

an' remarked, "Just so, Liza Jane. Indeed, so?"

An' then says she, "For richer, I sayed, for poorer, for good or for ill, from this time henceforth." Then she waited a wee bit, to give him another chance—though if she'd waited durin' the nine lives of a cat it would never get into Andy's skull. "Andy McClarnin," she says, don't ye see what I'm drivin' at?"

Poor Andy looked all confused, an' ashamed of himself, an' says he, "Faith, an' I don't, then, Liza, know from Adam down what ye're drivin' at, at all, at all."

"Bab snuff to ye!" says she, outright; "bad snuff to ye, for a numskull! Ye've a head that can see about as much as Paddy Managhan's turf-spade!"

"I know it—I know it, Liza Jane," says Andy, says he, blushin' all over. "Me poor father, when he was alive, used to say if he owned a wheelbarrow that had less brains nor me, he'd make matchwood of it."

"I don't doubt it at all, troth, I don't doubt it," says Liza Jane, seavairly. "Well will ye understand me when I say that I'm thinkin' I had best marry an' settle down."

Troth, that was plain enough for a pallin'-post to understand. So it's very little wonder that Andy did.

But the suddintness of it tuk his breath away for the first instant. An' the next, it was a dart of delight meandhered through him, from the crown of his head to the sole of his fut. Here had he himself been for four years tryin' to gather enough courage to put the question to her, an' now here was Liza Jane makin' up his mind for him!

"Liza Jane, says he, "it's both plaised an' proud I am to hear ye say so. Ye're a jewel of a woman, an' the greatest girl that walks the worl' the day, an'—"

"Marry," says she, "an' settle down," perfectly cool an' calm, an' never seemin' to see Andy's raptures at all. "An'," says she, "I was waitin', very anxious, to have your opinion on it."

"An' my opinion," says he with his head hangin', "is that though ye've done many wise things in your life, ye never done anything wiser; an'—an'—for—myself—"

"Thanky, Andy," says she, snappin' him up afore she'd let him go any further; "thanky. I feel comforted now that I see you think it wise an' favor it."

"T'kink it wise!" says Andy, says he. "Favor it! Why, my darlin'," says he, gettin' more confidence in himself an' sidlin' up his chair, an' reachin' out his hand to take a hold of hers, "why my darlin', sure, that's what I've been wishin' for, in my heart, for—"

But Liza Jane very suddintly, as if she didn't see him reachin', stretched out her hand, an' tuk a hold of the tongs, an' begun to mend up the fire, an' says she, cuttin' him off in the middle of what he was goin' to say, says she, "Seein' that I'm come to that time of day now to have sense for myself, if I'm ever goin' to have it—" Liza Jane was six-and-thirty, every hour of it.

"Yes," says Andy, encouragin'ly, though the nervousness overtuk him again; "yes," says he, encouragin'ly.

"An' it was about time I'd think of settlin', if I'm ever goin' to settle—"

"Yes," says Andy.

"An' seein' that I have a hundhred pounds at me back—"

"Yes," says Andy.

"A hundhred pounds," says she, not to mention the sprinkled cow, which comes to me likewise—"

"Yes, yes."

"An' two two-year-ould stires—"

"Yes, Liza; yes."

"An' a pair of me choice of the young pigs—"

"Brave girl! Brave girl!" says Andy, says he.

"Besides plenishin'—"

"Yes, aye."

"A bed an' beddin', three chairs an' a table, a churn an' crocks, a stock of delft—"

"Good! Good!" says he.

"An' a store of linen," says Liza Jane, says she.

"Magnificent!" says Andy.

"Seein' I have all that—" says she.

"Exactly," says Andy.

"An' seein' moveover," says she slow-er, "seein' moveover," says she, "that

I've been axed—" An' then she closed her mouth hard, an' waited.

"Ah-h-h!" says Bab's Andy, says he with a purty puzzlin' look comin' over his countenance.

"Axed by a boy," says Liza Jane, an' closed her mouth again.

"Ye-ye-yes," says Andy, says he, tryin' to recollect when, in the name of wondher, he had axed her, an' comin' to the conclusion that he must 'a' been walkin' in his sleep some time or other.

"Seein'," says Liza Jane, says she, "that I've been axed by one, last Saturday night was a week."

Andy was ten times puzzled than afore.

"Axed," says she, "on Saturday night last was a week, by a boy with a big farm, from the Dhrimholme parish," an' she begun pilin' more turf on the fire.

An' Andy he turned first like the fire-blaze, an' next like the lime-wall, in the face. An' he fished in his chair as if he had got down upon the point of a pin or something.

"An'," says Liza Jane, says she, puttin' the last turf on the fire, "an'," says she, "it's mighty hearty glad I am that your opinion about marryin' is the same as my own!"

"Ye-ye-yes," says Andy, says he.

"Bekase," says she, "as I sayed, there's none whose opinion an' advice I'd set afore yours, or sooner have."

"Ye-ye-yes," says poor Andy, tryin' for to twist the word out of himself, an' he now lookin' the picture of Black Death in the face. "Ye-yes-yes, surely," says he: "that is," says he, like a dthrowndin' man plungin' at a sthraw, "I mean to say, 'No, surely.'"

"What?" says Liza Jane, says she suddintly dthrowpin' the tongs. "Do you mean, Andy, that no, surely, ye don't advise me to get married?"

"Liza Jane," says Andy, at a dash, "that's it."

"There ye are," says Liza Jane, lettin' her hands dthrow, and lettin' herself fall back in her chair, "there ye are," says she, "an' me thinkin' all along that it was approv'n' ye were. Well, Andy McClarnin, there never was a bigger puzzle nor you in the almanac."

"Liza Jane," says he, "I humbly beg your pardon. So I was approv'n'—but then I thought—I thought—" An' there Andy's tongue got somehow or other into a knot.

"Yes," says Liza Jane, says she, to give him a bit of encouragement; "yes," says she.

"I thought—thought," says Andy, says he, sthroughlin', "thought—it wasn't a boy from the Dhrimholme parish ye intended to marry."

"Oh-h-h!" says Liza Jane, says she, relieved. "Is that it? You thought it was a boy in our own parish I was goin' to take," says she, encouragin'ly.

Andy was himself again, an' he says, "Yes, Liza Jane; yes."

"Ye thought it wiser-like to marry a neighbor boy that I knew well, sooner than venture upon a stranger that I knew little, or nothin' at all, at all, about. Is that it, Andy?"

"Them," says Andy, says he, boldly. "Is my sentiments, Liza Jane!"

Liza Jane she looked for a minute or two like one in very deep thought, an' her brow wrinkled. "An' maybe," says she, sittin' up suddint, an' lookin' Andy in the face, "an' maybe, troth," says she, "you're right, Andy McClarnin." An' then she shut her mouth with a snap, like one who was decided on a thing.

"Right?" says Andy, says he, still bolder. "Sartinly I'm right!"

"An' I should say 'No' to the lad from Dhrimholme when he comes here the mornin'—for he's due then—"

for his answer?" says she.

"Say 'No,'" says Andy, says he, "an' send him packin'."

"Andy McClarnin," says she firmly "I see the wisdom of yer words, an' I'll take yer advice. Unless," says she then, slower an' more thoughtful-like, "unless," says she, "I should change my mind atween now an' then. An' now, Andy, says she, "like the good boy ye are, will ye tell me which of the parish you thought it was that I was goin' to marry?"

In the wink of a midge's eye the courage of Bab's Andy was gone off out of him again, an' he was blushin' all over.

Says Liza Jane, says she, "Did ye think it was Mosie McClure?"

"No," says Bab's Andy.

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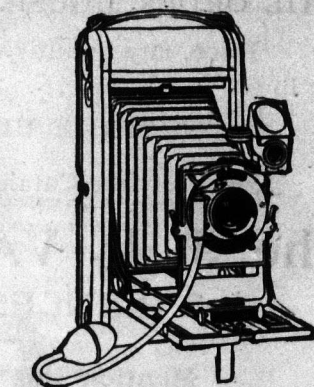
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