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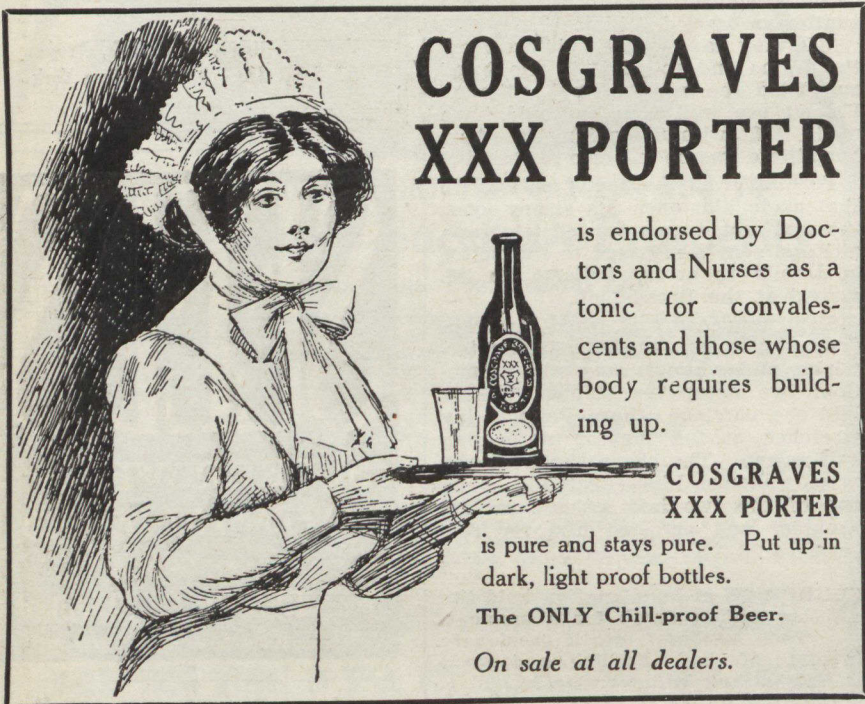
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choly that sighed for sympathy. Then the daughter heard for the first time her mother's love story.

One afternoon they sat together at the open window in the mild sunshine of a glorious day in early October—one of those "pet days" of the variable Irish climate—which has no equal in the world. Only a few small patches of cloud, soft and white as fleeces of wool, scattered here and there in the wide open vault of the heavens made pleasant contrast with the delicious blue.

On such a day in the fall of the year, familiar prospects surprise the gazer with new and unexpected beauty. The mountain tops range themselves in more graceful curves high up against the faint blue of the sky. The green tracery of the trees is more delicate, the light and shade more exquisitely soft on the slopes and hollows of the hills. At such a time the heart turns instinctively with mingled joy and sadness to "the days that are no more."

MOTHER and daughter felt the pensive charm as they looked wide over the lovely landscape where the clear music and the cool breath of the running water tempered the stillness and the sunshine.

"It was on a day like this I first saw him, Sybil," the mother said. "I was sitting where we are now. We were only a week in Connemara at the time. I had lived my life with an aunt in a stuffy little house in a stuffy little street in Dublin. We were very poor, my darling, in those days, but a rich, kind friend, dead years ago, took this house for us from Lord Sternholt's agent and sent us here. It was another Lord Sternholt at the time, the brother of the present earl, a famous person, who spent half his time hunting big game in unknown lands, and was a great man in the House of Lords when he was at home. As he never visited his estates in Ireland we got the place cheap, and I fell in love with the cottage at first sight. My first week I was as happy as any girl could be, so I thought at the time, but there was greater happiness still waiting for me here.

"I was nearly four years older than you are now, Sybil, but up to that time I had never been in love. I did not know what love was. I had read about it, of course, in stories and poems, but it was no more than a dream to me, a vague, delicious dream—until he came.

"I was sitting just here with Tennyson in my hand. I had been reading 'Enid and Geraint,' till my thoughts had drifted from the story into vague dreams of the future. The sound of a gun away on the hills startled me for a moment, and I caught a glimpse of white smoke and a dark outline of a man against the clear sky, and I began to wonder vaguely what he was like. After that the man got mixed up in my day-dreams. I believe I dropped off to sleep, and when I awoke with a start to see him standing at the open window with his eyes fixed on my face, the thought came to me in a single flash as I saw him standing there in the sunshine, that man is to be my husband."

"Was he handsome?" asked Sybil under her breath.

"He was just splendid, my net," the mother answered with a catch in her voice, "so like the picture it might almost have been painted for him. His hat was off and his hair was tossed back from his forehead, the sun shone through it, the wind stirred it. He had a gun under his arm, and two Irish red setters with burnished coats of red gold coupled beside him. I am sure I blushed. I am sure he saw me blush at the mad thought that flashed through my brain."

"You must forgive me," he said, "I am hot and tired, and the open window tempted me to look for someone to beg a glass of water." The quiet voice, the voice of a gentleman, helped me out of my flurry, and I was just able to ask him into the house.

"That was the beginning. My aunt made him stay for tea. He came again next day and the next. After the first week I knew what love meant, after a fortnight he asked me to marry him."

"That was awfully sudden," mur-

mured Sybil, blushing at the thought.

"Why, you were still strangers."

"You don't yet know what love means, my little girl," said the mother, "you will some day," and again the daughter blushed. "Love has nothing to do with time. We seemed to know each other all our lives. It happened one morning as I was reading a favourite poem," the mother went on softly, absorbed in her own love dream, "you know it, Sybil, 'The Lord of Burleigh.' He was but a landscape painter and a village maiden she." When I came to the last lines:

"But the trouble weighed upon her
And perplexed her night and morn
With the burden of an honour

Unto which she was not born.
Faint she grew and ever fainter,
And she murmured, Oh that he
Were once more the landscape painter
Which did win my heart from me.
So she drooped and drooped before him,
Fading slowly from his side."

"He took the book from my hand.
'That fellow was a fool,' he said.

"But he loved her."

"In a selfish sort of a way, perhaps, he did, but he wanted to show off what a fine chap he was, he wanted to patronize. Why couldn't he have let the girl have the cottage she had set her heart on?" Before I could answer he caught my hand and drew me to him. "Don't let us talk of other people's love, Magsie," he whispered. "I want to tell you of my own. It has grown too great to be hidden. Will you marry me?"

"There was but one answer to that question, for I could not hide my love.

"Do you like this place, darling?" he asked me one day when we were on the lake together, 'would you like to live here always?"

"I'd just love it," I answered.

"Right. I'll see if I can get a lease from the Earl of Sternholt. Your aunt can come down to you whenever you like, as I'm afraid I'll have to be a good deal away, off and on. I have a lot of things to look after. You never asked me if I was rich."

"Because I don't care. I'd beg from door to door with you."

"It isn't quite so bad as that," he answered smiling.

"How well I remember it all, Sybil, as well as if it had happened yesterday. He kissed me for the first time, and let the oar slip into the water, and we had to fish for it, and he kissed me twice on the way home.

"So we were married, to make a long story short, and then followed such years of happiness as no other woman has ever known. Each day I loved him more than the last. There was just the one drawback, he had warned me about it. He was often away from home, sometimes for months at a stretch. I never asked him where he went or what he did, and he never told me. 'It's a secret, Magsie,' he said, 'which you had best not know.'

"He never wrote a letter here and never got one. He used to write me long letters when he was away, but he never gave me his address, and I always wrote as he told me. To be left till called for at the post office. I never doubted him, darling; it is pleasant to know now that I never doubted him.

"It was on your seventh birthday that he drove over with this picture from the station. He brought it into the room himself, and set it by the wall just over there, opposite the window."

Her voice trembled a little, but she went on bravely:

"Your father had hinted that you might be sent to school, and I had broken down at the notion of parting from you. It was the first time I had ever shed a tear since we were married, and he was awfully put out to see me crying.

"Oh, I'm a brute, Magsie," he said, putting his arm round me. "Don't cry, can't you see how it hurts me?"

"I couldn't stop for a minute or so, though I wanted to, and he kissed me half a dozen times. On this very sofa we were sitting at the time.

"She will never be taken away from you, I promise you that. You