

That would be about the height he had imagined her. The face—ah, how could he be sure of her lineaments now? This face was fair and pure, with large dark eyes. The hair was not curled in little cloudy rings about the temples, the cheeks were not rosy, like those of the little girl he had known. The long waving tresses were swept back from the fair, child-like, and yet intellectual forehead, giving to the pale, oval face a dignified look which he could hardly associate with the winning and fantastic little peasant of Killeevy. And yet, and yet. Nay, what folly was this!

He involuntarily closed his eyes, and held his breath to listen.

It was the moment when the last notes of the silver trumpet's call having died away, and no champion having appeared for the forlorn little maid, Elsa flies and kneels before the king, craving him to command yet another blast to be sounded in her favor, yet another aerial summons to be uttered by those silver throats, to bring the unknown, yet confidently-expected, hero in all his warlike splendor, and with all his chivalrous eagerness, to her side. A few sweet, tremulous, bird-notes quivered on the ear, and Kevin turned pale. The notes reminded him strangely of the "Hymn of the Virgin Triumphant," and the voice, ah, how cruelly like it was to the child-voice that so often sung that song. He covered his face with his hand and listened. Ah, if it were Fanchea! But he had grown too wise by experience to give himself up to the thought that this dream, unlike all others that had gone before it, might prove true. He remembered how unusually occupied his mind had been with her all day, how he had striven to recall her face, her tones, and to bestow them on an ideal maiden whom his imagination had conjured to his side. All this had colored his thoughts, had predisposed him to the peculiar torture which he was suffering now. No, it was not Fan; only some fair and rare Italian, who would yet make a sensation in the great world.

"It is a rich voice," said Honeywood. "Trove-trove to some *impresario*."

The opera proceeded. Kevin sat forward now, gazing intently on the stage, hearing nothing through all the mighty storm of music but one voice, seeing nothing but the features and expressions of one face, the movements and gestures of one form. When the curtain fell upon the first act, a burst of rapturous applause told the satisfaction of the audience, and he lay back in his seat with a sigh of impatience at his own bewitchment. The Signora Francesca! Doubtless any one of the audience could tell him all about her. Well, he was not going to ask.

"She is a charming young creature," said Honeywood, "with a triumphant future, if I do not mistake. It is curious," he added, reflectively, "but I fancy I have both seen the face and heard the voice before."

Kevin started at these words, and turned on him an eager look, which must have attracted notice, only that Mr. Honeywood had turned even as he spoke, and was looking at the faces in the seats above them. His own memory suggested a meaning of this fancy of his friend—the gipsy entertainment at which Honeywood had been present, at which the child Fanchea had danced and sung. Completely carried away by this suggestion, he was about to start up and rush away to the green-room of the theatre to satisfy himself at once, when the curtain flew up once more, and the opera went on.

The music-story proceeded, and gradually unfolded its plot. Elsa saw her brother return, flew to meet him, and trilled her delight at seeing him again. Leading him by the hand, she approached nearer to the front of the stage than she had yet done, and Fanchea, who had been singing with a courage that astonished herself, now expressed Elsa's rapture with the most charming *naïveté*. This opera had been chosen at her own desire for her first appearance. The story of it had fascinated her imagination, and she did not feel herself alone in this vast crowd of singers, was not so nervous as she should have been in coming forth to sing solos, as in any other opera. She had readily thrown herself

into the part of Elsa. Something in the poetic story she had associated with her own in a way unexplained to herself; the loss of the brother, the loneliness of the sister. As she drew the brother forward, and sang her welcome to him, she seemed to look to where Kevin was sitting.

Her glance directed towards himself (as he fancied), her smile, a peculiar note in her voice at the moment smote upon Kevin. Was he going crazy, or was it really Fan, and had she recognised him? He turned deadly pale, and from that instant till the moment when Elsa fell prone on the riverbank while her hero sailed away, he scarcely drew breath nor removed his eyes from her face.

The curtain finally descended amidst the rapturous plaudits of the now well-filled house, and murmurs of delight were on every tongue.

"What is the matter with you?" said Honeywood to Kevin. "You look white. Are you ill?"

"I have got a surprise," said Kevin. "I think I have seen a friend."

"Ah, well. You will follow me at your leisure, I suppose," said Mr. Honeywood, wondering at his altered manner, and thinking he had recognised some acquaintance among the audience.

"What can be wrong?" he thought, seeing Kevin disappear with extraordinary quickness. "Something beyond the chance sight of an acquaintance has affected him."

In the meantime Kevin had rushed out into the street, and made his way behind the scenes of the theatre. He inquired for the *prima donna*, the Signora Francesca, and learned that she had already left the place. A carriage had been in waiting for her, and as soon as the performance was over her friends had taken her away.

He asked for her address, and hurried along the street, passing through crowds of pleasure-takers who made the streets gay with a gaiety scarcely seen in Milan under daylight skies. Bevy of fair maidens met him, flirting their fans, laughing and chattering, while the cool night air stirred their black lace mantillas and drew perfume from the roses that fastened the fluttering drapery to their still blacker hair. Crowds of lively people sat on the pavement at little marble tables, eating ices; the tall houses showed few lights; all the inhabitants were abroad; but the lower part of the streets shone like a ballroom. Above all, overhead the dark, lofty roofs, hung the purple sky, alive with great palpitating stars. Kevin saw nothing around him as he hurried along the streets to the house that had received the Signora Francesca. Every obstacle in his way was maddening to him; yet the easy walk of the saunterers he met was no way disturbed; nobody save himself hurried along, nobody was in a state of excitement although it was possible that Fanchea might be found!

Arrived at the house, he suddenly paused, with a shocked sense of his own rudeness, his own thoughtlessness. Every light was out; the house was apparently shut up for the night. What wild folly had brought him at this unseemly hour to thrust himself, in so excited a condition, perhaps into the presence of a stranger? The wearied *prima donna*, the youthful and lovely girl who had bewitched his fancy and entwined herself with his hopes, was probably already enjoying her hard-earned rest. He turned away, and began pacing up and down, determined to wait till morning should give a rational appearance to his visit. Hour after hour passed, and all the while he was trying to reason out the probabilities of the case, to persuade himself to take the matter quietly, to be prepared for a disappointment.

He would, of course, be denied access to the signora unless he could give a satisfactory reason for his visit. He must not rush in upon her like a wild man, exclaiming, "Is this Fanchea?" and so run the risk of being taken for a maniac by complete strangers. In a few simple words he must tell the story of his hopes and fears; and in fancy he now made his appeal to