

"Yes, madam. It is two months since I left our mountain, and I have been walking through England for many weeks. I have had work here and there for a few days, to earn a little money to bring me along; but I cannot stay long in any place. I must travel the world until I find her."

"Thou dost interest me very much," said Rachel Webb, noting the ring of pathos in the young man's voice, and the stern reality of the look of care on his face. "Thou hast done well to tell me thy history. I will think over thy case, and meantime thou canst have lodging for the night."

Rested and refreshed, Kevin was sent for next morning to join his new friend in her garden.

"Thou shalt work with me here as many days as thou wilt," she said, "and while we work we will talk about thy pilgrimage."

Kevin fell to work with hearty good will. When Mrs. Webb met the eager eyes of her new servant, and saw him spring forward to meet her slightest suggestion, she thought, "I have got a young Nathaniel; an Israelite in whom there is indeed no guile!"

Rachel Webb managed her own farm in her peculiar way, allowing the greatest possible number of people to live and support themselves on the ground that she owned. A thorough lady in all her personality she made herself the friend and companion of those who lived by and served her.

"Come in here, Nathaniel," she said one day, "I would speak with thee privately. Nay, I know it is not thy name; but bear with me; I mean thee well."

Her little sitting-room was the picture of repose, with its drab walls and settees, its glowing fire and beau-pot of golden chrysanthemums. She sat at her desk, and Kevin stood before her.

"I have been thinking and remembering, and I believe that I have seen thy little girl."

Kevin started: a crimson color dyed his pale face, and left it whiter than before.

"Oh, madam, you cannot be in earnest!"

It seemed to him in a moment that had she known where Fanchea was to be found she ought not to have taken him in, fed and housed, and set him to work, but sent him flying along the road in unbroken pursuit. The thought flashed through his mind in half a second, but Rachel saw the blaze of it in his eyes.

"Nay," she said, smiling, "my ways are not thy ways, Nathaniel. Thou must learn patience, or all thy simplicity and thy truth will not avail thee. Yes, thou hast had a sort of patience in thy determined search; but thine is rather the endurance of passion than the reasonable coolness and meekness which succeeds. But I will try three no longer."

"You have the right," said Kevin; "but I am in pain until you tell me what you mean."

"I shall tell thee. A short time ago a troop of gipsies encamped in our neighborhood. I have a dislike of the life led by these wandering people, but yet I feel an interest in them. They bear Scriptural names, and when I hear of their Naomis, their Rachels, their Nathans, I cannot but feel that they are the lost sheep of a royal fold. But I must not keep thee in suspense. I went to see the wives and mothers of this troop, and among them I found a little girl who struck me as in no way belonging to them. She was nursing a baby, and singing with a voice of extraordinary sweetness and power."

"That was Fanchea," cried Kevin.

"It was a voice that affected me in a way I cannot describe. The words of her song were in a strange language. The gipsies told me it was Romany; but I know something of Romany, and I did not believe them."

"It was Irish," said Kevin, breathlessly.

"I had heard that this girl took a prominent part in their performances for the amusement of the villagers; that she danced and sang and brought them a good deal of money. I was anxious to speak with the child, but noticed a distinct determination on the part of the gipsies that I should not do so. This increased my suspicions that they had not come by her

honestly, and I resolved to be very careful. My intention was to learn her history, to rescue her if possible from unworthy hands, and draw her into a more wholesome way of life."

"God bless you, madam," broke from Kevin, who had been struggling to listen with patience.

"But the gipsies were as suspicious and more cunning than I. They baffled me by shifting their tents and suddenly disappearing in the night."

"You have lost sight of them. Oh, madam, why have you kept me here?"

"Stay!" said Rachel Webb. "I had a purpose. Thou wert in an exhausted state, and I wished to save thee from illness and defeat. But I have lost no time. The day after thy arrival I sent a messenger in pursuit of the gipsies, to find out their present quarters, and bring me back news of their whereabouts. The messenger has gone and returned while thou hast been recruiting thy strength."

"You know where they are?"

"Yes; but I am sorry to say that things have taken an unexpected turn. My messenger found the gipsies, but the child was no longer with them. They declare that she has run away. Whether it is a trick or not I do not know. This is what thou wilt have to find out."

"Where are they to be found? Which way shall I go?"

"That I will explain to thee. My messenger shall put thee on the way. But wait till I give thee my advice. If thou dost find the child come back this way, that I may rest you both and be of some little use to you. If thou art satisfied she has truly run away, and is a second time lost, and if thou canst not discover any trace of her in the neighborhood, thy best course will be to make thy way to London. A girl with so remarkable a voice will ultimately be transported there. Some one will take her up to make money of her. Should it come to that thou wilt suffer much, and wilt have ample need for the patience I have spoken of."

The pain and suspense in Kevin's face mounted to a point of anguish, at sight of which the good lady's measured periods came to an abrupt conclusion. She hastily made some kindly preparations for his journey, and allowed him to hurry away upon the gipsies' track.

Following the directions given him, he easily overtook them, the more so as they made no attempt to evade his pursuit. The gipsy mother having suffered her own disappointment in losing Fanchea, felt a certain gratification in witnessing Kevin's dismay. She came out of her tent to meet him, and smiled at his excited questions.

"Yes, we brought her with us. She was always a wanderer, you know, and she liked to see the world. Now she is tired of us, and she ran away in the night. She will see plenty of the world before she has finished. It is not worth our while to search for her, but you can try it if you like. Ah, you will have me punished, will you? Who will listen to you? Where have you got money for a prosecution? I defy you, you poor creature! You had better have stayed at home in your own poor country. But I forgot that it is your fate. Did I not read it to you off the palm of your hand?"

Kevin turned away sick at heart. He remembered what she had said to him on the island, on that evening which now seemed twenty years ago, when pretending to tell his fortune by the lines of his hand. The recollection made his heart sink lower than ever, so plainly did it prove that the woman had laid her plot from the first moment she had seen Fanchea. "You will lose that which you love best in the world, and be a wanderer, seeking for it in vain." That was what she had said; and as the words came back to him he seemed to see again the wild brown island, the crimsoned waves, Fanchea's little eager face, and the flocks of white seagulls that wheeled screaming about their heads and disappeared in a trail of glory