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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TURN OF THE ROAD ***

THE TURN OF THE ROAD. A PLAY IN TWO SCENES AND AN EPILOGUE. BY RUTHERFORD MAYNE.

***MAUNSEL & CO., Limited,
DUBLIN. 1907.***

This play was produced in Belfast, December 1906, by the Ulster Literary Theatre. (All acting rights reserved by the Author.)

To LEWIS PURCELL

In remembrance of his kindly aid and criticism.

CHARACTERS:

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN, a farmer.
MRS. GRANAHAN, his wife.
SAMUEL JAMES, } their sons.
ROBBIE JOHN, }
ELLEN, their daughter.
THOMAS GRANAHAN, father of Wm. John Granahan.
JOHN GRAEME, a farmer.
JANE, his daughter.
MR. TAYLOR, a Creamery Manager.
A TRAMP FIDDLER.

THE SCENE throughout is laid in the Kitchen of William John Granahan's house in the County of Down.

TIME.—The Present Day.

A month elapses between Scenes I. and II.

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THE TURN OF THE ROAD.

SCENE I.

A farm kitchen of the present day. Door at back, opening to yard, and window with deal table on which are lying dishes and drying cloths with basin of water. A large crock under table. A dresser with crockery, etc., stands near to another door which opens into living rooms. Opposite there is a fireplace with projecting breasts, in which a turf fire is glowing. Time, about eight of a summer evening in July. Mrs. Granahan and Ellen are engaged at table washing and drying the plates after the supper. Thomas Granahan, the grandfather, is seated at fire place and has evidently just finished his stirabout. The strains of a quaint folk-air played on a violin, sound faintly from the inner room.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Is that the whole of them now Ellen?

ELLEN.

Yes that's all now but one.

She goes across to grandfather and lifts the plate.

Have you finished granda?

GRANDFATHER.

Yes dearie I have done.

He pauses and fumbles for his pipe, &c.

Is'nt that a fiddle I'm hearing?

ELLEN.

Yes. Robbie's playing the fiddle in the low room.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Arranging plates on dresser and turning round.

I wish some one would stop that boy's fool nonsense wi' his fiddle. He's far too fond o' playin'. It would stand him better to mind his work.

Calls.

Robbie!

Louder.

D'you hear me Robbie?

ELLEN.

Oh, let the boy be, mother. Its the first time I've heard him at it this week.

GRANDFATHER.

Och aye. Let the boy enjoy himself. You're only young wanst you know, Mary.

ELLEN.

I think it must be a great thing to be a great musician. Sometimes I believe Robbie should try his luck with that fiddle of his. Somehow I know—I feel he *is* a genius at it.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

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What notions you do have to be sure. To think of a big grown man like Robbie John spending his life-time at an old fiddle.

Sharply.

Blathers and nonsense. Its time that boy was out lookin' at the cattle.

Calls.

Are you there Robbie?

Louder.

Robbie John.

ROBBIE JOHN.

From without. The fiddle ceases suddenly and he comes and stands with it in his hand at the door.

Aye.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

You'd better go down to the low field and see the cattle haven't broken through into Aura Boyd's corn. You couldn't keep them beasts in when the flies gets at them.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Just one second till I try this again.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Now, will you go when I tell you. You and your ould fiddle. It'll be the death of you yet. Mind what I say.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Coming through door and standing there.

Bad cess to the cattle and Aura Boyd.

GRANDFATHER.

He's a tarr'ble unneighbourly man.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

He's a cross grained man right enough, but it wouldn't do to have the cattle trampin' and eatin' his corn.

ROBBIE JOHN.

I was down there only ten minutes ago when you sent me, and they were eatin' there quite peaceable.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Now will you go Robbie John when your mother wants you. Aura Boyd sent over here this forenoon to say if that Kerry cow broke into his field again he'd have the law agin us.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Och, he's a cross ould cratur. Sure, she had only one foot through the hedge when he turned her.

He sees mother is getting impatient.

All right; I'm away.

He goes back into room, leaves fiddle there, comes into kitchen again and goes out by door to yard.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

He's as ill to drive as the ould mare to meetin' a Sundays.

She goes and looks through door into room.

Look at the time it is and your father and Samuel James niver back yet Ellen. They're terrible late o' comin'.

ELLEN.

Och, I suppose they've met some dealer at the fair and are driving a hard bargain as usual.

GRANDFATHER.

I wonder if they got that foal red off their hands yet. It'll be a job I'm thinkin'. He was a miserable baste, and tarr'ble broken in the wind.

ELLEN.

Och, trust father to make that all right. I heard Mr. Taylor, of the creamery, say that father could sell you skim milk for cream, better than any man he knew.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Seating herself at chair beside table at back.

Oh, aye. It's easy for *him* to talk, but money's hard o' makin', and if people's soft it's their own fault. Only I hope they've no' taken any drink.

GRANDFATHER.

It's no fault in a good man if he does take a half-un.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Now, don't you be startin' to talk that way. It's always the way with them dailers. Muddle the good man's head with whiskey, and then *do* him.

ELLEN.

Standing nonchalantly at table facing front with hands resting on it.

They'll not muddle father much I'm thinkin'. Besides, Samuel James is with him.

GRANDFATHER.

Samuel James is a cunnin' rascal.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Don't you miscall my son Mr. Granahan. He's a canny good son and works hard, and is worth more than half-a-dozen men like Robbie John. They'll no put their finger in his eye.

Goes to door back.

Bliss my heart there's that sow among the kale. Shoo!

She goes out and is heard shouting.

ELLEN.

Laughing.

That poor sow. It has the times of it.

Robbie John enters and sits down near grandfather.

GRANDFATHER.

Well, son; what about the cattle?

ROBBIE JOHN.

Weariedly.

Och, they're all right. I knowed they'd be all right. It's always the way.

GRANDFATHER.

Soothingly.

They are a terrible newsance, indeed, Robbie.

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ROBBIE JOHN.

But that's not what troubles me. Why can't mother leave me alone for just a few minutes till I get some time to myself at the fiddle. I niver touch it but I'm taken away and sent off somewhere.

ELLEN.

Seating herself at chair beside Robbie John.

Don't be cross with her Robbie, dear. She's anxious about the cattle.

ROBBIE JOHN.

But, Ellen, look here. Any time I can get to have just a tune on that fiddle, someone's sure to take me away from it. Father sends me out to mend gaps that were mended, or cut turf that was cut, or fodder horses that were foddered. And when he's away and I might have some chance, mother does the same. Here I've been workin' for the past week, day in and day out, and the very first chance I get, I must run after the cattle or somethin'.

Despondently,

Nobody has any feelin' for me here at all.

GRANDFATHER.

Now, now; Robbie. It's all for your own good, son, she does it.

ELLEN.

And we feel for him, don't we Grand-da? You mustn't look so cross, Robbie. You know that they think you're too much wrapped up in that fiddle of yours, and they want to break you off it.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Determinedly.

That they never will; never.

ELLEN.

Coaxingly.

Oh! look grandfather at the cross Robbie.

GRANDFATHER.

Gazing amusedly at Robbie John.

Indeed, Robbie, you look like them prize fightin' men ye see up in the town.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Well, there; is that any better.

He smiles half bitterly.

ELLEN.

A wee bit. I wish Jennie Graeme seen you with that face. You wouldn't get your arm round her so easy then; would he Grand-da?

GRANDFATHER.

A bonny wee girl she is, and has a fine farm and land comin' till her.

Aside.

Boys a dear but these musicians gets the fine weemin.

ROBBIE JOHN.

There, there; and creamery managers sometimes gets them too, Grand-da.

GRANDFATHER.

Indeed, that Taylor man will get a body can cook sowans anyway.

ELLEN.

Looking through window.

Here's mother.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Enters and sits down exhausted on chair at side of table next door.

That sows a torment. I just had her out and back she doubles again. She just has me fair out of wind turnin' her out.

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ROBBIE JOHN.

Rising and making toward door into room.

I can go and have some practisin' now.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Robbie John, I seen the carts comin' up the loanin'. Your father will be in, in no time. He'll no be pleased to see you han'lin' that,

pointing to the fiddle.

just when he comes back.

Starts up as if suddenly reminded.

I must go and get them eggs counted.

Goes out again through door to yard.

ELLEN.

Aye, Robbie; don't take it. He'll just think you've been playin' that all the time he was away. And he's always that cross after markets, you couldn't stand him.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Sitting down again.

You're right. I don't want another talkin' to like the last one; but its hard.

He takes up a stick from fuel beside fireplace and starts whittling it. The rattle of carts is heard. Samuel James passes the window and walks in. He is partially intoxicated, enough only to make him talkative.

ELLEN.

Well, how did the fair go off?

Samuel James takes off his overcoat, flings it on back of chair beside dresser and sits down heavily.

Ah! you've been takin' a drop, as usual.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Scowls at this but does not deny.

The fair. Oh, it was great value. Sure grand-da he sould the foal for thirty poun'.

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GRANDFATHER.

Astonished

Boys a dear but William John Granahan bates the divil. And who took her?

SAMUEL JAMES.

There was a cavalryman bought her. Boys but Da is the hard man to plaze. We stopped at Muc Alanan's on the way home and met William John McKillop there, and he toul' the oul' man he was a fool to let a good horse go at that price, for he was lookin' all roads to give him thirty poun' for it; only he couldn't get in time for the sale.

GRANDFATHER.

Incredulously.

Who did you say? McKillop?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Laughing.

Aye.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Smiling.

Sure McKillop hasn't two sov'rins in the wide world. He was only takin' a rise out of Da.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Sure I knowed the ould Yahoo hadn't the price of a nanny-goat. But of course, Da tuk it all in for gospel. And me sittin' listenin to him tellin' ould McKillop what a grand action the foal had and the shoulders the baste had, and the way it could draw thirty hundred up Killainey hill without a pech.

GRANDFATHER.

Astonished.

William John Granahan makes a tarr'ble fine Sunday School teacher.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Grinning.

But to see ould McKillop sittin' there as solemn as a judge, drinkin' it all in as if gospel and winkin' at me on the sly, the ould rascal, and cursin' his luck at losin' such a bargain.

The voice of William John Granahan can be heard inviting some one to come on. The strains of a fiddle played by uncertain but unmistakably professional hands, sounds from the same direction.

ELLEN.

Looking out through window into yard.

Who's that father has got with him Samuel James? Oh such a dirty looking man!

SAMUEL JAMES.

Chuckling.

Da got ahout of him at Buckna cross roads and right or wrong he'd have him home wi' him to show Robbie John what fiddlin' brings a man till.

ELLEN.

Severely.

Its my mind that you and father have been stayin' too long in the public house, Samuel James.

William John Granahan and tramp fiddler can be seen outside window.

Look at them—comin' in! oh my; wait till mother sees the pair of them.

William John Granahan comes in leading a ragged looking bearded tramp with an old fiddle tucked under his arm.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Now we're hame, and we'll get a drop to drink and a bite to eat, Mr. Fiddler.

He goes over to fireplace and stands with his back to the fire.

Take a sate at the fire and warm yourself.

No one offers a seat to the tramp who stands puzzled looking and swaying in a drunken manner in the kitchen, slightly in front of Samuel James, who remains seated beside dresser engaged in taking off his leggings.

Ellen. Get us a drop o' tay and give this poor misguided cratur somethin' to eat.

ELLEN.

Moves over to dresser and then stands at door into room. She evidently disapproves of the tramp and does not offer to obey. The grandfather rises in disgust and moves his chair nearer the fireplace away from the tramp.

TRAMP.

To Ellen.

Your pardon noble lady, I intrude. Your pardon signor I incommode you. Times change and so do men. Ladies and gentlemen behold in me the one time famous leader of the Blue Bohemian Wind and String Band that had the honour of appearing before all the crowned heads of Europe.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

God bless me, d'you say so mister? D'ye hear that Robbie John. There's a fiddler for you and see what comes of it.

TRAMP.

Perhaps with your permission I may venture to play you a few extracts from my repertoire. I can play to suit all tastes from a simple country ballad to a concerto by Brahms or the great Russian composer Tschaikouski.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Openmouthed.

Them Rooshians has the tarr'ble names!

TRAMP.

Firstly I shall play that touching little ballad I heard Monsieur here warble so sweetly as we rolled homeward on his chariot. If I play he accompanies me with voice. Ne'st ce pas, Monsieur?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Nervously.

Is your mother out Ellen?

ELLEN.

She's lookin' after the hens I think. She won't hear you.

William John Granahan starts singing two verses of a folk song, the tramp accompanying meanwhile with fiddle, always putting in an extra flourish. The rest all join, even the grandfather beats time with a stick. The door opens and Mrs. Granahan appears seemingly astonished at the uproar. All suddenly cease singing and try to appear innocent, except the tramp, who goes on playing. He suddenly notices the cessation.

TRAMP.

Bravo. A most exquisite little air and beautifully rendered.

He stops short on seeing Mrs. Granahan who stands glaring at him arms akimbo.

Your pardon madam. You are the mistress I take it of this most noble and hospitable house.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Ignoring him and going to centre of floor where she looks angrily at William John Granahan who endeavours to appear unconcerned.

You should be well ashamed of yourself William John Granahan. What will they say about you in the Session I wonner next Sabbath day. D'you think my house is a home for all the dirt and scum of the country side?

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TRAMP.

Your pardon madam. You owe me an apology. Appearances belie me but scum I am not. I was at one time the well known and justly famous leader of the Blue Bohemian Wind and String—

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Wind and string fiddlesticks. Out you go. Out you will go. I want no tramps in here upsettin' my house and makin' it the talk of the neighbours. Out you go at once.

TRAMP.

With drunken pride.

I thrust my company on no man or woman uninvited.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Out you go. I want no excuses. Put him out of this Samuel James.

Samuel James eludes his mother's eye and beckons the tramp to stay on.

The drunken wretch comin' in here. A nice place you'd have it William Granahan with your fine company.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I brought him home here as a tarr'ble and awful warnin' to Robbie John what this sort of an occupation brings a man till. Yon see him Robbie John. There's you're great fiddlin' for you. Be warned in time.

ROBBIE JOHN.

The tramp moves to the door. Robbie John rises and goes across to him and taps him on the shoulder.

Here.

Slips him money.

God bless you poor wanderin' soul and God forbid any Granahan should ever be treated as you have been.

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TRAMP.

Sir, I thank you.

Coming back to him and confidentially.

Perhaps I could yet please your ears with a romanza which I composed myself—

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Away with you out of this. We want none of your music here.

SAMUEL JAMES.

To tramp.

Why don't you give up playin' that fiddle of yours and turn your hand to honest work?

TRAMP.

Proudly.

Desert my fiddle. The fiddle presented to me at Vienna by my orchestra! A genuine old Cremona 200 years old! Rather would I wander in Hades for ever. Never! Though cruel words stab and wound me.

Farewell.

All remain quiet. The strains of a melancholy air like a serenade come from outside. It slowly dies away in the distance. Robbie John moves forward as if to go out.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Sharply.

Robbie John. Where are you going? Don't dare to leave the house. My son going out to keep company with the likes of that dirty rascalion.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Ah mother pity the poor wretch. Every word you said to him cut and wounded me to the quick. Did you not see the tears in his eyes for all his fine talk. I should like to know more about him.

SAMUEL JAMES.

If you went to the sergeant at the barrack, I warrant ye he could tell you more about him.

He bends down as if to catch the sound of the fiddling which grows very faint.

Listen!

Robbie John moves to door and opens it.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Angrily.

Where are you going?

ROBBIE JOHN.

Rapt.

Listen.

He holds his hand for silence. Then quickly goes out.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

To get into his wife's good graces.

Well Mary the foal's sould at last.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

I've a crow to pluck wi' you over that same foal, William Granahan. I suppose they did you as usual.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Getting angry.

Nine and thirty year ha'e I gone till market and no man, woman, child, dog or divil ever got the better of me in a bargain yet and right well you know it.

With pride.

I soul' the foal for thirty poun' not a ha'penny less.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Doubtfully.

I hope you ha'e it all wi' you.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I ha'e it all but two shillin' and wan penny.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

And can you account for them?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAH.

Woman dear would you ha'e me go and come to market wi'out a ha'penny in my pocket? Have some gumption about ye.

In a loud angry voice.

I'm danged but the next time I make a good bargain, I'll go and ha'e a week to myself in Newcastle or Belfast. I'm young enow yet.

MRS. GRANAHAH.

There. Stop your fool talk in front of the children and go and change your clothes.

GRANDFATHER.

It was a good price indeed.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Stily.

Yes. He soul' it for thirty poun' and William John McKillop lookin' all roads to give him forty for it.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAH.

Angrily and stamping his foot.

Will you houl' your tongue you blatterin' blatherin' idiot. Bad scran to ye for a meddle—

He goes forward to go into room and aims a box on the ears at Samuel James who retreats to table and watches him go through door followed by Mrs. Granahan. A noise of voices in angry argument is heard.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Now he'll catch it. If I had been Da I would ha'e kept back five poun' and toul' her I soul' it for twenty-five, but the ould man's that honest, he knows no better.

Robbie John enters. He goes to seat himself in his old position but stops a moment when spoken to, and then in a petulant manner takes his seat on hearing the speech.

Well Robbie and what d'ye think of his great object lesson till ye. It was me put it intil Da's head. I thought there might be a bit o' value.

Chuckles.

ELLEN.

There. I just thought it was you did it.

She comes and sits down again beside table at left. Samuel James seats himself on table carelessly and swings his legs under.

You're a schemer that's what you are.

GRANDFATHER.

Aye. There's a dale of the crook in ye Samuel James. You're deeper nor one would think.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Suddenly to Robbie John.

I seen Jenny Graeme at the market to-day Robbie.

Robbie John does not answer, being evidently shy.

Oh well, maybe you're no interested in her.

To Ellen.

Man there was a fine lock o' cattle at the fair, Ellen.

ELLEN.

I'm sure there was. Who else did you see?

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ROBBIE JOHN.

Unwillingly but unable to restrain his jealousy.

Who was with her? Who left her home?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Nodding silyly to Ellen.

Young M'Donnell o' the Hill head was looking after her pretty close.

ELLEN.

Glancing at Robbie and then at Samuel James and smiling.

He's a very nice young man.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Savagely.

I wish her luck wi' yon booby.

SAMUEL JAMES.

There's nothin' the matter wi' him. He has a nice place and a fine farm forbye.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Farms and cattle and crops don't make a fine man.

GRANDFATHER.

Deed now Robbie, they goes a long ways.

SAMUEL JAMES.

To himself.

Better nor bows and fiddles and such trash.

To Robbie John.

I heerd up at Bann to-day, that ye won three poun' at the Feis at Newcastle a Monday.

ELLEN.

I knew that on Tuesday. It was fine of Robbie wasn't it?

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SAMUEL JAMES.

It all depends. Da heard it for the first time to-day and I can tell you it didn't seem fine to him. Coorse a poun' or two would ha'e made a differ o' opinion same as it done wi' you I expect.

ELLEN.

You needn't sneer at me. It was me told Robbie to keep it. He was goin' to give it all up. I wouldn't be so mean as to take it off him.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Oh you're an unusual sort of young woman I know but if Robbie John takes my advice, he better choose quick between playin' the fiddle and stayin' on here.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Give up my fiddle. Never.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Well you can plaze yourself. I suppose you could make as much by fiddlin' as if you stayed on here and waited till we had the place divid among the three of us.

ELLEN.

Why I heard from Mr. Taylor that father was worth four or five hundred pounds and then the two farms.

GRANDFATHER.

Aye. You'd be a long time Robbie John earnin' that wi' your fiddle. Don't heed his fool talk son. Stay at home and niver mind the musicians.

ELLEN.

Robbie dear, and I'm sure Mr. Graeme would never let his daughter marry a penniless fiddler—even if she would herself. I don't know. She might and she—mightn't.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Rising from table and stretching himself.

Coorse if he made a name for himself he could marry the landlord's daughter. I heerd the quality go mad after the musicianers.

Makes to door.

Well I'm going to wash my hands.

Goes out to yard.

GRANDFATHER.

Robbie dear. Come here.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Aye. What is it?

GRANDFATHER.

Take heed till yourself. I know what's going on better nor you. Take an ould man's advice. Settle yourself down and give up that string instrument. Coorse I daresay you may go and become a great man wi' it but you're more like to become a cratur like thon that was in as not. There's no good runnin' risks. And your father, I heerd him say himself, if you make your bed, you'll lie on it, for he'll niver help you out, once you take to the fiddlin'.

ELLEN.

Aye Robbie. Its far better not to run the risk of becoming a beggar man.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Well I'll think over it Ellen. I'll think over it.

GRANDFATHER.

Robbie, come out wi' me.

The two go out by door into yard.

William John and Mrs. Granahan come in arguing excitedly.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Well you can ha'e the poun' if you like, but I can tell you its a sore pinch to make things do, what with the price of the sugar riz up and the flour.

Samuel James comes in. He takes in the situation and seats himself again on the table near Ellen who remains still seated beside it.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

There. That's enough to do about it.

He goes over to armchair but does not sit down and remains facing Mrs. Granahan.

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Twenty nine poun' you'll get and no more.

Emphatically.

Min' that.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

I'll min' it right enough William Granahan. And its a sore time I have trying to keep in wi' one hand what you lavish out wi' the other.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Nudging Ellen silyly.

I was talking by the way to Mrs. McCrum the milliner, mother, to-day, and she said to give you word she'd have your new tay gown ready for you a Tuesday week.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Triumphantly.

There you are ma'am. There you are. Keepin' it in wi' one hand were you? Faith if I know anything you lather it out wi both hands and feet. You want to rob me of me one poun' do ye? And all for an ould tay gown!

Contemptuously.

A tay gown!

ELLEN.

Maliciously.

A taygown's not expensive.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Oh indeed now? Hach. You'll be wantin' one next I suppose. A nice house this is, where a man couldn't get keepin' as much as would buy him an ounce o' tobaccy.

Viciously.

Man I do hate this hypockerisy.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

I'll not talk any more till ye, William Granahan. You're full o' drink and bad tongued.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

If you say any more till me, I'll smash all the crockery in the house.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Come out Ellen to the creamery and maybe when we come in, he'll be a bit cooler in the head.

She hurries out followed by Ellen through door to yard.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

To Samuel James.

She's a tarr'ble woman your mother when she's started. But I'm much obliged to you Samuel James for the mention o' that tay gown. By me sang, but that turned the enemy's flank.

Laughs.

I'm danged but you're the boy.

Gratefully.

Heth you saved me a poun' anyway.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Rising and going over sheepishly to him.

You'll not forget me Da? will you?

Suspiciously.

Na.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Well ye might gie us a part o' it.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

How much dy'e want?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Twelve shillin'.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Would you take the very boots off me feet. Where would I get ye twelve shillin'.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Out o' the poun' o' coorse. Where else?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Grumblyngly.

You're askin' ower much. If it was a saxpence

Samuel James shrugs his shoulders.

or a shillin'

Samuel James shrugs more emphatically.

or two shillin'?

SAMUEL JAMES.

No.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

or half a crown?

SAMUEL JAMES.

No.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I'd think nothing of lendin' them till ye. But twelve shillin'! Would three shillin' no' do?

SAMUEL JAMES.

No. It won't. Either give me the twelve shillin' or I'll tell her about your conduct—

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

There. There it is an bad scan to ye. To think o' me walkin' ten mile to the fair and back and arguin' wi' dailers and chates of all kinds and gettin thirty poun' for a baste I wouldn't buy myself for thirty shillin' and only gettin' eight shillin' out o' it.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Whistling and counting money delightedly.

Aye. Its a hard world and no mistake.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Excitedly.

I'll go down to the shough and drown myself I will.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Na. Go to MucAlanan's and drown yerself.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I'm danged but you're right. Na. Na. She'll hear me goin' out by the gate.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Boys but you're the poor hearted man. Well I'm away.

He makes to door.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Where now?

SAMUEL JAMES.

To Courdy Williamson's for the loan of a monkey wrinch for the new machine. The hay's for cuttin' the morrow.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Oh aye. An you'll be for coortin' that young imp of a daughter o' his I warrant ye. Were you there yisterday forenoon?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Somewhat taken aback.

Yis. Why d'ye ask?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Oh nothin'. Only I hadn't a sowl to help me wi' them cattle.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Well wasn't Robbie John at home? What ailed him he couldn't help ye?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Look you here Samuel James.

Samuel James comes back nearer.

I've been worried wi' that boy this long time.

Samuel James nods approvingly.

I've made up my mind to-day after seein' yon scarecrow we met at Buckna cross roads, Robbie John aither mends himself or he goes out o' this.

SAMUEL JAMES.

You're right Da. You hae stud his goings on a long time. I think ye do well to stop him. It's only doin' him a kindness.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I'll just ask him to burn it when he comes in. If he won't, he can just plaze himself. I'll hae no more to do wi' him.

Suddenly.

I wunner what his mother would say to that?

SAMUEL JAMES.

She' just as tired of it as you are. Wait; I'll call her in.

Goes to door back and shouts.

Are you there ma'am?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Without.

Aye.

She comes to door, opens it and stands looking inquiringly at both of them.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Da's just been talkin' about Robbie John, and he wants you to hear what he says.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Robbie John's an idle useless paghle. He'll aither mend himself or go out o' this.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Sharply.

Mend yourself first, me good man.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Its not like as if he tuk a drop o' drink or fell in wi' bad company, for you'll get quet o' drink and bad company if you hae no money.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Slily.

It was mother and I larnt you that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Snappishly.

Will you hould your tongue.

To Mrs. Granahan.

When he might ha' been lookin after the cattle or the pigs or somethin else, where is he? Up in the loft playin that damnation fiddle o' his. Night an mornin' he's at it.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Deed and he's doin badly by it and no mistake. He's not been worth a ha' penny till us, this last six months. I think you do right just to stop him.

SAMUEL JAMES.

I heerd he won three poun' at the Feis last Monday at Newcastle.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

There you are. And he never offered me one ha'penny o' it. Me that brought him up and raired and fed him. Them that plays the fiddle comes to no good end, I can tell ye.

Reminiscently and with a sort of shame-faced pride.

Not but I wasn't the great man at it myself wanst. And you were the girl that could ha' danced to it Mary. But thank God I quet it.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Curiously.

Why?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I might ha took to drink and bad company and the like.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

You're no rid o' that yet William Granahan. Ye mind what way ye come home last Bann Fair on top o' the bread cart.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Slily.

Yis. And the way the Scarva man done him out o' the price o' the two

pigs.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

That's one thing I can't get over. Was it in a public house ye met him?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

There. There. Thats enough to do about it. I hear enough about drinkin' from John Graeme every session day without you etarnally at it.

Robbie John and Grandfather enter. They evidently understand from the looks of those present that something important is talked of.

Where's that fiddle of yours Robbie John? Bring it to me.

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Robbie John looks curiously at him and then at Samuel James. He goes into room and brings it out. He holds it in his hands and looks suspiciously at the father.

Now Robbie John listen to what I and your mother have thought about this. For our sake and your own we want you to give up that accursed thing and put it from you.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Why? What harm does it do you or me?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

It makes you negleck your work. It makes you think o' things you shouldn't think o'. It makes you loss slape o' nights sitting up an playin' and then you can't rise in the mornin'. When you should be polissin the harness, or mendin' a ditch, or watchin' the cattle, or feedin' the poultry, you've got this thing in your hand and practisin' on it.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Indignantly.

Its not true. I don't do these things. I—

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Now will you atten' to your duties and give up this playin'. What good will it ever do ye? Ye seen what it brought yon man till that was in here. It's a tarrible warnin' till ye.

ROBBIE JOHN.

The fiddle didn't make him what he is. The drink did that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Scornfully.

Aye. The leader of an ould circus band or somethin' like.

Getting excited.

I'd just do wi that as I'd do with a sarpint. Trample it under my heels.

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ROBBIE JOHN.

Threateningly.

Dare to put a hand on it. I'll kill the first man tries to.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Angrily.

You dar' talk that way to your father!

Soothingly.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Now Robbie dear. Don't be gettin' on that way.

GRANDFATHER.

Robbie my son mind what I was tellin' ye. Its better to bear it if you can my son. Its a hard thing but you can take my word for it, you'll no regret it.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Sadly.

I had o' coorse a will drawn up and signed by 'torney McAllan and was for lavin' ye nice an' comfortable when I was to be takin' away.

He breaks down.

Robbie, Robbie, my son, sure its not my heart you're for breakin'.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Coorse I heerd from one o' the judges, Robbie, at the Feis that you had the touch o' a master, and all that sort o' thing; but I advise ye—

Here the grandfather shakes his stick at him threateningly.

I advise ye—of coorse its hard to know.

GRANDFATHER.

Looking angrily at Samuel James.

Don't think o' that Robbie. Sure every man that plays a fiddle, thinks he's a genius. Don't be led astray son.

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WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Coaxingly.

Aye. Your grand-da has sense wi' him Robbie. After all what about it. Man there's that bonny wee lass waitin' for you over at Graemes. To the fire wi' it.

Robbie John hesitates. The grandfather pats him approvingly. With bowed head he goes forward to place it on the fire.

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.

[Pg 35]

The same scene. Ellen and Mrs. Granahan seated near fire.

ELLEN.

So Mr. Graeme is comin' over here to settle matters with father to-day do you say?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Yes child, he's comin' to-day.

ELLEN.

What is it all about?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Well I suppose he's anxious to see what money is comin' to Robbie John. He doesn't want to throw his daughter away without askin' questions. I expeck she's well enough to do to marry anyone she likes, but he's a canny man.

ELLEN.

Well I suppose he's right. He must be anxious to see her well married.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Oh now between the two of them, Robbie John will be a sight better off, nor your father and I, Ellen when we married.

ELLEN.

Robbie's a lucky man too. I never seen anyone as fond of him as she is. I wonder when father will be goin' to see anyone about me?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Oh whist child, your time's comin'. Who was it left ye home from John Graeme's temperance lecture?

ELLEN.

Slily.

That's a secret.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Knowingly.

Not till me. He's a brave body anyway.

ELLEN.

Who?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Now you're the soft lassie. Who's the manager of the creamery up beyond?

ELLEN.

Unsuspectingly,

Tom Taylor of course.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

And of course it was Tom Taylor left ye home.

Knock at the door.

Come in. Come in.

Taylor enters.

Why speak o' the divil—how d'ye do Mr. Taylor.

TAYLOR.

He comes in, stands rather awkwardly looking at Ellen, and then goes over near them.

Very well, thank you, ma'am.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

This is my daughter Ellen.

Slily.

I think ye met her afore.

TAYLOR.

Shaking hands with Ellen, he detains her hand for a second and then drops it.

We did, I think, didn't we?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Knowingly.

I just thought as much.

Aside.

Oh well, he's a brave body and would do rightly if the creamery does the same.

Suddenly to Taylor.

Are ye coortin' any this weather Mr. Taylor?

TAYLOR.

Taken aback. Then decides to laugh it off.

Well—eh—no. I'm not doin' much that way.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Incredulously.

Oh indeed. Well I heerd otherwise. Its full time ye were lookin' about for a wife. You'll be gettin' well on past thirty soon.

TAYLOR.

Fidgeting uneasily.

Oh I'm time enough for a couple of years or more. I want to look round me a bit.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Well ye better look sharp, for you'll soon be getting too ould for gettin' any sort of a dasint girl.

Inquisitively.

Ha'e ye anyone in your eye yet?

TAYLOR.

I have an account to pay your good man Mrs. Granahan.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Two poun' ten is due.

Thinking.

Aye. But I suppose you'll be now in what I would call a good way o' doin'.

TAYLOR.

There was a five per cent. dividend this half year. The creamery's goin' on well.

Searching in pocket and getting out account.

Two pounds, nine and six, ma'am, beggin' your pardon.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Ach sure sixpence is naiter here nor there to a creamery.

Pauses.

If that's the way you are, you could be married in a year's time and—

TAYLOR.

Evidently desirous to lead conversation off this topic.

Here's the money, ma'am.

He lays it down on the table and counts it out.

You'll do as well as Mr. Granahan, I suppose. You take all to do with the money part I think.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Yes I do. You were at the lecture last Monday?

TAYLOR.

Alarmed.

What the divil—

Suddenly to Mrs. Granahan and genially.

Yes. Could you oblige me with a receipt ma'am?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Surely. Here Ellen, get me the pen and ink.

Ellen goes into room.

I suppose now there were some nice young weemin there—eh Mr. Taylor?

TAYLOR.

Uneasily.

Yes. And don't forget the stamp ma'am.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Ach sure a penny stamp's what you always carry wi' ye.

Confidentially.

I think shame on ye Mr. Taylor, triflin' wi' the poor girls. There's no excuse for a man o' your age.

TAYLOR.

Fidgeting.

Well, well, I—Here's a stamp ma'am.

Impatiently.

I'm young enough yet. I don't want to marry yet awhile.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Well now I think ye'd be better o' some one to look after ye. There's William John Granahan. *He's* niver done bein' thankful since he married. He says he doesn't know what he mightn't ha' been, if he hadn't married *me*.

TAYLOR.

Stily.

I can quite believe *that*.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

It was a good job for him, I can tell ye. For what wi' goin' to dances and the like and public houses, he was for making a nice mess o' himself.

Confidentially.

And between you and me, Ellen will no' be so badly off aither when he goes.

Ellen comes in and puts paper, &c. on table.

TAYLOR.

Here's the stamp ma'am.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Not noticing.

And there's a girl for you Mr. Taylor, that we spent a dale o' time over, and was brought up most careful. She's none o' your or'nary girls.

ELLEN.

Sharply.

Oh mother!

She looks at Taylor, smiles, and shrugs her shoulders.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Motioning silence.

There's too many girls runnin' about and all they can do is—sing a song or two, and dress themselves up like play actresses, and run about at bazaars and the like trying to get ahout o' young men.

TAYLOR.

You're quite right ma'am.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Now there's Ellen was four years at a boardin' school that Mr. Graeme recommended till us, and I can tell you she got the proper schoolin', and let alone that, she can bake, sew or knit, and knows all about the managin' of a house.

ELLEN.

Oh quit!

She looks diffidently across at Taylor, who grins.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Counting money.

Here. It's sixpence short o' the count.

TAYLOR.

Let me see.

He goes to table and counts money.

Two and two's four, and two's six, and two and six is eight and six, and one shillin'—nine and six.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Thinking.

Nine and six. I thought it was—oh yes it *was* nine and six.

TAYLOR.

Yes. Nine and six.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Very good. I'll write you a receipt'.

Takes pen and paper.

ELLEN.

To Taylor who stands looking over at her.

You haven't been round this way a long time Mr. Taylor. What ailed you, you didn't call?

TAYLOR.

Oh I was very busy.

He looks at Mrs. Granahan who is writing laboriously. Then goes and examines a fiddle that hangs on the wall.

Ha! I thought Robbie John had burnt his fiddle and promised to play no more.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Aye so he did, but there's a strange story wi' that thing you're lookin' at. There was a tramp come here one day I was out, and when I come back, I found him playin' away on that thing, and the house in an uproar.

TAYLOR.

Aye? He left it here then?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

No, wait till I tell ye. I packed him out o' this, and the next thing I heerd about him was when a wheen o' weeks ago he was got half dead wi' wet and could in the Flough Moss. John McKillop was down for cutting turf, and foun' him in a peat hole, wi' his hands on the brew,

and the ould fiddle beside him.

ELLEN.

Yes. The poor soul died the next day, and just before he died he asked McKillop to bring over his fiddle to give to Robbie John. Robbie had been kind to him sometime or other, and the poor bein' never forgot it.

TAYLOR.

Ach aye. I do remember hearin' somethin' about it. They said he had been a big man in his day I think.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Aye. He was blatherin the day he was here about bein' the leader of an ould band or somethin' like, now that I call to mind. But indeed I paid no heed till him, for he was part drunk.

TAYLOR.

Curiously.

You didn't get Robbie to burn this one I see.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Well you see, Samuel James said it was a very valuable one and worth fifty poun' or more may be. There's an inscription on it somewhere if you look.

TAYLOR.

Taking down fiddle and examining it.

Aye so I see. "To Nicholas Werner as a token of esteem from his orchestra. Vienna, 1878."

ELLEN.

Yes poor soul. He was tellin' the truth and no one believin'.

TAYLOR.

And does Robbie never play it?

ELLEN.

Not since he promised that I know of. But all the same it must tempt him for I see his eyes fixed on it often enough when he thinks no one's lookin'.

TAYLOR.

He looks over at Mrs. Granahan who appears to be engrossed in her writing. He is just slipping his arm round Ellen when Mrs. Granahan looks up. He instantly drops his arm.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Ha'e you that stamp Mr. Taylor?

TAYLOR.

Its usual Mrs. Granahan for whoever signs the receipt to supply the stamp, however, there you are.

Mrs. Granahan licks the stamp, and signs the receipt.

The writin' doesn't come easy to you, ma'am.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Now its not very courteous makin' fun o' poor old weemin', Mr. Taylor. I thought better o' you nor that.

TAYLOR.

Ould weemin'? Talk sense, Mrs. Granahan. I only wish my ould woman, if ever I have one, looks as well as you do.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

There, there, none o' your fool nonsense. You don't go blarneyin' me, like you do the likes of Ellen there.

ELLEN.

Ach mother!

MRS. GRANAHAN.

I'm much obliged to ye for the money Mr. Taylor. I must put it by me.

Goes into room.

ELLEN.

I suppose you've heard about Robbie?

TAYLOR.

Coming near her.

No. What's happened?

ELLEN.

He's to be married to Jane Graeme at Christmas and Mr. Graeme's comin' over here to-day to settle about the money.

TAYLOR.

Silly.

I wonder who your father will be settlin' matters with Ellen, when you get engaged.

ELLEN.

Why, of course—whoever gets me, I suppose.

TAYLOR.

Well there's one thing I wouldn't haggle with him over.

ELLEN.

And what would that be?

TAYLOR.

Yourself of course.

He draws her to him and makes to kiss her. Robbie John and Samuel James pass by the window and Ellen immediately slips away from him. When they come in, she lifts a can and goes out by door to yard. Robbie John and Samuel James seat themselves at table.

Leaning against table and nodding to both.

Well how's the corn doin'?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Oh, fairly well the year. How's the crame market?

TAYLOR.

Much the same. Nothin' new with you I suppose?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Well they're goin' to settle Robbie the day, that's all. He's a lucky boy.

TAYLOR.

I wish you joy, Robbie.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Thank ye. Thank ye kindly. She's a nice wee girl.

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SAMUEL JAMES.

You don't seem as gay hearted as I would expect, does he Mr. Taylor? You'd think he was for getting hung or somethin'. I suppose ye heerd all about him givin' up the fiddle playin'? And the luck o' it. To burn his ould fiddle, and then get another a few days after. You'd think there was some sort of a strange warnin' or advice or somethin' in it.

TAYLOR.

It is very strange.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Samuel James do ye remember the time that ould tramp was playin' on this fiddle, as he went out that day, down the loney?

Samuel James nods.

Well, it seemed to me as if he were playin' to bring me out after him. D'ye mind the story, Mr. Taylor, about the piper that went off with all the children, and was niver heard tell of again.

TAYLOR.

Aye.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Well I could feel him drawin' me out after him the very same way. And last night, as sure as death, I heard the same uncanny air singin' in my ears, and it seemed to be callin' me to come out o' this.

TAYLOR.

Exchanges startled looks with Samuel James.

Och I suppose the wind or somethin' outside. But there's no doubt Robbie you have a genius for the fiddle. There was a German professor of music at Newcastle the day you won the prize and he was —But its not right of me to make you vexed, now you've stopped playin'.

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SAMUEL JAMES.

Ach he doesn't mind you tellin'. Do ye Robbie? Tell and hearten him up a wee bit.

TAYLOR.

This German was so struck with your playin' that he was lookin' for you all roads, but you were nowhere to be found.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Interested.

Aye? I went straight home. I wonner what he wanted?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Perhaps he could have given him a lift, eh Mr. Taylor?

TAYLOR.

He was talkin' to me afterwards and by the way, I had clean forgot.

Fumbling in his pocket.

He gave me his card to give you. I have it on me somewhere I think.

Producing it.

Aye, there it is.

Reading.

Professor—somethin' or other Royal College of Music.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Keep it. If I had it, it would only temp' me.

TAYLOR.

Looking significantly at Samuel James who indicates by shaking his head that he considers Robbie John hopeless.

You're a queer character. All right. But you can have it any time.

To Samuel James.

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I wish I had said nothin' about it. Where's the old man?

SAMUEL JAMES.

The two ould men are out in the haggard, but

Slily.

Ellen's in the crame-house.

Taylor goes out through door at back. Samuel James looks over at Robbie John who sits deep in thought near the fire.

You can no' hoodwink me, Robbie. You're no' happy.

ROBBIE JOHN.

I'm happy enough.

Angrily.

Don't be tormentin' me.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Faith you look happy.

Drawing closer.

I seen you last night at it.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Looks round startled.

I couldn't keep from it. There's a spell or somethin' on it.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Na. Na. But every fiddle has its spell for you. You broke your promise.

ROBBIE JOHN.

You followed me then?

SAMUEL JAMES.

Yes. Ye crept on your stocking soles to the back o' the forth ditch, and played there for two mortal hours, till I was heart feared they'd miss us out o' bed, and raise a cry.

ROBBIE JOHN.

And you stood two hours in the night listenin' to me.

SAMUEL JAMES.

I 'clare to God, there's somethin' out o' common wi' you or that fiddle, for I had to stop and listen, and me teeth chatterin' wi' could.

ROBBIE JOHN.

I did wrong I know, but look here Samuel James, as long as I see that thing hangin' there, my hands are itchin' to hold it, and the tunes I could play—they keep runnin' in my head.

Suddenly rising.

I'll destroy it.

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SAMUEL JAMES.

Quieting him down.

Na. Na. Its a vallible fiddle.

ROBBIE JOHN.

It is. Ach man but it does temp' me sorely.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Aye. You might make a fortune, the dear knows. Man I know what *I* would do if I could play like *you* do.

Sarcastically.

That was if ye had the heart.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Excited.

Ach quit! Quit talkin' to me that way. I'm going out.

Goes out by door at back.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Getting off seat and standing about centre of room.

He'll take to it yet.

He goes over nearer fireplace.

I can see it workin' in him. Sure his hands are tremblin' and his fingers twitchin' all the times he's lookin' at it.

The grandfather enters softly by door at back. He stands looking at Samuel James who does not observe him.

Maybe its no' right of me to let it hang there. Ach. He maybe could make money plenty. I want till have a fine place and a lock o' money. And I'll build a bigger house.

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GRANDFATHER.

Hobbling over to his seat.

Aye. Aye. Ye could do a heap wi' money, Samuel James.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Alarmed. He endeavours to bluff it with a show of geniality.

Money's the thing, Grand-da.

GRANDFATHER.

Its a tarr'ble fine thing, there's no doubt. Food and drink and fine clothes and fine houses ye can get.

SAMUEL JAMES.

And tobaccy and seegars and the front seat at a consart.

GRANDFATHER.

Here. Don't be temptin' Robbie John about playin' on that fiddle. You've upset the boy.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Sharply.

I don't temp' him.

GRANDFATHER.

You're always remindin' him of it. I can see what you're workin' for Samuel James. Ye want all the money for yourself.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Ha' sense, Grand-da. Sure they're settlin' the matter to-day and he's to be married at Christmas. He wouldn't do anythin' rash now.

GRANDFATHER.

The clock has no' struck the hour yet Samuel James. Ye could no' tell what's workin' in his mind.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Well, he'd be a fool, and what's more, he knows himself to be one if he goes. He'll lose all the money from Da if he goes, and I'm sure Jennie Graeme's father wouldn't turn his head to look at a fiddler.

GRANDFATHER.

Aye. He's tarr'ble proud o' his family.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Opens door of room and comes in.

Here. I seen Mr. Graeme and your Da comin' up the loney from the windy in the low room.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Well, they'll be for comin' in here and we're only in the road. Come and twist a wheen o' ropes for me.

Samuel James and Grandfather go out by door at back.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Takes brush and sweeps floor. She then arranges a kettle at the fire. Then goes to door and looks out.

Aye. Here he bes now and that good man o' mine talkin' till him a dozen till one. And ten till one, he'll have John Graeme that angered wi' his arguin', that there'll be nothin' settled the day.

Sound of William John Granahan's voice. He appears to be talking at a great rate and most emphatically.

John Graeme and William John Granahan pass the window.

Aye, to be sure. He'd rather get the better o' Graeme in an argyment as settle wi' him over twenty sons, the ould gomeril.

John Graeme and William John Granahan enter.

How dy'e do, Mr. Graeme?

She shakes hands with him warmly and warns the husband by nods not to resume the argument.

It's the brave weather for the crops this.

JOHN GRAEME.

Indeed we should be deeply thankful for the marcies vouchsafed us.

Solemnly.

Aye indeed.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Well indeed I would be that myself, only the half o' them young chickens goin' off with the gapes. It was a tarr'ble to do to save what's left o' them.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Oh well. Its all in the way o' Providence, Mr. Graeme.

She looks disapprovingly across at Granahan. The two men seat themselves. John Graeme beside table and Wm. Granahan on edge of table next him.

That was a fine lecture on the Temperance ye gied us Mr. Graeme, at Ballykelly. It done some people a heap o' good.

She looks across meaningly at William Granahan.

JOHN GRAEME.

Apparently much pleased.

Do you say so, Mrs. Granahan? I'm much pleased indeed to hear o' it.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

I only wished more o' the same kind had heerd you.

She looks across again at William John Granahan who avoids her eye.

But you'll excuse me, I'm sure. I ha'e some things next room to look after for the evenin'.

[Pg 52]

She curtsies to Graeme and with a warning look at Granahan goes into room.

JOHN GRAEME.

I am very much pleased indeed to hear your good woman say she liked what I said. How did ye take to it yourself, Mr. Granahan?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Suddenly waking up from twisting and untwisting a piece of string which he has found and in which he appears deeply interested while his wife is talking.

How did we like the speech you gave on temperance, d'ye say?

Carelessly.

Och, it was a very good and sensible discourse, so I heerd Ellen and Mrs. Granahan say.

JOHN GRAEME.

Ye didn't go yourself then.

Disappointedly.

Man, I wanted ye there particuler.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I ha'e no doot if I had been there, I could ha' got up and contradickted ye, for

Emphatically.

I did not agree wi' all I heerd ye said.

JOHN GRAEME.

Surprised.

Not agree wi' what I said.

Scornfully with evident disgust.

Man, ye couldn't argy wi' facts. What did ye disagree wi' in the discourse?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Well for one thing, ye said there was too many public houses in the country.

JOHN GRAEME.

Scornfully.

And every right-minded man would agree wi' that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Well I can shew you another. You'll no argy wi' me that if a man wants to drink, he will drink.

[Pg 53]

JOHN GRAEME.

Somewhat perplexed.

Well---

Slowly.

I suppose I do agree till that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

And if a man will drink, he's boun' till get drunk.

JOHN GRAEME.

Na. Na. I don't agree till that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Triumphantly.

Did you ivir hear tell of a man who was drunk wi'out drinkin'?

JOHN GRAEME.

That's no' in the argyment at all.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

But I tell you it is. A man's bound to be drinkin' if he gets drunk.

JOHN GRAEME.

I'm no contradickin' that at all. I---

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Interrupting.

Now houl' your tongue till I explain till ye. If a man get's drunk when he's drinkin', he's bound to be drunk o' coorse.

JOHN GRAEME.

Contemptuously.

Ye talk like a child.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Now wait till I get it hammered intill ye. Now when that man's drunk, he's boun' to ha'e been drinkin'.

He hesitates and is obviously confused. Then suddenly seems to grasp the idea he wants.

Aye—in a public house o' coorse.

JOHN GRAEME.

O' coorse. What else would he do there but drink.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Now that man gets drunk.

He looks inquiringly at Graeme

JOHN GRAEME.

Hopelessly.

Aye.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Now the public houses are that scarce that he has till walk home maybe ten mile or more.

JOHN GRAEME.

Well?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

And ten till wan he gets lost or somethin', and they have the whole countryside upset lookin' for him. Now if he had a public house convanient in his own townland, there would be no bother at all, and he could be at his work the next mornin' wi'out any interruptin' o' labour. D'ye see what I mane?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Suddenly appearing at door evidently angry.

The more public houses the less drinkin' did he say? If he had *his* way o' it, every other house from here to Buckna would be a public house.

[Pg 55]

To husband.

Quit your wastin' Mr. Graeme's time wi' your argyments, and settle what he has come here to do wi' ye.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Well. Well. We'll agree till let the matter drop. You ha'e nobody but your daughter I suppose?

JOHN GRAEME.

Well I ha'e a sister married up in Dublin.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

But she's in a good way o' doin' I suppose?

JOHN GRAEME.

Oh yes. Purty fair. O' coorse I would like to lave her somethin'.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Ach, gi'e her a lock o' your hair or somethin'. You'll lave the place to your daughter o' coorse.

JOHN GRAEME.

Yes. I'll be doin' that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Aye. It's a purty fair farm o' land. Ye bought it out o' coorse?

JOHN GRAEME.

Two year come March, and a good reduction.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Aye. So I heerd. Well if ye gi'e her the farm and what money ye ha'e, I'll gi'e Robbie a cheque for a hunnert poun'.

[Pg 56]

JOHN GRAEME.

Impressively.

William John Granahan d'ye think this is a horse fair? My daughter will ha'e no man unner five hunnert poun'.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Uneasily and walking about.

Man, you'll nivir get her married John Graeme, at that way o' talkin'. Five hunnert poun'. D'ye think I'm a Rockyfellow? Ha'e some sense about ye.

JOHN GRAEME.

Aither that or no son o' yours weds my daughter. Five hunnert poun' and not one ha'penny less. There's the family name to be thought o'.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Ach! family name! a lock o' ould wives' blathers about who was married till who, till you'd have your head sore takin' it all in.

JOHN GRAEME.

You've heerd what I ha'e to say. Take it or lave it. You can plaze yourself.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Five hunnert poun'. It's a tarr'ble price. Would two hunnert no' do? You see I ha'e Samuel James and Ellen to provide for.

JOHN GRAEME.

A Graeme o' Killainey weds no man unner five hunnert poun', William Granahan. Mind that. I want my daughter married to no beggarman.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Excitedly.

Beggarman! Beggarman, did ye say? Hats, John Graeme, I think ye should be proud o' wan o' yours marryin' a Granahan. Money or no money, that's a nice way o' talkin'.

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JOHN GRAEME.

I suppose ye know I come o' good family, Mr. Granahan?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Sarcastically.

I heard ye were wance cotter folk up by Dromara mountain.

JOHN GRAEME.

Proudly.

My father and my forefathers had my farm—aye, from the time o' the plantin'.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

D'ye tell me? I nivir seen your laase o' the farm but of coorse if ye say so. Did ye nivir hear tell of Smith, Hunter, and Fargison?

JOHN GRAEME.

Contemptuously.

John Smith of Ballykelly?

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Disgusted.

Yon cratur? Ballykelly?

Proudly.

Lonnon! Well my mother was a daughter o' Samuel James Smith, and a niece o' Robert John Francis Fargison.

JOHN GRAEME.

Contemptuously.

I nivir heerd tell o' them.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

I wonner at your ignorance John Grame. A well educated man like yourself as sets yourself up to be taching the congregation on matters o' law and the temperance question, (*raising voice*) and you that ignorant o' common information.

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MRS. GRANAHAN.

Opening door and coming in a few steps.

William John Granahan, didn't I tell ye not to be raisin' argyments.

How you manage at the markets I nivr could understand. Get your business done, and ha' settled wi' it.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Soothingly.

Whist, whist woman, I was only discoorsin'. Mind the tay and I'll mind the rest. There. There. I agree to your tarms, John Graeme. I'll do it, though it's lavin' me tarr'ble short.

JOHN GRAEME.

Impressively.

But there's one thing I'll no ha'e, William Granahan.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Alarmed.

And what might that be?

JOHN GRAEME.

If your son is to marry my daughter, I'll ha'e none o' his music. Its all very well for quality and the like to go strummin' on instruments, but its no' meant for a sensible farmer.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Aye. I agree wi' that. But look here. Mind ye a song or two and a bit o' a tune on a long winter's night keeps one from thinkin' long and between you and me, it keeps you from the bottle.

JOHN GRAEME.

That's where you and I differs. Supposin' he starts playin' a dance tune or two, and the neighbours gather in. You like to do the thing dacint, and ye send out for drink, and then it goes from bad to worse. Na. Na. I'll ha'e none o' that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Well. Well. Make your mind aisy. Ye know he has promised me nivr to play again, and I don't think you'll hear much o' his fiddlin'.

JOHN GRAEME.

I'm right glad to hear it, and I'll tak' your word for it.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Very good.

With admiration.

Man, you'd ha' made a great horsedailer John Graeme.

JOHN GRAEME.

Aye. I had an uncle in the town, a dailer, and he was always sayin' that.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

And well you could ha' done it, if I knowed anythin'. I'll go to Banbridge a Friday wi' you to settle wi' the lawyers.

JOHN GRAEME.

Very good. I'll call for you wi' the trap that day. Its time I was for goin' home.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

We were expectin' ye ower the day, and I think Mrs. Granahan has the tay laid in the low room.

Calls.

Mrs. Granahan!

MRS. GRANAHAN.

From room.

Yes.

She comes in and stands waiting near door.

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WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

We're just after settlin' up about Robbie John and Jennie. Can ye get us a drop o' tay?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

If you could just take Mr. Graeme for a turn round, I could ha'e it for you in wan second. The table's laid and the kettle's boilin'. Is your daughter wi' you Mr. Graeme?

JOHN GRAEME.

Aye. She was comin' over after me. I suppose she should be here by now.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Well I can show you the new reaper and binder I got. That new Wexford machine, I was tellin' you about a Sunday in the Session.

JOHN GRAEME.

Very good. I'll just go out and see it.

William John Granahan and John Graeme go out by door at back.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Going over to fire and arranging kettle.

Five hunnert poun, and after me tellin' him to keep till four hunnert. Wait till I get ahout o' him again. I'll speak till him. Did he no' hear me thumpin' four times on the door till remind him. He must ha'e a soft spot in his heart for Robbie John.

Tap at door.

Come in.

Jane Graeme enters somewhat diffidently.

Oh its you Miss Graeme.

Shakes hands.

Youre welcome indeed. Your father's just gone out wi' my good man.

[Pg 61]

JANE.

Yes. I know—but I thought perhaps—well that Robbie was in here.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Inspecting her critically.

Deed now, I couldn't tell you where he might be.

JANE.

I'll just sit down a minute. I suppose you are all doing well here Mrs. Granahan?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Ach aye. As well as one could expeck. There's nothin' to make much complaint o'.

JANE.

I haven't seen Robbie about for some time Mrs. Granahan. I suppose he's working hard at the harvest.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Aye 'deed there's a brave press o' work on now, what wi' the corn a cuttin', and the rest o' it, he's been gey busy o' late.

JANE.

Indeed I am sure he was.

She looks round, sees the fiddle hanging up where Taylor has left it.

Aside.

Is that the fiddle he was telling me about, I wonder?

To Mrs. Granahan.

Is that the tramp's fiddle, Mrs. Granahan?

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Aye, that's the poor cratur's belongin'. But you needn't be afeared. Robbie's indeed been very good. He's niver played on it to my knowin', and keeps his promise well.

[Pg 62]

JANE.

Poor Robbie. Do you not think he's unhappy about something or other Mrs. Granahan. He's got very dull and moody this last while.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Deed now I don't see much odds in him Miss Graeme. He niver was a great boy with his tongue anyway;

Slily.

bar maybe an odd wan or two he would mak' up to.

JANE.

I think you do wrong to keep that fiddle hanging up before his eyes, when he has promised never to play again.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Och blatherations. I niver heerd the like o' the sort o' talk people goes on wi' nowadays. Do ye think my son bes only an ould ba cryin' for a toy? Deed now I don't think he worries his-self much about it.

JANE.

Aside.

Poor Robbie.

To Mrs. Granahan.

Robbie's a poor hand at the farming, Mrs. Granahan.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Snappishly.

Och aye. But he's greatly mended since he giv up playin'.

JANE.

Yes. He's a very poor farmer. But he was a wonder with his fiddle.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Oh well. It canna' be helped. He's better wi'out.

JANE.

I don't know.

She goes over and takes down the fiddle seats herself and draws the bow across it as it lies on her lap.

Robbie could have made it speak to you. He used to make me cry, and then laugh after it.

She places the strings near her ear and thumbs it wrapt in thought.

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MRS. GRANAHAN.

Looking contemptuously at her and then rising.

You just stay here a second till I fix the tay.

She goes into room. Jane remains seated where she is, occasionally touching the strings and seemingly deep in thought. Robbie John passes window. He looks in and then goes quickly to door and enters.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Who's that fiddlin'?

Goes over to Jane.

Why it's you. I heard you were come.

JANE.

Yes. I'm just in a minute or two.

He sits down beside her.

Robbie.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Well?

JANE.

Answer me one question. Aren't you a very poor farmer?

ROBBIE JOHN.

Well—I—I suppose I am.

JANE.

I knew you were. You're no good for selling cattle or going to market, or looking after crops.

ROBBIE JOHN.

You're very hard Jane to-night. What's put all that into your wee head?

JANE.

I've been listening to this and its been tellin' stories on you.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Aye and when its hangin' there dumb its speakin' to me, callin' to me. Don't think I'm mad Jane but I can't stand it much longer. What makes them hang it there to temp' me? Why? Just because they think they can make a few miserable pounds, they'll keep it there makin' me a liar, a pledge breaker, a man who can't keep his promise. I'll end it now. I'll smash it.

He makes to take the fiddle out of her hands.

JANE.

Resisting.

No. No. I want to say—I want to ask something Robbie. What does it say to you?

ROBBIE JOHN.

What does it—Ach—I wonder would you laugh at me like the rest if I told you.

JANE.

Sitting closer and putting her arm about his neck.

What does it say. Tell me. *I* would never laugh at you Robbie dear.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Hesitatingly.

Ach—about—about takin' it and makin' a name for myself with it.

Bitterly.

It sounds like fool talk doesn't it.

[Pg 65]

JANE.

To my father and yours it would sound like that and Samuel James would laugh at you, but he'd encourage you to believe in it.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Let me break it then. Smash it.

JANE.

Determinedly.

No. Look Robbie if I said it was whispering you the truth, what would you say?

ROBBIE JOHN.

Surprised.

I would say that it was true. But you never would.

JANE.

Determinedly.

I say it is the truth.

ROBBIE JOHN.

You what? Ach you don't know what you say child. If I did take to it again, look what would happen. My father would turn me out, and your father would forbid me then ever lookin' at you again. Jane Graeme engaged to a penniless fiddler, and she the best match in the whole countryside. I need never think of you again Jane.

JANE.

I don't care what they bid. If you took to that fiddle and went away, would you forget me soon?

ROBBIE JOHN.

Forget you, Jane? What makes you think that? Sure you know I gave it up sooner than lose you.

JANE.

Then take that fiddle and do what your heart tells you to. I wondered often and often what it was that made you so sad, and I know now. God made you a musician and not a farmer.

[Pg 66]

ROBBIE JOHN.

And you? What would you do?

JANE.

I know and trust some day God willing, you'll come back to me, rich and famous enough to have them all at your feet. I know you will.

ROBBIE JOHN.

God bless you wee girl for you're put a heart into me.

They embrace. Mrs. Granahan comes in.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

There. There. Bide a wee. Here they're all coming in for their tays.

William John Granahan, Graeme, Taylor, Samuel James and Grandfather come in. Robbie John goes over to fiddle and puts it into a case.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Puzzled.

So you're at it again, are you? Well I suppose there's no harm in giving Miss Graeme a tune, but I thought you were a man to your word.

ROBBIE JOHN.

Determinedly.

Look here. I want you all to know I am goin' to try my luck with this.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Exultingly.

You're goin' to lave us like to mak' money wi' it.

ROBBIE JOHN.

I'm goin' to try.

MRS. GRANAHAN.

Robbie John are you daft. What wild nonsense are ye talkin' about. And you to be married at Christmas and everythin' settled about you this very day.

ROBBIE JOHN.

I am determined to do it. Nothin' can keep me back.

JOHN GRAEME.

There. That's enough. My daughter jilted by a Granahan! Come home out o' this Jane Graeme.

He stamps his foot angrily and beckons her to come. Jane moves past Robbie John where he is standing and then suddenly kisses him and goes out with her father.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Passionately.

You see what you ha'e done Robert John Granahan. Broken your parents' hearts, and made the name of the Granahans a disgrace to the countryside.

Wildly.

Quick d—n ye before it's too late.

ROBBIE JOHN.

My mind's made up. Give me the address of that Professor you told me of, Mr. Taylor.

TAYLOR.

You're a fool, Robbie.

Producing card and handing it to him.

There. That's it.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

There's time yet, man. After John Graeme, and make it up wi' him. Swear you were only makin' fun.

ROBBIE JOHN.

I stick by the fiddle.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Mad with anger.

Then stick by the fiddle. And know if ever you are weary or ahungered or in want, ye need niver look me for any help.

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[Pg 68]

Shouts.

Out you go. Out. Don't dar one of you as much as till take his hand.
Out. Out the same as the beggar man gone, wi' the curse of your
father on you.

Robbie John goes toward back and stands a
moment as if in silent appeal at the open door.
Mrs. Granahan rushes forward to her husband
as if to entreat mercy. He angrily puts her
away.

Out. Out you go.

CURTAIN.

EPILOGUE.

[Pg 69]

The same scene, about midnight. There is no light except that of one or two candles
and the turf fire. Grandfather seated at fire. William John Granahan leaning
despondently on table beside which he is seated. Samuel James in his favourite seat on
the top of the table. Wind, storm and rain outside.

GRANDFATHER.

Aye. Aye. But its no use talkin' now. Ye might ha' been a wee bit the
less hasty.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

And who was goin' to thole yon conduct. It was too bad of him and
after the to-do we had over him this very day. Its a sore heartscald,
Robbie John, ye've been to me this day.

SAMUEL JAMES.

Ach, sure its over. Its full time we were in our beds.

Viciously.

You'd think he was dead and buried to hear the two of ye goin' on.
Sure for all know, he may be comin' back and a great name wi' him.

GRANDFATHER.

That's you to the ground, ye cunnin' rascal. Keep him out at all costs.

Thunder and lightning.

D'ye hear yon? To think o' that poor sowl wi' his wee bit o' a coat out
in the coul' and wet. If any harm come till him, Samuel James, know
this, you were the cause o' it.

SAMUEL JAMES.

It was his own choosin'.

GRANDFATHER.

His own choosin'. Who flattered him and led him on? Who kep' the
fiddle hangin' there and would let no one take it down, a continuin'
temptation till him? And you, William John Granahan, wi' your lust for
money. Aye. Lust for money. You couldn't abide him heartenin' up the
house wi' a tune or two, but ye'd brak the boy's heart sendin' him out
till work again, and him workin' as much as two of Samuel James
there. Ye thought he was wastin' time and money. D'ye think there's
nothin' in this life beyond making money above the rent. I tell you it's
not the money alone that makes life worth livin'. It's the wee things
you think nothin' o', but that make your home a joy to come back till,
after a hard day's work. And you've sent out into the coul and wet, the
one that was makin' your home somethin' more than the common.
D'ye think them proud city folk will listen to his poor ould ballads wi'
the heart o' the boy singin' through them. Its only us—its only us, I
say, as knows the long wild nights, and the wet and the rain and the
mist o' nights on the boglands,—its only us I say, could listen him in
the right way,

Sobbing.

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and ye knowed, right well ye knowed, that every string o' his fiddle was kayed to the cryin' o' your own heart.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Half sobbing.

There. There. God forgive me, my poor ould boy. I did na know. Whist. Maybe if I say a word or two:—Oh God forgive us this night our angry words, and ha'e marcy on my wayward son, O Lord, and keep him safe from harm, and deliver him not unto the adversary. Amen.

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GRANDFATHER.

Amen. Aye. Aye. Ye done well. Let no the sun go down upon your wrath.

WILLIAM JOHN GRANAHAN.

Going to door.

It's a coorse night.

Pauses.

I'll lave the door on the hesp.

He unbolts the door.

CURTAIN.

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