody has told the pretty little fool never to trust strangers. You would have been amused, if you had heard that sly young person prevaricating with me. In one respect, her appearance strikes me. She is not like either the wretch who was hanged, or the poor victim who was murdered. Can she be the adopted child? Or is it the other sister, whom I have not seen yet? Oh, come! come! Don't try to look as if you didn't know. That is really too ridiculous."

"You alluded just now," I answered, "to our 'advantage' in being the only persons who know the truth about the two girls. Well, Mrs. Tenbruggen, I keep my advantage."

"In other words," she rejoined, "you leave me to make the discovery myself. Well, my friend, I mean to do it!"

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In the evening, my hotel offered to me the refuge of which I stood in need. I could think, for the first time that day, without interruption.

Being resolved to see Philip, I prepared myself for the interview by consulting my extracts once more. The letter, in which Mrs. Tenbruggen figures, inspired me with the hope of protection for Mr. Gracedieu, attainable through no less a person than Helena herself.

To begin with, she would certainly share Philip's aversion to the Masseuse, and her dislike of Miss Jillgall would, just as possibly, extend to Miss Jillgall's friend. The hostile feeling thus set up might be trusted to keep watch on Mrs. Tenbruggen's proceedings, with a vigilance not attainable by the coarser observation of a man. In the event, of an improvement in the Minister's health, I should hear of it both from the doctor and from Miss Jillgall, and in that case I should instantly return to my unhappy friend and put him on his guard.

I started for London by the early train in the morning.

My way home from the terminus took me past the hotel at which the elder Mr. Dunboyne was staying. I called on him. He was reported to be engaged; that is to say, immersed in his books. The address on one of Philip's letters had informed me that he was staying at another hotel. Pursuing my inquiries in this direction, I met with a severe disappointment. Mr. Philip Dunboyne had left the hotel that morning; for what destination neither the

landlord nor the waiter could tell me.

The next day's post brought with it the information which I had failed to obtain. Miss Jillgall wrote, informing me in her strongest language that Philip Dunboyne had returned to Helena. Indignant Selina added: "Helena means to make him marry her; and I promise you she shall fail, if I can stop it."

In taking leave of Eunice, I had given her my address; had warned her to be careful, if she and Mrs. Tenbruggen happened to meet again, and had begged her to write to me, or to come to me, if anything happened to alarm her in my absence.

In two days more, I received a line from Eunice, written evidently in the greatest agitation.

"Philip has discovered me. He has been here, and has insisted on seeing me. I have refused. The good farmer has so kindly taken my part. I can write no more."