

never quite sure when Bawn was joking; and a remark of the girl's that there was only one alternative to the parlor maid plan, and that was to walk with the unemployed shaking a collecting box, reduced the old lady to a terrified complacency. She was never quite sure of what Bawn might do.

'You know,' she said, during one of the days that followed, when Bawn was dismissing or being dismissed by possible or impossible mistresses, 'you know you'll never be able to keep a parlor maid's place. You won't be—respected enough—and—and—' Miss Quinn had her handkerchief to her eyes—'you never could conceal your dislikes. No one will keep you.'

'Yes, some one will, when I've found the person I want to live with. There are lots of nice people looking for parlor maids; there are only Gorgons looking for governesses and companions. When I find the right person, she'll never give me up, once she has seen my tables and my care of the plate and house linen. She will wonder how she ever endured the others.'

Those days following had many adventures, even to the arriving of envelopes addressed to Miss Desmond as 'Brigid Desmond'—she had thought it wise to suppress her real name, as not being within the grasp of the ordinary employer—containing letters beginning 'Brigid Desmond' in a naked brevity.

'It seems a rather inhuman way,' Miss Bawn said, quite enjoying the old lady's stormy indignation. 'Some of them would be for calling me "Desmons," but I shan't hire out with them. The lady who shall be my mistress will be one to call me "Brigid," and even to say "please" to me.'

Sure enough, one evening Bawn came home triumphant. She had got 'a place' as parlor maid in a flat and a record amount of wages, namely, £45 a year.

'How did you manage it?' asked Miss Quinn, softly weeping into her handkerchief.

'I asked for it and I got it,' said Bawn, triumphantly, 'although if it wasn't for Ballintubber I'd almost serve her for love. Such a sweet old lady, Aunt Grace—almost as great a darling as yourself. The Honorable Mrs. Molyneux is her name.'

'There were Molyneuxes of Templebredin,' began Miss Quinn, but Bawn was too excited to listen to her.

'This time next year,' she said, 'she won't part with me for a hundred a year. There's a cook who will have to go. If ever I saw thief written in a human face! I know she has been robbing that old dear. It is the sweetest little doll's house of a flat! I shall easily be able for it, cooking and all. If we want anything extra, we can have it in.'

It was in vain for Miss Quinn, who was a County Clare woman, and connected with every title in the county, to protest. A week later saw Bawn, with a modest tin trunk on top of a four-wheeler, driving off from the little house that was always so kindly willing to shelter her. She was in the highest spirits, the least bit in the world damped by the sight of Miss Quinn in tears on the doorstep.

'Never mind, dear,' she called back. 'I'll come every second Sunday afternoon and every one of my evenings out. I shan't have anyone to walk out with, you see, and it's ever so much nicer than being a governess.'

Some time later she was standing before Mrs. Molyneux in the little slice of drawing-room that held so many beautiful things, looking taller, more opulently built than ever, her hair more flamboyant than ever, in her plain black frock and white cap and apron.

The old lady was looking at her in a puzzled way. 'My dear,' she said, 'you are a lady surely, are you not?'

Bawn repressed a mischievous impulse to answer, 'No, please 'm; a parlor maid,' which was on the tip of her tongue. It seemed an impertinent thought, taken in conjunction with the kind, anxious old face opposite to her. Instead she blushed, and the blush gave her an expression of charming softness.

'I am a lady parlor maid,' she said.

'Ah! I have heard of such things. And are you sure you can do my work? You're not doing it for a jest or to write about it, are you, my dear?'

'I should never think of such a thing,' said Bawn, indignantly.

'You won't scratch my plate, will you? I have some very beautiful old plate. And I should expect you to do certain things for me which my maid would do if I had a maid—to mend my laces and wash my fichu, and make my caps and things of that sort.'

'Try me,' said Bawn laconically.

The old lady looked at her anxiously.

'I took a fancy to you my dear, the minute I saw you,' she said, 'and that explains my engaging you. As I said to my nephew, Captain Gerald Aylmer Molyneux, you were not at all the person I imagined as a parlor maid. Your hair, now.'

'You won't notice my hair in time,' said Bawn coaxingly. 'And I am going to be such a comfort to you. Only, if you please, Mrs. Molyneux, I'd rather no one but you knew I was a lady. No one at all.'

'Not my nephew? Why, I tell him everything.'

'It can't interest Captain Molyneux,' Bawn said. 'I never meant to have told you. It's a false sort of position. Why a lady parlor maid? I can be a parlor maid and a lady without its being explicitly stated. Let it be our secret.'

Mrs. Molyneux had a thought; the reflection of it flashed in her face. The girl was gloriously handsome. If her nephew knew that she was a lady, he might be attracted by her beauty. He would insist on treating her rather as a lady than a servant. Yes, it would complicate matters. 'Very well, my dear, I shall not tell him,' she said. 'And I am so glad that I have put you a folding bed in the little dressing-room off my own room. I thought it would be convenient when I wanted you to do things for me. I felt that I could not ask you to occupy the same room with Jane.'

'I am sure Jane snores,' said Bawn, with a glint of humor in her eye.

It was not long before things came to a crisis with Jane. Jane objected to having a young person in the kitchen who had a way of looking at her with that humorous and observant gaze. It was impossible to say that Brigid did not do her work. She did it, indeed, with a thoroughness and exquisiteness unknown in kitchen annals, which was another cause of offence. Jane didn't think her hair respectable, either, and altogether disapproved of the new parlor maid.

'My dear, she is so dreadfully sullen,' said Mrs. Molyneux, piteously, one afternoon, when it was Brigid's evening out. 'I am really afraid to be left alone with her, and that is why I have asked my nephew to spend the afternoon and dine. Perhaps she will give us no dinner, and I am sure she will not wait. Sometimes I think that Jane drinks.'

'When is her month up?' asked Bawn, with a sudden air of decision.

'To-morrow.'

'Will you give me her money and make me house-keeper for this afternoon, Mrs. Molyneux?'

'My dear, what are you going to do?'

'To dismiss Jane.'

'I have wanted to do it for five years, and have never dared to. I am afraid Jane wastes; mine is such an extravagant establishment for its size. I wouldn't mind, only that I haven't really much money of my own, although my dear boy, Gerald, is so good to me.'

'There is no reason why your money should go into Jane's pocket,' said Bawn quietly. 'Give me the necessary power.'

'And the dinner? I don't want my nephew to do without his dinner.'

'I shall see to that.'

'Haden't you better wait till he comes? Jane is so dreadfully violent.'

'She will not be violent with me.'

After Bawn had left her, Mrs. Molyneux listened with her gentle old heart in her mouth for an explosion that should shake the little flat, but all was silent within the room flooded with afternoon sunshine and sweet with growing flowers and flowers in vases.

Bawn could not have spoken yet. It was a relief to hear Captain Gerald's key in the door. He had a latchkey for his aunt's flat, and came and went as he would.

'There is some odd sort of drama going on in your kitchen, Aunt Sybilla,' he said, coming in. 'The door was open, and I saw your new parlor maid standing, like an angry goddess, on one side of the table, and a heaped-up person, whom I took to be Jane, on the other.'

Within half an hour Jane was out of the house. The details of that encounter Mrs. Molyneux never knew, although after Jane had gone she noticed Bawn, with a strange smile, folding some filmy old laces, which she had not been able to find of late, away in drawers. Also, in the days that followed, various trinkets and pieces of plate long missing were returned to their places.

'I'm afraid it was compounding a felony,' said Bawn; 'but she gave up all the tickets, poor wretch! And I don't think you'd like the publicity of prosecuting, Mrs. Molyneux.'