

go into about three words. 'Something wonderfully expressive and sensitive about the mouth.' Ah, well, I fear her captors, or even ordinary lookers-on will not be so observant of that characteristic. The voice will be a good mark, if it be really so remarkable as you think, and not an ordinary child's pipe. Don't start. Love is apt to exaggerate.

"Stolen by gipsies. Known to have been going about with them, singing and dancing at their entertainments. Last seen at R—, and believed to have escaped and come to London—"

"Stay," said Mr. Honeywood, breaking off abruptly "I have got the clue to what puzzled me before in this affair. Was it not last year? Yes; I was at L—, with some friends, and we saw gipsies one morning during our ride. And a little girl danced with a tambourine, and sang with a guitar. She was a picture to look on, poor little soul! and her voice was wonderful, and she sang in a strange language. She interested me strangely, and I went back the next morning to try and learn something about her; but when I arrived I found the gipsies had moved on in the night. They were gone, tents, and baggage, and all. I was disappointed at the moment, but afterwards it all passed away from my mind."

As Mr. Honeywood proceeded with this speech he became more and more in earnest, and throwing down his pen, looked steadily at Kevin, who had risen and come towards him as if expecting that he was going to tell him where the child was to be found, but at the last words fell back with a look of bitter disappointment.

"My poor boy," said Mr. Honeywood, "I think I have seen your Fanchea; but unhappily my news is only another flash of the Will-o'-the-wisp in the swamp. I know no more of her than you do. I can only say that I am now more fully able to realise your feelings with regard to the child. A more interesting creature I never beheld."

It was some time before Mr. Honeywood could satisfy Kevin's eagerness to know every detail of that morning's experiences, could answer all his questions as to how Fanchea looked, what she did and said, and how the people she was among appeared to treat her; it was long before Kevin could think calmly of the incident and make it the subject of sober conversation.

"How strange," he said at last, "that I should twice have met with people who had seen her, twice have come so near that I seem to touch her, and yet lose her again each time, unable to find any further trace of her!"

"The turns and twists of fate are, indeed, wonderful; but they have sometimes curious meanings when looked back upon. Let us try to console ourselves with this, and hope for the best."

"It is hard, when one thinks of a child—a girl—alone in the world of London."

"We do not know that she is in London. Do not look so unhappy; she may be better placed than you fear. At all events, I am going to help you to find her; I have considerable faith in this advertisement."

Kevin was cheered, and returned with new hope to his work. The advertisement appeared every day in the *Times*, and in the meantime Mr. Honeywood took care that all their hours should be fully occupied. Literary work in the mornings, study of the arts in the afternoons, and in the evenings seeing the world in the social sense; thus was their time filled during the later weeks of the London season. Every day the *Times* was feverishly scanned by Kevin, and at last one morning a cry broke from him as he opened the paper.

An answering advertisement had appeared:—

"Fanchea is well and happy, with those who will continue to care for her. Her friends may hear of her later in life, but at present she is not to be found."

After this blow had fallen, Kevin felt all the reaction from hope to despair, and became restless, and agitated, and afterwards dejected in the extreme.

"It is a blind. It comes from cruel people who desire to satisfy our fears and only want to induce us to leave off searching for her," he said gloomily.

"It may not be so," said Mr. Honeywood. "Try and hope the reverse."

But he felt very doubtful himself, and began to think of taking Kevin abroad, so that in the novelties and delights of foreign travel he might regain the natural hopefulness of his mind, and escape from painful thoughts through the pleasures and excitements of the imagination.

CHAPTER XIX.—THE OLD LORD WILL HAVE HIS WAY.

Lord Wilderspin's letter caused great commotion behind the little bric-à-brac shop. Mrs. Wynch was lost in wonder at the idea of her little maid having been turned into the protegee of a lord.

"I shall never contradict you again, Mamzelle," she said; "not that I am going to have much chance in future, but I wouldn't do it now, not if I could. There must be some kind of a blindness about me that I couldn't see something about the child that other people see. But you'll have it all your own way after this."

The signora herself was thrown into a state of agitation that was not all happiness. She was one of those persons who cannot feel unmixed joy at anything that happens in life. Change always brought her pain, and in spite of her delight at Fan's success, and at the nice discernment shown by Fate in making a favorite of the child, she felt at first as much dismay as pleasure in preparing to leave her own toilsome and precarious life in London for ease, security, and the conditions of peace. Things that had long been a trouble to her, such as the noise in the streets, and the dinginess of her apartment, which she could not afford to improve upon, grew dear to her all at once, and became invested with poetry, directly they were about to become part of the past. Like all who are of the same backward-looking nature, she needed a shake to make her know her own mind and realise the advantage of a fortunate change. Matter-of-fact Mrs. Wynch, taking her little mournful complaints literally, administered the slight shock which in this instance set her right.

"I'm sure I never knew you were so fond of the place, Mamzelle," she said, quite flattered, "and if you are sorry to go, why I am sorry to lose a good lodger. That old lord is so accustomed to have his own way that he never thinks of what it is to other people to have their lives routed about and everything changed. But I think if you wrote and put it to him, he would easily find somebody else to take care of our little maid; and you could run down in the train sometimes to see how she gets on, you know."

The signora opened her eyes wide and stared at her landlady, and instantly knew that she was longing to get under Lord Wilderspin's roof. And though she continued to sigh a good deal as she packed up her things, she made no more articulate complaints.

Nothing of her possessions could she bring herself to part with; and in the end she set out encumbered with large packing-cases, the contents of which were, for the most part, destined to form contributions to the collection in the lumber-rooms of the Hall.

When, however, she found herself in his lordship's carriage, rolling through his blooming park, and when she saw Fanchea, in a pretty brown linen dress with crimson ribbons, flying to meet her, then she realised that the times were good and that the lines were falling to her in pleasant places. All her regrets vanished like ghosts at cock-crow when she felt Fanchea's warm arms clasped round her neck. She allowed herself to be whirled from one beautiful room to another between gusts of joyous information which the child let loose upon her respecting the delights of the place. Various huggings took place at the beginnings and ends of the corridors, and Lord Wilderspin, coming suddenly round a corner, was witness to one of these.

"It will work, I see," he said to himself. "The child will have mothering as well." Then aloud: "Aha, madam, I have caught you already spoiling my property! My nightingale is not here in a gilded cage that she may sing to me and you alone, remember. This lively bit of human intelligence," putting his