

"You are too good to me," said Kevin. "How am I to thank you for all the interest you take in me?"

"My dear fellow, give me your regard. I am an odd chap, and do not take to everyone; but you are a friend after my own heart."

Thus the gay, dilettante, and slightly cynical man of the world, as he was called by many, entered into the bonds of friendship with the young peasant poet from an Irish mountain side.

One hot evening in July Mr. Honeywood had pushed his writing-table, with its permanent heap of disordered papers away from the window that overlooked the park, and in its place a great china jar, full of fresh roses, stood on the polished floor. With a literary newspaper, his paper-knife, and his cigar, he lay on a couch waiting; and ordered coffee when Kevin appeared. As the young man came in, he looked at him attentively, noting his gentlemanly appearance, the noble cast of his features, and the air of natural refinement that hung about him. He had observed this refinement of manner grow rapidly upon Kevin during the weeks of their acquaintanceship, had seen how each new store added to his thought and experience, each fresh contact with all that was delicate and beautiful had left a visible trace upon him.

"Kevin," said Mr. Honeywood, abruptly, "you do not mean to stand behind the counter of an old book-shop all your life. What do you mean to do with yourself?"

"I do not know," answered Kevin. "At present I have but one idea. There is a purpose in my life which I am bound to fulfil."

"To ripen into a scholar and a poet?"

"I was not thinking of that," said Kevin. "If such a hope has arisen in me it is since I began my search. I am seeking for a creature whom I love and have lost. This was the reason of my leaving home: it is why I am in London; it was the cause of my meeting with you."

"Go on," said Mr. Honeywood, regarding him with much surprise.

"At home on our mountain I was a stupid, heavy boy, whom ordinary people pitied, and my own mother could not call bright or attractive. My father thought me almost a fool. I hated school-books, and there was scarcely a creature I could talk to. Do I tire you, talking so much of myself?"

"You interest me greatly."

"I was so in love with all that is bright and vivid in life that my own dulness horrified me, and despair would have ruined me, only for the love and faith of a little child. Her mother, in dying, left her to my care; but it was the little child who took care of the big lad. She was not a common child; she had the voice and the spirit of a bird along with her human soul, and even as a baby she filled my mind with thoughts which I never could have dared to express. She opened to me a world in which I lived happily in spite of my natural disadvantages and the contempt of others; and she soothed me into having patience with myself. All this she did with the sweet artlessness of childhood, though she was quite aware of the power she possessed over me. It was a wonder and joy to her little heart that she could give me beautiful thoughts and make me delightfully happy. So we lived together a life no one could comprehend but ourselves, and I know now that under her spell my intellect grew, and my soul expanded within me. I reached manhood, and became every day more conscious of powers that were struggling within me, and more and more I clung to her for sympathy, and light, and inspiration. And then I lost her. Gipsies coveted her for her remarkable voice, and stole her from my mother's home while I was absent. After what I have told you, you will understand how my life was warped, my heart broken, my mind clouded without her. Even if my own need of her had not drawn me out into the world to look for her, my promise to her mother, my pity for her own unhappy fate, would have forced me to spend my life in searching for her."

His voice broke, and he was silent.

"Why did you not tell me anything of this before?" said Mr. Honeywood.

"Because I had grown ashamed of telling my story so often that I was like a bird with only one note. I often wished to tell you, though I fancied you would not, from your position in the world, be likely to be able to help me. I believe I have tracked her to London, and I have been advised to search for her in public places where children sing—not the highest places, such as you are accustomed to go to."

Mr. Honeywood walked up and down the room thoughtfully. "Your story affects me very much," he said, "and curiously enough it strikes me as the echo of something I have heard before. It touches upon an incident I have experienced; something I cannot recall. Well, that does not matter. It will not interfere with the search you are so anxious to continue."

Mr. Honeywood stopped in his walk, and Kevin fixed his eyes on him eagerly.

A humorous twinkle came into Mr. Honeywood's eyes, as he glanced over his shoulder towards his writing-table. "You see that mass of papers," he said. "Since you have begun to come here you have never seen them altered in any way; and yet, you may not believe it, but I do think there is in them the material for a not quite frivolous book. What I have jotted down and scraped together is hardly altogether in vain; but it wants a patient mind and a steady, industrious hand to sift the wheat from the chaff, and put the atoms of usefulness together. That you can do for me, if you choose to undertake the task. Come and live with me and be my secretary, and look on me, not as your master, but your friend."

Some moments passed before Kevin could answer. "I think I must be dreaming," he said at last. "Surely you cannot mean it!"

"My dear fellow, I am not a man of many words, but I always mean what I say. I have had this in my head for some weeks past. I will give you such help on the way as I can. Your mind and heart are alike worthy of the highest culture. Let us seek it together as we go along."

"It is too delightful," said Kevin; "I am dazzled and bewildered. To live and work with you?"

"Don't be so sure it will be delightful. I may turn out an old man of the sea, for all you may know. Yet come and try me. Now, is all that arranged?"

It was quickly settled. In a short time afterwards Kevin said good-bye to his friends at the old book-shop; and with many good wishes and rejoicing at his better fortune, loudly and pleasantly expressed by Bessie, he departed with Mr. Honeywood, and turned over a new page in his life.

(To be continued.)

It is a twice-told tale, that the world is passing away from us. God has written it upon every page of His creation that there is nothing here which lasts. Our affections change: the friendships of the man are not the friendships of the boy. The face of the visible world is altering around us: we have the grey, mouldering ruins to tell of what once was. Our laborers strike their ploughshares against the foundations of buildings which once echoed to human mirth, skeletons of men to whom life was once dear, urns and coins that remind the antiquarian of a magnificent empire. This is the history of the world and all that is in it. It passes while we look at it. We are such stuff as dreams are made of.—F. W. Robertson.

When moving furniture, our aim is always to lessen work and worry and expense. It can be done, too. Our experts handle the furniture in the right way—quickly and carefully—and that's a saving. Another help is the splendid vehicles we have. Naturally, our methods appeal to people.—The New Zealand Express Co., Ltd.