

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

CHAPTER XXV.

Mrs. Darnley was sitting in her charming little drawing-room, which, all dismantled as it had been when she had departed for Nice, yet looked cosy and pretty in the afternoon dusk and the fireglow. She was resting back luxuriously, glancing through a pile of letters which awaited her, one of which was from Lady Burton, giving a long and exultant account of dear Maude's engagement to the young Sir Richard Boothby, one of the catches of the matrimonial market.

"Boothby!" sneered Mrs. Darnley, as she flung the effusion into the fire. "It should be Boodle, as being nearer noodle! Poor creature! I suppose he has been caught blindfolded. Well, if all reports concerning him are true, they will be well matched—not a brain between them!"

With which kind remark Mrs. Darnley took up her tea and sipped it.

The sneer left her face after a while, and a frown came instead, contracting her smooth, handsome brows.

"After all, brains do not mean everything; if one's children are lunatics—well, they can be managed so much the better."

It had been a bitter blow to Mrs. Darnley that her son should have been so utterly crushed by Nancy Hamilton's apparent falseness and her speedy marriage, and in her heart there was a strong wave of jealousy to strengthen the dislike she had always felt for poor Nancy.

"I shall speak openly to Derrick," she mused on, "and tell him it is his bounden duty to marry Dorothy. The girl is over head and ears in love with him, and the marriage is desirable in every way. Thank Heaven that creature is safely out of his path; it was a strong measure, but a good one, and I don't regret my share in having given her a husband and a fortune."

And yet an uncomfortable expression passed over Mrs. Darnley's cold, haughty face as she said this to herself, an expression which deepened into something almost like consternation, as the door was opened at that moment and her maid announced:

"Mrs. Crawshaw."

Mrs. Darnley put down her tea cup with a hand that trembled slightly, then rose to her feet.

"Mrs. Crawshaw!" she repeated, as if doubting her ears; then suavely, "This is indeed a surprise! To what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

Nancy flung back her thick veil; her face was very pale, but calm. "I wish to speak to you on a very important subject," she answered, quietly; "I shall detain you only a few moments. The importance of my business must be my excuse for this intrusion."

Mrs. Darnley bowed.

"Will you sit down, and may I give you some tea? Pray excuse the very bald appearance of my room, Mrs. Crawshaw, I really did not anticipate any visitors; I am returning to Nice almost immediately."

Nancy did not take the chair placed for her, she felt she must get to her subject at once. She came a step nearer, refusing with a gesture the offered tea.

"Mrs. Darnley," she said, hurriedly, "will you answer me one question? You must forgive me for putting this question to you, but my position is a desperate one, and it is no time for false sentiment."

"What question can you have to ask me?"

Mrs. Darnley spoke coldly and resentfully, but her hands moved nervously, all the same, as she replaced the tea cup on the tray.

Nancy's blue eyes rested upon her for an instant.

"I want to ask you this—were you aware of the reason which forced me to become Thomas Crawshaw's wife?"

Mrs. Darnley paused, then she re-arranged.

"This is, indeed, an extraordinary question," she said, in sharp, clear tones; "I really fail to understand and you. Mrs. Crawshaw."

"Under ordinary circumstances I grant it would be extraordinary; under the present ones, no," the girl answered, feeling all at once that she was getting close to the truth. "Two nights ago my husband, in a drunken fit of madness, attempted to take my life; before he did this, however, he poured out a torrent of abuse upon me, and mingling in with this he taunted me with having been easily deceived, declaring that he had tricked me into marrying him, and that you—you, Mrs. Darnley, had helped him. I have come to you to know if this be true? If I am wronging you by asking the question, I will humbly beg you to pardon me."

There was dead silence in the room, broken only by the ticking of the clock; then Mrs. Darnley rose from her chair and faced the girl.

"And if I say that it is true," she said, with strange deliberation, "what then?"

Nancy shrank back from her. "What—what could have made you do such a thing?" broke from her pale lips. "What had I ever done to you that you should deliberately wreck my life, my whole happiness, as you have done?"

"I will tell you what you did," the other returned, fiercely, "you stole my son's heart from me; you crept in where I should have been alone; you bewitched him, and it was necessary to save him from you."

Nancy stood motionless, speechless, and the other woman, seeing this, went on swiftly, moving restlessly to and fro as she spoke.

"I did not intend to stand by and see my son ruin himself and his career for you; if it had to be done again, I would do it. After all, what do you want more? You have money, and money can do much for persons of your status."

The insult made Nancy wince. She half turned away, but as she was going she looked back.

"I beg to tell you that my solicitors will require you to confirm what you have just told me," she said, in a quiet, very cold tone.

Mrs. Darnley started as if she had been shot.

"What—what are you going to do?" she asked, hurriedly, for once frightened out of her calmness. "You surely are not mad enough to think you can get freedom through this?"

"Mad or no, I am going to try," was the girl's firm answer.

Mrs. Darnley gasped.

In that second, visions of disgrace, public dishonor, perhaps punishment—for if she had not actually forged that letter of Henry Chaplin's, which had been the chief instrument in working on the girl's mind, she had been a consenting and active party to the fraud—flashed hideously clear before her eyes. This must be prevented at all hazard—at any cost.

"And Derrick—have—have you no thought for him?" she murmured, huskily. "If—if you do this—I shall be disgraced, and my shame will be his shame."

A mist rose before Nancy's eyes, she paused. Then she said in a low voice:

"Your son has nothing to fear; he has done nothing dishonorable—your shame cannot touch him."

Mrs. Darnley drew a deep breath.

She had one more card left, she must play it without delay; it was a cruel, a wicked act, but there was no other escape from the net that was closing round her.

Bending forward, her face white to the lips, she looked at Nancy.

"Don't be so easily deceived," she murmured, "if I am dishonored, so will Derrick be also, since—since he too, was party to the trick, as you call it, which gave you, a penniless girl, such a magnificent fortune! Yes—Derrick stands with me in this."

"It can't be true—it can't be true!"

Nancy stretched out her hands and retreated till she reached the wall, where she rested a moment, stunned, overwhelmed with this awful statement.

The mother waited with sickening anxiety for the girl to speak, and as no words passed the strained, white lips, she spoke herself: "Do you know why he did this?—because he wished to be free, and yet see you well cared for. He thought it was for your good to marry this other man—my son is poor and—"

But Nancy stopped her with an imperative gesture.

"Don't say another word," she said, in low, husky tones; "I—I have heard enough."

"And you will do nothing? Promise me you will do nothing."

Mrs. Darnley almost knelt in her eagerness and despair.

Nancy looked at her in silence. There was no need for words. Her eyes spoke when her lips refused to move, and after a while she turned away and walked steadily out of the room, out into the cheerless streets, with a heart as cold as ice in her young breast. Mrs. Darnley stood motionless for nearly a quarter of an hour when she was alone. Then she shuddered. She felt abased, degraded by what she had done.

"Derrick, it was for you—for you!" she whispered, and she shivered again. "What an escape!" she muttered, pacing to and fro.

"But am I safe? Will she betray me?" She passed her hot hands over her eyes, then, as the vision of Nancy's face returned to her, she drew a deep breath; it was an expression of convincing relief: Derrick would never know the truth from Crawshaw's wife.

Then Mrs. Darnley started, and came to a standstill. Her quick ears had caught the sound of footsteps running up the stairs. She had forgotten until then that the hour she had appointed to see her son was near.

"He is coming," she said to herself, and with a swift movement she flung herself into her chair and took up her book.

The strong call on her nerves brought back her real self.

"How fortunate that she has been gone so long! A quarter of an hour earlier they must have met," she thought, and the next moment she was greeting Derrick with her usual cold smile, and not a sign of the humiliation she had felt so surely left on her handsome face.

Janet watched and waited for Nancy's return, and as hour passed hour she grew nervous.

"What can have happened?" she mused, anxiously. She stood all the time at the little window gazing down the street, and in her hand was crushed a telegram.

"Can she have seen? Can she know already?" she muttered again and again. "But it seems impossible. Who could tell her? Thank Heaven I sent that young lady at Ripstone Hall our address! If I hadn't done that we should never have known this news. Dear—dear! I wish she would come!"

And at that very moment her sharp eyes described the slender, black-robed figure walking wearily along.

"I have been nearly frightened out of my life, ma'am," she cried, as she ran to greet Nancy and draw her into the room. "Dear heart, how cold and white you look!"

And, forgetful of all else, Janet began to chafe the girl's icy hands and remove her bonnet and cloak.

"I am all right only tired—only tired!"

Then Nancy's eyes fell on the buff-colored envelope Janet had thrown hastily on the table.

"What is that, Janet? What has happened?"

Her eyes grew wide with fear. Was she traced already?

"Can you bear some great news, ma'am? Yes, I see you can. You are as strong and brave as a lion. You see, I disobeyed you, ma'am, and let Miss Leicester know you were safe, for I thought the poor young lady would fret her heart out, maybe, when she heard what had happened that night. I've heard from her every morning since I wrote, God bless her! and now she has sent this. Let me hold your hand, child, while you read it."

Nancy's heart seemed to rise in her throat. For one instant she could see nothing plainly, the next moment she was staring down at the written words, her fatigue, misery, Derrick Darnley's cruel treachery, all forgotten, as she read:

"Bring your mistress here at once. Mr. Crawshaw died this morning."

(To be continued.)

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AN ORIENTAL DETECTIVE.

Teapot Was Used to Find Money and Jewels.

Tea may be considered as a drink of the sages, but one would hardly expect the teapot to play the part of a judge. Yet Margaret Cotter Morison says in "A Lonely Summer in Kashmir" that not infrequently it is called upon to perform that function as well as its legitimate one. The author, in one of her tenting trips, lost a box containing one hundred rupees and some jewelry. Knowing that it must have been stolen in the night, she called for her servants.

They showed much surprise and distress. They searched the woods, and found the empty box thrown away by the thieves in their haste.

I sent for the native police. They proved to be more curious and picturesque than effective. They would arrive each morning in a bevy of over a dozen, tell the servants openly that they suspected them, and sit in a ring and cross-question them for endless hours, trying to trick them into saying something which could be taken as an acknowledgment of guilt. In vain I tried to point out that this would only put them on their guard; it was to no purpose. The police were too happy over the bustle and importance the occasion offered to adopt outside suggestions.

In one elaborate function I was asked to take part. I was placed in solemn state in an easy chair in front of the hut, and round stood a wide circle of turbaned natives. In front of me, on the ground, squatted the chief of police; to my relief, he could talk no English. My young cook squatted opposite; a small native teapot was placed between them, and close at hand five tightly rolled scrolls of paper, on which, I was told, were written the names of my five servants, one on each.

The teapot had a broad rim round the top. The chief of the police on one side, and the cook on the other, each placed a finger under the rim, and held the vessel loosely suspended between them.

Placing one of the scrolls in the spout, the policeman explained that if the paper held the name of the thief the vessel would give sign.

Two papers passed the ordeal. When the third was put in, the teapot made a semirevolution, and almost fell from the hands.

There was intense interest. The inspector put aside the paper, remarking that in it was the name of the thief. At the fourth scroll the teapot swerved again, but remained immovable during the test of the fifth. The scrolls were then thoroughly shuffled and a second trial given them. The teapot made its signs at the two same names.

The inspector then said that, as I was so tender of my servants' welfare, they would be given a chance of restoration before they were accused. A heap of loose earth was dug at the back of my tent after dark. Each servant, in turn, was to go alone and cast a basketful of earth on the heap. In this way it was hoped that the holder of the stolen goods would make restitution, in which case no questions would be asked.

After dark I heard the shoveling. After a while the inspector and I went out to the heap and carefully sifted the dirt. We found nothing.

Later, the two servants were arrested and put in jail. When they were released they immediately sued me for three weeks' wages, that being the time of their imprisonment.

"Will it hurt?" asked the precise person as he sat down in the big chair. "Don't you know that I advertise myself as the painless dentist?" "Yes. But what I want to know is whether you can guarantee me as a painless patient."

NIAGARA DISTRICT

NEEDS PROTECTION.

Enough Peaches in Georgia Alone to Supply America.

The relationship between Canada and the United States as regards the fruit industry, and the manifest need of a Protective tariff for Canadian fruit growers have been clearly shown in a series of articles by Dr. George Charles Buchanan of Beamsville, Ont., President of the Ontario and Western Co-operative Society. Dealing with the Niagara peninsula Dr. Buchanan says:—

There are in the Niagara Peninsula about 350 square miles of land on which fruit can be well grown, not counting such districts as Ancaster and Dundas. Between Toronto and Hamilton there is another 100 square miles; in all at least 288,000 acres.

Not all of this is peach land, not even probably 20 per cent. of it. But very little of it is of no use for any fruit. Much can be made fine peach land by drainage, or good apple, plum or grape land; some is only good for berries, but all of it is in a good fruit climate. The unplanted land is waiting to double or quadruple in value, whenever the market demands more fruit.

It may be assumed that the value of this land for general farming is not over \$100 per acre, and that for fruit purposes it is worth \$500 per acre; although much of the peach land is worth \$1,000 per acre; and that where it has to be drained, draining will average about \$20 per acre.

It can further be stated that peach land at \$1,000 per acre is known to pay a good return on the investment in the hands of practical growers. If we take the very low estimate of 10,000 acres planted at \$500 per acre we have a value of \$5,000,000 for the orchard and berry lands.

Now as our home market grows, and in our home market we have no competition, every acre of this 288,000 has potentially the same value, and fully half is unplanted.

There are in Canada about 8,000,000 people, the United States claim 93,000,000. However that may be, our present soft fruit acreage is fully equal to supplying Canada. It is safe to say there is not over 12,000 acres of peaches in Eastern Canada. If this supplet 8,000,000 people it would take 150,000 acres to supply 93,000,000 people, but there are 180,000 acres of peaches in Georgia alone.

JEWELS THAT DECK A QUEEN.

At almost all the court functions which have been so numerous in London this summer, the Queen's preference for diamonds over any other jewels has been invariably manifested. Beautiful as are sapphires, emeralds and other colored stones, it is certain that no gem can compete with diamonds in brilliance of effect. They are the court stones par excellence and set off the magnificence of a court toilet as no other jewel can. Diamonds are particularly becoming to the Queen, and her Majesty never looks better than when wearing her high crown of alternate Maltese crosses and fleur de lis and her dog collar of diamonds of lattice work design. Queen Alexandra, on the other hand, had a marked preference for pearls and colored stones, particularly amethysts, of which her Majesty possesses a beautiful parure, which does not form part of the crown jewels but is her own private property.

We seek a lawyer to protect us from our neighbors and a doctor to protect us from ourselves.