

—Fan—or the unknown sister who had assumed her personality in his mind.

When morning appeared, however, and looking round he saw that the pleasure-takers of the night had vanished, and that quite another order of beings filled the streets, he felt suddenly conscious of what a strange appearance he should present in a lady's morning room, in his evening dress, and with his pale and jaded face. He must return to the hotel and make himself presentable, deferring his visit to a proper hour of the day.

Carrying out this intention, he dressed, breakfasted, and tried to rest a little, but could not. The time seemed to lag wonderfully. At last he made up his mind that the moment had come when he might legitimately relieve his suspense. Setting out again, he paused before the house in front of which he had paced throughout the night.

"The Signora Francesca? Does she live here?"

"Yes," said the servant. She had been there, but she was gone.

"Impossible!" cried Kevin, with a sense of some overwhelming fatality.

"Oh, yes, gone. She and her lady friend left very early this morning for the country. The signorina suffered much from fatigue lately, and the departure was planned for the earliest moment after the performance."

"Where have they gone? When will they return?"

"They have not left their address. They wished to be unmolested for a few days to come."

"For a few days?"

"After that they will write here for their letters. The gentleman can call in about a week, when we shall be happy to give him the address."

"One more word. Have you any idea of what part of the country they have gone to?"

"Somewhere between this and Pavia, I believe. More I do not know."

Meantime Fan had passed through her great trial in the most triumphant manner, giving entire satisfaction to her guardians. The success of her *début* was unquestioned, and already she had received the offer of a first-rate engagement to sing in Paris. But before this matter had been fully discussed, before Lord Wilderspin and Herr Harfenspieler had met on the day after the performance, early in the cool of the morning following that exciting evening, Fan and the signora had stolen away from the city to a little country retreat that had been prepared for them. At Fanchea's earnest request, arrangements had been made for this hasty flight after her public appearance. She had been living in a fever of excitement for some time before the event; as the day approached, she had felt more and more unwillingness to appear on the stage, and her success had been bought by a tremendous effort at self-conquest.

"Let us get away the moment it is over," she had implored the signora; "away into the green country, away from all the crowds of faces, where we shall not know whether I have failed or succeeded."

She had not told the signora that part of her excitement was due to the fact that she expected to see Kevin among the audience. She felt that until the great trial was over, she could not speak on the subject of her meeting with her childhood's friend. She was already devoured by more excitement than she well knew how to master; and felt that to speak, or even to think, much of Kevin would be to give way and break down. Nevertheless she had hoped to see him on the terrible night, and she had not seen him. Her friends, Lord Wilderspin and Herr Harfenspieler, had seen him, recognising him through his companion, whom they knew; and each had thanked Heaven that Fanchea had been left in ignorance of his presence in Milan. They were also pleased that her request had been acceded to, and that she would at once be removed from the likelihood of a meeting with him.

"He is really a distinguished-looking young man," said Lord Wilderspin. "My mind misgives me for keeping them apart."

"You cannot keep them apart longer than Fate wills," said the Harfenspieler, mournfully. "Up to this, I believe, your action has produced nothing but good to both."

"I hope so," said the old lord, who, somehow, of late—ever since he had seen her eyes so red with crying—had begun to think that Fan was not the sort of creature to be happy on a stage, and that home was the best place for a woman, after all. As for his own hobby, had he not ridden it to his heart's content? He had proved his discrimination in discovering a first-rate voice, and forcing all good judges, as well as the public, to acknowledge that it was so. She had the world now at her feet, if only she would choose to live for the world.

But the old musician took a different view of the case. He had labored, not for the gratification of a whim, but that art might be glorified through his means. So far from being content with the result, and willing to turn from this achieved success, because the crowd had approved his work, he saw himself now only on the first step towards attaining his desire. The long, brilliant career which he saw opening before his pupil could alone repay him for the efforts of the last seven years, and that she should pursue it every step of the way, ever improving, ripening, gathering fresh power as she went, and pouring out the riches of her maturity and experience on the altar of art, for the increase and exaltation of its worship, was the burning desire of his soul. He turned away from Lord Wilderspin with an impatient frown, as his lordship's eyes kept flitting restlessly from Elsa on the stage to Kevin sitting wrapped in his corner among the audience.

"By Jove, I think he recognises her!" muttered his lordship; and Herr Harfenspieler could bear it no longer, but went off to mount guard and prevent the possibility of Kevin's sudden appearance behind the scenes, to hurry her away the moment the performance was over.

He had already planned to send her off early the next morning to the country retreat he had chosen for her, and to keep her there till her strength might be restored, and till Kevin should have left Milan. Fan, sadly disappointed that Kevin had not crossed her path again, had almost persuaded herself that it was in a dream she had seen him walk through the cathedral. She felt too tired to oppose Herr Harfenspieler, and dared not claim the sympathy of any of the people around her. As she travelled by the signora's side towards their temporary home near Pavia, she could only pray and hope that Providence would take up her cause, and again bring her friend to her side.

They found their country hiding-place a little house wrapped in vines and roses; and that evening Fan wandered about the garden pondering deeply on the strange chances of life. How noble, how good Kevin had looked: just as her dreams had so often pictured him to her! And then her thoughts went back to their distant island, so distant both as to time and place, to the birds, to his mother's house, to Killeevy Mountain. She remembered Killeevy as she had seen it last, with the moon overhanging the cliffs, the ocean; the lighted gipsy tents, the red shine glowing out of the shadows under the crown of the hill from hearthstones of humble though dearly-loved homes.

Only eight years ago, and yet what a lifetime it seemed to Fan. What a wonderful Fate it was that had withdrawn them both from that lowly peasant life, to educate and place them in a completely different sphere in the world. That they never could be peasants on Killeevy Mountain again she knew too well; but they could visit, and cherish, and love those who had long ago been good to them there.

Her whole past life lay before her as upon one curious page, and musing over it she easily believed herself a child again.

"And is this indeed me—little Irish me—the person who has been singing, not to a gipsy's crowd, but to a world of great people in a theatre in Italy, who has been promised fame, success, wealth, such as few ever attain to? Ah, how will Kevin ever believe it?"