

to marry, or knew what marrying was—but because he had saved our father's honour by paying his debt!"

She paused to take breath; but before Gore could speak, she went on again:

"Do you know what I always wonder, Walter, when I think of Clodagh?"

Gore made a low murmur.

"I wonder, considering everything, that she hasn't done really wrong things, instead of just terribly foolish ones! It doesn't seem strange to me that she should have behaved like a child, when she first felt what it was to be free and flattered and admired. Listen, Walter! There have been too many clouds between you and Clodagh. Neither of you has understood. You have been too proud; and she has been too much afraid. But I am not afraid!"

And in the prosaic London cab, with her eyes fixed resolutely on the heavy copper-coloured sky that hung above the housetops, Nance performed her second act of love. While Gore sat silent, she poured forth the whole mistaken tale of Clodagh's life, from the days in Venice to the hour of her departure for Ireland. She omitted nothing; she extenuated nothing. With a strange instinct towards choice of the right weapons, she fought for her sister's future. Everything was told—Lady Frances Hope's poisoning of Clodagh's mind against Gore himself—the scene with Serracauld in the card-room—all the temptations, all the follies, confessed in the darkness of the nights at Tuffnell, and in Clodagh's own bedroom on the night she visited Deerehurst. It was the moment for speech; and she spoke. Her own shyness, her own natural reticence, were swept aside by the great need of one who was infinitely dear. The scene at Carlton House Terrace she described without flinching; for candour and innocence move boldly where lesser virtues fail and falter. She told the story with a simple truth that was more dignified than any hesitancy.

When at last she had finished, Gore sat for a space, very silent and with bent head; then abruptly, as if inspired by a sudden resolution, he put up his hand to the trap in the roof.