

use. My bedroom overlooked the garden, and it was delicious to wake up in the early morning, throw the window open, and inhale the scent of the flowers, and the vegetables, and the fresh-cut grass in the distant fields. It was no trouble for me to get up early, as I used to go to bed at ten o'clock every evening, and in fact was glad to get there, as I was tired out doing nothing. I call doing nothing looking out of my sitting-room window while I smoked just one pipe, and amused myself by watching the people in the garden opposite.

It was a large garden belonging to a large house, one of those red-bricked Elizabethan houses that you find still standing in the northern suburbs. I used to see its owner and a young lady walking round and round the grass plot, he a tall, pompous old man, strutting along with his chin high in the air, and surveying the grounds with an unmistakable air of proprietorship, she walking quietly by his side, pensive, silent, and obviously bored. She must have been a very pretty girl, though I did not think very much about her in those days—my heart, or what I called my heart was occupied by another object. But I remember now that she had a pretty round figure, deep earnest brown eyes, an impertinent snub nose, and a most kissable bud of a mouth. I ascertained from my landlord that she was the niece of the pompous old gentleman. He was a widower, and had taken this child of his dead sister to be his housekeeper. My landlord spoke with becoming respect of Mr. Nagpore, for such he told me was the pompous old gentleman's name. He was one of the great men of the neighborhood, churchwarden, and chairman of the Local Board, the most intimate friend of the rector, and the leading authority in all parochial matters. He was an attorney in very excellent practice, in Westminster, and was considered in the neighborhood to be worth a great deal of money, though he had the character of being very covetous and grasping. Dark whispers were current, to the effect that Miss Marchmont, his niece, was actually kept uncommonly short in the matter of provisions; and one could judge from one's self that but little money was spent upon her wardrobe: not that she ever looked anything but a perfect lady, in her tight fitting serge dress, with its neat little linen collar and cuffs, but her well-made gloves and shoes were old and worn, and there was an absence of those little trifling ornaments and gimcrackerics always to be seen on a woman who has any money to spend.

Not that, from what I could make out, Miss Marchmont had no money of her own; on the contrary, if the report of the neighbors were to be believed, she was the heiress to a very pretty little sum of money, but this sum was not to be hers until her uncle's death, or her own marriage; and, in the latter case, Mr. Nagpore had the power of alienating his niece's legacy in another channel, provided he did not approve of her choice.

When I heard of these little particulars, I became quite interested in the Nagpore household, and enquired of my landlord whether there was no chance of Miss Marchmont's marrying. He replied that he had only heard of one suitor, and that this one was more of the old gentleman's selection than the young lady's. I saw the gentleman in question, a few days afterwards, walking in the garden with Mr. Nagpore and his niece, and I did not wonder that Miss Marchmont failed to be much struck with him. He was a short thick-set man, of a swarthy complexion, with a thick black beard, small, bright, beady black eyes, and sensual lips. A physiognomist would have made no mistake as