

Our Prize Story of the Week.

TESSY TIVLEHAN'S TACTICS.

The Prize of Two Guineas has been awarded to Eoghan MacDiarmada, 48 Lower St. Brigid's Road, Drumcondra, for the following Story.

EMLAGHMORE had acquired the unenviable reputation of being the dullest townland, although the largest, in the barony of Corran. For five successive years it had had no marriage to record, scarcely a dance—no not even an "American wake." The absence of the last-mentioned was not, however, to be regretted; it goes to show, nevertheless, that Emlaghmore was in a prosperous, contented way. And so it was. Dullness, stagnation, ennui, if the word is permissible—were its crying afflictions.

Each succeeding Sproft had come and gone, still "Sleepy Hollow" had not awakened. The summer was here again, bedecking the rich valley profusely. To the loving heart, day dreams were unavoidable. Pensive was the look Katie Moran gave from her father's doorstep towards the neat homestead of Peter Stanton a little way off, for 'twas there her lover, Phil Looby—Peter's nephew—lived. She wondered how long she would have to wait before Peter gave Phil the land, and if the rose of youth would have faded by then.

"Wisha, Katie, a penny for your thoughts," shouted a sweet silvery voice in her ear.

"It's you, Tess!" said she, turning round, "and what in the mischief are you up to now?" Katie had read at a glance that Tessa Tivlehan had something in her mind, something that was the outcome of her mischief-loving, tomboyish nature.

"What am I up to, indeed!" repeated Tessa archly, with a world of laughter in her dancing blue eyes. "I'm up to the grandest bit of sport that was ever known; I'm going to convert sleepy Emlaghmore into one of the merriest spots in the barony—see if I don't! Ha! ha! ha!" and Tessa filled the valley with the music of her loud laugh till tears stood in her eyes.

"O Tessa, what's come over you at all?" asked Katie in bewilderment.

"Now, Caith a ruin—I think that's how Phil would say it." Katie blushed prettily as Tessa continued: "I'll give you the outline—the framework—of the plot:—the groundwork of the little drama," and putting her arm round Katie's waist she accompanied her adown the avenue a little way, unfolding as they went along the mischief she had conceived.

At parting Katie seemed, but a little nervous. "It would be cruel to Phil," she protested.

"Cruel, indeed!" rejoined Tessa; "wait till he sees the denouement. He won't then, I promise you, be thinking of what you are pleased to call cruelty."

"And you are sure it will all work out as you desire," asked Katie.

"Of course it will," said Tessa gaily, as she sped across the fields, wild with delight.

Katie Moran and Tessa Tivlehan were neighbours' daughters—markedly in contrast, save for the one outstanding feature that both were uncommonly pretty. Tessa, with her

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ever-laughing eyes of the deepest and clearest blue, and sinuous, graceful form, was a wonder of delight. Her heart was a child's. Katie was meeker, quieter, graver; had a little touch of sadness in her splendid brown eyes, and moved about like a consoling angel. There was infinite feeling and sweetness of disposition in her face, and the broad, smooth forehead, with the stray ringlet adroitly, would have afforded rich material for the artist's pencil or sculptor's chisel. Both girls had lovers—who'd doubt it? Katie's being Phil Looby, the nephew of old Peter Stanton; Bernard Lannigan "was tormented," as he used to say himself, "with that villain of the world, Tessa Tivlehan." Phil would have taken Katie joyfully to the snug home of his uncle if permission to do so had been given him. It was only a question of time and patience. Phil was not rash; all would come well in its own good time, he argued. Bernard Lannigan, too, was in a plight, for his mother, the Widow Lannigan, considered her boy too young—altogether too young—to take upon himself the cares of a household. She held, too, that Tessa Tivlehan was a holy terror; and how could she know that she wouldn't, when she was Bernard's wife, leave her life a misery of fear and annoyance with her tomboyish tricks. She was resolved to hold the reins of office for some time longer. Thus matters for the lovers at Emlaghmore had come to an impasse. There was no marrying or giving in marriage; no spree, dances, or merry-makings; no foregatherings at the cross-roads or on the green hillsides. In fact, Emlaghmore was in a parlous way—it was in imminent danger of losing its soul; its one-time exuberant gaiety had almost vanished. It was prosperous; it is true, but at the same time dull as ditch-water.

Katie Moran admitted, as she walked back towards the house after Tessa Tivlehan had left her, that if the scheme as outlined ran smoothly it would assuredly create a stir and merriment, and end delightfully for all. And then she remembered that on the first available opportunity she was to act her part. The opportunity came sooner than she anticipated. Phil, her lover, had a rival in Johnny Lang, and this rival was to be utilised, to what end shall appear.

Katie was busying herself about the house when a "God save all here!" came from the doorway.

"God save you kindly, Johnny," said old Pat Moran. "Come up here and sit down, man." Katie was lighting the lamp, but she hesitated, with a piece of burning paper in her hand, to say, as she smiled angelically on the infatuated Johnny: "Ugh! Johnny, it's a cure for sore eyes to see you. We were thinking of getting an invitation to your wedding any day: I heard Bessy Farrell was buying the trousseau."

"Bad scran to that ould ass of Murteen Quigley's! He'll, ate every flower in the garden! Here, here, Captain, here!" and off with old Pat Moran to eject the trespassing ass.

"Troth, my wedding," said Johnny to Katie, after her father had gone out, "will be longer in the coming than some people think; unless—ugh! sure, there's no use in talking."

"How no use in talking, Johnny?"

"Now, you know very well, Katie, asthore. Let me light that lamp for you." Katie had purposely failed to light it: if it were alight she feared she would not be able to act her part. And then Tessa would blame her for the failure of the whole comedy.

"Oh, thank you," said she, as Johnny cracked a match and proceeded to turn up the wick. "It needs oil, I think."

"Do you know, I'm like th' ould lamp myself," said Johnny with a sigh. "I'm banging by the wall—empty. Ah! empty."

hearted, alanna; and no good for king of country."

"So there wouldn't be any use in cracking a match to you?" said Katie facetiously, with a roguish laugh.

"Deed there would, then, Katie ahaigis —" if 'twas a match to my liking."

"You'd take light?" said she.

"Ah, and burn. I'm burning as I am. Arrah, Katie aroon, why don't you give me a kind word or a kind glance?"

"Sure, I always do that, Johnny."

"Do you, then? So you do, so you do. I was forgetting. If only Phil Looby wasn't so persistent maybe, you'd —"

"There's talk of Phil going to America. Sure, isn't th' ould uncle getting married to Tessa Tivlehan, and that puts Phil on the shaughraun. The wife of a wandering boy, a poor exile in a far-off land, would have many a scanty bit and sup; and they say when poverty comes in at the door love flies out at the window."

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LET ME LIGHT THAT LAMP FOR YOU.

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"Peter Stanton getting married to Tessa Tivlehan!" re-echoed Johnny, in consternation and delight. "Did I hear you right? And what's to become of Tessa's ould lover, Bernard Lannigan? And Phil Looby going to America! That's the best I've heard yet." Johnny crept up closely to Katie, and would perhaps, have the next moment caught her rapturously in his arms were it not for a voice in his ear, which said—

"Faith, Phil Looby isn't going to America, or I'm an Eskimo!" Katie and Johnny looked round, and there, sure enough, stood Phil before them!

The man of the house returned, and Katie having this time succeeded in lighting the lamp, all three men sat down for a gossip. Phil smarted under the jealousy of seeing Katie and Johnny in close conversation on his entry, and no light in evidence, save the twilight that came through the open door and windows. He took a seat on the settle, fondly thinking that Katie would come and sit near him. Great, therefore, was his chagrin to find that instead of doing so she sat close by Johnny Lang, and engaged him in earnest conversation. And, oh, to look at the way she ogled the shaggy-whiskered, un-couth rival! Phil could hardly believe his eyes. He was sullen, and refused to be coaxed into the conversation. He was raging inwardly with jealousy.

Katie rose to fetch some water from the well, and whilst procuring the cans Phil quietly bade "Good-night" and went out. Katie knew what was before her if she ventured out then; that dread scene would come soon enough, she thought. She knew that Phil would be awaiting her, and that a stormy word-battle would ensue. She felt unequal to it then; so far she had played her role creditably, she imagined. Even the author of the whole comedy—the stage-manager—the inimitable Tessa—couldn't wish for better; everything had gone off splendidly. And Katie laughed heartily at how readily she did the flirt; it was a complete revelation to her. Poor Phil waited outside for over an hour, walking up and down like a caged lion, and kicking viciously at the boughalawns and thistles that came in his path; and when Katie did not appear—being probably, for all he knew to the contrary, folded in Johnny Lang's arms (her father having fallen asleep in the corner, as was his wont)—he determined, so far had goading jealousy enraged him, to wait for the usurper and mercilessly belabour him. He would tear the clothes off his back; he would drag him naked along the road; he would toss him across the highest tree; he would fling him midway in the lake! But Phil, after all, took the better course, and went home quietly, though in a bitter, heart-aching, desperate mood.

Next day Tessa ran across the fields to Katie, and in breathlessness laughingly told her that she had enlisted the services of Andy Dunnigan, "The Rover." Andy was popularly known as "the matchmaker," though 'twas doubtful if he had been ever the means of bringing about a marriage. He seemed to have his finger in every settlement, but being an easy-going, harmless good-natured fellow, with an inexhaustible store-house of fiction, in which he himself always figured as the hero, it may be assumed that nobody would have resented his interference. He had taken old Peter Stanton in hands from the start, that is, from the time Peter returned from Australia and purchased the Emlaghmore farm. But Andy could not suit him. All the girls to whom Peter was introduced were, he said, either too old, too ugly, too cross, or too poor. Peter had a great penchant for the money; he was determined that if he did marry, the fortunate Mrs. Stanton should have a "tidy bit in the stocking," besides being of a nice quiet disposition, young, and passably handsome. Withal Peter had a finely-developed sense of humour, and was known to highly appreciate anything in the nature of a practical joke, provided it was harmless and mirth-provoking. Little he dreamed that he himself was to become full soon the innocent means of providing laughter for a barony for many a long day! Andy, of course, threw him up after a time, vowing that he'd never get a wife. "He's too ould anyway," said he, "and then 'twould be a pity to dispossess poor Phil Looby." 'Twas cunning of Andy (the rogue!) to have sympathy for Phil when he found he couldn't arrange a marriage for his uncle!

~~Katie Moran was greatly amused that~~ Tessa should have called in the services of Andy Dunnigan.

"And what's Andy's part?" said she.

"Andy is my go-between—my little Puck, that ~~little~~ wanderer of the night," laughed Tessa. "But, O Katie, you haven't opened the play already? I met Phil Looby as I came along, and he looked like a man under sentence of death. He did not see me as I passed, or at least pretended not to see me."

Katie recounted the previous night's affair, at which Tessa laughed uproariously, clapping her hands in glee. Poor Katie, thinking of Phil's desolation and agony of heart, remained silent. She had almost repented of her action.

A few evenings afterwards Andy Dunnigan was seen sauntering leisurely towards the neat house of Peter Stanton. His duty was easy and pleasant, and when, the following day at sundown, Peter called at Pat Tivlehan's arrayed in his Sunday best Tessa could hardly contain herself. Peter had put on the semblance of youth. He was radiant; he walked on air. Tessa gave him a subdued, courteous welcome, suppressing, Peter

merry

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thought, a great deal of her wanted hilarity. She looked indeed serious, and why not, when such a momentous question as that of her marriage was about being discussed.

Tessy made tea and waited at table. Peter thought he had never tasted any tea like it. The butter and home-made bread were delicious. Oh, what sweet, health-giving, joy-giving food from the soft white hands of Tessy! He was bewitched, enraptured! And how in the earthly world, he asked himself, had he for so long overlooked Tessy Tivlehan? She was glorious. To-night, too, he noted, she had left aside that mischievousness that was not proper in a marriageable young woman.

Tea over, Tessy sat by the spinning wheel, and soon the music of its hum was heard. She bent her head lovingly towards it and, seemingly unconscious of the presence of any one, began a lilt to which the treadle and the neat little foot upon it kept time. The tune was the old spinning song, "Mo tHuirin Lin."

Peter was lifted into a heaven of ecstasy, and the words of the royal seer recurred to him: "She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle." Before leaving he found occasion to say, in a few well-chosen words, to the blushing Tessy, though not without considerable trepidation, that it was the paramount desire of his heart to make her his wife. She acquiesced in the proposition, saying she was willing to gratify that desire subject to her parents being satisfied. Peter felt unutterably happy, and walked the whole way home under the soft beams of a full summer moon like a man in a dream. It was only when he lifted the latch and stepped inside his own threshold that he fully realised all that had just befallen. He was wakeful that night, wondering and questioning whether, after all, he, an old man of almost sixty winters, had not made a fool of himself! Ah, how ~~valuable~~ the enthusiasm and infatuations of those who have long since passed the meridian!

Next morning when he looked at poor Phil, who was smarting under the repulse he had had from Katie Moran, he felt anything but comfortable. It was tacitly understood that Phil would get the place. He was worthy of it, Peter admitted; besides being the nearest relative. Now that was all upset.

When the news of Peter Stanton's approaching marriage to Tessy Tivlehan spread—and Tessy spared no pains to spread it—gaping surprise was depicted on every face in Emlaghmore. Phil Looby groaned in despair. He saw it all now—it was, alas! too plain. Katie had rejected him simply because she

foresaw that he would never get his uncle's place. "Oh, what consummate baseness in woman!" he cried. "And Katie, above all!" Phil, poor fellow, couldn't grasp the appalling betrayal. He resolved to emigrate. The day of departure could not come too soon. What was he to stay in Emlaghmore for? The light had gone out from his life. His confiding trust was turned into bitter cynicism. He wondered if Bernard Lannigan—jilted by that heartless tomboy, Tessy Tivlehan—would come with him. Perhaps so. No; Bernard had to stay with his mother—he couldn't desert her.

The night of Phil Looby's "American Wake" in Peter Stanton's well-equipped house—the first of its kind for many years in the vicinity—had come. A few short hours and he would for ever bid good-bye to all he loved best. He was now about to realise the poignant agony of separation. Dressed in a splendid new suit of clothes, and looking as fine a specimen of manhood as there was in the barony, Phil, to cool his aching brow, walked abroad just as the sun was going down behind dear old Tawnaghroe. The neighbours were ceasing work, and would soon be calling upon him to give him a last shake of the hand. He gazed in a certain direction, attracted by hearing a loud musical laugh he knew only too well. There, sure enough, not two fields away, were Katie Moran and Tessy Tivlehan, laughing and conversing in wild delight! "Oh, the world's gone awry—mad!" said Phil in rage as he went inside.

The neighbours had gathered, and soon the revels were loud and boisterous. A piper and a fiddler from the village were discoursing wild, tattering music, to which nimble feet kept time. Brave, strong eyes looked into soft loving ones; warm, soft hands trembled at the touch of hard, toil-marked fingers; youth, responsive to music and love, was smiling in the world's face. Phil, moodily sitting aside, noted it all, and sighed. It could not, however, he thought, add any bitterness to the overflowing cup of gall he had to quaff. Bernard Lannigan, brother in distress, came across the floor and sat beside him.

Andy Dunnigan was everywhere, and looked very important. He talked often to Tessy Tivlehan, whose face was a study in roguery. He buttonholed Peter Stanton and old ~~Nat~~ Pat Tivlehan alternately and together. His activity was phenomenal. He would perfect matters to-night; he had been asked by Peter to do so a few days previously, on which occasion they had had a long conversation concerning the approaching marriage. Peter rather vaguely hinted that he would rather the whole affair was upset; he thought it rather late in life to change his way of living.

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and he didn't, he confessed, wish to lose Phil. Andy pretended not to understand, and went on to say how enthusiastic Tessa was concerning the match. "In fact," said he, "Mr. Stanton, if you were in the least inclined to jilt the little girl I don't see how you could have the heart to do it; besides, her father would take immediate action for breach of promise. But that's beside the question; you have seven hundred pounds of a dowry into your hands only to say the word. The marriage agreement in respect of the question of issue or no issue is only a mere formality; and Tivlehan can't object to that."

Meanwhile Bernard Lannigan and Phil sat chatting together. "Bernard," said Phil, "can you grasp it all? I can't. I never dreamt it would be so hard to leave Emlaghmore. It's woven round my heart."

"It's well you can go away, Phil; but what of me, who has to remain here because of my mother and see Tessa married to your uncle—that Tessa who was the light of my life, night and morning. Phil, you cannot think how I loved her, and—and—do!"

"I'll never believe in woman's love again," said Phil.

The piper was tuning his pipes for another dance. The boys were seeking their partners.

"Bernard, have you got the courage to ask Tessa for a dance, and for the last time I'll take out Katie?" said Phil. "Let us forget all that has transpired in so short a time: let us think it a midsummer madness, and that, now restored to sanity again, we are dancing at our own weddings!" And, jumping up, Phil in two strides was by Katie's side. He thought she trembled a little as he asked her to be his partner in the dance—the last, he said, they would ever have together. She relinquished the seat she occupied by the side of Johnny Lang and stood close to Phil—so close that he fancied he could hear the wild beating of her heart. Her eyes were downcast. Bernard and Tessa joined them with other couples. The piper and his comrade musician struck up, and the laughing, light-hearted couples crossed and re-crossed, stepped, side-stepped, and shuffled to the rousing strains of "Miss M'Leod's Reel." Bernard and Phil quite forgot their woes: grief was trodden under foot.

Meanwhile, in another room, the Widow Lannigan, Peter Stanton, Andy, and old Pat Tivlehan were seriously discussing matters of great portent.

"I think," said Andy, "five hundred pounds reasonable, Mr. Tivlehan. This is a grand place of Mr. Stanton's. And you won't easily get a laughier man for Tessa in the length and breadth of Ireland."

"Truth, only for the matter has gone so far I'd give my consent to Bernard to take her at a less sum than that," rejoined Mrs. Lannigan, who now regretted her previous stubbornness and selfishness, which she feared had not a little to do with Tessa's determination to accept Peter as a husband.

"See that now!" said old Tivlehan, who was a tough man in a bargain; "and Mrs. Lannigan has a better place than this."

"Besides that," continued Andy, "there must be, of course, a marriage agreement drawn up, signed and sealed. Mr. Stanton has, I think, drafted the conditions of the settlement."

"I have," said Peter timorously. And he passed the paper to Andy, who handed it to old Tivlehan, who read and re-read it. One condition stated that in the event of Peter predeceasing his wife, and that there was no child of the union, Tessa was to be given her dowry back, and that the place would revert to Phil Looby. A third time Pat Tivlehan read it aloud. Then, looking up with a stern frown, he demanded—"Do you mean this?"

"To be sure I mean it," said Peter.

"That's enough!" And, standing up, the enraged parent, having crushed the precious document in his hand, flung it at Andy's head, shouting: "You're the prime mover in this!" And, truth to say, Andy had not a little to do with it.

Andy was amused, and pleaded with old Tivlehan that he should not be so hasty. Peter remained silent.

"Are you going to adhere to that condition, Peter?" asked Mrs. Lannigan.

"I am," said Peter, not at all sternly, but a little amusedly. He hesitated a moment. Old Tivlehan was waiting to hear more. "Do you know, ma'am, I don't like the state of affairs this little proceeding of mine has brought about. Anyway, when I think of it, I'm too old for marrying. I'll relinquish the reins of office to Phil. Your hand, Mr. Tivlehan. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Andy, as he struck the table a bang, making the decanter and glasses jump. "That's sportsmanlike, ma'am. And now that Tessa is free, do you hold to what you've already said, Mrs. Lannigan? You'll give Bernard your consent to get married?"

"To be sure I will. Peter there and myself will look out for old age pensions," and the widow laughed till the tears stood in her eyes. She was overjoyed that matters were beginning to right themselves, and she felt an inclination to seek out Tessa and fold her to her breast. There was a general loud

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laugh and much loud and noisy talk. The suspense was broken, and old Tivlehan joined in the merriment, despite the insult he considered he had just received.

Andy rushed to the kitchen. The reel was about to finish, and Phil Looby and Bernard Lannigan were each wondering whether they should ask their old sweethearts to elope with them there and then, whilst their glowing imaginations and enthusiasm were afire.

Tessy was the first to catch Andy's eye; she did not need to be told that all had fallen out as she desired.

"Your uncle," said Andy, addressing Phil in breathlessness, "has thrown up the sponge. You're heir to the property in the presence of witnesses. And your mother, Bernard, has given her consent!"

Phil looked at Bernard, and Bernard at Phil. Was it all a mad dream—were the times sane? And this to happen in Emlaghmore, the "sleepy hollow" of the barony!

"It's all too true. My hands on it!" shouted Andy, rapturously, as he shook them by the hands.

"Where's Tessy?" said Phil, looking around.

"And where's Katie?" said Bernard. They both laughed.

"I saw them run out," said Andy. A loud peal of laughter came from the doorway. There was no mistaking it—only two sweet voices could have made such music.

"Well, well," said Phil, as he kissed Katie full on the soft red mouth, "was ever such a comedy known?"

A little way ahead Bernard and Tessy walked arm in arm. She was grave now. The glorious summer moon threw her silver radiance on the scene. The lovers were in-
effably happy. Tessy had to confess her share in the plot, and Bernard, if before he had loved her well, now realised that in her he had no ordinary girl!

When they returned to the "American wake," which in their absence had been converted into a hilarious feast of jubilation, a solemnization of their espousals—they were met with cheers and witticisms and kisses and hand-shakings, and many were the warm, sisterly embraces Katie and Tessy got from their comrade girls. And it was observed, too, that Bessy Farrell had crept over to Johnny Lang to console him for the loss of Katie, and that, as one of the boys expressed it, things were going on very nicely. The piper and his collaborator, in a whimsical mood, struck up the "Green Fields of America!" "Three cheers on an Irish hill" were given as morning broke and the company dispersed.

"Sleepy Hollow" was awakened! It put on its youth. It regained its gaiety and soul, and the treble marriage—for Johnny Lang found great comfort for his wounded feelings in Bessy Farrell's love—in a little time gave it another splendid opportunity of showing how merry-hearted, exuberant, rosy-faced it could be, glowing and kindly hospitable—

"The good are ever the merry,
Save by an evil chance."

The comedy has long since been discovered, and all laugh very heartily at the parts they played, whether consciously or unconsciously.

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