B. L. FARJEON

TOILERS OF BABYLON

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Toilers of Babylon

A Novel

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CHAPTER I.

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The horse was very old, the caravan very dilapidated. As it was dragged slowly along the country roads it shook and creaked and wheezed, protesting, as it were, that it had performed its duty in life and that its long labors justly entitled it to permanent repose. The horse, with its burden behind it, had long ago given over complaining, and, although its plight was no less woful, was demonstrative only through physical compulsion. With drooping head, lustreless eyes, and laboring breath, it plodded on, with many a longing look at tempting morsels out of its reach.

At the present moment it was at rest, released from the shafts, and partaking of a spare meal, humanly provided, eking it out with sweet tid-bits, not too abundant, munched from the fragrant earth. Sitting on the ground at the back of the caravan was a man with a book in his hand, which sometimes he read with the air of one who was in the company of an old and beloved friend; at other times he gazed around with pensive delight upon the beauties of nature, which in no part of the world find more exquisite representation than in the county of Surrey. In the rear of the caravan were lovely stretches of woodland, through vistas of which visions of cathedral aisles could be seen by the poetical eye. Across the narrow road was a scene which brought to the man's mind some lines in the book he held. Turning over its pages, he called out, in a voice not strong, but clear:

"William Browne might have camped on this very spot, Nansie, and drawn its picture. The resemblance is wonderful." Then he read from the book:

"'Here the curious cutting of a hedge,
There, by a pond, the trimming of the sedge;
Here the fine setting of well-shading trees,
The walks there mounting up by small degrees;
The gravel and the green so equal lie,
They, with the rest, drawing on your lingering eye.
Here the sweet smells that do perfume the air,
Arising from the infinite repair
Of odoriferous buds; and herbs of price,
As if it were another paradise,
So please the smelling sense that you are fain,
Where you last walked, to turn and walk again.
There the small birds with their harmonious notes
Sing to a spring that smileth as it floats.'"

A practical flight of wooden steps at the back of the caravan afforded means of getting in and out, and when the man began to speak aloud a young woman issued from the interior of the conveyance, and stood upon the top of the little ladder, listening to his words.

"It is very beautiful, father," she said. "To think that it was written nearly three hundred years ago!"

"Yes, Nansie, in the days of Shakespeare; and it might be to-day. That is the marvel of it."

He fell to his book again, and Nansie, who held a teapot in her hand, beat a retreat and resumed her domestic duties.

A peculiar feature of the caravan was that it was commercially empty. In times gone by it had been used for trading and speculative purposes, by gypsies, by enterprising travellers, by venders of basketware, by dealers in birds. It had served as mart and dwelling-house, and had played its part in numberless fairs when they were in fashion. Now it contained nothing marketable, and bore about it no sign to denote that its denizens were travelling for profit; but that, even in its old age, it was being put to pleasant use was proved by the smoke curling from the little chimney projecting through the roof.

In due time Nansie reappeared, bearing two loose boards which she laid upon a pair of low trestles, spreading over them a white cloth. Upon this improvised table she set a smoking teapot, milk and sugar, and a plate of bread-and-butter, cut reasonably thick.

"Tea is ready, father."

She ate with an appetite. Her father ate more daintily. Before putting the food into his mouth he cut it into devices of fish and bird, which he then proceeded to slice and carve, evidently adding thereby to his enjoyment of the humble fare. And yet through all, whether he ate or read or mused, there was about him a conspicuous air of melancholy.

It was the evening hour, and the season was spring. It was a warmer spring than usual; there was a taste of summer in the air. They ate in silence, until the man remarked:

"You did not hear the nightingale last night?"

"No, father."

"It sang for hours, Nansie."

She nodded, and said: "I wish you could sleep as soundly as I do, father."

"I used to in my young days, and must be content. I am glad you sleep well. You have other wishes."

"Yes," said Nansie, calmly.

"You have a fine trick of composure, Nansie. What stirs within does not always find outward expression."

"I take after you, father," said Nansie, in an affectionate tone. "I have you to thank for all that is good in me."

"It is a pleasant hearing, but it cuts both ways. Do not your other wishes trouble you?"

"A little; but everything will come right."

"A comfortable philosophy, my dear child; but womanly."

"It was mother's," said Nansie. "I caught it from her."

"I know; and I could never make the dear mother understand that it was inadequate for the practical purposes of life. Eventually we may be satisfied that everything will come right, but before the end is reached there are many turnings. The mischief of it is"--and there was now in his face as he turned it more fully towards her an expression both whimsical and sad--"that we carpet the turning we wish to take with flowers of fancy which, as we proceed, fade utterly away. That is a human experience."

"I am human," said Nansie, and she pressed her young face to his.

"I could laugh and I could weep," he said, responding fondly to her caress. "In truth, my dear child, you perplex me."

"Or," suggested Nansie, "is it you who are perplexing yourself?"

He shrugged his shoulders affectionately, and did not reply.

The young woman was fair and beautiful. Though cast in a delicate mould, she was strong and redolent of health. Her face was slightly browned, and harmonized with her brown hair and brown eyes, the light in which was bright and tender. The man looked old, but was barely forty-five, and on his face were signs of suffering, patiently borne. They were dressed like persons in humble life, but with a certain refinement, observable more in the woman than in the man. For five evenings they had tarried on this spot. Each morning they had harnessed the horse to the caravan, and had journeyed slowly and aimlessly onward till noon, and then had turned back towards their camping-ground, which lay in the shadow of the beautiful Surrey woods, at a sufficient distance from the narrow road to escape casual observation. The right of doing so probably did not belong to the wayfarers, and this had disturbed the man somewhat, but he had fixed upon the spot for a particular purpose, and up to this evening had not been interfered with.

"At what hour last night," said Nansie, presently, "did you hear the nightingale?"

"It must have been near midnight," replied her father. "At the same time to-night it will sing again. Have you finished your tea?"

"Yes, father."

"Then go again to the post-office, and see if there is a letter for me. I am growing anxious at not receiving one. You need not stop to clear these things; I will put them away."

She rose and stood for a moment with her hand resting lightly on his shoulder. He drew her face down to his, and kissed her. With a bright nod she left him, carrying with her a written order authorizing the delivery of any letters which might be lying in the post-office for her father.

Godalming, the town for which she was bound, was within a mile, and she stepped out briskly. But when she was about midway, and no one was in sight, she made a little detour into the woods, and drew from her bosom a picture. It was the portrait of a young man, and she gazed fondly at it, and kissed it as fondly. Then she drew forth a letter, and read it and pressed it to her lips; after which she replaced the letter and the portrait, and proceeded on her errand. Her thoughts may be thus fashioned into words:

"I wrote to him yesterday, and I sent him a telegram in the evening, knowing we should be here to-day. He may be absent. I hope not; I hope he has received both. Will he write, or will he come? Will he be angry that I have accompanied my father? At all events he knows, and he is never unjust. Ah! if he were here with us, how happy I should be! I love him, I love him, I love him!"

She blew a kiss into the air.

In less than half an hour she was in the Godalming post-office, making her inquiry.

"Mr. James Loveday," said the female clerk, looking at the order handed to her by Nansie--she was familiar with it, having seen it on each of the three previous days. "Yes, there is, I think."

She sorted some letters and handed one to Nansie, who, after hesitating a little, asked:

"Is there a letter for Miss Loveday?

"Are you Miss Loveday?"

"Yes."

"No, there are none."

"Or for Miss Nansie Loveday? N-a-n-s-i-e."

"That's a curious way to spell Nancy," said the clerk. "No, there are none."

Nansie lingered.

"Or for Manners?" she asked, with singular timidity and bashfulness.

"Mrs. or Miss?" inquired the clerk.

Nansie's face and neck were scarlet as she replied: "Mrs."

"None for that name," said the clerk.

She lingered still, and said, with a kind of pathetic imploring: "Would a telegram be received here if addressed to the post-office till called for?"

"Yes."

"I sent one yesterday, and expected an answer. Is there any for either name?"

"No."

"Thank you," said Nansie, and walked out of the office, and set her face towards the caravan.

The female clerk looked after her sympathizingly. There was a love note in her voice, and the post-office girl had a little sweethearting of her own on hand.

CHAPTER II.

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Nansie walked on, turning the letter in her hand, and glancing at it occasionally. The writing was strange to her, and on the envelope was the London post-mark. When, at the end of twenty minutes, she stood by her father's side, he was asleep.

"Father!" she said, bending over him.

He opened his eyes instantly, and smiled at her.

"Ah, Nansie, it is you. I drop off constantly now, on the smallest provocation from silence or solitude. But it can scarcely be called sleep; I am conscious of all that is going on around me." He observed the letter in her hand, and he said, eagerly, "You have one!" and took it from her. "Yes, it is from my brother Joseph; I was beginning to fear that he was dead."

He opened the letter and read it, and then remained a little while in thought. Presently he resumed the conversation.

"You saw your uncle once, Nansie. Have you a recollection of him?"

"Hardly any, father. How old could I have been when mother took me to see him? Not more than four or five, I think. I had a white dress and a blue sash, and I took him a bunch of flowers. He gave me some sweetmeats, I remember, and a shilling. But I have no recollection of his face. He lived in London, in a street off Whitechapel; that I know."

"He lives there now. Your mother never spoke to you of him?"

"Never."

"You should be made acquainted with the story, Nansie, while I am here to relate it."

She stopped the current of his speech.

"Father, these last three or four weeks you have dropped hints which make me very anxious; they weigh heavily upon me. I know you are not well, but you harp upon it as if it were a serious illness. Tell me, father."

They were sitting side by side now, and he was smoothing her hair with his hand.

"I am far from well, Nansie."

She interrupted him again, and now spoke with tremulous impetuosity.

"You should take advice, father. You should go to a doctor."

"There are reasons why I do not do so. First, Nansie, I have no money. Figuratively speaking, twopence ha'penny is all my fortune. To be exact, twenty-three shillings represents my worldly wealth. I am afraid I have been unwise, and yet I do not see what else I could have done. This Quixotic wandering of ours--I own it, it *is* Quixotic--was in a certain measure forced upon me. Poor old Fleming, who owed me money, bequeathed his horse and caravan to me, his only creditor, and then he died. Had he left behind him wife or child I should have transferred to them this delightfully awkward property. Satisfying myself that it was legally and morally mine, the idea entered my head that a wandering tour through our lovely country lanes would invigorate me,

would put new life into me. And for a companion, who more sweet than my own dear Nansie!"

"There was another reason, father," said Nansie, gravely.

"There was another reason," said Mr. Loveday, apprehensively. "I am coming to it. It would have been useless to consult physicians. I have consulted them again and again, and the result was always the same. A fever? Yes, there would be a fair chance of curing it. A toothache, a cold in the head, a chill? Yes, they could prescribe for those ills--but not for mine. It is my old heart-complaint, of which I have been repeatedly warned. When I was a lad it was thought I should not grow to manhood, but I did, as you see, and married your mother, and have by my side a dear child to cheer and comfort me. It is well to be prepared-- Why, Nansie, crying?"

"I cannot help it, father, you speak so solemnly." She conquered her agitation and said: "That is not the reason I mean. There is another."

"Concerning myself, Nansie?"

"Concerning me, father."

"You wish me to speak of it?"

"It will be best."

"So be it. I have not been always with you, Nansie, to guide and counsel you. Worldly circumstances would not permit me. I have cause to reproach myself. Had I been a carpenter or a bootmaker I might have been better able to fulfil my duties."

"No one can reproach you, father; and I, who love you with my heart and soul, less than any in the world."

"I thank you, child, and am grateful. At all events, something was done; I fitted you for the sphere of a private governess, and you obtained a situation. From time to time I came to see you, and you seemed to be happy."

"I was happy, father."

"You filled the situation two years, and then the sudden removal to another country of the family in which you were employed deprived you of it, and threw you upon the world. You did not inform me of this at the time, Nansie."

"You had troubles and struggles of your own, father, and I did not wish to harass you."

"Your endeavors to obtain another situation were unsuccessful; the gentleman who engaged you as governess to his children went away in your debt; you were almost at the end of your resources. Of all this I was ignorant until a few weeks since when I came to see you. Then and then only did I learn what had occurred; then and then only did I realize the dangerous position in which you were placed; then and then only did I discover that your affections were engaged to a gentleman whose father is a man of great wealth. My duty was clear; I had come into possession of this legacy, and it seemed to afford a favorable opportunity for the distraction of an unhealthy fancy-- You place your hand on my arm; you wish to speak."

"No, father, no," said Nansie, struggling with her feelings; in the gathering dusk her father could not see the play of emotion in her features; and, indeed, during this latter recital she kept her face averted from him; "I am not yet at liberty to do so. Go on."

"For the distraction of an unhealthy fancy," he resumed, "which might grow into a disease--which might wreck the happiness of a life most dear to me, I called upon you by the tie which binds and unites us--I am not wrong, dear child, in saying it unites us?"

"No, my dear father, it unites us now and ever."

"My child!' I called upon you to accompany me in my wanderings, and you consented. I think I have stated it fairly Nansie?"

"Quite fairly, father."

"Have you anything new to say about it?"

"Nothing, except"--and a delicious smile played upon her lips--"except that I love Kingsley."

"That is not new," he said, in a tone of whimsical reproach; "it is old. You have told me that before."

"It is always new to me, father. And there is something else I *must* say."

"Say it, Nansie."

"Kingsley loves me."

"Neither is that new. Apart from this I sometimes have an odd idea that you have a secret which you are keeping from me."

"If I said I had, it would be half revealing it. Father, time will show."

"That is a wiser philosophy than that 'Everything will come right.' Time does and will show. Shall I now relate the story of your uncle?"

"If you please, father."

"It will not take me long. Your mother, my dear Nansie, had two ardent lovers, your father and your uncle."

"That was sad."

"These are strokes of fate not to be avoided, and love, which unites, sometimes severs. It severed me and my brother, and neither he nor I, nor your mother, Nansie, was to blame for it. In youth we had a great affection for each other, although our characters were dissimilar. Our father was a poor gentleman--our family boat never floated into a golden stream--and he gave us as good an education as we could have gained in schools And colleges. He had a taste for books, and he cultivated the taste in us, his only children. He had ideas, too, and to be in his company was an entertainment. When he died he left each of us a little money, not more than a hundred pounds apiece, with which we were to seek our fortunes. We remained together, and in this association we became acquainted with your mother. By that time I had grown into a dreamer, and, I am afraid, a vagrant; your uncle was a dreamer also, but his visions were not entirely Utopian, and he was less of a Bohemian than I. He loved your mother passionately, and by force of fate we were rivals. We both tried our fortunes with her; it was not a case of one supplanting the other, but fair play on both sides; he failed and I succeeded. Your mother was a sweet and beautiful lady, and how I won her I know not."

"Father," whispered Nansie, "you have a silver tongue and the heart of a man. That is how you won my mother."

"Well, well, child, I should be past these flatteries, but as you said of yourself a while ago, I am human. My brother, learning that he had lost what he would have given the world to gain, cut himself adrift from us. He would not listen to reason, and I do not wonder at it. When was love really

reasonable? What he did he did with determination, and all my implorings could not move him. He vowed that he and I should evermore be strangers, and so departed, and from that day we have not met. After my marriage I wrote to him from time to time, but he never replied to one of my letters. It was only when you and your mother returned from the visit you paid him that I learned he kept a bookshop in the East of London. I see his handwriting now for the first time in twenty years. Your mother and I constantly spoke about him; he possessed many admirable qualities; but, were I pushed to it, I should find it very difficult to say into what kind of a man he would grow, except that he would be constant and steadfast in his opinions. It was in the hope that he would soften towards me that, when you were a child, I sent you with your mother to see him. I see you now as you recalled yourself, in your little, white dress and blue sash, with the bunch of flowers you were to present to him. These are a part of a woman's innocently cunning ways, and I know it was in your dear mother's heart that, through you, your uncle should be won over to us. But the hopes in which we indulged were not realized. Your uncle was true to his word. It used to be said of him as a boy that he would die rather than break it--in which, when it becomes fixed in an earnest nature, there is sometimes a touch of folly or injustice--and I can recall many small incidents as a proof of his possession of this quality."

"But he has written to you at last, father?"

"Yes, Nansie."

"In a kindly spirit?"

"Yes, I am thankful to say."

"This is good. Is my uncle married?"

"No. In our last interview he vowed that he would never marry, and I doubt whether he would ever have yielded to the sentiment of love had his heart been again that way inclined. I deeply regret it. Life without love is at best a barren affair."

With a sweet look Nansie raised her dewy eyes to his. He divined what, in the darkness, he could not clearly see.

"It must be an honorable, honest, earnest love, child. You understand that?"

"I understand it, father."

"We will renew the subject another time. I am tired, and night has fallen. It is almost like summer--the sweetest spring in my remembrance. There is a fascination in shadows--spiritual suggestions and possibilities which cannot occur to the mind in sunlight. The night is dark and beautiful:

"'And silence girt the wood. No warbling tongue
Talked to the echo,
And all the upper world lay in a trance.'

"Life is a dream, dear child. May yours be a happy one!"

Then they did not speak for many minutes, and then it was Nansie's voice that was first heard.

"What did you say to my uncle in the letter you wrote to him, father?"

"I spoke to him of my illness, and of you. When your mother died I wrote informing him; but he took no notice of my letter. This time I appealed to him. I said, if anything happened to me you would be without a home. His answer

is that you can find a home with him. My mind is greatly relieved. Now, my dear child, we will retire."

"I will see to the beds, father. I shall not be long."

She ascended the little flight of wooden steps, and the next moment a light from within the caravan was shining through one of the windows. This delightfully primitive dwelling-house contained three rooms or compartments. One was the kitchen, where the meals were cooked, and, in bad weather, partaken of. The other two were the sleeping-apartments of Nansie and her father. In each of these bedrooms was a window with a double sash, opening up and down.

The beds were soon ready, and then Nansie called her father. He ascended the steps, and, pulling them up after him, made them fast. Father and daughter were thus in a stronghold, as it were, safe from invasion. Before entering the castle Mr. Loveday had seen that the old horse was safe, and had tethered it by a rope to one of the wheels. Then, kissing Nansie with much tenderness, he retired to rest. He slept in the back room, Nansie in the front, and the only means of ingress and egress was the back door in Mr. Loveday's bedroom. Thus he served as a kind of watch-dog to his daughter. She, partly disrobing, sat awhile by the open window, looking out upon the shadows. She had much to think of--her father's illness, their worldly circumstances, her absent lover; but her mind was as healthy as her body, and she looked upon all things hopefully. She did not muse long; finishing her preparations for bed, she closed the windows, and slid between the sheets. She slept for an hour, and awoke; slept again for a little while, and again

awoke. This was not her usual habit; as a rule she could sleep seven or eight hours at a stretch. Perhaps she was listening for the nightingale's song. It came, and she listened in delight to the bird of love calling for its mate; and as she lay awake another sound reached her ears, as of a heavy body moving softly outside. It was not the old horse. What could it be? She slipped out of bed, and listened at the door which led from her room to her father's. She heard his soft breathing; he seemed to be peacefully sleeping. Presently, as she stood in darkness, she heard a whispering voice which caused her heart to throb wild with joy.

"Nansie!"

She glided to the window and raised the lower sash.

"Kingsley!" she whispered, musically, in reply.

"You are here, my darling! I have found you!"

"Hush! Speak softly, or you will awake my father. What a time to come! How good you are!"

"I received your letter and telegram, and could not rest What a hunt I have had for you! I must speak to you, Nansie. Can't you come out?"

"Not to-night, Kingsley; it is impossible. Oh, Kingsley, how happy you have made me!"

"What else do I live for? But I must speak to you, I say. I cannot wait."

"You must--till to-morrow morning. Listen to the nightingale. Is it not sweet?"

"To-morrow morning, you say. An eternity! How am I to be sure you will not disappear before then?"

"I shall be here, in the woods, at sunrise. Could I keep away, knowing you were waiting for me? There--you make

me say foolish things!"

"Give me your hand, Nansie."

She put her hand out of the window; her white arm was partly bared by the loosened sleeve. He, standing on the spoke of the wheel, took her hand and kissed it, and then did not relinquish it.

"You are well, Nansie?"

"Yes, Kingsley."

"Quite well?"

"Quite well."

"And your father?"

"He is not well, I grieve to say."

"We will make him so, you and I. But what a freak--to live like this!"

"It is delightful."

"Without me?"

"I mean now that you are here. Good-night, Kingsley."

"A moment yet. I will wait till the nightingale has finished its song."

"You foolish Kingsley! It will sing for hours."

"Nansie, I have so much to tell you!"

"And I to tell you; but this is not the time. To-morrow at sunrise."

"Yes, to-morrow at sunrise." He kissed her hand again. "Nansie, my father has arrived home."

"At last!" There was a tremor of apprehension in her voice. "Have you seen him?"

"Not yet. But he has sent for me, and I am going to him after seeing you to-morrow."

"Where will you sleep, Kingsley?"

"I have a bed at Godalming; but I am in no humor for sleep."

"Be reasonable, Kingsley, if you love me." She leaned forward, raised his hand to her lips, and kissed it. "Now are you content?"

"I should be false to you if I were to say I am. There, I have given you back your hand. Are *you* content?"

"It is yours forever and ever. Good-night, my love!"

"Good-night, my heart! To-morrow at sunrise. Mind--not a moment later! Do not close the window yet."

He managed to pluck some daisies, and he threw them up at her. She caught them, and even in the dark she could distinguish the golden tufts within their silver crowns.

"Good-night, my love," she sighed again, pressing the flowers to her lips.

"Good-night, my heart!"

She listened to the last faint echo of his footfall, and then she sought her bed, and, smiling happily, fell asleep, with the daisies on her pillow.

CHAPTER III.

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Between midnight and sunrise a slight shower had fallen, scarcely damping the ground, but sufficient to draw out the perfume of the young flowers. The promise of spring was fulfilled, and tender bloom peeped up in places, and in others showed itself more boldly. About the trunks of ancient trees the sweet woodruff lurked; in sunny hedges the "cuckoo buds of yellow hue" proclaimed themselves; the heart-shaped leaves of the Irish shamrock were slowly unfolding; species of wild geranium and the strangely shaped orchises were abundant, the general commonwealth being represented by myriads of golden buttercups. Nansie and Kingsley stood near a great hawthorn, not yet in full bud, but already emitting a deliciously fine fragrance born of the light rain which had fallen during the night.

"Why, Nansie," Kingsley was saying to her, "I never suspected you had gypsy blood in you."

"I have none, as you know," was her response. "It was my father's whim, for which, I dare say, if he were here and was inclined to do so, he could give you several reasons. You can guess some of them, Kingsley."

"The first and foremost is that he wished to keep us apart. He has not succeeded. I would hunt you all over the world, Nansie."

"You must not be unjust to my father," said Nansie, "He was always full of fancies, Kingsley, but never harbored a

bad one; and you must remember he does not know our secret yet. I love and honor him; he is a good man."

"Or you could not have been his daughter. Full of fancies, indeed!" And Kingsley turned his head in the direction of the caravan. "Surely this is the strangest that ever entered the head of man! A gentleman and a scholar--for he is both, Nansie, and I suppose it was partly through your breeding that I was drawn to you--to go wandering through the land with his daughter, as though they belonged to the lost tribes! But there is an odd pleasantry about it that tickles one, after all."

"You would enjoy it, Kingsley," said Nansie, with a delicious laugh, nestling close to him; "it has really been delightful."

"Ah, you said that last night, and I asked you, in surprise, how it could have been, without me?"

"And I did not have wit enough to answer you properly. Think of the hour! I was scarcely half awake. And Kingsley, having the fullest trust in you, which nothing ever can shake, you would not wish me to be unhappy even when we are parted. I can think of you in a happy mood when you are not with me, if only by looking forward to the time when we shall always be together. It will be soon, will it not?"

"It must, it shall, either way," he replied; "but I do not think I was wrong in asking you to wait a little while."

"You have done everything for the best, so far as I am concerned-- But for yourself!" Nansie paused and sighed.

"But for myself," he said, taking up her words, "I have done that which is happiest and best, and that which falls to the lot of few men."

"Ah, Kingsley?" she said, hiding her face on his shoulder.

"I have won a faithful heart. What more could I desire?"

"It is sweet to hear you say so; but if your father should be angry--"

"What then? We are young and strong and willing, and shall be able to manage. I have friends who will give me a helping hand, as I would give them were our places changed. New men spring up every day, Nansie; the ladder is full of them, rising higher and higher. Why should I not be one of them? Why should I not be fortunate--in money, I mean; I am content with everything else--as my father was? When he was my age he had little more than I have. See what he is now. A power, mixing with those who bear historic names. And there are others as he is. The old ranks are widening, new men creep in, hold their heads high, and occupy positions of power and profit. The question will presently be, who are the masters? No, no, Nansie, I don't despair. I should not be worthy of you if I did. What ennobles a man? Rank? Hardly. He can prove himself worthy of it--that is all; then he may consider himself truly distinguished. Rank is mortal. Love is immortal. Ask the poets. Not that they know much better than any one else. After all, it is the heart that should be followed."

"I have followed mine," said Nansie, looking fondly at him.

She did not understand the drift of all he said, nor, indeed, did he himself, nor was he aware that his speech was of a wandering nature. He spoke enthusiastically, and sometimes he ran his fingers through his hair; and although he did this rather perplexedly, there was no indication in his

manner of any want of confidence in himself or his opinions. When Nansie said she had followed her heart, he kissed her and said:

"And I followed mine; it led me here to your side, my dearest, and I am happy. This is the loveliest morning! The rain has sweetened everything--for us! You are teaching me things, Nansie. I had no idea the early morning was so beautiful. The flowers, the dew--it is wonderful. If I were a poet I should say the earth was covered with jewels."

"You are a poet, Kingsley."

"No, no; I see things through your eyes. It is you who are the poet. But I have written verses, too. The fellows say poetry doesn't pay, and you must not encourage me. We must be sensibly worldly. What some of the fellows used to say was that I was prone to be discursive, but they were not judges. Between you and me, they were a little jealous because I could talk. Well, the gift of oratory is not a bad one--I don't say I have it, but I am seldom at a loss for words. It may not be a gift--it may be an art which a man may cultivate. That brings me back to my father. He was always fond of hearing me talk. He has often said, 'Talk away, Kingsley; you shall be in the House one day.' You know what I mean by the House, Nansie?--Parliament."

"I like to hear you speak of your father, Kingsley, and that he loves you."

"He does, sincerely. He says I am to do great things, and that all his hopes are centred in me. Why do you sigh, Nansie?"

"Did I sigh, Kingsley?" she asked, with feminine duplicity. "It must be because I am overjoyed that we are together."

"Dear girl! The reason I ramble on so about my father is because I wish you to know him thoroughly. He is very practical--so am I. Sentiment does not run in our family. Only he must be humored, because everything depends upon him. He is rather proud; he has a right to be so, being a self-made man. And obstinate; so am I. You do not know all sides of me yet, Nansie. I have heard it said of a man who has raised himself by his own exertions: 'Oh, he is only a man who has made money!' Now that is an exhibition of ignorance. For a man who was once poor to become a magnate--well, there is an element of romance in it. Look at Whittington. My father was a poor boy; his parents were poor, and could not afford to give him a good education. What he knows he has learned since he became a man. That opens up the question whether it was of any use sending me to college; whether a mistake was not made in not throwing me upon the world, as he was thrown? He has spoken to me of the philosopher's stone, and said he found it when he was young. 'Make use of others,' he says, and has furnished illustrations. 'Take a thousand workingmen,' he says, 'bricklayers, stonemasons, carpenters, anything. They work a certain number of hours per day for a certain number of shillings per week. So manage that from their labor you reap a profit of half an hour a day out of each man. That is a profit of five hundred hours per day for the organizer. At eight working hours per day you thus put, roughly speaking, into your pocket the earnings of sixty men out of the thousand.' That is the way in which my father became a contractor. Bridges, canals, foreign railways, he has made them all, and has had as many as eight thousand

men working for him at one time. And all out of nothing. But this is prosaic stuff. Let us talk of ourselves. Your father is ill, you said. What is the matter with him?"

"He suffers from his heart, Kingsley; I am in deep distress about him."

"Perhaps he is frightening himself unnecessarily, my dear. He must consult the best physicians. Thorough rest, freedom from anxiety, a warmer climate--leave it to me, Nansie. It is only a matter of money."

Nansie thought with sadness of the disclosure made by her father of the extent of his worldly resources, and at that moment the subject of her thoughts made his appearance. Mr. Loveday did not betray surprise at finding his daughter with Kingsley, but she blushed scarlet when she saw him, and Kingsley was not free from a certain embarrassment.

"You rose before me this morning," said Mr. Loveday to Nansie. "Have you been out long?"

"About half an hour, father," she replied.

"You have not met Mr. Manners by accident," he observed.

"No, father; Kingsley and I made the appointment last night."

"Last night! At what strange hour, then, and where?" Kingsley looked at her encouragingly, and whispered: "Be brave. I will tell him all."

This gave her courage.

"The appointment, father," she said, archly, "was made last night when the nightingale was singing."

He allowed his eyes to rest for a brief space upon hers, and he saw truth and innocence so clearly depicted therein