

A FAIR EMIGRANT

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND
AUTHOR OF MARCELLA GRACE: "A NOVEL"
CHAPTER XXXII

THE MAJOR ROUTED

Once at home again, Bawn felt that she had wandered out of the straight and narrow path of her intentions in giving even a half-promise to appear at the garden-party at Lisnawilly. She was consenting to play the lady by mixing with these people above the station she had chosen, and also to behave like an American woman in going independently into a large company. And yet Somerled's triumph sank into her. Her little triumph sank into her insignificance before that one fact that Somerled wanted her to be there. Prudence, she admitted, must assure her that his desire was a strong reason why she ought to absent herself; but she had come to a point when prudence seems unnecessarily severe.

Listening to Somerled's arguments against faith in Desmond's innocence, she had almost despaired of her enterprise; and now, looking back upon her experience of the day, she told herself that in all probability the wind and rain would sweep away that ruin before she could even attempt to accomplish her object. Everything was against her—delirium, dotage, the fierce and sullen temper of Luke Adare, and the savage isolation from his kind in which he had chosen to bury himself.

The death of those old people, likely to happen any stormy night, would deprive her in a moment of any faint chance, yet existing, of that happy confession of the truth for which she had so resolutely hoped. It might be that in a few months or weeks she should find herself quite defeated and obliged to disappear from this part of the world as unexpectedly as she had come into it. She would go off some early morning and never return. At Liverpool she would arrange with a solicitor to pay a year's rent to her landlords and a year's wages to her servants, as some amends for her capricious conduct, and then she would be heard of here no more. He was not likely to follow her to America; but if such a thing were to happen, she would there tell him her true story, and he would perceive at once that marriage was impossible between them. She thought she had already said the look and take final leave of Desmond's daughter. After that she would devote herself, her heart and soul, her bodily strength and her worldly possessions, to the care of those poor immigrants in America of whose hard case he had taught her to think.

This was the future which she now looked in the face, and recognizing its coldness and barrenness, she asked herself should she not meanwhile enjoy this one day's pleasure which was so pressed upon her? Under the influence of such a feeling she wrote to Paris for a dress of plain white woolen material and a bonnet to match; but when the parcel arrived she was busy in her dairy among her maidens, and had returned to her senses, and resolved that she would not go to the party. The box was pushed out of sight, and when, on the morning of Major Batt's fête, Shana and Rory Fingall drove up the little by-road to Shangangah, they found Bawn feeding her chickens, bare-armed, in the sun.

"What, not ready?" cried Shana, springing from the car. "There will be time enough," said Rory, looking at his watch. "Miss Ingram, let us feed the chickens while you dress." "I am not going," said Bawn, standing before them, hatless, with eyes and hair full of the sunlight. "Oh, nonsense!" said Shana. "After our long drive to fetch you! And I would get up so early to be ready for so much travelling." "It would be better not," said Bawn, relenting. "Why should I be so foolish as to step out of my own sphere?"

"It won't do your sphere the least harm, and will greatly improve ours," said Miss Fingall. "Miss Ingram, I will give you just half an hour to dress," said Somerled. "Meanwhile, can I milk the cows, or anything of that kind?" "Thank you. The only thing you could do for me would be to prop up my falling common sense, and that—"

"I have no intention of doing—at least in the way you are thinking of." Bawn looked from one to the other of her friends and said slowly, "It is quite unwise, but I will go." And disappeared into the house to get ready. Shana reflected, as she walked about and admired Bawn's efforts to make a garden flourish round the bleak little farmhouse, that probably most of Bawn's reluctance sprang from a difficulty about dress. But what did it matter? thought the girl. Any clean calico would be dress enough for beauty like Miss Ingram, and nobody would expect her to be fine. Great was her surprise when Bawn stood in the doorway looking towards her shyly, dressed in the faultless array of white which she had found in her box.

"Where did it come from? You look like a princess. Are you a princess in disguise? I have thought of that before," said Shana delightedly. "All woven of milk," said Rory, surveying her with wonder and

approval. "Miss Ingram can work any sort of magic in her dairy." "Shall I do?" asked Bawn. I asked for something plain. I am afraid it is a little too nice.

"Nobody will think so, except perhaps Flora," said Shana, laughing, as they seated themselves on the car. Bawn found herself spinning around the roads, too happy almost to speak, and not daring to look back at the cast-off rags of her prudence and common sense which she had left in her little room with her work-a-day apron and gown.

Lisnawilly is a fine old place in a lovely nook of Glendun, and Major Batt had some right to be proud of his gardens and lawns, as well as the valuable he had collected to adorn the interior of his house; and, taking into consideration all these pretty possessions, a good income, and his own great personal attractions, the major looked on himself as an enviable man, and greatly to be coveted as a son-in-law by any mother of marriageable daughters. But he was fastidious and cautious, and always on his guard against the too pressing ambition of the women of his acquaintance. Successions of girls had bloomed into matrimony around him, and in each case of the marriage of one of his favourites Major Batt had assured himself that he had had a lucky escape. Some charm had been, to him, wanting in the graceful creatures who had been found fair enough to wear his ladies, and occasionally he opened his gates and invited the fair creatures to come in and see what good things were in store for that happy feminine being who might eventually persuade him that she was worthy of his hand. Meanwhile he enjoyed the thought that he was a fastidious man and an object of much hopeless adoration. When the little party from Shangangah arrived he was surrounded by the fete of the county—Lord Aughrim and his mother, Lady Crommelin and her six daughters, the Hon. Mrs. McQuillan and five young women, daughters and nieces, Colonel Macaulay and three Miss McDonnells, &c., &c. Lady Flora Fingall and her husband, Manon and Rosheen were among the crowd when Bawn appeared, looking as Shana had said, like a strange princess in her simple white attire, her only ornaments being her golden hair and the bouquet of roses which she had found in her garden since she had left Shangangah.

As these people all knew each other ad nauseam, the appearance of a new face and such a face took them by storm. There was general curiosity to know who she might be, and for various reasons the host and the Glenmalur people were careful to keep their own counsel. A fair American—Miss Ingram? come to spend some time in the neighborhood, was the extent of the information vouchsafed by Major Batt.

Seeing the strange behaviour of Rory and Shana, Lady Flora was careful to keep her own counsel. For the credit of the family it must not be known that they were associating with a farming-girl who rented Shangangah and made her own butter for the market. The pleasure of the day was over for Flora as she saw Lord Aughrim and Major Batt rivaling each other in attention to Bawn, while Rory kept hovering in her neighbourhood, giving only a passing glance to Manon and herself. "There is something wrong about that girl," she said to Manon, "and I will find her out, or I am mistaken in my own capacity."

"I like American women; they are always so rich," said Colonel Macaulay, who believed himself a wag, and speaking to the eldest Miss McDonnell, who had not a penny; but then she was thirty and plain, and he did not imagine she could give a thought to herself. "In this case the riches are absent, I think," said Lady Flora sweetly. "All the gold on her head, eh?" said the colonel. "Pity." And then he asked to be introduced to Miss de St. Clair, with whom he walked away to join the lawn-tennis players.

Bawn acknowledged she could not play, and stood talking to her two admirers, Lord Aughrim and Major Batt, while Rory attached himself to the unimportant Miss McDonnell, and in the pauses of her unexciting conversation about botany he observed the effect Miss Ingram was producing on the county generally. Would her holiday end like Cinderella's ball, and would she, after this, hide herself in her farm-house and be seen no more by these people who were making such a fuss about her? It was the season of garden-parties, and, despite a little jealousy, some dowagers were thinking of inviting her to their bowers and tea-tables. How would it all answer with her butter-making, were she to get her head turned by their civilities and take to queening it about the country in that ravishing gown? She would have lovers in plenty thought Rory, and some of them might touch her heart which he had found so hard. He began to regret the urgency with which he had insisted on her coming, and his replies to Miss McDonnell grew a little vague. Was it only the other day that he and she were sitting in Shane's Hollow, as much apart from the world as if nobody lived on the globe but themselves. He began to wish Lord Aughrim and Major Batt in Dante's Inferno, with Miss McDonnell and botany to contribute to their amusement. How composed and untroubled she looked—now sweet and serious, now blithely gay!

"I have no intention of doing—at least in the way you are thinking of." Bawn looked from one to the other of her friends and said slowly, "It is quite unwise, but I will go." And disappeared into the house to get ready. Shana reflected, as she walked about and admired Bawn's efforts to make a garden flourish round the bleak little farmhouse, that probably most of Bawn's reluctance sprang from a difficulty about dress. But what did it matter? thought the girl. Any clean calico would be dress enough for beauty like Miss Ingram, and nobody would expect her to be fine. Great was her surprise when Bawn stood in the doorway looking towards her shyly, dressed in the faultless array of white which she had found in her box.

"Where did it come from? You look like a princess. Are you a princess in disguise? I have thought of that before," said Shana delightedly. "All woven of milk," said Rory, surveying her with wonder and

admiration, and at the same time to keep them in awe of her dignity. Strange girl! Where had she come from? In the backwoods of Minnesota how had she learned to conduct herself like this? After all, how little he knew of her! A troubled thought of how successfully she had always denied him her confidence clouded his face, so much so that his gentle companion perceived she had failed to hold his attention and desisted from her meek endeavours to be politely agreeable. Being accustomed to this failure, she did not resent it, though it gave her a little familiar pang. She withdrew and attached herself to an elderly lady friend, and Rory found Lady Flora at his elbow. "Rory, I am surprised at your discretion with regard to that American young woman. Mark my words, you will regret it." "May be so. I admit she is a woman, eminently calculated to cause regret to a good many men," he answered, smiling. "But by the way, Flora, why do you allow Alistair to flirt so much with Miss de St. Claire?" "Oh! come, are you jealous, after all?" she said, brightening. "I must say Alistair knows his duty to a stranger better than you do."

"He has not done half the duty that I have done. If you only knew all my fetching and carrying for Miss Manon, mornings and evenings! And doesn't she know how to take it out of a man? But all work and no play you know the rest." "So the other is your play. Cruel play to Miss Ingram, perhaps. Pity she does not hear you." "Put it out of your head, Flora, that Miss Ingram cares in the smallest degree for your humble servant."

"She is very deep, I think. She knows when to encourage you, and when to throw you over." "She has never encouraged me. She has done no one any wrong. But I warn you, Flora, that a woman's tongue might work her mischief." "So it might," thought Flora; but she did not acknowledge to herself that hers would be the first tongue to do such harm. "I want to tell you," she said, "that I am planning to have a picnic before this glorious weather breaks."

Rory reflected that Bawn would certainly not be asked to that party, and so he was indifferent on the subject, and merely said: "Indeed!" "Yes, and I want you to be nice with Manon. She admires you so much. And you know she is a charming girl, and such a fortune! There is Colonel Macaulay. How he would like to be in your place! And he is much richer than you."

"That is not saying much," laughed Rory. "Well, Flora, out at elbows I may be, but I am no fortune-hunter." "Think of your ambition to go into Parliament. How are you to gratify it?" "Not by bribery, Lady Flora. Come, let me get you a cup of tea or an ice, to refresh you after all the fatigue of this planning for a beggarly, thankless cousin. That's the way to describe me, isn't it? But if you don't talk any more about Miss de St. Claire's money and admiration for me, I will promise to help her over the wet places in the bogs at your picnic. Only don't, for heaven's sake, talk to her of the poverty of the Fingalls and my admiration for her."

Having seated her at a tea-table in Major Batt's drawing-room and left her among some maternal acquaintances, Rory went anywhere, walked away to the lawn-tennis ground. Shana and Willie Callender were among the players just then, but soon grew tired of the game and moved together to a distant part of the grounds. Among the various sauntering couples no one observed them, or could have guessed from their manner that there was a secret engagement between them.

"Shana," said Callender, "I can't endure this state of things any longer. It is not only that I do not see you, but that I feel like a sneak in not speaking boldly to your brother." Shana turned pale. "If you could only speak your brother without giving your fate into the hands of my sister-in-law, I would gladly allow you to speak," she said; "but Flora could ruin us."

"I have applied for that appointment in New Zealand," said Callender, "and if the answer be favorable—but, Shana, how can I take you away from all you love, perhaps to hardship? When I think of that I almost give up hope." "You may give up what you like, so that it is not me," laughed Shana. "I should grieve to leave Rosheen and Alistair, and Gran, and the children; but wherever you go I will go. Some day we should come back."

In the meantime, Lady Crommelin and her six daughters having waylaid Lord Aughrim and carried him off from Bawn, Miss Ingram had been beguiled indoors by Major Batt, and afterwards led by him through many apartments, where he displayed his various treasures, beautiful, curious and antique, to her unaccustomed eyes.

It is impossible to say how much Miss Ingram had risen in her host's estimation since Lord Aughrim had so evidently and highly approved of her. Major Batt was beginning to feel that his hour was almost come, and alternated between glows of eagerness and shivers of caution like a patient in fever and ague.

CHAPTER XXXIII NO DESERTER The next day Bawn was herself again—the fine lady was gone, and the dairymaid was at her work. Into her box the pretty white dress that she had packed with a regretful thought she could never venture to wear it again. How excellently it had

had something particular to say. What he had to say was that he had secured the appointment, and wanted permission to speak to my brother to-morrow. I walked up and down the road with him for about a quarter of an hour, and then I got a message to say that Flora wanted me." Shana's eyes flashed once more as she stopped, and was evidently living over again the scene that had followed her sister-in-law's summons. She sprang up, and, clenching both her little hands, walked about Bawn's parlor with a step as light as a bird's, and the whole of her slight figure wrapped in a flame of indignation. "I won't tell you what she said to me. My brother was away from home or she would not have dared. Clandestine meeting—secret—standing—beggary—scorn—contempt—shamelessness, were the heads of her discourse. Gracious heavens, how did I endure her!" cried Shana, quivering all over in another fiery whirlwind. "I am sure," said Bawn, sitting at the table with folded hands, watching her. "Come, Miss Fingall, confess that you did not spare her neither."

Shana calmed down instantly and stood still. "True," she said, "I answered her fiercely. I said things to her that she will never forget. I am sorry, as she is Alistair's wife." "And then you rushed away here. Why did you not go to Tor, to your grandmother?" "Several whys," said Shana in her most matter-of-fact manner. "In the first place, I couldn't have got so far to-night. In the next place, it was you I wanted. Gran is a good old soul, as good as gold, and kind-hearted, but she has some notions of her own which will not alter. She is a person of—"

"Fixed ideas?" suggested Bawn. "Yes; and one of her beliefs is that girls ought never to take their affairs into their own hands, and ought always to be guided by their superiors." "Indeed!" said Bawn reflectively. "Flora tries her often enough, and yet she does not know my sister-in-law as I know her, and I could not grieve her by hurling my story at her as I have hurled it at you. By the time I see her I shall have calmed down and made the best of it. I will not vex her. I have never done so. Gran has had a great trial of her own. Her favorite son was murdered by his friend—"

Bawn's face, which was turned on her full, the eyes listening, full of thoughtful interest, suddenly changed, so that Shana, even in her passion, could not but notice it. "What is the matter? Have I tired you, frightened you?" Bawn passed her hand over her face, trying to sweep the look off that had startled Shana. "I am not easily tired or frightened. You will learn that when you know me better. I have been thinking probably your good grandmother is right in holding that young women ought not too rashly to rush into planning their own fate."

"That is the last remark I should have expected to hear from an independent woman like you," said Shana. "However, whether she is right or wrong, I shall never desert—and her voice trembled, as if tears were coming." "No, you are no deserter. Neither am I," said Bawn. "That is a different thing. And we can't mend matters by looking back."

TO BE CONTINUED

MARGARET Slowly he raised the latch and opened the rustic gate; blindly he staggered up the path to the portico; and when the hallway was reached he sank into the nearest chair with utter abandonment of self to the grip of despair. In his ears still rang the measured chants of the De Profundis; then he stood again by an open grave, hearing the admonition to the dead to remember the origin and end of being—dust; and seeing the handful of earth cast down upon the lifeless form among the lilies.

It was over at last, and repulsing the kindly advances of the old Soggarth, the rector, and pleading to be alone in his misery, he had returned to the awful solitude and silence of his home. Mechanically he reached for his pouch and pipe to counteract the heavy scent of flowers hanging in the air. But the tobacco choked him; he threw it aside, crossed the hall to the dining room, and filled a glass from the carafe. Then to the window, where he absently watched the first fluttering flakes of snow commencing to cover the city—and the cemetery beyond.

As he stood there, clawing at the curtains, vaguely marveling at a strange sound from upstairs, as of a whimpering kitten, he found himself humming the De Profundis. With a cry of horror, he sprang away from the window and shook his clenched hands in the air; then threw wildly into the hall and up the stairs.

From a distant room he could hear a woman singing, and catching the word "mother," he stopped short, marble white, and held to the banister for support. Entering a tiny room beside his—

their—own, he smiled for the first time, as he picked up an air rifle and looked down its shining barrel. Other toys were arranged along the low shelves—baseballs and mits, magic lanterns, boxing gloves, electrical devices—all the things a boy could wish for.

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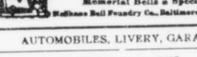
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