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DOOLAN'S FIDDLE.

"Theres more than yous enjoys a crack with me," said Micky Doolan as he stood at the door of his curiosity shop. "I suppose you know Colonel Gunning, well he kem in heself, just before the regiment left here, an' sez he, 'Micky, there's more entertainment here than in many a lady's drawing-room. an' he shuk me by the han' an' said good-bye, an' right sorry I was to see the last av' him, for it wasn't what he would buy aff me at all at all, but he knew what was what an' made none of them ignorant remarks that ye hear now an' then. Now, there was that William Long, M.F., all that he is and his greatness—he comes into my place an' sez he, 'Micky, you need not be pretending to me; any connoisseur could see with half an eye that bureau is faked; why I can get the same in Wardour street for half the price.' 'Go to Wardour street an' get it, sez I, an' he aff out av' this in wan minute. I'll have no one here insinuat' that 'Micky Doolan is a thief an' a rogue.' 'An to let you see the impudence av' him, he comes in again before he left the town an' he wanted the bureau with him, but not a bit of it would I give him: faked indeed."

In the centre of Ballygawn market is Micky Doolan's Store, and king of the dealers is Micky himself. "I've no dalins with them wans," he will say in a tone of superb scorn when you mention that you have seen such a thing in Lavery's or Donnelly's. You are made to feel that you have committed a social blunder and hasten to amend it; whereupon Micky brims over with his usual good humour and makes you forget your fault by telling you one of his many experiences. One of his particular charms as a story-teller lies in the fact of his unconscious mimicry, and it is very amusing to see him draw himself up and mince his words like some of the fine ladies who patronise him. One day as I stepped in, he seemed immensely tickled over something, and I asked him to let me share in the joke. It's a roundabout story" said he, "but if ye will sit down I'll try to tell it to ye, an' how it was. I don't often buy fiddles, for Donnelly down there does the most in that way, but I was up at the Blessington Sale, near by the Fort, and it was after the Waterford glass I was sick, an' a set ye never saw in yere life. I'll shew it to ye bye and bye, for I got it purty chape I can tell ye, not that I would have got it if Doctor Whitsun had been there, for they say he buys ivery bit av' it the country round. Well I was lyin' up agin the railins when the auctioneerholds up a fiddle an' sez he, 'Who'll start this?' an' with that he gev her a cluck across the strings. Now I'm no judge av' fiddles, but there was somethin' in that note that said to me, ye'll be be a fule if ye don't buy her, Micky Doolan." So with that I calls out 'ten shillins'—'Fifteen,' cried some wan else that I cud see wud not be wantin' a fiddle; so I just hung back, an' some wan said 'eighteen,' an' just when it was near going for that, 'twenty,' sez I, an' as no wan else spoke I got her. Well, I tuk her home an' I lays her down just there; an' there she sat with only two strings on her, an' I did not think more about her till wan day a nice-lookin' lady comes in an' sez she, 'Have you any violins, Doolan?'

"Just yon wan, Mem," sez I, "for I don't often have them, but judgin' from where it kem from she shud be a good wan." "Well," sez she, "I'm like yourself, I know very little about it, but I want one for my daughter who attends the School of Music. Might I take this with me to have it tried by her master? I shall leave you my name or a deposit just as you please. How much do you want for it?" "Four pounds," sez I, "an' it's chape at that; but ye need not lave me yere name or deposit, for a luk at ye're face is enough."

"Well, she laughed, an' tuk it away with her, an' I thought no more about it till wan day I had just put up my shutter to go for my dinner, when comin' down the street I sees a swell-lookin' jountin' car with an owld lady an' a young wan on it, an' thinks I to myself, it's the lady back with the fiddle, and I down again with the shutter an' am sittin' here when she comes up."

"I'm very sorry, Doolan," sez she, "but my daughter's teacher says the violin is too big, and advises me to get a smaller one, and as I am really ignorant on the subject I feel bound to take his advice. I am very sorry for giving you the trouble."

"I'm very sorry too, Mem," sez I, but I just lays her down and goes home to my dinner."

Well, wan day after that I was sittin' here where I could see out, an' I spies a furrin'-lookin' gentleman with long hair an' a soft hat, come down the street, an' he stops at this stall an' that stall an' luks at this thing an' that; but, thinks I to myself it's not them things ye're wantin' at all, it's my owld fiddle, or me name's not Micky Doolan. I have strange notions with me sometimes, the right way av' a thing just comes into me head, an' sure enough, full twenty minutes after, when he had been roun' the whole place, he steps in here an' sez he, 'I haf been looking rount thees places, and now I moost see wot you hai got,' an' with that he spies yon bureau, an' sez he, "How mooch is dis?" Now when any wan comes in an' asks ye for a bureau, ye may know it's the thing unlikest it they want, an' I was not desaved. No, thinks I, wait Micky, me boy, its the fiddle sure enough. So he asks me the price av' this, an' that, an' at the last, he takes up the fiddle, an' sez he, "Wot do you vant vor thees." "Four pound," sez I, "Vor pounds iss far too mooch," sez he, "I will gif you thorty sheelings." "Four pound is the price," sez I, decided like, an' sits down an' takes up my paper."

Well, as he goes out he stops an' says, "It iss too dear for me." "Well, anything else is too dear for me," sez I, "an' that settles it."

Well, I cud not tell ye how it was, but I got it into my head that the fiddle was a good one, and on the Saturday I sees a mug av' a fellow they calls McGlinn, who plays av' evenings in the market; an' says I, "Billy, I want ye to run yere han' over this fiddle av' mine, an' see what ye think av' her." Well, down he sits an' strings her up, an' plays sich tunes that wud melt the heart av' a stone, but they never sounded yon way on his own owld fiddle. "Micky," sez he, "she's a first-rate wan, an' no mistake; if I had the four pounds I'd give it to ye down, but don't part with her for nothin' less." Well, weeks went by an' I began to think I was desaved in myself, an' that for wance Micky Doolan had been mistook in human nature, when late in wan afternoon in walks my furrin' friend again and sez he, 'I do see you haf still that violin, vill you take thorty shillings for it now?' 'No, nor ten poun' sez I, for I was angered like, an' she's dirt chape at that price. Play on her yeurself and then see if you will have the face to offer me thorty shillings.' So he takes her up and tucks her under his chin, an' draws out av' her the most unearthly howls and screeches that ever you heard in your life. Ye would have thought it was killing a pig he was, I had wee Tommy Rooney down to see what was wrong. But, sez I to meself, I won't be tuk in by that performance, an' I just stood listening to him as if he was playin' "Home, Sweet Home" as nice as ye plaze. So he giv' me a quare look out av' the side av' his eye as much as to say, 'Micky, me boy, I'd like to know how much ye know, an' how much ye don't.' But Micky wasn't going till tel him. So he lays her down an' gives a big sigh." Well I suppose you must haf your price," sez he. Now that stuck me, for I always said 'Micky Doolan was a wan price, and him that dose't take it at that can lave it. But I was angered like that I had to to give it till him after the maneness of him, so I got drunk on yon four pounds for a fortnight as I knew it would bring me no luck to kape it."

Well, some time after, I sees a tall London like chap come down the market an in he walks to me an' sez he, with a twinkle in his eye, 'have you any more violins for sale Doolan?' And at that I laughs an' sez, 'what do ye know about meself or me fiddles sor?' Well, sez he, you sold one to Professor Plusky the other day for four pounds, an' he says he would not take a fifty pound note for it now; an he should know for he is the Leader of the Philharmonic and head teacher of the School of Music. I could take a few violins at the same price sez he. Is that the way the win' blows, thinks I to meself, an' I was madder than iver to think of him getting her. But to make a long story short, I went last night to the Philharmonic Concerts, an' there sure enough, there was my furin frien' with the long hair, an' I suppose it was my fiddle I heard screechin' above all the others, an' in the front row av' the Balcony was my lady an' her daughter. If she only knew how she had been desaved by the spalpeen, thought I to myself, she'd give him a piece av' her mind, an' if ever I sees her in Ballygawn agin, the Divil himself won't kape me from tellin her."

"EDITH M. WHEELER."