

Having received a lesson in his duties, Kevin was left to fit himself to his new position. Customers were not numerous; and as Kevin sorted, and classified, and arranged, he made himself acquainted with the names of a multitude of books, their subjects, and their authors. When his task was finished he planted his elbows on the counter and lost himself in a fascinating volume. So the day passed; the dim, yellow light vanished, Kevin lighted the paraffin lamp on the counter, and read again. Now and then he raised his head to listen to the wonderful tramp, tramp, of many feet hurrying along the pavement, the most positive outward sign of the vastness of the city which had as yet been forced upon his notice. A clock ticked loudly above his head and looked like the face of time peering out of the accumulated learning and poetry of centuries. Kevin walked to the door and looked with eager interest at the faces of the passers-by, asking himself how many had read these multitudes of worn and handled books, how many heads were full of their secrets, how many minds were illumined by the light of knowledge they contained? Then back again to the counter, and deep into the subject of his interesting book.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening: his employer had returned once during the day to dine, and had been out about his business all the long afternoon. No one had entered the shop since night-fall, but now Kevin was startled from his book by hearing a quick light step crossing the threshold. A young woman came in, dressed in a black waterproof cloak and a little hat, and carrying a small nosegay of flowers in her hand. Kevin had barely time to wonder at seeing flowers at such a time of year before the young woman crossed the shop, and, bowing, he asked what he could do to serve her.

The girl stopped, stared, showing a pretty face, pretty in a style that was quite unfamiliar to Kevin. Then she gave a little laugh, and passing inside the counter disappeared, with a backward glance and smile, into the house. Soon after Mr. Must came home, and Kevin shut up the shop.

"Come this way! Ah, Kevin. My, what a name! Why are you not Tom, Dick, or Harry? In the evenings we give ourselves a little breathing space upstairs."

They had stumbled up the narrow, dark staircase, and Mr. Must threw open the door of a comfortable, lighted room. Shabby and dingy it was, but with well-drawn curtains, a blazing fire and lamp, and a neatly-spread supper-table, the interior looked most inviting to the poor stranger who was invited to enter.

The girl who had passed him in the shop was in the act of carrying a dish from the fire, and smiled and nodded at Kevin's surprise.

"This is my daughter, Mr. Kevin (I will not attempt your other name). Bessie, this is my new assistant. She works with a florist in Covent Garden Market, and sometimes she brings us a little book!" said the father, triumphantly, sniffing at a few slightly faded flowers which had been carefully placed in water on the table.

"He wanted to sell me some of your rubbishy old books," said Miss Bessie, mischievously.

"I thought that you were a customer," said Kevin, and then he ventured an observant look at this new acquaintance. She was neat and trim in figure, and her black dress was decorated with a scrap of geranium fastened at her collar. Her movements were active and pleasant to look at, though full of consciousness. She had that unmistakable town-bred air that cannot be described, but which is conspicuously new to a country cousin, and as strikingly absent from the appearance of every fresh-cheeked new-comer from the woods and fields. Her hair was yellow, and was cut across her forehead in the conventional fringe.

"We haven't many customers on such a day as this," said Mr. Must. "Bookworms mostly like to grub in their libraries at home this foggy weather. But I've done a goodish stroke of business to-day, for

all that. Bought a rare nice lot as cheap as primers."

"Mr. Kevin was one of the bookworms this evening," said Bessie, with a knowing little laugh, and she suddenly planted her elbows on the table and clutched her head with her hands in such a ludicrous way as to make Kevin and her father smile.

"More than you'll ever be, miss," said the latter, chuckling and rubbing his hands.

"I did read a good deal," said Kevin. "When I had done all you told me I had nothing else to do."

"I don't object to it," said Mr. Must; "not if the business ain't neglected. My best assistants have always taken a dip into the books. Them that never looked between the covers was always the ones as let the books rot, from the damp, and lost me customers through not having the goods in their proper places. The man that reads knows where to put his hand on what is wanted, and it stands to him instead of tobacco and beer."

"My!" exclaimed Bessie.

"It takes the roof from over his head——"

"Oh, dear," said Bessie, looking up at the ceiling.

"Don't be impertinent, miss: you know what I means. It creates a h'atmosphere about his head, and that's what makes us booksellers so superior as a race."

"I am glad you do not object to it," said Kevin, smiling.

"No, I don't: but I'll give you a bit of advice. Sort and classify as you go along. You're beginning young, and it'll come easy to you. I didn't begin young, and I didn't sort nor classify; and though I've been picking and reading up and down for twenty years yet it has done me no good to speak of. All the knowledge has got mixed somehow, and they're got into a sort of perplexity. If I had all I knows properly parcelled out and labelled, Lord! there's no knowin' what I might have turned into. Perhaps it's the mercy of Providence, for very great men is never very happy ones."

Mr. Must leaned back in his chair, and patted his waistcoat while he looked over his spectacles placidly at his daughter and assistant. Kevin smiled and Bessie laughed outright.

"What would you have been, father, if you had your choice? The Emperor Napoleon, or the Duke of Wellington?"

"It's hard to say, Miss Pert. I couldn't have been men that was so long before my time: but I might ha' been something as great in its own way."

"I think I'd take the risk of the happiness," said Kevin, "if I had the chance of doing something great."

"Well, well! it's just as I said. You're young, and you try it. Dip whenever you has time: but sort and classify, or you'll be like one of them books we get sometimes in a mixed lot, without title-page or *finis*, and with pages out here, and pages out there, through and through, like a riddle of holes. The learnedest work among them won't fetch a price if it's in such a condition. But if you has the knowledge in you, and has your chapters filled up, and your pages numbered, and your beginning and end in the right places, never fear but you'll be worth a new binding and get a reading as long as there is a eye in the world."

This good advice Kevin took to bed with him, and he lay awake a long time wondering at the din of life that lasted so far into the night, and thinking about this wonderful chance for self-education that had come in his way. He was in London, and he must work to live, and he must stay in the great city till his quest for Fan should be happily brought to an end. Meanwhile he would read. And then his thoughts wandered away through the labyrinths of the streets, and in dreams he continued his search for the missing child.

(To be continued.)

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