

across the sunset. Even as the birds had vanished, so had she gone out of his life.

He walked away, and leaning upon a roadside gate tried to think the matter out, while his eyes fixed themselves on the distant landscape. It was a mild, damp winter's day; indistinct forms of delicate purple and misty brown were blotted in softly between the blank grey sky and the fields at his feet; and never afterwards could Kevin look upon such lines and tints of Nature without seeing in them the expression of a weary despair. As he stood there some one approached him; it was Naomi, whom Fan had named the sorrowful gipsy.

"Hush!" she said. "I have been sent to tell you to move away out of this; but I want to say something more. *The child really ran away.* You may not have believed it, but it is true. I am only a poor, broken-hearted creature, and I have no reason for deceiving you. I liked the child, but she never could have been happy with us. Three of our men have been out searching for her, and they think she must have got away by the train to London. I wish with all my heart that you may find her."

"May God reward you for this kindness," said Kevin. "Can you point me out the road to London?"

"You turn to the right from here," said Naomi, "but that is the very most I can tell you."

CHAPTER XII.—LONDON.

Tramping through wet and cold, faring on whatever food he could afford to buy, sleeping sometimes in a barn, sometimes in some corner of a wood, where the rain had not penetrated, Kevin made his way along the road to the great city. He was a strong, stalwart fellow, and sleeping in open air did not distress him. Having made up his mind that Fan must be in London, he kept up his spirits by reflecting on the joy of their meeting in some of the wonderful streets that he had heard so much about. Hand in hand they would "see the world" together, and having seen it to their full contentment, they would return together to Killeevy, where they would tell their experiences, turn by turn, as they sat round the fire with their friends at night. Thus having rested his mind upon hope, his thoughts began to take color from the objects surrounding him. He noticed with the utmost delicacy of feeling the beauty of the country through which he travelled, and contrasted it with the wilder charm of the beloved land from which his exiled feet were each moment carrying him further away. Every short conversation on the roadside, every rest of half an hour on the bench by some friendly cottager's door furnished him with a new experience, and widened his grasp of existing things. When the road was lonely he cheered it with snatches of his native song, or repeated fragments of Shawn Rua's poetry; sometimes continuing a theme according to his own fancy, sketching scenes and forging rhymes, which floated away and were forgotten again, as the rain-mists drifted off behind him. And so he reached London long before daylight on a foggy morning.

Like Dick Whittington and others, Kevin had expected a certain glory and splendor to burst upon him at his entrance into the great city; and as he threaded the wet, foggy streets his disappointment and surprise were extreme. Was this London he asked again and again, and was answered, yes, that he was in London. He breakfasted at a coffee-stand with a group of shivering milk-sellers, whom he eagerly questioned about Fancher. But none of them had seen her. "As well look for a needle in a pottle of hay as look for a child in London," said the owner of the coffee-stand, with a pitying smile.

"But it does not seem so very large," said Kevin, looking around on the narrow street and dingy houses.

"Walk a little further, my young h'emerald," said the man, "and come back next week, and tell if h'our London ain't big enough to please you!"

The day broke, the fog cleared a little, and a sickly yellow light made all things visible. Kevin had pursued his way from by-street to by-street, and

from thoroughfare to thoroughfare, and was walking up one of the streets leading from the Strand to Bloomsbury, when his attention was caught by seeing an old man stagger under the weight of a shutter which he had taken from a shop-window and was hardly strong enough to carry.

Kevin sprang forward, just in time to save him from a fall on the slippery pavement, shouldered the shutter, and put it in its place within the shop.

"Thank you! thank you!" said the old man. "I'm sure I'm obliged to you. I am *not* used to carrying them, but my assistant has treated me badly; went off last night without notice."

Kevin answered by quickly stripping the window of all its shutters, and leaving an interior lined with multitudes of old books exposed to public view.

"Well, you are a strong one, and a ready one, you are," said the bookseller. "I am sorry to have delayed you from your business."

"I have no business," said Kevin, with a little laugh and toss of the head. "I am a stranger in London, looking for work."

"Oh, come now, that would do exactly. But stay; you are a slip of the shamrock, I think?"

"I am an Irishman," said Kevin, quickly.

"Not so fast, young man; I'm not one of them bigoted ones that condemns a man for his country. We've done you more harm than you've done us, according to my way of thinking. I've dipped enough into the old books to lead me to that 'ere conclusion. But who 'ave you in London to give you a character?"

"No one," said Kevin. "I did not think of that."

"It's a difficulty, you know," said the bookseller: "for you'd have to live in my house and take care of my property."

"Yes," said Kevin, "I see. And of course you cannot be sure that I am not a rogue."

"I do not think you are; I do not think you are."

"I am obliged to you for your good opinion; but it is a difficulty which I suppose will follow me everywhere. I trust you may find an honest man. Good morning!"

Kevin turned away with his head erect, and a lump in his throat. To require a proof that he was not a rogue! This was a misfortune he had not anticipated. He had hardly got to the corner of the street, however, before he felt himself plucked by the sleeve.

"Turn back, young man," cried the bookseller. "Let me look again in your face. Yes, I will believe in your honesty. Come into my shop and I will show you what to do."

With a strange feeling of wonder and satisfaction Kevin followed his new employer into the shop. From top to bottom the walls were lined with books, more or less old and shabby. The counter was old and notched, the little ladders for fetching down the books were worm-eaten. The floor was mended, the boards dark with age. It was a curious, dingy little den, but Kevin looked around him with interest. The love of books, awakened in him late, had increased upon him rapidly since he had given himself to study. To be employed among books, to dust them and handle them; nothing could be better to his taste.

His new master brought him upstairs and introduced him to a small room at the top of the house where he was to sleep, and where he now removed his travel-stains, and made a hasty toilet. They breakfasted together in a small dark room behind the shop, a sort of reserve store for surplus books which stood in piles upon the floor, barely leaving room for a stove and a tiny table in their midst. The winter daylight could hardly penetrate through the one small window built round with walls, and a lamp burned on a bracket above the stove. Here Mr. Must, the old book merchant, was wont to read his newspaper in the leisure moments of his day, when he was not busy in his shop, or absent attending book sales in the city.

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