

"I think it is I who have idealised."

Nance straightened her small figure.

"Then you have always treated her wrongly. What Clo needs is not to be idealised, but to be taken care of—not to be praised or blamed, but to be taken care of. Her brown fingers were tightly clasped, as they rested on the cab doors. "All her life she has wanted to be taken care of—and all her life she has been thrown back upon herself. When I was little, I had her; but when she was little, she had no one. Our mother died when I was born."

Something in the simple pathos of this statement stirred Gore's ever-present sense of the sacredness of home ties.

"I never knew that," he said very quietly.

"Yes, our mother died when I was born; and Clo grew up in our father's care. Did she ever tell you about our father?"

"No. At least——"

"Then I shall. I've told Pierce. People ought to know. It helps them to understand.

"Our father was a spendthrift—a gambler—a man without any principles. If somebody stronger than himself had taken him in hand when he was young, things might have been different. But he began by ruling everybody who came in contact with him, until at last nobody dared to rule him.

"Can you imagine how a man like that would bring up a daughter—you who had a mother to help you in every year of your life?"

Her blue eyes darkened with intensity.

"Our home in Ireland is a big lonely house on the sea-coast. Imagine growing up in a house like that, without care or money or friends—for father drove all his friends away. Imagine Clo's life! Her only learning was what she got with our cousin from the schoolmaster of the nearest village; her only amusements were sailing and riding and fishing. She never had the love or friendship of a woman of her own class; she never knew what it was to be without the dread of debt or disgrace; and then, at eighteen, she married the first man who came into her life—not because she liked him—not because she wanted