

pervaded the story of the "Wild Birds," yet it exhibits in even a greater degree the power of the writer. The plot is developed with more care and the *dénouement* is sufficiently tragic to satisfy the most *blasé* reader. It is the story of a curse pronounced on the Finistons of Tobereevil by a frozen babe whose mother, with hundreds of other poor peasants, had been cast out into the snow, in order that the landlord might plant a great wood on the spot where their cabins stood. Most of them perished in a great snowstorm while coming to implore mercy of tyrant, and then—

"This woeftul babe cursed the race of Finiston. Their riches should yield them no pleasure. They should perish with cold, and be gnawed by hunger. Their lands should be waste and their house decay. Their daughters should never live past childhood; and even those of their sons who had gentle hearts should become hardened by possession of the gold of the Finistons. The curse should lurk for them in the corner-stone of the wall, in the beam under the roof-tree, in the log upon the hearthstone, in the meat upon the dish:

"In every bud and blade of grass that grows,
In every leaf upon their mighty trees,
In every kindly face that smiles on them,
In every pleasant word that neighbours speak."

"In conclusion, there was a prophecy. Never should the family be freed from the curse till one of them should be murdered by a kinsman of his own."

At the opening of the tale Simon Finiston, who had been, when a generous-minded youth, the lover of Martha Mourne, Mary's aunt, is master of Tobereevil. The shadow of the curse has fallen upon him and he walks a miser through the heart of his dearly-bought forests, where—

"The roar of swaying miles of wood surged above and below in continual thunder. Even the mildest airs of heaven seemed to have secret stings, which goaded the Tobereevil woods unceasingly into motion and sound."

Simon is tyrannized over by his sole servant, Tibbie, an old crone whom he values because she is as miserly as himself. Tibby is hated by the people, who regard her as a witch, and her son Con, the fool, is equally beloved. Occasionally she gives out dark hints as to what may happen in the future, when Con shall reign in Tobereevil, till at length the suspicions of her master being roused, she is forthwith turned out of doors, while Simon calls his nephew, Paul, whom he has hitherto kept at a distance, to take the management of the estate.

Paul is an ardent, high-spirited young man, the accepted lover of May Mourne, a maiden whose sensitive, dreamy temperament is united with serious and practical common sense. She rejoices with Paul, that he is never to have any part in the accursed property, and it is with every foreboding that she sees him enter even as a servant within the shadow of the Wicked Woods.

Her tears are justified; the touch of the miser's gold seems gradually to harden Paul's nature, and a beautiful siren, Katherine Archibald, as soulless as she is lovely, is striving to draw him within her toils, but May is determined she shall not succeed. Willing to give him up herself if he so desires, she cannot bear to see him fall under the evil influence of one who would hurry him onward to his ruin if she might build her own future on the wreck of his life. For her lover's sake, not her own, does May Mourne desire to thwart her rival's designs.

And now we have plot and counter-plot such as shall satisfy the most exacting novel reader. Paul, the tender-hearted, the future benefactor of his uncle's servants, as he fondly hoped, has fallen so low that he can hesitate as to whether he shall execute old Simon's orders and evict the poor cotters of the mountain side, in order to turn the land into a sheepwalk. His growing thirst of gold, the real curse of the Finistons, has brought him to this, and the wiles of Katherine Archibald have not been altogether fruitless.

His journey with Katherine over the Golden Mountain to Camlough, his detention there, stricken with a terrible mental malady while May believes he has deserted her, his mysterious rescue by the brave girl, all these incidents

are grouped together with dramatic skill. The reader is thrilled with admiration at the heroine's courage and presence of mind in dealing with the two madmen, becomes partaker of her fear when she finds that Paul has escaped, and of her horror when she believes that he has in his frenzy fulfilled the final portion of the prophecy.

It would be manifestly unfair to the author to reveal how it happens that Paul is guiltless of the blood of his uncle, who, nevertheless, has fallen by his kinsman's hand; or to explain how the serious complications which ensue are happily unravelled. To follow the fortunes of Paul Finiston and May Mourne through the maze of their joys and sorrows will, we hope, be a pleasurable task for many of our readers.

This story of the "Wicked Woods" contains many of those exquisite bits of landscape and portrait painting, in which Miss Mulholland indulges that fancy which ever desires to take wings and fly from the flat plains so well suited to the march of prose.

Rosa Mulholland is an Irishwoman. It is the unsurpassable scenery of her own dear isle that she paints with such a loving touch; and she is fully able to enter into the sentiments of her countrymen. With appreciating fidelity she has given us a heart-touching post- eviction scene, in which is beautifully shown the resignation with which the Irish peasant bows beneath the hand of God.

"People were passing from one cabin to another, saying sad farewells, and mourning together over the woe that was come among them. The Kearneys were carrying their small provisions into a cave under the cliff, where they intended to live till they could sell their pig and their little bits of furniture. With the few pounds that such would bring, they must start by and by, a sad and timid band of wanderers, to seek their fortunes, or misfortunes, in some unknown and dreaded town. Some others were doing likewise, thanking God, as they worked, that things worse with them."

"But there were others who could not make an effort to be cheerful; the people who had their sick and dying to provide for. What could Tim's old father, and little Bride's crippled grandmother do but die on the side of the hill? There was patient Nora in the last stage of consumption, and there was a mother of many children, who had been bedridden for many years. The children clung to their mother, who could not move, and moaned over the horror which the morrow was to bring to them; and the woman with the sick daughter sat with her arms around her dying child, and prayed with frantic earnestness that God would take her before the cruel hour should come."

The sympathetic reader, with the horror of Glenbeigh in his memory, knows that this is not merely a fanciful picture.

DAVID RONAYNE.

OUR MOST HOLY LORD, LEO XIII.

If ever "The Curiosities of History" are gathered into a volume, not the least curious chapter will be that which recounts the periodical announcements made by the newspapers for fifteen years, of Pope Pius IX.'s approaching dissolution. The announcement, to do it justice, generally came at a time of year when things journalistic were slack, and when those of our craft who "lead" on the daily papers were hard pressed to find subjects for their "leaders." For the announcement, made in the news column on the authority of a "secret chamberlain" or some other mysterious-sounding personage, that the Pontiff's life hung by a thread, which must snap before many suns had set, was duly accompanied by a column which said—every one knows the sort of thing. But when the oft-predicted event came at last, at a quarter to six on the evening of the 7th of February, 1878, it came as a surprise. Till twenty hours before His Holiness' death, even his physicians did not express alarm, though the Pope himself had, for five days, felt that his hour was near at hand. He composed himself in the little room—a much smaller room in that great palace of salas than an ordinary Mayfair bedroom—with two beds in it, on which he was placed in turn, two tables, on