

## EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO WALTER FRANCIS ROCH

My dear Roch,

Ever since you read "SONIA" in manuscript, you have been the book's most generous critic. May I mark my gratitude for this and for a friendship older than "SONIA" by dedicating its successor to you? Perhaps you remember openly doubting whether in fact the spiritual shock of war could so change and steady Sonia as to make her a fitting wife for any man, O'Rane most of all; you may recollect my confessing that such a marriage of hysterical impulse contained the seeds of instant disaster.

Sequels are admittedly failures, but I look on this book less as a sequel than as an epilogue or footnote. Sonia was not to know happiness until she had suffered, and the sacrifice in the early days of war was to many a new and heady self-indulgence. It is the length of the war, the sickening repetition of one well-placed blow after another on the same bruised flesh that has tested the survivors. After a year of war O'Rane could have mustered many followers, when he murmured to himself, "I—all of us who were out there—have seen it. We can't forget. The courage, the cold, heart-breaking courage . . . and the smile on a dying man's face. . . . We must never let it be forgotten, we've earned the right. As long as a drunkard kicks his wife, or a child goes hungry, or a woman is driven through shame to disease and death. . . . Is it a great thing to ask? To demand of England to remember that the criminals and loafers and prostitutes are somebody's children, mothers and sisters? And that we've all been saved by a miracle of suffering? Is that too great