

A FAIR EMIGRANT

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND
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CHAPTER XXXIX
A GHOST

When Bawn learned the news she was not taken by surprise, and yet the blow fell as heavily as if it had been unexpected. In a week the colour had left her lips and her dress hung loosely upon her. It was a week of rain and tempest, and Betty Macalister thought her young mistress had been suddenly seized with a fit of loneliness and fright of the storm.

"I was feared, always feared, that the winter'd be heavy on you," said Betty. "In summer time a body doesn't feel the loneliness; but winter up here is a trial, I can tell you."

"Perhaps I'm homesick," said Bawn, trying to smile. "I believe I am going back to America, Betty. This climate does not seem to agree with me. What do you think of coming with me—you and Nancy?"

"Och, mistress, I'm too old for changes; and it's too short a time you've given to the old country—you that was so brave at the first and had such plans. Why would you give up for a bit of a storm that'll blow over?"

Bawn lowered her head and made no reply. The storm she must fly for would never blow over, she feared—not, at all events, as long as she lingered here; for the storm was in her own heart. Back in America, with the ocean between her and this temptation, it might be that in years hence her old courage would return. The question now was how to depart quickly enough.

She must not give cause for wonder by a too precipitate flight; must give timely notice to her landlord, alleging that the Irish winter did not agree with her health. She must think of her handmaidens and their disappointment and make them some amends. In the meantime she must not see Rory.

He had come many times to her door, but had always been told in answer to his inquiries that she was ill and in her room; as indeed she was ill with sorrow because she dared not run to him; shut up in her room as in a prison from which she could not escape to freedom.

He had written her an urgent and impassioned letter, in which he bade her forget everything but his love, and end this tragedy with a word; but to all his pleadings she had answered only that she was quite unmoved in her resolve.

One day, when all her preparations for departure were almost made, Gran's ancient carriage arrived at the Shanganagh door, and Gran herself entered with trembling steps, uttering a little cry of dismay as her eyes fell on Bawn's altered face and figure.

"My dear," she said, "how ill you are looking! What is it all about? Can an old woman help to make things straight? Have we been unkind to you? Has any one hurt you that you so persist in running away from us?"

"No," said Bawn sadly—"no indeed. It is only that I am a capricious American and want to go home."

The old lady spread her thin hands before the fire and looked thoughtfully at the girl.

"My dear, I want you to understand me. I have not come here without a purpose. My grandson is very dear to me. You are making him unhappy."

"I am still more unhappy," said Bawn, standing before the old woman with her head lowered and her hands hanging by her side.

"There is a mystery somewhere," continued Gran, having studied Bawn's face eagerly for a few moments. "I cannot think of anything, except that some of our family have offended you, and that pride is in the way."

"It is not that. If I ever had any pride it is gone. And every one here has been only too good to me."

"What is it then? Will you not confide in me? Is there a difficulty which cannot be overcome?"

Gran's face twitched and her voice quavered. Bawn dropped on her knees and covered the wrinkled hands with kisses.

"It cannot be overcome," she said. "If I were to tell you, you would be the first to bid me go."

Then Bawn burst into uncontrollable weeping, and the old woman drew her to her heart and wept with her.

"I feared there was something," she said. "But you will trust me, will you not, if you can? How can you be sure of what I shall tell you to do till you try me? I know you are noble and good, and that this trouble which is in your mind, this hindrance to my grandson's happiness and your own, is nothing personal to yourself. He knows what it is, and he is not daunted. Why will you not be satisfied, too?"

"I will save him from himself," said Bawn, regaining her courage, but holding fast by the tender old hands that clasped her own. "I will not condemn him to a future of bitterness."

"You are putting an impossible case; and I cannot see further than just this, that I must go."

Gran went away at last with a sorrowful yearning in her heart towards the girl, but with a fear that there must be something very terrible to be revealed, as no woman, except under pressure of dreadful circumstances, could so withstand Rory.

She went on to the bath, where she had promised to stay a few days. Rory, who was there to meet her, was the only person who knew of her visit to Shanganagh. He was eager to hear the result of her interview with Bawn.

"I have gained nothing by going," said the old lady, "except that I understand what you feel in losing her. There must be some insurmountable bar, for she loves you dearly. But you must let her go."

"I do not consider it insurmountable," said Rory. "And yet, as he went out of the old woman's presence and walked alone down the glen in the twilight, he admitted to himself that Bawn had reason on her side in fearing to become his wife, now that the stain of murder could never be wiped from her father's name. He felt that Gran would believe she was right; and that if ever she received that letter which Bawn had promised to send her from America, his grandmother would applaud the resolution of the writer, and would never as Bawn had predicted, ask her to come back.

Even for himself in the far future could he so assuredly answer? How could he tell that a terrible repugnance might not one day spring up within him—repugnance to the idea that the grandfather of his children had been the murderer of his uncle? What reason had he for accepting the theory of Desmond's innocence beyond the impression made on his imagination by the passionate loyalty and faith of the daughter whom Desmond had reared, but who might have inherited her noble nature from a mother of whom she had no recollection?

Angry now with himself and now with her, and all the time sick at heart under the pressure of uncomprehending circumstances, he walked on half-blindly, while the twilight gradually deepened. He tried to put himself back into the place he had occupied among all things just before he had first seen Bawn—a place which had held him well enough, and with which he had been tolerably satisfied. But he owned bitterly to himself that he could no longer fit into that place, having outgrown it. The general altruism which had once wholly occupied and interested him had all centred in the desire to have one loving creature by his side. He thought he perceived that he could never again be a contented man. Had she been unable to love him, or had she proved scornful, he might have hoped to put her out of his life and forget her; but the knowledge that her life, too, was broken by the love that had driven her away from him must forbid him ever to forget what might have been, would take the sap out of his energies and sour the flavour of his daily bread.

It had grown quite dark except for a faint gleam from the moon—the same moon, now on the wane, that had lighted him to Shane's Hollow after the storm; a watery, red-eyed moon, trailing forlornly through clouds, like a weeping woman moving through the world alone with sable veils around her.

As Somerled walked on observing him he struck against somebody right in his path.

"I beg your pardon. I believe it is I who am to blame." And then he saw, by the pale ray from behind the roadside trees, what a fanciful person might have taken for the ghost of Edmund Adare.

"My God, man!" he exclaimed, "where have you come from?"

"Where should I come from but from Shane's Hollow, my ancient home?" answered the strange figure, which a brighter gleam of moonlight now revealed more distinctly. "Perhaps you do not know that you are speaking to an Adare."

"Excuse me," said Somerled; "the night is dark." And then he stood still a moment, feeling curiously embarrassed in presence of this wretched wreck of humanity.

"I excuse you," said Edmund Adare softly, and passed on, and Somerled turned his steps and walked with him in the direction of the Rath.

"I must congratulate you, Mr. Adare, on your singular escape. We feared you had perished in the accident a week ago."

"Thank you," said Edmund, modified. "It was a terrible accident, but not perhaps unexpected. My poor brother persisted in living in a dangerous part of the house. These old ancestral houses always become dangerous with time. My preservation is due to my wariness in selecting my own apartments. I have still ample accommodation."

Here he was interrupted by a frightful fit of coughing, followed by a faintness which obliged him to lean against a tree.

Somerled surveyed him with infinite pity. His small, shrunken frame, his streaming white beard, his hollow, glassy eyes contrasted strongly with the self-satisfied pomposity of his manner of speaking, which would have been ludicrous only for an occasional pathetic break in the voice and sob in the articulation which hinted that a long suffering patience had almost given way; that a monstrously bolstered-up pride had nearly broken down. Fingall remembered that this man was he who had always been considered the gentlest and least forbidding of the

brothers. Struggle as the poor creature might, death was very near him. There was nothing that charity could do for his relief, to soften the parting pangs of humanity yet to be endured by him?

"Mr. Adare, I fear you are ill," he said kindly. "Will you not accept a neighbor's hospitality for a little time—just for change of air?" he added, feeling that he was humouring the strange creature's pride, but unable to help it.

"You are good," said the poor ghost, pulling himself together and trying to move on, "but the Adares have always been stay-at-home people. Just now I am going to the Rath on business, to pay a strictly business visit to Mr. Alister Fingall—your cousin sir, I believe."

"Yes," said Rory; "and as I am going there now myself, we may walk together, if you have no objection. Perhaps you will take my arm, as you seem a little weak."

Old age, sir—old age!" said Edmund as Rory drew the death-cold, trembling hand within his arm, and suited his steps to the tottering steps that shuffled on beside him; and the last of the Adares, taken by surprise, allowed himself to be led along through the chill darkness, like a father by a son.

Impressed with the feeling that something strange was about to happen, Rory hastened to tell his cousin Alister of the curious resurrection that had taken place, informing him that the one survivor of all the Adares was waiting in the library, seeking an interview with him.

"Poor old creature! has he come to beg at last?" exclaimed Alister. "Well, we must see what can be done for him."

"I do not think that is what has brought him," said Somerled; "but if you can force a glass of wine down his throat, do it without delay."

Having seen Alister to the library-door, he went to the drawing-room, where he found Flora talking excitedly to Gran, who looked bewildered—and no wonder; for the subject of Flora's eloquence was the engagement of Manon to Major Batt, an event which had been announced to her only that morning. Somerled, on hearing the news, expected to be overwhelmed with Flora's scorn of his want of taste and enterprise in allowing so disappointing a state of things to arise; but, to his great surprise, her greetings took the form of congratulation.

Only yesterday she had learned that Manon, so far from being an heiress, was utterly penniless, having so greatly displeased her grandfather just before his death that he had left her nothing.

"So her sly mother sent her here, hoping that something would turn up for her; and undoubtedly something has turned up. The question is, will Major Batt marry her when he hears the truth?"

"Undoubtedly he will, Flora. He is not so bad as you paint him."

"There is no knowing what he may do under the influence of his disappointment, after the way Shana has treated him," said Flora, determined to keep hold of one grievance, at least. "I must say you take it very coolly, Rory. Just imagine what it would have been if you now stood in Major Batt's place."

"My imagination is not so elastic as yours: it won't take in such a possibility. As for Miss Manon, I can only say that in future I shall call Gran as a judge of character, rather than you. But, on the whole, it is a good thing to have Batt married, and he has money enough to afford a penniless wife, even looking at the matter from your point of view, Flora."

"Money enough? I should think so. But why should it fall to the lot of that designing little foreigner?" said Flora, thinking bitterly of Shana preparing for exile in New Zealand, and Rosheen unprovided for. "However, I have done with all attempts to improve the condition of my husband's family. It seems to me that the Fingalls have a constitutional objection to possessing the good things of this world."

Rory reflected that when his cousin Alister took to himself Lady Flora's handsome dowry and pretty face he had not secured all the things of the world by that act. And Gran, being too generous to exult over Flora, too tired to speak at all, merely looked at her favorite grandson with a wistful, sympathetic gaze which at once approved of his conduct and deplored that it had not met with the reward it deserved.

Interrupting the conversation came a message from the master of the Rath requesting Rory's presence in the library.

TO BE CONTINUED

BOOKS AS FRIENDS

There is no doubt that we should choose our books with the same care and on the same principles with which we choose our friends and companions. In fact, a book or a paper is a friend. The volume between our hands speaks to us just as a friend does, oftentimes even with greater freedom and straightforwardness. It informs, it argues, it influences, persuades and entreats, in precisely the same manner. Nay, more; it can attract us to virtue or entice us to vice; counsel good or counsel evil; delight us by its breadth of view and nobleness of purpose, or shock us by its looseness of speech, its immorality, its profanity, or its vulgarity, just as the living voice.—Bishop Vaughan.

MOONDYNE JOE

THE GOLD MINE OF THE VASSE
CHAPTER III
NUMBER 406

Some years before, the prisoner, now called Moondyne Joe, had arrived in the colony. He was a youth—little more than a boy in years. From the first day of his imprisonment he had followed one course: he was quiet, silent, patient, obedient. He broke no rules of the prison. He asked no favors. He performed all his own work, and often helped another who grumbled at his heavy task.

He was simply known to his fellow-convicts as Joe, his other name was unknown or forgotten. When the prison roll was called, he answered to No. 406.

In the first few years he had made many friends in the colony—but he had also made one enemy, and a deadly one. He did not avoid the fellow; but he never looked at him, saw him, spoke to him—not even answering him when he spoke, as if he had not heard him.

This treatment was observed and enjoyed by the other prisoners, and sometimes even adopted by themselves towards Bowman. At last its effect on the evil nature was too powerful to be concealed. With the others he could return oath for oath, or jibe for jibe, and always came off pleased with himself; but Joe's silent contempt stung him like a scorpion.

The convicts at length saw that Bowman, who was a man capable of any crime, held a deep hatred for Joe, and they warned him to beware. But he smiled, and went on just as before.

One morning a poor settler rode into the camp with a cry for justice and vengeance. His hut was only a few miles distant, and in his absence last night a deed of rapine and robbery had been perpetrated there—and the robber was a convict.

A search was made in the prisoners' hut, and in one of the hammocks was found some of the stolen property. The man who owned the hammock was seized and ironed, protesting his innocence. Further evidence was found against him—he had been seen returning to the camp that morning—Isaac Bowman had seen him.

Swift and summary is the dread punishment of the penal code. As the helpless wretch was dragged away, a word of mock pity followed him from Bowman. During the scene, Joe had stood in silence; but at the brutal jibe he started as if struck by a whip. He sprang on Isaac Bowman suddenly—dashed him to the ground, and, holding him there like a worm, shook from his clothing all the stolen property, except what the catiff had concealed in his fellow's bed to insure his conviction.

Then and there the sentence was given. The villain was haled to the triangles and fogged with embittered violence. He uttered no cry; but as the hissing lashes swept his back, he settled a look of ghastly and mortal hatred on Joe, who stood by and counted the stripes.

But this was years ago; and Bowman had long been a free man and a settler, having served out his sentence.

At that time the laws of the Penal Colony were exceedingly cruel and unjust to the bondmen. There was in the colony a number of "free settlers" and ex-convicts who had obtained land, and these, as a class, were men who lived half by farming and half by rascality. They sold brandy to the convicts and ticket-of-leave men, and robbed them when the drugged liquor had done its work. They feared no law, for the word of a prisoner was dead in the courts.

The crying evil of the code was the power it gave these settlers to take from the prisoners as many men as they chose, and work them as slaves on their clearings. While so employed, the very lives of these convicts were at the mercy of their taskmasters, who possessed over them all the power of prison officers.

A report made by an employer against a convict insured a flogging or a number of years in the terrible chain-gang at Fremantle. The system reeked with cruelty and the blood of men. It would startle our commonplace serenity to see the record of the lives that were sacrificed to have it repealed.

Under this law, it came to Joe's turn to be sent out on probation. Application had been made for him by a farmer, whose "range" was in a remote district. Joe was a strong and willing worker, and he was glad of the change; but when he was taken to the lonely place, he could not help a shudder when he came face to face with his new employer and master—Isaac Bowman.

There was no doubting the purpose of the villain who had now complete possession of him. He meant to drive him into rebellion—to torture him till his hate was gratified, and then to have him flogged and sent to

the chain-gang; and from the first minute of his control he began to carry out his purpose, truth, and justice, returning neither scoff nor scourge.

Joe had years to serve; and he had made up his mind to serve them, and be free. He knew there was no escape—that one report from Bowman would wipe out all record of previous good conduct. He knew, too, that Bowman meant to destroy him, and he resolved to bear toil and abuse as long as he was able.

He was able longer than most men; but the cup was filled at last. The day came when the worn turned—when the quiet, patient man blazed into dreadful passion, and tearing the god from the tyrant's hand, he dashed him, maimed and senseless, to the earth.

The blow given, Joe's passion calmed, and the ruin of the deed stared him in the face. There was no court of justice in which he might plead. He had neither word nor oath nor witnesses. The man might be dead; and even if he recovered, the punishment was the lash and the chain-gang, or the gallows.

Then and there Joe struck into the bush with a resolute face, and next day the infuriate and baffled rascal, rendered ten-fold more malignant by a dreadful disfigurement, reported him to the prison as an absconder, a robber, and an attempted murderer.

CHAPTER IV
BOND AND FREE

Three years passed. It was believed that Joe had perished in the bush. Bowman had entered the convict service as a trooper, but even his vigilance brought no discovery. Absconders are generally found after a few months, prowling around the settlements for food, and are glad to be retaken.

But Joe was no common criminal nor common man. When he set his face toward the bush, he meant to take no half measures. The bush was to be his home. He knew of nothing to draw him back, and he cared not if he never saw the face of a white man again. He was sick of injustice and hardship—sick of all the ways of the men he had known.

Prison life had developed a strong nature in Joe. Naturally powerful in mind, body, and passions, he had turned the power in on himself, and had obtained a rare mastery over his being. He was a thoughtful man, a peacemaker, and a lover of justice. He had obtained an extraordinary hold on the affection of the convicts. They all knew him. He was true as steel to everything he undertook; and they knew that, too. He was enormously strong. One day he was working in the quarries of Fremantle with twenty others. He knew of nothing to draw him back, and he cared not if he never saw the face of a white man again. He was sick of injustice and hardship—sick of all the ways of the men he had known.

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Prison life had developed a strong nature in Joe. Naturally powerful in mind, body, and passions, he had turned the power in on himself, and had obtained a rare mastery over his being. He was a thoughtful man, a peacemaker, and a lover of justice. He had obtained an extraordinary hold on the affection of the convicts. They all knew him. He was true as steel to everything he undertook; and they knew that, too. He was enormously strong. One day he was working in the quarries of Fremantle with twenty others. He knew of nothing to draw him back, and he cared not if he never saw the face of a white man again. He was sick of injustice and hardship—sick of all the ways of the men he had known.

Whatever was his offence against the law, he had received its bitter lesson. The worst of the convicts grew better when associated with him. Common sense, truth, and kindness were Joe's principles. He was a strong man, and he pitied and helped those weaker than himself. He was a bold man, and he understood the timid. He was a brave man, and he grieved for a coward or a liar. He never preached; but his healthy, straightforward life did more good to his fellows than all the hired Bible-readers in the colony.

No wonder the natives to whom he fled soon began to look upon him with a strange feeling. Far into the mountains of the Vasse he had journeyed before he fell in with them. They were distrustful of all white men, but they soon trusted him. There was something in the simple savage mind not far removed from that of the men in prison, who had grown to respect, even to reverence his character. The natives saw him stronger and braver than any one they had ever known. He was more silent than their oldest chief; and so wise, he settled disputes so that both sides were satisfied. They looked on him with distrust at first; then with wonder; then with respect and confidence; and before two years were over, with something like awe and veneration, as for a superior being.

They gave him the name of "Moondyne," which had some meaning more than either manhood or kingship.

His fame and name spread through the native tribes all over the country. When they came to the white settlements, the expression often heard was "Moondyne." The convicts and settlers constantly heard the word, but dreamt not then of its significance. Afterwards, when they knew to whom the name had been given, it became a current word throughout the colony.

Toward the end of the third year of his freedom, when Moondyne and a party of natives were far from the mountains, they were surprised by a Government surveying party, who made him prisoner, knowing, of course, that he must be an absconder. He was taken to the main prison at Fremantle, and sentenced to the chain-gang for life; but before he had reached the Swan River every native in the colony knew that "The Moondyne" was a prisoner.

The chain-gang of Fremantle is the depth of the penal degradation. The convicts wear from thirty to fifty pounds of iron, according to their offence. It is riveted on their bodies in the prison forge, and when they have served their time the great rings have to be chiselled off their calloused limbs.

The chain-gang works outside the prison walls of Fremantle, in the granite quarries. The neighborhood, being thickly settled with pardoned men and ticket-of-leave men, had long been deserted by the aborigines; but from the day of Moondyne's sentence the bushmen began to build their huts and hold their corroborees near the quarries.

For two years the chain-gang toiled among the stones, and the black men sat on the great unburnt rocks, and never seemed to tire of the scene.

The warders took no notice of their silent presence. The natives never spoke to a prisoner, but sat there in dumb interest, every day in the year, from sunrise to evening.

One day they disappeared from the quarries, and an officer who passed through their village of huts, found them deserted. It was quite a subject of interesting conversation among the warders. Where had they gone to? Why had they departed in the night?

The day following, an answer came to these queries. When the chain-gang was formed to return to the prison, one link was gone—Moondyne was missing.