

EVENTS IN THE FAMILY, RELATED BY MISS JILLGALL.

CHAPTER LVIII. DANGER.

"If anything of importance happens, I trust to you to write an account of it, and to send the writing to me. I will come to you at once, if I see reason to believe that my presence is required." Those lines, in your last kind reply to me, rouse my courage, dear Mr. Governor, and sharpen the vigilance which has always been one of the strong points in my character. Every suspicious circumstance which occurs in this house will be (so to speak) seized on by my pen, and will find itself (so to speak again) placed on its trial, before your unerring judgment! Let the wicked tremble! I mention no names.

Taking up my narrative where it came to an end when I last wrote, I have to say a word first on the subject of my discoveries, in regard to Philip's movements.

The advertisement of a private inquiry office, which I read in a newspaper, put the thing into my head. I provided myself with money to pay the expenses by--I blush while I write it--pawning my watch. This humiliation of my poor self has been rewarded by success. Skilled investigation has proved that our young man has come to his senses again, exactly as I supposed. On each occasion when he was suspiciously absent from the house, he has been followed to the farm. I have been staying there myself for a day or two, in the hope of persuading Eunice to relent. The hope has not yet been realized. But Philip's devotion, assisted by my influence, will yet prevail. Let me not despair.

Whether Helena knows positively that she has lost her wicked hold on Philip I cannot say. It seems hardly possible that she could have made the discovery just yet. The one thing of which I am certain is, that she looks like a fiend.

Philip has wisely taken my advice, and employed pious fraud. He will get away from the wretch, who has tempted him once and may tempt him again, under pretense of using the interest of his friends in London to find a place under Government. He has not been very well for the last day or two,

and the execution of our project is in consequence delayed.

I have news of Mrs. Tenbruggen which will, I think, surprise you.

She has kept away from us in a most unaccountable manner. I called on her at the hotel, and heard she was engaged with her lawyer. On the next day, she suddenly returned to her old habits, and paid the customary visit. I observed a similar alteration in her state of feeling. She is now coldly civil to Helena; and she asks after Eunice with a maternal interest touching to see-- I said to her: "Elizabeth, you appear to have changed your opinion of the two girls, since I saw you." She answered, with a delightful candor which reminded me of old times: "Completely!" I said: "A woman of your intellectual caliber, dear, doesn't change her mind without a good reason for it." Elizabeth cordially agreed with me. I ventured to be a little more explicit: "You have no doubt made some interesting discovery." Elizabeth agreed again; and I ventured again: "I suppose I may not ask what the discovery is?" "No, Selina, you may not ask."

This is curious; but it is nothing to what I have got to tell you next. Just as I was longing to take her to my bosom again as my friend and confidante, Elizabeth has disappeared. And, alas! alas! there is a reason for it which no sympathetic person can dispute.

I have just received some overwhelming news, in the form of a neat parcel, addressed to myself.

There has been a scandal at the hotel. That monster in human form, Elizabeth's husband, is aware of his wife's professional fame, has heard of the large sums of money which she earns as the greatest living professor of massage, has been long on the lookout for her, and has discovered her at last. He has not only forced his way into her sitting-room at the hotel; he insists on her living with him again; her money being the attraction, it is needless to say. If she refuses, he threatens her with the law, the barbarous law, which, to use his own coarse expression, will "restore his conjugal rights."

All this I gather from the narrative of my unhappy friend, which forms one of the two inclosures in her parcel. She has already made her escape. Ha! the man doesn't live who can circumvent Elizabeth. The English Court of Law isn't built which can catch her when she roams the free and glorious Continent.

The vastness of this amazing woman's mind is what I must pause to admire.

In the frightful catastrophe that has befallen her, she can still think of Philip and Eunece. She is eager to hear of their marriage, and renounces Helena with her whole heart. "I too was deceived by that cunning young Woman," she writes. "Beware of her, Selina. Unless I am much mistaken, she is going to end badly. Take care of Philip, take care of Eunece. If you want help, apply at once to my favorite hero in real life, The Governor." I don't presume to correct Elizabeth's language. I should have called you The idol of the Women.

The second inclosure contains, as I suppose, a wedding present. It is carefully sealed--it feels no bigger than an ordinary letter--and it contains an inscription which your highly-cultivated intelligence may be able to explain. I copy it as follows:

"To be inclosed in another envelope, addressed to Mr. Dunboyne the elder, at Percy's Private Hotel, London, and delivered by a trustworthy messenger, on the day when Mr. Philip Dunboyne is married to Miss Eunice Gracedieu. Placed meanwhile under the care of Miss Selina Jillgall."

Why is this mysterious letter to be sent to Philip's father? I wonder whether that circumstance will puzzle you as it has puzzled me.

I have kept my report back, so as to send you the last news relating to Philip's state of health. To my great regret, his illness seems to have made a serious advance since yesterday. When I ask if he is in pain, he says: "It isn't exactly pain; I feel as if I was sinking. Sometimes I am giddy; and sometimes I find myself feeling thirsty and sick." I have no opportunity of looking after him as I could wish; for Helena insists on nursing him, assisted by the housemaid. Maria is a very good girl in her way, but too stupid to be of much use. If he is not better to-morrow, I shall insist on sending for the doctor.

He is no better; and he wishes to have medical help. Helena doesn't seem to understand his illness. It was not until Philip had insisted on seeing him that she consented to send for the doctor.

You had some talk with this experienced physician when you were here, and you know what a clever man he is. When I tell you that he hesitates to say what is the matter with Philip, you will feel as much alarmed as I do. I will wait to send this to the post until I can write in a more definite way.

Two days more have passed. The doctor has put two very strange questions to me.

He asked, first, if there was anybody staying with us besides the regular members of the household. I said we had no visitor. He wanted to know, next, if Mr. Philip Dunboyne had made any enemies since he has been living in our town. I said none that I knew of--and I took the liberty of asking what he meant. He answered to this, that he has a few more inquiries to make, and that he will tell me what he means to-morrow.

For God's sake come here as soon as you possibly can. The whole burden is thrown on me--and I am quite unequal to it.

I received the doctor to-day in the drawing-room. To my amazement, he begged leave to speak with me in the garden. When I asked why, he answered: "I don't want to have a listener at the door. Come out on the lawn, where we can be sure that we are alone."

When we were in the garden, he noticed that I was trembling.

"Rouse your courage, Miss Jillgall," he said. "In the Minister's helpless state there is nobody whom I can speak to but yourself."

I ventured to remind him that he might speak to Helena as well as to myself.

He looked as black as thunder when I mentioned her name. All he said was, "No!" But, oh, if you had heard his voice--and he so gentle and sweet-tempered at other times--you would have felt, as I did, that he had Helena in his mind!

"Now, listen to this," he went on. "Everything that my art can do for Mr. Philip Dunboyne, while I am at his bedside, is undone while I am away by some other person. He is worse to-day than I have seen him yet."

"Oh, sir, do you think he will die?"

"He will certainly die unless the right means are taken to save him, and taken at once. It is my duty not to flinch from telling you the truth. I have made a discovery since yesterday which satisfies me that I am right. Somebody is trying to poison Mr. Dunboyne; and somebody will succeed unless he is removed from this house."

I am a poor feeble creature. The doctor caught me, or I should have dropped on the grass. It was not a fainting-fit. I only shook and shivered so that I was too weak to stand up. Encouraged by the doctor, I recovered sufficiently

to be able to ask him where Philip was to be taken to. He said: "To the hospital. No poisoner can follow my patient there. Persuade him to let me take him away, when I call again in an hour's time."

As soon as I could hold a pen, I sent a telegram to you. Pray, pray come by the earliest train. I also telegraphed to old Mr. Dunboyne, at the hotel in London.

It was impossible for me to face Helena; I own I was afraid. The cook kindly went upstairs to see who was in Philip's room. It was the housemaid's turn to look after him for a while. I went instantly to his bedside.

There was no persuading him to allow himself to be taken to the hospital. "I am dying," he said. "If you have any pity for me, send for Euneece. Let me see her once more, let me hear her say that she forgives me, before I die."

I hesitated. It was too terrible to think of Euneece in the same house with her sister. Her life might be in danger! Philip gave me a look, a dreadful ghastly look. "If you refuse," he said wildly, "the grave won't hold me. I'll haunt you for the rest of your life."

"She shall hear that you are ill," I answered--and ran out of the room before he could speak again.

What I had promised to write, I did write. But, placed between Euneece's danger and Philip's danger, my heart was all for Euneece. Would Helena spare her, if she came to Philip's bedside? In such terror as I never felt before in my life, I added a word more, entreating her not to leave the farm. I promised to keep her regularly informed on the subject of Philip's illness; and I mentioned that I expected the Governor to return to us immediately. "Do nothing," I wrote, "without his advice." My letter having been completed, I sent the cook away with it, in a chaise. She belonged to the neighborhood, and she knew the farmhouse well. Nearly two hours afterward, I heard the chaise stop at the door, and ran out, impatient to hear how my sweet girl had received my letter. God help us all! When I opened the door, the first person whom I saw was Euneece herself.