

A FAIR EMIGRANT

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CHAPTER XIX
IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP

Bawn stood on the hearth in Alister's library, looking round her with the most lively interest. She had now been several days in the Glen, and had walked and been driven in various directions, making acquaintance with her father's country. Each evening she had returned to Nannie Macaulay's, and recounted the bit of narrow stals that led to her nest over the needle-and-tape shop, with her heart and imagination vividly impressed by the scenery through which she had been moving all day. All over it she saw the sorrowful details of her father's history, and every creature she met on the way seemed an actor in the tragedy of his youth.

Afraid to ask many questions, lest those around her should guess her identity and purpose, she contented herself with hearing the general remarks of the car drivers, and encouraging Nannie Macaulay to gossip when she brought her heresay. In most people who live in a word and an idea, she fancied she saw the look of others here in some way and on the question so present to her own mind. How could persons who had once known or heard of Arthur Desmond outlive their interest in him, or suffer the life of the present moment to thrust him and his story far into the background of their thoughts?

Now she had penetrated into the very camp of the enemy, and stood upon the hearth of Fingal, Nannie Macaulay had not been slow in pouring forth, almost as a matter of course, the details of her father's history, and of Rory, master of Castle Tor. Her own wit and previous knowledge had discovered the exact relationship between these living man and the Roderick whom Desmond was supposed to have killed. Nannie had not mentioned the murder, nor touched at all upon the tragedy. She had only hinted at it by saying that the old lady at Castle Tor had known a terrible sorrow in her life. And Bawn knew that Gran must be the mother of Roderick, and that Alister and Rory must be the sons of his brothers, now dead.

In making her way from American prairies to Irish glens she had not counted upon coming at once into such close contact with the family so intimately connected with her father's misfortunes, the descendants of those "friends" who had condemned and forsaken him. When Alister Fingal, seeing her young and a lady, had asked her to come to the Glen, and there, concluding the arrangements for the farm with his sisters, her landlords, she had at first shrunk from accepting his invitation, disliking to enter his house. Curiosity, however, had overcome her hesitation, and she was here.

Now she stood under the roof that must have sheltered her father on many a happy day before the horror came. These walls had heard his laugh, these old books must have been touched by his hands. This fireside, towards which she instinctively stretched her fingers after the chill drive on an outside car through the evening mists of the glen, must often have reflected its flame in his eyes and welcomed him freely among its own. And the friends who had sat here by his side had deserted him in his misfortune, had cast him forth out of their home and their hearts.

She withdrew herself from the warmth of this fireside of a Fingal, and stood aloof, frowning round the quiet, comfortable room in which the book-lined walls, felt-covered floor, reading-lamps, reading desk, and pictures.

Here they had dwelt, the cruel ones, all this time, happy, honored, beloved, and at ease, while he whom they had persecuted wasted his life in an alien country, pining under the calamity with which they had helped to load him. After a few minutes these thoughts so grew and wrought in her mind that she had been left much longer in the room alone she might have walked out of it and made her escape from the house. Fortunately for her reputation as a sensible woman, very desirable to her at present, she was prevented from so acting by the entrance of Alister Fingal.

"Miss Ingram, pardon me for keeping you waiting. My sisters will be with us shortly. In the meantime sit down, please, and let us discuss our business. Have you thought over all I said to you this morning?" "I have thought it all out long before this morning, Mr. Fingal. One does not cross the ocean without knowing why one comes. The desire that brought me here was to possess a farm in Ireland. You have a farm to let, and I will give you the rent at which you value it."

fathers business and wishing to practise it, and with no family traditions to be hurt by my plebeian occupation."

Alister Fingal observed her attentively as she spoke, and followed the imperial wave of her white hand, from which she had forgotten to remove the coarse glove it pleased her to wear. He thought the would-be tenant of Shanagh Farm did not look exactly like a humble farmer's daughter. However, he could interfere no further on the score of the girl's apparent gentility. His remonstrances took another form.

"Farming is different here from what you have seen in Minnesota, and you will be obliged to trust servants to manage your business. If you lose your money in a year or so, have you considered what you will do?"

"I will not lose it," said Bawn, with decision. "And, at all events, I have made up my mind to try this venture. However, if you think me an unsafe and uncertain tenant, please say so at once, and I shall seek for what I want elsewhere."

"I have no the contrary. It is not easy to let land just now, and a solvent tenant is highly welcome to my sisters at this present moment. Anything I have said to dissuade you has been for your own sake alone."

He spoke with an accent of sincerity which Bawn, despite her prejudice, could not mistake. But she said to herself that she did not want his friendship, and that she had already repaid his courtesy by explaining to him her views—a piece of confidence which she had intended vouchsafing to nobody.

"As you have quite decided, I will now introduce you to my sisters," he continued, and rang, and sent a request that the young ladies would come to the library.

Shana and Rosheen came into the room, each in her own characteristic manner. Rosheen hovered behind her sister, glancing inquisitively into the glen, half frightened and half hoping for fun. Shana held her head well back and her eyes well open to take in the whole situation, and resolved that this brawny backwoods-woman who had come to their rescue should be treated as a friend, however disagreeable she might unfortunately be.

Both sisters paused speechless on the threshold at sight of Bawn, whose heart at once throbbled involuntary approval of these fresh, sparkling-eyed, white-armed girls in their graceful, though well-worn black silk frocks, and their simple and virginal ornaments of pearl.

"Miss Ingram, these are my sisters, the Miss Fingals, who will be your landlords. Shana, this is your new tenant—if all goes well. Miss Ingram will not be dissuaded by me from the difficulties and responsibilities of farming."

"I am a farmer's daughter," said Bawn, turning on the two girls a warm, broad smile which lit up her whole face, and showed it in a new aspect to Alister. "I cannot persuade Mr. Fingal of all that that you have taken my little for farm in my hand, and I wish to turn my American gold into Irish butter and wheat. If you will trust me with Shanaghann, Miss Fingal, I will do my best to prove a desirable tenant."

Shana had by this time recovered from her astonishment. "Forgive me for staring at you," she said pleasantly, "but I expected to see such a different person." And she cast a reproachful glance at Alister.

Glen to Cushendall that night. She must be warned up and made to forget her loneliness. Rosheen, always an admirer of her sister's superior audacity, heard her now with satisfaction.

But Bawn was not to be suddenly led into the bondage of friendship like this. The mention of Betty Macaulister had recalled her to herself, and reminded her of her cause against this house.

"You are very kind; but my car is waiting and I must go. I have business in the morning which must be attended to."

And in spite of renewed and pressing invitations she got upon her car and was driven from the door of The Rath.

"Well, have you dismissed the backwoods-woman?" asked Lady Flora, who, notwithstanding her interest in Major Batt, was rather tired of her *let's see* with him.

"O Flora! what a pity you did not see her," cried Rosheen. "She is simply glorious!" "With ugliness?" "With beauty."

"Alister, has this girl gone crazy?" "She has lost her head about Miss Ingram evidently. What would have become of the major, if we had introduced her here? Our new tenant is a young woman eminently fitted by nature for the breaking of susceptible hearts."

"Is she really handsome?" "Really." "And young?" asked Major Batt. "And young?" "And what is she going to do at Shanaghann?" "We see her money, I am afraid; but as she will not be advised, we must allow her to pay us the rent. You might as well have been civil to her, Flora."

"I do not like handsome women who go gadding about the world alone," pronounced Lady Flora. "When did she get here, and how?" "Oh! a few days ago, and by the car round the coast."

"Humb!" said the major. "My dear Fingal, I think I know the lady. It was extremely improper for her to come here. She has just recovered from the small-pox."

"Small pox!" cried Lady Flora, horrified. "I travelled on the car with her, and she told me of my misfortune," said the major. "A handsome young woman, as you see her through a veil."

Shana and Rosheen laughed and exchanged glances. "I think Miss Ingram has her wits about her," said their brother slyly. "Are you sure she did not want to get the car to herself, major?" "I am very sure she did not," said Major Batt slyly.

to suppress a voice in her heart that accused her of treachery to a friend. Where had those ardent, dark eyes sailed to out of her life, and what bitter things against her was that brave, brown man thinking now as he reflected on the trick she had played him?

Well, he was gone. One cannot both have one's loaf and eat it, and she had swallowed her bread, sour and bitter as the mouthful had been. She had thought the swallowing of the morsel everything, but it had left a taste on the mouth which was neither nice to endure nor easy to get rid of.

Even so, would she give up the position she had now gained, the footing on which she stood, the hope of accomplishing her purpose which seemed already floating all round her in this mountain atmosphere? As she hammered a nail home in her house-place she declared, no, she would not own to any desire that she had been weak enough to relinquish her enterprise, or suffer herself to wish for a moment that she was back on the high seas, with still the option of holding, for life, the lover who had so strangely, suddenly, extravagantly loved her.

When a few unexpected tears dropped on the nails she drove in, almost as heavily as the blows of her hammer, she told herself they had welled from the depths of her heart solely because she was lonely, homesick, and also because, curiously enough, now that she was here in the scenes so long dreamed of, had kindled her heart-fire on the mountain-side looking towards Aura, had spoken with the descendants of those whom she considered her father's enemies, she found it more difficult to realize certain dire events in the past than when sitting by a solitary grave on the now far distant prairie.

The people here all seemed so utterly unconscious of Desmond's tragedy. Even Betty Macaulister kneaded her cakes and arranged her pots and pans as if all memory of it had passed away from her mind.

For what, then, had Bawn come here, after all? To what end had she quenched for ever a light that had unexpectedly shone on her out of a stranger's eyes, warming her who had not known herself cold till the warmth was withdrawn?

These were sore questions, such as she had never thought to be beset with, and for the moment she was not able to answer them.

And meanwhile, as she was at work with her women, putting her house in order, cleaning and polishing and arranging her scanty furniture, a storm broke over the mountains and rolled down the glen, bidding Bawn the opposite ridges behind sullen cloud and tattered mist, and lashing the walls of the farmhouse with a scathing rain. A noise like thunder roared in the wide chimneys, angry drops hissed into the fire, and in the midst of the tempest Bawn wrestled with her own regrets, which were as fierce and unexpected in their onslaught on her heart as the assault of the elements on her dwelling.

But Betty and her daughter proceeded with their tasks as if nothing was the matter, only called to each other a little more loudly than usual, so as to be heard above the hurly-burly of the wind and rain.

No one came near the farm for a week, and the week was at an end. Bawn had grown visibly thinner, and thought that she must already have lived a year by herself at Shanaghann.

TO BE CONTINUED

begins, I must break ground for them as soon as the frost leaves the earth."

"But you can't begin the work today," she persisted. "No," he returned. "But I must see the architects, and go over the plans with them. But why can't you go without me? I can get along without the car, and Foley can take you there and back."

Mollie's eyes dimmed. "An automobile is out of place in a crowd," she objected. "Besides, I wanted you to take me. You have never taken me anywhere since—" His quick thoughts filled up the gap. No, he never had taken her anywhere—never had taken an interest in anything but his business since their mutual bereavement. And now, as he looked at his daughter, he saw, not Mollie, but one he had passionately loved.

In spite of the pain that suddenly gripped her heart, Burke felt that she had not been altogether fair to the one left to him; so, with an effort at lightness, he said: "You are a little tyrant, Mollie! and for to day, I'm your slave!"

Mollie and her father were among the first of those that gathered to see the annual procession, and they had been thus enabled to choose a position well upon the steps of a public building. The place had been suggested by Mollie, and her father had been well content with it.

Burke spent some time looking interestedly at those that were gathering or had gathered on the steps where his daughter and he stood or along the sidewalks. He noticed that they were all dressed in their best. But he also noted that, in many cases, that "best" was shabby enough. This was most noticeably so in the case of a woman who stood near him. She had two children with her. One crowded close to Burke, the other shouldered high, that he might miss nothing of the procession when it should pass.

Mollie stood on Burke's left, with her hands clasped lightly on his arm, and her father noted that she kept eagerly watching for the coming of the procession. As he gazed at her fresh young face, with its warm color, enhanced perhaps by the sharp March wind, and as he saw her blue grey Irish eyes sparkling with anticipation, a memory, stirred that morning, awoke, and he turned away with a set face.

After a while a strain of music reached Burke, but as yet it was unintelligible. Then an eager movement among those waiting, and a many whispered "Here they come!" proclaimed that the procession was on its way. Soon around a distant bend a brave array of mounted "sides" swept into sight. Silk hatted, black frock coated, and with each man wearing a green and gold sash, they presented a fine appearance. Many of them were American horsemen, but on that day they were all proudly Irish!

As they swept by where he stood one of their number turned and looked in Burke's direction, and raised his hat. Burke's face clouded but he was a gentleman, and he returned the other's salutation. Then he turned quickly to Mollie, and found her blushing furiously.

"That was young D'Arcy," he said, half accusingly. "Yes, father," she faltered. "Yes, father," he muttered, grimly. He was beginning to see now why his daughter was so anxious to witness the "parade." She wanted to see young D'Arcy. But what puzzled him was that she had not gone alone. Some months earlier he had placed an interdiction on the young man's too frequent visits at her home. He had nothing against the young fellow except that D'Arcy was a struggling lawyer, and Burke, in the remote contingency of his daughter's marrying, preferred that she should choose some one that could succeed him in his business.

"Did you send word to him that you'd be here?" he asked, suspiciously. Mollie turned on him a pair of eyes that held nothing of untruth. "No, father," she answered; "but I was here last year." Satisfied, he turned away. After all, he considered, her action had been innocent enough. Otherwise she need not have brought her father there.

"Killarney." Then to Burke's "It's Irish, isn't it?" came a quick, emphatic nod, and the words: "Sure it is. Couldn't you tell?"

Yes, he could have told, surely, as who could not? That had been his last St. Patrick's day in Ireland, and since then he had experienced much that had fashioned and wrought him into a different seeming. Reverses had come to him, but, with the pertinacity of his race, every setback had only made him the more determined to win success. And he had won. That in the winning he had become hardened and indifferent.

This retrospective vision, conjured up by a tune often heard—though with dulled ears, perhaps—was but momentary in its passing. Yet it left Gerald Burke humbled, but with a contradictory feeling of pride—race pride. It cleared his vision, too, showing him, in these men that were passing before him, not the poor, strutting fools he had often regarded them, parading vainly, gloriously when they had better be lining their pockets, but men moved by, next to religion, the highest and holiest gift to man; love of country!

The "Rifles" were followed by members of the local Hibernian societies. And Burke recognized many in the ranks who had, at one time or another, been in his employ. The day before—an hour earlier, even—he would have regarded their parading with a smile of cynical amusement. Now he beamed on them, and nodded encouragingly to such few as happened to look his way.

For some time the youngster on Burke's right had been on tiptoe, vainly craning to see the passing parade. But the people in front of him, although on a lower step than he, blocked his view. If he had been on the sidewalk below there is no doubt but that he would have squirmed to the front; but well up on a flight of steps, and moreover, held by the detaining hand of his mother, he was helpless. The boy manifested his discontent by impatient movements, once or twice justling against Burke, and bringing on himself whispered promises of future punishment if he did not better behave. These admonitions had no more effect on the youngster than to make him subside while his parent's eye was on him. But once released from that espionage, he would, boy-like, be at it again.

After a while the woman, seeing that Burke manifested no sign of annoyance at the uneasy movements of her irresponsible offspring, turned on her whole attention to watching the procession. And, shortly, her eye quickened by love, singled out one from those in the passing ranks.

"Jamesey," she cried to the child she was shouldering, "look at your daddy in the parade; shake a day-day to him, Jamesey!" Unconsciously in her excitement she allowed her voice to rise higher than she had intended. It carried to the passing men; and one stalwart fellow turned a beaming face and waved a loving salute to wife and child.

Burke, for the first time in many years, did an impulsive thing. He stooped, and quickly hoisted the other youngster to his shoulder. Then pointing, he whispered: "There's your father, sonny!" "Daddy! hey, daddy!" the youngster shouted hastily.

The man was already past, but the more upright sitting of his head showed that he had recognized the voice of his offspring. The woman now edged closer to Burke. "God bless ye, sir!" she whispered, "ye're a gentleman through an' through!"

And if that wasn't enough for Burke, his daughter, on the other side of him caressed his arm, and murmured: "I'm prouder of you than ever, father." When the last marching line had passed, Burke lowered the boy from his shoulder. "Thank the gentleman now, Mikey," prompted that young hopeful mother, as she proceeded to dust away the smudge deposited on Burke's coat by the shoes of her offspring.



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