

THE WRONG MR. REXALL

An Adventure That Had an Unexpected Outcome.

(Edith M. Doane, in Catholic Columbian.)

The speaker, her fur coat white with snow, stood transfixed in the doorway. "Croocuses!" she gasped. "Croocuses—in early March—with the snow outside an inch deep and more to follow! Croocuses—"

Words falling her, she stepped inside the heavy curtains and regarded the scene before her with astonished eyes. It was a pretty room, low and long, with a blazing fire of pine logs at one end, a room that bespoke warmth and home and comfort. But the new comer saw none of these. It was the mahogany table in the center at which she gazed hypnotically, where masses of red and yellow croocuses glowed in reckless profusion. They raised tremendous golden heads from a big brass bowl; they nodded from long slender vases; they flamed over the edges of a pewter jug in riotous confusion.

The girl standing beside the table poked the last slender green stalk into place, and stepping back, regarded her work with fine triumph. She turned a flushed face toward the doorway.

"The only trouble," she said, impressively, "will be to make him believe they grew."

"Grew!" "Yes, grew—naturally—with a vague wave of her hand in the direction of the window and the softly whirling flakes outside. "He won't believe it."

"Who won't believe it?" "He has the crocus hobby as seriously as Daddy, and they kept at it, until in a moment of wild enthusiasm Daddy insisted that his crocuses came up in March. Once—apologetically—"we did have a crocus the last day of March."

"But who—" began Lora again. "Daddy saw he doubted it, but he didn't care, for by that time he had begun to believe it himself; so when he said he was coming to New York in March, he invited him out—insisted—set the date and all. This is the date, and—Anne dimpled—"here are the crocuses."

"Anne," insisted her chum, firmly, "will you please stop saying 'he' and 'him' and tell me who and what you are talking about."

"John Rexall," essayed Anne. "The man Daddy met in camp and liked so well that he chummed with him, even though he shot more game than Daddy did himself. He has money and good looks—and—"

"Crocuses," suggested Dora. Anne dimpled again. "If only I could make him believe they really grew!"

The door at the further end of the room opened to admit a gray-haired man, rugged, but kindly featured, who came down the room, watch in hand. Anne smiled at him across the crocuses.

"You may just as well put that watch out of sight," she cried, as she placed a bowl of flowers on the piano. "No more calls tonight, Daddy in this room. A. J. company comin', too!"

Slipping her arm through her father's, she led him close to the nodding blossoms. "Pretty fine crocuses—for March," she said, her eyes dancing with mischief, as she reached up and bestowed a kiss upon him so vigorous as to leave him very little breath for protest. Dr. Nelson pretended great indignation. "Tut! tut! It isn't fair to take advantage of an old man," he chuckled, but his eyes were full of tenderness as Anne laid her cheek softly against his.

"You remember Milligan, the flag-man?" Dr. Nelson said at last again glancing at his watch. Anne nodded.

"He has been seriously hurt—in dying. I must go at once. I shall probably be late."

"There is always somebody—" began Anne. "Exactly!" Dr. Nelson thrust his watch back into his pocket and smiled at her disappointed face.

"Explain it to John Rexall, and take good care of him. With him to look after you I shall not worry as to your safety." And with a quick good-bye he was gone.

The sound of his departing horses' hoofs had hardly died away when Johnson appeared with a telegram. "For de doctah, Miss Anne," he announced.

"It is from Mr. John Rexall," she answered, with as much indignation

as if that young man had just been convicted of some heinous crime, "and it says that great and august personage is delayed by the storm and will not be here to-night."

"And you will be left alone—" "There are the servants. I do not mind," returned Anne, weakly. "But this house is so isolated and the grounds so large," Dora deliberated. "I will send Tom over to stay with you," she announced, with the relief of one who has solved a knotty problem.

Anne protested faintly. "Yes, I will!" Dora insisted. "He is only eighteen, but he will be company."

"Of course I should like it," agreed Anne. "When I consider these wasted March crocuses," began Dora. Anne giggled. "And the florist's bill for the same."

At this Dora gave way and relapsed into a helpless fit of laughter, whereupon Anne laughed, too, half hysterically, helpless to stop herself—laughed until the crocuses shook in their tall vases—and both girls sank into chairs, laughing and breathless.

"It's a judgment—because I wanted him to believe—they grew!" cried Anne, wiping her eyes. An hour later Anne descended the wide, open staircase. Her trailing gown hung in soft, straight lines; a row of tiny pearls clasped her throat; some crocuses were tucked in her belt, and one crocus nestled in her hair.

At the bottom of the step Johnson waited. "Gentleman to see you, Miss Anne. I done put him in the library."

"What is his name?" "I done forgot to ask him his name. He said yo' all was expectin' him."

Only the firelight illuminated the library, casting flickering, ruddy rays upon the slender figure that came slowly down the center of the room; a very sweet and attractive figure indeed, it seemed to the eyes of the man standing waiting in the shadow. Nearer and nearer she came, and the man stepped forward, offering his hand in easy, pleasant greeting, and then stood spellbound.

A vision in soft shimmering white pressed close to his side—his hand, his arm, was grasped in a warm though unmistakable hug. "You were a dear, good boy to come," the vision said.

"I—" he began helplessly. The next moment an embarrassed young man faced an equally embarrassed young woman with crimson cheeks and indignant eyes.

"Why didn't you speak?" she demanded wrathfully. "I thought it was Tom." She stopped in a vain search for words with which to annihilate this presuming interloper.

"You know I thought you were Tom," she added indignantly. "Would that I were," fervently. Curiosity tempered the wrath in Anne's eyes as she raised them to the face above her. The face of a gentleman, evidently—and extremely good to look at. Just now amusement struggled with admiration in the clear-cut features, as he stepped forward and again held out his hand.

"Please forgive me," he begged, quite as contritely as if he really were to blame. "I did not know—it was so insufferably stupid of me—" He stopped. ("You are altogether charming," said his eyes.) Anne's face softened.

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"I am sure Dr. Nelson will intercede for me," he went on, pursuing his advantage. Anne smiled. "Dr. Nelson is not at home. I am his daughter," she said simply.

"Then we are already old friends," declared the man eagerly. "In camp, last September, your father—but first allow me to present myself. I am—"

"Mistah Rexall," announced Johnson, at the library door, bowing pompously as he held aside the hangings to admit a slender, dark-eyed man who advanced a step into the room and then stood uncertainly in the dim light.

The surprise on Anne's face was equalled by that of the man beside her. He turned with a quick start, glanced sharply at the newcomer, then stood motionless in the shadow.

With a most unreasonable sense of disappointment Anne advanced to welcome the new arrival. "Father will be delighted. He has counted so on your coming—we were quite distressed over your telegram. So glad you managed to get here after all." She forced herself to the usual conventionalities.

So this was John Rexall, this man whom she instinctively dreaded—perhaps it was the flickering firelight that gave that shifting gleam to his eyes.

She touched a bell. A light, Johnson, she commanded half nervously. "Mr. Rexall, allow me to present—" With a feeling of relief she turned to the man in the shadow. Her words trailed off into amazed silence. A door closing softly at the further end showed where the erstwhile admirer had gone.

One o'clock chimed the tiny time-piece on the mantel. Outside the sound was repeated somewhere in the distance to graver, deeper tones. Anne shivered. Two hours had passed since the household had settled into silence, but so far no sleep had come to her eyes. She had not even undressed, but still sat upon the hearth rug in front of the fire in her cozy bedroom, staring into the glowing coals.

It was dreary waiting, but some vague fear kept her awake, hoping nervously for her father's return, listening anxiously for the first sound of his horses' hoof-beats on the gravel outside. Indeed, if he did not come soon, she had a horrible conviction that she would scream. In vain she tried to reason it away, sitting, her face in her hands, her eyes on the clear, glowing coals. What matter if she instinctively distrusted the man her father had found likable? Was that such an extraordinary thing? What if the man she had found likable, "for you know you did like him," she said to herself, "even if you did—"

Here the cheeks supported by the slim hands grew unaccountably hot. What if this man had chosen to take his departure suddenly? Was that so strange? He had come to see her father, and she herself had told him that her father was not at home. But, reason as she might, the vague misgiving remained.

At the sound of the clock she shivered slightly, and getting up from her lowly position, she drew back the curtain of her window. The storm had ceased and the snow lay lightly on branch and wall; the night was brilliant with moonlight, clear as day, full of hallowed softness.

She stood for a while, spellbound by the glory of the scene before her, then turned again toward the fire. "I forgot to look at the flowers—if

the fire dies down the library will be too cold for them. I will attend to them now; anything is better than waiting here."

As she reached the staircase, a little sensation of fear ran through her; she hastened her footsteps and ran hurriedly along the lower hall, which was almost as light as day. Not until she was close to the library did she notice a tiny gleam of light creeping from beneath the door.

At first the light dazzled her sight. She advanced a few steps, unconsciously treading lightly, as she had done all along, lest she should wake some member of the household, and then, passing her hand over her eyes, looked leisurely up. The fire was nearly out.

She turned her head, and then—then—she uttered a faint scream, and grasped the back of a chair to steady herself.

With his back to her—all unaware of her entrance—a bull's-eye lantern throwing its powerful rays on the floor beside him—knelt the late arrival—her father's friend—before her father's safe.

Facing her, beside a window, from whose curtained recesses he had evidently just stepped, covering the other with the point of a gleaming pistol—barrel, though her nameless cavalier of the early evening. His eyes bright and steady, were immovably fastened on the man before him.

"Hands up!" he said. An inarticulate shout came from the other man's throat; his face grew livid. He flung up his hands, palm outward.

"Who the devil are you?" he cried, between his teeth. His eyes were fixed with deadly hatred upon his foe.

Anne stood motionless, her heart thumping wildly, wondering what the end would be. Then, suddenly the silence was broken by the distant sound of horses' hoofs coming nearer. A noise of wheels on the gravel outside, a quick-spoken order to the driver, and some one came along the porch, through the hall, and into the room. Anne gave a quick little cry of relief and joy. "Daddy!" she cried.

He stopped in amazement, looking from the men to Anne, and then from Anne back to the men. The nameless one did not relax his vigil. He was rather pale, but perfectly self-possessed, and kept his eye on the man before him, but at Anne's glad cry of "Daddy!" a slight smile crossed his face.

Then suddenly, unexpectedly, across the grim quiet of that awful scene came an unmistakable chuckle, and the doctor's voice.

"Nothing surprising, I warned you things were pretty lively here in March."

The day, begun so strenuously, was fast drawing to an end. The shadows closed softly in on the white world outside; inside the bright light of the great pine fire streamed cheerily over the room.

Anne tucked herself comfortably in one corner of the huge Davenport. "If this thing keeps up much longer," she announced dramatically, "I shall lose my voice."

"As bad as that?" laughed John Rexall. "Every bit. This last harrowing recital to Tom makes the third since luncheon."

"I can understand," she went on, reflectively, "that that man might have gotten hold of your telegram in some way, either at the station or on the road, and so discovered that you were expected and delayed, and in that way conceived the idea of impersonating you. That part is clear enough. But what I cannot understand is how he knew we did not know you by sight."

"His face was familiar. I have

seen him before. Probably he was hanging around the camp last fall, and judged I would know only the doctor. He had to take some risks—probably conceived the whole idea at once when he saw the doctor leave. Sort of 'spontaneous inspiration,' as it were."

"His weak point was in not knowing you had come."

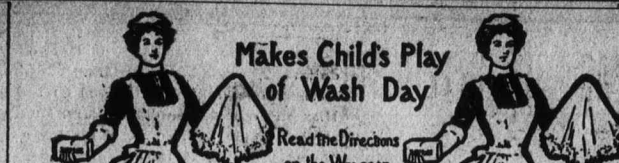
"He did not know it at first. I fancy he had a fairly clear idea of my presence later in the game."

"But if he—" "Never mind him now," he pleaded. "By your own statement you are in danger of losing your voice over him; and I want you to save your voice," he continued softly, "for better purposes."

Anne looked up at him. Yes? she queried. "I want you to save it to talk to me—to promise me something," he went on earnestly.

A wave of delicate color dyed Anne's face from brow to chin. Her eyes fell before the light in his. "And that promise—" "To let me know you better—to write to me. Then, perhaps, next year, when the crocuses come again, you'll promise me more—when you know me."

His face was very grave. "Well, perhaps"—Anne's dimples showed in sudden mischief—"in March," she added. "When the crocuses come in March—again."



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All fitting boots and shoes cause corns. Holloway's Corn Cure is the article to use. Get a bottle at once and cure your corns.

Glendalough the Beautiful.

Under the above head William P. Carroll writes in the Rosary Magazine of that beautiful spot in the County Wicklow, a region of romance and mystery with its little lake of gloomy solitude, inspirers of poetry and dreams. After riding some fifty miles in a southeasterly direction through the Wicklow mountains over loose, yellow sand, through a precipice and mountain pass, past old worn out lead and attained the patriarchal age of one hundred and twenty years. His feast is celebrated on June 8th.

Glendalough—literally the glen of the lakes—once a large diocesan city, was founded by Sir Kevin in the sixth century. There is no doubt about its former greatness; to-day it abounds in interesting ruins, chief amongst which are the famous Seven Churches, a cathedral, a monastery, castle defenses, large public buildings, and a round tower, in a fairly good state of preservation. Everywhere in that delightful spot there are finger posts of ancient greatness, and the elements of romance abound in the very atmosphere, where the transient lights and shades laughingly chase each other over the numerous nooks, dells and wooded sweeps of this entrancing beauty spot. Previous to my visit there I entertained serious doubts of the truth of many romantic episodes said to have been enacted in Glendalough; since then, however, I have been less skeptical.

In 1214 A.D., the diocesan See of Glendalough was annexed to Dublin. The Danish invasion in the tenth century and the subsequent English invasions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries effectively completed the ruin, with the sad result that the fine city of Glendalough of eleven hundred years ago is to-day a sleepy little village of two hundred souls and a mere collection of ruins. It has, however, a small, neat inn, and a few stores which are chiefly supported by tourists who gather there from many countries.

The Four Masters, O'Hart, Webb, and other historians, dealt somewhat at length with Glendalough and its legends, nor is it forgotten in poetry and song, for both Moore and Gerald Griffin, among others, sing sweetly of it.

The lake is a small, pretty sheet of water probably not two miles wide, with a peculiar, sombre and gloomy shade, a feature generally characteristic of lakes closely surrounded by mountains of even moderate altitude. Here in the vicinity of the lake in the sixth century Saint Kevin toiled, prayed and fasted; the deep imprints of his knees are yet pointed out on the stones on which he knelt in prayer, also the rude stone mortars in which he and his devout brothers, the good monks, ground corn to supply their meagre needs; and doubtless, they drew largely for sustenance on the fine fish that abounded, and still abound, in the lake's clear waters.

"By that lake whose gloomy shore Skylark warbles o'er."

You may capture a skylark, take it in a boat towards the lake's center, and release it, and it instantly veers along the surface to the shore, when it instantly shoots heavenward and in the fullness of its glee pours out its glorious song as if its very throat would burst with the volume of melody. In any other portion of the earth when you release from capture a skylark it shoots upward at once singing as its soars aloft.

Practically every stone and bend of the roadways, every mountain sweep and curve of the lake's edge, as well as most of the ruins, are pointed out to the tourist to-day in some connection with the life of St. Kevin.

Saint Kevin was born of a princely family, A.D. 498, in a portion of the present County of Wicklow, then known as Tir Tuathel. He was baptized by St. Cronin and received his education under the holy Petrosus. A long and warm intimacy existed between him and Saints Columille and Ciran. St. Kevin, we are told, was a handsome man with an attractive personality. He was a very learned scholar, and a famous theologian, frequently retiring to the mountain caves for long periods at a time in order to more zealously pursue his theological studies; about two miles distant from the Abbey on the eastern shore of the lake is a huge, overhanging ledge of rock known as St. Kevin's bed. He was very fond of nature, of birds and flowers, and we frequently find him represented with a bird in his hand. The Saint died in 618 A.D., having silver mines which abound there. I arrived at a point where my course began its descent into the valley below. The valley at my feet presented the appearance of a large natural bowl, about twenty miles in diameter, gradually sloping toward the center, whereon calmly rests the pretty lake which gives its name to the quiet, sleepy village resting on its margin.

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