LUKE TANSY'S LEGACY.

By EOGHAN MacDIARAMADA.

CHAPTER I.—THE AMERICAN WAKE.

THE neighbours were all gathered. The dance and merriment were in full swing in Luke Tansy's kitchen. In a corner apart Johnny Fahy and Mickey Doogan sat chatting.

"Troth, then, Johnny," said Mickey Doogan, "Cormac O'Hara will have a long wait before Luke Tansy gives him the daughter. Lizzie herself, they say, has a 'sneakin' regard' for Cormac, but it's all worth nothing when pitted against the strong will of the man of the house."

"Maybe," responded Johnny in a low voice, "we'd better say little on the amtter here," but raising his voice resumed, "Luke is a decent man, and I knew his people to be all decent before him, so it's kind father to him."

Johnny Fahy was a rogue—a waggish rogue—which rogueishness was well concealed under a show of simplicity, for who should be within earshot of the speakers but Luke Tansy himself, the man of the house. Luke, of course, pretended not to hear, and walked further away, but he heard nevertheless, and flattery, when skilfully applied, goes a long way towards softening the hardest—and Luke Tansy was flint. Luke had two daughters, Lizzie and Katie, no son, and was himself a widower. Katie was going to America in the morning, an dthis was the "American wake."

"My father," said Katie, coming forward and addressing Mickey Doogan in her best manner, poor girl, and with an appearance of great civility, "wishes John Fahy and yourself to come up to the parlour. There's no one there only a few old people like yourselves."

"Wisha, God bless ye all!" said Johnny Fahy, as he tenderly stepped into the parlour, glancing down at his big brogues on the carpet, and wondering if he did right in walking on it at all. The Tansys, in their way, were "great people," as some of the neighbours said, therefore rather exclusive and a source of wide and varied speculation.

"Thank you, sir," responded the schoolmaster, who occupied a seat near the head of the table, to Johnny's salutation. "Johnny," said he, rising and bowing to the bewildered Johnny, "if I may use so familiar an expression, Johnny, I say, on behalf of mine host here—the hospitable and genial Luke Tansy—you are heartily welcome. And you, too, sir," inclining his head gracefully and condescendingly towards Mickey Doogan.

The talk was general and hearty. A little whiskey took away Johnny's temerity; his natural good humour and drollery returned, and as he applied the chisel of wit to the "man of flint"—and the flinty man was no other than Luke Tansy himself—the schoolmaster's laugh was loud and silvery, his good old face beaming with delight as the sparks flew around.

"It's gettin' Lizzie married you'll be now, Luke," put in Mickey Doogan, when the uproarious fun had somewhat subsided, "sure you're gettin' a bit ould, like myself, and badly want a strong boy to work the land."

"Ugh! Let him knock down the mearin' fence," suggested Johnny. The master shouted out "Capital, capital!" sipped his whiskey, and looked grave.

"Knockin' down the mearin' fence" was long a favourite scheme of ould Jack O'Hara's 'Twas ould Jack's desire to see him son Cormac married to Lizzie Tansy, and the two farms—his own and Luke's—which ran side by side, merged into one. And he had even the audacity—for 'twas audacity, and nothing else, seeing that his neighbour's farm was by far the better one—to say to Luke that no idea could be more advantageous to both. Tansy, however, did not see it in that light. "Yes, yes, as John Fahey tersely and very properly puts it, knock down the mearin' fence. By gad, I'll come to see the work of demolition, give my full and hearty consent to the gracious act of vandalism, you know, and drink in bumpers flowing o'er to the happy future of the wedded pair." The schoolmaster's rounded sentences were very nice, but evidently had no effect on Luke Tansy.

"The master is full of eloquence, Johnny," put in Tom Wimbs, the tailor.

"I am, you know; and I'm full of everything!"

He was getting rather full, indeed. His big, intelligent, good-humoured face was "wreathed in smiles," to use a hackneyed expression, and more light and delight shone from his solitary eye—for the poor fellow had accidentally injured one permanently—than out of the two of any other person around the table.

Preparations for tea were being made. The glasses were removed and replaced by teacups. Katie beamed on everyone as she assisted her sister Lizzie, who was the eldest, and consequently the "mother of the house."

"There's loud merriment in the kitchen, Luke," said the master, "I think we'll give place to the ladies here, and 'ply nimble heel and toe,' you know, to the tune of the 'Jolly Tinker.'"

"The master is on it," whispered he tailor to Jemmy Tahaney. "We'll have sport yet before morning."

"Won't you give us the 'Load o' Hay, Tom?"

"Augh! bad luck to the one of me sang it since the wake in Martin Ward's. I'm hoarse anyway after the wettin' I got coming home the fair night."

The kitchen was a glorious sight—lads and

lasses tripping it through "the sets," crossing and gack again, wheeling and laughing, joking and smiling, till you hardly knew whether their feet followed the music or the music their feet.

Morrison, the fiddler, sat in the corner—and he wasn't blind, devil a sign of him!—discoursing sweet music, wild music, rollicking music, and music that would make an ould hag dance.

At a pause in the full-souled, hearty, red-cheeked merriment, the master was heard to repeat, with a peculiarly melodious intonation:

"WISHA·GOD·BLESS·YE·ALL" SAID·JOHNNY·FAHY·

"On with the dance. Let joy be unconfined."

The call went up "A song from Tom Wimbs—'The Load o' Hay'."

"Yes, Tom, 'The Load o' Hay'," entreated

"And if any of the hay-seeds get stuck in your throat, Tom, we'll see to wash them down," said Johnny Fahy, who sat beside the 'man of the house' on a long form by the wall.

'Begin Tom," persuaded Luke.

Tom coughed a few times, and then began—

THE LOAD O' HAY.

One winter's mornin', the snow adornin' the hils and brakes of Oughan More,
I left my sheelin' with buoyant feelin', although I ne'er might see it more,
And made for Cloonneen, where I had oft been at many's a spree till the break o' day,
There in the borheen I met sweet Noreen and she singin' gaily 'neath a Load o' Hay.

"Good morning' Deirdre, were I the Ard-ree I'd make thee Queen with a golden crown,"
Thus spoke I kindly, somewhat sublimely; the maiden blushed and then looked down,
But answered "Father, I'm sure, would rather you'd ply your needle for food and pay,
So stop your dreamin' and airy schemin' and let me pass with the Load o' Hay."

She was a Helen, with white bosoms swelling, and he kept on pleading, she little heeding, till ~~she~~ finally she got him to cary the load o' hay. At the 32nd verse it ended up beautifully, amidst applause.

"The Master's dance; come out, Mr. Geraghty, if you please," coaxed Katie, "it's the last dance I'll be asking of you for a long time."

"Yes, yes; I'll dance, Kate. I'm sorry you're leaving us; you were the brightest girl I ever had in my school, and—and—" the poor big-hearted felow was blubbering, "and we'll miss you greatly."

"Oh, I'll be back soon. My uncle in San Francisco is in poor health, and not expected to live long. He wrote to father to send me out. He'd like to have some of his own near him when dying. He was never married, and they say he's very rich. He owns a big saloon in the city."

Uncle Patsy, the San Francisco saloonkeeper, did not write to his brother, Luke, to send out his daughter. This was sheer imagination on Luke's part. Katie, however, believed it to be true. Her father's purpose was to have her there that she might get a share of the uncle's money. "Aye, maybe she'd get it all," he convinced himself, "for she's a winsome little creature—her poor mother all over, God rest her!" Her mother all over she was, indeed—gentle, wise, and cheerful, and of tidy and comely appearance.

"Your dance, Mr. Geraghty. Katie, will you take your arms from round his neck?" laughed out the fiddler.

"By gad, Tom, you're a wag, and possessed of a heart, you know, that knows not care. What's this the song says of your fraternity:

'I've but to touch a string,
On nimble finger glancing,
When off on airy wing
My heart flies dancing, dancing.'"

"Ugh! Mr. Reilly over there in the corner at the back door will give us all that after the dance. He'd sing ~~sing~~ it in Dublin, and Dublin was never like Carrownaha. That's right, Nellie, coax him; he'll do it for you, I know. I could sing myself once of my days:

'She stepped out an' I stepped in agin,
I stepped out an' she stepped in agin;
She stepped out an' I stepped in agin,
Just in time for Lannigan's ball.

I'll get up in the morning early,
I'll get up ~~in the morning early,~~ an' give ye a call
I'll get up in the morning early,
Just in time for Lannigan's ball.'"

"Wisha, may you never die of a winter's day!" exclaimed Mickey Doogan, as Tom the fiddler sat down amidst applause, witticisms, and laughter.

"The 'Dhrowsy Moggie,' sir?"

"No, 'The Jolly Tinker.'"

The schoolmaster took Katie Tansy as a partner, the jolly dancers did justice to the "Jolly Tinker," and knocked dust out of Tansy's cement floor.

Mr. Tom Reilly, of Dublin, who was "something in the Big Smoke," sang "The Fiddler." Tea came on next, and it was broad daylight when a stir was made for home.

"Good-bye, Katie."

"Good-bye."

A kiss, a hand-shake, and hot tears ended Luke Tansy's "American Wake."

CHAPTER II.—THE LOVERS.

NOW as o Cormac O'Hara and Lizzie Tansy, Katie's first letter from America had just arrived, saying she got over safely, having had a rough voyage. "Uncle is very poorly in health," the letter continued, "and not expected by the doctors to live long."

"Well," said Cormac, who had stepped in to hear the news from America, "I suppose, Luke, you'll be going to Ballynahown to-morrow with the fat pigs?"

"No; we can afford to keep them on for another month or two. We don't want the money, and we have plenty in the house to give them." This was pointed. Cormac attempted no further conversation. Knowing the peculiarly obstinate temper of Luke he considered it better to remain silent. Outside he met Lizzie coming from the well with two cans of water.

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"Why, Cormac," said she in a serious and half-reproachful way, "you're growing very unneighbourly."

"Ugh! I've been working very hard lately. Father says we must get a woman into the house soon, and I'm putting things straight for the occasion."

"Who's the lucky girl, Cormac?"

"A name-sake of my own from over by Carrickbanagher."

"Is it all settled?"

"Not quite; her father and brother are coming over to see the place next Sunday; and that's another reason why I've been so busy lately putting out the best side of things."

"I wish you luck, Cormac, but—but I didn't think—you'd—you'd treat me like that."

The big tears stood in her eyes. He felt himself to be a deep villain. Neither spoke for some time. Lizzie resumed:

"My uncle in San Francisco is dead—we had a letter from Katie to-day. He left four thousand pounds' worth of property to be divided between father, Katie, and myself. When I get my share I'll shake the dust of Carrownaha off my boots, and go as a governess or hospital nurse—I don't care which."

The property was sure. Katie's letter went on to say—"Poor Uncle's property (God rest his soul!) is to be sold by the executors when certain formalities are gone through, and the money realised divided between you, Lizzie, and myself in equal shares."

Luke was jubilant at first, and inclined to be communicative, even to Cormac and ould Jack O'Hara concerning the legacy. Gradually, however, he became reticent, and within a fortnight of the receipt of the good news he was haughty. "I must cut off the O'Haras," he said in his own mind; and he repeated these simple words till they seemed almost terrible.

"I must cut off the O'Haras!" and he did. Lizzie took to the severance more easily than her father expected; but then there was the rumour of Cormac's approaching marriage with Janey O'Hara, of Carrickbanagher—"a strong, starppin' stroghler"—as Johnny Fahy called her.

The news of Tansy's windfall went far and wide. Lizzie had many suitors, and if gossip—that long-tongued jade—speaks true, received them graciously, and sat by a patient listener whilst the question of money and marriage was debated; the latter and herself, however, being rarely mentioned. 'Twas gold, legacy, stock, and land; land, legacy, stock and gold!

At last an adventurer came—he was about the tenth, and a fine manly fellow too.

"I must get four hundred pounds into my hand before I sign up the place to any man, Mr. Brady," were the emphatic and decisive words of Luke Tansy."

"Well, my father is willing to give you that or near it, but thinks we'd better wait till matters are settled as regards the legacy."

Thus matters stood, and thus they remained for a year. Mr. John Brady was Tansy's prospective son-in-law. He was a regular visitor in Carrownaha, and sat in Tansy's corner many a long night discussing cattle, crops, and current affairs.

CHAPTER IV.—"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

TANSY'S is again a house of festivity. 'Tis the high feast of Hymen. The old schoolmaster is there, the tailor is there. Johnny Fahy sits quite at his ease on a sofa, and doesn't in the least show anxiety as he looks down occasionally at the carpet. Tom Morrison, the fiddler, is at his old familiar tunes; Mickey Doogan is chatting Mrs. Gaffney over a glass of punch. Owen Dermody is asked to sing a song, and there is a hush of expectancy in the company. All the neighbours are assembled at Tansy's. There is a glow of gladness everywhere—in faces, in cups, in glasses, in the pictures on the wall, and the high soot-glazed rafters glow down benignly on all.

But where is Luke Tansy himself? He has been dead this full year. The legacy was on the point of being realised. The property was to be sold and divided as provided in the will. In one night all was lost. The skyscrapers of which the property chiefly consisted were burned to the ground. The whole city of San Francisco was wrecked. Poor Katie was saved as if by a miracle.

Luke lived only a few months after receiving the fatal message.

"Surely the property was insured, Luke," said Mickey Doogan in a very sympathetic voice.

"'Twas, Mickey, but the d——d insurance company went to the d——l with all the rest."

Mickey was greatly surprised at the vehemence of Luke Tansy's language. His poor heart was broken; never strong, he pined away, and left his two daughters orphans and poorly provided for.

Mr. John Brady sneaked off soon after the news of the catastrophe arrived. Cormac O'Hara and his father were the greatest comforters the poor girls had in their hour of distress.

"Ugh! I suppose I will," said Lizzie, between laughing and crying, when Cormac asked her to be his wife. "But what's to become of your namesake in Carrickbanagher?"

"That was a piece of Johnny Fahy's waggishness from beginning to end. She's married, anyway, since last Saraft to Shawney Regan, the creel-maker."

"Troth, when I see Johnny, th' oul' villain, I'll give him a piece of my mind," and then bursting out into a sweet, rippling laugh, threw her arms round Cormac's neck.

The mearin' fence was to be pulled down the day before the marriage, and all the "good boys" from far and near came to do the "gracious act of vandalism" under the schoolmaster's supervision, who happened to be on vacation at the time.

"By gad," said he, "if O'Hara agrees to a fine we'll let the fence stand, and record this business you know, this merging of the houses of Montague and Capulet on the tablets of time."

And Lizzie having been previously instructed by the Master in her part, running in laughingly repeats:—

"O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou,
Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.'"

The schoolmaster shouted "capital," and repeated:—

"O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?"

Romeo appeared in the person of Cormac O'Hara. He paid the heavy fine imposed, and that day's doings, together with the marriage of next day between himself and Lizzie Tansy are for ever interwoven in the history of Carrownaha.