

Mollie was hastening to Derk Police Barracks to ask for advice. The cow's third visit had been that morning.

Her way lay by the lake. It rippled golden grey beneath the spring sunshine; little wavelets drove whispering through the rushes; the catkins hung golden tassels from the hedges; specks of white starred the blackthorns; the may shoots budded tender green. Primroses were a cloud of yellow on the banks, while anemones nestled in the hollows among the stones. Spring speaks, and Man must answer. Mollie's feet dragged on the narrow path, her eyes looked up to the farm buildings at Drumaleen where Tom worked. For thirty years he had toiled there to earn twelve shillings a week.

She stood still; for cows lowed, and she thought of the dewy summer dawns when he had held the kicking heifer for her to milk, and kissed her behind the cow roughly as she finished.

A field away children's voices rose as they played some foolish game. They lived close by Tom's old cabin, where Mollie was to have seen out her life of toil by her man's side, reared her own tow-headed children to play noisily, and suffer blows and kisses. Mollie walked on again, very slowly now, for something tugged at her heart. There was the little walled-in wishing-well, its stone ledges crowded with rags and scraps of broken china and even hairpins—offerings left there before some hope was drunk in with a sip of the cool sweet water.

She had often walked with Tom by the lake, silently as became them when alone, shy and giggling as they met their friends, and they two had wished at the well, leaving a broken blue mug there.

A water-hen drove through the rushes, startling Mollie. It was lonely by the grey waters; her mother had often told her the little people came there at night. Dark-scaled fairies who rose on the lake, and would take straying children down for ever. Tiny green-clad men who danced on the mounds by the castle, and warred with the waterelves; the red-heeled leprechaun too hammered fairies' boots in the fort. People said they heard him still.

Twenty years ago—another April—they were to have been married at the end of the month. She remembered how Kate Hayes, the dressmaker, was working at the blue dress with the white braiding, and how the braid had run short. The blue gown had been worn out for seventeen years; Kate was dead; her daughter fashioned the village orders; and Mollie Dayly was going to the police-barracks to summon Tom Doolan for trespass.

They had parted just beyond the wishing-well. The echo of her own angry young voice seemed to ring back to her. Tom's sulky muttering that he could find another, his own cousin Honor; Mollie's last shrill vow of lifelong silence as she flounced away. She drew a quick breath and hurried on with tightened lips; the lake said too much.

But fat Sergeant Dunne, basking on the wall after a good dinner, was all for peace and arrangement, unfortunately, for opposition determined Mollie in her decision.

"And I to be trampled on," she snorted; "the plants ripped from the ground day after day! An' in he walks quiet an' contained, an' 'Aisy, woman, threaten her,' says he, makin' me a laffin'-stock afore old Bid Naylan. An' he to trespass himself next day before daylight, putting bad plants in me garden. An' not once, but three times now, that red schamer is in. An' I want the law."

But here the sergeant intimated sharply that if she wanted law she'd better drive to Tulloun and get it; he was no issuer of summonses.

"An' a foolish bither woman ye are," he said emphatically, "with the poor chap doin' all he can."

Then he went in, leaving Mollie fuming, muttering between her teeth as she went home.

Next morning her donkey-cart carried her to Tulloun, where her summons was duly issued and accepted. For Tom took it apathetically, making no excuse or offer of settlement, though the red cow was mastered now. It was to be—that was all; the woman was bitter against

him. But the lines deepened in his thin face, and he slouched more and more as he came and went to his work.

As Mollie, very noisy and assertive, fed her hens and pigs, she saw him come and go. She noted the ill-patched shoddy clothes, the shambling, old-man's walk. And Tom was only forty-five. Neighbors poured in daily, begging her to see reason in words well chosen to urge her on. How Tom said she was the "bither old sthick," and how it was no fault of his, an' he'd be shamed for life in the court. Then the red cow, shedding her "pook," strayed again to make Mollie's case surer.

"A fool he is," Mollie would declaim, as she watched the tired man come home. "The fire's out half the days whin he gets in, an' old Hannie away, and the pail left for him to milk his own cow, before he has a sup of milk. An' his pig walkin' the road with her ribs through her shkin, I declare you can see the craythur's jealous whin she do be con-

varsin' with mine. Old Hannie's son is havin' the aisy life."

Mollie knew how often patient Tom went out without a hot breakfast, how he toiled to the village shop to carry home his loaves of baker's bread, how often, too, the old woman borrowed a donkey and was away with a load of suspicious bags and bundles.

For Mollie was always at her door when Tom came by, ready to fling fiery glances at his bent form; he never raised his head to look at her. Muttering to herself as she saw his chimney smokeless, she watched the tired man come out to milk the blinded cow.

She urged her case on with dull bitterness, until it was a certain thing that Tom, who proffered no settlement, would have to appear in court on the 27th of April.

Tom writhed at the thought. His life was a misery to him. Everyone he met had some joke to make, some piece of advice to give.

"The shame on it before the neighbors, an' we promised an' all," groaned Tom to a friend—a friend who immediately slipped across to Mollie, and with well-meant repetition kept the feud alive.

Old Hannie, too, hearing Mollie's comments, had her say. There were little heaps of ashes left in Mollie's yard—unexpected strays of the fat pig; eggs gone from outdoor nests, and other small things within an old woman's powers.

Spring ran riot over the humping hills above the lake when Fate elected to smile. Bryan Knox, the agent, arrived to inspect houses and improvements, and to interview would-be purchasers of land.

Tom was a favorite of his, and the story came to his ears. With a perplexed grin on his face he cycled down the narrow lane leading past the enemies' cottages, just as Mollie, standing with hands on hips, watched Tom slouch home and enter his cheerless house. Hannie was out.



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