

FRANCES PAIGE

THE MOVING SEQUEL TO
THE SHOLTIE BURN

MAEVE'S DAUGHTER



Frances Paige acquired many thousands of new readers when the first volume of her family saga, *The Sholtie Burn*, was published in 1986, but she has always been a popular and prolific writer, under a variety of pseudonyms. She has published two previous novels under the name Frances Paige: *Three Girls* and *Lost Time*. *Maeve's Daughter*, the second volume of her saga, will be followed by a third book about the McGraths.

Born in Scotland, the author is married to a psychiatrist whose thinking, she admits, has greatly influenced her approach to characterization. She and her husband live in Lancaster and travel regularly to south-west France, her second love.

By the same author

Three Girls

Lost Time

The Sholtie Burn

FRANCES PAIGE

Maeve's Daughter

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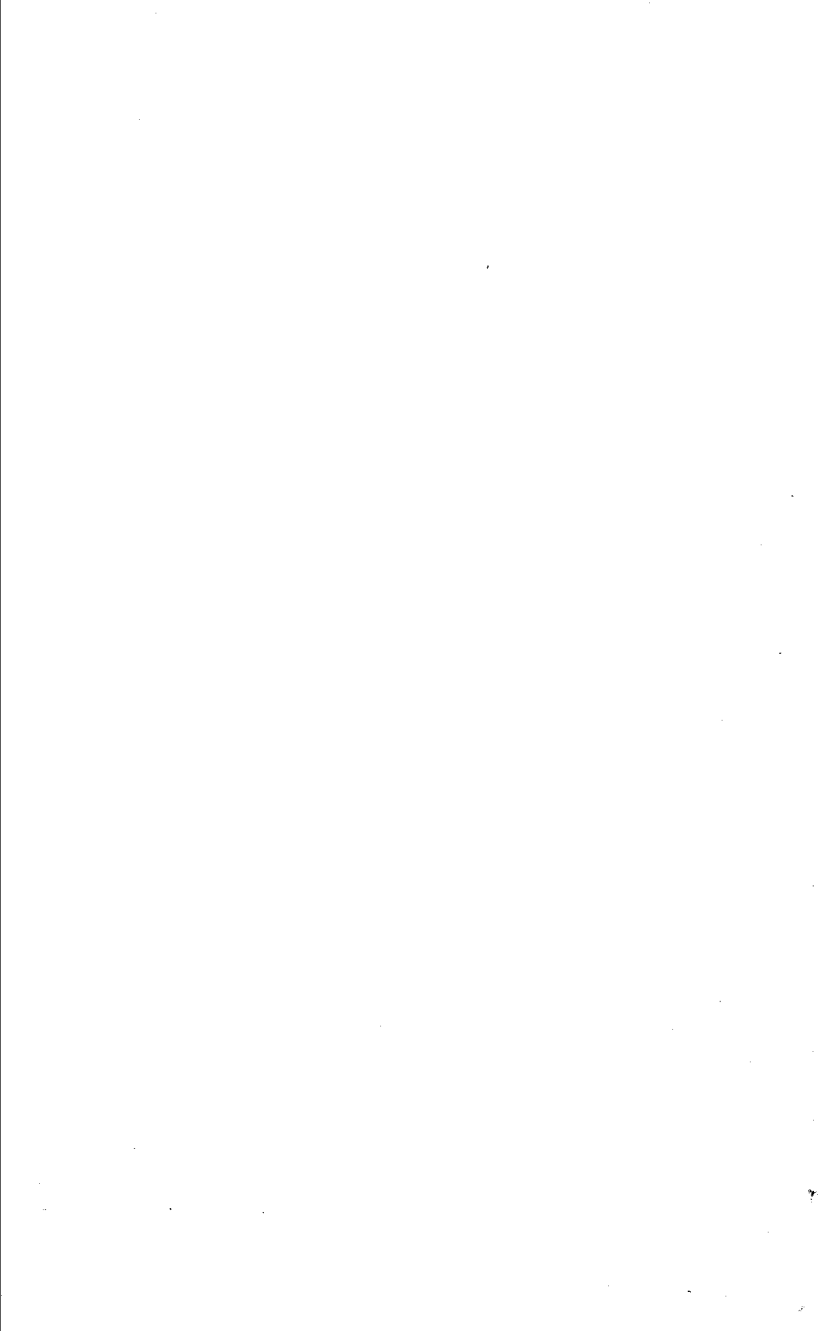
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All of the characters in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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BOOK ONE
Going Forward
1885-1890



1

No one can wear a hat like mother, Maevy thought, watching the tall elegant figure in full fig coming towards her with her grand-daughter, Lizzie, in tow, a manikin in an identical bottle-green velvet suit, the nipped-in waist, the puffed sleeves, more exaggerated than most Glasgow women or children might wear, the same red hair – in Lizzie's case ringleted where her grandmother's was swept up and partly concealed by the black pill-box hat trimmed with tulle and one green rose. A confection, not a hat, worthy of the Colosseum Millinery Department itself.

The woman and the child each wore a black astrakhan muff on a silver chain. Lizzie's hands were buried in hers – it was a nippy December day with the wind blowing off the Clyde – but Maeve had one hand raised to greet her daughter and namesake. Her blue eyes were brilliant in the paleness of her face, her smile had a richness.

Maevy bent to her small nephew, whose hand she was holding. 'There's your cousin Lizzie, Robert.' She gave her own hat a tug, unwieldy on her head after the trimness of her Sister's cap, moved her body against the blue serge of her suit, feeling her back itch. And her corset was too tight. The Royal Infirmary's diet was meant to sustain, not hone, the figure. 'You look lovely, Mother,' she said as they met and kissed. 'Your perfume will kill the smell of carbolic on me.'

Maeve lowered her voice, glancing at the boy, 'Someone, you know who, said I spent as much on perfume as a Frenchwoman!'

Maevy laughed. 'She'll have you running a brothel at

Braidholme next!' They had always shared the same sense of humour, especially about Catherine, Robert's mother.

'A brothel, is it? Now, that's a grand idea to be sure. Set Sholton by the heels.' Sometimes Maevy imagined that since her father's death the Irish lilt in the voice had intensified. Perhaps it was her mother's way of keeping his memory green. 'Anyhow, it's you who look lovely in your mufti, but, then, a bonny face fits the dishcloth.' She bent to kiss her grandson. 'Well, Robert, are you looking forward to seeing the Christmas Fair?'

He nodded, his face serious. 'Yes, Grandma, but Father says after the new baby arrives, he'll take a box at Hengler's Circus.'

'Oh, you'll enjoy that. There are little monkey jockeys riding the ponies, and a clown called Yorick and a wonderful water spectacle and . . .'

'How do you know all that?' Maevy asked. 'You never took us when we were small.'

'And didn't I often wish we could? But five children on your father's pay . . . No, it was Emily and Victoria, Kate's charges, who described it to me . . . like magic, it sounded.'

'That's what Father says,' Robert put in, 'like magic, with hundreds and hundreds of tons of water flooding the stage and he's going to ask you, and Uncle John and Aunt Isobel, and Uncle Patrick and Aunt Maria with little Sarah and you, Aunt Maevy and . . .'

'You forgot me, you forgot me!' Lizzie, who had been listening open-mouthed, jumped up and down, her curls jumping, too.

He considered, like a little man in his grey Harris tweed coat and voluminous cap to match. 'Yes, you'll be coming. You're the eldest.'

'And what about your other cousins in America?' Maeve said.

'Father didn't say them.' Robert looked worried.

'Well, we'll just have to take lots and lots of boxes.'
Lizzie clapped her hands.

'She's just like your brother, Terence,' Maeve laughed at her daughter, 'no penny-pinching.'

'Listen to the pot calling the kettle black.' Maeve shepherded the two children in front of them, **'Come on, then, or we'll be arrested for standing in Jamaica Street for too long.'**

The Colosseum had been one of the first Glasgow stores to introduce electricity, and when they went in the place was a blaze of light with Chinese lanterns in their hundreds. The children were speechless.

'Don't stray away from us, mind,' Maeve said to them as they went up the grand staircase. **'If you get lost you won't see all the splendid things when we go through the Grand Arcade.'**

It well deserved its name with its bowers of artificial flowers and coloured bead-work, but what enchanted the children even more was Mr Walter Wilson's New French Circus, where a small mechanical pony galloped round the room with a mechanical lady on its back, pirouetting and dipping on one pointed toe. But even that could not be compared with the Wonderland with its quacking geese and stalking cats, and the Italian organ grinder who obligingly played when a penny was dropped in his front.

Maeve said to her daughter, **'Do you remember when you were taken to church when you were small and you shouted out, "Where's your monkey, Joe?" to the new organist?'**

'I never did!'

'Terence nearly died of shame because he was trying to impress Catherine.' Maeve's laugh rang out and Maeve had to laugh with her. **'There was an old Italian called Joe**

who used to come round the village on Sundays with a barrel organ and a monkey sitting on it. You always ran out and danced.'

Across the years Maevy inhabited the dancing figure, skirts held out, even heard in her ears the clackety noise of boots ringing on the metalled road. And felt again the sharp nudge of Terence's elbow as she struggled to stand on the church pew . . . 'You've a great imagination on you to be sure,' she said, mimicking her mother's way of speaking.

At last they had both to admit they were whacked. 'What wouldn't you give for a cup of tea?' Maeve said, although to Maevy she looked as fresh as paint. It was no good telling herself she was a nurse and had no time for fal-de-rals. Her mother had given birth to six children in Colliers' Row and reared them in poverty, no, only five . . . John. Her heart could still miss a beat when she remembered that dearly beloved young brother who had drowned in the Sholtie Burn. She had told Charlie McNab about him once, when they were taking a turn in the Necropolis, handy for the Infirmary.

'And is that why you became a nurse, all that scouring and cleaning, to wash away your guilt?'

'No, it isn't!' She had been stung. 'And how about you slaving away in general practice in Sholton and dashing in here any time you have a minute?'

'It's to see you.' He had laughed at her.

'What a hope!'

'All right, I want to be where great things are happening, not that they don't happen every day in the practice at Sholton, births and deaths, but it's the future. I want to be part of it, just as I want to be part of your future. Go on, Maevy, say you'll marry me . . .'

She had shaken her head, drawn her red-lined cloak closely round her. 'I'm not ready yet.'

* * *

'Good day, Mrs McGrath.' It was one of the shop-walkers, resplendent in frock-coat and pearl pin in his stock. 'Are the children happy with our little display?'

'They're enchanted, Mr McAllister. We're afraid we're never going to be able to drag them away from all these marvels.'

'Yes, the piping bullfinch has been a great success. Have you visited our new afternoon tea salon, by the way?'

'We were just thinking about it . . .' Maeve glanced ruefully at the children.

'Might I presume to detail one of our staff to keep an eye on your daughter's children . . .'

'Oh, they're not mine. They're my nephew and niece,' Maevy interrupted.

'Ah . . .' A natural mistake, the man's look seemed to say. 'They'll be in good hands, I can assure you.'

'Thank you, then, Mr McAllister.' Maeve gave him her brilliant smile. 'We'll take advantage of your kind offer.'

'It's our pleasure.' He bowed. 'And I'll see that you get an invitation to our Fashion Show. They only go to our most valued customers.' He bowed again. 'Good day, Mrs McGrath, good day, Miss McGrath.' Had he emphasized the 'Miss'?

'Isn't this great?' Maeve squeezed Maevy's arm like a girl as they made their way to the afternoon tea salon. That was Mother, everything was always turned into an adventure. She remembered the blanket houses she had taught them to make in bed, draping them over the bed ends. 'Imagine you're camping in darkest Africa like David Livingstone . . .'

How sad Father must have been to die and leave her. For the first time she saw her through his eyes. How many wives were exciting to live with? She thought of the prim face of her sister-in-law, Catherine, the precise diction

when she was speaking at one of her meetings for the Temperance Movement. Poor old Terence. She would be watching him like a hawk at Maria and Patrick's Christmas party tonight.

'So, what's the family news?' she said when they were sipping their tea and nibbling one of the Colosseum's renowned 'fancies'.

'The business is going well, I'm there every day, have been since Lizzie went to Isobel and John.' Maeve saw the momentary sadness. 'Patrick hasn't missed his chance with horse-cars, naturally, but it's only a matter of time before the City Council take them over, so that revenue will go.'

'You still do carting for the railways?'

'Oh, yes, plenty. Short hauls. And plenty of work comes in from the Cleansing Department. But Patrick has no love of horses, unlike your father. It was his love of them that took him into the stables that night . . .' Her eyes glittered with sudden tears but unlike most women she did not dab at them with her handkerchief. They swam luminously in her pale face as she smiled. 'Glasgow's too small for our Patrick. He's desperate to get everything mechanized. Sometimes I think he'll pack up and go to America.'

'I think Maria still suffers from homesickness. She looks so wistful at times.'

'Still . . .' Maeve forked a piece of iced cake with genteel gusto, 'I should have thought she'd have put down her roots by this time. Sarah's two now and little Gaylord's a lovely baby. They're fortunate.' She meant because they were full cousins.

'She's happy with Patrick, isn't she?'

'Oh, yes, she adores him. Of course Bessie Hadow was his great love but that's behind him now. Maria has Bessie's gaiety with more assurance but then she'd been

brought up to it. She doesn't come from a butt and ben as Bessie did.'

'As we did.' Her mother nodded. She had never been given to talking about her old home in Ireland which had been so different.

'It was a comedown for you.' Surely I can say that now. I'm nearly twenty-four, a Sister in the Royal, one of Today's Women.

'What do you mean, a comedown?'

'Well . . .' a cake crumb had lodged in her throat, 'you had a different life, hunting . . .' The blue eyes snapping fire in the pale face made her stop.

'Never underestimate the power of love, Maevy.' And then she was saying, coolly, 'How are you getting on with Charlie McNab?'

'Charlie?' She lowered her eyes to the iced cake on her plate. There was an initial 'C' on it in chocolate icing. It could not be . . . no, it was for 'Colosseum', of course. Embarrassment addled one's mind. 'Oh, he's about the Infirmary a lot,' she said airily.

'But is he about *you* a lot?'

'For an Irish lady that's a coarse remark to make. This family of mine is obsessed with Charlie McNab! Maria's even asked him tonight, as if he was one of the family. We're the best of friends, that's all.'

'Och aye. I'll believe you. Thousands wouldn't.' Her smile disappeared. 'He's the best doctor we've ever had at Sholton. I couldn't have got through your father's death without him. I've a good family, but sometimes you need someone outside to put things in perspective. He supplied that, wise beyond his years, and with a touch of gaiety thrown in.'

'Oh, I know all that, Mother.' The serge was making her back itch again. 'But I'm interested in my career. I might even be the Matron some day . . .'

‘And an old maid into the bargain.’

‘Marriage isn’t everything.’

‘It was to me.’ She put her hand on Maevy’s hand and looked into her eyes. ‘When are you going to forget John Craigie?’

She shook her head, unable to speak. How they probed, mothers . . . if only she could rid her mind of him. What was it about Isobel’s husband which had taken her heart at sixteen and kept it? He hadn’t an intellect like Charlie McNab’s, or a future – a minister in a mining village – he had no dash, no polish, and yet she still could hardly enter a room where he was without trembling. ‘How is Isobel?’ She forced herself to speak calmly, ‘Is she better in health now Lizzie’s with them?’

‘Still frail, she always will be, Charlie says, but she’s making a splendid mother. And John’s as fond as she is. I met them the other day when he was escorting Lizzie to the Hall for a birthday party.’

‘The son and heir’s?’

‘Yes, Nigel, he’s called. I think he’s ages with Lizzie, getting on for eight.’

‘Our Lizzie’s moving in elevated circles. Of course, you’ve known his father for a long time, haven’t you?’ She was bland. Terence had once told her there had been a friendship, more than a friendship, he had hinted, but he had been expansive with drink.

‘I had the privilege of riding one of Lord Crawford’s horses for a time.’ Her eyes were cool. ‘Did I ever tell you about that business with Isobel? Three years ago, it’ll be. More tea?’

‘Yes, please. It’s nice.’

‘It’s China. They know here I prefer China. Involuntary melancholia, Charlie called it. He was very worried.’

‘I hadn’t realized . . .’ She listened through the subdued