

**THE NEW PRINCE
FORTUNATUS,
VOL. III**

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The New Prince Fortunatus, Vol. III by William Black

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WILLIAM BLACK

**THE NEW PRINCE
FORTUNATUS,
VOL. III**

THE NEW
PRINCE FORTUNATUS.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK,

AUTHOR OF

"A PRINCESS OF THULE," "MACLEOD OF DARE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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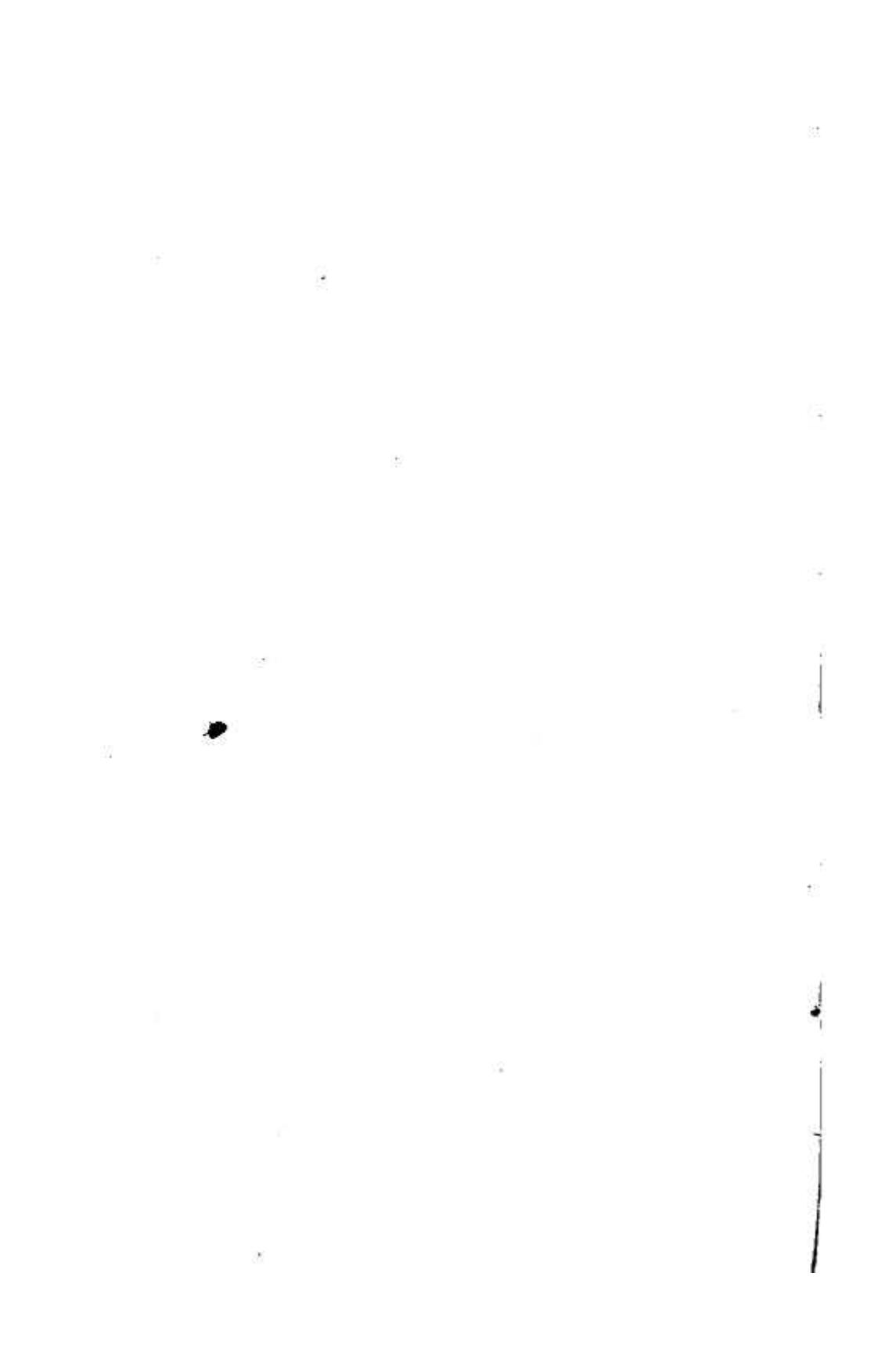
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THE NEW PRINCE FORTUNATUS.

CHAPTER I.

AN INVOCATION.

ALL his vague, wild, impracticable hopes and schemes had suddenly received their death-blow; but there was nothing worse than that; he himself (as he imagined) had been dealt no desperate wound. For one thing, flattered and petted as this young man had been, he was neither unreasoning nor vain; that a woman should have refused to marry him did not seem to him a monstrous thing; she was surely within her right in saying no; while, on the other hand, he was neither going to die of chagrin nor yet to plan a melodramatic revenge. But the truth was that he had never been passionately in love with Honnor Cunyngham. Passionate love he did not much believe in; he associated it with limelight, and crowded audiences,

and the odour of gas. Indeed it might almost be said that he had been in love not so much with Honnor Cunyngham as with the condition of life which she represented. He had grown restless and dissatisfied with his present state; he had been imagining for himself another sort of existence—but always with her as the central figure of those fancied realms; he had been dreaming dreams—of which she had invariably formed part. And now he had been awakened (somewhat abruptly, perhaps, but that may have been his own fault); and there was nothing for it but to summon his common sense to his aid, and to assure himself that Honnor Cunyngham, at least, was not to blame.

And yet sometimes, in spite of himself, as he smoked a final cigarette at midnight in those rooms in Piccadilly, a trace of bitterness would come into his reveries.

“I have been taught my place, that’s all,” he would say to himself. “Maurice was right—I had forgotten my Catechism. I wanted to play the gardener’s son, or Mordaunt to Lady Mabel; and I can’t write poetry, and I’m not in the House of Commons. I suppose my head was a little bewildered by the kindness and condescension of those excellent people. They are glad to welcome

you into their rooms—you are a sort of curiosity—you sing for them—they've very civil for an hour or two—but you must remember to leave before the footmen proceed to shut the hall-door. Well, what's to be done? Am I to rush away to the wars, and come back a Field Marshal? Am I to make myself so obnoxious in Parliament that the noble earl will give me his daughter in order to shut my mouth? Oh, no; they simplify matters nowadays; 'as you were' is the word of command; go back to the theatre; paint your face and put on your finery; play the fool along with the rest of the comic people; and we'll come and look at you from the stalls; and if you will marry, why, then, keep in your own sphere, and marry Kate Burgoyne!"

For now—when he was peevish, and discontented, and restless, or even sick at heart, he hardly knew why—there was no Nina to solace and soothe him with her gentle companionship, her wise counsel, her bright, and cheerful, and wayward good-humour. Apparently he had as many friends and acquaintances as before; and yet he was haunted by a curious sense of solitude. Of a morning he would go out for a stroll along the familiar thoroughfares—Bond-street, Conduit-