

'To be sure not!' the old lady answered hastily. 'She promised to mend her ways, and mentioned incidentally that she had saved enough to marry the man of her choice,' Bawn remarked, with a grim smile. 'If she'd been going to look for another place, I'd have had my doubts.'

The dinner was perfect that evening. To be sure, for some of the details Bawn was obliged to resort to a Piccadilly restaurateur, but, then, the notice was short. And she surpassed herself in her table decoration, which consisted of many kinds of roses. She had been to Covent Garden that morning, and had bought her roses for a song.

With the removal of Jane life at the flat became idyllic. Bawn had discovered a clean, quiet young woman, who came in the morning to do the rough work. For the rest, she delighted in doing the duties of what she had called the 'doll's house flat' and waiting on its mistress, to whom she had become warmly attached.

Captain Gerald Molyneux was there very often. For a fashionable man about town, he was extraordinarily devoted to his aunt by marriage. He had never let her feel lonely indeed, but now he was more at the flat than ever.

'I don't know what there is about your flat, Aunt Sybilla,' he said. 'There is something so restful. When one steps into your little white hall, it is as though one had left all the fret and disturbance of the world outside.'

'Dear boy,' the old lady said, looking at him affectionately. 'I didn't know you had any fret and disturbance, Gerald. But it is true that I live in great peace. It is all due to Brigid; she has made such a change in my life.'

'Ah, Brigid!' Captain Gerald looked uneasily at Mrs. Molyneux. 'She seems a very—admirable kind of girl. Not in the least like a parlor maid, Aunt Sybilla, is she?'

'Servants are different in our days,' said Mrs. Molyneux evasively, without looking at her nephew.

About this time, or soon after, she noticed that he became silent, restless, out of sorts. At last he announced to her one day that he was going to exchange into a regiment under orders for India, and likely to get some service in a troublesome little frontier war, which at the time was taking up a paragraph or two in the papers every day.

Mrs. Molyneux was dismayed. She let a tear fall, which much affected Captain Gerald.

'I hate to leave you, dear,' he said, taking up the thin, white old hand and kissing it. 'You see, you're the nearest thing I've ever had to a mother, and an uncommonly good substitute. But I'm tired of being an ornamental soldier. I want to work. The kind of life we lead is the safest thing in the world to get a man into some kind of mischief. Let me go, dear, and don't make it too hard for me. Indeed, it will be the best thing.'

Mrs. Molyneux dried her tears. Something in Gerald's voice as much as in his words alarmed her, for she knew not what. Was it possible the boy, who had always been so good, was in some disreputable kind of a scrape, or likely to be in one? She was vaguely frightened, and said nothing more to turn him from his purpose.

He was on the eve of effecting the exchange when he came to the flat one afternoon with a greater gloom on his brow than usual, and of late he had been very gloomy.

'I knocked up against that bad lot Reggie, in Regent street,' he said. 'He had just got back, and means to be in London for some months. I want you to promise me one thing, Aunt Sybilla. Don't have him here.'

Mrs. Molyneux looked at her favorite nephew in distress.

'How am I to refuse Reggie,' she asked helplessly, 'if he wants to come? After all, he is my nephew, too. I'm sure I don't know how he came to be Caroline's boy. Perhaps he has given up his wild ways.'

'If Reggie is going to come here, Aunt Sybilla, I don't leave London,' said Captain Gerald decisively.

Reggie did come, came first to pay a duty visit with an intolerable sense of boredom, stared at Bawn when she opened the door to him, and after that first visit came again and again.

But, as sure as he came to the flat, his cousin Gerald was there before him, or met him in the lift coming up, or was on his heels when he rang the door bell.

Even Mrs. Molyneux could not but notice that the air was charged with electricity. The young men sat and looked at each other; and, after a time, Reggie would get up with a laugh, take his hat and cane,

and depart. Reggie was always the one who laughed; Gerald, who had been gay enough in the old days, was the one to look careworn and stern. At times he looked older than Reggie, although that young gentleman's handsome, rakish face had more lines in it than his years accounted for, and Gerald had been used to look for many years the younger of the two.

At last, one afternoon Reggie arrived without his shadow. He knew, perhaps, that for once Gerald was obliged to be on duty. It was some little time between his ring at the door bell and his arrival at Mrs. Molyneux's little drawing-room. He was smiling, the used-up, cynical smile which made a good many people dislike him. One of his dark cheeks had a vivid red color. He looked excited.

'I am going to stay to dinner, Aunt Sybilla,' he said.

'Very well, my dear,' Mrs. Molyneux replied, quite oblivious of the scapegrace's tingling cheek, and feeling rejoiced that Captain Gerald was not to turn up, for the feud between the cousins troubled her.

The dinner was exquisite, as usual; but Brigid somehow fell short in her attendance. She looked as though she had been crying, and she neglected to fill Reginald Molyneux's glass. In fact, the gentleman had to help himself. She dropped the plates before him as though they burned her, and handed him vegetables at arm's length.

Mrs. Molyneux was very short-sighted and very unobservant, but even she could not fail to notice how her nephew behaved to the parlor maid. His eyes were more on her than on his plate. In fact, he stared in a very rude way, so that at length the old lady grew indignant.

'I should be glad, Reggie,' she said stiffly, when Bawn was out of the room, 'if you would not stare at Brigid. You embarrass the poor girl so that she does not know what she is doing.'

He murmured an apology, and was a little more careful when Bawn returned. In fact, Mrs. Molyneux thought her rebuke had been received excellently, and began to excuse Reggie in her own mind. 'She could not see how he stared into the parlor maid's eyes whenever she handed him a dish, nor his almost imperceptible smile, which cut Bawn like a lash.'

However, she did happen to be looking straight at them when this extraordinary incident occurred. Bawn was handing an entree of sweetbreads and mushrooms in thick brown gravy, to which Mr. Molyneux was helping himself with great slowness. Suddenly she saw the girl lift the silver dish and deliberately pour its contents over the young gentleman's sleek head and immaculate garments. There was a shriek, an oath, a scurry. Bawn had fled from the room, and Reginald Molyneux was standing, streaming like the god Neptune, only with brown gravy instead of sea water, a collection of sweetbreads and mushrooms between his shirt front and his vest, brown gravy streaming down his nose, hanging from his eyelashes and his hair, helpless, infuriated, dumb.

An hour later Captain Gerald, relieved from duty, made his appearance at the flat, and found his aunt gravely disturbed.

'I couldn't have believed it of Brigid—I couldn't, indeed!' she said. 'You should have seen the sight he was, even after he'd tried—to wash it off. I'm afraid he must have been rude to her.'

'I'm in love with your parlor maid, Aunt Sybilla.'

'Was that why you were going to exchange?'

'Because I was an idiot. I did know she was a lady. Yet—yet—I was afraid I might break your heart.'

'She belongs to a very good family—the Desmonds of Ballintubber. I found she had been living with my old friend, Grace Quinn, whom I had never seen since we were girls together in the County Clare. Where are you going to, Gerald, my dear?'

'To apologize to Miss Desmond for my cousin's rascality—to ask her to stay with you and me, Aunt Sybilla.'

'Bawn!' said Captain Gerald a few minutes later. 'I am proud of your spirit. If Reggie had succeeded in kissing you, I should have killed him.'

Bawn looked down thoughtfully at her slender, strong hand.

'You should have heard the report' she said, 'when I smacked his face. I thought Mrs. Molyneux would come out to see what had happened. He is not likely to forget,' she continued pensively. 'And yet it was a pity. It was a delicious entree; I had made it thinking of you.'

'I should not have enjoyed it half so much if I had eaten it,' Captain Gerald said, with grim delight.—Katherine Tynan in the 'Sketch.'

Self-respect is one of the best sentiments we can have when evil entices, but our respect for ourselves must be based upon the value God sets upon our souls.