

THE FEE OF THE DIOSCURI.

Loud the midnight revel roared
In the home of Cronon's lord,
Lyres were ringing, flutes were shrilling,
Fanned in flower-wreathed bowls the glowing wine.
Torches flashing through the hall
Lit the armor on the wall—
Stout Chalcidian blades and hauberks,
Shield and helm and cuirass, ranged in line.

In the midst, in princely pride,
With his kinsmen at his side,
Lay proud Scopas, lord of Cronon,
On Milesian purples couched at ease.
Then, with half-uplifted hand,
Scarcely deigning to command,
All the banquet's din he silenced,
Beckoning to the bard Simonides.

He, the swan of Dorian song,
With the common feasters' throng
Lay, not wholly mingling, silent,
Musing great thoughts in his poet heart,
Slowly, at the chief's command,
Near the throne he took his stand,
As who wakes from dreams of heaven,
On dull earth to play a mere man's part.

Glancing half in scorn the while,
Scopas smiled a prince's smile:
"Hear we now how lyres of Cæos
Skill to celebrate Thessalian deeds!
Grudge me not thy choicest lay,
What! a poet still, men say,
Cares his fee. If gold thou cravest,
Gold have I for fifty flowers' needs!"

"Sing my wars, my victories,"
There he censed, Simonides
Wreathed his brow with bays, and lightly
Ran his hand in prelude through the chords.
And he chanted how in fight
Scopas tamed Larissa's might:
Quelled Toleas; ravaged Tempe;
Tribute laid on vanquished Phæac's lords.

Now a nobler music flows,
For to worthier themes he rose—
Dwelt no more on man's mean triumphs—
Gods and heroes claim his praises now!
"Thus," he cries, "in earlier days
Cæstor stemmed the yielding frays!
Polydectes in Therapne
Thus with plumes of triumph decked his brow!"

Then in melting strains he told
All that sweetest tale of old—
Of the twins, the Dioscuri,
Cæstor, Polydectes; how in strife
Cæstor fell; and at his grave
Deathless Polydectes gave,
To restore his mortal brother,
Freely, half his own immortal life:

How the prison bonds of hell
From reviving Cæstor fell;
And, thenceforth, the Twins alternate
Life in Heaven and death in Hades share:
How their hero spirits reign,
Worshipped in Olympia's fame;
And their Twin Star o'er the Ægean
Gleaming grants the storm-vexed seaman's prayer.

Breathless hung the sobered throng
On the magic of the song,
Only Cronon's lord ungracious
Deemed his praise by praise of others marred.
"Friend," he sneers, "take half thy fee:
Half thy song was given to me:
Let thy Twins, thy Dioscuri,
Pay, themselves, their share of thy reward."

At the brutal prince's jest
Each sleek courtier smiled his best.
But a voice came: "Cease, stranger,
At the door two horsemen ask for thee."
Even as he left the hall
Down it crashed upon them all:
All but him. That voice had saved him.
Thus the Dioscuri paid their fee.

FRANCIS DAVID MORICE, in *Harper's*.

NEAVES, NANSE, & NEAVES.

BY ZADEL BARNES GUSTAFSON.

At about 10.30 in the morning of the 30th of December, 1881, young William Nanse sat at his desk in the counting-room of the publishing firm of Neaves, Neville, & Neaves—"N., N. & N.," as the employees shortened it.

The window at his left looked out on one of the busiest sections of Oxford Street, or would have looked out but that a thick chocolate-colored fog hid everything save the sounds of confusion going on in it.

Nanse looked up from the heap of papers on his desk, and called to an office-boy, "Sam, let me know the moment Mr. Neaves comes in."

"Yessir; 'e's—'e's a-comin' now, sir."

Nanse swung round in his chair, and rose quickly. A middle-aged gentleman of almost a military firmness of bearing was approaching the counting-room, surrendering his overcoat to an attendant as he moved. Nanse met him at the door.

"Mr. Neaves, can you give me a few moments, sir?" he asked.

"This morning?"

"Yes, sir; I'd like to get it over."

Mr. Neaves drew out his watch. "Come to me at eleven—no, say five minutes past, precisely," and he passed on to his private office.

Nanse returned to his desk, and rapidly sorted and arranged the papers there. The minutes dragged, the minutes flew, and he was cold and hot by turns. He wrote on a fresh envelope, "Miss Lulie Featherfew, 99 Marlborough Road," considered it with a heavy frown for a moment, and tossed it into the waste-basket, with a deep, impatient sigh. "No," he muttered, "it's done and ended, and in a few moments I shall have cut the bridge behind me."

When it wanted but thirty seconds of the time, just enough to exactly keep the appointment—for "N. of N., N., & N." never waits or keeps waiting," was the current saying—Nanse sprang up, looking a little pale, saluted, in passing, a

handsome, sallow young man with "Good-morning, Hartington," crossed over, tapped at Mr. Neaves's private office, and was promptly called in.

The clerk who received the mail entered the counting-room and laid a letter on Nanse's desk. Hartington, whose desk was next beyond that of Nanse, observed this, and drew indolently near.

He stood perhaps a full minute mechanically twisting his long dark moustache and looking at the letter. Then, first throwing a slow, careful, keen glance around him, he picked from the waste-basket the discarded envelope Nanse had addressed to Miss Featherfew, and slipping into it the letter from Nanse's desk, sealed and put it in his breast pocket. He then laid down another letter in place of the one he had just removed, and went to his desk. There he seemed to become almost immediately absorbed in his work, yet had any one taken him by the hand it would have betrayed his agitation.

In his private office Mr. Neaves, sitting with his hat off, his shoulders squared, his thick iron-gray hair pushed back from his forehead, was a man well worth looking at. If you had been going to describe him essentially in three words, you would have said, "Business, experience, heart"—a reversal of the usual order of things.

"Well, my boy," said the head of the firm, motioning to a chair, "what is it? By your looks it's trouble, so let us get it behind us as soon as may be."

"I'm going away, sir," exclaimed Nanse, speaking with difficulty. Then, after a moment's silence, he threw up his head and went on rapidly: "I can't explain, and I hope you'll not think hardly of me, sir, but I must go away; and if you had the man you wanted in my place, I should beg you to let me off at once—to-day. But of course I don't ask that, only, sir, if you'll please arrange it as soon as you can, it will be the greatest kindness to me, sir."

"This is a strange request—very," said Mr. Neaves. After a considerable pause, "Is your mind quite made up?"

"Quite."

"We have been thinking lately of some changes in which you are interested. Don't interrupt me, but listen. With the new year Mr. Neville, who is rich enough, and tired of business, goes out of the firm by agreement. You have been with us some time; you know the business; you suit us; and we have made up our minds to offer you a place in the firm, beginning with the new year. See?"—pushing a proof slip toward him—"Neaves, Nanse, & Neaves. It looks well; it sounds well; we think it will be well."

Nanse had risen and taken the slip, and now stood quite mute, and very red in the face.

"Come," resumed the older man; "you've made me crack the shell a day sooner than I wanted; but young folks always do force matters a little. Come, now, doesn't this change things a bit! Can't you explain? Or, better yet, let explanations go, and you stay."

"Oh, Mr. Neaves, all this makes it horribly hard for me," said young Nanse, beginning to tremble like a girl; "but—but it doesn't change things at all. Do you believe how grateful—"

"One word," broke in Mr. Neaves—"are you dissatisfied with me, with us, with anything here?"

"No, sir—never, sir."

"Very well, I'll look up a man, and let you off as soon as I can." Mr. Neaves had already turned to his desk, but he stopped the young man in the doorway; "Stay! Your address— I might want to use it—is with Miss Ingram, isn't it?" Mr. Neaves shot one of his keenest glances with this simple question.

"No, sir; I left my aunt's a month ago. I'm stopping in Guildford street." He was so confused that he did not give the number; and Mr. Neaves, who was not at all confused, ignored the omission, and occupied the next sixty seconds in writing a note, which was delivered by the postman that same night at 99 Marlborough Road.

Nanse looked very tired as he sat down once more to his desk. "It's an ill turn you have done me, Lulie Featherfew," he muttered, under his breath, "and I hope you'll be satisfied with your work." Then observing the note which Hartington had left on his desk, he opened it, read it twice, tore it into tiny bits, and drawing toward him a sheet of plain business note, wrote a few lines, inclosed, addressed, and stamped it, with an air of finality and dejection.

"Shall I post your letter for you?" said Hartington, turning to him at that instant. "I'm just going myself."

This note also was delivered that same night at 99 Marlborough Road, and the house-maid took them up to the drawing-room floor, dropped a courtesy, and handed them to Miss Betsy Ann Ingram—a pearl of a maiden lady, with slightly silvered brown hair, blue eyes, and delicate skin set off by a dress of silver-gray silk. To the young lady seated near her at the same table, knitting with scarlet wools, the house-maid gave a third letter.

This young lady was exceedingly fair to look upon, by reason of a sort of witchery which was neither of eyes, hair, complexion, nor shape. The free-spirited gaze and certain movements of the mouth indicated great pride and willfulness, yet softness and generosity too.

Miss Ingram's letters were short.

The briefest one ran thus:

"DEAR MISS INGRAM,—Telegraph if you can not see me at eleven o'clock to-morrow, the 31st.

"Yours truly,
NATHANIEL NEAVES.

The other note read:

"DEAR AUNT,—You mean most kindly, but you don't know Miss Featherfew's mind. I do; so let us leave it. As soon as Mr. Neaves can supply my place, I am going away—to America, I think. I am so sorry you must be vexed by this, but it can't be avoided. Of course, if you'll be alone, I'll come and see this old year out with you, as we've been used to do ever since I can remember. Don't think that I shall ever forget how good you've always been to me—more than a second mother, God knows. But when I come, don't let us speak about Miss Featherfew, please.

Yours, WILL.

"P.S.—I hope (Lulie, carefully scratched out) "Miss Featherfew is well."

Miss Ingram slipped the letters into her pocket; a smile had at the last crept into the anxious expression of her face. Taking up a copy of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, she glanced over the top of it at her companion, whose head was a little bent, but not more than was natural in picking out a tangle in the skein.

It rose again to its natural willful poise, and the fingers followed the needles lightly along the scarlet meshes. A vivid color had come into the young cheeks within the last few moments, and the fine white line marking the outer crimson of the lips showed that some powerful excitement was being resolutely repressed.

Whatever her letter had been, she had got it quickly into her pocket.

"Little Minx!" murmured Miss Ingram, mentally, "I know that letter was from Will, and she knits away as if she hadn't any heart, and as if I hadn't any either."

The next instant the maid announced "Mr. Hartington, ma'am," and in walked the handsome sallow young man with the voluminous dark moustache who had taken to the post at least one of the letters that night delivered in Miss Ingram's drawing-room.

Mr. Hartington was received by Miss Ingram with quiet courtesy slightly shaded with anxiety; by the young lady with an unusual show of cordiality.

"I thought I might meet Nanse here," he said, replying to Miss Ingram's vague inquiry if all were going on well at the office.

"Oh dear no," exclaimed Miss Featherfew, quickly. "Mr. Nanse seldom comes here now. He is too busy, of course, and then he is likely, we hear, to make quite a rise in life soon."

"Lulie!" cried Miss Ingram. It was wonderful how intensely willful the girl could look while so quietly slipping along the needles in her work; but neither of them observed the "Ah!" of relief which had escaped Mr. Hartington on being assured that Mr. Nanse was not likely to be there.

A veiled and confused blending of curiosity, caution, interest, calculation, passion, and resolve strangely animated his face and manner during the rest of the interview.

"So you have heard of it?" he asked, looking at them alternately. "Well, then, I suppose I am free to speak."

"Yes, pray tell us everything, Mr. Hartington," said Miss Ingram, eagerly. "You know how good and true my nephew is, and how much I care for the least things concerning him. But his modesty makes him reserved."

"Oh, Mr. Hartington," said Miss Featherfew, crossing to the piano, and taking up some music, "I have that lovely Hungarian air at last. Do come and sing it for me. We can hear about Mr. Nanse later, can't we, aunt?" with a challenging flash of the eye.

"If you don't mind," said Mr. Hartington, "I would like to speak now, dear Miss Featherfew, because—because now we are alone, and I am afraid I may have to give some pain. Later, some one might drop in, you know."

"Oh, very well!" said Lulie coldly, resuming her seat and her work with an air of abstraction.

Miss Ingram, who had grown a little pale, gave her whole attention to their visitor. "Yes," said she, "we have heard—that is, I have known some little time—that Mr. Neaves was thinking of taking Will into partnership soon; a great thing for him, dear boy, so young as he is, but he richly deserves it."

Hartington looked at her a moment, then said, with a burst of emotion: "You know how much I have always liked Nanse, and I am so grieved to have to tell you—By Jove! he ought to come and tell you himself."

"What is there to tell me?" cried Miss Ingram, in a changed voice. "Speak out at once."

Lulie Featherfew laid down her knitting. "Yes, do pray speak out, Mr. Hartington," said she, in a soft, steady tone. "We should never know anything of Will's doings if you didn't tell us"—with a look at her aunt.

"Why, he's going away out of the country," exclaimed Hartington.

"Oh, yes, he's written to me about that," said Miss Ingram, with a retorting glance at her niece.

"But he's going away in spite of Mr. Neaves's offer of—"

"Mr. Neaves has not made the offer," interrupted Miss Ingram; "he does not intend to make it till the day after to-morrow—New-Year's."

"Oh yes, he has, though; I happen to know that the matter of the partnership was proposed to Nanse this very day; and—and afterward Mr. Neaves withdrew it, and Nanse is to leave, and we think—they say at the office—that he must have done something very wrong; that's what's whispered at the office."

"What's whispered?" demanded Miss Ingram. "I want to know every word about it, Mr. Hartington; I want to know exactly what is said."

"Well, there's been a good deal of talk for weeks back. Nanse has been very gloomy and absent-minded, and now they think that he's—You know he's had all things in his own hands in the counting-room."

"Ah!" gasped Mrs. Ingram, "you mean that they dare insinuate my boy would steal—that's the plain English of what you are telling me. And you—you Mr. Hartington, his old friend—you have thrown back their base lies in their teeth!"

Hartington recoiled a little, cast down his eyes, and remained pensively silent.

Nothing could have affected Miss Ingram more than this air of disinterested regret. She recalled the note from Mr. Neaves—couched, indeed, like so many of its predecessors; but could it perhaps have this heavy meaning?

There was a rustle of the silver-gray silk. Miss Ingram had left her chair, and sunk on one knee at Hartington's side, and there she spoke, in a low, broken voice: "Your silence is terrible. I do not care for what people may say who do not and can not know my nephew; but you, his old friend, you know him—obstinate, high-spirited, and wayward, but true as fine gold; and if he has in haste, by some accident which perhaps palsies him with unforeseen consequences, done anything—if you have any reason for the horrible fear you give me—" Sobs interrupted her pleading; she crept back to her chair, and covered her face with her hands.

At that instant Hartington looked up with a sudden start. Lulie Featherfew had come around from the table and taken his hand in an almost powerfully nervous grip. She was quite pale, her voice was steady and soft.

"Come, Mr. Hartington," said she, and drew him—his hot fingers closing passionately around her cold hand—into a curtained recess.

"Now," said Lulie, in a voice that shook a little for the first time that evening, "what has Will done, and how can we help him out of it?"

"Miss Featherfew—Lulie—you must let me say something else first. Nanse and I have been friends, but we are rivals, and we agreed to give each other a fair field."

"Oh, Mr. Hartington, is this giving him a fair field?" she murmured, putting her free hand to her eyes.

The young man breathed fast and heavily. "Wait—hear me out. He has done—I'm bound by solemn oath not to tell what he has done. but—but if you'll promise me that you'll be my wife, I can and I will clear him."

A shiver ran through her, an outburst seemed on her lips, but she checked it, and presently said, "Come to-morrow night and I will answer you, but please leave me with my aunt now." He drew her close, and covered her hands with kisses. "Go! go at once!" she gasped, widely averting her head.

When the door had closed upon him she ran across the room and locked it, then turned and flung herself at Miss Ingram's feet, straining her arms around her knees, and broke out in grief so wild and passionate that the older woman was frightened into calmness.

"Oh, aunt, do anything, everything you like to me! It is all my fault. I'm the worst, the wickedest girl that ever lived! Oh, what can Will have done? Whatever it is, I drove him to it. And this—this man, his friend, will help him out of it if I'll marry him. Oh," laughing wildly, "of course I will! He's much too good for me; but, oh! I hate him so. Ah, I could cut my hands off! And I do love Will! I have loved him more and more, every day, every hour, of this wicked time that I've been so cruel to him, and driven him to despair!"

"Tell me how it all happened, child," said Miss Ingram, putting her arms kindly round the struggling girl.

"Oh, it was all my vile temper—my vile, vile, hateful pride. He didn't like me to waltz with Mr. Hartington, and when I said I would, he got angry, and said that—that any modest girl would know instinctively that he was not the right sort of man to be so familiar with. And then I lost my temper quite, and I gave him back his ring, and told him I hoped he'd find a girl modest enough to be Mrs. Nanse some day. And I knew Mr. Hartington was looking on, so I spoke up loud to vex Will the more, and then I went off and danced every round dance with Mr. Hartington. But that's not the worst"—pushing back her loosened hair from her flushed wet face. "The next day will come—you remember, for it was then he sent for his things away from here—and he spoke so kindly, and begged me to forgive him, and said I had made him so jealous he couldn't help himself; and then he tried to put the ring on my hand again; but I wouldn't let him, and I laughed and told him to keep it for the future Mrs. Nanse; that I thought Mr. Hartington could find a ring that would do well enough for me."

"Oh, how could you!" cried Miss Ingram, drawing back a little. She could not help resenting this for her nephew. But Lulie caught her hands and sobbed out:

"If you were only in love yourself, you'd understand how a girl could be awfully wicked and yet want to be good all the time, and—and wish somebody would manage her and make her behave. If he'd only kept the ring in his hand one instant longer I should have snatched it and kissed it before his eyes, and if he had only waited a moment I should have got over my wicked pride and thrown my arms around him;