

12 THE PORCELAIN LADY

and twinkling porcelain personality, was Ruth, the daughter of John Winter, by his wife, Amelia.

They dwelt in Maida Vale, London, N.W., in a house over against a canal, a squarely built house with huge gardens (at least, for London) to rear and front. Mr Winter was retired. His money, sufficient to retire upon the interest accruing from it, he had hoarded in Hastings; and there Ruth had been educated.

She had lived mostly not with her parents, but in the house of an uncle (her father's brother)—that is, when not at school. I say in the house; but really she spent as much time out and about with the uncle as indoors. His wife, who thought (perhaps rightly; I do not wish to be controversial) that consanguinity should be more dynamic than personal predilection, was hurt because of his affection for his niece. But she would have been more hurt had it seemed to her a "real affection." Though he was to be seen abroad everlastingly with Ruth, "his own daughter," as Mrs James Winter commented, "was still his daughter, you know." The cabmen on the ranks used to say, seeing James Winter passing with the pigtailed daughter of John Winter, she holding his sleeve, dancing by his side so that the pigtails danced too: "There goes James Winter with his

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