

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

## CHAPTER XXVI.—(Cont'd)

Dorothy was busy taking his scarf and hat, and helping him to remove his coat, while his eyes were fixed on that slender figure in the long, black velvet gown, turned so resolutely from him, with the magnificent hair coiled low on the white neck.

Sir Humphrey was soon shouting for some one to bring Mr. Darnley something to eat, and Miss Leicester drew her cousin to the fire.

"Nancy, here is Derry come to join us. Haven't you a word for him?"

Nancy, who was laughing and talking with Darcy Hamilton, turned round quietly.

"How do you do?" she asked, in cold, languid tones. "You must be frozen, I am sure, and we are monopolizing all the fire. Come along, Darcy, we will go and have a look at the ball-room, and prepare ourselves for the festivity. Dolly, if you want me, dear, you know where I am."

And gathering up her velvet train, Mrs. Crawshaw put her small hand on her cousin's arm, and walked away, laughing, with what rounded like good merriment to the others, but which rang in her ears as a hollow mockery.

Darnley stood staring after her as she went.

"Who is the man?" he asked Dorothy, sharply; and, as she told him, he relapsed into silence again, until a servant came to lead him to his room, when, with a forced smile, he said:

"I shall be down directly, Dolly," and he went quickly away.

Once alone in his room, he stood with clinched hands and compressed lips.

Incredible as it seemed, he could find no solution to the extraordinary change in Nancy except that her wealth had brought this change. Money must have hardened her heart and set her for ever away from him.

Going up to the broad mantle-shelf, he buried his face on his folded arms.

"What use to try and get at any other reason?" he asked himself, bitterly, as the moments passed, and then he roused himself. "She has told me plainly she doesn't want to have anything more to do with me. Well, that ought to be clear enough. I'm a fool to torture myself any more. After all, I'm not the first man to have made a big mistake about a woman!"

With a shrug of his shoulders, therefore, he roused himself and dressed rapidly, and as he stood for a moment before joining the others, he came to the determination that he would leave again as soon as he could get away.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

The servants' ball went off right merrily, and Janet was heard to declare that never—no, never—did any one ever dance like Mr. Derrick Darnley!

Once during the evening Nancy had disappeared, and Dolly, giving search, found her in the library, with pen in hand, writing, or pretending to do so, at any rate.

"Now what is it?—what are you worrying about, darling?"

Nancy seemed to wake from some troubled thoughts and start.

"Mrs. Starr tells me that Fenton has been asking for me; she says the poor man is in great poverty and distress."

"And you are going to help him, of course?" Dorothy was full of righteous indignation.

"A creature who never lost an opportunity of insulting you whenever he got the chance—who was a spy on you and—"

"Still, Dolly dear, I can't let him starve; and I have so much; what do a few pounds more or less matter? It is Christmas time, remember; and, you know, we must all be charitable and forgive now."

Dorothy's only answer was a kiss, and a very tender one.

"I may argue just as much as I like, but you will be firm all the same; I know you. Now I must go

back; you will come, darling, soon?"

"In a moment," Nancy answered.

She filled up the cheque she had written for Fenton, then, putting it in an envelope to give to the housekeeper, she rose to move away, when an uncontrollable impulse made her turn to the fire and stand there.

She was very miserable; with all her heard resolutions and bitter contempt, her love lived as strongly as ever for this man.

Yes, despite everything, and the long year's training she had given herself, she knew she loved him still, her heart was still thrilling with the excitement Darnley's presence brought. Even while she knew him, by his own mother's word, to be unworthy and dishonored in her sight, she yearned for him; his near presence tortured her.

While she was standing quietly, Janet came in with some letters in her hand.

"The second post has just come, ma'am, and brought these. Miss Dorothy thought you might like to have them. The poor man is so overweighted with Christmas cards he could not get here before."

Nancy thanked her maid and took the letters; there were only three for her; one from her uncle, another, full of grateful thanks, from the vicar of the parish, whom she had helped so generously; and the third, with loving greetings, from her old friend, Dr. Grantley.

Her new relations, Sir John and Lady Hamilton, had sent her a costly present before she left town. Nancy received it with pleasure, for she had a kindly thought for these people, through her sincere liking for her cousin, Darcy.

She little knew what hopes were built on that liking by the ambitious mother and father!

The inclination to remain alone and continue her sad, hopeless thoughts deepening, Nancy drew up a chair and sat down in it before the fire.

The back was turned to the door, and half-an-hour, perhaps an hour had passed, when some one entered abruptly and Lord Merefield's voice said, sharply and anxiously, as Nancy rose with a start:

"There, old fellow, sit there; I'll be back with some brandy in a second."

He pushed, or helped some one to the couch as he spoke; and Nancy, grown very pale, caught a broken whisper:

"Leave—me—me quite alone, Merefield—quite alone—for—moment."

The whisper was so eager, Lord Merefield could do nothing less than obey; but, as he turned, Darnley's head fell back against the chair, and he had fainted dead away.

In a second Nancy had moved hurriedly forward.

"What is it?" she cried, agitatedly. "What has happened?"

Lord Merefield muttered an explanation hurriedly. One of the wreaths of evergreens had taken fire, and, in falling, had caught a cotton gown, setting it on fire. The whole place threatened to be in a blaze had not Darnley sprung forward and extinguished the flames with his hands.

"And—and has hurt himself! Oh, go and fetch brandy; send Janet with oil and cotton wool. Oh, Lord Merefield, go quickly!"

Nancy's face was white to the lips, and, as Lord Merefield rushed away to do her bidding, she crept back to that still form and bent over it.

How brave, how noble, he had been! He was her hero again—her best beloved! The memory of his treachery was forgotten altogether in that moment.

With a shudder she glanced at the poor, burned hands, then, kneeling down, she bent still lower over the white lips.

Not a breath escaped them. An agony, an awful agony of fear came over her.

"Oh, Derry, Derry, my darling, speak to me! Speak, only speak to me! Oh, God, if he should be dead!"

Involuntarily her lips touched his, and, as though he had been electrified by that touch, a sigh ran through the man's frame, and he opened his eyes.

At first there was nothing but vagueness, like one who is blind, and then a swift contraction, as pain and sense returned. He closed the lids for a second, then opened them again, before she had time to move from her knees.

"Nancy—is it you—really you, my darling?" came in faint accents from his lips, while such a look of joy came into his eyes as bewildered her, even in the midst of her anxiety.

"You are better," she whispered, as she rose softly.

He gave a quick sigh.

"It—it is nothing. I am all right. I told Duncan not to make a fuss—not to frighten Dolly, or any one."

He was trying to move himself into a sitting position. He could not touch anything with his hands; they were covered with blisters, and were completely useless.

Nancy saw his difficulty, and a lump rose in her throat.

"Let me help you," she murmured; and, coming forward, she put her white arms round him.

The man's pale face flushed, his breath came in quick gasps. It was like a glimpse of heaven to be held in that embrace.

"I—I am so heavy," he panted.

"You must not. You—you will hurt yourself."

He put out his right and to gently push her back, but as the injured flesh rubbed her gown, he uttered a groan, and his eyes closed again, as in another faint.

Nancy's own eyes were full of tears.

"Oh, what shall I do?—what shall I do?" she cried, in anguish. "Derry! Derry!"

The dark lashes were lifted for an instant.

"You are sorry, dear?" he asked, with a look of unutterable tenderness. "You are sorry for me, Nancy? My darling!—my darling!"

His head sank forward, and was pillowed on the girl's soft, white throat, as the door opened, and Lord Merefield, followed by Janet, came hurriedly in.

Merefield made no sign as he saw Nancy's arms round the half-sunken form; he only poured out some raw brandy and put it to Darnley's lips. Then, as Nancy saw Janet already busy with the poor, maimed hands, she gently disengaged herself and went softly away—a broken sob in her throat and a mist of tears in her eyes.

An hour later a knock at her door aroused her. She had flung herself down in an agony of grief when she reached her room. Her ears rang still with Derry's tender, loving words; her pulses thrilled yet with the memory of how close his dear face had been to hers.

"I love him!—I love him!" she said, over and over again to herself. "He has wronged me more than any woman was wronged before; still I love him! Oh, Derry! if—if only you had been true and noble, as I thought you!"

She started to her feet as the knock came.

"If you please, ma'am, Mr. Darnley sent me to ask if you would kindly go and speak to him," said Janet, careful not to notice her mistress' white face and disordered hair.

"Is he better?" asked Nancy, faintly.

"He seems much easier, ma'am; Miss Leicester has been with him up to now, but he is alone again, ma'am, and wishes to see you very badly; will you go, ma'am?"

"Yes, I will go."

Nancy's heart was beating so wildly she could scarcely speak.

Without a glance at her reflection in the glass, she went down the broad staircase, a lovely vision, with her white neck and arms gleaming from out the black velvet gown, her hair falling in soft, ruffled curls on her brow and round her throat. She hesitated an instant before she opened the library door.

Derry was lying back in a chair as she entered, but as his ears caught the sound of her dress, he rose slowly and with some difficulty; both hands were bound up with lint and white bandages. There was a flush on his face and a strange look in his eyes.

"This is kind of you, Mrs. Crawshaw," he said, in quick, low tones; "I dared scarcely hope you would come so soon."

His eyes went to her delicate throat; was it a dream, or had his lips rested close to it just now?

"You—you want to see me?"

Nancy replied, standing, with one

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hand leaning on the table, a graceful, lovely figure.

The man bowed.

"I have a very painful task to perform," he said, after a pause; "but I owe it to myself to do it." He heaved a short sigh. "A year ago, Mrs. Crawshaw, you went to see my mother, and in that interview, which until to-day I was utterly ignorant had taken place, she made a statement to you, did she not?"

How pale his face had grown—white to his very lips!

"She did."

Nancy, too, had become, if possible, paler. Darnley moved a step nearer.

"On the table, Nancy, there lies a letter! It is from my mother—read it—read it, and give me your sympathy, for God knows I need it to-night; it is not often a man is made to suffer through his mother as I have suffered through mine!"

Nancy picked up the letter with a trembling hand. It was a very long one. Mrs. Darnley had written it many days ago, and, according to his cabled orders, it had been forwarded to him with his other correspondence to Ripstone from his club.

It was a confession, pure and simple, of her share in the fraud which had induced Nancy to become Thomas Crawshaw's wife; and a second one, full of bitter contrition for her falsehood to Nancy, wherein she had dishonored her son to save herself.

Ill and utterly miserable, the mother had at last found strength to own her sin at this Christmas time, and to implore her son's forgiveness.

Nancy's lips quivered as she put the letter down. A flood of self-reproach and remorse rushed into her heart. She moved forward.

"Derry," she whispered,

"Derry."

As she lifted his dark eyes, she flung herself at his feet.

"That I should have been so easily deceived! That I should have wronged you so, my own—my best beloved!"

Headless of injuring them further, he stretched out his maimed hands to help her to rise, and seeing this, she got up quickly and clung to him.

"Nancy, don't tempt me—is it love that makes you turn to me? Is all doubt dead, dear? Can you take the son, remembering what his mother has—"

She silenced him by putting her fingers on his lips; and, as he opened his arms, she buried her face on his breast and burst into tears.

"Forgive me! Oh! forgive me!" she sobbed.

As he kissed her brow, her wet eyes, and lastly her sweet, trembling mouth, with all the old passion and joy restored, Derry answered:

"Forgive you, my precious! when I, too, have wronged you! I have called you worldly, mercenary, hard, cruel, I know not what. Ah! we have gone through a great trial, my darling. Thank God! our love has lived through all. Lift up your lips and kiss me, Nancy; if you could only know how I have longed, hungered for their touch, my dearest one!"

Nancy nestled to him, heaving a happy sigh now and then; and then, by slow degrees, Derry drew from her the story of what had passed between his mother and herself. She glanced up at his darkened face as she finished.

"But you will forgive her, dear," she urged, involuntarily, as she realized what Anne Darnley must have suffered before she had brought herself to make atonement. "Please—please say you will forgive her."

The man paused.

"She has kept us apart a whole year—a whole terrible year. Ah, Nancy! even now I had not quite believed you were really in my arms. Yes—yes, my sweetheart, I will forgive, and we must teach ourselves to forget—we have so much to forget!"

He held her very tightly in his arms, and kissed her softly, with whispered words of joy that dazed her. And then they were silent—in the heart of both there was a prayer and a great thanksgiving.

THE END.

## WHITE MAN DOOMED.

Professor Thinks Fair Skinned Races Will Vanish From Earth.

If we are to take seriously the predictions of Prof. Lionel W. Lyde, of London University, the outlook for the white man on the face of this earth is gloomy indeed. Much has been written at one time and another regarding the ability of the white man to live in the tropics and to retain his bodily and mental vigor. The consensus of opinion, as pointed out by The Medical Record, has been that he cannot do so, but after a time he will surely deteriorate, physically and mentally.

Furthermore, white natives whose ancestors have lived three or more generations in the tropics are not, with rare exceptions, the peers either in body or mind of their relatives living in the temperate zone.

Prof. Lyde not only insists that the white man cannot live in health in tropical countries, but he also professes to believe that the white man is doomed to vanish from the face of the earth, giving way to the colored races. The English professor bases his belief on the theory that the original color of the human skin was dark brown, the variations of that color being the results of the weakening or strengthening of the pigment under different climatic conditions.

Taking ordinary precautions it may be possible for the white man, two years of acclimitization, to live in the tropics even more immune from tropical diseases than the black. But this period of immunity lasts for only about seven years, after which the deteriorating effects of the strong solar light and heat begin to show themselves on the white skin, and render the possessor thereof peculiarly susceptible to tropical diseases. In consequence the permanent settlement of the tropics by white men is impossible. But while the pigment with which the colored races is provided is indispensable for life in the tropics, it is a source of no danger in the temperate or frigid zones; therefore the dark or yellow man can intrude into the domain of the man of fair skin with little or no danger.

## HORRID THING.

Wife (excitedly)—If you go on like this I shall certainly lose my temper.

Husband—No danger, my dear. A thing of that size is not easily lost.

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