

HIS Larry laughed nervously. Miss McCarty, it was
MOTHER evident to him, did not understand the brusque
kindliness of his mother's inquiries. "Never mind
what it is," he said. "What difference does it
make?"

Mrs. Regan contained herself by folding her
arms upon her pride. "True enough," she said.
"What diff'rence? 'Tis none o' my bus'n's. None
at all." And with that she assumed an attitude of
silent self-suppression that was comical—as well as
tragic.

"It only took us twenty minutes to get down to
Fourteenth Street from a Hundred and Third,"
Larry told her.

"Did it," she said, shortly.

"Lots of flats to rent up there."

She said nothing.

"Better air, too."

With one hand supporting an elbow, she fingered
her lips as if she were fingering a padlock on them.
Miss McCarty was very repulsively looking aside out
of the window. Larry tried to make talk.

The end of it came when the girl, having carried
on five minutes' futile conversation with him—about
flats, comparative rents and the possible construc-
tion of more subways—rose placidly to say good
night; and Mrs. Regan awoke, too late, to the in-
hospitality of her behavior.

"Yuh're never goin' so soon!" she cried. "Wait
a bit. Have a cup o' tea now." The girl refused
firmly, but Mrs. Regan hurried out to the kitchen
to put on the kettle and open the cake box. She
heard Larry call out something which she did not
understand. And when she returned with her
pewter cake-basket and her tray of cups, the room
was empty.

They had gone.

She went back to the kitchen, thumped the cake
into the box, hanged the basket down on the table,
and snatched the kettle from the stove. "There!"