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**FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE;
OR, A LOOK INTO THE PAST**

CHAPTER XVI.

The newly-married couple were to go to London first, and then proceed to Paris and other Continental cities for their bridal trip.

The sacred service, the pealing organ, the wedding breakfast, with its laughter, buzz of voices, gorgeous dresses and flashing jewels, the hurried removal of her bridal array for her travelling gown, all had passed to Nancy as a curious dream. She moved about like one who is absolutely conscious of nothing, who is led by some strong influence, but beyond that is powerless to act for herself.

She heard the false, honeyed congratulations in a dim, far-off way, feeling it must be some other person who stood there with a bouquet of flowers in her hands and a carriage waiting to convey her away.

But she woke with a sudden pang of agony to know that it was no dream, but all hideous reality, as Dorothy flung her arms about her and kissed her farewell, weeping unrestrainedly as she did so.

Not till this moment did Nancy comprehend the fullness of the agony entailed by the sacrifice she had taken on her young shoulders; not till now did the fullness of her horror, her fear, her loathing of Thomas Crawshaw come to her. As her distraught eyes, shining like sapphires in their deep-blue glory, rested on his common face, full of savage triumph and unmeasurable conceit, she gave one great shudder, and, drawing her hand from Dorothy's, she ran down to the carriage and entered it. If she stayed another moment, she felt she should cling to Sir Humphrey, or to Dr. Grantley, who was there as her oldest friend, and implore them to protect her, and save her from a life of torture with this man for her husband.

Crawshaw was quick to see that shudder and that look of horror. His face grew very dark, and wore a nasty expression as he took his seat beside her and the carriage rolled away.

He said nothing to her, however, and, horrible as his sullen presence was to her, Nancy could not but be grateful for this silence.

Alas! she soon learned that this calm was but the prelude to a storm of impotent rage, before which she shrank aghast, and beneath which she cowered, not from fear, but from disgust and despair.

The country lanes were bordered with the villagers, who had come out to catch a last glimpse of the bride; but neither the man nor the girl made any effort to return their cheers and kindly greetings by even a bow or a smile.

Surely, never so curious a bride and bridegroom was ever seen before.

Nancy, still grasping the bouquet of delicate, hothouse flowers in her hand, crouched back in her corner, and kept her white face steadfastly turned from him; and he sat with his arms folded, his brows knit, and his eyes, still wearing that evil, cruel expression, fixed on her as a hawk might watch its prey.

The drive to the station was long, but Nancy wished it could have been even miles farther. For one hour did they sit in the carriage and roll through the sunlit country, just beginning to show a trace here and there of coming autumn, and never exchanged one word; and as each landmark and well-known spot vanished behind her, her courage and strength faded, too, till, as they

came to a standstill at last, she was trembling in every limb.

Crawshaw shambled out of the carriage, and then, regardless of the etiquette or any remark, turned his back on the girl, and left her to alight at her own convenience, thereby provoking many glances of astonishment from the station-master and the porters, and making Baines flush angrily, and long to knock him down.

The maid had previously been dispatched with Nancy's luggage, and she had been informed by Mr. Crawshaw's groom that she would meet the bridegroom's valet and her new fellow servant at the station.

To her intense surprise, and no little disgust, this individual turned out to be none other than William, the discharged footman from the Hall, a man whom she had never liked, and for whom she had a supreme contempt.

"Like master, like man," she said to herself, as she superintended the arrangement of the luggage without bestowing any but the curtest of greetings on her companion in service.

"Well, I thank Heaven I am going to be with Miss Nancy, for I feel sure something awful would happen to her alone with these two horrid men."

There was a self-satisfied expression about William's face that annoyed her, and his flippant manner to the steady old station-master, who was, in Baines' opinion, far above the valet in every way, roused her ire beyond description.

"We shan't be together long," she said to herself, grimly, as she stood waiting for her young mistress to come, "before I give him a piece of my mind, or my name ain't Esther Baines."

And at that moment she descried the carriage turning the corner of the lane, and prepared to receive Nancy.

An angry flush spread over her honest face, followed by an angry beat of her heart, as she saw Mr. Crawshaw treat his young wife with such scant courtesy; but her anger soon changed into fear and disappointment as she saw that her new master was coming direct to her, and that his face boded no pleasant or good news for her.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Crawshaw, roughly, scanning her up and down with his deep black eyes, his hands plunged as usual into his trousers' pockets.

"I am going as maid to Mrs. Crawshaw," poor Baines replied, her heart beating fast as she read her sentence in those eyes.

"Oh, you are—are you; and pray who told you you was to be maid to Mrs. Crawshaw?"

Nancy was exchanging a few hurried, nervous words with the old stationmaster. She never passed any one by without a kindly expression, and after that long, horrible silence it was a pleasure to exchange greetings with a sympathetic person. Her husband's loud, coarse tones grated painfully on her ear; she turned quickly, and her eyes rested on William's pale, smooth face, set in outward civility, but wearing an expression which made her blood boil. She walked across to Baines.

"What is the matter—what is wrong?" she asked, in scarcely audible tones.

Baines half turned to her; the woman's lips were trembling and her eyes were full of tears; but before she could utter a word Crawshaw had gone on furiously addressing her, and not bestowing a single scrap of attention to Nancy's question, or even to her presence.

"So now you know, and you can go back to the Hall as fast as you like, and tell Miss Leicester I don't intend to let no spies of hers come sniffing after my wife. Be off with you; Mrs. Crawshaw don't want no maid, and if she do, well, I will get her one; but it won't be an old fossil from that lot over there. I've done with them all from to-day—turned my back on them—and I won't have nothing more to do with them, so you can understand me clearly."

In his anger, Mr. Crawshaw spoke with a less regard for grammar than usual.

With difficulty Baines restrained her tears; she felt she must not break down, or Nancy would be more distressed than ever. She looked at the girl imploringly.

"What am I to do, miss?" she asked, hurriedly.

This direct indifference to him lashed Crawshaw to fury.

"Do!" he shouted, "do what I tell you—be off. Come, I shan't stand any impudence or nonsense, off you go!"

Nancy put her hand up to her throat; the white flowers in her bouquet were not so pale as her face.

"What if I—I refuse to let Baines go?" she said, in low, choked tones, her pride and anger making her faint and weak.

Crawshaw turned and looked at her fixedly.

"I don't think you will go against me, Nancy," he said, in ominously quiet tones, and with a shiver she understood him. Thwart him or defy him in any way, and his cruel hand would fall on the man for whose sake she had wrecked her life. No—no, she had put her hand to the plough, she must not look back; the sacrifice was not nearly complete, but, having taken it up, it would be worse than madness to permit her uncle's shame to become known now, when by simple submission to the tyrant's will she could avert such a calamity.

"Mr. Crawshaw's wishes are mine," she said, speaking in cold, even tones, the effort of sheer desperation, "therefore you must leave me, Baines; I—I am sorry, but—"

Baines made no answer; she could not control herself sufficiently to speak, for she did not know what she might not say if she began.

Crawshaw's eyes were full of triumph.

"Come, sharp's the word," he remarked, as he turned on his heel and lurched away a few yards.

"Baines," Nancy whispered, eagerly, "I want you to tell Miss Dorothy that she is not to try and do anything for me until—I ask her help; and, Baines, say I entreat, I beg, that she will never disclose my unhappiness to a soul. I can trust you, I know, Baines, but I do not want all the world to know the truth of my marriage."

"Oh Miss Nancy! Oh Miss Nancy!"

It was all poor Baines could say, and even if she had wished to speak more, she had no opportunity, for Crawshaw returned at that moment, and, without more ado, bundled her down the steps into the carriage.

A mist blinded Nancy's blue eyes as she stood and watched the departure of this last link to her lost, all too brief happiness.

Her sorrow was so keen that she seemed almost stunned by it. She did not realize the full bitterness of her position as she would have done at another time.

She glanced down at the flowers in her hand. What a mockery their fragrance and loveliness was! They had no part in her life henceforth. She had done with flowers and sunshine, happy, dreamy hours in the summer air—all was gone from her, without hope of return.

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With an irrepressible shudder, she dropped the costly bouquet on the platform, and went with hurried, nervous steps to the saloon carriage which Thomas Crawshaw's money had procured to bear himself and his newly-made wife to the metropolis.

The porters and a few rustics who had congregated to see them depart cast curious glances at her. Even their dense minds grasped the fact that this was no common marriage, and that the white-faced bride deserved their pity, and not their good wishes.

But Nancy heeded none of them. She flung herself on the cushioned seat, and buried her face in her hands, not even stirring when Crawshaw entered. The door was slammed, and the train steamed slowly away.

She was not crying; she was simply overwhelmed, crushed to earth, now that the necessity for bearing up the strain of the last few weeks had gone.

Crawshaw appeared to take no notice of her. He opened a newspaper and commenced to read, whistling softly under his breath the while; but his eyes went every now and then to that bowed figure, and he bit his lip with savage anger as he realized that, though he had won—though he had compelled her by cruel means to bow beneath his power—he was, if anything, more detestable and contemptible in her eyes than before.

He had flattered himself that he would only have to show himself to Nancy in his new feathers, and she would be at his feet immediately. It seemed an utter impossibility than any woman could resist him and his wealth, more especially one who had lived in such poverty and hardship as Nancy had done.

He had a long arrears of petty spite and grudge to settle with this girl, and his whole mind had been occupied, directly she disappeared, in saving money to track her out and bring her to her bearings.

Fate, or the devil, was good to him, for he came into his unexpected fortune at the very moment when he learned, through his old companion, William, of her presence and position at Ripstone Hall.

From that moment Crawshaw had possessed but one motive in life—a desire to be even with Nancy, and despite her every struggle, make her his wife. He had not forgotten that January night when Derrick Darnley's strong right arm had stretched him low in the mud. He had brooded on it until it had become infused in his blood, as it were; and this, strengthened by

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Nancy's never altering disgust and dislike for him, spurred him on to the task of being revenged.

He loved this girl—if such a sacred word as love can be applied to the jealous, selfish passion which surged in his mean breast. It was not enough that she was his wife—his slave; she must be his lover. Her beauty belonged to him now. Her wonderful, red-brown hair; her sweet, picturesque face; her eyes—those maddening eyes, of heaven's deepest, truest blue—all this was his by right of the marital vow she had just spoken.

But Crawshaw's heart beat with a fierce, jealous throb, as he realized that, despite a hundred vows, no love would shine for him out of those eyes; his lips, instead of meeting his would shrink and grow pale if he touched them with his own; that, though she was his wife, his own property, her heart, her very soul, was given irrevocably to that other man; and that contempt, loathing, hatred, deep and immeasurable, lived in her breast for him and his cruel, cowardly conduct.

(To be continued.)

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