

THE WILD GEESE

BY Stanley J. Weyman.

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CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Colonel John had risen. He watched her go with deep feeling; he turned to his seat again with a sigh. He was a shade paler than before, and the eyes which he bent on the board were dark with thought. He was unconsciously all that passed in his mind, and, if aware, he was heedless of the strength of the passions which she had unbridled—until a hand fell on his arm.

He glanced up then and saw that all the men had their eyes looking at him—even Uncle Sullivan—with dark faces. A passion of anger clouded their gaze. Without a word spoken they were of one mind. The hand that touched him trembled, the voice that broke the silence throbbed under the weight of the speaker's feelings.

"You'll be leaving her this day," the man muttered.

"I?" the colonel said, taken by surprise. "Not at all."

"We wish you no harm, but to see your back."

The colonel, his first wonder subdued, looked from one to another. "I am sure you wish me no harm," he said.

"None, but to see your back," the man repeated, while his companions looked down at the colonel with a strange fixedness.

"But I cannot go," the colonel answered as gently as before.

"And why?" the man returned. The McMurrrough was one of the speakers, but stood behind them, glowing at him with a dark face.

"Because," the colonel answered, "I am in my duty here, my friends; and the man who is in his duty can suffer nothing."

"He can die," the man replied, breathing hard. The men who were on the colonel's side of the table leaned more closely toward him.

But he seemed unmoved. "That," he replied cheerfully, "is nothing. To die is but an accident. Who dies in his duty suffers no harm. And were that not enough—and it is all," he continued slowly, "that harm should happen to me, a Sullivan among Sullivans? Because I have fared far and seen much, am I so changed that, coming back, I shall find no welcome on the hearth of my race and no shelter where my fathers lie?"

"And are not our hearts cold over many a league? And the graves—"

"Whisht!" a voice broke in sternly, as Uncle Ulick thrust his way through the group. "The man says well!" he continued. "He's a Sullivan."

"He's a Protestant!"

"He is a Sullivan, I say!" Uncle Ulick retorted, "were he the blackest heretic on the sod! And you, would you do the foul deed for a woman's eyes? Are the hearts of Kerry turned as hard as its rocks? Make an end of this prating and foolishness! One finger!" the man answered jerkily. "Next week—same. Third Week!"

"Next week?" she murmured, shuddering.

"Exchanged."

She lifted her eyes with an effort from his mained hand. "How many were you?" she inquired.

"We know one another when we meet," he said. He drew his waxed thread between his finger and thumb, held it up to the light, then looking askance at the gossamers about him, to whom he was a legend, he said, "They know only Erse."

The day was still, the mist lay on the lake, and under it the water gleamed, a smooth, pale mirror. Flavia had seen it so a hundred times and thought it was the same today, moved by what she had heard, the prospect spoke of a remoteness from the moving world which depressed her. Hitherto, the quick pulse and the energy of youth had left her no time for melancholy.

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she frowned. The man sorted ill with her dream.

It was Bale, Colonel John's servant. He was making some article taken from his master's wardrobe. His elbow went busily to and fro as he piled the needle, while sprawling on the sod about him half a dozen gossamers watched him inquisitively.

Perhaps it was the suggestive contrast between his diligence and their idleness which irritated Flavia; but she sat down her annoyance to another cause. The man was an Englishman, and therefore an enemy. And what did he do there? Had the Colonel left him on guard?

Flavia's heart swelled at the thought. Here, at least, she and hers were masters. Colonel John had awakened mixed feelings in her. At times she admired feelings in her. At times she should rue his insolence if he had it in his mind to push his authority or interfere with her plans.

In the meantime she stood watching William Bale, and a desire to know more of the man, and through him of his master, rose within her. The house was quiet. The McMurrrough and his following had gone to a cocking match and race meeting at Joyce's Corner. She went down the stairs, took her hood, and crossed the courtyard. Bale did not look up at her approach, but he saw her out of the corner of his eye, and when she paused before him he laid down his work and made as if he would rise.

She looked at him with a superciliousness not natural to her. "Are all the men tailors where you come from?" she asked. "There, you need not rise."

"Where I came from last," he replied, "we were all trades, my lady."

"Have you been a soldier long?" she asked, feeling herself rebuffed.

"Not more than twenty years, my lady."

"And now you have done with it?"

"It is as his honor pleases."

She frowned. He had a way of speaking that sounded uncivil to ears attuned to the soft Irish accent and the whining tone. Yet the man interested her, and after a moment's silence she fixed her eyes more intently on his work. "Did you lose your fingers in battle?" she asked. His right hand was maimed.

"No," he answered, grudgingly, as he seemed to answer all her questions, "in prison."

"In prison?" she replied. "Where?"

"He cast an upward look at his questioner.

"In the Grand Turk's land," he said. "Nearer than that I can't say. I'm no scholar, my lady."

"But why?" she asked, puzzled. "I don't understand."

"Cut off," he said, stooping over his work.

Flavia turned a shade paler. "Why?" she repeated.

"One God, and Mohammed His prophet—couldn't swallow it. One finger!" the man answered jerkily. "Next week—same. Third Week!"

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"Gone out of the way, eh?" Asgill replied with a deprecatory grin. "And the whole cargo, was it, Captain?"

"All the tubs, perfectly."

"You'd paid your dues, of course?"

"Dues, mon Dieu! But they take the goods."

"Had you paid your dues?"

"Not already, because—"

"That's unfortunate," Asgill answered in a tone of mock condolence. "Mighty unfortunate!" He winked at Uncle Ulick. "But, you know, Captain, must be paid before the ship slips her moorings."

"But—"

"Mighty unfortunate!"

"But what are the dues?" the poor Augustin cried, dimly aware that he was being baited.

"Ah, you're talking now," the Magistrate answered glibly. "Unluckily, that's not in my province. I'm made aware that the goods are held under lien for dues, and I can do nothing. Upon payment, of course, you know, Captain, must be paid before the ship slips her moorings."

"But how much? Eh, sir? How much? How much?"

Luke Asgill, who had two faces, and for once was minded to let both be seen, enjoyed the Frenchman's perplexity. The wise and the foolish with Flavia, and here was a rare opportunity of exhibiting at once his friendliness and his powers of drollery. He was therefore taken back when a grave voice cut short his enjoyment.

"Still, if Captain Augustin," the voice interrupted, "is willing to pay a reasonable sum on account of dues?"

The magistrate turned about abruptly. "Eh?" he said. "Oh, Colonel Sullivan, is it?"

"Then, doubtless, the goods will be released so that he may perform his duty to his customer."

Asgill had only known the Colonel a few minutes, and aware that he was one of the family, he did not see how to take it. It was as if treason lifted its head in the camp. He coughed.

"I'd not be denying it," he said. "But until the McMurrrough returns—"

"Such a matter is doubtless within Mr. Sullivan's authority," the colonel said, turning from him to Uncle Ulick.

Uncle Ulick showed his embarrassment. "Faith, I don't know that it is," he said.

"If Captain Augustin paid, say 20 per cent on his bills of lading—"

"Ma foi, 20 per cent!" the captain exclaimed in astonishment. "Twenty—but, yes, I will pay it. I will pay even that. Of what use to throw the handle after the hatchet?"

Luke Asgill thought the colonel very simple. "Well, I've nothing to say to this, at all!" he said, shrugging his shoulders. "It's not within my province."

Colonel John looked at the girl in a way in which he had not looked at her before, and she found herself speaking before she knew it. "Yes," she cried impulsively, "let that be done, and the goods be given up."

"But the McMurrrough?" Asgill began.

"I will answer for him," she said impulsively. "Uncle Ulick, go, I beg, and see it done."

"I will go with you," Colonel Sullivan said. "And doubtless Mr. Asgill will accompany us, to lend the weight of his authority in the event of any difficulty arising."

Asgill's countenance fell. He was between two stools, for he had no mind to displease Flavia or thwart her brother. At length, "No," he said, "I'm not doing anything in the McMurrrough's absence."

Colonel John looked in the same strange fashion at Flavia. "I have no legal power to act, sir," he said, "as I am not a lawyer. And that, being so, I must certainly ask you to lend me the weight of your authority."

"And I will be hanged if I do!" Asgill cried. There was a change in his tone and the reason was not far to seek. "Here's the McMurrrough!"

They all turned and looked along the road which ran to the end of the lake. With James McMurrrough, who was still a furlong away, were the two O'Bernes. They came slowly, and somewhat in their bearing, even at that distance awoke anxiety.

"They're early from the cocking," Uncle Ulick muttered doubtfully, "and sober as pigs! What's the meaning of that? There's something amiss, I'm feeling."

A cry from Flavia proved the keenness of her eyes. "Where is Gerald?" she exclaimed. "Where is the mare?"

"Ay, what have they done with the mare?" Uncle Ulick said in a tone of concern. "Where's the girl?"

"I do not know, though El Padre says I told him."

"El Padre is himself the guilty one," remarked the lawyer.

The door opened and El Padre approached the suddenly silent group. "Come with me tomorrow afternoon. I shall point out the thief."

The priest returned to his stone cell. With his gaze riveted on the damp, dreary wall, he fell into a deep reverie. The wall lost its solidity, becoming a gauzy curtain between him and a cheerless chamber. The curtain thickened and became the rising, swaying smoke from the golden censer, resting on the stone floor. In the midst of a white, curling cloud stood a woman of wonderful beauty of face and form. She was thrusting a long sword at an imaginary enemy. In the background a gaunt, emaciated man smiled approvingly. There was a strange resemblance between the cloud-veiled faces, but the ravishment of disease had marred the beauty of the man in the gaudy, striped dress.

The cloud thickened, and the dreamy eyes of the priest rested on the white wall. "Manana," he smiled. "Tomorrow we may expect a surprise."

The town forgot its grief in the arrival of El Toreador, the hero of the arena. It seemed scarcely creditable that this slightly built young man possessed sufficient strength to repel the fierce onslaught of bulls, yaddened by the torture of banderillas; yet his fame had spread through

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El Toreador

BY CARRIE ELIZABETH LOGAN

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"And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire at the altar, and cast it into the earth." Over the sacred spot where a golden censer had rested in the ground arose one of the most magnificent cathedrals in northern Mexico. Though rich in adornment, with priceless altar treasures and valuable paintings, its most prized possession was the golden censer discovered by its founder. The blessings that had enriched the great stone church and the small community were credited to the angel gift. It was carefully guarded by an aged priest.

Night descended upon the vast, empty vault of the cathedral. Great patches of moonlight fell from windows far above the ground upon the white marble slabs of the flooring. In a square of unearthly blue light shone the golden censer. A veil of fleecy cloud swept lightly across the face of the moon, and when the blue light again rested on the golden and gemmed articles of the altar the censer had disappeared.

The wildest consternation prevailed when morning light discovered the theft. Only the old priest remained calm and unmoved. There was a strange woman in town. She had come in advance of the party of El Toreador. People had noticed her as an unusually tall woman for one of Spanish race, dressed in black and heavily veiled. She was a devout worshiper, daily polishing with her knees the marble floor of the cathedral from the

Mexico.

A bull fight is the usual Sunday afternoon amusement in Mexico. People flocked to the large, stone amphitheater, the arena being open to the sky, but the tiers of seats covered. A stone wall five feet high protected the people from a mad rush of el tero.

This Sunday an unusual interest drew the crowd because of El Toreador, with whom none could compare. Some inferior fighters tried a little bull baiting with mock-spirited bulls. The crowd grew impatient, and a number arose, drowning the cry of the venders of dulces and pulque.

The vast amphitheater was ringing with vivas and bravos when the priest and his party arrived. El Toreador was giving exhibitions of throwing the lasso on horseback and on foot. His dress jingled with rials and pesos as he cast the lasso with a wrist of steel.

The crowd grew breathless as the door at the side of the arena was flung open, and a Texas bull, with flaming eyes and hoofs that spurned the ground, rushed in charging upon the toreador. The young man sprang aside, presenting his crimson cloak to the bull. The animal was borne past by the impetus of his charge, but turned as on a pivot, and made another pass at the calm toreador.

Suddenly arose the gaunt priest, known as "El Padre." "Die, thief of the golden censer!" he shouted.

The attention of El Toreador was directed to the side of the arena was flung open, and a Texas bull, with flaming