

the fountain, the master of the house with its collection, was not slow about inviting his visitor to drink of these pleasant sources of knowledge. The table of Mr. Honeywood's study was always covered with a heap of papers and books.

"That makes a great show, does it not?" he said to Kevin. "But it does not mean much. I am a busily idle man, or an idly busy man, whichever you like; I think I am better at criticising other people's work than doing my own. Two or three years ago I began to write a history of poetry, but I have never got further than collecting materials and making notes. There is a good deal that I want to say, but I only jot down my ideas, and the time never seems to come for getting them fitted into their right places. They are all shaken together like a child's toy letters in a box; I am not sure that they will ever spell anything."

"But what a pity not to work out your idea," said Kevin, who had been looking over some of the notes.

"My dear fellow, I have one advantage above many scribblers of this prolific age, and that is, that I am not haunted by a fear of what the world will lose if I die without enlightening it. If I ever print, it will be a good deal with the feeling of the mischievous boy who shies a brickbat across a garden wall, and then ducks to avoid being seen. I shall hit if I can, and run away, and never be heard of: but if from a distance I can see dismay and surprise among the cabbage heads of the world among whom my missile falls, I shall have a reward which I do not deserve."

"Then you will be severe on the poets of the present day," said Kevin.

"On many of them," said Mr. Honeywood, "especially the wordy weak and the deliberately obscure, and those who put the senses in the place of the soul. But this is a secret. Tell it not in Gath. I would not be laughed at and execrated before my moment comes."

Kevin listened half guiltily, thinking of sundry written pages which were as yet his secret. For this was before the finding of the ballad in the book; and so no wonder he was abashed at finding that this censor of living poets had discovered him. All the more dear, however, was Mr. Honeywood's praise of his ballad for the memory, yet fresh, of this passing conversation.

On one particular evening, when he walked into his friend's study, he found Mr. Honeywood waiting him with a look of sly humor on his face, a look which Kevin had come to like, as the forerunner of something pleasant to be said or done. He did not seem in a talkative mood, and after a few words threw a magazine across the table to Kevin, and said:

"Try a little light literature for a change. There is the *Current Century* for this month; amuse yourself with it while I smoke a cigar."

Kevin turned over the pages of the periodical, and his friend smoked in silence; even the very touch and smell of the new-cut leaves gave pleasure to our hero, as he glanced through the various contents with eagerness. So accustomed was he to yellow-paged, musty books that new paper and type were a little luxury in themselves over and above the delight he felt in coming face to face with the latest thought of the intellect of the civilised world. For the *Current Century* was one of the ablest and most thoughtful publications of the day.

Presently in the pleasant stillness an exclamation broke from Kevin.

"Well, what is the matter?" asked Mr. Honeywood.

"I am quite amazed. I don't know what to say. You made them put it in!" For Kevin had found his own ballad occupying a place of honor in the great magazine.

"My dear fellow, do you think the editor of the *Current Century*, who is a very big man, would be 'made' to put anything in? I showed it to him; and it is there with his full consent. And, lest I forget, let me give you something which he asked me to convey with his compliments." And Mr. Honeywood threw an envelope across the table, in which lay a cheque for a sum that seemed like a little fortune to Kevin.

"How does it read?" asked Mr. Honeywood, with a twinkle of fun in his eyes, and watching the young author gazing up and down the lines of his own poem, like a child who first sees with amazement its own reflection in a looking-glass.

"Wonderfully well," said Kevin, glowing all over with delight. "I could not have believed it. How shall I ever thank you?"

"By following the advice I shall give you presently. And now do you think you have sufficiently got over the first shock to be quite ready for a second?" And he laid an open paper before Kevin, containing a review of the *Current Century*, and speaking at some length of the ballad in question. "Buckle on your armor of humility," said Mr. Honeywood, "and read what is said here. If it were not for a certain look in your eye," he added kindly, with a lingering gaze at Kevin's eyes, in which lay reflected at the moment something of "the light that never was on sea or shore," "if it were not for a feeling I have about you, I should be afraid for you in the suddenness of this good fortune."

Kevin returned the look of his friend, without fully comprehending what was meant. But the older man was satisfied with the glow of innocent joy and enthusiasm, unclouded by any small self-consciousness, which flushed into his manly face.

"The *Critic* is a good paper," continued Mr. Honeywood, "and the man who wrote that notice is a sound opinion. Let us read what he says:

"It gives us surprise to see a ballad from an unknown pen filling so large a space in the *Current Century*, which generally eschews poetry, and is hard on the poets. Yet we cannot quarrel with the exception it has made. The poem has all the quaintness, picturesqueness, and vigor of Rossetti's best ballads, with the purity of Tennyson, yet we cannot mistake it for the work of any known living poet. There is about it a mark of distinct originality, influenced rather by ancient than modern models. If this remarkable ballad be the production of a young man, we venture to declare that a new poet is rising up amongst us."

Having read aloud these words, Mr. Honeywood lighted a fresh cigar, and walked away to the mantel-piece, where he stood smoking and observing the young man who was the subject of this praise. Kevin was trembling with agitation: his face was pale and his eyes moist. He sat quite quiet, and seemed to have almost forgotten where he was. In reality, he was where strong emotion always carried him: on the island among the sea-gulls with Fancher. Had her song really begun to flow from his lips? This was the question which, in some dim shape, arose in his mind.

"Well," said Mr. Honeywood at last, "what do you think of it? Or, rather, where have you been?" added he, smiling.

"I have been away—at home," said Kevin.

"Good! Let me know when you have quite come back, for I want to talk to you."

"I am all here," said Kevin, returning the smile that was given to his simplicity.

"I agree with all that is said in the review. Now what I want to say to you is this. Having struck a high note, keep to it. Don't fall in love with your own voice and sing for the pleasure of hearing it. Continue your studies, and be a severe critic of your own work. Do not rush out and cry, 'Here I am; I am the new poet'; but stay in your quiet corner until the world drags you out. Live as temperately as you have ever done, and never take to stimulating your imagination with wine and writing feverish verses in the small hours of the night."

Kevin laughed. "I cannot help laughing; I have so little temptation to such a way of going on."

"You don't know what you may be tempted to. There is a great deal in you that has never yet been drawn out. Be on your guard. And now having preached my little sermon, allow me to congratulate you."

He removed his cigar, walked up to Kevin, and shook him warmly by the hand.