

THE WILD BIRDS OF KILLEVEY

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND (LADY GILBERT)

CHAPTER VI—CONTINUED

"They won't find silver spoons on Killevey mountain," said Kevin's mother, contentedly.

"But they'll find cocks-an'-hens, an' ducks an' sheep," said Sibbie, sharply; and her hostess, taking fright, went off to count her precious livestock in the little outhouse.

The next day Fan set out as usual to go to school; but as she went the organ began to play, and somehow her feet took the downward lead to the upward path and led her to the gipsy tents. At dinner-time she came flying in flushed and breathless and crying out that she had been learning a wonderful dance. With a few swift movements she cleared the centre of the floor, and pointing her little toes, and holding out her crimson petticoat with finger and thumb, she gave the bystanders a specimen of her newly-acquired skill.

"Well, well!" cried Mrs. Connor. "If she hasn't been down among the gipsies again! Indeed, and you're just fit to live with them and learn their antics!" And the good woman frowned hard to hide her admiration of Fancha's performance.

The child's motions were so graceful as she waved her arms and snapped her fingers and skipped over the parthen floor on her pointed toes; in her blooming cheeks and arch eyes looked so winsomely lovely with the excitement and exercise, that it would have required a sterner mistress than Kevin's mother to pluck up courage to scold her.

"Brava!" cried a familiar voice outside; and there was Father Ulick standing in the doorway. Fan instantly stopped her dancing, and advanced respectfully to take his outstretched hand; but the glow of pleasure still shone in her eyes.

The old man surveyed her all over with a quizzical smile. "On my word," he said, "the performance is so pretty that I do not know how to say what I have got to say. So the gipsies have had you in training, my little woman?"

"They taught it to me," said Fan, "and they will teach me another."

"I think not, my dear," said Father Ulick, gently. "The gipsy's tent is not a good place for a little girl like you. I am sorry to be a spoil-sport, but it can't be helped."

Fan hung her head, and tears gathered in her eyes. "I intended to speak from the altar on Sunday," he continued, "but see I had better not wait for that. These gipsies are not safe neighbors. It will be better not to encourage them, but let them go their way."

"This what I've been saying myself, your reverence," said Sibbie; "but it's hard to put old heads on young shoulders."

"I'll speak a word to all as I go along," said the old man. "I would not be uncharitable, but I must look after my own. And you will not go any more, little Fan?"

"They were kind," said Fancha, regretfully. "What did they say to you, my dear?"

"I went down only to listen to the music, and the gipsy-mother came out and called me in. She asked me to sing for her, and of course I sang. Then the sorrowful gipsy began to cry, and said it reminded her of her own little girl."

"Well, what more?" the gipsy-mother sighed and said. "Do you imagine your sickly creature could ever sing like that? And the sorrowful woman gave a cry, and covered her face and ran out of the place."

"So they are not always so kind, after all?" said Father Ulick. "No, not always; and indeed I said so. I said, 'I wonder how you can be so unkind.' But the gipsy-mother laughed, and said she would teach me to dance."

"Well, you will promise me not to go there any more?" "Especially as Kevin is going to Dooneen," said the mother, in decided tones, "and will not be here to look after her. He'll be away for two days about business for his father."

"But I promised to go again tonight and tomorrow," said Fancha. "That is a promise you must not keep. Now, Fan, be good; I am an older friend than the gipsy. Come and take tea with me to-morrow evening; I have some pictures to show you, and there are roses out already in my garden."

"Roses and pictures!" echoed the little girl, softly. "Really," said Father Ulick, laughing, "roses and pictures, and—good-bye to the gipsy."

"Yes, Father Ulick; I will never go there any more." She spoke in all sincerity, and meant to keep her word. That night many of the younger mountain people found their way to the gipsy tents in spite of Father Ulick's admonitions. The large, handsome woman whom Fan had named the gipsy-mother looked anxiously among the crowd for some one she could not find. At last she went up to a man whom she had seen speaking to Fan the night before.

"Little Fan?" answered the man. "Oh, she is not to come near you any more."

The gipsy smiled, a tight, hard smile that began with her mouth and went slowly upwards, scarcely reaching her eyes, and only touching them with a chilly gleam. "Her people are right: this is not a safe place for her," she said, pleasantly.

"Yon's a very sensible woman, though she is a gipsy," said the simple mountain man to a neighbor. She knows right from wrong as well as another."

The next evening Fancha took her way to Father Ulick's cottage after school-time. The old man showed her the contents of his portfolio of photographs and prints, and shared his tea with her, and kept her singing and chatting to him till the sun began to set, and he was called away to a sick person at a distance; and after that she stayed still later with the priest's old housekeeper, helping her to make griddle cakes, and listening to her stories about fairies and banshees; creatures in which both old and young Killevey delighted to believe, in spite of the rebukes of their pastor.

And so when Fancha took the homeward path, with her hands full of roses, the moon had already risen over the sea; the round silver moon of Killevey mountains, which the child never forgot in all the wanderings that were to come. Full and white and splendid it shone over the ocean, and steeped the hill-sides in a flood of ethereal glory.

Fancha, feeling happy and good, walked along sedately, holding her bunch of roses with both hands against her breast, proud and glad of having behaved so well, and having earned so delicious a reward. She never once looked towards the tents or thought of the gipsies; till suddenly the organ began to play; and it played the Hallelujah Chorus.

"As if all the strongest angels were singing and shouting together," she had Fan described this music before, and the idea now returned to her even more vividly than when she had heard it first. She stood transfixed, and tears gathered in her eyes. The sacred triumph, the mighty sweetness of the wonderful strains seized on the soul of the child, untutored as she was, and shook her with an enthusiasm which made her forget everything else for the moment. The sounds drew her slowly like one walking in her sleep, her feet taking the downward instead of the upward path, her heart beating fast, her eyes dim, and her roses held tight to her breast. Lower, and a little lower, nearer and nearer she came creeping towards the overwhelming music. At last, her foot striking against a stone, she was startled out of her reverie, and glanced around her with a consciousness of wrongdoing.

"I promised not to go to the tents," she said to herself, and I must not go. I will only listen awhile, and then I will come home."

She curled herself up against a mossy stone, and nestled there in rapturous contentment. Long years afterwards she remembered the scene: the shining ocean, the dark mountain, with white homesteads on its summit; a red light here and there, and a smoke-wreath floating in the moonshine; the forbidden tents blazing out of the shadows beneath her, the overpowering music, the smell of the turf-fires of home mingled with the fragrance of heather and of the sea.

There were not many people in the gipsy tents that evening, for Father Ulick's warnings were beginning to take effect, and the few who were there departed early. Fancha watched them leaving the place in groups, and ascending the hill.

"Indeed I must go, too," she thought; "or mother will be frightened. Oh, I wish the music would stop, and let me run!"

She got up to go home, but something came against her as she turned. An arm was thrown round her; she gasped and struggled in the hold of some silent person whose face she could not see. Too terrified to be able to cry, she strove to find her voice as one does in a dream; but as the first attempt at sound passed her lips, a strongly-scented cloth was thrown over her face, her head fell on someone's shoulder, and she knew no more.

On the road at the foot of the mountain, about a quarter of a mile from the tents, a covered vehicle was waiting in the shadow of the hill, and by it were the two gipsy women who have already been mentioned. When a man carrying a child came striding up to them, the one began to cry and the other to smile. The crying woman got into the conveyance, and the child was laid across her knees.

"You villain, you have killed her!" she said, in a whisper. "Hush, stupid!" said the older woman. "She'll be able to give you trouble soon enough."

Then the man took his seat as driver, the vehicle was noiselessly driven away, and the gipsy mother returned to her tent.

CHAPTER VII

LOST, STRAYED, OR STOLEN?

Kevin had been away at the nearest town for two days, and was returning home. He was in good spirits for he had despatched his father's business successfully, and

was bringing his mother a fine broad ribbon to tie across her cap, and a picture of St. Bridgid for Fan. Already he was beginning to look out for a flying speck of scarlet in the landscape, a little figure coming to meet him.

He began to ascend the mountain; still no sign of the child, though she had promised to be at the foot of the hill. Kevin was tired, but not too much to notice the beauty on land and sea, of the lights glowing.

"Along the smooth wave towards the burning west."

If Fan would only appear he could love to loiter a bit and enjoy this lovely scene. A turn in the path brought him in sight of the figure of a woman sitting with bowed head, who looked up as he approached, showing him the face of his mother. The poor woman gave a cry and covered her face.

"Mother—what is it?" cried Kevin. "Is my father dead?" "No, thank God! but the child is gone. Gone since last night, and we cannot find her. High up an' low down, hill and hollow have we searched, and can find neither tale nor tidings of her."

"Nonsense, mother! Where could she be that we would not find her?" He sprang off his father's nag with these starty words, and flung the reins over the animal's neck as it trotted home on its own account.

"I'm glad you take it so brave," said the poor woman; and then she gave a cry as her eyes rested on Kevin's face, which had grown grey and cold as the truth took possession of his mind.

"The gipsies—"

"No, no, boy; we thought of the gipsies; but they're there still, and the child is gone."

"No matter, they must know, and they must be made to tell. There is no other thing could have happened, unless—Here, a vision of Fan lying dead under some steep cliff came before his eyes and froze his heart. He stood quite still and silent for some moments, struggling with the blow that had fallen upon him.

"Come, mother, come home! I am going to see about this."

The good woman ceased wailing, and followed her son as he strode up the path, wondering at his new tone of command and at the dignity of his sorrow. She had feared she knew not what wild scene in which she should have had to coax, comfort, and scold by turns, but Kevin's manner took her by surprise.

Only for the indescribable look that had settled on his face, she would have thought he did not feel the matter so much as might have been expected.

Having left her at home, he went to the gipsies' camp, where he was followed by a little crowd of sympathizing friends, all full of suspicion and indignation against the strangers. But the gipsies met the mountaineers with angry denial of the charge brought against them. When hard pressed against their accusers of their entire premises, and sneered at the idea that an ignorant child of the wilderness could be in any way desired by a people so superior to themselves. The child was a rover, and had lost herself on the mountains. Many times they had been obliged to drive her home when she had come prying about their tents. Had they not heard before of the trouble she had given to her friends by her wandering and dangerous ways?

The people having made their eager search in vain, fell back in awe at the wrath of the gipsy mother as she stood waving them off from the doorway of her tent. With her flashing eyes and glowing colors she made so imposing a picture that the simple folks were startled and impressed, and began to think they had wronged her. Kevin turned away from the encampment with but one thought—that she was not there.

"I still suspect them," he said to Father Ulick; "but I must not delay my search elsewhere."

"I will keep watch upon them while you are absent," said the priest.

So Kevin packed a small knapsack, taking bread and butter and a little spirits—provision for restoring the child's strength should she be found in an exhausted condition—and with a stout stick in his hand he set out to explore every foot of the mountains. Other parties set out in like manner, taking different paths; but Kevin put faith in nobody's eyes but his own. One by one the groups of searchers returned, satisfied after one, or two, or three days' travel that the child was not to be found, living or dead, among the hills; but for ten long days and nights Kevin's face was not seen by his friends. At the end of that time he reappeared, looking so wan and worn, so dark about the eyes and grey about the lips that his neighbors scarcely knew him. He had grown so thin that his clothes hung upon him, and when questioned he answered in a voice husky with weakness and pain.

He found that the gipsies had removed themselves during his absence, and Father Ulick had followed them on horseback to a town some twenty miles away, where they had established themselves.

"I watched them closely for several days," said the priest, who returned about the same time as Kevin, "and I found that I was only wasting my time. I told the

whole story to the police, and have sent advertisements to the papers. Is there anything more that I can do?"

Kevin groaned and shook his head. He could suggest nothing; yet he could not sit down and fold his hands with the bleak fact staring him in the face that Fancha was gone. Father Ulick, seeing the speechless look of agony in his eye, tried to soothe him as he would have soothed the suffering of some dumb animal that had crept to him; and sitting close by him, stroked his young, brown hand with an old and willow-fellow till Kevin's icy sorrow gave way, and he wept passionately on the old man's shoulder.

"You'll think me but a big baby myself, sir," he said, struggling to control this display of anguish.

"No," said the priest; "sorrow is no disgrace to the strongest. But at the same time, my boy, crying is not the best employment for six feet of manhood. Your father misses you at his work in the field; go in God's name and lend him your hand. Time will pass more quickly while you are doing your duty, and good news may be on its way to us even now."

Kevin obeyed, and his father was surprised to see him returning to his work. Friends and neighbors also saw it with surprise, for Kevin's great loss and grief had made him an object of interest to the mountain. They wondered if he had quite given up the search, and was becoming reconciled to the loss of the child. Only his mother knew how he roamed the mountains at night, arriving home at breakfast time, worn and weary, having spent long hours in exploring distant nooks among the hills. When he absented himself from home for a week at a time, and his neighbors thought that he was doing business for his father at some distant fair, he was in reality prosecuting the search for Fan. Besides his parents, Shawn Rau and the priest were the only friends who were aware of the depth of his sorrow. He would walk to the house of the latter, and pass hours talking over the fire with the book-learned man who mourned sincerely for the little girl's mysterious disappearance; or he would sit by Father Ulick's evening lamp, listening to the old man's sympathizing voice or conning the lessons which were given to him as an antidote to his pain.

Thus the summer and autumn passed away, and neither by advertisement in the papers nor by continued search and inquiry could any tidings of the child be obtained. As the winter nights came on, and the turf logs were piled on the hearth under a frosty thatch, poor Fan's fate was settled with many a shake of the head by neighbors on the mountain. She had certainly met her death on that beautiful moonlit night while the organ was playing in the gipsies' tent, and Kevin's mother was watching for her from the doorway.

"Strayed down to the cliffs she did. She was always fond of wandering an' exploring." An' the say is deep an' the tide is strong.

But wouldn't the body of her be seen?"

"Deed no; not for sure. They do be carried out far, an' do never come back.

And then instances were given and stories told, till the old people sighed and the young wept. But if Kevin appeared, the conversation was changed.

The priest, housekeeper, who had been walking down the hillpath with her roses against her breast, whispered about the fairies as she wiped her old eyes with her apron. Every one was grieved at the fate of the little singing girl, but no one now believed she would ever return.

TO BE CONTINUED

A TRIP TO CALIFORNIA

By Helen Macdonald in Kosmos Magazine

Even for October the weather was unusually mild and exhilarating. Over the brown hills with their symmetrical rows of stacked corn, the sun shone goldenly, and the grassy meadows and hillsides were as green as in their first May-day freshness. The drifting haze was golden, too, tipped toward evening with violet and shot through with the delicious pink of the sun's last rays. Under its sheen the far horizon took on an eerie look, and seen through the misty hills, toward the hills James Moore was journeying in his Ford sedan, somewhat slowly as befitted a lover of nature, and, moreover, if the truth were known, like one not quite sure what reception awaited him at the end of the road. He tried to watch the goldenrod and the purple asters and to bathe his soul in the peace of the scene, but all the time there was a little uneasy tap-tapping at the back of his mind, which said as clear as anything: "What will Annie say? What will Annie say? For he had sold the meadow farm that day—just as good as sold it—and Annie had always been dead set against selling it. She never liked the hill farm, which was where they would have to move now. Well, no do, but she'd come round in time. The price would be some fussing, but if nothing else did, three hundred dollars an

acre, cash in hand! It wasn't often you got an offer like that . . . not likely!"

Annie came out on the kitchen porch as he rolled into the yard. "You're late," she called out gaily, "but not so late that the biscuits are spoiled, so I won't scold. But another ten minutes—" She shook her head at him. "You never do know when to come home on a day like this!" James essayed delighted surprise. "I thought you were going to be so busy with your sewing all day. A snack on the kitchen table was what I looked for." Somehow he was sorry it wasn't the snack.

"Yes, I know," his wife said, as she set about taking up the supper. "But, would you believe it, I never sewed a stitch? Minnie Walsh came in right after you left. She had a day off and she caught the seven o'clock car. If I wasn't surprised when she walked in."

"And she's gone again, is she?" "Yes, Tom and Nancy took her to the car—she wanted to get home before dark—and that's how I got time to make biscuits. It wasn't worth while starting in to sew at four o'clock. And we had the best day out of doors, and walked all the way over to Nancy's for dinner. Then we walked back the hill road, and Tom and Nancy drove over just in time for Minnie to catch the four-fifteen. I haven't had such a delightful day in a long time."

"How is the hill road?" James asked, as he reached for a second biscuit. "Beautiful!" enthusiastically. "I could hardly tear Minnie away. She says we're the only country people she knows who really enjoy the country. I tell her they all enjoy it, but they don't know it. I said nobody loved the country any better than you did, but you never say much about it." James Moore took his courage in his hands.

"You should have heard me praising the country today," he said, smiling. "And I almost sold the farm on the strength of a spoon poised in her hand. The hill farm," she asked. "Were you offered a good price?"

"A fine price; but not for the hill farm—for this."

"Oh!" Annie began to dish the peaches. "Of course we wouldn't sell this. Where would we live? You always say you wouldn't go to town. Can you reach the cake?"

"Yes, thanks. My hand trembled the cake and felt his hand tremble. It was going to be harder to tell her than he had expected. "We could live at the hill farm. Couldn't we? Nicer place than this every way."

"Say something silly, why don't you, while you're about it. I'll never live on the hill farm, and you know it."

The surety of the tone was irritating and the man spoke quickly. "Where'll you go then when we sell this?"

"His wife gave him a sharp glance. "What have you been up to today, James Moore?" thought you looked guilty as soon as I saw you come in. You can't fool me!"

"Guilty, nothing! When I got a bigger price for this land than any one ever got within forty miles! I think I ought to swagger around some, that's what I think!"

Mrs. Moore had become slightly pale, but she kept a straight gaze on her husband's face. "And you think you're going to sell it, do you?" she said slowly.

"Well, now listen, Annie. I want to tell you about it. You can't help but see what a good chance it is," James said in a placating tone. "We don't need two farms."

"Then sell the hill farm," she interjected. "We couldn't get half as much for this winter, no one wants it, and this man does want the meadow farm bad enough to pay three hundred dollars an acre for it. Think of that! Cash, too! Why, Annie, it means a cool ninety thousand dollars for us."

"Humph!" said Annie. "Well! I won't sign it!"

"Annie, don't be silly. I've sold the farm and you'll have to sign it. You can't make a fool of me that way!"

"I won't make a fool of myself by signing it!" And that was Annie's last word. She washed the dishes in stony silence, making no answer whatever to her husband's numerous arguments, though when they took their places by the reading lamp in the sitting room she began in a perfectly casual tone to relate some of the incidents of the day, whom they had happened to meet and what Minnie had said. But when James tried to hark back to the matter of the sale, she closed her lips tightly.

Several days passed thus, James Moore becoming increasingly angry with Annie's last word and his wife concealing a heavy heart under a noncommittal bearing. The meadow farm was very dear to Mrs. Moore. She had come there a bride, and when her parents died the money she received helped to pay for the place and to make some needed improvements on the house. Three of her children had died here and Nancy, the youngest and only surviving child, had gone out from it a joyous bride. The happiest years of her life had been spent here, and if she loved it for its sad memories as well, that was because she was a woman. Meadow Farm was known as the

prettiest farm for miles around. She was proud of it. She knew every nook and corner of it, nearly every tree and shrub. And now her husband, who had seemed to love it too, was willing to sell it and go to live on the hill farm a good enough place, but off the pike and rather inaccessible in winter because of the mud roads. She couldn't understand it at all—why he wanted to do it. But of one thing she was sure—she'd block the sale!

One day Nancy drove over and soon envisaged the cloud. "What's the matter, mother?" she wanted to know, when they found themselves alone. And her mother, with a few quickly expressed tears, told her.

"But I'll never give in!" she concluded. "M-m-m," said Nancy. "Then there's apt to be a deadlock, isn't there?"

"You mean your father'll never give in either? Well, I can be stubborn, too. It's my home and I'm going to hold on to it. The very idea of the hill farm!"

"Yes, he has his nerve, hasn't he?" observed the dutiful daughter. But she was thinking that it wouldn't be very much of a home to hold on to if the two living in it were at daggers drawn all the time. "It makes it awfully unpleasant for you, mother," she added diplomatically, "and of course dad isn't exactly roaring with joy; but if you want to keep the place I don't blame you in the least. Only—"

"Of course I want to keep it—why shouldn't I? I've lived nearly all my life here and I thought I'd die here."

"Goodness, mother, what's the use of talking about dying. You're the strongest person I know. Look at the way you walked yesterday! I wonder—"

She pursed up her lips thoughtfully. "There ought to be some way—"

Then suddenly her eyes began to twinkle. "I know!" she cried. "I know what I'm going to do. I'll put a little kink in dad, even if it doesn't conquer him! Leave it to Nancy!"

Her mother demanded, "But what is it? What are you going to do? Nancy, don't you go and muddle things now!"

"Did you ever know me to muddle anything?" loftily. "And I can't tell you—you have to be entirely innocent. Only, don't show a single sign of giving in!"

Indeed, she wasn't the indignant rejoinder. Nancy drew a lugubrious face as she went out to her car, in case she might encounter her father. She climbed in slowly and was ready to start when he appeared.

"Good-bye, dad," she said, very soberly. "Are you coming over for dinner tomorrow?" with a slight accent on the "you."

"Of course," was the surprised answer. Ever since the marriage of their daughter Mr. and Mrs. Moore had taken Sunday dinner at her home, stopping in after Mass and remaining sometimes for the rest of the day. "Why, isn't your mother—?"

Nancy shook her head dejectedly. "She says not," briefly. Visible gloom descended on Mr. Moore. "I suppose she told you, did she, about the—about the—"

"Sale," Yes, she told me. "Well, what do you think about it, Nancy?" He looked at his daughter eagerly. "Don't you think it's a fine price?"

"Splendid! I had no idea you could get that much."

"Neither did I. But your mother an acre there would be some excuse for the way she's acting!"

Nancy gave a dolorous sigh. "Poor mother! You know, dad, I feel terribly sorry for her! She does love the place . . . and think how she'll hate it at the hill farm this winter!" She turned her eyes mournfully on the barnyard.

Mr. Moore's head perked up automatically and he stared at the drooping figure at the wheel. Why, that sounded like . . . What on earth had her mother said to Nancy? "She says she'll never sign the deed," he threw out fearfully. "Yes, I know. I told her she was foolish. That's a lot of money to turn down."

Her father gave her a grateful glance. "You're a mighty sensible girl, Nancy. I might know you'd try to help me. You talk to her again—"

"Oh, I talked it up great, and really, dad, I think I got her interested. She hadn't seemed to look at the money part of it at all, but before I left she was actually planning what she would do with her half of it, in case she decided to give in."

Hay Fever, Asthma, Catarrh and Chronic Bronchitis! All surrendered their terrible effects upon the human body of no less than 3,000 Candidates, by use of Buckley's Cough Treatment. Don't suffer one minute longer. Send today for trial size, 10c.

W. K. BUCKLEY LIMITED, MFG. CHEMIST, 42A Mutual Street, Toronto, Ont.

Casavant Freres CHURCH LIMITEE Organ Builders

ST. HYACINTHE QUEBEC BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS

MURPHY & GUNN BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, NOTARIES

FOY, KNOX & MONAHAN BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, NOTARIES

LUNNEY & LANNAN BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, NOTARIES

JOHN H. McELDERRY BARRISTER, SOLICITOR, NOTARY PUBLIC, CONVEYANCER

WATT & BLACKWELL ARCHITECTS

DR. BRUCE E. BARD

St. Jerome's College Founded 1864 KITCHENER, ONT.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

John Ferguson & Sons 180 KING ST.

E. G. Killingsworth FUNERAL DIRECTOR

87 YONGE ST., TORONTO Phone Main 4030

Hennessey DRUGS CUT FLOWERS PERFUMES CANDLES

Painting and Decorating of Churches, Altars, Statues, etc.

LOUIS SANDY

Gordon Mills Habit Materials and Vellings

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES BLACK, WHITE, AND COLOURED SERGES AND CLOTHS, VEILINGS CASHMERE, ETC.

LOUIS SANDY