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rapturous enjoyment, showed a thread of pearly teeth between.

Still he watched, silent as herself, in a like entrancement. She spoke at last: a reverent whisper as a devotee speaks in a church. "It is a miracle! Oh! you lucky, lucky man! to have such a picture to look at when you choose; to have summer and summer's beauty and sunshine in your room when it is grey, dreary winter for all the rest of the world."

"Would you care to have it for your own, Sybil?"

The words had slipped out half unconsciously, fashioned by his thought of the moment before.

She laughed good-humouredly, "How foolish you are. I have no money to buy masterpieces, and if I offered you the Bank of England I know you would not part with your matchless Turner."

"I did not mean to part with it," he said boldly. If she found any hidden meaning in the words she made no sign.

"SO I thought," she answered simply. "I would not if it were mine. It is enough to make me smash my palette and burn my brushes," she added after a moment. "If it did that," Hugh broke out, "I should be sorry I ever found it. Some day, Sybil, you will paint a picture that will live, a scene in Connemara. I have the very place in my mind at this moment. You know the corner of our favourite path, where the lake suddenly shows through the fringe of trees with the long curve of the blue hills behind."

"I have often stood there since you left us, Hugh," she said softly, "in the golden sunset when the lake was a pool of flame, and the trees stood clear against a rosy sky, and thought of the good times we had together in those days that are gone forever."

"There are better days still to come for you and I, Sybil."

"I cannot think it," she said softly. "I was very happy then."

Their eyes met, and love flamed up in his heart with sudden fervour, not to be controlled. The impulse to tell her then and there quite mastered him. His voice trembled with eagerness, the words jostled each other in their haste to his lips.

"I was very happy, too, Sybil. I did not think there could be greater happiness, but now it seems to me as nothing."

"Nothing compared with the hope—"

A sharp knock at the door cut his sentence in two. Then without waiting for a reply Ella Pallacio broke into the room, faultlessly attired in gay colours that set off her brilliant beauty to the uttermost.

She stopped short at the threshold, her hand thrown out and head thrown back—a superb figure of surprise, and conscious of her own grace and beauty.

"I beg your pardon, Hugh," she said, "I thought you were alone. I just wanted a word with you."

Sybil had risen as the girl entered, and Hugh was compelled to introduce them. "Ella, Miss Pallacio," he stammered, "will you let me introduce you to Miss Darley?"

The girls bowed and smiled with chill courtesy, like swordsmen about to engage, each conscious of the other's beauty. The blue eyes challenged the black.

"Delighted to meet you," said Sybil softly. "I am sorry I have been in the way, but I am just going. I will not interrupt your business with Mr. Limmer any longer." Hugh protested, but Sybil persisted smilingly.

"If you wait a moment I'll be with you," he said.

"No, no, no, you must not hurry business on my account. I can make my own way back quite easily."

"Don't look so cross, Hugh," Ella pouted plaintively, when they were alone. "I meant no harm. I came to tell you my good news. Stephen and I are engaged. He says you are the best friend ever a man had. Why do you look at me like that. What have I done? Won't you wish me joy?"

It was not joy that Hugh was tempted to wish her at that moment. So much at least was plain from his

face, though he did not answer in words.

He walked twice up and down the room before he was sufficiently master of himself to speak. But it was impossible to resist the appeal in those bright eyes.

"I congratulate you with all my heart, Ella," he said gently, "you are going to marry a real good fellow. Be good to him."

"That means I am to give up flirting," she retorted saucily. "Well, I don't suppose you will give me the opportunity any more. Who is she, Hugh? I congratulate you on your good taste. She's lovely. There, don't fly into another tantrum. It's no harm to praise her, I hope. Of course, I could see I was in the way when I bounced into the room, but what was I to do. If I spoiled one chance you can try your luck some other time, can't you?"

Hugh winced at her careless words, but he kept a tight grip on his temper. "Don't talk like that, Ella," he said, "I don't like it." She looked at him keenly for a moment, and the gray light in the black eyes softened to sympathy as she looked.

"Are you so hard hit, old boy, at last. Well, I won't even ask who she is. I will wish you luck, and I hope I may soon wish you joy. You have always been a kind friend to me, and I was very fond of you once upon a time. But all the while I knew you were never fond of me in the right way. I might have broken my heart about you, my dear, if Steve hadn't come along. We've had a jolly time together, Hugh, but we must bid it good-bye—mustn't we. This is to be the very last." Before he was aware the impetuous beauty had stooped and kissed him, and then ran laughingly from the room.

"Lucky Sybil didn't see that performance," thought Hugh, "or I was quite done for."

Sybil was in high good humour when they lunched together tete-a-tete, the old ladies not having yet returned from their shopping. Yet there was a subtle change in her manner, which he felt but could not define. Their old intimate comradeship was quietly ignored. She smiled as brightly, she talked as pleasantly as ever, but the mood of the morning was impossible to recall.

All through the lunch Hugh chafed against the impassable barrier that kept them apart, tantalized by her brilliancy and beauty. How could he tell that when at last he took himself off for a sulky smoke in his studio, the gay young beauty flew at once to her bedroom to ease the strain on her nerves by a good cry, which is a woman's substitute for man's great solace—tobacco.

IT was a relief to Hugh when Pallacio burst into his studio, his gaunt, deeply-lined face more livid than ever, his sunken eyes blazing with fury, as he denounced him for having trifled with his daughter.

"You made love to the girl," the old man said, stammering in his rage. "You made belief you would marry her, now you pass her over like a plaything you have grown tired of to that penniless dauber, Browne, who should be a grocer instead of a painter."

"Get out you old fool," cried Hugh briskly. "She and I were good friends, nothing more. Browne will make her a better husband than I ever could. Besides, she loved him and not me. Take my word for it, Pallacio, Browne is a first-class painter who will make his mark one of these days."

"Aye," sneered Pallacio, "one of those days when Ella has been starved to death in a garret. You want to be rid of her, so you turn her over to this painter, my poor little girl whom you deceived. I'm not long for this world, Limmer, but it would be some comfort if I could pay you out before I die. You have got a new girl now, Ella told me about her. May—"

"Stop," cried Hugh, roused to a sudden spasm of anger. "If you can't keep that evil tongue of yours quiet—get out."

The old man shook all over with impotent rage. "Oh! I'll go, I'll go;