

A FAIR EMIGRANT

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

Tor Castle stands on a breezy height a quarter of a mile inland above the bold promontory of Tor Head, opposite the Mull of Cantire. Here have dwelt for generations the elder branch of our Finlagg family, at present represented by young man, cousin of Shana and Rosheen, and by his grandmother, Gran, striking and well-known figure in the district, is also grandmother to Alister and his sisters, and a fond great-grandmother to Flora's children.

Between The Rath and Tor Castle lie miles of beautiful country; romantic Glenariffe and Glenan, the lovely shores and strange caves of Cusendun, the rugged and splendid headlands of Cashlake, with their rocky cliffs and flowery ravines. Far below Tor Castle the waters of Moyla wash the rocky walls of the great Tor Head—fairy Moyle, haunted in days of old by the enchanted sprites of the Princess Fionnuala and her brothers, Scotland looks so near that, on a fine day, one would think a ferry boat might bring one across in a quarter of an hour, and from the windows of Tor Castle the exquisite outlines of the hills of Jura show their fantastic outlines on the bosom of the glittering sea.

Gran is the real head of the clan Finlagg, loved by rich and poor. Her tall, spare, and still active figure is often seen moving from cottage to cottage about Tor, her stately old head with its snow-white curls drooping to enter at their low doorways. She is a rigidly upright, God-fearing, and charitable soul, kind rather in her deeds than her words, though a rare tenderness sometimes shines out of her keen and penetrating eyes. A slight degree of sternness in manner and demeanour deceives no one as to the quality of her heart, and it is never forgotten that she has known a terrible sorrow in her life.

On certain days the whole of The Rath family were accustomed to come all the way from Glenariffe to spend a day and stay a night with Gran. At other times Tor Castle was empty and silent enough, even when Rory, the master of Tor, was at home—he and Gran making but a small family to occupy it; but when the Rath people appeared it became as busy and merry as a hive. Such stirring visitations were the delight of the old lady's life; and preparations, in the airing of rooms and providing of sweets and good things for the children, were begun many days before the expected guests arrived.

On a bright May day the usual migration from The Rath to Tor was taking place. Lady Flora had gone early in her brougham with the nurse and two youngest children, leaving Shana and Rosheen and the elder babes to follow, walking, and riding on the family car.

The drawing-room at Tor had not been restored and the ancient furniture had performed no journeys up and down the garret stairs, had known no period of ignominious seclusion; there it stood just where it had been since the beginning of all things, as might be imagined—the old bureau, and tables, and china presses, and sconces, black with age and bright with well-polished brass. The round, convex mirrors which Lady Flora had once thought so hideous, but worshipped now, hung where they had always hung, except when they moved for purposes of cleaning; the carpet was so worn that, but for rugs adroitly spread, it would have shown too plainly the marks of its valuable antiquity; the curtains had no particular colour left in them, but had a ghostly dignity in their folds better than the richness of many modern fabrics. The well-wrought brasses about the fireside shone with a comfortable splendour when the fire glowed all across its width between the high shouldered pilasters and carved panels of the time-darkened chimney-piece.

All the chambers at Tor were furnished in the same styles of unquestionable antiquity. They and their contents seemed as old as Tor Head and the waves that beat against it; and they suggested the truth that more dignity than money belonged to the inheritance of the ancient clan Finlagg. Gran, who prized every stick and stone in the castle, saw nothing amiss; but Flora perceived keenly with her more worldly eyes that Rory would have to marry an heiress, as Alister had done, if only that he might restore and replenish his ancient home.

Even in bright May weather the breeze that blows up from the great Tor is sharp and cool, and Gran and her grand-daughter-in-law sat in two grim arm-chairs facing each other by the fire. Gran looked like some old queen in a historical picture, with her white head posed against the carving of her high-backed chair, and her long black draperies flowing round her on the floor. "I am glad you arrived first," she was saying, "because I want to talk to you apart from the girls. If Manon comes here I should not like them to have heard a word to the prejudice of her or her mother."

"Certainly not," said Lady Flora; "and I do not know why any one need be prejudiced. You did not like her mother when you knew her as a young woman, but her grandmother was your friend. The girl is of good birth and an heiress. Why should she not come to you, if her mother wishes it?"

"Why should she not?" said Gran reflectively. "But then why should she do so? I mean, what is the reason for her wishing it? Alister was a young woman I could not bear—sly, untruthful, cold-hearted."

"But she was charmingly beautiful and married the son of a wealthy marquis," laughed Lady Flora; "and that ought to cover a multitude of sins."

Gran sighed and fingered the letter she had in her wrinkled hand impatiently. Here was not a worldly-minded lady like Lady Flora's, and she had not been thinking of the position of this mother and daughter who were putting themselves forward to claim her friendship, but of their moral worth. It had once been a trouble to her that she could not like the daughter of the friend of her youth, and now it was vexing her that she might have to dislike the grand-daughter as well. True, the grand-child might reproduce the estimable and lovable qualities of the grandmother; but then why did Alister, the mother—so worldly—so cunning, and always, in former days so unsympathetic with Gran herself—now ask to send her child under her roof, into the undesirable seclusion of the Antrim highlands?

"I cannot guess her motive," said she, folding and unfolding the letter. "Manon is handsome and an heiress, and in France, in Paris, she ought to have the world at her feet. The grand-daughter is long dead—the only link between me and this mother and child; and even while she lives, Alister took but little interest in her mother's friend. And now she writes to me like this:—"

"Dear My Dear Friend of My Departed Mother—My darling Manon, of whom you have heard tell as the heiress of her grandfather, the late Marquis de—, husband of your dear friend my lamented mother, is now of age, and the world is full of snares and attractions for her. I have taken a strange fancy, sentimental if you will, to place her under your care for some few months, before launching her on the dangers and pleasures of life—"

"There!" cried Flora. "What would you have more unworthily than that? If not very wise herself, she has a high opinion of you, and would like her daughter to have the advantage of your friendship."

A little colour stole into Gran's dear old face, partly at the suggested praise of herself, and partly with pleasure to think that Alister's motive might, after all, be a high one.

"I do not consider myself a very good person, Flora. I tremble to think of how much better I might have been if I had tried."

Flora made a little mouth behind her fan, in her opinion Gran was a great deal too good—"too high-flown," as her grand-daughter-in-law would have called it.

"Any virtue I have had has been too much of a negative kind," the old lady went on. "One cannot be very bad, always looking at Tor Head and the sea. But I would be glad to think that Alister had some delusion on the subject, for better a mistake of that kind than no desire to look up to any one. Alister has lived in the midst of the gay world, with its snares and temptations, and her daughter will probably do the same—"

"Why?" asked Flora coolly, putting down her screen and looking Gran in the face. "If Manon comes here with her mother's graces, her French noble birth, and her grand-father's money, why need she ever return to France, except for a visit, as Rory's wife?"

"Flora!" exclaimed the old lady, grasping both arms of her chair and looking indignantly at her grand-daughter-in-law. "She is an Irish farmer's daughter from Minnesota, come to Ireland with the little savings that her parents left her. She wants to live in the country of which she heard so much from her father. Immediately on arriving she made inquiries about lands to let, and applied at once for Shanganagh."

her mind's eye, "rather than would I see Rory dead than standing by her at the altar."

Lady Flora shrugged her shoulders and glanced round the bare, faded, noble old apartment.

"At all events," she said, "I do not see how you can refuse to receive the grand-daughter of the friend of your youth. Rory is in London at present, and as the girl is coming there with friends he can escort her across the Channel. He will thus have an opportunity of discovering even sooner than ourselves whether she is a wretch or a saint."

"Of course, as you say, I cannot refuse to receive her," said Gran gravely; "but, at all events, I will write to her mother at once to tell her exactly how I am circumstanced here, and warn her of how little the girl can expect in the way of entertainment."

CHAPTER XVIII
THE BACKWOODS-WOMAN
While Gran came to this conclusion the rest of the family from The Rath—nurses, children, and aunts—were proceeding along the romantic road towards Castle Tor. Shana and Rosheen, being capital walkers, only needed "a lift" now and again, and when within about a mile of their destination they sent on the keeping family car without them, and went on foot towards the castle.

As the girls trudged along, laughing, talking, glowing with exercise, a figure appeared suddenly on the slope above them and began rapidly to descend—a fair-haired young man, who pulled off his cap as he leaped to the road and stood smiling before them.

"O Will!" began Rosheen, and checked herself, glancing at Shana. "How are you, Mr. Callender?" said Shana, gravely, giving him her hand.

"It is so long since we have seen you!" pouted Rosheen. "What have you been about?"

"Mr. Callender called yesterday when we were out, Rosheen, and he has been so busy. It is very hard and absorbing work bringing a narrow-gauge railway down the side of a mountain, is it not, Mr. Callender? Rosheen does not consider," said Shana, briskly.

"It is not, perhaps, as hard as it looks," said the young engineer, who did not feel as if he had much to say just for the first two or three moments. A few minutes ago he had been walking through the heather with sad enough thoughts, and lo! here he was looking in the face that was everything to him in the world.

"O Rosheen!" cried Duck, "do get me some of those sky-flowers down in the hole there!"

"Nonsense, Duck! Sky-flowers!" "Flowers like bits of sky, I mean," O Rosheen!

"I get you three will they consent to?"

"Six," said Duck. "I do so love them."

"Three!"

"You little extortioner! There, I will get you six, but not one more, for the rest are too far down." And off scampered aunt and niece, dropped over the roadside bank, and began to do what Duck called "blithering" down the seaward slope, while Shana and Callender walked on together.

"Miss Fingall—Shana!" began the young man eagerly, "I want to tell you if I may, why I must for the future refrain from visiting at The Rath. I have thought much about how to tell you. I had hoped yesterday to find an opportunity; I was disappointed then, but chance now favours me. I hope it is not wrong of me to speak—at all events, I must. I cannot allow you to think I am careless of seeing you, even if you do not care—"

"I do care," said Shana, abruptly. Then she added, "I like to see my friends."

"Ah! your friends. Well, Lady Flora has been so cold to me, has, in fact, so snubbed me on several occasions when you were not present, that I feel I cannot again force myself into her house. When your brother invites me I will come gladly and endure Lady Flora's slights, but I cannot enter The Rath uninvited any more."

"You are right," said Shana, quietly. "O Shana! if I may say a little more. Ah! I will say it, come good or come bad. Shana, I love you. Unfortunate beggar that I am, with my fortune yet to make—Shana, I love you, I love you!"

A flash of brightness and colour suffused Shana's face, and she trembled, but she said nothing.

"I know I am an idiot to speak, for I dare not ask you to marry me now. I dare say I am very wrong. I may be a dreamer to hope I may one day be able to give you a place in the world worthy of you. At present I can say nothing except that I love you, and perhaps I ought not to say it. But, Shana, I love you, I love you!"

Shana had conquered her trembling and lifted her grave, dark eyes steadily to his.

"And I love you too, Willie Callender," she said with still earnestness of manner, as if she were uttering a vow. "I am glad you have spoken to me, and you need not fear to have done me a wrong."

"O my love! I do fear it, I do fear it." "Come good or come ill, I am yours," she went on steadily, "whether you can claim me or not. If you were to die to-morrow, and I were to live to be a hundred, I should never love another man."

"Shana! Shana! do you know what you are saying? Do not say it rashly. I shall live on your words, and work on the strength they will give me."

"I have said it," said Shana, a radiant smile breaking over her face. "I have given my promise to you, Willie Callender," she went on, and they stood clasped hands, looking in one another's eyes, "and now my life will be full of light, and my future glorious. Come when you like, stay away when you like, I will welcome you, wait for you, trust you, work with you. Now here are Rosheen and Duck, and we must go on to Castle Tor."

"Are you going to leave us so soon?" cried Rosheen, as she saw Mr. Callender turn away from Shana. "The men are waiting for him yonder on the road," said Shana. "He is out surveying, and has no more time for us."

"Good-by, Rosheen; good-by, Duck," said Callender wistfully, and as he raised his hat his eyes flew back to Shana's, still shining with the light his impulsive words had kindled in them.

"Good-by," he repeated in an altered voice, and was gone.

"How oddly he looks!" said Rosheen. "What could you have said to him, Shana, in such a little moment to make him like that?"

Shana smiled. "Perhaps told him not to break his neck leaping down hills," she said. "One can say a good deal in a little moment, sometimes."

"It is a good deal, from you, to express even so much interest in him as that," said Rosheen, "so I don't wonder it overwhelmed him."

"I hear hoofs!" said Shana abruptly. "Duck, do you think papa can be coming?"

Duck believed it possible, and in a few moments Alister Fingall rode up and sprang from his horse, crying: "I have good news for you, girls. Guess—"

"Major Batt is married," said Rosheen with sudden solemnity.

"No," laughed Alister; "as far as I am aware, he is still in a position to fit from flower to flower."

"Betty Macalister has got her rent."

"Hopelessly wrong. I see I must tell you. There is an offer for Shanganagh Farm."

"Alister! What delightful news!"

Alister stood smiling at his sisters, watching their pleasure grow as they realized the welcome truth. The letting of the farm was very important to them he knew, but of all it meant to their proud young spirits even he was unable to imagine. Independent bread, a shield from Flora's taunts, power to look Duck and her following unremorsefully in the eyes, composure of mind with regard to the fate of the novel just begun—these were but a few of the boons which the rent of Shanganagh, paid regularly every half-year, would bring into the lives of his young-lady landlady.

"What kind of tenant are we to get?" asked Shana, radiant. "And will he pay?"

"It is not a he," said Alister. "It is a she."

"Really!" But of course she has a man of some kind to act for her."

"It seems not; and there is nothing very odd in a woman taking a farm, if only she knows how to manage it. Miss Ingram writes:—"

"Writes? Have you not seen her?"

Gin Pills FOR THE KIDNEYS Why They're Sold

National Drug & Chemical Co. of Canada, Limited, Toronto.

Bone Spavin Spavin and Ringbone Paste

ABSORBINE TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

Church Bells Memorial Bells a Specialty

C. M. B. A. Branch No. 4, London

PROFESSIONAL CARDS

JOHN T. LOFTUS, Barrister, Solicitor, Notary, Etc.

St. Jerome's College BERLIN, ONTARIO

FINNEY & SHANNON'S COAL The Coal of Quality

Funeral Directors John Ferguson & Sons

E. G. Killingsworth Funeral Director