

One day, however, it dawned upon him that his fickleness should cease, to make place for a more durable sentiment. He said to himself that, built as he was, happy as he was, he would do well to imitate his companions and take to himself a wife.

This being settled, he must find a home, not only for himself but for his bride and his future children.

The house of his father was very small, its resources very feeble. But careless Tom could not realize that the easy life he had led until then could cease, and he spoke to his father of his prospects.

The old man told his son that it was an impossibility for him to feed an additional mouth at the family table, or to find room for another woman in his house.

If Tom wanted to marry, he would have to find another home and take care of his new family.

This answer destroyed Tom's hopes. Accustomed as he was to lead an idle life he could not make up his mind to make a change, that is to say, work for a living.

He went to his sister and made the same request, namely, would she consent to take him with his wife in case he would marry.

Margaret Nulty, who is married to a Mr. Poudrier, living at Waxford, answered, like her father, that her circumstances did not warrant such an increase in the family. In brief, Tom was refused everywhere.

Tom said nothing and went away, having to all appearances resolved to go to work in order to save enough to go housekeeping.

Such a resolution in such a man was not to be taken seriously. In him it was the shadow of a thought. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that on his way to the contractor, to whom he was to offer his services, Tom backed out, and, with head bowed as if loaded with a painful thought, he came back to his home, dreaming.

It was almost noon.

It was a Thursday, the 4th of November, 1897.

The fields were deserted and silent; a biting breeze whistled through the denuded boughs of the trees, tearing away the last purple leaves that had not yet fallen.

In this wild solitude Tom was thinking, perhaps, for the first time in his life.

He was thinking that labor was a hardship, and did not know that work was the penalty inflicted upon man by God.

At this time, flashed upon his mental vision all the obstacles that were between him and his project of marriage,—his passion for dancing, his love for the fiddle, his leanings towards an idle life; and he was thinking with bitterness.

He was thinking that if his father's house was not incumbered by his sisters and his little brother, he could himself enjoy with the mate of his choice the idle life he always had led; he could eat, drink, sleep, idle away the time in smoking or dancing without ever being obliged to work.