

MICKEY AND THE DUCHESS

A Tale of the Part Played by Two Horses with Irish Characteristics

By KATHARINE TYNAN

THE beginning of the story was when Larry Casey presented himself at the hall door of Castle Lambert one morning of early spring, leading by a bit of rope a big chestnut colt, who was later on to receive the name of Mickey.

The arrival was observed by Miss Kitty Lambert, who at the moment was making a very good breakfast. All the dogs on the hearthrug—there were five of them—broke into a senseless yapping, lifting up their heads and serenading the portrait of Achilles Lambert, who had voted against the Union and had walked fifty miles to do it, his horse having broken down on the road. "Sure the Lamberts were always kind wid the people!" a peasant would say telling this tale of Achilles.

Mr. Dominick Lambert, who had a crumple of anxiety between his eyebrows, that gave him an odd likeness to his terrier, Garry, looked up from the pile of letters out of which he was sorting the envelopes that had a commercial look, and his face showed a mild protest against the noise the dogs were making.

"Fools!" said Kitty, running to the door. "It's only Larry Casey with the little horse."

To call the colt that was going to be Mickey a little horse was scarcely accurate. Mickey was tall for his age already, and as he was only two years old he might add a hand to his stature. There would be plenty of going in him by and by. Kitty said to herself, though not to Larry Casey, that the colt would do. Feeling him all over in the correct manner she came at last to see the expression of his face. He was looking at her with something human in his eyes, something of anxiety.

"He's afraid of his life you won't buy him, Miss," said Larry Casey, "for he knows if you don't he'll have to go up to Sewells, for I must have the price of him by Lady Day to pay the rent. He doesn't like going among strangers at all."

"He does look rather sad, poor fellow," said Miss Lambert, stroking the colt's long nose. "I believe he's been crying, Larry."

"Och, he feels it terrible, lavin' the woman and the childer. He was as good as a nurse in the house. An' yet he had terrible anxiety for a horse so young, for he was always afear'd o' the bog-holes for the childer. Sure I left them bawlin' murder after him, the crathurs. There never was a kinder baste."

"He does look very sympathetic."

By this time Mr. Lambert was at his daughter's elbow. Very soon the bargain over the colt was

signed and sealed. Forty pounds was paid over to Mr. Casey, who had begun by asking eighty-five. He had been almost tearful about parting with Mickey, but his tears dried up after he had laid away Mr. Lambert's cheque in an inner pocket of his coat, and had drunk "a glass for luck."

"I wish now, Miss," he said, "that you'd had the sister as well. Ye'd have been a lovely pair. She was bought by wan o' thim little officer boys from the Curragh. She was a dale prettier nor the colt, and being a poor man I couldn't refuse the price was offered."

"I expect you had the 'officer boy,' Larry," said Mr. Lambert.

"I won't tell you a lie about it, sir. He gave me seventy-five for the filly. I was thinkin' before he came that maybe Miss Kitty'd take her for thirty. But sure it wasn't to be."

SOMETIME that summer Mr. Percival Lumley, a rich English gentleman, bought Owl's Castle, which the Kavanaghs were no longer able to keep up. The Kavanaghs and the Lamberts had always been friends as well as neighbours, and there had been a particular friendship between Jim Kavanagh, the heir to an impoverished property, and Kitty Lambert. On the lady's side it had never been more than friendship. On the youth's—Jim Kavanagh was a subaltern in the Royal Irish Regiment—there was something more sentimental. The night before he rejoined his regiment to sail for India for five years, he had sung his favourite song with a note of meaning which had made Kitty sad and angry at the same time. It was the song of another soldier who had left a girl behind him not for him, and was dying on a field of battle.

"Ah, darlint," said he with a sigh,

"You won't be a widow, for why,

Sure you never would have me, avourneen."

The memory of Jim, and the thought of Mrs. Kavanagh and her old mother and her Aunt Fanny living in England genteelly on the money Mr. Lumley had paid for Owl's Castle filled Kitty's heart with rankling ill-will towards Mr. Lumley; quite unreasonable, of course, but then Kitty was not reasonable where her loyalties were concerned.

The first time Kitty met Mr. Percival Lumley—it was at Mrs. Lefroy's garden party—she was quite

snappy with him, to the distress of Mrs. Lefroy, who had hoped that the Lamberts and Mr. Lumley would make friends.

Mr. Lumley at the moment was staying with some of the officers at the barracks. Owl's Castle took a good deal of being made habitable, and he had to hang round till he could get a bit of the house finished to shelter him. Meanwhile there were the soldiers—and there were quite a number of the neighbouring gentry willing to house Mr. Lumley while Owl's Castle was a-doing. Also there was the Angler's Rest by the lough, a comfortable little hostelry with a kind landlady. Usually Mr. Lumley preferred the Angler's Rest.

He was a rather typical Englishman, tall, square, long-limbed, with a clean shaven face, blue eyes, in one of which he carried a single eye-glass, and reddish fair hair.

He was very humble with Kitty, explaining to her—as though he understood her animosity—how carefully he was handling the Kavanagh's old house.

"There must be a water supply," he said—"and new drains must be laid, and there must be bathrooms. Electric light, too; it is impossible to light those great spaces with lamps or candles. For the rest I am preserving the character of the place as much as I can."

"But you can't," said Kitty, rudely. "Without the Kavanaghs Owl's Castle will not be Owl's Castle. You should call it Melrose or Tintern, or something like that."

Mr. Lumley turned a little red, but answered Kitty quite good-temperedly.

After that when he and Kitty met he used to hang about in her neighbourhood, seldom approaching her, but with an obvious interest in her, which annoyed Kitty beyond measure.

KITTY went that August for a visit to her Aunt Maria in Bath. She hated Bath, and she said that Aunt Maria, who was only Uncle Terence's widow and not a real aunt, stifled her with her curtains and carpets and tea-parties and stuffy drives in closed carriages, and her assemblages of old ladies and clergymen of all sorts, and old sailors and soldiers, all of whom were zealots of one kind or another, but sometimes very dear old boys for all that.

She arrived home in October—her duty done and over, for Aunt Maria did not insist on many visits from her Irish niece, although she was given to

SOMEWHAT BADLY MAULED IN THE BIG ADVANCE, BUT HAPPY



English and Scotch soldiers wounded in the great forward movement a few weeks ago. After the peppering they got at the front these men seem to have no fear of the camera. This photograph was taken by special permission of the British censor in France.