

THE WILDBIRDS OF KILLEEVY

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND (LADY GILBERT)

CHAPTER XXIII—CONTINUED

"You needn't try to frighten me," said Rupert, good-humoredly. "You have spoiled me too long and too often for that. I have deserved your anger, and you have always forgiven me. This time there is no fault upon my head."
"When I advised you to marry you would not do it," burst forth his lordship. "Why have you not married your Lady Mauds and Miss Julia?"
"Because they were not—Fan," said Rupert, smiling.
"Be silent, sir, you are most impertinent," said Lord Wilderspin, striding about.
"Now, uncle, do be quiet, and let us talk. I want to marry and settle down according to your wishes; and the woman I have chosen is the 'child' who is dear to yourself. You love her as an old man, and I as a young man, and this is the only difference between us. You would have her obey you, and I would devote my life to making her happy. There are women enough to sing for us in the theatres. I advise you to let me have my own way."
"An Irish beggar-girl, a gipsy's founding, is to be installed here as the future Lady Wilderspin!" stormed his lordship.
"I will take her out of the place, that you will be troubled with the sight of her again."

worked himself higher in the scale of education and refinement? What proof had she that he had come out into the world in search of her, had been wrought up into something nobler than the noblest of the earth? Living at Killeevy, he would naturally do as others did, and go on earning his bread as his father had done before him. Could it be that he had forgotten all his early aspirations; or had he developed into such another as Shawn Rua (called the book-learned man)? Or even if he had followed her (according to her faith), roamed for her sake out into the world's wide high-road, could she feel sure that, even in this case, he had been met by a happier fate? How could he have procured any sitting up on her pillow, and the advantages that had been so freely poured out upon her?
Travel-solled, worn, weary, and poor, she had often pictured him to herself; but coarse and uncultivated, never. Oh! why had she not been left upon the mountain among her friends, to grow up and remain a peasant to the end of her days? She thought would never have been aware of anything wanting in those she loved, whereas, now, she realized that she might live to be only more unhappy through attaining the desires of her heart.
Sensitively and artistically alive to refinement, she was appalled at the probabilities presented to her, sitting up on her pillow, and staring at the brightening dawn, her eyes grew red with weeping, and her heart felt like to break. Where was the use of the day if Kevin's beautiful soul were a dream? What was the object of the existence of such a creature as herself, if he were to prove one with whom she could not bear to associate?

unpleasantness had come so quickly to an end.
That Fan would soon listen willingly to his suit he had no longer any fear, and he loved her all the more for the fidelity and tenderness that created her first difficulty. He was resolved to keep search for her early friends, but comforted himself with the reflection that very little of Kevin, when found, would amply satisfy the cravings of her heart. Out of his pocket he would make the people comfortable for the rest of their days, and thus win her lasting gratitude after the tears of her disappointment had been shed.
As for Fan, she saw everything undone again that last night had seemed finished and put away. She was quick enough to perceive that Lord Wilderspin was favoring his nephew's suit, and it did not surprise her so much as it ought to have done, because she was so accustomed to receive everything good from his hand. She was unusually grave and silent, and her lover respected her mood. He divined clearly enough that the force of circumstances was telling upon her imagination, and in time would tell upon her heart. She did not love him yet; but he would rather wait for her love than see her willing to marry him for the sake of mere worldly advantage. She would have her own time and her own way. It was enough for him at present to watch tenderly the sorrowful wakening of the dream of Kevin, and to have the privilege of soothing away the pain, replacing it gradually with a reality of happiness.
In the changed expression of her eyes he read that the visionary Kevin was no longer discernible, and the coarse reality, as presented by him, now constantly filled them instead. She was remembering all the circumstantial evidence against the friend of her youth. Her letters had never been answered; in all her wanderings she had not met him searching for her. The seven years (which at Fanchea's age are a lifetime) had changed him so that he was contented without her on the mountain, and was patiently supporting his wife and children by the labor of his spade. The utmost good that he could require of her now was probably a little bounty such as Captain Rupert could give, to make him and his family more comfortable. The loss of her dream pressed heavily on her heart, and changed her from a gleeful girl into a thoughtful woman. But Captain Rupert was right in judging that the way was opening that might lead her to become the Lady of Wilderspin.
They had ridden a long way, when the sky became dark, and it was evident a thunder-storm was following their steps. They saw it rolling towards them from the sea across the valley, and to turn would have been to meet it in the teeth. Captain Rupert, remembered a farm-house a mile in advance on the road, and they pressed on their horses to reach its shelter. In spite of fast riding, floods of rain and flashes of lightning overtook them; Fan's skirts were drenched, and the wind buffeted her little hat and tugged at her hair till it streamed in fluttering ringlets round her wet and rose-red face.
The haven was reached at last—a neat farm-house with a gable overgrown with climbing flowers. Captain Rupert sprang from his horse and threw the reins upon a rail of the gate, then hurried up the walk and knocked at the door. It was the same door at which Kevin had knocked when on his weary tramp many years ago; and one of Rachel Webb's handmaidens opened to him.
The distressed wayfarers were kindly invited in; Fan was lifted off her horse and hurried under shelter; and a fair, placid woman in grey garments and a white muslin cap met her in the hall with a welcome.
"Let me step into your kitchen," said Fan, smiling and rosy; "my dripping skirts will do less harm there than anywhere else."
As she stepped into the kitchen, and stood full in the light, she made a picture, with her clinging draperies, her blooming cheeks, and the wet tangle of her ruffled hair curling about her pretty head and neck.
Rachel Webb looked at her attentively; and then said, "Young friend, I have met thee before!"
CHAPTER XXV UNEXPECTED NEWS
"Young friend, I have met thee before," Fanchea returned the good Quaker's long, steadfast look with a glance of surprise, never doubting that she was mistaken for some other person.
"I do not remember," she said, "and yet—I have not seen many people."

When, still pondering these words, Fan emerged from the bedroom to which she had been led, she was dressed in a print gown fresh from the ironing table at which the maids were at work. Her riding habit was hung at the fire, and she was assured it would not be dry for an hour; besides the storm showed no signs of abating. In the parlor she found Mrs. Webb and Captain Rupert awaiting her reappearance; and tea was spread on a table in the pleasant old-fashioned sitting-room where the sober drabs and greys of the furniture enhanced the rich color of the flowers that adorned it. A large china bowl of fresh-gathered roses perfumed the tea-table; such lights as the storm permitted came into the room laden with a cool green tinge from filtering through overhanging leaves that clustered over the windows. Pleasant to Fan's eyes was the whole scene, including Rachel's white muslin cap, placid face, and the white plump hand that moved among the tea-cups. A swift, strange feeling, having been in the place and the circumstances before seized upon her. This woman belonged to her past, would have a hand in her fate. What was it that she was going to tell her?
Thrilling with expectation Fan did not notice the look of admiration which Captain Rupert bestowed upon her, as after the fashion of lovers he reflected that nothing he had ever seen her wear sat so fittingly upon her as the ironing-table. She fixed her eyes on Rachel, eager for her next words, yet finding it impossible to hurry her, or disturb her in her little hospitable courtesies.
"Drink thy tea first, my dear," said the good lady; "it will rest thee and do thee good; and then I will say what I have to say to thee."
Fan swallowed her tea, and then sat silently waiting. It will be nothing after all," she thought, checking her impatience. "Only some foolish story about the gipsies."
"Madam," she said at last, "you need not be afraid of frightening me. I am no longer afraid of the gipsies."
"Is she in safe keeping now, I assure you," said Captain Wilderspin, smiling on her.
Mrs. Webb looked from one to the other. "I am glad to know it," she said, "yet I have something to tell thee that does not concern those people. Didst thou know that some one else was seeking thee besides the gipsies?"
"Fan rose suddenly to her feet. "Yes, I have always known it, have always believed it. What have you got to tell me?"
"Is it several years since he came here on his way to London looking for thee, and I have not seen him since. I suppose you know of whom I am speaking."
"Kevin!" said Fanchea, trembling.
"That was his name. It was so new to me that I could not forget it. He was a simple, noble creature, and his anxiety about thee was great. I told him I had seen thee, and he put him on the track of thee, and when he found thee, 'Which way did he go?' said Fan, looking as if ready to unfurl a pair of wings and fly along the track so wearily travelled by her friend so many years ago.
" 'To London,' said Mrs. Webb.
" 'But calm thyself, my child; I cannot tell thee where he is now. He wrote to me from London many times; and I was always disappointed. He obtained some employment with a bookseller, and I have had means of learning that he gave himself up to study and developed some unusual talents. A literary gentleman took him up, and they went travelling together, and have never returned. Mrs. Wynn's face had become more and more radiant as the Queeness went on speaking. The fact that she had caught sight of him only to lose him again could not cloud her delight. Her faith in him had been verified, and at present that was enough. He had really been in search of her; he was educated, talented, and living with people of refinement. What did it signify that they were still to be apart? He lived in the world, and so did she; and with the happy audacity of youthful hope she felt it sufficient guarantee of their ultimate joyful meeting.
Glowing with excitement, beaming with triumph and joy, she turned to Captain Rupert who had been a silent witness of this scene; but she met no sympathy from him; he turned away abruptly and looked out of the window, with a clouded face. The whirl of her thoughts would not allow her to guess at the cause of his coldness; she only felt a sort of pity for his want of judgment, that he had never been able to believe in Kevin. A little laugh rose in her throat, as the picture of a coarse peasant, with which he had lately succeeded in frightening her, flitted across her mind.
Here someone announced that the storm was over, and the horses at the door. Fan hurried away to prepare for departure, and was soon riding homeward with Captain Wilderspin.
Very few words were spoken between them during the ride. Rupert could not bring himself to congratulate the young girl upon her discovery she had made, fearing it involved the ruin of his own hopes. The story he had heard had sounded in him like a page out of a fairy tale, and it seemed cruel of Fate to contrive circumstances so exceptional for the purpose of robbing him of his coveted happiness. Upon his exertions to win low-bred vulgar Kevin he had rested his expectation of winning Fanchea's affections; but he could do nothing to bring about her meeting with such a man as had just been described. Her little outbursts of gaiety as she rode along by his side, the lark-like joy in her voice as she broke out into raptures about the beauty of the clouds, the landscape, anything that caught her eye and became for the moment transfused by her own delight, annoyed him beyond measure, feeling, as he did, that the fact of his own existence had no part in producing her satisfaction. Yet his unresponsive gravity gave her a slight chill in the end. If he really had any regard for her, she thought, why could he not be glad in her joy?
"I think you are not pleased at my good news," she said, looking at him wistfully, when he had lifted her down from her saddle. Captain Rupert turned pale, but smiled, and for an answer raised her little hand to his lips.
" 'She is such a child,' he said to himself. 'How can I confess to her that I am jealous? After all she looks on this Kevin as a brother. If I can win her for my wife before-hand, why should I not be satisfied to see them meet?'"

TO BE CONTINUED
MAZIE AND THE MAJOR
By Marion Dee in Rosary Magazine
Spring had been late, and the April blossoming slow, but May burgeoned forth like a flower. Across the emerald green of field and meadow a prodigal hand had sown the gold of a million dandelions, while peeping from sandy ridges and forgotten fence corners the sturdiest and bluest of violets showed their heads in defiance of the casual despoiler. Such a sunny May, too, whose showers when they did come only served to accentuate the glowing green of tree and hedge and to fill the air with the pleasant smell of fresh loam and growing things. Never had there been a more wonderful May—and never had Mrs. Wynn been less in tune with it. As she raised her face from room windows this morning to the odorous breeze and looked out into the little yard where robins and blue birds and the inevitable sparrows were disputing themselves, her heart was as heavy as lead at the thought that perhaps soon all this dear and cherished loveliness would cease to be hers. She loved her little home and had managed admirably as long as Lessere remained a suburban corporation; but now that it was to be taken into the city taxes and other expenses would mount up to such an extent that, with her limited income, she would be unable to meet them. By using strict economy she would have enough to rear and educate her three children. But such an economy would not permit living in that promised suburb. Besides, she could sell to an advance. Already she had been approached with flattering offers. Somehow it did not seem right to refuse what would add a material sum to her small capital. And yet . . . to leave the dear home quarters—how could she bear to do that? She was turning away from the window with a burdened sigh when she heard the kitchen door slam, followed by a rush of eager feet.
Three children, from four to eight, erupted into the room, all talking at once. Mrs. Wynn held up her hands laughingly.
" 'One at a time!' she admonished.
" 'Grace, you tell me,' as the four-year-old precipitated herself into her mother's arms.
" 'Dozen eggs!' she pronounced breathlessly. 'A whole dozen, Mother!'
" 'Let's sell 'em—we don't need any eggs—'
" 'And not move to town!' recited the other two in unison, with an air of triumphant appeal. Such a grand idea—why hadn't Mother thought of it before? 'Please Mother, won't you?' Margaret, the oldest, begged.
Mrs. Wynn smiled, but her eyes filled and a little contraction came into her throat. 'That's a good idea,' she managed to say cheerfully after a moment. 'We'll have to think about it, won't we? What would Mother do without her little helpers?' gathering the three close to her.
The children knew all about the contemplated move, and with an understanding in advance of their years realized how much their mother hated to leave the dear little home.
" 'It's because Father lived here once,' Margaret told the two younger ones sagely, added importantly. 'I remember him, you know. I liked him.'
Her sisters regarded her enviously. 'To think she knew Father!' I would like him if I knew him,' offered Mazie. 'Wouldn't you, Grace?'
Grace was resourceful, if young. 'Oh, I can like him up in heaven,' she stated quaintly.
" 'I wish he was here, though,' Mazie said. 'Then he could tell Mother what to do.'"

"You little silly!" exclaimed Margaret. "If Father was here he'd take care of us all and we wouldn't have to move, or anything!"
Mazie looked properly impressed. "Oh!" she murmured. "Oh!" "That was it . . . If you had a father there was never anything to worry about. Fathers, it appeared, had so much money that little matters like wearing out shoes never worried them like it did Mother, for instance. Her mind strayed to new dresses, of which her small soul was passionately fond—proud dresses like those of the Ziegler children, whose weekday attire was hardly less glorified than that of Sunday, when they blossomed forth in the sweetest if simplest of garments. Mazie coveted similar ones, not alone for herself but for Grace and Margaret, and for Mother a rose-colored hat like Mrs. Ziegler's.
"Mr. Ziegler's probably the richest man in the world," she sighed to herself. "Richer than the president, or the Pope, or anybody. . . . I wish I had a father!"
It was a fair and lovely evening when Major Butler, who lived at the other side of Lessmere, was making his way homeward. He always got off the car at Marchmont Avenue for the sake of the walk across the stretches of charming suburb. A glance at his watch as he neared the Wynn cottage dispelled his half-formed idea of stopping for a few minutes, as he saw it was about the time of their evening meal. He knew Mrs. Wynn gave the children an early supper for he had been invited to share it a couple of times when he had thus happened in, but he was too shy a man, and too fearful of intruding, to risk stopping again at an inopportune moment. There was no one in sight as he passed, but further along as he found himself on a transverse lane he came upon a small figure tramping along steadily with a brown paper bag in her hand. "Why, I believe it's Mazie!" the Major thought. "I wonder where she can be going?" He began to smile as he gained on the child. "Listen to her sing, will you?" And stepping quietly on the soft turf he came close enough to hear her chanting in a queer sing-song:
I wish I had a father! I wish I had a father! I wish I had a father! Oh, don't I wish I had a father!
The Major paused with an odd feeling that he had been eavesdropping. "Poor little tyke!" he muttered. Then, "Is that you, Mazie?" he called after her.
The child turned with a glad smile and waited till the Major came up.
"Where are you going and what have you got in the bag?" he asked with an old friend's privilege.
" 'Cookies!'"
Mazie shook her head and proceeded to set the bag down carefully. "It's eggs," she explained. "A dozen fresh ones. I want to sell 'em. They're heavy, too," and she smiled up at her friend. "Do you know anybody'd want a nice dozen of fresh eggs?"
" 'Now, isn't that funny?' exclaimed the Major in great surprise. "I was just this minute wishing I had a dozen of nice fresh eggs."
Mazie looked surprised, too. "But you've got some. Mrs. Cross One said so. I was over to your house and she said I needn't—"

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