

THE WILD BIRDS OF KILLEEVY

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND (LADY GILBERT)

CHAPTER XIV.—CONTINUED
Bessie threw herself into the matter with a degree of interest and spirit that Kevin had not ventured to expect.

Bessie was not content with giving advice and making inquiries, but would sometimes accompany him to the scenes of action; an arrangement to which Mr. Must made no objection, looking at his wilful daughter from a philosophic point of view.

Nevertheless, the young florist's gay attire, loud delight in rather vulgar performances, and the consequence in the enterprise she had engaged in, grated on Kevin's intensity of feeling in moments of keen suspense.

Kevin felt her kind, and was unwilling to see a fault in her; yet though Bessie was good and Mr. Must complimentary, he felt that he liked best to go out upon his weary and disappointing quest alone.

One evening she brought him news that made his heart beat fast. "Ah," she said, tripping into the shop, "there you are, after a day's working, with your white face, and your eyes like ink-bottles.

Kevin accepted it with a flash of pleasure that mightily pleased the giver. "I thought it would do you good," she said, "but now for my news, which is better.

"Come, then, shut up shop; we have just time to get our tea and be gone," and she vanished upstairs to her household gods.

But, alas! when the goal was reached, when the curtains rose, came the young bedizened figure came to the front, face, voice, and gesture were all unrecognizable to her. As far away as ever, as far as the white birds that had flown right westward and vanished into the sun, so far, so distant from his reach and ken was the little living creature of his dreams.

songstress beat without music about his ears, and till the plaudits and laughter of the audience rose and drowned it.

Bessie was scared at the sight of his pain. "Dear, dear," she thought, "such a deal of grief for a little child!"

For the first time in her life she volunteered to leave a place of entertainment before the performance was over, and they got home early, Kevin went at once to his room, and threw himself wearily on his bed.

Yes, it was Fanchea with her song. Now full and solemn as a march of the dead, now fierce and pleading, and at last ringing with an outburst of ecstatic joy, the hymn of the Virgin Triumphant went thrilling down the street, soaring above, or drowned by the fitful noises of the night.

One minute that seemed only a second Kevin listened spell-bound, made up his mind it was no dream, sprang out of bed, and dressing hurriedly, flew down the staircase with trembling limbs.

Dream or no dream, the song had brought with it the fragrance of the heather, the smell of the peat-fires, the breath of the sea. Mingled with its notes had come the gentle chiding of his mother and his father's hearty shout.

Oh, what was this lasting denial, this cruel severance, this mysterious division that had so parted the current of innocent and unambitious lives?

CHAPTER XV. FATEFUL CHANCES

One day, a gentleman we have met before was walking down a certain thoroughfare of Bloomsbury, when his bright, observant eye was caught by some one of the books in Mr. Must's shop window.

A young man was sitting behind the narrow counter, whose wits were so utterly buried in a book that the customer stood still, waiting with some amusement to see how long it would be before he looked up.

Now, Mr. Thistleton Honeywood was unlike Bessie Must in this respect that he loved men who could pore. He had not the gift of poring himself; he gleamed and picked, and fished where he would, but he was well aware that this was not the way to attain to certain results which he admired.

"How pleasant to see the right man in the right place!" thought Mr. Honeywood, with a glance at the well-filled dusty bookshelves that formed a fitting background to Kevin's broad brow with its clustering hair, pale features, and student-like figure.

The persistent gaze of the bright, shrewd eyes acted magnetically on Kevin, and forced him to look up at last. He started, put down his book, and coloured up to his hair.

"Don't apologize. It was really delightful to look at you I envied you for your complete absorption. Now, if I were reading, no one could come within yards of me without disturbing and distracting me at once.

"You have not the same necessity for reading that I have," said Kevin, impelled, he knew not how, to speak freely and familiarly to this stranger. "I daresay you already know almost everything that is worth knowing, while I am only beginning to find out how much there is to be read."

Mr. Honeywood looked at him attentively, attracted by something unusual about the youth, an air of simplicity and refinement in face and manner, and a latent power in the dreamy eyes that so readily sparkled into animation.

"I wish you success. You make me feel ashamed of myself. May I trouble you to show me your book in the window?"

"I fear I shall be very old first," said Kevin, "but I am making the most of my time. I have got a great chance here, and I have done a good deal in a few months."

"But your education did not begin a few months ago?"

"Not quite; and yet I know nothing—nothing of poetry, for instance, except some old poems and romances in Irish written in the very early ages.

"You interest me greatly," said Mr. Honeywood. "I have a feeling that you and I shall see more of each other. I should like to have a talk with you about these Gaelic poems. But I have not time today."

In spite of this statement he lingered another half hour, keeping up a pleasant conversation about books and their authors, which was like a draught of wine to Kevin. After he had gone, he walked about the little shop, tingling with pleasure as he recalled the words and looks of this man who, in the space of a short hour, had unconsciously fascinated his heart and imagination.

"If Fanchea had been content to let the blind eyes of the picture wait till another day for light, she must have met Kevin face to face as he advanced through the outer room. Her own eyes would then have rested on something that was passing by and might never come back. So strangely do destinies touch and diverge again in life.

"The address on the card he carried led him to a small but elegant house near the park, where he gave the books to a servant and turned away disappointed. He had had a vague hope of perhaps meeting the master of the house on the door-step, and getting another bright word and look to take home with him to his corner among the bookshelves.

Smiling at his folly and shaking himself up to realities, he considered how he could best spend the half hour which was at his disposal. Mr. Must was accustomed to give him a certain time in which to accomplish a certain errand, and Kevin was in the habit of running almost all the way in order to save odd hours and half hours in which to make further acquaintance with life.

Kevin, who had been so long in the National Gallery, and make at least a beginning of acquaintance with the pictures. Leaping up the steps, he entered the gallery, and moved through it with awe as though it had been a church.

"I don't know about that," Mrs. Lennon replied. "Who is speaking, please?"

"Some one who wishes you well—"

Mrs. Lennon broke in contemptuously: "If you don't tell me who's speaking I shall hang up the receiver."

"Better ask your husband to tell you where he spends the first Thursday of every month!" Click! Mrs. Lennon's hand was shaking on a silent wire.

"After all, that curious match is turning out extraordinarily well, isn't it?" one woman observed carelessly.

"Why curious?" the guest of the day, an out-of-town visitor, wanted to know.

"Oh, well, there was quite a difference in their social standing, you know. Not," hastily, "that that would matter really, except that he was a trifle uncouth. You know? Strange to social usages, and that."

"Uncouth? Why, I've heard that John Lennon was a brilliant lawyer. "He is," the puzzled visitor was assured. "And wonderfully successful, too. But he was only an ignorant mountaineer boy when he came to Cincinnati and, my dear, you should hear the way he worked to get an education! I can't begin to remember all the things he did, everything! He was twenty-eight when he finished law at the university, and then, Harry says, it wasn't long before he began to make things hum."

"And you demand pretty society airs from a man like that?" the visitor's dry comment. "My goodness, in Louisville, when we have a big man we know it!"

There was a chorus of protest. "Don't think we don't appreciate him," was what she got out of the chorus. "And he isn't uncouth now either. But he is a little different and there was a question, you know, whether Alice was making a mistake or had she been a vagrantly to church with him, though, and you can see she is perfectly happy."

It was fortunate that they could not see Alice at that moment, wrestling with the worry that refused to drown. A dozen times she chided herself roundly for her foolishness in even noticing an anonymous attack over the telephone but the virus of it was too insidious, and though her face would clear and she would essay a smile one minute, the next she would be sunk again in frowning thought.

THE ANONYMOUS MESSAGE

By Helen Moriarty in St. Anthony Messenger

Mrs. Lennon closed the door after the last guest and leaned against it in an attitude of sheer exhaustion. It had been an interminable afternoon and now that there was no longer any necessity for concealment her face fell into lines of anguish.

"She had been so serious that he had come, naturally enough perhaps, to stress the serious side entirely too much, and only when he had met gay, vivacious, lovely Alice Marshall had the actual sunshine of his nature come to the surface. They were, apparently, perfectly matched and had perfectly happy, and there had been no faintest cloud in Alice's sky, until today.

"Is Mr. Lennon at home?" inquired a woman's voice. "No, He never is at home on the first Thursday of the month, is he?"

"No, Luckily I got a wire before train time telling me not to come. I was mighty glad of it, too, for I had—"

"I had something else to attend to today that I couldn't very well put off."

"For the life of her Alice could not resist asking: "What was it?"

"Oh, nothing you'd be interested in, dear. What about something to eat?" quickly. "I don't suppose you have a man's size supper around, after your afternoon shindig and not looking for a man's size man to turn up, so how about going down town?"

"That will be lovely," Alice said, trying to throw the usual amount of vivacity into her tone, and hating herself for the little nagging suspicion about the "something else" which had popped its head up as soon as he spoke.

"Well,"—when they were eating, "what did you do all day, besides frolic with the idle rich?" John queried idly.

"Alice gave him a grave smile. "Lots of things." And she went carefully through the list of her activities, including the number of times she answered the telephone.

"There!" And if I frolic with the idle rich, as you call them, you harass them to the best of your ability. So what have you been doing all day, Sir Counselor, tell me that!" in the pretty, imperious tone he loved.

"Well," consideringly, "I saw the Springer heirs, and those manufacturers that want a place on Price Hill, and two or three eastern capitalists. There was a meeting of the board of directors besides, so you can see that I was a pretty busy man."

"Alice's spirits lifted. "Then you never got away from the office all day!" she complained of him. "Poor boy!" Did she imagine it, or did his face change a trifle? He replied readily enough, however.

"Oh, yes, I was out a while in the afternoon—quite awhile, in fact. I was over the river on a little matter of business. Not a bad supper, this is it?"

He waited in vain for his wife's usual merry correction: "Dinner, you old mountaineer, you, dinner!" and as she said "yes" rather listlessly, he gave her a keen glance.

"Don't you feel well tonight, Alice?" he asked solicitously. "I believe I'm a little tired. The girls stayed so long gossiping. You know they always say they have a good time at our house."

"Then we'll go home as soon as we finish. There's no place like home, anyway, as far as John Lennon is concerned," laughingly.

"Alice felt a sudden curious distaste for the quiet and intimacy of the house. Could she sit there with him and not say to him, as she had yearned to do many, many times during the evening, "Listen, John, I had the oddest telephone today—"

"Oh, I think I'd like to go to a picture show," she said quickly. "Do you mind?"

"Not in the least," smothering the appeal of slippers, a comfortable coat and the evening paper. So a tiny shadow went with them to the playhouse, a shadow so palpable that the man neither guessed its presence then or in the days that followed.

"Is this going to be as busy a week as last week?" she asked her husband as carelessly as possible on Monday morning at breakfast.

He shook his head. "I don't think so. After the board meeting is over on Tuesday I hope to be a little free to look after some things I was obliged to neglect in last week's rush. Why? Is there some place you want to go?"

"Oh, no," demurely. "I just want to enjoy a little more of my husband's society, that's all."

"Well, in that case put it off till the last of the week, won't you?" with a laugh. "The chances are, I'll have a clean slate by that time and you can have all John Lennon's society that you desire."

Then on Wednesday evening, with secret trepidation: "Remember your promise, John. Consider yourself engaged to Mrs. Lennon for all day tomorrow."

"Promise? Promise?" He was all at sea. "You said you'd be free the last of the week and we're invited to the Lenningers, I said we'd come."

"Put them off till Friday then. You know how often we have refused the Lenningers."

"I'm impossible. I'm afraid." He frowned a little, then seeing his wife's disappointment, he added: "I suppose I could arrange to go to the Lenningers, but it would be rather late. What's the idea of an all-day session, anyhow?" with some irritation.

"Alice looked dubious, but her tone measured as she said: "What are the important things that you

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