

THE WILD GEESSE

by Stanley J. Weyman.

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CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

The man and the horse! The colonel began to understand that something more than wantonness had inspired Payton's conduct the previous night. He had had an interest in nipping the inquiry in the bud, and had acted on the instant and with considerable presence of mind.

The colonel remained within doors until five minutes before 3 o'clock. Then, attending to the directions he had received, he made his way to a particular room or a little within the back gate.

Had he glanced up at the windows he would have seen faces at them; moreover, a suspicious ear might have caught a scurrying of feet, mingled with stifled laughter. But he did not look up. He did not seem to expect to see more than he found when he entered—a great bare room, with its floor strewn with sawdust and its walls adorned here and there by a gaudy trophy of arms. In the middle of the room engaged apparently in weighing one foil against another, was a stout, dark man, whose light and nimble step gave the lie to his weight.

Certainly there came from a half-opened door at the end of the room a stealthy sound as of rats taking cover. But Colonel John did not look that way. His whole attention was bent upon the maitre d'armes, who bowed low to him. Clicking his heels together and sending his palms in the french fashion, "Good morning, sire," he said, his southern accent unmistakable. "I make you welcome."

The colonel returned his salute less elaborately. "The maitre d'armes, Lemoine?" he said.

"Yes, sire; that is me. At your service."

"I am a stranger in Tralee, and I have been recommended to apply to you. You are, I am told, accustomed to giving lessons."

"With the small sword?" the Frenchman answered, with the same gesture of the open hands. "It is my profession."

"I am desirous of brushing up my knowledge—such as it is."

"A rare good notion," the fencing master replied, his black, beady eyes twinkling. "Vare good for me. Vare good also for you. Always ready, is the gentleman's motto, and to make himself ready his high recreation. But, doubtless, sire, with a faint smile, "you are proficient and I teach you nothing. You come but to sweat a little."

"At one time," Colonel John replied with simplicity, "I was fairly proficient. Then—this happened. He held out his right hand, and said, "Ah! the Frenchman said in a low tone, and he raised his hands. "That is rare ogly. That is rare ogly. Can you hold with that?" he added, inspecting the hand with interest. He was a different man.

"So, so," the colonel replied cheerfully. "Not strong, eh? It is not possible."

"Not very strongly," the colonel assented. His hand, like Bale's, lacked two fingers.

Lemoine muttered something under his breath and looked at the colonel with a wrinkled brow. "Tut, tut!" he said, "and how long are you like that, sire?"

"Seven years."

"Pity!" Lemoine exclaimed. Again he looked at his visitor with perplexed eyes. After which, "Peste!" he said suddenly.

The colonel stared. "The Frenchman continued, "I don't know. Pardon me, sire, I do not fence with less estrople."

folding his arms with a superior air, and frowning against the wall.

"Parbleu," said Lemoine as they rested. "It is a pity. The wrist is excellent, rare. But the pointing finger is not—is not!"

"I do my best," the colonel answered, with cheerful resignation. "Shall we engage again?"

"At your pleasure."

The Frenchman's eye no longer twinkled; his gallantry was on its mettle. He was grave and severe, fixing his gaze on the colonel's attack, and remaining blind to the nods and shrugs of his patrons in the background. Again he touched the colonel, and, again, with an ease he could not mask.

Colonel John, a little breathed, and perhaps a little chagrined, dropped his point. Some one coughed, and another tittered.

"I think he will need another lesson or two," Payton remarked, loudly enough for all to hear.

The man whom he addressed made an inaudible answer. The colonel turned toward them.

"And—a new hand," Payton added in the same tone.

Even for his henchmen the remark was almost too much. But the colonel, strange to say, seemed to find nothing offensive in it. On the contrary, he replied to it.

"That was precisely," he said, "what I thought when this—he indicated his maimed hand—happened to me. And I did my best to procure one."

"Did you succeed?" Payton retorted in an insolent tone.

"To some extent," the colonel replied, in the most matter-of-fact manner. And he transferred the foil to his left hand.

"Give you four to one," Payton rejoined, "Lemoine hits you twice before you hit him once."

Colonel John had anticipated some of the things that had happened. But he had not foreseen this. He was quick to see the use to which he might put it, and it was only for an instant that he hesitated. Then "Four to one?" he repeated.

"Five, if you like," Payton sneered.

"If you will wager," the colonel said slowly, "if you will wager the gray mare you were riding this morning, sir—"

Payton uttered an angry oath. "What do you mean?" he said.

"It is true," the colonel answered, smiling. "And learned that trick from him?"

"I did. It is of little use except to a left handed man."

"Yet in play with one of the first force it succeeds twice out of three times," Lemoine answered. "Twice out of three times, with the right hand. Ma foi, I remember it well. I offered the master 20 guineas, monsieur, if he would teach me. But because—he held out his palms pathetically—"I was right handed he would not."

"I am fortunate," Colonel John answered, bowing, "in being able to requite your good nature. I shall be pleased to teach it to you for nothing, but now, gentlemen," he continued, giving up his foil to Lemoine and removing his mask, "gentlemen, you will bear me witness I trust, that I have won the wager?"

Some nodded, some murmured an affirmative, others turned toward Payton, who nodded sullenly. How willingly the foil was dropped! He laid the Colonel dead at his feet, and Lemoine, and the whole crew, friends and enemies! "Oh, hang you!" he said. "Take the mare; she's in the stable."

That a brother officer touched his arm and drew him aside. The interviewer seemed to be reminding him of something; and the Colonel, not inattentive, caught the name "Asgil" twice repeated. But Payton was too angry to care for minor consequences. He took off his adviser with a rough hand.

"What do I care?" he answered. "He must shoe his own cattle!" Then, with a poor show of hiding his spite under a cloak of insolence, he addressed the Colonel. "The mare is yours," he said. "Much good may she do you."

And he turned on his heel and went out of the armory.

CHAPTER VII.
BARGAINING.

It was perhaps because Flavia often sought the tower beside the waterfall at sunset, and he had noted that, that Luke Asgill's steps bore him thither on an evening three days after the colonel's departure for Tralee. Asgill had remained at Morristown, though the gloom of the winter twilight and his presence. But to all her remonstrances the McMurrough had replied, with his usual carelessness, that the man was there on business—did she want to recover her mare, or did she want to stretch himself at his ease?

But that as it might, Asgill did not find her at the tower. But he thought that she might still come, and he waited, sitting low, with his back against the ruined wall, that she might not see him until it was too late for her to retreat. And by he heard footsteps mounting the path; his face reddened, and he made as if he would rise. But the face that rose above the brow was not Flavia's, but her brother's. And Asgill swore.

The McMurrough understood, grinned, and threw himself on the ground beside him. "You'll be wishing me in the devil's bowl, I'm thinking," he said. "Yet, faith, I'm not so sure—if you're not a fool. For it's certain I am your brother, and as much as the sole of her foot without me."

"I'm not denying it," the other answered sulkily.

"So it's mighty little use your wishing me away!" the McMurrough continued, stretching himself at his ease. "You can't get her without me; nor at all, at all, but on my terms! It would be a fine thing for you, no doubt, if you could sneak round her behind my back! Don't I know you'd be all for old Sir Michael's wife, and might die in a gutter for you! But an egg, and an egg's fair sharing."

"Have I said it was any other?" Asgill asked gloomily.

"The old place is mine, and I'm minded to keep it."

"And any other marries her," Asgill said quietly, "he will want her rights."

"Well, and do you think," the younger man answered in his ugliest manner, "that I'm weren't for that small fact, Mister Asgill?"

"And the small fact," Asgill struck in, "that before your grandfather died I lent you a clear five hundred, and I'm to take that, that's my own already, in quitclaim of all!"

STAGE DISCIPLINE.
A Discourse by Horace Wyndham, St. James' Theater, London.

From the Sketch: It may possibly come as news to those who only witness a theatrical performance from the auditorium to learn that discipline is enforced almost as strictly on the stage as it is in a government department.

Every big London theater has a code of "rules and regulations" under which it is conducted, and rigid adherence to this is insisted upon from every one concerned—principal to call boy alike.

Speaking generally, the regulations are about twenty in number. Some managers, however, draw up so lengthy a list that they find it necessary to embody it in a small handbook.

Among the rules common to all theaters may be mentioned the following: (1) "The theater of the face must be shaven if required by the exigencies of the play represented;" (2) "All engagements to be regarded as exclusive, and no artist shall appear at any other theater or hall without the consent in writing of the manager or his representative;" (3) "All artists engaged are to be paid by the manager, and no artist shall be regarded as exclusive, and no artist shall appear at any other theater or hall without the consent in writing of the manager or his representative;" (4) "In the event of the theater being closed through riot, fire, public calamity, royal demise, epidemic or illness of principal, no salary shall be claimed during such closure."

One of the gravest offenses of which an actor or actress may be guilty is that of addressing the audience from the stage during the course of a performance. In a society where the only recognized punishment for this is instant dismissal, a note to this effect being inserted in the dialogue words or "business" not previously sanctioned by the management is also held to be particularly objectionable.

An exception, however, is usually made where musical comedy is concerned, for in entertainments of this nature the practice of "gagging" is more or less freely adopted. Librettists, indeed, have much reason to be thankful that the idea is not so generally recognized, since the success of their work largely due to the manner in which the comedians "build up" their parts for themselves.

The individual in whom is vested the responsibility for maintaining due order behind the scenes is the stage manager. Consequently everybody makes it his business to cultivate pleasant relations with him from the outset. As may be imagined, his position is a delicate one, calling for the display of a good deal of tact, since in the execution of his office he is sometimes required to "drop on a personal friend."

Should he show favoritism discipline is bound to suffer, with the result that he himself is called to account. No one however seems to know exactly how this is brought about, for imagination plays before the eyes of a stage manager reporting himself for neglect of duty.

One of the Requirements of Every Inhabitant of Village in Hungary.

There is in Hungary a village probably unique among the world's towns, in that it not only encourages chess as a pastime, but insists that the king of games shall be played by every man, woman and child in the place.

It is just as necessary in this out-of-the-world spot for the inhabitants to be proficient chess players as it is for them to be able to read, write and cipher. Proficiency in chess, children are given to the school.

Problems are given to the scholars that they are expected to take home and work out in their spare hours in addition to their other tasks.

Hungary has long been famous for her chess players. Indeed, this little village has, as can be well understood, turned out more than one player who has been considered fit to rank with such giants as Lasker, Steinitz or Tchigorin.

Every Christmas a great tournament is held in the village, and the burgomaster gives prizes to the best juvenile and adult players.

What Business to Take Home.

Orison Sweet Marden in November Success: It is a reflection upon your own business ability that you cannot bear a living during business hours.

Your ill humor is a confession to your wife of your weakness and incapacity, and of your not being master of the situation, or equal to confronting emergencies.

Women naturally admire strength, capacity, efficiency and courage in men. They are not satisfied unless they can only make a living, but also make it easily, without fretting, stewing or worrying. Your wife will think less of you if you continually lug home your business cares.

THE HAUNTED BED.

BY GRIF ALEXANDER.

As Wilfred McGinnis walked down Wylie avenue on the way to the office of his lawyer, many friends and acquaintances exchanged words and smiles with him, never dreaming that they were looking upon him for the last time on earth.

McGinnis was well known and well liked. His square chin, showing bulldog tenacity, was relieved by his humorous mouth; and his stern, deep-set eyes knew an occasional twinkle.

"Drawn up that will yet?" he asked as he entered the office at last.

"Why in thunder don't you shut that door, McGinnis?" demanded the lawyer. "You're the damndest man I ever came across."

"Aw, shut up yourself, you omdamhoo!" said McGinnis, but he shut the door.

Attorney McSwainson turned his big body in his swiveling chair, and his beady eyes laughed from his fat face at McGinnis. "Oh, but you're the bright joker, McGinnis," he said. "Where do you expect to die when you go to?"

"Haw, haw, haw," laughed McGinnis. "Tis the Irish in me. Let me see the documents, Bill."

"Here's the first," said McSwainson, dated January 2: "I will and bequeath all my goods and real estate to the Asylum for Indigent Spinners. That's it, balled down. And here's the other one, the last one, the genuine simon-pure one, the same one. You like your little joke, don't you?"

"And you like my little joke, too, when I pay for it, don't you?" McGinnis rapped back. And then they laughed again.

"Wait till I tell you something, Bill," said McGinnis, composing himself, "though it won't be news to you—of all it!"

"After a pause, he went on: "When I came to this country I had one sovereign in my pocket, but I was sovereign in my own right besides. 'Tis a joke I have."

"I began bad, for I ran into debt for four weeks' board. Then I went out and starved myself until I struck a job and started in to save money. It was slow work at first, but I paid my debts and

anywhere else in the house," he concluded.

"Going to ripe open the mattress?" queried Will.

"If necessary," said the lawyer. "But it wasn't necessary. When the bed was pulled away from the wall the missing will was discovered stuck into the back of the mattress. In this case it was equally plain that the old man had intended to finish his job the next day."

"I'm quite convinced that my old friend took this means of letting us know where to look," said the lawyer.

"Bahaw!" the uncle used to say. "The old man didn't know anything about telegraphy and couldn't have learned it in a year of Sundays. But, just the same, the crowd downstairs will likely agree with you."

And they did.

Presently Will said, sleepily, "It's all right, old man, fire ahead." And he began absently tapping on the bedpost with his pencil.

"I'm going to," said the lawyer. "But I'm not such an awfully old man."

"I wasn't talking to you," said Will, apologetically. "I was talking to the bed."

"What do you mean?" asked McSwainson.

"Did you hear the bed call 'Will! Will! Will!'" asked the young man, with a laugh.

The lawyer looked at him as though he thought he was mad.

"No, I'm not crazy," said Will. "I'm just amused. When I put my head on the pillow I heard a supernatural telegraph operator tapping 'Will! Will! Will!' over and over again. It kind of startled me at first, but now I know what it is. I've been experimenting while I've been lying here. Put your ear to the head of the bed. You hear tapping, don't you? Well, that tapping, in the telegraph code, means 'Will' repeated many times. When I move into the middle of the bed the tapping ceases. When I move over to the other side the tapping is resumed, but this time the tapping means nothing even to a telegraph operator."

"Now, the reason for the tapping is very simple. On the right side of the bed the springs under the mattress react with a certain rough rhythm. In this case the rhythm accidentally takes on the sound of 'Will' as a telegraph hears it. The sound is communicated to the head of the bed, and when one hears it it appears to come from there instead of from the springs, from which it really springs. Which is a joke, as uncle used to say."

"It means more than that, I am convinced," said the lawyer impressively. "It means that the missing will has been found."

"What missing will demanded the young man."

Then McSwainson told his story. "I'm going to examine that bed before I look



WAIT TILL I TELL YOU SOMETHING, BILL

The Matter of Charities.

Springfield Republican: It is now approaching the season when the charities of the people are appealed to on every hand, by those who need and deserve help, by those who need but do not deserve it, and by many who neither need nor deserve it.

In the old days, which few of us now remember, or know about save by tradition, the dispensation of alms was not very apt to go astray and waste, because the drift of humanity degraded and vagrant was so small, and the calculated industry of the tramp who does not intend to work, but who lives by the charity of those who by constant industry have reached the power to manage their own lives and help others. These degenerates count on the thoughtless generosity of the people whose doors they call for food, or for 10 cents toward helping them to get their fare to another place where they are going to get a job, or for dollars which will enable them to do many things which they cannot do without dollars. It is the season when all these leeches abound.

There are exceptions, but in all cases, wherever there is a bureau of information, an organized society which is engaged in true and honest service both to the public and to the unfortunate individual—such as the United Relief association in this city—the right thing to do is to send such applicants to that society, whose business it is both to help and to investigate.

Just Wanted a Chance.

Atlanta Constitution: "Mister Judge," called out the colored witness, after he had been on the stand a full hour, "kin I say one word, suh?"

"Yes," replied the judge. "What is it?"

"Yes, suh, dis dis, suh. Ef you'll des make de lawyers set down an keep still two minutes, en gimme a livin' chance, I'll whirl in en tell de truth!"

New York Times: Senator Spooner related a conversation he had had last summer in a street car in Milwaukee.

"Do you have pale beer?"

"Oh, no," replied the other, "pale always gets his bottled."