**Buying Ballabuggane**

J. E. Q. Cooil

[…]

TOFF: Is this a large farm?

LOAFER: Oh yes! I’ve got to have a miniature horse to get about it.

TOFF: And tell me, Sir, what is a miniature horse?

LOAFER: Well, one minute yer on, and the next minute yer off.

TOFF: What is the name of this farm? It has a name, has it not?

LOAFER: Oh yes, Masther, a rale good Manx name. (Pausing as if thinking one up) “Ballabuggane” they call it.

TOFF: And why do they call it such a peculiar name?

LOAFER: Well, “Balla” means “the farm,” and “Buggane” (looking off stage, scowling) after the owl dirt… (Realising he is saying too much, he tries to smile) er… er… “Buggane” means “the big crop.” Yes, that’s right, yer see whatever yer plant grows tremedjous. Yer put in the turnips and up they come. (Arms wide apart) Man! It only takes two to fill a stiff cart.

TOFF: Amazing! I say, if I buy the farm from you, would you be willing to stay on for a month or two, as an adviser?

LOAFER (thoughtfully): Well, yes.

TOFF: You seem to know the job well, and I can’t really be farming all day, of course, I want to become the Chairman of the Village Commissioners, so I can have some standing in the village.

LOAFER: Well, I can do that, I think, but would you be willing to give me a month’s wages in advance?

TOFF: Is that usual round here?

LOAFER: Oh yes! They all do it. Mighty rich people hereabouts.

TOFF (producing cheque book): I shall give you a crossed cheque payable to…

LOAFER: Aw, no, Sir. I’m an honest man, and I like to think of everyone being as honest as meself. Them things sometimes are not worth much. If yer were the Mayor now, it would be different. But with a wife and five starving children to feed, yer can’t blame a man for playin’ safe. Surely yer got that much in notes?… or… (he goes to move away, but keeps his eye on Toff).

TOFF: All right. (Producing well-filled wallet). Well, let me see, how much will that be? (He counts the notes and hands them over). Will that do?

LOAFER: Well, wouldn’t yer be giving a little more for expert advice?

(One more note is passed over. He shakes wallet to show it is empty).

TOFF: That is all I have with me. Now I want a receipt.

LOAFER (looking uneasily off stage left in agitation): A receipt? Oh yes. Just give me yer fountain pen. (He gets it). Me books are in me overcoat pocket.

(He picks up a traditional tramp’s bundle in a large red handkerchief on a stick, and hurries off right, past Toff).