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TOILERS OF BABYLON

A Novel

BY

B. L. FARJEON

AUTHOR OF
"PERIL OF RICHARD PARDON" "GREAT PORTER SQUARE"
"AUNT PARKER" ETC.

For life the prologue is to death
And love its sweetest flower
And death is as the spring of life
And love its richest dower

NEW YORK

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TOILERS OF BABYLON.

* * * * * *

CHAPTER I.

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.

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.

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 that a deep breath escaped him, as though a weight had been lifted off his heart. But this assurance of his daughter's guilelessness was another argument against the man who, in the father's opinion, was playing upon her feelings.

"Go and prepare breakfast, Nansie," said Mr. Loveday. "I will join you presently."

"And Kingsley?" she asked. "He will also come?"

"We shall see, we shall see," said Mr. Loveday, fretfully. "He and I have much to say to each other."

"But I shall expect him," she said, kissing her father; then, with a bright look at Kingsley, she departed.

"It was the only way to get rid of her," said Mr. Loveday, with a look of displeasure at the young man. "Even a father is compelled sometimes to practise deceit in his dealings with his children."

The implied accusation in this remark was acknowledged by Kingsley in silence. Impulsive and wayward as he was, he was apt to resent an imputation reflecting upon his honor.

"But then," continued Mr. Loveday, "a father is often justified in his deceit, especially in such a case as this, when he has to deal with a young and inexperienced girl."

His manner was as unfortunate as his matter, and it was impossible to mistake his meaning; but Kingsley exhibited no resentment.

"You are bringing an accusation against me, sir," he said. "The least you can do is to set it forth in plain terms."

"I will do so. Were I disposed to be lenient--which I am not, because the welfare of my daughter is too near to my heart--I should call your conduct rash and inconsiderate. As it is, I have no hesitation in declaring it to be criminal."

"I am glad Nansie is not present to hear you, sir."

"I, also, am glad. You know as well as I do that I would not dare to speak so plainly were she here. I should have to temporize with her--in plainer terms, to use some of the arts you have used to entangle her."

"Have I used such arts to such a purpose?" asked Kingsley. He was not accustomed to be addressed in such a manner and to be misjudged so promptly. "You make me aware of it for the first time."

"Use none with me; be straightforward, if it is in your power. I am my daughter's protector, and I intend to protect her with firmness and authority." And yet as he spoke he pressed his hand to his heart, and looked before him apprehensively for a moment with the manner of a man to whom a spiritual warning had presented itself. Firm and confident as he endeavored to make his speech, he felt his powerlessness. He was a beggar, and the shadow of death hovered over him. Nevertheless he bravely pursued what he conceived to be his duty. "I have called your conduct criminal. You have some knowledge of the world. In what other words would you describe the behavior of a young man of fashion--you see I do you justice--"

"You do not," interrupted Kingsley, "you do me a gross injustice, as you will be compelled to acknowledge before we have done."

"How other than criminal is the conduct of a young man of fashion when he makes an appointment with a pure and innocent girl such as this in which I have surprised you? What construction would the world place upon it?"

"I care little for the world, sir, where my affections are concerned."

"That is to say, that you care little for the consequences of wrong-doing. I know, I know; it is the fashion of your set."

"Upon my honor, sir," said Kingsley, warmly, "I cannot make up my mind how to take you. The attitude you have assumed rather puts me on my mettle, and though I could easily disarm you, perhaps it is as well that I should first hear you out."

"The attitude *you* assume, young gentleman, is an utterly unwarrantable one. I am speaking strongly, I admit, but I am justified by my duty as a parent."

"And yet, sir, I may have equal justice on my side."

"There can be no question of equality in this matter."

"Pardon me, sir," said Kingsley--hurt as he was, his bearing towards Nansie's father was, if not deferential, respectful--"I thought this was a matter of the affections." And, conscious of his integrity, he could not help adding: "Shall your daughter be the judge, sir, between us?"

In Mr. Loveday's eyes this was an added offence.

"It is an unworthy challenge, Mr. Manners. It is not difficult for an inexperienced girl to choose between a lover and a father. Old affections, old ties, all records of a parent's anxious care, fade into nothingness when her heart is touched by the new love." He spoke now plaintively, and he noted the sympathizing look in Kingsley's face. It inspired him with hope; his voice became more gentle, his manner more appealing. "Mr. Manners, have pity on me. Let us speak as honest man to honest man."

"Agreed, sir," said Kingsley, heartily.

"My daughter is a poor girl; I am a poor man, and have been so all my life. There is no great misfortune in this; as much happiness is to be found in the ranks of the poor as in the ranks of the rich. When, some short time since, it first came to my knowledge that my daughter entertained an affection for you, there was but one course open to me--to effect a separation between you, in the hope that time and distance might work a healthful cure, and cause her to forget you."

"But why, sir?" asked Kingsley, with smiling eyes.

"You ask why? Surely you can yourself supply the answer. There is between you a disparity which renders it impossible that any good can spring from such an affection."

"No, no, sir; not impossible. Pardon me for interrupting you."

"I, as a matter of course, can form some reasonable conception of the future that lies before my child. She is poor; she will live among the poor; it is her lot, and not a hard one. It is only temptation, it is only a longing for what is out of her reach, that is likely to spoil her life, as it has spoiled the lives of many who have not had the strength to resist. Will you help to spoil the life of a child who is very dear to me?"

"No," said Kingsley, fervently, "as Heaven is my judge, no!"

"Mr. Manners," said Mr. Loveday, holding out his hand to the young man, "you said a moment or two since that I was doing you an injustice, and that I should be compelled to acknowledge it. I acknowledge it now, and I ask your pardon. You have been simply thoughtless. The time may come when, with children of your own to protect, you will look back to this meeting with satisfaction."

"I shall always do that, sir. And now, sir, as we are on better terms, I may ask what it is you expect of me."

"That you never see my daughter more; that you give me your promise not to intrude yourself upon her, nor write to her, and in that way help her in the task that lies before her, the task of forgetfulness."

"A hard task, sir."

"It may be, and all the sweeter when it is accomplished, because of the dangers from which its performance saves her. You promise me this?"

"A moment, sir. If your daughter and I had been equal in station--which we are not; she is far

above me." Being more at his ease, he relapsed now into his old manner of discursiveness. "If you knew me better you would excuse me for flying off at a tangent. It is a butterfly habit of mine, though I hope there is something of the grub in me! It may be needed by and by. If, as I was about to say, your daughter and I were equal in worldly station, both being equally poor or equally rich, and I asked you for her hand, would you refuse it to me?"

"I think not," replied Mr. Loveday. "But knowing so little of you it would be necessary that I should know more, that I should be to some extent satisfied as to your past life."

"And your inquiries in that respect being satisfactory," interrupted Kingsley, "you would not refuse?"

"My daughter's heart should decide for me."

"Let it decide for you now, sir," said Kingsley, in a tone both light and earnest. "No, do not take it amiss that I make this proposition, but listen to me a moment. Hitherto I have been pretty well thrust aside in this matter, as if I were a bit of stone, without feelings, or something very nearly resembling a monster with them. I am quite conscious that I am of an erratic disposition, flying hither and thither as the whim seizes me--almost as bad, my dear sir, as your eccentric wanderings in a caravan--but I am not at all conscious that I have any very distinct vice in me; the explanation of which may be that I lack strength of character, a proof that it is as undesirable in one man as it is desirable in another. I am not speaking in praise of myself, except perhaps in a negative way, which is not much to one's credit. Though I may tell you, sir, that I have not unfrequently been called a radical, and a radical is a personage. What I am endeavoring to express is that I have feelings, and that I should prefer rather to be happy than miserable. There is nothing unreasonable in that, I hope."

As he paused for a reply, Mr. Loveday, somewhat mystified, said: "No, there is nothing unreasonable in such a desire."

"That much being admitted," continued Kingsley, "I repeat my request that your daughter's heart should decide for you, as you would allow it to decide for you if you supposed me to be a poor man. And this sends me flying off again. My father is a rich man; I am nothing but what he makes me. If he were to turn me off, my entire worldly wealth would consist of an inconsiderable sum of six hundred pounds, the whole of which would be swallowed up in paying my debts. Give me credit for frankness, sir."

"I do. Your frankness convinces me that for your own sake, as well as for my daughter's, it is best that you and she should not meet again."

"But she expects me, sir, and in your company. I would wager that she has prepared breakfast for me-- There, sir, don't turn impatiently away; it is the fault of my temperament that I can be light and serious in a breath, that I can mean much and seem to mean little. This I promise. If you will allow me to accompany you to the caravan, where your daughter is waiting for us, I will abide by your decision, to be arrived at within five short minutes after we are together, as to whether I shall remain to breakfast or bid you farewell. Come, sir, I can't speak fairer."

There was an irresistible ingenuousness in Kingsley's voice and manner, and Mr. Loveday led the way to the caravan. Breakfast was laid, and Nansie, busy within the dwelling-house on wheels, cried out in the cheerfullest of voices:

"Is that you, father?"

"Yes, Nansie," said Mr. Loveday.

"And Kingsley?"

"Yes, Nansie," said the young man. "Never mind the teapot. Come out at once; I have only five minutes' grace."

Nansie immediately ran down the little flight of wooden steps, and looked from one to the other of the men, both so dear to her.

"Nansie," said Kingsley, "I said that I would tell your father all. Forgive me; I have not done so."

"Why, Kingsley?"

"Because I left it to you."

"I may speak, then?"

"Yes."

And now there were tears in Nansie's eyes, happy tears. She approached closer to her father and took his hand.

"You said last night, father, that you thought I had a secret which I was keeping from you."

"Yes, child."

"I had; but I had given Kingsley a promise not to reveal it without his permission. I have his permission now, and I will tell it." Her bosom heaved, her lips trembled; she gazed fondly at her father.

"Well, child?"

"You will not be angry, father?"

"I do not know, Nansie."

"Father," said Nansie--her arms were round his neck, and her face half hidden on his breast--"Kingsley and I are married."

"Married!" cried Mr. Loveday, in a tone of wondering happiness.

"Yes, dear, married. Kingsley thought it best to wait until his father, who has been for some time abroad, returned home before we made it known; but I am glad that you know it earlier--glad and happy, my dear father. I wrote to Kingsley--I could not help it, father; I was afraid of losing him, we were wandering about so--and he came last night, when you were asleep. I was awake, listening to the nightingale. Kingsley being outside and I in, we could not talk comfortably together; that is how we met this morning at sunrise. You will forgive us, father, will you not?"

"Forgive you, dear child!" said Mr. Loveday, holding out his hand to Kingsley, who took it and pressed it warmly. "What can I have to forgive, seeing you and Kingsley so happy, and knowing that you have a protector? It is I who should ask forgiveness of him."

"Not at all, my dear sir, not at all," cried Kingsley, hastily. "I was to blame for allowing you to labor a moment under a misapprehension."

"My dear Nansie! my dear, dear child!" murmured the happy father. Then, turning to Kingsley: "When do you expect your father home?" As he asked the question his face became grave. He saw the difficulties in their way.

"He has arrived, sir. I had a letter from him yesterday, and I am going to him, to confess all. It was partly that, and partly because of Nansie's letter, but chiefly because I could not exist without seeing her before I went to my father, which brought me here. But, sir, my father is not the question."

"What is, then, Kingsley?" asked Mr. Loveday, still very grave.

"The question is, whether you are going to ask me to stay to breakfast with you."

Mr. Loveday brightened; there was something contagious in the young man's gay spirits.

"I invite you, Kingsley," he said.

"Thank you, sir; I am famished, Nansie."

Standing upon the wooden steps, she turned and gazed fondly at her father and her husband, and as her bright eyes shone upon them there issued from a thicket of trees a most wonderful chorus of birds. And Mr. Loveday, quoting from his favorite poet, said:

"'See, the spring
Is the earth enamelling,
And the birds on every tree
Greet the morn with melody.'"

And Nansie, going slowly into the caravan, thought that life was very sweet and the world very beautiful.

CHAPTER IV.

On the evening of the following day Kingsley arrived at his father's house in London. It was situated in the centre of fashion, and had been built by the rich contractor himself upon part of a

freehold which he had purchased upon terms so advantageous that, as he was in the habit of boasting, his own mansion "stood him in next to nothing," occasionally adding that he could find a purchaser for it at a day's notice for seventy-five thousand pounds. He was fond of dealing in large sums even in figures of speech, and he was to some extent justified in this habit by the circumstances of his career.

It was a wonderful career, commencing with nothing and marching into millions. A poor boy, doubly orphaned and thrown upon the world before he could stand upright, without a friend, without a penny, without shoes to his feet, he had grown somehow into a sturdy manhood, and when he was twenty years of age he stood six feet two in his stockings, and could fell an ox with his fist. Therefore, even at that humble period in his career, he was renowned among his fellows, and held a distinguished position. No man could equal him in strength; many tried and were laid low; giants travelled from afar to try conclusions with Val Manners, and all met with the same fate. Had he cared he might have developed into the greatest prizefighter the world had ever known, and have worn diamonded belts and jewelled stars, and become as a king among men. Newspapers would have heralded his doings in large type; he could have travelled in state like an ambassador; he might have exhibited himself and earned a princely income; the aristocracy would have patted his broad back, and titled ladies would have cast admiring glances at him. For this is the age of muscle as well as intellect, and a bully may take rank with Homer.

But Val Manners was not a bully, and his tastes were not for the prize-ring. He was proud of his great strength, because it gave him the mastery, and he used it upon needed occasions to maintain his position; but he did not love fighting for fighting's sake. In his early life he knew that he had biceps of steel and a constitution which defied wind and weather; but he did not know that he had a subtle brain and a talent for administration which were to lead him to eminence and enormous wealth. This knowledge dawned upon him afterwards, when he began to make successes, when he began to gauge men and understand them.

He commenced life as a bricklayer, and even as a boy his strength and fearlessness were quoted, and he found himself in demand. He did not seem to know what fear was; he could climb the shakiest and tallest of ladders, carrying wonderful weights; he could stand upon dizzy heights and look smilingly down. His possession of these qualities caused him to be selected for dangerous tasks, and he was never known to shrink from one, however perilous. All this time he earned barely sufficient to appease his enormous appetite. He received no education, but he had a native gift of figures. It was not till he reached his third decade that he could read and write. Long before that, however, his arithmetical talents had laid the foundation of his fortune. It was a fortune made partly out of stone and metal, but chiefly out of other men's labor.

Chance threw into his way a small contract. A retired pawnbroker wanted a house built in North Islington, and was not satisfied with the estimates he received from established firms. "It ought to be done for seven and a half per cent. less," said he, and he called Val Manners to his aid, having had occasion to observe the calm and skilful manner in which the young artisan went about his work. "He does the work of two men," said the pawnbroker, "and is probably paid for the work of one." He ascertained, upon inquiry, that this was the case; Val Manners, working so many hours a day, was paid so much a week. It was not that, out of boastfulness, he desired to do more work in a given time than comrades less strong and capable than himself, it was simply that he did his work honestly without regard to comparisons. The pawnbroker discovered in his first interview with Val Manners that the huge, common-looking man had a head for figures. He put the matter of his house before Val Manners, and asked him to prepare an estimate. The result was that Val Manners threw up his situation, and became a master builder in a small way; the result also was that the pawnbroker got his house built for twelve per cent, less than the lowest of the estimates submitted to him by old-established firms.

In this first operation the brain power of Val Manners made itself manifest. He worked himself, of course, and thereby saved one man's labor; this went into his own pocket. Indeed, being stirred and excited by this higher flight into life's struggles, he worked harder than had been his usual habit, and may be said to have done the work of at least two men and a half in the building of the pawnbroker's house; and this extra money also went into his pocket. Then, again, in the selection of men but of work who applied to be taken on, he chose the strongest, and, being always on the spot, saw that he was not cheated out of a quarter of an hour by one and ten minutes by another. Thus, when the contract was finished, he was a great many days to the good, and he found that he was richer by sixty pounds than he would have been had he continued to be a servant. This set him thinking.

The pawnbroker was so satisfied with the bargain that he proposed the building of a row of houses in a poor locality. Val Manners was ready and glad, and pursued the same tactics as before, and worked harder than ever. The second contract being finished to everybody's satisfaction, Val Manners reckoned up his gains. He was master of a capital of three hundred pounds.

From this point his career was a succession of triumphs, until his capital amounted to a hundred thousand pounds. It was wonderful how his money accumulated; it grew while he slept, for he often had relays of men working for him by night as well as by day. He was a hard taskmaster, perfectly just in his dealings, keeping to his word and his engagements with unerring fidelity, but exacting from those in his employ an absolute faithfulness, the least infringement of which meant instant dismissal. It was no longer Val Manners, but Mr. Manners, the great Mr.

Manners, who had plumped into the very richest part of a Tom Tiddler's ground open to every enterprising man, and picked and pocketed the plums growing therein. He did not allow himself to become bewildered by his success, but pursued his way calmly and masterfully as regarded his own undertakings, and with a vigilant watchfulness which frequently turned a probable loss into a certain profit. He undertook no more small contracts; all his business dealings were now on a vast scale, and no project was too stupendous for him to grapple with. It was not England alone that supplied his master mind with material to expend its energies upon; he sought abroad for contracts, and laid railways in deserts, built huge bridges touching the clouds, and made wonderful waterways for facilities of commerce. He became world-renowned, and the name of Manners, the great contractor, was a passport in every part of the globe.

It was to his advantage that he married young, his partner being no other than the daughter of his first patron, the pawnbroker. She was not in any sense a remarkable person, but she had an ambition to shine in society, and it was from her that Mr. Manners received the limited education which enabled him, at thirty years of age, to read and write. His ideal as to social position also grew with his wealth; but he had tact enough to understand that it was not possible for him to occupy a foremost position as a public leader. This, however, did not prevent him from building a grand house in the heart of fashionable London, nor from mixing among the best. He was not out of place there, for he had the rare wisdom of being able to hold his tongue, and never to speak assertively except upon the business with which he was familiar. On those occasions he was listened to with respect and deference, and his words had weight; he trod upon no man's corns by expressing opinions upon matters of which he had not made himself master; he was content that his works should speak for him. Eloquent, indeed, was the record which, so far as he himself was concerned, he bore about him in silence. The railroads he had constructed in savage countries, the seas he had joined, were not these matters of history? And he, whose constructive and administrative talents had compassed these difficulties, became in a sense historical. Stories were related of his great courage, of his amazing strength, of his daring and skill in moments of difficulty, putting his own shoulders to the wheel and showing his workmen how a thing was to be done. Women love the personification of strength in a man; it means power, manliness, nobility, in their eyes; and numbers gazed in admiration upon the massive frame of the great contractor for whom no undertaking was too vast. He was a striking figure in fashionable assemblies, towering above all, and moving like a mountain through the packed crowd of male and female exquisites. He only moved when he had occasion; he had not within him that restless, fretful spirit which weakens the character of many men; as he knew the value of silence, so also did he know the value of repose. In all gatherings of men and women the art of standing still with dignity and without self-consciousness is invaluable. This art Mr. Manners possessed, so that, taking him for all in all, he was no charlatan, trading upon false pretences.

The day previous to that upon which Kingsley entered his father's house, with the intention of making a clean breast of it with respect to Nansie, Mr. Manners himself had returned from Russia where he had been for five months superintending a railway contract for the Russian government, which he had brought to a successful conclusion.

CHAPTER V.

Father and son greeted each other cordially, but after the undemonstrative manner of Englishmen.

"Well, father?"

"Well, Kingsley?"

Then they shook hands, and smiled and nodded at each other.

"Has everything gone off well, father?"

"Everything. The balance on the right side will be larger than I expected."

"That is better than being the other way."

"Perhaps; but I prefer matters to come out exactly as I planned them. It is altogether more satisfactory. I will tell you all about it to-night, when we must have a long talk. I have a lot of letters to attend to now."

Kingsley took the hint, and, after seeing his mother, went to his room. The first thing he did there was to take out Nansie's portrait and gaze fondly on it and kiss it. He had parted from her

and her father in the morning, and had promised to write to her before he went to bed. As he had an hour now to spare, he thought he could not better employ it than in covering four sheets of paper to the girl he loved, so he sat down and enjoyed himself to his heart's content. His letter was full of the usual lover's rhapsodies, and need not here be transcribed. There was in it something better than rhapsodies, the evidence of an earnest, faithful spirit, which made it the sweetest of reading to Nansie when she received it on the following day. Kingsley mentioned that he and his father were to have a long talk together that night, and that, if he found a favorable opportunity, he would take advantage of it to make confession to his father; also if he had any good news to communicate, he might write again before he went to bed. And then, with fond and constant love and untold kisses, he was forever and ever her faithful lover, and so on, and so on. Very precious and comforting are these lovers' sweet trivialities.

Dinner over, Kingsley and his father sat together in the contractor's study, at a table upon which were wine and cigars. Mr. Manners drank always in great moderation, and did not smoke. Kingsley's habits were after a freer fashion, and his father did not disapprove. The first hour was occupied in a description by Mr. Manners of the operations in which he had been engaged in Russia, and of the difficulties which he had to surmount. He made light of these, but he was proud of his last success.

"There were mountains to cut through, Kingsley," he said, "and Russian prejudices to overcome; I hardly know which of the two was the more difficult job."

"There were dangers, father, as well as difficulties," observed Kingsley.

"Yes, there were dangers; you have heard something of them?"

"I have seen accounts in the papers from time to time. You see, father, the railway you have laid down is a step nearer to India."

"I am pleased to hear you say that, Kingsley."

"Why?" asked Kingsley, rather surprised.

"Because it shows you take an interest in politics."

"I have done that for some time past, as you know, father."

"Yes, and it pleases me. A step nearer to India. That is so, but it is no business of mine. It may," with a light touch of his finger on his son's breast, "by and by be business of yours, when you are a statesman. About the dangers? What did you read?"

"There were pestilent morasses to be bridged over or cut through, and there was great loss of life."

"Quite correct; the mortality was serious; fortunately I employed native labor."

"But it was human life, father, whether Russian or English."

"Quite true again, Kingsley."

"Holding views as I do, father," said Kingsley, "there appears to me something anomalous--that is putting it very mildly--in this last operation of yours."

Mr. Manners smiled good-humoredly, and nodded his head in pleasant approval.

"Go on, Kingsley."

"For instance, the matter of Russia's nearer approach to India being facilitated by an Englishman. Is not that anomalous?"

"No more anomalous than selling Russia a few millions of our best rifles and a few hundred millions of our best bullets."

"Would you do that?"

"I should like to get the contract."

Kingsley shifted uneasily in his chair.

"It is either right or wrong," he said.

"Being at peace with Russia, Kingsley, it is right. Of course, it would be wrong if we were at war with the country."

"But we provide it with rifles and bullets and railways beforehand."

"Quite so--in the way of business. I like a conversation such as this, Kingsley, in which there is no need for anything to be settled. As to the future before you, it doesn't matter to me which side you take, so long as you become what I hope you will be. Men like myself, sprung from the ranks

and making such fortunes as I have made, generally become Conservatives. I am neither one thing nor another, and shall not attempt to dictate to you. But into this question of bullets and rifles and railways let us import a little common-sense. If that sort of trading is wrong in times of peace, every country would have to cut itself aloof from every other country, and to live as if it were shut up in a box. I can't express myself as well as you, but I dare say you understand me."

"You can always make people understand you, father," said Kingsley.

"Yes, I have always been able to do that. They respect you all the more for it." Here he laughed quite gayly. "Even in Russia, where I did not know one word of the language, I made myself understood. I saw some great people there, Kingsley, and had interviews with them. Of course, I had a man to interpret for me, but I think I could have managed even without him. Some of the great men spoke English, but not a laborer I employed did. It was no more necessary for them to know our language, than for me to know theirs. The point was that there was work to do, and that it must be done within the stipulated time. With a stern master over him the Russian is a good workman, and values his life less than an Englishman. Take the pestilential ground we had to work over. No English workman would remain there a day; the Russian shrugged his shoulders and took the risk. Now, Kingsley, we will proceed to matters more immediately concerning ourselves."

"With pleasure, father."

"As between father and son there should be as few secrets as possible. You have some knowledge of my career; it is one I have no need to be ashamed of, and I propose to commence with the story of my life, and to make you fully acquainted with the secret of my rise in the world."

Upon that Mr. Manners entered unreservedly upon his relation, and spoke of matters in respect of his successful struggles with which the reader is already familiar. It was not all new to Kingsley, but he listened patiently and admiringly.

"I think I have made it plain to you, Kingsley," said Mr. Manners, when he had finished the recital, "that I owe everything to myself. I make no boast of it, and I have no doubt there are numbers of men as capable and clever as I am, only they have either not had the courage to launch out or have missed their opportunities. Now, my lad, I am sensible of my own deficiencies; I do not deceive myself by saying that I am as good as others with whom my money places me on an equality; I am a contractor, nothing more, and every shoemaker to his last. I shall stick to mine, and make more money. If I entered Parliament, which I could do without difficulty, I should have to sit mumchance, and play a silent part, unless something in my own particular line started up; and that would be once in a blue moon. Now taking a back seat in anything in which I am engaged would not suit me; I am accustomed to be master, and master I intend to continue to be. If I were a good speaker the matter would be different; I could carry all before me, though I am ignorant of Greek and Latin. When I was a lad I did not have what you call ambition; I took a pride in making sensible contracts which would bring me in a profit, and I crept along steadily, never dreaming that I should ever reach my present position. But the case is altered now, and I have a real ambition--not directly for myself, but for you. I have no expectation that you will disappoint me."

"I will endeavor not to do so, father."

"That is a good lad. You will be one of the richest men in the country, but I want you to be something more; I want you to be one of the most influential. I want people to say as I walk along; 'There goes the father of the prime-minister.'"

"That is looking a long way ahead," said Kingsley, considerably startled by this flight.

"Not a bit too far; it can be worked up to, and with your gifts it shall be. I have already told you that it matters little to me whether you are a Conservative, or a Liberal, or a Radical; that is your affair. If you are prime-minister and a Radical it will show that Radicalism is popular. I stop short of Socialism, mind you."

"So do I."

"Good. There is nothing nowadays that a man with a good education and a long purse cannot accomplish. I have the long purse, but not the education. I can talk sensibly enough to you here in a room, and in fairly good English, thanks to your mother and to my perseverance, but put me in the House of Commons and ask me to make a long speech upon large matters of state, and I should make a fool of myself. Therefore it is impossible *I* could ever become prime-minister."

"It is not every man who would speak so plainly and disparagingly of himself."

"Perhaps not, but I happen to know the length of my tether; I happen to know what I am fitted for and what I am not. I don't want you to suppose that I am making a sacrifice; nothing of the kind. I keep my place; you work up to yours; then I shall be perfectly satisfied. I have had this in my mind for years, and instead of making you a contractor I have made you a gentleman. That is what other fathers have done, whose beginnings have been as humble as mine. New families are springing up, my boy, to take the place of the old; you, Kingsley, shall found a family which shall

become illustrious, and I shall be content to look on and say: 'This is my doing; this is my work.' We shall show these old lords what new blood can do."

"Why, father," said Kingsley, laughing despite the uneasy feeling that was creeping over him, "you are a Radical."

"Perhaps I am, but we will keep it to ourselves. Now, Kingsley, it is my method when I am going in for a big contract to master beforehand everything in connection with it. I study it again and again; I verify my figures and calculations a dozen times before I set my name to it. That is what I have done in this affair. I have mastered the whole of the details, and I know exactly what is necessary. The first thing to make sure of when a great house is to be built, a house that is to last through sunshine and storm, a house that is to stand for centuries, is the foundation. That is out of sight, but it must be firm, and strong, and substantial. I am the foundation of this house I wish to build, and I am out of sight. Good. What is fine and beautiful to the eye you will supply--that is, you and your connections, in which, for convenience, we will say your mother and I do not count."

"My connections!" exclaimed Kingsley. "Apart from you and my mother!"

"Quite so. There are families of the highest rank who would not shrink from admitting you, upon the closest terms, into their circle. Some are tottering, and fear the fall. Old estates are mortgaged up to their value, and every year makes their position worse. We, with our full purses, step in and set them right, and bury the ghosts which haunt them. There is nothing low and common about you, my boy. You are, in appearance, manners, and education, as good as the best of them, and lady mothers will only be too glad to welcome you. The first thing you must do is to marry."

"Sir!"

"And to marry well. I have authority for saying that you can marry the daughter of a duchess. I don't wonder that you look startled. I have seen the young lady; she is nineteen years of age, and very beautiful. Of course she knows nothing of the scheme. It is for you to win her--of which I have no fears. You can make settlements upon her, Kingsley, which would satisfy the most exacting of duchesses. The family has influence, great influence, socially and politically. Married to her, with your talents, your future is assured, if you have only a fair amount of industry. I have set my heart upon it, Kingsley."

"There is the question of love, father," said Kingsley, in a low tone. It seemed to him that his father had cut the ground from under his feet.

"Quite so. There is the question of love. You will win your way to her heart, without a doubt."

CHAPTER VI.

There occurred here a pause. Kingsley did not know what to say. His father was waiting for him to speak.

"No man should think of marrying," said Kingsley, presently, "unless there is love on both sides."

"There is no occasion to discuss that point," said Mr. Manners. "As you will win your way to the young lady's heart, so will she win her way to yours. Wait till you see her, and meanwhile give me your promise that you will do your best to further my wishes. I do not expect a blind compliance; you shall go to her with your eyes open, and if you do not say she is very beautiful you must be a poor judge of beauty."

"But," murmured Kingsley, "to have an affair like this cut and dried beforehand for the man who is most deeply concerned--well, father, there is something sordid and mercenary in it."

"There might be," said Mr. Manners, calmly, "if the young lady knew anything of it; but she knows nothing."

"Yet you said you spoke with authority."

"Quite so. The young lady's mother has been indirectly sounded, and I spoke the truth. Listen, Kingsley," and Mr. Manners's more serious tone increased Kingsley's discomfort. "I said I have set my heart upon the projects I have unfolded concerning your future. I have set something

more than my heart upon them--I have set all my hopes upon them. You are my only child, and will be my heir if everything is right between us. You will come into an enormous fortune, greater than you have any idea of, and by its means and a suitable marriage you will rise to power. There are few men who would not jump at the proposition I have made, which, plainly explained, means your coming into everything that can make life desirable. If I were asking you to marry a lady who was ugly or had some deformity I could understand your hesitation. Do you still refuse to give me the promise I ask?"

"I cannot give it to you, father."

"Why?" demanded Mr. Manners, in a stern voice; but he did not give Kingsley time to reply. "Listen further to me before you speak." He took a pocket-book from his pocket, and drew from it a paper which he consulted. "I can make excuses for slight faults of conduct, but will not pardon an opposition which threatens to destroy the most earnest wish of my life. You are acquainted with a person of the name of Loveday."

"I have the honor of his acquaintance," said Kingsley, nerving himself for the contest which he saw impending, and considerably surprised at his father's acquaintance with the name.

"He is a person of no character," said Mr. Manners.

"He is a gentleman," interrupted Kingsley.

"That is news to me," said Mr. Manners, "and is not in accordance with the information I have received."

"Have you been playing the spy upon me?" asked Kingsley, with some warmth.

"I should require to be in two places at once to have done that. This time last week I was in Russia."

"Then you have been paying some one to watch me. By what right, father?"

"You jump too hastily at conclusions. You make a statement which is not true, and you proceed to question me upon it."

"I beg your pardon; but you must have obtained your information from some source."

"Quite so."

"Will you tell me from whom?

"I may or I may not before we part to-night. You refused to give me a promise; I refuse to give you one. I might well take offence at the imputation that I have paid a spy to watch you."

"I withdrew the imputation, father."

"The suspicion was in itself an offence. I have allowed you to go your way, Kingsley, in the belief and hope that your way and mine were one, and that you would do nothing to disgrace me."

"I have done nothing to disgrace you."

"We may take different views. As a young man you have had what is called your 'fling.' I made you a most liberal allowance--"

"For which I have always been deeply grateful, father," said Kingsley, hoping to turn the current of his father's wrath. It smote him with keen apprehension, for Nansie's sake and his own, that the anger his father displayed when he first mentioned the name of Loveday should be no longer apparent, and that Mr. Manners spoke in his usual calm and masterful voice.

"I made you a most liberal allowance," repeated Mr. Manners, "which you freely spent. I did not demur to that; it pleased me that you should be liberal and extravagant, and prove yourself the equal in fortune, as you are in education and manners, of those with whom you mixed. You committed some follies, which I overlooked--and paid for."

"It is the truth, father. I got into debt and you cleared me."

"Did I reproach you?"

"No, sir."

"If I am not mistaken--and in figures I seldom am--I paid your debts for you on three occasions."

"It is true, sir."

"And always cheerfully."

"Always, sir."

"I am not wishful to take undue credit to myself by reminding you of this; it is only that I would have you bear in mind that I have endeavored to make your life easy and pleasurable, and to do my duty by you. Nor will I make any comparison between your career as a young man and mine at the same age. I am satisfied, and I suppose you are the same."

"I think, father," said Kingsley, "that I should have been content to work as you did."

"Not as I did, because we started from different standpoints. Pounds, shillings, and pence were of great importance to me, and I used to count them very jealously. I value money now perhaps as little as you do, but I know its value better than you, and what it can buy in a large way--in the way I have already explained to you. For that reason, and for no other, it is precious to me. There are men who have risen to wealth by discreditable means; that is not my case; what I possess has been fairly worked for and fairly earned. All through my life I have acted honorably and straightforwardly."

"All through my life, father," said Kingsley, with spirit, "I shall do the same."

"Well and good. I have a special reason, Kingsley, in speaking of myself in the way I have done."

"Will you favor me with your reason, father?"

"Yes. It is to put a strong emphasis upon what you will lose if you cut yourself away from me."

"Is there any fear of that, father?" asked Kingsley, with a sinking heart.

"It will be for you, not for me, to answer that question; and it will be answered, I presume, more in acts than in words. I return to the Mr. Loveday, who is described to me as a person of no character, and whom you describe as a gentleman."

"He is one, father, believe me," said Kingsley, earnestly.

"Do gentlemen travel about the country in caravans, sleeping in them by the roadsides?"

Kingsley could not help smiling. "Not generally, father, but some men are whimsical."

"Let us keep to the point, Kingsley. According to your account we are speaking of a gentleman."

"We are," said Kingsley, somewhat nettled at this pinning down.

"Then you mean that some gentlemen are whimsical?"

"I mean that."

"In what respect is this Mr. Loveday a gentleman? Does he come of an old family?"

"I do not know."

"Do you know anything of his family?"

"Nothing."

"Is he a man of means?"

"No."

"A poor man, then?"

"Yes."

"Very poor?"

"Very poor."

"And travels about in a broken-down caravan, and you wish me to believe he is a gentleman. I would prefer to take your word, Kingsley, against that of my informant, but in this instance I cannot do so. It would be stretching the limits too far."

"We will not argue it out, father."

"Very well. But Mr. Loveday does not travel alone in this caravan; he has a person he calls his daughter with him."

"It is coming," thought Kingsley, and he set his teeth fast, and said': "His daughter, a lady, travels with him."

"So far, then, my facts are indisputable. This young woman is described to me as an artful, designing person who has used all her arts to entangle you--because you have a rich father."

"Who dares say that?" cried Kingsley, starting up with flashing eyes.

"My informant. I understand, also, that some months since she contracted secretly a disreputable marriage, and that her husband--do not interrupt me for a moment, Kingsley--has conveniently disappeared in order to give her time to bleed you, through your rich father. To go through the ceremony again would be a light matter with her."

"It is a horrible calumny," cried Kingsley, in great excitement.

"Although," pursued Mr. Manners, exhibiting no agitation in his voice or manner, "the circumstances of my own private life have not made me personally familiar with the tricks of adventuresses, I have in the course of my experiences learned sufficient of them to make me abhor them. How much deeper must be my abhorrence now when such a woman steps in between me and my son to destroy a cherished design which can only be carried out in his person! I will listen to no vindication, Kingsley. Before you arrived home to-night I had a strong hope that some mistake had been made in the information which has reached me concerning your proceedings. I was wrong; it is unhappily too true."

"You received the information from an enemy of mine."

"No, Kingsley, from a friend."

"Ah!" There was here, even in the utterance of the simple word, a singular resemblance between father and son. Kingsley's voice no longer betrayed excitement, and his manner became outwardly calm. "There is only one so-called friend who could have supplied you with the information--my cousin, Mark Inglefield."

Mr. Manners was silent.

"Was it he, sir?" asked Kingsley.

Still Mr. Manners was silent.

"I judge from your silence, sir, that Mark Inglefield is the man I have to thank."

During his silence Mr. Manners had been considering.

"I must say something here, Kingsley. I have no right to betray another man's confidence, and you no right to betray mine."

"It would be the last of my wishes, father."

"If I tell you who is my informant, will you hold it as a sacred confidence?"

It was Kingsley's turn now to consider. He was convinced that Mark Inglefield was his enemy, and by giving his father the desired promise of a sacred confidence, he would be shutting himself off from all chance of reprisal. On the other hand, he might be mistaken; and his father might also refuse to continue the interview, which Kingsley felt could not be broken at this point; and after all, how could he hope to help himself or Nansie by a personal encounter with his cousin or by further angering his father, who, he knew only too well, was now in a dangerous mood?

"Do you insist upon my holding it as a sacred confidence, father?"

"I insist upon it," said Mr. Manners, coldly.

"I will hold it so."

"On your honor as a man? Not as a gentleman, for our views differ there."

"On my honor as a man."

"You were right," said Mr. Manners. "I received the information from your cousin, Mark Inglefield."

"As I expected. I must now relate to you, father, the circumstances of my acquaintance with Mr. Loveday and his daughter, and the manner in which my cousin Mark comes into connection with it."

"I will listen to you, Kingsley," said Mr. Manners. "Our conversation has assumed a complexion which may be productive of the most serious results to you and myself. I do not hold this out as a threat; I state a fact. I am, in my convictions, inflexible. Once I am resolved, no power on earth can move me. And do not lose sight of another thing. Mark Inglefield is your mother's nephew, and therefore your cousin. That I have given him the advantage of a university education, and that I sent you both to college at the same time, is my affair. I should have done the same by you had you been my nephew and he my son. It was always my intention to advance him in life, and it

is my intention still. He is worthy of it. He is your equal in birth and attainments. Therefore speak of him with becoming respect. I shall know the exact value to place upon intemperate language in a case like this, where the passions are involved."

"I will do my best to obey you, father," said Kingsley, "but a pure reputation is at stake, and I may fail in my endeavor. It was my cousin, Mark Inglefield, who first introduced me to Miss Loveday. He spoke to me of her, as he spoke to others, in a light tone, and I do not know what it was that induced me to give ear to his boastings, although I entertained a contempt for him and a doubt of his truth. One day, while we were walking together and he was indulging with greater freedom and boisterousness than usual--though his ordinary habit was bad enough--of his acquaintanceship with Miss Loveday, it happened that we met her. He could do no less than introduce me, and I had not been in her company five minutes before I suspected that his vaporings about her were those of a base man, of one who was dead to honor. A true man is respectful and modest when he makes reference to a lady for whom he entertains an affection, and the doubts I had previously entertained of my cousin when he indulged in the outpourings of his coarse vanity were now confirmed. I followed up the introduction by courting Miss Loveday's intimacy, and she grew to respect me, to rely upon me. The more I saw of her the more I esteemed her. Never had I met a lady so pure and gentle, and it was a proud moment in my life when she asked me to protect her from my cousin's insolent advances. I spoke to him, in a manner not too gentle, I own, for my indignation was aroused, and from that time he and I were enemies. I know it now; I did not know it then. He was far too subtle for me, and I, perhaps too much in the habit of wearing my heart upon my sleeve, was, as I now discover, sadly at a disadvantage with him. He showed no anger at my supplanting him, and this should have warned me; your cold-blooded man is a dangerous animal when he becomes your enemy; but I suppose I was too deeply in love and too happy to harbor suspicion against one who had no real cause for enmity against me. Nor did I consider the consequences--not to myself but to the lady I loved--of my frequent visits and meetings with her. There is no doubt that she was compromised by them, but she was as guileless and innocent as myself, and it was not till it was forced upon me that her reputation was in my hands that I prevailed upon her to take the step which gave the lie to malicious rumor."

"And that step, Kingsley?" asked Mr. Manners.

"I married her. She is my wife."

"You think so?"

"Think so, father! What do you mean? Am I a man with reason, gifted with some standard of intelligence, that I should think--which implies a doubt--where I am sure?"

"You are a man deluded, Kingsley, as other men have been by other women. This woman has deceived you."

"No, sir, truly as I live."

"The farce would not be complete unless you protested. It is the least you can do. All that you have said confirms your cousin's story. He has not erred in one particular, except in what is excusable in him, and perhaps in you. Mischief is done, but it can be remedied. An impulsive man like yourself is no match for an artful woman."

"I will not hear the lady I love and esteem so spoken of," said Kingsley, with warmth.

To this remark Mr. Manners was about to reply with equal warmth, but he checked himself, and did not speak for a few moments. When he resumed the conversation he spoke in his usual calm tone, a tone which never failed in impressing upon his hearers a conviction of the speaker's absolute sincerity and indomitable will.

"It has happened--fortunately for others--but rarely in my life, Kingsley, that such a crisis as this has occurred; and I regret this difference in our ideas all the more because its consequences may be fatal to you and may shatter hopes upon which I have set great store. When you say to me that you will not hear me speak in such or such a manner, because it displeases you, you behave in a manner to which I am not accustomed. When you place yourself in opposition to my wishes you treat me to a new experience which I do not welcome. Were I holding this interview with any other than yourself I should have put an end to it some time since; after that there would be nothing more to be said on either side. I am not used to disappointments, but I should be able to bear them; I am rather fond of difficulties because it is a pleasure to overcome them. I am inclined to regard this difference of opinion between us as a difficulty which may be overcome without much trouble, if you are reasonable."

"It is not a difference of opinion, father," said Kingsley, moderating his tone; the interests at stake were too serious to allow him to give his indignation free play, "it is a difference as to facts, of which I, and not you, am cognizant."

"I hold to what I say, Kingsley," replied Mr. Manners. "I have received a certain statement of particulars which I choose to accept as true; you have imparted to me certain information which I do not choose to accept in the manner you wish. Setting aside for a moment all question of the young woman of whose character we have formed different estimates, I ask you, supposing you to

be legally married, what is the kind of respect you have shown me, a father who has never crossed your wishes, by contracting a lifelong obligation without consulting me?"

"It was wrong, father," said Kingsley, with contrition. "I have only the excuse to make that I loved her and was eager to defend her reputation."

"It is an excuse I cannot accept. And the deliberate committal of a fault so fatally grave as this, with a full knowledge of the consequences, cannot be condoned by the weak confession, when it is too late to repair the fault, that you were wrong. There is a repentance which comes too late, Kingsley. But even that I might have forgiven had I reason to approve of your choice."

"You have but to see her, father," said Kingsley, eagerly. "Let me bring her to you! You will be as proud of her as I am; you will know then that I have not chosen unworthily."

"No," said Mr. Manners, "if I see her at all I must see her alone."

"Give me a minute or two to consider, father."

"Certainly, Kingsley."

The young man turned aside, and allowed his thoughts to travel to Nansie, and to dwell upon the beauty of her character. He knew her to be patient and long-suffering, and that she would not shrink from making a sacrifice for one she loved as she loved him; he knew also that these qualities were allied to a spirit of independence which, while it would enable her to bear up outwardly under the pressure of a great wrong, would rather intensify than abate the anguish which would wring her soul were such a wrong forced upon her. It would be a lifelong anguish, and would rack her till her dying day. His father, with his iron will, was just the man to force the sacrifice upon her, was just the man to so prevail upon her that she might, at his persuasion, remove herself forever not only from the presence but from the knowledge of the man she loved and had vowed to love while life remained. Poor, helpless, dependent, and alone in the world--for Kingsley had an inward conviction that her father's days were numbered--to what a future would he, the man who had sworn to love and cherish her, be condemning her if he permitted his father to have his way in this matter! The crime would be his, not his father's; upon his soul would rest the sin. And then the image of Nansie rose before him, not at first sad and despondent, but bright and sweet, and full of innocent, joyous life; and in that image he saw a sunshine of happiness which he and Nansie would enjoy together if he played a true man's part in this contention. He saw also with his mind's eye the other side of the picture in the figure of a heart-broken woman brooding over the misery and the torture of life, and praying for death. This sad figure vanished, and he and Nansie were sitting together hand in hand, their hearts beating with the sacred love which sweetens and makes life holy, and she was whispering to him that her greatest joy lay in the knowledge that he was true to her.

He had shaded his eyes with his hand during this contemplation. He now removed it, and raised his eyes to his father's face.

"I cannot consent, father," he said, in a low, firm tone, "to your seeing her alone."

"You have come deliberately to that determination?" asked Mr. Manners.

"I have, father."

"It is irrevocable?"

"It is irrevocable."

"I will still not hold you to it," said Mr. Manners. "It would grieve me in the future to think that the matter was too hastily decided. You owe me some kind of obedience, some kind of duty."

"I acknowledge it, father. In all that becomes me to yield you shall have no cause of complaint against me."

"Very well. Let there be some slight pause before the final word is pronounced. Remain here a week, and give the matter a calmer and longer deliberation. Its issues are sufficiently important to make my request reasonable."

"I will do as you wish, father," said Kingsley, after a slight hesitation, "on two conditions."

"Name them."

"First, that you do not invite my cousin, Mark Inglefield, here during the time."

"I agree."

"Second, that you do not seek my wife for the purpose of relating what has passed between us."

"I agree to that also. I will not seek your--the young woman for that or for any purpose. Are you content, Kingsley?"

"Yes, father, I am content."

"As you admit that you owe me some small measure of duty and obedience, you will not object to my request that you hold no correspondence with her until the week is past."

"It is a hard request, father, but I will obey you."

"There remains, then, in this connection, but one thing in respect of your future which I think it necessary to impress upon you. As I have made my fortune by my own efforts it is mine to dispose of as I please. Comply with my wishes, and the bulk of it is yours. Oppose them, and not one shilling of it will be yours to enjoy. To this I pledge myself. And now, Kingsley, we will drop the conversation."

Kingsley had a reason for consenting to the week's delay. He had a hope that within that period his father would relent. It was a faint hope, but it seemed to him that it would be criminal to let it slip.

CHAPTER VII.

On the fourth day of his probation Kingsley received a letter from Nansie. No further words upon the subject of their recent conversation had passed between him and his father; neither of them had broken faith in respect of the promises given, and everything went on in the house as usual. Mr. Manners passed the greater portion of his time in looking over specifications and making calculations for fresh contracts of magnitude; he was accustomed to attend personally to these matters, and never left anything to chance, or solely in the hands of any other man. It was not without an object that he requested Kingsley to assist him in his labors during these days. He wished his son to become sensible of what he would lose if he persisted in his opposition to his father's wishes. With this end in view he made Kingsley familiar with all the channels in which his fortune was invested. Kingsley was amazed at its extent, and was also amazed at the wisdom of his father's investments. There were no chance risks; every shilling was as safe as human judgment could make it. He owned a great deal of property in land upon which other men had built houses, and the land was situated in the most thriving and most fashionable neighborhoods; he held a vast number of government securities, and those only of the most stable governments. Companies he had avoided, their alluring prospectuses having no temptation for him. He had advanced scores of thousands of pounds upon first mortgages, and not a doubtful one among them.

"I was never a gambler," he said to Kingsley, "but I never let my money lie idle. I have the offer now of a great estate in the country, which, if all goes well, I shall buy. It is in one of the best counties, and the simple possession of it will give a man a standing in the country which would occupy all the years of a man's life to gain. A stroke of the pen will do it."

Kingsley knew what he meant when he said "if all goes well," but each kept the open expression of his thoughts to himself. On the evening before Nansie's letter arrived, Mr. Manners told Kingsley that his income was not less than sixty thousand pounds a year; and he added that he was not spending a tenth part of it.

In the solitude of his chamber Kingsley opened Nansie's letter; it had been written from day to day, only for her lover's and husband's eyes:

"My Beloved Kingsley,--It is night, and I am writing in my little room in the caravan. Father is asleep, and everything around is still and peaceful. It is the best of all time to write to you and think of you, but indeed you are never out of my thoughts. It is a beautiful night, and I have made up my mind not to go to sleep till I have heard the nightingale, so how can I employ my time better than in the way I am doing? All the day long I have been thinking of you. 'Now he is in the train,' I said, 'now he is so much nearer London, now he is in London, now he is at home and talking to his father.' Of me? I could not decide that. Perhaps you will wait till to-morrow, but I am with you in spirit, Kingsley, as you are with me. Yes, I am sure of that, and it makes me very, very happy. Kingsley is at home, in his father's house. Is he really at home? My home is with you; there is no home for me without you. How ungrateful it sounds, with my father so close to me; but I cannot help it; it is the truth. And then this caravan--can one call it a home? Though there are people, father says, who are very happy in caravans--as I should be with you; or anywhere, Kingsley. Indeed it is so; it will not matter to me so long as we are together.

"I am writing cheerfully and hopefully, am I not? And yet my father has been uneasy in his mind to-day. He has been speaking a great deal of your father, and he fears that he will not approve of our marriage. 'For your sake, Nansie,' father said, 'I wish Kingsley's father was a poor man.' Kingsley dear, I wish that too; but then your father was once as poor as we are, and perhaps that will make a difference. I hope with all my heart I have not done you wrong by

marrying you; but how could I help it, loving you as I did and do, and how could I help it when you persuaded me so? Oh, my dear love, I will do all that a woman can do to make you happy! I can do no more. To me it does not matter how we live, but will it matter to you if your father is angry and will not receive me? I cannot bear to think of it; my heart grows cold, and I stretch forth my hands imploring an angel to come and help me. But that is not needed, is it, Kingsley? and you have good reason to be angry with me, for what I have written is almost like a doubt, and to doubt you is to doubt that there is any goodness in the world. No, Kingsley, I will not doubt; it would be treason to love. . . .

"I have not written for an hour. I have been thinking, thinking, thinking, and I should have gone on thinking, just as if I was in a waking trance, if it had not been for my father talking in his sleep. 'Nansie, Nansie!' he called, and I went in to him, but he was fast asleep, and his forehead was quite damp. I wiped it softly, but it did not wake him, and he kept on murmuring my name and yours, and calling on the angels to guard us. Dear father! we have not been a great deal together, but he loves me truly, and I think he is reproaching himself for not having been with me more. I could not love him more than I do, but I might have known him better. He is a good man, Kingsley, and I think if he had been rich he would have made a name in the world. There! I have written 'if he had been rich.' To be happy it is not necessary to be rich, is it, dear? Father says not. That is when he is awake. What did he mean by saying in his sleep: 'Money is a blessing and a curse?' Well, yes, I can understand it. It depends upon how it is used. Oh, Kingsley, I hope your father is not very rich. By my father's side was his favorite book, 'William Browne.' I took it away to my room. Before I go to bed I will put it back, for it is like meat and wine to him. More precious than those, I am sure. What are you doing at this very moment, Kingsley?

"There again. I have been in dreamland for an hour and more. And then, waking up, I read a little of 'William Browne', and took my pen in my hand to go on writing, but I did not know what to say. Kingsley, dear, the errand you have gone upon haunts me. So much do I fear that I hardly know what to think. Even my favorite saying that father does not consider wisdom, 'Everything will come right,' does not comfort me somehow. I don't know why, except it is that we are not together. Suspense is dreadful, is it not, dear? And just now everything seems in suspense. Oh, hark! The nightingale! It is an omen of joy and gladness. Thank God for all sweet sounds, for all that is sweet and good--and the world is full of sweetness and gladness. And I was reading of it in 'William Browne:'

"'But the nightingale i' th' dark
Singing, woke the mountain lark;
She records her love.
The sun hath not with his beams
Gilded yet our crystal streams,
Rising from the sea;
Mists do crown the mountain-tops,
And each pretty myrtle drops;
'Tis but newly day.'

"There, my dear love, I have copied it exactly, apostrophes and all, and it seems to bring me nearer to you. How wonderful is the gift of poetry! ''Tis but newly day.' It is day in my heart. Yes, everything will come right. Good-night, dear love, with a thousand kisses. I send them from my window through the night, which soon will be day. Heaven shield you....

"Another day has passed. Oh, Kingsley, what joy and delight your dear, dear letter brought to me! Your letters are the sweetest that ever were written, that ever could be written. Heaven bless your father for being so kind to you. How glad he must have been to see you after such a long absence! I am sure he must be the best of men. But Kingsley, dear Kingsley, how shall I tell you? My dear father is worse. I know he is, although he has not complained. We sat together this evening, watching the sunset in silence. He held my hand, and sometimes he gripped it hard. It was because he was in pain, but he would not have it so. He said it was because he loved me so dearly. When the sun went down he spoke, oh, so solemnly and beautifully, Kingsley, of the sunset of life, and said he would be perfectly happy and contented if he knew that I was safe. 'You mean safe with Kingsley, dear father,' I said. 'Yes,' he answered, 'safe with Kingsley.' Then I read your letter to him--every word, Kingsley; I was not ashamed--and it comforted him. 'He is the man I would have chosen for you, Nansie,' he said, and then he spoiled it all by adding: 'Only, only, if his father were not rich.' I reproved him gently, and said he must not doubt you, but must have in you the perfect faith that I have, and he said that I was right, and that it was only a father's fears that disturbed him. We must not blame him, dear; we are so poor, you know, and he does not know you as I do. I can write but a few lines now, I am so anxious about father. Shall I receive a letter from you to-morrow? If one does not come, I shall be sorry, of course, but only sorry, nothing more. For you and your father must have so much to talk about, and, as you told me so seriously, you must wait for a favorable opportunity before you spoke to him of me. Ah, poor me! What a worry I am! But I will make it all up to you, my dearest, in the happy days to come. Father is calling to me; I must go. I kiss you and kiss you, and indeed there are kisses on my lips for you only--and ah! for my poor, dear father. Through all time to come I am ever and ever your own loving Nansie....

"Oh, Kingsley, my dear husband, how shall I tell you? My hand trembles so that I can scarcely write the words. My father, my dear, dear father is dead!

"I look at the words I have written, and they seem to move, to live, though *he* is dead. I go from the page upon which I write to the bed upon which he is lying, and I can scarcely believe that it is true, he looks so sweet, so peaceful and calm. 'Father, father!' I call, but he does not answer me. His spirit is with God. But surely with me, too, surely with me! Oh, Kingsley, I feel as if my heart were breaking!

"I do not know when his spirit passed away. We sat up late last night, and he seemed in his usual health, but weak. He made no complaint, but he must have had a premonition of what was hastening to him, for he talked to me of the life beyond this, and dwelt upon it with hope and rapture. We sat in the dark; he would not have a light. Ah, me! I must have been blind and deaf not to have guessed that he believed his end to be approaching when he spoke so much of you, and desired me to give you his dear love and his heartfelt wishes for a bright and happy life. 'With me, father,' I whispered. 'Yes, my daughter, with you,' he answered. 'Kingsley could not be happy without you.' Ah, how glad I was to hear him say that! It proved that he had faith and confidence in you, and yet I might have been warned of what was to come by his solemn voice and by his addressing me as his daughter. He had never done so before. It was always: 'My dear,' or 'Nansie, child,' or 'My dear Nansie.' Ah, Kingsley, if you had heard what he said you could never have forgotten it. 'Life is a breath,' he said, 'a dream, and its end should be welcomed with joy, for it opens the door to a higher, holier life. Happy is the mortal who can approach that threshold with a consciousness that he has done no wrong to his fellow-creature.' And then he said that there should be no vain thirstings and yearnings for knowledge that was wisely hidden from us, but that every human being should strive to keep shining within him three stars, faith, duty, and love. I cannot now recall all that he said, but I know that his last dear conversation with me left me better than I had been, and that

with all my heart and soul I thank him for his gentle teaching.

"It was past midnight when he went to bed, and I intended then to continue my letter to you, but he called to me before I commenced, and asked me to sit by his side. I did so, holding his hand, until two in the morning, and all this time he lay quite quiet and still, sometimes opening his eyes and smiling upon me. At length he said, 'Kiss me, my dear,' and I stooped and kissed him. Then he bade me go to bed, and, indeed, I was glad to obey him, Kingsley, for my eyes were closing. I awoke at my usual hour this morning, and went to him. He had not stirred. Ah, how still and beautiful he was! I spoke to him and he did not reply. I called louder, and still he did not speak. Then, smitten with a dreadful fear, I placed my hand on his heart; it was pulseless, and I knew that my dear, dear father had passed away.

"I can write no more. I have much to do, and the last duties of love will occupy every moment of my time. I shall have him taken to Godalming, where I shall be if you can come to me. If that is not possible, I shall go after the funeral to my uncle in London, whose address you have. There you will find me. Pity me, Kingsley, and do not leave me long alone. I have only you in the world. Believe me.

"Ever your loving wife, Nansie."

Deeply shocked and grieved, Kingsley went to his father with Nansie's letter in his hand. "I want you to release me from my promise," he said.

"I never release a man from a promise given," was his father's cold reply, "and I never ask to be released from one I have made."

"You cannot refuse me," said Kingsley, whose eyes were bedewed with tears.

"I do refuse you," said Mr. Manners, sternly.

Kingsley gazed irresolutely around, but his irresolution lasted for a moment or two only. "I must go," he said, straightening himself.

"Against my will?" asked Mr. Manners.

"Yes, father, against your will, if you refuse."

"I have refused."

Kingsley was silent.

"It is what I will never forgive," said Mr. Manners.

"I cannot help it, father. There are duties which *must* be performed, and one is before me." He held out the last page of Nansie's letter, but his father thrust it aside.

"I do not wish to see it. I will not see it. It is from that woman."

"It is from my wife."

"And you are going to her?"

"I am going to her."

"If you leave my house now you never enter its doors again. If you persist in your madness I cut you out of my heart forever. I shall have no longer a son, and for evermore you and I are strangers."

"It is cruel--it is pitiful, but I must go."

"You understand the consequences of your disobedience?"

"You have made them only too plain to me, father," said Kingsley, mournfully.

"And you still persist?"

"There is no other course open to me. I am a man, not a dog."

"You are an ingrate. Go!--and never let me look upon your face again. From this moment I do not know you."

CHAPTER VIII.

There are extant numerous clippings from famous writers which, coming "trippingly off the tongue," have grown into popular favor and are generally accepted as the essence of wisdom, but which will not stand the test of cold and logical analysis. Hence it is that so many familiar proverbs belie themselves. Among these popular sayings may be classed the description of life as a fitful fever. There are few men and women to whom this will apply; with the great majority of human beings life glides from one groove into another with ease and naturalness, and the most startling changes are effected without violent strain. Poor men grow rich, rich men grow poor, the lowly mount, the high slip into the downward paths, and one and all accept the reversals of position with a certain innate philosophy which makes life desirable, and often sweet, however wide the gulf which separates the present from the past. It is something to be genuinely grateful for; were it otherwise, existence would become an intolerable burden, and every waking moment would be charged with pain.

These observations are pertinent to the course of our story, in respect of which the incidents already narrated may be accepted as a kind of prologue. The scene changes to the busy East of this mighty city, the precise locality being a second-hand bookshop in Church Alley. The proprietor of this shop was Mr. Joseph Loveday, Nansie's uncle, and that the reflections upon the shiftings in life's kaleidoscope are not out of place was proved by words which fell from his lips as he sorted a pile of books which he had purchased at auction.

"Change, change, change--nothing but change. Some drop out, some remain, and time rolls on. I live, with a likelihood of living for many years; he is dying, with the certainty of death in the course of a few days. So he says in his letter, and in serious affairs he was never given to light talk. Presently he will leave the world behind him. What matters?"

The question, addressed with mingled bitterness and mournfulness to himself, aroused him from his reverie.

"It does matter," he said. "We are not exactly lumber."

He was a man of middle age, a bachelor, and he conducted his business alone, without assistance of any kind, taking down his shutters in the morning and putting them up again at night, arranging the books on his shelves within and on the stall without, and knowing where to lay his hand, almost blindfold, upon any volume which he or a customer required. In this lonely mode of carrying on his trade there were inconveniences which were beginning to tell upon him. The toilers round about were not as a rule blessed with libraries of any value, and although he was always ready to purchase any odd lots that were brought to him, he picked up very little stock in this way. The greater portion of his treasures was bought at book auctions in the West, and whenever he attended one of these sales he was under the necessity of shutting up his shop and taking the key with him. Of late he had thought seriously of employing an assistant, but the difficulty was to find one to suit both his business and his peculiarities. In his domestic arrangements he was compelled to call in assistance. He employed a charwoman twice a week, for half a day on each occasion, to clean his place and set it in order; his breakfasts, teas, and suppers he prepared himself with his own hands, and when he did not purchase his dinner at a convenient cook-shop, it was sent in to him by Mrs. Peeper, keeper of a wardrobe-shop in Church Alley. He looked older than he was, and had too early acquired a stoop from poring over books; he had blue eyes, large and shapely hands, and features furrowed with lines of thoughtfulness. When he was not called away to attend an auction or upon other business, he would be seen sitting at his counter, or upon the floor, sorting books and making lists of them, or standing at his door in slippers, wearing a loose dressing-gown and a plain skull-cap, and with a pair of spectacles resting generally above his eyebrows. His reputation extended far beyond the immediate East in which his shop was situated. In the course of his career it had been his good-fortune to light upon rare books in the odd lots he had picked up at auction, and book-hunters from afar would come to look over his stock of treasures. On the day of his introduction to the reader he had been much exercised. There was the letter from his brother, to which he had replied in terms with which we are familiar; it had taken his thoughts to the past, and old memories had troubled his mind; domestic and business worries were also troubling him. The charwoman he had employed for years, and who was now up-stairs making a noise which annoyed him, had, during the last few weeks, generally made her appearance in a state of inebriation. He had expostulated with her upon this new and evil departure, but his remonstrances had not effected an improvement, and now, as he sat musing and sorting his books, a sudden crash in the room above caused him to start to his feet with an angry exclamation. He calmed himself instantly, having a great power of self-control, and, going to the staircase, called out:

"What is the matter, Mrs. Chizlet?"

"Only the wash'and basin, sir," replied a voice from above.

"Oh," he said.

"And the jug, sir."

"Oh."

"And the soap-dish, sir."

"Oh."

Then there was a pause and an ominous stillness.

"Have you broken anything else?" he asked.

"I didn't break 'em, sir," was the reply. "It was the cat."

"There's no cat in the house. Come down."

"In a minute, sir, when I've recovered myself."

He waited the minute, and down came the woman, with a vacant smile on her face, and a number of pieces of broken crockery in her hands, which she let fall with a crash on the floor of the shop.

"The cat, eh?"

"Yes, sir, the cat."

"Where did it come from? The sky? What is that sticking out of your pocket? The skeleton of the cat? No. A bottle. Empty, of course."

"Yes, sir, worse luck."

"Mrs. Chizlet," said Mr. Loveday, gravely, "last Friday you broke two dishes."

"Not me, sir."

"Well, the cat. This day week the cat broke all my cups and saucers. If I keep you in my service, in the course of another week there will not be a sound piece of crockery or glass in the place. Therefore I will not trouble you to come here again."

"We're all born, and none buried," said the charwoman, with a silly smile.

And having received her half-day's wage, she departed contentedly, and made her way to the nearest public-house.

Mr. Joseph Loveday gazed disconsolately around; it was not the broken crockery that annoyed him, it was the disarrangement of domestic custom. Having discharged the woman who had served him so long, it was a settled thing that she would never be employed by him again. Where could he find another who would serve him more faithfully? He detested strangers, and a break in his usual habits was a great discomfort to him. He was in a mood to exaggerate the discomfort, and in a few minutes he had magnified it considerably. It is not from the most important disasters of life, but from its pins and needles, that we draw our acutest miseries. Everything had been going wrong with Mr. Loveday lately. During the past week he had missed three books from his stall outside, and had been unable to discover the thief. Even if he had been successful in catching him he would have hesitated to prosecute him, because of the loss of time it would entail. Then, Mrs. Peeper, proprietor of the wardrobe shop, who occasionally cooked his dinners for him, had been behaving badly, keeping him waiting an hour and more, and placing before him food, so villainously cooked that he could not eat it. Some change was decidedly necessary to restore the harmony of his days. As he was debating with himself in what way the change could be made, he raised his eyes and saw through the window a lad standing at the stall outside, turning over the leaves of a book. The age of this lad was twelve, and his name was Timothy Chance.

"I might do worse," thought Mr. Loveday. The drawback was that Timothy was a bundle of rags.

He was turning over the leaves of the book he had lifted at haphazard from the stall, but he was not reading it. Every now and then he directed a furtive glance towards the interior of the shop, in the hope, without obtruding himself, of attracting favorable attention. Hanging on his left arm was an old open-work basket, and sitting therein was a bedraggled hen. Mr. Loveday stepped to the shop door, and said:

"Well, Timothy."

"Yes, sir," said the lad, looking up with a cheerful smile, and speaking in quite respectable English, "here I am, back again, like a bad penny."

"Come in," said Mr. Loveday.

Timothy gladly obeyed the summons, and entered. Placing his basket with the hen in it upon the floor, he stood respectfully before the bookseller. In classic story a goose became historical; in this modern tale, wherein heroic deeds are not heralded by clang of trumpets, it may by and by be admitted that the fowl which Timothy Chance set down deserves no less a fame.

CHAPTER IX.

Poor and ragged as he was, the lad's bearing was distinguished by a bright manliness--even thus early shown--which could scarcely fail to win favor. The circumstances of his young life were singular, and deserve, and need, brief mention.

Somewhat less than twelve years before this day on which, in obedience to Mr. Loveday's summons, he entered the bookseller's shop, Mr. Loveday turned into Church Alley, after a walk he was in the habit of taking through the markets of the East where the humble folk make their purchases for the day of rest. It was therefore Saturday night, and the hour was a little past midnight. In front of the pawnbroker's shop, at the corner of Church Alley, stood the pawnbroker himself in a state of perturbation, taking a few steps this way and a few that in an uncertain, undecided fashion. His shutters were up, and the day's business was at an end. He pounced upon Mr. Loveday, whose position then, as at present, was one of authority among his neighbors, who tacitly and willingly acknowledged him to be a man of superior stamp.

"Ah, Mr. Loveday," said the pawnbroker, laying his hand on the bookseller's arm, "did you see a woman running away as you came along?"

"Not that I noticed," replied Mr. Loveday, observing that something unusual was agitating the pawnbroker.

"Or a man?" asked the pawnbroker.

"No."

"It is altogether the most extraordinary thing," said the pawnbroker, scratching his head, "the most ex-tra-or-di-na-ry. I never heard of anything like it."

"Like what?"

"Would you mind," said the pawnbroker, "stepping inside, and giving me your advice?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Loveday.

He followed the pawnbroker into the shop, and there upon the counter, in one of the divisions used by persons who came to pledge their goods or redeem them, lay an old shawl containing, as was evidenced by a gentle and regular upheaving, an animate object.

"What do you think of this?" exclaimed the pawnbroker, unfolding the shawl.

"A very fine baby," said Mr. Loveday, "though I don't pretend to be a judge--and fast asleep."

"Proving," added the pawnbroker, "that it's been well stuffed."

"Stuffed!"

"Had plenty to drink--got its belly full. That's the artfulness of it."

"The baby's artfulness?" inquired Mr. Loveday, much mystified.

"No--of the trick that's been played upon me. Put comfortably to sleep, satisfied, so that it shouldn't excite suspicion by as much as a whimper."

"But explain," said Mr. Loveday, as much in the dark as ever. "Is it your baby?"

"No, sir," replied the pawnbroker, energetically, "it is not."

"Then how comes it here?"

"That's what I'd like to know. If you'll believe me, Mr. Loveday, I'll tell you all about it--no, not all, as much I as know myself."

"Of course I'll believe you," said Mr. Loveday, his interest growing fast.

"Here am I," commenced the pawnbroker, excitedly, "all alone by myself in the shop--well, not exactly here where we stand, but in my room at the back there. Business over an hour ago--close at eleven, you know. Shutters put up, and my assistant gone home. Front door left ajar, because it's a hot night, and the gas has been flaring away. My wife and the children all asleep up-stairs; no one to disturb me. There's a bit of supper on the table. Mr. Loveday," he said, breaking off

abruptly, "my wife is a most peculiar woman--a most pe-cu-li-ar woman."

"Go on with your story," said Mr. Loveday, calmly.

"Usually she stops up with me, and we have a bit of supper together, especially on Saturday nights, the busiest time of the week for me. But, as luck will have it, she doesn't feel quite the thing to-night, and she goes to bed early. There I am, then, eating my supper and making up my accounts. Everything very quiet, nothing wrong, as far as I can see. I'll take my oath, Mr. Loveday, that when my assistant wishes me good-night all the parcels are cleared away, and there's nothing left on the counters, not as much as a pin. Well, sir, I come to the end of my supper and my accounts, and feel easy in my mind. Three ha'pence wrong in the reckoning up, but it's on the right side. I put my money and books in the safe, lock it, pocket the key, fill my pipe, and get up to come to the door to have a whiff of tobacco and fresh air. I've got to pass through the shop to get to the street door, and as I come up to this counter here, this bundle stares me in the face. 'Hallo?' says I--to myself, you know--'Hallo! here's something been overlooked;' and I takes hold of the bundle, and starts back as if I was shot. I feel something moving inside. I come up to it again, and open it, and there's this baby staring me in the face--no, not staring me in the face, because it's fast asleep; but there's this baby. How would you have felt?"

"Very much astonished."

"I was flabbergasted. How did it come here? Who brought it? What's the meaning of it? While I was sitting in the back room I didn't hear a sound, but it must have been then that the street door was pushed softly open, and this--this *thing* put on my counter. If I caught the woman who did it I'd make it warm for her."

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Loveday, "it is done for a joke."

"A joke!" cried the pawnbroker. "A nice joke to play a married man--and at this time of the night!"

"At all events you have lent nothing on it."

"Find me the pawnbroker," retorted the distressed man, "who *would* lend money on a baby!"

"Truly," observed Mr. Loveday, with grim suggestiveness, "flesh and blood is not at a premium in this neighborhood."

"But, Mr. Loveday," implored the pawnbroker, "what am I to do with it?"

"I can hardly advise you. You can't very well put it among your other pledges, and you can't very well throw it into the streets."

In his heart of hearts the pawnbroker, although not in the main an ill-natured man, was for the moment mad with himself for having taken Mr. Loveday into his confidence. If he had kept the matter to himself, he might, failing all other ways of getting rid of the encumbrance, have deposited it on a doorstep in such a manner and at such a time that it could not fail to come under the notice of a policeman, who, in the exercise of his duty, could not have allowed it to remain there. It was a warm night, the child was strong and healthy, and was sleeping comfortably; it could scarcely have taken cold. But this proceeding was not open to him now that Mr. Loveday was in possession of the particulars.

"They wouldn't take it in at the workhouse," said Mr. Loveday.

"Why not? They've a better right to it than I have."

"It would have to be proved that it belonged to the parish. It is such a queer story, you see."

"Do you mean to say it wouldn't be believed?"

"I can't hazard an opinion. Suppose you call your wife down, and ask her to take care of it till you find out something about it."

"What!" cried the unhappy pawnbroker, "I should have the house pulled over my ears."

Mr. Loveday shrugged his shoulders. Not that he was indifferent; the adventure was so novel that it interested him; but he could not exactly tell what could be done.

"After all," he said, "it may be as I suggested, a joke. The person who left it here will probably call for it presently. Wait awhile."

"I must, I suppose, but I shall go crazy if I'm left alone with it. Do a charity, and smoke a pipe with me."

"I don't smoke, but I'll keep you company for half an hour. Before that time the mystery may be solved."

But though they waited up till two o'clock there were no further developments. There they sat, for the most part in silence, and there lay the baby in his shawl, sleeping soundly and placidly.

At length Mr. Loveday rose and said he must go. The pawnbroker began to implore again.

"You're a single man; you've got no one to take care of but yourself; I've got six children of my own to look after. Take it home with you and give it a bed."

"No, no," said Mr. Loveday, laughing, "I couldn't think of such a thing. If I were a woman--perhaps; or if I had a female housekeeper in my house. The child needs a woman's care, and your wife is at hand."

The pawnbroker groaned. He heard a policeman's footsteps outside, and in his despair he called him in and repeated his story.

The policeman listened gravely, threw the light of his dark lantern on the sleeping child.

"I don't see what I can do," he said.

"I give it into custody," cried the pawnbroker.

"What's the charge?" asked the policeman.

The pawnbroker wrung his hands. Finally the policeman departed, recommending the pawnbroker, before he left, to follow Mr. Loveday's advice and call down his wife. Mr. Loveday also went home, and the pawnbroker was left alone with his new and startling responsibility.

"I'll call in the morning," said Mr. Loveday, "to see how you've got along with it."

When he called he learned that nothing further had been discovered. The pawnbroker had passed a disturbed and sleepless night; the pawnbroker's wife was in the worst of tempers, and declared that either she or the baby would have to leave the house. Mr. Loveday calmed her down, and then entered into a sensible consideration of the case.

"So many hours have passed," he said, "since the child was left here, that it seems more than likely that the person who placed it on your counter has no intention of redeeming the pledge. In a few days, or weeks, the matter may be traced; in the meantime something must be done. I suggest that a woman be sought who, for three or four shillings a week, will undertake the care of the child. I don't mind bearing half the expense if you will bear the other half."

The benevolent offer was eagerly accepted by the pawnbroker, whose only anxiety now was to get the baby out of his house. Before the evening a poor woman was found who consented to take charge of the helpless bundle of humanity. Having come into the neighborhood by a mysterious chance, the child was called Chance, to which, when or how could not afterwards be recalled, the Christian name of Timothy was prefixed. Endeavors were made to solve the mystery of his birth, but, in the absence of the slightest clew, nothing was discovered. For four years Mr. Loveday and the pawnbroker paid the expenses of the child's bringing up between them; then, somehow or other, Timothy Chance began to take care of himself, nursing babies bigger than himself for mothers whose quivers were too full, and getting a bit of straw to sleep on and a crust of bread to keep life in him. He was full of health and strength, and willingness, and even in those early days he developed a surprising independence which served him in good stead. As he grew in years the task of looking after himself and obtaining shelter and food became less difficult; he throve where others would have starved; if he could not get crumb he put up with crust; if he could not get straw to lie upon he put up with boards, if not boards the earth, if not a roof the sky. From time to time he disappeared from the neighborhood, went hopping in the season, attaching himself to some family bent on the same errand, took service with a tinker and went about the country, and did anything and everything to keep body and soul together. He succeeded in a good and worthy way, and the partnership of his boyish frame with a cheerful, willing spirit, was a passport wherever he went, and would have carried him all over the world. He did well for others, and better for himself, as will be seen, although he was penniless nine days out of ten. This did not trouble him; he was healthy, strong, and happy, and had ideas--in the germ at present, and not by himself understood; but there they were, working in his fertile, healthy brain, to ripen and bear fruit one day perhaps. Such, imperfectly limned, was Timothy Chance as he stood before Mr. Loveday the bookseller.

CHAPTER X.

"Just come back, Timothy?"

"Yes, sir, just come back."

"You've been away a long time?"

"Seven months, sir."

"Done any good for yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, you've got a pocketful of money, then?"

"Not a penny, sir."

"Yet you say you've done well?"

"Yes, sir. I've worked hard, and had plenty to eat, and I'm stronger than ever."

"Ah, that's what you mean by doing well?"

"Yes, sir, and I'm willinger--I mean, more willing than ever."

At this slip of language and its correction Mr. Loveday cocked up his ears, and took a longer look at the lad. Timothy met his gaze ingenuously.

"I think there's an improvement in you, Timothy."

"I hope so, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"In a lot of places, sir, but most of the time in a school."

"Oh, in a school. Doing what? Studying?"

"A little, sir," said Timothy, modestly; "but I wasn't engaged for that."

"For what, then?"

"Garden work, knife-cleaning, boot-cleaning, running of errands, making myself generally useful."

"And picking up scholarship."

"As much of it as ever I could, sir."

"There is certainly an improvement in you, Timothy. You speak more correctly than you did."

Timothy was silent, but his face flushed with pleasure.

"How did you get into the school?"

"By a bit of good-luck, sir--though it wasn't good-luck to another boy who had the place."

"What is one man's meat, Timothy, is another man's poison."

"Is it, sir?"

"So they say, and so it often happens. Go on."

"I was in Essex, sir, looking for a job. It was half-past ten in the morning."

"Carried a watch, eh?"

"No, sir, I was passing a church. But I didn't pass it. I stopped.

"What for?"

"There was a fight going on. Two boys, pegging away at each other like one o'clock. The road was muddy, and they rolled over and over in it, then got up and went at it again. When they'd had enough they ran off different ways, and I lost sight of 'em. I was walking off myself when I noticed something in the mud. It was a letter, and I picked it up and looked at it. I couldn't read the address, it had been dug into the mud so; but in a corner, in very plain writing, I saw the name of Dr. Porter. I went into a baker's shop, and asked if they knew Dr. Porter, and they said he kept a school a little way off. I asked them to show me where it was, as I thought it wouldn't be a bad thing to take the letter to him myself and ask him for a job. They showed me, and I saw Dr. Porter himself; he was in the grounds in front of the schoolhouse, and one of the boys who had been fighting was there too. I gave the doctor the letter, and asked him if it was his, and he

said it was. I found out afterwards that it was a very particular letter, and had some money in it. The boy was sent out to post it, and he got fighting and dropped it in the mud. Then the doctor said he supposed I wanted a reward, and I said no, that I wanted a job. Not to make too long a story, sir, he put a lot of questions to me, and seemed pleased with me, and he sent the fighting boy away and took me on in his place to do the rough work."

"How much a week, Timothy?" inquired Mr. Loveday.

"Two shillings a week and my keep."

"You slept there?"

"Yes, sir."

"And out of the two shillings a week for some months you saved nothing? You come back here without a penny?"

"You shall hear, sir. My clothes were pretty bad, the same as I've got on now, and I thought I'd save as much as I could, and buy a new suit. I did buy a new suit the week before last, but I didn't wear 'em for garden work. Well, sir, while I was with the doctor I was very happy. Plenty of work, but plenty to eat. He hadn't many young gentlemen to teach, and I've found out that he wasn't well off. He had a daughter, a beautiful young lady, not as old as I am, and she had a bit of garden that I used to look after for her. I took a lot of pains with her flowers, and she was so pleased that she used to give me lessons. I can write pretty well, sir."

"You can, eh? I'll try you presently. Go on with your story."

"I learnt a bit of grammar, and a bit of history, and a bit of arithmetic. It was a great bit of luck for me, but it ended badly." Timothy paused and sighed, and his face became grave. "I used to stop up late at night to study, and I picked up a lot. Dr. Porter seemed always to have a peck of trouble on him, but he helped me, too, a bit, by lending me books, and Mrs. Porter helped me as well. I was never so happy before. I bought a new suit of clothes, as I've told you, sir. Everything was going on swimmingly till last week." Timothy paused again.

"What happened then, Timothy?"

"I went to bed very late; I'd had a good hard night of it, and I had to get up very early to do something I wanted to Miss Emily's bit of garden."

"Miss Emily is the doctor's daughter?"

"Yes, sir. I don't know how long I'd been asleep, but it was dark when I woke up all of a sudden with a singing in my ears, and a lot of other sounds that I can't describe. Then I heard some one sing out 'Fire!' I'm pretty quick, sir, as a rule, and I got into my old clothes in less than no time, and ran out of the room. Sure enough, the house was on fire. Miss Emily was crying for her mother, and Dr. Porter was running about like a madman. I raced to Mrs. Porter's room, and helped to get her out, and then we stood and watched the fire burning up the house. There wasn't a drop of water except what we could get from the pump, and that came out with a dribble. A fire-engine came up when it was too late. By that time the house was a mass of flames. There wasn't one bit of furniture saved, nor a book. All their clothes were burnt, and everything they had, except what they stood upright in. My new suit of clothes went too, but I didn't think of that; I was too sorry for Miss Emily and her mother and father. We had a dreadful time, and when daylight came the whole house and everything in it was a heap of ashes. Some friends took Dr. Porter and his wife and Miss Emily away, and I hung about, almost dazed out of my senses. I saved one thing, though--this fowl here, and the basket. The next day I saw Dr. Porter. 'My lad,' he said, 'I owe you a week's wages; here's your florin; I'm a ruined man, and you must look out for another situation.' He spoke nothing but the truth, sir; he *was* ruined; he wasn't insured for a penny. I wouldn't take the florin; I told him about this fowl that I'd saved, and I asked him to let me have that instead. 'Take it and welcome,' he said, 'and your florin too.' But I wouldn't. I wanted badly to see Miss Emily to tell her how sorry I was, and to wish her good-bye, but Dr. Porter had sent her off I don't know where, so I had to come away without seeing her. That's the whole story, sir."

"A sad story, Timothy."

"Yes, sir, you may well say that."

"What are you going to do now?"

"That's what's puzzling me, sir." And Timothy cast a wistful look at the bookseller.

"Take this book in your hand. Open it anywhere. Now read."

Timothy opened the book, and with great fluency read from the top of the page.

"That will do," said Mr. Loveday. "You can write, you say. Sit down there; here's paper, here's a pen. Now write what I say. 'The world is filled with fools and bunglers, and a few clever men. A small proportion of these clever men grow rich, because they are that way inclined; the majority

die poor, because they are not entirely sordid-minded. The fools and bunglers grow so in a small measure from inheritance, in a large measure from indolence and a lack of judicious training.' Give it to me."

He examined the paper carefully.

"Ah! Writing tolerably good. Not a bad style; improvement will come by industry. I think you have that, Timothy Chance."

"I think I have, sir."

"Three mistakes in spelling. Bunglers is not spelled b u n g e l. Inheritance is not spelled without an h and with two e's in the last syllable. Judicious is not spelled j e w. For the rest, all right. A bit of arithmetic, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Be ready with your pen and paper. I buy a parcel of twenty-eight books at auction for three and sixpence; three I sell for waste-paper, sixteen at twopence each, five at threepence each, two at fourpence, and one for a shilling. What's the result?"

"You lay out three and sixpence, sir," said Timothy, almost instantaneously; he was sharp at most things, but especially sharp at figures; "and you get back five and sevenpence. Two and a penny profit."

"Quite right. Anything else?"

"The three books you sell for waste-paper will bring in something; perhaps they're big ones."

"Perhaps they're little ones. We won't reckon them. Anything else?"

"You bought twenty-eight books, sir; you only gave me twenty-seven to figure out. One short, sir."

"That was stolen, Timothy."

"Where from, sir?"

"From the stall outside."

"It couldn't have been, sir, if you had a sharp boy to attend to it for you."

"Ah! The question is, where to find that particularly sharp boy?"

"He's handy, sir, almost at your elbow." Now, although these words betokened a certain confidence and were spoken with a certain boldness, it is a fact that there was a tremor in Timothy's voice as he uttered them. The conversation between him and Mr. Loveday had been strangely in accordance with his earnest desire to be taken into Mr. Loveday's service. He had been upheld by this hope as he tramped from Essex after the schoolhouse had been burned down, and he had hurried back to London more swiftly than he would have done without it.

Mr. Loveday ruminated; Timothy Chance waited anxiously.

"I'm rather a peculiar fellow, Timothy," said Mr. Loveday, presently; "not at all unpleasant out of business, unless you quarrel with my social crotchets, and you're not old enough to do that yet, Timothy, but very strict in business matters, however trifling. That fowl of yours is beginning to crow, Timothy."

"It's all right, sir," said Timothy, in a tone of wistful expectation, "please finish."

"This strictness of mine in business matters may make me a hard master; I haven't tried my hand in that line much, as I've always attended to my shop myself, but I will not deny that I'm half inclined to engage a lad."

"Make it a whole mind, sir, and engage me."

Timothy's occasionally apt replies tickled and pleased Mr. Loveday; they betokened a kind of cleverness which he appreciated.

"As we stand now," continued Mr. Loveday, "man and boy, not master and servant, we have a mutual respect for each other."

"Thank you, sir."

"It would be a pity to weaken this feeling."

"It might be made stronger, sir."

"There are numberless things to consider. If I say, 'Up at six every morning,' up at six it would

have to be."

"And should be, sir."

"If I say, 'Every day's work completely done, every day's accounts satisfactorily made up, before the next day commences,' it would have to be. That fowl of yours is crowing louder, Timothy. No shirking of work by the excuse that it doesn't belong to the duties I engage a lad for. You understand all this?"

"I understand it, sir."

"On the other hand, satisfaction given, the cart would run along smoothly. There might be a little time in the evening for study and reading; there might be sundry pleasant interludes which one can't think of right off. Eh, Timothy?"

"Yes, sir."

"You had it in your mind?"

"I did, sir."

"But," said Mr. Loveday, glancing at the lad, "there is one most important question--the question of respectability."

"There's nothing against me, sir. You may inquire of everybody I've worked for."

"I mean the question of a respectable appearance. Now, Timothy, you will not have the assurance to assert that *you* present a respectable appearance?"

"Cluck! cluck! cluck?" went the fowl in the basket.

Timothy's eyes wandered dolefully over his ragged garments.

"If my new suit of clothes hadn't been burnt," he murmured--

"But they are burnt. Spilled milk, you know. The long and the short of it is, if you can obtain a decent suit of clothes, I'll give you a trial, Timothy."

"Cluck! cluck! cluck! Cluck! cluck! cluck!" from the basket. A jubilant, noisy, triumphant flourish of trumpets, to force upon the world the knowledge of a great event. Timothy knelt down, put his hand in the basket, and drew forth a new-laid egg.

"The world's mine oyster, which I with knife will ope." But surely that knife never presented itself, as it did at the present moment, in the form of a new laid-egg.

CHAPTER XI.

Church Alley, in which Mr. Loveday's second-hand bookshop was situated, was not in the most squalid part of the East, wherein may be found horrible patches, in comparison with which the haunts of heathens in savage lands are a veritable paradise. It was, indeed, in close contiguity to the most respectable part of it, lying to the eastward of the famous butchers' mart, which, in the present day, is shorn of its doubtful glories. The alley was a slit in the main thoroughfare, running parallel with it, about sixty yards in length, and containing thirty-four tenements, sixteen of which were private dwellings and eighteen places of business. In the flourishing West it would have been converted into an arcade, and dignified with an imposing name drawn from royal or martial records; in the toiling East it was simply what it professed to be--an alley, very narrow, very shabby, and generally very dark. When winter fogs lay thick upon the mighty city they reached perfection by the time they floated to Church Alley and settled there. Then was the darkness truly Egyptian, and there the gloom remained, as if in proud assertion of the fitness of things, long after surrounding thoroughfares were bright. The sun rose later there and set earlier, and in freezing time it was a very heaven of slides days after surrounding space was thawing. The explanation of these unusual phenomena may be found in the circumstance that when "weather" got into Church Alley it could not easily get out. There was no roadway for horses and carts; between the rows of houses ran a footpath ten feet in width. The enterprising builder who purchased the land and designed the estate had husbanded his inches with a shrewd eye to the greatest possible number of rents to be squeezed out of them, and it must be confessed that his efforts were crowned with complete success.

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen," and this applies to weeds as well as flowers. Persons not acquainted with the intricacies of the neighborhood would have passed Church Alley without noticing it, even without being aware that there was such a thoroughfare within hail; it seemed, as it were, to shrink from notice, and to have been formed with a view to the enjoyment of the pleasures of obscurity, notwithstanding that it had at one end a public-house and a pawnbroker's shop, and at the other end a pawnbroker's shop and a public-house. These four establishments may be said to have been the archways to the paradise of Church Alley, and from the commencement to the end of the year, in rain or shine, in winter or summer, lost and wretched Peris could always be seen there, lingering at the gates. Public-houses and pawnbroker's shops are as the very breath of life in the East of London, and are important and degrading elements in the education of the dwellers therein. Children from their earliest days are familiar with them, and grow into the knowledge (which fair minds cannot dispute) that these institutions are planted there especially for their behoof. Brewers and distillers grow fat upon vice, and go smilingly through the world, conveniently blind to the fact that the richer they grow the more crowded become the ranks of those wretched ones from whose midst our prisons are filled, and whose lives are a standing reproach to humanity and civilization. It is not the fair use, but the gross abuse, of a system which is here deplored. The axe should be laid to it, despite the Moloch called vested interests, which is set up at the least remonstrance to frighten the timid. Let there be beer-shops and public-houses within limits, but it is infamous legislation which sanctions and encourages (as is to be verified to-day in slices of the East) every fifth or sixth tenement to be either one or the other. To contend, in respect of these hot-beds of vice, that the law of supply follows the law of demand, is an unblushing falsehood; they are distinctly forced upon the people by the very men who fatten upon the degradation, and who are often to be seen upon public platforms deploring the evils of which they are the creators. The sermons these moralists preach--to win votes, or to prove themselves qualified for public office, or to air their spurious philanthropy--are the bitterest of mockeries.

Between the particular public-houses and pawnbrokers' shops which flanked Church Alley were dotted other notable places of business. To wit, Mr. Joseph Loveday's second-hand bookshop, to which we have been already introduced, a sweet-stuff shop, a cook-shop, a wardrobe-shop, and a printer's office, in which the master worked at case and press as his own journeyman. To the small boys and girls in the vicinity of Church Alley these shops were a great attraction, and they patronized them generously. The wardrobe-shop, which, like the bookshop, dealt only in second-hand goods, was as alluring to the grown-up folk of the female sex as it was to the youngsters, and longing were the eyes cast upon the faded silks and satins displayed in the dingy window. A shrewd, wise woman was Mrs. Peeper, the keeper thereof, a woman deeply and strangely versed in the desires and temptations of the lowly female heart. A woman of attainments, too, who might have won a name as a writer of fiction had her steps been led in that direction. In her shop-window would be displayed a much-worn and frayed satin dress, with a train so long as to set female mouths watering, and to this dress would be attached the legend, "From the wardrobe of her Royal Highness the P----ss of W----s." The legend set afloat would go the rounds, and girls and women would flock to gaze at the dress which had once adorned the figure of a royal princess. At another time Mrs. Peeper would arrange in her window several pairs of shoes, boots, and silk stockings, which she would announce as "Direct from B----cking----m P----l----ce;" at another time a flounced petticoat from a duchess; at other times hats, feathers, gloves, trimmings, capes, and various items of vanity, which she would cunningly bait with tempting legends to catch her fish. Mrs. Peeper might be accounted somewhat of a magician, for she filled the minds of many females with fancies which played their parts in dreams, changing charwomen into duchesses, young girls into princesses, and garrets into palaces. Mrs. Peeper seldom failed to land her fish, and the royal garments would be sold at singularly moderate prices, and, moreover, payment taken at so much per week.

Then there was the printer, Mr. Edenborough. In his window were displayed specimens of cheap printing, cards, billheads, handbills, and what not, but there were clear spaces through which the children could peep at the master printer at his work. His stock in trade consisted of one frame, containing about a dozen cases of fancy type, which, with three pairs of cases of small pica, comprised his treasures in metal; there was also a rack of large wood letter for display bills; also an old Albion press. The youngsters stared their eyes out at him as he stood before the frame, composing-stick in hand, picking up the types with that swaying motion of his body which the spectators did not know was the sign of an inferior workman, for the skilful and expert compositor, the one who has generally earned his reputation as a "whip," keeps his body still as his hands travel over the case; they stared the harder when they saw him lock up the chase in which the card or handbill was inserted; and they stared the harder still when he worked ink-roller and press, and pulled off the impressions of the job in hand. He was rather proud of his audience, and made no attempt to disperse them; their admiration was a tribute, and it sweetened his labors.

Then there was the cook-shop, in which, at stated hours of the day, hot dishes made their appearance, smoking. A great attraction, these; tantalizing perhaps, but at all events the youngsters had the smell for nothing. Sometimes a stray ha'penny from the juvenile throng found its way into the cook-shop till. Thereafter would ensue, in some convenient nook, such a feast as Caligula never enjoyed.

Then there was Mr. Sly, the proprietor of the sweet-stuff shop. Such mysteries of sweetness, sticky or otherwise, but generally sticky, were in his window, that the children, once they got

there, had the greatest difficulty in tearing themselves away. Ha'pence and farthings--the latter largely predominating--burned holes in the pockets of small breeches, and invariably, unless the plum-duff of the cook-shop stopped the way, were swept into Mr. Sly's till. There was, besides, in this man's establishment a strange and overwhelming temptation which lured the children on, and filled them now with visions of ineffable happiness, and now with visions of dark despair. The exquisite feelings of Manfred were repeated again and again in the breasts of these small morsels of mortality. In a little room at the back of his shop Mr. Sly kept what was spoken of as a "dolly," which may be described as a species of roulette board, the ball--a marble--being sent spinning down a corkscrew tower till it reached the numbers, and finally settled in its resting-place. The rule of this gambling game was the easiest imaginable, and will be understood by the words "double or quits," a system which, in its results, was painfully comprehensible to the young reprobates who patronized it. A case in point occurred at the precise time that Mr. Loveday and Timothy Chance were talking together, and what ensued may be accepted as an illustration of Mr. Sly's method of conducting that part of his business.

A juvenile of the male sex had come unexpectedly into possession of a farthing. It had not been given to him "to be good;" he had picked it up in Church Alley. He looked at it first in wonder and delight at his good luck, then he flourished it triumphantly. Forthwith he was surrounded, and far and wide the news spread that "Billy Forester had picked up a farden." This caused the meeting to be a numerous one. Before proceeding to discuss how it should be spent there was a difficulty to smooth over.

"I cried, ''Arves!'" said little Bob Bracey.

"You didn't," said Billy Forester.

"I did!"

"You didn't!"

"Look 'ere; I'll fight you for it!"

"No, yer won't. It's mine, and I means to stick to it."

"What are you goin' to do with it?" was asked in a chorus.

"Spend it," said Billy.

"In course he is. The farden's Billy's, and he's goin' to spend it. We'll all 'ave a lick."

Then ensued a discussion upon ways and means.

"I think," said Billy, "I'll spend it in burnt almonds."

This caused dismay. A farthing's worth of burnt almonds among so many, Billy by right taking the lion's share, would go a very little way; the majority of Billy's comrades would not get even a "lick."

"I tell yer wot to do, Billy," said a shrewd youngster. "'Ave a spin at old Sly's dolly, and double it."

"Yes, do, Billy, and double it ag'in. Then we'll all 'ave a taste."

Why they called Mr. Sly "old Sly" cannot be explained, the vender of sweet-stuff being comparatively a young man; but it is a way poor children have.

Billy Forester was at heart a gambler.

"I'll do it," he said.

Away he marched, followed by the admiring crowd. Billy, having found a farthing, was a hero.

"Now then," said Mr. Sly as they flocked into his shop, "not so many of yer. Hallo, Billy, it's you. What do you want?"

Billy replied by crooking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Mr. Sly's back room. That the gambling had to be carried on in secrecy made it all the more tempting to the juveniles. It was supposed by many that Mr. Sly would be beheaded if the government caught him at it.

"All right," said Mr. Sly, "you and me, Billy. Now, clear out, every one of yer, or I'll shut up shop. You can wait outside for Billy."

He hustled them out like a flock of sheep, and they clustered in the alley in pleasurable expectation, waiting for Billy. Meanwhile Mr. Sly conducted the hero to the little back room.

"'Ow much for, Billy?" asked Mr. Sly.

"A farden."

"Only a farden! Well, never mind; little fish is sweet. 'And it over."

Billy parted with his farthing.

"Will you go fust, Billy?"

"No, you," said Bill.

"'Ere goes, then." Down the screw turret went the marble, spinning round and round, and when it landed Mr. Sly called, "Eight. Rather a low number that, Billy."

Billy took the marble, spitting first in his hand for luck, and put it in the hole at the top of the tower.

"Twelve," said Mr. Sly.

Billy, having won, was entitled to one half-penny's worth of sweet-stuff for his farthing. He could choose, at liberty, almond-rock, acid drops, peppermint-stick, barley-sugar, hard-bake, toffee, treacle-rock, or any other sweet condiment he preferred. He was debating what to do when the voice of Mephistopheles fell upon his ear.

"You've got a ha'porth, Billy. Make it a penn'orth. Go in and win."

Billy remembered what one in the meeting had said, "and double it ag'in." He would.

"I'll go fust this time, Mr. Sly," he said.

Down went the marble, and, with a long face, Mr. Sly called out "Twenty-three. But it's to be beaten, Billy."

He did not beat it, however, his number being fourteen.

"That makes a penn'orth, Mr. Sly," said Billy, exultantly.

"That makes a penn'orth," said Mr. Sly, despondently. "Make it tuppence or nothink. Yer sure to win."

"Am I?"

"Sure. You'll see."

Billy, in a kind of desperation, seized the fatal marble, and sent it spinning down the corkscrew turret.

"The same number ag'in," he cried. "Twenty-three."

"A true bill," said Mr. Sly, his face darkening. "Down I go. Well, of all the luck! Twenty-two."

"I've won," said Billy, trembling from excitement.

"I told yer yer would, and yer'll win ag'in if yer not chicken 'earted. Fourpence or nothink? What do yer say?"

"I say, yes," replied Billy, in a loud tone, he was tasting for the first time the delirious excitement of gambling and winning largely, and his blood was in a ferment. "Fourpence or nothink. 'Ere goes."

There did go the marble, and landed in twenty-one. Mr. Sly was not more fortunate than before. His number was seven. His face grew darker and darker.

"Fourpenn'orth!" cried Billy. "Hooray!"

"Try ag'in," urged Mephistopheles. "Eightpenn'orth or nothink! Why, yer in sech luck that yer'd break the Bank of England. There's no standing ag'in yer. I'm desperate, I am. I shouldn't wonder if yer was to break me."

Flushed with victory, and dazzled with visions of armsful of sweet-stuff, Billy for the fifth time sent the marble down, and for the fifth time won. He screamed out the fact at the top of his voice.

"That's Billy cryin' out," said one of the throng outside. "He's winnin'."

"He'll 'ave the 'ole bloomin' shop," said another.

"If I was Billy I'd stash it," remarked a clear-brained juvenile. "I know 'ow it'll end. I've been there myself."

"Oh, you? you've got no pluck! Go in and win, Billy!"

This exhortation was shouted out, and it reached Billy's ears.

"There," said Mr. Sly, in a tone of suppressed excitement, and striving hard to smother his resentment at Billy's good-fortune, "d'yer 'ear wot they say? 'Go in and win.' Yer've got eightpenn'orth, make it sixteenpenn'orth or nothink. There was a boy 'ere last week"--and Mr. Sly gazed meditatively before him at the visionary boy he was referring to--"who commenced with a farden, just like you, and he won nine times runnin'. It's nothink much at fust---a farden, a ha'penny, a penny. It's *now* that it begins to mount up. Yes, nine times running he won--ten shillings and eightpence, that's wot he got the worth of. He went out loaded. Four pound of 'ard-bake, a pound of burnt almonds, a pound of barley-sugar, three pound of peppermint-rock, same of toffee, and I don't know what else. I didn't mind a bit; it did me good. That's the way to make a forchen."

The recital of the catalogue of treasures was too much for Billy, and the marble being insidiously slipped into his palm by the cunning tradesman--who was quite aware that if you go on doubling or nothing it must eventually come to nothing--Billy, with quivering nerves, dropped it down the corkscrew turret.

"Three!" shouted Mr. Sly. "But I might git one or two. 'Ere goes. Seventeen! Nothink."

Billy was sobered. Ruined and chapfallen he preceded Mr. Sly into the shop, and thence emerged into the alley, where he related his misfortune, while Mr. Sly, standing at the door, wiped his heated brows, and called out:

"Never say die, Billy. Better luck next time."

But Billy was not to be consoled. His companions, disgusted with his bad luck and disappointed in their expectations, fell off from him one by one, and he was left quite alone. A few minutes ago he was a personage, now he was nobody. He felt the fall.

CHAPTER XII.

Timothy Chance went from Mr. Loveday's shop with the warm new-laid egg in his hand. By permission of the bookseller he left his one possession, the fowl rescued from the burning schoolhouse, behind him, Mr. Loveday saying, jocosely,

"If it lays another egg to-day, Timothy, I shall claim it."

"All right, sir," Timothy had replied. "It won't lay another to-day, but there will be one to-morrow. It's a bird that can earn its own living."

A remark which caused Mr. Loveday to laugh, and to think: "You're a clever fellow, Timothy. There's stuff in you."

Nearly everybody within hail of Church Alley who was familiar with Timothy's face was always pleased to see him, and indeed it may with truth be averred that he had not an enemy. This pleasant fact was the reward of his willing and cheerful spirit, which invariably prompted him to do a good turn if it was in his power. But he had one especial friend for whom, above all others, he had a deep regard. The name of this friend was Teddy Meadows, a lad about the same age as himself, and of about the same build. The liking for each other which existed between these lads might have ripened into a firm and lasting bond of friendship in their manhood, had circumstances been favorable. It had commenced with a timely service which Timothy rendered Teddy some years before. Teddy, although as tall as Timothy, was of a weakly constitution, and suffered from lameness. One day, while crossing the Whitechapel Road, he fell under the feet of a horse which was drawing a loaded hay-cart, and had it not been for Timothy rushing forward and dragging him away, he would probably have received fatal injuries. As it was, he was much shaken, and Timothy had to carry him home. The parents were grateful to Timothy for the rescue, and thus the bond between him and Teddy was commenced. Teddy's father was a carpenter, and not a bad one, and being a steady man and a capable, was successful in obtaining pretty steady work. He had a fairly comfortable home, and, without being able to put by much money for a rainy day, kept his family in comfort. Their one sorrow was Teddy's lameness and his weak constitution.

It was to Teddy's house that Timothy wended his way when he left Mr. Loveday's shop, not only because of his desire to see his friend and to relate his adventures, but because he had a vague hope that Teddy might be able to advise how he was to obtain a decent suit of clothes. On the road he met Mr. Meadows, and he fancied that Teddy's father was graver than usual; there were certainly signs of trouble in Mr. Meadows's face. "Perhaps he's out of work," thought

Timothy. He went up to Mr. Meadows, and accosted him.

"It's a long time since we've seen you," said Mr. Meadows. He spoke absently, and did not seem to observe how poorly Timothy was dressed.

"I've been in the country," said Timothy, "but the gentleman I worked for was burnt out last week."

"That's unfortunate," said Mr. Meadows. "There's more trouble in the world than there ought to be."

Timothy supposed that Mr. Meadows made this remark because he was out of employment, and he did not think it right to comment upon it. From a young lad to a grown man with a family it might savor of impertinence.

"I have just come back to London," he said, "and I was going to see Teddy."

"Were you?" The father's face brightened a little, then fell again. "He'll be glad to see you. He has often spoken of you, especially lately. My poor boy!" He almost broke down.

Timothy's heart sank within him.

"Is Teddy unwell?" he asked.

"He is very ill," replied Mr. Meadows, turning his head.

"Very ill?" said Timothy, with sudden terror.

"Very, very ill." He turned his face again to Timothy, grateful for the note of sympathy in the lad's voice, and then Timothy saw that his eyes were filled with tears.

"Oh, I am so sorry, so sorry!" said Timothy, unable to restrain his own tears. "Not seriously, Mr. Meadows; not seriously, I hope."

"Yes, seriously," said Mr. Meadows, sadly, and he laid a kind hand on Timothy's shoulder. "But go and see him. He will be glad." And saying this, and afraid to trust himself further, Mr. Meadows hurried away to his work.

Timothy walked slowly on, greatly shocked by the sorrowful news. Mr. Meadows's voice and manner denoted that he feared the worst. The worst? Yes, perhaps death.

It stirred Timothy's heart deeply; a wave of sorrow was passing over it, and he had never till this moment realized how much he loved the young friend who was lying in such peril. His own troubles were forgotten; he thought only of poor Teddy.

He quickened his steps, and soon reached Mr. Meadows's house. He was about to knock at the street door, when it opened, and a gentleman came from the house, saying to Mrs. Meadows, who stood on the door-step:

"Remember--a new-laid egg."

Timothy started, and looked after the doctor. Then he went up to Mrs. Meadows.

"Oh, Tim!" sobbed the woman, "my poor boy is dying!"

"Is the new-laid egg for Teddy?" asked Timothy, in a shaking voice.

"Yes. It is the only thing, mixed with a little wine, the doctor says, that will keep strength in him till his father comes back from work."

"I have brought one, Mrs. Meadows," said Timothy, sadly. "You may be sure it is new-laid--only half an hour ago."

"God bless you!" said Mrs. Meadows. "Come in, my dear. Teddy will be so glad to see you!"

CHAPTER XIII.

In all his after-life Timothy never forgot that night he spent with Teddy. It left upon him an

abiding impression for good, and if in his manhood he stepped out of his way to do a kindness, he would sometimes think that he was urged to it by the spirit of his dear friend.

Teddy was more than glad to see him; he said it was the one thing he had been wishing for before he--, and then he stopped, and looked at his friend with a half-wistful, half-whimsical expression on his face.

"Before you what, Teddy?" asked Timothy, a great lump rising in his throat.

"Before I go to another place," replied Teddy.

"Where?"

"Ah! now you ask a question, Tim." He paused awhile, and added: "But somewhere. You've been talking to mother, haven't you?"

"Yes--and I met your father as I was coming here."

"He was cut up, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Speaking of me?"

"Yes. He could hardly get his words out."

"He has been a good father--I couldn't have had a better; no boy could. My dear, good mother, too, she will feel it. They told you I was dying, didn't they?"

The mournful look in Timothy's eyes was an eloquent answer.

"It's true, Tim; I knew it before they did, before even the doctor did. Long ago I knew I should never live to be a man. I don't know whether I'm sorry or glad. There's Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott--I say, isn't 'Ivanhoe' splendid?"

"I don't know, Teddy. I never read it. But what about Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott?"

"They're dead, aren't they?"

"Of course they are."

"There it is, you see. It comes to the same thing. The only difference is in being born earlier or later."

"I say, Teddy, where did you get all this from?"

"All what, Tim?"

"This way of talking."

"Wasn't I always so?"

"Not quite so; it's new, a lot of it--at least to me."

"Comes from reading, I suppose, and thinking a bit, like a parrot."

His mother here entered the room, with a tumbler of wine in which Timothy's new-laid egg was beaten up.

"Timothy brought the egg, my love," she said; "it is new-laid."

"Did he, now? Lift me up, Tim, please."

Timothy raised the dying lad, and supported him in his arms, and Teddy drank the wine and egg slowly.

"It's nice," he said; "it seems to make me strong."

"The doctor said it would, my dear," said his mother; "it will help to make you well."

Teddy looked tenderly at her.

"Kiss me, mother."

She took him from Timothy's arms, and for a little while the mother and son lay in a close embrace. When she was gone Teddy said:

"Did you bring the new-laid egg for me, Tim?"

"I must have done," replied Timothy, more cheerfully, hailing with hope the delusive sign of

renewed strength in his friend, "because you've eaten it."

"But intentionally?"

"No Teddy, not intentionally."

"It's funny you should have had one, though, just when the doctor ordered it for me. Perhaps you're in the egg business now?"

This caused Timothy to laugh and Teddy to smile.

"I'm not in the egg business yet," said Timothy. "How I got it is part of a story."

"Your story, I can guess. You've been away a long time. Tell me everything about yourself, and everything that has happened--everything!"

"It will take so long, Teddy."

"All the more reason," said Teddy, with a grave smile, "why you should begin soon. Fire away, Tim. It will be a pleasure for me to lie and listen."

It is not so uncommon as may be supposed to chance upon a lad in Teddy's station in life able to express himself so well. Looking round upon the familiar faces in the gallery of art and literature, and recognizing in this one and that one portraits of earnest workers, the fruit of whose labors have imparted intellectual pleasure to hundreds of thousands of men and women, one cannot fail to be struck by the fact that it is not from the ranks of the rich and powerful that the majority of these bright stars have emerged. It may be that the rich have not that incentive to succeed--the spur of necessity forming part of it--which the poor have, but the fact remains. Thus it is not surprising to find a lad of Teddy's stamp in the squalid East, and his weak physical frame may be set down to his intellectual advantage.

He lay and listened to Timothy's story. Timothy spoke softly and slowly, and when, at the expiration of fifteen or sixteen minutes, he saw Teddy's eyes close, and judged that he had fallen into slumber, he stopped till Teddy, after the lapse of another few minutes, opened his eyes, and said:

"Yes, Tim, and then--"

Then Timothy resumed his story, pausing again when Teddy closed his eyes again, and continuing when the dying lad was sensible once more of what was going on around him. Now and then the mother would enter the room, very softly, and, in obedience to Timothy's finger at his lips, would close the door behind her and step to the bedside so quietly and noiselessly that she might have been a pitying spirit of air instead of a suffering mother whose heart was filled with woe. Then would she bend over the bed, sometimes with a terrible fear that her son had passed away; but she would raise her head and look at Timothy with tears in her eyes, and whisper:

"Thank God, he only sleeps!"

Ah! in these vigils of love, kept through day and night in the homes of the rich and poor, drawing the sick ones together until they stand upon the eternal platform of equality, there is much to be thankful for. If the lessons they teach were more enduring the world would be more human than it is, and justice--not that kind of justice we seek in wig and gown--would be dispensed more equally.

At length the story was finished, and Teddy, awake, but growing weaker and weaker, lay and thought over it. His voice now sometimes wandered away, and the sense of his words was blurred by the approaching change, but for the most part he held himself in control, and spoke intelligently, with a full consciousness of what he was saying.

"It was a lucky thing you got into that school, Tim."

"Yes, Teddy, it was."

"I always knew you were clever, and only wanted teaching. You must read 'Ivanhoe.'"

"I will, Teddy."

"And 'The Old Curiosity Shop,' and 'The Cricket on the Hearth.' Oh, how I've laughed and cried over them. Is Miss Emily pretty?"

"Very pretty, Ted."

"That's nice. I like pretty things--faces, flowers, and pictures. I can shut my eyes and see them--oh, such crowds of them, disappearing and coming up again. I am sorry for poor Dr. Porter. Perhaps you will see Miss Emily again."

"I hope so."

"There was little Alice Goldsmid; she was my sweetheart"--he was wandering now--"and she died a long, long time ago. I shall see her. She wore a white dress and a blue necklace. Is that you, father?"

"Yes, my boy," replied Mr. Meadows, who, with his wife, had just entered the room; "do you feel better?"

"Much better; oh, so much better! Give me your hand, father." He took it and held it to his lips. "Did you hear about Timothy and his new-laid egg?"

"Mother has told me about it, my boy."

"Is mother here?"

"Yes, my dearest."

A sudden strength animated Teddy's frame. "I could almost sit up alone," he said; and he strove to rise.

"You had better lie and rest, my boy," said his father.

"But I have something to do," he said, "that mightn't be thought of afterwards. Though if you did think of it I am sure you would do it, because it would give me pleasure."

"We would do anything to give you pleasure, my boy."

"I know you would, father, and thank you for all your goodness to me. It shall never be forgotten--never. Please help me up."

They humored him, and propped him up with pillows. Timothy was now sitting at the foot of the bed, and the dying lad's parents one on each side at the head. Their hands were clasped at his back, forming a frame for their dear one, in which he found support.

"Mother and father," he said, "I am going to make my will."

As he said this Timothy saw in his face the same half-wistful, half-whimsical expression he had observed upon his first entrance into the sick-room. The tears which welled into the mother's eyes at mention of a will--a strange fancy to enter the brain of one so young--almost blinded her. Mr. Meadows's eyes were tearless, but he suffered none the less.

"First, though, I must say good-bye to Harry and Joe and Nelly."

These were Teddy's brothers and sisters, all younger than he. "Good-bye!" murmured the mother. "Oh, my poor boy, my poor boy!"

"It is right," said Teddy; "it is, isn't it, father? I shall see them again; but after to-night they won't see me, perhaps, for a long, long time. No, don't take your arm away, father; I like it where it is, and mother's." He turned to each of them, and received their loving kiss. "Tim will go and bring them up. And, Tim, don't say anything to them about my dying; it might frighten them, and they wouldn't understand. Tell them that Teddy wants to kiss them good-night. Not good-bye, Tim, good-night."

Timothy went down-stairs and brought the youngsters up, telling them to be very quiet, as brother Teddy's head ached badly.

"Lift them up, Tim," said Teddy. "Good-night, Harry."

"Good-night, Teddy," said Harry. "Won't you get well soon, and have larks?"

"You shall have plenty of fun, Harry. Say God bless you, Teddy."

"God bless you, Teddy."

"And God bless you, Harry, and mind you must be a good boy."

"I will, I will," said the little fellow.

And so with Joe and Nelly, who kissed and bade their brother good-night, and gave him God's blessing.

"Would you mind, mother," whispered Teddy, "if they said their prayers now before going to bed?"

In obedience to their mother's directions, the children knelt at the bedside and said their prayers aloud, Timothy, the sorrowing parents, and Teddy himself mutely joining in the simple supplication. Mr. and Mrs. Meadows's heads were bowed upon their breasts, but Timothy's eyes were fixed upon Teddy's face, and a great tremor ran through him as he noticed the dying lad's lips form the words, "Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep." The solemnity of the occasion sank deep into Timothy's heart. "He says that prayer," he thought, "for the last

time, for the last time. Poor Teddy!"

The prayers being over, the children were taken quietly from the room. Teddy's eyes followed their figures until the door closed upon them. Then his lids dropped, and no one spoke until he himself broke the silence. His voice was weaker now, and he often paused, as if to gather strength for the words he wished to utter.

"Harry will be just like you, father, when he is a man. He is proud of it when I have told him. 'I want to be like father,' he has said many times."

"I hope he will be a better man," said the father.

"He couldn't very well be that, eh, mother? And Nelly will be like you, mother, but not so pretty, I think."

Mrs. Meadows sighed. She was a buxom woman; but her best-looking days were gone. She knew that quite well, and had always wondered at Teddy's praises of her prettiness.

"And now, father, about my will. You won't mind, will you?"

"No, my boy, we will do everything you wish."

"Thank you, father. But first, though, about what I've got a right to do."

"You've the right to do anything, Teddy. Only say what it is."

"Are my books mine, father?" asked Teddy. "Yes, my boy."

"I know exactly how many I've got--forty-seven, some of them nicely bound. I should like Timothy to have five."

"He shall have them, Teddy, the best there are."

"He won't pick out the best, father; he knows they are only as a remembrance, and I want him to have something else. Father, you must have my desk."

"I will keep it and cherish it, my boy."

"There is something in it for mother--a little ivory brooch I bought for her birthday before I was taken ill. Your birthday comes exactly four weeks to-day, mother. I sha'n't be here; but think I give it to you *then*."

Mrs. Meadows could not speak. She lowered her face to the wasted hand she held in hers and kissed it, and held her head down.

"My other books I should like divided between Harry, Joe, and Nelly. That will be fourteen each. You will know which to choose for them. Father, are my clothes mine?"

"Surely they are, my dear lad."

"To do whatever I like with?"

"Whatever you like, my boy."

"I am glad of that, because there is something I very much wish to do. Timothy is just my height, father."

"Yes, my boy, he is."

Timothy held his breath, divining the idea bred by the thoughtful love of his friend.

"Has he told you that he can get a good situation if he has a decent suit of clothes to go in?"

"No, Teddy; but I am glad to hear it."

"He'll tell you all about it another time--not now, because my breath is going. Would you believe that the only thing in the world he can call his own is a fowl? Such a wonderful layer! That is how it was he was able to bring the new-laid egg to me. I should like Timothy to have my best trousers, my best coat and waistcoat, my best shirt--no, two shirts--and my best boots."

"He shall have them, Teddy."

"Thank you, father. He isn't to wait for them, you know, because it is *now* he wants them. It would do me a great deal of good if I could see Timothy in them with my own eyes."

Mrs. Meadows rose, and, selecting the clothes mentioned by Teddy, told Timothy to go into her room and put them on. "If the dear Lord in his mercy should spare us this blow," she thought, "my darling boy can have new ones. How thankful, how grateful I shall be if this blessing is granted me!"

Timothy was absent from the sick-room for a much longer time than was necessary for him to throw off his ragged garments and get into Teddy's clothes. It was not out of vanity, but of delicacy, he did this, for he did not have the heart to look at himself in his better raiment. His young life had been already full of adventures, and many of them sorrowful ones, but this was the most mournful of them all. Ideas with respect to Teddy's clothes were stirring in his brain as well as in that of the mother sitting by the bedside of her dying son. "If Teddy takes a turn for the better, I can easily get into my rags again." He consoled himself with this idea, and he did up his tattered garments into a tidy bundle ready for the better emergency. He prayed that his dear friend might live. There would be little hope then of his obtaining the situation which was offered to him, but shrewd and clever as he was he was void of that kind of selfishness the gratification of which entails misfortunes upon others. "If I can't get into Mr. Loveday's shop," he thought, "I shall get something else to do, I dare say. I shall manage to rub along somehow." He would dearly love to obtain service with Mr. Loveday, but not at the expense of the life of the best friend he ever had. He remained from the sickroom so long that Mrs. Meadows had to come and beg him to return to it.

"Teddy is asking for you," she said. "Oh, my dear, he is sinking fast, I am afraid!"

"I hope you don't think it wrong of me to do this," said Timothy, looking down upon Teddy's clothes.

"Wrong, my dear? No, indeed not. It is to please our dear boy--and you shall keep them even if he does get well. But I fear--I fear-- Oh, my dear, he is the sweetest lad that ever drew breath! Never an angry word from his lips, never, never--and I have spoken cross to him often and often. He never answered me, never once. And now I am punished for it, now I am punished for it!"

It was painful to witness her anguish.

"You must not, you should not speak in that way, Mrs. Meadows," said Timothy, to whom came at this juncture an impressiveness of manner which spoke well for a true manliness of spirit in the future when he should have arrived at manhood's estate; "if Teddy knew it he would be very grieved--it would hurt him badly. You have nothing to vex yourself about, I know, who never had a mother to love"--and here Timothy's voice shook. He was aware of the strange mystery attached to his being thrust, a stranger, upon the care of strangers, and at this solemn time it forced itself upon him with a new significance.

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Meadows, "I am sorry for you."

"I know," continued Timothy, "from Teddy's own dear lips how good and loving you have been to him--"

"Has he told you so--has my dear boy told you so?"

"Over and over again; and he has said that he could never repay you and his father for your goodness to him."

"That came out of his own kind heart, always thinking of others, never of himself."

"It is true, Mrs. Meadows. He said once to me, 'I wish you had a home like mine, and a mother and father like mine.'"

"The dear lad--the dear, dear lad! It makes it all the harder to lose him, all the harder."

"It is hard--but let us go in now. He will be restless."

"Yes, yes, let us go in. You are a good lad, Timothy, and we shall always be glad to see you here. Remember that, my dear."

"I will, Mrs. Meadows, and thank you."

The mother wiped the tears from her eyes, but as fast as she wiped them away they flowed afresh.

The moment he entered the room Timothy saw the change that had come over Teddy. But Teddy could still speak in a faint, weak voice, and his eyes brightened as they rested on Timothy.

"How nice you look!" he murmured. "Do they fit you?" Timothy nodded. "Bend down, Timothy. That's right." He kissed Timothy. "If you get along, as you're sure to do, you must pay me for them."

"How can I do that, Teddy dear?" asked Timothy, in wonder.

"By helping some poor boy, and trying to get him out of his trouble."

"As you have got me out of mine. I promise, Teddy, faithfully."

"I think," said Teddy, suddenly raising himself up in bed, and speaking in a thin, clear voice, "that everything is very beautiful. Good-night. I am very happy. God bless you, Tim!"

"God bless you, Teddy!"

"Mother, father, put your arms round me."

Close, close beat the loving hearts, one growing fainter, fainter, until, though still it fluttered, they could neither see nor hear its pulsation. Teddy lay still for hours, for the most part with his eyes closed; but at long intervals the lids were slightly raised for a few moments at a time. Whether he saw anything before him they did not know, but they knew by an occasional slight movement of his fingers, which feebly strove to clasp the hands in which they were enfolded, that the tide of life had not quite run out. In the midst of their deep trouble it consoled them that he was in peace, and that it was mercifully ordained that he should pass away without suffering; for all through these memorable hours, which formed for them a sad and loving memory till they themselves received the summons to eternity, a smile rested on his lips. It was there when a linnet in a cage down-stairs began to chirp and twitter in the early morning. Teddy did not hear the sweet sounds; he had answered the call, and his soul was with God and the angels.

"So you've got the clothes, Timothy," said Mr. Loveday on the following day.

"Yes, sir," said Timothy; and he told the bookseller about Teddy.

"Ah," said Mr. Loveday, "so goes on forever and a day the mystery of life and death, never for one moment ceasing its work. Timothy, your fowl has laid another egg. Shall we value it at five farthings?"

"Keep it, sir, and welcome," said Timothy.

"No, my lad. Justice is justice, and I get it cheap. I engage you, Timothy, as my assistant, at eighteen pence a week and board and lodging. Satisfaction given, a rise of sixpence a week at the end of six months; satisfaction still given, and all going along comfortably, a rise of another sixpence at the end of twelve months. What do you say?"

"I am very thankful to you, sir," replied Timothy.

"You will want to go to the funeral, Timothy?"

"If you can spare me, sir."

"Of course I can spare you. Friends are not so plentiful, dead or alive."

CHAPTER XIV.

We return to Nansie and Kingsley. They were still in Godalming. Nansie's father was buried, a quiet funeral, with only Nansie and Kingsley as mourners; the horse and caravan were sold, and the loving couple who were now to commence the battle of life in real, right-down earnest, had taken humble lodgings for a week or two, pending the serious question as to what they should do. Until after the funeral Nansie had no heart to write to her uncle in London. She had thought of acquainting him with the death of his brother, and asking him whether he would wish to attend the funeral, but the knowledge of the estrangement of the brothers during her father's lifetime, and a feeling of loyalty towards her father, who, in this estrangement, had been, in her belief, harshly treated, caused her to postpone the writing of her letter till the last sad offices were fulfilled. There was another reason. She feared that her uncle was a man of hard disposition, and that his resentment against his brother might find an outlet over the grave of the dear father she loved so well. This fear also sustained her. An inharmonious note springing from an unkind nature, during her days of fresh sorrow, an inharmonious note which might have been detected even when the dear remains were consigned to their last resting-place, would have been too painful to her to bear, and would, besides, have been a desecration. Therefore it was that many days passed by before Nansie communicated to her uncle the news of his brother's death.

Meanwhile Kingsley was busy thinking about the settling of his affairs. He had some belongings and a little money, and it was necessary that his debts should be paid.

"We will commence quite free, Nansie," he said, "then we shall know where we are, and how we stand."

"It will be best, Kingsley," said Nansie.

"We will wipe out the past, my dear," said Kingsley, "and commence with a new slate. That will cost nothing, being in a sense metaphorical."

She did not ask him if he felt regret that he had married her; she knew that he did not, but she would have been scarcely human had the thought not obtruded itself. Certainly nothing in Kingsley's manner denoted regret. He was cheerful, hopeful, confident, and, having sufficient for the present day, felt no fears for the future. That was probably because he had not had experience. His life hitherto had been pleasant and luxurious, with no troubles of money to harass him. A good education, a liberal allowance, having but to ask and receive--these easy ways were not a good education for adversity.

"There is a song I have often sung, Nansie, my dear," he said, lightly, "and the burden of it is, 'never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you.' That is the plan we will follow."

"Yes, Kingsley," said Nansie, with a bright look; "it does not mean that we should not be prepared."

"Prepared!" he exclaimed, putting his arm round her waist and kissing her. "Of course we will be prepared. Leave everything to me; and don't have any fear that I shall miss anything."

"Are you sure, dear?"

"Am I sure? Well, upon my word! There is only one thing in the world I should miss, and that is you--with a thousand apologies for calling you a thing. So long as you are with me, with your bright eyes and sweet face, and that pretty bit of ribbon about your neck--I love to see you dressed like a lady; of course that will always be--so long as we are together as we are now, it isn't possible for me to miss anything, because my bonnie Annie Laurie is all the world to me. Then, you know, there is a charm in change, a positive charm in coming down a bit. There's pheasant now, and partridge and grouse, and *pâté de foie gras*--why, I've run away from them for a cut of rump steak. As for champagne, which I could have swam in--really, Nansie, swam in--why, I would rather have a bottle of Bass any day. There were some of the long walks I used to take with a chum or two. Well, we walk a dozen miles and pull up at quite a common little inn, and call for bitter--in the pewter, Nansie--and bread and cheese. Was there ever anything like it? Never. The best meal I ever sat down to was nothing in comparison. I would look at my chums, and my chums would look at me, and we would all agree that we never ate and drank anything with such a relish. It was true. We'll take long walks together, Nansie, you and I, and you will say the same. I must leave you to-morrow morning, you know, my dear, for a couple of days to settle up all my old debts. There's the stable bill--I shall have to sell my horse--and the jeweller's bill."

"Kingsley, dear," said Nansie, interrupting him.

"Yes, Nansie."

"This watch and chain was bought of the jeweller, was it not?"

She pointed to a pretty watch and chain she was wearing, which, with a locket, he had given to her on the morning they had disclosed to Nansie's father the secret of their marriage.

"Yes, my dear," he said, gayly.

"And was not paid for when you gave it to me?"

"And was not paid for," he repeated, in the same gay tone, "when I gave it to you. But," he added, "it will be before I return."

"Don't you think, Kingsley, dear, that it would be best for you to ask the jeweller to take it back? It will make your account lighter."

"What?" he cried. "Rob you of my own gift! Not likely, Nansie. Well, that is an idea to get into your head! And you call yourself practical!"

"I think it would be right, my dear, and I can do very well without it."

"And *I* think it would be wrong, and I am certain you could *not* do very well without it. And the locket, too--why, Nansie, it has my portrait in it!"

"I should like to keep the locket," said Nansie, opening it and gazing fondly at the handsome, smiling face of her lover and husband.

"I should think you would, indeed. Let me look at it. Upon my word, Nansie, it flatters me."

"It does not," said Nansie, energetically. "You are a great deal better-looking than the picture."

He laughed.

"Now it is you who are flattering; and, of course, you are only joking when you ask me to take the watch and chain back. Don't mention it again, there's a good girl. It gives me an uncomfortable feeling. Every lady has her watch and chain, and I should feel that mean if I saw

you without one--well, there! don't let us talk about it. I shall be able to pay the jeweller. You don't know half the things I've got in my bachelor rooms; and just look at this diamond ring he wheedled me into buying for myself. Down in the bill for sixty pounds. To think I have never given you a ring!"

"Yes, you have, dear," said Nansie, kissing her wedding-ring.

"Of course, that," said Kingsley, taking her hand and kissing it, and keeping it clasped in his; "but I mean diamonds."

"I don't want diamonds, dear."

"Because you are the sweetest, most unselfish little wife that a fellow was ever blessed with. But confess, Nansie, now, you do like diamonds, don't you? No subterfuges, you know. I am your husband, and you mustn't deceive me. You *do* like them?"

"Yes, Kingsley; all women do, I think."

"And lace?"

"Yes, and lace."

"That's where it is," he said, in a tone of vexation, running his fingers through his hair. "I had my eye on a lovely ring, and such a brooch! I asked the jeweller to put them by for me."

"You will not get them now, Kingsley?" said Nansie, anxiously.

"No, I can't very well, and that is what vexes me. I look upon them as really yours, and as if I'd behaved meanly in not buying them for you. It is really a loss, for, you see, if I had bought them when I took a fancy to them, you would have had them, and I shouldn't have cause to reproach myself."

"Kingsley, dear," said Nansie, holding up a reproving forefinger, "you are, as my dear father used to say, illogical."

"Your dear father may have said it to you, my unreasonable darling, because logic is not by any means a feminine quality; but he would never have said it to me, because we men see deeper into things than you. I could prove to you incontestably, Nansie, that it is a positive loss that I did not buy that ring and brooch for you; but I don't want to make your head ache." He kissed her eyes and forehead and lips, as if these marks of affection were as powerful as any logic he could bring to bear upon the point in dispute. "However, what is done is done, and what we have to consider is not yesterday, but tomorrow."

"Yes, dear," said Nansie, hailing this more sensible turn, "that is what we have to consider."

"And we will consider it, dearest, in a practical, logical manner." Nansie, despite her anxiety, could not help smiling at this. "I am sure I am thinking of it all the night long."

(If this were so it must have been in his dreams, for he was an exceptionally sound sleeper, as Nansie well knew, by reason of her own mind being really disturbed by thoughts of the future.)

"What will have to be decided is what I am fit for and what I can do, and the thing then is," and Kingsley looked pleasantly around, as though he were addressing an audience, "to go and do it. Yes," he repeated, "to go and do it. You cannot deny, Nansie, my darling, that that is the practical way to go about it."

"Yes, Kingsley, dear," said Nansie, with fond admiration, "that is the practical way."

"To buy another caravan," pursued Kingsley, "and a horse, and to fit it up comfortably with chairs and tables and beds, an easy-chair for you, my dear, and one for me; and a little library of books, and a piano--because there is nothing so pleasant on a beautiful evening in the woods, when the birds have settled in their nests and all nature is hushed and still, preparing by needful repose for the joyous life of to-morrow; there is nothing, I say, so pleasant as to sit by the side of a dear little wife while she plays the airs one loves best--but I am afraid there would not be room for a piano."

"I am afraid not, dear," said Nansie, humoring him.

"It is a pity. If it were too warm--being summer, my dear Nansie--to sit inside the caravan, we might move the piano into the open, where you could charm the birds from their nests. They could not resist the temptation of coming out to listen to the concert, and perhaps join in. Now, that would form a pretty picture. A gifted fellow could almost write verses on it. But it is not to be thought of, Nansie, is it?--I mean the piano, not the verses."

"I am afraid not, Kingsley, dear," said Nansie, into whose heart was stealing a kind of pity--pity which had no terrors in it, but rather nerved her to courage, and was the germ of a new teaching in her gentle nature.

"I think you must admit, my dear," said Kingsley, taking her hand and patting it softly, "that the moment I perceive an idea, however enticing it may be, is not practical, I send it to the right about. As I do the piano. Away it goes, and I take off my hat to it with regret."

There was something so kindly and humorous in his speech, and in the expressions and gestures which accompanied it, that Nansie did not have the heart to check it or to dispute it with him.

"We should have to do without the piano, then; but it is hardly possible to live without music. Well, we could go to a church, or, better still, to a cathedral. That could easily be managed, for we could so arrange as to halt for the night near a cathedral town, and if we were a little late starting off the next day, it would not so much matter, our time being our own. Then, it might happen--stranger things happen, my dear, and in discussing a matter it is only fair to look at it from every aspect--it might happen that we hear of a concert to be given in a hall a dozen or twenty miles away. Away trots the horse at six or seven miles an hour--that would not be overworking it--and we arrive in time. I run into the town or city, or perhaps we pass through it, and I take tickets. We dress--properly, you know, Nansie--I in my swallowtail and white tie, you in your prettiest evening-dress, and off we start arm-in-arm. A fine evening, a pleasant walk of a mile, a most beautiful concert which we enjoy, and then the walk home, with stars and moon overhead, and the clouds forming a panorama of exquisite colors in lace-work through the branches of the trees. That is what I call true enjoyment, which, however, only lovers can properly appreciate. Would it not be perfect, Nansie?"

"Perfect," replied Nansie, for a moment carried away by his earnestness and eloquence; "a heaven upon earth."

"You can form no idea," said Kingsley, with a happy smile, "what delight you give me in agreeing with me upon such subjects. Though I should not say that; it half implies that we might possibly disagree upon our views for the future. When I first saw you I knew you thoroughly. I saw your sweet and beautiful nature in your eyes, and they are the loveliest eyes, my heart, that ever shone kindly upon man. 'Here,' said I to myself--Oh, you have no notion how I thought of you when I was alone! I used to walk up and down my room, speaking to you and listening for your answers; there are silent voices, you know, Nansie--'Here,' said I to myself, 'here is the sweetest and purest spirit that ever was embodied in woman. Here is one whose companionship through life would make earth a heaven'--exactly as you expressed it just now, my love--'and to win whom would be the most precious blessing which could fall to a fellow's lot. I love her, I love her, I love her!'"

"Oh, Kingsley!" murmured Nansie, laying her face on her husband's breast. His sincerity and simple earnestness--whatever the worldly practical value of the words he was uttering--carried her away into his land of dreams, and surely they were words so sweet and loving that no woman could listen to them unmoved.

"And if it be my happiness to win her," continued Kingsley, "I will prove myself worthy of her."

Nansie thought of the sacrifice of wealth and position he had made for her, a sacrifice not grudgingly but cheerfully made, and in the making of which he did not arrogate to himself any undue or unusual merit, and she murmured, as she pressed him fondly to her: "You have proved yourself more than worthy, my dearest dear. It is I, it is I who have to prove myself worthy of you!"

"That is not so," he said, gravely, but still holding the thread of his dreams; "it is the woman who stands upon the higher level; it is the man who must lift himself up to it, if he is a true man. Yes, my darling, even when I first saw you I used to think of you in the way I have described. Why, my dear, your face was ever before me; every little trick of expression with which you are sweetly gifted was repeated a hundred and a hundred times when I was alone and nobody nigh. And let me tell you, dear wife, you exercised an influence for good over me which I cannot well make clear to you. 'Why, Kingsley, old fellow,' the chums used to say, 'we expected you to our supper-party last night, and you never turned up. What has come over you?' I wasn't going to tell them what it was that kept me away. Not likely. The majority of fellows there, living the life we did, wouldn't understand it, and it isn't a thing you can beat into a fellow's head--it must come to a fellow, as it came to me, I'm thankful to say."

"Was there ever a man," thought Nansie, "who could say such sweet things as my Kingsley is saying to me?"

"To return to the caravan," said Kingsley. "I have no doubt you are perfectly familiar by this time, Mrs. Manners, with one of my great failings in conversation--flying off at a tangent upon the smallest provocation; but I always pick up my threads again, that you must admit. So I pick up the thread of the caravan we were discussing. You have put the matter of the piano so forcibly before me--although you are not a logician, my dear, I give you the credit of not being bad in an argument--that it is put quite aside, not to be reintroduced. There is one capital thing about a caravan, there are no taxes to pay, and no rent either. If a fellow could only get rid of butchers' bills now! You see, I know something about housekeeping. Well, but that *is* a good thing in caravans, isn't it, Nansie--no rent or taxes?"

"Yes, it is," replied Nansie; "but you must not forget, Kingsley, dear, that it is not summer all the year through."

"Forget it! Of course I don't forget it. There are fires, aren't there, Nansie? And don't you forget that I've been very careful in making the caravan water-tight. We should feel like patriarchs--young patriarchs, you know, though I've always looked upon them as old, every man Jack of them. When you say 'in the days of the patriarchs,' it sounds oldish--long white beards, and all that sort of thing."

"May I say something, Kingsley?"

"Certainly, my love."

"We should have to live."

"Why, of course, my dear. Do you think I have forgotten that? What do you take me for?"

"Whether we live in a house or a caravan we must have bread and milk and eggs--"

"And butter and bacon," interpolated Kingsley. "You see, I know."

"And clothes."

"And coffee--black coffee, very strong, that's how I like it."

"All these things would have to be paid for, Kingsley."

"I suppose so--I mean, of course, they must be."

"How, Kingsley, dear?"

"Ah, howl" he said, vaguely, drumming on the table with his fingers.

"That," said Nansie, with pretty decision, "is what we have to consider."

"Of course, of course. We *are* considering it. Is it your opinion that the caravan idea is not practicable?"

"Yes, Kingsley."

"Then away it goes," said Kingsley, with the air of a man from whom a great weight of responsibility has been suddenly lifted; "away it goes, with the piano, and the nice furniture, and the birds, and the wild flowers in the summer woods. I take off my hat to the caravan, though," he added, with a tendency to relapse, "I shall always regret it; the life would have been so beautiful and pleasant."

"We will endeavor," said Nansie, tenderly, "to make our life so in another way."

"Certainly we will, my dearest," responded Kingsley, heartily. "There are a thousand ways."

And yet he looked about now with a slight distress in his manner, as though he could not see an open door. But he soon shook off the doubt, and the next minute was the same blithe, bright being he had always been.

"Let us go for a walk, Nansie," he said.

CHAPTER XV.

How sweet are the Surrey lanes and woods, especially round about Godalming! Innumerable are the pictures which artists have found there and fixed upon canvas to delight and instruct. In spring and summer peeps of fairyland reveal themselves almost at every turn. Small forests of straight and stately trees are there, full of solemn visions, lifting one's thoughts heavenward, and attuning the soul to more than earthly glory. The earth is carpeted with wonders, and the air is fragrant with subtle perfumes. The gentle declivities are clothed in beauty, and the wondrous variety of greens and browns are a marvel to behold.

It was a balmy night, and the skies were full of stars. A clear pool reflected them, and Nansie and Kingsley stood upon the rustic bridge and looked down in silence and love and worship.

"In the method of my education, my dear Nansie," said Kingsley, as they walked from the bridge into the stillness of the woods, "I recognize now one end."

"What end, Kingsley?" asked Nansie, looking up at him in hope.

"Nothing particular," said Kingsley. He spoke with his customary lightness, but there was a dash of seriousness in his voice, not as though he was troubled by the reflections which were passing through his mind, but with a dim consciousness that something better than he was able to accomplish might have been evolved. "That seems to me to have been the method of it--nothing particular. Shall I try to explain myself?"

"Please, dear. But kiss me first."

"Even in this kiss, my own dear wife," said Kingsley, "which, in what it means to me, all the gold in the world could not purchase-- Ah, Nansie, dear, how truly I love you!"

"And I you, Kingsley, with all the strength of my heart and soul."

"That is the beauty of it, and it is that which makes it unpurchasable. It is my love for you, and yours for me; it is my faith in you and yours in me, springing out of my heart and soul as it springs out of yours, that makes me feel how inexpressibly dear you are to me, and to know that my spiritual life would not have been complete without you. But I am flying off at a tangent again."

"You were speaking of the method of your education, my darling."

"Yes, ending in nothing particular. God knows whether the fault is in it or me, but so it strikes me just now. I have a smattering of Greek and Latin, but nothing really tangible, I am afraid; nothing which would warrant me in calling myself a scholar. Say that I *were* one, a scholar and a man, I do not see (because, perhaps, after all, the fault or the deficiency is in my nature) how I could make a fortune out of it. For you, Nansie."

"I know, my dear," said Nansie, "that you are thinking of me."

"I confess that, if I allowed it to take possession of me, I should be more than perplexed; I should be seriously troubled. But, to go on. I seem not to be able, except in words, to express myself or do myself justice. For instance, I look into the stream, and see a wave of stars. There is a poem there, and I feel it, but I could not write it. Pitiful to reflect, isn't it? because, in our circumstances, it might be sold for--twopence; but even that we might find useful."

"A great deal more, dear, if you could write it."

"If I could! There's the rub. Here, as I look around me, and at every step I have taken, I see pictures; but I could not paint them. Now, how is that?"

"Perhaps, my dear," said Nansie, timidly, "it is because life has never been so serious to you as it is now with me by your side."

"Serious and sweet," said Kingsley; "remember that. We must not have one without the other. The fact is, I dare say, that I never thought of what I was to be, because I did not see the necessity of troubling myself about it. My father was a rich man; everybody spoke of him as a millionaire, and spoke the truth for once; and all my college chums envied me my luck. But for that it may be that I should have applied myself, and ripened into a poet or a painter, or something that would come in useful now. Nothing very superior, perhaps, in any line, because, my dear, you will be surprised when I confess to you that I do not regard myself as an out-of-the-way brilliant fellow. But there's no telling, is there, what may come out of a fellow if he puts his shoulder to the wheel?"

"Something good would be sure to come out of such a head as yours, Kingsley," said Nansie.

"You *will* flatter me, my dear; but, after all, you may be right. There are no end of clever men who were dull boys at school, and thought to have nothing in them; though, now I think of it, I was not at all a dull boy--rather bright, indeed, really, Nansie--and the fact that dullards often prove themselves geniuses is rather against me. Do you know what I've been told? That there is a lot of stuff in me, but that I lack application; that is, the power of sticking long to one thing. That is true, perhaps, and it is that quality, or failing, or what you like, that makes me fly off at a tangent in the way I am in the habit of doing. I've stuck pretty close to this conversation, haven't I?"

"Yes, dear."

"Notwithstanding that there are a thousand things to distract my attention. For instance, thoughts. Such as this: that it would be a happy lot if you and I could wander forever side by side through such lovely scenes as this, and in a night so sweet and beautiful."

"But that could not be, Kingsley, dear, and I am not sure whether it would be a happy lot."

"You surprise me, Nansie. Not a happy lot! Our being always together, and always without

worry or trouble!"

"In course of time," said Nansie, a slight contraction of her eyelids denoting that she was thinking of what she was saying, "we should grow so used to each other that we should become in each other's eyes little better than animated statues. The monotony of its being always summer, of everything around us being always beautiful, would so weigh upon us that we should lose all sense of the beautiful, and should not be grateful for the sweet air, as we are now, Kingsley. We grow indifferent to things to which we are regularly accustomed. Change produces beauty. You are making me think, you see, and I am almost pretending to be wise."

"Go on, Nansie. I want you to finish, and when you have done I have something to say on an observation you have made, change produces beauty. Now that is a theme profound."

"There is not a season in the year that is not full of sweetness, and that we do not enjoy. If it were always spring the charm of spring would be gone. If it were always summer we should lie down and sleep the days away, and should gradually grow indifferent to the beautiful shapes and colors with which nature adorns the world in the holiday time of the year. Is not autumn charming, with its moons and sunsets and changing colors? And what can be prettier and more suggestive of fairy fancies than winter, in its garb of snow and icicle? There are plenty of bad days in all the seasons, even in the brightest, and it is those which make us enjoy the good all the more. In the last weeks of my dear father's life I learned a great deal from him; it was almost, Kingsley, as if he created a new life within me; and he had the power, in a few words, of unfolding wonders and making you understand them."

"Your dear father," said Kingsley, "was a wise and good man--a poet, too, and could have been almost anything in the artistic world he cared to aspire to. I have no doubt of that, Nansie, dear. And yet he was always poor, and died so."

"It is true, Kingsley. I think it was because he lacked--"

But Nansie paused in sudden alarm, and the word she was about to utter hung upon her tongue. It distressed her, also, that, in what was in her mind as to the reason of her father's worldly failure, the very words which Kingsley used towards himself should have suggested themselves to her.

"Because he lacked"--prompted Kingsley. "Finish the sentence, Nansie."

"The desire to produce, to achieve," said Nansie, in a stumbling fashion.

"No, Nansie, that was not the way you intended to finish the sentence. I want it in the original, without correction or afterthought. Because he lacked--"

"Application," said Nansie, desperately.

"Exactly. My own failing." Kingsley spoke gently, and as though he was not in the least dismayed by the example of an aimless life which presented itself in the career of Nansie's father. "Your father had great powers, Nansie, and could have accomplished great things if he had been industrious. But he was a happy as well as a good man. I cannot recall, in any person I ever knew, one who was so thoroughly happy as your father. He did harm to no man. His life was a good life."

"Yes, Kingsley." And yet Nansie was not satisfied with herself for being the cause of the conversation drifting into this channel.

"You see, my love," said Kingsley, in his brightest manner, and Nansie's heart beat gratefully at his cheerful tone, "when a truth comes home to a man he can, at all events, learn something from it, unless he be a worthless fellow. When he sees an example before him he can profit by it, if his mind be set upon it. He lays it before him, he dissects it, he studies it, and he says, 'Ah, I see how it is.' That is what I shall do. Your father and I, in this matter of application and industry, somewhat resemble each other. A kind of innate indolence in both of us. Well, what I've got to do is to tackle it. Within me is an enemy, a bad influence, which I must take in hand. 'Come,' I say to this insidious spirit, 'let us see who will get the best of it.' Thereupon we fall to. The right thing to do, Nansie?"

"Yes," she replied, "but you must not reproach yourself, my dear."

"Oh, I am not doing so," he said, quickly, before she could proceed. "I am applying to the discovery I have made the touchstone of philosophy. There is no doubt of the result, not the slightest. But I don't think it is anything to lament that I seem to find a resemblance in your father's character and mine."

"It is something to be deeply grateful for, my dear."

"And the discovery is made in time. After all, I am a young man, and, as I told you, I intend to commence with a new slate. Really, I intend to try my very best."

"And you will succeed, Kingsley," said Nansie, earnestly. "You are sure to succeed."

"Now that's comforting. It gives a fellow strength. With you always by my side, it will be very hard if I fail. But," and here he took off his hat and passed his fingers through his hair with the characteristic of vagueness in him which sometimes took a humorous and sometimes a pitiful turn, but always perplexed--"succeed or fail in what? That is the all-important question. There is no quarry in sight; it will never do to follow a Will-o'-the-wisp. So much valuable time lost. The very best thing, I take it, for a fellow in my position to do, is to find out his groove and fall into it. Do you consider that a practical idea?"

"Quite practical, my love."

"Yes, to find out the groove and fall into it. Could anything be done with tools?"

His voice was wholly humorous now, and for the life of her Nansie could not help smiling. "And what tools?" He looked at his hands, and stretched out his arms. "Well, all that is in the future. I was going to remark on an observation you made a little while ago. Oh, I remember what it is. 'Change produces beauty.' Now that struck me as serious. How about love?"

"I did not mean that, Kingsley, dear. Love stands apart from everything else. The sweetness and beauty of love is to be found only in perfection when it is constant and unchangeful. To me it is the same as my faith in immortality. My love for you will abide in me forever. Ah, Kingsley, do not misunderstand me, or misinterpret what I said!"

"I do not," he said, folding her in his arms and embracing her; "I could never have loved any other woman than you, I can never love another. So you see, my dear, you are not quite logical. There is one thing in which we should find no beauty in change."

They strolled through the woods, exchanging fond endearments, pausing often in silence to drink in the sweetness and the beauty of the time and scene. They listened to the notes of the nightingale, and recalled the remembrances of the night when Kingsley came to Nansie in the caravan.

"I have the daisies you threw up to my little window," said Nansie. "We listened to the nightingale then."

Some few minutes afterwards Nansie spoke to Kingsley of his mother.

"When your affairs are settled," she said, "do you not think that she would help you to make a start in life? You seldom speak of your mother, Kingsley."

"I think a great deal of her and of my father," said Kingsley, "and I have hidden something from you which I will tell you of presently. It is wrong to have a secret from you, but I really did it because I felt it would distress you. Between my mother and me, my dear, there was never any very close tie. We had not those home ties which I think must be necessary to bind parents and children together. Since I was a young child, I have always been away for ten months or so every year at school or college, and frequently in vacation I had no house in London or elsewhere in which to spend my holidays. My father, engrossed in his business, would be absent from England sometimes for many months, and my mother would often accompany him. Then you must understand that my parents are as one. What my father says is law, and my mother obeys his instructions implicitly. She is entirely and completely under his control, and has the blindest worship of him. She cannot believe that he could do anything that was not just and right, and if he says a thing is so, it is so, without question or contradiction from her. That tells fatally against me in this difference between my father and me. In her judgment--although she does not exercise it, but submits unmurmuringly to his--he is absolutely right in the course he has taken, and I am absolutely wrong. During the last week I spent at home my mother said many times to me, 'Kingsley, be guided by your father. For your own sake and ours do not thwart him.' I tried to reason, to argue with her, but she shook her head and would not listen, saying continually, 'I know all; your father has told me everything.' I half believe if she had only listened to me, and consented to see you, as I begged of her, that there would be some hope; but she would not. Well, my dear, since your dear father's funeral I have written to my mother."

"Yes, Kingsley," said Nansie, looking anxiously at him.

"No answer. I wrote to my father, too."

"Did he not reply, Kingsley?"

"He replied in a very effective manner. You know I received a letter yesterday, which I led you to believe was from a lawyer?"

"Yes, my dear."

"It was not, my dear. It was the letter I wrote to my father, returned to me unopened."

"Oh, Kingsley!"

"It was a blow, though I should have been prepared for it. My father is a man of iron will, Nansie; there is no moving him, once he has resolved upon a course. I dare say this inflexibility

has helped him to grow rich, but it is a hard thing for us. And now, my dear, let us talk no more of this at present; it troubles me."

They diverged into other subjects, and Kingsley soon regained his lightness of spirits. They passed into an open glade with trees all around.

"A beautiful spot," said Kingsley; "and so suitable!"

"For what, dear?"

"For the caravan; one could be happy here for a long time. But that castle is in the air, is it not, my love?"

CHAPTER XVI.

When Mr. Loveday, the bookseller in Church Alley, heard of his brother's death in a letter which Nansie wrote to him, he fell to reproaching himself for the small grief he experienced at the news. The intelligence did not, indeed, create within him any profound impression. He and his brother had been separated for a great many years, and the bond of love which had united them in their childhood had become weaker and weaker till it scarcely held together. It is true that death strengthened it somewhat, but it could never again be what it once was. The humanly selfish cares of life are so engrossing that love which is not in evidence dies gradually away. That "absence makes the heart grow fonder" is as false as are nine out of ten of other sentimental proverbs.

"Timothy," said Mr. Loveday to his new assistant, who was proving himself a perfect treasure, "when little Teddy died you were very sorry."

"I was more than sorry, sir," said Timothy, becoming instantly grave; "I was almost heart-broken."

"Have you got over it?" asked Mr. Loveday.

"I shall never get over it," replied Timothy.

"Do you think that will be true all your life long?"

"I am certain it will be, sir."

"And yet you were not related to him."

"No, sir; but I could not have loved a brother more."

Mr. Loveday winced.

"You regard that as a very strong tie, Timothy."

"A brother's love, sir?"

"Yes."

"I can hardly imagine a stronger. If I had a brother I should so love him that I think I should be ready to die for him."

"Ah!" mused Mr. Loveday, "perhaps if my brother had died when we were boys together, I should not be reproaching myself now for not feeling his death more keenly."

As a penance, he inflicted a punishment upon himself. Since he had taken Timothy into his service his life had been easier and more agreeable than it had been for a considerable time past. He was no longer tormented by small worries, which, after a long recurrence of them, become, in certain stages of mental irritation, veritable mountains of evil. Timothy had more than one rare gift, and not one more precious and beneficial in its effect upon others than the gift of thoughtfulness. This, extending to the most trivial matter where his own interests were not involved, was invariably displayed by Timothy when opportunity offered, and it was natural, therefore, that in his new and important position in Mr. Loveday's business and household, it should come into play with greater force. The result was that not a day passed without Mr. Loveday being made aware that he had enlisted in his service a lad who seemed bent upon making everything go on smoothly around him. Heaven only knows where Timothy picked up all

he knew; it was likely the outcome of a willing, cheerful, practical spirit, and of one who knew how to profit by observation; but Timothy, who had never learned how to cook, could cook a chop and a steak and a potato to perfection, and before long could prepare more ambitious dishes in a manner to satisfy his master's not very fastidious taste; and Timothy, who had never passed an apprenticeship in domestic service, could and did apply himself with skilful efficiency to the thousand and one drudgeries of domestic affairs. Moreover, he did his work neatly and unobtrusively. There were no sudden noises now in Mr. Loveday's establishment; no unreasonable breakages of crockery; and, what Mr. Loveday thoroughly appreciated, no waste. It could not be but that Mr. Loveday noted with gratefulness this improvement in his surroundings, and therefore, being at ease and in rare peace of mind, the punishment he inflicted upon himself for not taking the news of his brother's death more closely to heart was really no light one. It was to write to Nansie and remind her, if she needed reminding, that he had promised her father to give her the shelter of his home.

"My dear niece," he wrote, "the intelligence you have conveyed to me of your dear father's death has deeply affected me--"

He broke off here and sat, pen in hand, ruminating, with his eyes fixed upon the words he had written. "I suppose," he thought, "that life could not be carried on without duplicity. Here am I, for the purpose of self-defence, where I am not openly accused, and of proving that I am not quite a monster, calmly presenting myself in a false light to a young person whom I saw only once in my life and do not in the least remember. But what kind of a world would this be, I wonder, if the exact truth were always told?"

He continued his letter:

"I knew that he was ill, but had no idea he was in a dangerous state, or I should not have neglected coming to see him. However, there is no recalling the past, and regrets, though poignant, are idle in a case like this, where the blow that has fallen is irremediable. I do not intend to reproach you for your neglect of a duty, which very likely, because of our being comparative strangers, did not present itself to you in such a light, but I feel strongly the loss of the opportunity of attending my dear brother's funeral. Had you written to me when he died I certainly should have come down to you, and have done whatever lay in my power to soften your affliction."

He broke off again and mused. "'Words, words, words,' as Hamlet says. And yet I could almost deceive myself by believing that they are true. I *should* have gone down, and perhaps with something of the full heart which I am endeavoring to express to my niece Nansie. It is a curious way of spelling the name, but I like it better than Nancy. It is more poetical; but there was always a vein of poetry in my brother's nature." The tenderness in him was growing stronger, and he found comfort in it as he plied his pen again.

"I will not ask you why you were silent. You doubtless had your reasons, one of which, perhaps, was that you were doubtful of me, and that you regarded me as little better than a stranger. In this you are not to blame, but if such a feeling exists I desire to remove it. Some little while ago your father wrote to me of his circumstances, and of his anxiety respecting you in the event of anything happening to him. In my reply, I told him that you could always find a home with me. From imperfect knowledge I gather that my dear brother left but little worldly wealth behind him; and my principal object in writing to you now is to convey to you the offer of my home which I made to him. Whether we should suit each other remains to be seen, but I would endeavor honestly to be kind to you, and if you inherit any of your father's amiable qualities, I have no doubt that we should get along comfortably together. I have no ties of women and children about me; my home is a poor one, but such as it is, it is yours if you choose to accept it."

This was the gist of Mr. Loveday's letter to Nansie, who read it with satisfaction. When it arrived Kingsley was absent, winding up his affairs, and the first thing Nansie did upon his return was to give it to him to read.

"Did you tell him you were married?" asked Kingsley.

"No," replied Nansie. "To tell you the truth, Kingsley, I scarcely knew in what light to regard him."

"He says something to that effect in his letter," remarked Kingsley, "but it seems to be honestly and sincerely written."

"I think so, too," said Nansie.

"But you see," said Kingsley, "in his offer of a home--which is very kind; I do not underrate it--he evidently looks upon you as a single young lady."

"I shall write, telling him that I am married."

"It will be best; and write soon, else he might think there was something wrong--of which, my dear," added Kingsley, rubbing his forehead, "I am not quite sure myself."

"What makes you say that, Kingsley?" asked Nansie, anxiously.

"Well, my darling," replied Kingsley, "it is altogether the best to look things straight in the face, isn't it?"

"Quite the best, dear."

"We have decided on that before, Nansie."

"Yes, dear."

"It isn't the first time I have made the remark, but that does not lessen its force and truth. Well, then, my affairs are settled."

"Is everything paid, Kingsley?"

"Everything. We do not owe one penny in the world. What do you think I discovered, Nansie?"

"I cannot imagine, dear."

"That I had a great deal more property than I supposed."

"That is delightful news, dear."

"Yes, isn't it?" said Kingsley, with a light, puzzled laugh. "When I say property, I don't mean land. Wish I *could* mean it, because it would represent something tangible in the way of an income, perhaps; and that is what we want, Nansie, don't we? An income."

"It would be very pleasant, dear," said Nansie, with a fond look of pity at him.

"Yes, very pleasant; it would rub away the crosses of life."

She recalled him to his theme.

"You were saying that you discovered you had more property than you supposed?"

"Yes, that is what I was saying. And not land, as I should have liked; but wine. Really a little stock, and of the best. Of course it would be the best. And books, some of them valuable; and *bric-à-brac*. I was astonished when we came to look through them. And pictures, too. I was surprised how ever I came to buy them; but money always burned in my pockets, Nansie. When it was there it had to be spent. Do you know a greater pleasure, my dear, than spending money?"

"It is a pleasant occupation, Kingsley, when one has it to spare."

"Of course, that."

"Do me a great favor, dear."

"I will. Just say what it is."

"Tell me everything you did while you were away, without--without--"

Kingsley laughed gayly and took up her words.

"Without flying off into side paths, eh? Keep to the main road. Is that the great favor?"

"Yes, dear."

"Very good. I will try. But just consider, Nansie--only for a moment; I will not detain you longer than a moment. Here we are, you and I--the best company in the world, my darling--walking along the main road. Very grand, very stately, very wide. Everything according to regulation. It is a very long road--it generally is, Nansie--and there is an overpowering sameness about it. My feeling is that it is becoming tiresome, when all at once I see, on the left or the right, a little narrow lane with a hedge on each side; at the end of the hedge, some cottages, dotted here and there, with flowers in the windows; at the end of the cottages some tall trees, meeting and forming an arch. What do we do? Without thinking, we turn from the grand main road into the little narrow lane, and the moment we do so we breathe more freely and begin to enjoy. That is an illustration of my manner, dear. Do you recognize it?"

"Yes, dear Kingsley."

"It isn't unpleasant, is it? Confess, now."

"Nothing that you do, dear, can be unpleasant. But remember what you said a few days ago. We must be practical."

Nansie did not utter these words in a serious tone. On the contrary, her voice was almost as light as Kingsley's, and as she spoke she laid her hand upon his shoulder, and smiled with bright affection. He kissed her, and replied with animation and decision:

"Exactly. That is what we are going to be. So now for the great favor. Well, I commenced by

going through my property and being surprised. Then I went to the tradesmen to whom I owed money, and said: 'Make out your bills and send them in.' One or two inquired whether I was going to pay. I said, 'Of course--what else?' When they heard that--I refer to those who, to my astonishment, appeared a little uneasy about the money I owed them--they said, 'Oh, but there's no hurry, Mr. Manners. We will send in the account at the end of the year.' But I said, 'No; at once, if you please.' When they came in I did not examine them; I laid them carefully aside in their envelopes. Then I went to an auctioneer, and gave him instructions to sell all my property. I wished him to do it immediately--that very day, but he would not; he said it would involve too great a sacrifice; but that was my affair, not his. It is unaccountable that people will not do the thing you want done in your way, but in their own. However, I hurried my friend the auctioneer as much as I could, and the result of it all was, that I found myself two hundred pounds richer than I had supposed."

"How pleased I am, Kingsley!"

"So was I. It seemed to me as if I had discovered a gold mine. Then I sat down with a clean sheet of ruled foolscap before me, and opened the tradesmen's accounts, and put down the figures, and totted them up. The result was that I found I owed four hundred pounds more than I had supposed."

"Oh, Kingsley!"

"It was vexing, but there it was, and there was no help for it. I went about my affairs in the practical way, did I not?"

"Yes, my dear; it was the only way to arrive at the truth."

"And to look it straight in the face. I kept to the main road, but if a view of a narrow lane had presented itself, I believe I should have been tempted to wander a little. My dear, I paid all the accounts, and I was left with--how much do you think?"

"I am afraid to guess, Kingsley."

"Something under ten pounds. Was I dashed? Did I despair? Not at all. Said I to myself, said I--by the way, Nansie, I once came across an old novel with just that title; an odd one, isn't it?--said I to myself, said I, to work, to work! Something must be done, for my dear Nansie's sake."

"How proud I am of you, Kingsley!"

"Thank you, dear. So what did I do? I can sketch a little in colors, you know."

"You can paint very well, Kingsley. When you said, the other night, that you saw pictures but could not paint them, I knew you were wrong, though I did not contradict you."

"Thank you again, dear. Nothing would please me better than to be a poor artist, with you, rich and influential, for my patron."

"I should give you every shilling I possessed, Kingsley."

"And you call yourself practical. Nonsense, nonsense! It is I who am the practical one. I proved it. I bought watercolors, drawing-paper, pencils, brushes, a nice little outfit for thirty-eight shillings, and, Nansie, I set to work. Upon my honor, I painted a picture which I considered not bad."

"What did you do with it? You have brought it with you?"

"No, my dear little wife, I sold it."

"Why, Kingsley," said Nansie, in a delighted tone, "you have actually already made a start."

"I have," said Kingsley, laughing heartily. "The picture painted, I took it out to the shops. My dear, they rather pooh-poohed it at first."

"They ought to have been ashamed of themselves," exclaimed Nansie, indignantly.

"They weren't. But I met with a patron at last. He was a stationer, and said the picture was of no use to him. 'But it's worth something,' I said. To be honest with you, Nansie, I was getting rather disgusted with the whole affair. 'It's worth something,' I said. 'Two-pence,' said the shop-keeper. 'Done,' said I, and I threw the picture on the counter, and held out my hand. He stared at me, but I gave him to understand that he had offered me two-pence for my picture, and that I accepted it. He stared harder than ever and handed me the two-pence. It is the first money I ever earned in my life, and I have brought it home to you. The experiment was a capital one, Nansie; it taught me something--that I am not cut out for a painter. Next to discovering what you can do, the best thing is to discover what you can't do. Having discovered it, turn the key on it."

Nansie gazed at him sadly. He was speaking with animation, and there was an excited flush in his face. His eyes were bright, and his manner was indicative of anything but disappointment.

"I thought then," continued Kingsley, "that I would try my friends, but when I came to consider, I arrived at the conclusion that there was only one to whom I could disclose my position. I went to him and made full confession. He is an older fellow than I, and wiser. What I like about him is that he doesn't say: 'You shouldn't have done this,' or 'You shouldn't have done that.' He hits the nail on the head. 'There is no hope of your father relenting?' said he. 'None,' said I. 'Time may soften him,' he said. 'Even if it does,' said I, 'there is a problem to solve while the grass is growing.' 'You must live,' said he, 'of course.' 'Of course,' said I. 'And you must work to live,' said he. I assented. 'Then,' said he, 'let us see what you are fit for.' My own thought, Nansie, put almost in my own words. But although we considered and talked we arrived at nothing tangible. He seemed really more troubled than I was, and at the end of a long conversation he said: 'Kingsley, old fellow, I can lend you a tenner.' It was noble of him, because he must have known that there was little chance of my being able to repay him. I thanked him, and said I wouldn't borrow in such circumstances as mine. Then he invited me to dine with him, and I accepted. And that, my dear Nansie, is all I have to tell you."

He gazed round at Nansie with the air of a man who had just finished a pleasant tale, and said:

"Now we will talk of something else."

CHAPTER XVII.

Nansie wrote to her uncle before she went to bed, informing him that she was married, and thanking him for the kind letter he had sent her. She said nothing as to the offer of a home, because she did not consider that it held good. Nansie single and Nansie married could not bear the same relation in her uncle's eyes. Single, she needed a protector; married, she possessed one. The responsibility of affairs lay with her husband; all that it was in her power to do was to wait and see what steps he took towards providing for their home. She could encourage and strengthen him, but for the present that was all. To attempt so early to assume the direction of affairs would have been an affront to her husband's manhood, and as, out of loyalty to Kingsley, she purposely avoided the contemplation of this contingency, she had no idea what steps it would be advisable for her to take in the event of Kingsley's failure.

On the following morning she told Kingsley that she had written to her uncle, and asked him if he would like to read the letter before it was posted. Kingsley replied that as she must have written about him he would prefer not to see it.

"I have written everything that is good about you," she said.

"That is the reason," said Kingsley. "My dear, I trust you implicitly, and I am satisfied that you have said exactly what is right--with one exception. You have spoken too highly of your husband. Don't shake your head, I know it. You have an exaggerated opinion of me, or, to phrase it better, you have formed an ideal which will not bear the test of sober truth. But that, dear little wife, is the fate of most ideals."

"What you say," observed Nansie, "will apply with equal truth to your opinion of me."

"Not at all," said Kingsley, with fond seriousness, "you stand away and apart from me--higher, nobler, more capable. I will not listen to any contradiction, my dear, when I am discussing *you*. The fact is, I have already applied the test."

"In what way, Kingsley?" asked Nansie.

She was learning that it was best to humor him in certain moods, which it seemed impossible for him to avoid.

"In this. Of course, when I first saw you I formed my ideal of you. What it was, I think you know to some small extent, for the love I feel and express for you is no idle sentiment. Whatever else I may be, I am at least as true as steel to you. It is one virtue I may fairly claim, for nothing which is inspired by you can be anything else. Well, knowing you but slightly, my ideal was formed, and familiar association would either destroy or establish it. My dear, I have questioned myself, I have asked: 'Does Nansie come up to your ideal? Is she the true woman you supposed her to be? Does she represent what you believed--the sweetness, the purity, the nobility, the tenderness which have sanctified the very name of woman?' The answer is: 'She is all, and more than all, you believed her to be. There is nothing in her that is not sweet, and true, and good. The ideal you set up falls short of the reality.' Then, on the other hand, is the question of Me. I do not wish to disturb you, my dear, but I fear a terrible disappointment awaits you when you have

found me out. No, I will not allow you to answer me. You may stand up in my defence when I am not present, but my imperfections are too apparent--now that I am brought face to face with them--to encourage any attempt to smooth them away. However, we are bound to each other for better or worse, and you must make the best of me. Now address your letter to your uncle, and I will post it for you."

"Shall I give him your love, Kingsley?" asked Nansie, adding hurriedly, "you are very unjust to yourself."

"Yes, dear, give him my love, and say that I hope to make his acquaintance one day. As to being unjust to myself, I know I am the best judge of that."

He went from the room, and in a few minutes presented himself again, gloved and polished, a faithful presentment of a young English gentleman.

"You must wish me luck, Nansie," he said. "I am going to see what can be done in the way of obtaining a situation. Perhaps something fortunate will turn up."

She kissed him and watched him from the street door walking along the street, looking brightly this way and that for something to turn up. He returned at six o'clock in the evening, in time for dinner. There was a jaded expression on his face, which vanished the moment his eyes rested on Nansie.

"Home, sweet home," he said, passing his arm round her waist, and drinking in her beauty with a grateful spirit.

She knew that he had not been successful in his quest, but nevertheless she asked what fortune he had met with.

"None at all," he replied; "but Rome wasn't built in a day. We must have patience. I will tell you after dinner what I have done."

They had the pleasantest of meals, enlivened by his gayety; and when the things were cleared away and he had lit his cigar, he said:

"What can a man wish for more? A good dinner, the sweetest of company, a fine cigar--it was right, was it not, Nansie, for me to keep back three hundred of my choicest?"

"Quite right," replied Nansie, "and very thoughtful of you. I love the smell of a good cigar."

"When I put them aside," said Kingsley, holding up a reproving forefinger, "I thought only of myself. I reflected that it might be some time before I could afford to buy more of the same kind."

"Kingsley," said Nansie, pleadingly.

"Yes, dear," he responded.

"I want you to understand something."

"Anything you wish, Nansie. Let me know what it is."

"Only that your disparagement of yourself hurts me, dear. Knowing that there is nothing in the world you would not do for my sake, it is painful to me to think that you may grow into the habit of believing that everything you do is done with a selfish motive. It is not so--indeed, it is not so!"

"How seriously you speak, Nansie!" said Kingsley, drawing her close to him. "Do you really mean to say that I am not selfish?"

"If there is in the world a man who has proved himself otherwise, it is you, my dear," said Nansie, laying her head upon his shoulder. "Be just to yourself, in justification of me."

"That requires elucidation, my dearest," said Kingsley, with great tenderness.

"Think of the sacrifice you have made for me, a poor girl, but for whom you would be now at peace with your parents, and in the enjoyment of much, if not of all, that makes life worth living. How low should I fall in your estimation if I were insensible to that sacrifice, if I were to undervalue it, if I were to say: 'It is what any other man in Kingsley's place would have done!'"

"Is it not?" he asked, passing his hand fondly over her hair.

"No, indeed and indeed it is not. I do not pretend to assert that I know the world as you know it"--there was something whimsical in the expression of unconsciously affected wisdom which stole into Kingsley's face as she uttered these words--"but I know it sufficiently well to be certain that there are few men capable of a sacrifice such as you have made for me. What had I to give in return?"

"Love," he answered.

"It is yours," she said, and tears, in which there was no unhappiness, stole into her eyes, "love

as perfect as woman ever gave to man. Not love for to-day, my dearest, but love forever; love which nothing can weaken; love which will triumph over every adversity; love which will be proof against any trial. But that is little."

"It is everything," said Kingsley, "to me and to every man worthy of the name. The sacrifice I have made--you choose to call it so, and I will not contradict you, dear--is to be measured. Not so with love. It is illimitable, unmeasurable. It illumines every surrounding object; it makes the commonest things precious. How beautiful the present is to you and to me! Could it be more beautiful if we were passing it in a palace? That picture on the wall--a common print? No. A lovely possession. The handsomest painting that ever was painted hanging there--would it make the present moments sweeter, would it invest the spiritual bond which unites us with a binding link which now is missing? This book on the table which cost a shilling--if it were a first edition worth thousands of pounds, would it increase our happiness, would it make your love for me and mine for you more perfect and complete? There is an immeasurable distance between what I have gained and what I have lost. So let us have no more talk of sacrifices, Nansie, dear."

She could not find arguments with which to answer him, and it would have been strange if she had needed them.

"In return," he continued, "I will make the strongest endeavor not to underrate myself, nor to prove that I am more than ordinarily selfish. There--my cigar is out."

She lit a match and held it while he puffed away at his weed.

"You promised to tell me what you have done to-day," she said.

"There is very little to tell. I did what I could, which consisted simply of walking about, and looking in shop-windows. I went out without any distinct idea in my mind; I thought that something might happen, and I was disappointed. Everything and everybody seemed to be going along nicely, and not to be in want of me. It occurred to me to consider what I was fit for. I looked into the windows of a boot-shop. What do I know of boots and shoes, except how to put them on my feet? Literally nothing. The same with haberdashers, the same with grocers, the same with jewellers, the same with every kind of shop. Then, trades; I don't know one. Printers, engravers, carpenters, watchmakers, and that kind of thing--you have to serve an apprenticeship before you can hope to earn money by them. I felt like a fish out of water. There seemed to be no groove for me, nothing that I could take hold of. I am really puzzled, Nansie."

"My poor Kingsley!" murmured Nansie.

"But, there," he said, snapping his fingers, "it will not mend matters to worry about them. *Nil desperandum*, and a fig for the world and its cares! If only to-morrow would not come!"

He certainly had the gift of giving dull care the go-by; and in another minute he was the same light-hearted, pleasant-humored, irresponsible being he had ever been, and was doing his best with his whimsical talk to make Nansie forget the serious position in which they were placed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Some indication has been given of the success of Timothy Chance's service with Mr. Loveday. There are men, like Kingsley Manners, who, being suddenly thrust upon the world to shift for themselves, find themselves plunged into a sea of difficulties, extrication from which is impossible except by some unexpected windfall of fortune. There are others who are so well armed for difficulties that the encountering of them serves as an incentive and a spur. What depresses one elevates the other; what makes one despondent makes the other cheerful. It is chiefly a matter of early education, in which adversity is frequently a factor for good. Partly, also, it is a matter of adaptability.

It may be taken for granted that wherever Timothy Chance fell he would fall upon his feet, and that he would be among the first to take advantage of an opportunity. A hard-working, faithful servant, but with an eye to his own interests. It is running far ahead of events to state that when he was a middle-aged man, with a house of his own, there stood upon a bracket in his private room the image of a hen fashioned in gold--a valuable ornament; for the gold was of the purest, and the bird was of life-size; and that the sense of possession imparted a satisfaction to Timothy Chance far beyond its value. He amused himself by the fancy that the fowl of gold was an exact reproduction of the living fowl which he had rescued from the fire in the schoolhouse, and which had laid an egg in Mr. Loveday's shop on the day of Timothy's return to London. The goose of the

fable that laid golden eggs was an insignificant bird in comparison with Timothy Chance's first fowl. There was at first a difficulty respecting its habitation. Mr. Loveday's shop had no backyard, and for the sake of cleanliness it could not be kept in the house. There were, however, plenty of backyards in the immediate vicinity of Church Alley, and to the proprietor of one of these Timothy betook himself, arranging to pay rent in kind, that is to say (for we are approaching legal ground), one new-laid egg per week, or, in default, its full retail value, seven farthings. For it was not long before Timothy discovered that he could dispose of a limited number of new-laid eggs--the day of laying being guaranteed--to private persons at that rate per egg. Timothy's hen was certainly a wonderful layer; during the first thirty-one days of its tenancy of the Whitechapel backyard it laid no fewer than twenty-six eggs, which, deducting five for rental, left twenty-one to the good. A retired butterman, who should undoubtedly have been a good judge, engaged to take them all at the price above mentioned, and at the end of the month the account stood thus:

	s.	*d.*
21 rent-paid eggs at 1 ¾*d.*	3	0¾
Less food for fowl, at the rate of ½*d.* per day	1	3½
	_	__
Leaving a net profit of	1	9¼

This is a precise copy of the account made out by Timothy Chance, on the termination of the month; and with the figures, clear and well-shaped, before him, Timothy devoted himself to thought. His service with the seller of second-hand books had served him in good stead. He had rummaged out from among the stock at least a score of books treating of fowls and their produce, and he had studied them attentively. Some were old, one or two were of late years, and they all pointed to one fact--that money was to be made out of eggs. Most of the writers deplored the fact that the English people were so blind to their own interests as to systematically neglect a subject so fruitful. One of the treatises dealt in large figures--to wit, the population of Great Britain, and the number of eggs by them consumed annually; further, the number of eggs laid in the kingdom, and the number we were compelled to import to satisfy the demand, amounting not to scores but to hundreds of millions. Timothy's eyes dilated. One daring enthusiast went so far as to print pages of statistics to prove that if government took the affair in hand it could, in a certain number of years (number forgotten by the present chronicler), pay off the national debt. This, perhaps, was too extravagant, but the fact remained, and appeared incontrovertible, that money was to be made out of eggs. Here was plain proof--one shilling and ninepence farthing made out of one hen in a single month.

"Let me see," mused Timothy, "how this turns out for a year."

Down went the figures.

	s.	*d.*
Cost of good, 365 days at ½*d* per day	15	2½
Cost of fowl, say	3	0
	__	__
Total	18	2½

For a moment he forgot the rent, but he remembered it before he went into the credit side, and he reckoned it at a penny a week, which made the total expenses £1 2*s.* 6½*d.*

Timothy was aware that he could not reckon upon an egg a day all through the year, but his reading-up on the subject, and the calculations he had made, convinced him that a fair-laying hen might be depended upon for two hundred and forty eggs during the three hundred and sixty-five days.

"At three-halfpence each," he mused, and set down the figures, "that will bring in thirty shillings. Say it brings in only twenty-eight shillings, and make the total charges one pound four, and there remains a clear profit of four shillings for the year. Then the fowl itself, supposing I sell it at the end of the year, is worth at least a shilling. A profit of five shillings on one hen. On twenty, a profit of five pounds; on a hundred, a profit of twenty-five pounds; on a thousand, a profit of two hundred and fifty pounds."

The figures almost took his breath away. Let it be understood that Timothy's reflections and calculations are here pretty accurately reported. He continued. So large a number of eggs would have to be sold wholesale, and three-halfpence each could not be reckoned upon, but then the rent would be much less, and the cost of food much less; and there were other ideas floating in

his mind which he could not formulate, and about which there was no cause for his troubling himself just at present.

"Mr. Loveday," said he to his employer, "if a speculation is entered into in a small way and leaves a small profit, would it not leave a larger profit if entered into in a large way?"

"That," replied Mr. Loveday, "stands to reason. What is your head running on, Timothy?"

"Eggs, sir," said Timothy.

Mr. Loveday stared at him for a few moments without speaking.

"That is what you have been studying books on poultry for?" he said, presently.

"Yes, sir."

"Well," said Mr. Loveday, after another pause, "there's something in eggs, I dare say. Some of the peasantry in France make quite an income out of them; our own poor country-folk are not so far-seeing."

"What can be done in France," said Timothy, patriotically and sententiously, "can be done in England."

"Don't be too certain of that," said Mr. Loveday. "They grow grapes in France and make wine. We don't."

"That is a matter of climate," remarked Timothy. "Fowls lay eggs in every country in the world, and once laid, there they are."

"To be sure," said Mr. Loveday, staring at his assistant, "there they are."

"Anyhow," said Timothy, "nothing can alter that what will pay in a small way ought to pay in a large; can it, sir?"

"The conclusion appears sensible and reasonable. I suppose you have made something out of your fowl?"

"Nearly two shillings in the month, sir."

"Not at all bad," said Mr. Loveday, "not at all bad. You must take the breed into account."

"Black Hamburgs, sir, that's the breed for eggs."

"Dorkings, I should say," suggested Mr. Loveday.

"Black Hamburgs will beat them, sir," said Timothy, confidently; and Mr. Loveday, feeling that he was on unsafe ground, wisely held his tongue.

Timothy had saved between five and six shillings out of his wages, and he expended the whole of his savings in putting up a rough fowl-house, and in the addition of a black Hamburg to his live-stock. He began to feel like a proprietor.

"Slow and sure, you know, Timothy," advised Mr. Loveday.

"Yes, sir, and thank you," said Timothy. "I will endeavor not to make mistakes."

"We shall have you chancellor of the exchequer in course of time," said Mr. Loveday, in a tone by no means unkindly.

"I shall be content to earn a living, sir," said Timothy, modestly; and rejoiced largely when he showed his employer two new-laid eggs in one day.

CHAPTER XIX.

Three months after this conversation Mr. Loveday and Timothy were standing in front of the book-shop, discussing some proposed alterations in the stall outside upon which the more promiscuous books were offered for sale. The weather was fine, and a bright sun was striving to make its presence known in Church Alley; a bird in a cage hung above Mr. Sly's shop-window was

piping a song of gratitude and welcome, and a cat, caught by a sunbeam, stood stock-still enjoying the warmth. A young woman, neatly and plainly dressed, entered Church Alley, and with timid, hesitating steps, gazed at the shops and houses as she passed them, halting within a yard of the stall before which Mr. Loveday and Timothy were talking. Timothy was explaining his views. The new stall could be made with flaps, hanging down, which, when rain threatened, could be swiftly raised to enclose the books. This would do away with the old and cumbersome method of covering the outside stock with canvas.

"And besides, sir, it could be made to fit like a box, with a good padlock outside, so that there would be no need to take the books out and in morning and night. The expense would not be great, only the timber. I can borrow tools, and make it as well as a carpenter. I don't mind saying that a thorough good workman couldn't beat my fowl-house."

"There's nothing much you can't do, Timothy," said Mr. Loveday.

"These things are not difficult, sir, if one only puts one's mind to them. A good saw and plane, a chisel, a few nails, and hinges, and it is done."

"You shall try your hand, Timothy," said Mr. Loveday, and turned to go into his shop.

As he did so, his eyes rested upon the figure of the young woman who had halted within a few steps of him.

He was transfixed. Twenty-and-odd years of his life were suddenly engulfed in a memory of the past.

There stood the woman he had loved and lost--the woman whom his dead brother had loved and married.

He stood like a man in a dream, or under a spell of enchantment. All consciousness of the present time had vanished. The past came back again, the love which had slept so long that he had deemed it dead awoke within him and stirred his heart. Was it joy, was it pain he felt as he stretched forth a trembling hand.

As if in response to that movement on his part, the woman moved towards him, and held out her two hands with an affectionate look in her eyes, in which there dwelt also some touch of entreaty.

"Who are you?" he asked, faintly, recovering his voice.

"I am Nansie," was the reply. "I recognized you, uncle, by your likeness to my dear father."

"And I recognized you," he said, "by your likeness to your dear mother. How like you are to her--how like, how like!"

"I am glad," said Nansie. "My dear father always said I was growing to resemble her more and more. Uncle, am I welcome?"

"Quite welcome. Come in."

He was himself once more; and he took her hands in his, and conducted her into his shop.

Timothy gazed at Nansie with worshipping eyes as she passed from the open, and stood gazing--for how long he knew not--until he was aroused by Mr. Loveday suddenly appearing from the shop, and calling out to him, in an agitated tone, to run for a doctor.

"No, no," cried Nansie's voice from within, "I do not need a doctor. I only fainted a moment, I was so tired. You don't know the ways of women, uncle."

"How should I," he said, rejoining her, "having so small an acquaintance with them?"

"But you said I was welcome, uncle?" she said, in a solicitous tone.

"And you are."

"You are glad to see me?"

"Yes. Why have I not seen you before? Why have I not heard from you?"

"I wrote to you, uncle."

"Telling me you were married. Yes, I forgot."

"You did not reply."

"I saw no occasion. I thought if you wanted me you would write again, or come."

"Here I am, as you see, uncle."

"I see. Wanting me?"

"I--I think so, uncle. You shall judge."

"You speak in a voice of doubt. Listen to me, Nansie. I may call you so?"

"Surely, surely. It gives me pleasure."

"Listen, then. If there is anything in my voice or manner to cause you uneasiness, account for it by the fact that I know little of women, as you yourself said. It is sometimes my way--not always, and seldom unless I am somewhat shaken. If you had informed me that you were coming I should have been prepared. I should not then have thought, when my eyes fell upon you, that it was your mother I was gazing upon, and not her daughter."

"I am sorry," murmured Nansie.

"There is nothing to be sorry for. These reminders do a man--especially a recluse like myself--no harm. You are turning white. Are you going to faint again?"

"No; I will not allow myself."

"I have some brandy in the house. Shall I give you a little? It is a medicine."

"No, thank you, uncle; I never touch it."

"What is it, then, that makes you so white? Stay. A cup of tea?"

"If you please, uncle."

"I am a dunderhead. Timothy!"

No *genii* in Eastern tales ever appeared more promptly at a summons.

"Yes, sir."

"Make some tea; the best--quick!"

Timothy glanced at Nansie, nodded, and vanished.

"That is my assistant," said Mr. Loveday; "a treasure. A man, a boy, a girl, a woman, rolled into one. He can sew on buttons."

Nansie laughed, and Mr. Loveday gasped.

"Don't mind me," he said, in explanation. "Your laugh is so like your mother's. You see, Nansie, until I grow more accustomed to you, I shall find myself driven into the past."

There was a deep tenderness in his voice, and she took his hand in hers.

"Uncle, will you not kiss me?"

He kissed her, and the tears came into his eyes.

"There," he muttered, "you see how it is. That is the first time my lips have touched a woman's face since I was a youngster. Don't think the better of me for it. What is the time? Four o'clock. Have you had dinner?"

"No, uncle."

"Lunch?"

"No, uncle."

"Breakfast?"

"Yes."

"At what hour?"

"Eight o'clock."

"And nothing since?"

"Nothing. I was so anxious to get to you, and I have been so long finding you."

"No wonder you are white and faint. Ah, there is Timothy, in my little room where we eat--and talk, I was about to say; but we talk everywhere. Come along."

There was not only tea on the table, there was a chop, beautifully cooked, and bread-and-butter, on a clean white cloth.

"What did I tell you of him?" said Mr. Loveday, when Timothy, after looking at the table to see that nothing was wanting, had departed. "He knew what I did not. I never met another like him. Now, eat. Ah, the color is coming back into your face. Have you come from the country?"

"Yes, uncle."

"What station did you stop at?"

"Waterloo."

"At what time?"

"One o'clock."

"And you have been three hours getting here. Why did you not ride? I beg your pardon. No money, perhaps?"

"Oh, yes." She produced her purse, which, before she could prevent him, her uncle took from her hand.

"Two shillings and eightpence. Is it all you have?"

Her lips quivered.

"Of course you could not ride. There is no return ticket to--to the place you came from."

"I was not sure of returning there, uncle."

"Ah! I have something to hear. Or perhaps you did not have money enough to pay for a double fare. Why, Nansie, I might have been dead, for all you knew! You trusted to a slender chance. What would have happened if you had not found me? Two shillings and eightpence would have kept you till to-morrow, and then-- You have something of my brother's thoughtless spirit in you."

"Say, rather, of your dear brother's hope and trust."

"I will say it if you like, but it will not alter the fact that you have acted rashly. But I must learn how the land lies. You have a story to tell?"

"Yes, uncle."

"If I allow you to tell it in your own way you will stumble and break down; will cry, and faint again, perhaps. I put you, therefore, in the witness-box, where you are to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Are you ready?"

"Yes, uncle."

"No evasions, no gloss; plain and unvarnished. Deceive me once, and you will find me a tough customer. First, let me say that I am agreeably surprised in you. Brought up in the country I know not how, I might have expected my niece to be a raw country wench with rough manners and small education. I find, on the contrary, a lady who can read and write."

"Yes, uncle," said Nansie, with a smile, "I can do that."

"And can cipher, perhaps."

"I am not very good at figures, uncle."

"Of course not--you are a woman. But languages now. French, perhaps?"

"Yes, uncle."

"And German?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Ah, a Crichton in petticoats. Any others?"

"Those are all the languages I can speak, uncle."

"And enough, too, Nansie."

"Yes, uncle."

"I must do your father the justice to say that he has furnished you well. But I suppose you can't make a pudding?"

"Yes, I can, uncle."

"Better and better. I thought I was about to learn something. And, now, when your father died he did not leave a fortune behind him?"

"He died poor."

"But you were not alone and unprotected. You had a husband by your side. It occurs to me as strange that so soon before my brother's death he should have written to me in anxiety about you, and should have asked me to give you a home here in London; and you with a husband all the time!"

"My father did not know I was married."

"But you were?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean to tell me that you were secretly married?"

"It is so, uncle."

"I never heard of a secret marriage the motive for which did not spring from the man. It was your husband's wish that your marriage should be kept secret?"

"For a time only, uncle; until his father's return from abroad."

"Of course--family reasons."

"Yes."

"The usual story. What difference would it have made if you had been married with your father's consent and knowledge? There would have been less duplicity in the affair."

"Uncle, it is difficult sometimes to see how things come about. It happened as I have told you. It might not if we had consulted my dear father beforehand."

"Would he have refused his consent?"

"It is most likely."

"Ah! However careless and unmindful my brother might have been in worldly matters, he was a gentleman and a man of fine instincts. You married a man beneath you?"

"You are wrong, uncle. I married a gentleman far above me."

"And yet you tell me your father would have refused his consent."

"You forget, uncle. My dear father was truly what you have described him--a man of fine instincts."

"Well?"

"We were poor; my husband's family are very wealthy."

"I am corrected. The fact would have caused my brother to act as you say, unless, indeed, the consent of your husband's parents had been previously obtained."

"It was not, uncle."

"What rash folly! I anticipate your answer. You were in love."

"Yes, uncle."

"I am beginning to get puzzled. There is a kind of tangle here. In the first letter you wrote to me you signed yourself Nansie. Nothing more. When I replied to you I addressed you in your father's name. In your second letter, acquainting me that you were married, you signed yourself Nansie Manners."

"That is my name."

"You tell me that you have married into a wealthy family, and you come to me faint and hungry, with two-and-eightpence in your purse. And I will hazard the guess that you travelled third-class."

"I did, uncle."

"Explain the anomaly."

"When my husband told his father of our marriage he discarded him and turned him from the house."

"That explains it; but it is bad, very bad. See what comes of secret marriages. Hopes shattered, old ties broken, hearts embittered, parents and children parted in anger. Had you

known all this beforehand would you have married?"

"No, uncle," replied Nansie, firmly. It was the first time the question had been put to her, and she could not but answer frankly. "I would not have done Kingsley such injustice."

"Then there has been injustice--injustice all round. Kingsley, I infer, is your husband." Nansie nodded. "Have you come into association with his family?"

"I have never seen one of them, uncle."

"Where do they live?"

"Here, in London. You have heard of them, I dare say, uncle. Kingsley's father is the great contractor, Mr. Manners."

Mr. Loveday started. "Manners, the great contractor! Why, Nansie, the man is a millionaire, and famous all the world over! You have flown high, my girl."

"I knew nothing of this. Before Kingsley and I met I had never heard of Mr. Manners; and even up to the day of our marriage I had no idea that he was so wealthy and famous. Kingsley spoke of him as being rich, but nothing more; and, uncle, I was not very worldly-wise, and should have thought a man with a thousand pounds rich. I should think so now."

"You have made no effort to see your husband's father?"

"No; it would be useless. Kingsley tells me he is a man of iron will, and never swerves from a resolution he has made. There is no hope of turning him. Was it not noble conduct, uncle, on Kingsley's part to marry me, a poor girl without a penny in the world?"

"I am not at all sure, Nansie." He opened her purse and took out the few poor coins it contained. "See what it has brought you to. Better for you if your husband had a hundred a year than a father with millions which he buttons his pockets upon. It was a rash and thoughtless act you young people have done. There is no hope of turning Mr. Manners, you say. Yet you are a lady, well mannered, well spoken, well educated; and he sprang from nothing. It is well known. But it is idle to talk in this fashion. There is a stubbornness on the part of the ignorant which is worse than the pride of those who can boast of high descent. The self-made man is often the most difficult animal to deal with. Your husband could not have contemplated the cost of what he was about to do."

"He thought only of one thing, uncle--that he loved me."

"And that is to serve as a set-off against all the ills of life. I hope it may prove so. The commencement does not hold out any great promise, that's plain. And now, Nansie, tell me the rest in your own way. I have got the nut of the story, and a precious hard one it is to crack."

"When my dear father died," said Nansie, "Kingsley was in London. Mr. Manners had just returned from Russia, and it was the first opportunity Kingsley had of making him acquainted with our marriage. I think that Kingsley, out of consideration for me, has not told me everything that passed between him and his father, but I know that Mr. Manners extracted a promise from him to remain at home for a week before he decided."

"Decided upon what?" asked Mr. Loveday, abruptly.

"I do not know, uncle; Kingsley has been so worried and troubled that it would have been unkind for me to press him upon points which really matter very little. For, after all, Kingsley came back to me when I called him, and is true and faithful."

"His father perhaps pressed him to desert you and break your heart. Rich as the self-made man is, he could not divorce you. And your husband consented to remain a week in his father's house to consider it! That looks ugly."

"Kingsley did nothing wrong. He hoped by remaining near his father that a favorable moment might come when he could successfully appeal to him to deal more tenderly towards us. There was also the chance of his mother's mediation."

"Ah, there is a mother. I was going to ask about her."

"Mr. Manners is master of everything and everybody. His lightest word is law. Before the week was ended Kingsley received my letter with news of my dear father's death. Where was Kingsley's place then, uncle?"

"By your side."

"He came at once without a single hour's delay. He asked his father to release him from his promise, and as Mr. Manners would not do so, he broke it--out of love for me. This, I think, embittered Mr. Manners more strongly against us, and he turned Kingsley from the house. I hope you are beginning to do Kingsley justice, uncle."

"He seems to have acted well. But go on."

"After my father was buried, Kingsley and I were naturally very anxious as to how we should live. Kingsley had a little property, but he owed money to tradesmen, which had to be paid. The settlement of these accounts swallowed up nearly every sovereign he possessed, and we had a hard fight before us, harder, indeed, than we imagined. I must tell you that Kingsley wrote to his parents without success. His father returned his letter without one word of acknowledgment. If I had thought I could do any good I would have gone to his mother, but I felt that it would only make matters worse, if they could be worse. What could I have expected from her but reproaches for separating her from her son? For I am the cause of that. If Kingsley had never seen me he would have been at peace with his parents, carrying out his father's desire that he should become a member of Parliament, and take a part in public affairs. Kingsley is fitted for it, indeed he is. He talks most beautifully. And I have spoiled it all, and have ruined a great career. I would not dare to say so to Kingsley; he would never forgive me for it. He tried hard to get some sort of work to do; he went out day after day, and used to return home so sad and wearied that it almost broke my heart to see him."

"With but a little store of money," said Mr. Loveday, "such a state of affairs must soon come to an end."

"We held out as long as we could; longer, indeed, than I thought possible. We parted with many little treasures--"

"And all this time you never wrote to me!" exclaimed Mr. Loveday.

"Remember, uncle, that I *had* written to you and that you had not sent a line of congratulation upon our marriage."

"A nice thing to congratulate you upon! But I was to blame, I admit it."

"It was a delicate matter to Kingsley. 'Your uncle doesn't care to know me,' he said; and so it seemed. At length, uncle, we came to a great block, and we truly despaired. But there was a break in the clouds, uncle."

"Good."

"I am speaking of yesterday. A letter arrived for Kingsley from a friend to whom he had written, saying that a gentleman who intended to remain abroad for three or four months required a kind of secretary and companion, and that Kingsley could secure the situation if he cared for it. The gentleman was in Paris, and the letter contained a pass to Paris, dated yesterday. We had come to our last shilling, uncle, and this separation--I hope and trust not for long--was forced upon us. Kingsley managed to raise a little money, a very little, uncle, just enough to defray his expenses to Paris and to leave me a few shillings. So last evening, when we parted, it was agreed that I should come to London to-day, and appeal to you to give me shelter till Kingsley's return. That is all, uncle. Will you?"

"Yes, Nansie," said Mr. Loveday, "I will keep the promise I made to my dead brother."

Nansie took his hand and kissed it, and then burst into tears.

CHAPTER XX.

From that day a new life commenced for Mr. Loveday. It was not that there was any great improvement in the ordinary domestic arrangements of his modest establishment, because the reign of Timothy had introduced beneficial changes in this respect before Nansie was made queen. It was more in its spiritual than its material aspect that the new life was made manifest. To have a lady moving quietly about the house, to be greeted by a smile and a kind glance whenever he turned towards her, to hear her gentle voice addressing him without invitation on his part--all this was not only new, but wonderful and delightful. Mr. Loveday very soon discovered that Nansie was indeed a lady, and far above the worldly station to which her circumstances relegated her; it was an agreeable discovery, and he appreciated it keenly. He found himself listening with pleasure to her soft footfall on the stairs or in the rooms above, and he would even grow nervous if any length of time elapsed without evidence of her presence in the house. Perhaps Nansie's crowning virtue was her unobtrusiveness. Everything she did was done quietly, without the least fuss or noise; no slamming of doors to jar the nerves, nothing to disturb or worry.

"Where did you learn it all, Nansie?" asked Mr. Loveday.

"It is what all women do," she replied.

He did not dispute with her, although his experience was not favorable to her view. Inwardly he said: "What all women could *not* do, if they tried ever so hard, but then Nansie had perfection for a mother." His thoughts travelled frequently now to the early days when he loved the woman who was not to become his wife, and it may be that he accepted Nansie's companionship and presence as in some sense a recompense for his youthful disappointment, a meting out of poetical justice, as it were.

Of all the hours of day and night the evening hours were the most delightful, not only to him, but to Timothy, between whom and Nansie there swiftly grew a bond of sympathy and friendship. Before Nansie's appearance Mr. Loveday's house was a comfortable one to live and work in; but from the day she first set foot in it, it became a home. Neither Timothy nor Mr. Loveday could have given an intelligible explanation of the nature of the change; but they accepted it in wonder and gratitude. Everything was the same and yet not the same. There was no addition to the furniture; but it appeared to be altogether different furniture from that to which they had been accustomed. It was brighter, cleaner, and in its new and improved arrangement acquired a new value. There were now white curtains to the windows, and the windows themselves were not coated with dust. The fireplaces were always trim and well brushed up, the fires bright and twinkling, the candlesticks and all the metalwork smartly polished, the table-linen white and clean, clothes with never a button missing, socks and stockings with never a hole in them. Nansie could have accomplished all these things unaided; but Timothy was so anxious to be employed that she would not pain him by refusing his assistance. She had another reason--a reason which she did not disclose, and which Mr. Loveday and Timothy were too inexperienced to suspect--for accepting the lad's willing service. She knew that a time was approaching when it would be invaluable, and when she would be unable to devote herself to these domestic duties.

The evenings were the most delightful, as has been stated. Then, the day's labor over and everything being in order, they would sit together in the little room at the back of the shop and chat, or read, or pursue some study or innocent amusement. Mr. Loveday fished out an old draught-board, with draughts and a set of chessmen, and was surprised to find that Nansie was by no means an indifferent draught-player, and that she knew the moves of chess, in which her skill was not so great. At one time of his life he had been fond of backgammon, and he taught Nansie the game, Timothy looking on and learning more quickly than the fair pupil whose presence brightened the home. Timothy also made himself proficient in the intricacies of chess, and within a few months justified himself master, and gave odds. An evening seldom passed without a reading from a favorite author, Nansie's sweet, sympathetic voice imparting a charm to passages from which something valuable might have been missed had they not been read aloud. From this brief description it will be gathered that Nansie's influence was all for good.

Thus time sped on, and Kingsley was still absent. He wrote to Nansie regularly, and she as regularly replied to his letters, never missing a post. She wrote in her bedroom always, and generally at night when the others were abed. In silence and solitude she was better able to open her heart to her husband. To say that she was entirely happy apart from Kingsley would not be true, but she had a spirit of rare hope and contentment, and her gratitude for the shelter and comfort of her new home was a counterbalance to the unhappiness she would otherwise have experienced.

"A letter for you, Nansie," Mr. Loveday would say.

Taking it eagerly, she would speed to her room and read it again and again, drawing hopeful auguries from words in which none really lay. For although Kingsley's letters were cheerfully and lovingly written, there was nothing substantial in them in their prospects of the future. They were all of the present, of his doings, of his adventures, of his travels, of what he had seen and done, forming a kind of diary faithfully kept, but with a strange blindness in respect of years to come. At one time he was in France, at another in Italy, at another in Germany, at another in Russia.

"Mr. Seymour," he wrote, "has an insatiable thirst for travel, and will start off at an hour's notice from one country to another, moved seemingly by sudden impulses in which there appears to be an utter lack of system. It is inconvenient, but of course I am bound to accompany him; and there is, after all, in these unexpected transitions a charm to me, who could never be accused of being methodical. The serious drawback is that I am parted from you. What pleasure it would give me to have you by my side! And you would be no less happy than I."

Then would follow a description of the places they passed through and stopped at, of people they met, and of small adventures which afforded him entertainment, ending always with protestations of love, the sincerity of which could not be doubted. But Mr. Loveday was never anything than grave when Nansie read aloud to him extracts from her husband's letters.

"Who is Mr. Seymour?" he asked.

"A gentleman," replied Nansie.

"What is he, I mean?" was Mr. Loveday's next question.

Nansie shook her head. "I have no idea."

"Has your husband any idea?"

"I suppose he has."

"You only suppose, Nansie."

"Yes, uncle, I can do nothing else, because Kingsley has never said anything about it."

"Surely, if he really knew," persisted Mr. Loveday, "he would not be so silent on the subject."

"Perhaps you are right, uncle; perhaps Kingsley does not really know."

"If Mr. Seymour were travelling with any specific object in view, there would be no need for secrecy. Say that he were an enthusiast, that he had a craze, no matter in what shape, he would not disguise it."

"Certainly not, uncle. Mr. Seymour must be travelling simply for pleasure."

"Which is not a simple matter, Nansie," observed Mr. Loveday, "when a man runs after it. I can imagine few things more laborious and less likely of a satisfactory result. Now, Nansie, what are your husband's duties in his employment?"

"He does not say, uncle."

"Do you think he has any?"

"I suppose so."

"More supposings, Nansie."

"What else can I say, uncle?"

"Nothing, my dear, and I am to blame for worrying you. We will drop the subject."

"No," said Nansie, earnestly, "please do not drop it."

"Why should we continue it, Nansie?"

"Because," replied Nansie, with a slight flush on her face, "I am afraid you are doing Kingsley an injustice."

"I should be sorry to do that," said Mr. Loveday, very seriously.

"I know you would," responded Nansie, in a tone of affection, "and that is why I want to set you right. You think that Kingsley is concealing something from me. He is not; he loves me too well. You think that I need some one to defend me. I do not. It is only when a person is wronged or oppressed that he needs a defender. No one has ever wronged or oppressed me. On the contrary, every one in the world is kind to me--that is," she added hastily in correction, for she thought of her husband's parents, "every one who knows me. Now you, uncle," she said, wistfully and tenderly, "before I came here I dare say you had no great regard for me."

"I had not, Nansie."

"It was only because you made a promise to my dear father out of your kind heart, and because you are an honorable man who would not break his word, that you welcomed me at first. And perhaps, too," her voice faltered a little here, "because I resemble my mother, for whom you had an affection."

She paused, uncertain whether she had gone too far; but he inclined his head kindly towards her, and said,

"You are speaking justly, Nansie. Go on, if you have anything more to say."

"Yes, uncle, I have something more to say. That was your feeling for me at first; but since then--I say it humbly and gratefully--I have been happy in the belief that I have learned something for myself."

"You have," said Mr. Loveday. "I love you, Nansie."

"It is so sweet to me to know it, dear uncle," said Nansie, with tears in her eyes, "that I am enabled to bear Kingsley's absence--I hope and pray it will not be for long--with courage and resignation. And because of that, because of the love which unites us, you must think well of Kingsley--you must think always well of him. Uncle, he is the soul of honor, truth, and unselfishness. When he told me he loved me, and asked me to marry him, he did not weigh the consequences, as nearly every other man in his position would have done."

"He was rash," observed Mr. Loveday.

"Would you censure him for it? Did he not behave as an honorable, noble-hearted man?"

"Undoubtedly. He has a worthy champion in his wife."

"Ah, but it would distress me immeasurably to feel that you believe he needs a champion, or I a defender. You do not know him, uncle; when you do you will not fail to love him. I do not say that he is worldly wise, or quite fitted yet to battle with the future, but that it is his earnest desire to fit himself for what I feel will be a great struggle, and to perform his duty in a manly way. No man can do more, and, whatever may be our future, I shall love and honor him to the last."

"My dear Nansie," said Mr. Loveday, "say that you are partly right in your views of my feelings for your husband; be content now to know that you have won me over to his side."

"I am indeed content to know it, uncle."

"But should that deprive a man of his right to judge actions and circumstances? We sometimes condemn those whom we love best."

"It should not deprive him of the right," replied Nansie, adding, with what her husband would have told her was feminine logic, "but you must not condemn Kingsley."

"I will not. I will apply ordinary tests. When he took the situation with Mr. Seymour, did he know anything of his employer?"

"Nothing; but we were in great stress, and Kingsley was compelled to take advantage of his opportunity."

"Admitting that. But a man must face his responsibilities, and discharge them to the best of his ability."

"Yes, uncle, to the best of his ability."

"My dear, had you been a man, you would have made a very good special pleader. To continue. What is your husband's salary?"

A look of distress was in Nansie's eyes, and she did not reply. "I infer," said Mr. Loveday, replying for her, "that you do not know."

"I fear I do," said Nansie, in a low tone.

"Tell me, then."

"I fear, uncle, that there is no salary attached to the situation."

"But there should be?"

"Yes, there should be."

"Mr. Seymour, wishing to engage a gentleman as part companion and part secretary, must have been prepared to enter into some kind of monetary arrangement. Whose fault is it that the arrangement was not made? I will reply for you again. It must have been Kingsley's fault. Not very practical, Nansie."

"I am afraid, uncle," said Nansie, speaking slowly, and as though she were about to commit an act of treason, "that Kingsley is not very practical."

"But how is a man to get along in the world," said Mr. Loveday, with a curious mixture of decision and helplessness, "who thus neglects his opportunities? I am speaking entirely in a spirit of kindness, Nansie."

"Yes, uncle, there's no occasion for you to remind me of that. But how can you blame Kingsley? He meets Mr. Seymour as one gentleman meets another. He is too delicate-minded to broach the subject of salary, and perhaps Mr. Seymour forgets it."

"No, child, Mr. Seymour does not forget it. He takes advantage of your husband, and the consequence is that he is using a man's services without paying for them. And the consequence, further, is that valuable time is being wasted and misspent. Two or three weeks ago you commenced to read to me something in one of your husband's letters, and you suddenly stopped and did not continue. It was about money. Am I wrong in supposing that what you were about to read was in reply to something you had written in a letter to your husband?"

"You are not wrong, uncle."

"Plainly, you asked him whether he could not send you a little money?"

"Yes."

"And that was his reply. I can judge what it was."

"Uncle, he had none to send. He is entirely dependent upon Mr. Seymour."

"Who is not liberal?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Who is not only not liberal, but unjust?"

"But that is not Kingsley's fault," pleaded Nansie.

"I am not so sure. Child, child, you and your husband are like the children in the wood, and you know their fate."

"I should be content," said Nansie, mournfully, for a moment overwhelmed--only for a moment; her mood changed instantly, and with indescribable tenderness she said: "But I want to live--to live!"

There was a new note in her voice, and in her eyes a dreamy look of exquisite happiness which caused Mr. Loveday to wonder as he gazed upon her. Never had she been so beautiful as she was at that moment. In the expression on her face was something sacred and holy, and Mr. Loveday saw that she was deeply stirred by emotions beyond his ken.

"Nansie!"

"Yes, uncle," said Nansie, awaking from her dream.

"You heard what I said?"

"Yes, uncle--but you must not blame Kingsley; you must not blame my dear husband."

"I will not--strongly. Only I should like you to consider what would have been your position if you had not found me in the London wilderness, or, having found me, if I had proved to be hard-hearted instead of a loving uncle."

"What is the use of my considering it," she asked, in a tone of tender playfulness, "when I did find you, and when you proved yourself to be the best of men? It would be waste of time, would it not? Confess now."

"Upon my word," said Mr. Loveday, "I should almost be justified in being cross with you if I did not suspect that any unreasonableness in our conversation must spring from me, in consequence of my not being familiar with the ways of women. But you shall not drive me completely from my point. For your sake, Nansie, I regret that I am poor. I never wished so much to be rich as I do at the present time. You are attending to me, Nansie?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Has your husband sent you any money at all since he has been away?"

"None, uncle. He has not had it to send."

"Yet you are in need of a little?"

She looked at him, and her lips trembled slightly; and then again, a moment afterwards, the same expression of dreamy happiness stole into her face which he had observed before.

"Yes, uncle, a little, a very little. But I shall manage; I have already earned a trifle."

"In what way?" inquired Mr. Loveday, much mystified.

"I got some needlework to do, and am being paid for it."

"But in the name of all that's reasonable," exclaimed Mr. Loveday, "where and when do you do your work?"

"In my room of a night, uncle," replied Nansie, blushing.

"When we are all asleep," said Mr. Loveday, with the nearest approach to a grumble she had heard from his lips. "This must not continue, Nansie. You will do your work here of an evening and during the day, if it is necessary."

"Yes, uncle, I will obey you. But--" her form swayed slightly, and she was compelled to make an effort to keep herself from swooning--"you must not be angry with me. I am not very strong just now."

She brought her work down, and went on with it before his eyes, and there was perfect harmony between them. But still, in the stillness of her room, when her uncle supposed her to be abed, her fingers were busy in their labor of tenderest love.

CHAPTER XXI.

The event which occurred in Mr. Loveday's house in Church Alley, and which caused him perhaps the greatest excitement in his life, will be explained by the following letter which Nansie wrote to her husband two months after the conversation between her and her uncle narrated in the last chapter:

"MY OWN DEAR KINGSLEY,-- At length I am strong enough to write to you, and it is a great joy to me to sit down once more to speak to the beloved wanderer of whom I think night and day. I am sure that you must be with me, in spirit, even in my dreamless sleep. You will not be sorry to know that you are not the only one now the thought of whom makes my heart a garden of flowers. I have a sweet treasure--surely the sweetest that ever blessed a happy woman--lying at my feet, and you will not begrudge me. Oh, my dear Kingsley, if you were with me at this moment, and we were looking down together on the lovely, innocent face of our darling, you would think as I do, that heaven itself was shining in the little room in which I am writing! Everything is so strangely beautiful that I can scarcely believe I am living the same life I lived till I became a happy, happy mother. It is not the same--it is sweeter, purer, more precious; I seem to hear angelic music even in the silence which surrounds me. I know what produces it. I put my face close to my darling's mouth, and I can just hear her soft breathing.

"You will forgive me, will you not, for not having written to you for so long a time? I could not help it, you see. I know from your last letter that you received the one my uncle wrote to you, and that you would have flown to my side if you had had the means. It seems so cruel that you should be in such straits for money. Why do you not ask Mr. Seymour straightforwardly to pay you what he must owe you? It must be a good sum by this time. But perhaps it is wrong of me to say to you, why do you not do this or that?--for surely you must know what is best to be done, and the right time to do it. It is easy to judge for others, is it not, my dearest? I have the fullest faith and confidence in you; and, my dear, you must not worry about me. My uncle is the dearest friend I could have met with. He is kindness itself, and I feel that he loves me as if I were his daughter. And I have money--not much, Kingsley, dear, but enough--to go on with. Before baby came I earned some, and presently, when she can crawl, and walk, and speak--oh, Kingsley, the wonder of it!--I shall earn more. Uncle is so good to me that I need very little; but still some things are necessary which uncle does not understand about, and he has not more than he knows what to do with. Then, of course, I am an expense to him; but he never makes the least mention of that--he is too considerate, and I know he is glad to have me with him--and to have baby, too, although I fancy he does not quite know yet what to make of the darling. Indeed, I half think he is frightened of her. I see him sometimes looking at her when she is asleep with such a funny look in his eyes that I can hardly keep from laughing. The idea of a great big man being frightened of a little baby! But, Kingsley, dear (I would not confess it to anybody but you), I, too, am frightened of baby a little sometimes, when she lies in my lap, staring at me solemnly with her beautiful eyes--the color of yours, dearest--wide, wide open, without even so much as a blink in them. She seems to be reading me through and through. 'What are you thinking of, darling?' I whisper to her; and though of course she cannot answer me, I am sure that she understands, and that I should be very much astonished if I knew what was passing through her mind. She is going to be a very wise little body--I can see that--and very sweet and beautiful, and a great blessing to us. But she is that already, the greatest, the most precious that has ever fallen to my lot. You see, my dear husband, I look upon baby and you as almost one person; I cannot think of one without the other, it is impossible to separate you; so that when I say that baby is the greatest blessing that was ever given to me, I mean you as well as our darling....

"I have been obliged to stop; baby woke up, and we had a happy hour together. Now she is asleep again. She is so good, not at all fretful, as some babies are, and when she cries (which is really not often) it is a good healthy cry, which makes uncle say that her lungs are in fine condition....

"I have been reading over what I have written, and I stopped at the part where I speak of baby presently being able to walk and talk. Long before that, my dear Kingsley, I hope that you will be with us, and that we may be all living together. Do not think I am desirous of urging you to any other course than that which you consider right, but the happiness of our being together again would be so great! Is there any chance of Mr. Seymour coming to England and settling down here, and keeping you as his secretary at a fair salary? Then we could have a little home of our own, and you could go to Mr. Seymour in the morning and come home in the evening, and we should have one day in the week to ourselves. It is not a very great deal to ask for, but if some kind fairy would only grant it I should be supremely happy. Surely, surely, the future must have something good in store for us!

"I have told you in my letters all about Timothy Chance, and how good and helpful he has been. Well, my dear Kingsley, until baby came I looked upon Timothy as my knight, my own special cavalier whom I could depend upon for service at any hour I chose to call upon him; but I think now that he has divided his allegiance, at least half of it going to baby. Timothy is an extraordinary lad, and uncle has a great opinion of him. Putting his duties in uncle's business out of the question, and putting baby and me out of the question, Timothy seems to have only one idea--eggs and fowls. He is now the proud owner of four fine hens, and his spare minutes (not too many) are devoted to them. He reads up every book he can lay hands upon that treats of fowls, and is really very clever in his proceedings. He made me laugh by saying: 'If fowls won't lay they must be made to lay;' and he studies up food to coax them. It is very amusing; but Timothy is so earnest that you cannot help respecting him, and respecting him more because he is successful. He shows me his figures, and is really making a profit every month. He is now drawing out plans for constructing a movable fowl-house, in compartments, each compartment accommodating eight fowls, and capable of being taken down and put up again in a wonderfully short time. Uncle says the plans are as nearly perfect as possible, and that he should not wonder if Timothy made a fortune one of these fine days. Timothy has insisted upon my accepting two new-laid eggs a week. Uncle and he had some words about them at first, uncle wanting to pay for them and Timothy refusing to accept any money; but the good lad was so hurt and took it so much to heart that I persuaded uncle to let him have his way.

"Why do I write all this to you, dear Kingsley? To show you that I am in the midst of kindness, and that although you

have not as yet been very fortunate, there is much to be grateful for. Remember our conversation, my darling, and never, never lose heart. Courage! courage! as you have said many times; and it will help you to feel assured that there are loving hearts beating here for you, and friends holding out willing hands. Why, if a poor, imperfectly educated lad like Timothy looks forward to making a fortune out of such simple things as eggs, what may you not do, with your advantages and education? All will be well, and there is a happy future before us.

"I am tired, and have a dozen things to do, or I would keep on talking to you for hours. But I must really finish now. Baby sends you her dearest, dearest love. Indeed she does. I asked her, and upon my word, Kingsley, dear, she crowed and laughed. She is the most wonderful thing in the world, there is no doubt of that. I kiss her a hundred times for her dear papa, and I blow her kisses to you, and kiss them into the words I am writing. Our hearts are with you; our dearest love is yours. Oh, my darling! to close this letter is like bidding you good-bye again. Take all our love, which is forever blossoming for you. I close my eyes, and think that you are by my side; and I press you to my heart, which beats only for you and our darling child. What name shall I give her?

"Good-bye, and God bless and guard you, my own dear love.

"Your faithful, loving wife, Nansie."

CHAPTER XXII.

History repeats itself. The fortunes of Timothy Chance were turned by a fire--whether for good or evil, so far as regards himself, had yet to be proved. He was to go through another experience of a similar kind, in which, as on the first occasion, those who befriended him were the greatest sufferers.

Nansie had to wait for more than a month before she received an answer to her last letter from Kingsley. He and his employer, it appears, had been continually on the move, and the letter which Mr. Loveday had written to him could not have reached him. It was by a lucky chance that Nansie's letter with the news that he was a father fell into his hands after a long delay; and she gathered from his reply that some of his own communications to her must have miscarried. This last letter which she received was far from encouraging. It was in parts wild and incoherent; the cheerfulness which had pervaded his previous missives was missing; the writer seemed to be losing hope.

"I am learning some hard lessons," Kingsley wrote, "and am beginning to doubt whether there is any truth or justice left in the world."

This was distressingly vague, for no explanation of Kingsley's moody reflection was forthcoming. It did not even appear that he was drawing consolation, as he had often done during his absence, from the thought that Nansie was ever ready with open arms to comfort him.

"Instead of advancing myself," Kingsley wrote, "by the step I have taken, I have thrown myself back. It is a miserable confession to make, but there it is, and wherever I go I see, not the shadow, but the actual presentments of misery and injustice. Can any man inform me under what conditions of life happiness is to be found?"

As was to be expected, the letter was not wanting in affectionate endearments and in expressions of joy at the birth of their child. "He is miserable," thought Nansie, because we are not together. "When we are once more united, will it be wise to consent to another separation?" She felt that he had need for the companionship of a stronger nature than his own, and she prayed for the time to come quickly when she would be with him to keep his courage from fainting within him.

The very next day she was comforted by the receipt of another letter from Kingsley, in which was displayed his more cheerful, and perhaps more careless characteristics.

"What could I have been thinking of," he said, "when I wrote you such a strange, stupid letter as I did yesterday? I must have lost my wits, and I hasten to atone for it by sending you another in a better and more natural vein. Burn the first, my dear Nansie, so that it may not be in existence to reproach me. A nice piece of inconsistency you have married, my dear! I do not remember ever to have been so cast down as I have been for two or three days past; but I should keep that to myself, and not burden you with a share of my despondency. It has been my habit always to look with a light spirit upon circumstances, whether they were in my favor or against me; and if I am to replace that by becoming savage and morose, I shall be laying up for myself a fine stock of unhappiness. So I determine, for your sake and mine, and for the sake of your dear little bairn, to whistle dull care away, and to make the best of things instead of the worst. Here am I, then, my usual self again, loving you with all my heart and soul, longing to be with you, longing to hold our dear bairn in my arms, longing to work to some good end. The question is,

how to set about it, and what kind of end I am to work for. There is the difficulty--to fall into one's groove, as we have decided when we have talked about things, and then to go sailing smoothly along. Yes, that is it, and we must set ourselves to work to find out the way. I may confess to you, my dear wife, that up to this point success has not crowned my efforts; in point of fact, to put it plainly, I am thus far a failure. However, I cannot see how I am to blame. If I had had the gift of prophecy I should never have joined Mr. Seymour, but how was one to tell what would occur? Now, my dear, you urge me to make some approaches to Mr. Seymour with respect to money matters. Well, awkward as the position is, I have endeavored to do so, but have never got far enough, I am afraid, to make myself understood. My fault, I dare say, but just consider. There is nothing of the dependent in my relations with Mr. Seymour; he received me as an equal and we have associated as equals; when we first met there was no question raised as to a salary, and there has been none since. How, then, am I to go to him and say: 'You are indebted to me in such or such a sum'? It would be so coarse, and I do not see justification for it. If I have made a mistake I must suffer for it, and must not call upon another person to do so for me. That would not be consistent, or honorable, or gentlemanly. After all, my dearest, the standard of conduct is not arbitrary. What it would be right for Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith to do would not be right for me, and the reverse. What is to be done, then? Having made a mistake, I am too proud--perhaps not quite broken in yet--to get out of it in the most honorable way I can. It is in my power to say to Mr. Seymour: 'A thousand thanks for the pleasure you have afforded me and for the courtesies you have extended towards me, but my time is precious, and I must not keep away from my wife any longer.' That would be all right, but to follow it up with a request for a loan to enable me to get back to England would be so mean and coarse that I could never bring my tongue to utter the words. Can you understand my position, my darling? It is a humiliation to me to ask the question, but I am in a cleft stick, and am positively powerless to help myself. What a pity, what a pity that my original idea of living in a travelling caravan could not be carried out! Do you remember that delicious evening, dear? I should like to pass such another, and I dare say I should commit myself again to the foolish wish that it would last forever.

"Now, my dearest, I am quite cheerful and light-hearted, but there is something I must tell you. I must warn you first, though, that this is a secret between ourselves; on no account must it be disclosed to your uncle or to any other person. Much may hang upon it--I do not know what; I prefer not to think; but at all events I must do nothing base or treacherous. If confidence has been reposed in me I must not betray it. But mark what I say, dear; it is only lately that I have come to a knowledge or a suspicion of certain things, and no hint must escape me of that knowledge or suspicion (it is a mixture of both) to any except yourself.

"In speaking of Mr. Seymour you would naturally suppose that you were speaking of an Englishman, the name being unmistakably English. But Mr. Seymour is not an Englishman, and therefore the name must be assumed. As to this I have no definite information, but it is so certainly. It did not occur to me to mention to you that Mr. Seymour was probably a foreigner, the matter seeming to be of such small importance. He speaks English fluently, with the slightest accent; speaks also French, German, Italian, and Russian, as to the precisely correct accent of any one of which I am not a competent judge. I am not given to curiosity, and have a habit of believing what I am told; that is, I do not look much below the surface of things. Now, this may lead a man into a scrape.

"Were I alone, without wife and child, I should, I dare say, allow myself to drift according to circumstances, but I am bound to consider you. Well, then, Mr. Seymour, with whose right name I am not acquainted, has ideas with which I am not sure whether I agree; he has a mission with which I am not sure whether I sympathize. There are large movements in public affairs which require deep investigation before one finally and firmly makes up one's mind. Take, for example, the revolutionary movement--the idea that all people should be upon an equality, the mission to bring this about. I had better not write to greater length upon this theme. If you do not quite understand my meaning I will explain it more fully when we are together again. In saying that I am deeply anxious to get back to England soon, and that I must by some means manage it, I am thinking more of you than of myself. Shortly before writing the letter which I sent to you yesterday, I allowed myself to be led away by certain disclosures which were made to me for the purpose of binding me to a certain course--Mr. Seymour and the friends he meets and makes thinking me ripe for it, perhaps, and giving me credit for being cleverer than I am; and it was an amateur enthusiasm which drove me to conclusions to which I would prefer not to commit myself--again, more for you and our dear little one's sake than for my own. There! The confession is made; perhaps you can thread your way through my mysterious allusions. And now, my darling--"

Then the letter went on, and was concluded with expressions of love and tenderness, and occasional drifting into whimsical by-paths, in which the nature of the old Kingsley Nansie loved so well was faithfully depicted.

On that evening Nansie nerved her courage to speak to her uncle about Kingsley's desire to return to England, and her own that he should do so without delay.

"He is wasting his time," she said, "and cannot but feel it deeply that I am living upon your kindness."

"To which you are heartily welcome, Nansie," said Mr. Loveday.

"I know that, dear uncle; but is it as it should be?"

Without answering the question Mr. Loveday said: "Certainly it would be better that your husband should be at some profitable work. It is a pity, Nansie, that you did not marry a man who was accustomed to work."

"It is not a pity, uncle. There is no better man in the world than Kingsley."

"It was only a reflection of mine, my dear," said Mr. Loveday. "There is no reason why Kingsley should not do well. But the getting back--"

"There is the difficulty, uncle," said Nansie, looking at him anxiously; "the getting back to London, and the commencement of a career."

"Well, my dear, we must do what we can. You would like to send him sufficient to bring him from foreign lands into our happy family circle. Understand, Nansie, that we are to live together. You have made me so accustomed to you that if you were to leave my house you would leave desolation behind you. I shall insist upon fair play. Unfortunately, funds are rather low just now, but I will manage it. Will ten pounds be enough?"

"I think it will, uncle. It must be as a loan, though we shall never be able to repay you for what you have done."

"There is nothing to repay, Nansie; you have given me more than value. Now we will shut up shop."

"So early?"

"Yes, if you want your husband back so quickly." He called Timothy, and gave him instructions to close. "I know where I can sell a parcel of books, and I must go and strike the bargain. I will take Timothy with me. While we are gone, write to your husband, and tell him that you will send him a draft for ten pounds to-morrow. Say, if you like, that you have borrowed it from me; it will make him feel more independent, and will show that he has a sincere friend in your old uncle. There, my dear! there is nothing to make a fuss over. A nice world this would be if we did not lend a helping hand to each other!"

While he was gone Nansie wrote her letter, and, baby being asleep, ran out to post it. It was long since she had felt so happy and light-hearted. Kingsley was coming back; her beloved husband would soon be with them. Grave troubles had already entered into her life, but they seemed to vanish as she dropped her letter into the post-office box. All was bright again; Kingsley was coming back.

Returning, she related the good news to baby, and told her she must put on her best looks to welcome her papa. "And how happy we shall be, baby," she said, kissing the child again and again, "now and for evermore! You see, baby, papa is never going away again; never! never!"

The room in which she sat was the first floor front, looking out upon Church Alley, and she saw a little ragged girl lingering outside. The girl looked hungry, and Nansie, with her baby in her arms, ran down-stairs, and from the house, and gave the poor girl two-pence, which was all the money she had in her purse. The girl scudded away to the cook-shop, and Nansie went back to her room.

"There are so many," she said, addressing the baby again, "so many hundreds--ah! I am afraid, baby, so many thousands--worse off than we are; ever so much worse off, my darling pet. For they haven't got papa, have they? and they haven't got you! But the idea of my thinking that we are anything but well off, when we are going to be as happy as the days are long! I ought to be ashamed of myself, oughtn't I? You mustn't tell papa that I ever had a thought of repining, or it would grieve him. You must know, baby--I hope you are listening properly, sweet, with your great beautiful eyes so wide open, and looking so wise as you do--you must know, baby, that you have the very best and noblest papa that a baby ever had or ever could have. And he is coming home, and you must be very, very good, or you will frighten him away!"

Then she sang the child asleep, and sat in the dusk musing happily with her baby in her lap.

Suddenly she started to her feet with a look of alarm. She smelled fire. Snatching up her baby she ran into the rooms in which fires had been burning, but all was safe there, and she saw no cause for alarm. She was standing in the sitting-room looking about in her endeavor to account for the smell when a cry of "Fire!" from the adjoining house lent wings to her feet, and the next moment she was in the court, with a number of people about her in a state of great excitement. As to the cause of her alarm there was no doubt now. Tongues of flame darted from the windows, and instantaneously, as it seemed, slid into Mr. Loveday's, shop. Hustled this way and that, and pressing her baby close to her breast, Nansie was so distracted that she could not afterwards give an intelligible account of what she saw; except that there appeared to be thousands of people thronging into Church Alley and being thrust back by the police, that the air was filled with flame and smoke and wild cries, that women were wringing their hands and screaming that they were ruined, that fire-engines were dashing up the narrow path, and firemen were climbing on to the roofs of the houses, and that, turning faint and reeling to the ground, she was caught by

some humane person and borne to a safe house, where she and her baby received attention. She was unconscious of this kindness for some little while, and when she came to her senses Mr. Loveday and Timothy were bending over her. Timothy's face was quite white, and he was in a state of great agitation, but Mr. Loveday was composed and grave. The people in the room were saying it was a shame that the police would not allow him to go to his burning shop, but he, in answer, said that they were right in preventing him.

"What good could I do?" he said. "I should only be a hinderance. My great anxiety was for you, Nansie, and your baby, and when I heard you were here I came on at once. You must have received a terrible fright, my dear. You were not hurt, I hope?"

"No," she answered, she was not hurt, and she marvelled at his composure. Some other person in the throng was commenting audibly upon his calmness, and received for answer the reply from a neighbor that Mr. Loveday must be well insured.

"No," he said, turning to the speakers, "I am not insured for a penny."

They were surprised to hear this bad news, and poured condolence upon him.

"Uncle," whispered Nansie, pulling his head down to hers, "will it hurt you very much?"

"That has to be seen, my dear," he replied, with a cheerful smile.

"Not in spirits," she continued, gazing at him in pity and admiration; "I know now what real courage is. But in your business."

"If what I've heard is true," said Mr. Loveday, "I am being burned out stock and block, and shall have no business left. In which case, Timothy, you will lose a situation."

"Don't think of me, sir," said Timothy, ruefully. "Think of yourself."

"I shall have plenty of time to do that, my lad."

"This is the second time," said Timothy, "that I've been burned out of a situation. I had better not take another. I do nothing but bring misfortune upon my masters."

"Nonsense, Timothy, nonsense. It is the fortune of war, and we must fight through these defeats as best we can."

He asked for the mistress of the house they were in, and inquired whether she had a furnished room to let. There happened to be one fortunately on the second floor, and Mr. Loveday at once engaged it, and assisted Nansie up-stairs. They had hardly been in the room a moment when the landlady appeared with a cradle for baby.

"It ain't mine," she observed; "Mrs. Smithson, next door, run and got it for you. She's a good creature is Mrs. Smithson, and has had seven of her own. She expects her next in about three weeks."

Nansie sent her thanks to Mrs. Smithson, and thanked the landlady also.

"Oh, that's all right," said the landlady. "Mothers are mothers, you know, and Mrs. Smithson is that fond of babies that it's my belief she could live on 'em." In which description of Mrs. Smithson's fondness for babies the landlady did not seem to consider that there was anything at all alarming. "And look here, my dear," she continued, "don't you take on. That's my advice--don't take on. The misfortune's bad enough, but there's worse, a thousand times. I'll see that you're nice and comfortable--and I say, Mr. Loveday, you can stop here a fortnight for nothing, you not being insured, and being always so kind and obliging to everybody. There's nobody better thought of than you, and it's a pity we ain't all of us rich."

"A great pity," said Mr. Loveday, shaking the landlady's hand, "and I am grateful to you for your offer; but I have no doubt we shall be able to scrape up the rent. If you could make my niece a cup of tea now."

"Ay, that I will," said the good woman, "and fresh, too, not the leavings; and she'll take it from me as a compliment, won't you, my dear?"

Nansie nodded with a cheerful smile, and the landlady, having leaned over the baby and kissed it softly, and declared that it was the sweetest, prettiest picture that ever was, departed to make the tea.

"That is the best of misfortunes like this," observed Mr. Loveday; "it brings out the bright side of human nature. Sudden prosperity often has the opposite effect."

"But is it true, uncle," said Nansie, "that you will lose everything--everything?"

"There will in all probability be salvage," said Mr. Loveday, thoughtfully, "worth a pound or two, perhaps; maybe less. I shall prepare myself for the worst. Who is there?"

This was in response to a knock at the door, and Timothy presented himself with four new-laid eggs.

"We will accept them, my lad," said Mr. Loveday. "How is the fire getting on?"

"They've got tight hold of it now, sir," replied Timothy, "and it's going down."

"And the shop, Timothy?" Timothy made no reply in words, but his face told the rueful tale. "Eh, well, it can't be helped. I'll be out presently and have a look round for myself. Yes," he continued, when Timothy was gone, "I shall be prepared for the worst. Then all will be profit that falls short of my anticipations. I might worry myself by lamenting that I did not get insured, but it would do no good. Let me get it over by declaring that it was a piece of inconceivable folly to neglect so necessary a safeguard. The mischief is that I seldom if ever kept a balance in cash. As fast as it came in I spent it in fresh stock; it was a mania of mine, and I have paid for it. I shall have to commence the world over again, that is all. Nansie, my dear, I regret what has occurred for your sake; it will, I fear, prevent my doing what I wished. We will not have anything hang over; it will be wisest to speak of what is in our minds. Did you write to your husband?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Is your letter posted?"

"Yes."

"Well, it cannot be recalled. If you will give me his address I will write to him before I go to bed, and make him acquainted with the calamity which has overtaken us. I think, Nansie, that I have learned something of your character since you came to me, and I give you credit for possessing courage."

"I am not easily daunted, uncle. We are all of us learning lessons as we pass through life."

"They come in different shapes to different persons, and those are wise who can profit by experience. Some persons are overwhelmed by visitations of trouble; to some they impart new strength and vigor. Let this be the case with us; let us resolve not to be cast down, but to be up and doing with the best courage we can summon to our aid. It is a matter for thankfulness that bodily we are uninjured, and that baby is safe and well."

"You are a true comforter, dear uncle," said Nansie, pressing his hand.

"We might continue talking for hours, and could add little more to what we have already said and resolved. Here is our good friend, the landlady, with the tea. I will leave you together, and go and see how things are getting on."

"There are three houses gutted, they say," said the landlady, "yours and the one on each side of it. It is a mercy the whole alley isn't down."

"It is, and I am glad for those who have escaped."

"Don't go without a cup of tea, Mr. Loveday," said the landlady; "I've brought up one for you. I thought you would prefer it in your own room, my dear," she said, addressing Nansie, "there's such a lot of gossiping going on down-stairs. Ah, that's sensible of you"--as Mr. Loveday took the cup of tea she poured out for him--"there's nothing like keeping up your strength. *You* must think of that, my dear, because of your baby. Half the neighborhood wanted to come up and see you, but I wouldn't let 'em. If I put my foot down upon one thing more than another, it's gossiping. They've found out how the fire occurred, Mr. Loveday."

"How was it?"

"It was that new lodger the Johnsons took in last week. He takes the room and keeps to it, and isn't known to do a stroke of work; he does nothing but drink. There was a lamp alight on the table, and some papers about. What does he do but upset the lamp, and then run away. He's drinking now at the 'Royal George.'"

"He was not hurt, then?"

"Not him! He had sense enough to run. Not that he could have done much good by stopping! But what I say is, he ought to be punished for it."

"So ought all confirmed drunkards. Fires are not the only mischief they cause. They break hearts and ruin useful lives. I will not be long, Nansie."

"What a man he is!" exclaimed the landlady, gazing after him admiringly. "There ain't another like him in all Whitechapel. Don't cry, my dear, don't cry; it won't be good for baby. With such a friend as your uncle, everything's sure to come right!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Mr. Manners, the great contractor, sitting in his study at a table spread with legal documents and papers relating to his vast transactions, was informed by a man-servant that a stranger wished to see him.

"Who is he?" inquired Mr. Manners.

"I don't know, sir."

"Did he not give you his name?"

"I asked him for it, sir, and he said you did not know him, but that he came on very particular business, and must see you."

"Must!"

"That is what he said, sir."

Mr. Manners considered a moment. He had finished the writing upon which he had been engaged, and had a few minutes' leisure.

"What kind of man?"

"Neither one kind nor another, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"That he might be a gentleman, sir, and mightn't. It's hard to say."

"It generally is nowadays. Show him in."

The servant retired, and, ushering in Mr. Loveday, left the room.

"Well, sir?" said Mr. Manners. The contractor did not speak uncivilly, for the appearance of Mr. Loveday, who was fairly well attired, was in his favor; he might be a smaller contractor, or an inventor, or anything that was respectable.

"I have ventured to visit you, sir," said Mr. Loveday, without first seeking an introduction, "upon a matter of importance."

"My servant said upon particular business."

"He was scarcely correct, sir. I can hardly call my errand business, but it is no less important than the most important business."

"It is usual to send in a card, or a name."

"My name you will probably recognize, and I did not give it to the servant from fear that you might have refused to see me."

"This sounds like an intrusion. What may be your name?"

"Loveday, sir."

Mr. Manners did not start or betray agitation, but he looked keenly at his visitor. He was a man of method, and had on all occasions complete control over his passions. He recognized the name, the moment it was uttered, as that of the girl for whom his son had deserted him. Therefore, the name of an enemy; undoubtedly the name of an intruder.

"It is a name with which you suppose me to be familiar?"

"Yes, sir."

"I ask the question simply because there are coincidences, and I make it a rule to avoid mistakes. If you come from my son--"

"I do not, sir."

"But you are in association with him? You know him?"

"Only indirectly, sir. I have never seen your son."

"I refuse to take part in mysteries. You are related to the young woman for whom my son threw over his duty to me."

"I am the young lady's uncle."

"And your visit is in furtherance of an appeal from her or on her behalf?"

"On her behalf, but not from her. I did not inform her that I was coming."

"The information is of no interest to me. The appeal you speak of is of the usual kind. It is superfluous to ask if you are rich."

"I am not, sir."

"Poor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very poor?"

"Very poor."

His frankness, his bearing, his aspect compelled a certain amount of respect, and it did not soften Mr. Manners to be made to feel this.

"Had you any hand in this marriage?" demanded Mr. Manners.

"None, sir. Had my advice been solicited, I should have been strongly against it. I am not going too far to say that I should not have sanctioned it, and should have thrown in what small amount of authority I possessed to prevent it, if your consent had not been first asked and obtained."

This view of the matter appeared to strike Mr. Manners, and he regarded his visitor with closer attention; but presently he frowned; it was as though the honor of the alliance was on Nansie's side instead of Kingsley's.

"I will not inquire into your reasons," he said, "except in so far as to ask whether your brother, the young woman's father, who, I understand, is dead--"

"Yes, sir, he is dead."

"Whether he made any effort to prevent the marriage? I speak of it as a marriage, although I have my reasons for doubting whether it could have been legally entered into."

"Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Loveday, much astonished.

"I decline discussion," said Mr. Manners. "I am not an idle speaker, and I know what I mean. We will call it a marriage. It does not affect the conduct of my son towards me. You heard my question. If you have an objection to answer it I shall not complain."

"I have no objection, sir. My brother knew nothing whatever of it until it was too late to interfere. The young people acted for themselves, without consulting a single person. It was a secret marriage."

Mr. Manners smiled. "Exactly. But my question is still not answered."

"My brother would have felt as I feel, sir. Without your sanction he would have withheld his consent, and would doubtless have succeeded in preventing the union."

"It would have been well if it had not taken place."

"I agree with you, sir."

Mr. Manners frowned again. His visitor was taking high ground.

"Come to the precise object of your visit," he said.

"The lamentable severance of the affectionate relations which existed between you and your son has been productive of much suffering. The young people have been driven hard--so hard that in the endeavor made by your son to obtain some sort of position which would hold out the hope of his being able to support her, they were compelled to separate. Your son went abroad and left his wife here in England, doubly orphaned, friendless, penniless, and unprotected. She appealed to me for shelter and temporary support, and I received her willingly, gladly. I will not indulge in sentiment, for I know you by repute to be a practical man, and it may be not only distasteful to you, but it may place me in a false light--as making a lame effort to influence you by means of which you may be suspicious; but it is due to my niece that I should declare in your presence that a sweeter, purer, more lovable woman does not breathe the breath of life. She is a lady, well-educated, gentle, and refined; and whatever value you may place upon my statement--which I solemnly avow to be true--you must agree that it is to the credit of your son that if he chose for

his mate a lady who was poor, he at least chose one who, if fortune placed her in a high position, would be fitted to occupy it. Of this it is in your power to assure yourself, and you would then be able to judge whether I speak falsely or truly. Your son has been absent from England now for many months, and from his letters to his wife it may be gathered that he has been disappointed in his hopes and expectations, and it is certain that he has not benefited pecuniarily by the effort he made."

"He is reaping the fruits of his disobedience," said Mr. Manners.

Mr. Loveday made no comment on the interruption, but proceeded. "The consequence is that he has been unable to send his wife the smallest remittance. Until to-day this has been of no importance, as I was in a position to discharge the obligation I took upon myself when I received her into my home. Your son's affairs abroad became so desperate (and, in one vague sense, possibly compromising) that it was decided yesterday between my niece and myself to send him money to bring him home, in order that he might make another effort here to obtain a livelihood. I am speaking quite plainly, sir, and without ornament of any kind, and you will see to what straits your son is reduced."

"He is justly served," said Mr. Manners.

"It was but a small sum of money that was required," continued Mr. Loveday, "but I did not possess it. I had, however, books which I could sell--I am a bookseller by trade, sir--and last evening I left my house and place of business to negotiate the sale. Meanwhile my niece wrote to your son that I would supply her with the means for his return home, and that she would send him the money to-day. Upon my return, two or three hours later, I found my house in flames. The account of the fire, with my name, is in this morning's papers, and you may verify my statement. I was not insured, and nothing was saved. I am a beggar."

"It is, after all, then," said Mr. Manners, with a certain air of triumph, "on your own behalf that you are making this appeal to me."

"No, sir," replied Mr. Loveday, "I want nothing for myself; I shall rub along somehow, and hope to lift my head once more above adverse circumstance. My appeal is on behalf of your son's wife. I am unable to fulfil the promise I made to furnish her with the small sum required to bring your son home. I ask you respectfully and humbly to give it to me or to send it to her direct to this address." He laid a piece of paper, with writing on it, on the table. "If you would prefer to hand it to her personally she will call upon you for the purpose."

"You have spoken temperately," said Mr. Manners, with cold malice in his tones. "What is the amount you require?"

"Ten pounds, sir," replied Mr. Loveday, animated by a sudden and unexpected hope.

Mr. Manners touched a bell on his table. A servant appeared.

"Show this person to the door," he said.

"Is that your answer, sir?" asked Mr. Loveday, sadly.

"Show this person to the door," repeated Mr. Manners to the servant.

"I implore you," said Mr. Loveday, strongly agitated. "When I tell you that you have a grandchild but a few weeks old; that the poor lady, your son's wife, is in a delicate state of health--"

"Did you hear what I ordered?" said Mr. Manners to the servant, and repeated again: "Show this person to the door."

CHAPTER XXIV.

From that day commenced for Nansie and her uncle the hard and bitter battle of life. All that had gone before was light in comparison. Without money, without friends in a position to give them practical assistance, they had to depend upon themselves for the barest necessities. Confident and hopeful as he was, Mr. Loveday found it impossible to raise a new business out of the ashes of the fire which had ruined him.

"I must begin again," he said.

Had any employment offered he would have accepted it, however uncongenial it might have been; but nothing came his way. Golden apples only fall to those who have already won fortune's favors. To those most in need of them they are but visions.

He was not the kind of man to waste his time; besides, he knew how precious it was. An idle day now would be inviting even harder punishment in the future. As the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet went to the mountain--that is, to a newspaper office, where he laid out a shilling or two in fourth and fifth editions, and bravely hawked his wares in the most likely thoroughfares. The day's labor over, he found himself the richer by nineteen pence.

"Come now," he said to Nansie, gayly, "that is not so bad. In a little while we shall grow rich."

His thought was, not that nineteen pence a day would make them rich, but would keep the wolf from the door. Strange that in this the most civilized of countries we should snatch a phrase pregnant with terror from savage times and savage lands.

"The great difficulty," he said, "is my voice. Young rascals beat me with their lungs. They ring out the news; I can but quaver out the tempting morsels of murders and suicides. How I envy the youngsters! Still I shall manage, I shall manage."

Both he and Nansie had secret thoughts which they kept from each other.

"Three mouths to feed," thought Nansie. "It would be easier for him had he but his own."

"She must not think she is a burden to me," thought Mr. Loveday, "or I shall lose her."

He would have suffered anything to prevent a separation. Strong human links grew out of her helplessness; he was Nansie's protector, and it made him glad. In those early days of the new struggle she could do nothing to help the home, which consisted of two very small rooms at the top of a working-man's house. The fright of the fire had weakened her, and weeks passed before she was strong enough to put her shoulder to the wheel. Her uncle did not tell her of his visit to Kingsley's father; silence was the truest mercy. And it happened that within a very short time doubts of Kingsley's faithfulness and honesty rose in his mind. The cause of this lay in the fact that from the day of the fire no letter from Kingsley reached them. It made him indignant to note Nansie's sufferings as day after day passed without news.

"Do you think the letters have miscarried?" she asked.

"Letters don't miscarry," replied Mr. Loveday.

She looked at him apprehensively; his voice, if not his words, conveyed an accusation against the absent one.

"You believe he has not written," she said.

"I am sure he has not written," said Mr. Loveday.

"Then something must have happened to him," she cried. "He is ill and penniless, and I cannot help him!"

"If I had but a magic ring," thought Mr. Loveday, but he said no word aloud.

He reasoned the matter out with himself. On one side an innocent, unworldly, trustful woman of the people; on the other, the son of a man of fabulous wealth awakened from his dream. For this summer-lover, here was a life of poverty and struggle; there, a life of luxury and ease. To judge by human laws, or, rather, by the laws which governed the class to which Kingsley Manners belonged, which path would the young man choose? "It is more than likely," thought Mr. Loveday, "that the scoundrel has made his peace with his father, and has resolved to cast her off. But he is her husband"-- His contemplations were suddenly arrested. Words uttered by Kingsley's father recurred to him. "I speak of it as a marriage, although I have my reasons for doubting whether it could have been legally entered into." What if there was some foundation for these words? What if they were true? He did not dare to speak to Nansie of this. She would have regarded it as base and disloyal, and the almost certain result would have been to part them forever. So he held his peace out of fear for himself, out of pity for her.

Thus three months passed. Nansie had regained her physical strength, but her heart was charged with woe.

"I cannot bear this suspense any longer," she said to her uncle. "I will go to Kingsley's father, and ask him if he has received any news of my husband."

Mr. Loveday did not attempt to dissuade her; he thought that good might come of the visit, if only in the opening of Nansie's eyes to Kingsley's perfidy, of which by this time he was fully convinced. He did not offer to accompany her, knowing that it would lessen the chances of Mr. Manners's seeing her.

She went early in the morning, and sent up her name to the great contractor, and received his reply that he would not receive her. She lingered a moment or two, and cast an imploring glance

at the man-servant as though it were in his power to reverse the fiat, but the man looked impassively first at her, then at the door, and she left the house.

What a grand, stately house it was! It almost made her giddy to look to the top. She stood on the other side of the road, watching the door through which she had just passed; her mind was made up to wait, and at all risks to accost Mr. Manners when he came out. She had never seen him, but she was sure she would know him when he appeared. Kingsley had shown her the portrait of his father, and the likeness between them would render mistake impossible. She wondered whether it would have assisted her to bring her baby girl, and wondered, too, how a man so rich and powerful as Mr. Manners could have the heart to behave so harshly to his only child. She had gone no farther than the entrance hall of the stately mansion, but the evidences of wealth which met her eyes had impressed her more deeply than ever with the sacrifice Kingsley had made for her sake. A sense of wrong-doing came to her. She should not have accepted the sacrifice. She should have thought of the future, and should not have allowed herself to be led away by the impetuous passion of her lover. Even the duty she owed to her dear father had been neglected, and she had taken the most solemn step in life without consulting him. It was too late to turn back now, but could she not atone for the wrong she had done? If she said to Kingsley: "Dear husband, let us part; return to your father's home, to your father's heart, and I will never trouble you more;" would he accept the atonement? Would he, would he? A chill fell upon her heart, like the touch of an icy hand, but the sweet remembrances of the past, of the vows they had exchanged, of the undying love they had pledged to each other, brought gleams of sunshine to her. Kingsley had thrown in his lot with her for weal and woe. She would work, she would slave for him, and he should never hear one word of complaining from her lips. If only they were together again! They could be happy on a very little; she would make him happy; she would be bright and cheerful always, and he would draw gladness from her. Their baby was at home, waiting for a father's kisses, for a father's love. If he needed a stronger incentive to be true and faithful, he would find it in his child. Upon the mere suggestion of this possibility she stood up in defence of him. No stronger incentive was needed than the ties which already bound them together. But where was he? What was the reason of his long and heart-breaking silence?

She walked slowly up and down for an hour and more, never losing sight of the door of the rich man's house. She was determined not to go away without seeing him, if she had to remain the whole of the day. It was a weary, anxious time, and it was fortunate for her that she had not much longer to wait. The door opened, and Mr. Manners came forth.

How like he was to Kingsley!--only that his face was harder, and that all that was gentle and tender in Kingsley's face was depicted in his father's in hard, stern lines. But the likeness was unmistakable. He stopped as she glided swiftly to his side and timidly touched his sleeve.

"Well?"

His voice was as hard and stern as his face, and if she had not nerved herself to her task the opportunity would have been lost.

"You would not see me when I called at your house, sir, and I took the liberty of waiting for you here."

He did not ask who she was, and he showed no sign that he was touched by her gentle, pleading manner.

"What do you want?"

"I came, sir, to ask if you had any news of"--she stopped short at the name of Kingsley; he might have resented it as a familiarity--"of your son."

"Why come to me?"

"I do not know, sir," said Nansie, humbly, "whether I dreaded or hoped that you might relieve me of the trouble which is oppressing me; but you may have heard from him lately."

"I have not heard from him."

"Do you know nothing of him, sir?"

"Nothing; nor do I wish to know. When he left my house he was aware that the step he took put an end to all relations between us. I am not a man to be turned from my purpose. He chose his course deliberately, and set me at defiance."

"No, sir, no!" cried Nansie. "He had no thought of that."

"Words do not alter facts. He owed me a plain duty, and he ignored it for a stranger. The lures you used to entangle and ruin him have proved effectual. You led him on to his destruction, and you are reaping what you have sown. Finish your errand."

"It is finished, sir," said Nansie, turning mournfully away. "I cannot doubt that you have spoken truly, and that you have not heard from my husband. The last time he wrote to me he was in sore distress, without means to return home. I was in hopes that I should be able to send him a

little money, but my hope was destroyed by a calamity which beggared the only friend I have."

"I have heard something in the same strain. You sent this only friend to me."

"No, sir, I did not. Do you mean my uncle?"

"I mean him. He came to me, as you know, and asked me for a sum of money to send abroad to my son."

"Indeed, indeed, sir, I did not know it."

"Which, doubtless," continued Mr. Manners, ignoring the contradiction, "he would have pocketed, with the satisfactory thought that he had got something out of me."

"You do my uncle great injustice, sir. He is noble and generous, and I honor him with my whole heart."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Manners, and there was a deeper sternness in his voice, "it is among the class to which you and he belong, and into which you have dragged my son, that honor and nobility are to be found. I have had experience of it. Once more, finish your errand."

"I have nothing more to say, sir. I fear to anger you."

"Your real purpose in seeking me was to beg for money."

"Indeed not, sir. I had no such purpose."

"And would not accept it if I offered it?"

"I cannot with truth say that, sir. We are so poor that the pride I once had is broken. Pardon me if I say that I think you have no intention of offering it."

"I have none."

She bowed, and crossed to the opposite side of the road; but before she had gone a dozen yards she heard his voice accosting her.

"It is in my mind to say something to you."

She turned to him with a sudden hope. Had he relented? Had her distress softened his heart towards her? A glance at his face dispelled the hope. There was in it no sign of pity.

"Accompany me to my house," he said.

Bewildered and surprised she walked by his side in silence, and they entered the mansion together.

"You would probably like," said Mr. Manners, "to have some better knowledge than you at present possess of the position which, by his disobedience and unfilial conduct, my son has forfeited."

CHAPTER XXV.

He conducted her through some of the principal apartments, which had been furnished and decorated in a princely style. The pictures, the sculptures, the *bric-à-brac* were of the choicest character. Her feet sank in the thick, soft carpets, and her heart fainted within her as she followed Mr. Manners through the sumptuously appointed rooms. He paused before one, and, throwing open the door,

"You may enter; it was my son's bedroom."

"She obeyed him, a rush of tears almost blinding her; Mr. Manners remained outside. She saw, not a bedroom, but a suite of rooms luxuriously furnished; a library of costly books; rare old engravings on the walls; a bath-room fitted up with all the newest appliances; everything that money could purchase to make a man's life pleasant and devoid of care. She remained there but a short time; the contrast between these rooms and the miserable attics which she and her uncle occupied, and to which she hoped to welcome Kingsley, appalled her. When she rejoined Mr. Manners in the passage he led her down-stairs and ushered her into his study.

"You may sit down," he said.

She was tired, wretched, and dispirited, and she accepted the ungracious invitation.

"I am not in the habit of boasting of my wealth," he said; "what you have seen affords proof of it. And all that you have seen, with means sufficient to keep it up ten times over, would have been my son's had you not marred his career. I will not do you an injustice; you have surprised me; I thought that my son had taken up with a common, vulgar woman; I find myself mistaken."

Again animated by hope, she looked up; again her hope was destroyed by the stern face she gazed upon.

"It is because I see that you are superior to what I anticipated that I am speaking to you now. Doubtless my son has informed you that, by my own unaided exertions, I have raised myself to what I am." She bowed her head. "The pleasure of success was great, and was precious to me, not so much for wealth itself, but for a future I had mapped out, in which my son was to play the principal part. With him absent, with him parted from me, this future vanishes, and I am left with the dead fruits of a life of successful labor. Who is to blame for this?"

She held up her hands appealingly, but he took no notice of the action.

"You are therefore my enemy, and not only my enemy, but my son's. With my assistance, with my wealth and position to help him, he would have risen to be a power in the land. You have destroyed a great future; you have deprived him of fame and distinction; but there is a remedy, and it is to propose this remedy to you that I invited you into my house. Your speech is that of an educated person, and you must be well able to judge between right and wrong. What your real character is I may learn before we part to-day. I will assume, for instance, that you are nothing but an adventuress, a schemer--do not interrupt me; the illustration is necessary to what I have to say. You may be nothing of the kind, but I assume the possibility to give force to a statement I shall make without any chance of a misunderstanding. It is this. Assuming that you played upon my son's feelings because of my being a rich man, in the expectation that, if not at once, in a little while I should open my purse to you, it will be well for you to know that there is not the remotest possibility of such an expectation being realized. Do you understand?"

She did not reply in words; the fear that she might further anger him kept her silent; she made a motion which he interpreted into assent, and accepting it so, continued:

"Assuming, on the other hand, that you did not weigh the consequences of your conduct, and that you had some sort of a liking for my son--"

"I truly loved him, sir," she could not refrain from saying.

"It shall be put to the proof. If you love him truly you will be willing to make a sacrifice for him."

"To make him happy," she said, in a low tone, "to bring about a reconciliation between you, I would sacrifice my life."

"But it is not yours to sacrifice. Something less will do. On one condition, and on one condition only, will I receive and forgive my son."

And then he paused; it was not that the anguish expressed in her face turned him from his purpose, but that he wished her to be quite calm to consider his proposition.

"I am listening, sir."

"The condition is that you shall take a step which shall separate you from my son forever."

"What step, sir?"

"There are other lands, far away, in which, under another name, you can live with your uncle. You shall have ample means; you shall have wealth secured to you as long as you observe the conditions; you shall not be interfered with in any way; you will be able to live a life of ease and comfort--"

He did not proceed. There was that in her face which arrested his flow of language.

"Is Kingsley to be consulted in this, sir?"

"To be consulted? Certainly not. He is not to know it."

"Shall I be at liberty to write and tell him that it is for his good I am leaving him?"

"You will not be at liberty to communicate with him in any way, directly or indirectly."

"He is, then, to suppose that I have deserted him?"

"He is to suppose what he pleases. That will not be your affair."

Indignation gave Nansie courage. "Is it to be yours, sir?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Manners, frowning.

"That you will have the power to invent some story to my discredit, and that your son shall be made to believe I am not worthy of him. That is my meaning, sir."

"Do you think you are serving him or yourself by the tone you are adopting?" asked Mr. Manners, rising from his chair.

It was an indication to Nansie, and she obeyed it, and stood before him.

"I have not thought of that, sir; I am thinking only of what is right. Forgive me for having intruded myself upon you, and allow me to leave you. If your son is living--sometimes, in my despair, I fear the worst, he has been so long absent--and returns home, perhaps you will inform him of the proposition you have made to me, and of the manner in which I received it."

"That is a threat that you will do so."

"No, sir, it is not; he will hear nothing from me. Heaven forbid that by any future act of mine I should help to widen the breach between you? Good-morning, sir."

She did not make her uncle acquainted with what had passed between Mr. Manners and herself; she simply said that Mr. Manners had refused to see her, that she had waited for him in the street, and that she had learned from him that he had not heard from Kingsley.

"Did he speak kindly to you?" asked Mr. Loveday.

"No; he is bitterly incensed against me, and looks upon me with aversion. If I had ever a hope that he would relent towards us it is gone now forever. Uncle, is it my fancy that you are looking strangely at me?"

"Your fancy, my dear," replied Mr. Loveday, with a smile which he endeavored to make cheerful. "Why should I look strangely at you? Your interview with Mr. Manners has unnerved you."

"Yes," said Nansie, "it must be so. When Kingsley returns he must not know of my visit to his father. It will make him angry and uncomfortable."

"I shall not tell him, my dear," said Mr. Loveday.

CHAPTER XXVI.

When Kingsley returns! Nansie suppressed a sigh as she uttered the words; but the unspoken thought was in her mind: "Would he ever return?" She flew to her baby as to a refuge and a sanctuary, but her heart was very heavy.

It was not her fancy that her uncle had looked strangely at her, and he had not behaved ingenuously in his reply to her question. He had deep cause for uneasiness, and his duty seemed to lie, for the present, in the effort to keep her in ignorance of ominous news which had come to his knowledge during her visit to Kingsley's father.

On the previous day, in the last edition of the papers he sold in the streets, he noticed a paragraph to which he had paid no particular attention. It was simply the record of an accident on a German railway, in which ten persons had been killed and considerably more than that number seriously hurt. No particulars were given, and no names were mentioned. In the first edition of this day's evening papers Mr. Loveday read the following:

"Further particulars have reached us of the railway accident in Germany, but its precise cause still remains unexplained. It appears that the train was conveying nearly two hundred travellers, of whom ten met their death, as was stated yesterday, and twenty-three were seriously injured. Among the dead was a gentleman of the name of Seymour, who was accompanied by Mr. Manners, who is supposed to have been travelling with Mr. Seymour as a kind of companion or secretary. These two are the only English names in the list given of killed and wounded. Mr. Manners is one of those who were seriously injured; he lies now in a precarious state, which precludes the possibility of any information being obtained from him which would enable the authorities to communicate with his relatives or the relatives of Mr. Seymour. As to the latter,

however, some important discoveries have already been made, through documents found upon his person. Reticence has been observed in making these particulars public, but sufficient is known to warrant the statement that, despite the English name under which he travelled, he is by nationality a Russian, and that he occupied a position of responsibility in a certain secret revolutionary society whose aim it is to spread discontent and disaffection among the working classes on the Continent."

It was this paragraph which caused Mr. Loveday so much anxiety. There could be no mistake that the Mr. Manners referred to was Nansie's husband; the association of his name with that of Mr. Seymour rendered this a certainty, and it appeared to Mr. Loveday that the personal injuries he had met with in the railway accident were not the only dangers which threatened him. Mr. Loveday could not immediately make up his mind whether it would be wise to acquaint Nansie with what had come to his knowledge. It was very unlikely that she would otherwise hear of it, for the reason that she never read the newspapers; in the neighborhood in which they lived an accident so remote would pass unnoticed, and thus it would not be difficult to keep her in ignorance of her husband's peril. Kingsley's father could not have known anything of this when he and Nansie were together or he would undoubtedly have made some reference to it.

What was best to be done? That was the question which was perplexing Mr. Loveday. To take any practical step was out of his power, because that would entail the expenditure of money which he did not possess. He and Nansie were living now literally from hand to mouth; the day's earnings sufficed for bare daily food; they had not a shilling to spare from the inexorable necessities of existence. To make another appeal to Mr. Manners would be worse than useless; it would bring fresh insults and revilings upon them from the stern millionaire, whose heart was steeled against the calls of common humanity. Thus did he argue with himself as to the good that would be done by making the disclosure to Nansie; it would but intensify the sorrow caused by Kingsley's silence into a torture which would be unendurable. If any useful end could have been served by letting Nansie into the secret of her husband's peril Mr. Loveday would not have hesitated to inform her of it; but, so far as he could see, the distress of mind occasioned by the revelation would add misery to misery; and, after some long consideration of the matter, he determined to keep the matter to himself, at least for the present. Meanwhile he watched the papers for further information of the railway accident, but for some time saw no reference to it. One day, however, the following paragraph arrested his attention:

"With respect to Mr. Seymour who met his death in the railway accident in Germany, the particulars of which have been fully reported in our columns, it is now certain that he was by birth a Russian, and that he was for a number of years intimately connected with conspiracies against law and order. The documents found upon his person were of such a character, and were so drawn out, as to destroy the hope that was entertained that they would lead to the detection of the members of the secret societies with which he was associated. Great pains have evidently been taken--probably from day to day--to do away with all documentary evidence that would incriminate others, and this is an indirect proof of the dangerous nature of the conspiracies in which he was engaged. With respect to the Mr. Manners who met with serious injuries, nothing to directly implicate him has come to light. The strongest point against him is the fact of his having travelled for many months with Mr. Seymour on apparently confidential relations. Papers found in his possession lead to the conclusion that he is the son of the great contractor, Mr. Valentine Manners, whose name is known all the world over."

In the following day's paper Mr. Loveday read a letter to the following effect:

"Sir,--It is necessary for me to state that I have not been in any way acquainted with the late movements and proceedings of my son, Mr. Kingsley Manners, who is reported to have met with serious injuries in a railway accident in Germany, nor have I any knowledge of the Mr. Seymour with whom he is said to have travelled as companion.

"Faithfully yours, VALENTINE MANNERS."

That was all. Although Mr. Loveday carefully searched the papers day after day, he saw no further reference to the matter; it dropped out of sight, as it were, and the faint interest it had excited in the public mind appeared to have died completely away. The hard battle of life continued sadly and monotonously, without the occurrence of one cheering incident to lighten the days; and as time wore on Nansie ceased to speak to her uncle of the beloved husband who was either dead or had forgotten her. In her sad musings upon the question of death or forgetfulness she did not bring the matter to an issue. Had she been compelled to do so, she would have stabbed herself with the torture that Kingsley was dead; for that he could have forgotten her, and that he could be systematically neglecting her, was in her faithful, chivalrous heart impossible. All that she could do was to wait, although hope was almost dead within her.

At an unexpected moment, however, the question was solved.

It was evening. Mr. Loveday had not returned from his daily labors, and Nansie had put her baby asleep in her cradle, and had gone out to execute some small household duties. She hurried through them as quickly as possible, and, returning home, had almost reached the street door of the house in which she lived, when a voice at her back said,

"It *is* Nansie!"

The pulses of her heart seemed to stop. It was her husband's voice, and so overcome was she by this sudden ray of sunshine that, when she turned, she could scarcely see before her. Again the voice came to her ears; the gay, light, happy voice of old, which expressed only joy and sweetness, and in which there was no note of sadness or sorrow.

"Why, Nansie--it *is* Nansie! I was born under a lucky star."

And still, without seeing the speaker, she felt herself drawn to the heart of the one man in the world she loved--of the dear husband and the father of the babe sleeping peacefully at home.

"Oh, Kingsley! Is it you, is it you?"

"Of course it is, Nansie. Who else should it be? But it is very perplexing and puzzling; I don't quite see my way out of it. Tell me, Nansie--you expected me, did you not?"

"Yes, Kingsley, yes--for so long, for so long!"

"No, no, not for so long. Why, it can have been but a few days since I went away! Let me see--how was it? We had to look things in the face, and we did, and we agreed that something must be done, and then--and then--upon my word, Nansie, I think I am growing worse than ever; I not only fly off at a tangent, but I seem to be afflicted by an imp of forgetfulness. What does it matter, though? I have found you, and we are together again."

During this speech Nansie's eyes were fixed upon his face in tender love and thoughtfulness. His words were so at variance with the true nature of her position and his that she would have been unable to understand them if love had not brought wisdom to her. There was in Kingsley's eyes the same whimsical expression as of old, there was in his manner the same light-heartedness which had enabled him to look upon the future without anxiety, the tones of his voice were clear and gay, but he bore about him an unmistakable air of poverty. His clothes were worn threadbare, his hands were attenuated and almost transparent, and the lines of his face denoted that he had passed through some great suffering. He evinced no personal consciousness of these signs, and seemed to be at peace and in harmony with himself and all around him.

"Are you well, Kingsley?" asked Nansie, solicitously.

"Well, my love? Never was better in my life, and now that I have found you, there is nothing more to wish for. And yet--and yet--"

He passed his hand across his forehead, and looked at her in a kind of humorous doubt.

"Do you observe anything singular in me, my love?"

It would have been cruel to have answered him with the direct truth. It was from the deep well of pity with which her heart was filled that she drew forth the words,

"No, Kingsley, no."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, dear."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Nansie. I am the same as ever, eh?"

"Yes, Kingsley, the same as ever; but we will not part again."

"No, indeed! I don't intend that we shall--because, although we have been separated but a short time, my head has got full of fancies about this and that--foreign countries--outlandish places--strange people--rapid journeys--accidents even, but dreams, all of them, Nansie. They must be dreams, or I could fix them with greater certainty. Now, you know my old way, my dear; when anything was troubling me I used to say, 'What is the use? It won't make things better.' There is only one wise way to look upon life--make light of things. You remember a favorite saying of mine--it was from a song, I think, was it not? 'Never trouble trouble, till trouble troubles you.' And that is the way we will go through life together, eh, my love?"

"Yes, Kingsley," said Nansie, and would have said more, but for a sudden trembling that came over him, which caused him to cling to her for support.

"What is the matter, Kingsley?"

"To tell you the truth, my dear," he replied, with a wan, whimsical smile, "you would hardly believe it, but I think I am hungry!"

"Hungry! Oh, Kingsley!"

"Well, yes; such a careless, neglectful fellow as you have got for a husband, Nansie, never thinking of things at the right moment, never taking into account that it is necessary to eat even,

until it is forced upon him that he must eat to live. And talking of eating to live--is there anything in the larder, Nansie?"

He had rallied a little, and spoke with greater firmness.

"Yes, Kingsley, plenty; come--come. Ah, my dear, my dear, with all my heart I thank God that you are with me again!"

"Dear wife," he murmured, and allowed himself to be led by her into the house, and up the dark stairs to the rooms she occupied.

But outside the door, on the landing, she whispered to him,

"Kingsley!"

"Yes, love."

"There is a great happiness within. Be prepared for it."

"There is a great happiness here"--with his arms around her. "I am really and truly thankful."

"But a greater within, Kingsley, my husband. Listen--our darling child sleeps there."

"Our darling child, our little one! Surely I have seen her in my dreams, in which I have seen so many strange things. Ah, how I have dreamed of you, Nansie, even during this short absence! But let us go in, or I shall be reproached for forgetfulness."

They entered the room together, they leaned over the cradle, they knelt by its side, and Kingsley, lowering his face to the pretty babe sleeping there, kissed her softly and tenderly.

"She is very sweet, Nansie, like you. I am sure her eyes are the color of yours."

"No, darling, she has your eyes."

"And your heart, Nansie. Happy little one, happy little one! We will make her happy, will we not, dear?"

"Yes, Kingsley."

"But, my dear, pardon me for saying so, I am really and truly hungry. Even a piece of dry bread would be acceptable."

She kept back her tears, and quickly placed bread upon the table, which he ate ravenously at first, smiling at her gratefully the while. Very soon she had prepared some hot tea, which he drank, and begged her to drink a cup with him. His hunger being appeased, he lay back in his chair, his eyes wandering round the room.

"What is our dear little one's name?" he asked; "I have forgotten it."

"No, dear," said Nansie, "you have not forgotten it, because she has not one yet; we call her 'baby,' you know."

"Yes, yes," he said, "'baby,' of course, the best, the sweetest that ever drew breath; but she must have a name, Nansie; she cannot go through life as 'baby.' Say that when she is a happy woman she marries, it would not do for her to be called 'baby' then."

"We waited for you, Kingsley, to give her a name."

"Well, then, what shall it be? But that it would introduce confusion into our little home, no better name than 'Nansie' could be found. That would not do, would it?"

"No, Kingsley. Shall we give her your mother's name?"

"My mother's? No, there must be none but good omens around her. *Your* mother's, Nansie. I remember you told me it was Hester."

Then he called aloud, but in a gentle voice, "Hester!"

"She is awake, Kingsley," said Nansie, lifting the baby from the cradle and putting her into his arms.'

"This is a great joy to me," he said; "I really think she knows me; we shall be the best of friends. There is so much that is good in the world to show her--to teach her. Now, you and I together, love, will resolve to do our duty by her, and to do all that is in our power to make her happy."

CHAPTER XXVII.

An hour later, when Mr. Loveday returned home, Nansie, who had been listening for his footsteps, went out to meet him. Even in the dark he, with love's keen sight, observed that something of a pleasant nature had occurred.

"Good news, Nansie?"

"Speak low, uncle. Yes, good news. He has come home."

"Kingsley?"

"Yes, uncle. He is asleep with the baby by his side. He is very, very tired."

"How did it happen? How did he find you out?"

"It must have been almost by chance. I was out making some little purchases, when I suddenly heard a voice behind me saying, quite naturally, 'It is Nansie!' Turning, I saw him, not clearly at first, because I was almost blind with joy. You must be very gentle with him, uncle."

"I will, my dear; but there is something in your voice--gentle for any especial reason?"

"Yes, for a special reason, which you will more fully discover for yourself. I am glad that I have seen you before he meets you; it will be better that you should be prepared."

"Prepared for what, my dear?"

"Kingsley is laboring under an impression that he has been away from us but a very short time. What we know to be real he believes to be fancies. He has made no reference to his travels abroad with Mr. Seymour, nor to the railway accident in which he was injured. He speaks of dreams, and even then not clearly. It is difficult for me to make myself understood--"

"Not at all, Nansie; I think I understand. The accident he met with has affected his memory; but it is good that he is with us now. We can take care of him, we can nurse him back to strength and health."

"How kind you are, uncle! Never thinking of yourself!"

"Nonsense, my dear, nonsense! It is entirely of myself that I am thinking, for I would not lose you and your dear ones for all the money the world contains. That is putting a small value upon money, though. I wish we had a little."

In his mind was the thought, "We need it all the more now," but he did not give the thought utterance.

"Is he low-spirited, despondent, Nansie?"

"No, uncle, quite the contrary. He is as light-hearted and gay as ever, and speaks in the same sweet, hopeful strains of the future, his anticipations of which led him into the error of--"

She stopped short; she did not complete the sentence. Her uncle completed it for her.

"Of marrying you, my dear. Do not regret it; accept it as a blessing, as it really is. Short-sighted mortals as we are to so constantly forget that life is short, and that its sweetest happiness is to be found in self-sacrifice--even, Nansie, in suffering!"

They entered the room together, and found Kingsley awake. He rose when his eyes lighted upon Mr. Loveday, and, with a bright smile, said:

"Nansie's uncle?"

"Yes, Kingsley," said Mr. Loveday.

And Nansie raised her uncle's hand to her lips, and kissed it in grateful recognition of the affectionate greeting.

"Now," said Kingsley, to whom strength seemed to have really returned; he held out his hand, and retained Mr. Loveday's in his as he spoke--"now what could be pleasanter, what could be brighter and more full of promise? Here, for the first time, we meet, and I recognize in you a friend. Believe me, sir, when I say a friend, it is said once and forever; it is *meant* once and forever. I am no butterfly, eh, Nansie?"

"No, dear Kingsley," she replied, pressing close to him.

He passed his arm round her.

"No butterfly," continued Kingsley, "except in the way of conversation, but that you will find out for yourself. I fly from one theme to another in the most inconsequential manner. A bad habit, sir, if it really meant anything serious, but it does not, and I have here by my side a spiritual support"--he kissed Nansie--"which never fails to recall me to the straight line at the precise and proper moment--as it does now; for looking at her, I am reminded of all we owe to you. Let me thank you in our joint names. I will not say that I hope to live to repay the debt, because there are some debts which it is good never to repay, and this is one. It is sometimes most ungracious to deliberately cancel an obligation."

"The debt is on my side, Kingsley," said Mr. Loveday, greatly won by the returned wanderer's speech and manner. "Nansie has brightened my life."

"She could do no less," said Kingsley, in a tone of grave and tender affection, "to the life of any person who has the happiness to know her."

Upon the invitation of Mr. Loveday, who knew, now that Kingsley had joined them, that certain changes were necessary in their domestic arrangements, and that Nansie could more readily effect them if she were left alone, the two men went out for a stroll. They returned after an absence of a couple of hours, and Kingsley presented Nansie with a few simple flowers, saying as he did so: "Our honeymoon is not yet over, my love."

Presently Kingsley, who, it was apparent, needed repose, was induced to retire to his bed. No sooner had he laid his head upon the pillow than he was fast asleep. Nansie and her uncle sat together in the adjoining room, and conversed in low tones.

"It is as you say," observed Mr. Loveday, "he appears to have no memory--that is, no absolute, dependable memory--of what has transpired from the time he left you. I have not directly questioned him, feeling that it might not lead to a good result, and that he is not yet strong enough to bear even a slight shock; but indirectly I threw out a veiled suggestion or two, and his responses have convinced me of his condition. He has a vague impression of a railway accident in which some person whom he knew was killed, and some person whom he knew was injured, but he does not associate either the one or the other directly with himself. You will not mind my mentioning something, my dear, because in our position there must be between us no concealment. Kingsley has no money, not a penny."

"It is as I expected, uncle; but how did you discover it? Did he say so?"

"No, my dear, it came when he paused before a woman who was selling flowers. He put his hands into his pockets, and was, I think, more perplexed than distressed. 'Now this is too bad,' he remarked, and I, divining, paid the woman for the flowers he selected. It is wonderful to me how, circumstanced as he is, he managed to make his way home."

"Providence directed him, and protected him," said Nansie, devoutly, "and will surely smooth the path before us."

"With all my heart I hope so," responded Mr. Loveday; "meanwhile, until the better fortune smiles upon us, we must work all the harder, and bring our best courage to bear upon the present."

Their conversation was interrupted by a gentle tapping at the door, and, opening it, they saw Timothy Chance, who had a covered basket on his arm which he laid upon the floor, and then respectfully greeted Mr. Loveday and Nansie, who, however, would not be content with this, but shook hands heartily with him.

A word of explanation as to Timothy's movements will here be useful.

They had not seen him since within a fortnight of the fire which had plunged them so low. When he was convinced that there was no present hope of Mr. Loveday being able to re-establish his business, he had looked out for a situation in the immediate neighborhood, in order that he might be near the friends to whom he was so devotedly attached. But his efforts were not successful; no situation presented itself which he could accept, and as he was driven by necessity, which knows no law, he was compelled to avail himself of an engagement in the country some fifteen miles away, which offered itself in the nick of time. What eventually transpired will be best related in his own words.

"You thought I'd forgotten you, sir," he said to Mr. Loveday.

"No, my lad, I did not think that. My thought was that you had not been fortunate, and that you kept away out of consideration for us."

"Thank you, sir. You have a happy way of saying things. True, too, because I was not very fortunate at first; but there has been a turn in the wheel."

"A good turn, Timothy, I hope?"

"It will prove so, sir, if I have a head upon my shoulders; always trusting that there are no more fires."

"Ah," said Mr. Loveday, "we have had enough of those experiences."

"Yes, that we have, sir," responded Timothy, gravely; "but what I say is, 'Never despair.' I have not neglected my studies, sir, and I can give you the Latin words if you like--'*Nil desperandum*.'"

Timothy said this proudly, and with a bright eye.

"Good lad," said Mr. Loveday. "It is not in you to despair, Timothy. You are the stuff that men are made of, and will run ahead of all of us."

"Never so far ahead, sir," said Timothy, wistfully, "that I shall lose sight of the best friends a poor boy ever had; but that sounds like boastfulness."

"Not at all, Timothy, not at all. You speak with as much modesty as resolution. This turn in the wheel, my lad--what kind of a turn?"

"I think, sir," said Timothy, with a gay laugh, "that you could guess in once."

Mr. Loveday glanced at the basket on the floor, and made a guess in merry mood, for Timothy's blithe spirits were contagious.

"Eggs, Timothy?"

"Yes, sir," said Timothy, laughing again; "you have guessed it in once--eggs. But before I tell you about it"--he turned to Nansie--"how is baby?"

"Thriving beautifully, Timothy," replied Nansie.

"May I see her?" he asked.

"Wait a moment," said Nansie, and she went to the inner room, where baby was lying in her cradle. Returning, she said: "Yes, you may see her; but you must be very quiet. Do not make the least noise, and don't be surprised at what you see. My dear husband is home."

A bright light came into Timothy's face.

"I am glad," he said, "for your sake and baby's."

He stepped softly into the bedroom, accompanied by Nansie, and stood in silence for a few moments, gazing affectionately at the sleeping child.

"May I kiss her?" he said.

"Yes, Timothy, but very, very softly."

With the gentleness of a woman he stooped and kissed the child, and then came back with Nansie to the sitting-room, closing the door softly behind him.

"Eggs, as you say, sir," he recommenced, taking up the business part of the conversation where it had broken off. "You know that I had to sell off my little stock of fowls here, so that I might get to the situation I heard of. It wasn't a very good one, and it wasn't a very bad one; I had to work hard, which is a thing I shall never complain of, and although, besides my grub, I got very little a week, I managed to save a little out of that. Well, sir, six weeks ago I had two laying hens, and there I was established again in a small way, doing business for myself outside the hours I had to work for my employer. Then came a bit of good-fortune, the turn in the wheel I spoke of. Not far from my place lives a blacksmith, and to him I've been going of a night for a little while past, teaching him to write a bit, teaching him to read a bit, and reading books to him myself that made him laugh and cry. He gets fond of me and we get talking together, especially about eggs. Says I, 'There's a fortune in eggs.' Says he, 'Is there?' Says I, 'No doubt of it.' And three weeks ago--that is, you know, three weeks after I had set up in business again with my two fowls--I put it all down in figures one night, and we went into it seriously. 'It seems all right,' says he. 'It is all right,' says I. 'Supposing you have not made a mistake,' says he, 'and that you are not being deceived by sparks.' He was hammering away on his anvil, and the sparks were flying up. 'Supposing that,' says he, 'and they are very deceptive creatures--sparks--bright as stars one moment, dead as ghosts the next, how much would it take to start the business?' 'First,' says I, 'there's the ground.' 'I've got that,' says he, 'at the back of the forge; an acre and a half.' 'Then,' says I, 'there's timber for fowl-houses, say enough for thirty to commence with.' 'I've got that,' says he, 'lying idle on the waste ground behind.' 'And nails you've got,' says I. You see, sir, I was speaking with confidence, and rather boldly, because a voice was whispering to me, 'Here's your chance, Timothy.' 'And tools to work nails and timber with,' says I. 'Labor will cost nothing; I should be carpenter and builder.' 'Should you?' says he, 'and I could give you a hand. But an acre and a half of ground and any amount of timber and nails won't lay eggs. Come to the grip--how much money to bring that about?' 'Ten pounds will be ample,' says I. 'I've got that,' says he, 'and

more at the back of it. Say ten pounds then.' 'Do you mean it?' says I, my heart almost jumping out of my body. 'I never say what I don't mean,' says he, 'though I don't always say what I do. It is agreed, Timothy, that we go into partnership; rent of ground to be reckoned, nails and tools to be reckoned, timber to be reckoned, and ten pounds to be reckoned, as the capital of the firm. The sooner you start, the better.' I think you know enough of me, sir," continued Timothy, glowing, "to know that I didn't waste an hour. Waste an hour! I didn't waste a minute; and before that week was over the fowl-houses were up, not far away from the forge--because warmth, sir, is a good thing for laying hens--and there was a stock of thirty black Hamburgs to start with. Now, sir and Mrs. Manners, we have been in business just one fortnight, and everything is going on swimmingly. My partner says he never saw such fowls, and says I deal in magic; but the only thing I deal in, sir, is common-sense. So, being fairly started on my way, and having something good to tell, I burned to come and tell it to the friends I honor most; and now I must go. I have to get back to-night; but perhaps you will let me come to see you again."

"Indeed, we shall be delighted to see you at any time, Timothy," said Nansie, for he looked at her for an answer. "No one is more rejoiced at your good-fortune, and at the prospect before you, than ourselves."

"I know that," said Timothy. "Good-night, and God bless you."

"Your basket, Timothy," said Mr. Loveday.

"Oh, if you will excuse me, sir, it is yours, and not mine. I have brought it for you, and I hope you will not take it amiss." And off Timothy went, without another word.

Opening the basket when he was gone, they took out a score of new-laid eggs and a young fowl trussed for roasting. Tears came into Nansie's eyes.

"Did I not say, uncle," she murmured, "that Providence will smooth the path before us?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The week that followed was one of great anxiety to Nansie, springing less from the pecuniary circumstances of their position than from the state of Kingsley's health. The privations and the sufferings he had endured told upon him now that the excitement of the reunion with his wife was over, and for some days he was too weak to leave the house. He himself made light of his sickness, and would not admit that there was anything seriously the matter with him. They made no endeavor to impress this upon him, but he gathered it from the evidences of care and attention by which he was surrounded.

There was in the neighborhood a doctor of great skill, who could have practised successfully in fashionable quarters at high fees, but who had deliberately chosen to remain among the poor, whom he loved and attended to with as much devotion as he would have displayed to the highest in the land. His fee was fixed at a shilling; when this was not forthcoming he was content with sixpence, and in many cases with nothing, making no complaints against tardy debtors. This man was always cheerful, ready, and willing, at whatever hour of the day or night; and, without ostentation, he played the part of a true minister to those who needed it most. It is pleasant to be able to limn, even thus briefly, the character of one in whose life and career were exhibited the noblest attributes of human nature. He and Mr. Loveday were friends, and shortly after Nansie came to live with her uncle Dr. Perriera was greatly attracted to her, no less by her gentle manners than by the display of attainments superior to those among whom she lived. When Mr. Loveday was burned out Dr. Perriera was the first to express sympathy with him; he would also have been the first to offer practical assistance had it not been that he was very poor, a fact which troubled him not at all so far as regarded himself, but frequently disturbed him when he came into contact with distress which it was not in his power to relieve. After the fire, when he attended Nansie of his own free will and prompting, he declined to receive any fee whatever, and to this Mr. Loveday did not demur.

As his name indicated, Dr. Perriera was of Spanish descent, and could, indeed, trace his genealogical record back to the days when Spain was first among the nations of the world in art, literature, and science. But the dark and heavy hand of bigotry effectually scotched the fair promise which lay before the favored nation, and with the exodus of the Jews--to which race Dr. Perriera belonged--commenced the decay of a mighty nation.

On the day succeeding that of Kingsley's return Mr. Loveday called upon Dr. Perriera, and told him of it.

"I am greatly pleased," said Dr. Perriera; "it will be better medicine for Mrs. Manners than the finest drugs in the Pharmacopœia."

Then, in order that Dr. Perriera might be in possession of all necessary information, Mr. Loveday made him acquainted with the particulars of Kingsley's association with Mr. Seymour, following those up with the intelligence of the strange hallucination under which Kingsley was laboring with respect to his long absence from home. To Mr. Loveday's surprise, Dr. Perriera showed an intimate knowledge of the movements of the so-called Mr. Seymour, as well as of the secret societies in the interests of which it was said that he travelled.

"Of Mr. Manners," said Dr. Perriera, "I know nothing. In Mr. Seymour's transactions he was little better than a cipher, and was probably used as an innocent decoy, or as a means to avert suspicion from the doings of his chief."

"How have you become acquainted with these affairs," asked Mr. Loveday; "you, who seem to have no spare moments of time apart from your professional offices?"

"I have time and to spare for much," replied Dr. Perriera, smiling. "I keep up rather an extensive correspondence with many European societies which have for their object the advancement of science and humanity."

"Humanity!" exclaimed Mr. Loveday.

"I call it by that name," said Dr. Perriera. "Were it possible that the ends aimed at could be reached, the toilers of the world would be undoubtedly benefited. The advocated means are frequently pernicious and indefensible; but this occasionally arises from the fact that men of keen intellectual power are goaded to madness by the tyranny of old systems. However, enough of this; I think much but speak little of such matters. I have my small part to play in the world as to the larger and grander movements of which I can simply look on and observe."

Dr. Perriera called to see Kingsley, and of his own accord visited him daily. He gave Nansie kindly hope and sympathy, but did not enter into the peculiarities of her husband's case. With Mr. Loveday he was more open.

"It is a singular condition," he said. "The loss of memory is not at all uncommon, nor, either, is its recovery; but in most instances this loss is a total loss, time, well-known incidents, relative circumstances, the names of friends and acquaintances, even one's own name, being plunged for a period into absolute obscurity. But here the loss of memory is partial, and the singular phase of it is that it affects only those circumstances of the past which it would be disagreeable to recall. He remembers all that is pleasant and happy in his life, but forgets all that has brought trouble upon him. It belongs to this phase that he is incapable of realizing the privations of the life which seems to lie before him. His temperament is exceptionally bright and cheerful; he looks upon the happy side of nature, and every hopeful sentiment which passes his lips seems to blossom into flower at the moment of its utterance. I can imagine no happier condition of being; but in a poor man it has its grave and most serious side."

"How?" inquired Mr. Loveday.

"In the fact," replied Dr. Perriera, "that it allows no room for effort, that it affords no incentive to it, that it creates a sure contentment even for a crust of bread, and an utter obliviousness to what may be necessary for those who, he being the head of the family, are naturally dependent upon him."

"That is to say," observed Mr. Loveday, "that there is no hope of his being the bread-winner."

"None," said Dr. Perriera, "until there is a radical change in him; and I confess to being at a loss as to how this can be effected."

The correctness of the good doctor's diagnosis was verified by an incident which did not come to the ears of Nansie or her uncle until after its occurrence. Stronger in body, and able to walk abroad without assistance, Kingsley soon made himself acquainted with all the intricacies of the neighborhood; and on a certain morning he wended his steps to the West-end of the city, and stood before his father's house. Without hesitation he knocked and rang, and upon the door being opened pushed his way past the astonished servant, and walked straight to his father's study. There sat Mr. Manners, who gazed at his son with sternness and some inward agitation which he was successful in concealing.

"Good-morning, father," said Kingsley, drawing a chair to the table, and seating himself; then glancing at the papers scattered about, added, in a tone of inquiry, "Fresh contracts?"

Mr. Manners did not reply to the question.

"What brings you here?" he asked.

Kingsley had grown thinner since he last saw him, and that circumstance and the shabbiness of Kingsley's appearance suddenly inspired in the heart of Mr. Manners the hope that his son had come to him in submission.

"I was anxious about you, father," said Kingsley, in an affectionate tone, "it seems so long since we saw each other. A son must not be forgetful of his duties."

"Ah," said Mr. Manners, his hope growing, "you recognize that at last?"

"At last!" said Kingsley, in a tone of cheerful surprise. "I have always recognized it. I cannot recall that I have ever been wanting in my duty to you."

Mr. Manners stared at his son, debating now within himself what kind of part Kingsley had come to play. There was a silence of a few moments, during which Kingsley gazed at the familiar objects of the room with great calmness, and quite at his ease.

"The object of your visit?" demanded Mr. Manners.

"I have told you, father. Are you well?"

"Yes, I am well."

"And happy?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Manners, setting his teeth, "and happy. That knowledge will hurt you, perhaps."

"Why, no, father, it delights me. Everything, as usual, prospers with you, of course."

"Everything, as usual, prospers with me," said Mr. Manners, mechanically. "Did you inquire of the servant if I was at home?"

"No, why should I? It was my home once as well as yours."

"But is no longer," said Mr. Manners, with a deepening frown.

"Oh, well, no, in a certain sense," said Kingsley, "not directly, but indirectly still my home as well as yours. There are ties which can never be broken, and which you, in the goodness of your heart, would never wish to be broken. I should not like to hear from any man's lips that you think otherwise; I am afraid I should say something unpleasant to him."

Kingsley's cordial manner and cheerful voice would have mystified most men with a weaker order of mind than Mr. Manners's; but although this was not the case with the great contractor, he was certainly at a loss to account for them. He knew that Kingsley possessed a soul of frankness and honesty, and he could not readily bring himself to believe that it was cunning and duplicity which had induced his son to seek this interview. Still, for the exhibition of these qualities he would have been, as he always was with all men, perfectly prepared, but not for the ingenuousness with which he was now confronted. He thought to turn the tables upon Kingsley.

"Are you well?" he asked.

"Quite well, father," replied Kingsley.

"And happy?"

"Quite happy, father."

"And prosperous?"

"To be quite well and happy," said Kingsley, in no spirit of evasion, "is not that a prosperous state?"

"You are quibbling with me," said Mr. Manners, "and I am not in the mood, and have no time for trifling."

"I shall not detain you long, father; you have eased my mind, and I shall go away presently, quite contented. As to quibbling, you, who know me so well and have been so good to me, must know that I am incapable of such conduct."

"I decline to argue with you. Come to the point at once. You wish to make some kind of appeal to me. I did hope that you had come in submission."

"I have, father; submission in all things that accord with one's duty."

"With your duty to me?"

"To you and to others who are dear to me."

"I will not listen," said Mr. Manners, "to anything concerning them."

"I will not force it upon you. There shall be nothing discordant between us. But what do you mean by 'appeal?'"

"You are here to ask for money, as those who have separated us have been here before you."

"Indeed, you are quite wrong. There has been, there shall be, no separation between us. I love you as I have always done, as I always shall love you. And they appealed to you for money! Did you give it to them?"

"No, nor will I to you."

"Oh, but I need none. You have been since my earliest remembrance most liberal to me, but you cannot accuse me of being mercenary. I should like you to know my wife, I should like you to know and love our child. If you are too busy for that now, we will wait; when you visit us, which surely you will do some day, you will be pleased at the manner in which we shall receive you; all the honor that is due to you shall be cheerfully rendered."

"This mockery must end," said Mr. Manners; "go! But, before you leave, it will, perhaps, be as well for me to say what is in my mind."

"Yes, father," said Kingsley, gently.

"I do not know," said Mr. Manners, in a set, hard tone, "whether I should ever have been inclined to forgive your disobedience and undutifulness; I do not know, after what has passed, whether, you being my son upon whom once all my hopes were centred, I should have been disposed to once more hold out my hand to you. I think it would not have been possible, but there may have been, at least, some remote chance of a partial reconciliation. If there was such a chance, you have utterly destroyed it by your conduct during the past few months."

"What conduct do you refer to?" asked Kingsley, smiling. "You surely are laboring under some delusion!"

"It is no delusion," said Mr. Manners, "that you have been travelling for some time with a person of infamous character and designs!"

"Surely it must be, father. Does the man live? If he does, he will disprove it."

"I will fall in with your humor," said Mr. Manners, "and will pay no attention to your amazing evasions; all the more amazing, all the more inexcusable, when adopted towards a man like myself. Do you pretend that you are unacquainted with the person who travelled under the name of Seymour? Do you pretend that travelling in close association with him as you did for so long a time, you had no connection with the designs he was wishful to promote?"

"You remind me strangely," replied Kingsley, "of something which has been troubling me--no, I am wrong in saying troubling me, I mean that has been interesting me. There have undoubtedly been some such designs as you refer to, mysterious and inexplicable enough to me, but the interesting part of the matter is, how did it ever come into my mind that I could have been associated with them? Clearly, I must have evolved the idea out of a too vivid imagination; because I cannot trace the slightest actual connection between me and them. Similarly, too, with the name you have mentioned--Seymour. How did it come into my mind that I knew such a gentleman? Clearly, he must have existed; and now there occurs to me a dim remembrance of a railway accident in which a gentleman of the name of Seymour was killed, and many were injured. How comes the knowledge of that circumstance to me? May I not also have evolved that from my imagination? Anyway, I shall not allow myself to be troubled by matters which I cannot directly trace, though I cannot avoid being interested in them. But what you have said has another bearing, as though I had done something to disgrace my name. Of course such a thing would be impossible, and if I am indebted to any ill-natured person for having aroused in you any suspicion to my hurt, I make him my hearty acknowledgments without bearing the slightest ill-will against him, because, after all, father, a serious calumny should not be allowed to have weight unless an absolute foundation of fact can be brought forward, as cannot be done in my case. Man must be judged by his own actions, not by what people say of him. You infer that this Mr. Seymour travelled to promote infamous designs with which you suppose me to be in sympathy. What designs, father?"

"Republicanism," said Mr. Manners, not displeased at being brought to the point, "Socialism, Communism, and the overthrow of existing institutions, which are a blessing to mankind."

"Ah, but there, you know," said Kingsley, with no departure from his light mood, "you open up debatable matter. It is not disagreeable to me. I was always fond of argument, although I have been accused of too freely wandering away from one upon the slightest excuse. You condemn Republicanism, but I think I would sooner live under a republic than a monarchy."

"What you say confirms the accusation I and others bring against you."

"Not at all. I am merely expressing my view of a large matter. You see, father, there is so much misery in the world, so much undeserved suffering, so much compulsory poverty, such astounding inequalities in the social condition of the people, that a fair-minded man cannot possibly avoid wishing to remedy these ills. What are you touching the bell for?"

"For the servant to show you to the door."

"I do not need him; I know my way out. Your time is valuable, and it is inconsiderate of me to take up so much of it. Is my mother in?"

"No."

"I am sorry; I wished to see her. She is well, I hope."

"Quite well. She has not a sorrow in the world. And now, for the last time, leave the room--and the house."

His peremptory, harsh tone had no effect upon Kingsley, who, with a genial nod and a "Good-morning, father," left the house with a light step.

In the evening he informed Nansie and Mr. Loveday of his visit to his father, and, to their astonishment, described it as one of a pleasant character. Their astonishment was all the greater when they read a letter which was delivered personally to Kingsley. It was from a firm of lawyers, and was written in accordance with instructions received from Mr. Manners. In the first place it conveyed an intimation that Kingsley would not be allowed again to enter his father's house; in the second place it contained a warning that if he made any further endeavor to force himself into his father's presence, proceedings would be taken against him for the trespass.

"I think," said Kingsley, "that lawyers must have been invented expressly to torment mankind; they never can put a thing pleasantly. My father, I suppose, is too busy to write to me himself, so he told his lawyers to do so, and they, wishing to make things as unpleasant as possible, send me a communication couched in terms which my father would certainly resent. Of course I shall not go to him again until he sends for me."

So saying, he tore up the letter and put it into the fire.

A few days afterwards it was announced in the papers that Mr. Manners had broken up his London establishment, and with his wife and his nephew, Mr. Mark Inglefield, had started on a foreign tour, which was likely to be of long duration. This paragraph was read by Kingsley, and caused in him the first spark of resentment he had exhibited since his return.

"I am sorry," he said, "that my father has taken up with such a man as Mark Inglefield. He is dangerous and coldblooded, and, I am afraid, no friend of mine. Not that I want him for a friend, but that, being with my father, he may say something against us. However, to use your dear mother's saying, Nansie, 'Everything will come right in the end.'"

With this comfortable assurance he dismissed the matter from his mind, as was his habit.

And here the course of our story renders it necessary that the curtain shall fall for a certain time. When it rises again seventeen years will have passed away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Before, however, we join the threads which link the past with the present, we will briefly glance through the years during which Nansie's and Kingsley's daughter grew into the beautiful springtime of young maidenhood, and before whom fair visions rose even in the midst of surroundings pernicious enough to poison the sweetest dreams. They poison many, and the awaking would be sad and bitter were the home influences with which they were from their birth familiar of a purer and more refining nature. In judging them we judge them from our standpoint instead of theirs, and we too often condemn where we should pity. In respect of these influences Nansie's home shone forth a sweet and bright example of what may be accomplished when the early training is good. There were few poorer homes than Nansie's, there were few lives more full of struggle, but she kept herself and those most dear to her pure through all the bitter phases of the battle she was destined to fight. She worked hard, and taxed her strength to the utmost, but she never complained, least of all to or of her husband, who should by right have been the bread-winner. The greatness of the sacrifice he had made for her had, as we have seen, deeply impressed her. At first, it is true, the heavenly glamour of true love had wholly possessed her, but even then, had she known what she learned when it was too late, she would not have accepted the sacrifice, though her heart had been broken. Indeed, in those never-to-be-forgotten days the actual responsibility lay not with her. Kingsley made so light of the difference in their social positions, and she was so entirely guided by him whom she regarded as the king of men, that she had no idea of the extent of his father's wealth or of the difficulties in their way. Had she been

aware of these, not only her love for Kingsley, but her practical good sense and self-respect, would have effectually directed her not to yield to his implorings. But these hidden from her, she followed the dictates of her heart. All the more devoted and considerate towards him was she when she learned the truth; all the more noble did his conduct appear in her eyes. If reproach lay at either door, it lay at hers; if either of them had the right to complain, it was he. In the early days of their union she had discovered that he was deficient in those qualities which are necessary to fight the hard battle of life even with moderate success. Should she blame him for this? What right had she to do so? He had not deceived her, and his prospects and education had not been of a nature to render him fit for the cruel battle. All the more was he to be pitied; all the more need was there that she should show him the tenderest consideration. And she did so. Willingly did she take upon her own shoulders the burden of the struggle, and worked cheerfully and willingly with heaviest odds against her. From the effects of the railway accident he never recovered, and his memory never returned to him. Although he did little to help the home, his gentleness, his contentment with a crust, his light-heartedness, brightened it. And so they went on to middle age, with a full measure of love to lighten their lot.

CHAPTER XXX.

At the end of seventeen years we renew our acquaintance with the personages who play their part in this story; but before they are reintroduced it will be pertinent to touch upon certain political changes which had taken place in the social condition of the people during this period. The growth of these changes had been going on for a great number of years, and the seeds may be said to have been sown with the advent of the cheap press. A slow growth at first, the slender roots beneath the soil having scarcely strength to take firm hold; but as they became stronger they became bolder, and were now winding themselves firmly and stoutly around the roots of the old institutions which, fixed as they had been for centuries, were in this audacious grasp beginning to show signs of weakness and decay. There was a time when what is known as the higher classes would have regarded as incredibly monstrous the idea of affinity between them and those who moved in the lower grooves. There was a time when the lower classes themselves would have regarded as the height of effrontery the idea of raising their eyes in any other than a timid way to the higher classes who ruled and dominated them. That time is past, never to be revived. There exist here and there in England instances of feudalism almost as marked as any that can be drawn from the time that is gone. In those places the high hand is still employed to destroy any hope of progress among the people, but these instances are rare, and are becoming still rarer. The penny newspaper has drawn prince and peasant, noble and serf--for we have the latter even in free England--closer together, and has taught the multitude that all men and women are human alike, and that there exists in the upper grades no divine right of power and supremacy. And, strangely enough, it is through this very means that the higher classes have been forced to recognize the power and the might of the lower. This new condition of things has also been promoted by other causes than the advancement of intelligence. The increase of population has forced upon reasoning minds among the people the inevitable necessity of radical changes in the hitherto existing order of things; and the scarecrow of vested interests, which is set up by those who lay claim to them, will be powerless to check the onward march. There are, unhappily, retarding influences, springing from the very vices of the people, which prove stumbling-blocks in every step that is taken or suggested. But for these vices the victims themselves are scarcely to blame. It is not an inherent matter, it is a matter of birth, whether one grows up with the courtly airs of St. James's or with the degrading characteristics of St. Giles's; and it is good to observe that there are statesmen in St. James's who recognize the fact, and who are working honestly and earnestly towards a better end--or, rather, not to speak paradoxically, towards a better beginning. And yet, despite these reflections, society perhaps never labored under greater ills than at present. The ephemeral, vicious fashions of St. James's were never in greater vogue than now; the cunning and vices of St. Giles's were never more conspicuous and apparent. There was a time when much of this, both in the higher and lower classes, was hidden, but in the present day everything is brought to light in the conflict of testimony which a fair-minded survey is forced to perceive. There are cogent and powerful arguments to be adduced in justification by each side against the other, but these are small, meandering rivulets which but slightly affect the rolling of the grand tide. Out of this seeming chaos good must come. It is, as it has ever been, still the fashion of the age--even now that darkness no longer weighs heavily upon it--to shift and evade a responsibility. Thus, the owner of a great landed estate, in portions of which hotbeds of vice and misery can be found, is in the habit of shrugging his shoulders when public attention is directed to them, and of saying, in effect, "It is not my affair, it is the affair of my agents." But this attitude, which springs either from fear, cowardice, or indifference, can no longer be accepted. It is the owner alone who is responsible; it is the owner and the owner alone who thrives and fattens upon these systems, who is in justice accountable for the evils of which he is undoubtedly the breeder; and the attitude he assumes proves him to be unfitted for his

responsibilities. The remedy is his to apply, and if he apply it not in time the power of doing so will be taken out of his hands. The present opportunity is his; the future with its dark possibilities lies before him. It is well if he take heed of this before it is too late. Let us present an illustration bearing upon our story.

Two years after Kingsley's return Nansie and her uncle, who constituted the government of ways and means of the household, decided that the rooms they occupied were too dear; they paid for these rooms five shillings a week. They looked out for others, and decided upon two rooms at the top of a house in a narrow court, in comparison with which Church Alley was a paradise. This court was so narrow that the occupants of the houses on either side could hold conversation with each other from opposite windows. The rooms were very small, the ceilings very low, the ventilation horrible, the sanitary arrangements disgraceful--a description of affairs which renders it all the more wonderful how Nansie's daughter, Hester, and how Nansie herself, could have kept themselves pure and sweet in an atmosphere so inimical to healthful moral and physical growth. The court--with other thoroughfares as narrow and stunted and vicious in its immediate neighborhood--was built upon part of an estate which belonged to a family the head of which sat in the House of Lords. There was in the house in which Nansie resided a cellar, politely called a basement. In this cellar were two rooms--one back, one front. The back room had a fireplace, but no window; what light filtered into it was filtered through a pane of glass let into the compartment which divided it from the front room, and as this front room itself could boast of but one window, the light it supplied to its neighbor was of a character so dismal and forlorn as scarcely to relieve the darkness into which, by the laws of its structure, it was plunged. But, indeed, to call it by the name of light was the bitterest of mockeries, not alone because of the small play it had, but because of the dust and cobwebs which covered both sides of the pane of glass. In this back room, however, lived a family of father, mother, and three children, all pigging together--there is no other word to describe it--in the narrow space which may fitly be likened to the Black Hole of Calcutta. They had certainly one advantage--that they could run out when they pleased and breathe the fetid air of the court, and thence into wider thoroughfares where the air was not vile enough to poison them. Had this opportunity not been theirs they would have died in a week. The social station of the head of this family was that of a scavenger, for six months of the year out of work. His wife occasionally got half a day's washing to do; the children were young and helpless, and the life they all lived can be more easily imagined than described. To describe it faithfully would be impossible in the pages or columns of any respectable journal, the details were so frightful and vile. And it is in no class spirit, in no spirit but that of mournfulness and amazement, that the fact is repeated--that the virtual owner of this back cellar sat in the House of Lords.

The front room of the cellar was occupied by a cobbler. The window which supplied light to his room was a practicable one, resembling a shutter of glass, which could be put up and taken down at will; and during the whole of the year, in fair weather or foul--except upon those occasions, which were frequent enough, when he was drunk--the man could be seen by passersby plying his thread and awl. Fortunately for himself and for everybody about him, he was a bachelor.

There were two rooms on the ground-floor, the front occupied by a "baked-tater man," his wife, and two young children. At those periods of the year when baked potatoes with their seasoning of pepper and salt were not in request, the man, being a strict Conservative, was idle, allowing his wife to accompany a friend of his, who drove quite a roaring trade in fairly good neighborhoods with his barrow of seasonable flowers. For this labor she was paid in coin one shilling a day, and a share of his bread and cheese or bread and meat, as well as of the sundry pots of beer his thirsty soul demanded in his peregrinations. Their two children played in the gutters, being not exceptional in this respect, because most of the children in the court found in the gutters a veritable Crystal Palace of delights.

The back room on the ground-floor was occupied by a large family--father, mother, and seven children--all employed from morning till night, and often from night till morning, upon the manufacture of match-boxes, at the rate of two-pence three-farthings a gross. Their united earnings never exceeded fifteen shillings, often were less. Thus the grim effort to make both ends meet, no less than their close and long hours of toil, rendered them white, pinched, haggard-looking, and almost fleshless.

On the first-floor front lived a married couple with an only child. The man had once been a law-writer, probably not a very skilful or capable scribe, seeing he had never been able to save a penny. However, it was here he found himself plunged into poverty's depths and unable to follow his calling, the muscles of his right hand being paralyzed. The wife had become a shirtmaker, and was assisted by her child, a girl of sixteen. Neither of these was a skilful workwoman, and after the payment of their rent there was seldom left at the end of the week more than seven or eight shillings to expend in food.

The first-floor back was tenanted by a widow with two children, twins, a little more than a year old. Being unable to find any other means of living she had, by force of circumstances, drifted into the rear ranks of the ballet, where she helped to fill the stage on a salary of two shillings a night. Commencing late in life to learn to dance, there was for her no hope of promotion in the ranks. Her lot was hard enough, Heaven knows; but she would have found it harder, because of the impossibility of leaving her babies every night for a good many hours together, had it not been for the kindness of the law-writer's wife and daughter, who often looked after them when the mother was absent.

In the rooms on the second floor, which were very small attics with slanting roofs, lived Nansie, Kingsley, and their daughter. Mr. Loveday took his meals with them, but slept elsewhere. The front attic was used as a living-room during the day, and as a bedroom during the night--the shut-up bedstead being sometimes occupied by Kingsley alone and sometimes by Hester. Altogether there slept in this small house twenty-eight persons. The frontage of the house was twelve feet, its depth twenty feet; and it will be gathered from these dimensions how utterly unsuitable it was in the way of health and morals for so large a number of occupants. In this respect anything more vicious can scarcely be imagined, and yet this house was but one of many built upon land owned by an enormously wealthy man, one who helped to make laws for the social regeneration of the people. Were the facts forced upon his knowledge in the way of accusation, he would doubtless plead ignorance of the circumstances, as others have pleaded before him; but this convenient blindness to the truth will not serve; this convenient shifting of responsibility is of no avail; an unfaithful steward he has been, and an unfaithful steward he remains.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was a great night at the Wilberforce Club, and the members mustered in force. Numbers were unable to obtain admission, and the spaces outside the room in which the club held its meetings were thronged by working-men and lads, many of them members of the Wilberforce. These, although disappointed at being shut out, did not give vent to their feelings in the shape of grumbling, but good-humoredly accepted the position, and split themselves into convenient knots for the purposes of discussion.

The Wilberforce was a working-man's club, similar in its nature and aims to the numerous institutions of a like character which exist in the centres of labor in all the great towns and cities of the kingdom. It commenced with small beginnings, the original number of members being twelve, who met weekly at the lodgings of one or the other for the purpose of discussing political matters affecting themselves. A very short time passed before others made application to be allowed to join the band of twelve, and then the idea was formed of organizing a working-man's club, to be called the Wilberforce. The originator of this movement was a man of strong opinions, by trade a carpenter. He was a ready orator, and he ruled over his followers by force of this gift, as well as by the superior knowledge he possessed of the movements of the age in which he lived. It may not be uninteresting to place upon record a report of the meeting at which the club may have said to have been born.

By consent of a licensed victualler it was held in a room in the "Three Jolly Butcher Boys," a noted public-house in the neighborhood. There were some thirty persons present, all humble, earnest, hard-working laborers in different crafts. Mr. Bartholomew, the carpenter and initiator of the movement, elected himself into the chair.

"We are only a scattered body as yet," he said, "and none of us has the proper authority to propose and second a chairman, so by your leave--" He moved to the head of the table and seated himself. Drawing out his two-foot rule he used it as a mace to rap the table.

"A dozen of us," he said, rising to his feet when all the others were seated and silent, "have been meeting for a little while past at one place and another, with a notion that opening our minds to each other wouldn't do any harm. That has been proved; it has done good. There ain't one of the dozen who don't understand the rights and wrongs of things better than he did before. Now, this was no hole-and-corner affair, and as it's got about, and as there's a wish of a good many others to join us, why, I say, 'Join us and welcome.'"

There was a murmur of approval, and a general rapping of knuckles and scraping of feet on the part of the original eleven.

"The more the merrier, I say," continued Mr. Bartholomew. "What we are working for, or what we are going to work for, is the general good of all alike--in a fair way, mind! Nothing wrong, nothing violent--"

"Hear, hear," from the auditors.

"Everything constitutional. When my wife doesn't agree with me, I don't knock her down, as brutes do, I argue with her; if that don't make her agree with me, I keep on arguing with her; and if she's that obstinate that she won't agree with me even then, I go on arguing with her; and the upshot of it is that I fairly wear her down, and in the end she's bound to agree with me."

Murmurs of approval and a little laughter from the audience, with here and there a *sotto-voce* remark: "Bartholomew knows what he's about."

"Now," pursued Mr. Bartholomew, "that's what I call constitutional. I don't mean to say that I ain't open to conviction myself; but when a man knows he's right, all that he's got to do is to go ahead--always in a constitutional way. Now there's the government--it's right, or it's wrong. If it's right, let it remain as it is; if it's wrong, it's got to be altered."

"It's wrong, that's what it is," blurted out a working-man.

"Not so fast, not so fast," said Mr. Bartholomew; "saying it's wrong don't make it so. We've got to find it out by argument and open minds, constitutionally, and that ain't a thing for to-night; and it ain't a thing that can be settled in a day, or a week, or a month, or a year. It'll take time, because--I don't mind confessing to you my opinion--that what's got to be done is no trifling matter; it's a mighty matter, mates, with kings and queens, and princes and princesses, and prime-ministers and chancellors of the exchequer, all mixed up in it. Do you know what I call those ladies and gentlemen, mates? I call them the frillings. The solid mass, the real body, is here." He gave the table a great thump with his fist.

"Bravo, Bartholomew!" from many voices. "We've got a man at the head of us!"

The excitement was beginning to rise.

"You ain't got anybody at the head of you. All that sort of thing--forming ourselves into an institution, election of officers, and so on--has got to be done. We're just now having a little friendly chat before dinner. Yes, mates, we are the solid body of the country, and it has struck me for a long time past that the time has come for us to make ourselves known and heard. I won't quite say that it's a matter of mathematics, but it is a matter of numbers. Every man has two arms and two legs--except those that's got wooden ones--a head to think, and often think wrongly, mind you, a heart to love, and a stomach to fill, which, if you don't fill, plays the very devil with you. There's something in Coriolanus--"

"Where's that?" cried one, interrupting the other.

"'Where's that,' Bill?" echoed Mr. Bartholomew. "It ain't a 'where' at all; it's a who. Coriolanus was a great general; and when the institution is formed, which we have met to-night to form, I hope you'll read about him in William Shakespeare; for what we're going to have in that institution, besides other things that's got to be settled, is books, mates."

"Hear, hear."

"And papers."

"Hear, hear."

"A little idea just comes to my mind. There's a good number of men in the world pretty much like boxes, shut up tight, locked up tighter. We're going to open those boxes; we're going to unlock 'em; we're goin' to let panes of glass into 'em, that the light can be seen through."

"Bravo! bravo! bravo!" from all parts of the room.

"Because, mates, don't you make any mistake. The fault doesn't lie with the ladies and gentlemen I made mention of a minute or two ago, it lies with us; and if we don't help ourselves--constitutionally, mind--we can't expect anybody else to help us. *They're* not wrong. I don't blame 'em, much"--and there was a touch of humor in his manner of uttering this small word which caused general laughter--"I blame ourselves. I was saying that every man has the regulation number of limbs and members, the regulation measure of appetite, the regulation instincts, sentiments, and all that sort of thing, and I was going to say, when I was interrupted, that you'll find something in Coriolanus about the stomach which rather bears upon the point. I dare say there are one or two in the room who'll remember my mentioning this at a meeting before the last general election, when I spoke against the Conservative candidate. It was a Conservative meeting, and the hall was pretty well packed with one-siders, but the candidate--a gentleman, mates--got me a fair hearing, and I was listened to. Yes, you were there, and you"--pointing to two in the room who nodded gravely. "Well, when I'd done about this Coriolanus and the stomach business, up gets the Conservative candidate and says: 'I don't for a moment doubt that our good friend, Mr. Bartholomew'--he knew my name; I handed it up to him on paper, not having an engraved card--"

"Ha! ha! ha!" from the back of the room.

Mr. Bartholomew looked severely in that direction, and said:

"What are you ha-ha-ha-ing about? Do you think I want to make a point against gentlemen who carry cards? You're mistaken, though perhaps I too was wrong in the way I put it. 'I don't for a moment doubt,' said the Conservative candidate, 'that our good friend, Mr. Bartholomew, who I hope one day will blossom into a good Conservative'--between you and me, mates, that will be never."

"Hear, hear."

"'I don't for a moment doubt that he is right about what he says of Coriolanus and the application of it. I don't remember the lines myself, but I will take them from him, and I will give him an answer in an anecdote. There was a serpent once, a regulation serpent, a twining, slimy, creeping, crawling reptile, with head and tail, and all other necessary parts. Now, Mr. Bartholomew knows that it is a law of nature for serpents that in going through life the head goes first. I don't know exactly how old the serpent was when its tail ranged itself upon what I may call the opposition side. It said to the head: "Look here, I ain't going to be dragged about in this manner all day long, and all night long, just where you like to take me. I won't stand it. It's my *turn* for an innings; fair play is fair play." All the other parts of the serpent joined in the argument, and the tail was so noisy and blustering that it carried along with it every bit of the serpent but the head. Now, it unfortunately happened,' said the Conservative candidate, 'that this particular head of this particular serpent was weak-minded; anyhow, it was foolish enough to say: "Put it to the vote, and I'll stand by it. You shall decide who goes first, the tail or me." It was put to the vote, and it was decided by a large majority that the tail was right, and that it ought to have an innings. "Very well," says the head, I resign." Then the tail, crying, "Come along," took command. But, my friends,' said the Conservative candidate, 'you don't need to be told--though perhaps it will enlighten Mr. Bartholomew--that the eyes of a serpent's body are in its head, and not in its tail, and that as the tail dragged its way along it couldn't see where it was going. It got into a prickly hedge, and when the other portions of the body felt the sting and the pain they cried out: "What are you about?" "Oh, that's nothing," answered the tail, working its way out of the prickly hedge, I am new to the business, that's all; you must put up with a mistake or two--that's only fair, you know." "Yes, yes," said the other parts of the body; "go on, go on." He did, and came to a part of the forest where there was a smouldering fire. Straight into this fire crept the tail, and, maddened with pain, crept farther into it, hoping to escape, and in less than no time the tail and the other rebellious parts of the body were burned to ashes. The head alone remained.'"

Mr. Bartholomew paused for a moment or two, and then said:

"I see some of you fidgeting at your pipes. Fill 'em and smoke 'em. We're not regularly formed, and whether we shall always be at liberty to smoke while we're talking is a matter for you to settle by and by."

The pipes being filled and lighted, Mr. Bartholomew went on.

"That was the story the Conservative candidate told, and it set the packed meeting cheering and laughing to that degree that I couldn't get in another word, and was supposed to be settled. But the Conservative candidate made a great many serious mistakes in that illustration. He intended to liken the government of England, and everybody else in it, to one single being; whether it was beast, bird, or fish don't matter, because it won't do, mates, because it doesn't apply. True enough there must be a head to all constituted societies, to all forms of government, but, mates--"

And here the speaker rested his two hands upon the table and bent earnestly forward.

"We who are governed have eyes; we're not like the serpent's tail--we can see where we're going. The road is stretched before us, and our eyes are open. The serpent's tail not only had no eyes, he had no brains--we have, and we can judge. The serpent's tail not only had no eyes and no brains, it had no heart--we have, and we can see and judge, and love and suffer and enjoy with as large a capacity as those who govern us. I don't for one moment believe that the view the Conservative candidate took--he didn't get in, you know, mates--"

"Ha, ha, ha!" from the audience.

"Is the view entertained by the Conservative party, the leading members of which are far too sensible and clever to put forward such narrow-minded theories. But it must never be forgotten that they're in the main looking out more for themselves and for their own interests than for us and ours. That's human nature, and I don't complain of it; if I did, it would be in a measure like cutting the ground from under our own feet, because one of the objects of this meeting--the principal object, I may say--is to look after ourselves and our own interests, which we've got the idea has been rather lost sight of. Now, before I come to the wind-up of my speech--it has been a great deal longer than I intended to make it--"

"Not a bit too long, Bart," was the general cry.

"Much obliged, mates. Before I come to the end of it, I want to impress one thing upon you. All over the world there are to be found men who go in for equality, with a capital E. Some of those men are scholars, lots of 'em clever and talented; but, mates, they've got a warp in their minds. Such a thing as equality ain't possible. If it was possible to establish it at nine o'clock to-night, by nine o'clock to-morrow morning it wouldn't exist. There must be different degrees among human beings, there must be inequalities, like the very world we live in, which, as we've been taught in school, resembles the outside of an orange. But our argument is--because I suppose we're pretty well agreed upon it--that the inequalities are now too great, and require to be rubbed down a bit. It's a difficult question, and it's got to be treated with good sense. And now, thanking you for your

attention, and the meeting being regularly opened, we'll proceed to business."

Mr. Bartholomew sat down amid a volley of applause, after which there was a long silence, he being really the only practical man among them; or, to speak more correctly, the only man who had practice in this kind of movement, and knew how to conduct it.

"The first thing we've got to do, you know," he said, looking around, "is to propose a resolution forming ourselves into a distinct body. As the chairman of the meeting, I can't propose any resolution; it is for one of you to do it."

"All right, chairman," said a bold boot and shoe maker, "I do it."

"What?" inquired Mr. Bartholomew.

"Propose it," said the bold boot and shoe maker.

"Propose what?" asked Mr. Bartholomew.

"That we're a distinct body," said the bold boot and shoe maker.

"I seconds it," said another boot and shoe maker, starting up, and sinking instantly into his chair, covered with confusion. It was the first public speech he had ever made.

"No, no, that won't do," said Mr. Bartholomew, "you must put it in words--understandable words. You propose that we form ourselves into a working-man's club. That's your proposition, ain't it?"

"That's it," said the bold boot and shoe maker.

"And you second it," said Mr. Bartholomew, looking at boot and shoe maker No. 2, who faintly nodded. He had not the courage to speak again.

"It is proposed by Mr. Richard Chappel," said Mr. Bartholomew, "boot and shoe maker, and seconded by Mr. William Blackmore, that we form ourselves into a working-man's club, we being all of us Liberals, and our chief object being the political and social advancement of working-men generally. Those in favor of the resolution signify it in the usual manner by holding up their hands."

Every hand was held up.

"On the contrary," said the chairman.

Full half of those present held up their hands.

"No, no, no," cried the chairman, "there must be something wrong here. You, Stokes, and you, Manning, and you, Bill Forbes, and you, William Blackmore, who seconded the resolution, all voted for it, of course, and now you vote against it. You can't vote two ways!"

Boot and shoe maker No. 2, with a white face, whispered something in a neighbor's ear, who thereupon said:

"Blackmore says he always votes on the contrary. He does it at home."

"But that can't be here," said the chairman; "we must all vote one way or the other. Are you in favor of this club?"

"Yes," every man cried. "Is there any one not in favor of it?"

"No," every man cried.

"Then it's carried," said the chairman, "unanimously. Now we must give it a name."

Upon the face of every man present dwelt a pondering expression, the general just interpretation of which would be vacuity. Half a dozen put their fingers to their brows, but not one of them had a name to propose.

The ever-ready chairman--and be it here remarked that Mr. Bartholomew was as good-humored as he was apt--rose and said:

"It ain't the lightest of matters to give a fit name to such a club as ours. I think I can suggest one."

"Bart's the cleverest chap in the country," said one of the audience. "He ought to be prime-minister."

Mr. Bartholomew resumed.

"I don't throw it in your teeth, mates; it's only a matter of reading, and I don't doubt in a year or two that some of you will know as much as me, and a good deal more. I don't throw it in your

teeth, I say, that perhaps none of you ever heard the name of William Wilberforce."

They looked at each other and shook their heads.

"He wasn't a working-man, he was a gentleman with plenty of money; born a gentleman, and bred at college. But, mates, he was a man who saw things with a clear eye, and a clear heart that bled at the sight of oppression, and with a mind steadfast enough to accomplish what it was set upon. It is to William Wilberforce that we may say we owe--not only we, but all mankind--the abolition of slavery."

Tremendous applause.

"I don't know how many years this grand gentleman worked for it--worked and fought for it. He was beat over and over again in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, but he stuck to his guns, and on his death-bed he had the good news brought to him that the second reading of the Abolition of Slavery Bill was carried. He was a man, and every Englishman is proud of him. He was a man because he worked and fought on the side of humanity, and if any one here will propose that our club be called the 'Wilberforce Club' I don't think he could do a much better day's work."

Up jumped a dozen and proposed it, and the chairman conducted the question to an orderly issue. It was carried that the title of the institution should be the "Wilberforce Club." Then, pioneered by Mr. Bartholomew, other small matters of detail were discussed and settled. Present subscription of members, one penny per week, and the first week's subscription was paid into the hands of an elected treasurer. Sub-committees were appointed to form rules for the guidance of the club, and to look out for a suitable room in which to gather together. And then the meeting broke up, satisfied and gratified with the work it had done.

CHAPTER XXXII.

From the day of its formation the Wilberforce Club had prospered, and although it could never boast of more than sufficient funds to carry out its modest requirements, the principal of which were books and newspapers, it had become in some sense a political power in the district. As was right, Mr. Bartholomew, to whom its existence was due, was elected its first president, a position which he filled for many years; but although he was still in vigor of life, he had resolved to retire from the office, and, in spite of all attempts to induce him to withdraw his resignation, he insisted that it was time a new president should be appointed.

"You want new blood, my lads," he said; "you might as well have a king over you as a president who reigns all the years of his life. A stirring up of the waters is good for the people. If the new man doesn't work to your satisfaction I will take office again, perhaps. The vacation will rub the rust off me."

It was, therefore, for the purpose of choosing another president that the Wilberforce Club mustered in full force. It was bruited about, and indeed known to some few, that there was a likelihood of the introduction of a personal matter at the meeting which might prove exciting and interesting. Mr. Bartholomew had found it no easy task to keep well in hand a strong and full-blooded team such as the members of this working-man's club. Boys with ideas, and with a fresher and more advanced kind of education than their parents had received, had grown to be men, and were playing their part at the club meetings and in the social gatherings; and to this younger element the prospect of a change in the direction of affairs was not unpalatable. Upon Mr. Bartholomew the necessity of keeping a tight hand upon these youthful members, whose ideas were apt to run ahead of the times, had frequently impressed itself.

There were two candidates for the presidency. One was Mr. Richard Chappel, who had taken part in the initiatory meeting at which the club was constituted. He was then somewhat of a timid orator, but he was an apt scholar, and was now fully competent to conduct working-men's meetings. He was fairly popular, and had many supporters. The other candidate was Kingsley Manners, who was popular, and a favorite with all the members of the Wilberforce Club. By some he was considered not strict or strong enough to lead, but a good proportion of those who entertained this notion had determined to support him. It was not of his own wish that he had come forward for the office. He had been proposed by a powerful section who believed that through him it could work its own ends. The backbone of this section were the young members, who were always ready to take a foremost part in any agitation--such as entertainments, in the heart of which lurked some political object: processions against, or in favor of, some measure which was then being discussed in the House of Commons; the right of public meeting in public

places, and so forth. These ambitious and hot-blooded members had been kept in moderate subjection by Mr. Bartholomew, and now rejoiced in the prospect of a president of less force of character.

Nansie's uncle, Mr. Loveday, was also a member of the Wilberforce. He had joined it at Nansie's solicitation, who was in anxiety lest Kingsley, through his easy nature, should be prevailed upon to take part in some violent movement. Mr. Loveday's reports to her had removed this cause of alarm.

"Kingsley does no harm at the club," he said; "it is an amusement and a relaxation to him. He knows that he is liked by all the members, and the knowledge affords him pleasure; and he obtains there books and papers which occupy his mind, and which otherwise would be out of his reach."

Kingsley's candidature for the presidency had, however, seriously discomposed Mr. Loveday. He saw beneath the surface, and suspected that Kingsley was simply put forward to assist the views of others.

Mr. Bartholomew opened the proceedings.

"You know," he said, "what we are met to decide. This is the last occasion--at least, for some time--upon which I shall take the chair at the gatherings of the Wilberforce; but that will not lessen my interest in its welfare, and I shall work quite as hard and earnestly as a soldier in the ranks as I have done in the position of your chief. Now, I want to give you a little bit of advice. Times are different from when this club was first started; men and opinions are more advanced; there is a better kind of education going on in the land, and people who, under the old ways, would never have learned to read and write can now do both very well. But I want to warn you. It's a good thing to be able to read and write, but it's a better thing to be able to profit by these advantages. Go ahead we must; the onward march cannot be stopped; but beware of going ahead too fast. Slow and sure is a motto I was not very fond of when I was a young man, but I have learned its value since, especially in such movements as ours. There is no telling what changes the next fifty years may see; in my opinion they will be more startling than any that has gone before; but in order that these changes shall be for the real benefit of the people--that is to say, of us--it will be necessary to look before we leap. Now, I am not going to particularize; I am speaking in a general sense. There are individual instances of wrong with which I sympathize as much as any of you can do, but I don't intend to make any such instance a ground for general action. What we have to attend to is the interest and prosperity of ourselves as a body. According to the rules, you are now to elect a president for the year. You have done me the honor of re-electing me again and again for a number of years, and I believe I have given you satisfaction. I hope that our new president will work as I have done--for the general good of all."

Mr. Bartholomew having resumed his seat, a member rose to propose Mr. Richard Chappel as president. He was duly seconded, and then another member proposed Mr. Kingsley Manners, who was also seconded. There being no other candidates, the aspirants for office addressed the meeting:

"I propose," said Mr. Chappel, "to tread in the footsteps of our late worthy president, Mr. Bartholomew. I quite agree with him in all his opinions, and all he has done. More haste, less speed. We have never been in a hurry, and we have done a good deal since we started. In elections we have made ourselves a bit of a power, and the reason of this is that we have always seen where we were going to fix our nails; we have not knocked them wildly about, and made holes in wrong places. If you elect me as your president, I will do the best I can in the office."

"Good," said Mr. Bartholomew.

"Good," also said and thought many of the elder members; but the younger ones looked at each other and shook their heads.

"Richard Chappel promises nothing," said one, starting up.

"What do you want him to promise?" asked Mr. Bartholomew; and, as young Hotblood could not exactly say, he sat down abashed, but in no wise satisfied.

"That is it," said Mr. Bartholomew; "and I should like you to bear it in mind. I don't wish to influence you, nor to say a word against Mr. Kingsley Manners, who is a favorite with all of us; but as a common member of the club I am entitled, as every other common member is, to express my opinion upon this subject. Here is a candidate for office, Mr. Richard Chappel, who pledges himself, if elected, to govern the club in the same way that it has hitherto been governed; and here is one of our members jumping up and saying that he promises nothing. To that I reply that Richard Chappel promises a great deal. He promises to do everything that is constitutional; he promises to act for the benefit of the club, as I have acted. If that doesn't satisfy you, I don't know what will. Mind, I'm not saying one word against Mr. Manners; I respect and like him, but I shall give my vote to Richard Chappel."

"Let us hear Mr. Manners," said a member.

Kingsley rose and addressed the meeting. He had for some little while past regarded this

approaching event as of great importance, and had prepared himself for it. He said he was in favor of public meeting in all public spaces. He spoke strongly against the monopoly of brewers and distillers. He advocated universal suffrage, and he characterized as infamous the neglect of sanitary laws in the dwellings of the people. The whole aim of government, he said, should be for the benefit of the many, and not of the few. There were old-time privileges which, perhaps, could not be suddenly abolished, but to which, at all events, a limit should be set. He spoke for half an hour, and the tenor of his observations may be gathered from this brief description. When he sat down some were pleased, some were displeased, and some did not know exactly what to think.

"Mr. Manners," said Mr. Bartholomew, "has generalized almost as much as Richard Chappel."

"No," cried some of Kingsley's supporters; "there is a great difference between them."

"Let us hear and discuss," said Mr. Bartholomew; "it will open our minds."

"What does Richard Chappel say about universal suffrage?" asked a member.

Richard Chappel scratched his head. He had not given the subject that necessary consideration which enabled him to reply on the instant. Up jumped Mr. Bartholomew.

"I like that hesitation on Richard Chappel's part," he said. "Universal suffrage has bothered cleverer heads than any in this room."

"What do you say about it?" asked a bold member. Mr. Bartholomew laughed.

"I would give it to every man who has a right to it."

"Every man has a right to it!"

"No, no; there must be qualifications. The Reform Act did a lot for us, and a lot has been done since, and a lot more will be done in the future. There *must* be electoral qualification. Even in our little club here every man has not a right to become a member. The difference between some of us is this--we agree upon the main point, but we do not agree in the way of bringing it about. 'Go slow' is my motto."

"Yes," grumbled one, "and die before we reap."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Bartholomew, gravely. "But does that lessen the value of our work, which, I take it, lies greatly in its unselfishness? We look more to the future than to the present. We think of our children and of the benefits they will enjoy, benefits brought about by us who may not live to see the fruit."

Much discussion of a similar nature followed, and it seemed likely at one time that the result would be largely influenced by the private wrongs of a member who had resolved to take this opportunity of ventilating them, and had, indeed, been urged to that course by the more inflammatory spirits. His story was not an uncommon one, and may be narrated in a very few words. He was a working-man, of course, with one child, a daughter whom he idolized. This daughter, to his grief and despair, had left her home; and it was, the father said, a gentleman who had brought the shame upon them. The man was very eloquent in his description of the monstrous wrong. He did not know the name or the whereabouts of the villain who had inflicted it, and said that if he could find him he would strike him dead at his feet. Mr. Bartholomew was too wise to prevent the father from speaking, although he strongly disapproved of the intrusion of this private matter into the club business; but he saw that it had been prearranged, and was intended to influence the election in favor of Kingsley. As a prudent general, therefore, he proposed the adjournment of the meeting, which broke up in some slight confusion.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

This meeting led to important results. It is by small and apparently trivial matters that the main issues of life are determined. A fall of rain, the plucking of a flower, the accidental turning to the right or the left--any one of these trifling incidents is sufficient to stamp the future with an indelible impress.

Parkinson was the name of the man whose daughter had been tempted from her home by the false wooing of a man in a superior station of life to her own; the daughter's name was Mary. The disclosure of this private wrong proved to be the most exciting incident in the proceedings of the Wilberforce Club on the night of the proposed election, and after the meeting broke up the

grievance formed the subject of animated discussion all around the neighborhood. To feel and express sympathy for the father was humanly natural, but here and there this sympathy was expressed in an unreasoning and dangerous manner, and served as a peg--as was attempted at the Wilberforce--upon which to hang an ominous string of hardships as between class and class. Dr. Perriera, who had remained a firm and faithful friend to Nansie and her family, had just listened to certain outpourings of this nature mouthed by a trenchant demagogue to a small band of working-men and lads, among whom, also, was Mr. Loveday. These two more intelligent of the audience walked away together.

"It is remarkable," said Dr. Perriera, "to note the blindness of these ignorant orators to palpable facts. The way in which Mary Parkinson was brought up was enough to ruin any girl. A father at work all day and spending his nights at the Wilberforce Club. A mother dying when her daughter was twelve years of age, and leaving as a legacy to her child a recollection of frivolities. This was one of the reasons--perhaps the principal one--why Parkinson spent nearly all his leisure time away from his home. His wife had no notion of domestic duties, was a bad cook, and either would not or could not make his home attractive to him. Parkinson is a good and skilful workman, has never been ill a week in his life, has never been out of employment. This is an unusual record, but it has not benefited him. When his wife was alive she and he between them spent every penny of his earnings; she was fond of incongruous color in her dress, fond of mock jewelry, fond of aping the foolish fashions of her betters. She was fond of worse things--of music-halls and their brutalizing vulgarity. I am well aware that it is absolutely necessary to provide amusement for the people; without it life would be unendurable; but I have always been of the opinion, and experience has confirmed it, that amusement in a worse form than that provided by the music-hall could scarcely be devised. I speak of the entertainments as a whole. There are portions of them which are innocently amusing and healthful, but the most popular features are those which the exponents of coarseness and vulgarity provide. I had some opportunity of studying Mrs. Parkinson's character, and I know that it was this coarser element of the entertainments that attracted her. I frequently heard her singing verses of songs which, I regret to say, were and are popular, and the true meaning of which is an offence to decency. The mischief is that this moral poison is at the bottom of the cup; but it is well known to be there by everybody who partakes of it; and even when it is so cleverly veiled that it can only be conveyed by a motion or a gesture, this form of expression is carried away by the audience and used by them when they sing the song in private. It is to Parkinson's credit that he preferred the Wilberforce Club to the music-hall; but it is not to his credit that he left the entire social education and recreation of his daughter to one so unfitted for these duties as his wife. I would not make life too serious, but I refuse to excuse any person who ignores its responsibility. Parkinson allowed his wife to take their little Mary to the music-halls, and to implant in her nature a foundation of frivolity which has borne bad fruit; it could not be hoped that it would bear good."

"I agree entirely with you," said Mr. Loveday, "and if I take the matter more closely to heart it is because of the affection which our Hester bears for the poor girl. Mary is bright and attractive, and has many good qualities."

"Good qualities which needed home training," said Dr. Perriera, "and which should not have been allowed to run wild. Bright and attractive! Frequently a misfortune when the early education has been bad. I will finish my argument. The orator to whom we have just listened is one of an unreasoning class who takes into account only the faults and errors of one side of his case. That side, in his view, is thoroughly black; the other side is thoroughly white. Fair-minded men are bound to take into consideration both cause and effect, and men incapable of doing this are not fitted to lead. I am sorry that Mr. Bartholomew has resigned the presidency of the Wilberforce; in addition to being a man of sound, advanced opinions, he was a restraining force. Do you think Kingsley Manners fit for the position?"

"I do not," replied Mr. Loveday, firmly, "and I have done all I could to dissuade him from standing for office. At times I thought I was succeeding, but some kind of outside influence has always thwarted me. 'A man must follow his star,' he said; and he said it, I believe, with but a vague idea of his meaning."

"There are members of the Wilberforce," said Dr. Perriera, "who want to use Kingsley Manners as a tool; and he, with his amiable nature, might easily be led into a false position. His true friends must save him from this danger, if possible."

"The difficulty is to find a way," observed Mr. Loveday.

As he made this remark a hand was laid upon his arm, and, turning, he saw Nansie. From her face the beauty of youth had quite fled; sorrow and trial had left their traces there, but her brave spirit and cheerful endurance of long hours of toil had so chastened her that no one could be long in her presence without being made to feel that here was one in whom the highest attributes of fortitude, faith, and duty's performance were manifest. The time was within a few minutes to eleven, and Mr. Loveday was surprised to see her out at that hour of the night.

"Do you know where Kingsley is?" she asked.

"No," replied Mr. Loveday. "Is he not at home?"

"He has not returned yet," said Nansie, "and I am anxious about him."

"I will find him for you," said Mr. Loveday. "He will come home at once when he hears you are uneasy about him."

"Yes, I know he will do that. I should like to see him myself, to explain--"

"Nansie," cried Mr. Loveday, as she paused, "something is troubling you."

"Yes," she answered, frankly; "I cannot tell you what it is--I do not think I ought."

"Where is Hester?"

"At home, alone. She will not go to bed until her father returns."

"But you, Nansie, are you not going back?"

"No; I have something to do that will keep me out late. That is what I wished to see Kingsley for--to explain it to him. Tell him I may not be home till the morning, and that Hester is waiting for him. He is not to worry himself; everything is right."

"There goes a true woman," said Dr. Perriera, looking after her, "upon an errand of mercy and goodness."

"Do you know what it is?" asked Mr. Loveday.

"No, nor can I guess, but I would stake my life that it is as I say, and that you believe as I do, notwithstanding that we are both in the dark."

"You are right," said Mr. Loveday. "Dr. Perriera, misfortune sometimes proves a blessing. It has been so to me. Had I been rich and prosperous, I doubt whether it would have been given to me to know the perfect sweetness and beauty to be found in common lives."

"It is the fashion to call them common lives," responded Dr. Perriera, "though here and there is a life which an angel would be proud to live."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Some three months after this night a gentleman was sitting with a friend in a well-appointed house in Harley Street. The host was a man in the prime of life, his name Hollingworth; the guest was his elder in years, his name Manners--none other than the once great contractor--Mr. Valentine Manners, Kingsley's father. They had dined, and were sitting over their claret.

Mr. Valentine Manners had long since retired from business. For many years he had travelled the world in search of something--he knew not what--which he had lost, and had returned home without finding it. Part of the time his nephew, Mark Inglefield, who was to be his heir, had travelled with him; but the younger man had made periodical visits to England upon his uncle's private affairs, of which he had the practical management. A fortune so vast as Mr. Valentine Manners had amassed was in itself a business, the care of which occupied a great deal of time.

Mr. Hollingworth and his guest had discussed many matters, the most important of which was a proposed marriage between Mr. Hollingworth's only daughter, Beatrice, and Mark Inglefield, the rich contractor's heir. The girl was barely twenty, Mark Inglefield nearly fifty; but these disparities are not uncommon in matrimonial unions in which money and not love is the principal factor. Mr. Hollingworth had only one other child, a son of twenty-six, who had just been elected a member of the House of Commons. The conversation of the two gentlemen was interrupted by the announcement of a servant that a man wished to see Mr. Hollingworth.

The tone of the servant when he uttered the words "a man" was a sufficient indication of his opinion of the visitor's standing. Mr. Hollingworth accepted his servant's opinion.

"Did you say I was busy?"

"I told him so, sir, and that you could not be disturbed."

"Well?"

"He said he must see you, sir, and that he would come every day and night till he did." Mr. Hollingworth groaned. "Did he give you his name?"

"Yes, sir, and said you would know it. Mr. Parkinson--a stone-mason, he said he was."

"Parkinson--Parkinson! I do not know the man, and I have not been engaged in building. More in your way, Mr. Manners."

His guest nodded, but made no remark; there was nothing in the incident to interest him.

"He has been here several times this week, sir," said the servant.

"I remember now hearing of it, and I left instructions that he was to put his business with me in writing."

"He paid no attention to that, sir, but kept on calling."

"Well, we must get rid of him somehow. A stone-mason, eh? Parkinson--the very name for a stone-mason. My boy Dick carried his election on the working-man's interests. A popular cry; we are becoming very radical. Show Mr. Parkinson up. You have no objection, Mr. Manners?"

"None at all."

The servant retired, and returned, ushering in Mr. Parkinson. Mr. Hollingworth cast a keen glance at his visitor, and saw that he was to all appearance a respectable working-man.

"You wish to see me?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Parkinson in a respectful tone, and yet with something of defiance. He had repaid Mr. Hollingworth's keen glance with interest. He was calmer now than when he had recounted his wrongs at the meeting of the Wilberforce Club; but although he was holding himself in check, he was quite as much in earnest.

"It seems that a personal interview was imperative."

"It was, sir."

"Well, I am not disinclined to listen to you. Anything respecting politics? My son, Mr. Richard Hollingworth, has lately been returned to Parliament in the interests of the working-man, as I dare say you know."

"Yes, sir, I know it. That is how I found you out, though I expected to see an older gentleman than you."

Mr. Hollingworth smiled. "You may do that in the course of years if I live. Your expectation is an inexplicable one, however, and as strange as your expression that you have found me out. Almost a crime," he continued, still with a smile on his face, "to be found out in these days. You have come, then, upon political business?"

"No, sir; I have come upon private business."

"Upon private business! A singular time to introduce it. As singular as the question. What private business can there be between you and me, who are perfect strangers to each other?"

"There *is* private business between us, sir, of a vital nature. You will understand if you will listen to me, as you said you would."

"Will you be long?"

"I will try not to be, but there's a tale to tell."

"Tell it, my friend, as briefly as you can. Will you wait?" he asked, turning to his guest, "or shall we resume our conversation to-morrow?"

"I will wait," replied Mr. Manners, "unless you wish to hear this person in private."

"I have no such wish."

"I think it will be better, sir," said Mr. Parkinson, "that we shall speak without witnesses."

"Let me be the judge of that," said Mr. Hollingworth, warmly. "You have chosen to intrude upon me at an untimely hour, and if you have anything to say of which you are ashamed, you have only yourself to blame for the publicity."

"The shame's on your side, not on mine," retorted Mr. Parkinson, speaking as warmly as Mr. Hollingworth had done, "and the blame rests with you and yours."

Mr. Hollingworth's hand, at this retort, was extended towards the bell, and but for the last two words uttered by his visitor he would have ordered him to the door. He sank back in his chair, and with some sternness desired Mr. Parkinson to proceed.

"I am, as you may see, sir, a working-man, and have been so all my life. I live Whitechapel

way, and this is my full name and address." He placed an envelope on the table. "I am a widower with one child, a daughter, just eighteen years of age. My wife died eight years ago, and I brought up my girl as well as I could. She is good-looking, worse luck! and can read and write. There has never been anything against me; I owe no man a penny, and my character in my line is as good as yours or any gentleman's in his."

"I don't see how all this affects me," said Mr. Hollingworth, with an assumption of weariness. "Cannot you spare me further details?"

"I must tell my story my own way, sir, and you will soon see how it affects you."

"Go on, then, if it must be so."

"If we had been let alone, my girl and me, there would have been no occasion for me to be here now; but we were not let alone, to live our lives our own way. We were interfered with by a gentleman."

"Come, come, my friend," said Mr. Hollingworth, "this is mere clap-trap."

"Not a bit of clap-trap about it, sir. Hard, bitter truth; that's what it is. According to the order of things, my girl would have married one of my sort, one of her own--there were plenty after her, but she wouldn't look at 'em--and would have had her regular ups and downs, and gone through life respectable."

"Oh," remarked Mr. Hollingworth, flippantly, "she has spoiled her chance for that!"

"It's been spoiled for her, sir. When and where she met this gentleman of hers I've no means of saying; she's as close as wax; and it is only by a trick--a just trick that a father has a right to use--that I've come to some knowledge of things. But I'll tell my story straight, and won't run ahead more than I can help. It's months ago now since my girl run away from me, and left never a word behind her that I could find her by."

"In the name of all that's reasonable," exclaimed Mr. Hollingworth, "you have not come to me to find her for you?"

"No, sir; that's not my business here. My girl was found and saved by an angel."

"A veritable angel?" asked Mr. Hollingworth. He was nettled by the tone and attitude of the man, and was disposed to resent these signs by a lightness of manner in his reception of the uninvited confidence that was being reposed in him.

"What do you mean by veritable?" demanded Mr. Parkinson; and quickly himself answered his own question. "Oh! I know; a kind of mockery of me! The angel I mean is a woman with a name which I'll give you if you like."

"It's a matter of perfect indifference to me, my good man."

"I'll give it to you, then. There are not many like her, and as I come here alone, unsupported by evidences or witnesses, you might, when I've done, like to find out for yourself whether I'm speaking the truth. That would be only fair. The good angel who found and saved my Mary is Mrs. Manners, who is something more than loved--she's worshipped by every one who knows her."

When Mr. Parkinson uttered the name of Manners, Mr. Hollingworth started, and glanced at his visitor; but the great contractor made no movement.

"Your daughter being found and saved," said Mr. Hollingworth, "there is a pleasant ending of your story."

"Not at all, sir. There's been a wrong done that must be righted; and before we come to the way of that, there's more to say. When my girl ran away from her home I was for a long time fairly mad, and was ready to strike both him and her dead at my feet if I had the chance. I was as bitter against her as against him; and if I'd known what I know now, there would have been a case in the papers, and the boys in the streets screaming out the news. But I couldn't discover who the man was; all that reached me was through hearsay from one of her girl companions, who had happened to see her in the company of a man they called a gentleman. They didn't know who he was any more than I did; and when I made up my mind that my girl had been brought to shame, I swore that she should never darken my doors again. A good many weeks passed by, and my feelings against my girl got harder instead of softer; and then, sir, the usual thing happened."

"I understand," said Mr. Hollingworth, "as little of what you mean by 'the usual thing happened,' as I do of how the story you are telling can possibly affect me."

"A little more patience, sir, and it will be clear to you. The usual thing is, that the man who wronged my child deserted her."

"Ah!"

"She was left pretty well shipwrecked in this big city of cruelty. Where should she turn to? Where do they all turn to in their thoughts? To the home they have brought disgrace upon; to the father and mother whose hearts they have broken. But my girl was afraid to come to me. She had somehow heard that I had sworn she should never cross my threshold again; that I had sworn to strike her down dead if she ever came before me again. So she hid herself and her shame, and fell into a fever, and was close to the death I had sworn against her. I knew nothing of it; the news didn't reach my ears, but it reached the ears of the angel woman I spoke of, Mrs. Manners. The way of it was that, thinking she hadn't many hours to live, my girl wrote a letter to one whom she loved and honored, a girl of her own age, sweet, and loving, and good, Miss Hester Manners. 'Dear Hester,' my girl wrote, 'come to me, if only for a minute, and give me one kind look before I die. Heaven will reward you for it.' There was more in the letter that I won't trouble you with. Miss Hester, as was right and proper, showed her mother the letter, and her mother, as was right and proper, said, 'My dear, *I* will go and see the poor girl.' Heaven bless her for her merciful act all the days of her life! She is poorer than I am by a long way, and has had such a battle to fight as few women have, and has fought it in a way that no other woman could. I have been pretty much of a careless, selfish man, I can see that now; not through her telling me of it; no, sir; but through her ways, somehow, that I've seen so much of lately. I've been neglectful of my duty, though I've led an honest life, which is about the best that can be said about me, but I'm a different man now through her, a different and a better man, I hope, than I've ever been; and if I could serve her by suffering any pain that a man can suffer, I'd do it gladly, and thank the chance. It was late at night when Miss Hester gave her the letter from my poor girl, and her husband wasn't at home, but she went straight on her errand of mercy, and remained with my child, nursing and attending to her till daylight came; and when she went away she promised to go again, and she did, day after day, night after night, taking her sewing with her, for the minutes were precious, and bread for her family had to be earned. This went on, sir, for some time in secret without me ever knowing it, until my Mary was snatched from death's door by this bright angel. Then, sir, Mrs. Manners began to speak to me of my child; how she did it I can't remember, try my hardest; there was nothing sudden, no news all at once that my Mary had been almost dying, and nursed back to life by her; she softened my heart gradually in a cunning and beautiful way, bringing Miss Hester with her to my rooms, and making me feel, as the dear young lady moved about, doing this and that for me, how happy I might be once more if I could see my child doing as she was doing. Mrs. Manners's heart is not only a heart of love and mercy, it is a heart of wisdom, and when she had well prepared me, and had led up to it so that I couldn't have refused to do the hardest task she set me, then, sir, it was that she told me all that had happened to my Mary, and told me, in her loving, gentle voice, that it was my duty to open my arms to the child who had been led into wrong through her own innocence and helplessness, and perhaps through my own neglect. She didn't put this last thought into my mind; it came there out of my own sorrow and self-reproach, but it was Mrs. Manners who planted the seed. I took my girl home, hoping and believing that everything would be right, and resolved, too, to do all I could to make 'em right. But the contrary has happened, and another disgrace, that none of us but my Mary knew, is threatening me now. The companions she used to associate with won't have anything to say to her. The poor can be hard, sir, as well as the rich--I've found that out; can be hard, and unjust, and merciless. Perhaps it was my Mary's own fault. She went away a merry, chattering magpie, singing and laughing, and chirruping like a cricket. She came back quiet and melancholy, and she moves about as though she wanted to die. The only women friends she has are Miss Hester and her mother; she's faithful and loving to them, but often when they are gone I find her crying fit to break her heart. Now, sir, as was natural, I tried to get out of her the name of the man who has brought this ruin and shame upon us, but never a word would she let slip, even to them who proved themselves better friends to her than I was. Seeing she was so quiet and shy, I looked out for letters; none came, and if she wrote any she has kept it secret from me. Now, sir, with the new disgrace threatening us that only a few days ago came, to my knowledge, I was more determined than ever to find out the man who must do her justice. I had never pried into the little box of clothes she brought home with her, and that she kept always locked in her bedroom, but I thought myself justified now in opening it unknown to her. It wasn't difficult; it is a cheap, common box, and almost any key the size of the lock would open it. I found no letters there, but a portrait, with a name at the back in my girl's writing. I went to her straight, and told her what I had done. 'Is this the man?' I asked her. She said, 'Yes,' in a whisper. 'Did he give it to you himself?' I asked. 'No,' she answered, 'I took it without his knowing, and he doesn't know now that I've got it.' That shows the wickedness and artfulness of the villain--I beg your pardon, sir, for letting the right word slip."

"Why beg my pardon?" asked Mr. Hollingworth, coldly.

"Can't you guess what I'm coming to, sir?"

"Indeed, I cannot; and I may add that up to this point, although I sympathize with you in your trouble, and wish it were in my power to relieve you, I have not the remotest idea why you have inflicted your story upon me."

"Is that true?"

"As this is the last time you will have the opportunity of speaking to me, I forgive the impertinence. It is quite true."

"But you sympathize with me, you say?"

"I have said so. You are yourself aware that your unhappy story is one which many poor fathers can relate; but that does not render it less detestable. You seem to be mistaken in me, my friend. You present yourself here to me, and plainly, although not in the exact words, you say, 'I am a working-man, and therefore an honest man. You are a gentleman, and therefore a scoundrel. I credit myself with virtue; I credit you with vice. I am a worthy member of society; you are an infamous one.'" And now Mr. Hollingworth spoke with real dignity: "You are absolutely and fatally in error. The pernicious views you have in effect expressed are, I am well aware, shared by many of your class. They are erroneous views. Among the class I may be supposed to represent are a number of very worthy and honest persons who are really earnest in their desire and endeavors to set right what is wrong in society. I believe myself to be one of these persons; I believe my son to be another; and it is you and such as you who throw obstacles in our way. There is something too much of this parade of exceptional virtues on the part of such demagogues as yourself. Have I made myself clear to you?"

"Quite clear, sir," replied Mr. Parkinson, frankly and respectfully. He had listened with eager attention and interest to Mr. Hollingworth, from whose speech he seemed to derive satisfaction. "And I am free to admit that there is some truth in what you have said."

"Really!" exclaimed Mr. Hollingworth, letting his earnest mood slip from him. "Perhaps you are as free to admit that even among the humbler classes such wrongs are done as you have come here to descant upon."

"I admit it, sir; but each wrong must be treated on its own special ground. Had a poor man betrayed my child, I should have gone to him as I now come to you."

"This is beyond endurance--"

"No, sir," interposed Mr. Parkinson, "do not summon your servants until you hear what name is written on the back of the portrait I found in my poor girl's box."

"Let me hear it, then, without any further beating about the bush."

"It is that of your son, Mr. Richard Hollingworth!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

Mr. Hollingworth fell back in his chair, shocked and horrified, and a panorama of years of deceit crossed his mind. If what this man said was true, he had undoubted justice on his side. If what this man said was true, the son in whose honor and rectitude the father had implicitly believed had lived a life of treachery, had secretly lived the infamous life, and had successfully concealed the knowledge from those who held him dear.

"When I read the name on the picture," said Mr. Parkinson, "it did not enlighten me, and as my daughter, after her first admission, obstinately refused to give me further particulars of her betrayer, I should have remained in the dark but for one circumstance. I belong to a working-man's club, the Wilberforce, which is in some sense a political club, as all such clubs are more or less. For weeks before my discovery of the portrait, I had not visited the club, having no heart to mix in its affairs; but it happened that I strolled into the club-room on the night the portrait fell into my hands. Political matters are freely discussed there, and the effect of every fresh election is commented upon. The evening papers contained the result of the election which has made your son a member of Parliament, and then it was that I saw his name in print. I took counsel with certain friends upon whose judgment I can rely, and their advice was that I should come direct to you. I have done so, and you will now know whether I was justified in seeking this interview."

He paused, and it was only after a long silence that Mr. Hollingworth said:

"Quite justified." Mr. Parkinson bent his head and waited. When Mr. Hollingworth spoke again it was in a constrained voice. "I should have preferred that your disclosure should have been made to me privately."

"I wished it, sir," interrupted Mr. Parkinson.

"Yes; I forgot. The fault was mine." He looked at Mr. Manners, but the contractor's eyes were averted. Not by word or motion had he denoted that he had been an interested listener to what had passed. "Nothing can be decided in the absence of my son, and you must not suppose that I shall condemn him unheard. What reparation can be made--" He could not finish the sentence; his agitation was so great that he scarcely knew what he was saying.

"You would not think of offering us money," said Mr. Parkinson, in a tone of deep sternness.

"No, no, of course not. And yet--but I can say no more at present. Have you the portrait with you?"

"Yes, I brought it, expecting you to ask to see it."

He handed it to Mr. Hollingworth, who, the moment he saw it, gave utterance to a cry of joyful surprise. It was the cry of a man who had been suddenly and unexpectedly released from unendurable torture.

"You are not mistaken?" he exclaimed. "This is the picture you found in your daughter's box?"

"It is," replied Mr. Parkinson, gazing suspiciously at Mr. Hollingworth. "Your son's name is written on the back."

"I see it, in your daughter's handwriting." Mr. Parkinson could not understand the meaning of another strange expression in Mr. Hollingworth's face as that gentleman raised his eyes from the picture and partly turned to the contractor. "You are satisfied that this is the portrait of the--the gentleman who has wronged your daughter?"

"She told me it was, and I am satisfied."

"You lift a weight from my heart. Mr. Parkinson, this is not the portrait of my son, nor of any member of my family."

"I'll not take your word for it," cried Mr. Parkinson, taking, with some roughness, the picture from Mr. Hollingworth. "Tell me, sir, you," he said, addressing Mr. Manners, "whether he speaks the truth."

Before Mr. Hollingworth could prevent him he thrust the picture into Mr. Manners's hand, who, gazing upon it, recognized the likeness of his nephew, Mark Inglefield. Mr. Manners and Mr. Hollingworth exchanged meaning glances.

"My friend speaks truly," said Mr. Manners, "and you might have believed him without appealing to me. This is not his son."

"What infamous plot is here?" cried Mr. Parkinson.

"None of our making, Mr. Parkinson," said Mr. Hollingworth. "With all my heart I sympathize with you."

"I want none of your sympathy," said Mr. Parkinson, "I want justice, and I will have it. Whoever this man is, I will drag him into the light." In his passion he turned from one to the other with furious looks.

"You cannot blame the innocent," said Mr. Hollingworth, pointing to a picture on the wall. "That is my son, Mr. Parkinson. You can trace no resemblance between the portraits."

"No, they are not the same men. What is the meaning of this mystery? It shall not remain a mystery long--I swear it!"

"Is there any reason why this interview should be prolonged?" said Mr. Hollingworth. "If you doubt my word, and that of my friend, you can set your doubt at rest by looking at the illustrated papers this week, in which the portrait of my son, a newly elected member of Parliament, will appear. It would be the height of folly on my part to attempt to deceive you. I make this promise to you, Mr. Parkinson. If you prove the portrait to be that of my son--who is as dear to me as your daughter is to you--and if he has done your child wrong, he shall make her the only reparation in the power of an honorable man."

"I hold you to your word, sir," said Mr. Parkinson, "and if I have been mistaken, I ask your pardon. There is, however, something more for me to say. I am not blind; I have watched the faces of you gentlemen, and I believe you know who this person is. I may be mistaken in this belief, as I am in the other, according to you. Will you tell me if I am right or wrong?"

Mr. Hollingworth made a deprecatory motion with his hand which the injured father construed into a refusal. Mr. Manners was motionless.

"Very well, gentlemen," said Mr. Parkinson, with a gesture, half despairing, half scornful, "I will take your silence for what it is worth. But listen to me. There appears to be a double villainy in this affair, and it shall be brought to light. In my daughter's belief, the name of the man who betrayed her is Richard Hollingworth; and if your son's name has been so used it has been used for a vile purpose, and your honor is concerned as well as my own--if you will excuse a common working-man for speaking of his honor."

"Nay, nay, Mr. Parkinson," said Mr. Hollingworth, gently, "surely you will not do me a further injustice!"

"It is far from my wish, sir; but it is natural--perhaps you will admit it--that words should escape me for which I ought not to be held strictly accountable. Again I ask your pardon. You have met me fairly, and I thank you for it. That is all, I think."

"Good-night, Mr. Parkinson," said Mr. Hollingworth, holding out his hand. "There are reasons why I should say nothing further at present. I will make a point of calling upon you and your daughter, with my son, if you will permit me. And if I can in any way befriend you--"

"You can in one way," interrupted Mr. Parkinson, "and in one way only; by helping me unmask this villain and bringing him to justice. He has ruined my daughter's life, and I will ruin his if it is in my power--ay, I will, though it cost me the last drop of my blood. Good-night, sir."

He turned to go, but stopped at the instance of Mr. Manners.

"One moment," said that gentleman; "your visit here is at an end, and mine is nearly so. Would you have any objection to waiting for me below for two or three minutes? I wish to speak privately with you."

"Will it serve any good purpose?" demanded Mr. Parkinson.

"It may," replied Mr. Manners. "There are other wrongs than yours."

"I don't dispute it. But I am concerned only in my own. Excuse me for speaking roughly."

"I excuse you readily, and may perhaps have cause to be grateful to you. Other persons whom you honor may also have cause to be grateful that what you had to say to this gentleman was said in my presence. Let this assurance content you, and give me the favor of your company when you leave this house."

"I'll do so, sir. I seem to be struggling in a net. A little mystery more or less won't matter much."

With a rough bow--in which there was some native grace of manner which well became him in his grief and perplexity--he left the room. The two gentlemen, being alone, waited each for the other to speak; but the silence was soon broken.

"The man's tale is true," said Mr. Hollingworth; "of that there can be no doubt. But I will not rashly commit myself to what may be an act of injustice. It remains for your nephew, Mr. Inglefield, to clear himself from the foul charge. If he cannot do so, he has played the part of an infamous scoundrel in the use he has made of my son's name; it is conduct which cannot be forgiven. Why, he might have ruined my lad at the very outset of his public career! If you were in my place, with an only son, upon whom all your hopes were set--for, although he has a sister, a girl counts for very little--would you overlook an act so base?"

"No," replied Mr. Manners. A sharp pang had passed through him at Mr. Hollingworth's reference to an only son. He thought of Kingsley, with his bright, ingenuous face, with his eager voice, and simple, loving ways, with his clear ideas of duty and honor. Yes, even duty, which, in the years that were gone, he had accused Kingsley of forgetting and neglecting, crept into his mind side by side with honor. A rash act to marry without a father's consent, against a father's wishes; but Kingsley was ever rash and impulsive, but never in a dishonorable direction--never! And the step being taken, he did not flinch from its consequences. He had thrown in his hard fortune with the woman to whom he had pledged his faith, and had not for one instant wavered in the course he had believed it was right to follow. Would his nephew, Mark Inglefield, have stood so unflinchingly firm; would he have withstood temptation as Kingsley had done? Mentally he surveyed the two men, and a sound like a groan escaped his lips.

"Have I pained you by my decision V asked Mr. Hollingworth, in a solicitous tone.

"No; it is just. My thoughts were upon another matter."

The sadness of his voice impressed Mr. Hollingworth, and he remembered that Mr. Manners had an only son, whom he had cast off for disobedience. This remembrance came to him now with strange significance. Mr. Parkinson had mentioned the name of Mrs. Manners, and had described her as an angel of goodness. Was it possible that some close relation existed between these two who bore the same name?

"You had a son," he ventured to say.

"Yes, I had a son," said Mr. Manners, "who disappointed and disobeyed me."

"Children have no appreciation of the sacrifices parents make for them. I am sorry for you. I should not have spoken of him but for a reference made by the man who has just left us.

"Yes; he spoke of a Mrs. Manners. The name is not a common one, and it may be--" He broke off here. "Mr. Hollingworth, it is not correct for me to say that my son disobeyed me, and you must not suppose that he was guilty of a dishonorable action. He was incapable of it."

"Is he living still?" asked Mr. Hollingworth, laying his hand sympathizingly on his guest's

shoulder.

"I do not know. I have heard nothing of him for years. We will not pursue the subject; it is too painful, and I am waited for below. With respect to Mr. Inglefield, your best course will be to see or write to him. There need be no disguise. I myself shall speak to him, and shall mention names plainly."

"I will write to him to-night; he must know at once that his visits here are at an end, unless he has been maligned."

Mr. Manners found Mr. Parkinson waiting for him in the street.

"I could not stop in the house," he said, "there is something about it that suffocates me."

"I intended to ask you to walk with me to mine," said Mr. Manners.

"I will walk with you, but I refuse to enter it," rejoined Mr. Parkinson, roughly. "You are, of course, a rich man."

"Yes, I am rich."

"I am poor, and I will keep my place. It would be better for all of us if every man did the same. We can talk in the streets. It will serve some good purpose, you said. I ask nothing for myself, mind, nothing but justice."

"In the sad story you have told," said Mr. Manners, "you spoke of a woman who was kind to your daughter."

"I did, and what I said of her is true. She is an angel of goodness, and she saved my daughter, body and soul. See here, sir. I am not a church-going man, and I hate sanctimonious people, but I am not a heathen either. There's some kind of a power that made the world and sent us into it for some purpose. I often wonder what, when I think of things. And there's a hereafter, and I'm glad to know it. I'll tell you why I'm glad. Because, if that scoundrel who ruined my daughter escapes his punishment here--and I'll do my best that he sha'n't--but if he *does* escape it here, he'll meet it there! That's a satisfaction to me, and the thought of it will make me religious. I'll go to church next Sunday."

"My object in speaking to you now," said Mr. Manners, "is to obtain information of Mrs. Manners. I gathered from what you said that she is poor."

"Very poor," said Mr. Parkinson, "and that stands to her credit here, and 'll stand to her credit in the next world--if there's any justice there."

"In what way does it stand to her credit?"

Mr. Parkinson stopped suddenly to look at Mr. Manners's face, upon which the light of a street lamp was shining.

"You are asking close questions," he said, "and I'm getting suspicious of people."

"You are suspicious of me?"

"Put it as you like. You don't know me, and never heard of me before to-night, and I don't suppose you care a brass farthing whether you ever hear of me again. I never saw you before to-night, and I don't know your name even; so you have the advantage of me. You're in the light, you see, and I'm in the dark, and here we are talking together confidentially, with the difference that you know what you're talking about, and I don't. Stop a bit. I see you want to speak; but I must work off my reel first. I don't care for interruptions. You've heard me tell my story; you've got in your mind my name, and my girl's name and shame, likewise the name of the man I'd take by the throat if he stood before me now and I knew it. Likewise the name of the angel woman who saved her, and who'd stand by her--I'll take my oath on it--if all the rest of the world was hounding her and throwing mud at her. Likely as not you're a friend of the scoundrel that's brought this upon us. I saw something in your face that makes me sure now he's not a stranger to you. He was a gentleman, so-called; you're another. I've only got your word for it that the talk you're having with me is for a good purpose. It may be for a bad one. I've no call to trust you that I can see. Give me a reason."

"I find no fault with you for your suspicion of me. My name is Manners."

"Oh! And is the woman I'd die to serve a connection of yours?"

"She may be. It is to ascertain whether she is that I am questioning you now."

"For a good purpose, you said?"

"What I said I mean."

"Let me have another look at you."

Again they stopped, and again Mr. Parkinson's eyes fixed themselves on Mr. Manners's face. He was to some extent apparently satisfied.

"Go ahead," he said.

"You said," resumed Mr. Manners, steadily, "that her being poor, very poor, stands to her credit here, and will stand to her credit in another world, and I asked in what way."

"All right. You've got a clear head on you. In this way. She's got nothing to gain by it. What she does is done out of pure goodness--not only what she's done for me and my girl, but what she does for every one who's in trouble. There isn't a face that don't light up when she comes by; there isn't a lodging, the commonest you can think of, that isn't brightened when she opens the door. If she was to die to-morrow--the good Lord forbid that she should! but I'm putting it that way to make it plain to you--if she was to die to-morrow, there'd be hundreds of us, men, women, and children, who'd follow her to the grave, and know that they'd lost a friend that could never be replaced. There would be no money to pay for a stone, but she'd have one in our hearts. God Almighty bless her and hers!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The earnest sincerity of the grateful man shook Mr. Manners to the soul, and for once in his life his self-control slipped from him. He recovered himself quickly, but the impression produced by Mr. Parkinson's words remained.

"You speak," he said, "of a woman and her daughter who have laid you under an obligation--"

"A moment, if you please," interrupted Mr. Parkinson; "I spoke of a lady and her daughter. Mrs. Manners is a lady; we all know that, every one of us, and we've often wondered how she found her way among us, and how it is she is almost as poor as the poorest of us. I object to your calling her a woman in a tone that means, if it means anything, that she is no better than the rest of us. It's clear enough to me that you look down on us. Well, look down. It doesn't hurt us, any more than it's to your credit."

"You are mistaken," said Mr. Manners, gently; "I do not look down on you. I was once a working-man myself." He sighed as he made the admission, at the thought that in those early days when he was struggling and making his way up the ladder he was a happier man than he had ever been since.

"Were you?" exclaimed Mr. Parkinson, in wonder. "Let me think a bit. I remember when I was a boy hearing of a Mr. Manners, a great contractor, who was once no better than a bricklayer, and who had made himself a millionaire by his cleverness. It may be that you're the gentleman."

"I am he."

"I take off my hat to you. I'm not one of the envious ones. You made your money fairly, I've heard, and though you drove hard bargains, you didn't cut down wages."

"That is true. I shall be pleased if yon will reckon it to my credit now."

"I'll do that--it's no more than fair. And the lady I speak of may be a connection of yours, you say. That's interesting, though I never thought of linking you two together."

"She never gave you cause to suspect it?"

"Never. If she had it would have been known and talked of. These things get about, you see."

"What you say makes me think all the better of her. May I proceed with my questions?"

"You may."

Had Mr. Manners been inclined to reflect, in his usual spirit, under the peculiar nature of this conversation, he would have loftily resented Mr. Parkinson's occupation of the higher ground; but in truth there was that stirring within him which humbled him; and it is good to know that it humbled without mortifying him.

"Are Mrs. Manners and her daughter," he asked, "living alone? Is she a widow?"

"No," replied Mr. Parkinson. "She is married, and lives with her husband."

"Are you acquainted with his Christian name?"

"Yes. It is Kingsley."

A sigh of relief escaped Mr. Manners. He was not childless, then. It was still in his power to make reparation, or if not to make, to offer it. The latter alternative trod close upon the heels of the new-born impulse to atone for his harshness; the reflection intruded itself that his overtures towards a reconciliation might be declined. Many years had passed since there was peace between him and his son, and during all those years he had been, figuratively speaking, rolling in gold. So vast was his fortune that, living the life he did, he could not spend one half of it, and every day of his existence its colossal proportions grew. To Mark Inglefield he had made a most liberal allowance, and Inglefield, cunning and careful of the future, had occasionally drawn largely upon the great contractor's generosity. The requests he made were never refused, the reasons for them never inquired into. Mr. Manners had set store upon his wealth before he discarded his son; it meant then distinction, fame, political power, in which he would have a share. Kingsley's sense of right, no less than the ingenuousness and unselfishness of his nature, would have caused him to lay at his father's feet the honor and glory which he would assuredly have won had he been allowed to follow the career which, in his young manhood, had been mapped out for him. The rich man's heart was tortured as the image of Kingsley rose before him: the frank, laughing mouth, the bright eyes, the eager manner, smote him now with more than the force of actual blows. Those he could have parried or returned; not so the accusing voices from the past which proclaimed him tyrannical, ruthless, and unjust. The manner of Kingsley's life, as indicated by Mr. Parkinson's championship of his wife and daughter, was an added sting to the torture he was suffering. Kingsley and those with whom he had, without a murmur, thrown in his lot, had borne privation and poverty cheerfully, and had won a place in the esteem and affections of the poor people around them of which the highest in the land might have been proud. And all this time it had been in his, the father's, power to have lightened and brightened their lot without in the remotest degree feeling the loss; and all this time they had lived and labored without uttering one Word of reproach against him whose unreasoning, dictatorial conduct had made their life one of daily, hourly struggle; and all this time they had made no appeal to him upon whom they had a just claim, but trod, with courage and resignation, the thorny paths into which he had thrust them. Well might he hide his face in his hands with shame. He thought of Nansie, and of the surprise he felt when he first saw her--surprise at her modesty and gentleness of manner, surprise at the soft, pleading voice, surprise that she was a lady, fitted to grace any position to which wealth could raise her; to grace and adorn it, and to bring into it qualities of goodness which would have made her a shining example amid the follies and frivolities of fashionable life. What were the grounds of his anger against her and his son? That Kingsley, meeting her, had fallen in love with her, and had wooed her honorably, and that she, urged in some degree by youth and love, and in some degree by Kingsley's confident view of the future, had accepted him and become his wife. How, then, was Nansie to be blamed? How had she merited the lot to which he had condemned her? And wherein lay Kingsley's misconduct? In that having wooed and won a lady, he had held an opinion of his father which placed Mr. Manners above the sordid considerations of a sordid age. That surely was not a crime; but the father and judge had viewed it as such, and had meted out a cruel punishment. Kingsley might have acted differently; he might have acted towards Nansie as Mark Inglefield had acted towards the working-man, whose visit to Mr. Hollingworth had brought about disclosures which had led--and perhaps happily led--to the contemplations in which Mr. Manners indulged as he stood in the dark night with Mr. Parkinson. The conversation between them had been continued, and Mr. Manners, anxious to obtain as much information as it was in Mr. Parkinson's power to impart, had been told of Kingsley's connection with the Wilberforce Club, and of the project to make him president in the place of Mr. Bartholomew. This project Kingsley himself had relinquished, further experience of the violent views of his partisans having convinced him that their methods were not such as he could approve of. Mr. Parkinson, being led on by Mr. Manners, dilated at some length on working-men's politics in connection with Kingsley.

"Not so easily led as you would imagine, sir," observed Mr. Parkinson, referring to Kingsley's characteristics. "Sympathizing with all who suffer from unjust and unequal laws, but stanch in his belief that those wrongs can only be set right by temperate means. Mr. Kingsley Manners has a will of his own."

The father had already been compelled to acknowledge that. Strikingly different as he and his son were in their dispositions, they resembled each other in one respect; having resolved upon what they deemed right to do, they walked straight forward, regardless of consequences. Kingsley had done this in his relations with Nansie, and Mr. Manners had done this in his relations with his son. But Kingsley had sacrificed everything, his father nothing; and yet, of the two, Mr. Manners could not help confessing that the lot of the man who had cheerfully embraced poverty was the higher and nobler of the two.

"And now," said Mr. Parkinson, after further questions had been asked and answered, "I've told you all I know about Mr. and Mrs. Manners and their daughter, and I should like to know what good it is going to do me."

"I do not follow you," said Mr. Manners.

"You've been so much occupied," explained Mr. Parkinson, "in the object you've been driving at, getting all you can out of me, and telling me precious little to enlighten me, that maybe you've

lost sight of *my* story."

"I acknowledge it," said Mr. Manners.

"I told you," proceeded Mr. Parkinson, "when we were in Mr. Hollingworth's house, that I believed you knew who the man is who has wronged my child. I say so again. You *do* know him. Come, come, sir, I've played fair with you; play fair with me."

"If the portrait you showed Mr. Hollingworth," said Mr. Manners, "is that of the man who has done you this wrong, I do know him."

"Thank you for that much. I'll trouble you for his name. I don't want any one to take my quarrels on himself; I'm equal to them, and can carry them through. His name, sir, if you please."

"At present I must decline to give it to you," said Mr. Manners, and would have proceeded had he not been interrupted roughly by Mr. Parkinson, who exclaimed:

"That's the thanks I get! I might have known what to expect! But I'll find out where you live, and I'll dog you like your shadow till I come face to face with him."

"There is no cause for you to speak to me like that. I have told you who I am, and wished you to come with me to my house. Mr. Parkinson, you have done me a great service, and in return I would give you all the assistance in my power. But threats and violence will not help you here. For the present, leave your wrongs to me; it is not unlikely I may be able to render you an infinitely greater service than you dream of. I ask you to trust me."

"For how long?"

"For a few days."

"Have you influence with the scoundrel?"

"I have."

A queer smile played about Mr. Parkinson's lips. "An infinitely greater service than I dream of," he said, repeating Mr. Manners's words. "Of course there's but one way of setting this thing right, and then I should lose my daughter. That's what we have children for--to plague, or torment, or disgrace us."

Mr. Manners laid his hand gently on Mr. Parkinson's arm, and said, "We bring such punishment upon ourselves often. Perhaps it is the parents, not the children, who are chiefly to blame. Good-night, Mr. Parkinson. Here is my card; if you wish to see me you are welcome at any time. If you do not come to me I will come to you. There is one other favor I would ask of you."

"Name it, sir."

"Say nothing to Mr. and Mrs. Manners of what has passed between us to-night; regard our interview as private, for a time at least."

"All right, sir. It shall be so. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mr. Manners had not far to go before he reached his house, but he lingered somewhat on the road, wrapped in thought. Had what was passing within him been revealed to any person long familiar with him, it would have inspired feelings of wonder and surprise. In truth, a great change was taking place in this man's nature; he was no longer stern, self-willed, and arrogant; he was conscious of a certain humbleness of spirit, and he yielded to its influence. His thoughts were chiefly upon Kingsley and Nansie; what he had heard concerning them had touched him nearly; it had, as it were, opened a window in his soul which had been darkened all his life. But now and again his thoughts wandered to Mark Inglefield, and he dwelt upon the contrast between this man and his son. Kingsley so impetuous, open-minded, and frank, Inglefield so cool, methodical, and wary; the one wearing his heart upon his sleeve, the other keeping strict watch upon it, so that he might not be tempted to follow its impulses to his own disadvantage. The links which united Mr. Manners and Mark Inglefield were strong ones, and had been forged by Mr. Manners himself. When he discarded his son, and made up his mind to leave England, perhaps forever, he had made certain propositions to Mark Inglefield which had been eagerly accepted. Inglefield

was to be his companion, his second son, and was to devote himself entirely to his patron, to be as it were at his beck and call, and subservient and obedient in all things. That the companionship had been productive of little pleasure was perhaps as much the fault of one as of the other. Disappointed in his dearest wishes, Mr. Manners's principal desire was to be left to himself, and Mark Inglefield humored him; careful ever to be ready when called upon to perform some duty, never contradicting his patron, never arguing with him; a willing, submissive slave, waiting for his reward in the future. This reward had been promised him; he was to be Mr. Manners's heir. The prospect was a glowing one, and he revelled in it, although there were occasions when a great wave of discontent swept over him. He was not a young man; how long would he have to wait? Mr. Manners was his senior by twenty-five years, but his health was perfect. It was his boast that he had never had a day's illness in his life, and his habits were such that there seemed little probability of his breaking down before he was a very old man. Luxuriousness of living had no temptations for him; plain fare sufficed for his needs. Mark Inglefield, on the contrary, was fond of rich food and rich wines, and he indulged in them; his tastes (in which may be included his vices) were the very reverse of Mr. Manners's, and if he chafed under the restraint in which he was held he was careful not to betray himself to his patron. He took his pleasures in secret, and was not sparing of them; and it was a proof that he was an able and astute man, cunning in device and richly capable in deceit, that not a whisper of those doings which would have been reckoned to his disadvantage had ever reached Mr. Manners's ear.

"Is Mr. Inglefield in his room?" asked Mr. Manners of the servant who opened the door.

"No, sir," was the reply.

Mr. Manners passed up to his own, in which the gas was lighted, and paced it slowly in deep thought, with his hands clasped behind him. The house was the same he had built during the time he was resolving upon Kingsley's future and the position he was to occupy in the world. He remembered that then he had in view a lady whom Kingsley was to wed, and through whom he was to obtain immediate entry and recognition into the highest circles of society. All the years that Mr. Manners had been abroad the magnificent house had been left in the charge of care-takers, the owner not caring to let or part with it. There was another motive. Despite the apparent irrevocableness of the break between him and Kingsley, there lurked in Mr. Manners's mind the latent hope that something--he knew not what, and had not the courage to mentally inquire--might occur which might bring them together again. He would do nothing to bring this about, but the possibility existed, and, for a while, was dimly recognized. Gradually it faded into mere nothingness and was lost sight of, but by that time Mr. Manners had become too indifferent to the making of money to turn his investment to account.

He had left this house with his wife and Mark Inglefield. He returned with Mark Inglefield, having buried his wife in a foreign country. Between her and him no mention had been made of their son from the day of the renouncement. On that day he had said to his wife, "I will not allow his name to be uttered in my presence." He was her master as well as her husband, and she had grown to fear him. Whether in the depths of her heart she had preserved some touch of that most sacred of human attributes, a mother's love for her only child, was never known to Mr. Manners. She obeyed him implicitly in this as in all other matters, and even on her deathbed Kingsley's name did not pass her lips. But now, in the solitude of his room, Mr. Manners recalled those last minutes on earth of the woman he had sworn to cherish, and it came to his gentler self to place a new meaning on the wistful look in her eyes as she turned them upon him for the last time. "She was thinking of Kingsley." He did not speak the words, but they could not have been plainer to his sense had he uttered them aloud.

He went up to his wife's room, the room in which he had deposited all the mementoes of her silent life which he had brought home with him. Her jewels were there, her desk, and an old trunk which from sentiment she had preserved from the days of her maidenhood. In her desk he found a bunch of keys, and one of these fitted the trunk, which now lay open before him. He had never before looked into this trunk, and he could not have told what he expected to find there; but what he saw now stood witness against him. From the grave in a foreign land came the accusation.

Nothing of his dead wife's was in the trunk, nothing that she had worn or that he had given her. Everything it contained had belonged to Kingsley. Portraits, school-books, articles of dress, and many items insignificant and worthless in themselves, but deeply precious in their spiritual significance. Here was the mother's heart portrayed, here the record of her inner life and sufferings, to which she had never given utterance. All the more potent now in their silent testimony. The proud man read in these trifles his condemnation. With a little quivering of his mouth, which he made no effort to control, he closed the trunk and locked it, and left the room, treading softly.

In the passage he lingered a few moments, wrestling with an inward urging to visit the room which Kingsley used to occupy, and which was situated on the floor above. With something of his old masterfulness he wheeled suddenly round, and returned to his own apartment. There, however, the desire manifested itself more strongly, and yielding to it he soon found himself in Kingsley's room, which he had not visited since the day on which he had conducted Nansie thither, with the endeavor to impress upon her the great sacrifice which she would force Kingsley to make if she did not herself take steps to separate from him. Here, again, Mr. Manners was

confronted with accusing testimony, for, from surrounding evidence, he saw that his wife had been in the habit of sitting in this room, and frequently occupying it after their son's departure. These signs of suppressed suffering, of anguish borne in silence, could not fail to impress him; nor could he fail to be impressed by the once familiar objects in which Kingsley took pride. The books, the bed, the articles of taste and value, the pipes, even some bits of jewelry--it seemed as if nothing had been removed or disturbed. Mr. Manners was both surprised and touched; these things were Kingsley's own, and he might have taken them and converted them into money, which the father knew had been sadly needed. "Kingsley was never mercenary," thought Mr. Manners, with a pitiful smile of mingled pride and humiliation. "The soul of honor and generosity!"

He returned again to his room, and had not been in it a minute before he heard the sound of a step on the stairs. He threw open the door, and Mark Inglefield appeared.

"I hardly knew whether you would be home so early," said the expectant heir. "Did you leave Mr. Hollingworth well?"

The object of Mr. Manners's visit to that gentleman was, of course, known to Mark Inglefield, who looked upon this day as the red-letter day of his life. In the event of Mr. Manners arranging the marriage between him and Mr. Hollingworth's daughter, all anxiety for the future was at an end. Mr. Manners had promised to make at once a settlement upon him which would place him above all the chances and caprices of fickle fortune. For some time past he had found the ties which bound him to his patron irksome and disagreeable; he was hardly his own master; and to all the hints he had thrown out that he might fairly claim to be placed in a more independent position, Mr. Manners had replied:

"Wait till you are settled."

It was, indeed, this consideration that had impelled him to urge on the marriage. He had as little true love for Miss Hollingworth as the young lady had for him. She plays no part in this story, but it is necessary to say that she was a thoroughly worldly young person, with a full appreciation of the worldly advantage of marrying the heir of a millionaire. In their matrimonial views, therefore, she and Mark Inglefield were on an equality; the marriage into which they were willing to enter was a marriage of convenience, and they were content to leave the preliminaries in the hands of their elders.

Mark Inglefield put on an air of anxiety as he asked Mr. Manners if he had left Mr. Hollingworth well. He knew the exact value of his part in the projected alliance, but he had represented to Mr. Manners that his heart was deeply engaged, and he labored under the belief that he had succeeded in throwing dust into his patron's eyes. Mark Inglefield had a remarkable opinion of his own capacity and capabilities, and, during his long relations with Mr. Manners, had grown extremely confident of himself and his powers, and somewhat scornful of Mr. Manners's force of character. The reason for this was that the two men never came into collision; their opinions never clashed. This might have occurred in the early years of their association had not Mark Inglefield tutored himself into complete subservience to a will which he had reason to know was imperious; but as time wore on Mr. Manners's interest in the affairs of life grew weaker, and Mark Inglefield made the mistake of attributing this indifference to failing mental power. Hence the growing scorn of his patron's character, which, once respected and feared, he now held in small esteem.

"Mr. Hollingworth is well in health," said Mr. Manners. Mark Inglefield detected nothing significant in the tone, and was not in the least disturbed.

"I hope the interview was satisfactory," he said.

"Not entirely," replied Mr. Manners.

This did produce some slight discomfiture in the younger man.

"I thought," he remarked, "that everything was understood, and that it was a mere matter of arrangement of practical details."

"I thought so, too," said Mr. Manners. "Something else, however, has cropped up, which needs explanation."

"From me?" inquired Mr. Inglefield.

"From you," said Mr. Manners.

All Mark Inglefield's astuteness came instantly into play; no wariness was expressed in his face, for the reason that he had complete control over himself, and, on his mettle, was seldom, if ever, to be taken at a disadvantage.

"I am ready to give any explanation that may be required," he said, in a tone of modest assurance. "Perhaps it was hardly to be expected that an affair of such importance could be settled without some trifling hitch."

It was in his mind to say that the required explanation was nothing that affected his character, but he was prudent enough to arrest the words. No one knew better than himself that this was dangerous ground to approach. If anything was to be said upon the point, it must not come from him.

"I was not prepared for any hitch," said Mr. Manners. "When I visited Mr. Hollingworth this evening, I believed that everything would be arranged as you wished."

"And as you also wished," said Mark Inglefield, quickly.

"Yes; although my interest in the negotiation was naturally less than yours. Do not stand, Inglefield; what we have to say to each other will occupy a few minutes."

Mark Inglefield, with inward anxiety and a cheerful exterior, drew a chair to the table and sat down.

"Do you love the young lady?" inquired Mr. Manners.

"If I did not," replied Mark Inglefield, wondering at the strangeness of the question, "should I desire to marry her?"

"That is scarcely an answer," observed Mr. Manners.

And now Mark Inglefield suspected that a battle was impending, and that something serious was coming.

"Certainly I love her," he said. "Is there any doubt of it, and is that the difficulty?"

"That is not the difficulty, but it strikes me now as singular that love was never mentioned in the course of the interview."

For the life of him Mark Inglefield could not help remarking:

"I was not aware that you were given to sentiment."

"Nor am I," retorted Mr. Manners. "I have been all my life a practical man, until lately, when life seems to have been valueless to me."

"I am sorry to hear you say that," said Mark Inglefield, with well-simulated sympathy.

"The sentimental view of a question," continued Mr. Manners, "is a view I have always ignored. I set my own course, and, rightly or wrongly, have followed it. Whether it has brought me happiness or not affects myself only."

"Pardon me for venturing to differ from you," said Mark Inglefield, thinking he saw what might be turned to his advantage; "what you decide upon may affect others as well as yourself."

"I am corrected; it may, and has."

Mark Inglefield inwardly congratulated himself. Not a suspicion crossed his mind that he and Mr. Manners, in this contention, were mentally travelling different roads. He was thinking only of his own interests; Mr. Manners was thinking of Kingsley.

"May I ask," said Mark Inglefield, "whether Miss Hollingworth was present during your interview with her father?"

"She was present at no part of it," replied Mr. Manners.

"Then the difficulty you refer to did not spring from her."

"It did not."

"Nor from you, I hope, sir?"

"No, nor from me."

"Surely Mr. Hollingworth raised no objection?"

"He was not the originator of it."

Mark Inglefield took heart of grace. Whatever grievance had arisen--and he was too wary to demand its nature with any show of indignation; it might lead to the idea that he himself was conscious of something blamable in his conduct; it was by far the best to avoid anything that savored of heat, and to maintain the attitude he had always assumed with Mr. Manners--whatever grievance, then, had arisen must be purely imaginary, and could be easily explained away.

"I await your pleasure," he said, "and am ready, as I have already stated, to give you any explanation you require."

"The interview between Mr. Hollingworth and myself," said Mr. Manners, his eyes fixed upon Mark Inglefield's face, in which no trace of discomposure was visible, "was nearly at an end, when a visitor was announced. It is not my habit to beat about the bush, Inglefield. The name of this visitor was Parkinson."

Not a muscle in Mark Inglefield's features twitched, although he recognized at once the precipice upon which he was standing.

"Parkinson," he repeated, in a tone of unconcern.

"Do you know a man of that name?" asked Mr. Manners.

"Parkinson! Parkinson!" said Mark Inglefield, as though searching his memory. "No. I am not acquainted with any man bearing that name."

"Nor with any woman?"

"Nor with any woman," replied Mark Inglefield, coolly. "It is only fair that you should be told what this man revealed."

"If it affects me, certainly, though I am completely in the dark. The person was admitted, then?"

"He would not be denied. It appears that he has called repeatedly at Mr. Hollingworth's house, with the purpose of seeing that gentleman, and he refused to go away now without being satisfied."

"As you evidently suppose me to be implicated in the revelation--I adopt your own term, sir--he made, I am entitled to ask whether he is a gentleman."

"He is a working-man."

Mark Inglefield leaned back in his chair with an air of content, expressing in this action a consciousness of complete innocence.

"I was really beginning to fear," he said, "that a charge had been brought against me by one whose words would have some weight."

"Mr. Parkinson's words had considerable weight," said Mr. Manners, "and the tale he related was true."

"It is not for me to dispute with you, but I am all curiosity, sir."

"Before I recount the shameful story he related, of which you appear ignorant--"

"Of which I *am* ignorant," interposed Mark Inglefield.

"It is but right," continued Mr. Manners, ignoring the interruption, "that I should make reference to a certain understanding between ourselves. I refer to the promise I gave you to make you my heir." Mark Inglefield caught his breath, and his face grew a shade paler. "This promise, in effect, as we sit together here to-night, is already fulfilled. My will is made out to that end."

Mark Inglefield recovered himself. What need was there for anxiety? The blow was unexpected and crushing, but he would prove himself a clumsy bungler indeed if he were unable to parry it.

"I have never had any uneasiness on that score, sir," he said. "Your promised word was sufficient assurance. The trust, the confidence you reposed in me cannot be shaken by false statements."

"It is not for me to say," remarked Mr. Manners, "at the present juncture, whether the statements made by Mr. Parkinson are true or false; but as they stand they affect you vitally, so far as worldly circumstances go. I do not hold myself bound by my promise if I find I have been deceived in you. It was given to a man of honor. Prove yourself so, and you shall not be disappointed, although some small share of my wealth may be otherwise bestowed. But I tell you frankly that I intend, quite apart from what you may have to say, to sift this man's story to the bottom, and to come to the truth of it. You have not lived with me all these years, Inglefield, without knowing that when I announce an intention I shall carry it out to its end. Mr. Parkinson's story, and other disclosures of which it formed the groundwork, have deeply affected me, and may have a strong bearing upon the small span of life which is yet left to me. I am speaking to you openly, because the occasion demands it. Quite independent of the wrong of which Mr. Parkinson justly complains, there are matters of which I intend to speak to you. Shall we go into them to-night, or would you prefer to defer their consideration till the morning?"

"To-night, sir, to-night," exclaimed Mark Inglefield, with an exhibition of great indignation. "I could not sleep until I have removed from your mind the unjust suspicions which have been planted there by a man who is an utter stranger to me."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Mark Inglefield's assumption of virtuous indignation would have been supplanted by a feeling of veritable consternation had he been aware of what was passing through the mind of his patron. Mr. Manners owed it to himself, and was fully determined, to lay bare the naked truth of Mr. Parkinson's story; but, true or false, it was of small importance to him, in comparison with the feelings which had been aroused within him by the description which Mr. Parkinson had given of Kingsley and Nansie. He had promised to make Mark Inglefield his heir, and if this man succeeded in freeing himself from the charge which had been laid against him, the promise should be fulfilled. But he had not pledged himself to leave Inglefield the whole of his property. There was enough and to spare for ample provision for the son he had discarded, and to whom now, at the eleventh hour, his heart was turning. He had never entertained any strong affection for Inglefield. In the early days of their association he had endeavored to acquire a feeling of sentiment towards his nephew, in order that the alienation between himself and Kingsley should be complete and irrevocable; but Inglefield was not gifted with the qualities to win such an affection. Failing in this, he and Mr. Manners travelled together more as ordinary acquaintances than warm friends; and as time wore on the opportunity of drawing them closer together was lost.

"We will first," said Mr. Manners, "dispose, as far as we can, of the wrongs of which Mr. Parkinson complains. I say as far as we can, because I wish you to distinctly understand that I intend myself to investigate the matter."

"I understand so, sir," said Mark Inglefield, inwardly cursing Mr. Manners for his obstinacy.

"You should be glad that I have resolved upon this course. Declaring yourself innocent, as you do, the result should more completely exonerate you. In which case Mr. Hollingworth will doubtless adhere to the alliance which I went to his house to-night to complete."

"Otherwise he will not?"

"Otherwise he will not," said Mr. Manners. "Do you wish to hear the words he uttered with respect to you?"

"It will be best," said Mark Inglefield.

"Mr. Parkinson's story being told, he left the house, and Mr. Hollingworth and I remained in conference for a few minutes. It was then that Mr. Hollingworth said: 'It remains for your nephew, Mr. Inglefield, to clear himself from this foul charge. If he cannot do so, he has played the part of an infamous scoundrel.' Strong words, Inglefield."

"Yes, sir," said Mark Inglefield, "and that they should be used towards me fills me with indignation and amazement."

"Innocent, your feelings are justifiable, and you will find Mr. Hollingworth ready to make amends. In what he said I fully concurred. I will explain as briefly as possible the matter of which Mr. Parkinson complains. He is a working-man, living in the east of London. He has one child, a young woman named Mary." Mr. Manners paused; Mark Inglefield never winced. "This daughter, it appears," continued Mr. Manners, "has fallen a victim to the designs of a scoundrel. She fled from her home at this scoundrel's instigation, who, wearying of her, deserted her and left her, ruined and penniless, to die or pursue her life of shame."

"It is not at all an unusual story," said Mark Inglefield, apparently listening to the narrative with great interest, "but I fail to see its relation with me."

"Had it not been," continued Mr. Manners, "for the kindness of a lady who, according to Mr. Parkinson, is universally beloved for her goodness of heart, the unhappy girl, driven to despair, would probably have committed suicide; but this lady--"

"Lady, sir?" interrupted Mark Inglefield, noting with curiosity a certain emphasis of tenderness which, unconsciously to himself, Mr. Manners put upon the word.

"I said a lady, although she is as poor as those among whom she lived."

"Ah," sneered Mark Inglefield, "a piece of working-man's clap-trap, introduced for the purpose of imposing upon your benevolence."

"I am not noted for benevolence," said Mr. Manners, dryly; "it would not have been to my discredit had I been more charitable in my career."

Mark Inglefield stared at his patron. This was a new phase in the rich man's character, and, with his altered demeanor, for which Inglefield could discover no explicable reason, boded changes. Still he did not lose his self-possession.

"Of every twenty who beg of you," he said, "nineteen are rank impostors."

"Possibly; but that does not affect our present business. The lady I refer to stepped in at a critical moment, nursed the poor girl and brought her to reason, and finally succeeded in reconciling her father with her, who received her again in his home."

"Ah!" thought Mark Inglefield, "Mary is at home, then. I shall know where to find her." Aloud he said, "Why do you pause, sir?"

"I supposed you were about to speak," replied Mr. Manners.

"No. I was only thinking that this Mr. Parkinson was not a bad sort of fellow."

"Because of his reconcilement with his only child," asked Mr. Manners, "who not only offended but disgraced him!"

"Yes, because of that," said Mark Inglefield.

"It speaks well for him?"

"Yes." Almost upon the utterance of the word there came to Mark Inglefield the recollection of the estrangement between Mr. Manners and his only child; and now there occurred to him that behind this story of Mary Parkinson there lay something which might be of almost equal consequence to his prospects. All the cunning forces of his nature took array within him, and stood on the alert for the protection of their wily master. The affair was beginning to assume a more serious aspect. Well, he was prepared to battle with it.

"I am pleased to hear your opinion, Inglefield," said Mr. Manners; "it coincides with mine." ("I was right," thought Inglefield.) "The daughter, however," pursued Mr. Manners, "again in her home, was most unhappy, from a cause which her father had not suspected. He set a watch upon her, to discover the cause of her unhappiness, and soon found that he was threatened by another disgrace. Maddened by this discovery, he questioned his daughter, and pressed her to give him the name of her betrayer. She refused." ("Good girl!" thought Mark Inglefield; "stanch girl! I am safe.") "Mr. Parkinson was not the kind of man, with this additional disgrace hanging over him, to rest contented with the refusal, and he adopted the extreme measure of breaking open his daughter's box, in which he found the portrait of a man, a stranger to him. On the back of this portrait a name was written." (Mark Inglefield smiled placidly. "I never gave her a portrait of myself," he thought, "though she begged often for one. Nor has she a scrap of my writing to bring against me. You were ever prudent, Mark. You will get over this difficulty, have no fear.") Mr. Manners had observed the placid smile, but he made no comment on it. "It happened that the name written on the back of the picture has just been brought into prominence, and with this double clew in his possession, Mr. Parkinson sought, and after some difficulty obtained, an interview with Mr. Hollingworth, in which he told the story I have narrated to you. Are you curious to learn the reason of his desire to speak with Mr. Hollingworth?"

"It would be strange," said Mark Inglefield, "if I were not interested in anything concerning a family with which I hope to be soon connected by marriage."

"Mr. Parkinson accused Mr. Hollingworth's son, Richard, who has just won his election, of being Mary Parkinson's betrayer. Shocked at the charge, Mr. Hollingworth demanded some better proof than Mr. Parkinson's bare word, and the wronged father produced it. He handed the portrait he had found in his daughter's box to Mr. Hollingworth, and stated how it had come into his possession. The name written on the back of the photograph was Richard Hollingworth."

"In whose writing?" asked Mark Inglefield.

"In Mary Parkinson's. But the portrait was not that of Richard Hollingworth."

"Whose then, sir?"

"Yours."

Mark Inglefield started, and could have lashed himself for this exhibition of surprise.

"Surely," he said, "upon such evidence you do not accuse me?"

"I accuse no one. I must not forget to inform you that when Mr. Parkinson found the portrait he forced from his daughter the confession that it was that of her betrayer, who had the audacity and the infamy to present himself to her under the guise of a friend. Mr. Richard Hollingworth was your friend. Inglefield, I have purposely used these two strong words 'infamy' and 'audacity.' Do you agree with me that such conduct on the part of any man was audacious and infamous?"

"I agree with you entirely," replied Mark Inglefield, who, although he felt as if he were being caught in a trap, still spoke in a calm voice, and was busily casting about for ways and means to get out of it. "But I repeat, you would surely not accuse--nay, not only accuse, but convict me upon such evidence?"

"I have already told you that I accuse no one; still less would I convict without absolute proof. Very little more remains to be told of this shameful story. Mr. Hollingworth, upon seeing the portrait, indignantly defended his son, whose prospects of a public, honorable career would have been blasted had he been dragged into the courts, charged with a crime so vile, and he made the promise to Mr. Parkinson that if it should be proved that Richard Hollingworth was the betrayer, the young gentleman should make the girl the only reparation in the power of an honorable man."

"Marry her?"

"That was his undoubted meaning."

"It was a convenient promise," said Mark Inglefield, with easy assurance. "Had the portrait been that of his son he would not have made it. Mr. Hollingworth is a man of the world."

"There is no need for us to discuss that point. Your remark does you no credit, Inglefield."

"It was founded, sir," said Mark Inglefield, in a tone of respectful deference, "upon a knowledge of Mr. Hollingworth's character."

"Mr. Hollingworth would not thank you for that."

"Possibly not. Still I speak as a man of the world, as you know me to be, and as you are yourself. A man's experience must count in such matters. Is your story ended, sir?"

"Very nearly. When I left Mr. Hollingworth he expressed the intention of writing to you to-night, to the effect that your visits to his house must cease until you have cleared yourself. You will receive his letter in the morning. Mr. Parkinson also said something with which you should be made acquainted. He said you had ruined his daughter's life, and he made the solemn declaration that he would ruin yours if it cost him the last drop of his blood."

"He knows my name, then?"

"He does not. Neither Mr. Hollingworth nor I enlightened him."

"That was only fair to me, sir. My good reputation is as dear to me as any man's. All the time you have known me there has been nothing dishonorable laid to my charge."

"I know of nothing, Inglefield; but then our courses have lain somewhat apart. There should certainly, in our relations, have been a closer confidence. However, all that is past, and it is not given to us to recall our actions. Now that we are speaking together, openly and frankly, there must be no reservations. I have plainly indicated to you the course I have resolved upon with respect to the story of Mary Parkinson. I have pledged myself to assist him in obtaining justice, and you know that I shall keep my word. Let me tell you that there appears to be something strange in your attitude on this question."

"What do you expect of me? I can afford to treat with quiet scorn the accusation which you seem to favor against me."

"You are still on the wrong tack--a surprise to me in a man of so much intelligence. I expected from you something more than general statements."

"If you would put direct questions to me," said Mark Inglefield, who all this time was in serious mental debate with himself, "I should cease from unconsciously offending you. I owe you much, sir, and all my future prospects depend upon you. Recognizing and acknowledging this, it would be the height of folly in me to disappoint you in any way; but, I repeat, I am in the dark as to what you expect from me."

"You would prefer that I should ask straight questions?"

"It is my wish."

"I will do so. You are now acquainted with the disgraceful story which has caused both Mr. Hollingworth and myself to assume an attitude towards you for which we shall fully atone if we are satisfied there are no grounds for it. You do not know any person, male or female, bearing the name of Parkinson?"

"I do not."

"Do you deny that you are, directly or indirectly, connected with the wrong of which Mr. Parkinson complains?"

"I deny it emphatically." Mark Inglefield said it boldly, and met Mr. Manners's gaze unflinchingly.

"That is plain speaking," said Mr. Manners. "You must pardon me if I widen the matter a little. It is far from my wish to pry into your private concerns, but to some extent they affect me."

"You have every right to inquire into them," said Mark Inglefield; and now that he was launched on a full tide of deceit and treachery, determined to override every obstacle and to overcome every danger, there was nothing in his voice or manner to which the most suspicious person could take exception. "Every action in my life is open for your inspection."

"The man who has wronged Mr. Parkinson's daughter presented himself to her under a false name. She may have done the same to him."

"I understand what you mean, sir," said Mark Inglefield, not giving Mr. Manners time to finish, "and I declare, upon my honor as a gentleman, that there lives not a woman in the world who can complain of wrong at my hands. Is that sufficiently comprehensive, sir?"

"So far as Mary Parkinson is concerned," replied Mr. Manners, "it covers the whole ground, although it does not clear up the mystery."

"What is it that remains to be cleared? Is not my word of honor as a gentleman of more weight than the false statements of a shallow, ignorant woman?"

"You are speaking with unnecessary heat," said Mr. Manners, calmly. "In a few hours, by a very simple process, the matter can be settled. To-morrow morning you will accompany me to Mr. Parkinson's home--I have the address--and there, face to face with him and his daughter, you will be able in a moment to convince them how you have been maligned."

"Surely, sir," remonstrated Mark Inglefield, to whom this proposal brought a feeling of consternation, "you do not really mean to drag both yourself and me personally into this disgraceful affair?"

"What can you find to object to in it?" asked Mr. Manners. "I have pledged myself to sift the matter to the bottom, and I am not the man to depart from my word. The course I propose is an honorable course, and the result must be your complete vindication. At the present moment you are under suspicion; you cannot wish to remain so. Of course, Inglefield, I cannot compel you to accompany me. If you refuse--"

Mr. Manners paused, but the uncompleted sentence was sufficiently comprehensive. Thus driven, there was no alternative before Mark Inglefield than to cry, with great warmth,

"I do not refuse."

"You will accompany me?"

"Yes, sir, willingly, as you attach so much importance to it."

"I attach the most serious importance to it. We will start at eleven o'clock in the morning, and will go by train. To drive there would attract notice, which it is my desire, for more reasons than one, to avoid. It is agreed, then?"

"Yes, sir, it is agreed."

"There is an aspect of this unfortunate affair," said Mr. Manners, "which seems not to have occurred to you."

"What is it, sir?" asked Mr. Inglefield, whose inward perturbation was not lessened by the continuance of the conversation.

"Think, Inglefield. I would prefer that it should come from you instead of from me."

"I can think of nothing," said Mark Inglefield, speaking now with sincere ingenuousness. "So far as I can see, we have threshed it completely out."

"Take a moment or two to consider. I am really anxious that it should occur to you."

Mark Inglefield pondered, but so entirely engrossed was he by the main issue--which now, indeed, he recognized was vital to his prospects--that there was no room in his mind for small side issues. He found himself incapable of wresting his thoughts from the one grand point--how was he to avoid this personal meeting with Mary Parkinson in the presence of her father and Mr. Manners?

"I can think of nothing," he said, presently.

"Then I must remind you," said Mr. Manners, coldly, "that Mary Parkinson has your portrait in her possession."

"True, sir, true," exclaimed Mark Inglefield. "How could it have escaped me? And, now that you have reminded me, I believe you said that the girl herself unblushingly proclaimed that the portrait was that of her betrayer." He said this glibly; a plan was forming in his mind by which he

could avert the threatened danger.

"She proclaimed it," responded Mr. Manners, "so Mr. Parkinson informed me, but I do not think I said she proclaimed it unblushingly; I had no warranty for saying so."

"The expression is mine, and fits the case; she has trumped up the story, very likely at the instigation of her accomplice."

"If that is so he proves himself a clumsy scoundrel. Your statements established, Inglefield, you must bring this man to justice. It is a conspiracy to ruin you, therefore a criminal offence."

"You may depend," said Mark Inglefield, vivaciously--his plan was formed, and he was confident of success--"that I shall not allow this scoundrel to escape me."

"We will dismiss the matter for to-night," said Mr. Manners; "be sure that you are ready at eleven in the morning. And now I wish to speak to you upon another matter."

"Very well, sir," said Inglefield, and thought: "What is the old fool going to bring forward now?"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"I told you," said Mr. Manners, "that the matter we have left is one vital to your interests. The matter we are now approaching is vital to mine."

"I am sure, sir," said Inglefield, wondering, "anything I can do to serve you--"

"The truth will serve me; nothing less. How long is it since you saw my son, Kingsley?"

"A great many years," replied Inglefield, with a fainting heart.

Here was another unforeseen danger threatening him, for there was nothing of harshness or severity in Mr. Manners's voice; it was, indeed, gentle and tender.

"How long since you have heard of him?"

"Nearly as long. I never corresponded with him, you know. It was enough for me that he offended and deceived you--you, the best of men and fathers!"

Mr. Manners gazed at Mark Inglefield in surprise. This reference to himself as the best of men and fathers was new to him, and from such a quarter quite unexpected.

"I do not deserve your good opinion," he said; "I am not the best of men, and have not been the best of fathers."

"Let others judge," murmured Inglefield.

"They would condemn me, but not more strongly than I condemn myself."

"Why do you agitate yourself, sir?" said Inglefield. "The affair is dead and buried long ago. You have no cause for reproach."

"It is because I have true cause for reproach that I am tortured now. Wrongs may be buried, but they do not die. They live to bear after-fruit."

He leaned his head upon his hand, and a thought flashed suddenly into Mark Inglefield's mind.

"The past has been recalled to you, sir," he said, in a tone of false commiseration, "in some special way."

"Yes, Inglefield."

"Through this Mr. Parkinson?" asked Inglefield. "Yes, through him."

"Ah," cried Inglefield, "then these men are acquainted with each other."

"These men?" repeated Mr. Manners, in inquiry.

"Mr. Parkinson and your son," replied Inglefield, somewhat confused by the question.

"Yes, they are acquainted with each other."

"Then it is your son," exclaimed Inglefield, starting to his feet with a show of passion which was not entirely simulated, "I have to thank for the vile accusation which has been brought against me! It is he I have to thank for blackening my character! And it is by these means that he, after all these years, endeavors to supplant me in your respect!"

"Restrain yourself," said Mr. Manners, "You are doing Kingsley an injustice. With what has passed between us he has nothing whatever to do."

"Then how comes it, sir," demanded Inglefield, speaking still with violence, "that this Mr. Parkinson, this sham working-man--oh, I know them, sir; they trade upon the term, and twist it artfully to their own advantage--how comes it, I ask, that this Parkinson visited Mr. Hollingworth with this trumped-up story while you were with that gentleman? Why, the plot is as clear as daylight! I see it all. The shameless villains!"

"Stop, Inglefield," said Mr. Manners, sternly; "I will not allow you to brand my son with such an epithet. Recall it."

"At your bidding, yes, sir. But none the less am I amazed that you should permit yourself to be duped by such a barefaced, superficial trick."

"How was it possible," asked Mr. Manners, "that Mr. Parkinson knew that I was with Mr. Hollingworth when he called?"

"How was it possible, sir? There was no difficulty in ascertaining a fact so simple. It belongs to the deep-laid plot by which my enemies hope to ruin me."

"Once more I tell you," said Mr. Manners, "that the expectations I have held out to you shall be fulfilled to your satisfaction if you clear yourself of the charge in relation to Mary Parkinson. Be wise, Inglefield; I am not a man to be lightly trifled with, especially at a time like this, when you can see I am deeply moved. Whether Mary Parkinson's story affects you or not, it is a true story; there is no room for doubt; and the introduction of my son's name into it was not premeditated."

"What is it you wish of me?" asked Inglefield, seating himself sullenly.

"Some assistance in recalling what I learned from your lips with respect to my son and his wife."

"Well, sir, I am bound to obey you, though the subject is intensely painful to me."

"How much more painful must it be to me when I have heard that which leads me to doubt the justice of an act which condemned my son to a life of privation!"

"What you have heard from Mr. Parkinson to-night, sir?"

"Yes, from Mr. Parkinson. Inglefield, I remember that you spoke of the lady who won Kingsley's love as an artful, designing woman. If I am exaggerating, correct me."

"I certainly said little in her favor," replied Mark Inglefield, sullenly and ungraciously. There could have been no more unwelcome topic than this, and it was broached at a time when all his attention and skill were required to ward off impending ruin. It proved that he was a man of infinite resource that two such blows dealt at once and so unexpectedly did not completely confound him.

"You must be a great deal more explicit with me, Inglefield," said Mr. Manners. "You said nothing in her favor."

"Well, sir, if you will have it so."

Mr. Manners frowned.

"It is not as I would have it; it is or is not the truth."

"I have no intention of denying it;" and here came a cunning stroke. "Consider, sir. Is it not natural that I should be to some extent unbalanced by what has transpired?"

"Yes, it is natural, Inglefield, and I will excuse much. But I must have plain answers to my questions, or I shall ask you nothing further."

CHAPTER XL.

The turn which this conversation had taken and the unexpected nature of the disclosures which Mr. Manners had made were, indeed, surprises for which Mark Inglefield could not possibly have been prepared. He had entered the house in a condition of mind which may be designated beatific. All his plans had prospered, and he had expected to hear from Mr. Manners a thoroughly satisfactory account of the interview between his patron and Mr. Hollingworth. The celebration of the contemplated union with Miss Hollingworth would have been the crowning triumph of all his scheming. From the day when he first instilled into Mr. Manners's ears the poisoned insinuations which were to effect the separation of father and son, success had attended him. Wary, cunning, and most painstaking in the early years of his association with Mr. Manners, he believed that he had so firmly established his position that there was no possibility of his being shaken from it. Gradually he had allowed himself to be lulled into a state of perfect security--to such an extent, indeed, that he no longer took pains to make himself more than ordinarily agreeable to the man upon whose word his future prospects depended. But now, in this startling manner, and at this unexpected time, the storm he had not foreseen burst upon him. He did not pause to consider that the Nemesis which threatened him was the outcome of his own evil, and that it sometimes happens that wrong-doers themselves forge bolts which destroy them. The idea of anything like justice or Providence did not occur to him. He was angry, but his conscience was not disturbed. His inherent and perfect selfishness led him straight to one incontrovertible view of the difficulty in which he found himself. He had enemies who, nettled and wroth at his approaching triumph, had suddenly banded themselves together for the purpose of trampling him in the dust. It was, therefore, a battle to the death between him and them, and, recognizing that this was the supreme moment in his career, he determined to stop at nothing which would avert defeat. In the heart of this determination there lurked a ruthlessness of spirit which would lead him to any extreme of crime and duplicity. For the unhappy girl whom he had brought to shame and ruin he felt not one spark of compassion; his own safety was his only consideration. As for Kingsley and Nansie, if a wish of his could have destroyed them it would have been breathed without compunction.

Between Mr. Manners's last words and his response there was not a moment's pause. Swift as lightning's flash his resolution was formed.

"I scarcely know, sir," he said, "how to convince you that I have no other desire than to satisfy you. I can only repeat what I have endeavored already to make clear, that you shall have plain and honest answers to everything you ask of me. But for all that, you must make some allowance for my natural feelings of surprise and indignation, that, after all these years, I find my integrity and honor doubted, and matters suddenly and strangely revived which I thought were settled long ago."

"I will make every reasonable allowance," said Mr. Manners. "At present, so far as you are concerned, I am animated by no other spirit than that of being strictly just towards you--even though finding that through some mischance I have drifted into error, I shall be compelled to deprive him who is nearest to my blood of the chief portion of his patrimony. I am ready to take upon myself the whole of the blame; but I must be satisfied that I have not been wilfully deceived."

"Deceived by whom, sir? By me?"

"By you," replied Mr. Manners, calmly. "You were the first to impart to me information concerning the lady my son Kingsley married. Your reports aggravated the feelings I entertained towards her because of the disappointment I experienced by my son marrying without my consent and approval. No other person spoke to me of her but yourself, nor did I seek information elsewhere. You cannot fail to remember the nature of the charges you brought against her."

"That is asking me a great deal," said Inglefield. "Do you expect me to remember faithfully every trifling detail of circumstances which I have not thought of for a long number of years?"

"I do not," said Mr. Manners, observing with displeasure that Mark Inglefield continued to fence with the most important issues of the conversation; "but the principal of them cannot have escaped your memory."

"Being, as it seems to me, upon my trial--" said Inglefield, and paused, for the purpose of ascertaining whether this statement was in consonance with Mr. Manners's intention.

Mr. Manners nodded, and said:

"Yes, Inglefield. You may consider that to some extent you are upon your trial."

"That being the case, sir, it strikes me that you have already formed a judgment, without hearing what I may have to say."

"I should be sorry to think so. Tell me in what way you suppose I have done this."

"You speak of the person your son married as a lady."

"Well?"

"That is not how I should describe her."

"Your remark tallies with what you said against her many years ago. But I shall continue to speak of her and to regard her as a lady until I have evidence to the contrary."

"Have you seen her, then, lately," asked Inglefield, "as well as the scoundrel who has brought these monstrous charges against me?"

"You are overtaxing my patience, Inglefield," said Mr. Manners. "You assert that you are anxious to satisfy me upon certain points which I consider vital, and yet you take advantage of any slight word or remark which offers the opportunity of evasion. If this opinion is unpalatable to you, thank yourself for it. I have seen the lady of whom we are speaking but once in my life, and on the occasion she visited me I was surprised at the impression she produced upon me. I expected to see a woman whose appearance would have justified the opinion I had formed of her through your statements. I saw, on the contrary, a lady of gentle manners, a lady of culture and refinement, who received with dignity and respect the reproachful words I addressed to her. She needed to be accomplished, indeed, in duplicity and artfulness to have so successfully simulated the air of modesty and gentleness which distinguished her."

"You are not versed in the ways of such women, sir," said Inglefield. "They can deceive the cleverest of men."

"Possibly. I am waiting to ascertain whether I have been so deceived. At present, everything is in her favor. You informed me that she was a vulgar, showy person whose appearance in good society would bring ridicule upon my son."

"That is the opinion I formed of her, sir, from more complete evidence than you are supplied with."

"I understood that you were very well acquainted with her; intimately, I think, you said."

"I knew her very well, sir."

"Intimately? You told me so at the time."

"Yes, sir, intimately," replied Inglefield, inwardly cursing his patron's faithful memory.

"I am glad to be corroborated; it shows that you are speaking frankly. You related to me a story of the arts she used to entangle you, of your seeing through them, and escaping. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"As she could not ensnare you, she turned to Kingsley, and got him into her toils. Correct me if I am wrong in my memory of these matters."

"I cannot say you are wrong, sir, but I will not pledge myself to the precise words you are using."

"I do not ask you to do so. So long as we are agreed upon the general view I shall be satisfied. For my own part, I may say, Inglefield, that I am quite certain I am putting it fairly. Most distinctly did you call her an adventuress."

"Was she not one, sir, in entangling your son because he had a wealthy father?"

"If that was her motive, yes, she was an adventuress; but it scarcely accords with the character of an adventuress that she should be content with making but one appeal to the man upon whose money she had designs."

"You have a very positive and decided manner, sir, from which she might naturally infer that further attempts would be useless."

"I cannot agree with you. Such a woman as you described would not so easily relinquish her designs. It was all she had to depend upon. Failing success, a life of poverty was before her. She certainly would have tried again."

"Surely you would not make me accountable for her actions, sir?"

"No; I am simply arguing the question logically--not as regards you, but as regards her. At the time she made her modest appeal my judgment was clouded with passion; it is now clear, and the course I took does not commend itself to me. Her uncle also made an appeal to me--only one. He had fallen into sudden misfortune; on the day before he came to me he had been burned out, and was not insured."

"A trumped-up story, I have no doubt, sir."

"Not so. A true story, as I saw in the papers afterwards. Neither in his manners was there anything vulgar or objectionable. Although a poor man, he was well educated, and spoke with discretion and intelligence. Had he appealed to me for a large sum of money I might have had reasonable grounds for suspicion; but all he asked for was either five or ten pounds, and that was to send to my son, who was in a state of poverty abroad. I declare," said Mr. Manners, rising, and pacing the room in agitation, "now that I am opening my mind upon these matters, now that I hear myself speaking of them, I cannot justify my conduct. It was monstrous, monstrous. Had I given them a thousand times as much as they asked for I should not have missed it. My heart must have been made of stone!"

"Do not distress yourself, sir," said Inglefield, with a fawning attempt at sympathy. "You could not have acted otherwise."

"I could. I could have acted both justly and mercifully, and so have lightened their lot. I drove the uncle away from the house, and he, too, never made another appeal to me. Their conduct from first to last was dignified and independent; mine was dastardly. You see how little disposed I am to spare myself. Let us put an end to this conversation; I am afraid to trust myself further."

Mark Inglefield was too discreet to offer any opposition, and too glad to escape to put into operation the plans he had formed. With a gentle "Good-night, sir," he was about to leave the room, when Mr. Manners said:

"Do not forget that we have to inquire into the treacherous story related to me by Mr. Parkinson. You will be ready to accompany me at eleven o'clock in the morning."

"I shall be quite ready," said Mark Inglefield. And thus the interview terminated.

CHAPTER XLI.

Being alone in his room Mark Inglefield set to work at once. The first thing he did was to write a letter, which he addressed to Mary Parkinson. The purport of this letter was that difficulties which had stood in his way were fortunately removed, and that he was now in a position, or would be in a very short time, to fulfil the promise he had made to her. This promise was that he would marry her. Appearances, he said, had been against him, but he would explain all to her personally. The past had been sad, the future should be bright. She could trust him implicitly, and it was a proof of his anxiety to do what was right that he asked her to leave her father's house the moment she received this letter. He was waiting for her, and would take her away at once to commence a new and better life. She must leave the house quietly and secretly, and no one must know of her movements. "In a little while," he wrote, "when you are my wife, we will either send for your father, or you shall go to him and bring him to the home I shall prepare for you. Do not delay; there is not a moment to lose. I have much to tell you, and I cannot rest till I see you." Having reached this point in his letter, he was about to add an instruction to bring this letter with her from her father's house; but he did not write the words. "It might arouse her suspicions," he thought. "She is sure to bring the letter." He signed himself, "Your faithful lover and husband," and then paused again, doubting whether this would be sufficient without a name. He could not put his own, for the reason that she was not acquainted with it. With the boldness of desperation he wrote the name he had assumed when he first introduced himself to her, "Richard Hollingworth," and thought as he did so what a fool he had been not to have assumed a name which was entirely false. But he had not then reckoned with the future, and had not dreamed that an exposure could ever occur. It was too late now to repent; with all these chances against him he had little doubt that he would ultimately triumph.

If he could succeed in conveying this letter to her to-night all would be well. Mary Parkinson would only be too glad to obey him, would only be too glad to fly into his arms. She had no one else in the world to depend upon but herself; her honor, her good name, her future happiness, were in his hands.

The letter finished, and placed in an envelope, at the head of which he wrote, "Read this immediately. R. H.," he looked through his wardrobe, and selected a suit of clothes which would in some measure disguise him. These he put on, and then enveloped himself in an ulster which would render the disguise more complete. Carrying the letter in his hand, he stole stealthily out of the house, locking the door of his bedroom, and taking the key with him. He had provided himself with a latchkey, so that he could leave and enter the house without attracting attention.

"Safe so far," he muttered, when he found himself in the dark street. When he was at a safe distance he hailed a cab, and was driven to the east of the City, within a quarter of a mile of Mr. Parkinson's house. He was too cunning to drive nearer. Paying the cabman liberally, he strolled away with apparent carelessness. The next thing to be done was to convey the letter to Mary Parkinson without any one but themselves being the wiser. A difficult undertaking at such an hour; he was not even sure of the house in which Mary lived. It was necessary, therefore, he decided regretfully, to obtain the assistance of a stranger. He arrived at the street in which Mr. Parkinson lived, and he looked about him. A policeman passed him, but he dared not seek the aid of a public officer. The policeman being out of sight, fortune favored him. Wretched wayfarers who had no roof to cover them, and no money to pay for a bed, are not uncommon in these poor thoroughfares, and one approached him now and looked into his face. She was, alas! a young woman, scarcely twenty years of age. He accosted her without hesitation.

"Do you want to earn half a crown?" he asked.

She laughed hysterically, and held out her hand. He put sixpence into it, saying:

"The other two shillings if you can tell me what I want to know."

"Right you are," she said, recklessly; "fire away."

"Are you acquainted with this neighborhood?" he said.

"What game are you up to?" she cried.

"Never mind my game," he said, "but answer my questions. Do you know these streets?"

"Do I know 'em? Why, I was born in 'em!"

"In which one?"

"In this; and wish I hadn't been."

"Never mind that. You know the people who live in these houses, then?"

"Know 'em? By heart! And they know me--rather! Ask any of 'em what they think of Blooming Bess."

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Make it worth my while."

"Will a crown be worth your while?"

"Depends."

"You shall have a crown, and if you hold your tongue, in a fortnight I'll come and find you and give you another crown. I suppose you'll be hereabouts."

"Unless I'm in jail, or dead! I don't much care which."

"It isn't much of a secret, only don't talk about it to any one. You know this street, you say, and everybody in it. Just walk along with me, and tell me who lives in the houses."

"That's a lot to make a fuss about," said the wretched girl, and walked past the houses in his company, and said, here lives such and such a one, here lives so-and-so, here's a dozen of 'em living together, and so on, and so on. Now and again, to put her off the scent, Mark Inglefield asked questions concerning strangers, as to their trade, families, and other particulars. At length she came to Mr. Parkinson's house, and said,

"Here lives old Parkinson."

"And who is he?"

"Oh, one of us," replied the girl.

"One of us!

"Leastways, no better than the others. No more is his gal. I'm as good as she is, any day."

"His daughter, do you mean?"

"Yes. Stuck up, she used to be. Not stuck up now, not a bit of it. That's her room on the first floor, with a light in it. Afraid to go to bed in the dark. A nice lot she is!"

Mark Inglefield, having ascertained what he wanted, marked the number of the house, and congratulated himself on the lighted candle. Then he walked to the end of the street, listening to the account the girl gave of the residents, and when he came to the end of it he handed her four-and-sixpence, and said that was all he wanted to know.

"You're a rum un," said the girl. She had enough to pay for a bit of supper and a miserable bed. Late as it was, she knew where to obtain them.

All was silent and dark as Mark Inglefield wended his way back to Mr. Parkinson's house. Making sure that he was alone, he stepped back and threw a small stone at the window. Mary Parkinson was awake, for he had but to throw another before the sash of the window was raised, and the girl looked out.

"Who's there?" she asked.

"Hush!" said Mark Inglefield. "Read this."

He had the letter ready, with a stone attached to it, and he threw it skilfully almost into her hand. The girl retreated into her room, and Mark Inglefield waited. He had purposely disguised his voice, fearing that, in the excitement of recognizing it, Mary might have screamed out and alarmed the house. He had not long to wait. He heard the key being softly turned in the street door, and the next moment Mary Parkinson was by his side.

"Oh, Richard!" she cried; "is it you--is it you?"

"Yes," he said, hurriedly. "Don't make a fool of yourself. No, no, I don't mean that; I mean, speak low. You're a good girl; you've got your hat on; now, let us get out of this. You thought I was going to leave you in the lurch. See, now, how you were mistaken in me. I will explain all as we go. I couldn't help acting as I did. My whole future and yours, Mary, depended on it. But everything is right now, and you will not have any reason to complain of me again. It did look bad, I admit; but all your trouble is over now."

He was hurrying her away as he spoke, and already they were at some distance from her father's house.

"Oh, Richard, Richard, it is all so sudden!" sighed the girl. "I have been so unhappy--so unhappy!"

"Yes, yes," he said, interrupting her, having no desire to encourage her to talk, but you are happy now, and everything will be well. "You read my letter, didn't you? All that I wrote in it is true. Ah, here's a cab. Get in."

"Shall we never part again, Richard?" asked Mary, trembling so in the sudden happiness of this adventure that he had to support her into the cab.

"Never again, Mary, never again. Never mistrust me again."

"I won't, I won't!" said the girl, and burst into a fit of passionate weeping.

Mark Inglefield gave an instruction to the driver, and they rattled along at a great pace through the City.

CHAPTER XLII.

At eleven o'clock punctually the next morning Mark Inglefield knocked at the door of Mr. Manners's study. They were not in the habit of taking their meals together; this was the reason of their not meeting at the breakfast-table.

"Good-morning, sir," said Inglefield.

"Good-morning," said Mr. Manners.

Mark Inglefield was cheerful and composed, and Mr. Manners, gazing at him, could not help thinking that he must be mistaken in suspecting him of wrong-doing.

"Shall we start at once, sir?"

"At once."

"I have been thinking," said Mark Inglefield, "of what took place last night, and I almost fear that I laid myself open to misconstruction."

"In what way?"

"By my manner. I was nervous and agitated, and I am afraid I expressed myself badly. It was not quite unnatural. The shock of finding myself charged with a crime so vile was great. Stronger men than I would have been unnerved. Indeed, sir, I could bear anything except the loss of your esteem."

"It will soon be put to the proof, Inglefield."

"Yes, sir, and I am truly glad that I shall be brought face to face with my accusers. When the poor girl who has been wronged sees me you will be immediately undeceived. Let us go, sir."

"This," thought Mr. Manners, "is innocence; I have done Inglefield an injustice." His manner insensibly softened towards the schemer who up till now had so successfully plotted; but this more lenient mood was attributable only to his stern sense of justice. It was this which induced him to say aloud, "Inglefield, you gathered from what I said last night that it is not unlikely I may take steps to reconcile myself with my son and his wife?"

If Mark Inglefield had dared he would have denied that he had gathered any such impression, but so much now depended upon his keeping his patron in a good-humor with him that he merely said, "Yes, sir," and waited for further developments.

"Should this take place," continued Mr. Manners, "we shall both have to confess ourselves in the wrong. Your mistake may have been only an error of judgment; mine was much more serious; but that is a matter with which you have nothing to do. If Kingsley is willing, I should wish you and he to be friends."

"I am ready to do anything," said Inglefield, "to please you. But may I venture to say something?"

"Say whatever is in your mind, Inglefield."

"Nothing, believe me, sir, could be farther from my desire than that you should find yourself unable to carry out your wishes. No effort shall be wanting on my part to bring happiness to you, quite independent of any reflection that may be cast upon my truthfulness and single-mindedness in what I unhappily was compelled to take part in many years ago. I waive all selfish considerations. I feel that I am expressing myself lamely, but perhaps you understand me."

"Yes, and I appreciate your delicate position. Go on."

"Having, then, made this clear to you, having as it were consented to have a false light thrown upon my actions, you cannot doubt my sincerity when I say that you have my warmest wishes towards the success of what you desire. But this is what I wish to say, and I beg you will not misconstrue me. The new impressions you received were gained from this Mr. Parkinson, whom you so unexpectedly met at Mr. Hollingworth's house last night."

"Yes."

"Heaven forbid that I should step between father and son! The duty that I once felt devolved upon me was a most painful one, but I did it fearlessly, in the hope that the disclosures it was unhappily in my power to make might have been the means of assisting you to the accomplishment of your wishes with respect to your son. As I did my duty then, fearless of consequences, so must I do it now."

"Well, Inglefield?"

"I repeat, sir, that the new impressions you gained were gained from statements made by Mr. Parkinson. I have no hesitation--you must pardon me for being so frank--in declaring him to be a slanderer. I have no key to the mystery of the plot which, in the hands of a man less just than yourself, would almost surely have been my ruin, and I should be wanting in respect to myself were I not indignant at the monstrous charge of which it seems I stand accused, and of which I am now going with you to clear myself. That will be a simple matter, and I will pass it by. But, sir, if it is proved that Mr. Parkinson is wrong in my case, if it is proved that for some purpose of his own, and perhaps of others, he has invented an abominable story, and committed himself to abominable statements, may he not also be wrong in the statements he has made respecting persons whom, out of consideration for you, I will not name?"

"You refer to my son and his wife," said Mr. Manners. Inglefield was silent. "I can cast no blame upon you, Inglefield. I can only repeat that everything shall be put to the proof."

With this remark Inglefield was fain to be satisfied; but he inwardly congratulated himself that he had done something to throw doubt upon Mr. Parkinson's eulogies of Kingsley and Nansie.

They did not walk all the way to the east of London, but, as Mark Inglefield had done but a few short hours ago, they rode to within a quarter of a mile of Mr. Parkinson's residence, to which they then proceeded on foot. As they drew near they became aware that the neighborhood was abnormally excited. It was past twelve o'clock when they reached the street in which Mr. Parkinson resided, and this was the dinner-hour of a great many of the working men and women roundabout. The majority of these were standing in groups, talking excitedly of an event in which

it was evident they were hugely interested. Mark Inglefield guessed what it was, but Mr. Manners had no clew to it. He inquired his way to Mr. Parkinson's house, and, at the moment he reached it, was confronted by Mr. Parkinson himself.

The man was in a violent state of agitation. His limbs were trembling, his features were convulsed with passion, and he gazed upon Mr. Manners without recognizing him.

"I have come," said Mr. Manners, "in accordance with my promise--"

"What promise?" cried Mr. Parkinson. "I want my daughter--my daughter!"

"It is about her I have come," said Mr. Manners, in great wonder.

"What of her?" cried Mr. Parkinson. "You have come about her? Well, where is she--where is she? But let her be careful, or I may be tempted to lay her dead at my feet!"

"I do not understand you. Do you not remember what you and I said to each other last night? I said I would see you righted. I said I would bring the man whom you accused."

"I remember, I remember," interrupted Mr. Parkinson, in a voice harsh with passion. "You made fair promises, as others have made before you! But what does it matter now? My daughter is gone--gone! Run away in the night, like a thief! She may be in the river. Better for her, a great deal better for her! Stop! Who are you?" He advanced to Mark Inglefield, and, laying his trembling hands upon him, peered into his face. "I know you, you black-hearted scoundrel! You are the man whose picture I found in my daughter's box. Give me my daughter--give me my Mary!"

Mark Inglefield shook him off, but with difficulty, and the man stood glaring at him. Already a crowd had gathered around them; the words, "black-hearted scoundrel," caused them to cast angry glances at Mark Inglefield. Mr. Manners looked in astonishment at one and another, utterly unable to comprehend the situation.

"The man is mad," said Mark Inglefield.

"Yes, I am mad," cried Mr. Parkinson, striving to escape from those who held him back from springing upon Mark Inglefield, "and therefore dangerous. What! Is a man's home to be broken up, is he to be robbed of his only child and disgraced, and is he to stand idly by when the scoundrel is before him who has worked this ruin upon him? As Heaven is my judge, I will have my revenge!"

"Come, come," said a working-man, "this violence will do no good, Parkinson. Be reasonable."

"If violence will do no good," retorted Mr. Parkinson, "still struggling, what will?"

"The truth," replied the working-man who had interposed.

"Ah, yes, the truth," said Mr. Parkinson; "and when that is told, let us have justice!"

"Spoken like a man," murmured some in the crowd.

"But what kind of justice?" demanded Mr. Parkinson. "A cold-blooded law court, with cold-blooded lawyers arguing this way and that, while those who have been brought to ruin and shame sit down with their wasted lives before them? No--not that kind of justice for me! I will have the life of the man who has cast this upon me! And that"--pointing with furious hand towards Mark Inglefield--"that is the monster I will have my justice upon, without appeal to lawyers!"

"I give you my word of honor," said Mark Inglefield, appealing to those by whom he was surrounded, and who hemmed him and Mr. Manners in, determined that they should not escape--"I give you my word of honor that I have not the least idea what this man means. I do not know him, nor any person belonging to him."

"You lie!" cried Mr. Parkinson.

"I speak the truth," said Mark Inglefield, perfectly calm. "This gentleman who has accompanied me here will testify to it. If I did not suspect that this man is not accountable for his words, I would not remain here another moment."

"But you must," said a friend of Mr. Parkinson; and, "Yes, you must, you must!" proceeded from others in the throng.

"I will," said Mark Inglefield, "because I have come here for the express purpose of unmasking a foul plot--"

"Rightly put," shouted Mr. Parkinson. "A foul plot--a foul plot! And it shall be unmasked, and the guilty shall suffer--not the innocent! For, after all, mates"--and now he, in his turn, appealed to the crowd--"what blame lies at the door of a weak, foolish girl who is led to her ruin by the lying, plausible words of gentlemen like these?"

But here the unreasoning torrent of his wrath was stemmed by many of his comrades, who said:

"None of that, Parkinson. It won't help you, and it won't help us. The gentleman speaks fair. He says he has come here to unmask a foul plot."

"That is my intention, and the intention of my friend here," said Mark Inglefield, "and, as you say, it will not help him nor any of us to be violent and abusive. Why, does it not stand to reason that we could have kept away if we had chosen? Does it not prove, coming here of our own accord as we have done, that we are of the same mind as yourselves?"

"Yes," replied one, struck, as others were, with this plain reasoning, "let us hear what this gentleman has to say."

"It is not for me," said Mark Inglefield, who, although he had won the suffrages of his audience, was not disposed to be too communicative, "to pry into any man's family affairs, but when he makes them public property and brings false accusations against the innocent, he is not justified in grumbling if he is hauled over the coals. My friend here was compelled last night to listen to charges which seemed to him to implicate me in some trouble into which Mr. Parkinson has fallen."

"How do you come to know his name?" inquired a man.

"He gave it last night to this gentleman, who communicated it to me. Besides, it has been mentioned half a dozen times by yourselves. The charges I referred to coming to my ears, it was arranged between my friend and myself that we should present ourselves here this morning for the purpose of confuting them. I suppose you don't expect anything fairer than that?"

"Nothing could be fairer."

"I am sorry to learn," continued Mark Inglefield, "that this man has been wronged, and sorry to learn that trouble has come to him through his daughter. They are both entire strangers to me. What I ask is that he bring his daughter forward now to corroborate my statement that she and I never saw each other in all our lives."

"But that," said one of Mr. Parkinson's friends, "is just what he can't do. His daughter has strangely disappeared in the night."

Mark Inglefield turned towards Mr. Manners, with a smile of incredulity on his lips.

"Our errand here seems to be wasted. Let me speak to you a moment out of hearing of these people."

The working-men moved aside to allow the two gentlemen to pass, and when they were a little apart Mark Inglefield said:

"I hope you are satisfied, sir."

"So far as you are concerned," replied Mr. Manners, "I cannot help being. But there is something still at the bottom of this that I would give much to get at the truth of."

"Why, sir," said Mark Inglefield, scornfully, "can you not see that the whole affair is trumped up?"

"No, I cannot see that. These men were not aware that we were coming here this morning, and even if they were it is not likely that they would have got up this excitement for our especial benefit."

Mark Inglefield bit his lip.

"I am not quite right, perhaps, in saying that the whole affair is trumped up, but undoubtedly it is much exaggerated, and more importance is being attached to it than it deserves. You must not mind my saying that I cannot form the same opinion of Mr. Parkinson as yourself. It seems to me that he is desirous of making capital out of his calamity. I have done all I could, have I not, to clear myself of the charge?"

"I do not see that you could have done more."

"There is nothing more to stop for, then. Shall we go?"

"Not yet. You may, if you wish, but I shall remain to make inquiries."

"I will remain with you, sir, of course. It would not be safe to leave you alone in such a neighborhood as this."

"It would be quite safe. You forget that it was in just such neighborhoods I passed my young days. I know them better than you appear to do, Inglefield. The people we see about us are respectable members of society--quite as respectable as ourselves. As to remaining, please

yourself. I do not feel at all out of place in such society."

"Nor do I, sir," said Mark Inglefield, with a frank smile. "It is only my anxiety for you that made me say what I did."

"There is another matter which you seem to have forgotten. It is in this neighborhood that my son and his wife and daughter live, If I am not mistaken, Mr. Parkinson wishes to say something to us."

During this colloquy Mr. Parkinson had calmed himself greatly, and now, followed by his friends, approached the gentlemen.

"I should like to ask you a question or two," he said, addressing himself to Mark Inglefield, "if you have no objection."

"Of course I have no objection," said Mark Inglefield. "I will do whatever I can to help you; only come to the point."

"I'll do so, sir. Your visit here, on the face of it, seems fair and above-board. What I want to know first is, how it happens that my daughter had a portrait of yours in her possession?"

"My dear sir," replied Mark Inglefield, blandly, "you are putting a conundrum to me."

"You don't know how she got hold of it, sir?"

"I haven't the remotest notion."

"How comes it that, when I taxed her with it, she confessed that it was the portrait of the scoundrel who had brought her shame upon her?"

At this question all eyes were directed towards Mark Inglefield. Nothing daunted, he said:

"That is a question it is impossible for me to answer. She must, of course, have had some motive in giving utterance to so direct a falsehood. My only regret is that she is not here to tell you herself that we are complete strangers to each other. Has your daughter always told you the truth? Has she never deceived you?" Mr. Parkinson winced; these questions struck home. "Why, then," continued Mark Inglefield, perceiving his advantage, "should she not have deceived you in this instance? Perhaps she wishes to screen the man against whom you are justly angered; perhaps she still has a sneaking fondness for him, and protects him by throwing the blame upon a stranger."

"I don't dispute," said Mr. Parkinson, "that you may be right. But are you public property?"

"I fail to understand you."

"Are you a public man, sir?"

"Thank Heaven, no. I am a private gentleman."

"Your portraits are not put up in the shop windows for sale?"

"No."

"Then what I want to know is," said Mr. Parkinson, doggedly sticking to his point, "how your portrait fell into her hands."

"And that, I repeat," said Mark Inglefield, impatiently, "is exactly what I am unable to tell you."

"She couldn't have bought it. She must have had it given to her by some one."

"Well?"

"Whoever gave it to her must know you, and you must know him."

A murmur of approval ran through the throng. Nothing better pleases such an audience, as was now assembled, than an argument logically worked out.

"That does not follow," disputed Mark Inglefield, annoyed at Mr. Parkinson's pertinacity, but seeing no way to avoid it without incurring the risk of reviving Mr. Manners's suspicions.

"That's where the chances are, at all events," said Mr. Parkinson. "You see, sir, that you can't help being dragged into this bad business."

"And if I decline to be dragged into it?"

"It is what very few men would do, sir. I should say--and I think most of those round us will agree with me--that you are bound to do all you can to assist me in discovering the scoundrel who would ruin you as well as me."

Mr. Manners looked straight at Mark Inglefield. Mr. Parkinson's view tallied with that which he had expressed to Inglefield in their interview.

"I will do what I can," he said, "but I really am at a loss how to take even the first step."

"Thank you for saying so much, sir. We are all at a loss, but I don't intend to rest till I discover the scoundrel. You'll not object to giving me your name and address."

"What for?" demanded Mark Inglefield, wishing that the earth would open and swallow his tormentor.

"Give it to him," said Mr. Manners, quietly.

Thus forced to comply, Mark Inglefield, with a show of alacrity, handed Mr. Parkinson his card.

"I am obliged to you, sir," said Mr. Parkinson.

A possible road of escape presented itself to Mark Inglefield.

"Who saw this portrait?" he asked.

"No one in this neighborhood," replied Mr. Parkinson, "that I know of, except me and my daughter."

"It may not be my portrait, after all," suggested Mark Inglefield.

"There isn't a shadow of doubt, sir," said Mr. Parkinson, "that it *is* a picture of you. I'm ready to swear to it."

It was at this precise moment that there occurred to Mark Inglefield a contingency which filled him with apprehension. From what Mr. Manners had told him, Kingsley's wife had befriended Mary Parkinson, and was doubtless in the confidence of the poor girl. Suppose Mary had shown his portrait to Nansie, would she have recognized it? It was long since he and Nansie had met, and time had altered his appearance somewhat, but not sufficiently to disguise his identity. He did not betray his uneasiness, but a new feature was now introduced that caused him to turn hot and cold. This was the unwelcome and unexpected appearance of Blooming Bess upon the scene.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The wretched girl did not come alone. A woman dragged her forward.

"Here you are, Mr. Parkinson," said the woman. "Blooming Bess can tell you something about Mary's disappearance last night."

"I am ruined," thought Mark Inglefield, and hoped that Blooming Bess would not recognize him. There were chances in his favor. It was night when they met, and he had taken the precaution to change his clothes and wrap himself in an ulster. To these chances he was compelled to trust; and perhaps he could keep himself out of the girl's sight.

"What do you know about it?" asked Mr. Parkinson, in great excitement.

"Oh, I don't mind telling," said the girl. "Here, you! Just let go of me, will you?"

She released herself from the woman's grasp.

"Do you want the lot," she asked of Mr. Parkinson, "from beginning to end?"

"I must know everything," he replied, "everything."

"You must, must you? Well, that's for me to say, not you. I could tell you a lot of lies if I wanted to."

He made a threatening motion towards her, but was held back by his mates. "You'll only make things worse," they said.

"A precious sight worse," said Blooming Bess, with a reckless laugh. "Oh, let him get at me if

he likes! Who cares? I don't. But I'll tell him what he wants, never fear. She's a respectable one, she is! When I went to the bad, passed me by as if I was so much dirt. Wouldn't look at me--wouldn't speak to me; holding her frock like this, for fear I should touch it. And now what is she, I'd like to know? Better than me--or worse?"

Mr. Parkinson groaned.

"Groan away; much good it'll do you. It won't bring her back; and if it did, who'd look at her? Not me. She's come down, with all her stuck-up pride. I'm as good as her, any day of the week!"

"Come, come, Bess," said a man in the crowd, "you're not a bad sort; let us have the truth, like a good girl."

"Oh, yes, I'm a real good un now you want to get something out of me! But never mind; here goes. It was in the middle of the night, and I didn't have a brass farthing in my pockets. They turned me out because I couldn't pay for my bed. It wasn't the first time, and won't be the last. So out I goes, and here I am in the middle of this very street, when a swell comes up to me, and says, says he, 'Do you want to earn half a bull?' I laughs, and holds out my hand, and he puts sixpence in it, and says, says he, 'The other two bob when you tell me what I want to know.'"

"Are you making this up out of your head, Bess?"

"Not me! not clever enough. Never was one of the clever ones, or I'd be a jolly sight better off. Then the swell asks me if I can tell him the names of the people that lives in the street, and plump upon that asks me if I can keep a secret. I thought he was kidding me, I give you my word, and I says, 'Make it worth my while.' With that he promises me five bob, and I walks with him, or he walks with me--it don't matter which, does it?--from one end of the street to the other, and I tell him everybody that lives in it. 'Who lives here?' says he, and 'Who lives here?' says he; and thinks I, this is a rum game; wonder what he's up to! But it ain't my business, is it? My business is to earn five bob, and earn it easy; and when I have told him all he wanted, he gives me four bob and a bender, and sends me off. What can you make of all that?"

"Not much," said the man who had taken her in hand. Mr. Parkinson could not trust himself to speak, and Mark Inglefield did not dare. "What time was it when this occurred?"

"By my gold watch," replied the girl, "with a fine sarcasm, it was half-past the middle of the night. Perhaps a minute or two more. I like to be particular."

"And that is all you know? You can't tell us anything more?"

"Oh, I didn't say that, did I? All? Not a bit of it. Why, the cream's to come. It's only skim-milk you've got as yet."

"Let's hear the end of it, Bess," said the man, coaxingly.

"That's the way to speak to me. Be soft, and you can do what you like with me; be hard, and to save your life I wouldn't speak a word. The end of it was this. The swell had done with me, and thought I had done with him. Never more mistaken in his life. I was born curious, I was; so thinks I to myself, 'I'm blowed if I don't see what he's up to;' and when I turned the corner of the street and he thought I was gone for good, I come back, and there I was, you know, standing in the dark, out of sight. He walks back to the middle of the street, and stops right before this house, and looks up at Mary's--I beg your pardon, at Miss Parkinson's window. There's a light burning there, you know. He's got a letter in his hand, and what does he do but pick up a stone and tie them together. Then he picks up another stone, and throws it at Mary's window, and it opens and she looks out. I'm too far off to hear what they say to each other; but I suppose he says, 'Catch,' as he throws the letter up, and catch she does. And would you believe it? A little while afterwards down she comes and takes his arm as natural as life, and off they go together. I follow at a distance; I didn't want my neck twisted, and he looked the sort of cove that wouldn't mind doing it, so I keep at a safe distance, till he calls a growler, and in they get and drive away. And that's the end of it."

"It's a true story," said Mr. Parkinson. "When I went into her bedroom this morning, her window was open."

Those who had heard it gathered into groups, and discussed its various points; some suggesting that it looked as if the police were mixed up in it; others favoring Mark Inglefield's view that Mary Parkinson's statements to her father were false, from first to last. Meanwhile Mark Inglefield and Mr. Manners were left to themselves, the younger man congratulating himself that he had escaped being seen by Blooming Bess. His great anxiety now was to get away as quickly as possible, and, at the risk of offending Mr. Manners, he would have chosen the lesser evil, and have made an excuse for leaving him, had it not been that he was prevented by Blooming Bess, whose aimless footsteps had led her straight to Mark Inglefield, before whom she now stood. She gazed at him, and he at her. Her look was bold, saucy, reckless; his was apprehensive; but knowing, if she exposed him, that there was no alternative for him but to brazen it out, he did not decline the challenge expressed in her eyes. She said nothing, however, but slightly turned her head and laughed. As she turned she was accosted by Mr. Parkinson, who had joined this group.

"Did you see the man?" asked Mr. Parkinson.

"Did I see him?" she exclaimed. "Yes; though it was the middle of the night, and dark, I saw him as plain as I see you. Why, I could pick him out among a thousand."

But to Mark Inglefield's infinite relief she made no movement towards him; she merely looked at him again and laughed.

"Describe him," said Mr. Parkinson, roughly. "It may be a laughing matter to you, but it is not to us."

"To us!" retorted the girl. "What have these gentlemen got to do with it?"

"We are interested in it," said Mr. Manners.

"Oh, are you? And are you interested in it too, sir?" she asked, addressing Mark Inglefield.

"I am," he replied, finding himself compelled to speak.

"That's funny. You're the sort of gentleman, I should say, that would pay well for anything that was done for him."

"I am," said Mark Inglefield, growing bold; her words seemed to indicate a desire to establish a freemasonry between them, of which neither Mr. Parkinson nor Mr. Manners could have any suspicion.

"That's a good thing to know," said Blooming Bess, "because, you see, I should be an important witness--shouldn't I?"

"Very important," said Mr. Manners, "and I would pay well also."

"You would, would you, sir?" She looked from one man to the other.

"Allow me to manage this, sir," said Mark Inglefield. "It is more to my interest than yours."

Mr. Manners nodded acquiescence.

"I asked you to describe the man," said Mr. Parkinson.

"I can do that. He was short and fat, and his face was covered with hair. Oh, I can spot him the minute I see him."

Mark Inglefield gave the girl a smile of encouragement and approval. The description she had given could not possibly apply to him. Every fresh danger that threatened vanished almost as soon as it appeared.

"There seems to be nothing more to stop for, sir," he said to Mr. Manners; "with respect to this man's daughter, we have learned all that we are likely to hear. It occurs to me that you might prefer to carry out the second portion of your visit to this neighborhood alone."

"You refer to my son," said Mr. Manners.

"Yes; and I might be an encumbrance. Whether justly or not--out of consideration for you I will not enter into that question--your son and his wife would not look upon me with favor if they were to see me suddenly; and the circumstance of my being in your company might be misconstrued. I am willing, sir, that the past should be buried; your simple wish that your son and I should become friends again is sufficient for me. I will obey you, but a meeting between us should be led up to; it will be more agreeable to both of us. Do you not think so?"

"You are doubtless right, Inglefield," said Mr. Manners. "I appreciate your delicate thoughtfulness."

"Thank you, sir. There is another reason why I should leave you now. The story that girl has told may be true or false. You must not mind my expressing suspicion of everything in connection with Mr. Parkinson's daughter. It is even possible that she and that girl may be in collusion for some purpose of their own, and that they have concocted what we have heard. I have cleared myself, I hope."

"It would be unjust to deny it," said Mr. Manners.

"But I shall not allow the matter to end here," said Mark Inglefield, warmly. "I shall put it at once in the hands of a detective, who will, I dare say, be able to ascertain how far we have been imposed upon. The sooner the inquiry is opened up the stronger will be our chances of arriving at the truth. Do you approve of what I propose?"

"It is the right course," said Mr. Manners. "I was about to propose it myself."

"I will go then at once. In simple justice to me, sir, if you see Mr. Hollingworth, you should tell him how cruelly I have been suspected."

"You shall be set right in his eyes, Inglefield. If I can find time to-day, I will make a point of paying him a visit."

"My mind is greatly relieved, sir. Good-morning."'

"Good-morning, Inglefield."

Mark Inglefield, without addressing a word to Mr. Parkinson, went his way. The conversation between him and Mr. Manners had been quite private. Before he left the street he looked to see if Blooming Bess was still there, but she had disappeared.

He did not proceed to the office of any detective. Slowly, and in deep thought, he walked towards the Mansion House; the crowds of people hurrying apparently all ways at once disturbed him and annoyed him; it was impossible to think calmly in the midst of such noise and bustle. If ever there was a time in his life when he needed quiet and repose to think out the schemes which were stirring in his cunning mind, that time was now. The danger was averted for a while, but he could not yet regard himself as safe. He had to reckon with Blooming Bess.

That she had recognized him was certain--as certain as that she had played into his hands, and put his enemies off the scent.

"I wonder," he thought, "that she did not ask my name and address. What a misfortune that she should have presented herself when I was in the street!"

He was not aware that the girl of whom he was thinking was following him stealthily, and had never for a moment lost sight of him.

He turned to the left, and reached the Embankment. It was quieter there. Blooming Bess followed him. There were few people about, and he strolled leisurely along, looking at the river. The principle of evil was strong within him. He belonged to that class of men who will hesitate at nothing that can be done with safety to protect themselves. He was not bold enough for deeds of violence; his nature was sufficiently ruthless, and he was not troubled with qualms of conscience; but his first consideration had ever been to keep himself on the safe side. In his methods he was sly, cunning, deceitful, treacherous; but physically he was a coward. He had, however, the greatest confidence in his resources. "I shall beat them all yet," he thought; and thought, too, what a stroke of fortune it would be if sudden death were to overtake those who stood in his path. He had passed Waterloo Bridge when he felt a touch upon his arm. He looked down and saw Blooming Bess.

"Oh," he said, with no outward show of displeasure.

"Yes," she said, with a smile.

To strangers this simple interchange of greeting would have been enigmatical, but these two understood each other, though socially he stood so high and she so low.

"Have you been following me?" he asked.

"Of course I have," she replied. "Too good to miss. I'm in luck. I say, you *are* a gentleman, ain't you--a real swell?"

"I am a gentleman, I hope," he said, with perfect sincerity.

"I hope so too. You've got plenty of tin?"

"Very little."

"All right. I'll go off to the other one."

He caught her arm.

"Don't be a fool!"

"That's just what I ain't going to be. Well, you're a nice one, you are! Not even a thankee for standing by you as I did."

"You will not be content with thanks," he said, gloomily.

"Not likely. Want something more solid. Now, didn't I stand by you like a brick? Just one word from Blooming Bess, and your whole box of tricks would have been upset. But I didn't let on, by so much as a wink. We took 'em in nicely between us, didn't we? 'You're the sort of gentleman,' says I, 'that would pay well for anything that was done for him.' 'I am,' says you. I say, if they'd guessed the game we were playing there'd have been a rumpus. I want to know your name, and where you live."

"You don't," he retorted. "You want money."

"I want that, too; but I want your name and address, and I mean to have it. I won't use it

against you so long as you square me."

She spoke with so much determination that he gave her what she demanded.

"Mr. Parkinson knows the other one," she said; "and if I don't find you at home when I want, I'll find him. Have you got a sovereign about you?"

Surprised at the moderateness of the request, he gave her a sovereign.

"How's Mary?" she asked.

The question suggested to him a plan which offered greater safety than allowing her to go away with money, and perhaps drinking herself into dangerous loquacity.

"Would you like to see her?" he asked.

"I wouldn't mind," she replied.

"Come along with me, then," he said. "I'll take you to her."

CHAPTER XLIV.

Mr. Manners experienced a great sense of relief when Mark Inglefield had taken his departure. The presence of that person had hampered not only his movements, but his will. Now that he was alone, he felt himself absolutely free. He exchanged a few words with Mr. Parkinson, in which he expressed again his good intentions towards the distracted father, and he spoke also to two or three other of the working-men, who, when he moved away from them, looked after him with marked favor. It chimed with his humor not to be known, and he was pleased that Mr. Parkinson had not made free with his name. The reminiscences attaching to him, from a working-man's point of view, would have caused him to be followed and gazed at with curiosity. The name of Manners was a name to conjure with; the great fortune he had made caused him to be regarded as a king among the class from which he sprang, and it was to his credit that he had amassed his wealth fairly, according to the conditions of things. Perhaps in the not far-off future these conditions will be changed, and it will be recognized that labor has a right to a larger proportion of its profits than at present falls to its lot. Meanwhile it may be noted that, despite the private wrong which lay at the door of Mr. Manners, and which he was happily stirred now to set right, despite the fact that in his business relations he had driven hard bargains, his public career was one of which he might be justly proud. Hard as were the bargains he had driven, he had not ground his workmen down; if they did a fair day's work they received a fair day's wage; he had made no attempt to filch them of their just due. In contrast with many a hundred employers of labor, who grind the men and women they employ down to starvation point, Mr. Manners stood forth a shining example. As for his private affairs, they were his, and his alone, to settle. Whatever changes for the better may come over society in the coming years, the purely human aspect of life will never be altered. There will always be private wrongs and private injustices; and although it is to be hoped that the general inequalities of mankind may be lessened, the frailties of our common nature will ever remain the same.

Mr. Manners strolled slowly through streets and narrow ways with which, in his youth, he had been familiar, and he derived a sad pleasure in renewing his acquaintance with the aspects of life which characterized them. He noted the changes which had taken place. Here, a well-known street had disappeared; rows of private dwellings had been turned into shops; but for the main part things were as they used to be. He searched for a certain house in which he had resided as a boy, and, finding it, gazed upon its old walls as he would have gazed upon the face of an old friend who had long since passed out of his life. He recalled himself as he had been in the past, a brisk, stirring, hard-working lad, taking pleasure in his work, eager to get along in the world, keen for chances of promotion, industriously looking about for means to improve himself. Between that time and the present was a bridge which memory re-created, and over that bridge he walked in pensive thought, animated by tenderer feelings than he had experienced for many, many years. Once more he felt an interest in the ways and doings of his fellowmen, and it seemed to him as if he had long been living a dead life. The crust of selfishness in which he had been as it were entombed was melting away, and even in these humble thoroughfares the sun was shining more brightly for him. Such a simple thing as a geranium blooming in a pot on the window-sill of his old home brought an unwonted moisture to his eyes. He knocked at the door, conversed with the woman who opened it, ascertained her position, listened to what she had to say about her children, wrote down their names, and left behind him some small tokens for them from one who once was as they were now.

"You shall hear from me again," he said to the surprised woman; and as he left her he felt new channels of pleasure and sweetness were opening out to him. He was becoming human.

When he started with Mark Inglefield from his home in the west of the city, he had formed no plan as to the means by which he should approach Kingsley and Nansie; but after some time spent in wandering among the thoroughfares and seeking old landmarks, he resolved not to present himself to them until evening. It would be a more favorable hour for what he purposed to do. Until then he could profitably employ himself in ascertaining how they stood in the neighborhood, and whether Mr. Parkinson's report of them was correct. It was three o'clock in the afternoon before he felt the necessity of eating, and then he entered a common eating-house and sat down to a humble meal. It was strange how he enjoyed it, and how agreeable he felt this renewal of old associations. When he had finished, he took out his pocket-book and made some rough calculations. The poverty of the neighborhood had impressed itself upon him, and he thought how much good the expenditure of money he could well spare would do for the children who were growing into men and women. He remembered the want of rational enjoyment he had experienced occasionally in his boyhood. He had not then many spare hours; but there had come upon him at odd times the need for social relaxation. There was only one means of satisfying this need--the public-house--and that way, as he knew, led to ruin. From what Mr. Parkinson had told him, Nansie was untiring in her efforts to ameliorate and smooth the hard lot of the wretched and poverty-stricken; and, poor as she was, had succeeded in shedding light upon weary hearts. If, in her position, she could do so much, how vast was the field before him to do more!

He made his calculations, and was surprised to find, when the figures were before him, that he was richer than he had supposed himself to be. In former days he was in the habit of making such calculations; but for a long while past he had not troubled himself about them--a proof how truly valueless his great store of wealth was to him, and how scanty was the enjoyment he derived from it. Supposing that Mark Inglefield justified and cleared himself in this affair of Mary Parkinson--of which, notwithstanding all that had transpired, Mr. Manners was not yet completely satisfied--half of his fortune should go to the redeeming of his promises to that person in respect of the expectations held out to him. The remaining half would be ample for the carrying out of schemes as yet unformed, in the execution of which, if all went well, Kingsley and Nansie would assist him.

Issuing from the eating-house with a light step, he proceeded to make his inquiries respecting his son's family. What he heard made him even more humble and remorseful. Every person to whom he spoke had affectionate words for them; nothing but good was spoken of them. They were not only respected, but beloved.

"If you want to know more about them than I can tell you, sir," said one poor woman to whom Nansie had been kind, "go to Dr. Perriera."

Receiving Dr. Perriera's address, Mr. Manners wended thither, and found the worthy doctor, who was now a man well advanced in years, in his shop. With Dr. Perriera he had a long and pregnant interview. In confidence he told the doctor who he was, and Dr. Perriera's heart glowed at the better prospect which seemed to present itself to friends whom he honored. Forces which had long lain dormant in Mr. Manners came into play; always a good judge of character, he recognized that he was conversing with a man of sterling worth and honor.

"I have been informed," he said, "that you are a doctor of great skill. You would have succeeded in more flourishing neighborhoods than this."

"I preferred to stay here," said Dr. Perriera. "Elsewhere I should not have found the happiness I have enjoyed among these poor people."

"But you would have been rich."

"It would have marred my life," was the simple rejoinder. "You and I are on equal ground, about the same age, I judge. We have not many years to live. Of what use presently will much money be to you and me? Men and women grow into false ideas; most of those who become rich become slaves. Gold is their master--a frightful tyrant, destructive, as it is chiefly used, of all the teachings of Christianity. But, then, Christians are scarce."

Mr. Manners hinted at his unformed schemes, and Dr. Perriera was greatly interested.

"What the poor and wretched want," he said, "is light, first for the body, afterwards for the soul. Not the light of gin-shops, which are poisonously planted by the wealthy at every convenient corner. Sweep away the rookeries; purify the gutters; commence at the right end. There are darksome spaces round about, in which only vice and crime can grow; and they are allowed to remain, defiling and polluting body and soul. There is a false, convenient theory, that you cannot make people moral by act of Parliament. My dear sir, you can. Cleanliness is next to godliness; that is a wiser saying; and governments would be better employed in enforcing this than in ninety-nine out of every hundred of the acts they waste their time in discussing."

"What do you mean," asked Mr. Manners, "by your remark, commence at the right end?"

"Commence with the children," replied Dr. Perriera, "not neglecting meanwhile those who are grown up. These children presently will become fathers and mothers, and their early teaching

bears fruit. It is impossible to train anew firmly rooted trees, but they can be gently and wisely treated. With saplings it is different."

They remained in conversation until evening fell. Mr. Manners had received Kingsley's address, and the two men were standing at the door of the doctor's shop when an elderly man and a young girl passed. In the elderly man Mr. Manners recognized Mr. Loveday, Nansie's uncle, who had once paid him a visit in his grand mansion. But it was the girl who chiefly attracted him. Her sweet face, her gentle bearing, impressed him, but more than all was he impressed by a likeness which caused his heart to beat more quickly. It was a likeness to his son.

Dr. Perriera glanced at Mr. Manners, and called the girl, who, with her companion, paused to say a word or two.

"Is your mother well?" asked the doctor.

"Quite well, thank you," replied the girl.

"And your father?"

"Quite well."

"How is business, Mr. Loveday?"

"So-so," said the old book-man. "I can't compete very well with the youngsters. Their brazen voices beat me."

He said this quite good-humoredly.

"We must make way for the young," observed the doctor.

"Yes, yes; but the necessity of living is upon the old as well."

"Are you going home now?"

"Yes," said the girl, answering for her uncle. "We have been to see the new shop."

"Whose?"

"Timothy Chance's."

She laughed kindly as she spoke the name.

"See," said Mr. Loveday, opening a small parcel he held in his hand, "we've been making a purchase there."

What he disclosed to view was half a cooked fowl. Dr. Perriera appeared to be greatly interested in this simple food.

"How much did you pay for it?"

"One and four."

"That is cheap. A fat fowl, too."

"Yes. The shop is crowded; people are buying like wildfire. Timothy will make a fortune."

"He has pretty well made one already. Sharp fellow, Timothy Chance, and a worthy fellow, too."

The girl nodded, and Mr. Loveday observed:

"He is just the same as ever. Not a bit altered. Never forgets old friends, and never will forget them. That come-by-chance waif is of the right mettle. He is with Nansie now. We are going to see him. Come along, Hester."

"Can you guess who that young lady is?" asked Dr. Perriera of Mr. Manners.

"I am almost afraid to guess. Tell me."

"Your grandchild. Have you never seen her before?"

"Never."

"If I had a daughter," said Dr. Perriera, "I should esteem it a great blessing if she were like Hester Manners. She has all the virtues of her mother, all the simplicity and nobility which distinguish her father. She has been trained in the right school. I regard it as an honor that I am privileged to call myself her friend. Do you wish to proceed at once to your son's poor dwelling?"

"I would prefer to see him alone. This friend whom my grandchild spoke of is there; I will wait

awhile."

"It will be best, perhaps. My place is at your service. If it accords with your desire you can remain here, and I will bring your son to you."

"I thank you," said Mr. Manners, "and accept your kind offer."

His heart was stirred by hopes and fears. It went out to the sweet girl he had seen for the first time; she was of his blood; but had he any claim to her affection? How would her parents receive him--her parents, to whom she was bound by the strongest links of love, and whom he had treated so harshly and unjustly? There was a time when he thought he could never bring himself to forgive the son who had disappointed his worldly hopes; but now it was he himself who needed forgiveness. The happiness of his brief future depended upon the son he had wronged; if Kingsley and Nansie rejected him, the anguish of a lonely, loveless life would attend him to his last hour.

"I should advise," said Dr. Perriera, "that you wait awhile before the interview takes place. Timothy Chance and your son's family are much attached to each other, and it will be an act of delicacy not to immediately intrude upon them."

"An act of delicacy?" repeated Mr. Manners, looking at Dr. Perriera for an explanation.

"I have an idea," said the doctor, "that Timothy Chance has a tender feeling for your grandchild. Whether it is reciprocated or not, I cannot say. There is a disparity in their ages of fourteen or fifteen years, but that should be no obstacle. I hold that in married life the man should be some years older than the woman."

"You have hinted that this Timothy Chance is well-to-do."

"He is more than that. He is on the high-road to a fortune. I am curious to see the shop he has opened. Will you come? We have time. On the road I will relate to you Timothy Chance's story. It is, in its way, remarkable."

They started out together, and, with a heart gloomed by the intrusion of this friend of his son's family, Mr. Manners listened to the doctor's narrative. In Kingsley's eyes his money had never been deemed of importance; Kingsley had never stooped or cringed before that universal idol. How much less was he likely to do so now that he had by his side a friend who could lift him from the state of poverty to which the hard father had condemned him? Not purse-strings, but heart-strings, would decide the issue of his heart's desire.

Up to the point with which we are familiar there is no need to set down here what Dr. Perriera imparted to his companion. We will take up the thread from the time of Timothy Chance's last appearance upon the scene.

"Timothy has made the best use of his opportunities," said the doctor. "From the small beginnings which I have recounted he has risen by slow and sure steps to be, I should say, the largest poultry breeder in the kingdom. He has farms in half a dozen different places, and it is necessary, of course, that at stated intervals he should get rid of old stock to make room for new. His contracts are really important ones, and he turns over a large amount of money during the year. Lately an idea occurred to him, which he is now turning to practical account. Instead of selling his old stock to hotels and shopkeepers, he believes it will be more profitable to speculate in it himself. As a trial, he has opened a shop in the neighborhood here, which I regard as a boon to the people. He will send so many fowls there every day, and they will be cooked and disposed of to those who can afford to buy. I think his idea was inspired by something of a similar nature which he saw in France. You can purchase a whole roasted fowl, a half, a wing and breast, or a leg. The prices are very moderate, the poultry is of good quality, the cooking is sure to be excellent, for Timothy is perfect in all his arrangements. Here we are at his trial shop."

It was, indeed, a notable establishment, and, as Hester had said, was crowded with customers. The predominating features of the shop were light and cleanliness. At the rear of the shop were the stoves at which the fowls were roasted, and these were cut up, or arranged whole, upon marble slabs. The attendants were all females, and wore light print dresses and spotlessly clean white aprons and caps; order and system reigned, and the money was rolling in. It was an animated scene, made the more agreeable by the pleasant faces and the civility which distinguished those who were attending to the customers.

"It will do," said Dr. Perriera, in a tone of approval. "Before the year is out Timothy will have a score of such shops in poor localities. He is made of the right stuff; his future is assured. Let us return now, and I will bring your son to you."

CHAPTER XLV.

Mr. Manners sat alone in Dr. Perriera's living-room, awaiting the arrival of his son. The last twenty-four hours had been the most pregnant in his life; in a few minutes his fate would be decided; in a few minutes he would know whether the years that remained to him would be brightened by love, or made desolate by loneliness--loneliness in which reigned a terror and despair he had never yet experienced. Hitherto he had been a law unto himself; hitherto he had borne the fate he had courted with a stern, implacable spirit, bearing with bitter resolve the burden he had inflicted upon himself. There had been no resignation in his soul to soften his sufferings, and he had not sought the consolation which charity or religion would have shed upon him. His heart had been as a sealed box, into which no ray of light had entered; all was dark and desolate. He would soon learn whether this would continue to be his fate. Some savage comfort had come to him in the past from the belief that he was in the right, and Kingsley in the wrong, but this would be denied to him now. The thought had occasionally intruded itself that Kingsley would come to him as a suppliant, begging for mercy and forgiveness; but the positions were reversed; it was he, not his son, who was the suppliant; it was he, not his son, who pleaded for forgiveness.

Each moment seemed prolonged. "He refuses to come," thought the repentant man. "I am to my only child as one who is dead. It is a just punishment." It was in accordance with his character that he should recognize the justice of the position in which he stood.

When he heard footsteps in Dr. Perriera's shop he rose to his feet and looked towards the door as a criminal might, awaiting his sentence. The door opened, and Kingsley entered.

His face was radiant; a tender light shone in his eyes.

"Why, father!" cried Kingsley, and opened his arms.

"Thank God!"

He did not speak the words aloud; they were spoken by his grateful heart as he pressed his son to his breast. Then he gently released himself, and gazed with tearful eyes upon the son he had turned from his home.

Kingsley was much altered. His hair was grayer than that of his father; his face was worn and thin; but the tender, whimsical spirit of old dwelt in his eyes.

At the present moment it was only the sympathetic chords in his nature which found expression.

"I knew you would come, father," said Kingsley, and at the tender utterance of the word Mr. Manners's heart was stirred by a new-born joy; "I always said you would come to us one day. And Nansie, too; she never wavered in her belief that we should see you. 'The time will be sure to arrive,' she often said to me, 'when we shall be reunited; and when your dear father comes to us, we have a home for him.' Yes, father, our home is yours. A poor one, but you will not mind that. It needs but little for happiness, and we have been happy, very happy."

"Oh, Kingsley," said Mr. Manners, "can you, can your good wife forgive me?"

"Forgive you, father!" exclaimed Kingsley, in a tone of surprise. "For what? You have done nothing but what you thought was right. Indeed, the fault has been on our side, for not coming to you. It was our duty, and we neglected it. Father, I do not think you know Nansie as well as I should wish."

"I do not," said the humbled man. "Oh, Kingsley, that I should ever have shut you from my heart!"

"I declare," said Kingsley, putting his hand fondly on his father's shoulder, "if any man but you said as much, I should feel inclined to quarrel with him. Shut me from your heart! I am sure you have never done that. I am sure you have thought of us with tenderness, as we have thought of you. Yes, father, in our prayers you have always been remembered. And we were content to wait your will, which was ever wise and strong. Not like mine--but that is my loss. A man cannot help being what he is, and I am afraid that I have been wanting in strength." He passed his hand across his forehead, half sadly, half humorously. "But I am truly thankful that I have had by my side a helpmate who has strewn my life with flowers. Dear Nansie! Ever patient, ever hopeful, with her steadfast eyes fixed upon the light which you have brought to us now! Then, there is our dear daughter, your grandchild, father--ah, what a blessing she is to us! You will love Hester. Beautiful as her mother was--and is, father--with a nature as sweet and gentle, and as trustful and confiding and pure."

A sudden weakness overcame him here, and with a little, pitiful motion of his arms, he sank into a chair.

"Kingsley!" cried Mr. Manners, alarmed. "Kingsley--my dear son!"

"It is nothing, father," said Kingsley, looking up, and pressing his father's hand to his lips. "The shock of happiness is so great! I scarcely expected it to-night. I was thinking of Nansie. She will be so grateful--so grateful!"

"Does she not know?"

"She knows nothing of this sweet joy. Nor did I when Dr. Perriera called me from the room. I am glad he told me as we came along. You will remain with us a little while?"

"We will never part again, Kingsley, if you and Nansie and Hester will have me."

"If we will have you! Why, father, how can you ask that? Nansie will be overjoyed, and Hester will go wild with delight and happiness. How often has the dear child asked, 'When am I going to see grandfather?' Well, now her desire will be gratified. She will see you, and will love and honor you, as we have always done, and we always shall do. Hush! Is not that Nansie's voice I hear?"

It was, indeed, Nansie who was speaking softly to Dr. Perriera in the shop without. Anxious about Kingsley, she had slipped on her hat and mantle, and had followed him. In a few hurried words the good doctor had told her all, and she was now standing in trembling hope to learn the best or worst.

"Kingsley," said Mr. Manners, "if it is your wife outside, go to her, and ask her if she will see me. Let her come in alone."

"As you wish, father. I will remain with Dr. Perriera while you speak to her."

With a fond look at his father he left the room, and a moment afterwards Nansie and Mr. Manners stood face to face. Tearfully and wistfully she stood before him. Better than Kingsley did she recognize what this meeting might mean to her and her beloved ones. He held out his hand, and with a sudden rush of joy she bent her head over it.

Had any barrier remained standing in the proud man's heart, this simple action would have effectually destroyed it. He could more easily have borne reproachful words, and was ready to acknowledge them his due, but this sweet and grateful recognition of a too tardy justice almost broke him down. He turned his head humbly aside, and said:

"Can you forgive me, Nansie--my daughter?"

"Father!" she cried, and fell sobbing in his arms.

It was a night never to be forgotten. In his heart of hearts Mr. Manners breathed a prayer of thankfulness that the flower of repentance had blossomed for the living, and not for the dead. Often it blossoms too late, and then it is a fateful flower, and leaves a curse, and not a blessing, behind it.

But this night was not only to bear the sweet fruit of goodness and self-denial; it was to bring forth a fitting punishment of a life of cunning and duplicity.

Linked close together, Mr. Manners and his children walked to Kingsley's humble rooms, and there the old man received his grandchild's kiss. Instinctively he was made to feel that, through all this long and bitter separation, no word of complaining had ever reached Hester's ears. All the brighter in his eyes shone the characters of Kingsley and Nansie, and readily did he acknowledge that never was nobility more truly shown. The little room in which they sat was a garden of love.

Nor was the old book-man forgotten. He and Mr. Manners, in one firm hand-clasp, forged a link which even the grave would not sever.

Timothy Chance was not with them; he had other business to see to. What that business was, and to what it led, will now be told.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The clock struck nine when a knock was heard at the door. Hester rose and opened it, and Dr. Perriera appeared. He looked round upon the happy group and smiled; but when the smile faded they observed an unwonted gravity in his face.

"What has happened?" asked Nansie, solicitously. Her sympathetic nature was ever on the

alert to detect signs of trouble in her friends.

"Hester," said Dr. Perriera, "leave us for a moment or two. I wish to speak to your parents alone."

The girl retired to the inner room, and shut herself in.

"It is best to keep it from her ears," said Dr. Perriera; he addressed Mr. Manners. "You are as much concerned as any here in the news I have to impart. I was not present when you and a friend came to the neighborhood this morning to see Mr. Parkinson; but, if I am not mistaken, you are interested in the misfortune which has fallen upon him."

"I am deeply interested in it," replied Mr. Manners, "and have pledged myself to sift the unhappy matter to the bottom. But, unfortunately, the poor girl has disappeared."

"The truth may be made clear this very night," said Dr. Perriera. "Strange news has strangely reached me. May I ask if this is the portrait of the friend who accompanied you?"

He handed to Mr. Manners the portrait of Mark Inglefield which Mr. Parkinson had shown to him and Mr. Hollingworth on the previous night.

"Yes, it is he," said Mr. Manners.

"I obtained it from Mr. Parkinson," said Dr. Perriera, "and promised that I would return it."

"But your reason?" asked Mr. Manners.

"If you will come with me," replied Dr. Perriera, "all shall be explained. No, not you, or you"--Kingsley and Nansie had both risen, in token of their willingness to assist him. "Leave the matter in our hands. I am at present," he added, glancing at Mr. Manners, "somewhat in the dark, and perhaps I have small right to inquire into your motives. What chiefly concerns me, as taking what I may call a vital interest in the poor people among whom I have passed my life, is that a worthy man has been foully wronged, and a weak-minded girl beguiled by the arts of a scoundrel. To right this wrong I am willing to make some sacrifice, if only in the cause of justice."

While he spoke, Mr. Manners, without thinking, had laid the portrait of Mark Inglefield on the table, and Kingsley, looking down, recognized it. A sudden paleness came on his face, and Nansie, following the direction of his eyes, also looked at the portrait and recognized it. For a moment or two no one spoke, and then Kingsley whispered a few words to Nansie, and she left the room in silence.

"Before you go with Dr. Perriera," said Kingsley to his father, "there is something that must be said. It refers to this man, in whose company I now learn you came here this morning."

"Speak, Kingsley," said Mr. Manners, extending his hand to his son; but Kingsley did not attempt to take it. "Do you doubt me, Kingsley?"

"No, father," said Kingsley, with a certain decision in his voice and manner which surprised his listeners, "I do not doubt you; I never have, and I never shall. Most earnestly do I hope that we shall never be separated again."

"We never shall, Kingsley," said Mr. Manners, "if it rests with me. You have no reason to trust my word--"

"I have every reason," interrupted Kingsley, impetuously. "You have never swerved from it; you have been always just. It is not"--and now there was a heightened color in his face as he pointed to the portrait--"because this man was my enemy that I regard him with horror, but because I have grounds for suspicion that he sought to defame the dearest, purest woman that ever drew the breath of heaven. For me, he may pass by unscathed, though I would not defile myself by touching his hand; but for another, whom I love and honor as an angel on earth, I would drag his foul lie to light, and throw it in his teeth! I have erred, but never in my life have I done conscious wrong. What there is best in me, father, I draw from you." Mr. Manners sighed and turned his head. "You never deceived man or woman, and you transmitted to me an inheritance of right-doing which has been more precious to me than gold. Answer me candidly, father. Did not this man traduce my wife?"

"He did; and, Heaven forgive me, I believed him."

"And now?"

"And now," said Mr. Manners, stretching forth his hands, "there is no penance I would deem too great to repair the injustice I have committed. The man who traduced you and your honored wife is no longer my friend. Without you, my son, and Nansie and Hester, I should be alone in the world."

This appeal was sufficient for Kingsley, whose manner instantly softened. He passed his arm affectionately round his father's shoulder.

"After all," he said, "why should we be troubled by the knowledge that there are men living who find pleasure in base actions? Let us pity, even while we condemn them."

But there was no pity in Mr. Manners's heart towards Mark Inglefield. His suspicions were revived by what Dr. Perriera had said, and the true nature of the man seemed to be revealed to him.

"You will return to-night, father?" said Kingsley. Mr. Manners looked at Dr. Perriera.

"I cannot tell," said the doctor. "It will depend upon what you resolve to do."

"Can I find a bed in the neighborhood?" asked Mr. Manners.

"I can offer you one," replied Dr. Perriera.

"Early or late," said Mr. Manners to Kingsley, "I will return to-night."

"We will wait up for you," said Kingsley.

Then Mr. Manners called Nansie and Hester, and, kissing them with much affection, departed with Dr. Perriera.

As they walked to the shop Mr. Manners, without reserve, imparted to Dr. Perriera the nature of the connection between him and Mark Inglefield. The confidence was a great relief to him. Hitherto he had taken pride in keeping his private affairs close shut in his heart, and now that the floodgates were open a strange feeling of satisfaction stole over him. Truly he was no longer alone.

Dr. Perriera did not interrupt him with questions, and when Mr. Manners ceased speaking he said: "I will not assist you to prejudge the case. You shall hear from Timothy Chance's own lips the story he related to me."

"It is he, then," said Mr. Manners, "who has stirred up this matter afresh?"

"Timothy," said the doctor, "is one of us. He passed many years of his life in these streets, and he is acquainted with nearly every person round about. He knew Mary Parkinson as a child, and, sharp business man as he is, he is keen in matters of justice."

"Does he know anything of my intimacy with Mr. Inglefield?"

"No; nor does he know that Kingsley is your son. It will be strange news to him, and he will rejoice in the good-fortune of the dearest friends he has. I bade him await my return in my shop."

Mr. Manners was scarcely prepared to see in Timothy Chance a man who won his regard the moment he set eyes upon him. Timothy had grown into something more than a respectable man; his appearance was remarkable. He was tall and well proportioned, and there was a sincerity and straightforwardness in his manner which could not fail to favorably impress strangers with whom he came into contact for the first time. Being introduced, he and Mr. Manners shook hands with cordiality. "Here is a man," thought Mr. Manners, "who, like myself, has carved his way upwards." That fact was in itself sufficient to insure respect.

"Mr. Chance," said Dr. Perriera--he usually called him by the old name Timothy, but on this occasion he considered it would add weight to Timothy's character to address him by a more ceremonious title--"relate to Mr. Manners what you have told me of Mary Parkinson. It may lead to a result you little dream of."

"Will it lead to justice?" asked Timothy.

"It shall," said Mr. Manners.

These two practical men immediately understood each other.

"It saddens me," said Timothy, addressing himself chiefly to Mr. Manners, "to see those I have known from childhood on the wrong path. Generally these things come home to one, but they appeal to us more closely when there is a personal connection. The lot of the poor is hard enough, without those who should know better making it harder. I do not speak as a class man, but as a man who is desirous to mend social grievances. Perhaps by and by I may be able to do something in a public way."

"Mr. Chance is ambitious," observed Dr. Perriera.

"Not for myself, nor from vanity, am I so. I have nothing to boast of in my parents, for I never saw their faces. I have lifted myself out of the evil they might have brought upon me. These things lie deep, sir, deeper than most people consider. But that is not to the point. This is what I have to say with respect to Mary Parkinson. I have a poultry farm in Finchley, and I attend to my business. I am up early and late. It happened last night that I had much to look after, and my affairs kept me up till the small hours of this morning. Within a hundred yards of my farm is a public-house, the Three Tuns. At four o'clock this morning I walked from my office into the fresh

air, before retiring to rest. I do this often; it freshens me up. When I was within a few yards of the Three Tuns, my attention was attracted to a cab which had just driven up to the door. It was an unusual hour for such a thing to occur. A man got out of the cab, and knocked at the door, and after some delay it was opened. Exchanging some words with the person who answered his summons, he returned to the cab, and assisted a woman to alight. I did not catch sight of her face, but I saw the man's; it was strange to me. The woman appeared to be in great agitation, and it seemed to me that she had been crying. Presently they entered the public-house, the door of which was closed upon them. I got into conversation with the driver of the cab, and learned that he had had a long drive from the east end of London, quite close to this spot. He was to drive the gentleman back to London, he said; and soon the gentleman came out, entered the cab, and was driven away. I don't know why this simple adventure should have made an impression upon me, but it did. However, I had other things to think of, and I went to bed. I was up early, and in London here, to see to the new shop I have opened. I was due in Finchley again this afternoon--I am a busy man, you see, sir--and it happened that when I arrived there I saw another cab stop at the Three Tuns. But though it was another cab, it was the same man who got out of it, and I saw his face very clearly. It was not the same woman, though, that jumped out, and I knew her well. It was a poor, foolish girl, almost a child in years, but a woman in sin, who goes by the name of Blooming Bess. Both the man and the girl went into the Three Tuns. My curiosity was aroused; my suspicions also. I did not like the face of the man; it was cold, heartless, cunning. He had cast looks about him in which I seemed to discern evil; he came from a quarter, or at least his companion did, with which I was intimately acquainted. We don't live in the world without learning, and I have learned something of the ways of scoundrels. If chance had put it into my power to unmask one--and I had a strange idea that it might be really so--I resolved not to throw it away. I hung about the place for some time, and at length bribed a servant to tell Blooming Bess secretly that a friend wished to speak to her in private. Out she came in a few minutes, and I had talk with her, and learned that the woman who had been brought to the Three Tuns, in the middle of the night, was no other than Mary Parkinson. Blooming Bess is a careless, reckless soul, the sort of girl who might have grown into an honest, respectable woman if she had had fair chances. She hadn't, and that is why she is what she is. I don't say it as a boast that I have helped her out of hunger sometimes, and I know she is grateful to me. This afternoon I promised her something which I shall fulfil; she shall have the chance that has never yet been put in her way of becoming a decent member of society. And upon the strength of that promise she told me all I wished to know. It seems that the man, whose name she had obtained, had come in the dead of night to the street in which Mr. Parkinson lived. He did not know the house, and he bribed Blooming Bess to point it out to him. When he thought he had got rid of her, he threw a letter up to Mary Parkinson, whom he had succeeded in awaking, and she came down to him. They went away together, and Blooming Bess saw them drive off in a cab. She had kept watch upon his movements. This morning the scoundrel came to the neighborhood for the purpose of clearing himself from some kind of suspicion which had attached itself to him in relation to Mary Parkinson. He came with a friend."

"With me," said Mr. Manners.

"I guessed as much. The scoundrel professed absolute ignorance of the whereabouts of Mary Parkinson, and had it not been for what happened to me last night, might even now have been regarded as an innocent man. I will not lengthen the story. Blooming Bess expressed her opinion of the man in terms which he would not have regarded as flattering. 'He's promised me I don't know what,' she said, 'to keep his secret; but I know the sort of man he is. When he's got all out of me he can, he'll throw me away like an old glove--as he'll throw away Mary. The fool believes in him even now!' Then she told me that he had tried to disguise himself in the night by putting on another suit of clothes--I had observed that myself--and that if it hadn't been for her, his villainy would have been exposed this morning when he came here with you. These are the main lines of the story, and I determined to bring the scoundrel to book. I gathered from Blooming Bess that the three of them were to remain at the Three Tuns to-night, and were all to go away together to some place or other; but where she did not know. He refused to tell her when she asked him. However, my intention was to take Mr. Parkinson to the Three Tuns to-night, and see what could be done. But I have not spoken to him yet of my plan. Dr. Perriera, to whom I have told the whole of the story, has persuaded me to be guided by him in the affair; he has a wise head and a kind heart, and I am satisfied that he will do what is right. The first thing he did was to go to Mr. Parkinson and obtain a portrait of the scoundrel who has brought Mary to shame. This I recognized as the man who brought Mary Parkinson and Blooming Bess to the Three Tuns. Then he desired me to wait here until he returned. He *has* returned, with you, sir. That is all I have to say for the present."

"I need no further assurance," said Mr. Manners; "but you may as well mention the name which that girl Bess gave you."

"Mr. Mark Inglefield," said Timothy Chance.

"It is enough. You have rendered me a great service, for which I cannot be sufficiently grateful. I will go to this man myself to-night, and he shall learn from my lips that his knavery and villainy have been brought to light. I hold a power over him which I can serviceably use."

"Your plan is a good one," said Dr. Perriera. "It would never do to take Mr. Parkinson to his daughter. There would be mischief done. He has been heard to say a dozen times today, 'If I meet the villain who has ruined my daughter, and if he will not make an honest woman of her, I will

hang for him.' You will not go alone?"

Mr. Manners looked at Timothy Chance inquiringly.

"Yes, sir," said Timothy, "if you will allow me, I will accompany you."

"I thank you," said Mr. Manners, and again the two men shook hands.

Then Mr. Manners desired Dr. Perriera to go to Kingsley, and tell him that he might not return till morning, and that it would be best not to wait up for him. After which, he and Timothy set out on their errand.

"I will drive you," said Timothy; "I have a fast-trotting mare that will skim over the ground."

The fast-trotting mare being harnessed, they started off at the rate of ten miles an hour.

CHAPTER XLVII.

It was closing time at the Three Tuns, and some tipplers were being bundled out, much against their will, when Timothy Chance, entering with Mr. Manners, called the landlord aside, and had a hurried conference with him. The result was satisfactory.

"They are having supper in a private room," said Timothy to Mr. Manners, "and the landlord will take us up, unannounced." They ascended the stairs, and the landlord, without knocking, throwing open the door, Timothy and Mr. Manners entered the room.

Mark Inglefield was sitting at the supper-table; by his side sat Mary Parkinson; opposite to them sat Blooming Bess. Mark Inglefield, looking up, with angry words on his lips at the intrusion, was about to utter them, when, seeing who his visitors were, he fell back as if suddenly paralyzed. His face was of a deadly pallor, his limbs trembled, he was speechless. Mr. Manners gave him time to recover himself, but the detected villain did not speak. He felt that retribution had overtaken him.

"I wish to say a word to you," said Mr. Manners, sternly. "Do you prefer it should be said here or in private?"

Mark Inglefield, shaking like a man in an ague, rose to his feet and staggered to the door.

"In private?" asked Mr. Manners.

"In private," replied Mark Inglefield, his voice scarcely rising above a whisper.

"Remain here," said Mr. Manners to Timothy, "and explain to Miss Parkinson why we have come."

Then he followed Mark Inglefield from the room. The landlord was on the stairs, and at Mr. Manners's request he conducted the two to another room, saying:

"You will not be disturbed."

Summoning all his courage, Mark Inglefield said:

"This is an unexpected honor, sir. Your errand is probably the same as mine."

"What may your errand be?" asked Mr. Manners.

"I said this morning," replied Mark Inglefield, striving to believe that the game was not yet lost, and that he could still continue to deceive the man upon whom he had imposed for so many years, "that I would find Mary Parkinson, and endeavor to extract the truth from her. With the aid of a detective I succeeded in tracking her here."

"Yes," said Mr. Manners, inwardly resolving to ascertain to what further lengths in the art of duplicity Mark Inglefield would go; "was she surprised to see you?"

"Very," said Mark Inglefield, beginning to gain confidence. "Very much surprised."

"She did not know you?"

"How could she, sir? It was a bold plan of mine, but I have hopes that it will be attended with the happiest results. To restore an erring child to her father's arms is a task of which I am sure you will approve."

"I do."

"Perhaps," continued Mark Inglefield (thinking to himself, "What a fool I was to exhibit any sign of fear!")--"perhaps to bring her back to the path of virtue and make an honest woman of her--this is what I hope to achieve. Then I could come to you, and say, 'I have done this good action in return for the slander which an enemy dared to breathe against me.'"

"It would be a good action. To bring a weak, erring child back to the path of virtue, and make an honest woman of her. Is that really your wish?"

"What other wish can I have, sir, with respect to Mr. Parkinson? Would it not entirely clear me from suspicion?"

Mr. Manners ignored the question. "She did not know you, you say. How did you introduce yourself to her? In your own name?"

"Of course. It would have been wrong to use another."

"Did the detective you employed accompany you?"

"He did; else I should hardly have found this out-of-the-way hole--in which, sir, I am surprised to see you. But I need not express surprise. Your decision of character and kindness of heart are well known to me.",

"My decision of character--yes; my kindness of heart--those are meaningless words in your experience of me. But the past can be atoned for."

"You have nothing to reproach yourself with, sir."

"My conscience answers. But it is not to speak of myself that I have come to-night. Is the detective who conducted you here now in the house? I should like to speak to him."

"How unfortunate! It is but a few minutes since he left us. Had I known--"

"But you did not know."

"No, indeed, sir."

"Did you disclose to Miss Parkinson the nature of your errand?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was her answer?"

"She was grateful, truly grateful."

"Was it your intention to take her back to her home tonight?"

"Scarcely to-night. Early in the morning, after she was calmer, and prepared to meet her father."

"She has a companion with her?"

It was this question which caused Mark Inglefield to suddenly recollect that Mr. Manners had seen Blooming Bess earlier in the day. Up to this point he had not given her a thought.

"Ah, yes, sir, a companion, who gave us certain information when we paid our visit to Mr. Parkinson. It was a happy thought of mine to take the poor girl with us; it would inspire Miss Parkinson with confidence in me. Besides, sir, it would not have been proper for me to visit Miss Parkinson alone."

"Shall I call her down to test the truth of your statements?"

"Surely, sir, you do not doubt me!"

"I ask again, shall I call her down to test the truth of your statements?"

"Shall I go up and bring her down to you?"

"In order," said Mr. Manners, "that you may have time to concoct some story which you can prevail upon her to adopt, so that I may be the further deceived?"

"Sir, you wrong me," stammered Mark Inglefield.

"Mr. Inglefield," said Mr. Manners, "let us throw aside the mask of treachery and deceit. The

questions I addressed to you were put for a purpose. Is it sufficiently explicit to you if I tell you that you have betrayed yourself?"

"I do not understand you."

"That is not true. You understand me well enough, though yet you do not know all I have resolved upon. It is I, not you, who will take Miss Parkinson to her father to-night. It is for you, not for me, to make an honest woman of her."

Then, indeed, did Mark Inglefield know that the game was up.

"If you are determined not to believe what I say, sir--"

"Not one word. All your statements are false--in the present, as they have been in the past. It was you who stole Miss Parkinson from her home last night, and the poor girl who is now with her was bought over by you. Be thankful that you are spared a visit from Mr. Parkinson. But for me, you would be face to face with him, and would have had to answer for your crime. Mr. Inglefield, evil can be atoned for. For the evil I have done in the past it shall be my endeavor to atone. It will be to your interest to come to the same resolve."

"Can nothing I can say convince you that you are doing me an injustice?"

"Nothing. So much has been revealed and made clear to me that only one course remains open to you, so far as I am concerned."

"Perhaps," said Mark Inglefield, in a tone which he vainly strove to make defiant, "you will explain yourself?"

"I will do so. You will marry the girl you have brought to shame."

"I, sir, I! It is a monstrous idea!"

"Knowing you as I know you now, there is indeed something revolting in it--and it may be that she will not give you the opportunity of making atonement." Mark Inglefield smiled scornfully. "There is a road," pursued Mr. Manners, "out of evil, and for a little while this road will be open to you. Turn your back upon it, and go forth into the world, a beggar! Enter it--with a purified heart, if you can--and I will make you recompense."

"You will fulfil the expectations you have always held out to me?"

"No. My promise was given to a man of honor, as I believed. I will not bring my tongue to utter what you have proved yourself to be. But I will give you a competence, which my lawyers shall arrange with you. For myself, after this night I will never see you again, nor shall you ever again darken my door. There is something more, and it may weigh with you. For years past you have transacted certain business matters for me. I have not too closely looked into them. Refuse the offer I have made to you, and they shall be searched into and examined with but one end in view--punishment. Accept it, and all that has passed between us in connection with these matters shall be buried forever. You will know how best to decide. I give you"--he took out his watch--"five minutes to decide. Your fate and future are in your own hands."

Then there was silence. With his back turned to Mr. Manners, Mark Inglefield debated with himself. He knew that the matters to which Mr. Manners referred would not bear investigation, and that he was in danger of the criminal dock; he knew that Mr. Manners would show him no mercy. He shrugged his shoulders savagely, and said:

"What do you call a competence?"

"It shall be decided between you and my lawyers at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon, by which time they will have received my instructions. You have barely half a minute to arrive at a decision. I am inexorable."

"I accept your offer," said Mark Inglefield.

"You will find Miss Parkinson in her father's home. There must be no delay. Farewell."

At nine o'clock the following morning Mr. Manners sat at breakfast with Kingsley, Nansie, and Hester. There were no traces of fatigue on Mr. Manners's face; on the contrary, it looked fresh and young. A new and better life was before him. Mr. Loveday, the good old book-man, kept purposely away; he would not intrude upon a meeting which he deemed had something sacred in it. And indeed it had. Hearts that should never have been separated were united, and love shone within the little room.

It was a humble meal, but the sweetest that Mr. Manners had tasted for many, many years. Nansie's face was bright, and now and then her lips were wreathed in happy smiles, and now and then her eyes were filled with tears. And so we leave them. Flowers are blossoming; there is good in the future to be done.

It may be, also, in the future, that Hester Manners and Timothy Chance may come together for

weal or woe. Words have yet to be spoken, but in their hearts love has already found its nest. May their lives be as sweet and pure as the lives of Kingsley and Nansie! There will be manna for the hungry, and light will be shed upon the dark spaces of the East.

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TOILERS OF BABYLON: A NOVEL ***

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