

CHAPTER LXXIV

IT was raining and snowing at once, the roads were a porridge of thick brown mud, the trees looked piteously wet and neglected in their nakedness.

Sandy stood at the library window, looking out into the darkness. An hour before his son had come into the world. He had already seen him, already felt the strange feeling, as if his bones were turning to water, experienced by some men at the first sight of their first-born.

Mary, his wife, was well ; she had refused to be treated as an invalid ; she had smiled and given her baby from her own arms into its father's. And now Lord Sharrow was alone, trying to realize his great happiness.

He was very happy ; to-night was Christmas Eve. He had been married for over a year. Mary had come back after what seemed to him an endless absence of six months, and quite simply he had told her of his grand discovery.

"I love you, dear," he said. "Will you marry me?" And he did love her with a deep, quiet affection that satisfied him completely.

And it had grown, this affection, as affection will, when it is based on respect, and a community of interests.

In the light, as he stood by the window, Sandy's face looked a very different one from the face we knew. The lines were there for ever, of course, but there was a new softness about his ugly mouth, a new look in his eyes.

He rarely brooded now ; he never did so deliberately, and his remembrances of the sad things in his past were softened by his present peace. So there he stood, looking out into the night, while his new-born son lay sleeping upstairs in the room in which his great-uncle had been born and died.

And presently the rain ceased, the clouds broke, letting a very faint glow of moonlight through.

Sandy smiled. He was too happy to form articulate