

**THE WILD BIRDS OF KILLEEVY**

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND (LADY GILBERT)

CHAPTER XIX

THE OLD LORD WILL HAVE HIS WAY

Lord Wilderspin's letter caused great commotion behind the little bric-a-brac shop. Mrs. Wynch was lost in wonder at the idea of her little maid having been turned into the protégée 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 of her 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 realize the advantage of a fortunate change. Matter-of-fact Mrs. Wynch, taking her little mournful plaints 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 realized 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 beginning, and ends of the corridors, and Lord Wilderspin, coming suddenly round a corner, was witness of 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 broad hand on Fan's cool, rounded brow, "is not here to play but to work."

The signora was a little startled by his fierce manner, but when she saw the arch smile with which Fanchea met his glaring eyes, she caught the cue to his character at once.

"My lord," she said, in her earnest, emotional way, "this dream of yours was mine first. I had only the will; you have the power."

"Thank heaven, then, madam, that we have come together," said his lordship. "Between will and power, we shall, to use a vulgar proverb, either 'make a spoon, or spoil a horn.' But mind, I warn you; the making will be mine, the spoiling yours. I never do anything wrong; so don't imagine it. And with a scowl and a low bow he left them.

ness and unconventionality which covered a generous heart. The old lord recognized daily the delicacy and refinement of her nature, something of which he had discerned at the first moment under the shabby cloak of the little grey woman just arrived at the end of her journey. And there never was any oppressive formality between them. Mamzelle was too much the child of genius not to feel that in her own personality she carried the key of entrance into any circle above or below her; and though said key might be rather rusty for want of use, still the possession of it enabled her to feel at home in the atmosphere of Lord Wilderspin's drawing-room.

When she had time to look around, she discovered that nothing could suit her better than this place. The beauty of the old house, the storied furniture and adornments, the choice contents of the picture-gallery, the musical atmosphere which she was to breathe, the visits of Herr Harfenspieler, whom she was to assist in the tuition of the child; all these conditions of her existence were so perfect that, true to her faculty of suffering, she began to feel oppressed by their charm.

"My dear," she said to Fan, "I shall die of all this delightfulness if I do not escape from it."

"Oh, you are not going to leave me!" she cried.

"No, my love, never. But I have got leave from his lordship to fit up one of the empty rooms in my own way. There are the things I brought with me, you know; and I will live in my own nest, and only come out into the splendour when I feel myself able to bear it."

Her new life was inaugurated on the first evening when Herr Harfenspieler came, and all the actors in the little drama was beginning met at dinner. The thought of meeting the great musician agitated her much more than the prospect of encountering his lordship had done. She prepared for the occasion with some solemnity, and appeared attired in a very antique brocade which had belonged to her mother, a much larger woman, and trailed behind her, and in her dear old black lace mantilla, worn long ago in the Italian city of her youth and dreams. Under this her loose gold and silver hair shimmered strangely, and made one at a distance ask if she were child, angel, or witch. Her worn face, with its deep lines of pain and passion, its frequent wistful, almost infantile expressions, and its wandering lights of genius, was very striking to Herr Harfenspieler, who at once recognized a good ally and a kindred spirit. As they clasped hands they seemed to know that they were brother and sister in what the world would call misfortune, each having found life a loneliness, and given up all that is comfortable and pleasant for a solitary and never-fading dream.

The man who had found happiness in varieties of dreams which always faded, or dissolved one into another, stood over them and glowered at them in satisfaction from under his shaggy brows. He had brought them here together that out of their ruins he might build a fair temple for his own contentment, and the delight of the world as they stood talking, each with a hand on Fanchea's shoulder, the old lord strode about, laughing grimly to himself.

"With this trio," he said; "on this triangle, I will make such music as all Europe shall run to hear!"

And as these eager guardians hovered about the slender slip of humanity, with her black head and eyes and pomgranate cheeks, casting their spells of woven woe and of waving hands, around her, Kevin himself, had been able to see, might have surely been content with her state. She herself felt a deep wonder at finding that she was the object of so much attention from such learned and travelled people, and listened with interest to their conversation.

"Madam," said Herr Harfenspieler, "allow me as a musician to pay a tribute to the musical genius of your beautiful land."

"Ah, sir," said the signora, "we may well feel a mutual sympathy. Your country contains the intellect of music, and mine, perhaps, the soul."

"And mine deserves some praise for producing that noble strain, 'The roast beef of old England.' Let me remind you that dinner has been announced."

After dinner the old lord had a smoke and forty winks in his smoking-room, while the musician, who could not bear tobacco, drank coffee and tuned his violin, and talked with the signora in the music-room.

"That was said long ago," she said; "but it is like a sorry old jest to hear it now."

"Why? Angels may get worn faces for time, perhaps through wearying after the good in some human soul. When that soul is worn their wrinkles probably disappear. Whatever is intrinsically good and beautiful remains a perpetual fact, and never can be destroyed; it is only what is ugly, wrong, discordant, that is failure and negation. What is time? Ach? Ach! Music will never cease."

Hereupon a burst of delicious melody swept through the quiet and darkening room; and noiselessly the signora wept.

"Juliet was born in your Verona," continued the old professor, laying down his bow; "and Juliet is a fact, though she never was clothed in flesh and blood. The deep red rose that comes every June is a fact, though each time it sheds its leaves we can scarcely believe it ever was, or ever will return. Beethoven's Dead March is a reality that still beguiles us lovingly to the grave, while the sad, solemn, mysterious eyes that look down on us yonder from the wall are closed for ever. So, why should not the face of an angel with a lute remain an angel's face, even though Time has written a score across it. Let me talk my own way. I do not often get a listener like you."

"It is pleasant to me to listen," said the signora. "Life does not seem so wasted when one gets rid of the idea of success and failure."

"That for failure!" said the Harfenspieler, snapping his wiry fingers. "Give me the beautiful, the true, and pain with its reverse. When the height is missed, the depth is found; true, but when the abyss is touched, there is the rebound which sends us higher than we otherwise could have reached. Hist! I will tell you a secret. I have made no name like him," pointing to the portrait of Beethoven. "My efforts have passed into the works of others; my soul has been only uttered by others' lips. I shall die unknown, and be buried obscurely; but I would rather wield this in a garret"—touching his bow—"than have it changed into the sceptre of a prince. Yet I am not mad."

"I have shared your feeling too much to doubt you," said the signora. "My youth was one long passion of longing to create the beautiful. Life broke my tools and laughed at my folly; and yet there is something dwelling with me for all that which binds up the sorest wounds of a broken spirit. Art has allowed me to live in her house, though her dearest tasks have been given elsewhere. I have tried to remember that 'they also serve who only stand and wait.' The long patience, the readiness to do if called, the meekness forced upon one at being always passed over—these must shelter one from the charge of waste. The joy at seeing others do, takes the place of feverish desires for self. One grows content to glean where others bear the sheaves; if only the harvest be somehow gathered in."

"My own thought," said Herr Harfenspieler, "expressed in womanly words. Let us put it into music!"

Again he touched the violin, and wonderful strains poured from it: feverish, hurried, impassioned, then yearning and wistful, and at last dying away in notes whispering of peace.

"Now," he said, when he had finished, "we are going to do something, you and I, something that shall be proved worth the doing. This girl who stands between us is rich material to work upon. There is a quality in the voice which I have never known equalled. In it is contained something that once heard never can be forgotten. She will give expression and form to the noblest conceptions of the great masters. Not only are her notes ravishing, but she has a broad intelligence, a rich imagination, and fortunately also the pure, vigorous physique which will make her perfect mistress of her artistic powers."

"You sum up her qualities exactly as I have done myself," said the signora.

"I know. To you be the honor of the first discovery. More yet can you do, more than educating and cherishing her, and helping to make her the queen of song who is one day to conquer the world. I would beg you to keep her noble and simple as she is. Let no petty conceit creep into her feminine brain; amuse her with no trashy novels and romances; let her know nothing but of the higher purer literature; cultivate her heart to thrill only to the real, the most genuine, and unaffected sorrows of life, to the purest and holiest affections. People call me an enthusiast, but I know to whom I am talking at this moment."

and with several glances all round from under his white brows, as if he feared eyes in the curtains, or ears in the pictures on the walls, drew a fold newspaper from his pocket and tapped it with his finger.

"I have something to show you here," he said. "Read this advertisement. Well, is that intended for us?"

It was Kevin's advertisement which had been so carefully worded by Mr. Honeywood. Herr Harfenspieler read it, and a flame shot out of his eyes.

"Mein Gott!" he murmured. "Shall we be forced to give up this fair enterprise?"

"Hush!" said his lordship, with a grimace. "Don't let us talk about it here, or the words will float up through all the ceilings to that pair of little hare's ears, and we shall have her performing La Sonnambula before her time. She would be down upon us in her bare feet in a trice, imploring to be packed up in this newspaper on the spot, and sent off by post to advertiser. The night is fine; let us take a turn outside."

"We are like a pair of wicked old conspirators plotting away somebody's life," said Lord Wilderspin, striding along between the high hedges, and pulling his hat over his eyes.

"Seriously," said Herr Harfenspieler, "do you mean to give up the child or not?"

"I do not," said his lordship, stopping, short. "There, the sky has not fallen upon me!"

"And yet—it seems cruel to take no notice of such an advertisement."

"Now listen to me, Herr. You are a musician, and all you musicians, poets, artists, and your kin, are bound to do nothing to him or his I shall beg leave to remain in my modest obscurity. Let him dig his potatoes, and cut his turf, and leave the child to the good fortune that has dropped upon her."

"You do not mean to ignore this altogether?" persisted Herr Harfenspieler.

"Confound it, no; I suppose I must do something."

"Write, and tell them as much as you please, and make terms for keeping her unmolested."

"My friends you do not know these Irish! They have hearts as big as copper kettles, and value money no more than sand where their affections are concerned. You know the creature that sang for us an hour ago and is now curled up in her pillows with her blue eyes shut as fast as yonder convolvulus. Could you have looked in Fan's eyes before she went to bed and offered her a bright sovereign to forget her night-prayer for Kevin? You could not do it. And they are all 'tarred with the same stick,' to use a vulgar proverb which your musical ears have probably never heard before. Children every one of them in faith and love—all honor to them for it!"

And the lord lifted his hat from his bald head—"but still I am not going to have them spoiling my plans with their *cushla machreees* and their *adulins*!"

him rejoice at the decision of his friend.

After every one was asleep in the Hall that night, the Harfenspieler sat at his open window fingering his violin tenderly and fitfully. The jasmine from without scented the air, and the old musician was living in other scenes where even such white jasmine wreaths had perfumed other chambers.

"Is it right, after all," he thought, "to play such tricks upon human hearts? Has not humble and holy love too often to pay the penalty for fame and the triumphs of art? Can we who rob this lowly nest as that the bird would not be happier singing in her native woods?"

But this mood of the old professor passed away with a few hours of moonlight dreams, and a restless night. The impulse of his genius was too strong for the more subtle tenderness of his heart. He was glad when he saw his young pupil running to meet him in the morning sun, and reflected that Lord Wilderspin's mysterious advertisement was on its way to the post.

TO BE CONTINUED

TAKING RISKS

By Joseph Carmichael in Rosary Magazine

I have long been accustomed to take the tram-car from my business place in the big midland town to one of its suburbs; there is a railway station near enough to both ends of the journey, but the tram is more interesting as well as more free from hurry and rush. Moreover, it brings one into contact with a different class of travellers, and I find it attractive to weave romances about their varying personalities.

On one specially dreary evening—rainy, foggy, and chilly—I was particularly glad to board the brightly-lighted car, after the depressing gloom of the street; grateful, too, that I should have to have a troop of Irish bog-trotters running after us all the time the thing is going on. If these low connections of hers were blood relations—were her own family—I don't know how I should get out of the matter. If this Kevin were her brother, or father, or if she were old enough to have a lover and he were that worthy, I suppose I should feel bound to 'intervene' the fellow; but as she is nothing to him or his I shall beg leave to remain in my modest obscurity. Let him dig his potatoes, and cut his turf, and leave the child to the good fortune that has dropped upon her."

"You do not mean to ignore this altogether?" persisted Herr Harfenspieler.

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And the lord lifted his hat from his bald head—"but still I am not going to have them spoiling my plans with their *cushla machreees* and their *adulins*!"

Herr Harfenspieler had nothing more to say. He felt it best to let the whimsical nobleman work out his own idea, and put it into words without help from him.

"You do not ask me what I am going to do?"

"I am waiting to hear."

conceal under a matter-of-fact exterior.

As we passed on down the road, the boy walked rather unsteadily. "You are tired," I said. "Let me help you along." I took him by the arm, and we soon arrived at my diggings. He was silent until I had made him remove his overcoat and led him into the cheerful sitting-room, where a bright fire glowed and the shaded lamp showed a table spread for dinner.

My guest looked so white and weary as he sank into the chair I had drawn forward for him that I felt alarmed. I proposed a glass of wine, or mouthful of brandy, realizing that his strength was almost spent.

"You are most kind," he said, but I have not had food very lately and I feel rather afraid to take wine or spirits, under the circumstances."

"You shall have some soup first," I said. I ordered in the dinner at once, and got the lad to sit down with me without pretence of reluctance.

We talked little during the meal, for my visitor was evidently in sore need of nourishment, and I felt it wiser to attend, in the first place, to bodily rather than mental affairs.

Over coffee and cigarettes the boy told his story. It was the not unusual one in this benighted land—thanks to solid British prejudice, and want of logic: His father, Thomas Wollencroft, a successful ironmaster, had sent him—his only son—to Oxford, so that he might be the means of the social advancement of the family. Young Tom had been "fool enough" in his father's phraseology—"to get ensnared by those Papists" (T. W. Senior got a bad attack of virulent adjectivitis whenever he alluded to the subject, to "join on with them in their tom-fooleries"—in ordinary English, to become a Catholic himself).

T. W. Senior's religion consisted in being officially churchwarden and personally a rare attendant at his parish church, and a munificent contributor to all Church charities which issued regular lists of subscriptions. His aim was to make enough money to live in easy affluence, until he saw fit to convert his business into a syndicate and settle down as a country gentleman.

Young Tom was an important factor in the scheme; he was not expected to demean himself by the slightest connection with the "Works," but was to play the gentleman, and by means of his aristocratic acquaintances float the Wollencrofts into "society."

The old ironmaster's anger with his son was unrestrained. He had literally turned him loose on the world—penniless, indeed, but for the lad's mother, who had secretly supplied him with all the available cash in her possession, as she took a tearful leave of the exile. Tom had gone straight to London, expecting in his youthful ardor to get congenial employment; but without references, or experience, nothing could be gained, and his money was rapidly diminishing, his shoes and clothing wearing out, and the outlook depressing in the extreme.

He had come down to the country for economy's sake, attracted to Midhampton by the fact of the residence there of a youth with whom he had formed a rather close friendship at Oxford; but his friend was touring on the Continent and his address was vague—moreover, the rest of the family were entire strangers to Tom, and had shown the merely polite interest in his visit that circumstances required. They had not even offered him tea, which would have helped him on his way for a meagre breakfast was all that his exchequer had warranted before starting by rail that morning.

"I had to screw up my courage to follow you home," he concluded apologetically; but it was your kind action to that little kiddie in the car that suggested asking your advice and help."

I must own I was deeply moved by the lad's helpless situation. There could be no mistaking his sincerity; his manners were those of a cultured gentleman, and his personality unusually winning. My sympathies were entirely in his favor, and I resolved to help him, come what might. (I have a spinster sister, herself the soul of charity, who loves to ward off suspicions from herself by dealing out to me generous reprimands upon my foolish accessibility to any casual tramp who can spin a pathetic yarn. Luckily she happened to be absent that evening.)

The boy was moved almost to tears when I outlined my plan. I could not put him up that night, but I directed him to a decent hotel, and proffered coin for immediate necessities. He was to come next evening to dinner, and we would discuss possibilities. I hinted as likely to disarm my sister's suspicions) that he might prudently invest in some suitable raiment, and handed my card as introduction to the tailor I usually employed, promising the lad that I would stand surety for payment, if needed.

The rain had ceased and the air was clear when I accompanied my new friend to the hotel I had mentioned. He gave me a tremendous grip when we parted, and I walked back home elated, and I thought of having played so successfully the role of the Good Samaritan.

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