

**THE PIONEER
SERIES. ACROSS AN
ULSTER BOG**

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The Pioneer Series. Across an Ulster Bog by M. Hamilton

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M. HAMILTON

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Across an
Ulster Bog



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Across an Ulster Bog

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Across an Ulster Bog

By

M. Hamilton

Author of

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Across an Ulster Bog

CHAPTER I

THE rain was falling with a soft, persistent sound.

When Ellen went to the door to look out for her father, she could distinguish little save a brown blur of bog-land, with a grey, misty background. The dark pools of turf-water were full to overflowing, and the dripping rushes beside them bent and clung together; the cotton-grass, with all its fresh whiteness gone, was beaten down into the heather in pitiable, soiled masses. Near the lake, a straggling row of poplars stood out with ghostly indistinctness.

A sense of utter isolation weighed upon Ellen; the rain seemed to shut her out from human sight or sound, a solitary human creature. She knew that if the mist lifted she would be able to see the smoke from half-a-dozen chimneys across the bog, and as many distant groups coming back from their work along the damp road; but the knowledge only gave a background of relief to the strange, unreal feeling of aloneness.

She held the door open, that her father might see the light of the fire as he came across the bog. A few drops of rain drifted in and touched

her hair, and she drew back a little farther into the shelter of the cottage.

Her work for the day was not very heavy, and she had finished it long ago. She had brought in both the goats, after her usual difficulties with the grey one, which was no respecter of persons, and butted at Ellen as readily as at any one else; she had fed the chickens on the potatoes left over after dinner, and brushed up the earth floor in the kitchen to leave no three-cornered marks of their wet little feet. Then, just after the rain had come on, she had made up a bright fire, put the kettle on to boil, and got everything ready for her father's tea.

Most of the live creatures had gone to bed early, in disgust with the weather. The old mother pig was still out for an airing; she was of an obstinate disposition, and did not allow her regular afternoon walk on the midden to be lightly interfered with. But her temper was ruffled, and she stopped to quarrel viciously with a couple of dissipated-looking chickens over a remnant of potato.

Ellen interfered and drove her back to her children, grunting ill-humouredly.

Inside the house a brown puppy and a couple of kittens were having it all to themselves, and were squabbling in a warm corner with small yelps and growls. The father's seat was ready for him—a wooden chair drawn in closely to the fire, where a brown tea-pot was warming in the ashes.

When Ellen caught sight of him, a shadowy figure drawing out of the mist, she went in to get his thick delf cup and saucer and little jug of goat's milk from the dresser.