

The Strategy of Eliza Jane Bohunna

By Seumas MacManus.



LIZA JANE she lived in the very next townland to myself, an' it's well I mind her. She was one of the hard-headed Scotch that we have so many of in this end of Ireland. An' hard-headed as she was, every mortal bit was she as hard-handed, for, like her industrious kind, she wrought sore an' fast, from four o'clock on Monday mornin' till eleven on Saturday night, with cows an' pigs, tubs, pots an' kettles.

An' that was small shame to her, an' less harm; for the boys of her own kind who were on the outlook for the makin' of a good wife set more value on a rough hand than on a fine face, an' considered a strong arm fitter than a purty phiz, any day, for a farmer's wife—for that was their way of lookin' at things, though it wasn't ours.

An' as this Liza Jane, independent of her kitchen an' farm-yard acquirements, was given out for a hundred pounds of dry money, there was, as ye may well suspect, a tremendous traffic of boys come afther her. But its little encouragement they got from Eliza Jane; she considered coortin' a ridiculous waste

house. In was in Andy McClarnin's neighborhood, an' she knew well Andy would be there, because, bein' a boy of renowned capacity in the feedin' line, he almost passed his winter travellin' from one public bun-worry to another (overpolite people call them tay-parties) in his own parish an' in the next parishes to it, an' was reported once to have accounted for five buns over an' beyond Long Rabin MacHamrigh—though Rabin had been fastin' from the night afore, an' Bab's Andy had only done without his dinner. Anyhow, Bab's Andy was at the Alt-a-roie tay-party sure enough, an' Liza Jane pushed up an' took her sait beside him, an' put speak on him, an' give him points about the rearin' of calves, an' the right sort of a dhrink to give a cow that's got the Complaint—till the tay begun to be served an' the buns to go 'round. She so interested Bab's Andy that he proposed to walk home with her. An' he took the opportunity of their starlight sthroll to talk romantically of the darlin' fine price pigs were fetchin' in the last fair of Donegal. An' when they parted at the gate, Liza Jane had undertaken to go to meetin', to the Killymard Meetin'-house, next Sunday night, an' he was to be there an' see her safe home.

Liza Jane got a new skirt thrown to-



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of time that a pair of tomfools, only, might engage in; an' as for marryin' the most of the lads that presented themselves, she said she wouldn't make dis'-clouts of them, to wipe a pot.

This, I say, she thought of most of the neighbor boys, but not of all. There was one, Andy McClarnin, or Bab's Andy, as he was better known, by reason, as there was a roughness of full namesakes of his in the same part, each was easier known by tellin' whose son he was—an' his father's name was Bab. Anyway, this Bab's Andy was no eyesore to Liza Jane, for he had a fine farm that fed five milch-cows, an' give him ten head of stock to sell off every harvest: his father, poor man, was five years dead. An' Bab's Andy was neither lame nor lazy, an' looked on both sides of a ha'penny afore spendin' it; an' it was generally understood that he had as much wit (of the world's sort) to spare as would make five fools wise.

An' Liza Jane Bohunna, knowin' that she had come to the time of day to look about her an' think of a likely man, saw that, all things considered, she couldn't get, an' wouldn't ask for, a better or a warmer sittin'-down than Bab's Andy's. An' accordin'ly she made up her mind that she'd marry Bab's Andy—in case the boy was anyways middlin' willin'.

So Liza Jane bought a new hat, an' went—for the second time in her life—to a bun-worry in the Alt-a-roie School-

gether for herself, to keep the new hat in countenance, an' went to meetin' as often now in one month as she had troubled it in three months afore, till Mr. McPollin, the minister, noticin' it, remarked that Eliza Jane Bohunna was very seriously turnin' to religion.

An' Liza Jane now likewise become a religious attender at all the tay-parties in the three parishes, an' magic-lantern entertainments, an' night lectures by missionaries who had just come back from terrible adventures among the black haythen. An' Bab's Andy fetched her home safe from every one of them—an' as a reward for his dutifulness larnt more in three months about the proper way of rearin' up young pigs than he had larnt in half his life afore. An' time afther time, as she unfolded bit by bit of her extraordinary stock of knowledge about the right feedin' an' breedin' of all manner of farm-bastes, the worship of Bab's Andy for her was growin' greater an' greater, till at last he looked on her as an angel that dropped through the thrap-door of heaven.

When that winter was through with, Liza Jane looked back on it with an aisy conscience, considered she had done her fair share of the coortin', an' that she might very well afford now to sit down an' fold her arms an' let Bab's Andy do the rest.

But, for all that, she didn't know Bab's Andy through an' through. He was a backward boy, an' he was a nar-

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