

A FAIR EMIGRANT

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

A PERPLEXING SITUATION

Dinner, which had been waiting some time, was announced, and the company repaired to the dining-room—a long, high, haughty-looking room, if the word may be allowed, very scantily furnished, the walls hung with a few old family portraits, the windows scantily and dingily draped, but the table appointments nice and even handsome in an old-fashioned way.

Rory, the master of the house, sat at one end of the table, with Manon, whom he had taken in to dinner, on one hand, and his cousin-in-law, Flora, on the other. Gran, at the opposite end of the board, had Bawn beside her, and interested herself in questioning the quiet yet audacious young woman as to her knowledge of farming, her experience of America, her impressions of Ireland, &c.

"What affected me most as strange at first were the little patches of fields, the green hedges, and the gradually falling twilight," said Bawn. "I stay out of doors watching the night fall, and every time it seems to me more wonderful."

Gran had laid down her knife and fork, and was looking at her visitor with a peculiar expression. She appeared absent and disturbed.

"I hope you are not unwell," said Bawn, aware of a sudden change. "No, my dear; I am well, thank you. It was only something in your voice. We old people get strange fancies. Our minds are full of echoes. Will you say again 'the green hedges,' just to please me?"

"The green hedges," said Bawn, smiling. "Thank you. I am very full of fancies. I do not know of what your way of saying those words reminds me. The suggestion has passed away, whatever it was."

"The words are new to me," said Bawn, still smiling, "but they ought not to be new to you."

"No, they are not new, as you say, but at my age it is not the new things that signify. And so you intend to cut a figure in the butter-market. There is ample room for you, I own. We are open to improvement."

"Yes, I am hoping to rival the Danes," said Bawn. "I hold it a shame that Irish people continue to eat Danish butter."

"Who eats Danish butter?" asked Shana, looking shocked. "A Dublin butter merchant assured me by letter this morning that only for Danish butter he could not supply his customers," said Bawn.

"What about Canon Bagot?" asked Alister. "I thought he had improved away all that interference."

"Canon Bagot has done a great deal," said Rory from the other end of the table, "and the dairy schools are doing more, but we had all need to be alive. A thorough revolution in our butter-making is necessary."

"Really, Rory, the idea of reform is turning your brain. Don't persuade Manon that our butter is not delicious," said Lady Flora.

"Our butter, yes," said Rory; "there is none such in the world. But the butter that our farmers, especially our small farmers, make, pack, and send abroad; the butter that is to travel and to keep—that is mere money thrown away by those who badly need it, capital sunk in the sea, a heritage which is our national inheritance dropped into our neighbours' pockets."

Flora shrugged her shoulders. So long as the family tables were delicately supplied she cared little whether the butter of the nation was wealth-producing or not.

"Flora knows on which side her own bread is buttered, but that is all," said her husband, mischievously. "If you mean that I don't believe in philanthropy and political economy, and that sort of thing, you are right," said Lady Flora, erecting her fan with an air of dignity. "I hold with people minding their own affairs. It is the only way to keep things going right."

"Or going wrong," said Rory grimly. "Come, Rory, talking of philanthropy, you have not told us anything yet about your trip to America among the emigrants. Miss De St. Claire, you would scarcely believe that this elegant young man in his faultless evening dress—"

"Seven years of age," said Rory, glancing at his sleeve with the ghost of a smile. "—Went out to New York last summer with a batch of emigrants, lived among them, ate with them, all to see how they were treated on the way. You will now know why some of us consider him the crazy member of our family."

ulster in the cabin; and she decided that Somerled never could have sat so long among his friends, even with the annoyance of her presence on his mind, without one of his brilliant smiles. When Manon said, "It must have been pleasanter coming back," she felt herself almost safe in watching to see how he would reply. He had never looked at her once, that she had observed, since they sat down at table. Why should he look at her now? What had the return journey of this crazy member of the family to do with her? Somerled was in Paris, perhaps still searching for her. "The name of a street, the number of a door"—how he had pleaded for the address of her imaginary home in Paris! A traitor she had been—that was not to be doubted; but dairy-keeping was now her role, and not sentimentalizing, and so as a mere farmer-woman, she would have no scruple in just looking expectantly to hear how this Rory, who understood so well the necessity for improvement in Irish butter-making, had enjoyed his return journey after his quixotic excursion to America.

"Yes, it was happier coming home," he said, with a slight frown, and suddenly turning his glance full on the wide, calm, observant eyes gazing at him from the other end of the table. And then Bawn felt that she had got a blow, and sat pale to the lips, telling herself that this was indeed Somerled, and that he hated her.

Gran unconsciously came to her relief by rising from the table, and the ladies returned to the drawing-room, where Bawn was again placed by the old lady near herself as her own particular guest. As Flora and Manon kept themselves at the other side of the apartment, it was evident that they, at least, did not intend to begin an acquaintance with the farming tenant of Shanganagh. Gran, a little tired, soon fell into a fit of abstraction, gazing into the fire from the depths of her great armchair, while Shana and Rosheen drew their seats as near as possible to Bawn's.

"Is it really true what Rory says, that wealth for this country can be made out of improved butter, asked Shana eagerly.

"Rory is always right," said Rosheen.

"He is only a theorist. Miss Ingram has experience. Miss Ingram makes butter. Can a fortune really be made out of butter, Miss Ingram?" asked Shana impatiently. She was thinking that perhaps butter-making might prove a better means than story-writing of amassing that fortune which would enable her to be such a useful wife to Willie Callender. If so she would go into partnership with her tenant and hire herself as a dairymaid on the spot.

"I don't expect that I shall make a fortune," said Bawn. "I have not—she stopped short, and then went on: "Capital value is necessary for that."

"Capital?" cried Shana, disgusted. "It is always the same answer. Capital, you are told, is needed to make money. As if capital did not mean that one had already got one's fortune. What is the difference now between our butter and the Danes', Miss Ingram?"

"The Danes do not send it out of turf-smoky cabins where it is hoarded up from week to week. They make it better, too, and salt it better, and of all things, pack it clean," said Rory Fingall from behind Shana. The gentlemen had come into the room while the ladies were talking. "Even the Cork merchants, who have a monopoly of the most delicious butter in the universe, pack it in such dirty old tubs as have disgraced us before the world. I hope you intend to pack clean, Miss Ingram."

"The Danes are my model in that respect," said Bawn, just raising for a moment a pair of cool, unrecognising eyes to the dark ones that had glanced at her so coldly. "I have ordered a small barrel of Cork butter and another of Danish to be sent to me, and I shall judge by my own lights of the merits of each."

"I see you are a practical woman and know what you are about," said the host; and then he turned away and left her asking herself again the question, was this man Somerled, or was he not?

"May I come to see the barrels of butter when they arrive?" Shana was pleading with the preoccupation caused by Bawn's perplexity allowed her to hear and see again what was going on around her.

"I shall be pleased, honoured, if you will come," said Miss Ingram, and she prepared to plunge once more into the butter question; but the next moment Shana was taken away abruptly by her brother to sing a duet with Rosheen, and Bawn was left to observe two things—first, that Rory was engaged in conversation with Manon, at the other end of the room, oblivious of the existence of the Minnesota farm-woman; and, second, that Gran had become wide awake again and was observing her with the same peculiar look of interest which had rested on her face when she had asked her at dinner to oblige her by saying those simple words, "the green hedges," again.

Then came a "little music." Major Batt shouted in a stentorian voice his desire to "like a soldier fall," but as he followed no particular air, and all the words except the refrain were inarticulate, there was a sigh of relief when he had finished; and it occurred to Bawn that they were all thankful he had not fallen, as it would have been so difficult to

pick him up again. Alister chirped an old Jacobite ditty in a weak though true tenor, and his sisters warbled sweetly enough about a bower of wild roses on Bendemeer stream, the notes of which were read from a yellow-leaved music-book which had belonged to their mother. There was no instrumental music worth listening to, for Flora played like a cat walking over the keys, and, though Bawn's fingers longed to touch the piano, no one thought of requesting the backwoods-woman to perform for the company. Even if she had been invited Miss Ingram would have thought it imprudent to betray the fact that she had received a musical education.

"Rory has a delightful baritone voice," said Rosheen, flitting back to Bawn, "but he is cross-to-night, or something is the matter with him, and he won't sing."

"I am afraid the company of the emigrants has not improved his manners," said Bawn to Gran, having taken up her position by the old lady, right behind Bawn. "So disappointing for Manon's sake! She will think him downright forbidding."

"Manon must take him as he is—as she must take us all," replied Gran a little stiffly, evidently thinking that Rory was good enough for anybody, even at his worst.

"Oh! of course it is only for his own sake." And Lady Flora gave her own peculiar slighting glance round the noble but not too richly furnished apartment. And by those few words, though she did not see it, she comprehended at once that Manon was rich, and destined by at least some of his friends to improve Rory's decaying fortunes. With a flash of thought she remembered her own half-million lying unused in America stock, but as quickly transferred her attention from it to Rosheen.

Then the little party broke up, and Bawn lay awake in the large, sparsely-appointed chamber up-stairs listening to the roar of the waves round the great Tor, the crying of the curlews and sea-gulls from the rocks below, and the swirling of the night wind in the cavernous chimney. Projected on the darkness before her was the image of Rory Fingall, which she examined now at leisure with careful, critical eyes, and with sharpness of the deliberate contemplation of Somerled's personality as memory presented it to her. The two were the same, and yet not the same. Rory was like Somerled's colder, harder, less amiable twin-brother. He had neither the fire, the tenderness, nor the genial good-humor of his more troublesome and more attractive double.

He loved Manon, or had thought he loved her, Bawn. She was too tired to follow out the strange particulars of the several coincidences that had struck her with regard to these two men who had crossed her path, but she had sufficient energy left to deny steadfastly the still important suggestion that the two individuals were one and the same. No, Somerled, her friend, was in Paris. "The name of a street, the number of a door." She heard his voice, pleading, tender, impassioned. This Rory never spoke with such a voice. The name, the number—her thoughts melted away in dreams, and she was following on his footsteps through strange streets as he knocked at door after door that would not open to him, she herself invisible to his eyes and unable to make herself known to him; at last these fantasies of approaching slumber were dissipated, and Bawn slept the sleep of healthy fatigue.

In the morning, however, she wakened before daylight with a sense of renewed embarrassment and trouble. Whatever it was, she did not want to meet again that man who tantalized her with his likeness to Somerled. The thought of the expedition to see the caves of Cushtendun gave her no pleasure, though under other circumstances she could have delighted in it. She felt that, in spite of herself, she should spend the hours in observing Rory Fingall from a distance. He would be attached to Manon all the time, guarding her delicate feet from sharp stones, and caring for her as Somerled had cared for Bawn, who could scarcely have been involuntarily and painfully on the watch for evidence for or against her own conclusion regarding him, should find no fair opportunity for more completely satisfying her mind on a distressingly perplexing point. For though her doubt had been laid to rest before she went to sleep, it would rise again, she was aware, as soon as she found herself in his company. She would be glad if, while her mind was made up against the possibilities of his being Somerled, she could escape from Tor Castle and get back to her solitude, her liberty of thought, and her still immature plans at Shanganagh.

Rising early and throwing open the window, she watched the sunrise kindling a huge fire behind the dark shoulder of the great Tor, and caught the white flash of those waves which had resounded in her ears all night like thunders of doom. The fresh air of the morning blowing in on her face had already revived her courage and enabled her to smile at the idea of trying to escape the expedition to the caves, when the sound of wheels under the window attracted her attention, and she heard the voice of Rory Fingall saying to the servant:

"You will explain to the ladies as I told you, M'Clokey. If possible I shall be home for dinner." And then, standing near the window, she saw the master of the castle disappearing down the avenue in the vehicle in which he had carried her through his gates on the evening before.

She was now freed from the trouble of his presence for the remaining hours of her visit to Tor; also denied any further means of ascertaining whether or not he was identical with Somerled. She might go out and walk about the rocks till breakfast time without fear of meeting him, or wounding her own pride and dignity by trying to keep out of his way; and she did so, enjoying the splendors of the morning at Tor, with high blue skies and a gale blowing the spray over the rocks to her face.

As she walked she thought much about Rory Fingall and his emigrants, and his philanthropy, and the people who surrounded him. Gran and the two young girls were the only individuals of the family group whom she greatly liked. Alister had allowed the Shanganagh gates to hang off their hinges, and had suffered the gaps in the hedges to remain unfilled until she had come from America to stop them up. A country gentleman ought to mind his duties as a landlord first, and he made an enemy of those people, who, if they knew the value of his father's land, she was precisely that one whom she should find it most difficult to hate.

"If I can prove to her that she was in the wrong I shall not want to make an enemy of her; but she looks like one of those persons who have fixed ideas which they will never consent to change. It may be that I shall have to go back to America hating her."

This was a hateful reflection, and when Bawn made her appearance in the breakfast-room she was feeling a little depressed, conscious of being here under false pretences, newly assailed by a fear that she was acting a disloyal part in accepting the hospitality of these people, who, if they knew the value of her father's land, they would probably shrink from her.

"But my father did them no wrong, and I am come to prove it to them," she argued with herself, as she took her seat by Gran's side with her usual air of cool serenity. "And at all events, once the visit is over I shall come back here no more."

Only Gran and the girls breakfasted with her; and it was resolved by these ladies that, as Rory had been summoned away to act in his capacity as magistrate, the expedition to the caves must be for the present given up. Bawn steadfastly refused to wait till tomorrow. Her affairs at Shanganagh urgently required her presence there. She hoped to have many opportunities of visiting the beauties and curiosities of the neighborhood. By the way, she hoped her pony (Shana and Rosheen exchanged glances) would not often make a point of going down on his knees—

"If Major Batt had not believed you were marked with small-pox he never would have sold you that pony," observed Shana.

"Shana!" exclaimed her great-grandmother, severely. "I am shocked at your rashness. There must have been a mistake. If anything be really wrong with the pony, Rory will see that Miss Ingram gets another. Miss Ingram, you must not mind this girl. She does not mean to be uncharitable."

"O Gran, if you are going to take up Major Batt—"

"Good morning, ladies," said that gentleman, appearing in the doorway. "Miss Ingram, I am distressed to hear that your blundering man let the pony down last evening. I am going your way this morning, and I hope you will let me have the pleasure of driving you to Shanganagh myself."

"Thank you," said Bawn promptly. "But I am going to stay here for a week."

"Oh! ah! said the major, looking chagrined; in that case—I am sorry to say I am obliged to be off in an hour. Lord Anghrim, &c., &c."

"Have you really changed your mind, and will you stay with us?" asked Gran, when Major Batt had left the room; and the old lady looked at the girl critically, as if considering what she might have meant by her rather audacious announcement.

"Oh! no, thank you. I must pany once more," said Bawn, earnestly. "Only not with Major Batt," she added, smiling. And she went.

TO BE CONTINUED

ROBERT EMMET'S LAST APPEAL

Many a man whose gifted mind has placed him as a leader among his kind will feel a thrill of appreciation for the words of Robert Emmet spoken just before his death: "I refrain from this world. It is the charity of its silence. Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let no prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me rest in obscurity and peace and my tomb remain unadorned."

and my memory in oblivion until other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then and not till then, let my epitaph be written." The time when Ireland may fulfill the vision Emmet had of her seems near at hand, but Emmet's epitaph has long since been engraved on every Irish heart.—Catholic Sun.

UNDER THE POPLAR TREES

BY ALICE DEASE

The June sun of northern France was blazing down with an intensity seldom known in British clime, except perhaps in occasional Augusts. The fighting had been very fierce, and the wounded men, who had been carried back from where their dead comrades lay, gasped for breath even in the shelter of the long straight row of poplar trees that edged the long straight road running parallel to the English trenches and leading towards those of their French allies.

Under one of these trees that stood rather apart from its fellows a khaki-clad figure was stretched, and on the torn and dusty tunic there was the distinctive badge of the Munster Fusiliers. The boy's face was almost ashen, and the blue-black rings on which lay long curled lashes enhanced the terrible pallor. Just now a red stream had trickled pitilessly from the half-open lips, but this, for the moment, had ceased. The officer who bent over the deathly still figure wondered vaguely if this was death, or whether the cessation of blood meant any possibility of life for the lad. But as quickly as this thought came it was banished by the remembrance of the torn, gaping wound in the chest across which the crumpled tunic had been drawn. No, Thade Flynn had been brought to the rear as wounded, but it was a wound to the death, and the only question was whether the merciful rest had come as yet to him. Then, whilst Captain Acton hesitated as to withdrawing the arm he had slipped under the boy's shoulders and leaving him in peace, there was a tremor on the white face, the long heavy eyelashes quivered and the lids were raised, revealing eyes that proclaimed their owner's motherland unmistakably without any aid from name of regiment.

For a moment Thade looked at the dancing poplar leaves above his head, shining and green, for the wind had freed them from the dust and grime that had been his surroundings these days past in the trenches.

Where was he at all? Not at home in Ireland, for there were no trees that tall around the bog of Dubrick. He drew a breath, and even so much movement set the pain gnawing and cutting away in his chest. This, and his captain's face bent above him, answered his question. The trenches, the battle, the awful dust and din, the wound—so far his mind travelled, and then with quick, unerring instinct he knew what was to come—death!

It was a long time since he had left Ireland—five years since he had seen the waters dancing in the Cove of Cork. And those five years spent in one garrison town after another had not left the boy with the straight account for heaven that life at home, for all its lapses and shortcomings, would have made. His faith was there, unquestioning as of old, but the restrictions that its practice lays upon us all had galled him, and more from carelessness than ill-intent, he had gone even out to the great war without first making his soul.

"I'm done, sir," he whispered, and though his voice was thick it strengthened as he spoke. "I'm done, entirely, but it's right glad I am yourself come safe."

"Steady, Flynn," said Captain Acton, fearful of a further hemorrhage. "Keep as still as you can, and when the doctor comes this way again he'll see what he can do for you."

"And what could he do, at all sir," returned the dying man, "an' me with the chest shot out of me? Oh, captain dear," he went on quickly, forgetting the formal manner of the regiment, "oh, captain dear, it's a priest I'm wantin', not a doctor. For God's sake, for your own soul's sake, fetch me the priest!"

He was exhausted even from this exertion, but the blood mercifully showed no further sign of flowing, only his hand clung weakly to that of his captain and there was infinite pleading in his great dark eyes.

Captain Acton had not interested himself in the welfare of his men ever since he had been gazetted to an Irish regiment without having learned that this cry for a priest came invariably when death was near, and though he was powerless to ease or help this boy any further, so far as physical help or ease was concerned, this last request for spiritual comfort he could not disregard.

"I'm afraid, my lad," he began uncertainly, "that the chaplain is too busy at the base, even if I could get him here—"

"A priest—for God's sake, sir, a priest!" groaned the boy. "But I'll tell you what I can do," replied Captain Acton—"mind now, I must move my arm"—and gently he suited his actions to his words. "Keep perfectly still and I will go down to the French lines, where, even if there is no chaplain about, I'm sure to find a priest amongst the soldiers."

The darkness of evening was falling, and the light was growing dim under the poplar trees as the officer strode along the road in the direction of the Allies' trenches. They, too had suffered during the day's encounter and had paid their share of the price of the enemy's forced retirement. George Acton, unlike many of his comrades, was perfectly at home in the French language, and the short explanation he gave of his errand was passed from one to another of the weary, battle-stained men until it reached one of those whom he sought—a soldier-priest.

He had taken his share in the day's fighting, this young abbé, who found that in this call to arms he had to fight not only for his country but also for the souls of men. There was nothing even faintly ecclesiastical in the short, erect figure in its dusty military tunic, baggy grey trousers and once smart, now shabby, kepi. Only the small black moustache above the unshaven chin shaded a mouth that was not that of even the best of his comrades. His head came barely to Captain Acton's shoulder, and he took three steps to every two of the Englishman, who, whilst leading him back to where the Irish boy lay dying, told how urgent was the need of his priestly ministrations. "But," said the Abbé, when he heard it was a case of the confession of a private, "but of your English I understand nothing, you will, sir, of your kindness, tell this poor boy that, since this is so, he must make his act of contrition and confess his sins to God. Under the circumstances I can give him the last absolution, and blessing for the dying."

But when this explanation, translated by Captain Acton, reached Thade's already dulling mind it roused him instantly, and the harassed look—that had changed to peace when the captain's assurance that that strange little figure was a priest had been proved to him by the sight of a familiar purple ribbon thrown, inconspicuously round the neck of his tunic—returned to his face. "But I must have my confession," he remonstrated. "For God's sake, sir, tell him not to let me go before the gates of heaven with the sins I have upon my tongue!"

"But, lad, he would not understand you," replied the captain. "If it would ease your mind to say them, I'll go away and leave you to do it, but remember he won't understand, and he says"—these were unfamiliar words to the captain, who years ago had cut himself adrift from the stern religious observances of his own people—"he says that God will know what's in your mind." He turned quickly and asked the abbé to repeat his explanation—and if you are sorry for your sins, even without confession, he can give you the absolution that you ask."

The officer was translating, almost literally, the words of the soldier-priest, on whose head, now bared and bent over the dying boy, the circle of short black hair showed where lately a tonsure had been. But to Thade Flynn they brought no satisfaction. He had sinned—and he was dying. Not, thank God, without contrition and a priest, but apparently without the possibility of the confession he had been taught to look upon as necessary for the forgiveness of sin, unless, indeed, as his catechism taught him long ago, there were no priests at hand and the sinner could offer an act of perfect contrition for his sins. Was his contrition perfect? Oh, surely, he was sorry for his offence to God, but was there no fear of punishment mingled with this sorrow? He could not satisfy himself that the justice of God would not ask for more than the French priest said. Then came a sudden idea.

"Captain," he murmured, "Captain Acton, sir, since you can't tell me what he says, will you tell him what I say, as well? Like that he'd get my confession, straight and clean, an' I could go before my God without shame or sin."

For a moment no answer came from the English officer's lips. It hardly seemed to him possible that a man, mortally wounded, should, in a lull of his excruciating agony, choose to lay bare the innermost secrets of his life to another man, that he in his turn might reveal them to yet a third, just because this third man had the power to forgive these sins. Had the power? Had he? At that moment George Acton never dreamt of questioning the abbé's power to give Thade Flynn forgiveness as he craved.

"What does he say?" questioned the abbé, on his knees beside the dying man.

On his knees, too, went George Acton, and with his face turned away from the others he repeated Thade's request in French. "But I can't do it," he added. "God help me, how am I to do this thing?"

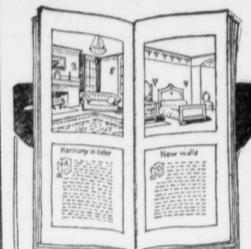
"It is not necessary, certainly," returned the abbé; "only it would give peace to the last moments of this dying boy."

Again there was a silence.

"Tell away, lad," the words came through lips that for all his bravery the officer could not keep from trembling. "I will do as you wish."

In the time the captain had been gone to fetch the priest Thade had once again, after the lapse of years, examined his conscience as long ago, he had done in Ireland and now, understanding, he made his confession in a voice growing weaker and weaker.

With bowed head, with his face hidden in his hands, George Acton first listened, then with an effort tried to speak. But no words came. There was a great lump in his throat,



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