

CHAPTER VIII

A QUESTION OF EXPEDIENCY

"Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the will of the Almighty God. Bartly will have a fine coffin out of white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can he want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied."

J. M. SYNGE: *Riders to the Sea.*

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DERYK's latch-key turned stiffly in the lock; he pulled the bolts out of their sockets and flung open the double doors, watching with pride their perfect poise and deliberate, smooth movement. After the heat and glare of Pall Mall the hall with its mosaic pavement and white marble pillars seemed cold and dark; triangular shafts of light, varying in extent and intensity, shone into the gloom from the doors of the rooms opening out into the hall, but the great central glass dome, which had been used to light the whole interior of the building, was now removed, and the circular orifice was covered with planks. Feet could be heard passing and repassing over them, until the planks bent in the middle and let in chunks of light on either side; from time to time there came the merciless, hollow reverberation of a hammer on a steel girder's end, but no workmen were visible, and the noise alone suggested their presence.

"Then I have a glass skylight, flush with the roof," Deryk explained; "and the winter garden, or whatever you choose to call it, above that. I'll take you up there when I've shewn you round the rest of the place. Starting with the ground floor, you have dining-room, smoking-room, ball-room and my own study. We'll take the dining-room first."