

THE GUARDED FLAME

Tall Miss Granger, who lived with her mother near the coast-guard station on the far side of the harbour, was, or at least had been, the belle of Whitebridge. She was as well known to all the world as the swing-bridge, the pier-light, or the great Mr Burgoyne himself—and indeed had been thus famous for twelve or more years. Many were the little jokes, known to all the world, that had poor Miss Granger for base and starting impetus.

"See how she is hurrying—do you think she'll catch him?"

"Well, Effie—and this also is in confidence—I should not be surprised if she did catch him—one of these days," and the philosopher chuckled tolerantly and benignantly.

Fishermen showed their teeth in a friendly grin, and touched their woollen caps; old women nodded, and children curtsayed: it was a pleasant progress through friendly faces. But half-way down Harbour Wall Effie frowned. Uncle Richard was about to be stopped by the most insufferable man in Whitebridge—the most insufferable man in Europe, perhaps. So Effie thought: Uncle did not mind him.

"Hi," called Mr Ingle, the hairdresser, from the steps of his haircutting saloon, "hi, sir—surely you're not going by? Sir!"

John Stone loathed Mr Ingle. Dr Wren used to say that he lived in fear lest one day he should lose control of himself and kick Mr Ingle all down Harbour Wall and round the corner into Pier Street. But really and truly Mr Ingle meant no harm. It was the consciousness of this fact that tied your tongue and paralysed your arm or foot when you sat in one of Mr Ingle's velvet chairs and suffered. He meant no harm. It was this fact—understood by Mr Burgoyne more clearly than the rest—that enabled the philosopher to sit in the velvet chair without suffering at all.

And Mr Ingle was devoted to Mr Burgoyne—loved him and revered him for his *common-sense*. "That's what I pride myself on," the hairdresser used to tell his customers; "and that's what I admire in him—quite apart from his position——" When Ingle was about to move from his old premises in Pier Street