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# LET THE ROOF FALL IN

BY  
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"Pigs in Clover," "Baccarat,"  
"An Incomplete Etonian,"  
Etc.



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LET THE ROOF  
FALL IN

I had thought to hear thy children  
Laugh with thine own blue eyes,  
But my sorrow's voice is silent  
Where my life's love lies.

. . . . .

Let the roof fall in, let silence  
On the home for ever fall  
Where my lost son lay and heard not  
His lone mother's call.

Printed in Great Britain

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## CHAPTER I

THE weather was cold, the sky overcast, there had been several short, sharp showers of rain, and the prospect of a pleasant day's racing was not even problematic. The stand at Sandown would be half empty, and the difficulty of spotting winners, always great enough in the jumping season, would be doubled by the heaviness of the going.

Lady Carrie Carthew had been talking about the weather since nine o'clock, when her maid had called her. It was still the subject of her conversation when, at eleven, she walked to the window and decided it would be quite absurd to venture out. She had had her morning appetizer of rum and milk, followed by a cigarette, she had read her letters, torn up her bills, and yawned over her papers. Four or five dresses had been taken out of the wardrobe, and replaced, discarded definitely for the occasion. She had intended all along to wear the new brown cloth with her sables, and the wallflower toque. But what was the good of dressing-up on a day like this? From the window in Charles Street she had a side glimpse into Berkeley Square, and in Berkeley Square it was miserable enough, the moist air clung like grey fog to the leafless trees, and dripped from brown boughs on to the sodden grass. It would be worse still in the country, slopping across the Park

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through the grass to the ill-protected stand, spending the rest of the day with shoes and stockings damp and feet cold, shivering whilst the horses paraded, watching them through obscured field-glasses as they jumped, or fell short, the colours indistinguishable, and the result in doubt until the numbers went up.

Lady Carrie loved a day's racing, and had, in fact, insisted that Lord Ranmore should fetch her in the car and drive her down. But the weather made it impossible. She gazed out of the window, doubted, shivered, and was glad of her warm *peignoir*.

“You can put away all those clothes, Marie; I shall stop at home,” she decided at last, abruptly. “Get me my writing-case and the telephone book. Tell Mrs. Batson we shall be four or five to lunch, and she must see there are plenty of hot cakes for tea. I shall have bridge here; it is the only thing to do in such weather.”

She turned away from the window. The warm bedroom, with all its comfortable disarray, appealed to her senses, and now she sank luxuriously on to the sofa, happy in her decision.

That was the moment when the big car turned into the Square, and, with its familiar toot-toot, and the soft splash of its tyres in the fluid mud, drew up before the house.

“Ranmore must give it up,” she said to herself comfortably. “It isn't as if he were going to ride Montserrat. The idiotic clairvoyante put a stopper on that. I shall want Betty Brinmore for a fourth, I suppose Betty is one of the party.”

Any doubt on that score was quickly set at rest, for the car had hardly stopped, the engine still making its unholy noise before the door, when Betty Brinmore herself, having discarded ceremony many years ago, and never

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found time to recapture it, burst into the room without knocking:

“Not dressed yet! what a sluggard you are! But it’s just what I expected! You’ll have to hurry up all you know. Look sharp, Marie, and put her ladyship into some waterproof togs . . .”

“Don’t be foolish, Bet! Of course I’m not going; it’s too wet. Ranmore isn’t going to ride, the ground will be nothing but a bog, there won’t be a soul there. . . .”

“Oh, don’t talk! you’ve got to come. Ranmore’s outside with the car. The horses will be there, won’t they? I’m going to see Montserrat win the Grand Military if it blows a blizzard. A little rain won’t hurt you, put on thick boots and leggings. There will be some ripping good racing, I can tell you, and it will be a near thing between Gabriel and Montserrat, anyway. Do hurry! I want to have a good look at them before lunch, and the first race is at one.”

Betty Brinmore had a house near Ascot, where Carrie always stayed for the week. She was also the possessor, through her husband, of a hunting-box at Melton, a grouse-moor, and a large amount of more-or-less-exclusive racing information. Carrie valued her friendship, and all that was to be had out of it. Betty would hardly have called their intercourse friendship, it was not a word that fitted Lady Carrie; but they were intimate enemies. Their tastes and pursuits were similar, and they hunted pastime in couples. Betty’s was the franker nature; she was also good-natured. Carrie had persuaded her that Lord Ranmore’s attentions were serious. Well, she had brought Ranmore, or Ranmore had brought her, to fetch Carrie for Sandown; and Carrie would have to come. She did not want to be alone with three or four men. Jim de la Roche

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was in the car, and he was enough for her. Carrie must help in entertaining the others.

Lady Carrie did not want to go to Sandown in the wet; she wanted to stay at home and play bridge. But she could not afford to throw away her chances; the insistence of Betty and the call of that puffing, straining car outside were inexorable. A day with Ranmore, too, ought not to be missed, she knew it well enough. She protested, but her protests were perfunctory. She was despoiled of her comfortable *peignoir*, and laced into a tweed frock, before she had finished asseverating that she did not intend to move; that she was just writing to Dot, and Jenny Ransom to come and play bridge; that she did not believe there would be any racing, and she was sure, if there were, all the favourites would get beaten:

Betty took little heed of her protestations:

“Go on, Marie, hook her up as quickly as you can. It doesn't really matter what you put on her, she won't be without her coat on a day like this. You don't want that footling motor-veil”—Carrie was endeavouring to secure herself from wind and weather—“the car is shut up. Come on, we can do it in an hour if there are no police-traps. Terence drove it round himself. He has his cousin with him, Derrick Malone; such a fine fellow, twice the size of Terence. Terence says he is a ‘black Ranmore,’ whatever that may mean. He has just passed an examination and got some appointment. Terence is making no end of a fuss about him. He is about six feet two, green from Belfast, and with a brogue you could cut with a knife. Do come on. Jim is with us. He is riding in the first race. Hurry, hurry, hurry!”

Betty Brinmore, who had been Betty Carew, was not used to being contradicted. She was impatient under it, and had no hesitation in pressing her point. She wanted

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to talk to Jim. With the car there were Ranmore, and his cousin Derrick, and Noel Scales, as well as Jim. Carrie could not leave her in the lurch with them all. Carrie did not see what Bet found in Jim de la Roche, he had only his pay, and no conversation except about racing. But then Bet could never understand what Terence Ranmore found in Lady Carrie Carthew, and this mental attitude, with the concealment of it from one another, was typical of the two women's relations.

Carrie and Bet were neighbours at Melton. They were neighbours, too, in town, where neighbourhood counts for nothing. You live either in Mayfair, or out of it. Charles Street was in the area, and there Carrie had set up her Lares and Penates when her husband's sudden death had freed her. But Berkeley Square was only a stone's-throw away, and fundamentally there was no distinction in the distance.

Lord Ranmore was standing on the pavement when the two ladies emerged from the house. If he were as impatient as Betty had said, he certainly disguised it well. But then, Terence, Lord Ranmore, was remarkable for his pretty manners, in an age when, among a certain set of people, it was considered good form not only to have no manners, but to cultivate frank, rude speech. Terence was an Irishman, and Ranmore Castle is not far distant from Cork, near where the Blarney-stone is to be found.

“And wasn't it worth while waiting for her?” he answered Bet, who explained the delay. “Let me present my cousin to you, Lady Carrie. It's the broth of a boy he is, and he only speaks Irish.”

When Lord Ranmore took his hat off to greet them, and stood with it in his hand until they were both in the car, one could see that the red-gold wave of his hair would have clustered into curls had the regulations permitted it. He had a dimple in his cheek like a girl, that showed when

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he laughed, and Terence laughed often, then his blue eyes twinkled, and he had a trick of half closing them. He was quite extraordinarily good-looking, and all his five feet nine were perfect in carriage and proportion. Derry was a rough-hewn giant beside him, and could not be said to have any manners at all—at least, the introduction hardly held his attention:

“Can I really drive the car all the way down, Terence? You’ll trust it with me, and you’ll not be wanting the chauffeur at all?” He had all a boy’s eagerness, although he was nearly twenty-four, and so big. Terence had driven it round himself, with Derry beside him, and the chauffeur sitting on the step. But it was raining, and now, that there were two ladies, Terence would surely be wanting to talk to them.

“It will be a fine drive,” he went on excitedly, hardly noticing Lady Carrie Carthew, who was good to look upon, nevertheless; or so Ranmore told her, giving Derry a cheery word of warning or advice, and following her into the car. The car was a new one, and this was the first day it had been out. Derry thought it was wonderful of Terence to entrust it to him. But when wasn’t Terence kind to him?

“I had all the trouble in the world to get Carrie to dress,” Bet told Terence when they had started. Derry, very proud in his position on the box, had his hand on the whistle all the time.

Carrie put her gloved fingers to her delicate ears. “Tell him not so much whistle, please, I want to talk. I was so disappointed when I saw in this morning’s paper that you were not going to ride Montserrat. That is why I was not ready when Bet came for me. I hated going to the Grand Military if I was not to see you ride,” Carrie said, smiling sweetly at Terence, as if the weather had

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had nothing to do with her hesitation, and bridge held no allurements.

“But I told you that yesterday!” He flushed a little; his skin was as fair as a girl’s. “Jim here has the mount, and he’ll do it full justice. I’ve put you a tenner on. As for Bet, I believe it’s bankruptcy and the poor-house she’ll face, if it doesn’t get home. It ought to be a good thing; it’s as near a certainty for us as anything can be.”

Jim de la Roche was the best gentleman-jockey in England, and Sir Noel Scales was another Irishman whose most salient feature was a knowledge of Ruff. Form and odds were the topics all the way down, and Betty did most of the talking. Lady Carrie was occupied, as ever when she was in Lord Ranmore’s company, in trying to look her best, although her good looks were but a poor thing compared with his. Her strong point was her fair hair; she spent many hours of the day in its tendance. It was pale fawn-colour, it was waved daily by the best hair-dresser in London, and washed with white of egg and champagne. Whatever the fashion of the moment in hats, she would wear none large enough to cover it. She had a trim and pretty figure, and rather a plaintive manner, which she used for all it was worth. She called Lord Ranmore, Terence, and paraded her intimacy with him. She dropped a word or two now and again into the midst of the racing talk, to demonstrate to Bet and the other men that she was familiar with Lord Ranmore’s movements yesterday, and the day before. This was part of her method. Jim and Sir Noel knew all about it. Everybody knew that Harry Carthew’s widow wanted to marry Terence Ranmore. Odds had been laid against her bringing it off.

Terence’s sister was the Duchess of Towcester, and Terence was devoted to her. When the odds on, or against, Lady Carrie Carthew succeeding in her project were

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discussed, it was always the Duchess and her influence that threw them against Carrie. There was Lady Ranmore, too, to reckon with, Terence's mother. He was as a young sun-god in his mother's eyes; she would never find mortal woman fit to wed with him. Wasn't he the heir to all the Ranmores, seventeen generations of them, and an epitome of the whole of Irish history? Wasn't he the head of the family, to say nothing of being the apple of her eye and his sister's? Certainly Carrie's chances, if they depended at all on Terence's family, looked very poor indeed.

The young sun-god was not quite in his best spirits to-day. His laughter rang out less often, or rang less gaily than usual. The twinkling eyes and the dimple suffered something of an eclipse. Before now Carrie had amused Terence, but her rallying to-day seemed to have little effect.

Lady Carrie had tact, she did not ask what ailed him; she thought it was easy enough to guess. He was in the habit of consulting clairvoyantes before he went for a day's racing; and yesterday he had been warned he must not ride Montserrat for the Grand Military. Carrie knew that Terence was in debt and needed money. Lady Ranmore was spending her jointure, and all her private fortune, in repairing the castle and improving the estate. But there was not much left over for new motor-cars and polo ponies, ill-luck at racing and cards, and Carrie's own insatiable needs. Terence wanted the money he would have won over Montserrat if he had ridden him. There was no use looking further for the cause of the cloud that was temporarily passing over his brightness.

Carrie was really too much wrapped up in herself to regard very seriously the absence of Terence's usual high spirits. She thought she held him safely—perhaps she accepted his glumness as a further proof of it. For,

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whatever his sentiments might have been two years ago, when he was new to London and to her, and ready to be pleased with everyone, she knew quite well that to-day there was little sentiment in his feelings for her. Terence had his code of honour, and Lady Carrie had a claim upon him. He would not ignore nor forget her claim, but to-day its insistency now and again irritated him. Who could guess that he was haunted to-day by the sweetest pair of grey eyes, pleading eyes, frightened eyes, eyes that shed tears? He could not see Carrie's eyes through her veil. They were not Carrie's eyes that were haunting him.

What had Derry meant by talking to him about Rosaleen before they started? Derry was nothing but a boy—a great, overgrown boy, not ripe for love-making. Derry had his way to make in the world, whilst Rosaleen . . . Well, he didn't want to think about little Rosaleen, nor to hear Derry talk of her. That was why he was riding inside with Carrie and Bet, instead of with Derry on the box.

Terence, Lord Ranmore, was not the young sun-god his mother thought him. He was, indeed, very human, just a dear, spoilt boy who had always had his own way, and had taken it once too often, perhaps, in a masterful manner. The Duchess saw him with a lesser halo than his mother did, albeit the one he wore before her was bright enough. But although he was not a god, nor quite what they thought him, he had a conscience, and it was pricking, reminding him, worrying him, all during that motor drive to Sandown.

He was quite gallant to Carrie and paid her compliments, but secretly her note irked him a little. If she held him in a chain of roses, to-day the roses had thorns.

Betty Brinmore went on talking of weights to Jim, as

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if she were the official handicapper. Sir Noel had his little “Form at a Glance” with him, and helped them to remember performances. Terence easily assimilated his talk to theirs, he was ever adaptable. Lady Carrie’s mind remained chiefly intent upon herself, even when she talked to Terence. When the weather brightened, as they approached Esher, she wished she had put on her brown dress; when the rain came down again pitilessly, she was glad she was in tweed. She doubted the fitness of her hat, the stoutness of her boots, and the resistant quality of her *souçon* of rouge. But she continued to show her proprietorship in Terence, and, if she was thinking of herself and her appearance throughout the journey down, secretly longing, perhaps, for her bridge and home-comforts, nobody guessed it—least of all Terence, who presently assumed something of his normal gaiety and promised them a fine day.

Arrived at Sandown, his first care was for Derry. But Derry said he wasn’t wet at all, the big mackintosh had protected him. And he had never enjoyed anything so much in his life as driving her down. And wasn’t she a grand car, and what would it have been if he had “let her out”? Short as was the walk from the motor to the enclosure, they were all pretty wet through before they reached the shelter of the stand. Terence held his umbrella over Carrie very carefully, as directed, and a very cursory inspection of herself in the glass in the ladies’ room assured her that her colour had stood, her fringe was still in curl, and there was nothing in the way of her enjoyment, if, indeed, enjoyment were possible under the circumstances.

Happily, matters improved whilst they were at lunch, and very little rain fell after racing had begun, although the weather remained for some time dull, gloomy, and uninviting.

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The Duchess had motored all the way from Dunstons. She had heard nothing about the clairvoyante, and fully expected Terence was going to ride Montserrat. She was alone, and would have liked her brother to join her. Neither Carrie Carthew, nor Betty Brinmore, were very congenial to the Duchess of Towcester, Terence's sister. But there was Derry, and the Duchess cared for Derry next to Terence himself. Terence could not leave his party, but he could, and did, persuade his sister to join it. And now he was entirely himself again.

Derry proved quite a success among the little party. Margaret and Terence ordered him about, and it was easy to see that he worshipped them both, and they loved him.

Margaret, Duchess of Towcester, had the Ranmore red in her abundant hair, a touch of their persistent brogue on her thin, humorous lips, and all and more than the family beauty in her blue eyes and ready smile. There was little trace of Ranmore about Derry, although in his way he was no less distinctive. His six feet two made Terence look small, but then Terence's neatness made his cousin look rough, almost unkempt, in his loosely fitting tweeds. The dark hair was thick about the wide brow. There were strength and power in the rugged young face, but there was no beauty. He had engineer's hands, too, a great contrast to Terence's slender "sevens." As for Margaret, her hands and feet were proverbial. Derry was rough-hewn granite beside the delicate terra-cotta of this brother and sister. And he knew it so well. But it was like them to carry him along with them this day, and to have made his rare holiday in London so full and wonderful. He had finished all his examinations, he was off to Siam in another fortnight, to take up his appointment. But Terence and Margaret had been as good to him here as they always were at Ranmore, which they had made

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him look upon as his own home. He was staying with Terence in his rooms, and Terence had let him drive the new car down. Now there was a day's racing in front of him.

His good spirits affected them all, and it was a gay luncheon, if a hurried one. Derry's appetite was what Terence called “up to his weight,” and the Duchess and Terence and, above all, Betty, enjoyed his Irishisms.

The rows of chairs in the Club enclosure were unoccupied, and, although a few men in mackintoshes, with race-glasses slung across their shoulders, stood about the sodden lawn, and talked in pairs, or in small groups, the scene was desolate in the extreme. The raucous voices of the bookmakers were comparatively silent in Tattersall's, and the outside public, in the ready-money silver ring, were subdued in laying and backing their fancies. The green course was empty but for a few mounted policemen, it had been cleared for the first race without difficulty.

The numbers were up when they had finished lunch, and before they had settled down, the thin “field” was straggling to the starting-post.

Lady Carrie and Bet had the stand to themselves when the men left them, Sir Noel and Jim de la Roche to place their bets, Derry to “see to the car.”

Terence, at the Duchess's request, took her into the paddock to see Montserrat, and talk to the trainer. They made a noticeable pair, and many who saw them together that day, for the last time, turned involuntarily to look at them. It was easy to see the love they bore each other. Terence's face was alive with animation, hers, hardened somewhat by life, for she was five years older than he, and was a wife in name only, softened whilst she listened, and in her eyes, when they looked upon him, was mother-love. He was so inexpressibly dear to her, this gay, careless brother, almost all she had for which to care.

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The first race was soon over. Jim de la Roche was riding in the second, and there was no doubt Jim could ride. Other men had joined the party in the enclosure. Betty Brinmore was one of the most popular women in London, and what she did not know about a horse was not worth knowing. They wanted to hear if Jim was going to win the Tally Ho, but chiefly what she and he thought about the Grand Military. There was some comment about Lord Ranmore standing down; for Montserrat belonged to Terence, and it was unusual to give such a mount to another man. When Bet told the story of how a clairvoyante had warned him not to ride, they laughed, and repeated it from one to another, and the thing got about before the flag went down for the Tally Ho.

The Tally Ho steeplechase brought out only four runners. Jim de la Roche, carrying the money of all the party, took a toss at the stand-fence, and brought home a lame horse some time after the rest of the field. The little group who had been watching the race through their field-glasses shut them up with a cheery word or two. For nobody had "put the pot on" for the Tally Ho, and it is always amusing when a fine rider like Jim gets thrown.

"It was absurd to come out on such a wet day!" Carrie commented. "The grass is so wet the horses simply slip about instead of running. And I am sure I am catching cold. Let us go home instead of waiting for the rest, and play bridge in warmth and comfort. Some of you will come, won't you?"

She, too, was quite popular among the crowd. That she pursued Terence Ranmore with her wiles was nothing to them, and bridge was no bad substitute for racing in this sort of weather.

"Don't be obstinate, Bet," she urged.

"I am going to see Montserrat win the Grand Military

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if there's a waterspout instead of a shower. I told you so this morning. So, please don't worry me.”

Bet was obstinate, and Lady Carrie had to stay where she was.

The Tally Ho had been a disappointment, the men who stood around or came up to them were explanatory, condemnatory, or argumentative.

The great question was now, who would win the Grand Military? And on this opinions were varied. There was no doubt Jim had a good mount in Montserrat. But Jim was all to pieces to-day, he had thrown away the Tally Ho. What a pity Ranmore was not riding!

The talk swayed to and fro, but always came back to the same starting-point:

Who was the clairvoyante? What on earth was a clairvoyante, and what had she said? They did not know Ranmore was so superstitious. Hadn't he backed the horse?

The bookmakers seemed to know that Lord Ranmore was out of spirits, or out of luck, and their first fancy for Montserrat fizzled out. The horse went back in the betting, and now one could hear other horses' names:

“Two to one bar one! Two to one Ixion! Three to one Montserrat! the field a pony!”

For everyone could see the owner was here; and why wasn't he riding?

“Four to one Montserrat! Six to four Ixion!” The voices reached them where they stood.

“What the devil's the matter with the horse, Ranmore?” one asked, and then another. “They are laying against him for all they are worth.”

“He was as fit as a fiddle an hour ago, that's all I know,” said Terence. “I could barely get twos this morning. And Ixion is a cart-horse beside him. Where's Jim? Jim ought to know.”



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He had more money on Montserrat than he could afford to lose. He generally had more money on a horse than he could afford to lose.

“I’m going back to the paddock to find Jim. You’ll be all right here till I come back,” he said to Carrie.

“But Terence, if Montserrat is lame, if anything is wrong with him, put my tenner on Ixion.” Carrie always had an eye to the main chance.

“I tell you there is nothing wrong with him; there could not be.”

“Don’t get scared, Carrie, and don’t scare Terence. What does it matter about the odds? Jim will win if the horse has four legs left. It’s all a question of jockeyship in this race,” Bet said.

“And here is Jim, coming along to speak for himself.”

“But, good heavens! he has changed his things. He isn’t even dressed!” exclaimed one of the group.

Jim looked pale and shaken, and he was evidently in a tearing hurry:

“That you, Ranmore? I want to speak to you.” He took him on one side. “Look here, old fellow, I hate doing it, but I must throw up the mount, and they’ve got to hear about it. No one can ride him but you or me; you know that as well as they do. I’ve sprained my infernal wrist; I couldn’t hold a donkey. I’ve put a pot of money on him. . . . You don’t really funk it, do you?”

For Ranmore had not acquiesced, as might have been expected, but hesitated.

“How about Jerry?”

“Don’t be an ass! You are not going to chuck away the race, and my money as well as your own, because a rotten Bond Street charlatan warned you you’d come to grief?”

“I’ll come to grief, anyhow, if it doesn’t win.”

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“ Well, what’s to hold it back ? ”

What the clairvoyante had said was that she saw trouble in the crystal, and that the trouble was connected with horses. She had not been able to get a clear view, or to give a clear description of what she had seen. There was the race-course, with the horses galloping over the turf ; then, before she could distinguish horses or riders, the crystal became clouded. Last year in this very race, Lord Ranmore told her, he had come a cropper at the stand fence and broken a rib ; the year before he had been thrown at the water and damaged a knee-cap. She had warned him not to ride, been insistent in her warning. But it was not entirely because of what the clairvoyante had said that he hesitated. He could not afford any sort of accident just now, that was the truth. He had a sin on his conscience ; only last night that wild letter had come from Rosaleen. He was ashamed and sorry for what he had done. Of course, he must put it right. He must not, dare not risk an accident. He had a sense of apprehension on him ; not through what the clairvoyante had said, but because of that miserable, despairing pathetic little letter.

“ I don’t think I’ll ride,” he said again hesitatingly.

Carrie and Bet began to rally him.

“ Terence goes to a clairvoyante regularly,” Carrie said. She was really anxious about her “ tenner,” and felt she would secure it if she could persuade Terence to the mount. “ And half the time she is warning him of something or the other.”

“ Did she ever put him on a winner ? ” Jim asked impatiently.

Ranmore was certainly wavering ; it was the merest folly that stood between them and their money. Bet knew it, and Jim no less ; but it was Lady Carrie that jeered at him, and knew how to move him.

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“Don’t make him do it, Bet, if he really is afraid. He would only lose his nerve and throw the race away.”

“No one has ever seen me lose my nerve when I am on a horse.”

“Well, you know as well as I do this clairvoyante business has upset you. You haven’t been yourself since yesterday.”

Terence acknowledged this, but he knew also that it was not the clairvoyante’s fault.

“Look at that!” Jim held out his hand, the wrist had been bandaged, but the fingers were swollen and red, and there was not the slightest doubt they could not hold a rein. “But I’ll ride him with one hand sooner than he shouldn’t go at all.”

“Do make up your mind, Terence.”

The numbers were up for the “United Service Steeplechase,” and already the horses were coming out of the paddock. The Grand Military was next on the card. It was, of course, the race of the day. For the moment betting on it had ceased, but there really was not a minute to lose.

And Terence was longing to go; there was no lack of heart or courage in him, and he did not know the meaning of the word fear. But he had done a blackguardly thing, and he meant to put it right. He never had a doubt until the clairvoyante had put it there. Since then he had been thinking, and thinking was a new trick for Terence Ranmore. Suppose anything happened to him before he had answered that letter, and made up his mind what he should do?

*And what had Derry meant by his talk about Rosaleen?* She wasn’t anything to Derry.

But, there now, what was the good of going over it all again? What should happen to him? And what a fool he

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was to go imagining things, letting Carrie and Jim and Bet, and all of them, think him a coward! And Montserrat—Montserrat to be ridden by Jerry, or Jim with his disabled hand, or some lout of a stable-boy! It couldn't be done.

The flag was down, the "field" for the United Service was off; there really was not a moment to spare.

This was the unlucky moment when Derry came back, muddy from some work he had been doing on the car, ignorant of all that had happened. Probably he had never heard of a clairvoyante in his life. For, if he had, bred in a land with a peasantry to whom superstition is as ingrained as their religion, he might have hesitated to speak, or spoken differently. As it was, when Bet appealed to him and said, "Oh, Mr. Malone, here's Terence hesitating about riding Montserrat. Now, do persuade him, for there's no one else can ride him!" Derry dashed into the conversation like a steam-engine:

"Oh, sure, Terence, and you wouldn't be disappointing the lady, and all of us? I've never seen you steeple-chasing, and wouldn't I love to see you skimming over the fences! The memory of it would be something to take with me to Siam."

It was then, and then only, Terence yielded. He gave in all at once, and as if glad of the chance:

"All right, Derry, if it's to please you, I'll go. And I'll win your tenner for you, Carrie, never fear of that. You might put another pony on for me, Jim, it will wake them up there in the ring. Go and look after Margaret, Derry; she is still in the paddock. Take her down to the rails to see the race, I'll try and give you the treat of seeing me half a field in front of the others."

Jim got him away as quickly as he could. He did not want him to alter his mind, and as it was, there would be

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## "LET THE ROOF FALL IN"

very little time for him to change into his racing clothes. Terence went gladly enough now, all his mercurial spirits rising as he talked of what the horse could do.

The sky really cleared up for the first time that day, and his natural gaiety rose with the lifting of the clouds. He dressed quickly, and found his sister and Derry walking by the side of the groom with the horse:

"There's nothing wrong with him," she said; "his coat is like satin, and he seems to me to be trained to a hair. I'm glad you're going to ride him yourself. I couldn't make out your ever leaving it to Captain de la Roche. Captain de la Roche can ride, but you ride so much better."

"I'm better at everything in your eyes, Margaret; in yours and Derry's." And then, for he could not quite throw off that which was oppressing him, he added lightly, "I wish I were half as good as you both think me."

"Well, we *can* ride," she said candidly. And, indeed, no one could deny that to either brother or sister.

He spoke to the horse as he mounted:

"You'll carry me kindly, old boy, you're knowing it's me, aren't you? Why, it's dancing he is at the thought of a race. Gently now! I'll bring you home the cup," he called out to his sister, as the groom released the bit. Look after her," he said to Derry; "take her down to the rails."

He cantered away from them, with his head erect, and a whole lifetime of boyish enjoyment in his blue eyes. Now he forgot everything that had held him back. He felt the strength and confidence of a good horseman on a good mount.

"God! I could ride anything to-day!" was about as coherent a thought as he could muster, while the horse carried him lightly, and the heavy wet turf splattered up

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

under the hoofs. The wind blew strong and sweet in his face, and the sun shone. There was nothing he had done that he could not put right, and Margaret would help him, a splendid sister to him was Margaret. And, if it came to it, there was little his mother wouldn't forgive him. He knew he was the apple of her eye. He did not know what had upset him so thoroughly, but he was glad he had pulled himself together in time.

“So ho! gently now! don't take it out of yourself before we're starting.” He knew how to talk to his horse, and quiet him with hands and voice.

Now they were at the post.

There were eight starters, and Ixion was fidgety. Perhaps he knew how much of the stables' money he was carrying, and fretted to get rid of the burden.

“They are off!” was called out twice. But each time it was a false alarm; and first Ixion, and then Gabriel, and finally Montserrat had to be taken back, and patted down, and taught to stand still until the flag fell. But he was off at last, the turf flying, the wind in his face, the thud of other hoofs before and behind. There were two miles and a half to go, and nothing was going better than Montserrat; he skimmed the stand-fence like a bird.

“So much for the clairvoyante!” was the joyous phrase in Terence's mind as he felt the turf under him again. Ixion had fallen, a flying glance over his shoulder saw that, Gabriel and Red Rover were neck to neck on his flank. The danger, if there ever had been danger, was past; there was only the water to get over, and then a race for home. A handkerchief could have covered all three at the water, Gabriel and Red Rover were still neck to neck. It was a fine race, the best race of the day. Something touched Montserrat's quarters as he rose—

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Terence knew it; a blunder was inevitable, but he was ready for it. . . .

“Two to one bar one, the field a pony, six to four on Red Rover, five to four on Red Rover! A thousand to nothing on Red Rover.” And some fool shouted :

“Hurrah! the favourite’s beat!”

Margaret had been standing to see the race, close to the rails. She turned round to her cousin, and already her eyes were startled.

“Derry, someone has fallen!”

Derry saw that her face was white.

“There are only two of them running now. That’s Montserrat, with the empty saddle. Why doesn’t Terence move? Derry, can you see? My glasses are blurred, can you see Ranmore? Is he on his feet yet? There’s Montserrat, galloping home by himself. *Derry!*”

“I can’t quite focus them, I’m not sure at all who it is. We’ll go over, come on, I’m sure it’s all right. Here, give me your hand; let’s run for it. . . .”

There was a hush over the field, and even in the ring; men seemed to be rushing past them as they ran, men with white faces and shocked eyes, calling out something they would not hear.

Only Lady Carrie Carthew, intent on keeping her feet dry, alone in the Grand Stand, recognised nothing ominous in the silence. There had been a spill, as usual. Terence was down and Montserrat’s chances done for. She wanted the money badly, but Terence would make it right. One must say that about Terence, he was awfully good about money matters. She shut up her race-glasses. The race was over. What were they all waiting for? Where was the Duchess? She had monopolised that big, hulking cousin of Terence’s.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“Where on earth are they all running to?” she asked Bet. But Bet, too, was running. Everyone wanted to get to the paddock, and hear what had happened. It was not like an ordinary meeting. The riders were all their own friends and intimates, and if it was Terence Ranmore who was hurt, it was they who had persuaded Ranmore to ride. . . .

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## CHAPTER II

THE Duchess and Derry had run quickly, but the stretcher, and other help than theirs, had already reached the injured man before they got to the paddock. Margaret was not a fainting woman, but the world turned black, and only her cousin Derry's roughened hand held her up when she realized what was happening.

"They are bringing him to the weighing-room: we'll get there this way quicker. Don't give way now, Madge. Maybe it is not so bad as you think. Come along."

There was a crowd about the door; the constables were not needed to keep order, for all were Ranmore's friends, who held their breath as he was carried past. There had not been a moment's delay. It was a military meeting, and the ambulance had been galloped across the field the moment it was seen that Ranmore made no attempt to rise. It was true enough—everybody was Ranmore's friend; he never had but one enemy, poor lad! Some of the men could not bear to look at what was carried, others pressed close. As Derry pushed through them with Margaret, to whom all seemed blurred with the swaying sky and ground, their ears caught the words:

"I heard him speak as they carried him in; it can't be as bad as they said."

Margaret made Derry stop a minute, leaning up against the closed door; she had to gather together her courage. And here other scraps of speech reached her:

"He fell clear, but Gabriel kicked him."

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“Nothing of the sort, my dear fellow! I saw it distinctly. It was foul racing, I swear; Lawton bumped against him on purpose. Montserrat jumped short, and Ranmore went over his head.”

“Did you hear that a clairvoyante had warned him?”

“I must find out how he is, let me pass. Nothing must happen to Ranmore, he is the only bright spot in this hell of a world.”

“Such a little gentleman!”

“Gay as a lark, there has never been anyone quite like him.”

“No, and never will be again. It’s impossible it’s as bad as they say.”

“Jack heard him speak . . .”

It was strange how far off their voices sounded, although they themselves were all so close to her. The voices were muffled too, yet how clearly she heard them.

Inside the weighing-room everything seemed in military order. The stretcher lay in the middle, just in front of the machine, the doctors, and two of the orderlies, stood at the head. Margaret was very pale, but her courage and calm came back to her when she saw Terence lying there. She thought he was looking for her, she knelt quickly by the side of the stretcher. There were shocked, pale faces, even wet eyes, in the group at the head of the stretcher. But Terence, with a regimental pillow under his head, and his eyes shining, seemed quite in good spirits.

“That you, Midge mavourneen?” he asked. They were children again together, in league for mischief; it was the childish name he used. “A bad cropper this time, I’m thinking. But there never was a Ranmore died of old age. Let’s have a look at you, Margaret. I can read your face like a book, and it’ll be written there. They haven’t told me a word yet. I can’t feel anything . . .”

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

She kept her face hidden a moment longer, and then faced him, as brave as he was. There was no colour in her face, or lips, but her blue eyes lied bravely and smiled into his.

“I’ve had a fright, but it’s past now. Ah! the trouble you’ve always been to me, Terence. And here’s a month’s nursing on our hands.”

But his eyes were bright, and searching.

“Tell me the truth, Margaret; don’t keep it from me. I’m wanting to know. I must know. . . .”

It was impossible to say how the agony and the certainty had got into the air. Margaret’s courage was a thing to wonder at, but there was a cold clutch at her heart, and over and over again the swaying room went black. But her eyes held desperately to Terence’s face, and she knew she was not going to fail him.

“We’ll hear presently, I expect,” she said. “Anyway there are no bones broken, and the concussion must be quite slight. Go on talking to me. Where do you feel it? How did it happen?”

“I can’t feel anything. It wasn’t Montserrat’s fault; he went down like a gentleman, and I rolled away from him. I recollect it perfectly. You know the sky was blue, and the sun was in my eyes. I don’t know exactly what happened. Who won the race?”

“I forgot to look. So you’re not in any pain?”

“I’m thinking it’s the spine, Gabriel must have kicked me as he went over, it wasn’t Montserrat. What’ll you do about mother?”

“I’m only thinking about you.”

Then he lay silent for a minute.

Jim de la Roche was as hard as nails; he had come in quietly and was standing with the two doctors, one of them had said a word to him; and now the tears were coursing

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

down his cheeks. Only Derry, towering above the others, had not yet grasped the position. His eyes, like a Newfoundland dog's, were fixed on Margaret. There was still colour in Terence's face, and he was talking.

“Is Carrie there? Lady Carrie Carthew?” Terence asked presently.

“Do you want her, dear? I'll send for her,” Margaret answered. “Go, Derry, go, you'll find her on the stand.”

“Tell her that tenner will be all right . . .”

But Derry had gone, glad to be doing something, he was hardly uneasy yet.

“You know all about me and Carrie?” Terence went on to his sister, not quite sure to whom he was talking. His eyes were beginning to glaze. “I have to do something for her. It was I who killed Harry Carthew. God knows, I didn't mean to do it; I don't know how it came about. . . .” Some trouble was struggling with his weakness.

“Don't think of it, dear!” She thought he was wandering. Sir Harry Carthew had died of an accident, two years since. He had been drunk at the Ralyn Club, and fallen downstairs. He had been picked up unconscious, suffering from concussion, then delirium tremens had intervened, and hastened the end. Everyone knew the story, it had all come out at the inquest. It had nothing to do with Terence, his name had not been even mentioned.

“Carrie knows I killed him. I've helped her out since then. What was it I wanted to say to you? It wasn't about Carrie . . .”

Now the cold grip on her heart was loosening, and the room seemed to be growing steady. But if he were going out, then the best part of her life was going out with his. There were only those two—brother and

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

sister—more to each other than all the world knew. None but Terence understood the tragedy her marriage had been, and the empty life she had, with only his to follow and delight in. And there was the mother of them to face presently.

Terence had been given an injection of morphia before they had lifted him from where he lay, after the horse had kicked him. His spine was broken, and there was no more hope of his living than if he had died where he fell. The morphia injection was all the doctor could do for him, and it acted intermittently.

“I feel rather excited . . . I’ve got so much to say, don’t leave me, Midge, don’t go,” the poor boy murmured, and then drowsed off into unconsciousness.

Margaret got up from her knees. It was then she saw that Jim de la Roche was crying, and dimly she wondered why anyone should cry but herself. She heard the names of horses being called outside. The numbers were going up for the next race. Terence heard it too :

“My number’s up,” he said drowsily. “The flag’s down, I’m off, steady, Margaret, don’t cry. . . .”

But Margaret was not crying. She spoke to the doctors. There were two of them, and they had sent for more. They could not deceive her or themselves :

“Is there anything to be done?” she asked.

“The horse kicked him,” one answered, vaguely.

“Don’t cry,” she said to Captain de la Roche. “He’ll hear you. . . . And I want you to help me.” Even in her grief she knew how to soothe his lighter trouble. “Will you go and give out that it is nothing of consequence? I cannot let my mother hear it cried in the streets. See the reporters, lie to them. . . .”

But Terence called to him :

## "LET THE ROOF FALL IN"

"Is that you, Jim? How quiet everything seems, and me lying here. Let one of the doctor fellows come over." One moved to him.

"Give me the truth," Terence said. "Am I done for? I want to know."

"We've sent for Sir Gregory Owen," was all the military doctor could find to say. "You're not in any pain, are you?"

"Can't you tell me when I ask you?"

"You've had a bad spill."

"An' me back's broken?" he said quickly.

"Wait until Sir Gregory comes."

"Man, I've maybe got no time to wait. Margaret Margaret! come over here to me."

"And as if I'd move!" She knelt down again and he put out his hand to her:

"It's Derry'll come after me, isn't it? I'm not clear. Is it Derry?"

She couldn't help the sob in her throat.

"Yes, it's Derry."

But all their love was in Terence; and here he lay, already the pallor spreading, and the eyes glazing, and not a hope for her to hold on to.

"It's Derry then I must talk to. I haven't been what you thought me, Margaret; what any of you have thought me. It's a blackguard I've been up there at Ranmore. Don't let mother know, let her go on thinking I'm all she meant me to be, my father's son, and all that sort of thing. . . . What did Derry say about Rosaleen?"

"Rosaleen O'Daly? Little Rosaleen at the Castle?"

"And then there's Carrie—and I'm up to me neck in debt. And mother saving all the time for me, an' getting Ranmore to rights, an' all!"

"She's been a good mother to you. She'll not think

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

hardly of anything you've done. Don't fret, darling. Look what you've been to me!”

“Get Derry here. I want to talk to him . . . Derry.”

Derry was here already, with Carrie Carthew—reluctant to enter, shrinking from any unpleasant sight, incredulous of the worst. The racing was going on, and the ring had woke up again; for already Jim had been at work, and the rumours of anything worse than a broken rib or two, and possibly concussion, had been quickly contradicted. But Terence no longer wanted Carrie; for the moment he had forgotten Carrie. It was Derry, his cousin, his heir, to whom he must speak. Terence was hearing the Great Whisper; no longer as a distant murmur, as of waters breaking on the shores of time; it was flood, overwhelming consciousness, drowning thought. But he must speak—he must. The tide must not bear him out until he had spoken. This was the bravest act of his life, this struggle against the tide. Pain, agony was on this side, but he would not cross. It was morphia against which he was struggling; had he had full consciousness, he would have said it was a cruel kindness they had done him. He must turn back, breast these breakers of agony, turn his back on the calm flood; there was a message to deliver before he could go. He met the agony like the fine soldier that he was. It brought consciousness with it.

“Derry! Derry, come close. Don't let anyone else hear.” And Margaret moved back.

“I'm kneeling close against you. Put your lips to me ear, me heart's yours, Terence. Tell me what you want.”

“You'll do it for me? Everything will be yours—you'll do it? Swear. . . .”

There was something on the dying man's mind, or consciousness. The words came and went, but never the right words. Something he wanted to tell his cousin, to

## "LET THE ROOF FALL IN"

make him promise. Margaret mustn't hear, no one must hear. He grew shockingly agitated, he even made vain, frantic, horrible efforts to rise; but only his head moved a little, wildly, on that regimental pillow, and his eyes grew bright again, and pleaded frantically.

"You'll do it, Derry? Swear."

"I'll die rather than fail you. What it is, then? I swear I'll do it, if it's me life you're asking."

And then the struggle ceased suddenly, and Terence lay back easily—he thought he had told it.

"I believe it was always you she liked the best," the dying lips murmured; "little Rosaleen, my dark Rosaleen! how she fought against me! the pretty!" His eyes closed; it seemed he had fallen asleep.

"Is it Rosaleen?" Derry cried in a hoarse whisper. What was this that was happening? "What is it you mean, Terence? Tell me, tell me! You mustn't go now . . . tell me."

His voice aroused Terence, but the restlessness was gone for the moment.

"Mother mustn't know; she'd be hard on her. But it wasn't any fault of hers. Tell her I'm sorry . . . an' the chapel was consecrated."

"Is it Rosaleen you're meaning?"

"Isn't that Carrie?" He was not quite himself now. Carrie did not seem to matter so much.

Derry's face was almost as white as Terence's when he rose to his feet, staggering a little. And Margaret moved to be near, to support him. Margaret was quick of perception.

"I saw he had something on his mind, Derry. That's why I left you to him. Has he told you?"

Derry put a shaking hand to brush the mist from his eyes.

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“I don’t know,” he said, almost piteously. “I don’t know.”

The two watched Terence ; surely he would speak again.

“But whatever he’s asked you to do, you’ll do for him, Derry?”

“Haven’t I sworn it? And him laying dying there!”

“Oh, Terence! Terence! Not that, not that! I can’t bear it, I can’t! Don’t leave me alone, don’t die . . . Terence!”

It was the first time her despair had been voiced ; and it was only then she flung herself beside him and cried to him, raining out her tears. He lay peaceful, heeding nothing, the morphia well at work now. Derry’s slow brain was on fire, and his eyelids burnt, and all his love and loyalty to these two, and to the family, seethed in his great tempestuous heart.

For Terence was dying—Terence, who had been good to him all his life—Terence who was the sun of the world, the Ranmore of Ranmores. He had sworn to do what Terence asked. And it was something about Rosaleen. . . . He must not think too much about that. . . . And there was something about Carrie, and that was Lady Carrie Carthew who was outside. Poor Derry was all at sea, and desperately miserable. And the last thing in the world he thought of was that, if Terence died, he would be Lord Ranmore, and stand in his cousin’s shoes.

But the end was not yet. It would perhaps have been better for Terence, and for all of them, if it had been. Science set to work, the *Deus ex machina* being the great Sir Gregory Owen, who arrived in a forty horse-power motor car, and refused to accept anyone’s diagnosis, or to believe in anyone else’s examination. The poor lad was roused and stimulated, and examined and cross-examined. He was not to be allowed to die ; that was

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

the final verdict. He was to be carried up to London in an ambulance, and to be taken to a nursing home, and experimented upon. For that is what it amounted to. Perhaps Lady Ranmore, hastily summoned from Dunmanway, was glad of this break in the awful suddenness of her bereavement. She had him for a few short weeks to fondle and nurse; she had a memory or two to store up of a plaintive “Mother, are you there?” or “Mother, make them leave me alone,” a clinging to her, a return to babyhood. Yet who that loved him could be glad to see him die by inches, instead of gallantly, and suddenly, with his courage unconquered?

Science got to work on him, and all the surgeons and physicians of Sir Gregory's own hospital set, whom he called in consultation, carefully avoiding all those of any other school, benefited by the large fees he asked for them. Practically, amongst them, they vivisected him, performing new and unheard of operations, running through Röntgen Rays and radium, electricity, and the introduction of innumerable bacilli, and micrococci and phagocytes, torturing the patient under chloroform, or ether, or half a dozen new anæsthetics, delaying disastrously the inevitable end, to their own great pecuniary advantage and self-glorification, but never to the patient's well-being.

Terence Ranmore should have been allowed to go out like a soldier, like a sportsman, not have been kept back like a Chinese prisoner until, under daily torture, his manhood left him, and his speech. His mind went before he did, and all the fineness of him. It was pitiful to see the wreck they made with their knives and their drugs. And he crossed the dark river in the end, all beaten and helpless and moaning, with his courage gone. That is what science did for Terence, whilst it wrung his mother's

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

heart for a few weeks of hopeless hope, when Margaret wilted to a shadow, and Derry's young shoulders bent under the suspense he carried, and his dark eyes under their heavy brows were just caverns of trouble and despair.

There was no red Ranmore to succeed Terence, only black Derry. And he wanted neither title nor estate, but only the right to work at the profession he had learnt, the love of his aunt and his cousins, and the memory of the only home he had ever known, his home with them at Ranmore, to carry with him to a new world.

This prospect had been for Derry Malone, the young cousin whom Terence and the Duchess had loved like a younger brother, and treated like one. For Derrick, Lord Ranmore, must be another fate.

They carried Terence's body back to Castle Ranmore when he was past torture. Lady Ranmore and the Duchess of Towcester went with him, two women out of whose world the light had gone. Derry travelled with them, although he saw little of them on the way. Most of the time his head lay on the coffin, he was whispering to what rested inside, reiterating the promises he had made, vowing himself to his cousin's memory. He would keep it green and sweet. All during the journey he was remembering kindnesses, and many gifts, and that Terence had never patronised him, but had just been a friend, and more than a brother to him. And the good shot he was! All the familiar phrases and jests they had had together came back to him on this sad long journey, just Margaret and Terence and he, though he was only a distant cousin, a boy without a father or mother, and with his way to make, coming from school, and later from the workshop in Belfast, to revel in the wild freedom of Ranmore and in all their wealth of kindnesses. Then, he thought of

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

the boat Terence had taught him to sail, and the fish Terence had taught him to catch, and the colt Terence had taught him to ride. . . . And now he was journeying to Dunmanway, with Terence boxed up like this!

The last stage was perhaps the worst.

The ill-lit, end-of-the-world station was alive with keening peasantry carrying torches. It was his own people would bear the Ranmore to his last resting-place. The night was dark, and all the way as they went, up the village street, and through the sculptured archway, down that long avenue of trees, all the miles as they walked, the keening grew wilder, and mingled with the wind that moaned about them, and the rain that fell pitilessly. It was to the mausoleum in the grounds they would bear him. And it was Micky Clarke and Jerry Malachy and Cormac O'Daly who carried him, as they had carried his young father, who had been drowned, almost within sight of his wife, when the storm burst on Bantry Bay, the great storm of 1887. Strange were the sounds the peasants made as they marched; the sound of their voices, and the sounds their feet made in the mud, and in the wet, and among the fallen autumn leaves in the long avenue, were muffled funeral music. Derry walked with the bearers, and the mother and daughter walked, side by side, at the head of the procession in their long black robes. All the household servants were there, and the priests. Always as they moved, the procession grew.

And then they came to the mausoleum, the grey building quarried out of the same stone that served for all the hovels of the village. Generations of Ranmores lay on shelves in its gloomy depths. But there was room for Terence.

They halted at the little chapel, and laid their burden

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

down, whilst the priests said the mass, and chanted the burial service. Always the wind and the rain and the keening followed the prayer—like waves the sad sounds beat upon the ears. It seemed long hours during which Derry had heard nothing else. Unconsciously it had soothed and quieted him. It was for Terence they were all grieving—Terence, sunny, red-haired, laughing Terence! They must leave him behind in the cold and gloomy dark of that musty-smelling ruin of a mausoleum, round which he and Derry had played in the days that seemed so near. Consecutive thought was suspended, everything was unreal, and he a shadow among the unrealities.

It was all over at last. And there were whisky and food, with the comfort of reminiscence, and a community of sorrow, for the peasantry and the household in the servants' quarters. There were loneliness and heart-break for the mother, glassy-eyed and silent in the solitude of her bedroom, whither she would not let even Margaret follow her.

For Margaret and Derry too, in the great murky, oak-raftered dining-room, trying to swallow a mouthful of food, although there were no words, there was a sense of companionship. The time had not come for words, some day they would talk about him to each other; now fatigue and grief paralysed them.

“You'll stay with us, Derry?” Margaret said. It was the first time she had spoken. Margaret was an English Duchess, but the heart of her was Irish; she knew her duty would call her back soon to the husband who was no partner of her joys or sorrows, and the home that was so poor a substitute, with all its grandeur, for Ranmore in its desolation. “You'll stay with mother if she wants you, Derry?”

“She hasn't looked at me, nor spoken to me, since. . . .”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“You must give her time. You know there was no one but him since father died. I didn’t count. I shan’t count now. She won’t let me into her room. She is all alone there.”

“Alone, is she?” he repeated mechanically, but conscious of the loneliness.

“We sent Bidly to her with food; but Bidly is sitting on the floor outside the door with her head covered, rocking herself to and fro, and talking to herself. She nursed him, you know. Mother has barred her door. I don’t know what to be at.”

The dining-room was so large and so gloomy, with its black oak walls and rafted ceilings, and the few candles in their wall-sconces and on the table made so little effect of light upon it, that Rosaleen was beside them before they knew. Such a soft step she had, and so quietly had she come into the room that they were not conscious of her till she answered Margaret’s despairing “I don’t know what to be at” with:

“Will you let me try? She’s used to me waiting on her of late. She wouldn’t take me to London when she was sent for, but she’s used to me here.”

There was a sudden stirred remembrance in both of them when they looked at her, when she paused for an answer, framed in the heavy lintel of the door. It was dim and confused to Margaret—something Terence had said of his mother being kind to her; it was acute, and like a sword in his heart to Derry. She was a tragic figure in her poor black. Rosaleen’s wonderful great grey eyes had sunk back in her head, and chalk-white was the small face, the thin lips indrawn. She was only a poor dependent in the house, only the daughter of O’Daly, the rent-collector, who had been murdered in the bad times that had gone by. Rosaleen was the daughter of O’Daly, and his

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Protestant wife. What had she with Lord Ranmore, or Lord Ranmore with her? And she was but a child still. The blue-black wonder of her hair, and the slender grace, the light that had been wont to play upon the demure sweetness of her face, the quick smile and the dimple it brought, which had begun only last summer to mean so much for Derrick and for Terence, meant nothing to Margaret, Duchess of Towcester. How should it? She was merely a servant in the house, educated by their charity, brought back here to serve them, as her father's people had served them for many generations.

Yet, perhaps, even then the Duchess had her misgivings. All the household was mourning for the dead master, but the mourning in the face of Rosaleen O'Daly had in it some strange quality. It was not only Death upon which the girl's eyes were looking, it was Terror and Despair. Terror perhaps had passed, it was despair that was wild in her eyes.

“Is it Rosaleen O'Daly?” asked Margaret, to gain time, but knowing well. “Don't stand there by the door. Come in, yes, you go up—see what you can do for her. A cup of tea now, or coffee? Think what would be the best to tempt her with.”

“She'll not want food now that his lordship is dead,” Rosaleen's voice had the mournful cadence the Irish accent holds so well—“but maybe she'll drink her tea.” She and Margaret talked a little, and busied themselves with a tray. But Derry's heart had turned to water. What was it Terence had said to him, and what was it he must do?

Rosaleen proved successful where Bidy had failed. As she said, Lady Ranmore was used to her. A year now she had waited on her, neat-handed and quiet. Terence's mother unbolted the door to her voice, and Rosaleen passed in with the tray. Broken down with grief and

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

strain and fatigue, perhaps Lady Ranmore felt the comfort of the quiet tendance. Once even she spoke ; she seemed to have noted the girl's face too, for she said :

“ Ah ! you're all grieving for him the night.”

“ An' for you,” said Rosaleen quickly.

Then she knelt by her quite suddenly, her voice loud and her eyes wild :

“ Ah, me lady, me lady ! If ye kill me I must ask ye. Did he say anything ? Did he tell you anything ? Me lady, it's lost I am . . .”

Perhaps all the blood had been drained from Lady Ranmore's heart, and all the human kindness coagulated, these last days of watching. The kneeling figure was nothing to her, the words fell with no meaning on the grief-dulled ears.

“ Was there never a word he said to ye ? ” the girl sobbed, “ and him that promised . . .”

Now she was prone on the floor, crying wildly, and a dim resentment stirred in the mother's heart that anyone but she should cry like this for her son. Her eyes were dry, and her heart empty. She had sent away Bidy, for Bidy's keening shook her dry heart, and burnt her dry eyes. Now here was this girl, who knew so little of him, who had not nursed him in her arms as Bidy had, nor followed his first toddling steps . . . and she making that noise on the floor.

Lady Ranmore sent her away quickly and harshly. She could not bear the grief that cried out to be beside hers that was beyond tears. She drove the girl away from her, she even said a bitter word or two out of her own bitterness, a word that showed the girl she must not even weep for Lord Ranmore. It was only to his mother his memory belonged.

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### CHAPTER III

THOSE first grey days dragged by slowly. Derry hung about, more miserable and resentful when some obsequious hireling called him 'my lord,' than when an old retainer, grown dense in the Ranmore service, showed his feeling in furtive diverted glance, and hurried shuffling away from him. For there was luck with the red Ranmores, and Terence had been born and bred amongst them; but there was no luck with the black Ranmores. And Derry was hardly a Ranmore at all, seeing that the mother that bore him was a 'furriner,' and his father but a younger son of a younger son, unknown from Dunmanway to Bantry.

Lady Ranmore could not bear to look upon the new heir; that was clear. She remained in her own room, and what business she had to transact she transacted there, seeing lawyers from London, and lawyers from Cork, making no sign as to what was going on. The Duchess stayed as long as she could, but her time was drawing near, however loath she was to go.

For many years now, ever since her husband's death had made it possible to reduce expenses, Lady Ranmore had been nursing the estate for Terence, and Terence's children. It was a dream, an obsession, a passion with her, to restore Ranmore to what Ranmore had been a hundred years ago, before the Saxon rule, and, be it lowly spoken, the habits of half a dozen reigning Ranmores, had despoiled them of their acres, and left the big pile of the castle more than three-fourths a ruin. She had her

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

jointure, and that paid the mortgage interest; she had the rents during Terence's long minority, and they paid builders and contractors. Already one wing was restored, and the stables were rebuilt. Then there had been rumour of coal, and much money had been sunk, although as yet with poor result. And on the further portion of the nine thousand unproductive acres of swamp and bogland, rock and mountain, that stretched from Dunmanway to Bantry, and from Bantry to the sea, an English company had taken the lease of a copper mine. Some day "royalties" would come in from this. But that day was not yet. The accumulated rents had been spent, and the whole income from the jointure. Terence had been supposed to economise in Ranmore six months in every year, and to be no spendthrift in London. Margaret guessed there would be debts, of which her mother must not hear. She and Derry put their heads together time after time in those few days, and wrote to bookmakers and motor-car builders, and everyone of whom they could think, telling them to wait with their claims, and everything would be paid by the Duchess. The accounts must be sent to Dunstons.

"He wanted her not to know," they said to each other; and each knew the other would help to keep his name sweet. Derry had excuse enough for opening letters addressed to Lord Ranmore. He knew nothing of his own pecuniary position, and he had a curious sensitiveness about asking. It could wait, everything could wait, but keeping Terence's debts or difficulties from that poor, broken-hearted woman upstairs. It was Quixotically, perhaps, but then Derry was Derry, and faithful to the trust Terence had placed in him. There were bills for jewellery, and some that were difficult to understand, and all of them had to be kept from Terence's mother.

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

As the days went on, and more bills came, the less it seemed that they *could* talk about them, even to each other. “He was always open-handed,” Derry said sometimes, wistfully, apologetically. The Duchess only gathered up the bills.

Yet all might have been well, the improvements proceeding, and all the attempts persevered with to preserve the Ranmore acres, and the Ranmore prestige. For, in truth, Lady Ranmore’s mind was not made up. Twenty years she had lived for this, for Ranmore and Terence. She wanted so little for herself; always her eyes had been on the future, when the feet of Terence’s children should echo in the empty, dismantled rooms, and, in the fair domain she had created for him, he would reign with them among his people.

*“I had thought to hear thy children laugh with thine own  
blue eyes,  
But my sorrow’s voice is silent where my life’s love lies.”*

She had only progressed as far as this in the void his death had made, her trouble only beginning to emerge definitely as unbearable, the first shock had hardly worn off, when that occurred which turned it to a maelstrom of anger—unreasonable, perhaps, as anger is invariably. After that her actions became inconsequent, and the unbearable sense of injury she nurtured towards the Providence that had wrenched her beloved from her, became diverted against the heir, who stood, ungainly and awkward, in the shoes of Terence.

Derry sinned unwittingly. Again and again in those days that succeeded the funeral, he had sought for an interview with Rosaleen O’Daly. He had caught a glimpse of her at twilight, in the sodden evening—a hurried, uncertain glimpse from afar. She had vanished ere his long

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

legs had covered the ground betwixt him and her. He had heard a light and furtive step at dawn, and had scrambled into his clothes, and started in pursuit. But always she had evaded, eluded him, and they had had no speech together.

Yet only last summer, when he and Terence had been here, and she shy and new amongst them, Derry had had long talks together with her, and he had seen into her simple heart, full, like his own, of gratitude and loyalty to the Ranmores, bent on service. She had clung to her connection with the family; what was there else to which she could cling? She had not even the religion of the country. For her mother had been an O'Brian from Tralee, and a bitter Protestant. Everyone knew Mike O'Daly had carried off his wife without a “with your leave” or “by you leave” to her family. And a handsome man he was, Rosaleen had told Derry, who could well believe it, for whom any woman would have left her home. But a hard man he grew after her death, oppressing the tenantry to get money for that gay Lord Ranmore, Terence's grandfather—he who built the stables and had the race-horses, and could drink any man in Cork county under the table. Terence's father had been drowned in Bantry Bay before his grandfather had spent all there was to be spent. He had been drowned just two days after Rosaleen's own father had been shot, in broad daylight, by “them land-leaguers,” it is believed, who had never been caught—no, not to this very day.

Rosaleen was only nine years old when this happened. It was Lady Ranmore who had sent her to the convent of the Sacred Heart, and had her taught and cared for, but stipulating she should retain her religion, as O'Daly had promised her mother. And now here she was back at Ranmore, with my lady herself, to sew for and tend,

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## "LET THE ROOF FALL IN"

when the young lord was away with his regiment, or up in London, and she lonely, with neither him nor Her Grace at Ranmore.

Derry had drawn some analogy between himself and the girl. For, were not both of them orphans, and dependents on the big house? And the only Protestants there. And some day, when she was grown up—some day—well, he thought of what he would ask her some day, when he had made himself a position, and she had left off laughing when he tried to be serious with her. He would let her know the tenderness that was growing with him. For indeed she was still but a child that summer, with her hair like a cloud about her. The grey eyes would dance and glint with demure merriment at any little thing, the dimples coming and going in her smiling. She would not be serious with him for long; she did not want to listen when he would talk seriously. "Standing with reluctant feet, where womanhood and childhood meet"; it was not Derry who would force her too soon to cross the line. That summer it was the child in her he loved. He was but a boy himself, and all their life was before them.

Terence it was who said she was the prettiest colleen he had seen from Killarney to Bantry—ay, and from Cork either. And he'd never shut his eyes on a pretty girl. But Terence, Derry thought, had taken but little notice of her; he had no long talks with her as Derry made opportunity for whilst they were here together. True, Terence had stayed on in July, when Derry went back to finish his course, and get through his examinations.

And never had a doubt crossed his mind, until it struck him, like a blow between the eyes, that day in the weighing-room, where Terence lay dying.

Every word Terence said was like the writing on the wall. And every night, as if written in phosphorescent letters

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Derry saw it in the darkness against his dreams. And now, in those dreams, too, he saw Rosaleen's altered face, and haunted eyes. And always when he thought of her, his heart turned to water. Speak with her he must, and yet he dared not. What he might learn might prove unbearable; yet he hardly knew what it was that he feared. Terence had told him to care for Rosaleen. But always he would have cared for her; he had no other hope so dear as that he might care for her always. Only now—now he feared. There was more woman than man in Derry Ranmore, for all his size and his dark looks; and he dared not, what he yet must dare. For, had he not sworn it to Terence? And what he did in the end was done in the wrong way, and perhaps at the wrong time. He had his promise to Terence to fulfil, and her hunted, terror-stricken eyes never left him all these days.

It was when hardly a week of them had passed, that he was sent for to his aunt's room. When she was a happy woman, she was a very kind one, and the boy had been almost as a young son to her; while she had been all the mother he had known. And as a son he loved her, although, perhaps, he was a little in awe of her as a real son would not have been. But she had never thought of him as Terence's heir. That Terence's sun should go down had been the one inconceivable thing. Now in her new misery, that harsh garment into which she could not fit herself, which exacerbated and fretted her beyond her strength, it seemed that this Derry, this common clay Derry, so insignificant for all his size, and rude strength, must have always known, always been waiting, expecting, hoping. . . .

When she had sent for him, he stood there, so awkward, so big and shuffling on his feet, so unlike the graceful, bright, blue-eyed laddie of hers, that she averted her eyes, she could not bear to look upon him. Was he waiting to

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hear her say that now Ranmore was his? Oh! how it wrung her heart, to think she should never see Terence installed there, him that was the darling of her heart; how like physical pain it was to picture Derry there in his place! Some moments passed before she could speak. Derry was just full of sorrow for her, and that made him more awkward, for he could not find the words in which to tell her how he felt about it all. She looked critically at his rough hands, and shuffling feet, and rough-hewn, big head. Perhaps he had forgotten to shave this morning, and his hair was unkempt. It was terrible to think he must be Lord of Ranmore.

Her grating misery made her voice harsh. She had no thought of Derry's sensitiveness, nor of what he felt; she did not think of him loving Terence and mourning him, and wanting nothing the dead boy had left, except, perhaps, a little of the kindness that had been as an atmosphere about him always, especially here in his home.

“I sent for you to know when I must leave the home, that was my husband's, and my boy's.”

She had not meant to say that. The sight of him standing there, in Terence's place, stung her to it.

“Leave—leave here!” he stammered.

“Well, it's no news to you that his place, that the Castle is yours?”

“It's God forbid you should go out of it,” he said.

“To stay and see you in his place!”

Oh, how they hurt each other, she with her contempt, it was hatred he felt behind her words—and he with nothing but honour for her, and such a sorrow that it overflowed speech! Her scorn lashed him and bewildered him, he stood tongue-tied before her. But beyond him she heard Terence's happy fluency, the gay and loving words, and felt the arms he'd fling about her . . . gone, gone for

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ever. . . . It was Derry Malone standing awkwardly there, where he should have been.

She tried to be calm. These days and hours she had kept to herself, it was that she might meet them all with some measure of composure, that she might hide her broken heart, enwrapping herself from the pity that would break her down. But her reasonless resentment against Derry grew all the time. It makes one cruel; the agony of being a mother, without a son!

“I won’t keep you long. You’ll like to be out looking at your grounds, and the new stables and all.”

He could only gaze at her; the bitterness was so new and unexpected, driving him to say he knew not what. He had not thought of the grounds, nor the stables, nor anything of his own. All he wanted was that if Terence could not be here, she and Margaret should be here; that he might feel he had a home. It was for them, not Ranmore, that he cared.

“What I wanted to ask you was, what arrangement we could come to, so that I could come here every year, for just one week.”

And then she looked away from him, and through the windows, and over beyond the Park. The mausoleum was out of sight, although she saw it so plainly, and the old chapel, and all the graves of all the Ranmores. Her breaking heart was melting in tears, but her voice was hard. “One week in every year I want to come here, to . . . to mourn my dead.”

He knew that every year since Terence’s father had been brought home there had been a week of prayer and mourning at Ranmore; the chapel had been opened, candles burned, and masses said for the dead.

“An arrangement!” he repeated stupidly.

“To rent the Castle from you, I must have the whole

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place to myself just one week in the year. I'll pay you for it. There is no entail, it is only the Castle and just a bit of the land about it that goes with the title. I suppose you know that. And that I can claim against you for the improvements. I'm not saying I'm going to do it," she added. *The improvements she had made for Terence, and the children that should come after him. . . .* Her heart was like water; but still her voice was harsh. She had not meant to say this, but now she felt it—that she must be alone—that she could not bear for him to be there. It was her place, her home, they were her dead. What was he but a Malone, an Ulsterman, a Protestant? She had been own cousin to her husband, and a Ranmore in direct descent. Every minute the bitterness grew.

“Is it money you're offering me for the place you've made home to me?” he said stupidly. But she took no heed of the pain in his voice, she was thinking only of her own unbearable bereavement.

“I'll go out of it this night, if I'm not welcome with you,” he went on, dully; “and I see I'm not that. I stayed on because Margaret asked me, and there was something Terence asked me to do, and I've not been able to do it yet.”

“Something Terence asked *you* to do?” The tone lashed. ‘*You!*’

And Derry blundered on:

“He asked me to take care of Rosaleen O'Daly . . . it's fond of her he was. . . .”

“What are you saying? What is it you're saying? Asked you to take care of Rosaleen—Rosaleen—O'Daly's daughter, me own maid! And my Terence—my boy asked you to be looking after her! It's lies you're telling me.”

“I'm telling you the truth. He said it to me when he

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

thought he'd no more words to say. Often I've heard it since : 'Take care of Rosaleen,' he said."

It had only needed this to make his position there impossible. She told him that he lied, and that he knew he lied. She said that the girl had befooled him, and might have tried to befool Terence, who was kind to everybody, worthy or unworthy, himself included.

If she had not remembered, even as he was speaking, that, when that wire came telling of the disaster at Sandown, the girl, who had been with her, had dropped in a faint at her feet, and been useless for the journey or the packing, or anything ; if Lady Ranmore had been able to blot out the despairing words, and the pleading . . . if any of these memories had not been with her, she might not have been so fierce in her denial, so violent in her denunciation. She said the girl was lying to secure her place. But out she should go that very night. The shock came on the top of so many other shocks. It was not strange the girl had lifted her eyes to Terence. Again as in a vision, pain blurred, the gay charm of him was before her. And Rosaleen O'Daly ! It was impossible, incredible that he should have given her grounds to think he had looked back to her. Out she should go—out.

It was only a sudden jealousy, a sudden anguish of jealousy. Her son was to her what other sons are to loving mothers. And purity is the birthright of Irish-women. That there had been romance or love-making between Terence and the girl, and Terence had stooped a little in kindness was all that was possible. But even that was hard to bear ; and that Derry should bring her word of it, was harder still.

Derry was dismissed with the words ringing in his ears that Terence's mother would turn Rosaleen from the door ;

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

that it was a slander he was uttering, for Terence would have never degraded himself to look at O'Daly's daughter. The wickedness of her to say that he had! Derry carried away an impression of fury and implacability, and he felt desperately that it was he who had stirred up all this against the girl whose champion he should have been. And all his confused thoughts resolved themselves into a hurried decision to find Rosaleen, tell her what had occurred, and of his promise to Terence, vowing himself to her service. When he had done that, he would leave Ranmore, he would wipe the dust of Ranmore from his feet. It wasn't as Lord Ranmore he saw himself at the moment, it was as an interloper, an intruder into the family. Where he had been most sensitive, there he was most wounded. It was as an enemy Terence's mother had talked to him, whilst nothing but love and tenderness had been in his mind towards them all.

Had Derrick by happy chance been present at the interview which took place between Margaret and her mother later in the day, he would have learned that the first words of an angry woman are not the last words; and much trouble might have been averted, that was brought about by his misapprehension.

For, by the afternoon, when Lady Ranmore had thought round and about the position, had sent for Rosaleen, only to be told she was nowhere to be found, and finally had decided to voice her new grievance against Derry to the Duchess, much of her rage and rancour had left her. Grief was back again in full sway. It was kind to the girl Terence wanted her to be, and the last thing she thought of doing was carrying out her threat to turn Rosaleen from the Castle. If it were the truth that she had lifted presumptuous eyes to Terence—and indeed, and indeed, who was there that had not loved him?—she would

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hear all about it from her; they would talk of him together.

By the time the idea had sunk into her mind, it had become more than bearable. Neat-handed, gentle-footed, patient, everything that a young girl should be, Rosaleen O'Daly had proved since they sent her from the convent to wait upon her patroness. The Duchess must go back to her husband, and it was alone they would be together, she and Rosaleen: they could talk of him, perhaps the talk would help her awful heartache. She knew she could not bear it alone much longer. Sometimes she felt her reason was giving way under it. He had left a gap so wide there was nothing for her to hold on to; the whole world was a void, it was a black chasm he had left behind him.

When Margaret came to her that same day, in the twilight, Lady Ranmore talked first of Derry, of his inferiority and unfitness for his position. She spoke of him with bitterness. Margaret reminded her gently that Terence had always been fond of him, that Terence said it was a fine man he would make.

“You must remember it's half heart-broken he is. He is not thinking of his position at all.”

Perhaps Lady Ranmore saw him less a schemer and an intruder than she said. She asked her daughter presently, it had been in her mind all the time, but it was only at the end she brought it out:

“Did you hear anything from our darling boy that day about Rosaleen O'Daly? Did he speak of her to you at all?”

“Yes. It was something he wanted to ask Derry, or tell him about her.”

“And what was it he said?”

“Something about you being kind to her. I did not

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quite understand why he should doubt it. But he spoke to Derry after ; there had been some love-making between her and Derry, I think. And now that he was to come into the title and everything, perhaps Terence doubted that Derry would go on with it. She looks terribly ill and unhappy. Has she said anything to you, or you to her ? "

" It was Terence himself, I understood Derry to say . . . "

" Terence ! Rosaleen O'Daly and Terence ! "

" It wasn't easy not to love him. "

" Oh ! I think you are mistaken, mother. And yet . . . she does look dreadfully unhappy . . . she could not have thought that Terence. . . . Oh, mother ! poor girl, if that is so. But I can't believe it. You'll be kind to her, if it is that, you'll be kind to her, " Margaret pleaded. " If she took him seriously, perhaps . . . but what does it matter now ? " Margaret's unready tears began to flow. What did it matter now if Rosaleen O'Daly thought Terence had been in love with her, or she with him ?

" I'll not have her thinking she is to grieve for him differently from the rest. " Lady Ranmore spoke doggedly, tears behind her words, for who was it that could help loving him ?

" Oh, mother, don't be hard ! You've grown so hard. Sure, it's only a child she is, gather her in your arms and comfort her. That's what I'd do if she'd let me ; if she is grieving so for him. Now I mind it, she looks like death. We must be good to her. "

That was the talk, and there was none of the rancour against the girl that Derry had heard, and believed in so absolutely. It served possibly to distract Lady Ranmore's mind a little. Perhaps that night, instead of black sleeplessness and moaning over her desolation, she bethought her of what she should hear from Rosaleen, of what

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Rosaleen would tell her of his words. She was sure there had been no love-making, or but little love-making, yet perhaps some talk between them. And she would hear that—the very words of him, and how he looked when he spoke them. And dimly she hoped that she might feed her grief upon his remembered words, until it broke to tears the slow tears for want of which her eyes burned in those black, sleepless nights, when all she knew was that she had no son. She had little rancour against Rosaleen that night. It was against Derry her reasonless jealousy grew, against Derry, who was here in Terence's place.

But when the morrow came, there was neither Rosaleen nor Derry to be found. And the blunder had been made irreparable.

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#### CHAPTER IV

**A**FTER seeking her so many days, it was strange that Derry should have found Rosaleen that very morning, not ten minutes after he had left his aunt's room. His heart was aflame with Lady Ranmore's injustice, and his slow brain was hardly working, or it was working backward. He knew he would leave Ranmore. They had made him welcome there always, it had always been his home; now he was no longer welcome there. He would go to where Terence lay in his coffin, Terence who had been own brother to him, and kneel there to say good-bye; then he'd go to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and tell them Rosaleen must go back to them. After that he would leave Ranmore. He was so sore and hurt when he left his aunt's presence, that his thoughts were as wild as hers. He rushed to Terence, where he lay in that narrow coffin, hearing nothing, and answering nothing, to the wild cry of the boy. Derry was but a boy as yet, and he cried out against injustice:

"*You* know it's not your place I'm wanting, Terence. You know I'd have given my life for yours, and been proud to do it! Oh! Terence, Terence, if you could only come back to us!" This relieved his bursting heart a little; then, with his eyes still full of tears, he stumbled along the little path, all overgrown and soft, that led to the chapel. When he got to the chapel, the door was open. He was not of their faith, but the open door, or his bursting heart, or some unknown hand led him.

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She was there, sure enough, this Rosaleen whom he had been seeking, but for the moment had forgotten to seek, lying all huddled up by the altar steps, sobbing as if her own heart would break. All the words he heard her utter were just: “Oh, Mother of God! Oh, Mother of God! And what shall I do? What shall I do?”

He had no courage . . . the misery of her! There was a trembling on him, and his knees were unsteady, so, for all that he was a Protestant, he fell upon them, beside her. And the prayer he put up wildly was that he might fill Terence's place. It was Terence who had won her, and God alone knew what he had done to her. But Terence had told him he was to help her. He had not voice, nor words, nor strength, whilst she sobbed so wildly, the slender slip of a girl, the girl that had laughed at him, with the soft light in her eyes, and the thin sweet lips, such a short while ago: it was little but a child she was now. How she shook, like a leaf in the wind!

“Let me die, Mother! Mother of God, let me die!” She was a Protestant too, but convent bred, and the prayers she had heard so often came easiest to her lips.

Nights and nights she had had of sick fear, not grief, only fear. Cold fear, and terror, and despair, had walked with her in the dreadful day, and lay beside her, through the dreadful nights. What Terence had had, he had taken unfairly, and not won. Terence was the master here, and all she had, she owed the Ranmores. But it was not blaming him she was, only herself. She had listened to the soft voice and pleading of him; she had fought against him, but she had yielded. She had been unsafe-guarded through her very innocence. . . . But she would make no excuses for herself, it was a wicked girl she had been, and now all the world would know. He had promised, here,

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in this very chapel, before the Image of the Blessed Mother; he had vowed. . . .

It was a cruel enough story, but the rights of it Derry could not draw from her, neither then nor ever. Neither of them, she in her despair, and he in his trouble, could be ought but tender over the memory of the dead man.

"He said he loved me so dearly; it's married we'd be before the fall. . . . Oh! Mother of God, and what'll become of me now?" she moaned. She had taken little heed of Derry, she was beyond heeding. But she had not resented his presence there, and something of strength and courage returned to him, for he had to help her, he could not bear her grief. He was only a boy, and sobbing too now beside her:

"The Mother of God, she's just a plaster image there, and the paint gone. It's me you must turn to; he told me all about it, and I'll find the way to help you. Be done with your cryin'."

"Oh, Mr. Derry, but it's past help I am! I want to be dyin'. And what will she say when she knows? And him that promised!" She could not check her wild sobbing, although she tried whilst he talked to her, groping for the soothing word and telling her she had been Terence's last thought. She had not heard a word of that before; now she was listening to him, hanging on his words, remaining on her knees, chilled and trembling on the cold flags, but listening.

"It's neither of us is wanted here," he said at length. "I'll take you away from here."

That showed her a gleam of hope, although the firmament was so black that she hardly recognised it. It had seemed there was nothing before her but to stay here, where all the world would get to know of her trouble, and look scorn at her, and never know it was himself who said

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that vows before the Blessed Mother were as good as being wed. He was dead, and they'd never believe what he had promised. She rocked herself to and fro, and broken phrases came. . . .

What did it matter Mr. Derry's hearing? Her pride was in the dust; she was but a broken thing before him. She would drown herself the day, for it was drowning she'd thought of every night since he died. Often she'd pictured it. She knew the lake that had no bottom to it, the lake that lay between the rocks, no trees nor rushes near it, the lake on Gabriel. She had seen it once, one happy picnic day out from the convent. She could take the train to Bantry, and from Bantry 'twas but three hours' walking; and then she could throw herself down, and her body would never be found. Mayhap she should have done it before . . . but 'tis hard to die at seventeen. Then the tears flowed again, for Derry's words touched the bitter fountain of them.

“It's not fit to live I am, you can't help me; it's past help I am.”

“I'd find the way to help you, if I had to crawl all me days on me hands and knees. Rosaleen, he bade me do it. It was you he was thinking of all the time he lay dying. And he made me swear it to him. I'll not be false to my oath. I'm going to find a way. ‘Swear,’ he said to me, ‘Derry, swear.’ You were in his mind all the time. That ought to comfort you. ‘It's only Rosaleen I'm thinking of,’ or words like that he said, again and again.”

She had stopped crying now, but she was still crouching on the ground, listening, yet saying over and over again that she was only fit to die. He told her, thinking it was the only way to comfort her, of Terence's anxiety for her, straining truth a little, perhaps. But it was not that which soothed her, it was the human sympathy, the

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first sympathy she had known in these weeks since the cruel telegram came, following so soon on Terence's letter, when he had told her to keep her heart up; the letter which had answered her first shamed, fearful cry to him.

Derry blundered on in the only way he knew. Terence's mother had said she would turn Rosaleen out of doors if she claimed that Terence had been in love with her. Well, she was claiming that Terence had promised to make her his wife. Never a doubt had Derry that he would have done it. But now all the country-side would point scorn on her, and there was no shelter nor pity, and she but a child still.

"You'll come away with me, this very day," he said; for his strength grew with her consciousness of her need of it. "I'll find a place for you away in London whilst we're thinking what to do. Neither of us is wanted here. I'll be own brother to you, Rosaleen, if you'll trust yourself to me. I'll take care of you, and it will all come right. You've no call to be talking of dying, it's living you've got to be; and helping me to keep my word to Terence."

There was hope in his words, and it was small wonder that she listened to him. She had no money, and no knowledge of any world that lay beyond the convent or the castle grounds. She had tried to think of herself as Terence's wedded wife, for he had vowed it to her here, before this very altar, with the Mother looking down. But she was only a poor girl, for all that, and no priest had blessed them. And she wasn't sure but that she was a wicked girl. Only Derry comforted her by telling her she couldn't be that, for Terence had meant all he said, or why was her name on his lips when he thought he was speaking his last words? And why had he entrusted her to Derry?

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Their plans were soon made. She was to stay where she was until after nightfall, then creep back to the house for her things. And Derry would go back now, and get money and clothes. From Dunmanway station they'd start this very night for London; and he would find a place of shelter for her. From Cork it was easy to get to Liverpool. If search was made for them it would be in Dublin. But it was to London they'd go, where hiding was easy. She said mournfully that none would look for her. It seemed to Derry that perhaps this was true, and the sadness of it isolated them still more within the stone walls of that little chapel. The plaster Mother, with her crude blue colouring, and the Babe, whose gold crown was half peeled away with the damp, witnessed a stranger scene than when Terence had taken his vows before the altar, and tried to reconcile his conscience to the sin he had committed. No subtle schemer, or sinner, had Terence been, and, had he lived, opposition or no opposition, he would have made amends. But he had been so used to his own way, and being given what he wanted, that, if it were not to be had by fair means . . . But it is horrible to write about, and even Derry never heard the rights of it.

Rosaleen, too, put the remembrance as far as possible away from her when she went forth with Derry that night, neither of them seeing where their journey would take them. They were both of them very young; it is only very young people who see no way to meet trouble but to fly from it, never heeding where the flight may land them.

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## CHAPTER V

LORD RANMORE—for henceforward Derry must bear his title—left Ranmore, taking Rosaleen O'Daly with him, less than a week after his cousin's death. He knew nothing of his means, he had no money but the few pounds he carried with him, and at first he was even reluctant to apply to the family lawyers.

It was, perhaps, not to be wondered at that Rosaleen went with him so easily. She knew what was right and wrong, but very little of how wagging tongues put wrong constructions on innocent acts. They passed one night at Dublin, and another in getting to Liverpool. The horrors of seasickness fell to Rosaleen's share, and Derry nursed her, for the night was a wild one, and the stewards were too busy to tend second-class passengers.

In London, Derry with his portmanteau, and Rosaleen with her shabby bag, stood doubtfully for ten minutes in the midst of a yellow November fog on the platform at Euston. Derry questioned a friendly porter, who recommended him to a temperance hotel, somewhere off the Tottenham Court Road. Rosaleen was in no fit state to be left alone, and Derry was in no mood to leave her. He had constituted himself her protector, or brother, as he preferred to call himself. Every hour they had been together, his tenderness toward her had increased. It is like this with chivalrous natures. She clung to him, she was utterly dependent on him, poor child that she was. She was worn out with all the sleepless nights she had passed, and the unaccustomed travel, and the strange-

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

ness of it all. It was sleep she wanted most, and after the cab had taken them to the temperance hotel, Derry's footsteps paced the dingy coffee-room uncertainly before a friendly chambermaid brought him word that sleep had come to Rosaleen.

London, in a dingy temperance hotel on a foggy November morning, is a poor place for right thinking. Derry had little notion of what his next step should be. He felt the weight of his responsibilities; but the sense of achievement, and the consciousness that he was carrying out his vows to Terence, gave him a new sense of exhilaration. He was happier than he had been since Terence's death.

When Derry asked for a room for himself, the proprietor of the hotel very naturally wanted to know who his clients were, and suggested a payment on account. Derry hesitated about giving his own name, for he had not grown used to it yet. And he hesitated more in giving hers. Yet, had not she a right to be called Lady Ranmore? A better right than his own, he thought, if the truth were known. But the hesitation failed to inspire confidence, when he said at length that they were Lord and Lady Ranmore. A temperance hotel off the Tottenham Court Road was not the usual stopping-place for a peer and his lady. The fly-blown, green, paper-covered lampshades, the dingy oil-cloth on the table, the early Victorian prints in maple-wood frames, together with the uncarpeted floor, a stray text or two, and an advertisement of a new mineral water, seemed to present little temptation to dishonest travellers. Yet the proprietor was obviously suspicious, and even when Derry offered him what payment he wanted in advance, the man continued surly and apparently ill-satisfied. He said his was a respectable house. Derry said it ought to be something, for it was damned uncomfortable! That did not mend matters. In fact, it

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

was only by pulling himself together at the critical moment, and remembering that Rosaleen must have her sleep out, that Derry commanded himself and the situation long enough to procure the hospitality he sought.

Matters looked better in the morning : not the hotel—that was dingier than ever, more fly-blown, more hideously respectable and text-ridden, and the food past praying for ; but affairs generally, and chiefly, Derry’s own spirits.

For Rosaleen came down to breakfast with him, and she looked the better for her night’s rest. The dirty Britannia-metal teapot, the thick white teacups, shop-eggs, stale bread and salt butter, elicited no complaint from her. She looked better, but the shadow was dodging her here too. She had put herself blindly into Derry’s hands, but she did not know what Derry would do with her. Nor did Derry himself know.

But his spirits had risen, and he determined hers should not fall below a certain point. He pressed the eggs upon her, and called for more bacon, and carried the situation with the sheer simplicity of his satisfaction in it. Anyway, he was doing something.

“And we’re free as air here in London,” he told her triumphantly. “There’s not a soul knows where we are, and we can just make a start, and go our own way.”

“You’ll find me work to do ?” she asked him.

“I’ll find you something ; don’t you worry. You just sit about and get rested when you’ve taken your breakfast. I suppose I must try and find those lawyers, and see into things a bit. Anyway, we’re neither of us with those who don’t want us.”

It was hard for him to keep his eyes off Rosaleen, or keep them, when they did fall upon her, from telling her how pretty she looked this morning. After, there was

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

little doubt why his spirits had risen. She was pouring out his tea for him, and there was not one but him to look after her, and what lay behind was done with, and what lay before them could wait. She had wound the great plaits round her head in what seemed to him a very cunning and pretty fashion. Her face was very pale, and her grey eyes were dark and mournful still, but there was some colour to-day in the sweet, tremulous lips, and he was even more conscious than she of her dependence on him.

But they were not as isolated as they thought. They had been seen at Liverpool, and that their destination was London was known. They had run away together, and what complexion could be put upon their elopement? There had been no talk about Terence and the girl, any more than there is talk about the sun when it kisses the tree-tops. But the talk waged wild about the two who had stolen away from the house of mourning, and all Ranmore waited for news of the wedding. They thought shame on her that she could not wait until Ranmore was cold in his coffin—Terence was still Ranmore to them. Lady Ranmore, and even the Duchess, had no doubt, from the moment the news of the elopement was authenticated to them, but that Derry and she had been “carrying on,” and it was about this that Terence had wanted to speak. Terence, it seemed to them on consideration, had wanted to ensure that Derry, when he succeeded to the title, should not ignore his obligations, and it was for Derry’s sake he had pleaded to his mother to be kind to her.

That was the reasoning at Ranmore, although there was little reasoning against the feeling of all that the moment had been inauspicious for love-making. Tongues wagged harshly; even the Duchess found it difficult to forgive Derry for having acted so precipitately.

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Anger against Derry steadied the world a little for Lady Ranmore. The relations it had been so impossible to conceive as between Terence and the girl, became less completely incredible when Derry took the foreground position in the picture. Terence's character, wanting no burnish, stood out the brighter because, on his death-bed, he had been anxious the right thing should be done, and troubled lest Derry, with his new dignities, should forget his old obligations? So reasoned Terence's mother when the elopement was made known. She was very angry, and righteously angry, with what she misread so definitely. In her anger and unreasonableness generally, she resolved suddenly on what she had up to the time of the flight been but dimly contemplating. She would wrench her heart and thoughts from Ranmore. She had a good jointure, and it had been poured out like water for the improvements. Now everything should stop; the building and the excavations for coal, the cottage industries and the lobster-potting down by the coast. She would build up no home for Derry, and the baggage he had taken with him. Perhaps "baggage" was not the word she used, but she did not forget what was due to the Duchess. And real evil, even of Derry, she was slow to suspect, even whilst she voiced it.

Margaret was not so clear about it all as Lady Ranmore, nor so bitter; although she was very shocked at Rosaleen, and very disappointed in Derry. The flight, and the time chosen for it, seemed heartless, and cruel, and unnecessary; but it was not criminal. She had to urge this view upon her mother, and she spoke of their youth, but she only added to her mother's anger, and brought some of it down upon her own head.

The Duchess's plea for Derry, perhaps a little half-hearted, for she was sore herself at the moment over his

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

desertion. Seemed to excuse her mother's sudden decision to abandon Ranmore, to let it fall back into the ruin from which it had still only half emerged. Anger and resentment are easier to bear than grief. Lady Ranmore nursed her feeling against Derry, and sent for her lawyer to give effect to it.

But, when the days went by, and no news came of the wedding, the Duchess's conscience grew restless. Lady Ranmore might nurse her grievances, and listen to Mr. Carruthers' advice, and plan reprisals. The Duchess did not take those reprisals very seriously at first; it was good for her mother to have a grievance to occupy her instead of only her loss. But Terence had been troubled in his mind over Rosaleen O'Daly, or over Derry's possible treatment of her, and his sister could not leave things to take their course.

She had to leave Ranmore, and take up the duties, never neglected, that she owed to that poor derelict Duke of hers. Passing through London, however, on her way to Dunstons, she wrote a line to Mr. Carruthers, asking for Lord Ranmore's address in London; she never doubted his having it.

Before this incredible elopement had taken place, she and Derry had been full of schemes, in which the lawyer's help was necessary for rounding off all those matters relating to Terence, and keeping them from his mother's ears. She did not doubt but that Derry would carry out their plan, even if his own affairs had become entangled. For entanglement was the euphemism with which she now began to cloak the flight.

The contents of the Duchess's letter were given to Derry directly he called upon the family lawyer. He could not delay that, for his funds were very limited.

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

the Duchess of Towcester was seeking his address, he did not wait long enough at the lawyer's office to carry out the purpose of his call there. He had been wasting his time in London, not realising quickly how he ought to act. Now it came at once into his impulsive head that his cousin would befriend Rosaleen; that, in taking her so hurriedly from Ranmore, he had left the Duchess out of his calculations. Margaret's heart was as large as his own.

He never paused to think of the inexplicable things he must explain. Outside cog-wheels and machinery, Derry was no tactician; even his curious sensitiveness had its extraordinary limitations. *He* had understood the story Rosaleen had not told him, and he never doubted but that Margaret would understand it as easily. The harshness of woman's judgment on her fellow-woman is strange to any young man's mind, and this was never an ordinary young man, this Derry, who had made up his mind for all time that the laws for other men were not the laws for Terence Ranmore.

He could not quite blind himself to his own feeling for Rosaleen, although he could subordinate, and keep it in the background. That he might have to suffer through his action never entered his head. Had it done so it would have made no difference to his conduct; the one person Derry never thought of in the affair was Derry.

It had not been worth while to open the ducal house in Bruton Street for the night or two the Duchess must pass in town. It was, therefore, at Claridge's Hotel, Mr. Caruthers told Lord Ranmore he would find Her Grace. Derry had no difficulty in gaining access to her. His unnecessarily extravagant hansom had hardly stopped on the indiarubber covered approach to that fashionable caravanserai, before a uniformed functionary with a hat

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

like a beadle's, had summoned his myrmidons and sent the name to his cousin. Derry had a bare two minutes to wait in the great, luxurious hall before a page-boy came to conduct him upstairs. The hall of Claridge's contrasted very favourably with the linoleum-covered passage, leading to the coffee-room of the temperance hotel, that Derry had just left. Not more so, of course, than the elegant suite of rooms, upholstered in mauve satin, and elaborate with primrose window-curtains and *portiere*, where he found the Duchess of Towcester awaiting him, contrasted with the bedroom with its slip of drugget, its deal single washstand, and its rickety chest of drawers with a Bible on it, where he had left the girl he had taken under his charge.

The Duchess stood to receive him. The beauty of her, with the red-gold pile of hair against her mourning robes, her brilliancy and fine carriage, although she was the pride of all the Ranmores, could not dazzle the eyes that were fresh from Rosaleen's slender charm. But although he was not dazzled nor overwhelmed, he was struck dumb by her greeting, which had rather judgment in it than welcome, and was unlike any greeting he had ever had from Margaret.

“I asked Mr. Carruthers for your address, I suppose he told you,” she began. She did not offer to shake hands, nor did she bid him sit down.

“Perhaps I ought to have washed my hands of you, and left you to go your own way, as my mother has done. It could only have been of yourselves you were thinking, when you ran away from us like that. You've angered my mother terribly, estranged her from you, embittered her. It was a cruel slight upon his memory, upon all of us. Why couldn't you have waited? why didn't you confide in me, and him not dead a fortnight,

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and so much to be done for him?” . . . Her feelings carried her away, she spoke quickly, almost breathlessly. It was so disloyal, so unlike him. “Oh! why did you do it, Derry?”

She softened even as she spoke, for, indeed, she was fond of Derry, and so had Terence been; and his looks were not furtive nor guilty, only bewildered.

“Why couldn’t you have waited until we had got over our mourning a little, and the strangeness of it? You could not expect my mother not to be angry with Rosaleen, stealing away like that. She has always been so good to the girl, and she had grown used to her. What does it all mean, Derry? But perhaps I should not ask. Only I hate to think ill of you. Why have you not married her? Is it carrying out what he asked you? It’s shame you’re bringing to the girl, and to all of us.”

She paused, breathless, having poured it all out in a torrent, and now beginning to recognise she understood it less than ever.

“If you cared for her when you were Derry Malone, you oughtn’t to care less because you are Lord Ranmore. Was it of that Terence was thinking? And did he know you better, after all, than I? I wouldn’t have believed it of you, Derry; to bring shame on the girl! And she almost a child, not out of her teens. And what is to become of her life?” But even as she spoke, she hardly believed that Derry could have done this thing. There must be some mistake.

“It’s no shame I’ve brought to Rosaleen,” Derry answered, quite taken aback, almost sullenly. The attack was so sudden and unexpected he scarcely knew how to meet it.

“You are married to her then? I told my mother I was sure that was how it was. When was it? Why have you kept it secret from me? Did Terence know?”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“I’m not married to her.”

His heart seemed suddenly to beat faster than it had beat before. He had not faced it, yet this had been in his mind before, in that unforgettable happy summer. But it was Terence who had won her. It was not surprising, for who could withstand Terence? But that thought, too, was dim, and the pain in it was numbed and distant. It was for Terence he was guarding her. But what was this about marriage? Perhaps it was slow to dawn on him that this was the way, the only way. It was Margaret that was bringing light to the slow dawning.

He could tell Margaret nothing, having meant that she should have guessed everything. For before he had time to speak, Margaret was telling him not only how wrongly he had acted, and how his action was resented at Ranmore, but which was the only way to repair his fault! And she went on to remind him what he owed to the girl, and what Terence would have thought of it all. She had said a great deal before she waited for him to answer, overwhelming him with it. She spoke quickly, for some of the time she was speaking against her conviction, though always in accordance with what she thought was her duty, and the right thing for her to be pointing out to him. His dark face flushed as he took it in slowly, but more quickly than he could answer it.

There was no slur on Terence, unless he put it there; it wasn't Terence they were thinking of at all! *What* was it that she was saying?

“If . . . if your hand was forced, Derry? I don't know what to make of it, I don't want to begin thinking . . . it's so unlike what I've always known of you, it is so difficult to understand. My mother and I thought it was for Terence she was fretting; and you thought so too. At least, that is what we understood. Then

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you take her away, out of my mother's protection, and I suppose she is in London here with you? We heard of you at Holyhead—and Micky was on the boat. Derry, if my mother has been misled about her, and . . . and if she is not a good girl, I must not perhaps press you to marry her. But something must be done, you must let us do something.”

“Good! Good! She's better than untold gold—a jewel, God bless her, and it's me that's not worthy of her!”

But his lips went dry, and all at once he saw his way, and his heart was vociferous.

“Well, you know best.”

She felt rather cold; sin had never touched her closely. Somehow she had not anticipated Derry's attitude; she failed to understand it, naturally.

“But you are not married, you say?” she persisted.

“As yet there's been no talk of marriage between us.” His lips were dry, and his words came with difficulty.

“Surely it is very wrong?”

She must do what she thought right. But she had hoped he would have met her differently.

“Perhaps I ought not to interfere. You may say it is no affair of mine, you are a man grown and I am only your distant cousin. But she has no parents, and my mother was her guardian. In a way, we are all her guardians, and her father died in our service. . . .”

“I'm meaning to take care of her,” he said. His eyes were glowing now. Margaret understood less than ever. In truth she hardly wanted now to press this marriage on him. For she was only a normal woman, although a Duchess, and Derry was the head of her house. It was money he should marry; the more so now that her mother would do nothing for him. She hesitated, standing

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there, softening toward Derry, hardening in her judgment of the girl who had led him into this. She said a hard word or two about her, tentatively, and that lit Derry's chivalry to a blaze. But it made it no easier for him to speak.

"You're blaming her for what was no fault of hers," was all he could get out. "She is as good as gold . . . a jewel."

"I'll not believe it was you alone that thought of running away from us all."

"Is that what they are all saying down there?"

"It would be a great step up for her, of course, to become Lady Ranmore. But now, now that you ran away with her and have been nearly a week together, you can't expect people to look upon her as they would if you had married her, as indeed I thought you had, or would, at the first possible opportunity. You say there has been no thought or talk of marriage between you." Some doubt, or perplexity, some misgiving, faint enough, but there, stopped her speech. "Is there some explanation . . . *Derry?*"

And then what came into her mind flushed her face, and low as her voice went, he heard the fear in it. She had come in an instant's intuition within appreciable distance of the truth, but turned sick and faint and his name on her lips was as a plea to him for denial.

He must get back to Rosaleen. Of course there was no other way. It had been coming so slowly to Derry, perhaps from the time he heard her sobbing in the chapel, perhaps when he named her as Lady Ranmore in the eating-house, that, when the idea was full born before him, it no longer seemed strange, but as if he had known it always. Margaret's voice pleaded to him, and her eyes; it was reassurance he must give her, hurriedly and completely. There must remain nothing on her mind



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to slur Terence's memory. It was Terence himself had laid this charge upon him. Rosaleen would do it, perhaps, for Terence's memory. Would she do it? He could hardly answer Margaret, so great was this thought that had come to him. But Margaret moved nearer to him, for now the fear and the intuition were sharp.

“*Derry!* About Terence? There was nothing, not between her and . . . Terence.”

“What is it you are thinking?” he said roughly. “There is nonsense in what you are saying. I'm going back to Rosaleen; it was not her I came about at all, but the bills and things. Now you've said enough, too much. Neither you nor my aunt will have anything to do with Rosaleen, and I can't expect it, you say! Well, and I haven't asked it, nor she neither. We came away, isn't that enough? It's . . . it's married we'll be soon.”

Derry rushed from the room without leave-taking, in anger, or something that looked like it. Margaret tried to call him back, but she could not call his name through the corridor, down those wide steps where she saw him running. She had gone after him, she had not meant to be abrupt, unkind, and it was but slowly she returned to that elegant suite of hers.

Had he completely reassured her? She hardly knew what had suddenly given her that shock of fear; she was still trembling from it. But it was irrational and absurd, no wonder Derry had been angry! How could she have thought . . .? She would leave off thinking. Derry was but a boy; she would see him again, and yet again. There was plenty of time, he must not spoil his life. As for the girl. . . . Well, it is not to be supposed that the Duchess of Towcester thought very kindly of Rosaleen O'Daly.

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She had perforce to put Derry and his affairs out of her mind at the moment, for she was due at Dunstons. Derelict as he was, paralysed, a mere cumberer of the earth, with a blank mind, and only a body needing tendance, she had been away from her husband long enough. She must see Derry again—Derry must come to Dunstons. It is possible she thought the trouble about Rosaleen would pass away. She was really a good woman; but when the sudden fear that had shaken her had evanesced, leaving her uncertain as to whence it came, or why, there remained a sediment, of which the main ingredient was the possibility, the hope, that she might hear no more of Rosaleen.

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## CHAPTER VI

THE hansom was still waiting for him, the horse fidgeting decorously on that indiarubber pavement. Derry gave the Tottenham Court Road address and told the man to hurry, to hurry all he knew. Clear as daylight his thoughts were then—clearer than the day that was before his eyes in the murky November streets. He saw Rosaleen waiting for him ; perhaps her eyes would brighten when he came—those mournful grey eyes.

Because he was habitually slow of thought, now the reminiscences and the certainties jostled each other too quickly for him to capture or marshal them. The golden summer, the sparkle and promise of her, the secret hopes he cherished. . . . then Terence in the weighing-room, and the jar of his words ; Rosaleen in the chapel. . . . Derry became convinced, during that drive which seemed so short, that what he was going to do was what Terence had wished. There should be no shame on her or him. It was Lady Ranmore she should be, and that as soon as the law could make her. Beyond this he could not go. She did not care for him at all ; it was Terence who had won her. But that must make no difference, since Terence was dead.

If happiness for himself was not in the picture he was drawing, it did not seem to be an essential factor. He had always thought little of himself, of the size that spelt awkwardness, and the muscle that was only of use in the workshop. Next to Terence he had always been as pottery to porcelain, just rough. And she, the elegant slip of a

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girl . . . it is difficult to credit such selfless thoughts as Derry's, yet there they were. He had seen a sudden fear in Margaret's face, and he must not let it abide there. It could all be made plain and easy. It was himself that must take Terence's place. He anticipated no opposition from Rosaleen ; it was so easy a way out of the tangle. Let come what may, he thought vaguely, though without any definite premonition of what might come, Rosaleen must be made Lady Ranmore.

He found Rosaleen just where he had left her, in the dingy coffee-room of the dingy hotel. The breakfast things had been cleared away, and luncheon was spread. She was seated dejectedly at the table ; now and again she had been staring into vacancy, into the dread future. Now and again her head had sunk down in shame, the beautiful little head with its coronet of black plaits. So Derry found her. There was no brightness in the eyes that met his, they were almost as mournful and hopeless as they had been at Ranmore. For who would take her in, or find her work, and how better off was she here than there ? And ah ! the day !

Derry went straight to the point, bungler that he was. Any intimacy between them during the last four days was only in his constant thought of her. There had never been any love-making, since that unspoken calf-love last summer, the love which she would, perhaps, have read in time, which he had begun to hope she was reading, when he went back for his examination. But Terence had stayed on to dazzle, and bewilder, and carry her away. A bold wooer was Terence, and hard to parry for a girl with only a conventual outlook, and she a dependent in his house. It was only her beauty that had counted as yet, with either of them. Her character had hardly begun to emerge from a training that had left her without

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volition. She had had the disadvantages of her Protestantism to contend with both in and out of the convent; and this was an additional misfortune. For else there would have been someone to whom she could have told her trouble, even if it had been only a priest in the confessional. As it was, she had the training and the phrasing of a religion bereft of its essence. Her soul and temperament would have to push their way presently through all the human muddlement of her education and final disaster.

"Rosaleen! I've something to tell you. I've seen my cousin; she says we ought to be married, coming away together like we did. . . ." His face was crimson, and his breath was as hurried as if he had been running. "And I've been thinking she is right. We'll get it done as fast as possible. I'm going back to the lawyer's this afternoon, and they'll put me in the way of it, but first I had to come and tell you what I had decided."

There was only a look of bewilderment in the little mournful face, and no hope nor lightening at all.

But then, all at once, she could not face him. For she had thought he had known! But now, now it seemed he did not know at all. Marriage! for him, and for her . . . her, who was, who was . . .

"You've no cause to be taking it like that," he said, for he saw that she was crying. He saw the sudden sobbing that shook her, and his heart ran like water to her, but he dared not touch her to comfort her, not even a hand upon her shoulder. "It's others than ourselves we've got to be thinking of," he said, more slowly, "and there's no other way to prevent them knowing."

She sobbed on a little, and he, standing beside her, bent now on his way, put it to her again that there was no other thing to do.

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Presently her sobs grew quieter, and she lifted her head :

“You’re not understanding . . .” Her tone was past sadness, she went quite white, as if she would faint ; not meeting his eyes, desperately determined that she must not deceive him, wishing she could drop down dead at his feet, before he knew her shame, he that had been so good to her. . . .

“I’m understanding well enough !” He tried to take her hands, but she kept them locked fast.

“You don’t want me to touch you,” he went on ; “I know that it’s meself that is nothing to you, your heart’s in the grave with him. I’m understanding well enough. It’s not a real marriage, I . . . mean. . . .” And then the flush mounted in his face. “You’ll be . . . you’ll be . . . just as you are. But you’ll have his name, and no one will look coldly on you, and that’s what he meant, and made me swear to do. . . .” Again he put out his hand, and again she kept hers locked.

“Burden you with me !” she cried, and then, in a much lower voice, a voice he could hardly hear, added the words she could hardly speak, “*Me . . . and me shame. . . .*”

“It’s a burden I’ll bear gladly.”

His kindness made her want to cry again ; but she was too cold, and too faint, and too frightened to cry. She rose and moved away from him, toward the window, gazing out on the murk. . . . she could speak better then, and he was waiting for her to speak, conscious of his own tongue-tiedness, and now of his growing anxiety for her acquiescence.

“I’m . . . I’m . . .” Her face was turned from him, when she whispered, “I’m not fit for the likes of you.”

They were her masters, these Ranmores. Terence had done what he wished to her. Mr. Derry—how big he was

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and kind! And she thought he had guessed her secret, but now she knew she had been mistaken. Oh, what would he think, what would he think of her when he knew?

“Go away, and let me bide,” she said passionately. “Leave me be, Mr. Derry, there’s something . . . something more you ought to know. I ought never to have let you bring me away. I’m not the girl you knew . . . in June.”

He *did* know; all his manhood knew, and kept the knowledge in leash. For he must not think harshly of Terence, and he must not hurt her with his knowledge. He had to handle this delicate thing with his rough hands.

“It’s not whether you are fit for me, or I’m for you; it’s *him* of whom we’ve both of us got to think. They won’t lose sight of you; they have a suspicion. . . .” Her face turned whiter, and a shade more of apprehension deepened in her eyes. His face was more flushed, and his courage stopped at the point of meeting her eyes:

“It’s not for myself I’m asking it. ‘*Don’t let my mother know,*’ and ‘*take care of Rosaleen,*’ were the last words he said to me. There were other things too, but these were the last. You’ll help me to keep my promise to him. It will be all the same to you.”

This was what he wanted to impress upon her, that it would be all the same to her! His chivalry was flaming in arms for her, and it was as a brother, as a protector, as a guardian against the world, he was looking to her, not as a bridegroom. She was no bride for him, he knew; it was Terence she loved, to Terence she had given herself. But his name would be a shield for what was coming, and under cover of it, the sweet head might be held erect. He did not look very far into the future—perhaps he dared not look. He had had a dream about her once, but it was no dreaming he was doing now. If his face

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was flushed and burning, and he had to hold on to his courage with both hands, he never faltered in his purpose. The words fell upon her ears, they were like soft vivifying rain, she could not see his face, nor hear his heart pounding; but as the words fell, the dead petals of hope seem to flutter.

“ ’Tis not your real husband I want to be ! ” Those were the words . . . “ it’s to give you, you, and . . . and him that’s coming, the name that belongs to you both. I’ll not trouble, nor come near you. I see you hate me to come near you. But it’s broken-hearted Margaret would be, and his mother, if they knew he had left you like this. He said, ‘ *Don’t let my mother know* ’ ; over and over again he said it; and that’s why I’m urging you to let me do what he would have done, if . . . if God had spared him,” his voice broke.

Then it began to dawn upon her, not the greatness of the sacrifice, nor the greatness of the heart that conceived it, but only the bare husk of the idea that Derry, to save Terence’s name, and prevent his mother and sister casting blame upon his memory, would lighten this intolerable burden she was bearing, would make it bearable. It was incredible; she did not believe her ears. And now her eyes helped her no better, for his avoided them.

“ You’d marry me ? ” she repeated.

“ That’s what I’m begging you.”

“ To keep shame from his name ? ” Then her honesty impelled her further, “ It’s not his shame, but mine, I’m thinkin’.” Her voice went very low again.

“ It’s no shame for either of you ; he . . . he made his vows to you on the altar, in the chapel. If he had lived, he would have said them to you before the priest. . . . ”

Still honesty drove her.

“ I’m no’ so sure,” she whispered. Even to herself she had hardly whispered it before.



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He would not listen to that, he brushed it away. Now all he wanted was that she should not oppose him ; that she should agree to any arrangement he might make. He was so considerate of her feelings, and so reticent of his own, that it was doubtful if at the moment she realised all he was offering her, although she knew she was not strong enough to refuse it. But some misgiving she had, and an overwhelming, wordless gratitude. He pressed the point that it was for Margaret and Terence's mother this marriage was necessary, and to guard his memory with both of them ; neither he nor she came into it, they were of so much lesser importance. And she clung to that, tried to see it the way he would have her. They were not to look upon themselves as individuals, but just as they had always been, as dependents, serving the family. It was the way he felt it as he talked, for now his mind was fully made up, and he did not see beyond the certainty that he must give Terence's name to Rosaleen and her coming child.

## CHAPTER VII

**M**R. CARRUTHERS, to whom Derry went for help in complying with the technicalities of the English marriage laws, was the typical lawyer in high-class London practice. He had the capacity for withdrawing all personality from any case presented to him, and clearing it of any but its purely legal aspect. Derry was now Lord Ranmore, and there was a considerable number of points to be made clear before the estate could be wound up, and that portion of it which actually belonged to him handed over. That is to say, if anything should be left after legal charges had been met, and all contingencies fully provided for.

Mr. Carruthers had been over to Ireland; he had seen Lady Ranmore, and met the lawyers from Cork. He was fully informed as to the situation, which presented difficulties that would take time to unravel, proving, perhaps, not unremunerative to the firm. This afternoon, when Derry called upon him so impulsively to help him to get married, and as quickly as possible, Mr. Henry Carruthers neither queried nor protested. When he understood the inquiry, he sent for his head clerk, and asked him to run through with his lordship the various ways in which he could accomplish his desire. He asked if there was any question of settlements, and suggested that in such case there might be difficulties and delays. Derry brushed the question aside impatiently. Beyond the question of settlements, any marriage Lord Ranmore was contemplating had no interest for the lawyer.

Henry Carruthers was tall, thin, and carried himself with

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elegance ; he wore eye-glasses, and had had a distinguished University career. He had been called to the Bar, but, wisely marrying the daughter of a solicitor, he became convinced that the lower branch of the profession would suit his peculiar talents as well as the higher, and accepted a partnership in his father-in-law's firm. He was compact of vanity, but the soundness of his law was part of its *raison d'être*. No client interested him, only his case. Nothing, however, had any real interest for him but Henry Carruthers, and there was no grace or covering to his leanness of soul and body to disguise the fact. He would probably charge a guinea, possibly two, for advising Lord Ranmore, with the aid of his managing clerk, as to where Doctors' Commons was situated, what was the formula for obtaining a special licence, how one could be married by banns, or in a registry office. It was no part of Mr. Carruthers' day's work to take the slightest interest in the bride, nor to wonder at the necessity that brought her intended bridegroom to him. He *did* ask when Lord Ranmore would be prepared to take over the accounts of the estate ; and, after he had gleaned all the information possible about the ceremony that was absorbing him, Derry made an appointment to do so. But the want of humanity about the man oppressed him, and for his part he found the little, round managing clerk infinitely more sympathetic. He followed him into the outer office, and lingered talking to him. A "special licence" would strain his resources, the alternative three weeks' "domicile" was an almost insuperable difficulty, and a registry office was out of the question. Mr. Danvers, in the end, was good enough to recommend him rooms, and facilitate matters for him generally. He had a little natural curiosity too, and even ventured to wish him "happiness."

When Derry came to have that business talk with Mr.

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Carruthers, he was rather dismayed at his position. For years Lady Ranmore had been paying out, always believing, of course, it was in Terence's interest she made these disbursements. But the trustee to Lady Ranmore's marriage settlement was Mr. Carruthers' father-in-law, or, one might almost say, the firm. They had, of course, been compelled to foresee the possibility of such an eventuality as had now accrued, and they had always safeguarded their client's interests. Which meant, as Derry was slowly made to realise, that his income at the moment was practically dependent on Lady Ranmore's forbearance. The entail went only so far as the Castle and a few adjacent acres. The intestacy gave her practically unlimited power over the rest. The money she had spent upon the estate had become a debt from the estate to herself. The iniquitous death-duties, as they related to land, were brought prominently home to the heir, as a further complication. Altogether it seemed to him he had been better off as Derry Malone than he was likely to be as Lord Ranmore. It was perplexing to find that he, who had never owed a hundred pounds, was up to his neck in debt.

At the end of the interview Mr. Carruthers said stiffly that he was in communication with Lady Ranmore, and hoped in a day or two to have a proposition to lay before him.

The letters that had accumulated for Lord Ranmore, and had been forwarded from the Castle, were handed to Derry as he left the lawyer's office. One of them only was of personal interest, and this one he did not read until later in the day, at those rooms to which the managing clerk recommended him. The rooms were near Marylebone Parish Church, where all the technicalities the laws demand for marriage by banns between Protestants were now in process of being complied with.

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

It was through indifference rather than want of knowledge of conventionalities, that Rosaleen had her bedroom in the same house, that to all outward seeming they were living together.

The Duchess knew it, for she had written to invite Derry to Dunstons, and Derry's reply had been that he could not leave Rosaleen alone here! And this had proved an effectual stopper on the correspondence.

Derry's life had been wrenched so violently out of its groove that all his actions became distorted. He was as a man who can see only one footstep clear, but that the next might land him in bog or morass could not deter him from going on. In Albany Street he found himself well-placed, with a clean and accommodating landlady, and her husband, who had been a butler. Since the rooms were comfortable, and the food well-prepared and served, why should Rosaleen remain on in the dirty and uncomfortable Temperance hotel? There seemed no reason for it, and his meals were the brighter for her sharing them. For all that, she continued ill at ease with him, and the conversation between them was often at a standstill. They could not dwell upon the past, and the future further than the marriage ceremony, was all dim and uncertain. The daily weather, or the daily *ménu*, soon wore thin as subjects for talk. That the embarrassment of the position might increase instead of diminishing, both of them shut out of their minds. Derry, because it was natural to him to be optimistic, and not a little careless, Rosaleen, because there was growing in her all the time a dumb tempest of gratitude to him, a dumb passion of desire to prove it, and a miserable self-consciousness of inferiority that manifested itself in a silence through which, at present, at least, he could not win.

That companionship, for the moment, was impossible

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between them, was partially due, no doubt, to the fact that his time during these few weeks was occupied in unravelling Terence's affairs; at least in so far as they concerned his own. There was obscurity, Mr. Carruthers admitted to him, about some of the old title deeds. Derry could not talk to Rosaleen of Terence, and Terence's debts. Margaret's attitude again, and that of Lady Ranmore, could not be discussed, under the circumstances. A want of mutual ease marked their growing silences. Yet Derry was never uncertain that he was glad she was there. And she was always seeing more clearly, understanding more definitely, that from which he was saving her.

Carrie Carthew's letter, coming as it did, ten days before their marriage, was not one upon which he could take counsel, least of all Rosaleen's counsel.

"DEAR LORD RANMORE,

"I have never seen you except that dreadful day at Sandown. Perhaps you know how much your cousin and I were to each other? I wonder whether you could spare an hour one afternoon for a chat with me about it. I am always at home between 4 and 5. It was the Duchess who told me you were in town.

"Yours very truly,

"CARRIE CARTHEW."

Derry really had an uncomfortable instinct about this letter. He had half a mind to speak about it to Carruthers, but Carruthers, as he said to himself, was just the man to whom no one could talk. He could not explain his misgiving that the letter presaged trouble, but there it was. Terence had mentioned Lady Carrie's name. Derry remembered, before that never-to-be-forgotten black

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tragedy of a day, he had been promised a confidence about Lady Carrie Carthew. He had been present with Terence at his club when there had been some chaff about her, which Terence had turned off lightly, yet had taken seriously enough to say to Derry afterwards, “Don’t you take any notice of anything they may tell you about Lady Carrie. She has been a good friend to me, poor little woman. If it hadn’t been for her I should once have been in a devil of a hole.” And he had promised to take Derry to see her. Then Derry had seen her, and received a general impression of Terence’s attentions to her. Whatever it was that had been between them, she had certainly been on his mind at the end.

Derry was in half a dozen minds as to what answer he should make to the letter. He did go so far as to ask Rosaleen, “Did you ever hear any talk of Lady Carrie Carthew—Carrie Carthew, they call her? I am going round to see her this afternoon. In Charles Street, she lives. . . .”

Rosaleen had never heard of her. But she remembered her name afterwards—long afterwards—and the significance of a certain indecision in Derry’s way of asking her then became apparent to her. Now it passed into the general blur of her days. She did not know Derry’s grand friends; she that had been shut away in the convent until she came to be maid to Terence’s mother. Sometimes now, with all her other feelings, there was a rising resentment at her circumstances, the little chance she had had, and the cruelty of her fate. She had hardly yet begun to rise on the stepping-stones of her dead self. It was such a young and featureless self that had been killed, that the protoplasm of her ego had escaped the harrow, escaped through its very insignificance and immaturity. It came to life much later.

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Carrie arranged with characteristic definiteness for her interview with Terence's cousin. That that “great hulking boy,” as she remembered him, had succeeded to the Ranmore title and estates was the prominent factor in the situation. Of Rosaleen she knew nothing, of course, and of the value of the estates still less. It is possible she pictured Derry wealthier than Terence had been, for feminine imagination is apt to stray with inclination.

At four o'clock of a winter afternoon the remnant of daylight could easily be shut out. In the economic distribution of pink-shaded electric wall-lights the narrow drawing-room of Charles Street looked its best. There was no affectation of decoration; whatever else her friends might deny her, there was no doubt Carrie had taste. The plainly painted walls were hung with a few eighteenth-century colour-prints, the Lowestoft and Bow, the Whielden figures and the Staffordshire cottages, were massed on shelves and in corner cupboards. The note of the furniture was Chippendale; the pattern of the chintz was a hundred years old. The table of cut flowers, orchids and roses and light Neapolitan violets, was at the head of the sofa; before it stood the tea-table, with the lamp of the kettle alight; and here, too, were the Sheffield dishes that held the muffins and two or three varieties of cakes and sandwiches.

Derry was not supposed to understand the subtle refinements of Lady Carrie's room, but the impression to be conveyed to him must be attractive, alluring, as indeed Carrie hoped herself to appear to him.

Lady Carrie, who was the eldest daughter of the old Earl of Wickford, by his first Irish wife, with the bluest of blood in her veins, and a pedigree that was a “genuine antique,” stained and worm-eaten, much repaired and



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showing signs of wear, but thoroughly authenticated, was thirty-five years of age, and, without the rose-colour lamp-shades and the rest of it, looked every day of it. She had a great deal of style and some character. The style was good, and the character bad. There was also individuality, with undoubted intelligence. Either or both must have captured Sir Harry Carthew when she led him to the altar in the desperation of her twenty-eighth year. But then, he had been a determined bachelor, who rode hard, cared for nothing but horses, and never understood how it was he had been married, out of hand, as it were, to this sporting little filly. In communicative after-dinner moods, in the early days of their marriage, he was apt to dwell upon her talents. His income was moderate, yet Carrie dressed from Paris—“by God, she did, Sir,”—and they had the best cook in the neighbourhood, and a cellar second to none. The Charles Street house was an incident of her widowhood. But at Melton, from the day of his marriage, Sir Harry's fortune seemed to grow. It had been moderate when she married him. Yet she, as everybody knew, had nothing. He was an honest fool, and his eyes opened very slowly, and not very long before he died. The manner of his dying was the point that was obscure. At least, Carrie conveyed to Derry the idea that it was obscure, when he sat in that pretty little drawing-room of hers this afternoon.

Derry *did* find the drawing-room comfortable, and its mistress companionable. She drew him out, and flattered him dexterously; and it was only when she felt she was on safe ground, that she threw out those mysterious hints about her husband's death, and appealed to his heart. Derry looked extraordinarily large in that little drawing-room. His head, with its square and rugged brow, was well set upon his shoulders; his hands, now they had

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recovered a little from their five years in the workshops, were not ill-shaped. His clothes were not ill-fitting either, for he had gone to Terence's tailor. He would never have the bandbox elegance of that other one, who had sat so often in his place; but Carrie had an appreciative eye for him, and decided that he might prove almost unique in the situation she would devise. Underneath her smartness and the purr of her manner, there was a sensuousness—to give it its mildest name—that set the seal upon her type. It was only a sensuousness of imagination, her temperament was cold.

“It was very good of you to come so soon. I wanted to write before, but it seemed almost intrusive. It was such a shocking, awful thing . . . tea? May I pour you out a cup of tea, whilst the muffins are hot? What a funny place you wrote from, Albany Street? You are not in the Army, are you?” She had some vague idea she had heard of barracks in Albany Street.

“I'm an engineer,” said Lord Ranmore.

“A sapper?” she laughed. She only knew of one sort of engineer. “Never mind. You'll resign now, I suppose, and begin to enjoy life.”

Then she added, in that language of which he understood not one word, and would never learn:

“I hope I shall be able to add something to it for you.”

“I'm sure you're very kind,” said Derry. “It's not enjoyment so much I'm thinking of . . .”

“Then of what are you thinking?”

She leant forward a little to ask him. She was a small woman, fair. In the pink light it was impossible to detect the biliousness of her complexion, and the well-shaped nose had a chance. Lady Carrie's lips were somewhat thick, but her teeth were white and pretty, and there was something attractive about her smile. And she was

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so “nice” to all her men friends and acquaintances, that she had really earned the soubriquet Betty Brinmore had given her years before. Bet called her “the Yellow Peril.”

Derry gave a short laugh :

“Now it’s kind of you to be interesting yourself in me. I’m thinking most of the time of Mr. Carruthers, and what he’s after telling me.”

“Carruthers! That’s the lawyer, isn’t it?” Carrie pricked up her intelligent ears.

“He is the English lawyer to the Ranmore estates.”

“Is he bothering you?”

“That’s just what he’s doing.”

“You must tell me all about it.”

When it is remembered that Derry really had no confidant, no one to whom he could voice his perplexities, and that Carrie was a woman of the world, and had an end to gain in obtaining a footing with him, it is easy to see what befell. She flattered and cajoled him, and he had not been used to flattery or cajolery. She wormed out of him all about the tangle of the estates, and what Mr. Carruthers had said to him.

“It is awful to be short of money,” Carrie said sympathetically. “You know, but for Terence . . .” And then she stopped, and bit her lip, and seemed as if sorry she had spoken, but regarded him under her eyes, and wondered if he would rise to the fly.

“That’s just what I want you to be telling me.” Derry had been wanting to get to it, although really he was so comfortable, warmed and soothed, that he had almost forgotten the object of his visit. “There was something between you and Terence . . .”

She gave a little low laugh at that, and Carrie’s laugh was the most attractive thing about her.

“You are wondering what it was,” she said. And

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anyone less naturally dense on such a subject than Derry would have jumped to the conclusion she meant to convey. But Derry, besides being naturally averse to thinking lightly of any woman, had his own reasons for acquitting Terence of any love-making in this attractive quarter.

“I am wondering that,” he said quite simply. It was a rebuff, Carrie felt, and an unreasonable irritation, or anger, at his denseness precipitated her into hasty speech.

“It doesn’t strike you that he might have been fond of me?”

“He told me that you had been a good friend to him.”

She had to review her forces, and that quickly. She had sent for Derry partly in idleness, but mostly with intention. The *chantage* Terence had paid so willingly she had no lever to exact from his successor; and Derry’s youth and obvious ignorance of the world had suggested another way. But now that she found him so unresponsive—stupid was the word she used to herself—she had to resolve quickly whether she would tell him, or imply to him, that there was a promise of marriage between her and Terence, or whether she would make her appeal to him on some ground nearer the truth. It was Derry who decided the point, by going on in that soft voice of his, with just the touch of the brogue in it:

“I’d have thought it was you and he had been love-making together, and small blame to him, but for the knowing Terence was engaged in another quarter.” This was news to Carrie, but quickly assimilated. “So it must have been some scrape you pulled him through, and that he hinted about to me. Maybe you’d rather not tell me,” he added hastily. “But whatever you did for Terence, I count as if it had been done for me, for that was the way of things between Terence and me. And I’m grateful . . . It’s me that’s here to set anything right.”

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Her plan of campaign seemed to unroll, to straighten itself out.

"It is not so simple a matter as you might think," she said, to gain time, and readjust her ideas. "He was so impulsive," she went on slowly, as if excusing him before she spoke.

"He had the good heart," Derry interposed quickly.

"And quick temper," she answered equally readily.

"Maybe."

"And it was the one and the other that made the link between us."

"You'll tell me?"

The maid coming in to remove the tea-things stopped conversation for the moment. When they were alone, Carrie put both hands before her eyes, and she spoke, a little in the voice of a sleepwalker. She was back in the past, or playing at being back in the past:

"Terence thought himself in love with me, years ago, when he first came to London, just a red-haired, impulsive Irish boy. And I'm his cousin, you know, the nearest relative he had in town. He came to stay with us at Melton. There was nothing Terence couldn't ride. He went out hunting with us. Harry liked him, he had such gay spirits. In the evenings he sang us his Irish songs . . . such strange songs. I remember one of them"— she hummed it:

"Oh! whisky or the Devil, ye are leading me astray,  
Oh! whisky or the Devil, drunk or sober . . ."

And another about:

"A fine old Irish gentleman, one of the rare old sort."

It was about a wake, that one. And there was another of which the refrain went softly:

"An' he sold her to his servant,  
An' he gave him twenty pound."

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Well, the days in the hunting-field, and the evenings at the piano, came to an end . . .”

Derry had heard Terence sing all his songs. Ah! the gaiety of him, and the voice that he'd never hear again! It all came back to him as she spoke.

“Up in London, of course, that season, we did not see so much of him, but he was in and out. Harry got jealous, or suspicious about it. It was one day when I was wearing a new ring—this one.” She took her hands from before her eyes, she held her hand out to Derry. It was a small hand, and its yellowish pallor went pink in the lamplight. He could not but take it in his, since she gave it to him, and the ruby on the third finger was set round with diamonds.

“My husband asked me who gave it me. Terence had given it me; it was a bet we had had—Shotover for the Diamond Jubilee stakes. But Harry lost his temper over it. That night he and Terence met at the Ralyn Club. You know what happened? Harry had a fall. Terence brought him home. At the inquest they said Harry had taken more than was good for him—he did sometimes, you know. He had just got to the top of the stairs when he met Terence. Terence did not know he had anything against him. It was just a word and a push. . . . Terence could never get over it; he was quite broken up when I told him how Harry had gone out enraged against him. Terence thought he had only been chaffing him, but Harry had not gone out in a chaffing mood. I had to tell him so. . . .”

Derry had hold of the small hand; he could not but press it.

“I saved him all that was possible. No one ever knew they were anything but the best of friends. Mossy Leon, the lawyer—you know him, of course?—was the only member of the Club who had been present. I saw him for Terence.

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Harry's foot had slipped; they are marble steps, you know. I dare say you remember the evidence, and the verdict of 'accidental death.' Well, it wasn't true. Harry had gone out to find Terence and have it out with him, Terence himself always said he never knew how it all happened. But Mossy Leon knew." She drew her hand away from Derry's, not abruptly, but it had been long enough in his.

"When Terence knew what he had done, and how alone in the world I was, I must say he was very good to me. Harry had always been extravagant, we had always lived above our income. And Terence was my own cousin . . ."

"You saved his name," Derry said, in a low voice. As she told the story, it passed by Derry that, if any name wanted saving, hers might have been at least as smirched as his.

"I did all I could," she said, modestly, accepting his exclamation. "He would have made up for it afterwards in any way that was possible. But, as you say," Carrie was quick to take her cue—"he had fallen in love again. He helped me out with my little income . . ."

She had got to the point. Now indeed she was watching him, her eyes—they were eyes that saw better in the dark than in the light—were narrow and bright upon him. "He would not let me suffer financially. I would not take anything from him at first. Do you think I was right? But he insisted, since it was his fault that I was so alone and poor . . ."

"He couldn't do anything else," Derry answered impulsively. "He must have been very thankful of the chance, very glad he was able to help you . . ."

"You think that?" she went on quickly. "I was half afraid you would, and that you would want to go on with it, but you have no responsibility . . ."

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Perhaps it had not struck Derry so quickly, but now it was clear as daylight to him that Terence's responsibility was his.

“Of course, his death must not make any difference to you.”

“Oh! no, no. I'm not dreaming or thinking you'll do what he did. But from what I heard of you”—what she had gathered since he had been in the room, she meant—“I knew you would want to do something. It was that I wanted to talk to you about chiefly. You must not allow yourself to be inconvenienced.”

Derry had no reason to doubt the story that had just been outlined to him. Terence had wanted to say something to Lady Carrie, and had sent for her, when the greater anxiety about Rosaleen had seized on him, in what seemed likely to be his last hour. Derry would shoulder this burden, too, of Terence's, if he were able. Money had not counted much with Derry up to now. It is with rich people money bulks so largely, not with those who have never had it. Terence had given Lady Carrie money because he was directly, or indirectly, responsible for her widowhood and poverty. On the accident itself Derry did not dwell, the relation of it was certainly a little obscure. But by this time Carrie had produced the impression for which she had been aiming. Derry thought of her as a “poor little woman.” The further she spoke of her position, the more pathetic it seemed.

Cautiously as Carrie moved, the moment had to come when figures must be mentioned. Terence *had* given her from time to time a great deal of money, whatever he could raise or spare. But not an allowance—certainly nothing in the way of an allowance. He had been sorry for Carrie; she had put the responsibility of Harry Carthew's death on him, and he had accepted it,



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though, for the life of him, he had never been able to remember what had happened. Harry was drunk when he came into the Club, and Harry was apt to grow offensive at the second stage. Terence had been talking to Mossy Leon; Mossy had discounted bills for him, taught him how money was to be obtained—a good fellow, Mossy! At the moment when Harry Carthew lurched upstairs and began some yarn, Terence thought it was the lawyer he was going for. The words he seemed to remember were “damned shark” and “infernal scoundrel,” and he thought it was Mossy to whom he was alluding. Mossy Leon evidently thought so too, for he retreated quickly when Terence interposed. It wasn't fair to go for little Mossy. Terence only meant to see fair play. Harry put up his hands, and Terence was never slow with his. . . . But to the day of his death Terence never remembered touching the man, only seeing him lurch and hold on to the banister, and then leave go. But he remembered the sickening thud of the fall, members running out, and club servants, and that huddled figure at the foot of the stairs, and Mossy dragging him backwards into the card-room.

“Keep out of it,” Mossy said, “let's keep out of it.” He was for saying they had both of them only come out of the room when they heard the noise . . .

But, of course, Terence would not have that, and it was he who had taken Harry home, and in an emotional moment of breakdown, facing Carrie in her new bereavement, he had bound the shackles on his wrists that now were to grip Derry's. Those early days of Lady Carrie's widowhood were full of interviews with Terence. The one or two she had with Mossy Leon were nothing new; she had had many transactions with Mossy. But Harry's death made a difference. Mossy knew the difference, but he was always considerate to his old clients.

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All this was nothing to do with Derry, who was sorry for the poor little woman, when she made him see how she was placed by Terence's death. It would go hard with him but he would be able to help her.

He grew quite friendly with Lady Carrie before that afternoon visit of his drew to a close. He understood that she was very lonely. And there was no reason for him to hurry away from her. Nobody wanted him. Rosaleen's thoughts, of course, were wrapped up in Terence. He told Carrie all he knew about his own affairs, but somehow or other, he did not speak to her of Rosaleen. It was really characteristic of Lady Carrie that Derry could not open his lips to her about the girl whose life he had taken into his keeping. It showed that Derry had instinct even if he lacked reasoning power. But he talked to her about the complications of the Ranmore estate, and of the heavy death-dues.

“I don't know why you should believe everything that Henry Carruthers tells you,” she said at length, thoughtfully, when she had assimilated it. “I should think you ought to have an independent solicitor.” And then, still thoughtful, although perhaps it was not entirely of Derry's troubles she was thinking, she added:

“Would you like me to see Mossy Leon for you, and ask him? I think it is very possible you are being badly advised. Mr. Carruthers may be, probably is, studying Lady Ranmore's interests, and not yours at all. I seem to remember Terence telling me the land is very rich; coal, or tin, or something. It is very probable you are being robbed. Mossy is very sharp, much cleverer than Henry Carruthers.” Henry Carruthers should have heard her! “You had better let me arrange an interview for you with Mossy Leon, and hear what he has to say about it, if he has anything to suggest?”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Derry deprecated the trouble he would be putting her to ; but of course he would like to come in again, for his days were not very full. Carrie was a “ poor little woman,” kind and sympathetic to him. He wanted to do something for her. It was a comfort to have someone to talk to, and, as she herself said, if she was Terence’s cousin, she must be also his.

She stretched herself when he had gone. It had been a long, a difficult, interview. But she flattered herself she had gone through it very well. He was extraordinarily simple. She really thought Carruthers would probably be getting the better of him. There might be something for Mossy in it, as well as for herself. She thought how easily she could wind Derry round her finger, and how he had opened himself to her. She never suspected that on one subject at least he had not opened to her at all. The place Rosaleen had with Derry, had always had with him, was in a little shrine, in the very innermost recess of his heart, shut up there now with tenderness, and not a little pain, but in the dark, not to be talked about. To Carrie he gave all the detail about Ranmore that he had learned from Mr. Carruthers, and about the complications. She was satisfied she had all his confidence !

## CHAPTER VIII

**M**OSSY LEON had an unique position, whether as solicitor, in which profession he had started life, as money-lender, in which he had graduated under the great Sam Levine's fostering care, or as "one of our leading London dramatists," a distinction to which he considered himself entitled as one of the many authors of many musical comedies. Nat Simmons, the famous theatrical entrepreneur, was one of his clients; to which fact, as much as to his connection with Sam Levine, must be attributed his development. For Mossy was nothing if not adaptable. He was very clever. Carrie was quite right, he was much cleverer than Henry Carruthers, although he did not know Archimedes from Aristotle, and had possibly never heard of either of them. He had a contempt for any literature that was not up-to-date, and topical. He had forgotten just enough Latin to make him remember it was in the curriculum of the University College School, which he had left, without attaining any position at all, when he was sixteen. Between that tender age and the time when he passed his "final" and became a fully fledged lawyer, he had kept his sharp black eyes wide open, and learnt a hundred useful things about men and women and money. He had developed ambition, too, which presently ran riot in him, and led him into many devious and intricate ways for obtaining the means to gratify it. But his appetites were so numerous, and so insistent, that the money he earned, considerable although it was, never kept him sufficiently supplied. His appetites

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were ogres, and finally they overpowered and killed him. But this was many years after the date of this story.

At the time Derry Ranmore made Mossy's acquaintance he was living in Grosvenor Square, and practising in Lincoln's Inn. He had a wife in whose veins "ran the best blood in England"—so her mother had assured him when he won her. Afterwards he used to say it persuaded him she was illegitimate; but, at the time, there is no doubt he accepted the Ayscough tradition of high descent without its touching his rich vein of humour.

Ethel Ayscough had been quite beautiful enough to persuade any warm-blooded Oriental, in his twenty-first year, to accept any tradition. They were a very pretentious family, the Ayscoughs; they had no really characteristic feature except this, which differentiated them from all the many varieties of Micawber to which they were affiliated, and gave a *cachet* to the poverty that they wore so aggressively.

When Mossy Leon realised the style he was expected to keep up as the husband of his wife, he was bound to realise also that six-and-eightpences, however quickly they came in, were insufficient for his needs. He became a jackal for Sam Levine, the great Jewish money-lender, who left four millions of money to London charities, every shilling of which had been earned by usury. Mossy envied him; but when he compared Sam's unwieldy, enamelled and painted wife, as she lolled back in her victoria behind the thousand-guinea pair of horses Sam had bought for her, with his own thin and pretentious treasure at home, he grew more reconciled to fate. They were always Mossy's inconsistencies that made him interesting.

Ethel Ayscough fulfilled none of the duties of wifehood, and Mossy had discovered the third row of the musical-comedy chorus before he had been married a year. Yet,

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although he was never faithful to his wife, and they lived on cat-and-dog terms, he was secretly proud of her. She always influenced him unconsciously, and was responsible for his later troubles. As for her, she cared only for externals, draining him of money for unessentials, dress, jewellery, fine houses and entertainments; she was a true daughter of the horse-leech.

When Derry was introduced to Mossy Leon by Lady Carrie Carthew, he and his wife were at their zenith. Sam Levine was dead, and in winding up his estate Mossy had feathered his nest warmly. The house in Grosvenor Square was being “run” on a fine scale. Lady Carrie had been to one or two of Mrs. Mossy’s receptions, and Mossy thought he might entertain royalty one day. Also his taste had progressed from the third row of the chorus to the leading lady, and he had a box for the first night of every play worth seeing—that is, for every play with songs, and dances, and pretty women, and no “damned nonsense” about plot.

He was a lawyer, and not a money-lender, he often said. Yet he had the money-lender’s art at his bediamonded fingers’ ends. Carrie had been very useful to him; he thought her a clever little cat of a woman, and had no illusions about her. But often he would let her get the better of him, he was instinctively and royally generous.

“What! Ranmore’s heir! But Ranmore hadn’t a bob! Oh, yes, I’ll see him, of course. I know Carruthers—a long, thin chap, with a glass in his eye, stuck-up sort of fellow. I don’t like him, but he knows his work. His work is running up costs, same as most lawyers. Me! Oh! I’m different, of course, I *don’t* think! But bring your pal along. I’m not over busy just now.”

Carrie had come to Lincoln’s Inn to see Mossy Leon about Derry’s affairs. It was not the first time by many that she had been here. The luxurious easy chairs and

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sofas, Chippendale bookcases and other luxuries that furnished Mossy's sanctum were all familiar to her. Mossy and she were friends, in a way. Mossy had paid for her friendship, but he bore her no malice for that. There had been a time when, notwithstanding she was Wickford's daughter, and he only Mossy Leon, she had smiled prettily for his benefit, worn her veil down, and, with a soupçon of rouge, a touch of black to her eyelashes, and a general preening of her feathers, prepared for her visits to his office. There had been something not unattractive to Carrie in Mossy's quick wit, and varied knowledge and pursuits, so eclectic were her own tastes. But that time had long passed. Now she sat in her plainest morning tailor-made dress on the corner of the sofa, facing Mossy, who was restless, as always, in his office chair at the big writing-table, and she discussed both Derry and Terence with frankness.

“You want me to see him and find out what his resources really are. I can't take the winding up of the estate out of Carruthers' hands, I'm afraid, but I'll see the new Earl, of course. Why didn't you bring him with you? I don't think I know him by sight, do I? Ginger?”

“No, he is what they call a ‘black Ranmore’; but that only means he hasn't red hair, he is not particularly dark.”

“He is younger than Ranmore, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes; three- or four-and-twenty at most, I should think.”

“Drink?”

“No—oh, no!”

“Well, Ranmore did, you know, not regularly, perhaps, but every now and again. And it would have grown on him—it's in the blood.”

Carrie took out a cigarette and lighted it. She did not mind raising her veil now in Mossy's office, nor sitting

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facing the window. He gave her a brief resumé of the Ranmore peerage. He was full of *chroniques scandaleuses* of the peerage, he always said it was part of his business to work them up.

“But this man must be a distant branch, surely? I suppose he is the heir?”

“Oh, yes; the title is his, and the Castle, without dispute. They have always accepted him as the heir, although I believe only a small part of the estate is entailed. Terence and the Duchess were both devoted to him.”

“I had better see him here. Can’t you fix an appointment?”

“No. He hates lawyers, shies at papers and figures, he isn’t very clever, you know! You’d better come in to tea this afternoon, and we’ll introduce the subject naturally, easily—no formalities. Then you can take him away with you and discuss detail. Let it come about that way. He is very dull here in London, he seems to know no one.”

“I can take him home to dinner, if it comes to that.”

Carrie’s laugh was mischievous as she blew out her smoke-rings.

“‘The Last of the Ayscoughs’ will gladly entertain Lord Ranmore, and she will telephone that unfortunate sister of hers in the morning, ‘My dear, I’m so overwhelmed with people, Lord Ranmore dropped in last night,’ and rub in the distance that lies between Society in Grosvenor Square and the suburbs in Dorking.”

Lady Carrie had made a study of Mossy’s wife. That was in the days of her interest in Mossy. Since then her sketch had grown, and had amused several of Carrie’s friends, who went to Grosvenor Square to verify it. Mossy saw the humorous side of his wife’s character. It was one of his many saving graces that he saw the humorous



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side of everything, even of musical comedy. But Lady Carrie's sarcasm never altered that secret feeling he had for his wife.

That afternoon he met Derry, as arranged, in the Charles Street drawing-room. Derry had found himself there more than once since the last week. Lady Carrie was very kind to him, and instructed his ignorance, making him hold his head a little more erect, be more consciously Lord Ranmore. The alteration was insensible to himself, but it was there nevertheless. Rosaleen, sharing those rooms in Albany Street with him, waiting for her wedding-day, knew it.

Carrie introduced the two men. There were no social barriers to break down, as there might have been with a man differently bred. Mossy was full of talk—metropolitan, all of it. But then, the metropolis was new to Derry, and had its allurements. Lady Carrie liked to know everything, money-gossip, the debts and difficulties of her men-friends, theatrical news, and every possible or probable society *esclandre*. Mossy had a whisky-and-soda instead of tea, and drew a wrong augury from Derry's readiness to fall in with Carrie's invitation to join him.

“My dear fellow,” he said—Mossy quickly arrived at the “my dear fellow” stage, with any new acquaintance—“there is no place in the world like London; you take it from me. What have you seen?” He ran through the musical comedy list. “I'll take you round to the ‘Corinthian’ to-night, if you like, they keep two stalls for me always; I never get tired of hearing the Etna girl do that song and dance. It seems to me silly to go from one place to another when you know where you can find exactly what you like. For my part, I've seen ‘The Foolish Virgins’ twenty-seven times, and I hope to see it twenty-seven times more. You can't get tired of a thing like that.”

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Derry could not honestly say his evenings were engaged. Rosaleen kept to her own room save for meal-times. She had learnt to sew in the convent, and was putting her talent to good use, stitching no happiness in with the fabric. But before Derry she could not even ply her needle easily. Derry assented to the evening at the “Corinthian,” but he would not dine with Mossy and his wife. He said he must go home to dress; he would join them at the theatre.

It was when he had gone away with Mossy, and Mossy had offered to drive him anywhere, the motor having nothing to do, and he, Mossy, not being busy, that Derry’s curious address was disclosed.

“But why, my dear fellow, why on earth Albany Street?”

“Carruthers’ clerk recommended the rooms to me; they’re good rooms enough.”

“But I cannot make out what Carruthers is doing with you. She told me you were short of money, but it can’t be as bad as Albany Street. Can I be of any use to you? Any friend of Lady Carrie’s, you know . . . I was fond of your cousin Terence. My wife liked him at the house, he was good company, sang a good song. But what’s this about the money? There’s nine thousand acres of Ranmore, isn’t there? You might have to let the Castle. . . .”

All the while Mossy was talking, they were driving through Bond Street, Maddox Street, Regent Street, now by Park Crescent.

“Why don’t you change your mind and come home with me? We’ll fetch your things. I suppose your man could pack them?”

Since Mossy had been in funds, had had his valet, and his motor, and other luxuries, he had forgotten what the “simple life” was like. It really did not strike him that Lord Ranmore had no personal attendant.

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“And then we could talk over your affairs before dinner. It's not six yet.”

Derry insisted he must dine at home. And, as Mossy put it, he began to smell a rat. But he went on talking. If Lord Ranmore was short of money, it could only be something temporary. Mossy had no doubt he could get him a loan, he knew all the right people.

“You can't go on living in Albany Street,” he persisted. “The thing is impossible. Stay at the ‘Savoy’ or the ‘Ritz,’ if you don't want to take a flat. You're a mile from the theatres here.”

Derry had no greater desire, as yet, to take Mossy into his confidence about Rosaleen than he had had to speak of her to Carrie. But Mossy was much more inquisitive and difficult to baffle. Derry had to admit, not without some embarrassment, that he could not leave Albany Street for a few more days. For now he was really within a week of the fulfilment of the law's requirements.

“You needn't tell me if you don't like.” Mossy was good-nature itself. “A case of landlady's daughter? I say, don't you get yourself in a mess. You're new to London, you know.”

Derry seemed very young to Mossy, but he was not as ready to condemn him as “stupid” as Carrie had been. Mossy saw that he was reticent, and guessed there was something he was keeping back, while Carrie's vanity had made her imagine she had gauged the whole of Derry's mind and found nothing in it deeper than the perplexities Carruthers was creating.

The motor stopped at the number that had been given to the chauffeur. Mossy's curiosity had no gratification beyond the normal lodging-house exterior of that somewhat dreary thoroughfare. There was not even a face at the window, nor the swish of a petticoat in the narrow

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passage that was all the quickly opened street door presented to his sight. Derry did not invite him in. Mossy thought, in fact, that Derry was anxious to be rid of him. He thanked him for the drive, and promised to be in his place at the theatre before nine, when the first “Etna” number was due. Mossy did not say anything about supper after the play. He was a little unsure of his footing with this strange young man. He found himself pondering about him as he drove away. Mossy thought Derry was no fool, if he was chary of talk. The very suggestion of a woman in the background piqued Mossy’s interest. He was at the very opposite end of the pole from Mr. Carruthers, and his way of conducting his business. Mossy’s clients were all individuals, men and women to him; he was the most human of scoundrels, if, indeed, he were a scoundrel at all, and not, as one would prefer to consider him, merely an altruist without boundaries. Absolutely all the way back to Grosvenor Square he was wondering what sort of woman Derry was keeping in Albany Street, trying to conjure up his type, deciding to note where his admiration fell that night, thinking he would get to know. Among Mossy’s appetites was the appetite for the unknown, and already his interest in Derry’s affairs was keen.

## CHAPTER IX

ON the 12th November, at the Parish Church of Marylebone, Derrick, Lord Ranmore, was united in holy wedlock to Rosaleen O'Daly. It was quite understood between them that the ceremony was not to alter their relations. What it meant to Rosaleen was a sense of deliverance so great, so overwhelming, that the passion of gratitude in her was like a flood-tide now, overflowing all the banks. She could not speak to him, nor raise her eyes to his ; but she could think of nothing else, and how she could ever repay him.

Derry thought her heart was all the time with Terence. He was full of pity for her that she had to accept him as substitute. He would not obtrude on her grief, nor intrude into her confidence. Overwhelmed with pity and sympathy for her, he was so anxious to make it clear that, although it was he, and not Terence, who was standing by her at the altar, it was only as a substitute he was there, that he hardly looked at her, or spoke. She must not think he would take any advantage, it was Terence's widow she was to him, and he would not intrude on her trouble. He went through the ceremony, and said the responses, and held himself so well in hand that she never guessed his passion of pity was as strong as her passion of gratitude.

He had put the ring on her finger, and she was Lady Ranmore right enough ; now the more he kept out of her way the better. That was what he thought. There was still her trouble to come, and of that he dared not let himself think.

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Rosaleen could not guess what made him dumb and tongue-tied in her presence, and kept him so many hours out of the house. Everything was difficult for them. She thought that it was only out of pity he had married her, and to save Terence's name with his mother and sister; and she was as shy of intruding her company upon him as he of looking upon her in her trouble. And because of that marriage ceremony, and what it covered, she was one flush of shame now before her newly made husband, the shame Terence had put upon her. In the mantle of it, that was like a flame about her always, everything was burnt out but her gratitude.

“She'll be thinking of Terence,” was really Derry's mental attitude. His sensitiveness burnt like her shame. It was fire kept them apart.

Meanwhile Mossy was trying conclusions with Mr. Caruthers.

“Mind you,” he said to Carrie, “I'm doing what I can for Derry Ranmore, but I don't believe you've sized the fellow up at all. In the first place, I'll bet a monkey he's got some woman in those diggings of his in Albany Street. He is as close as wax about it, but I'm pretty nearly sure.”

“That would certainly be a complication.” Lady Carrie blew her cigarette smoke softly into the air. “But you may be wrong, Mossy, you are often wrong, you know!”

“I'm never wrong in this sort of thing. So, if you want me to get money for him, in order that you can get it out of him”—Mossy was not a gentleman, and that was the coarse way he worded it—“it is possible you're reckoning your chickens before they are hatched, that the hatching will be done by another little hen.”

Carrie only smiled.

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“Are you going to get him any money, that is the immediate question? Don't you worry about me, Mossy, I can look after myself.”

For only that very afternoon Derry had been with her, and he had walked about her room in his big, clumsy way, lamenting his position—not on his own account, but because he must seem so *mean* in her eyes.

“I'm getting desperate about it,” he said. “I must get hold of some money somehow. If my aunt and Mr. Carruthers don't let me know soon how they are going to arrange matters, and what is coming to me, besides the title that is no good to me at all, and the Castle, of which I would not dispossess her for a million, I shall go back to my job. There was a post I could have had in Siam, up at Bangkok; it's still to be had for the asking. I've more than half a mind to clear out, and leave them to settle it any way they like. It's only you I'm thinking of, you and . . .” Carrie had to admit to Mossy Leon that he paused there, as if she were not all his responsibilities. There might be something, after all, in what Mossy suggested.

“Can't you get him any money?” she persisted, nevertheless.

“It is rather a curious state of affairs, one that could only happen in Ireland. There is no will, and Terence's mother and sister are nominally Terence's heirs. But we can't get hold of the title deeds, one of which has apparently been lost or mislaid, and Carruthers persists there is no entail, although for hundreds of years the lands have gone with the title. There are about nine thousand acres, any amount of copper, and probably coal. The Duchess has renounced all claim. But the old woman is playing grab; she seems to have a regular spite against our man . . .” That was Mossy's disrespectful way of speaking

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of Terence's mother, now the Dowager Lady Ranmore, who had spent twenty years in nursing Ranmore. “Our friend Derry might even find himself a rich man one day,” Mossy went on; “although the rental is comparatively nothing, and what there is they don't get since O'Daly was shot.” Mossy had been getting up his subject, and had it all at his fingers' ends. “I can get him a certain amount of money, on his prospects, a thousand or so, anyhow. But I could deal ever so much better with Carruthers if Ranmore was out of the way. He is so damned close in some things, and so damned outspoken in others, and he has any number of damned fool scruples. That's not a bad idea of his, clearing out. Do you think you could keep him up to it?”

Carrie raised her eyebrows.

“He can't go without money; when could you get him that thousand?” she asked.

“In twenty-four hours. He'll have to sign a bill, and insure his life, but that's all right. Is he in earnest about going to Siam?”

“I think he is simply beating his head against the bars. He has not an idea of what to do with himself.”

“He doesn't look happy, that's a fact. Ethel thinks he is in love with his cousin; he has spoken of her once or twice.”

“For Heaven's sake, don't quote Ethel to me. It is the sort of thing she would think. Ethel could not understand anyone *not* being in love with a duchess! So you've entertained him in Grosvenor Square?”

“Oh, yes, he has dined with us. I like the fellow, that's the fact. I wish he had a little more brains, or a little less. I could put the screw on old Lady Ranmore if I were left alone. I have an idea that there is some sort of a row on between them—nothing to do with the estate. But do



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you think the ass will let me know what it is? Not he! And he won't let me go over to Ireland and see her, or search the Castle for the missing papers, and he won't have favours asked of her; and he won't do this, and he won't have that, until I've half a mind to throw the whole thing over.”

“Not you!” She laughed at the idea of Mossy relinquishing the case because he could not get all his own way. Then she leant forward, and the little yellow fingers that held the cigarette rested impressively on the table.

“You get him the money. He'll sign anything you put before him. And I'll see that he takes that post in Siam. We'll get Derry out of the way, and you and Henry Caruthers can have all the law you want. You had better make it fifteen hundred, Mossy,” she went on, reflectively; “I'm sure it is all the same to you. You mean to make him pay for it.”

“I tell you I like the fellow.”

“I know. But you won't like him too well to make yourself safe.”

Wherein Lady Carrie showed that she did not understand Mossy Leon. He never made himself safe; he never was safe, as the end proved. He borrowed the money he lent, for one thing, and, to make over-reaching profits, he took big risks. And he saw too far—into the day after to-morrow, in fact—whereas to-morrow always came first, with his own expenses that had to be met. This is perhaps foreign to the immediate subject in hand, which was Derry's fifteen hundred pounds. But Mossy Leon was full of inconsistencies, and Carrie Carthew never had the insight, or the sympathy that was necessary to penetrate them.

It was ever difficult, for instance, for Mossy to take a purely business interest in a man who broke bread with him. Derry dined two or three times in Grosvenor

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Square, and Ethel garnished her conversation with “Lord Ranmore” and his cousin “The Duchess of Towcester.” The nearest Ethel ever got to a personal acquaintance with a Duchess was hearing Margaret talked of by Derry, but she made the most of that. Derry had a way with him, not quite the same gay way as Terence, but on the same lines. He soon made himself at home with people; he had too great a simplicity of mind, and too little self-consciousness to be ill at ease. Always excepting with Rosaleen, of course, where his very simplicity and ignorance of a woman’s heart stood in his way.

Ethel and her husband were at loggerheads on nearly every subject, the irritation of her “superior” airs being never ending, but they were agreed about Lord Ranmore. He was a pleasant fellow, a good listener to Mossy’s stories, and either he, or his title, was an ornament to their dinner-table.

Mossy was not going to rob Derry. He would borrow £1500 for him, and he could sign a bill for £3000. But Mossy himself paid £2000. As a financier he had extraordinary talent, but it was of the bubble-blowing type; beautiful, alluring colour was the essence of it, but it was not solid.

What Mossy found unusual—but then, everything about Derry was unusual—was that he said he did not think he wanted fifteen hundred pounds, he thought a thousand would be all he would need, if Mossy would be able to get him another thousand next year. For now Derry had made up his mind to go to Siam, and he had seen the representative here of the Government Department. He had been told that he could live there well enough on his salary. The engagement was for two years, and he had definitely accepted it.

“I’ll not be keeping a secret from you,” he explained to

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Mossy in the end. “It’s not for myself I’m wanting it” —then he flushed a little, for the word was new and unaccustomed on his lips—“it’s for me wife.”

“What?” said Mossy. “What?”

Well, now that the ceremony had actually taken place, it need no longer be kept a secret. The sooner everyone knew, those at the Castle, and everybody, the better. Yet Derry had to force himself to speak of it, and Mossy saw that his colour was heightened.

“I am wanting it for Lady Ranmore, and . . .” He was not quite sure that he ought to tell Mossy half of it was for Lady Carrie Carthew. Derry was under the impression—an impression conveyed to him by Carrie, probably with a purpose—that Mossy Leon knew Terence had helped her with money. But Carrie had also conveyed the impression that what she had confided to Derry about her husband’s death, and the suppressed evidence at the inquest, was not to be talked of with the lawyer, who had arranged it.

Derry had been prompted very cleverly, and now his affairs seemed to straighten themselves out. He found Mossy much easier to do business with than Mr. Carruthers. If Mossy could let him have a thousand pounds this year, and a thousand pounds next, and take off his shoulders all the trouble of those accounts and papers about which Carruthers was for ever bothering him, he would divide the money between Carrie and Rosaleen, and go out to Siam with an easy mind, as he had been on the point of doing when Terence’s death landed him in this coil.

Mossy could not get over the fact that Derry had a wife. He wanted to talk about nothing else, and to hear who she was, and all about her.

“Ethel *will* be surprised,” he said.

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Derry admitted, not without a sense of guilt, that perhaps he ought to have mentioned it before. But having mentioned it, he was filled with confusion, and the difficulty of explaining why he had hitherto kept it a secret. In the end, because Mossy was curious and persistent, and used to worming people's secrets from them, he admitted it had been a runaway match. Mossy soon got to know of Derry's difficulties about the English marriage laws, and the question of domicile, and the three weeks' delay. Mossy had no difficulty, after that, in realising that he had been right in his surmise. She, whoever she was, had been in Albany Street all the time. Quite easily, too, he realized that this marriage was the point of the difficulty between Derry and his family.

Lady Ranmore, who was still at the Castle, and the Duchess, would have nothing to do with Derry and his wife. Margaret had never said she would have no more to do with him, by the way. It was Derry who put that interpretation on her silence since he had refused her invitations to Dunstons.

Carrie made no difficulty about accepting five hundred pounds from Derry. That she would have the same next year, and, after that, according to Derry's means, was quite pleasant hearing. If those means were large, it would not be any fault of hers if her share were not proportionate.

But it was very different with Rosaleen, when Derry mooted his plan to her. He was not very clear in his mind as to what Rosaleen would do with herself in his absence. The possibility of asking kindness for her, from either of the two women with whom he was just now thrown into such constant contact had, of course, crossed his mind. But they were neither of them women in the real sense of the word. How he knew, it is difficult to arrive at, for he found Carrie companionable, and Mrs. Leon kind; but

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he *did* know, instinctively, and could picture neither of them in juxtaposition with Rosaleen. Strangely enough, too, although it would not seem strange to those who knew Mossy, it was Mossy that Derry thought might be a friend to Rosaleen in his absence. There was so much humanity about the Jew. He talked freely about women, too freely for Derry's liking, but he never spoke unkindly of them. Derry was in several minds about asking Mossy to keep an eye to Rosaleen in his absence. What he failed to reckon for was Rosaleen's attitude in the matter.

"Rosaleen, I want to talk to you. Can you spare me a moment?" he said desperately, one morning, when his application had been made, and accepted, for that berth in Siam, and nothing remained but to take his passage and fix his date.

"Will it suit you now, or, if you are busy . . .?" He dreaded intruding upon her, or seeming to intrude; she had withdrawn herself more definitely from him since their pretence of a marriage, it was as if she shrank from meeting his eyes, or speaking to him at all, since he could call himself her husband.

For answer she sat down again. It was after breakfast, and she had no where to go. They had only the one sitting-room, and generally she left him there with his cigar and his newspapers. It was a travesty of domesticity through which they were passing.

"Is it talkin' to me . . .?"

"And it's talking to you I'd often have been if I thought you wanted to hear me."

She raised her eyes to his, those mournful, long-lashed, great grey eyes of hers, and her lips trembled.

"You'll be sayin'?" was all she could get out.

"Won't you sit here in the easy chair?" He drew it

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forward for her. “ You’re sitting up there so stiff and uncomfortable.”

He had got used by now to ladies who lounged.

Rosaleen did not move. He thought she looked at him with fear, or . . . dislike, as if she did not want to be friends with him. But it was not so; it was that her heart was beating so tumultuously that it choked the outlet of her words.

“ I’m thinking what you would like to do with yourself when I am gone. I want to talk it over with you. It is but dull you are here . . . ”

Dull! Was dullness the word for the desolation of her days, the grey street of mean houses, the pavement, and the hours and hours by herself? But he had slept under the same roof with her, she had the consciousness of that, and of his generosity in carrying out his scheme for saving her. And he had not left her quite alone in the world. What was it he was saying . . . ?

“ I am going abroad soon. Next week, or the week after. I want to see where I shall leave you, and about it all.”

Only the two words remained, beating on her head and in her ears.

“ Going abroad! You are leaving me here! ”

Desolation then was before her; she would be alone in this great London, no step for which to listen, no voice to hear. Her lips trembled, those sweet, thin lips. In a moment the old tenderness wrung his heart, and he went on hurriedly, so that she should not see his lips were tremulous too.

“ There’s much to be settled about the estates, and I’m in the way while it’s being got through, it seems. And I can’t hang about here, doing nothing; *and it’s miserable you are with me,*” broke from him.

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“And it’s less miserable you think I’d be when you’ve gone,” came through the sob in her throat. He went over to her, not knowing what moved him so. But she looked so forlorn. . . .

“Rosaleen, shall I stay?”

She pushed her chair back, moved from near him.

“I’ve been feeling this week past you’d be glad if I was not here. You rush away as soon as you finish your meals. I’m not blaming you, not a minute”; his voice rose. “You’ll not think that? I know you can’t help thinking who it is should be in my place. But since it’s like that with you, and small wonder, I thought you’d rather I went away? It will be better perhaps, when I come back. I’d like to have told you about it, Rosaleen, we were friends once, about the country I’m goin’ to, and the strangeness of it, but you haven’t wanted to talk to me.”

“I thought—I thought—” but her voice was locked, and he could not hear what she said. Again he went nearer to her, and this time she did not move away.

“*I thought you were shamed with me,*” she said. Her head was averted, and her eyes were lowered, but he could see the colour as it rose rare and exquisite in her white skin, and painfully to the roots of her hair. As for her voice, it was but a whisper.

“Shamed with you!” His voice was almost as low as hers, and his flush was little less deep. “If you only knew!” A flood of reminiscences swept over him. . . . “The friends that we were, although I think you were always shy with me. Do you mind the gorse, and the day we caught the hare?” She minded it right enough. “And the face of you when it leapt?”

“Micky said it must have been the charm . . . to catch a hare in your arms.”

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“And then I let it go, when you begged me . . .”

Suddenly the aptness of it struck him. A hare she was too; hunted, without a shelter. “It ran this way and that, not knowing where to bide.”

“Like me!” there was a sob in her voice.

“Oh, Rosaleen! But you’re crying . . . it’s not because I’m leaving you, because I’m going away! Rosaleen . . .” For an answer she made a rush for the door, he must not see her falling tears. But he stopped her, putting out his arms, barring her way. A great idea shook in his voice.

“You wouldn’t go with me?”

His arm stayed her going, and the excitement in his voice communicated itself to her.

“You wouldn’t be taking me?”

“Wouldn’t I? But the distance of it, and you’d be frightened to go with me! It’s exiles we’d be.”

“It’s an exile I am,” she said, that moving sob in her throat.

The consciousness that he wanted desperately that she should go with him had flashed into his mind like lightning. How was it that he had not known it all along? Why should he leave her behind? She would grow less shy with him soon, and in a strange country it would go hard with him but he’d get that sadness out of her eyes. It was to him she had to look, and him only. What was it possessed him to think he would leave her behind?

“I’m afraid you will have to rough it.” He felt bound to put the worst of it before her as the anxiety he had for her company grew. “There’s a bungalow for me in Bangkok, but most of my work will be in the back of beyond, up country. There’ll be only black servants, and the great heat, and mosquitoes.” He was going on breathlessly; she must hear the worst of it. “I’m not sure about the



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food. Sit down and I'll tell you . . . I'd love you to come with me; the difference it would make!”

She sat down to hear about the hardships. If there were no servants, she would serve him. This was really the dawn of Hope; to go with him to a new country. It was leaving her trouble behind her. No, it was not that, but she would not think beyond going away from here, and with him. And that perhaps she could wait on him, serve him.

“It's two berths I'll be taking then,” he went on, triumphantly, tentatively, watching her face. While he had been telling her of all the hardships she must expect, he noted that she never blenched; but that her lips were nearer to a smile than he had seen them these many weeks.

“It's not hardships I'm fearing, if you want me to go with you.”

“Rosaleen!”—he was emboldened now. “We must be friends again.” He took her hand. “We'll go out together to the new country, and I'll take care of you all I know. You've been shy with me these days, now we'll be friends.”

She sat mute, her hand in his, her eyes downcast.

“It's friends only I mean. You'll not be afraid with me? I'll not forget.” He drew in his breath, he must say it. And then out he blurted it, he was so happy, he did not know why, but he wanted her to share his feelings, not to be afraid of him, “I'll not forget . . . it's . . . it's Terence's widow you'll be to me. But we'll talk together, and be friends, I should have been horribly lonely out there, and thinking of you all the time. . . . You will be friends with me, won't you?”

The eyes that were raised to him now were not mournful. The dark grey depths of them were alight.

“Ah! and I'll be that,” she answered, fervently.

## CHAPTER X

THE new era their talk inaugurated had a thousand charms. Rosaleen forgot to be unhappy when Derry was talking eagerly of plans and outfit. It was strange to her at first, and difficult, to be taking money from him for so many clothes that he said she must have. It seemed a dreadful amount of money he was spending, quite soon she was anxious about his improvidence and trying to keep him from buying this and that. Mossy Leon and Lady Carrie Carthew saw little of Derry during the last days of his stay in London. These were spent in shopping. And now, at breakfast and lunch and dinner, there was much to talk about, and she no longer left him the room to himself, but sat on listening whilst Derry talked of their new life, and sometimes even he caught glimpses of the old Rosaleen, with a glint in her eyes and the dimple about the corners of her mouth—sometimes, not often.

Derry had obtained a list of what was wanted for the East. He bought clothes and flannels. Nothing would serve him but that Rosaleen should have muslins, and cotton dresses, and thin underwear. Sometimes there were embarrassing moments, but he was extraordinarily tender and considerate of her feelings, and sensitive to her moods. He was full of his intention that there should be friendship between them. He was very happy. Was he not fulfilling all his promises? Carrie had her money, poor little woman; and now he knew he would never let Rosaleen out of his care. He could not talk to Rosaleen about Lady Carrie. The mere hint that there

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had been love-making between her and Terence made it impossible. But he could tell her about Mossy, and how the lawyers would straighten out affairs between themselves when he was in Siam.

“Aren't you going to introduce me to your wife before you go?” Mossy asked him. “Why don't you bring her to have a bit of dinner with us? We never see anything of you now.”

Carrie, of course, adopted a different attitude. She took it for granted that Derry's wife was not presentable. She did not ask him to bring Rosaleen to see her, although the announcement of the wedding had been in the *Times* and *Morning Post*, and she had no valid reason for her course of action. But it was characteristic of Carrie; she hated to be bored, and she thought the sort of wife Derry would have chosen and married in this way would be certain to bore her; she had his money, and her hold on his sympathy.

Derry was doubtful about taking Rosaleen to dine with Mossy. He was not, however, nearly as doubtful or reluctant as Rosaleen was when the idea was mooted to her. But for Mossy's persistence, and the lack of reasonable excuse for refusal, it would never have come about, although Mrs. Leon called in her fine carriage, and left a note of invitation.

Mrs. Jobson was Ethel's criterion of fashion. Mrs. Jobson, who lisped, and whose friendship with an Irish baronet was her claim to be considered in society, had said that “it was hardly proper Mrs. Leon should continue to receive Lord Wanmore without his wife.” Mrs. Jobson had a curiosity to see the new Lady Ranmore; she had seen the dowager. She implied to Ethel that it had been at Dublin Castle; but, in truth, it was when she had been in service as cook-housekeeper, during one of the intervals

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when Jobson, who was an ex-solicitor's clerk, had seen no way of making a living, and been content that his wife should do it for him. In Dublin, Mrs. Jobson, then not without a fair and comfortable prettiness, had met the baronet, and returned triumphantly to London, setting up an establishment in which he figured as a paying guest. Since then Mrs. Jobson and Sir Patrick Setwell had become quite features in Kensington. Ethel was more intimate with this woman than with her mother, or any of her own sisters, she really was under her influence. Mrs. Jobson, who was even more pretentious than Ethel, thought it was essential Lord Ranmore should bring his wife to Grosvenor Square. She quoted Sir Patrick on the subject, she thought that to quote a baronet's opinion gave weight to her own!

It was absolutely essential, according to Mrs. Jobson, that Lord and Lady Ranmore should dine with the Leons, and the fact be duly chronicled in the *Morning Post*.

Mrs. Jobson advised Ethel to write that they would be alone, or practically alone. “*Sans cérémonie*” was what Ethel wrote. Mrs. Jobson's knowledge of French was a minus quantity. Derry translated the words to Rosaleen; and explained them.

“It means you are not to bother about dressing, or anything. They are nice people, and hospitable. I'd like you to come there with me.”

“But they are grand folk, and I shan't know what to say to them. Leave me behind you, Derry; you go, it's you they want.”

“You'll have to get used to going out with me. It's Lord and Lady Ranmore we are.” Derry saw that it was as Lord and Lady Ranmore they were going away together. It had grown quite clear with him now that they must appear before the world as husband and wife. He had a

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great contentment over this; everything was easier, too, now he and Rosaleen could talk. He built light conversational bridges to bear him over the gaps that came between them.

“They’re not grand folk at all; at least, Mossy isn’t.” He was not quite so sure about Ethel, her pretentiousness had somewhat impressed him. “He is just a kind-hearted, genial fellow, and they’ll be proud to welcome you.”

There were discussions about what Rosaleen would wear. Derry said it didn’t matter at all; for the *sans cérémonie* had been accepted by him as genuine.

“Sure and it doesn’t matter what you’ll wear; you’ll look the beauty you are in whatever it is,” he said. It was not often he allowed himself to pay her compliments. She blushed at this one.

“It’s yourself that will be the only one to think it,” she answered.

She put on one of the muslin dresses Derry had bought for her, and plaited her hair neatly. She wanted to be creditable to him.

Her heart beat very unevenly on the way to Grosvenor Square. It oppressed her to be called Lady Ranmore, and she thought a great deal about that. But she owed everything to Derry, and she hoped his friends would not look down upon her. This was Rosaleen’s first definite realisation that she must try to be equal to the position she had been given. Derry’s simplicity saw no difference between them. He had been a poor relation, she a poor dependent, of the great house. But Rosaleen knew that Derry was “one of the family,” and she the daughter of their farm bailiff. Her humility was alive with pride. She was full of fear, but would not show she was afraid. Had this, her first entry into Society, been of a more auspicious nature, had her sensitiveness not been cruelly attacked and

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wounded on this first brave essay, she would have shown her quality more quickly. But it is not an Ethel Leon who can play hostess to a new-comer in a strange world, and make her at home in it.

The muslin frock that was donned for that dinner was short in the skirt, and high in the neck. Rosaleen had made it herself, and she thought it a grand affair. Round her waist there was a black ribbon. Rosaleen was taller than most women, although she came little higher than Derry's collar. She was pale, the intense blackness of her hair giving a fine transparency to her pallor. Her grey eyes, set rather deeply, were shaded by lashes incredibly long; the delicate pencilling of her brows had a trick of restlessness, moving when she spoke or laughed. Her face was very thin, and her lips softly pink, with tremulous curves. To-night she had divided the great thickness of her hair into plaits, and round and round her small head she had wound them. It was not until they arrived at the big house in the Square that she had any misgiving as to her appearance. What she should say, and do, had been her fear, not how she would look. She had little or no personal vanity.

There was an awning before Mossy Leon's door, and three powdered footmen were in the hall. Rosaleen was already startled and would have clung to Derry's arm. She did not understand she was to follow the maid to take off her cloak. "I'll leave it with ye," she said. But Derry coaxed her to go.

She had been in grand rooms at Castle Ranmore, but she had seen nothing like Mrs. Leon's bedroom. At Ranmore the dark wainscoted rooms were lit by candles. Here there was a blaze of electric light, and *Rose du Barri* hangings, gold bottles and gold-backed brushes on the dressing-table, and, above all,—worse than all

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—a dozen fine cloaks on the bed, all chiffon, and fur, and grandeur. And it was alone Derry had said they would be dining with the Leons! There was enough of the woman in Rosaleen to see the difference between the black cape she had on and those fine cloaks. She would not look at herself in the glass. All her courage was needed to get her to where Derry waited for her in the hall.

“It’s a big dinner-party they are giving,” she whispered to him.

“I know; but it will be all right, you’ll enjoy yourself.”

“I’ll do everything wrong.” There was despair in her voice.

“Not you!”

The big doors of the drawing-room were thrown open, and they heard their names called out.

“Lord and Lady Ranmore.”

Ethel stood near the door to receive her guests. Ethel mistook emaciation for elegance, and prided herself on her eighteen-inch waist. She had a new dress to-night, an elaborate confection of velvet and old lace. She wore all her jewels—the diamond coronet, the two rows of matched pearls, and many diamond brooches. Her dress was cut so low that, even in her trepidation and alarm, Rosaleen could be confused for her, and ashamed to look at such nakedness. It really is difficult to tell who was the more shocked, Ethel at Rosaleen’s appearance, or she at Ethel’s.

What a figure to present to her guests! was Ethel’s comment. “Shure, an’ it’s naked she is entirely,” was Rosaleen’s, as she looked away.

Ethel was dreadfully mortified at having to present such a figure to her guests. She did not know what Mrs. Jobson would say.

Even Derry saw that something was wrong. There was

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no mistaking the curiosity and surprise on the faces of the other guests, or Ethel's strangulated reception of the introduction. In her white high frock, short in the skirt, and her braided hair, Rosaleen was different from all the other guests in their low dresses and diamonds. The vexation on his face lest she should feel the difference, Rosaleen thought was dissatisfaction with her. And now there was a cold piece in her heart; it was shame she would bring upon him.

When Mossy offered her his arm to take her in to dinner, she did not know what it was he was meaning, sticking his elbow out like that. She did not know what to do with it. They were watching her, she felt they were all watching her.

Had Mossy's acquaintances, or Ethel's friends, been drawn from the class that the Duchess, for instance, would have gathered about her board, neither the ill-bred surprise, nor the ill-bred curiosity would have been manifested. But these were not well-bred people, and the Irish country girl, so strange to her position, felt the rudeness of their staring without knowing how to resent it.

There were sixteen people settling into their places round that over-decorated dinner-table. When Rosaleen entered the room, not having taken Mossy's arm, but by his side, and preceding the others, it seemed to her that the business of taking their seats was subordinate to their business of concentrating curious eyes upon her. They were cold eyes, and curious. Mossy noticed nothing unusual about Rosaleen, except perhaps the quality of her beauty. He was an emotional person, and it struck him almost from the first. "My God! I never saw such eyes in my life, and what a skin!" represented Mossy's impression of Derry's wife. He neither noticed her clothes; nor the reception the women gave her, or he might have found a



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way to make her feel at home. He was really the soul of hospitality, and good-nature personified. But he was knocked over by her great, mournful eyes, white skin and pink, pathetic lips, he did not even want to talk to her just yet.

On his other side was Mrs. Jobson, and Mrs. Jobson being his pet aversion, he thought it necessary to be extra civil to her. The woman, whatever she had been in her youth, when she had netted her poor boor of a Baronet, was now, in her aggressive and scandal-loving middle age, unwieldy in bulk, and essentially common-looking. That she wore a blue feather in her hair, and affected coquettishness, only brought this out more clearly. Mossy always said one could see the landlady in her. When she meant to be ingratiating, he found her only obsequious. It was extraordinary that she had impressed Ethel as a desirable acquaintance.

"The idea," Mrs. Jobson said to Mossy, as soon as they were seated, "of his bringing a creature like that here with him! Where could he have met her? Not at the Castle, I'm sure." And she laughed. Her laugh was common, too, and affected. Mossy did not realize for the moment about whom she was talking. Mrs. Jobson always talked ill-naturedly, it was what she understood by conversation. She went on to suggest there must be some scandal about the new Lady Ranmore, and to guess its nature. But to Mossy already Rosaleen was a rare creature. And presently, when he had seen that everything was all right, and the dinner beginning to go, he would concentrate on her. But he looked around his table with inward dissatisfaction. He hated the type of people in whose society Ethel found pleasure. His instincts were so much finer than hers.

On the other side of Rosaleen was Sir Patrick Setwell.

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Mossy could not stand Sir Patrick either. The Irish baronet had an ill-balanced head, narrow forehead and coarse jaw, he had high Calmuckian cheekbones, with an unhealthy flush upon them, the hands of a navvy, and the manners of a boor. His stupidity was so dense, that, in contrast with it, Mrs. Jobson's lisped ill-nature appeared bright. The long-standing acquaintance between them had influenced what little of character he had. She had estranged him from his mother, and his barren acres, and now that he was her creature, he cut but a poor figure in the surroundings she had chosen for him. A half-witted chuckle of laughter when she spoke to him across the table, was almost his only contribution to the hilarity of the occasion. Sir Patrick had taken Lady Pentacle in to dinner. Mrs. Jobson was very strict about etiquette, and kept Ethel up to the mark. Lady Pentacle's first husband had been a City grocer. The distinguished K.C.B. whose name she bore, had married her in his dotage. Lady Pentacle was old too, now, although she wore a youthful black wig. Her two rows of false teeth moved constantly in her narrow mouth, like those of an animated rabbit, chewing an imaginary cabbage. She was another of Mrs. Jobson's "paying guests," the centre of a little, grasping, bridge-playing circle she gathered together in the Kensington drawing-room, and out of whom she made her living.

Mr. Jobson was of the dinner-party. He looked like a seedy waiter, in a very low collar; he had a neck like that of a withered chicken, a furtive manner, and a deprecatory way of clearing his throat. Mrs. Jobson made a point of being attentive to him in public, and would say what old "fwiends" he and Sir Patrick were.

Mrs. Macklesfield was another of what Mossy called the "Jobson brigade"; an under-bred, over-dressed, black-eyed, Colonial woman, in a Parisian dress thick with gaudy

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embroidery, a turban head-dress, decorated with diamonds, but inharmonious in colour, and more jewellery, more diamond chains, ropes of pearls, and ill-assorted Maltese and Runic crosses in rubies and emeralds, than one would have thought it possible could be concentrated on one human being. She, too, was coquettish; she and the old Indian civilian, without whom she went nowhere, were known as the “turtle-doves.” Mrs. Macklesfield was very rich, ambitious of social advancement, and ignorant of how it was to be achieved. The Indian civilian dined with her, and drove with her, and was seen with her everywhere. He had only a pension.

Mrs. Streeter was a more decorative, tall and beautiful woman with white hair, in a pink brocaded dress. She raised her tortoiseshell lorgnette and surveyed Lady Ranmore with quiet insolence.

“Who did you say she was?” she asked Ethel, quite aloud, and without any consideration for anybody’s feelings. “Lady Ranmore? Oh!”

Derry sat opposite Mrs. Streeter, and, turning her lorgnette now upon him, she asked sweetly:

“Is your wife a foreigner, Lord Ranmore?”

“A foreigner! The saints forbid!”

“She is so unlike an ordinary Englishwoman.”

“My wife is Irish,” he answered, shortly. He was beginning to see the difference between Rosaleen at the other end of the table, and all those other women, in their *décolleté* dresses and jewellery. No man can guess all that a woman feels at such a disadvantage; but Derry saw, or suspected, something of the malice in Mrs. Streeter’s inquiry.

“She has not been out at all,” he went on; “she is straight from her convent school.” He turned to Ethel. “You said ‘without ceremony’—that you’d be alone.” And then his pride would not let him make

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excuses for her. “It’s she that will be shocked with your clothes here.”

If it had been only the clothes, there would have been little harm done. But the etiquette of the dinner-table, and the society laws that obtained, were each fresh stumbling-blocks to poor Rosaleen, at the end of the table, the cynosure of these curious eyes.

Mossy took everything about her for granted. With all the disadvantages of her dress and braided hair, he realized the quality of her rare good looks, and they took him captive immediately.

“You don’t like caviare? Of course, you’re right, it’s only decayed entrails, but it’s the fashion to like it.”

Rosaleen had never seen caviare before. The Bortsch was equally strange to her, and she refused the cream.

“I say, you’ve got no appetite at all! . . . How do you like London?” he asked her.

He thought those mournful eyes she turned on him were astoundingly beautiful, they almost took his breath away. If he noticed at all that anyone was staring at her, he would have put it down to that. He wanted to stare at her himself.

“’Tis a rare sad place, I’m thinking,” Rosaleen answered in a low voice.

“Sad! Cheery, I call it. What have you seen? I suppose Derry has taken you to a play or two, or to the Palace? They’ve got a clever girl at the Palace now; sings a good song in a new way.”

“Is it to the King’s Palace you’re meaning Derry should have taken me?” she almost whispered, gazing on Mossy with something like awe. She was trying to hold on to her courage, but the low-necked dresses, and the servants that kept offering her things she did not want, and the looks she saw directed to her, the jeers she

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suspected, made it a desperate venture. Mossy seemed kind, kinder than anybody who was there. But what was it he was asking her about the Palace? Was he only making fun of her? It took Mossy a minute to realise her meaning. Then he shouted with laughter and repeated what she had said to his neighbour.

“She thought Flossie Delaporte’s engagement was at Buckingham Palace!”

The mistake did not seem anything very out of the way to Mossy, who knew Rosaleen had been brought up in a convent, and was fresh from Ireland. In repeating it he merely wanted to give the talk a roll, to help on the *bon-homie* and geniality that seemed to be lacking from the dinner-party. Ethel’s dinner-parties generally did lack hilarity; when he wanted to enjoy himself, he chose his own guests. He was annoyed when Mrs. Jobson answered:

“The idea! Where on earth did Lord Wanmore pick her up?”

He turned away from her quite abruptly, he never spoke to her again that evening. He hoped Rosaleen had not heard; he was sure, in his optimism, that Rosaleen had not heard. But of course she had, and now she was yet more confused and ill at ease. And Mossy’s manner to her failed to help. Mossy was one of those convivial spirits who get drunk without drinking. One glass of champagne, the exhilaration of having discovered a new beauty, the desire to protect her from Mrs. Jobson’s ill-nature, combined to make him extraordinarily talkative. He asked the bewildered girl if she had ever thought of going upon the stage. He promised her his influence, and told her what he had done for other good-looking girls. And then he was busy with his hospitality, sending this bottle round to one man, recommending something else to another. Mossy wanted all his guests to be happy, and to enjoy themselves, to eat

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and drink of the best. Even if they were not the guests he would have chosen, it was equally on his mind that he was their host. He really did not notice how little Rosaleen answered him, how monosyllabic were her answers. Mrs. Jobson asked her whether she played “bwidje,” and got a hurried, ingenuous admission that she did not know what it was. Maliciously, then, one and another asked her questions. She became more and more uncomfortable, her brogue increased, and her ignorance and unfitness for her position seemed to her to be completely exposed.

“Is it plays you’re talkin’ of? An’ I’ve never seen a play at all,” she told Mossy desperately. “It’s meself that never was out of the convent till I went to the Castle, to wait upon her ladyship.”

The words seemed, even in her own ears, to be loud across the dinner-table. Mrs. Streeter’s lorgnettes were turned full upon her. Mrs. Jobson grew quite pink, and said “Ve idea!” remembering that she had been in service herself, but hoping that no one else would. Sir Patrick emitted one of his ill-bred chuckles; it had nothing to do with Rosaleen, but of course she thought it had. It was only Mossy who thought nothing at all of what she had said. He was ever more of a talker than a listener, and he wanted to tell her about the first play *he* ever saw. What did it matter whether she had been in service, or what she had been, with eyes like these, and such a delicate rarity of flush? Yet it was Mossy who deepened her confusion to breaking-point.

“Of course you knew Terence then,” he said. “Bright fellow, wasn’t he? Everybody loved him. I suppose you didn’t get off scot-free. . . .”

She gazed at him with fear-distended eyes, and her mouth went dry. It was unfortunate that was the moment the finger-glasses were placed. If your mouth goes dry

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and it's water that's put before you, what can you do but drink it?

In Kensington and Hampstead, Belsize and Regent's Park, all the localities from which Ethel's friends were drawn, it was told for many a day how Lady Ranmore drank from her finger-glass. Ethel's sudden rise and movement before the fruit had been served was a move of exasperation. This was the last straw of aggravation. Her vaunted guest had admitted she had been in service, now she drank from the finger-glass. Ethel heard the titters quite as loudly as Rosaleen. They hurt her almost as much. She could have borne it better if Ellaline had not been present. Ellaline was the Ayscough sister who had married a stockbroker, and lived at Dorking. Ellaline had had much to bear. It was mere human nature for her to whisper:

“It is so good of you, dear, to give me a chance of meeting ‘really nice people.’ One has so little opportunity, living in the suburbs, of seeing how ‘really nice people’ behave.”

Ethel coloured with annoyance. She always invited Ellaline with some such preamble as the one quoted. She loved to make Ellaline think she lived in the centre of fashionable society. She had no sense of humour, and could not bear the tables being turned upon her like this. She had no repartee ready, and could not conceal her mortification. It was at its height by the time Rosaleen reached the drawing-room. She could have borne everything better if Ellaline had not been there to see it.

Rosaleen did not even reach the drawing-room first, as she ought to have done. She missed the signal Ethel gave, or did not know what it meant. She had kept her seat until Mossy said:

“That's right, Lady Ranmore. You stay and talk to us!”

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Then, with a fresh flush of confusion, she had understood, and got up.

They were all in the drawing-room when she got there, the curious, ill-bred women, and Mrs. Streeter, whose lorgnettes seemed concentrated on her face like burning-glasses. How she wished for the quiet of her small bedroom at Albany Street! What had her host said about Terence? Had Derry heard? And what did he mean at all? How unfit she was to be here among Derry's fine friends! The things she had done at dinner! And now those burning-glasses on her face.

“You waited on Lady Ranmore,” Mrs. Streeter began, in those sweet tones of hers that carried as much malice as Mrs. Jobson's lisp. Mrs. Streeter could not bear that there should be other good-looking women in the world. She was quite virtuous herself, and thought her condition, considering her beauty, quite exceptional. She had never had a lover; her little, respectable, consumptive husband sufficed her coldness. But she suspected all other beautiful women, drew her skirts away from the contamination of them, and hated them for the happiness that had been denied to her. “Do tell us why you left Was she pleased when you married her son?”

“It wasn't Mr. Derry that was her son. It's Lord Ranmore that was her son.” Rosaleen had no weapon with which to meet this insolence. She went red and white, and looked to this side and another like a trapped animal, as she answered in the simplicity of her confusion.

But Mrs. Streeter had made a *faux pas*, and of course Mrs. Jobson drew immediate attention to it.

“Fancy you not knowing Lord Ranmore has only just come into the title! I should have thought you'd have known that, Mrs. Streeter.” Mrs. Jobson laughed. “Though



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of course, it's not as if you had ever mixed in ve Castle set . . .”

In parrying Mrs. Jobson's attack Mrs. Streeter let her hold on Rosaleen. The glasses were directed elsewhere for a moment, and Rosaleen's face could begin to cool.

Her hostess took no notice of her at all. Those among the guests who were not actively malicious had not the manners to approach her. For a few minutes she stood quite isolated and strange amongst them. Then there was a movement made to the dressing-room. There was powder to be replaced, and fringes to be adjusted before the men rejoined them. Bridge was to be the order of the evening. Already two or three green cloth-topped tables, each with its ordered burden of cards and markers, were incongruous in the elaborately upholstered room. Rosaleen was neglected, or forgotten for a moment. And she seized upon her opportunity like a famished dog upon a bone. She wanted to move out of the focus of these curious eyes. She wanted to be alone again, to cool the burning of her cheeks, and still the tumultuous beating of her heart. She went out of the drawing-room when they did, but it was not upstairs to the bedroom she'd be going with them. They did not want her, she was not of their kind. She was flying downstairs whilst they were chattering about each other's jewellery and clothes. She was down the stairs, and through the street-door, before anyone noticed she was gone. She had not waited to find her cloak; she would not face again the blaze of light in the pink room.

Down the stairs, and through the hall she darted, as if the lorgnettes and that sweet, insolent voice would pursue her. A wondering footman, startled into politeness, opened the door for her.

Now she was in the street, panting. She did not stop to look this way or that, she was afraid they would be

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after her. She took to her heels like a child pursued by fear, round the Square, and down Grosvenor Street, never pausing until Bond Street was passed, and two or three corners doubled, and she could feel herself safe.

But Rosaleen's costume of white muslin, without coat or hat, was even more conspicuous in Regent Street than it had been in Grosvenor Square. She paused to take her bearings when she reached the Circus, and in that pause a man came up and spoke to her. Of course it was an outrageous thing for him to have done, seeing that he was a married man, on his way home to Portland Place, after a decorous game of billiards at his club. But he had never seen her on the street before, and her looks were unusual and striking. Perhaps, however, it is unnecessary to try to excuse him.

Rosaleen was a little dazed by now. The man seemed kind when he spoke to her; but it was out of the way of everybody Rosaleen would be flying. There was no sense or reason in her action, already she knew she ought not to have run away, to have left Derry behind, to have behaved so childishly. And now she had lost her bearings.

“Are you looking for anybody? Is there anything I can do for you?” Willie Henhouse asked her. She stopped, regarding him doubtfully; and emboldened, he went on:

“I think we must have met somewhere. You don't remember me, perhaps?”

“I've never set eyes on you, I'm thinking.” Even that short speech was enough to betray her country.

“Surely we met in Ireland. Won't you try and remember?”

“Is it from Ireland you are? Then perhaps I can ask you. It's Albany Street I'm looking for; it's my way I've lost. Am I near there belike?”

Albany Street was hardly an address to assure a man

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about town that he had made a mistake in addressing the young woman.

“We are within a quarter of an hour of Albany Street. You will let me walk there with you; or perhaps you’d rather drive?”

“I’ll be thankful to you, I’d rather walk,” she said, simply.

It was the strangest experience for Willie Henhouse. He walked by her side, steering her carefully down by-streets, and out to Portland Road Station. They might have passed his own house, but of course he avoided that. He talked all the time, about Ireland, and why she had left it, the length of her stay in London, and so on. She never answered him at all, or if a word fell from her, even he could see that her thoughts were elsewhere. When they came to the corner of her street, her face lit up in recognition:

“I’ll not be troublin’ you any further,” she said. “For it’s here; and thank you kindly for bringing me.”

“Oh, nonsense!” Willie answered. “Of course you are going to ask me to come in with you?” Now he caught hold of her arm. She wrenched it from him indignantly:

At that moment Derry’s hansom drew up, he was out of it before it had time to pull up, out of it, and on to Willie.

“What do you mean by it? What do you mean?”

He had hold of him.

“Run home, Rosaleen, run home.” He shook Willie, who was a little man, well known in the rubber-market, but insignificant outside of it. Willie Henhouse thought he had got himself into a tight place, of course this was her bully, this big fellow who had a grasp like iron on his arm. Willie had quick visions of blackmail, and *esclandre*, and no end of horrors. He looked desperately up and down for a policeman, but there was no policeman in sight.

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"It's your life I'll be shaking out of you! How dare you speak to that lady?"

Rosaleen had not obeyed his injunction to run home. She stood by, wondering at Derry's strength, and the great size of him. But now she thought she should speak:

"It's me that asked him the way in Regent Street." Derry dropped Willie's arm, and turned round to urge she should go away home. "I'd lost my bearings..."

You cannot be a dealer in the rubber market, and lack smartness. The very moment Derry dropped his arm, Willie had his foot on the step of the waiting hansom.

"A sovereign when you get me to Portland Place," he shouted to the man.

The London cabman looked at Derry, and at the girl in her white dress. Then he gave his new customer a solemn wink.

"Hell for leather," said Willie, and the man whipped up his horse. Whichever of the two swells was in the right, was not for Cabbie to enquire. He had brought the other from Grosvenor Square, and he, too, had urged speed. But a quid is a quid, and he whipped up his horse.

This night's experience was not one that Willie Henhouse ever related; he was in a sweat of apprehension until he was safe inside his own door. He was a married man, and lived habitually in impeccable domestic virtue. What had induced him to embark upon such an adventure he could not imagine. His mind led him to blackmail, and a thousand dangers he had escaped. It was a most wholesome lesson to Willie, and one by which he profited.

As for those left behind on the pavement, it was Derry who spoke first.

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"How came you to do it, Rosaleen?" he asked. He opened the door with his latch-key, and drew her into the shelter of the narrow passage. Still holding her arm, he led her up to the sitting-room, then turned on the gas.

"How came you to do it?" He was quite breathless, white round the nostrils; and the look in his eyes was different from any she had ever seen in them.

## CHAPTER XI

“HOW dared that man lay hold of you?”

He had her arm himself, and he did not leave go, although now they were in the sitting-room. She made no effort to free herself from him.

Derry had been full of anxiety when he heard that “Bady Ranmore had gone home;” although the exact manner of her going had not been told him. Mrs. Leon had said she feared she was unwell, but Derry had not been very attentive to Ethel’s artificial surmises. He had made his excuses as quickly as he could and dashed after her. He was filled with misgivings. Having made her accept the invitation, he knew the experiment had not been a success. In the cab as he dashed after her, he was tender and pitiful in his thoughts of her. And, for some reason or another, unrecognised even by himself, the tenderness and pitifulness were less quixotic, and more primitive, than any he had as yet allowed himself. To Derry it seemed that Rosaleen, although she was different, had more than held her own amongst those second-class ladies at Ethel’s party. Derry had no fault to find with the high frock; the crown of black hair was more becoming than jewels; the white skin, with the geranium flush that came and went, was more beautiful than painted cheeks. Yet because of his own sensitiveness, he had guessed something of how she must have been feeling amongst them. When he heard she had gone home, he knew he must follow her. Then, when he came up to her, and saw her on the pave-

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ment, talking with a man, a man who laid a sacrilegious hand upon her sleeve, he had lost his self-control.

"How dared he lay hold of you?" he asked.

Rosaleen was facing a Derry that was new to her, one with anger in his face, and excitement. He hurt her with the tightness of his grasp, but she had no fear of him.

"Are you angered with me?" she said, wonderingly.

"What did he say to you?"

"He said he'd be glad to see me a step on me way."

"Be damned to him! be damned to him!"

"And 'twas when he said that I might ask him to come in . . ."

"And you . . ." his grasp tightened.

"It's bruising me you are." She tried to get free.

"Oh yes, 'tis he that might hold you; you that can't bear I should touch you."

She looked at him, and then she met his eyes, saw a light, an intentness in them, and lowered her own.

"Anybody but me may touch you," he said sullenly.

"'Tis cruel you are, cruel!" Her hands went up to hide her face. But he took them down, and held them, and forced her eyes.

"You like me less and less."

"It's not the truth you're speaking." This was quite low. And then, because of her own heart that was clamouring, or because of what she saw in his eyes, having once before seen the same look in a man's eyes, she was suddenly one burning blush, and her head drooped like a wilted flower on a stalk.

"You're hurting me; let go my hands."

"You know I would not hurt you."

"You've been good to me." There was a sob in her throat.

"Not as good as I'd like to be;" he was a little beside himself; "you only half trust me."

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“You’re angry with me for running away, for leaving the house like that,” she said, in confusion, conscious still of that light in his eyes, which might be anger.

“It’s not angry with you at all I am.” Now his voice was as soft as a caress. Then he tried to remember all he had forgotten, but she looked so beautiful, standing before him in confusion, in fear almost, now pale and now flushed, and so like a girl, the very girl who had caught his love in the Ranmore woods, that he heard his own heart beating, and his breath was caught in his throat, as it might be with a man in face of physical danger. Perhaps it was fear, too, that she heard knocking. If her eyes drooped, his had a sudden hunger in them; and yet he was ashamed.

“If you’d never met Terence at all?” he found himself saying; it was only by accident the words slipped out, it was as if he were thinking aloud, and then was ashamed of the words as he heard them, and stopped abruptly. The fitful colour in her face faded to whiteness; an anguish of memory and shame seized her:

“*Ay, if I’d never met him, if I’d never set eyes on him!*” she echoed.

He mistook the strain in her voice, the hopeless misery of it. How could he know that every hour since she had been through that empty ceremony of marriage with him, the memory of Terence, and what Terence had made of her, had become more and more unbearable? She looked back in shame, and forward she could not look at all. She had been through so many emotions this evening; but when Derry said to her, “*if you’d never met Terence at all!*” it was agony that shot through her at the thought of what might have been! . . . She dropped on the floor at his feet, her head went down on her arms; she was only a peasant, she broke out into weeping, and her slight form was shaken with sobs. Derry dared not trust himself to



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stoop and gather her in his arms ; he walked up and down in agitation instead, and said :

“ Oh ! don't, now, don't ! ” And “ Give over, do ! Give over ! ”

He only felt that he had frightened, shocked, outraged her, brute that he was, unfit for his charge. She had loved his cousin, and was mourning for him all the time ; these wild sobs were for him. He hated himself for what he had said. He forgot exactly what he had said, but he knew what he had meant or felt. Only for a moment, it had only been for a moment, he had lost his self-composure. She must not sob like this. He stopped before her abruptly.

“ Give over crying like that,” he said. “ It's Terence's widow you are, sure enough, I wasn't meaning anything but taking care of you. It wasn't angry with you at all I was, only resentful, when I saw that man touch you. And so *he* would have been himself, it's his widow you are to me.”

She was ashamed of her wild sobs, they ceased quite abruptly. His words were like a douche of cold water on them ; *it was only Terence's widow she was to him.* She got up slowly, keeping her face averted from him. But indeed he was not looking at her.

“ It's been a long day, and trying . . . ”

“ Good night to you,” she said dully. “ I'm sorry . . . ”

“ There's no need.”

She was sorry she had failed him so miserably at the grand party, sorry her self-control had broken down for that wild moment on the floor. If she was sorry for something beyond that, some stilling, stunning words that reverberated in her ears, she was not conscious of it. Dully she said :

“ Good night,” and “ I'm sorry.”

“ There's no need,” he answered. He had hurt her by

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his words about Terence, and in her hurt she had cried out. That was all.

He opened the door for her. She passed through, then she came back, hesitating.

"It's getting late," he said quickly. "Good night." He held the door.

"Would you rather I'd not be going out to Siam with you? You'd be freer alone, I'll be a drag and a hindrance to you." Now she, too, was speaking very quickly. "It's not Lady Ranmore I'm fit to be, anyhow, and after to-night . . ."

"You were the greatest lady of them all to-night."

"You'd best be leaving me behind."

"You're not trusting me, because . . . because I lost me temper with you."

"I'm trusting you to the death. But . . . but it's disgracing you I'll be!" Her voice was low, and the sob was not far from it.

"You'll not be doing that."

"It's the wrong thing I'll be for ever doing. It's a grand lady you ought to have had for your wife, and not me at all, at all. I ought not to have let you do it; it's selfish I've been to you. But you'll be free if you go to this new country alone."

"Come in a minute."

She came back into the room, and he shut the door behind her.

"Will you sit down?" He pushed a chair toward her. "Do you mind if I smoke? We won't go to bed this night without talking, and it's not so late." He knew he must reassure her, and perhaps himself. She obeyed him, coming back, and sinking into the chair he gave her; she was just tired. But all she was thinking was that she was nothing but a tie to him, and that he should leave her behind.

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"It's a poor Irish country girl I am, it's nothing but the cooking and the needlework I know. Your aunt said I was light-footed after her, and quick to learn, but what's that to yourself?"

Derry did not want to speak too quickly. He filled his pipe very deliberately. At first his fingers trembled, but at the end they were steady.

"We've got to go out there together. Don't be thinking too much about the future, let us go on as we were going. To-night was strange to you. I ought to have helped you more, and I'm sorry I lost my temper at the end, here in this room. . . ."

He had finished filling his pipe, now he lit it.

"It was that man . . . of course I understand now. What I want you to get clear is that we have undertaken this thing together, and we've got to carry it through. It's Lady Ranmore you are, and nothing is going to alter it. All we've done would go for nothing, if you let me go away alone. What would they think up at the Castle?"

He knew he did not want to part with her; that was all he would allow himself to know just now. Nothing had happened to make them change their plans. He did not know she was as little anxious to part from him as he from her. They had no glossary as yet to each other's language.

And yet she felt she was not as unhappy as she had been a few moments ago. He did not want to leave her behind. She listened to his arguments, and he went on arguing, perhaps with himself.

"I'll go with you, if you want me to, and gladly," she said, in the end. "And I'll bear myself as Lady Ranmore as best I may. You'll not be hard on me, if it comes slow? I'll try to make myself worthy."

She had risen from her chair, and now he, too, got up again. He had quite subdued himself, and there was

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nothing left of that primitive feeling which had seized him on seeing another man's hold on her arm. In the reaction he felt quite cold to her. She looked very tired, and very young; it was a long way they were going together.

“It's getting late,” was all he said, “and we've a good bit to be seeing to to-morrow.”

She felt the reaction so much more quickly than she had felt the approach.

“Good night.”

“Good night.”

But he did not go to bed himself for quite a long time after that. He sat and smoked and looked into the fire. He could not see happy pictures there, of wife and children, as other men might have done; nor of Castle Ranmore with himself at the head of it. What he saw at first, as he sat, was not the future, but the past. Terence welcoming the raw, shy schoolboy that he was when he first went to Ranmore. Terence, before he went back to his school in Belfast, pouring out the contents of his own ill-provided pockets, dividing everything into two halves. One half must always be for Derry. And the letter or two that would come from him, not very well written, not very well spelt, for Terence was never a scholar . . . The letters held so much of himself that Derry used to think it wasn't Terence writing, but Terence speaking: “I miss you horridly here, old man. I've got no one to bully nor order about, and I'm spoiling for a turn-up with you, and hugging afterwards. Margaret says I'm to tell you there'll be the trout this time, and you're not to have grown any more, or the shadow of you will frighten the fish . . .”

“I promised I'd look after her for him,” Derry said drearily to himself, as he finished looking back, and got up from the chair, “and look after her I will, but . . .”

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The "but" was so loud and tumultuous that it ticked from the clock, it was like a voice in the close little room. He stretched himself, and meant to go off to bed. As he had said, there was much to do to-morrow, one of the few to-morrows that were left to them in England. But what was the use of going to bed and lying awake, thinking? There was so much thinking to be done, and he had done none of it, he had only acted: that was his way, his young, impulsive way. Now, quite suddenly, and for the first time, misgiving seized him, a cold, uncanny thing to seize a man at one o'clock in the morning. Cohorts of doubts suddenly assailed and buffeted him. For all the "buts," the only answer was the irritating tick of a cheap American clock. They stopped him in the middle of that healthy stretch of himself, he had felt the youth and strength and muscle in it, *but . . .* had he overburdened his strength? He was going out to a new country, to work he hardly knew, he was taking a girl with him, taking a wife with him . . . *taking Terence's widow with him.* Even now that he was alone he flushed at the thought of it. She *was* Terence's widow. But what were his own feelings toward her? Misgiving was a cold and haunting thing, and the little room was hot, stuffy, unbearable. Yet to go to bed and lie awake, and look back, or forward, was impossible.

Rosaleen, listening upstairs, as every night she listened for the sound of Derry's going up to bed, heard instead the slam of the street door. He had gone out, he could not bear the small rooms, or his own thoughts. Derry walked over half London that night, getting his blood cool. He saw a grey London, half-blind, with shuttered windows, inexpressibly dreary and unfriendly. What lay before him in that strange, distant country would surely be better than this. The grey deepened, and now the houses were

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silhouetted against a fitful black sky, gusty clouds showed no stars nor promise. His courage was at its lowest ebb just then. How alone he would be in the new country! He would take her with him, but he would not see too much of her. It was not himself she was wanting, only to nurse her grief. And wasn't it enough if he could stand by, and be of help to her sometimes—she was but a girl? Then the clouds began to spread, and over the whole of the sky there came a lightening. After all, he was young and strong, and he had only done for Terence what Terence would have done for him. Didn't he leave his squirrel in the cage one never-to-be-forgotten holiday, when he was little more than ten years old, leaving it without food, and forgetting he had meant to let it out? He had cried himself blind in the train, thinking it would starve to death. Terence was going away himself the next day, and the squirrel would have neither food nor water. Derry ate no supper, he cried himself tired in the dormitory that first night at school. He wasn't homesick, as the other boys taunted him, but all the time he was seeing the squirrel, walking round and round, in the cage he and Terence had made for him, looking vainly for nuts, for water . . . Derry had all the pangs of hunger in his bed that night, and the bars, too, he saw around him. They had always meant to let him out when the holidays came to an end, but it had been such fun feeding him with the nuts. . . .

In the morning came Terence's pencilled scrawl: "I let the squirrel out when I got back from the station, you should have seen him scamper. We'll catch him again at Easter."

Derry, on the Thames Embankment, between three and four o'clock on that dreary morning, staring into the water, found himself wondering if he had persuaded, or . . . But

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he would not let himself wonder, nor stare down into the water, seeing their two faces reflected there; he turned away, feeling a little sick. The dawn had lightened, and now the closed eyes of the houses began to open sleepily, slowly, but still to open.

He was a man, and if it were a burden he had to bear, he must strengthen his shoulders, that was all. Involuntarily he squared them as he turned his face homewards. There would be work to do, and a place to fill, and in a new land there were new possibilities. Already the horizon was brightening. What had he to do with misgiving? It wasn't himself he had to be thinking of at all, but Rosaleen, who was brave enough to go with him, trusting herself to him. He would make a life for her out there. It was not of his feelings toward her he must be thinking. And now he had no feeling toward her at all, other than a swelling pity, and chivalry. It was going to be quite a bright morning. Somewhere, although he could not see it for the houses, the red sun must be climbing the horizon, as so often he and Terence had watched it rising through the mists behind the trees in the green woods of Ranmore. He need not doubt himself; he would not fail in loyalty to Terence, nor to the girl who had only himself upon whom to depend.

## CHAPTER XII

THERE was no God-speed from Ranmore, nor from Dunstons, to start them on their journey. The announcement of the marriage had been too long in coming. It seemed that Derry had behaved badly, callously, to say the least of it, and without regard for anyone but himself. That was what Lady Ranmore thought, and it was that supposition on which she based her subsequent actions. The Duchess was slower to think ill of the boy she had watched grow up, neither callous nor unkind, but just impulsive and simple, a dog at Terence's heels. Terence had been fond of him, and thought the world of him. Margaret sent no word, but many a time she regretted the omission. Her conscience reproached her that she had not been kind to the girl, nor to Derry either.

Rosaleen put resolutely away from her, as Derry told her that she must, the feeling of the unreality of her position. He talked about it often during their last two days in London. It was husband and wife they must be before the world. She had a genuine humility of mind, and the knowledge of how she had come by her position was ever present with her. But she set herself bravely to the task of taking her place by his side. It would have been easier if she had known the place she had in his heart, but there was a wall between them. It was not so much the deficiencies in her education, for, although it would not have qualified her for an entrance to Girton, or enabled her to pass even the Junior College of Preceptors' examination, yet the instruction that had been given her, with the



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qualities it brought out, proved of more practical utility than would the undigested cachets of information administered by the English High Schools.

It was not in education primarily that Rosaleen failed, it was in knowledge of the world. Her first glimpse into the second-rate "smart" world, through Ethel Leon's dinner-party was only of value in so far as it directed her attention to things which had hitherto found no place with her—spiritual unessentials, yet making for grace, external grace. Derry's wife ought to have every advantage, the poor girl thought. She realised his qualities while undervaluing her own. But she would learn to bear herself as one more worthy of him; she made up her mind to that.

Derry's passage was paid by the Siamese Government, by whom his services had been accepted when he was Derry Malone. They had no official intimation that it was as Lord Ranmore he was coming out to them.

There is a small colony of Englishmen employed in different capacities by the Siamese Government, and their head-quarters are at Bangkok. Derry had been appointed on his qualifications. To celebrate his success he had that never-to-be-forgotten week with Terence in London. As events turned out, it was fortunate that the Eastern habit of moving slowly left the post still free when he made his hurried decision to take it up. It carried a salary of something like £400 a year, a bungalow, and all expenses. Derry had signed for two years. He felt quite rich with his secured £500 a year from Mossy in addition to this. He had taken a nice cabin for Rosaleen on the ss. *Moirá*. He knew they were going to make a success of their project from the moment they entered Marseilles, and stood on the quay in a blaze of sunshine.

"It's a good omen for us," he said; "all the sunshine, and the beautiful boat she is."

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Rosaleen's spirits, too, seemed to rise as England and Ireland receded, and the new, strange home loomed on the distant horizon.

There was the usual crowd of travellers, whose destination was Port Said. The big financier, who was helping us to tighten our hold on Egypt, was there, with his secretary and valet. This big financier, by the way, was a small and rather irritable person, apparently more interested in his liver than in any affair of state. Calling himself an Englishman, he yet spoke its language with a Teutonic accent, and the title that had been conferred upon him for services rendered sat strangely on his lack of dignity and childish petulance of temper.

There were married couples with their provincial or suburban narrowness of outlook, incongruous against the blue breadth of the Mediterranean, fussy about their deck-chairs and cushions, full of talk about their meals and their neighbours, interested chiefly in the weather and the boat's daily record of knots. There were several unattached officers, a clergyman or two, and three entire parties of Americans, more or less typical, with women-folk whose attractions were insistent. Also there were Lord and Lady Ranmore. Under the influence of deck games, concerts, charades, and various other amusements, there grew up a strange semi-intimacy, or *camaraderie*, among these incongruous people.

The boat sped through the blue waters, the wind and sea-spray held the sun in solution. The weather grew hotter and ever hotter. The passengers seemed, in the limitless horizon of the sea-girt days, to have nothing but mutual interests, mutual pleasures; they were like a huge family party, with trivial pursuits that yet sufficed them. But the under-current of the pleasant days was an ever-threatening boredom, the evasion of which was the one

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genuine objective. Derry had, perhaps, more than the fear of boredom to evade, and it was he who became the head of the Sports Committee, animating it always to fresh effort, trying to keep the ball rolling. Bigger in every way than any of the men on board, his cheeriness dominated them. Perhaps at first he was playing a part, but it soon ceased to be that. There was nothing morbid about Derry, and he meant to fill his days. He was for ever varying the "how many knots a day sweepstake," and devising new forms of competition and prizes. He would not let Sir Alfred Schloss's moroseness affect him, and he assisted in initiating the Rev. Dionysius Parker into the mysteries of Chinese poker, and Kentucky loo. He had first to learn them both himself, but he was never backward in learning games.

Rosaleen thought everything he did was wonderful. She tried at first to follow in his footsteps, but she never attained even a measure of success. She could not learn the cards, the deck games, of course, were out of the question, she would be only a spectator at charade or concert. The art of trivial talk was at present beyond her, silence being the only polished weapon in her armoury. Around her instinctive reticence was the chain-armour of the secret she had to guard. She could not talk of her travel experiences, for from Ranmore to London was all she knew. Of the past she could not speak, nor could she answer kindly, intrusive questions. The present was all strange, and the future unknown. The Americans said she was "stuck up," but Lord Ranmore was "just a daisy"; in the ignorance of their self-sufficiency they attributed to pride what was due to humility. In the end the majority of the passengers avoided her. She had meant to learn much from their ease of manner, their gift of light talk, but she soon realised she could only

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learn in watching. Comedy or farce was their drama, tragedy hers.

Perhaps it was not strange that in Sir Alfred Schloss she found, after Derry, her most congenial company. The multi-millionaire, the successful financier and friend of kings, was as much alien as she from the frivolity and emptiness of that daily life. If he had great affairs on hand, as the talk would have it that buzzed about him on board, or if, as he said himself, he was voyaging for his health, it was no matter. Withdrawing into himself as she into herself, they found companionship when their chairs were side by side. One whole afternoon he talked to her about the vagaries of his digestion, twice he took the trouble to send his man for a larger umbrella for her, one that supported itself behind her chair, lined with green, and luxurious with fringe. Sir Alfred was going on for sixty years of age, a widower, and immune from women's wiles, as many knew. But Rosaleen had no wiles, she had only her beauty and her quietude, and either or both of them soothed his nerves.

Rosaleen never found herself embarrassed by his questions. The curiosity he felt about anything but pounds, shillings, and pence was infinitesimal. But he did ask her about Derry's appointment.

“I am surprised he should have taken it,” he said. “The Siamese Government is notorious in its treatment of English employées. He will never get any further with them.” And then a gleam of interest, or avarice, came into his little bright eyes. “But of course, if he is going up country, he may have something else in his mind, some concession. . . .” Sir Alfred dreamt of concessions. “He has influential friends, he could get any capital he might want?”

“He has a great deal of money,” Rosaleen answered;

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for indeed Derry had told her of the £500, and that seemed a great deal of money to her. He was wasteful with it, but when is an Irishman not wasteful, or an Irishwoman either, for that matter? Thrift was no real part of Rosaleen's character, but the only feeling she allowed herself for Derry, the mothering or protecting instinct, told her he was too open-handed.

Very rich men have their only real human intercourse with other rich men, people who do not ask them for money or help. Sir Alfred would have avoided a richer man than himself, for he would have felt jealous, or resentful, of a superior ability to amass wealth. But Lord Ranmore could not be that, or he would have heard of it. Sir Alfred Schloss extended his tolerance from Derry's wife to Derry. By the time they arrived at Port Said he had unbent sufficiently to hope they would meet again. Derry hoped so, too; he hoped he would meet everybody again.

The moment they were in sight of land, they were surrounded and overwhelmed with the insistent turbaned black men, offering their wares. Derry immediately began buying presents. He bought presents for the Americans, and for the parson's daughter, and one for Rosaleen. Rosaleen, watching the novel scene with brooding eyes, felt indeed that Ireland was far away. Ranmore, in the luxuriance of its green foliage and verdure, was a dream from which she was but slowly awakening to this glare and dazzle of dust and sun. And it was through a nightmare she had passed. Again everything seemed unreal to her. When Derry came to her with his offering, it seemed more unreal still. She felt this through that dream-like feeling in which her consciousness was suspended. He had bought her a silver scarf, he told her it was night itself with its silver stars she would look like when she threw it over her head. It was kind of him;

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everything he did was kind. They had had little talk together during the journey, yet each had been supremely conscious of the other. If it were a duel of sex in which they were engaged, as yet they were only surveying the ground, eyeing each other from the distance, apprehensive.

Between the banks of the Suez Canal they glided past the Arab villages ; the camels, too, were dream-like and unreal against the deep indigo of the wonderful nights. The searchlight from their own boat made deeper the shadowed solitudes.

Derry was always there, and although they had so little talk together, she often felt that he and she were alone. She had nothing in common with the people who got up gymkhanas, and discussed fancy-dress balls whilst the marvellous sunsets hung low on the red waters, and the splendour of the night followed on the splendour of day. Derry mingled with the other passengers, talking to them, playing with them, but surely he and they had nothing in common.

That fancy-dress ball seemed to Rosaleen the last word of strangeness. Vulgarity would have been a better expression, but it was not a word in her vocabulary. Many of the same people with whom they had started from Marseilles were travelling on with them to Ceylon. By now she had grown tired of watching them, of their vapid talk, and their wearisome egotism. She had meant to learn from them, but there was little but their clothes that she found worthy of imitation. Rosaleen had the dress instinct. Perhaps, when she remembered that dreadful dinner-party at the Leons', it was her lack of suitable clothes she seemed to remember most vividly. Here, in this heat, the muslins and cottons Derry had bought her were sufficiently appropriate, and passed muster. But they could not be named in the same day as

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the delicate, clinging confections from Doucet and Voisin that draped the grace of the young women from New York.

On the night of the fancy-dress ball she took infinite pains to do credit to him. She adopted the idea he had given her, and, with black dress and silver draperies, silver stars shining in the hair she let down, she looked indeed like the spirit of beautiful night. Her hair was lustrous, and it hung far below her waist, the black loose folds of her dress clung indefinitely about her softly moving feet, and to-night her eyes shone; it was as if a star were in the centre of each dark iris. There was no one could touch her for beauty or strangeness.

Little as she cared for anyone's opinion but Derry's, although she had dressed herself for him, and for him alone, it would have given her confidence in herself, and proved valuable toward that education which was proceeding so slowly and imperceptibly, if there had been public recognition that she had done well. There were votes and prizes for the best costumes; other girls and women had striven for distinction. But eyes that had not wandered from the bridge-table when the moving panorama of Suez and the Red Sea was spread with wonderful lure before them, eyes that had been dull to the morning glory of blue sky and brilliant sun, to the evening majesty of sapphire and gold, were blind, too, to the rarity of the human picture that asked their suffrage.

Rosaleen had hardly five votes to her name, and one of these was Derry's. The prize went to the buxom daughter of the Rev. Mr. Parker, who had concocted for herself, out of two tartan rugs and a sporeen, a Scottish effect that brought down the house. She danced a reel, too, and Derry with her. He must not be always looking at Rosaleen. All the time, he was living to his plan, his plan not

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to embarrass her by attentions too personal. He still read grief in her eyes, respected it and looked away. For in truth he could hardly bear to see it.

Rosaleen noted that he did not look at her, although she had dressed to please him. She listened to his gay talk, and watched his gayer dancing of the reel. She shed a few absurd tears when she sought her cabin that night—absurd, she thought, because what concern had she, in her shame and sorrow, with fancy-dress balls and the like? If her heart was heavy, it was surely from other causes. But Derry had danced the reel with the rosy-cheeked girl in the tartan get-up, and 'twas he who had read out the prize-winners, and seen her name at the bottom.

On Christmas Day they reached Colombo, and quitted the *Moirs* for good. Rosaleen's "foolishness" had taken her to the point when she was glad to know that the Rev. Dionysius and his family were going no farther.

Derry and she and their luggage were conveyed from the boat to the Galle Face Hotel. Now from the window the lovely view of the bay lay before them, the wonderful blue waves, lapping with luxurious slow regularity the white beach, accompanied their voices with monotonous music. The parson and his wife and daughter had come to the hotel with them. There had been laughter and chaff on the way, and Rosaleen's heart had sunk at the warmth of Derry's hopes that they would meet again, and the promise that the afternoon should be spent in looking for parting presents. It was in the essence of him to be gregarious and readily on good terms, to make friends easily. It was just a surface lure of manner, this friendliness of Derry, but to Rosaleen it was a new pain she had to bear that day. The parson's daughter was high-spirited, like Derry himself, and her boisterous mood and merriment took impetus from Rosaleen's pallor and watching. There are some



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feminine natures that enjoy their conquests over man only if they have another woman for spectator. Bridget Parker was one of them, she thought she had made a conquest of Lord Ranmore, and to flirt boisterously with him under his wife's eyes during that drive to the hotel gave zest to the familiarities she permitted herself. It was she who proposed they should all lunch together—a farewell lunch. Rosaleen excused herself, but up here, in her own room, a little afraid lest Derry should be resentful of her withdrawal, she said :

“Do you mind if I don't lunch with you? I'm thinking it's resting I'd better be. It's strange to see the land stand still.”

“It's not luncheon you are to call it here, it's 'tiffin,' and I'll be getting an appetite for myself to do justice to it.”

They were to join the *Delhi* that afternoon. It seemed to Rosaleen that Derry, kind as he was to her, was nevertheless anxious to get away. His eyes were bold on Bridget Parker's, whilst on her they hardly ever rested.

“There's a swimming-bath beyond, and I'll just indulge myself. Is there anything I can get for you before I go?”

Rosaleen was hurried in her assurance that she had all she needed. When he had gone, her eyes wandered over the bay. After the moving panorama of the last weeks, the stillness and restfulness had a curious effect. If only her thoughts could have rested like her eyes! But they followed Derry, and the buoyant girl with whom he would lunch and shop. It was not jealousy she felt. Why should she be jealous of him? She told herself this new pain in her heart was sorrow for him. For she was not only a burden, she was standing between him and happiness. Not that Bridget Parker was worthy of him. She had danced and talked and flirted with other men all through the voyage, a bold piece of goods.

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When Derry came back to the hotel to fetch Rosaleen for the *Delhi*, he was full of enthusiasm about Colombo. She heard that he had had a merry time.

“You never saw such beautiful buildings. There’s the post office now, with a fellow—a scribe they call him—sitting outside all day long in the sun to write letters for people. Now, that’s an idea I’d like to take home with me.”

“’Tis few letters we have to write.”

“I’m not thinking of myself; but you should hear the number of people the Parkers have to write to, the post cards they have to be sending. . . . And you should see the Government house, Rosaleen, just long and low, and painted the green of the Ranmore hazel. There are cocoanut palms, and big cocoanuts growing on them. And the tall banana trees, with the clustered, hanging bunches of fruit . . .”

But Rosaleen could have seen them all, she would have gladly gone with him had he pressed it. It wasn’t for lying down she had withdrawn from the party.

The *Delhi* was a smaller and inferior boat to the *Moir*, but it seemed to Rosaleen there were almost the same people on board; certainly they were people with the same ideas of amusement. And Derry was at home with them at once.

They had escaped from the heat, now a steady breeze blew by day, and the nights were cool. Deck quoits were abandoned, and the saloon was full of card-players. Bridge was the order of the day, but the sweepstakes on the run continued.

In seven days they reached Singapore. There was a bridge “drive” or tournament in progress, and who would leave the excitement of the game for such a sight as the red cliffs covered with verdure, sloping down almost

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to the water's edge? There were not half a dozen passengers on deck when they steamed in.

"I'm told Singapore harbour is like Clieveden Woods," one said carelessly.

"Oh! yes, I believe it is; but I live at Maidenhead, so it is no treat to me to look at Clieveden. Hearts are trumps—please get on with the game; we'll be in in an hour, and if we are not finished, I don't know what they'll do about the prize. It will be simply awful!"

The game never was finished, by the way, for at Singapore they had to disembark. What eventually became of the prize is a problem that to this day has not been solved.

Derry had a great deal to attend to with luggage and the like; perhaps that was one of the reasons that the prize problem was not cleared up. Amidst the din of the disembarkation two shrill female voices pursued the subject. There was not much time to spare for any of them. The P. and O. harbour was right on the other side of the town, and everything in the boat had to be transhipped. Derry and Rosaleen were conveyed in gharries to the hotel recommended to them, the Raffles Hotel. Long before they reached it the rain was coming down in sheets. Derry was concerned for Rosaleen, and wanted her to have his coat as well as her own. Bad as the weather was, and although there was no glory of bay, or public buildings, Rosaleen enjoyed her few hours' sojourn in Singapore a great deal better than the same time in Colombo. Derry insisted on her drinking wine to "keep the cold out." He had got over his own shyness with her for the moment, and used an authoritative, half brotherly, wholly protecting, manner that seemed just perfection to her. She ate to please herself, and drank to please him, and it was as if to a picnic they went now, each in the

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covered gharry that waited for them in the strange Chinese street.

Arrived at the pier, Derry could not find his luggage anywhere. Several people had seen it in the bullock cart, waiting to be unloaded; now it had disappeared.

Derry was seriously considering whether it would be as well to delay their journey when it was discovered in the boat, quite safe and awaiting them.

Rosaleen wanted no delay. Her mind's eye was fixed now on Bangkok, and the bungalow they would dwell in together, the life of work she would share with Derry, lightening it, perhaps, for him. She thought her heart had forgotten to sing, but it was breaking into song as she stood on the pier looking at the boat, so small after the other, that would take them to what already she had begun to call home.

She was destined to be disappointed; for some reason or another, it was suddenly announced that there would be a delay, and that the boat would not start until the next morning.

Then it was that Derry's popularity became manifest. There had travelled with them from Colombo an elderly merchant and his wife, of the best type of English Colonial people, unaffected and homely. Rosaleen had had but little talk with Mrs. Darrell, and none at all with her husband, but Derry knew them both well. They would not hear of the Ranmores going back to the hotel, they must come home with them.

Rosaleen hesitated and looked at Derry, who never hesitated at all.

“Well, now that's kind of you, that's very kind, and my wife and I will be delighted. I'll just see that everything is all right aboard, and you'll give me the direction, and we'll take dinner with you with all the pleasure in the world.”

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Rosaleen got through that dinner well enough. There were just the four of them, in their travelling clothes, and it was really without any ceremony. Mrs. Darrell was homely, motherly, although she had no children of her own. She petted Rosaleen and made much of her, and the girl thawed under this treatment. All her secret could not be kept. If Mrs. Darrell penetrated it, and said a kindly word, it seemed now, in this beautiful new world, that it was a word which did not hurt.

“It will be all right for you at Bangkok, my dear,” she said. “I’ll write to my friend, Mrs. Sydney Biddle, about you. She has a beautiful home there, and it’s open house with her always. And there is an English doctor, I know.”

Derry said, easily, during that friendly dinner :

“Don’t you think my wife is very brave to come all this way with me? She has proved a famous traveller, neither sick nor sorry.”

“I’m sure you’ve got a very good wife,” Mr. Darrell answered, comfortably. But Mrs. Darrell had noted the girl’s quick blush, and found the opportunity for that kind and reassuring word.

Rosaleen thought it had been wonderful of Derry to talk about their strange relations in this easy way. For an hour before they started, they sat on the verandah overlooking the great still mystery of the lake, and that heart of hers which had begun to sing was full of deep, unfathomable thanksgiving. She knew to whom she owed her succour. Hope and promise thrilled in the warm air. The Chinaman that came to announce that the carriage was waiting to take them to the harbour swung a lantern in his hand, and on the waters of the lake the bright colours made bright larger reflections. The weather had cleared, and for five miles, under an ultramarine sky, where little light floating clouds now hid, and now revealed, the myriads

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of stars, she and Derry drove together. They seemed so near to each other, so much nearer than they had been during all this long voyage. The very silence that was between them this night held an intimacy that all their other silences had lacked.

When Derry's hand sought hers in the carriage and he said, "You were not minding what I said at dinner?" she answered simply:

"It's kind you've been from first to last."

"And it's brave you've been," he answered. There was no reason their hands should not lie locked in this friendly way. The air was so soft, the sky so darkly blue and beneficent about them, that they forgot everything but that they were young and alone. If one called the feeling that was between them "gratitude," and the other named it "pity," the little god who knew the truth could afford to laugh and wait; his arrows were planted surely. They might hurt where they stuck, but never, never would the wound they made be healed by such misnaming.

The boat, that seemed so tiny after the P. and O. steamer, puffed its uncomfortable way along the Gulf of Siam. Rosaleen lay on a sail-cloth deck-chair, and now the singing in her heart had reached her eyes, and they sang too, of hope. The life before them was coming very near; two days more, one day more, and they would be at Bangkok.

### CHAPTER XIII

THEY had made up their minds not to be disappointed whatever might await them at Bangkok. They talked it over during these last two days, even as they had talked it over in London, before that long pilgrimage began, with the mutual shyness. They assured each other, not once, but many times, that they were not afraid of "roughing it," that the unknown presented no terrors to them.

Derry had understood that the Director of the Siamese Survey Department, in whose service he had entered, would meet him at Bangkok. But there was no one to meet them, and their first night in Bangkok was passed at an hotel. Afterwards it transpired that a letter sent to them at Singapore had missed them. It was all made right in the morning, when Derry went to the office, and announced to the phlegmatic official the fact of his identity with Derry Malone.

The bungalow allocated to him was fully furnished; his predecessor had evidently luxurious tastes. The beds were English, and there was enough glass and china, considerably damaged, however. Before they had time to go through the four rooms and big verandah of which the residence consisted, it seemed to Rosaleen that the neighbours began to call. Certainly they were met with kindness—or was it curiosity?—from the whole of the English colony. It is not usual for a young nobleman, even if he be of the Irish peerage, to take a subordinate position in the Survey Office of Siam. Some were frankly astonished, and interrogated him as to his motive; some were suspiciously surprised

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and put the worst possible construction upon an exile that must have been necessitated by debt or difficulty at home. Others, again, were disingenuously not surprised, and more subtly interrogative. This was the way that impressed Rosaleen as being the most natural. That was the true Celtic attitude of mind to take up toward the unknown. The quality in Derry to which she found it most difficult to accustom herself was his frankness. Derry told everyone his inheritance had come to him as a surprise, that there seemed great difficulty in getting matters settled, and, as he had to live meanwhile, he thought he had better do so by the only profession he had learnt. And he said “my wife and I” whenever he talked of his affairs. Over and over again Rosaleen heard him, but never without a quickened heart-beat.

At the English Club they said Lord Ranmore was a white man; but Lady Ranmore won their suffrages less easily. She wanted neither to patronise nor to be patronised, what she really wanted was to be left alone, to work out her daily life so that it would enable her to be of service to the man who had given her a home. She fell easily into the habits of the place, and her domestic qualities developed rapidly. She made war against ants and cobwebs, learnt to leave the cook to his own devices, and express no surprise when her little brown maid was courted by an aspirant, who sat on his haunches, and watched her, without speaking, at all hours of the day and night. The price of foodstuffs appalled her, and all the ways of the coloured servants were strange at first. It irked her that, if she went shopping, for instance, she should be followed by an Indian watchman with a big stick; but she submitted to it, as it was Derry's wish, and apparently not unusual. Derry bought a dog-cart and a pony. In less than a week the syce ran away without notice, but before she had time



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to wonder who would groom the pony, a brother of the Indian watchman appeared, and announced that he was their new syce. He was an inch or two taller than the other, and not insignificant in weight, dressed all in white, even to the turban; a most princely figure. Rosaleen pitied the pony should he attempt to drive. But Derry said it was all right. Derry had a way of saying things were all right, and thinking it too.

But Derry was restless. The happiness Rosaleen was getting out of their lives together, the happiness that was independent of mosquitoes and insect life generally, and visitors, and the inevitable occasional throbs of homesickness, was her portion alone.

These days saw Rosaleen looking very beautiful. Happiness irradiated the whiteness of her skin with some inner glow of transparency, and always now a star shone in the centre of each dark iris. Derry saw her early in the morning, when she rose at six o'clock to get him coffee before he went for his daily exercise at the squash racquet-court. He saw her in the evening, when, after his day's work was done, she would come out with him on the verandah and sit contentedly by his side, whilst he smoked and tried to speak only of the lessons he was taking in Siamese, of the work he had to do at the office, of the Sports Club, and the daily routine.

But he was young and hot-blooded, and the girl by his side was the girl that he had pictured there when first his eyes had turned towards the East. Here she was, but not for him. There were fruit and flower in his home, but he must neither taste nor enjoy. His eyes might linger, and the desire to taste, to gather, might come now and again upon him suddenly, a thrill of longing that was pain, but fruit and flower were dedicate to the dead, and even to desire made him feel like a thief, made him flush, and look away, and be ashamed.

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Rosaleen never guessed what lay beneath his restlessness.

Derry played more, worked more, drove and rode and talked, more than all the other Europeans in that little colony. Presently it was whispered that he could also drink more. That was hereditary in the Ranmores, but he tried to keep it in check. Yet he thirsted, and always within his reach were the grapes he must not pluck; day and night they hung in luscious clusters temptingly before him.

Sydney Biddle, who was head of the department for which Derry worked, heard of his visit to the “Tingle-Tangle.” He had heard of many visits, and some lingering, at the United Club, but for an Englishman to visit the “Tingle-Tangle” was going a little beyond the limits that married men in Bangkok were in the habit of openly allowing themselves.

Sydney spoke about it to his wife, it was a habit of Sydney's to refer his troubles there. And this was quite a trouble, for Sydney Biddle took himself and his position seriously. He liked his energetic young subordinate, and his feeling of responsibility toward him could not let him ignore the matter when it was brought under his notice.

Sydney Biddle's wife was the daughter of the leading English merchant in Siam. She was a woman no longer young, but gifted with extraordinary energy. A great deal of it had been expended, by the way, in pushing Sydney's interest; but there was enough left to manage all the affairs of European Bangkok, to dress and doctor its women and babies, arrange its water-picnics and visits to the native festivities, settle its tennis and bridge parties, and pair off its unmarried couples. The Biddles had no children, and they had been in Bangkok for many years; they looked upon themselves as the mother and father of the colony. Rosaleen's lack of response to many a proffered kindness now rose up in Emma's mind.

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"Of course we only see the surface of their married life. Perhaps she is reticent because she has something to conceal. We don't know much about them, only what he has told us himself. He came into his title very unexpectedly, and there was no inheritance to go with it, apparently. We don't even know how long they have been married. But it seems a strange time for him to choose to go to that place."

"Of course, he may have only gone because it was a novelty, because he wanted to see what it was like."

"I know." Neither Sydney Biddle nor his wife were likely to put the worst construction on any action. "But I really must make another effort to get on better terms with her. I have asked them to dinner twice, but once they refused without any valid reason, and the other time, as you know, he came alone. He does his work well, doesn't he?"

"Better than well. And he is learning the language incredibly quickly. There is one thing about Irishmen, if you get clever ones they are cleverer than all their Saxon brothers put together. I don't believe there is anything Ranmore set his hand to that he wouldn't make a success of it. It's a pity if a taste for . . . for anything like dissipation should get hold of him. He carries his wine well, but it seems to me he tests his capacity, occasionally, to its extreme limit. I'm bothered about the fellow, that's the fact. The 'Tingle-Tangle!'"

The expression on Sydney's fair, sunburnt face was as if he had swallowed something exceedingly nasty, and Emma's expression, as always, reflected his.

"We must see what is to be done," she said.

The immediate upshot of that conversation was renewed kindnesses from the Biddles to the young couple under discussion, kindnesses that Derry accepted eagerly, and that even Rosaleen found it impossible to parry.

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“ If they are not agreeing very well, they ought not to be left too much to themselves. There are always difficulties in the first year.”

Emma thought that Derry would not be so much at the United Club, or the Sports Club, and would certainly go never at all to the “ Tingle-Tangle,” if he and Rosaleen had been in accord. And it was easy to find colour for the conjecture. They were not seen much together, their manner towards each other lacked something, or held something ; it was difficult to say what it was, but certainly it was different from that of other young wives and husbands under similar circumstances. The “ circumstances,” to experienced feminine eyes, were not difficult to discern. They might have their differences of opinion. Lord Ranmore was open-handed, open-hearted, talkative. Lady Ranmore seemed cold, self-contained, silent. Perhaps he had chosen badly, but if so he should make the best of it—not his way of making the best of it, which led to clubs, and too many drinks, and the horrid possibilities of the native tea-rooms—but Emma’s way, which she proceeded to develop.

Rosaleen was uprooted forcibly from her domesticity. Good Mrs. Biddle discovered that the Ranmores were seeing nothing of the country. She and her husband, with the best intentions in the world, broke up that home-life that was giving Rosaleen so much quiet happiness, and Derry so much unrest. First, Sydney found urgent work for Lord Ranmore which made it essential he should pass a week at the Survey Office, Sapatum. It was a palace that had been built for a Siamese prince, comfortless to a degree, and boasting only one staircase, a spiral one of iron ; it was impossible to use it without passing and re-passing the native servants going up and down.

“ He’ll go back to his home with so much more satisfac-

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tion in it,” Emma explained, when she suggested the arrangement. And, indeed, both Derry and Rosaleen were glad when the week was over. In a way—a way far from the one the Biddles saw—it had not been a bad move for Derry, the puny physical discomforts had kept his mind on the task of lessening hers; he was full of expedient, and had little time for dreaming and growing uneasy in his dreams, and full of self-reproach.

Then, there were the three days’ festivities for the King’s birthday. Nothing would satisfy the Biddles but that the Ranmores should give up the bungalow, and stay with them for the whole time. No one in Bangkok lived in such luxury as the Biddles. Emma Biddle had a French maid, and a Chinese cook, who was noted throughout the whole place. Derry frankly enjoyed the luxuries; the fine baths, the carriage that took him to and from office to club and home again. He was glad Rosaleen should be freed from her domestic work, and should only *tiffin* and sleep, drive out, and be generally cared for. He was genuinely grateful to Emma; he had no idea that it was his own conduct to Rosaleen that had been under suspicion. He was glad not to be living that strained life alone with her in the bungalow. And he showed this only too clearly to the Biddles, who, finding him both sober and domestic, already began to think the fault, if fault there was, must be Rosaleen’s.

They went up the river for a wonderful picnic. The destination was one of the largest temples in Bangkok, but the strange river craft, the floating houses, the panoramic variety, interested them more than the temple. The scenes through which they floated that evening on their way home, under the soft glow of what, in England, one would call a harvest moon, were a curious mixture of civilisation and savagery. The moon hung, somewhat

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yellow, like a burnt-out sun, low above the waters. There was light above and behind and below it, light paler than the moon itself, more transparent, a cloud mountain on which it could float, and this cloud-mountain, and not the moon, was reflected on the dark bosom of the still waters.

The Siamese fleet, eight vessels all told, outlined with small electric lamps, made a brave show. To-morrow the King would sally forth at the head of a grand river procession, bearing his gifts to the priests. To-night all was preparation in the native boats. One saw the busy little brown men, with their women and children, hanging paper-lamps, cutting tinsel, and making chains and flowers. Weirdly the lights of moon and burning torches, the electric lamps from the fleet, and the paper ones from the junks, mingled on the waters.

“I really don't think there is anything amiss between them,” was Emma's comment to her husband that night, when they got home. “Did you see how anxious he was that she should see all there was to be seen? He borrowed a shawl from me for her, and put it over her shoulders. I'm sure even *you* couldn't be more attentive.”

But there were differences between the domestic life the Ranmores led, and that to which the Bangkok residents were accustomed. And it is difficult to keep a secret in such a place. Either the native servants talk, or the ubiquitous washerwoman. Anyway, and without any undue prying of theirs into the affairs of their neighbours, the Biddles were still conscious that the Ranmores did not live as other young married couples.

It was Emma's scheme that Derry should be sent “up country.” The week at Sapatum had certainly not been without its effect. It is difficult to know how she arrived at this conclusion, but there it was, fully estab-

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lished. Back in the bungalow, Derry's convivial tastes again gave food for gossip, and it was Mrs. Biddle's idea that her husband should try him with the "simple life."

"It will cut him off from it all before it goes too far." She was not explicit as to what she meant by "all." But then, the significance lay in the ellipsis. Derry, notwithstanding his spirits, appeared to neither of them as the happy married man. They did not stay to trace this feeling about him to its source. The domestic arrangements at the Bungalow, or the incident of the visit to the "Tingle-Tangle," or perhaps the restlessness, helped the diagnosis.

"Send him to Petchaburi," was Emma's decision. "He speaks quite enough Siamese already to be able to do the work. And she will pine for him, and perhaps be warmer when they do meet. She hasn't his gaiety of temperament, and the first year of married life is always trying," she repeated. "Try a short separation for them. I'll keep her under my own eye whilst he is away, and I dare say I shall have the chance of dropping her a hint or two. Why, even I, when I came up here first, was impatient sometimes, and used to let out to you."

But Sydney would not have it that his wife was ever less than perfect. What had somewhat marred their married life was certainly not marring Derry's.

"Well, then perhaps it's that that's the matter. She hasn't spoken of it to me, and she has shut up like wax when I have tried to get her to talk about it. But women are different at such times. She may easily feel ill, and perhaps a little set against him for the moment."

Mrs. Biddle knew so much, but her knowledge profited her little when, placing Derry's, in the category of ordinary marriages, she made her wrong deductions.

However, there was no doubt that he did not resent

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being sent to Petchaburi, that, in fact, he welcomed any change. The more Derry saw of Rosaleen, the more his heart was set upon her. That was the truth about it, and the whole truth. Sometimes he got beyond his own self-control, and then there was nothing for it but the drink, or the violent exercise. Some day, perhaps, he would have to tell her he was not her brother, or her cousin, but just a man. But when he felt he was getting to that length, sitting by her in the bungalow, watching the rise and fall of her bosom under the folded kerchief, the little ear of her so close against the white neck, the black abundance of those plaits, that once he had seen let down, he would get up and move away, sometimes he would have to go out. It was he that was her guardian just now, and a sacred trust she was to him—Terence's wife that would have been. But it was very hard. He thought it would become less hard if he could leave her for a spell, so long as she was well cared for, and in kind hands. He knew she cared for him, but it was only as cousin or brother. *She* had no unrest when she sat by his side in the long evenings.

Derry's preparations were quickly made under Sydney Biddle's directions. When Rosaleen first heard he was going to leave her, for a moment her heart stopped beating, and all the colour ebbed from face and lips. She was on the point of fainting, but recovered herself. When his voice reached her, she was hearing him say that he looked upon it as a mark of confidence, as a step upward; that he wanted to see the ricefields, and that Bangkok was beginning to pall. He talked as men whistle in moments of danger, it was to keep up his courage. To stay was sapping his strength, to leave her was the only possible course. It never occurred to him that the pain of the impending separation could wring her heart.

“I'm thinking it will be good for you, as you say,” she



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got out after a pause. "It's a country life you're needing. Here, with the heat and the games, the office, and all the hospitality you're taking, it's thin you're growing."

There was nothing behind the quiet words to indicate the pain which, after that first acute thrust of it, was but a dull ache. She went on with the sewing she was doing when he broke the news to her, but the needle seemed to be growing, now too large to slip through the stuff, now too small for her to hold.

"You'll not be missing me?" he interrogated.

She could not trust her voice to answer. He was unlacing his boots, and the flush on his face when he asked the question might well have come from the exertion of stooping.

"You'll not be dull nor lonely, I know," he said. "There's Mrs. Biddle will be the best of friends to you. And Sydney is a very jewel of a man. They'd like you to stay with them all the time I am away."

"I'd rather be here, it's not lonely I'll be," she answered quietly. What she had in her mind was that she would be happier here, in her own home, than with strangers, however kind. She had had many happy hours on the verandah beside him, sewing, with him talking to her. Now he had grown restless, tired of her company. But those good hours were like angels in the house. When she would be quiet and alone here, she would hear the flutter of their wings in the air, and feathers from them would fall softly about her, like benisons.

"It's here I'd rather stay," she said again, when she could trust her voice.

Derry had to tell the Biddles so, for he saw she meant it. His heart was sore because she would not be missing him, but it is doubtful if it had the ache that hers had. He, at least, knew what was the matter with him. She thought she was ungrateful and unreasonable, that she had tired

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him with her difficulties in making friends, and in not keeping the house gay with company for him. He had only his longing for her to hurt him, his lawless, dishonourable longing, as he voiced it to himself. She had a thousand misgivings; the knowledge that she was a drag and a drawback to him deepened. It was his life he had sacrificed to her and to Terence. The weight she carried was as a load in her heart and a heaviness in her brain. Only those winged, happy hours that had been in the bungalow were there to soften the new solitude.

She bade him good-bye with what seemed to him such coldness and indifference that he had not even the courage to kiss her, as he had intended, with the Biddles on the platform to see him off, both of them wondering at the omission.

"They've said their good-byes at home," Emma explained. But neither she nor Sydney felt very satisfied. Derry's face was at the window, straining for a last look of her, but it was only her back he saw, for already she had turned away. All her spirit was set on hiding her distress; but how could he, or the Biddles know that?

## CHAPTER XIV

THREE weeks after Derry's departure for Petchaburi, Mrs. Sydney Biddle called at the bungalow to invite Rosaleen to go with her to a Royal cremation. Hardly a day had passed without some attention on the part of the older woman, and this, although it sounded rather gruesome, was to be a great function.

"You know it is partially our fault that you are lonely. Sydney might have sent someone else to Petchaburi, so you must let us do what we can to compensate you for his absence," Mrs. Biddle was always saying. But a word let drop accidentally, a word heard at the Club, borne on the air, told Rosaleen that Derry had been sent away because it seemed to be better for him to be got out of the town. And her sensitiveness suffered under the possibility that someone had guessed how things were with them. She knew it was impossible, yet the thought of it made her intercourse with her neighbours always less easy; it was only the Biddles whose kindness was impossible to avoid. And she no longer wished to avoid it. But for the feeling that she was taking it unfairly, that, if they knew her for what she was, they would not be treating her as they were, but for Rosaleen's consciousness of her duplicity, in fact, Emma would have got through all Rosaleen's reserves, as, indeed, she had already got through many of them. The girl wanted mothering, that was the truth of it; and often for a few moments now her defences went down. She talked to Emma Biddle of the old days in the convent; now and again of the green glory of Ranmore.

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“She is frightened at what is before her,” Emma told Sydney, “that’s the whole truth of it, I do believe. And she has resented it with him. I only hope it will be all over before he comes back. You can keep him there until the spring. My! we shall see a difference between them then. For she is fond of him, Syd, I am absolutely sure of that. But she is home-sick and lonely, and frightened, and much shyer than most young things. I’m getting very fond of her. All her little *gaucheries* and awkwardnesses with people are due to her convent training. After all, if you were to take any girl, only six months out of a convent, and those six months passed in a ruined Irish castle, you would not expect her to know about returning people’s cards, and having her own visiting day, and that sort of thing. She is handy enough with her needle; you should see the little things she is making, and has made. Yes, Syd, you may smile, and say all my geese are swans. But I’m getting fond of Rosaleen. If I’d had a daughter, I wouldn’t have wanted her to be very different. She is not given to making friends, but she kissed me to-day—she did indeed—and said I’d been so good to her.”

Mrs. Sydney Biddle was quite touched, and pleased by a growing dependence upon her that Rosaleen manifested. Sydney made her a present of a dog, an Irish terrier, to keep her company of an evening. The dog and the Biddles, and her youth, from which hope was inseparable, helped her over these weeks. Derry wrote to her, wrote quite often; he wished her to write to him, too, and she did, letters full of the Biddles’ kindness, and about the terrier, which she called “Buggins,” and he would know why. For “Buggins” had been a feature at Ranmore—the terrier that was cleverer than a ferret. They had common memories about “Buggins,” and his letters and

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

hers told anecdotes. Derry wrote of a primitive, wholesome life, lived mostly in the open air. He made light of physical discomforts and deprivations. “I wish you were with me,” he wrote, more than once. “I sleep in a tent, and my food, such as it is, is cooked on the doorstep of the *sala*. I bathe in the river, and ride my pony all over the place. It’s fat I’m getting now, and so sunburnt that it’s an Indian I’ll be taken for when I come back. . . .”

Rosaleen was glad he wished she were with him. She thought, maybe, she could have added some comforts to the menu he gave her. She told Mrs. Biddle of his letter as they drove to the Royal cremation. Mrs. Biddle said, perhaps thoughtlessly, considering that she had arranged it, never doubting the wisdom of the arrangement:

“I used always to go up country with Sydney when we were first married. I couldn’t bear to be without him for a day. I always said it was the best part of my honeymoon—no one but me and Sydney and the coolies. We had our sleeping-tent just outside the *sala*, and were in the open together nearly all the day, riding the little Siamese ponies, bathing in the river. I had a maid then, who would weave wreaths for my hair whilst I was bathing. And, not to offend her, I always put them on when I came out of the water. You can picture me.”

Mrs. Biddle was past forty now, and her grey hair did not look as if it could be appropriately crowned with flowers.

“We wore hardly any clothes out there. I bathed in my chemise, and had a dry one waiting for me, over that I wore a kimona, so you can guess how I looked, with the wreath to top it. Syd would come to meet us with nothing on but a vest and a pair of Chinese silk trousers. The pair of us would have made a sensation in Bond Street. What? But there was no one to see us then. Oh, yes, there was,

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by the way, I'm forgetting the natives who followed us wherever we went, squatting on their flanks and watching. And the washerwomen! I remember sitting outside the *sala*, working, and my washerwoman and another squatting down just in front of me. What did she do presently but lift up my skirts and show the other the clocks on my stockings! Quite gravely, as if, having washed them, they were as much hers as mine, and she was proud to show them."

Mrs. Biddle explained everything that wanted explaining in Derry's letter. The *sala* was a sort of resting-place for travellers, generally attached to the temples. It is only a large barn, built of wood, and raised from the ground on piles, but many of the *salas* have been beautified outside with frescoes. Derry was living in one of the best, or living outside it, rather, for when he was not in his sleeping-tent he seemed to be on his pony.

It appeared to Rosaleen but a short drive to where the Royal cremation was taking place, so interested was she in picturing Derry amid such scenes.

This festivity of the Royal cremation had been long talked of in the town. Nothing in the way of our Western funeral services could be compared to it. Long before they reached the long room, with its roof of white cotton, which was to be the scene of the obsequies, they saw the road lined with booths, in which the Siamese people, in their native costumes, were performing wonderful, endless plays, and doing the national dance. The national dance is with the hands and the body and the head, everything but with the legs, which scarcely move at all. Many of the dancers wore great gilt masks, which certainly added to the *bizarre* effect.

There is no fixed time, apparently, in Siam for a cremation. The corpses on this occasion were of a young prince,

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a nephew of the King, and of his mother. The lad had died last year in Germany, but the mother had been fifteen years waiting for her funeral service.

Rosaleen and Mrs. Biddle sat on benches outside the death-chamber, whilst relays of priests, in yellow vestments, went in chanting, and seemed to stay there, awhile, incessantly chanting. When they emerged they were wearing new and more brilliant yellow robes, and they carried embroidered fans! These were their presents from the dead—farewell presents. They seemed very proud and pleased with these presents, especially with the fans. Their thin, impassive, ascetic faces shone with an expression of great content, and their oblique slits of black eyes seemed more awake, more human. Rosaleen thought she could detect a satisfied cupidity. She was sure they looked happier than when they went in.

The Queen was the first of the royal party to arrive. The ceremonial itself, more than a thousand years old, a legacy from Buddha, was not made less striking by the example of modern science introduced. The Queen arrived in a motor-car, quite up to date, the chassis English, but the coach-work from Paris, and in quiet Parisian taste. The car was closed, and she sat back in the corner of it, without bonnet or veil, a still, strange, Eastern figure, quite immobile.

Then came the Siamese band, playing the Siamese anthem, a most dire and discordant chant. The band preceded His Majesty, King Chulalongkorn, who made his appearance in a European uniform. He was, however, accompanied by a bodyguard of eight Siamese, holding over him an enormous umbrella of cloth of gold, that glittered in the sunshine.

The urns that contained the corpses were two tall vases, Greek in form. They were probably of lacquer, but looked

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flimsy, as if made of gold paper. The ceremony consisted of the King setting fire first to one and then to another of these vases. There were sandal flowers and sandal-wood candles in the death chamber. By the time Rosaleen and Mrs. Biddle had pushed their way in, the smell was something appalling. It was concocted of the sandal-wood candles, and the burning urns, perhaps also the priests. In any case the two ladies were glad to push their way out again.

Presents were given to them, too, tokens with inscriptions in Siamese, and sandal-wood flowers. The whole thing was much more like a wedding than a funeral, with perhaps a dash of a country fair thrown in, to add to the other incongruities. Both women were conscious of headache and a sense of fatigue. The carriage was waiting for them, but beside it stood Sydney's own syce; he had evidently driven out, for the dog-cart was there, too.

“Why, there is Sydney come to meet us!” exclaimed Emma. “That is good of him. Just like him, too! I didn't ask him to join us, for I knew he was up to his neck in work.”

But Sydney was not there, only a note from him, sufficiently urgent for him to have sent it instead of waiting until his wife returned.

“What can he be writing to me about?” she said wonderingly, as she took the note from the man who produced it from his turban and handed it to her.

“DEAREST,—I've had news from Petchaburi. You'll know how to break it to the girl. Ranmore has had a sun-stroke. Mitchison writes in a great state. I thought I'd better let you know at once, so that if she decides to go up to him, you can go home with her and help to get her off. Send me word what you think, and I'll see about a seat in the train, and join you at the bungalow later.



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Make as light of it as you can. Mitchison is not very experienced, and she mustn't have more anxiety than necessary on her way up."

It was characteristic of Sydney, and reflected his own married relations, that he never doubted Rosaleen would want to join her husband, whatever her own condition or the trouble before her. His wife thought the same, but she foresaw more clearly than he what such a decision would mean. She had the sense to keep the contents of the letter to herself for the moment, to make no further exclamation. She gave the man his message, and he salaamed and left them. She could begin to tell Rosaleen when they were nearing home; there was no need to prolong the tension. The heat was intense.

It was that intense heat that gave her the first opening.

"If it were not that you are not in the best of health, you'd be almost better off in Petchaburi than here," she commenced, "it never seemed too hot to me."

"It's cool in the evenings, Derry writes. He sleeps half outside his tent, he says."

"He has a fine constitution." This was vague, and seemed to have little to do with what had gone before.

"Derry is very strong," Rosaleen answered. Then she was quiet a little, partly because her head ached, partly because she was thinking of Derry's six feet two, and the breadth of his shoulders. It was but a little fellow Terence had seemed beside him in those far-off days. He had wheedling ways, and a voice to which no one could say no; but it was Derry was the fine man.

Out of the fulness of her heart she began to talk of feats of strength in which she had seen him engaged.

"He wrestled with Tim Doolan once, and Tim was the champion of the whole of the south of Ireland. Derry didn't know the tricks as well as he did, but he just stood

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firm on his feet, I've heard Terence tell, like a statue; and the other could neither grip nor hold him. All of a sudden he tried for a fall, and then indeed he laid hold of him—it's Derry laid hold, I'm meaning—and he put Tim down as if he'd been a child, flat on the ground, with his shoulders touching. All the people shouted and called out to him . . .”

“You are very proud of him,” Emma said curiously.

“It's proud of him I've cause to be,” answered Rosaleen, unstrung a little through her memories.

“And yet Sydney and I have sometimes wondered . . .”

The ready flush warned her.

“—Have sometimes wondered if you and he quite hit it off together. I don't mean that exactly, but you are not quite like other married couples, you know.”

“Is it different we are then?” stammered poor Rosaleen, with a clutch on her heart.

Mrs. Biddle mentioned casually one of the differences she had noted, and Rosaleen's flush was painful.

“Of course you are both of you very young. I'm not asking for your confidence. Only this note from Sydney was about Derry.”

“About Derry?” she faltered, and all the flush of colour died out suddenly. “What is it about Derry?” She laid her hand on Emma's arm. “What is it about Derry? There's no accident? It's not ill he is, and you asking me about his strength?”

“I don't think it is anything very serious. You must keep yourself calm. We are driving home as quickly as possible, and there is nothing to be done until you get there.” She kept hold of the hand that lay nervous on her arm, and petted and patted it. “Lord Ranmore seems to have had a slight sunstroke, Mr. Mitchison has written . . .”

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“What will I do? What will I do? I’m alone the day!” She wrung her hands, she made as if she would get out of the carriage—“Is it a sunstroke you’re telling me? Oh! it’s dead he is, Mr. Derry is dead! Let me be, let me be. I want to get out. It’s not bearin’ it I’ll be. And me alone here!” She saw her loneliness, the horror of her position; she shook all over, her teeth chattered, she had no courage at all. Had she not seen Terence go forth, all gay and strong, and then the telegram on the top of it, and never again the light laugh of him, or the low, wheedling voice. And now Derry!

It never struck her that she might go to him, it never seemed to enter her head once through the drive, during which, as Mrs. Biddle said afterwards, she was as a girl possessed, crying, moaning, and saying the strangest things. Mrs. Biddle was disappointed in her, she seemed to have no practical sense at all, and certainly no idea that if her husband were ill, and alone in the up-country *sala*, it was her place to go to him, and that as quickly as possible, and see what good nursing would do. But then, of course, Rosaleen had no idea she could go to Derry, nor that he would want her.

Emma had a moaning, distraught creature on her hands by the time they got home. She sent for a useless doctor, and discussed every remedy, from bromide to a hot-water bottle, she exhausted reassurances and scolding. She resorted to open reproaches at last, and told Rosaleen the harm she might be doing to another life dependent upon hers. Finally Sydney arrived upon the scene, and was taken to see the now almost uncontrollable patient.

“Wouldn’t you like to see Mitchison’s letter?” he asked the girl, who had got no farther than the verandah, where she lay in a huddled heap, moaning and saying it was she

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that was the wicked girl, and it was through her that Derry had followed Terence . . . it was the ill-luck she brought them all. And much more, equally foreign to the situation, as Sydney saw it. He and Emma could only suggest the Celtic temperament as an excuse for her.

“I don't know what to do, I really don't. She has been like this ever since I told her, moaning and crying out that it is a judgment upon her; and talking about Terence—that's the cousin who was killed horse-racing—the one this one succeeded. I can't make head or tail of it all. She certainly does not think of going to him, she could not go to him in this state. You'll have to send someone, if Mitchison asks you for help. Who would be of any use? What time does the train go?” Certainly Emma was nothing if not practical.

Sydney suggested she should tell the girl they were sending someone up to look after her husband. And Emma managed to convey this in an interval of comparative quiet. The effect was electrical:

“It's not dead he is, it's not his death you've been trying to break to me!” She brushed her arm against her eyes. “Now, tell me again, what is it you're saying . . .?”

She was very confused. The news had come on the top of great fatigue, and her head was swimming and weak with it. She looked round, and saw them all clustered about her. Sydney, with his anxious face, and Emma, who had been crying with annoyance at her uselessness, at some failure of tact of which she was conscious, the doctor, who wished he might get back to his tennis, and had harsh thoughts about “hysterical young women”; and the impassive native servants. Sydney took up the parable:

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“Lord Ranmore is very far from dead, I doubt if he is even very ill. He has had slight sunstroke, probably on the top of a touch of malaria. The officer he has with him is young and new to the country.” Sydney could not help letting out what he felt was that which Emma was signalling to him not to mention, “I thought you’d want to go yourself.”

She interrupted him.

“Is it me—me, you’re meaning? Me to go up and nurse him?”

“Well, that is what I thought, certainly.”

Of course it was the Celtic temperament, and embarrassing to an Englishman, although the Englishman was Sydney Biddle, who only lived to do other people kindness, and escape from their gratitude.

Rosaleen flung herself on her knees before him and kissed his hands.

“You’ll be sending me to him! You’ll be letting me go to him?”

Derry wasn’t dead at all, he was only ill, and she it was who might go to him, and nurse him, and be of service to him. The nightmare of it passed so quickly that it seemed as if it could never have been. The whole aspect of the case was altered. Oh! if she could be of use to him! Of course the doctor was cautious, and Mrs. Biddle concerned. They had seen her breakdown, but this Rosaleen, pleading to be allowed to go, pleading for haste, asking for directions, was a different creature.

Emma tried to explain to her that she was taking a risk. They had none of them heard her laugh as she laughed then—so gaily, so like a child’s laugh.

“Is it risk you’re talking of, and Derry waiting for his nursing?”

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There had never been any real difficulty, this was what Sydney anticipated. There was a great deal of packing and arranging to do, there were medical and other comforts to seek. Mrs. Biddle undertook to put the bungalow to rights the next day. Blankets and linen and perishable things had to be stored away with camphor balls. It is doubtful if Rosaleen knew any of the precautions that would have to be taken at the bungalow lest they should come back to find the insects had devoured it. It was little she cared for blankets or bungalow. She was to go to Derry, to nurse him through his illness. That night, which passed so quickly for the Biddles, who worked as if they were, not their own native servants, but half a dozen energetic English ones, seemed to Rosaleen to drag. She wanted to be in the train, on her way to him. She would have forgotten the rest she needed so badly, and her own clothes, and everything beside, but for Emma, who never left her until she saw her into the train, having supervised her breakfast, and insisted on its substantiality. The train started at seven in the morning; in less than twenty-four hours she would be with Derry. Was it likely she could think of anything else? It is to her credit that in the end she did remember to thank Sydney, to kiss Emma, to falter out her apologies for her “desperate” bad behaviour.

“And we thought they didn’t care for each other!” Sydney Biddle ejaculated, when they had watched the slowly moving train steam out of the station, and turned their faces toward home.

“But still there is something strange between them,” Emma persisted, “or why did she reproach herself, and talk about the other one?”

“Perhaps there had been rivalry between the cousins, and she only married Derry after the death of the other,”

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Sydney answered, getting unconsciously somewhat near the truth.

"They must have been married longer than that," Emma answered. "It was only in October he was killed, I remember."

"Oh! yes, so it was, the first autumn meeting."

## CHAPTER XV

AT Petchaburi, where the great acres of rice-fields, which but a month ago had murmured yellow and wheat-like under the sun, now lay brown and bare in the heat, Mr. Mitchison met her with the good news that her husband was conscious. For the first twenty-four hours he had lain without speaking, there was no doctor within call, but an American missionary had come over from Ratburi. Mr. Mitchison did not know if he had any medical qualifications, but he knew he had carrotty hair. . . .

Anything feebler, or more futile, than Mr. Mitchison was never yet designated by the name of man. He was very small, and had pale hair, a retreating forehead, and an underlip that drooped in a half-open mouth.

"What was a fellow to do, you know?" an observation that he made at least three times, represented not only his conversation but his actions. He did nothing, ever. But then, as Emma Biddle said, he was very well connected; and when his family had exported him, as a last resource, to Sydney, Sydney was bound to find him a job. He was "attached" to the Survey Department. In what capacity neither he nor anyone else quite fathomed. He rode about a great deal on his pony, and, whatever the pace, he managed to keep his eyeglass in his eye. Perhaps this eyeglass was the most distinctive thing about him. It was not on a string, it simply rested in the orbit, and gave him what expression he had. Of course his name was Augustus, and he was in love with the daughter of the



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American missionary. But these two things Rosaleen only discovered later on.

Derry had had a sunstroke, and the missionary had made the long journey from Ratburi especially to attend him, and had stayed up with him for two nights, “just putting wet cloths on his head. I’d have done it for him myself, only, give you my word, I never thought of it. The fellow couldn’t speak. My gad! it was awful; thought he was going to die, you know. Kept wondering what I’d do with the corpse on my hands. Brother Whippell, American fellow, calls himself ‘brother,’ said I wasn’t to worry about that. Can’t help worrying; what the dooce can a fellow do with a corpse on his hands?”

Rosaleen was quite reassured by Mr. Mitchison; her natural sense of humour came into play with him, and in the days that followed she grew quite glad of his companionship. He fetched and carried, and his absolute vacuity made him unembarrassing.

The temple, and the *sala* that was attached to it, lay just as Emma Biddle had spoken of them. Derry was still in the sleeping-tent, watched over now by his head coolie. The *sala* was dining-drawing-and-living-room, the food was cooked on the doorstep. The native village was within easy reach, and presently the natives made their presence obvious, they squatted on the step, they looked in at the window, they were ubiquitous, curious, utterly useless, and continuously in the way.

It was Mr. Mitchison who told Derry that his wife had come. Derry was very enfeebled, he tried to rise to welcome her. Rosaleen had to take her courage in both hands, and go in to him. He was in that stage of physical weakness when nothing seems surprising. The pain in his head that the sunstroke had left kept him supine, the attempt at rising to welcome Rosaleen failed.

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"Is it you?" he asked.

The true nurse is born, not made. The science of nursing may be taught, but the instinct, the natural gift, is what counts in an emergency. Rosaleen was a born nurse. The moment she saw Derry lying there, all his strength gone, his half-glazed eyes scarcely recognising his surroundings, the very inertness and position showing how it was with him, it was this instinct that awoke.

"It's myself," she answered, and straightway forgot everything but his illness and need of help. There were bandages on his head, these she renewed, he felt the cool relief of them and murmured thanks. She asked Mr. Mitchison when Derry had had food, and Mr. Mitchison said he didn't know, the American fellow had been over in the morning.

In the strange solitude of that camping-out station Rosaleen passed the next fortnight in almost complete happiness. For, first Derry grew convalescent under her care, and then Derry grew well, and the development of their daily life proved a summer idyll. Their isolation, save for the coolies, was almost complete. As long as Derry needed her she sat with him, doing her needle-work, talking a little, even reading to him now and again. She got used to the coolies clustering and squatting around and about them. She had her own tent, but the tents were hot, and there was little privacy in them. A river ran through the rice-fields, and presently Derry was having his daily swim. Then came the time when he was able to mount his pony and get back to his work.

Something had changed in their relations to each other. In Bangkok Derry had been restless, excitable, full of high spirits, certainly, but high, uneven spirits; here he was quieter. Sometimes, as she sat sewing in those days of his convalescence, and looked up to see that it was well

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with him, she would meet his eyes intent on hers. If her head drooped quickly he would say nothing, but once or twice she met a smile in his eyes, as of contentment.

"It is good to have you sitting there," he said. "You can't think what the loneliness was those first few nights. I had no idea what was the matter with me. It was malaria, of course; the sunstroke was nothing, it just came from standing about trying to get warm when I was in one of my shivering fits. You haven't seen Whippell yet, have you? It's a long pull from the Missionaries here, but he told Mitchison he would come over any time he was wanted. It was only quinine and wet rags they could do for me until you came."

"And what could I do for you?" She smiled at him; it was almost the girl Rosaleen he had got back to himself.

"Just sitting there."

"And the broth I've made you?"

"And the bandages you've put on my head, and the cool little hands."

"Now it's you that are talking too much."

"Then you talk to me instead."

"But what shall I be talking about?"

"Why, Ranmore, to be sure."

They were never tired of talking of the great stone house, with its towers and its turrets, of the woods that surrounded it, and the still lake with the taste of the brine in it, where the herons made their nests, and the sea-birds found their way; of the tussocked grass, and the green, lush stretches; of the roses which grew all the year round in the old kitchen-garden, the hazel and birch in the coppice, and the sheep that wandered at their own free will, with only Buggins to bark at their thin heels.

What lay behind all these reminiscences was their one summer there together. A hundred times Derry had it on

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his lips to ask, what of the morning when they had met before the household was astir, what of their one evening together when all the enchanted wood was bathed in moonlight? Lady Ranmore had sent Rosaleen to fetch a book, and Derry had followed when he saw her slip out. She had heard him coming and fled in caprice, but he had overtaken her. She had been a faun that night, dancing, laughing, evading, eluding him under the shadows of the trees, in the fairy rings, now in the leafiest darkness, now in the patches of the moonlight. Her hair had floated about her . . .

“You mind that night——?” he asked her once, and then stopped. But she knew which night he meant, and what Derry might have said to her then had she been a woman grown, and ready to hear it, not just a maid who wanted to hear naught, only to dance and to laugh whilst the big fellow admired and pursued. . . .

Once, indeed, in those days of convalescence, when she was folding away her work, preparing to leave him for the night, he put a hand on her arm.

“Rosaleen,” he asked, with the note in his voice that went right to the core of her heart, and set it beating wildly. “Rosaleen! it’s not always you’ll be mourning for Terence?” But the flush and the flutter and the fear of her, as she dropped her work, as she turned from him, as she answered nothing, silenced him. He could hear his own heart beating, she could hear hers, but they could not hear each other’s.

“It’s only good night I’m saying.”

And she, too, said only “Good night,” as she passed out of his tent.

Now it was May, and heavy rains came upon Derry as he rode about his work. He would return at three or four o’clock, for she was for ever telling him to be

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careful of his health. She was solicitous for his comfort, housewifely.

“Then you are caring if I’m ill or well?” was another speech that woke, or shook, them both, since they were not only the words he spoke, but those his eyes spoke, that carried his meaning.

“You’re telling me to take care of myself.”

“And who else have I got belonging to me?”

“Is it belonging to me you are?” he answered, and for once he laid a gentle arm about her shoulders.

The sudden stricken look in the eyes she raised to him, mournful once again, was the real answer:

“It’s me that’s not belonging to myself just now, Derry,” she said. The shame flushed in her cheek, and the words were low and hurried.

“I can wait.” But the flush was on his, too.

She ran away from him that time. Waiting was the task he set himself, and the conditions now made it easier.

Derry’s recovery from the time that Rosaleen had come to him had been sufficiently steady to make it unnecessary to send for Brother Whippell. But one day, when she was shopping in the market street, she heard a huge rumble, and saw a farm-waggon, with three benches across it, drawn by two small Siamese ponies. This was the missionary family coming to call. They hailed her, and made themselves known, they were not going to be deterred from their call by the mere accident of her being out.

“I want to see my patient, Lady Ranmore,” Brother Ben Whippell began. “You’ll be going along home, I do think, and you’ll just let us hoist you inside, and come along with us.” His Americanism was very marked, but the nasal quality of the accent notwithstanding, Rosaleen found the voice agreeable. It was so human and friendly, there seemed to be an immediate friendship established

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between them. He helped her into the cart dexterously and cleverly. Brother Ben, who, by the way, was a fully qualified medical man, in addition to being a Primitive Methodist preacher, had a shaggy, unkempt, straggling head of red hair, and keen grey eyes. His hands were sinewy, small, and capable. He wore a white, or clerical, tie with his khaki-coloured linen clothes, otherwise there was nothing to indicate his dual profession. A cloth cap, with a flap that hung down behind to protect his neck from the sun, completed his costume. His placid wife was obviously from the South; her slurred burr contrasted with his nasal tongue. She was stout, and made room for Rosaleen with difficulty.

“I ought to have been over before,” she said, “but there is so much to do.”

“And as Mommer doesn’t do any of it, it keeps her busy,” Aline broke in.

Having seen Aline, it was not difficult to account for Mr. Mitchison’s infatuation. She had her mother’s dark eyes, and there was enough of her father’s colouring in the brown tints of her hair to make the word Venetian appropriate. She was slender of build, graceful of movement, alert, and extraordinarily voluble. Rosaleen heard more about Siam, and, incidentally, more about Aline Whippell, in that half hour’s drive than she had learnt of the country in four months, or of any human being in a lifetime of acquaintance.

“My, you should have seen me!” or “My, you should have heard me!” prefaced a dozen incidents in which it seemed she was for ever in the foreground.

“Why, if that ain’t Ranmore himself!” Brother Whippell said as they approached the *sala* on their strange vehicle, and saw Derry and Mr. Mitchison on the road. Derry had on a white linen suit, but poor Mitchison was

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straight from the river. He wore his under-vest and a *sarong*, which is a native garment, something between a petticoat and a kilt. He made as if to hide himself behind Derry, but the Americans hailed him as if they noted nothing unusual, and presently the two men, too, were being hauled into the farm-cart. Aline continued talking, and Mr. Mitchison, in the intervals of pulling down his *sarong* and apologising for it, played a sort of wondering chorus to her monologue. She rallied him, but seemed not averse to his attentions. When they arrived at the *sala* they all trooped in, and took seats on provision-boxes. They were offered cocoanut milk and water.

"Waal, I'm glad you took my advice, young man," said Brother Ben to Derry. "I've put your husband on the teetotal ticket for so long as he is up here, Lady Ranmore. And mind you keep him to it, that head of his don't want anything more to carry just now."

"Brother Benjamin is all for total abstention," drawled Rachel.

"Popper don't believe in compromises."

"Ah! curious thing, now you remind me," said Mitchison. "I never met but two sorts of Americans, those who drank like fish, and the iced water brigade."

"Is that so, now? Then I may take it from you that the American that travels in Europe is either a teetotaller or a drunkard?"

"They are the only sort I have met."

"I shouldn't take Mr. Mitchison too seriously, Popper."

But "Popper" took everything seriously, and pursued the subject. It was a burning one with him. He spoke with great feeling, he was given to free speech, but had little chance, as he would say, quietly, "when Aline was around." Evidently quite proud of her conversational powers, he himself was most interesting about his missionary work, and,

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when he talked of the national religion and of Buddhism, of what he was “out to fight,” he spoke not only like an evangelist, but like a man of feeling. He made the relation of his spiritual campaign a real and vivid thing. His heart was in his work.

The weather helped them out when other subjects were exhausted. Aline asked Rosaleen if she rode, and said riding astride was the only way with the Siamese ponies. She offered to make Rosaleen a pair of khaki trousers, like her own. Brother Ben looked up quickly, and quite authoritatively, without any ceremony, interposed:

“You’d better not ride at all just now,” and excused his daughter’s exclamation by adding, “She don’t know everything, Aline here,” and openly winked at Rosaleen.

Their plans were discussed, and again Brother Ben put in a warning word, when he heard that in a fortnight they were going up farther; camp was to be struck for Wat Poh Pra. Mr. Mitchison was not accompanying them, for the work that led Derry afield was not work in which Mr. Mitchison could even pretend to assist. Brother Ben knew the country well.

“You can get to the sea in two hours from Wat Poh Pra. And that’s the vurry best thing you can do with your wife. Send her to the mission-house there. They’ll look after her, and the sea breezes will put colour in her cheeks.”

“You don’t think my wife is looking pulled down?” Derry asked anxiously. He liked the words on his lips. He said again, “My wife has been nursing me too well. I’ve been an impatient patient, doctor.”

“I’m all right, Derry, I’m all right!” She flushed quite deeply. “Now be telling us more about the people and the priests, Mr. Whippell.”

“Popper likes to be called ‘Brother,’” Aline put in slyly.



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"And it's brothers we all are," Derry put in promptly, "we Westerners out here."

"Waal, I shouldn't call myself a Westerner," Brother Ben objected.

They stayed quite a long time, right into the cool of the evening. Rosaleen found herself liking always more definitely the doctor's nasal accents, and quaint turns of expression. He gave an impression of solid and reliable strength. Afterwards, when she knew him better, and had heard his history, she found her first impression confirmed. He was the one of the party that interested her most. Certainly it was to Brother Whippell's sense and promptitude that Derry owed being again in health. Mrs. Whippell was more obese than individual, and Aline too much interested in herself to leave anyone else room for the theme.

"I came out here with Mommer and Popper because I thought it would be a change from school-teaching. There ain't hardly a soul for me to speak to up in Missionary Land. You see, I'm intellectual, and better read than most. There's Schopenhauer, now, there's hardly a book of his I ain't read. You'd be surprised. And these missionaries, why, they never even heard tell of him. And I can play the piano. Mommer says it makes her want to cry. You must come and stay with us one while, Lady Ranmore, and just hear me. We ain't got many lords' wives around. Here's Mr. Mitchison, why, his sister is a baronet's wife, but she's in England. Didn't you say she was a baronet's wife?"

"Ah—well—did I? Not exactly, you know. She married"—he turned to Derry as if he alone would understand—"the Master of Fairbank."

It was difficult to explain the status of a Scotch laird to an American girl, but Derry accomplished it. It was easy to see that Augustus had been exploiting his connections

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with which to dazzle her, and that he had not been wholly unsuccessful.

At leaving, Brother Ben said again :

“ Don't you hesitate if you want to get away from that camp up at Wat Poh Pra. They will take you in any time at the Missionaries' ,” he said to Rosaleen. His manner gave her a sense of comfort, a sense of security, too, and this she knew was what he meant to convey. She had been living in the present.

And live in the present she continued to do until two weeks later, when they struck camp.

Certainly the Americans had quickened the Ranmores' curiosity in their surroundings. Neither Derry nor Rosaleen had explored the neighbourhood, and their interest in Buddhism was less than elementary. The priests had followed them sometimes to the river-side, but the priests were no less a part of the landscape than the native women, with their burden of double panniers, one containing provisions and the other a baby. In the market street Rosaleen had seen the men from Lao, with their quaint costumes of tightly fitting black jerseys, buttoned with elaborate native buttons right up to the throat, their short trousers and bare legs ; the Lao women in their striped petticoats of blue and yellow. Brother Ben told her that when the Lao young couples contemplated matrimony the ceremony of betrothal consisted in their sitting in company under the supervising eyes of both families and many friends, watching whilst the lover solemnly sewed up his fiancée's petticoat.

Buddhism was the religion of the country, and all the many Christian missionaries from many lands had made no appreciable difference to it.

The Siamese New Year fell at the end of March, just before they struck camp, and that was a very festival

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of Buddha. Their newly awakened interest led them to many an excursion. Less than two miles from Petchaburi were the caves, where in coolness and darkness many hundreds of presentments of the prophet lie in their separate shrines, guarded outside by the wonderful sleeping Buddha, nearly 135 feet long, and more than proportionately broad. He lies on his side within sight of the caves, one gilt arm under an enormous head, covered with spikes representing hair, and a golden flame, like an aureole. All his toes are joined together, and they are all the same length. This worshipful monster has a beautiful mouth, like a Cupid's bow, and his half-closed eyes are of mother-of-pearl.

The caves themselves were pleasant after the heat; cool and dark. Every niche had its gilded Buddha, and no Buddha on the New Year but had its tribute of burning joss-stick. This day the natives were clambering up the rocks in shoals, sprinkling their favoured gods with scent! The band played, and there were Siamese dances, as at Bangkok, with play of wrists, elbows and head. The music of the band is a drone. Sometimes the pipers joined in the dance with each other, back to back, twisting their limbs. The three days' festival of the New Year, of the Buddhist New Year, is one of the public holidays when the natives are allowed to gamble. And they take full advantage of the permission, sitting at the games with solemn, inscrutable faces, morning, afternoon, and night. They would do no work these three days. Even Derry's head coolie, and Rosaleen's washerwoman, temporarily abandoned their duties.

Other Buddhist festivals interested them, one occurring shortly after the New Year. The ceremonies took place in Ratburi, but Derry managed to get Rosaleen into the town. The occasion was the return of a Buddha who had

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been regilded ! Two bands went out to welcome him, and a long procession. A fair followed, with more music and dancing, and stalls or booths full of dreadful penny toys and bunches of beads, hailing probably from Birmingham. A great wheel of bamboo was made in the Buddha's honour, bearing four hammocks. It was worked by hand, and everyone seemed to ride in it, always in honour of the regilded Buddha.

To each country its religion, but this of Buddhism, the farther they penetrated its mysteries, the stranger it seemed. They were both of them glad of anything that took their thoughts from themselves just now, subconsciously they both knew it was through a waiting time they were passing. They were prepared to regard any religion with respect, and every superstition, for this is a necessity with Irish Protestants, if they are to live in peace with their Catholic countrymen. But when Derry's tent blew down in the night, and one of the very Buddhas who had been fess-sticked and scented in the day was carried out to act as a weight, the limit of irreverence seemed to have been reached. Certainly the workman saluted the god before tying him up, but this was the only apology for using him as a tent-peg.

The missionary service they attended together, the last day they spent at Petchaburi, brought home to them the contrast of the story that had moved the world.

It was held at a little village behind the hills. They drove there in the moonlight, a long, silent drive on a lonely, unpeopled road. Suddenly, and, as it seemed, from nowhere at all, they were among a crowd of natives, silent natives, all converging to one point, a large shed that had been erected ; before the wide door, or opening, was hung a white sheet. The little brown people squatted quietly down before the sheet in row upon silent row.

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Rosaleen saw Brother Benjamin, and one or two other dark-coated men; lift up the sheet and pass into the tent. Presently, against the moonlight, half shadowy and wholly impressive, she saw thrown upon the white sheet, in all its simplicity, the first scene in the stable at Bethlehem. She saw the animals feeding at the manger, patient, bovine, unregarding. She saw the Virgin Mother, the babe in her arms with the aureole of light, the wise men from the East kneeling before it in adoration.

One of the missionaries was telling the story in Siamese. Picture followed picture. Here was the flight into Egypt; steadily the voice explained it. It was gone, and here was Jesus, the Child, rebuking the elders in the Temple, the mother seeking her Son. The answer, “*Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?*” sounded curiously in its foreign expression. The panorama of the miracles culminated in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Now came the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and then the Last Supper. Here was Gethsemane, with its sleeping disciples, unconscious of that long hour of agonised prayer . . . the English voice broke a little as it narrated it. The next picture was the trial before Pontius Pilate. One saw, one almost heard, the gibes and jeers of the ribald gaolers over the mock crown of thorns. Then there was the weary bearing of the cross which was to become the symbol through countless ages. Now there were sounds from that hushed row of silent people, a wailing sound that was like an Irish keen, for the agony of the Crucifixion was before them. Above the low wail rose those last words: “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*”

It was the story that had moved the world. It seemed almost new, and strangely vivid to Derry and Rosaleen as they heard it in those strange surroundings; and it gave them some rush or tide of feeling that brought them closer

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to each other. In the moonlight Derry could see the girl's eyes were wet.

They drove back silently to the camp. The moon was steady above the trees, but the fireflies danced like will-of-the-wisps among the leaves and branches.

"You're crying," he whispered. His arm went about her. "I can't bear you should cry."

"But for you, what should I have ever done but cry?"

"We'll be happy some day together. . . . say you think so, too. It's a waiting time we're passing through."

CHAPTER XVI

THEY struck camp the next day for the move to Wat Poh Pra. They travelled by ox-cart, and the ground was soft from the heavy rain. The wheels sank inches deep, and the wretched animals strained again and again to move them. The coolies yelled and shouted and pushed. They would have rained blows, but neither Rosaleen nor Derry would permit that. Derry got out and helped to push. Rosaleen, too, insisted on walking some parts of the way. But the tents and the luggage were in the ox-cart, and the animals were inferior to the Kaffir variety, and much smaller. Derry knew, when it was too late, that he ought to have had a team of four instead of two.

It was a tedious affair, but they got to their destination at last. Rosaleen made light of her fatigue, Derry was not conscious of feeling any, he was so relieved to have arrived.

The primitive domestic machinery that had worked so well at Petchaburi broke down completely at Wat Poh Pra. At Petchaburi the coolies had done their work, except on the occasion of the gambling interregnum, with regularity and sufficient intelligence—any way, with apparent interest. The Chinese cook could provide a meal out of any material to his hand, there was a choice of washerwomen, and in any little thing that Rosaleen was bent upon doing herself, for Derry's comfort, she had the sympathetic assistance of the head coolie. There seemed such a number and variety of natives that they had hardly

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taken it seriously when, on the eve of their departure for Petchaburi, the Chinese cook refused to stir, and Rosaleen's little Siamese maid, who had come all the way from Bangkok with her, was nowhere to be found. She had run away with Mr. Mitchison's head boy. They had been amused at the romance. Rosaleen said she had no call for a maid, and really it was little the girl had done for her.

The wash-tub is perhaps the most prominent feature of Siamese housekeeping. Clothes are changed daily, or twice daily; everything finds its way quickly to the wash-tub. The absence of a maid was amusing, the desertion of the cook was bearable, but the difficulty of finding a washerwoman was insupportable. They were farther from the river here, and the air seemed alive with heat and insect life. The new *sala* was half the size of the last one. They had hardly been a week at Wah Poh Pra when they found there was a difficulty in obtaining provisions. Chickens were to be had, tough and stringy, and mangoes, but there seemed little else. There should have been eggs, but the chickens failed of their duty. Each chicken they ate might, they thought, have been the one that would have laid had her life been spared! They tried to make light of their inconveniences. This was the time when Rosaleen showed her quality. She cooked and sewed, and even washed! They had taught her to iron in the convent; there she had ironed her own needlework, and the fine lace and embroideries that had been sent to the convent to be mended. Now she utilised her knowledge. Derry sent one of the coolies back to Petchaburi, and one of them up to Ratburi, with orders to find a washerwoman at all costs. But meanwhile Rosaleen could not bear to see him with his linen coats so rumpled, and, oblivious of the heat, and of the curiosity of the natives, who climbed the window to see her do it, she set to work



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to iron them out for him. This was whilst Derry was afield, at the work he had been sent here to do. Once, when he arrived home, he found her very white and shaken on the doorstep. She did not tell him that she had fainted at her occupation and been carried out here. She told him that she had found a snake in her sleeping-tent. It was quite true, and it excused and explained her faintness. He did not know that it had not disturbed her in the least, and that it was the previous day the incident occurred. The snake had been killed by one of the boys; it was a very harmless variety. Derry, who had been alarmed at her pallor, found it quite simply explained by the story of the snake. He was sorry for the fright she had had, he began to wonder if he had done rightly to bring her so far, to expose her to all these hardships. She would not let him doubt, she made light of all of them.

But they were hardships, almost unendurable for white people.

Derry was at work, he could take exercise, walking, and on his ponies. There was hardly a day when he did not manage a swim, although they were too far from the river for those evening walks that had formed the pleasant termination to so many of the Petchaburi evenings. Rosaleen had nothing but the heat of the *sala* and the sleeping-tent, the daily struggle to get the washing and ironing done, and as much cooking as was possible. All her days were lived that Derry might miss nothing, want nothing. She worked at stove and ironing-board as none but an acclimatised native could have worked under the conditions to which she was exposed.

She had fainted the first day she tried the ironing; the tendency to faintness recurred, and kept her lethargic, and with a feeling of ever-impending illness. She wished sometimes, vaguely, that Brother Ben Whippell was within call;

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but she wished more definitely than anything else that Derry should notice nothing of her state of health, and miss nothing that she could do for him. She made really heroic efforts to conceal how it was with her. In another month they were to go back to Bangkok. It seemed to her that she could hold out for another month. She knew she ought to be able to, her knowledge had taken her as far as that. It did not strike her that the exertion she was taking might interfere with these calculations.

They managed a little better with the foraging presently, when the news of their arrival spread about. Fish was now to be had, vegetables and fruit other than the mangoes, small peas, for instance, peas that are cooked and eaten with their pods, and there was sweet corn. There was a market, after all, although it was some way off. And now the new coolies began to wake up to what was needed. Rosaleen might have held out a little longer, it was a man's spirit that was growing in her feminine body, if Derry had not expressed a desire for bread. It was a very idle wish, he was in good health again, and growing used to the life; it pressed so much less hardly upon him than upon her. He said it was a rest-cure he was having. The absence of white people, white faces, that she found almost a nightmare, did not affect him at all. No hideous fear and faintness haunted *his* waking hours.

In the convent Rosaleen had also learnt to make bread. The coolie brought the material she ordered the next time he went to market, the very day after Derry had expressed his idle wish. The cooking apparatus, a cauldron on three legs, was new to her and difficult to manage, and her first day's baking was not a success. But Derry was so proud that she had made the experiment—what was not burnt was sodden and raw, yet he insisted on eating it—that she was fain to try again. His praise was sweet to her, and he

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was lavish with it. The second attempt was more successful. That several times, whilst she was kneading, a curious trembling came upon her suddenly, that twice or three times during the baking there was a return of faintness, did not count against the pleasure of hearing he had never tasted such bread in his life. He ate half a loaf with his evening meal, washed down with cocoanut-juice. Exhausted as she was, and fearful beyond consecutive thought or expression, seeing Derry eat his bread brought fresh life and courage to her.

If only the rain would come, or the nights grow less hot ; if only she could sleep, or stand up at her work without the *sala* growing dark and swaying ! She was naturally strong, she held up longer than seemed possible. The change in her came gradually, and Derry, seeing her many times a day, was less likely to notice it than a new-comer. Her face grew preternaturally thin, and her eyes sunken ; there was no colour in her thin lips, and it was only when Derry was by that she could hide her languor, not very well even then.

What instinct, or broad humanity, brought Brother Ben Whippell riding into camp one day she never knew. Derry was afield ; she had tried and tried to get through with her bread-making. Now she was lying on the ground, out here in the hot air, she had one of her rare fits of overwhelming physical depression. She could not go on, she did not care what became of her. It was home-sickness for Ireland's green lush grass that she had, it was deadly fear of sickness, it was pain in her head, and heat and swelling in her useless hands and feet.

Ben rode up, the first thing she saw was his shaggy red beard. The nasal accent fell on her ears like music.

“ Anybody in ? ” He saw her almost as soon as she saw him, and was off the pony and by her side.

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“Well, now, just to think . . . !” For, at sight of him, all at once, her self-control seemed to leave her, and her courage. She just burst out crying, and, when he took her hands from her face to look at her, she went on crying uncontrollably.

“There now, there now!” he soothed her. “You didn’t expect me riding along in this way. It ain’t no harm crying; just cry away.”

He seemed to know where everything was to be found. He got a pillow from her sleeping-tent, and put it under her head; for the moment she was beyond effort. His fingers were on her pulse.

“Lonesome?” he asked. She began to recover herself presently, and sat up.

“It’s foolish you’re thinking me?”

“Now, what put that into your head?”

“It’s so . . . so hot!” The weak tears could not be restrained. He did not try to check them, but went on talking as if he noticed nothing. He told her whence he had ridden, of the sea, and the palms that grew close to the place, and the white mission-house with the verandah. The awful sense of isolation and loneliness passed away from her a little as he was speaking. There were cool breezes somewhere.

“I’ll be getting me courage back presently.” And now she smiled faintly at him through her tears. They had been friends from the first, these two, although they had spoken so little together.

“Waal, I guess you’ve got some things to tell me.”

“Ah! doctor, an’ can you keep away the faintness?”

He got it all out from her gradually—the weakness and the trembling, the fainting and her fears.

“Make me well enough to go on just this one bad month

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we're here. It's missing me he'd be ; and him that has to work in it all.”

He could see it was only of Derry she was thinking, and Derry's need of her. He did not tell her she had come to the end of her strength, there was time enough for that. But what he saw made him remember. This was a common thing, this sacrifice of one human being to another. He had made his offering on the altar many years ago, he knew all about sacrifice, and the strength it spent, and gave.

“How is Derry ?” he asked. “Any more headache ? That's a fine man of yours, Lady Ranmore.”

“Ah, and he is that !”

He knew the way to her confidence, and to her heart. He talked a little of Derry, and Derry's illness. By the time Derry himself came home, vociferous in his welcome, Ben Whippell knew all that he needed.

“You wait until I get through with my bath,” Derry said, after his first burst of greeting. “We'll keep him to dinner, Rosaleen ; he must taste that bread of yours. I hope you've got plenty of it, by the way. It will get the chicken down, and the mangoes. There's fish coming, unless it's here. I sent it on, just out of the river it is, lying on its belly in the basket, with its eyes turned up. I don't know the name of it, but it will taste of the water perhaps. And that's what we're all wanting. It's rain, doctor, I wish you'd brought with you.”

Derry's bath was something new in ablutions, he had invented it himself. He stood outside his tent, talking all the time, just as he had come in from riding, fully dressed, in his thin white vest and linen trousers, but with his hat off. He was a fine figure of a man beside the coolies, not one of them reaching higher than his shoulder. He had grown lean, and while, under his directions, the men swashed

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bucket after bucket of cold water at, and over, him as if he had been a horse, and this his grooming, one saw beneath the wet and clinging vest the muscular deep chest, the sinews of the arms, the long flank.

"It's my own idea; you get the freshness of the water when it's flung at you like this. Will you have one, doctor? There's time before dinner. And I can lend you a change of clothes."

But Brother Ben declined. He was quite ready to stay and dine with them, having come over for that purpose, in fact. His instinct had led him right. They were young things, not fit to look after themselves, far less each other. He would have to make an opportunity to see Derry alone. She had begged him not to tell Derry there was anything amiss. But the tact that comes from the heart is less likely to err than the tact that comes from the head, and Brother Ben Whippell had both. He would retain Rosaleen's confidence, and he would not unduly alarm Derry. But he knew the girl was very near the end of her endurance; there is a moment when the fretted string gives way. Where were Derry's eyes that he had not seen? The answer to that was easy. Derry's eyes were blinded by his admiration.

During dinner Ben heard all about the bread and the ironing, and the fine manager she was. And he saw the lines go out of the white, tired face, and the softening that came into the sunken eyes. This was her hour; it was for this she worked.

"It's Derry that's making the fuss about the little I do," she said. "You'll tell him it's not much for a girl to be able to cook."

"Waal," said Ben, holding up the bread, "I ain't going to tell him anything against this. We've nothing better than this up yonder."

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“And it’s herself that made it all,” Derry began again.

It was after dinner, when the heat grew more bearable, that Ben suggested Derry should ride with him a little of his way. Rosaleen gave a quick, suspicious look at the doctor, and he nodded his reassurance. He would tell Derry nothing. She was feeling ever so much better tonight, there was no need to say anything. She had let herself get low and frightened, it was the solitude, and all those brown faces.

“You’ll not be saying anything to Derry?” she said to Ben the moment Derry had gone into his tent to get his hat, and exchange canvas slippers for boots.

“Just you let me fix it up,” the doctor answered. “Derry wants a change quite as much as you do. Two or three days by the sea would set him up fine. I guess I’ll make him take a day or two off. There ain’t the hurry about this railway they’re prospecting, that it need prevent him having a holiday. Don’t you worry about anything I may tell him. I’m just as close as wax. You get to bed, and have all the sleep you can. You take that cachet I gave you, and don’t hurry to get up in the mornings.”

He did not advise her to give up cooking, or any of her household work. But, when he was with Derry, under the stars, riding through the night, he asked him, casually enough, how long he’d been married.

“Only just as long as that!” he said, in surprise, when he had his answer. Then he rode on silently a few paces, thinking. In the end he put it to Derry just as he had outlined it to Rosaleen.

“I want you to come up to us for a few days. The sea-bathing will do you good.”

“Whew! but I’d like a taste of sea-breeze.” Derry took off his hat, but there was not enough wind to ruffle his hair. “It’s not myself, though, that matters. I could

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get away all right, but it's Rosaleen that . . . that can't ride just now.”

“Waal, fix up that she can drive.”

“She doesn't feel the heat as much as I do; she tells me it hardly affects her at all. It's wonderful how well she feels, but for the snake they found. Did she tell you about that snake?—she was as fit as anything up to then.”

“Oh! that's what she tells you?”

“I'd dearly like a swim in the sea; it sounds too good to be true. But I can't leave her in that beastly camp alone. . . .”

Ben wheeled round and looked at him:

“No, you can't!”

Rosaleen's confidence was not violated; but Derry was made aware in some indefinite, but very practical way, that Ben Whippell had made up his mind they were both to come to the mission station for a few days. It was not Ben's way to look too far ahead. Lady Ranmore must be moved at once; he would know presently whether she would be able to return. Ways and means for the transport were discussed. That Derry should ride and his wife should drive was inevitable. Ben lost no time over his job. He made it his job, which had become even more vital than saving these Siamese souls. With a pulse at 130 and a history such as he had taken from her lips, he knew every hour was of importance.

The ox-cart that fetched Rosaleen the next day was a tiny thing, about two feet wide by six feet long. Two chairs were placed in it, with a Chinese mattress, some straw, and all that was possible for her comfort. But the roads were bad, and the oxen shook from their heaving flanks. The tracks through the rice-fields could hardly be called roads; the high banks, the intersecting waterways,



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all contributed to the unevenness of the ground. At first, the mere fact of moving, of being on the way to the sea, of leaving the camp behind them, kept her up. Derry had ridden on in advance, there was only herself with the drivers. But the bumping grew worse and worse, and the day was torrentially hot. Not all the prospect of coolness brought coolness to her. The horrible, incessant bumping jarred her nerves, her head, her back. It was only a three hours' drive, but it seemed endless, unbearable; the pain every fresh rut brought began to tear through her. . . .

The Rosaleen that was lifted out of the ox-cart and carried into the missionary house was very near the end of her troubles, however. And there were kind hands about her, white women's hands, Christian women's helpful hands. There was no doubt how it was with her. They got her into bed.

The missionary house lay white above the sea. From her windows Rosaleen could see the water, through the palms, blue and moving. The murmur of it came to her ears whilst she lay. There was a cooling breeze, too, for it was evening here. She heard kind, pitying voices, saw white faces, she had not much strength, but her courage held. When he was wanted Ben was there, too, and every fear seemed to go with his coming. It seemed long to the women who watched. Brother Ben, and the women, grew more and more anxious for her. But there came never a murmur from her lips, save a murmur of thanks, a word of gratitude, a wish "they'd not be tiring themselves." All there was to be borne she bore with a great and wonderful patience. More than once she said how good it was to be here, and that she heard the sea. All through that night the murmur of the sea was in her ears, and the breeze came through the open window. When the whiff of chloroform was given

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her for Ben knew that her strength was failing, although her courage held, it was back in the convent she thought herself, and called the Sisters by their names. For the convent, too, had lain within sound of the sea.

It was morning before the baby lay beside her, and then she had passed into sleep, a sleep so like death that those about her held their breath.

That was how Derry came to see the baby before she did. He had walked about through the whole long night, full of fears, self-reproaches, now shaken with anxiety, now desperate lest enough should not be done for her. There was something stronger, that fought with all the other feelings. Was it jealousy? Was it rage? No! not rage; he could not let it be that. Terence had never meant aught but good to her. He had only loved her too much, and who was it that wouldn't love her? It was Terence that didn't know the meaning of self-denial.

Then he thought of all her brave comradeship to him during these past months. Ah! it was a fine legacy Terence had left him. It was she that was more than estate or title.

But Ben would not let him stay too near the sick-room. Brother Ben Whippell thought of everything. He sent Derry for a swim in that early morning hour, toward the end, when he himself hardly dared to think what the end might be, so worn out was she and exhausted. Ben met him when he came out of the sea, the towel about his loins, his eyes alight with anxiety, but with health and vigour in his step as he strode up through the palms.

"Good news?" he called out, for Ben had waved to him.

"There's a son for you," he said simply. He had been through a strenuous time, and he had no words to waste.

And then it came about that Terence's son was put into Derry's arms. An indescribable feeling seized him

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as the bundle stirred, and was warm and alive in his hands. Strong man as he was, he trembled ; but Ben saw nothing strange in his emotion. Ben was an emotional man himself, and that made him sympathetic.

“Why, man, don’t you know better than that how to hold him ? ” was all he said.

Derry’s eyes were full of tears. It was to hide the knowledge of them that the doctor spoke, more nasally than ever, it seemed, and made as if to take the bundle from him. It was so small, so puny a thing. Ben pulled the flannel aside. Two eyes as small as a kitten’s opened—they were blue eyes. Derry saw that the down on the small head was red, as red as Terence’s had been.

“What do you think of it ? ” Ben said. “It’s a very fine child. I shouldn’t be surprised if it weighs up to eight pounds. And look at his arms. He’ll be a prize-fighter. Look out, he’s going to hit you ! See him doubling his fists.”

If Derry could have put his thoughts into words he would have answered that a tenderness like pain had come into his heart ; it was so small and fragile a thing that he held. A generous great rush of feeling came over Derry when the blue eyes had opened under the red down. He had had some feeling that was anger, jealousy . . . he knew not what. Now it passed away from him, passed away from him for ever. There was only pity left, pity for Terence, who had died without knowing what it was to hold a son in his arms. But he, Derry, would father it.

He put his head down to it a moment, how small it was, how small and weak ! He was ashamed of his emotion, but he vowed that never, never again should anger come into his heart. Terence’s boy should be welcome with him. ’Twas the head of the family he was, a red Ranmore again.

## CHAPTER XVII

**I**N the weeks that followed Rosaleen lay on her bed and dreamed, while Derry went back to his work and dreamed. But the dreams of neither of them showed what was in the heart of the other. And Ben Whippell, to whom the human heart was well known, found these two were locked against him.

He did not understand why, when she had awakened from her first long sleep, and they laid the baby in her arms, she first looked at it, and then piteously, fearfully at them, and then had broken into sudden tears, and turned away her face. He did not know why she drew the flannel hurriedly over the child's face, and then turned hers away from it. Motherhood seemed to come to her as a shame, not as a joy, Ben thought, as he watched, saying nothing, understanding less. She did not want to nurse or hold the baby; she trembled, and her eyes were averted when they laid it in her arms.

Ben had no clue to the feeling that made her beg him, in broken voice, not to let Derry come near her, to keep Derry out of the room. He was too good a doctor to cross her wishes, but it was hard to get at the root of them. It was difficult, too, to comprehend why Derry took so quietly this prohibition of the sick-room to him.

"Tell her I understand," was all his message.

It was strange how Derry understood he must leave her alone just now, but he did. He saw the child again; again he made his silent vows that it should be as a son to him. The likeness was more pronounced as the features grew

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clearer, and he knew that Rosaleen must be alone with this Terence come to life again. He would not be intruding on her. “Tell her I understand,” was his message. He could not trust himself to say more. If there was jealousy in his heart he smothered it.

He went back to the camp, and to his work. However it was at the moment with her and with the child, he knew the time would come when she would want a man beside her. They were both so frail, she and her boy; and it seemed to him they were both so helpless. It made him glad in his strength, for they had no one but him to shelter them. His love went out to them both, and made a man of him. That new manhood yearned for his mate, and his dreams were full of her. He dreamed that her eyes would lighten at his coming, had he not already seen them lighten at his coming? And sometimes, in those hot, lonely nights, he saw great welcoming eyes, and felt the touch of timid lips. In his dreams during these tropical, restless nights, he heard her whisper that she needed him, even as he needed her, that she had done with grieving, that now she knew he had loved her all the time, that she had done with grieving for the dead, that she was very young, and needed love; and . . . in his dreams she nestled in his arms. His spirit and his flesh leaped to her, and yearned for her. She had suffered, it was healing she should find in his arms. He had always loved her; and what could come between them, since Terence's son should be his son? Already he loved him for his father's blue eyes and sunny hair.

But Rosaleen's dreams were different. She turned her face from her baby, up there in her bed at the mission house, always her eyes were averted from him. And when perforce they fell upon him, they saw through tears. Derry might have forgotten; that was what she had thought.

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He might have forgotten, forgiven . . . but here were the blue eyes and red hair to remind him. Now Derry could never forget.

They were not blue eyes, and sunny hair, that had won her heart in that summer past. She knew it now, if she had never known it before. It was not the young sun-god, with his gaiety and wheedling ways, that she had loved. It was gay he was, and masterful, and at Ranmore no one could deny Ranmore's lord. She had seen his mother's eyes strain after him :

*"When his foot went forth at morn,  
Like a dancer in his blitheness."*

But *she* had never strained her eyes to see him pass. What had come upon her through him had come in ignorance. In her wild weeping now she said that he had been selfish and cruel, and her thought of him was one burning flush and agony of resentment and shame. She clenched her hands and set her teeth when she thought of it, burying her face in the pillow, writhing from her memories. Terence was not like him who had chased her through the woods on that moonlight night. Derry, with his long limbs and his great shoulders, and his gentle halting tongue ; him that she knew now was all the lover or husband she had wanted. She was slow to take her baby to her breast, she came reluctantly to her motherhood.

Ben watched and wondered. If, now, he would force her confidence it was because her strength was not returning to her.

"You ain't doing me no credit, and that's about the size of it," he told her one day. "You're fretting. You wouldn't like to tell me what you are fretting about, I suppose ?"

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He was sitting by her bedside, and he laid his hand on her wrist when he asked it. His nasal voice was surprisingly gentle. His practised eye, no less than the hand on her pulse, told him that all was not well with his patient. She flushed under his eyes, a delicate rose-tint of a flush spread about her paleness; then she turned her face away from him.

“I guess Derry is lonely, back there in the camp, without you? If you don’t get better quicker than this I shall have to order you right away to Bangkok, without seeing him at all. Or shall I send for him here, and see if his treatment would be better for you than mine?”

He waited for his answer. The baby was nearly three weeks old, and all that time Derry had not once ridden the two or three hours that lay between him and his wife and child. Brother Ben could not understand it at all. It was not curiosity he had about it, only the knowledge that there was something amiss, and a beautiful desire to help. He had been sent into the world to help his brothers and sisters; that was his whole creed.

“I’ll send right along for him if you say the word. You are crying in the night, and sometimes in the day. It ain’t good for you, and it ain’t good for the baby. I’m Brother Ben Whippell, I went through deep waters before I came out here, I’ll tell you about it some day, if ever you care to hear. I’d like to lend you a hand to get through, if you are in the floods. Hold on to my hand, if it is any good to you; pull yourself on your feet through holding on to me. There ain’t no saying what a friendly hand can do, until you’re holding on to it. I’m talking in the dark, since you’re keeping me there”—he kept his hand on her wrist—“but I’m a man that’s been through . . .”

She was not crying now, although the eyes she turned on him were wan and sunken with tears.

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“I guess Derry’s lonesome up at the camp, waiting for your message.”

“It’s not Derry will be wanting to hear from me.”

“What makes you think that? I guess you’ve made a bad hit this time; you’re wide of the bull’s-eye. ‘Just let me know and I’ll come along the moment she sends for me,’ that was what Derry said, and he said that ‘he understood’.”

“He said that?”

“He did indeed, he said just that. I’m Brother Ben Whippell, ain’t he been good to you?”

At that she turned to him wildly.

“Good to me! Good to me! It’s an angel Derry’s been to me! It’s a saint of a man he is!” And then burst out crying again. “It’s me that’s ashamed!”

Ben thought he had the cue. The best of men make their mistakes, but when good men make mistakes, they do little harm with them.

“If”—his voice was gentler than any woman’s—“if he loved you too much . . . too soon, and now that he ain’t here, and you’ve had pain and suffering through it, you’re bearing him malice; just think what it must be to him, up there, alone, thinking of it. He is sorry, I’ll bet he is sorry. He walked up and down all that night, he never went to bed, he could not rest.”

“Oh, don’t, don’t!” She covered her ears.

“Don’t be thinking all the time about yourself, now. Think of that time you were with him together in the camp, killing yourself that he should miss nothing. You love him, you know you love him.”

“Ah!” she burst out crying: “I love him . . . it’s him that . . .” The sobs interrupted her; but Ben finished her sentence.

“That loves you. Don’t doubt it. I know. When



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you've been through waters, you get to know things . . ."

"But when he sees him?" she said wildly, she sat up in bed, and her eyes and voice were wild. "When he sets his eyes on him, and remembers . . . All the time we've been together lately, he's forgotten. But what'll he say when he sees him . . .?"

"What is it you're talking about? Don't you know he has seen him?"

Less and less Ben understood, more and more he wanted to help. He could see fear in her wild eyes, but love was there, too; surely love was there.

"Has seen him?"

"To be sure. Held him in his arms, kissed him."

"*Derry!*"

"That's so. Why, it was when he held him in his arms that he sent you that message. Tell her 'I understand,' he said."

"The saint of a man!" she gasped out. But now there was no longer fear in her eyes, they glowed with some emotion he could not understand.

"The saint of a man he is! Tell me all he said, every word; and how he looked—tell me! . . ."

She was so agitated, excited, insistent, Ben began to fear for her. She turned quite white, he thought she was going to faint. He took the pillow from under her head and made her lie quite flat as he went on talking.

"I'll tell you every word. You're scaring me with your dough face. I wonder what you've been conjuring up. Now, what made you think he would go away without seeing his son? . . . I'll leave off talking if you don't lie still! Did you think he would be ashamed of him then, a fine, great boy like that?" The painful flush that spread over the pallor, confirmed him in his mistake. He

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went on, “If he has come a little before his time, Derry’s welcome had to be warmer. I guess he thought you might chill him. Derry just gathered him up in his arms, and warmed and cradled him there.”

“Is it truth you’re tellin’ me? Is it truth?”

“He cradled him there in his arms, I’ve never seen a man handier. I pulled the flannel off his head, so that he should see him properly, and the young flapper opened his eyes. ‘It’s heaven he’s got between the lids of him!’ Derry whispered. He knew Who had sent the child to you,” Ben added softly. It was so easy to forget he was a missionary, it was only Ben himself who never forgot he had a message to give, even although he knew too, that there were times and seasons for delivering it. Rosaleen only said feverishly:

“Go on, go on! Tell me everything he said and did.”

“After he had said it was heaven he’d got between his lids, he stooped and kissed him.”

“Kissed him?” Now, for the first time, it was the mother-look that came into her eyes. Ben got up and took the sleeping bundle from the cradle, laying it beside her. She turned over on her side, and gathered it in her arms. “He kissed him!” she said, wonderingly, under her breath.

“That was the first time he saw him. The second time . . .”

“Derry saw him twice?”

“Waal, there ain’t nothing out of the way in that, is there? The last time he saw him was the day before he went away. ‘Ain’t he just growing?’ he said. Then he took him over to the window and looked at him quite a long time. *He ain’t ashamed of him.* ‘He’s a red Ranmore,’ Derry said. ‘They say up at Ranmore it’s the sun shines brighter when a red Ranmore is born.’ ‘You’re

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proud of him?’ I asked. ‘It’s proud of him I’ll be,’ he answered simply. Then he laid him on the pillow in the easy chair, as if he’d been used to handling babies all his life. And I saw him kneeling down . . . I didn’t stay after that. If he was putting up a prayer for him, if he had any cause to reproach himself . . .”

“Oh, no, no, no! not him, not Derry!”

“I left him on his knees by the boy. That’s when we don’t want no doctor. I guess if he puts up a prayer it’s going to be answered. When I came back he had him in his arms again. Nurse Ward said you were stirring, and we did not want you to wake and find him gone. Derry had him up against his face. He kissed him before he gave him back to me. ‘It’s proud and fond of him I’ll be,’ he said, almost as if to himself . . .”

It was the doctor, not the missionary in him, that watched the colour returning to lips and cheek. If all the time he was talking under a mistake, he was effecting all the good that would have been done had he known the facts.

“You’ve brought me life,” was what she said when he rose. He knew it was time to go. She seized his hand, and would have kissed it. “It’s life you’ve brought me,” she said as he drew it away, patting her shoulder instead.

He never knew the truth, but then he had no curiosity. The spirit that moved him was truly the spirit of Christ, and it was His work of healing he tried to do in the world, healing of both body and soul. Some day the life of Brother Ben Whippell will be written, but the writer worthy of the task will first have to be found.

After he had left her, Rosaleen lay conscious of nothing but a rush of thanksgiving. All that dreadful time at Wat Poh Pra she had been upheld by Derry’s words, “*We’ll be*

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*happy together some day . . . say you think so too.”* But, after she had seen Terence’s child, she could not think so. Surely he would always be between them. But now that cloud had passed away. It was her weakness that had brought it about, perhaps. Now her tears were tears of thanksgiving. What a man Derry was! What a saint among men! And he had kissed the baby, and said it was heaven he saw shining through his eyes. Rosaleen could see it now—now the mother in her was awakening.

From that day Ben began to see the improvement in his patient, and, once begun it made quick headway. He did not ask her again whether he should send for Derry. That could wait. If there had been a flaw in the understanding between them, and he was shy of coming to her, or she of sending for him, time would be the best mediator. Ben did not know exactly what he had said, or how it had affected her, but he knew that once again it had been vouchsafed to him to be of service. Ben Whippell was quite happy as he saw Rosaleen growing stronger day by day, and the baby thriving, too. He could go about his Master’s business again; there was no young thing lying, broken and unhappy, in his house. He heard her singing to her baby now, sweet Irish lullabies. It gladdened him in his work. There was nothing more to be said between them.

The young mother that was waking in Rosaleen was very like other young mothers. The baby’s eyes were still a miracle of blueness, but he had rubbed off some of the red down, and the soft head was almost bald. There was no doubt his hair would grow again, Nurse Ward assured her. She was anxious about it, it seemed so strange it should have disappeared. She was not satisfied without consulting Ben, and getting Ben’s grave reassurance that he was not always going to be bald, and that the occurrence was not

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unusual. Of course, already he was unlike any other baby, and she had a surprising knack with him. She was singing lullabies to him, but she and her heart were singing low. It was still a waiting-time with her, although now it was a glad waiting-time. She was shy of sending, but she knew Derry would come to her. It was the first time she had ever sought her glass. Now she thought about her looks. She had not much reason to be dissatisfied, for, as soon as she was strong enough, Ben made her spend all her days in the open air, most of them by that unfamiliar, tideless sea. Unfamiliar and tideless it was, though the wind, that stirred it so gently, kissed her lips to coral, and turned the eggshell white of her skin to fine ivory. All nature came to her aid to prepare her for Derry's coming.

For, of course, Derry was coming. Mysteriously he knew it was time, there is no saying how the knowledge came to him, but certainly it was there. He rode up, and she saw him whilst he was still a long way off. She got out of the house, and ran down to the sea. It was there he found her, an hour or so later, when he had had his bath, and changed his clothes. He was quite excited, and the blood rushed to his head, for everything had changed between them, he did not know how. His dreams had led him a long way; he went to meet her with outstretched arms. But they fell to his side again. She looked so beautiful. Her eyes fell before his, and he could not see the gladness in them, and now he was afraid. Neither of them had words for greeting.

"You've been up to the house?" She spoke first, as a woman will.

"Yes. They told me I'd find you by the sea."

"It's rare and pleasant by the sea."

"It's made you look fine."

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They walked up to the house side by side, hardly speaking together more than that; the silence of deep feeling was on them both. They did not understand each other well enough to be quite silent. They were shy of what was between them, unconscious what it was. Derry was tongue-tied and stammering; more than once he said she looked fine. And his eyes said it oftener, and more eloquently. He could not keep his eyes from her, not during that walk up to the house, nor afterwards.

Ben was waiting for them on the verandah, and his welcome was not wanting in warmth; he saw they were shy with each other, and through that evening meal, when he was talking, and making his effort to release Derry's halting tongue, he noted that her eyes were averted, and her colour came and went, that her husband's eyes were never off her, and the flush rose sometimes to his forehead. But presently they were all talking together, notwithstanding, for Ben had the gift of being host. Rosaleen's spirits rose with Derry's account of the troubles there had been in the camp since she left; of how he had eaten the last chicken and been eggless ever after; of the famous effort of the coolies to make the bread the "mem" had made; of the state in which it had been served up to him; of the cook "boy" who had given notice, but been forbidden to leave; and of how, while the rest of the servants were sleeping or eating, he had lifted up a plank in the *sala*, when he was supposed to be preparing the evening meal, and had slipped through, disappearing from under the piles.

There was talk of the state of the roads, and of the native methods, and of the rice crops. The talk came easily, then with difficulty; and there were intervals of silence which even Ben Whippell found it difficult to bridge. There was an awkward number. Yet they both seemed to

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prefer it to a *tête-à-tête*. He said it was a wonderful night, the moon would be lying like a silver net over the tree-tops and on the surface of the sea, and he would go to the verandah for a smoke after supper. But Rosaleen made a quick excuse to slip up to the baby. Derry joined him on the verandah immediately and pulled out his pipe. Derry said he must be riding back soon. He and Rosaleen had said “good night” at the door.

Ben thought the time had come when he must cease to be hospitable.

“When are you taking them away from us?” he asked Derry, carelessly, when he gave him a light. “You’ve finished your job here, ain’t you? You’ll be going back to Bangkok, I surmise. Why don’t you take them both up to the Missionaries at Petchaburi for a few days? Make a sort of second honeymoon of it.” He was holding the match for Derry; he saw that the hand that held the pipe was not quite steady. “You’ll have the place to yourselves for the best part of a week. They are all going up to the Congress. You’ll find everything there very comfortable. . . .”

“If she’ll come with me,” stammered Derry, with the flush mounting, never stopping to query what Ben would make of the doubt. Ben had no doubt she would go with him. He thought it well they should be alone together.

Two or three days more Rosaleen stayed here by the sea, whilst Derry went back and finished his work. On Saturday they would make the first stage of their journey to Bangkok, halting for a few days at the Missionaries’. Both of them—he at Wat Poh Pra, and she during long days by the sea, long nights lying tremblingly awake—were facing the prospect of being alone together. Both of them were facing it with shifting colour and unsteady pulses. Everything would be different from what it had

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been before. What would it be now, that life they were going to face together? Derry knew what he hoped it would be, what he meant it should be. Rosaleen did not allow herself to think over much. She only knew the world was beautiful.

An hour or two before they started Derry knocked at Rosaleen's bedroom door.

“Can I come in?”

“Come in!” She was standing at the window, with the baby in her arms, saying good-bye to the palms and the blue sea beyond them, a silent good-bye. She turned her face to him when she saw him enter. If she blushed he did not notice it; she was always beautiful in his eyes. The room was in some disorder, for she had been packing up, and now boxes were corded and everything was ready. He was in a hurry, and what he wanted to say had to be said in a hurry, with no significance in it. He was acting on impulse again, quick impulse.

“Brother Ben wants to christen the boy before we start. You don't mind, do you? He asked me what name we'd be calling him by. I said there had been Terences at Ranmore before Saint Patrick. We'll be calling him Terence, I told him. Will you bring him down? Nurse Ward wants to be godmother, and then there's Brother Ben and myself . . .”

Derry was breathless and hurried, holding the door open. He wanted to get the naming over. He hated to see the fear come into her eyes when he spoke Terence's name, so he avoided her eyes. But had he not avoided them, and had they not been downcast, he would have seen there was no fear in them, only hope.

“It's Terence then we'll call him,” she said, as she went by him to the door. Her colour was high as she passed him, but there was no sorrow in her eyes, and her voice



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was quite steady. He put out an arresting arm, and the flush deepened. His voice went hoarse; he did not know what to say to her when she was standing near him like this.

"You're not sorry to be going away with me?"

They were such beautiful eyes she raised to him, and the flush made her face like a wonderful flower. He could only say again, "You're not sorry?" It was all so wonderful.

She gave him a quick look. No! she was not sorry. Then she was out of the door. They must not keep Ben waiting.

## CHAPTER XVIII

THEY stood side by side whilst Ben read the service and Derry made his responses. Possibly his mind was not concentrated on what he was saying. This was the beginning of his love story, he had seen the light in her eyes. It was a girl she looked to-day with her star-centred eyes and the flush on her cheeks, and his heart leaped to her. While he was saying his responses, and hearing Ben's voice, he felt the flush of his manhood upon him, and his pulses rose and fell. They were going away together, and it was love that lay before him. The whisper of it went through him like the whisper of spring at Ranmore, when the brown trees put forth the crumpled green of the first young leaves, when the water rushes down from the mountain to the welcoming lake, and daffodil and violet push their way through the ground to meet the sun's first wooing, when the lush grass waves like corn in the soft April breezes, and the clambering rose trees throw out their eager shoots.

*"And He took them up in His arms, put His Hands upon them and blessed them."*

These were the words that he heard, but he was thinking, as she moved across the room, of the buoyancy and spring in her walk, and the new young slenderness. She had run from him down the stairs with the old swiftness of foot. This was the girl he had wooed.

They took leave of Ben, and of Nurse Ward. Rosaleen would have kissed Ben's hand, so grateful was she to him, but he kissed her cheek instead, and Derry envied him! Yet he knew his time was coming. Every moment his

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spirits rose. He told Ben how grateful he was for all his goodness to his wife and child. He watched Rosaleen out of the tail of his eye when he said it, and thrilled at the pink embarrassment he saw. He kissed Nurse Ward, saying he did not see why Ben should have all the privileges. And all the time he was watching Rosaleen. She was going away with him. They were at the beginning of everything. He was like a man starting on his wedding journey. Even Ben was startled at his spirits, and her silence, and the happiness that seemed to illuminate both of them. They did not look upon each other, although their supreme consciousness of each other's presence was so patent throughout that leavetaking.

Again Derry rode, and she drove. This time the road seemed less uneven, the heat not so trying, and through the sun and the heat of that new day happiness drove with her, seeming to ease the heavy wheels with rubber tyres, and change the wooden supports of the waggon into C springs. He rode by her side, behind or in front of the waggon. But a dozen times that day he asked if she were comfortable, if she wanted anything, if she would get out and walk a space with him.

The house in Missionary Land near Petchaburi was empty, and awaited their coming. Ben's wife and daughter had gone home for a while, back to Tecsumah; the rest of the mission party were at the Congress in Bangkok. Derry and Rosaleen had the place to themselves, not only the house, but the generous garden, and practically the whole small mission station. From the very moment they arrived there, from the very first night, he began to woo her. Perhaps the wooing had begun before, but now it was conscious wooing. Both of them were conscious of it all the time. She was his wife, had nursed him through illness, shared solitude and hardship with him; yet never

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a touch had he laid upon her lips, nor had his hand sought her waist.

The first day or two here he was a little humble, as befits the perfect lover, and a little bold, as befits him too. And when he was humble, and pressed his suit lightly, thinking to give her time, and not play the tyrant with her, she thought she had been mistaken, and held herself more aloof. And when he was bold, with his eyes, or, perhaps, with a hand on her shoulder, or a quick arm about her waist, she was off and away from him, full of fear. Sometimes the old pain throbbed in her, lest he be thinking lightly of her. Always she knew she would give her life, and her immortal soul for him. The trembling at the touch of him, that he, or she, mistook for fear, was more of the nature of an ecstasy. It was something beyond happiness that was coming to her, the exquisite joy of it touched pain. Always she ran away from it, but it was not far that she ran.

That was how the first two days passed. This house, too, had a verandah, the very pattern of the one at Bangkok, where she had sat quietly by Derry's side and done her needlework. But she did little needlework these two days. It was she who was restless now, more restless than he. She was for ever avoiding these *tête-à-têtes*, or seeking them. There was a hammock on the verandah. Derry said it was too high for her to get into unaided.

"Let me swing you up."

"I'm too heavy for you."

"Why, it's no weight at all you are!"

"I can get up by myself. Let me be."

She fluttered like a bird between his hands. He held her the tighter.

"I never thought you were so light."

"Let me go, Derry."

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All the ivory and white of her skin were flushed with the wild blushes that came and went.

"I like to be holding you," he whispered. "I like to be feeling you in my arms."

But she escaped from him that time. She made him set her down. It was seldom afterwards that she found herself safe; his arms were so long.

"It's needing support you are . . . you are not strong yet," he told her. It seemed to her that she was always blushing. To him there was nothing sweeter than the confusion he could bring upon her. Now he began to tell her about her looks, about her grey eyes that had stars in them, about the pink, thin lips, that smiled until the dimple came and played in the corners of her mouth; of her eyebrows that were like little dark feathers, moved by her changing expressions as feathers in the wind. Then he thought that was a bad simile, and sought for another. They were like a delicate etching. He must lay a finger on them to see if they would rub out. Her face went down, and he made it shelter on his shoulder.

"And the hair of you," he whispered, "is like the trees at Ranmore."

He put his face down upon it, it was soft hair, he could bury his face in the abundance of it. It was loose, and waved back from her face, the great knot at the back seemed as if no hairpins could hold its weight. "You remember that night in the woods, when it was all about you like a shawl? You'll let it down one day, and let me see. . . ." But she wrested herself from him. . . .

That evening Derry said he was too far off from her if he faced her across the table for dinner. Nothing would serve him but to bring his chair beside hers.

"You may be wanting something passed to you," he said, coolly, although he was not cool at all. "It's

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over-exerting yourself you are with that great dish in front of you.” With the coolies in the room she could say nothing, but only make way for him beside her. Her quickened heart-beat, and the feeling she had that there was storm in the air, took away her appetite. All that evening was full of thrills and excitements, of sudden flushes; every word he said had subtle meanings. She felt the storm that was in the air, and that there was some strange glory of sunset beyond it. When she was a child she had heard of the pot of gold that lay at the end of the rainbow. After dinner the storm came. He put both those strong arms about her, and swore he could not let her go. He said her cheek was as soft as a baby’s. Can a man taste and not hunger? His lips lingered, and now it was hers they had found and forced. He let her go before he had done more than know how they trembled and grew hot beneath his own.

Afterwards they sat in a new silence. Surely, it was no longer dark. Surely, they were in the arc of the rainbow, and all the lights and colours lay about them, more beautiful than gold; it enwrapped them with its radiance, and it was they that were part of it. She did not know how it was she found herself in his arms again, but she was trembling there, held close, and exquisitely afraid.

“Are you frightened of me?” he whispered. “You’ve need to be . . . I can’t wait much longer.” His breath was in her ear, and the whisper went through her. They were unknown feelings he stirred with that warm breath that she felt tingling in the crown of her head, and in the soles of her feet. “It’s hungry for you I am. I want my wife . . . *my wife*, Rosaleen. I’ve been so patient. . . .”

It was such a short week they passed together at that little isolated Missionary Station, but the emotions of a

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lifetime were concentrated in it. Even now she could hardly believe that Derry cared for her. Expression was always rare and difficult to her, but feeling deepened, and deepened, until it was the spring from which life itself was fed. Derry accepted what had come to him more lightly, there was so much of the boy still in him. He had come into his own, and that was enough. But he would not let her be out of his sight, nor out of the reach of his arms for very long. He was boyishly in love with her, and patently happy, bubbling over with good spirits and easy talk, always a wonder to her with his exuberance.

They had to return to Bangkok at the end of the week, but were loth to go.

“Our honeymoon is over,” Rosaleen said, as they watched the stars together on the last night here.

“And that’s what it will never be . . . all our life is going to be honeymoon.” She was never beyond reach of his arms, and now her cheek lay against his.

“It’s all our life will be honeymoon,” he repeated. His breath was soft on her ear, and his lips on her cheek.

“You’re meaning that?” she whispered.

“An’ you’re knowing it as well as I do.”

## CHAPTER XIX

EMMA BIDDLE had done all and more than she had promised in protecting the bungalow at Bangkok from the native servants, and the native vermin. The verandah was gay with flowers and Chinese cushions. There were white curtains up in the windows. Emma had neglected nothing for their home-coming, and, of course, she and Sydney were their first visitors. Never had there been so successful an experiment, the Biddles thought.

"They might have been married yesterday for the way he looks at her, and she at him." So Emma told Sydney after the visit was over. "It was the best idea we ever had, to separate them for a bit, and then to send her up after him."

She took to herself the entire credit for the happiness that was so unmistakable about both of them; and certainly, if intention were to count, she deserved the pleasure she got out of the supposition. She was delighted with the baby, too. Derry and Rosaleen had to school themselves not to mind the exclamations of wonderment that it should be so fair. That red fairness was the shadow on the horizon of Rosaleen's happiness. She could not credit all at once that Derry had no retrospective jealousy. She was jealous for him, of him. Already, in these first weeks after the return to Bangkok, she began to doubt whether he loved her with one tithe of the love she felt for him. He could talk of it so easily; she could hardly talk of it at all. The past, of which neither of them spoke, seemed to Rosaleen to be with them all the time in the



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house. Derry played with the baby, and her own love for the child grew with its growth ; but the likeness to its dead father was as an accusing finger, pointing scorn at her. She would cover his face sometimes, then snatch him to her in remorse. She was gentle mother, but wifehood was her crown and glory.

Notwithstanding the shadow, she was more able now to play her part in the social life at Bangkok. Derry taught her tennis, and she was an apt pupil. She could dance as lightly as the rest. Flirtation she never learnt, and she was always a little shy of compliment, and chary of intimacy. She had no confidante, she could not gossip as the other women did. The misconception which had grown up about her, that she was proud, that she gave herself airs, had just this much foundation for it. Emma and Sydney Biddle were the only friends she had, the rest were acquaintances. And, as she was Lady Ranmore, and titles were scarce, although snobs were always plentiful, the supposititious exclusiveness created a certain amount of enmity ; although perhaps, enmity is too strong a word. She stood a little aloof from these people, and they from her. She was invited to functions, but not to intimate parties. As she was so much happier alone with Derry than in any society, large or small, it never hurt her to hear she had been left out. That was the only effect of her so-called exclusiveness until Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Huxted came from Turkey to Bangkok.

Of Frederick Huxted little need be said, except that he had been unfortunate in his marriage, as all the men might consider themselves unfortunate who had married one of the Ayscough sisters. Mossy Leon up in London, who had married Ethel Ayscough, knew how to find compensations for any deficiencies in his married life. Frederick Huxted, who was in the Consular Service,

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had no compensation. Every appointment that he had was inferior to the last. His wife's tongue rasped his chances, it left some unhealthy places on his character, and the character itself had weakened and deteriorated under its wounds. Frederick Huxted expected Yokohama, but was given Siam. At Bangkok Mrs. Frederick Huxted began to have grievances. One of her greatest grievances was that Lady Ranmore had not called upon her, as she should have done.

The transcription of part of a letter received by Mrs. Mossy Leon will give the gist of the matter :

“ Ellaline wrote me an awfully funny account of your aristocratic dinner-party last year, and of Lady Ranmore, who drank her soup out of her plate, or something like that. Well, strangely enough, the first people we came across up here were these very Ranmores. I told Mrs. Biddle—she is the wife of the head of the English Survey Department, rather a commonish person—that Lord Ranmore had married beneath him. But, at a place like this, one cannot afford to be as particular as one could be at home. Of course, dear, it is not quite the same with you, having married a Jew, and all that. I didn't mean that *you* should be more particular. In fact, I told Ellaline, when I answered her letter, that although it must have been a great shock for you, and quite spoilt your party, she ought not to twit you about it. I think it is wonderful who you get to come to your house, considering. But about these Ranmores : I called upon them because I feel that in my position I am bound to show a certain amount of civility to all the English colony. Lord Ranmore is in the Survey Department. She has not returned my call yet, but what can one expect from that sort of person ? I hear, by the way, that they were living on very bad terms before Sydney Biddle contrived a sort of

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separation, and sent them up to Petchaburi. They are the talk of the place now for the way they flaunt having made up their differences. They've got a little carroty baby, to whom he is quite devoted. But what I want to know about it is, *who she was*, and why they are so poor. They have quite a small bungalow, less than half a dozen coolies, and he works at the drawing office of the Survey Department as if he really had his living to earn.”

Ethel, who received the letter on the eve of a new campaign in the London season, quite appreciated its sisterliness, but she was too much occupied for resentment. Ethel Leon pursued the “Season” as Lancelot the Holy Grail. She was often in sight of the treasure, but never quite came up to it. In April the menservants had fresh liveries, the carriages new varnish, extra horses were bought. In May she complained to her West Kensington acquaintances, whom she invited to meet each other, that “people came back so late from the Riviera now.” The private view at the Royal Academy gave her some opportunity for seeing Society people, and she had just imagination enough to think that she knew the well-known people she saw. In June she complained of the new habit of “week-ending” that kept people out of London. In July she would announce to her sisters that there was a positive rush of engagements, and that she was beginning to feel overtired. At the end of July, however, and during the whole month of August, her prospects always improved. Mossy was able to bring quite smart men to the house—men whose wives and daughters had already left town. Ethel's real London Season was in August. But she never ceased to hope that her parties would be chronicled, and her dresses described in the papers.

Bianca's letter reached her in May, when expectation

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was at its highest, and her good temper represented her hopes. Mossy, too, was at his best in his home-life just then, for he had discovered the most wonderful little dancer in the world, and the wonderful little dancer was accepting diamonds, rings, and bracelets from him. At such times Mossy was always most liberal and most amiable to his wife.

They were dining alone when Bianca's letter came from Siam. Ethel said she was always glad of a night off. She had many of these nights off, and spent them in the sedulous exercise of massage, in the care of her complexion, in going to bed early. Mossy generally went out after dinner. Having to see Nat Simons on business was a convenient excuse.

There had been no subject for dispute between them this evening. Even for Mossy, he had been exceptionally generous lately. She had not been presented at Court, but she had a beautiful new brooch from Cartier's. They were at their domestic best.

“I had a letter from Bianca to-day,” she began. “They don't seem to know what to do about recognising the Ranmores.”

“Why on earth shouldn't they recognise the Ranmores? What's the matter with the Ranmores? He is a charming fellow. I don't know when I've taken such a fancy to anyone.”

Ethel had an unfortunate harsh note in her laughter, a high, cultivated note that had come in when it was the fashion to shake hands in imitation of the village pump. She did not know that the laughter and the hand-shake were both out of date.

“You did not take a fancy to her, did you? She must have been a servant, I should think, she had absolutely no style at all!”

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"Good God! *Style!* What rot you talk. She was absolutely one of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen. As for being a servant, she is the daughter of the Ranmore land-agent, who was shot when collecting rents. I heard all about it the other day. She became companion to Lady Ranmore. The trouble with the family was that she and Derry did a bolt. It was immediately after the cousin's funeral, when the Dowager, his mother, thought that everyone should have been wailing and keening for Terence in chorus, thinking of nothing else but him. I suppose it's just possible they had no choice about it. But that view of the case does not seem to have struck anyone else. . . ."

"I wish you would not be so coarse."

"Oh! coarse, is it? Well, perhaps you're right. Nature is disgustingly coarse, too, sometimes; that's why I hate the country. Anyway, he married her as soon as he was able. I expect ours was the only house in London open to them then. But if what I am working at comes off, there won't be anywhere they can't go when they come back."

"What *are* you working at?"

"There is a fortune down at that place of Derry's. There is coal enough to warm the whole country. I can't get a scuttleful out without the old dowager's consent, confound her! But Carruthers can't checkmate me for ever."

"Then they'll be very rich some day? Bianca writes to know why they are so poor."

"They are so poor now because Derry is Don Quixote, and a damned clever woman has got hold of him."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Ask Lady Carrie Carthew what becomes of half Derry's

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money to-day, what will become of it when he gets hold of some more.”

“Lady Carrie!”

Mossy was always a little incautious in his talk. He had no idea of making mischief when he told his wife about Derry and Carrie Carthew. If he expatiated on the theme it was only because he was fond of talking, and forgot to take into consideration the character of his audience. The Ranmores were away, and he never dreamed of his wife writing to Bianca, betraying the secret he had let out. Still less did he think to what use Bianca would put her knowledge. It is difficult for a man to gauge the length to which a malicious woman will go to revenge a slight, fancied or real.

Once Ethel had started him on the subject, Mossy had gone on talking about the Ranmores. It was very rarely that she listened when he talked; perhaps that made him incautious. Ethel was generally thinking about herself when Mossy talked to her, it was the only subject upon which she could ever really concentrate her mind. His wit never amused his wife. She found it difficult to follow, and she was never quite sure it was good form to be amusing. But she listened when he talked about Lady Carrie and Lord Ranmore. She was glad she would be able to impress Bianca with her knowledge of the Ranmore affairs. She heard, too, from Mossy, of the ramifications of the Ranmore estates, of the widow's jointure that “bled it.” He talked of the enormous claims that were being put forth by Carruthers on behalf of the Dowager Lady Ranmore. The estate was not entailed, and little but the Castle went with the title. It seemed Terence had been in the habit of signing anything that was put before him. Carruthers, under the pretence of protecting his client, had so complicated matters that a lawsuit was almost inevitable.

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“I’m damned if she isn’t claiming against us for every stick that has been stuck into the ground to strengthen a sapling, and every nail that holds up a rotten beam. It seems that for years her one hobby was to improve the estate. Now, I suppose because of this marriage, her one hobby is to ruin it. I can’t prospect for coal because she has sunk a shaft and done a few hundred pounds’ worth of work, getting a paper from her son, her own son, mind you, giving her exclusive rights. We can’t collect the rents until we have settled her claim, because Carruthers has issued a *caveat*, and every tenant has had notice that there is an action pending, and they are not to pay to Derry’s representative. The place is falling again into rack and ruin. She has stopped all the work that was being done. She is living in Dublin, where she has some crack-brained scheme on hand for endowing an orphanage to bear her son’s name. Meanwhile, the only offer I can get from her is to rent the place for a week in every year. They’ve got a sort of mausoleum in the woods there, and she wants to go and pray for her husband and son. I’m going to stick out about that; it’s the only lever I’ve got. If she won’t give up the coal concession, I’m damned if she shall pray. They have not got Derry to deal with now.”

Ethel had a gleam of intelligence.

“But you can’t act for Lord Ranmore?” she asked.

“Why can’t I? I’ve got his power of attorney. You don’t suppose I took a hand in the game without knowing that the chips would be paid for, do you?”

When the brougham was announced, and Mossy had explained the exigencies of a billiard handicap at his club—Mossy was always most explanatory when he was least candid—when the butler had helped him into his satin-lined overcoat, and the footman had found him a light for

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his cigar, Ethel composed herself to answer Bianca's letter.

Incidentally it is worth noting that, when this letter reached Bangkok, Rosaleen had still not returned Mrs. Frederick Huxted's call.

"My dear, I've had such a rush of people this week, it has been difficult to find a moment to myself in which to answer your letter. People are back later than ever from the Riviera this year; but Lady Cowper is in town, and the Duchess has passed through. I saw the Lonsdales the other day, and the Albemarles . . ."

Ethel rarely told untruths, she *had* seen them all.

"Nearly all my own friends are back."

This *non sequitur* she easily permitted herself. "My friends" were words that were often on Ethel Leon's lips, and on the point of her pen, but she had really only acquaintances, and of these she shed many annually, ridding herself of them as crustaceans of their worn-out shells.

"And, by the way, Lady Carrie Carthew is in London. How funny of you to ask what becomes of the Ranmore rents. I thought everybody knew about Lord Ranmore and Lady Carrie. But then, dear, you are a little out of the world at Bangkok, are you not? How dreadful it must be for you to be without any fixed home; I should simply hate it. I had my drawing-room done over again for this season, the walls hung with vieux-rose silk, set into white panels, *carton pierre* decorations, and the floor parqueted. It's enormously admired, it was done by the best firm in London; they have a Paris house, too. Mossy has given me some wonderful new jewellery. Not large stones—large stones are quite out of fashion, the *setting* is everything this year. My *parure* is all from Cartier's, I'm longing to show it to you. But apropos of the Ranmores, if you can get them to know you, I strongly advise you to



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do so. He will have quite a large fortune one day, and then she will be received everywhere. Of course, if ever you get back to London I shall do what I can for you, and introduce you to some really nice people. But it would be so much easier if Fred had been in the diplomatic service. I saw Ellaline this week. I am so sorry for her; her *ménage* is so impossible altogether. People simply *won't* meet stock-brokers. I can't think why. There has been a "slump," as they call it, and Tom is very nearly ruined; they are talking of living in the country altogether. In a way, I rather wish they would. Of course, I should miss Ellaline, but I hate leaving her out of everything, and I can't face that grey *panne* of hers. No one wears *panne* any more. Dresses date so this season. . . ."

## CHAPTER XX

**T**HERE is a comparatively large English colony at Bangkok, but almost every nation has its consular representative. A babel of polyglot tongues is heard in the streets, not only by the side of the mud-banks, the wharves, and the jetties, where the floating Asiatic population of Chinese and Malays, Annamites and Siamese dominate the river, but up in the town, where there are Javanese, Singalese and Bengallee, men from Bombay, and gem-dealers from Burmah.

There are flagstuffs of many nations in so-called Consular Bangkok. Consular Bangkok is distinguished by its verandahed houses, its club, and tennis, and cricket grounds. The palm and the bamboo dominate the gardens, and the note is of the higher civilisation, the civilisation of hot and cold baths and electric light. Here the Stars and Stripes are conspicuous, and the Tricolour floats in the breeze. The Union Jack is unfurled side by side with the national emblems of Denmark and Germany; Italy runs up its red, white, and green in friendly rivalry with the yellow of little Holland.

Many people had called on Rosaleen when she first came to Bangkok, and she had done as little as possible towards returning their civilities. Her health, however, then made a certain excuse, and, if she made no way socially, she cannot be said to have excited any active animosity. That she was "exclusive," that she "kept herself to herself," that she "gave herself airs," had been the worst charges levelled against her, and even from these she had been

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protected in a measure by the Sydney Biddles. As far as it is possible for there to be a head to such a heterogeneous colony, the Sydney Biddles may be said to have occupied that post in Bangkok. Their house was the largest, they practised the most lavish hospitality. Sydney's position was better established than that of any Englishman working under the Siamese government.

Unlike the Japanese, the Siamese show little fidelity, and less gratitude, in dealing with the Europeans who, in subordinate or superior positions, assist in the administration of customs, education, or survey. They tire quickly, as children tire, of anyone who possesses a shadow of authority, a suggestion of superiority. The King of Siam has great qualities, but his wife is the grey mare. Novelty is what she looks for from the representatives of a new and strange civilisation, and to this end all the short contracts, or engagements without contracts, are freely and admittedly adapted. Sydney Biddle is perhaps the one Englishman for whom an exception has been made; but both the King and Queen have a genuine affection for him. He has a large stake in the country, and his appointment, although ex-official, is in the nature of a permanency.

This habit of the Siamese Government, however, is necessary as an explanation of the shifting character of the European colony. When the Ranmores left for Petchaburi, there was one set of faces to be seen in the tennis court, and the cricket ground, the Sports Club, and the United Club. When they returned, there was quite another. And the *personnel* of the English Consulate, at least, had certainly not been improved by the advent of the Frederick Huxteds.

Emma Biddle had been anxious, when she first began to interest herself in the Ranmores, that Rosaleen should return the cards that were left upon her, join in the gaieties,

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and take her place in the society which, at that time, at least, was fairly pleasant and congenial. But Rosaleen had failed, at first, to respond to Emma Biddle's anxiety. Emma had forgiven her, and perhaps been a little flattered at her failure, which yet meant a personal success. After the return from Petchaburi everything was easier. The great social function at Bangkok is the tennis. Rosaleen, no longer standing aloof, now took her place in the team, playing in tournaments and gymkhanas. There are dances given at the Club, and now Rosaleen also danced. The people she had hardly known, but who had been there on her first arrival, accepted her, as it were, on her own terms. If she would play games with them now, they were quite satisfied that she had not meant to snub them in the past. And Derry remained as popular as ever.

Among the new-comers the same tolerance was generally observed, but the Frederick Huxteds complicated the position. Mrs. Huxted had expected everyone to call upon her, and in this semi-colonial *milieu* her pretensions were accepted without any very close scrutiny.

The Ranmores were the only English, or Irish, titled people settled in Bangkok at the moment. After waiting a month or so for Lady Ranmore to call upon her, Mrs. Frederick Huxted had summoned her supposititious reminiscences of Court etiquette, and made the first visit.

Rosaleen had not meant to snub Mrs. Frederick Huxted. She hardly knew the meaning of the word, and, notwithstanding the erroneous opinion that had got about, she had, of course, no social pretensions at all. She had, however, predilections and superstitions. Unfortunately Mrs. Huxted antagonised her in both. She met her at the Club, at some amateur theatrical performances got up by the Biddles, and at dinner, before that visit was paid which was fated never to be returned.

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Mrs. Huxted was the only one of the Ayscough sisters whose pretensions did not include beauty. She was the eldest of the family. Having lived since her marriage in hot climates, she had developed angularity of figure and sallowness of complexion. In addition she had prominent teeth, and a high aquiline nose. She was proud of her aristocratic appearance, and had no doubt of her manners. But she was really an ill-natured woman who would have set any provincial, or cathedral, English town by the ears, and who seemed to have missed her vocation in life in not being given this opportunity. She had a way of querying people's position, means, and conduct. Her own alone seemed to her to merit no animadversion. When she called on Rosaleen, she found fault with the approach to the bungalow, and the bridge that connected it with the highway; and she wondered that Lady Ranmore could content herself in such a poky place. Rosaleen loved her home, and thought it very beautiful and perfect. She was sorry her visitor did not like it, and thought it strange that she should mention it.

Mrs. Huxted, who was a childless woman, dogmatised as to how children should be brought up. She asked to see the baby, but when it was brought in by Agnes, the Siamese convert who had been recommended to Rosaleen from the Missionaries, she found nothing to say but that he looked delicate, and would probably prove difficult to rear.

“You ought to have a Chinese nurse. The only servants that are any good out here are the Chinese.” Although she had been at Bangkok less than a month, Mrs. Frederick already considered herself an authority on the complicated, curious country.

“The Siamese are sweet and kind to children,” Rosaleen answered. “Look at them with their own!”

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And, indeed, one of the sights of Bangkok, in the streets, and on and near the river banks, are the swarms of brown-eyed, chubby, well-nourished, native youngsters. The ill-treatment of a child is unknown among the Siamese; fathers as well as mothers take a share in carrying and tending the babies, their affection to their offspring being one of the most prominent national characteristics, and dominating all classes. But Mrs. Huxted said:

“*You* may think so! Perhaps you haven’t seen them give their babies cigarettes to smoke? I have. I saw a boy, who couldn’t have been four years old, toddling down the streets on his little fat legs with a great brown cigarette in his mouth that made me sick to look at. But perhaps you don’t mind your boy learning to smoke early?” And the laugh came again.

Rosaleen was too full of all her happiness just now to take Mrs. Huxted very seriously.

“Oh! Agnes won’t teach my baby to smoke just yet,” she answered quickly. “He is only eight months old, not four years.”

“And the native servants are such terrible liars. He will have hardly learned to speak before she will teach him to tell untruths.”

Rosaleen had a secret sympathy with the Siamese natives. She had found great happiness at Bangkok, and perhaps that softened her judgment. What Mrs. Huxted called lying, she and Derry had agreed to regard as merely a habit of circumlocution. And the natives were only idle when they were not set to work. Derry had two Siamese clerks under him in the office, and could not speak sufficiently highly of them. She did not think they were vicious. As for being irreligious, never were people so indefatigable in doing honours to their gods. The Buddhist festivals were innumerable, and neither

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a Siamese gentleman, or working man, would omit to join in them. Mrs. Huxted attacked, and Rosaleen defended, with warmth and growing spirit.

“Ah, well, have it your own way,” said Mrs. Huxted at last, turning from the subject as if it tired her, and she really could not condescend to argue on it any further. Among her other agreeable ways, she had the habit of inferring that any subject under discussion was so much better understood by herself than by her companion, that it was idle, and waste of time, to go into detail concerning it. “We won’t talk any more about the Siamese. When you’ve lived in the East as long as I have, you’ll begin to understand the Oriental character. How do you get on with the people here? As far as I have seen of them they are not very interesting. Mr. Mitchison is a gentleman, of course. His sister, Lady Fairbanks, was in India when we were there. I saw a great deal of her.”

Rosaleen could have forgiven her visitor’s remarks about her house, her baby, and the native servants; but, when she attacked the Biddles, she found forgiveness more difficult. Rosaleen’s loyalty was part of her nature.

“Then, there is that vulgar little woman, Mrs. Biddle,” Mrs. Huxted went on. “I can’t think how she has got such a hold here. She can never have been in any society at all. Colonial-born, I suppose. Do you know, I met her this morning without any gloves on, carrying a basket, and no end of parcels! I wonder what the natives think of her?” Mrs. Huxted laughed. “I hear, too, that she has Madame de la Poer at her house. I suppose she doesn’t know any better. She is an acquaintance of yours, isn’t she?”

“She is my friend,” Rosaleen said, with heightened

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colour. “And it’s proud I am to call her my friend. All day long she does kind things, and thinks kind thoughts.”

“Oh! well, everyone to their taste. For myself, I like to associate with ladies and gentlemen. I was brought up that way, you know.”

Rosaleen could not control her indignation during the rest of that visit. She took a real dislike to her visitor. There was no question of snubbing her. It was simply a case of personal antipathy, and this was nothing unusual where Mrs. Fred Huxted was concerned. But, of course, she never recognised the cause of the treatment she received.

Because Mrs. Huxted had spoken disparagingly of the Biddles, Rosaleen told Derry she would not return her call. Derry said she was quite right; but then, Derry said everything she did was quite right! It was inevitable they should meet at the Club and elsewhere. But Rosaleen avoided these meetings as far as possible; although she was habitually reticent, she was not an adept at concealing her feelings.

Long before Ethel’s letter reached Siam, a positive dislike had sprung up between the two women. As far as Rosaleen was concerned, she merely wished to avoid the other. But Bianca Huxted was really of a malevolent disposition. It was, however, Rosaleen herself who made the malevolence active. Emma Biddle was standing with Rosaleen on one occasion, and it seemed hateful to the girl that Mrs. Huxted should greet Mrs. Biddle as if she had never spoken disparagingly of her. She resented that Emma, or Sydney, should waste their smiles or their kindness on such a woman.

“I suppose one must not expect punctuality in social observances in these wilds; but it is more than three weeks since I left my cards, and surely it’s almost time



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that they were returned?" Bianca began, with an affectation of careless geniality.

"You can have them back," Rosaleen said, shortly, turning away from her.

Even Emma was shocked at her, and stayed to explain away the words. Mrs. Huxted was quite ready to be superficially convinced, and to accept Emma's explanation. But, of course, she stored it up against Lady Ranmore.

"How could you say such a thing?" Emma asked Rosaleen.

"She is a hateful woman. I can't bear to see you and Mr. Biddle so good to her. Look, if he isn't takin' her out! And she with the bitter tongue . . ." Rosaleen could not control her indignation.

"Mrs. Huxted certainly does contrive to make herself extraordinarily disliked," Emma answered; "and she seems to possess as much ill-feeling as she inspires. She is forever calling upon Sydney to complain of something or somebody. But it was a dreadful thing to say, you really will have to call after that." And then, for she was compact of charity, Mrs. Biddle added, "I see you have taken a dislike to her. But don't you think we never know what other people's troubles are? Perhaps her temper has been spoiled by some personal or private worry, and if we knew everything we should only be sorry for her. What has she been saying that annoyed you?"

"She warned me Agnes would give Sonny cigarettes to smoke when my back was turned."

"Or betel-nuts to chew!" Mrs. Sydney's laugh was a very different affair from that cackle in which Mrs. Fred was wont to indulge. It cleared the air. Rosaleen laughed too, a little doubtfully.

"I know I ought not to allow myself to get vexed with her. If I had the second sight, I should say I feel as if

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she had ‘ill-wished’ me. For shure, I’ve an uneasy feeling when she is in the Club.”

“Call on her, and get it over.”

“I don’t mean to go at all, and that is the truth of it.”

“She is very punctilious about that sort of thing. One should never make an enemy of a woman with a bitter tongue.”

Emma’s worldly wisdom was a very shallow affair, represented by a few *clichés* such as this. She sympathised with Rosaleen’s desire to avoid Mrs. Fred Huxted; that particular feeling was so very general.

She did not press the point of the visit, beyond offering to call for her one day if she meant to make it.

Rosaleen changed the conversation. She went home quite early.

The few first months after their return to Bangkok, Rosaleen was living in the effulgence of a rainbow. Mrs. Frederick Huxted’s malevolence could not really obscure it. All the days were rainbow-tinted for Rosaleen. What clouds lay on the horizon were clouds that had blown over. Would they ever gather again now that the arc of many colours was set as a promise in the sky? Meteorologists know, but Rosaleen was no weather prophet. She disliked, and avoided Mrs. Huxted, but saw no menace in her.

Nor did she see menace in the English mail which brought that letter from Ethel to her sister, and to Derry a big square envelope, with a scrawling handwriting, and the crest of a red eagle with a fish in its mouth. He had had such letters before, but he never showed them to her. Once he had said carelessly, “Oh! that’s from Lady Carrie.” He had torn it open, and read it with perturbed brow. Afterwards he had never read similar letters in her presence, but, if one came, he would separate it from the

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

others and put it in his pocket, to read at leisure, she supposed. Once she asked him who was Lady Carrie, and he had answered hastily :

“ Oh, Lady Carrie Carthew. She was an old friend of . . . ” And then he had stopped abruptly, as if he did not care to pursue the subject. If she had curiosity, she never showed it until she heard the name on Mrs. Huxted’s lips.

As a matter of fact, the English mail had little interest for Rosaleen. She was too happy to be curious. She knew, of course, that affairs were not yet settled at home, that Derry was Lord of Ranmore, but was being kept out of his own. But, like the Lady of “Burleigh Hall by Stamford town,” she rejoiced in his present lowly estate. To share his cottage, represented in this instance by the squat little bungalow, to work for him in the home he had given her, was happiness enough. She was very vague about everything that stood between him and his occupation of Ranmore. Material things become vague when one is living in the arc of a rainbow. Mrs. Huxted, however, was one of the material things that refused to remain vague, she made quite a little round of visits on the strength of her letter from Ethel. She dropped a careless hint here, and a careful one there. Several people learnt, or thought that they learnt, through these means, what was the nature of the entanglement that kept Lord Ranmore from his native land. Of course, it was interesting gossip. Ill-natured gossip is interesting to ordinary minds ; and the large majority of minds are very ordinary. Gossip, before Mrs. Huxted embittered it, had said Lord Ranmore’s sojourn here was due to the want of money, that the estate had not come to him uninvolved. Now they heard that this was not the whole truth, that there was a woman in the case. Was it something in the nature of black-

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mail? It really sounded interesting and Mrs. Huxted made the most of it. She derived no personal benefit from her mysterious hints and innuendoes; but then, the women who disseminate ill-natured gossip never do derive any personal benefit from their hobby. They are like the pariah dogs who nose out offal, and feed on it. They are doing what their temperaments demand; it is the call of nature they are obeying.

It was on the Premane grounds, where Rosaleen had taken her baby to see the kite-flying, that Mrs. Huxted found her great opportunity.

Kite-flying is one of the many Siamese national pastimes. The Siamese are really a nation of children. Historians have told us of a Cabinet Meeting being deserted, and finally abandoned, when a Minister exhibited a new toy that had just been sent out to him. The interest in the new toy quite superseded the affairs of state. First one, and then another, member of the Cabinet began to play with it. There was no business even attempted that day, and the representatives of foreign governments went away wondering. This nation of children flies kites from February to April, when the strong south wind helps the game, and makes it irresistible. As well expect an inhabitant of the fen country to abandon skating on the rare occasion of a frost, as the Siamese gentlemen to abstain from kite-flying when the south wind blows over the Premane grounds. This kite-flying is a more elaborate affair than our poor English imitation. It is no question of how high the kites can go, or how long they can stay in the air. It is a contest between kite-fliers, a chase for supremacy. The endeavour is to entangle, and bring to the ground, the kite of an antagonist. Immense ingenuity and skill are employed, and thousands of spectators assemble to watch the mimic battle. For hours at a time the game proceeds.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

It is impossible, watching the Siamese gentlemen at play, to realise why they should be accounted indolent; they certainly spare no energy on their favourite pastime.

Rosaleen and her baby watched the Siamese gentlemen flying their kites, and the crowd following them breathlessly. She was so happy that it seemed natural other people should be happy too. She had never seen a football match at the Crystal Palace, nor International cricket at Lord's, and the kite-flying held her spellbound. One or another of her acquaintances came up and spoke to her, but she did not detain them. Watching baby watch the kites, and following them herself with her eyes, proved sufficiently absorbing.

It was not until Mrs. Huxted deliberately stood by her side, and began to talk to her, that she woke up to her annoyance at the interruption. Mrs. Huxted began the conversation characteristically. Long before this she had made up her mind to ignore the unreturned call, and the attitude of Lady Ranmore toward her. She made a point of speaking to her in public. Rosaleen had grown used, although never reconciled, to that. But Rosaleen had usually Emma Biddle with her, or Derry. To-day she was alone here with the baby in her arms. She was holding him up to see the kites, when Mrs. Huxted came up to her. Mrs. Huxted rejoiced in her opportunity. There was no one to protect Rosaleen, and from women like Bianca Huxted the whole world needs protection.

She opened her attack by commenting upon Rosaleen having the baby in her arms whilst the native nurse stood by, enjoying the show unburdened.

“Turning nursemaid, Lady Ranmore?” she began, with her hard laugh. “I should have thought the heat was enough, without doing servants' work. I'm sure I'm almost overpowered with it. It's a disgusting climate!

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Not that he can be much of a weight. He is beginning to look a little peaky, I see? It is quite impossible to bring up European children in the East, the mortality is enormous.”

Rosaleen held the baby close in her arms. He was really a beautiful baby, without a trace of delicacy about him. He wore no hat, and he held his little head, running over with red-gold curls, as erect as if he had been an Irish king. That is what Derry said about him, and the description was good. For his head was set royally on his shoulders, and from under the wide baby brows the blue eyes smiled confidentially at all the world. Little Sonny, as they called him, did not know how to be shy with strangers, all the native servants were his subjects, everybody brought him offerings of toys and sweets. He even smiled on Mrs. Huxted, and would have made to kiss her but that Rosaleen clasped him jealously and quickly in her arms.

“It’s not delicate he is at all. He sleeps the night through, he hardly ever cries. He’s his mother’s pet, that’s what he is.” She rubbed her face against his.

“I wonder you don’t dress him in the native dress. All that white embroidery must help to pull him down.”

Rosaleen made his white silk pelisses herself, daintily setting them with lace and embroidery.

“It’s Chinese silk,” she said. “Mr. Biddle got it for me, and it’s floss silk I use to sew it; it’s no weight at all.”

“I suppose you are thinking of taking him home soon?”

“We are not making any plans.”

She could not move away, there was no excuse. She could not refuse to answer when she was spoken to, for she had no legitimate quarrel, or cause for dispute. She could hardly even actively resent that Mrs. Huxted found Mrs.

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Biddle common, for the Biddles themselves were on quite friendly terms with her.

They stood and watched the kite-flying together, but Mrs. Huxted contrived to take all the amusement and gaiety out of the scene. Standing there, unwelcome, she poured into Rosaleen's reluctant ears that the Siamese were all liars and thieves, idle, vicious, and irreligious. She jeered at their many festivals, exaggerated their passion for gambling, spoke of their decaying buildings, and decadent spirit.

"Ah, well, I see you don't agree with me. You never did, I know. But I am so much more experienced than you, my dear. You think that child is looking well, for instance; while I know that it is probably fever makes his eyes so unnaturally bright."

Here rang out her harsh cackle of laughter.

"But I'll leave you with your illusions." The note of the laugh held mischief, it was as the cry of the hawk when it swoops; the swoop came swiftly. She made as if she would say good-bye and be off, but she had her arrow to plant; that objective had never been out of her sight. "And, after all, I don't wonder you want to make out the child is not suffering from the climate. Lord Ranmore had much better be kept out of Lady Carrie Carthew's way for the present. I heard he was being blackmailed, but one never knows the whole truth in these cases—I suppose he *was* very infatuated? That is the worst of these society women; once they have established a hold they are so impossible to shake off. Why, my dear, you are looking quite pale! I hope I have not been indiscreet. I thought it was such an open secret. . . ."

Rosaleen was a little too young to be a match for such an enemy, and in the immediate first moment she was too stricken to be able to act. She had so much imagina-

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tion, that the very moment the words were spoken she could see the letters that came to him by the English mail; she could envisage a lady, noble and high-born, with all the graces she lacked; she could even remember to have heard the name. Yes! Derry had visited a Lady Carrie whilst they were in those lodgings in Albany Street. Mrs. Leon's dinner-party, too—surely she had some association there! Yes! At dinner Mossy had asked her if she knew Lady Carrie Carthew. She turned pale as she stood there in the sun, her eyes still mechanically following the kites.

“My sister—you know my sister?—wrote me she supposed it was on account of Lady Carrie Carthew you were staying away. But I would not allow any woman to keep me out of my own country!” Here came in again that hard cackle of laughter. “And in the interests of the child, I really should advise you to reconsider your decision to stay on. I must be going now. Fred is waiting for me. Good-bye, dear Lady Ranmore.”

The child in her arms prevented the necessity of shaking hands.

“Ta-ta, baby! Don't let your mother sacrifice your health for any woman.”

She made a peck at the baby, but Rosaleen drew him back quickly.

“Don't be afraid, young man, I'm not going to kiss you. He has a little temper of his own, hasn't he? You have not paid me that visit you owe me, by the way. But I suppose I must not expect Mayfair manners in Siam.”

The last word or two were hardly heard. All the gaiety and laughter had gone from the scene. Now the south wind carried sorrow, and the brown native faces were as clouds before the sun. Rosaleen had answered nothing. In truth, she no longer saw Mrs. Huxted standing there.



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It was not the woman behind the words, but only the words themselves, that remained, like mosquitoes. Rosaleen heard them as one hears the winged insects of the night, the precursory tingle before the inevitable sting. She felt all that when she fled the Premane ground, bearing the boy lightly in her arms. She wanted to run away from those poison-laden words, but they pursued her, pursued her all the way home whilst she sat by the syce's side, trying to avoid her thoughts and memories being stung. Her mosquito-net was Derry's loving looks; she was hurrying back to them; but it was beneath the net the mosquitoes had lodged.

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## CHAPTER XXI

ROSALEEN saw Derry watching for her from the verandah as she approached home. His long legs covered the ground quickly. He lifted the boy from her arms and gave him to Agnes.

"How late you are! Here have I been all alone by myself for the last ten minutes. I'd begun to think it was deserting me you'd been for some fine Siamese gentleman. But it's tired you're looking and hot." His tone was solicitous, his arm went around her waist. "I shan't let you go about by yourself if you come back to me like this. Does anything ail you, mavourneen? or is it only your tea you're wanting?"

What was the use of telling him she had been stung? Was not his solicitude a cure for her wound? She did not know then that mosquito bites have a tendency to re-inflame and fester unless radically cured. Candour might have helped to that radical cure, but the Celt in her prohibited candour.

"I'm only tired. I'll be myself again when I have had my tea. I held him up to see the kites. . . ." She told Derry all about the kite-flying.

"And did you meet the Biddles?"

"No, but I met the Carews and the Fotheringays." Now she remembered all those who had spoken to her before Mrs. Huxted had darkened the day.

Afterwards, when she was completely rested, had had dinner, and was sitting beside Derry again on the verandah in the cool of the evening, when it was

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dark, and he could not see her face, she said, “Mrs. Huxted came up and spoke to me.”

“And you did not appreciate the attention,” Derry interjected, laughingly, taking his pipe from his mouth. “It isn’t like you, Rosaleen, to dislike anyone as you dislike that woman. It’s surprised at you I am for taking her so seriously. What did she say to you to-day?”

Rosaleen waited a minute or two before she answered. She wanted to tell him what Mrs. Huxted had said about Lady Carrie Carthew; but it proved impossible. She only said:

“She was telling me of the letters she’d had from her sister, Mrs. Leon; it seems they are wondering why you are staying on here—that is what Mrs. Huxted told me. And she said baby was looking thin and peaky, and she was sure the climate didn’t agree with him, and that there was a great mortality among English children here.”

Derry laughed again before he replaced the pipe in his mouth. “She seems to have been bent on making herself thoroughly agreeable. But you know the boy’s as fit as a fiddle, so she didn’t vex you, did she?”

Rosaleen answered shortly, “Yes, she vexed me.”

“And it’s you that’s foolish, then,” he said very tenderly, drawing her closer to him, in spite of the pipe, and making her rest her head on his shoulder. “It’s very likely she has her own troubles, and that makes her spiteful.”

“That is what Emma Biddle says.”

“It’s only people like you and me, and Sydney and Emma Biddle, who are happy ourselves, that like every one else to be happy.”

“That Mrs. Leon you know in London, where I dined with you that night, she’s Mrs. Huxted’s sister. Now, are she and her husband happy together, or is she just

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a spiteful woman, too, like her sister here? And truthful—is she truthful?”

“I think she’s all right.” Derry, as will have been seen, was not a good judge of character. “I never heard her say anything unkind about anybody, except, perhaps, Lady Carrie. . . .” And then he broke off abruptly.

Rosaleen wanted him to go on, but hardly knew how to ask him.

“Lady Carrie Carthew, it’s she that writes to you by the English mail, isn’t it?” her breath fluttered in her throat.

It was Derry now who relapsed into silence.

Those letters of Carrie’s, comparatively infrequent as they were, had bothered Derry a great deal. He had done the right thing by her, and she had been very kind to him in London. He was still sorry for her, he still wished he had been able to do more for her. She was a poor little woman whom life had treated hardly. She had managed to convey this idea of herself to him, and it remained in his mind, but there was an occasional touch of sentiment in her letters, and it was this that bothered Derry. Sometimes her letters left him with a vague sense of disloyalty to Rosaleen. Sometimes the vague sense was of disloyalty to Carrie. He could tell Rosaleen nothing about Carrie’s letters, and so was silent now. For it was Terence’s secret. He could never judge Terence, nor criticise his conduct, he had only to protect his memory. What Terence had done for Lady Carrie, and why, and what Derry was continuing to do, must, at all hazards, be kept from Rosaleen.

That was why he broke off abruptly after he had mentioned her name. It was perhaps but natural that Rosaleen should misconstrue his silence.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“What made you ask about Mrs. Leon?” he asked presently.

Rosaleen had no answer ready.

There should be no hiatus in the confidence between husband and wife. Mischief is sure to breed in the empty space.

More than once after that evening, in a tentative way, Rosaleen approached the subject of Derry's English correspondent, but he never told her anything. In truth, as the time wore on, Derry found it no easier to speak to Rosaleen of Terence. Jealousy is hardly the word, yet no other describes it. Her thoughts must not wander back, he wanted her to be entirely his own. His very delicacy of outlook towards her made it impossible to think of her as callous to the dead man's memory. Yet Derry could not bear to think that she should remember Terence. And how could he breathe word to her that there was another woman, too, who had the right to remember Terence. Silence was best, Derry thought.

It was a great wife she made him, surely. No English girl in Bangkok was as active as she. He was proud of her cooking and sewing, of the way she managed the polyglot servants, and of all her swift grace and charm, that were handmaidens to the comfort she brought around him.

There is something in common between Irish servants and Siamese, some common quality of good-humour and incapacity, of loyalty to the household they serve, and inability to serve it straightforwardly. It was on this likeness Rosaleen built. She knew when to coax, and when to command, when to tolerate, and look the other way on misdemeanour, when to rage out, or pretend to rage out, and clear the air with domestic storm. The

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native servants simply worshipped the ground upon which she trod. They came to her for advice and medicine—the Siamese are great lovers of medicine—they carried out the majority of her orders, they stole from her as little as they could help.

For a time, life went on in the bungalow much as it had been before Mrs. Huxted had set those mosquitoes flying. If the rainbow had faded, if Rosaleen was less happy, less certain, Derry never knew it. He thought her prejudice against Mrs. Huxted too strong, for now Rosaleen would go nowhere the Huxteds went. She could not bear to be in the same room with the woman, nor even on the tennis-ground at the same time. She shrank back into herself during these months. That was the way the poison worked with her. She was afraid; afraid of her happiness, and her worthiness of it. In the background of her life now, instead of the rainbow, there were again clouds—there was a doubt. Already there had come into her mind the question whether Derry had ever cared for this woman with whom he corresponded. Was it out of pity he had married herself? That was the dreadful question by which she was haunted. It was never answered; it could never be answered, because it was never put. Only now she watched for the English mails, and suffered when one of those letters came, and Derry put it in his pocket unopened, and told her nothing of its contents.

He told her all about Mossy's letters, which were full of the obstructions Carruthers was for ever raising between Derry and his rights in Ranmore. Derry was never at his best on mail-days. He was happy out here with his wife and his work, work that Sydney Biddle said he did better than any other European in the whole department; but every mail-day brought him an attack of homesickness. He would not talk about it to Rosaleen; he

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would go out and take long walks ; or go down to the racquet or tennis court. The more violent the exercise, the more likely it would be to blot out from his eyes the green glory of pasture and wood, the sun and the shadow as it played on the surface of the lake, the birds that carolled and sang, the towers and turrets of Castle Ranmore, the broken masonry with the clinging ivy. At these times he was desperately homesick for them all, and for the word of kindness that had never come to him, or to his wife, from the Duchess, or the Dowager. Home was no home if they would not have him there willingly. Palm and cocoanut must take the place with him of willow and hazel. Mail-days were black days with them both ; with Derry because it brought him that spasm and passion of homesickness, with Rosaleen because of those scented letters that came, or did not come, and over which there was for ever silence between her and Derry.

As time went on, there was another little hiatus, or halt, in their talk. There was no homesickness about Rosaleen, it was in Siam she had found her happiness. And by some instinct Derry grew to know that she was hurt at his longing for the word of kindness from his people, for the blue mountains, and the green woods of Ranmore. She had had so little part in his life there ; here she could feel she was all in all to him. But, after Bianca Huxted had loosed her words, Rosaleen was never without a little sting of shooting doubt.

Derry's contract with the Siamese Government had been made for two years. The time was fast approaching when he had to consider whether it was to be renewed, and all Rosaleen's secret heart was longing that the answer should be in the affirmative. She had been so happy here. Was happiness waiting for her in the grey cold

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London? It was the lady who was writing to him he'd be seeing there, no doubt. Was she any fitter to meet Derry's grand friends now than she had been when she came out? Would she be any helpmate for him in the new surroundings he would have? Here she knew she had been a helpmate to him. It was that which gave her any confidence and courage she had; but neither of them was very firm once she allowed herself to think that there was someone else for whom Derry cared.

It was not as if they would be going back to Ireland, to Ranmore. Always it seemed there were more difficulties about Derry's inheritance, and more delay in his prospect of being allowed to take possession of the home that belonged to him. She could not resent it, and Derry's resentment, too, was not personal. He was sore and hurt at the way he had been treated without ever quite understanding the genesis of it, but resentment, in the ordinary sense of the word, was the one feeling of which he was absolutely incapable where his aunt or the Duchess was concerned.

As for his aunt, his heart went out to her. It was so natural she should resent his standing in Terence's shoes; try as he might, Terence's shoes would never fit him. For ever, in retrospect he saw Terence through the eyes of Terence's mother. The young son-god that he was! She had mothered him, too, in his boyhood, and all his heart was soft when he thought of her, not hard, although she was standing between him and Ranmore. It was for her, as well as for Ranmore, that he was homesick.

Mossy had not reckoned on this when he made his plan of campaign, the plan of campaign he had outlined to Ethel, and on which he was now prepared to act.

It was on one of those dreaded days when the English mail was due that Rosaleen, from the verandah, saw Derry



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come tearing over the bridge with a pale face. She knew the day it was, half the night she had been lying awake, wondering if one of those letters would come. But it was not a letter from Carrie Carthew that Derry held in his hand. Her heart, which had begun to beat quickly, quieted down when she saw that.

“What is the matter?”

“The matter!” he could hardly get out what it was; but he had come straight to her for sympathy. Straight, at least, after having answered the letter with a telegram.

“The matter! We are just going home, that’s what it is. I can hardly wait to tell you. What do you think he’s done? Him that I thought was my friend.”

“Going home! Who . . . what! . . .” But at least the letter he had in his hand was not one of those big square envelopes with the crest.

“Why! Mossy, Mossy Leon, him that has my affairs in hand.”

“And what has he done?”

“Read it, just you read it!” He thrust the letter into her hand, but could scarcely keep silent or still while she obeyed him. He strode about, and made his indignant comment whilst Rosaleen read, only half comprehending:

“I’ve come to the end of my patience with Carruthers,” Mossy wrote. “And, as for the Dowager, I went over to Dublin to see her, and she practically turned me out of the house! So I’ve no choice but to put on the screw. I’ve only waited all this time because, when I first suggested it, you kicked at it. They are making arrangements at Ranmore for a week of mourning; the mausoleum has been repaired, and there’s a temporary erection being run up at the chapel, where I hear there is to be High Mass and all that sort of thing. The Pope, or one of the Cardinals, or

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some big pot in the Church, is going to conduct a sort of sing-song.” Mossy’s knowledge of Roman Catholic rites was on a par with his ignorance of how Derry felt about his family. “The Dowager is going to build an orphanage in memory of her son, and the ceremonies at Ranmore, I believe, are a preliminary canter. She is using the money for it that ought to be yours. Well! that just gives me my chance. They can—at least, they have—estopped the rents, but there is no denying the Castle is yours. I’m going to wait until the last possible moment, fool them to the top of their bent, and then come down with an ultimatum. The rents released, and a settlement favourable to us of all the questions in dispute, or, mausoleum barred, and a posse of constables to hold the castle and the chapel against all comers.”

“Did you ever hear of such a thing? The scoundrel, the villain! To think I’d be a party to it, barring her from her own house, saying the prayers for him where he lies. An’ it’s her husband lies there too.” A spasm of the throat seized him, and he could hardly go on. He forgot all about Rosaleen for the moment, although he was talking to her. He meant to protect her from reminiscences, but he had forgotten that. “I’d rather starve all my life, I’d rather cut my right hand off, than do such a thing! It’s they that are the Ranmores, her husband and him, and all the dead that lie there. And me to bar her out from Ranmore . . .”

“He didn’t know how you felt about it all.”

“Then he ought to have known. How else should I feel? To think I should be the one to stand between her, and honouring his memory. Me! that would spend my life, a dozen lives, if I had them, in keeping it green.”

“What will you do?”

“I didn’t wait. I cabled him not to dare to interfere.

## "LET THE ROOF FALL IN"

Sydney worded it for me, I could not collect myself to write; I'm going home as quick as I can get there. There's no saying what he'll be up to. I'm just on fire to be off. You don't mind?"

"Of course, it's just as you wish."

"Sydney talked about the cost of cables. I don't know how we're off for money, but I'd have pawned me clothes rather than have stinted a word. How dare he think of such a thing!"

"It will reach him in time?"

"It's only October now."

Then, suddenly he remembered he ought to be saving her, and he went over and put his arms about her.

"You must forgive me, darling. I ought not to be going on like this. But I'm half mad over it." She could see that the sob was still in his throat. "Me, that loved him, to prevent her saying her bit of prayer for him . . ."

His generous great indignation choked his speech. Rosaleen, who loved him so much more than she loved herself, or cared for her memories, could do nothing but try to help him. All the help he needed was to get home quickly. He did not know what he would do when he got there, nor did he pause to consider. The passion of homesickness had risen to its height, and overflowed in unnecessary haste. To be moving, to be travelling homeward, was the idea that possessed him entirely, he was on fire with it.

Rosaleen could do only her small part, in packing, and facilitating their departure. If her heart ached at giving up her home, it ached dumbly. For the moment, Derry was giving her no thought. All his thought was at Ranmore, in the mausoleum, in the chapel. It was a month before the anniversary of Terence's death would come round. Would his cable be in time to stop Mossy's

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proceedings? That was all he could think, or talk about. A cruel, damnable, dastardly thing it was to do. And to think it was being done in his name! To bar the mother from praying by the tomb of her son, to keep Ranmore from the Ranmores, to add anything to the sorrow that had fallen upon her! He really lost both his sleep and his appetite. Him to do it! him who loved her almost like a mother; though it was a stepmother she had been to him since Terence's death. But small blame to her for it, poor thing! And now, if Mossy carried out his plan, and if she thought he had a hand in it . . . It was unbearable, unthinkable. He raged over it. Even Rosaleen had none of his thoughts during the week that followed the sending of the cable. After the first two days he simply haunted the telegraph office. He made poor Sydney Biddle's life a burden to him by cross-examining him as to how long a telegram generally took to get from Bangkok to London and back again, what was the shortest time on record, what were the circumstances that expedited it, and whether they could not be repeated?

The reply came at last, and proved satisfactory. It was in cipher. Sydney read it out to him. Derry had cabled:

“Absolutely forbid interference with memorial service. Castle and contents to be left at Lady Ranmore's disposal without restriction or proviso. Reply confirming. On my way home.”

Mossy answered:

“Glad to hear of your return. Impossible raise money or avoid proceedings if you persist in your instructions.”

“Damn the fellow!” Derry was not given to swearing, but Sydney was his only audience, and Sydney would not score it against him. “Be damn to him! Does he

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

think he is going to threaten me? As if I cared for his dirty money! Here, I'm going to cable him again, plain English for me.”

He wrote out a flaming tirade, but Sydney ultimately reduced it to something like reasonable dimensions. Derry would have expended forty pounds' worth of indignation, but Sydney got it down to under five. It was not the moment to tell him so, but Sydney thought, from what had been told him of the Ranmore finances, that Derry would want all the forty pounds he could save. And, after all, the object in view could be achieved without desperate extravagance.

“Do nothing until I arrive. Instructions must be strictly observed. No interference with Ranmore ceremonies under any circumstances.”

Nothing remained to be done, but to help them to get away. It was not without a pang that Emma did her loyal part. She had grown attached to Rosaleen, and the child might have been her own for the love she lavished on it. She had grown, too, to some understanding of Rosaleen, and she knew there was no joy in her outlook toward that home-going. But Derry's impatience to be off never abated, and both of them were loyal to him, and did their best.

The day of their departure seemed to be upon them before Rosaleen had fully realised that she must uproot herself. It seemed years since the day they had first crossed the mud-bar, with the dim lighthouse on Kaw Chuen facing them beyond the brown and ugly waters. Now she could hardly bear to look at the mangroves, and the white buildings with their flat roofs, the pagoda in the river, and the betel and cocoanut palms, the riverside cottages, the yellowing padi, the floating houses on the rafts, the mud-banks, and rice-mills, the lorchas, the steam-launches,

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the crowded rows of native rice-boats, empty now, and the tall-masted junk-rigged lighters. She saw them all through a mist of tears. What had she not found here? Peace and home at first, love and happiness afterwards. What was she going back to, save unrest and doubt? But she did not want him to see her depression; his whole mood was so different.

They had passed the mud-bar and the river, they were in the Gulf, and clear of shipping, before he could begin to rest.

“I thought we should never get off. Up to the last moment I was afraid something would occur to prevent us starting. It seemed too good to be true,” he said to her.

Was it possible for her to say she wished they had never started at all, she, who wanted his happiness so much more than her own! Later on, it was the day they were approaching Colombo, when the evening gathered in the wind-swept sky, he seemed to wake up to the difference in her moods.

“You’re not sorry to be going back?” he asked. She was standing on the deck when he joined her, watching the waves as they scudded under the keel, and at first it was difficult to answer him. She had been thinking of her happiness at Petchaburi, and in the bungalow, of services she had been able to render him at Wat Poh Pra. What use would she be to him when they got home? And what of the lady that wrote to him? Her heart was very heavy and sad as she watched the scudding waters.

“I’m wondering what we will do at first,” was what she answered when she could bring her thoughts to answer at all.

“Oh! we’ll have great doings,” he answered vaguely,

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but happily. “And isn’t it together we will be any-how?”

“But it’s not me you’ll be wanting when your grand friends get around you.”

“It’s no grand friends I’ve got at all. And there’ll never be a moment I’m not wanting you.”

She had Lady Carrie Carthew’s name on her tongue, but could not utter it.

“I’m thinking it’s a great deal I found in Siam,” she said in a voice so low that it might have been part of the sough of the sea, lost in the wind and the wave. How the waters were scudding, how fast they were steaming!

“And isn’t it home we’re taking with us,” he answered gaily, with an arm flung over her shoulder. “It’s you that will make home for me, Rosaleen, wherever I go.” The deep breath was as a sigh of relief. “Oh! but I’m tired of the palaces, and the pagodas, and all the brown faces. You felt it up in Wat Poh Pra when I hadn’t a trace of it, nor a thought for anything but you. But it’s meself that’s been feeling it all these months in Bangkok; at times it’s been little but a prison to me.”

## CHAPTER XXII

IT was February when they reached London; a treacherous month, when the wind was high, with cold showers abundant, the sun fitful and rare, and the change from the East trying to the travellers.

It seemed to Rosaleen that, from the moment they sighted land, she no longer held the first place in Derry's heart, if indeed she had ever held it! She could torture herself that way, too. Now he was thinking and talking of nothing but Ranmore, wondering what had been done, or left undone. He was in the woods, or on the lake; memories crowded upon him, and set rare melancholy in his dark eyes. But it was only of Ranmore she was jealous during these last few days of the journey. Even then, she found all her courage was needed to face the uncertain future.

It had been easier to make a home in the Bangkok bungalow, a *sala* at Petchaburi, or on the environments of a rice-field in Wat Poh Pra, than it was in the dismal Strand Hotel, to which Derry brought his family. A man they had met on the steamer had recommended this hotel to them, and they went there direct. The recommendation must have been for economy; other advantages were all to seek. Their bedroom was noisy, with ill-fitting windows. The first night, the roar of the Strand seemed to interrupt any attempt at talk, filling their life with discord; at least, that is how it appeared to Rosaleen. Derry wanted to see Mossy Leon immediately. He was aching for news. He said so that night, and he said little else, he was so conscious of the aching.

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

But the interview had perforce to wait. Derry, fine strong fellow though he was, had contrived to catch cold. He meant to have seen Mossy the next day, but his night was feverish and restless, and when he tried to get up, to throw off the feeling of illness, to assure himself that there was nothing at all the matter, influenza urged its unanswerable argument, and drove him back to bed. A doctor, recommended by the hotel-proprietor, and acting solely in his interest, found that Lord Ranmore was suffering from “malaria” and would be well in a few hours. He assured Lady Ranmore that there was nothing infectious in the illness, and he prescribed drugs to reduce the fever. He reduced the patient’s strength at the same time, but this was a detail. In twenty-four hours he was able to verify his prophecy that the temperature would be normal. Rosaleen ought to have taken another room for herself and little Terence, but it never struck her to do this, and the doctor never suggested it.

They had brought no nurse with them from Bangkok, a Siamese woman would have been only an obstruction, and there was no European to be had. Little Terence had been no trouble at all on the journey, he had been on deck all the time, everybody’s playmate, and playmate, too, of the sun and the air. He missed his companions here in this close room. During the first day or two of Derry’s illness he was as good as gold, and played quietly with his toys in a corner of the room. It seemed possible to make him understand that “poor daddy had a toos’ache.” The struggle through of those dilatory teeth had been the only discomfort he knew. He wanted to “tomfort” Daddy, to pat his mouth. Rosaleen had her work cut out with both of them. The first day Derry was restless, thirsty and in high fever, the second day he was only drowsy, and she was able to take the baby out for an hour

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or two. He was used to air, and quickly languished without it, but the compressed air of the Strand is in-nutritious. Therefore, long before Derry had thrown off his illness, little Sonny had sickened of it. Night and day Rosaleen nursed them both. The baby had the complaint mildly, but it left him fretful and difficult.

As for Derry, to the one day of high fever succeeded nearly a fortnight of headache and lassitude, with pains in his head, and a great unwillingness of movement.

Rosaleen walked the room hour after hour with the boy, singing low to him to keep him quiet, for Derry needed sleep. It was little sleep she got herself that first week of her home-coming. She did not know what Derry's plans were. She could not look forward, and the four walls of that bedroom seemed as the estoppel of her vision. But those four walls held her dear ones, and night and day she nursed and tended them, happier in her mind than she had been since the intrusion into it of Bady Carrie.

When Derry awoke to what was going on, he missed the geranium from her cheeks, and some of the light from her eyes.

“You're pale,” he said, looking up at her from his pillow. His headache had gone, and the power of thinking had evidently returned to him. “What's come to you?”

“It's not my looks you have got to be thinking of, but your own,” she answered, smiling on him. “You are better this morning?”

She had been up a long time, had washed and dressed the boy, and given him his breakfast. Now he was drowsing off to sleep again in her arms.

“I'm well. What has been the matter with me? Why is it so dark?”

“It's a foggy morning. You have had high fever and headache; malaria, the doctor calls it.”

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“Have I seen Mossy Leon? How long have I been here? I don't seem to remember anything.”

“You have not seen anyone but me. You were taken ill the night you came.”

“And how long ago was that?”

“More than a week.”

“You've been nursing me again?”

“It wasn't much nursing you needed. Just a drink of milk and soda, and the medicine.”

He was eyeing her solicitously:

“You have been losing your looks. I am ashamed of myself to have been lying here like this. But I'm all right this morning, I'll just have a bath and a shave, and I'll be as right as rain. We must be getting those roses back for you. . . .”

But, when he tried to get out of bed, he found the doctor and his drugs had been too much for him. His legs refused their office, and were like drunken servants who could not do their duty. He collapsed on the floor, and lay there a moment, feeling very shaky and dazed.

“That's a nice thing to have happened,” he said. She put the boy into his cot, he was fortunately asleep. Then she tried to help Derry, but getting him back on to the bed again was by no means easy.

“I've done a nice thing for you, bringing you here, and me like this,” Derry said breathlessly, when he was back in bed. “What's to be done now?” He felt utterly helpless and dependent on her. “I am only a log; and no use to you at all.”

She tried to comfort him.

“You will be well in no time at all. It's only your breakfast you are wanting now. Wait till I ring and get it for you, you'll feel stronger after that. . . .”

But Derry's spirits had collapsed with his legs.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“I believe I’ll never be any better. And I don’t know what’s going to become of you in this great wilderness of a town . . . ?”

She had to laugh at him, as she coaxed him to a cup of coffee and a little toast. He did not want to eat or drink, it seemed to him that he was very ill, and would never be better, a black wave of depression struck him, as it were, full between the eyes. It was Rosaleen who would not let him shut his eyes, and be submerged. He muttered that he had brought her away from her friends, that they were all alone in this great city.

“It’s not alone at all I am, with you and the boy,” she said gently. She had a great deal to do for both of them, and no work was too much for her. Only Derry’s depression worried her. She could not satisfy herself that its source was illness only. She was so little use to him, and the mosquito stings revived. Was it something or somebody he was missing, and if so . . . who? Of course the depression was due to the influenza and the drugs, and, although some instinct told her this, and that feeding up was the panacea, she tried to find other causes. She thought perhaps he was fretting over what might be going on at Ranmore. It was her sudden idea that instead of waiting until he was able to call on Mossy, he should send to him.

“It’s him that you’re looking to for news. He won’t have done what you told him not. Let me write to him, and tell him you are in London. Then you will hear what is going on,” she urged.

“How can I sit up and write?”

“And why should you sit up and write? It’s meself that will write.”

“What can you say? You can’t tell him he is a murdering villain to think of disturbing them.”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“I can tell him you’re wantin’ to know what’s been done.”

“Oh! Do what you like.” Derry’s face was turned to the wall. Hadn’t he tried to get up, and hadn’t his legs failed him? And wasn’t he no use at all? Now he only wanted to be left alone and sleep. The noise of the hotel, and the roar from the Strand were both at the worst this morning. The state of their finances made it difficult for her to decide a move on her own responsibility. Her recollection of Mossy was that he had tried to be kind to her. Derry had always liked him until that unfortunate suggestion. And there was no one else. . . . She had another name in the background of her mind. Derry was not friendless, he had a friend in London; but it was not to Lady Carrie Carthew she would be writing. She made up her mind quickly while Derry slept:

“DEAR MR. LEON,—Derry took a chill the very first day he got to England, and has had to stay in bed. He is uneasy in his mind, and is wanting to hear all about Ranmore. It would be kind if you would send me a letter that will ease him when he wakes up.”

She went softly out of the room, so softly that she woke neither of them, and gave the letter to a boy. She knew the address of Mossy’s office, and said it was to be taken over at once, it was but a step. Then she went back into the darkened room, as softly as she had left it; she was a born nurse.

Mossy had been expecting to hear from Lord Ranmore for some days now. He knew he was due in England, and there were bills to be renewed, and sundry matters to be gone into. Rosaleen’s letter was brought to him when he was in the middle of his post. Mossy Leon’s habits were luxurious, and he did not arrive at his office until eleven. When he had read the note he was in two minds about

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bundling all his other correspondence back into the basket, and dashing round at once to the hotel. He could not understand why Lord Ranmore had chosen such a domicile. But he remembered Albany Street!

"He was always a queer fellow about diggings," Mossy thought. He did not understand Derry's desire to be economical. Derry had come nowhere near the end of his borrowing powers, and Mossy only understood economy when it was obligatory. *He* had no horror of debt. Quite the contrary. It was one of his aphorisms that creditors were tradesmen, to whom bad debts were a necessity, in fact an integral part of their balance-sheets. When his own tradesmen became importunate, which his improvident habits brought about frequently, and threatened him with a writ, or other proceedings, he would pay under protest, and say they were blackmailers. Another of his aphorisms was that a man who, having ready money, parted with it, did not deserve to be trusted with it at all.

He did not know of any reason why Lord Ranmore should be economising, for he had hardly touched the edge of his credit. The hotel was so near that he could put off going there until after lunch, which he could enjoy at Romano's, in the cheery company of chorus-girls, and their admirers; the semi-theatrical, semi-Bohemian atmosphere suited him. He knew most of the habitués, and it was usually the pleasantest hour of the day for him.

Everybody in the theatrical world knew Mossy Leon, not only because he was part author of the libretti of many musical comedies, but because he was also legal adviser to the most famous *entrepreneur* of them all. He enjoyed his unique position, and no one was better up in the gossip of the coulisses. He had helped a good many famous, or infamous, artistes into contracts, or out of them. Here

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

at Romano's he was in the thick of his clients. He forgot Derry whilst he was going from table to table, to this group and the other. He settled down finally with three young ladies who had been rehearsing, and in their giggling society he discussed his excellent luncheon over a bottle of champagne.

It was half-past three before he remembered he was on his way to see Derry Ranmore, and he was feeling mellow and well content. He walked from Romano's to the hotel ; the very entrance offended his senses.

“ Good God ! what a hole for a man to stay in ! ” he exclaimed, oblivious of the feelings of a German waiter who was sauntering from the table d'hote room to the hall, carrying a table-napkin as soiled as himself.

“ Here, you ! find me someone to take my card to a gentleman. Isn't there a hall porter or something ? Where the dickens can I find someone to take a message ? ” There really was no one about but the German waiter. “ Lord Ranmore is staying here, isn't he ? Can I see him ? ”

The waiter saw no reason why not. Meinherr Ranmore was on the second floor—Number Eighty-four. No, there was no lift, *aufzug*, the stairs were not steep.

Mossy went up. The shabby stair-carpets, and the smell of food positively distressed him. One has to recollect he liked Derry, and was never more than half a business man. The rest of him was made up of inconsistencies, the chief of which was a desire for everybody's well-being. “ What the devil made him come to a hole like this ? ” was all he was thinking. His conscience did not distress him at all in having essayed to prevent the Dowager Lady Ranmore from occupying the castle without giving any equivalent to Derry. Mossy's conscience was a very easy and adaptable friend to him. A keen sense of humour helped,

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

too, to keep it always in good subordinate mood. He knew it had been a very clever idea to close the mausoleum against the Dowager, and he thought, at the time, that Ranmore had been a fool to stop him, but so many things had intervened that he had forgotten this one. The things that had intervened were chiefly chorus-girls. All he remembered very distinctly just now was that Derry Ranmore was a nice genial fellow, and Flossie Delaporte would like him.

He knocked at the door of Room 84, and being bidden in Rosaleen's clear accents to enter, he found himself in a close atmosphere. Derry had once more essayed to rise, but had only got to the easy-chair, and into a dressing-gown. Rosaleen, of whom Mossy's only remembrance was her incongruous appearance at his dinner-party, and her abrupt and inexplicable flight from it, had a baby in her arms.

The walls of the room were papered with horrible yellow chrysanthemums, and there were no pictures or prints to relieve this; but there was a square of green carpet, with a maple-wood chest of drawers, washing and dressing-table, and Terence's cot. Derry's easy-chair was of basket-work. Mossy had an immediate sensation of acute discomfort.

“My dear fellow! Why didn't you send for me before? I've been wondering what the deuce had become of you. But what a ghastly hole to be in!”

He gave Derry no time to remember that he was a villain. With an eye on Rosaleen, rather a bold eye, by the way, he took a seat by Derry, and plunged at once into talk.

“I'm awfully sorry to see you like this. What doctor have you had? Some damn fool of a general practitioner, I suppose. You ought to have the best man in London. There's Tanner now, he's a very clever fellow . . .”



## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“I’m not requiring a doctor. That was a nice thing you wanted to be doing at Ranmore,” Derry began. But he was glad to see Mossy, he knew it, even whilst he started to abuse him. Mossy Leon took the bull by the horns.

“My dear fellow, you don’t mind my saying you made a damn fool of yourself with that cable? By now everything would have been straightened out, and you’d have been at the Ritz, with money to burn, instead of in this dog-kennel. But we won’t discuss that now. You are not fit for it. I don’t believe you ought to be out of bed.” He turned again to Rosaleen.

“Who has been attending him?”

He looked at her, and now he really did not want to look away again.

“It’s the malaria he has had; and the sunstroke he took out at Petchaburi has left him subject to headaches. But he’s better to-day. You are better to-day, aren’t you, Derry? And talking to Mr. Leon will do you good.”

“I should think if you have not done him good, no one could,” Mossy said this with his wandering eyes still following Rosaleen as she moved about the room.

Mossy was straight from Romano’s, where all the girls, with peroxide heads and advertised smiles, who danced and sang in musical comedy, and drew London by their beauty or agility, had been lunching and talking. To look from the garish, gilded beauties he had left, into Rosaleen’s pale face, grey eyes and wealth of black hair, was like coming from the decorative atrocities of a modern Alhambra into the broad calm of a Venetian lagoon. He would not have been Mossy Leon if he had not felt immediately that she was a factor in the situation. She was beautiful, this wife of Derry’s, unquestionably beautiful. There were a dozen things to talk to Derry about, the bills

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

that must be renewed, the action that ought to be taken with regard to the rents and leases; but Mossy did not want to talk of any of them, he wanted to look at Rosaleen, and indulge himself with that little thrill of appreciation.

Rosaleen, however, thought the men would want to be left alone.

“I’m going to wrap the boy up, and take him out for a while,” she told Derry. “Mr. Leon will be company for you while I’m gone. He’ll tell you all you want to know.”

“Don’t leave us, Lady Ranmore,” Mossy said.

She smiled at Mossy because already she saw that he was going to do Derry good, and the smile completed her conquest.

“Can’t talk about Flossie in the same breath,” was Mossy’s inward comment when he opened the door for her.

“What a beautiful boy!” Mossy was fond of children, and knew by instinct what to say to them.

“He has not been well these last few days.”

“You all want looking after, that’s what it is.” Mossy liked the idea of playing providence to Rosaleen and her belongings. He went back to Derry after she had gone out.

“Tell me about everything,” Derry said, rather feebly.

“You know Flossie Delaporte is to play ‘lead’ in the new piece at the Pantheon? I suppose I mustn’t smoke here? Your wife’s a beauty, and no mistake. I’d like Nat Simons to see her. What a place to have brought her!” Mossy was quite restless for a few moments after Rosaleen had left them, and walked about the room, talking spasmodically. Then, all at once, he recollected Derry’s needs.

“Have you seen any of them, there at Ranmore?” Derry asked him. Again and again during his illness the

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

passion of desire for Ranmore, and for his people there, had surged hopelessly over him.

“I went over. What a cursed crossing it is! . . . I saw the old lady in Dublin.”

“She is not old at all,” Derry interposed. “Go on.”

“And I told her what I thought of her, but she began by abusing me. She said you had put yourself in the hands of a low attorney, and you had forgotten what she and Terence were to you—and a lot more.”

“You didn’t let her think you came from me?”

“What the deuce did it matter what she thought? The woman’s a perfect vixen.”

“She used to be so good to me.”

“Well! She doesn’t seem to feel that way now. She called you all the names she could lay her tongue to, from interloper to abductor. I suppose it was a bit hot, you bolting with the girl that was engaged to your cousin, before he had been buried eight-and-forty hours! I say . . . do you really think a cigarette would matter? I believe it would be better for you than the atmosphere of this room.”

“Oh! smoke if you like,” Derry said impatiently, “but go on with your talking. What else did she say? And did you see the Duchess, or hear of her? What has become of her? Are they both deserting me entirely?”

With a cigarette hanging on to his lower lip, Mossy grew more definite. Derry heard about the interview in Dublin. It was obvious that Mossy had widened, not lessened the breach.

He had seen the Dowager Lady Ranmore in her own house, in Merrion Square. He had not waited to be announced, but had followed his card into the drawing-room, and commenced at once by saying he represented Lord Ranmore.

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The Dowager, who was sitting gazing into the fire, seeing nothing but a lonely old age reflected there, seemed at first too dazed to realize who he was, or what he wanted. Then, when she began to understand, her desolation broke over her like a cold and devastating wave, and she could only breathlessly splutter out the anger that was another name for shock. Was this Derry's emissary—Derry, who hadn't so much as asked if she was dead or alive,—but only that she should give up Ranmore to him, with all she had done there for “her lost darling.” Dry sobs had contended with incoherent grief as she talked. Wasn't it her husband's cousin's son, and had not she been a mother to him all the days he was an orphan? And hadn't he left them alone in the house directly trouble had come to it, clearing out when the black sorrow came? And now it was money he wanted, and only money. Ranmore was not for such as he. And the girl, who had professed to care for Terence, her angel son, had gone with him! It was the heir she had wanted, and never cared which of them it was; but it was heir to nothing Derry would be, and heir to nothing she had married. She would pull Ranmore down on both their heads if she could, and it was little short of it that she was able to do, Mr. Carruthers told her, if she exercised her rights, and she had instructed him to waive none of them. So, he, Mossy, could go back and tell that to his client.

Mossy had hardly recovered from his sea-sickness, and he was never at his best out of London and his familiar haunts. He had retorted that it was a “dirty trick” to claim against Derry for the improvements she had put in to please herself, and he did not suppose for a moment that she could legally maintain her position. She had replied that she did not want to be told her

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duty by a law attorney engaged by her ungrateful nephew to turn her out of her home.

“But, damn it, it is not your home, it's his.”

“Well, let him try and get it,” she had replied, ending the interview.

In the result Mr. Carruthers' claims had become more exorbitant. Mossy knew he had failed, and he wanted the Dowager to suffer for his failure. He had not gone over to Dublin to soothe Lady Ranmore's exacerbated feelings, he had gone there, to use his own expression, “to try to collect some oof for Derry.” The idea of barring her from Ranmore and the mausoleum was the outcome of this state of feeling. Fortunately, it had not occurred to him until his return to England. Derry had prevented his carrying out the scheme, and by this time, as was Mossy's way, he had forgotten his irritation.

He told Derry all about it, sitting there by his side in the dingy Strand Hotel.

It hurt Derry horribly, the more so because Mossy conveyed it badly. Of course he did not intend to hurt, but he really thought Lady Ranmore's feelings against Derry and his wife were as strong as she had talked them, and this was the impression he conveyed. Mossy said authoritatively that any idea of reconciliation was quite hopeless.

“What you have got to do,” said Mossy, walking up and down the room, the inevitable cigarette hanging from his lip, “is first to get well, and out of this filthy place, and then to make up your mind you have got to fight.”

“But, Margaret—did she say nothing about Margaret? The Duchess, I mean. Does *she* feel like that about me?”

“Never said a word about her, never mentioned her name,—besides, what has she got to do with it? She has renounced any claim.”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“It is not a question of claim,” Derry answered forlornly.

It was not possible for Mossy Leon to understand that Derry's depression had nothing to do with the money, or the possession of the Ranmore rents.

“Well,” said Mossy, when he had done a little more talking, “I am going to bring Tanner to see you this afternoon, because that's the first thing to do, to get you well, and out of this place. I will see Levy for you and get your bills renewed. You will have to sign another, but there is no difficulty about that. By the way, Lady Carrie has been asking after you, and when you are coming back. She is in the devil of a hole: I've spent half my time the last few weeks staving off Lady Carrie's creditors. I don't know what the deuce she expects you to do for her, or why you should do it, but her instructions have been to stave them off until you came back.”

That was the unfortunate moment Rosaleen chose for her return, and the first words she heard as she re-entered were Derry's:

“Is Lady Carrie wanting money? Well, bring me the bill to-morrow, and I will sign it.”

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## CHAPTER XXIII

ROSALEEN stood a moment, hesitating, on the threshold of the room.

"Come in, come in," Mossy said. "We've done our talk. By Jove, that boy has got quite a colour from his outing. But surely he is too heavy for you." Rosaleen had gone very pale, and the intentness of Mossy's look discovered it. "I'm going to send Tanner up directly I get back. I believe you all want change of air."

"Come in and shut the door," Derry called out, almost impatiently. He had the invalid's premonitory shiver, and dread of draughts. But Rosaleen thought he was vexed at her entry, at her having overheard his last sentence.

"Give him to me, I like kids; he is a little ripper, isn't he? Funny thing, he's much more like Terence than he is like you," Mossy said to Derry.

"Oh! put him down, we hadn't half finished our talk." Now it was for Rosaleen, Derry was impatient and irritable, but she did not stay to consider that.

"I'm taking him out again. I only came in for a moment, to see if you wanted anything."

"I'm just going. I only stayed until you came back, so that he shouldn't be alone. I'll come round again tomorrow, and hear what Tanner says. My business with Derry can wait. I don't consider him fit for business. Can't you take him off to Brighton?"

"Why Brighton?" This from the invalid. "I'll be all right in a day or two. I should have been all right before, if I could have got out."

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“That’s just my point. How can you get out here? Unless, of course, you only want to get as far as Romano’s. Let me arrange something for you.” Now it was to Rosaleen he was speaking. “I know some awfully nice rooms at Brighton. I went there last week with . . .”

But he did not finish his sentence. Mossy was an unaccountable person, and for the moment could think of nothing but the extraordinarily clear softness of her porcelain skin, the little trick of eyebrow, and the upward curve of the bow of pink lips, the way her head was set on the graceful slope of her shoulders, the slender perfection of her figure from rounded bust to waist, and the length from hip to foot.

“I’ll come round again to-morrow, after you have seen Tanner,” were his last words; and he did not part with his cigarette when he said them.

“I’m sorry I interrupted you in the midst of your business talk,” Rosaleen faltered out to Derry when he had gone. Derry noticed the falter in her voice, her pallor. He put it down to those words of Mossy about the boy. She could not even bear Terence’s name mentioned, Derry thought, and he had that little spasm of retrospective jealousy. It altered his manner to her for the moment, in some subtle way, not easy to convey. Poor Rosaleen thought the alteration was due to an allegiance revived. This dreary London was perhaps full of happy reminiscences for him, but he meant her not to know; she felt that now. If he had only married her out of pity, he never meant that she should know there had been anyone else, anyone whose place she had taken. She went on tending him as if nothing had occurred.

Dr. Tanner, sent by Mossy, came in later on. He was a big, fine Scotsman, the last man in the world, one would have imagined, to be spending his life writing certificates



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for leading ladies. And he knew his work well, too; only an unfortunately active thirst kept him from the position to which his talents entitled him.

He overhauled Derry, and found nothing the matter with him but treatment, and he duly admired Rosaleen, about whom Mossy had raved to him.

He sat talking with them quite a long time, and the upshot of his talk was that they were to take the eleven o'clock train for Brighton to-morrow morning, and to stay there until the sea breezes undid the work of the sudorifics.

“And I'm going to get me strength back entirely, and be able to look after this poor girl who has exhausted herself with nursing me?”

“I don't think you need worry about Lady Ranmore,” Dr. Tanner answered, regarding her with an expression of solicitous interest, really thinking that for once Mossy had not exaggerated. “To-day is Thursday, isn't it? I venture to think that by Sunday you will both of you have forgotten there has ever been anything the matter. But don't be too sparing with the food”—this was to Rosaleen as he shook hands with her—“and mind you see that he gets his tonic. Good-bye. I shall not even come in and see him again. So that tells you what I think about him. He doesn't want a doctor. You will be the best doctor for him.”

“And it's nurse and doctor she has been to me,” Derry called out. He was very affectionate to her, and appreciative, not at all different now from what he had always been. But she saw the difference that was not there; and, lying by his side that night, little stings and fears kept her awake. What was it he and Mr. Leon had been saying about Lady Carrie Carthew when she came into the room? And why had they stopped abruptly?

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

He had been impatient to her about shutting the door, him that was never impatient with her.

The next day saw them installed in those rooms at Brighton recommended by Mossy. These were in every way an improvement on the Strand Hotel. Derry and the child began to regain their health almost in a few hours.

Mossy ran down for the week-end.

“It’s all right,” he told Derry. “Levy will let you have another eight hundred pounds; you’ll have to give him a bill for twelve hundred pounds, but you won’t mind that. He’ll renew the others. I’ve seen Carrie, and told her you are here. She wants to see you. I suppose that’s all right?”

“I’ll see her directly I get back. I don’t like this borrowing, but I suppose there is no help for it.”

“My dear fellow, what does it matter to you? You’ll be very rich one day. There’s any amount of coal at Ranmore, I’m told. Your title is clear. It’s only a question of the money that has been spent. If I’d started first, or been allowed my own way earlier, Carruthers would never have got that order for the rents to be paid into Court.”

Mossy came down ostensibly to talk business to Derry. In reality Rosaleen was his objective. Why not, since Derry had an affair on with Lady Carrie? That was the way matters ranged themselves in Mossy’s eyes. He did not understand any other relations between men and women. Lady Carrie had corresponded with Derry; now she was looking forward to his making some arrangements with her creditors. What was the obvious conclusion? Of course, it was the one at which Mossy had arrived. It was hard lines on his wife. Mossy Leon, for whom the word morality had no meaning at all, but who was soft-hearted, and a good fellow all round, had sympathy

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

with Derry, and thought he could do him a good turn by occupying his wife's attention. He also had sympathy with Rosaleen, and from Saturday to Monday, for two or three consecutive weeks, he left Flossie Delaporte to her own devices, and on the promenade by the sea, or in the drawing-room of the house in the King's Road, he devoted himself to the consolation of young Lady Ranmore. His sudden infatuation would have been patent to anyone who knew him. Mossy was transparent when such an attack came to him. Derry, of course, saw only friendship for himself in Mossy's appearance at Brighton, and Rosaleen saw nothing else. She thought Mossy Leon was very kind and attentive; he had brought them all here to this sea and sun. It was through him Derry was himself again, and little Terence gurgling with laughter in the day, sleeping through the night. Sitting on a chair by the window, with the inevitable needlework on her lap, listening whilst Mossy talked, or half listening, she smiled, now softly, now gaily, at Mossy's stories. Mossy had no end of stories. Some of them made Derry glance askance in her direction, some of them she could not understand at all, but many of them made her laugh. Mossy, as he talked, could watch the dimple play in the corner of her mouth, and the way one eyebrow would move whimsically up. He found her brogue delicious.

When a girl's heart is as full of one man as Rosaleen's was of Derry, it takes a long time for her to understand that another is making love to her. It seems so patent to her that there is only one man in the world, that she expects everyone else to see eye to eye with her. Then, there were many other reasons why she should not suspect Mossy of entering the lists for her favours. She was a married woman, come of a class for whom the sanctity of marriage vows has a peculiar significance, and Mossy

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was a friend of Derry's. To glance, too, from one man to the other made the idea absurd. Derry had gained in good looks since he had married, his face had become more set, instinct with character; it was the face of a man who had done good work, and was conscious of it; who had carried out a vow, and was full of the quiet content of it; who had won a good woman's love and knew how to keep it. He was not, perhaps, handsome; the nose was too broad and the chin too square, he was too swart of skin. His straight hair fell untidily about his rugged brow; but his figure was magnificent. And now he carried his six foot two as if the world belonged to him. When they walked along the King's Road, or up the Parade, Rosaleen thought there was neither woman nor girl who did not look at Derry as he went by. She was never without her fulfilment of pride in him. It would have been impossible for her to imagine Mossy Leon, or anybody else, thinking to make love to her when she had Derry.

Mossy was definitely Semitic, and already, at five-and-thirty, his indulgence in the pleasures of the table had given him a somewhat gross appearance. His black eyes were bright and sharp; he inclined to baldness, and he was an indefatigable talker. He was always elaborately dressed, glossy, and brilliantly manicured; on one hand he wore two gipsy rings, on the other he disported the family seal. This had been Ethel's wedding present; it bore the crest of her family, of course. Mossy's family crest would have been three hats rampant, he said, or three balls pendant. His sense of humour did not fail when he talked about himself, but it certainly stayed in the background when he could contemplate Lord Ranmore's wife reciprocating his admiration.

He tried very hard. He told her all about Iris Mac-

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Intoy's turquoises, and May Ferrand's comments upon them, about both their salaries, and how Iris made nine shillings a week the first year she was on the stage, and £500 a week the third, and was no more solvent in the third than she had been in the first. He spared no detail of Lord Ramkelley's recklessness with Ellaline Gavin, and was eloquent of dinners at Taplow and jaunts to Maidenhead, and confidential as to what Jenny said to Zena, and what Lily said to Maud. Rosaleen did not listen to him very attentively; she was generally wondering whether the new nurse remembered that Terence liked a sponge-finger with his milk at eleven, or that it was time for Derry to have his tonic.

Mossy's infatuation lasted over three week-ends, and he never succeeded even in making her understand what he was trying to tell her. Mossy's temperament required encouragement, and he was used to receiving it, having both influence and diamonds to give away. He began to think Rosaleen, although so beautiful, must be stupid; but, after all, he was a clever man, and he noted the direction of her eyes, and gradually began to understand the position. By that time, however, he had, quite without knowing how he got there, or at what exact period he had fallen out of love and into friendship, arrived at a very genuine appreciation of her character, and he thought Derry a very lucky fellow, contrasting his own lot with something perilously like a heartache. If he had had a wife who adored him, and a kid like theirs, probably there would have been no Flossies, nor interests apart from Grosvenor Square. One of the strange things about Mossy was his appreciation of domesticity. Another was that he was never entirely disillusioned about Ethel. He always thought there was good in her, and that it was something of his own fault if it had never flowered. She

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could not help being a snob, or having no sense of humour. If she had only known the right people! He spent these few week-ends watching Rosaleen waiting upon Derry, playing with her baby, working for both of them. Then he thought it would be a capital idea if she and Ethel made friends. He had forgotten the fiasco that had attended his first attempt in this direction.

Ethel had not forgotten it. It was just the sort of thing that would have dwelt in her memory, even had Ellaline forgotten to remind her of it, or Bianca had not written.

“The Ranmores are coming to town at the end of the week,” Mossy announced, when he got back to Grosvenor Square one Monday. Ethel knew that they were at Brighton, and that Mossy was visiting Lord Ranmore on business. She did not go beyond this. If she ever suspected Mossy of being unfaithful to her, it had no effect upon her except to make her more extravagant. She had no capacity for jealousy; but she resented his spending money on anybody but herself. Mossy had been for many week-ends to Brighton before the Ranmores had gone there; and business was always his excuse.

“Coming back to town, are they? I suppose I shall have to call! Rather a bore, isn't it? I suppose she hasn't improved at all?”

“What the devil do you mean?” Mossy's manners retrograded under Ethel's superior airs.

“I mean that I suppose she still dresses like a housemaid, and drinks out of the finger-glasses.”

“She dresses a damn sight better than Mrs. Jobson, or any of that crowd! As for her behaviour, I wish to God any of your friends were as well-mannered!”

“There is no use getting into a rage about it. If they are clients of yours, of course I shall call.” Ethel was

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

quite willing to be a helpmate to her husband in this way, when his clients wore titles.

“Much good your calling will do her!” Mossy was irritable this evening; he was fresh from that domestic interior, those modest apartments, where love dwelt. And Grosvenor Square, the men-servants, the elaborate dinner, the bills that littered the hall-table, gave him an uneasy sense that he was getting little for his money.

“And I suppose you’ll get Mrs. Streeter, or Mrs. Jobson to go with you. I wish you’d go alone, and give yourself a chance. Get to know her.”

Ethel laughed.

“Oh! I got to know her well enough at the dinner-party I gave for her. She told me she had been maid, or housemaid or something. No, thank you; I don’t want to know any more about her than I do. But I’ll call, of course. Where are they staying? Not in Albany Street still, I hope?”

“I wanted you to look up a furnished flat for them. I suppose that won’t be too much trouble? They will have to stay in London until we get nearer a settlement. I know what Carruthers is playing up for, of course, but I’m not going to oblige him.”

“Mrs. Persian wants to let her flat. She has taken a cottage on the river.”

“Mrs. Persian? That’s the woman with a sweet smile and a bad word for everybody, isn’t it? Another of your Jobson lot. What’s her flat like?”

“It’s in Westminster. I don’t think it’s anything out of the way. She isn’t at all well off, but her husband was one of the De Clintons.”

“Oh, yes! I remember. She tried to get her marriage annulled—the case was heard *in camera*. She did not succeed, and has behaved ever since as if she knew he

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could get no redress either. A well-matched pair! What does she want for her flat?”

“Very little, I think. Six or eight pounds a week.”

“I’ll see it myself in the morning. You’ve got the address. Is it empty?”

“Yes, she went away last week.”

“They could get in by Friday, then? What twaddle it is to talk of the way Lady Ranmore dresses! She is one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. You can take it from me, she’s going to make a sensation.”

“A sensation!” Ethel pricked up her ears.

“That’s exactly it. As soon as ever they are settled, I’m going to give a party for them. Not your sort of party, that she bolted from before—and no wonder, all buckram and boredom. But just the right people, the people she’ll like to meet.”

Mossy had fallen out of love, and into friendship; now he would relegate Rosaleen into the background where he kept his instinctive connoisseurship of pictures and French furniture, cinque-cento work and enamels. But it was Mossy’s way to feel tenderness for any woman on whom he had looked with an amorous eye; such a one was never the same again as other women to him. He wanted to do things for her. Some instinct told him Lady Ranmore was not a happy woman, notwithstanding her undisguised devotion to husband and child. He wanted her to be completely happy. Mossy’s strange panaceas for any trouble were all to be at her disposal, Derry must buy her some jewellery, Ethel should make friends with her, and he would give a theatrical party for her.

He talked to Ethel about the party he would give as soon as the Ranmores were established in town, and he asked her to see about the flat for them the first thing in the



## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

at morning. He could talk about nothing but the Ranmores  
that evening. Ethel was full of misgivings; the title  
ae allured her, but her last fiasco obscured it. It was finally  
le agreed, to the satisfaction of both, that none of Ethel's  
is friends should come to the party. She would first see if  
ou Lady Ranmore had improved.

The flat in Westminster was duly inspected and taken.  
In the end Mossy left that in Ethel's hands. Once it had  
seized upon his imagination to give a theatrical party in  
Rosaleen's honour, this absorbed him entirely.

d, It was very rarely Mossy gave a party in Grosvenor  
of Square. The Savoy, the Ritz, or the Carlton was generally  
all the scene of his hospitalities. Grosvenor Square was his  
he wife's department. But he had a genius for entertaining,  
and when he took in hand a thing of this kind it was apt  
to be well done. When Ethel selected her guests she  
ow showed the quality of her mind. The choice fell upon the  
re inferior pseudo-smart, the admiring acquaintances from  
ad the suburbs, the combination of dull respectability  
ut and snobbery which really constituted her ideal society.  
on Mossy's ideals were different. He was quite frank about it.

ne “I don't want your West Kensington crowd at all. I  
le hate ‘respectable’ people! They are a damn sight more  
m disreputable than the others, and not half so amusing.  
h- Do you think that Irish hog Mrs. Jobson drags about  
ad with her is different from any other man who goes about  
r's with a woman? And she jaws about ‘wespectability’!  
er Give me a good-hearted, good-natured, and, above all, a  
iel good-looking woman, and what do I care what she does  
a with her spare time? I'll show you how to give a party.”

as He grew quite excited about it as the time went on.  
he He would have it on a Sunday night. Then he could get  
he a real good entertainment—all the music-hall people, as  
well as the others. He decided he would have quite a

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

small dinner-party, only eight or ten, then as many as he could get in the evening, and a big supper.

Mossy had taste. When he began to visualise his entertainment, he execrated Ethel's upholstery, the *carton pierre*, the *vieux rose* walls and furniture. He had so little interest in it that he had left it to her. Now he could comfort himself only with the knowledge that there were no bad pictures on the walls. The few water-colours by David Cox, Varley, Copley Fielding, and Crome were of his purchasing, and would have redeemed any less ostentatious hangings.

It was the list for the dinner that bothered him. Lady Carrie wanted to meet Derry; and naturally Derry would like to meet her. But how about Rosaleen? Mossy knew the two women had not yet met. Did Derry want to keep them apart? There was only one way to find out—that was to ask Derry when he came up on Friday. But the party was fixed for Sunday week, and there was but little time for all there was to be done.

Ethel, although she hated Carrie, who jeered openly at her pretensions and made fun of her, thought it only right she should be invited. For the Ranmores and she were cousins, and, much as Ethel disliked Lady Carrie, she could not forget that she was the daughter of the Earl of Wickford. It was a very difficult point to decide. Mossy could not help talking about his party to everybody he met, and he had to meet Carrie on business that very week. He boasted of the celebrities who had promised to attend—Lord Windermere and Iris MacIntoy, Mrs. Maltravers and Nat Simons. Mossy's celebrities, like the exhibition fruit at the Horticultural or Botanical Show, were too showy to be quite sweet. They were fruit of magnificent appearance, grown for show, something wanting in purity of flavour, perhaps. But Lady Carrie thought his party

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

would be great fun. She said she would like to come very much. Mossy's house was neutral ground, she could meet anyone there; it was just an excursion into Bohemia. Not like Ethel's dreadful parties, another of which she vowed she would never attend.

Mossy did not ask her if she minded meeting Derry's wife. What was the use, since she had said she would come, almost before he had made up his mind to ask her? The same argument applied to Derry; the thing had decided itself.

## CHAPTER XXIV

**M**OSSY was not very pleased with Mrs. Persian's flat when he went to see the Ranmores and tell them of the entertainment he was preparing in their honour. He found it stuffy, tasteless, and ill-furnished. And, indeed, it was all that. The last thing he could think was that these commonplace wall-papers and engravings, these saddle-back sofas and chairs, could be background for tragedy. Double doors divided the dining and drawing-room. When they were set open there was enough air in the room, which was about all that interested Derry. It was only a halting-place for him on his way to Ranmore.

"I say, Derry, what's Lady Ranmore going to wear at my party? Let me choose a dress for her, will you? I want her to outshine everybody else. She ought to, you know, although Julie Stormont is coming. By the way, did I tell you Julie was coming? She's the best-dressed woman in England."

Mossy talked as he wandered round the rooms, and grumbled at them, commenting on their frowsiness, and giving the names of a few of the people who were attending his party.

"I'll be choosing her a fine new dress myself," Derry said, looking at her affectionately. He knew Mossy admired Rosaleen; but then, that did not seem at all wonderful to him. Sometimes he had thought, perhaps, down at Brighton, that Mossy eyed her a thought too boldly;

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

but it was Mossy's way, and it wasn't a fuss he'd be making about it. “She'll look well in whatever she wears.”

Rosaleen, with heightened colour, protested she didn't want a new dress, and she didn't want to go to the party at all. It was her vivid recollection of the last one that dyed her cheeks. Mossy interpreted her flush correctly. He would not allude to it directly, he thought whatever had occurred then was best forgotten.

“I'll guarantee you shall enjoy yourself, Lady Ranmore. Oscar Paton is coming, and Mrs. Maltravers, Nat Simons and Clarice Vane, Lord Windermere, and . . . and . . .” He cleared his throat, and hesitated. He looked from one to another, relit his cigarette that had gone out, and added tamely—it seemed tame after the other names—“and Lady Carrie . . .”

It seemed to Rosaleen she could hear the silence that followed; but they were only her own heart-beats she heard. Derry gave her a glance; she did not meet his eyes, but she knew he had looked at her.

“Lady Carrie coming! Is she? Now, that's good news.” But he wasn't very sure about it. “My wife has never met her.”

“You've never met her?” Mossy turned inquiringly to Rosaleen. “She is good company.”

“Good company, is she?” Rosaleen answered dully. Both of them now began to speak of Lady Carrie Carthew somewhat eagerly, as if the moment had been embarrassing, but the embarrassment was over.

“She can imitate anyone she meets, you'd think you heard them speaking. You should hear her do Mrs. Jobson and Sir Patrick.”

“She has had very hard luck one way and another,” Derry began. Rosaleen must never know that it was Terence who had consoled her.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“I don't know what you mean by bad luck, she puts in a pretty good time, I can tell you. She is always short of money, if that's what you call bad luck; but which of us isn't?”

“She is lonely . . .”

“Rats! The place is always full of men.”

“Perhaps she has told Derry she is lonely,” Rosaleen ventured; her lips were trembling, but she was brave enough to want them to go on. She wanted to hear more, but she did not know what it was she wanted to hear. Derry, who was not good at any sort of dissimulation, who bungled and grew red, and was noisy with the furniture, knocking about a footstool, almost overturning a lamp, only wanted to change the conversation. He was afraid of Terence's name being brought up before Rosaleen. He did not know what Mossy would say, Mossy, who had known better than himself what were the relations between her and Terence.

“She's lonely enough, and hard up besides. And as for the men. . . Here, have a whisky-and-soda, Mossy. Tell us more about the fine party of yours. What's the good of talking about Lady Carrie? Rosaleen will see her, and I'll be bound she'll like her.”

Mossy saw that Derry was embarrassed, and talking to cover it, and he thought it was, perhaps, quite natural; but Lady Carrie and Rosaleen had got to meet, so what was the use of bothering? He was beginning a dissertation upon her; he did not want Derry to have any illusions. Whatever he was doing he had better do with his eyes open.

“I like the idea of Lady Carrie being lonely!” he repeated.

Derry went straight at it then. After all, he need not hear anything for which he had no mind.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“I wish you wouldn’t talk about Lady Carrie at all,” he said to Mossy, still with that heightened colour. “Rosaleen doesn’t know her, and you’ll only be prejudicing her. You’re such a prejudiced fellow yourself. How about that new dress, though? I thought you were taking such an interest in it, and were going to advise as to the colour.”

“Well, that was partly because I wanted her to cut out Carrie . . .” but he saw the frown on Derry’s brow.

“It’s a grand creature she is, then?” Rosaleen asked.

“Grand! Not a bit of it. What made you think she was grand? She’s quite a little woman; it’s always these little women who . . .”

But now Derry literally shouted at him.

“Have done about Lady Carrie! I’m not wanting her discussed, I’m telling you . . .” He was ashamed of his violence. But Rosaleen must not hear about her and Terence.

“All right, old fellow, all right.” Mossy was confirmed in his opinions. He thought Derry a fool, considering what a far more beautiful woman his wife was than Carrie Carthew. He thought, too, that Rosaleen looked unhappy; her face was white, and the stars had gone out of her eyes, that now were sombre and brooding like a dark night. Mossy was sorry she should look sad.

“Talking of dress reminds me that Percy Fullerton is coming too. You must leave your dress to me, Lady Ranmore. Percy has often said he’d rather have a word of appreciation from me, when he has really done himself credit in dressing a show, than a whole column of praise from a critic who didn’t know red from magenta.”

Derry plunged eagerly into the question, looking at her with an attempt at envisaging her in a ball-dress.

“She must wear green, for the honour of old

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Ireland. . . .” There was love in his eyes, had she but been able to see it, and a great anxiety to know if a chance word had hurt her, if she had ever guessed she had had a rival with Terence. She saw the anxiety, but missed the love.

Mossy scoffed at the idea of green.

“My dear fellow, we’ve got to bring out her tones, not to deaden them. Green is all very well for girls with red hair, sometimes for a very pale blonde; it’s no good at all for a real brunette. Red now, if we had to decide on a crude colour, would be a thousand times better; but we’ll do better than that. You leave it to me; I’ll see Madame Festoon, and talk it over with her.”

Derry would not leave it to anybody, although he was quite ready to discuss it with Mossy, or with all the world. The subject seemed of absorbing interest.

After Mossy had left, not without giving Derry the name and address of the dressmaker, and urging the necessity for seeing the selected colour by artificial light, Rosaleen found the strength to ask:

“Is it for this Lady Carrie Carthew, then, that you want me to be so fine?”

Derry’s reply, “Well, I’ll be proud to show you to her,” did not seem all the answer she wanted.

In the short silence that fell between them she felt wildly that she must make an effort to know what it was he was trying to hide from her. Of course she knew it was only to save her feelings he would practise dissimulation. Derry’s goodness could never be in question; but he had almost been forced into his marriage with her. She forgot how happy they had been together. Was it, then, true that he had known and cared for another woman, and that only his great chivalry, and his great care for his cousin’s memory, had prompted his marriage? It was



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good he was . . . but, oh! if it were only his love he had given her rather than his pity! She choked back the sob in her throat.

“You don’t want to talk about her to me,” she said then desperately.

He went over to where she stood by the window, looking blankly out at the blank wall; he put his arm about her, never dreaming how she was misunderstanding.

“Not if you don’t mind,” he said. “We’ve plenty else to talk about, you and I.”

## CHAPTER XXV

THE day of Mossy's party came at last. Rosaleen had made vain protests, first against going at all, and then about the fine new dress. Mossy and Derry together had overridden all her objections. Mossy reiterated he was only giving the party for her. Derry said more than once that it was proud he'd be to see her dressed like a queen. Derry was always saying pretty things to her. Now with determination she tried to shut her mind, and her memory, against the doubts and fears that encompassed her.

She had gone with him to the great *modiste* whom Mossy had recommended, and chosen her dress, although, indeed, she was not allowed to interfere over much, for Madame Festoon knew so exactly what was required. She admitted that Mr. Leon had spoken to her of Lady Ranmore; Mr. Leon was a good customer of hers. Mossy had once boasted to Derry that he had given more clothes to more women than any other man in England, except, perhaps, Nat Simons; but then his were in the way of business. Derry had never in his life ordered a dress for any woman but Rosaleen. He flattered himself into thinking he ordered this one. He did not even know its colour when he went into the bedroom to see her, all arrayed for conquest, as he told her jestingly, before they set forth for Grosvenor Square.

"I thought it was to be white!" he exclaimed. And there was so little colour in it, it well might have been white; but just that little colour there was, and the sheen of

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the satin, brought out, as Mossy had promised, every egg-shell tint of the fair skin, it deepened the iris of her eyes, and the lights of it matched the light that excitement brought into the centre of them. Her hair, taken simply back from her face, lay in a great coil low down on her neck. Rosaleen's neck had the grace of a swan. The white slenderness of her small bust was draped with filmy lace, but it lay like snow beneath the lace, yet snow with the sun on it, almost dazzling.

“Mossy said I ought to have bought you diamonds, but it's no jewels you want, it's a jewel yourself you are,” Derry exclaimed when he looked upon her.

“You are pleased?”

“Now, if I just gathered you up in my arms to tell you how pleased I am, I'd spoil everything; so don't tempt me by standing there.”

She was young enough to be excited by a new dress, and her own reflection in her mirror, and above all by Derry's praise. She put aside all doubts and misgivings, and only remembered that, at least, she was his wife, and that to-night he was pleased with her. It was his appreciation that lit the stars in her eyes. Happiness accentuated her beauty. Derry was really proud of her, and she, as always, of him. Derry, like all dark men, looked his best in evening dress.

They were a very noticeable couple as they followed their names into Mossy's drawing-room, and were received in Ethel's best manner, and with Mossy's real cordiality.

“Ripping, isn't she?” he said aside to Derry. Mossy's black eyes glistened as they went over the detail of her dress. Mossy was a splendid host when the whole conduct of affairs was in his hands, as it was to-night. He made every guest feel that he or she was the guest of the even-

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ing, and that the entertainment was given in his or her honour. Ethel could never have been a good hostess. All the time her mind was on herself, and on the effect she was making. She was certainly handsome, and her waist measurement was not more than twenty inches, if that. All the Ayscoughs prided themselves on their genteel slimness. In truth, there was no milk of human kindness in any of them that could serve for fattening. Ethel held herself very erect in her new black velvet; her hard, handsome eyes were critical on Rosaleen, but, once they were satisfied, they easily sought the mirror between the windows. She saw that Lady Ranmore wore no jewellery, whilst her own coronet of diamonds sparkled on her elaborate coiffure. Now she could receive her other guests with an easy mind. She really thought she looked much more like a peeress than Lady Ranmore.

The dinner-party was to be small, only ten people. Rosaleen had hardly collected her faculties before she found herself being piloted downstairs by Mossy. She had been hot and cold, looking this way and that, dreading to recognise Lady Carrie Carthew, fearful all at once, she hardly knew of what. Derry was so fine and precious a possession to her; little chills of terror shook her as she went down the stairs with Mossy, because some other hand was on his arm, and she heard his deep voice answering a low one

“We’ve a crowd coming in the evening,” Mossy said, “but I like a small dinner party. Ten is two too many, but one never can be certain of Lady Carrie.”

Now they were seated at the round table with its flat decoration of mauve orchids. Among the orchids were poised little dancing figures, dressed, Mossy told Rosaleen, like the chorus of flowers in the new play at the “Frivolity”; each bearing an electric lamp.

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“That was my own idea; good, isn't it? We shall have the whole fifty on the supper-table.” He was quite exultant over the effect. Rosaleen's eyes were on the table, indeed, she found it beautiful, she told him. Those eyes of hers could not, as yet, wander any farther, and her heart-beats were stifling her. It was only Lady Carrie she wanted, and dreaded, to see; she who had written to Derry in Siam, about whom he did not want to talk. Yet now she heard him talk. She heard his voice more clearly than she heard Mossy's, although Mossy never stopped talking.

But presently, when she found the courage to raise her eyes, her transient colour coming and going, she found she could not see Lady Carrie from where she sat, and Derry, too, was almost hidden from her. Then she was able to follow what Mossy was telling her about his guests, and realise that he was introducing her to her *vis-à-vis*, and the man who sat next to her.

Carrie, in the meantime, up at the top of the table, had no interest at all in Derry's wife, but a great deal, for the moment, in Derry himself.

There was no one more capable than Carrie of appreciating the alteration in Derry. He had grown from a great, awkward boy into fine manhood. He was even more attractive than Terence had been, she thought. And to-night he had something of Terence's gaiety.

“I am going to save you from Mrs. Mossy Leon,” was almost the first thing she said to him. “You are sure to be on the other side of her, and she will ask you, as loudly as possible, so that everyone at the table may hear, and think she is a friend of hers: ‘How is your cousin, the duchess?’”

Carrie imitated Ethel's tone, although Ethel was just behind her on the stairs, and might easily have heard.

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“You may answer her. I shall let you gratify her to that extent. Then you must turn round and talk to me for the rest of the dinner. I’ve a hundred things to say to you.”

Derry was nothing loth; even her enemies had to admit Carrie was good company. And they began by a laugh that established their friendship. For, surely enough, as soon as ever they were all settled in their seats, and in the pause that came before the first bottle of champagne was uncorked, Ethel said loudly:

“And how is your cousin, the duchess, Lord Ranmore? I see she has returned from Pau. I hope she enjoyed the hunting . . .”

Derry answered that she knew more about his cousin’s movements than he did. He threw it off lightly. He was not going to spoil the pleasure that was before him by dwelling on the thought of how little he knew of Margaret’s movements. He appreciated Carrie’s imitation of Ethel. Perhaps it was a little cruel, perhaps it was a little caricatured, but certainly she hit off their hostess to the life, and was not deterred from continuing her mimicry by the proximity of her victim. Afterwards she gave Derry a rapid description of the other guests, with a flash of illuminating phrase that made him see them through her eyes.

Next to Carrie, on the other side to Derry, was the famous Irish novelist, Oscar Paton. He had been red-haired and flamboyant in his youth, with eyes of china-blue, and fat, small hands with which he gesticulated and talked. The red hair had turned white, but the eyes had retained their blue, and the speech its flamboyancy. Oscar Paton was the only literary man in an illiterate age. He told this to everyone, and some of them believed him. Certainly he devoted his entire life to his art

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living in Dublin, and only coming over now and again to visit his publishers. With his waving hands he deplored that he was unable to read modern English. He did not understand it, he said. He extolled the French novel, and shrugged his shoulders when he regretted our insular lack of literature. Oscar Paton has not a great vogue. The press, the compact little ring that controls the fiction market, always treat him with indifference, for even a journalist resents being stigmatised as illiterate. In a pause of Carrie's description he was heard to speak of a leading reviewer :

“I deplore his undistinguished fluency. If he were to praise anything I did, I should know I had failed, I should be afraid he had begun to understand me. ‘*She threw an orange at him.*’ That is his criterion of imaginative fiction.”

And he went on to speak of a novel he had not read, but which had gone into many editions, and excited his jealousy. The phrase seemed to have no meaning, but he repeated it several times. “*She threw an orange at him.*”

Oscar Paton had a distinct personality. But for his overweening vanity, and his lack of classical education, he might have been the great man that he saw himself. As a novelist he failed, and would always fail, because he had no understanding of normal relations between men and women ; but in his younger days he had written exquisite verse, and a play that ran for a week, in which Mossy had detected genius. Mossy and he had been friends ever since then. Oscar talked to him for hours whenever he was in London, of himself, and of Judaism. Oscar was very much interested in Judaism ; he found it a picturesque survival.

On his other side to-night was Mrs. Maltravers, the famous courtesan, a woman of forty but still beautiful ;

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a Provençal by birth, owing her name and place to a romantic marriage.

“You know something of these Jews?” he asked her, “they are the romance of our dull age.” Everything he said was said for effect, as Carrie pointed out to Derry in a quick undertone. But there was often a wild truth caught in the net of his epigrams. Rosaleen was introduced to him across the table, and he asked at once if she had read *The Bay of Bantry*.

“It is the only serious contribution that has appeared on this side of the Channel to the literature of catholicism and decay. The French were the first to discover the analogy, but it was I who . . .” He wanted the entire table as audience, but when he found they were bad listeners, he dropped his voice, and spoke into the ear of his neighbour, Mrs. Maltravers. He was full of French stories, modern *contes drolatiques*, and he had an absolute pride in his want of delicacy in narrating them. It was many a long day since Rose Maltravers had found her way from a French circus to an English country house, and Maltravers had been but ill rewarded for his misplaced chivalry. For a time Mrs. Maltravers was the most-talked-of woman of her day, the scandals which were attached to her name began in a palace, and ended in a stable-yard. Perhaps they had not ended yet. She was extraordinarily stupid, and had never quite mastered the language of her adopted country, but her amiability was as amazing as her stupidity. It was Mossy who had engineered her on to the stage when her fortunes were at their lowest ebb. He said her neck and shoulders, combined with her bad reputation, and her French accent, would make any play. She was not an actress, but her few public appearances in foreign parts of plays written for her, had given her a new standing in the public eye.



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The horses, however, that had been her first love were also her last. She had racing stables now, and an entire new social *clientèle*. At forty she was still beautiful. She had no scruple in laughing at Oscar Paton's coarse stories, delicacy being no part of her social equipment.

Another of the dinner guests was Nat Simons, the famous *entrepreneur*. What share he had in Mrs. Maltravers' racing stables was always a subject of debate in theatrical circles. A handsome fellow was Nat Simons, with the head of a Roman Emperor. His eyes were sleepy and southern, his black hair curled low on his forehead. He glanced at Rosaleen from under his eyelids, now and again, as if wondering how she would look in tights. It was Nat's appreciation Mossy wanted, when he had taken so much trouble over Rosaleen's costume. They were solicitor and client, but they were also boon companions. Mossy enjoyed exhibiting a new beauty to Nat as a collector enjoys a rarity when showing it to a brother collector, who would have given any money for it. Nat was very sociable, an agreeable addition to any dinner-party; he could both talk and listen.

Clarice Vane and Lord Windermere completed the party. Their *liaison* was one of the tragedies of the Roman Catholic anti-divorce laws. At twenty-four Lord Windermere had been persuaded by his confessor into a *mariage de convenance* with a young convert of the great house of Eartham. In the first eagerness of her apostacy the marriage with Lord Windermere appeared as a fitting corollary to her induction. But within a year the innate fickleness of her disposition found another objective. Large interests were involved, and a scandal had to be avoided at all hazards. When Lord Windermere became convinced that it was impossible to get a dispensation from Rome, he bowed his head to the yoke, as children of

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his church have done from time immemorable, and wore his fetters uncomplainingly. But at thirty-four, neither husband nor widower, he fell in love with one of the prettiest and most virtuous little women that ever danced and sang her way into the fickle graces of the public. He had two children by her, and would have made her his wife at any time, had he been able. Their lives together were models of domesticity. He was a dark and saturnine, melancholy man, she was light of foot and dainty; their devotion was a popular jest.

Clarice Vane had a great friendship for Mossy Leon. It was Mossy who arranged her settlement, and persuaded Lord Windermere to let her remain on the stage. Mossy urged that, as he could not give her any society but his own, and, as she had been the great favourite of the public, used to applause, the “beat of populous hands,” it would be unfair to deprive her of the exercise of her art. She would make him no worse companion for going on with her life’s work. Through Mossy’s intervention, therefore, Clarice kept her place on the boards. The home in St. John’s Wood lost nothing because its mistress led a strenuous, instead of an idle, life. There were times when Lord Windermere had perforce to leave her for days, sometimes even for weeks at a stretch; he had the duties of his great position. He, too, was grateful now to Mossy for having pointed out that she would have pined and fretted at her isolation without the stage. She had been absolutely faithful to him, and had never had another lover. Mossy could not for the life of him see that Clarice Vane was not fit to meet Rosaleen, or his own wife, or any lady in the land.

Carrie, telling the story in her own way to Derry, rather jeered at Mossy’s point of view. She had known Gerald Windermere all her life, she said, but he would never have

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dreamed of introducing her to Clarice Vane. Lady Carrie was under many obligations to Mossy, and was enjoying his hospitality, but that did not deter her from jeering at his lack of shibboleths. Derry looked at Clarice with sympathy and interest, and perhaps that influenced Carrie when she spoke of the “impossible” things Mossy did, such as inviting Clarice to dinner. Clarice Vane, off the stage, was a sweet-faced, gentle little woman. Whatever her status in society, Carrie Carthew would have been unable to understand or appreciate her. The form of her union with Lord Windermere may have been irregular, but in all essentials she was a sweet and tender wife and mother, and a loyal comrade. All the dramatic charities could have told tales of her unstinting generosity; many a poor sister-professional, fallen on evil days, had cause to bless the day she heard her name. She had a wonderful charity of thought and action. The State might not recognise her position, and such women as Carrie Carthew and Ethel Leon might treat her with contempt or condescension; but if any morality, other than conventional, be accepted in a higher place, there would be no condescension in the judgment meted out to Clarice Vane.

The dinner passed all too quickly. It is possible both Clarice Vane and Rosaleen dreaded that inevitable twenty minutes in the drawing-room. Lady Carrie had an habitual distaste for the society of women; particularly, as she said lightly to Derry when she followed Ethel's signal, “spotted ones.” He took the allusion slowly; it was difficult to think she could class Mrs. Maltravers with Clarice Vane.

But, once in the drawing-room, Mrs. Maltravers presented no social difficulty. “It is going to be one long evening, I sink,” she said to Ethel, smiling sweetly; “and if you will excuse me, I go upstairs, and take

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ten minutes' sleep, I sink there is a big sofa in your bedroom. You vill tell your maid to call me at half-past ten, vill you not ?”

Rosaleen knew her moment had come. She met, as well as she was able, Lady Carrie's light, inquisitive eyes. They were vaguely curious, perhaps still more vaguely satirical.

“So you are Derry's wife,” she began. “He ought to have brought you to see me before this, I've just been telling him so.”

“It's so short a time that we've been in London,” Rosaleen faltered.

“Yes, I know. Still, he found time to come himself.” The sudden flush amused Carrie. “Did he not tell you he had called ? I'm sorry I was out, he ought to have let me know he was coming. . . .” Then, because she could read the other like an open book, and found herself all at once quite amused, and in her element, she added mischievously, “like he used to do.”

Lady Carrie understood jealousy when she met it ; it no new thing for her. To find it in Derry Ranmore's peasant-wife was exhilarating.

Derry's wife did not look like a peasant, although, somehow or other, Carrie's supercilious and patronising smile and manner, and amused, critical eyes, made Rosaleen hold herself less erect. It was always her own past that humiliated and flushed her cheek irregularly.

Carrie subsided gracefully into a low easy-chair, and indicated that Rosaleen should sit too.

“You are so tall, too tall for a woman. Derry used to like little women. Don't stand as if you were triumphing in being so much above me.”

Rosaleen's flush deepened.

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"You had not known Derry very long before you married him, had you? I don't think he had met you at all when I first knew him. He never spoke of you to me." She smiled just as maliciously as she had spoken. "He was only a boy. I've often told him what a boy he was; too young to be making love to me."

"It isn't a boy Derry has ever seemed to me," the poor girl said slowly; she was in a bewilderment of feeling. It was surely impossible that Derry had ever cared for this plain little body. Yet the plain little body had the power to hurt. Lady Carrie knew her capacity, and it was easy to see the other's defencelessness; even this preliminary skirmish made it clear. And Derry had grown into a fine man; he was worth fighting for.

"Don't scold him for having been to see me, there's a dear woman, I like him to come, and he likes to come." This evening was the first time Carrie had seen Derry since his return from Siam, but Rosaleen was confused, and failed to realise it. "You have so much of his society," Carrie said, with a droop of her lip, but a quick glance of her eye to see how her plea was received; "don't grudge me an occasional hour."

"I'd not be interfering with anything Derry wants to do," Rosaleen answered, not without her defence of pride. For now she had her armour on, that armour of instinctive reticence.

"How sweet of you!" Carrie ejaculated. Who could say if she meant it ironically, if she thought Derry would go and see her anyhow, whether his wife wished it or not? They exchanged a few more sentences. Carrie was a little vexed at getting no further "rise" out of her victim. The flush had been succeeded by pallor, but Rosaleen's voice was steady, and what little she answered to the other's veiled gibes, or questions, showed nothing of her mind.

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In truth Carrie found Rosaleen somewhat baffling. She was perfectly gowned, for one thing, and no one could deny her beauty. But she had taken the liberty of baffling Lady Carrie, and Lady Carrie's duty was clear.

Derry was the first of the men to come upstairs.

Carrie said to him coolly: “Now, don't forget I expect you to devote yourself entirely to me this evening. We're both of us out of our element.” Glancing at Rosaleen, she added: “I suppose your wife knows we are by way of being distant cousins, the Ranmores and I?”

Rosaleen understood, if Derry missed the implication, that here, among these theatrical and Bohemian people, *she* might be in her element, but Derry, and his “distant cousin,” were out of theirs.

“We'll look on at Bohemia from a convenient distance. There is a sort of conservatory arrangement at the other end of the room, isn't there? I think I see it, or is it only palms? Now, bring me this low chair, and another comfortable one for yourself, a cushion and a footstool, and I'll play showman to you.”

“And it's the showman will be the best performer of them all, I've no doubt,” he answered gallantly.

Carrie, with a little parting smile, went off with Derry just as Mossy made his way toward Rosaleen. Derry looked both expectant and merry as he went, carrying Lady Carrie's low chair, listening to her and talking. Surely, Rosaleen thought, she had not been so unhappy that last evening she dined here, and ran away before the men joined them in the drawing-room. There was no opportunity of running away now, Mossy was by her side, full of his intention to give her a pleasant evening.

“I've got the Paulyn Brothers coming, and Dan Stern. They have neither of them ever performed in a private house before. Stern has only been in England four days,

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and his contract with the Palace is an exclusive one. Oh! don't bother about Derry!” for he followed the direction of her eyes. “Carrie has walked off with Derry; it's a way she has. She'll keep him amused. Did you ever see Dan Merino do his ‘Bill Sykes at the Pet Dog-show?’ I told you I'd secured him, didn't I?”

Mossy constituted himself her bodyguard. He did not neglect his other guests, but he never left her alone for long. He was so obviously anxious she should enjoy herself, that she had to smile at him, and tell him everything was delightful. Whilst all the time she was carrying her heart like a stone in her breast, and the cold of it was all through her.

But it was really a delightful evening. There were many ladies, from the first rank only, of the musical-comedy stage, and there was not merely our only light-comedy actress, but also our only *tragedienne*. Julie Stormont was easily the best-dressed woman in the room, notwithstanding the trouble that had been taken over Rosaleen's get up; but Julie had a gift, an instinct for clothes, also a superb figure, and a jewel casket wherein taste met splendour. To-night she wore green—that very green that had been denied to Rosaleen; but then, it matched Julie's eyes, and her wonderful chain of uncut emeralds. And her hair, for the moment, was red, or brown with a shading of red; she wore it high, piled against her quaint Empire comb of emeralds. Her manners were as fine as her figure. Perhaps there was a shade too much of them, she was a little too invariably amiable, a little too *empresée*, and delighted to meet everybody; but that counted for, and not against her, in this circle. She had French methods and modes of expression, she moved with a slow, undulating grace, and she moved a good deal, here, there and everywhere, distributing words and smiles. Carrie told Derry she

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had to walk about because she was laced too tightly to sit down!

Mrs. Brian O'Hagan was in black velvet, a crumpled-looking garment that had a second-hand effect; a fichu, which had once been white, was adjusted, as if hurriedly, about her shoulders, the corner of it missing the middle of her back, and the rest meandering at will, obviously covering hooks that were absent and an essential shabbiness. She wore a great *cinquo cento* crucifix, suspended from a string of amber beads: this was her only jewellery. The tragic eyes were set in a sallow complexion, and, amid the chatter and light laughter that so soon filled the room, the beautiful cadences of her voice struck an incongruous note. Mrs. Brian, as they all called her, came in very late, and she appeared a little dazed, as if she had been sleeping. Carrie told Derry she was supposed to be addicted to morphia, but to a more observant eye, it only showed her as a mystic, or visionary.

When the rooms were quite full, there were certainly a hundred or more guests, hardly half a dozen of them with names unfamiliar to the public.

To entertain the artists of the musical-comedy and regular stage, Mossy had got together all the talent from the "halls." Presently, on the platform where the grand piano stood, one or another took his place, to speak a speech, or sing a song, or show his quality. This was an audience of artists, and the spirit of it grew. Champagne was brought into the drawing-room, and flowed freely. Smoking was, of course, allowed, and amid the fumes one heard the excited laughter, and applause. The last play in which Julie Stormont had appeared ran for three hundred nights. She had no opportunity of going to the Oxford, and hearing the incomparable Dan Stern sing "It was half-past nothing on a snowy summer's night,"



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or, dressed as Joan of Arc, telling the story of the famous pearl necklace. She shrieked with laughter at Dan's presentation of Joan on her white horse, mounted for the first time, haranguing the troops as it caracoled and more than once nearly threw her. All his properties were a handkerchief, which he made into a helmet, and a stick that he borrowed from Mossy and bestrode in great style. He was Marie Antoinette one moment, and Joan of Arc the next, with Mary Queen of Scots as a "runner up."

The Paulyn Brothers were American. One told a good story, the other capped and contradicted. They were so quick, and the stories so good, that a ripple of laughter began almost at the first few words, and was kept up all the time. Their patter was full of colloquialisms, and strange, racy, transatlantic phrases, but this only added to its charm. What one could understand was so humorous that the rest was accepted as being even more so.

That brilliant protean artist, Mr. Sebastian Links, aided by his incomparable wife, did a rapid *revue* as it would appear on a cinematograph worked by an amateur in a manner that brought down the house. The broken fitful dancing, the scraps of song that were supposed to issue from a gramophone, the spontaneity and genius of the little *tour de force*, met with generous appreciation.

From start to finish the entertainment went with a bang. Long before supper-time the *artistes* were tumbling over each other in their anxiety to "do a turn." Those who would have needed an hour's pressing before they would have sung for anyone else, or in any other private house, were volunteering on all sides. For, if Julie Stormont had never heard Dan, nor the Paulyn Brothers, they, in turn, had never heard her. Julie recited, Clarice gave "A Columbine once met a Clown at a fair," and thoroughly enjoyed hearing for the first time, Eric Coombes' imitation

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of it. Clarice had been singing the Columbine song for half a dozen years, but she had never before had an opportunity of hearing Eric in it. He was apologetic, and not quite up to his best form in the commencement, but she encouraged him, and soon he was doing himself and the song full justice, dropping his voice, and his curtsey, making his expressive gestures—just that mixture of buffoonery and caricature for which he was famous.

“I believe I made the success of that song,” he boasted to Clarice, defiantly, after his third tumbler of champagne. The champagne was served round in tumblers, and Eric’s defiant manner was the natural sequel to his nervousness; “They like the parody quite as much as the original.”

“I am sure they do,” Clarice answered him, soothingly. “I would much rather hear you than sing it myself. Can’t you do anything with the new one, ‘Pretty Fanny Moody met a melancholy man’?”

He caught at the suggestion, quite a promising friendship was struck up between them, and if he had not drunk a little too freely of Mossy’s champagne, and grown a trifle uproarious later in the evening, she might have invited him to that house in St. John’s Wood.

Few people wanted, perhaps, to hear Mrs. Brian recite “The Death of the Firefly” from the new Japanese play at the Parthenon, but it was wonderful for her to volunteer it.

Rosaleen liked this item better than any other part of the programme. She had tried to respond to Mossy’s kindness, but the sight of those two figures at the end of the room, sitting together, laughing, and talking, so full of gay intimacy, paralysed her faculty of enjoyment.

All at once, as that beautiful cadenced voice rose and fell, she was back in Siam, on that evening when Brother Ben Whippell had told in Siamese the Story of the

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Crucifixion to the moving pictures from the lantern. She fell to dreaming, and now there was the long drive home, with Derry's hand clasped in hers, under the wonderful moonlight. She saw it all so vividly. On every side, from pine tree and alder, the fireflies danced and played in the silvered darkness, darting here and there. . . . She had to brush her hand against her eyes to see that she was here, in Mossy Leon's brilliantly lighted, crowded drawing-room and Derry was still seated in the corner there, under the palm, holding Lady Carrie's fan, listening and laughing whilst she talked.

At twelve o'clock supper was announced. A hundred people crushed at once into the dining-room, overwhelming imported butlers and incompetent footmen; they ate as if they had never eaten before, and drank wine as if it were water. At first the clash and clatter of plates, and knives, and glasses dominated the supper-table. But very soon the men were getting on their feet, and toasting their host, singing "For he's a jolly good fellow," and later on, for no reason at all, "Auld Lang Syne" and "Yankee Doodle." Glasses were clinked and broken, healths drunk, new friendships and old admirations proclaimed and insisted upon. The turmoil ebbed and flowed, and, but for Mossy, would have flooded decorum. But Mossy knew when the current needed diverting, and he would shift a seat, or turn a discussion, or head an argument without any apparent effort. He liked to see the champagne flowing, and his fine cigars being consumed. He was for ever pressing both, and directing the servants. His hospitable instincts were racial and generous. Nobody could eat, or drink, or smoke, or talk, enough to please him.

Lady Carrie disappeared early. Derry remained and helped the toasts, and the choruses. He drank perhaps a little more than was good for him.

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At four in the morning, crawling homeward in the four-wheeled cab that smelt of straw and damp, he said it had been a glorious evening, and he did not know when he'd enjoyed himself so much. He put his arms round Rosaleen, who held herself upright, and a little aloof. He told her she had looked ripping, the handsomest woman in the room, and that he had been proud of her. If she relaxed a little, looking at him wistfully, taking hope, his next sentence was like a dash of ice-water in her face, and she stiffened her back.

“She's wonderful company, is Lady Carrie; it's better than being at a play to hear her talk. She's taking me down to Hurlingham next week, to see the polo.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

MORNING brought Derry a parched mouth and a heavy head. He breakfasted late, but whilst he was struggling with his bacon and kidneys he said he must be out early.

"Another cup of coffee, if you please, darling. These late nights don't agree with me. And how about yourself? No roses this morning! Like a ha'porth of soap after a hard day's washing you're looking; it's a stay-at-home couple we are. I must go out directly I've swallowed me breakfast, but I'll be back and take you for a drive this afternoon, if you like."

Rosaleen had not slept at all. How could she sleep when her heart lay cold as a stone in her body, and all the time she was feeling the weight of it? It was Lady Carrie was the good talker, and the good companion to him. He had said he did not want to talk to her about Lady Carrie; he had said it more than once, and not only to her, but to Mossy. How could she help wondering why, and never hitting upon the clue? She did not underrate Carrie's attractions as a smaller woman would have done. Carrie was subtle, purring, with a fluffy appeal. It was not wonderful if she should care for Derry. Rosaleen would not have thought it wonderful if every woman cared for Derry; but it made her heart ache to think that Lady Carrie and Derry had an intimacy from which she was shut out. It wasn't a jealous wife she would be making him; but if it had been only out of pity he had married her, and it was in the way of his happiness she was stand-

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ing . . . Why, the endless night itself wasn't long enough for the vista of empty years and dreariness that stretched before her. *She*, in the way of Derry's happiness! How gay he had been with that woman last night, he had not been so gay since they reached London, and this morning over breakfast he . . . yawned.

He went out after breakfast, and after luncheon too, not without asking her if she cared for a drive, but relieved, she thought, when she said no. It was nearly six o'clock before he came home again. He said he had had tea, and he yawned again. He thought he'd have a nap in the drawing-room. . . . She sat in the dining-room, not to disturb him. She guessed where he had been, although he had fallen to sleep without telling her.

It was quite a sad face Mossy discovered when he came in to talk over the party, to hear from her, as he had heard on all sides to-day, what a success it had been, and how unique. She saw him coming, and let him in herself; Derry mustn't be disturbed. She led Mossy into the dining-room, her finger on her lip, and it was then he saw that her face was sad.

“Well! wasn't it a good party? There's not another man in London could have brought such a crowd together. No money could have bought such a show.” Then he broke off, because he'd seen her face. “What's the matter? You look as if you'd lost a diamond tiara, and found a hair-net of the wrong colour with a big hole in it! But, seriously now, anything wrong? How's the boy?”

“It's grand he is; there's nothing the matter. I'm tired, that's all. Speak low. Derry is asleep on the sofa behind the folding doors.”

Mossy persisted:

“I expected you to be looking no end gay, you were the success of the evening last night, you know. You

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should have heard what Nat Simons said about you! You could "walk on" to-morrow, if you liked, and I would guarantee you a speaking part in a month."

Assured that there was nothing the matter with her but over-fatigue, Mossy became fuller than ever of theatrical gossip. They moved into the bay of the window, in order not to wake Derry, and he told Rosaleen what everybody had said about his party; he had lunched at Romano's, and found that no one was talking of anything else. He wanted to know what item of the entertainment she had enjoyed most. Talking, not listening, was Mossy's idea of conversation; whatever he asked her, he never waited for the answer. That was his weakness, but it was one that suited Rosaleen very well.

Suddenly it struck her that she could ask Mossy, more easily than Derry, about Lady Carrie. Had Derry ever cared about her? What had they been to each other? Her own marriage to him was so wrapped in pain and darkness, she could not bear to look back, yet she was being forced to look back. She had never known for certain why it was he had not spoken that golden summer at Ranmore, before Terence came, and shadowed not only all her summer, but all her life? She felt now that it was in shadow and humility her life should have been lived. She had thought that it was his poverty had kept Derry silent, and because they were both young. Now she believed that it was because here, up in London, he had already seen someone he liked better. All her reasoning powers were obscured by her pain.

She did not have to press Mossy for information; his indiscretions were part of his companionability. He had not the gift of keeping secrets, his own or anybody else's, except sometimes from Ethel, for whom he had that curiously inconsistent respect.

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“And what did you think of Lady Carrie—Carrie Carthew? She wasn't looking her best last night. She *will* wear that *cau de nil* shade, because years ago some artist fellow told her her hair was the colour of primroses, and she must dress up to it; ‘the sheath and the flower’—you know the sort of thing. But really there is hardly any yellow at all in her hair, it is just ashen: he had much better have made her wear brown, and appear as an Upman cigar. But to see Carrie at her best you must see her in a tea-gown, in her own place, of an afternoon. . . .”

More than half in earnest, for he liked Rosaleen, and hated to see her look sad, he went on:

“By the way, I shouldn't encourage Derry to sprawl his long length too many afternoons in that pretty drawing-room of hers. I meant to tell you that before. She is a clever little monkey, full of tricks. You have to get up early to get the best of her.”

And yet he did not seriously fear Lady Carrie's seductions for Derry. After seeing Rosaleen as he had seen her last night, after contrasting one woman with the other, it was ridiculous to think Derry was now in love with Lady Carrie. Derry was in love with his own wife; really it was shouted on the housetops, it was only Rosaleen who did not hear it plainly. Her love for him was so loud and insistent that she heard nothing else.

But Carrie had admitted some time ago to Mossy that she had a hold, the effect of which would be felt in Derry's pocket. Mossy did not want to give away any of Carrie's secrets, they were old allies, and he liked Carrie. Liking many women was one of Mossy's specialities. But Derry had been waiting for him when he came to the office that morning, in urgent need of money; it could hardly be for his own requirements. He had had eight hundred pounds hardly a fortnight ago. Rosaleen was a perfectly



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wonderful manager and needlewoman. Derry was never tired of telling of her prowess. She made all the boy's clothes, her own, too, except last night's wonder. The housekeeping in the flat was on an economical scale, just a couple of maids and the boy's nurse. Why should Derry want another £500 at once?

Mossy was never a business man, notwithstanding that he was a financier by profession, a Semite, and a solicitor. He had gone to the length of pointing out to Derry that money borrowed at 80 or 100 per cent was dear, if it was to give to a woman he no longer cared about. Even Mossy thought that Derry must once have cared for Carrie. Derry had practically told Mossy to mind his own business, get him the money and not ask questions. Mossy had no thought of making mischief when he gave Rosaleen a hint that Carrie might get Derry into a mess.

“You see, they are old friends,” he said, “and Carrie has a way of depending upon her old friends. You take my meaning?”

“I'm not sure.”

Rosaleen's heart was beating faster than ever, and louder surely, she did not want Mossy to hear it, nor to think that she was prying upon Derry's affairs: “It's Derry and she were old friends, you're telling me, before we were married. But why shouldn't he go and see her then? It's dull for him here, I'm thinking.”

“Oh! well, just as you like. There is no reason he should not go and see her; but he'd better leave his cheque book at home. That's all I meant; she's a little intriguer, a bit hot, and going the pace all the time, on a small income. Don't say I didn't warn you, that's all. Derry is such a good-hearted chap; a woman like Carrie can twist him round her little finger. What did you think of Julie Stormont's 'get up'? They talk about French-

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women! There isn't a French-woman I've ever seen who is fit to hold a candle to her. And she never makes a mistake, Lady Ranmore, she never makes a mistake." Now he was talking about something he really understood, and his manner was distinctly earnest. "She has got the finest selection of jewels of any woman on the stage, and she only wears exactly enough—never a brooch in the wrong place, or a ring too many. Did you notice her emeralds? They must have cost a fortune. The next time you see her she may be in white satin, with diamonds set *à jour*, French setting, mind you, that makes them look like lace. She has a set of peacocks, in diamonds and emeralds and sapphires, that would make your mouth water, and a *parure* of rubies—pigeon's blood—not a flaw in any of them—that she wears with a rose-pink brocade. Some people call her plain. As if a woman could be plain with a figure like that, and the knowledge how to dress it!"

"Is she very rich?"

Mossy laughed. He liked instructing Rosaleen's ignorance, here in the intimate dusk of the closing day, although he was no longer actually in love with her. That Derry was sleeping at the other end of the room did not prevent it being a *tête-à-tête*.

"She hasn't got a bob. She draws two hundred pounds a week, and spends four."

"Then how does she get her wonderful jewellery?"

Rosaleen had only a perfunctory interest in the matter, but she was glad Mossy was no longer talking about Lady Carrie and Derry. She had wanted him to at first, but it had been almost like the cessation of physical pain when he turned to another subject. She had wished to know all there was to be known of Derry's intimacy with Lady Carrie; then she had found the subject, and Mossy's

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treatment of it, unbearable. For Julie Stormont she cared nothing.

“She gets her jewellery the same way other pretty women do,” he answered, and proceeded to dilate upon the theme.

“How many diamonds do you think you could have if you’d so much as look at any man but your big Derry?”

She raised unseeing eyes to his face. Had Derry ever given jewellery to Lady Carrie?

“You know that line in ‘*The Boys from Barton*,’ ‘I do believe in platonic love, but I’m a sceptic about platonic jewellery’? Well, Julie Stormont’s casket of jewellery isn’t supposed to be platonic. I can’t say if it’s true, I’ve never given her anything myself. She is a connoisseur, I couldn’t afford it, if I wanted to. We’ve been speaking about Lady Carrie, her income is about eight hundred pounds a year, and she rents a hunting-box at Melton, as well as the house in Charles Street. How do you think it’s done?”

It was at this point that Derry sat up and yawned, so loudly that they could have heard it if the folding-doors had been closed.

“Who’s in there with you, Rosaleen?” he called out. “That you, Mossy? That was a fine feast you gave us last night, I haven’t got over it yet. Have you been talking it over with Mavourneen? Didn’t she look the grandest of them all?”

“We were talking of Lady Carrie,” Mossy answered coolly, flipping away the ash from his cigarette. “I was saying she was as clever as a monkey, and no more pays for her own clothes than Julie Stormont does for her own jewellery. Your wife here is quite shocked.”

“And no wonder! I’m surprised at you talking that way of Lady Carrie. No one knows better than you what

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she has gone through, and the claim she has . . .” Suddenly he recollected, and was abruptly quiet.

“Me! What should I know?” Mossy asked. “I know she would ruin Rothschild.”

“Well, shut up about it, anyway.” Derry left the sofa and came over to them. Noticing Rosaleen’s pallor, he said, “Late hours don’t agree with her, do they?”

“She ought to have more of them, that’s what’s the matter. She ought to go out more, and enjoy herself.”

But Rosaleen turned and fled. Her heart had contracted when Derry told Mossy to “shut up” about Lady Carrie. His look of kindness on her was poisoned. If he called attention to her pale looks, wasn’t it because someone else’s pleased him better? When she got out into the passage, that sob in her throat found vent. She had not meant to listen, but she heard Derry’s voice raised when he asked Mossy:

“What for were you talking about Lady Carrie to Rosaleen? Did you want to let her know the straits the poor woman is in? I’m surprised at you.”

Derry had always understood that Mossy Leon knew all about Sir Harry Carthew’s death, and the hand Terence had had in it. But he forgot entirely that Mossy could know no reason for the suppression of the whole subject of Terence and his friendship for Lady Carrie from Rosaleen.

“My dear fellow, if you go on borrowing money to pay Lady Carrie’s debts, you won’t be able to keep it a secret, that’s all I’ve got to say.”

“I am bound to do the best I can for her?”

“I’m hanged if I know why!”

“You know right enough,” Derry answered, shortly

“I suppose it’s the usual reason,” Mossy said. Then, he harked back to the party, repeating good things that

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had been said and better things that had been thought of afterwards, giving incidentally the outline of an idea that had struck him over supper for a farcical comedy with a plot as well as music. Mossy went away before dinner, but not before the maid had been in twice to lay the table. He was hoarse with talking, but in good spirits; he never guessed there might have been mischief in his talk.

Derry was more solicitous of Rosaleen's looks when she ate so poor a dinner. He pressed food upon her, and wine. He was kindness itself to her; but bungled when he said:

“To think of a bit of gaiety oversetting you like that! Why, you look like you did before we went out to Siam!”

It had slipped out unawares, and he was sorry immediately, for now indeed her eyes grew suddenly quite mournful and pathetic, and he knew he had hurt her by remembering. After that he would not let her go on with her farce of a dinner; instead, he made her lie down on the drawing-room sofa, and, great-hearted fellow that he was, he knelt down before her and put his arms about her, and laid his face against her hair when he whispered:

“I ought not to have said it! Forgive me, I'm a blundering fool. It's me that must forget—and haven't I forgotten? We've been so happy together, sweetheart. Don't look like that; I wouldn't hurt you for worlds. There's only you and me now, just you and me! . . .”

With the dry sob there broke from her the words:

“But it's never forgetting I am.”

“You're tired, mavourneen, only tired. It's happy as the day's long you shall be. Tell me I am making you happy! I'm thinking now and again I'm failing you in something.”

She put away his arms.

“And is it reproaching yourself you are,” she said

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passionately, “when you’ve given your life to me?” For none of her sad misreading saw anything but what was fine in him. He must never think she knew, or suspected it was pity and chivalry he had given her, and that she had only known that mirage of happiness whilst she was mistaking it for love. “It’s nothing you haven’t given me, and, indeed, I’m happy as the day’s long. I’m tired, only tired.”

That excused the sob, but those strong arms would not be flung off, they were around her again, and his lips were on her ear.

“Not too tired to be kissing me, and telling me I’m forgiven?” For it *was* as a lover he loved her, although her eyes were so blind to it.

## CHAPTER XXVII

**Y**ET, after Mossy's party, it seemed that nothing was the same with Derry and Rosaleen. Sympathy between husband and wife is a subtle and delicate mechanism, adjusted, as it were, by an imperceptible spring that may be jarred by the slightest word or movement, put out of order and brought to a deadlock without warning. That was how it was with Derry and Rosaleen. Conversation lagged, the spring of that, too, had run down, they seemed all at once to have no mutual interests. The child was no link between them; for Rosaleen's motherhood was tainted. She tortured herself with the thought, as he laughed and played with the child, that he affected for her sake a pleasure in his false fatherhood.

The misunderstanding, the breakdown of the machinery of marriage, was all in her imagination. Derry was ignorant that anything had come between them, innocent of offence, he knew nothing of what was happening. He saw that Rosaleen was out of spirits, and put it down to the spring weather, and the close flat, and a dozen other things, he could not dream of the real cause. He looked at her sometimes wistfully, sometimes wonderingly, he felt there must be deficiency in himself.

Not all at once did the enlightening or illumination come to him, and then it was only an artificial lighting; it flickered and wavered, and lit up the corner that was to have remained in darkness. Derry saw with pitiful, half-averted eyes, blinded by this false light, that Rosaleen was still fretting after the child's dead father. The

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sunny curls and blue eyes and merry laughter of the growing boy were reminding her of her young lover. Derry had never grasped the whole truth, never grown to know that Terence had never been Rosaleen's lover, Rosaleen's beloved; he had only been her master. Derry had never quite understood. Yet all the manhood in him resented her memories, for she was his. But he must be gentle with her, forbearing. There had never been anyone like Terence; it was not likely she could forget him so soon, he must not press himself on her.

The more pitiful he was, and tender, restraining his love for her, giving her time to recover her spirits, the deeper and more constant grew the ache in her heart. The waters went over her head, waters of bitterness and humiliation, when she thought it was only her misfortune that had won him, that it was only a great, beautiful pity she had from him, not love at all as she had dreamt in Bangkok. When once this idea had taken firm hold of her, she often found herself sobbing in her sleep. She knew now that it was out of pity he had married her, and out of his fealty to Terence. She would dream of blackness and misery, and wake sobbing. Then she would quiet herself, forcing herself to lie still. She must not disturb him, she would give her life and soul for him, this grand, generous husband of hers. But she must stand in his way as little as possible. That was why she urged him to go out more, to see people; and because she urged this, he thought she liked better to be alone than to have him with her.

This was Lady Carrie's opportunity, of which she took such full advantage.

The flat in Westminster lost its charm and home-like quality, and seemed to grow formal and ugly, with all the glamour gone from its hired furniture, filled only with stale



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reminiscence of the former people who had lived there. The house in Charles Street became something of a refuge for Derry, and certainly Carrie could be a gay companion to a man upon whose conquest she was bent. It never struck Derry that a false interpretation could be put upon his friendship with Lady Carrie. His conscience was so absolutely clear. If he feared sometimes that he might have blundered in carrying out Terence's wishes for Rosaleen, if he feared lest his love for her had made him precipitate, he never dreamt for an instant that he had blundered over Terence's obligations to Carrie. He was meeting them the best way he knew.

He did not realise that Lady Carrie was flirting with him, he thought she was grateful to him for helping her, and amusing and pleasant by nature. He was sorry for her loneliness, in which he believed implicitly, and for her money troubles. When he was at Charles Street he was certainly quite content to be there. The life he was leading in London did not suit him at all. Carrie talked to him of hunting and horses, sometimes, too, she talked to him of Margaret. He did not recognise the efforts she made to find the subjects that interested him, but whenever she asked him, he went to tea with her. Rosaleen seemed to want to be alone just now, not to care for his company. Derry knew little about women, and he saw nothing dangerous in Carrie. He had not a thought that could have wronged or hurt his wife, if she had only known.

But she did not know. She only knew that he and Carrie had been old friends, and he did not want to talk about her; she never doubted that he sat with her every afternoon. She knew, too, from Mossy Leon, that he gave her money. Yet money was scarce with them. She had been so proud to save it for him, working, and guarding

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his interests, but the thought that she was saving for Lady Carrie now turned her economies to bitterness.

It was impossible to suspect Derry's fidelity to her. In such a mind as hers that weed could not grow, there was no soil for it. The form her self-torture took was that Derry had met, and cared for, Lady Carrie while he was up in London on his visit to Terence, and that they may have been engaged lovers when she and her misfortune separated them.

She wondered miserably what explanation Derry had given Carrie for having thrown her over. She knew he would have kept her own dreadful secret.

The unreasonable estrangement widened. Lady Carrie had an inkling of it, and fostered it all the time.

Derry, sick at heart, because he saw the shadows lying in his wife's grey eyes, and the stars never shining there now, because she was growing thin, and her voice lifted no more in song about the flat, and because he misunderstood the genesis of it, grew unhappy, and restless in his unhappiness, even as he had been that short time in Bangkok. This London life offered no relief in work, and open-air exercise. He was hankering, too, after Ranmore, desperately home-sick for Ranmore, and all that had made it home for him, tired of Mossy's talk of delay, the inevitable slowness of the law, and the dilatoriness of Carruthers. Lady Carrie was a refuge from it all.

Lady Carrie lured him with talk of Margaret. "The Duchess would certainly be in London some time this season." Up at Dunstons, now, she was detained by the ever-increasing malady of the unhappy Duke, but some time surely she would come, and then Carrie would speak to her about Derry, and bring about a meeting between them. This was what he and Carrie discussed when they were together, how he should get back into his

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aunt's good graces, how, if he met Margaret by accident, or in Lady Carrie's house perchance, without any loss of dignity, or anything in the nature of an appeal, she would understand how it was with him, and that he was longing for reconciliation. This was all Derry thought he talked of with Carrie; she knew differently.

Lady Carrie, commiserating him on the dull time he was having, waiting for the lawyers, invited him to accompany her on a day's racing at Sandown, or at Kempton, at Hurst Park, or Windsor. He was apologetic at first about these invitations, although Rosaleen did not seem to mind at all. He explained the nature of his enjoyment in them.

“It's getting a breath of the country,” he would say, stretching his broad shoulders, throwing his head back as if to take a long breath. “It's filling me lungs with air. Then there is seeing the horses led round in the paddock, the glossy necks and clean hoofs of them. I get talking to trainers, and the jockeys sometimes; it's all of the trials and the handicapping, and breed of them, we're gossiping. But it's a rare change from all that theatre talk I hear from Mossy. Do you mind if I am away for the day?” And when she said she did not mind at all:

“But it's you that's not caring for my company any more,” he would add, wistfully, with a desire for contradiction.

Rosaleen, who could have kissed the places his feet trod in the hall, who laid kisses among all his clothes, and tears among them, too, never contradicted him.

She wanted him to have his pleasure. It would have been absurd to pretend he did not derive enjoyment from these outings. He had no real reason for unhappiness; no living rival stood between him and the woman he loved, who belonged to him, sleeping each night by his side, caring for him too, in some way, he knew. He had

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only to be patient. His nature was naturally optimistic and joyful. In his light clothes, with his race-glasses slung across his shoulders, he had something of a boy's excitement over the prospect of a day's pleasure. She saw it in his eyes.

And sometimes—so strange a thing is a loving woman—the exhilaration in his eyes gave her that thrill of sympathy which is almost a mother's privilege of emotion. But then, there is no woman loving a man as Rosaleen loved Derry that has not something of the mother-feeling toward him. She did so want him to be happy. Surely, she thought, it was to the racing and the open air he was looking forward, not to Lady Carrie. That was when he stood so tall and fine before her, with the look of exhilaration in his eyes, but never forgetting to bid her take care of herself, and to hope she wasn't feeling dull. Afterwards, when she was alone, of course, the reflection that all his enjoyment was in Lady Carrie's company came back to her bitterly enough.

The “day's racing” took place very often. Then, there was polo at Hurlingham and Ranelagh. Lady Carrie and her sporting acquaintances were so much more to Derry's taste than Mossy's theatre friends.

Carrie scored all the time, and she knew well enough she was scoring, although she had only seen Rosaleen three times altogether. Derry took Rosaleen to Charles Street one afternoon. A few days later Carrie dutifully returned the call at the flat. On the occasion of Rosaleen's reluctant visit to Charles Street, Carrie contrived to show how many times Derry had been in the artificial atmosphere of that pretty drawing-room, and how familiar he was with the way of the house. Lady Carrie sent Derry downstairs to find cigarettes and matches. She reminded him of the day the Princess Zoto of Roumania had smoked them out with

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her scented “*cigarellos*,” and they had had to take refuge in her boudoir afterwards. She proved in a dozen small ways the intimacy that poor Rosaleen never queried. She did it with intent, although there was nothing to be gained by it; it was only because she was naturally feline and mischievous, and she thought Rosaleen’s forlorn attitude ridiculous. Derry missed reading the riddle of her face, but Carrie missed nothing.

When Lady Carrie paid that obligatory return visit to the flat, Derry was at home to receive her. She had arranged with him the time of her call. Rosaleen knew that, because Derry had ingenuously told her, knowing no reason for concealing it.

She had come in all her *frou-frou* of fine clothes, and style, and had stayed less than ten minutes, looking about her with quick and affected surprise, asking Derry how he could bear to live with other people’s furniture, and *such* furniture! She had openly sympathised with the conditions of his life. She had called him “poor Derry,” and had said she really must find means to reconcile him with his people.

Rosaleen’s attitude added zest to Carrie’s pursuit of Derry. It was pleasant enough to have a cavalier upon whose escort she could depend to execute her racing commissions, take her tickets, get her lunch and tea, play the *cavalier servente*. Lady Carrie always had, and always would have, someone dangling after her, attached to her suite, as it were. Derry did not make love to her; she had not brought him to that point yet, although she had hopes of it; but he was very good to look upon, and easy to lead. Whatever he had she could get from him; he was certainly an acquisition. That he had a wife, a dumb, mournful peasant, as Carrie characterised Rosaleen scornfully, was no drawback, rather it was the contrary. Lady Carrie did not

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want to marry again, unless, of course, marriage should ensure a fine settlement; she had had enough of marriage with Sir Henry Carthew, and her temperament was really cold. What she wanted was to enjoy herself. The conquest of Derry, or of any man, became interesting to her only when it was in battle between herself and another woman. Rosaleen was her enemy whilst Derry was still unconquered. He paid her compliments, of course; was he not an Irishman? But of love-making there was none. Carrie was annoyed about it sometimes; he ought to make love to her. She knew it was Rosaleen that stood in her way, and she began to dislike Rosaleen.

The climax came with the invitation to stay at Ascot for a week.

“The Brinmores have told me to bring anyone I like; they want one man to complete the party,” Carrie told Derry. “It’s a very pleasant house to stay at, they do you well all round. Brinmore drives a four-in-hand; we get over to the course in under an hour. Jack Brinmore has always horses running, and, as he trains with Finne- more, he gets to hear one or two really good things in the course of a meeting. You can’t expect more than that.”

The invitation had been sprung upon Derry the evening she had driven him home from Ranelagh in the dusk, after dining in his company. It had all been very pleasant. But to spend Ascot week away from home! She could see him hesitating as he stood on the doorstep to say good-bye to her.

“It’s a pleasant time we’ve had.”

“It will be pleasanter at Ascot.”

Then she found her lever. If Margaret would go anywhere at all, with the Duke in his present condition, she would go to the Brinmores. In any case, she was certain to be over to the racing for one day.

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“That is why I’ve practically settled it. I said you would come with me. Three years ago Terence went with me. It’s not the place a woman can go by herself. They don’t expect it of one. I am sure it will all come right with you and the Duchess if you get face to face.”

She intended to carry Derry to Ascot with her; she did not care with what argument she baited the hook. The Duchess was just as likely to be staying with the Brinmores for Ascot as she would be to quarter herself on the Mossy Leons, for instance, for the London season, but this, of course, Derry could not know. He was told he would be able to ride over to Ascot, if he preferred it to driving. He heard of Jack’s fine racquet-court, in which there was generally a game to be had before they started for the course. Nothing was said about the bridge, and the little game of baccarat, that wound up the evenings. She knew it was racquets and tennis, and, above all, the horses, that could tempt Derry if the prospect of meeting his cousin was too remote.

“I’d go like a shot, I’d go in a minute, but I don’t like leaving Rosaleen. It’s herself that’s looking peaky, and wants a change of air.” He hesitated, the prospect held out was very pleasant; he would like to be out of London, he was longing to meet Margaret, he loved racing.

“But she won’t be dull,” Carrie urged. “She has her beautiful boy.”

Lady Carrie had never seen little Terence. She openly admitted she could not bear children; they monopolised conversation, and seemed to her of no interest. “Or why,” she went on, “if you say she is looking peaky, why don’t you send them both away to the seaside whilst you are with me? You could join them at the end of the week. Why not Folkestone? I might go down with you from Ascot to Folkestone, and run over to Paris for a few days.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

There isn't a decent hat to be found in London. I don't believe I could do better than run over to Paris.”

All this was not said on the doorstep of Charles Street ; but the next day, and the next. Derry, restlessly moving from one chintz easy-chair to another in the Charles Street drawing-room, was allowing himself to be allured. Carrie thought Folkestone was an inspiration. Derry would bore himself to death in Folkestone lodgings after a week at the Brinmores. Paris is the one place impossible to be about in alone. He would probably jump at the chance of seeing her over, and, once there, she had no doubt he would stay as long as she wanted him. She urged the advantages of the Folkestone plan upon Derry. He agreed that sea air might do wonders for Rosaleen and the boy, although he would make no promise about Ascot. He must first see what Rosaleen had to say about it.

“Not but what the boy looks a picture. It's she that has grown thin.”

But he could not talk about Rosaleen to Carrie. He was worried about her, although again and again she assured him she was quite well. It never even vaguely occurred to him that his intimacy with Lady Carrie had any connection with Rosaleen's altered looks.

Mrs. Mossy Leon, who was very attentive to Lady Ranmore, and frequently called to invite her for a drive, offers which Lady Ranmore almost as frequently declined, supplied an explanation.

“When are you going to take steps about your wife's presentation?” Mrs. Mossy Leon said to him, one night at the theatre.

Mossy had taken stalls for the four of them, and Rosaleen wore her champagne-coloured dress. She had grown too thin for it, and now the fit did Madame Festoon no credit,



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but she was striving to respond to Mossy's witty gossip, and he was very content with her society.

“Her presentation?”

“She ought to have been presented on her marriage. Of course the Dowager would be the right person, or, if she is still in mourning, then the Duchess of Towcester. But, failing either, there is Lady Carrie . . .”

“Oh, I can't think of it at all,” Derry answered hastily.

He did not know why he couldn't think of asking Lady Carrie to take the place of his aunt or cousin; the whole idea was new to him, and distasteful.

“I think she is fretting about it,” Ethel went on, relentlessly. “It is such a slight, and under the circumstances, you know. . .”

Derry was really startled. The play lost its interest, and the supper at the Savoy, that followed it, was dust and ashes in his mouth. Surely Rosaleen would not think he meant to slight her. He glanced at her across the supper-table. How beautiful she was! And she smiled back at him, for, at the same moment, she was thinking that not a man in the room was as fine as he. When they had come into the room, everybody had turned to look at him. She always thought it was at him people looked. But Derry saw that her smile had lost its youthfulness. Could she possibly be thinking he meant to slight her over that presentation, had he been dull, or obtuse, and missed the cause of her changed demeanour; it seemed absurd, impossible that she should care for such a thing? The band had been playing “The Wearing of the Green,” and perhaps that accounted for the lines into which her face fell after that smile. It is a wonderfully sad piece of music, Derry thought, watching her. It was impossible she was fretting about not having been presented. She could not

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think he meant to slight her, to keep her from her rightful position.

In the cab, going home after supper, Derry questioned Rosaleen. Somehow or other his arms had grown a little shy; they no longer went so certainly and instinctively about her.

“Is it dull you are in the flat? Is it more society you’re wanting? Mrs. Leon, she’s thinking you’re fretting over not being presented. It’s proud enough I’d be to take you to Court. And the Queen, God bless her, and Him too, they’d love to know you. I was only waiting”—Derry hesitated, but, after all, he thought, why shouldn’t she know his hopes?—“until me aunt came round, or Margaret. It’s Margaret would be proud to present you.”

“It isn’t dull I am. And why should I be fretting? Don’t think of it,” she answered him.

“And it isn’t fretting after anything or anybody you’d be if I could help it.” The tenderness in his heart was so great that it drove the timidity from his arms. He put them about her, and her head rested a minute against his shoulder.

“I’d like to see you happier,” he said.

She hadn’t a word to answer him. But she rested there, against his shoulder, all the way home, wishing the drive could last for ever.

All the deep springs of her nature were blocked and congested by the passion of her feeling for him, and her gratitude. She had, perhaps, forgotten it in Siam for a time, accepting the joy of her daily life without thinking always of its source. Since the vision of Lady Carrie had intervened she had had no hour of this unalloyed joy. She was thinking always of what he had done, and why he had done it. By now, she had quite forgotten that once she had hoped he cared about her for herself, that once she had

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thought he did. In her mind now was the fixed idea that it was the Lady Carrie he had cared about, long ago, for herself he had kindness, nothing else. But yet she might have said a word to him, have let fall one that would have given him a clue, when he held her like this, and his arms were comforting about her, and her tired head rested against his shoulder.

“You are growing thin,” he went on, as he held her. “I was talking about it to Lady Carrie to-day, telling her you were not looking strong at all.” If her lips tightened he did not see it, her head was against his coat, and now she could feel his breath stir her hair. “I can’t have you leaving me bit by bit, an ounce to-day and a pound to-morrow.” His tone was light, but the feeling underneath it was deep. “I’d like to see you happy. You’re not used to London ways, and you’re getting tired of them. Will you be happier by the sea, with the boy? Is it more air you’re wanting? Why not be going off to the sea with the boy?”

It was then he told her of his own invitation to Ascot. Her head lay still against his shoulder, and she never stirred.

“I don’t want to be going away without you, but if you’d be happier . . .” Again his tone was wistful.

“It’s not happier I’d be without you. An’ it’s not *my* happiness I’m wearing after,” she said hastily.

He drew her closer. Of course, she was thinking of that young life that had been brought to so quick and cruel a close; he felt he would have given the world to make her forget.

“Is it better when I’m beside you, then?” he whispered. To-night it seemed his patience was failing him a little, and he must have reassurance from her. “You’re not disliking me altogether?”

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She gave a little low laugh.

“ Haven’t you been Providence, and all to me ? ”

“ But it’s not gratitude I’m wanting . . . ”

“ And how can I help being grateful ? ”

Then the cab stopped.

When there is a misunderstanding between husband and wife, words are necessary for its full elucidation. For a satisfactory readjustment of delicate machinery, the flaw that has caused the jar must be discovered.

For all its crawling, the cab stopped too soon that night at the Westminster flat.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

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THE next time Derry saw Lady Carrie he told her he had decided against the week at Ascot. Rosaleen did not seem to like the idea of going to Folkestone without him. Altogether it seemed a selfish plan, and he would give it up.

Carrie was furious. She had the emotion one could imagine in a world-renowned wrestler, thrown in an early round by a bungling amateur. It was an accident, it could only have been an accident, but it was intensely galling to her pride. She concealed her feelings from Derry, but dwelt upon all the pleasure he was missing; it was only regret she expressed to him, not anger.

He came away from that interview rather pleased with his own magnanimity for refusing the invitation, but rather sorry for Lady Carrie, who told him she had quite counted upon him, and that it was too late to find another cavalier.

It was natural Rosaleen should gather something of his state of mind. It was not against the visit to Ascot she had protested, but at being sent to Folkestone. Where Derry and the boy were, was home for Rosaleen. The Westminster flat had still that distinction.

"Go to Ascot, it's a fine time you'll be having there, and I'll like to hear of it. But let me stay here with Sonny."

"I'll not be leaving you behind me in London, while I'm enjoying myself in the country. I'd have liked to be taking you down with me. It wouldn't be half a holiday without you. But it's only meself Lady Carrie has asked, worse luck. I'll not be going at all. Put it away from your mind."

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

But in the evening, after he had seen Lady Carrie, and all that he was missing had been explained to him, he spoke about it again. It wasn't exactly that he was wavering, but if Rosaleen *had* cared to go to Folkestone, and get a breath of sea air, why, he admitted, he could have had a fine time at Ascot.

He told her all about the racquet-court that Brinmore had built. He said it was so long since he had taken any exercise, he did not believe he would be any good at all. This was whilst they were still at dinner. Afterwards, when he was filling his pipe, he made her feel his muscle, to realise how it had attenuated, though there was not much attenuation perceptible. Now he put the pipe on the mantelpiece whilst he walked about, and made movements as if practising with a dumb-bell.

“I'll be falling off me horse, like that man we saw at Mossy's party, and the racquet will be too heavy for my hand. It's a poor husband you're getting, Rosaleen. I'll have to be looking for work, if things don't right themselves soon.”

Then, because this was the mood into which Lady Carrie's talk had brought him, he gave vent to some of the vexation of spirit he felt over the tedious delays Mossy and Carruthers were making, and his regrets that there seemed no way to overcome the dislike the Dowager had taken to him, or to circumvent, without actually commencing an action, the efforts she was making to bar him from the enjoyment of the estate.

“If I hadn't made a vow that I'd never enter Ranmore until she made me welcome there, I'd be taking you over.”

And, walking up and down, puffing at his pipe, he could not conceal his longing, and constant home-sickness, for his own people, and his own country. She had known he fretted for reconciliation and Ranmore, but she had not perhaps quite understood until now, when he

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

voiced it, how deep it lay within him. To her, home meant Derry and the boy; to him, it meant—Ranmore. Here in London he felt as if in prison. The close flat, the thick air, the pavement, all suggested captivity, and it seemed that all the exercise he had was walking in the prison yard. He was no Londoner, the metropolis was not in his blood. The blue mountains with the mists upon them, and the soft humid days, haunted him. It was Ireland of the many streams, and lush greens, he saw in his dreams; and in the daytime, above the roar of the traffic and the tunes of the barrel-organs, he heard the call of curlew and heron.

So he expressed his mood. But it was only a mood of the moment, an echo or reflection of things Lady Carrie had been saying to him that afternoon. He was not really quite so restless, or dissatisfied, or impatient as he made himself out to be, although, of course, it was true that he was always home-sick for Ranmore.

It was nevertheless this transient dissatisfaction of Derry's that made Lady Carrie's task so easy when she came to see Rosaleen. The more Lady Carrie thought of her defeat, the more she resented it. Derry *must* take her to Ascot. That uncongruous, unnecessary, incubus of a wife of his must be made to see the necessity. The first throw was nothing. Metaphorically she girded up her loins; literally, she put on her best clothes, and ordered the carriage for three o'clock. She would let his wife know that she was standing in his way.

Derry had sighed when he had told her he could not go with her. He *may* have chafed a little at his fetters; the desire for freedom surges over a man sometimes, over the most contented of married men. The prospect of a week's racing had certainly been attractive to Derry, and when he told Lady Carrie he must give it up because Rosaleen

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did not want to go away, and he would not leave her alone in London, he may have sighed. Yet neither the sighing nor the restlessness meant more than the mood of a moment.

But Lady Carrie determined that he should not miss his racing, nor she his company, to please his peasant-wife. It was for that she went to see her. She must have known Rosaleen was alone that day, for it was she who had sent Derry to Tattersall's. If she spoke and thought of Rosaleen as a peasant, she dressed for her as if she had been one of her own set.

Rosaleen had not learnt the trick of saying she was not at home when she was disinclined for company, so Lady Carrie had no difficulty in obtaining admittance. As usual, Rosaleen was at needlework; it was her great companion when Derry was out. She filled her days with darning Derry's socks and underwear, making little garments for the boy, keeping her household linen in repair. She was engaged on the underwear when Lady Carrie came to see her for the second time, resplendent in her Parisian raiment and brightly plumaged hat.

Rosaleen sat at her needlework in the dining-room, for there the table was most convenient. The furniture was of fumed oak and the upholstery was in tapestry. On the walls were modern mezzo-tint engravings after Luke Fildes and Frank Dicksee, cold impressions from steel-faced plates. The carpet was a little worn, and protected by a white drugget. From the red jute curtains at the window, to the heavy oak-framed mirror over the mantel, there was nothing in the room to gratify a cultivated taste, nor to content an educated intelligence. Lady Carrie truly shuddered. She talked desultorily, almost nervously, for a few moments. It was the room that affected her nerves, for really she had the courage of her heartlessness, and was drawing taut her muscles for the bout.



## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

She laid a gloved hand on the under-vest Rosaleen was darning.

“Is this the way you spend your time? Poor old Derry! Does he sit of an afternoon in this awful room, and watch you darning away at his underwear?”

“It’s yourself that knows best where Derry sits,” Rosaleen was stung into retorting; but she got up, and folded away her work. “Mary will be taking the tea into the drawing-room,” she said, “will you come?” There were sofas and easy-chairs in the drawing-room, some flowers and books, it was at least habitable.

“Why do you say I must know best where Derry sits? Is it meant for sarcasm, or don’t you like Derry to come and see me?”

Lady Carrie could affect simplicity, too. If she was going into the ring, she was quite ready to shake hands first, she knew all the rules.

“Because you’ve only got to say so,” she went on, “I believe in women being straightforward with each other. I thought it possible something of that sort might be in your mind. You come with him so seldom. Why don’t you come with him oftener? I’m sure I should always be charmed to see you.”

Rosaleen had no answer ready for the moment. Then she said, hesitatingly: “It’s you that can talk to Derry.”

“Of course I can talk to Derry; we’re such old friends. You mustn’t forget I knew him before you were married. That is really half the reason I’m here to-day, I want to talk to you about Derry. You know he isn’t looking at all well.”

Rosaleen also tried to brace her muscles, although she had no heart for the fight. She, too, knew instinctively that it was going to be a fight, and that she was ill-prepared.

“Not looking well!” she answered mechanically.

“Haven’t you noticed it? He was speaking to me about

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it himself. His muscle is going, he says. He is getting flabby. Hasn't he said anything to you about it ?”

“He said that.”

“You don't mind my being frank with you, do you ? I am fond of Derry, and I hate to see him going downhill. He is fretting at the estrangement from his family. I've come to talk to you quite seriously about that. It is time something was done. There is no use leaving the lawyers to wrangle and quibble indefinitely ? What is needed is a woman's hand, I'm quite certain of that, it is diplomacy, not law, that is wanted. Did he tell you I want him to go to the Brinmores for Ascot week ? And that it is almost certain the Duchess will be there ? Don't you think you are rather narrow minded in shutting him away from all his friends ?”

The suggestion that it was she who was keeping Derry from his friends had time to sink into Rosaleen's mind while the conversation was interrupted by the maid bringing in the tea, lighting the lamp under the kettle, and returning with cake and bread and butter. When she had gone, Rosaleen said, her hand trembling over the sugar-tongs :

“It's not me that is standing in the way of Derry's going to Ascot. I am willing enough for him to go.”

“My dear thing”—it was the fashionable mode of expression that season—“I am sure you would not be selfish for the world. But the fact remains that it was all arranged Derry should come with me to Ascot, and you should take your baby to Folkestone. Naturally when you wouldn't go to Folkestone, Derry wouldn't go to Ascot. You have your methods . . .” and Carrie shrugged her shoulders, as if she understood that Rosaleen had been diplomatic in her opposition to Derry's suggested holiday.

“I've no method at all.”

Lady Carrie took the cup of tea Rosaleen handed her,

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

and she nibbled at a piece of bread and butter, her veil only half lifted to free her mouth.

“You say you want him to go and enjoy himself. But he is much too good-hearted to be happy away, if you are moping and discontented at home.” She added, with an affectation of hesitation, “jealous of all his old friends.”

She finished her bread and butter.

“Do you mind if I have another cup of tea. One lump of sugar, please. You see what I mean. You are really hampering Derry; he ought to go about and see people. It is very likely he will meet his cousin at Ascot. For my part, I look upon it as vital that he should be there. You don’t mind my speaking plainly, I hope? The fact is Derry is chafing under his chains, panting for more freedom.”

She noted the pale face of the other, and the hands that shook among the teacups. “In our set, you know—and, after all, it is to us Derry belongs—it is not usual for a wife to drag on to her husband’s coat-tails. Our men hunt, and shoot, and go about the world. Of course, Derry is trying to meet your requirements, the *bourgeois* ideal, domesticity, and all that sort of thing.” She spoke with a tolerant contempt. “But is it quite fair to him to press your claims so heavily. I only put it to you, is it fair?”

What a poor-spirited creature was this wife of Derry’s! She was putting up no fight at all. Carrie wanted her to speak. There is very little pleasure in wrestling with a lame opponent. Even a bull-fight loses its charm if the bull cowers timorously in a corner.

“You can tie him to your apron-strings, and he won’t pull away for fear of hurting you. He is the most kind-hearted man I’ve ever met. But if you keep a dog on too short a chain, and he is for ever straining, and straining, . . . well, it is very bad for him, to say the least of it.”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Rosaleen left off that pretence of making tea.

“It’s me that’s chaining Derry, you think?”

“My dear thing, look at what is happening. You can’t pretend you don’t know why they won’t settle up the affairs of the estate, or see him, or anything!”

“You’re meaning?” she asked, breathlessly. Indeed, she had known, but even to herself she had not worded her knowledge. For, if it were true, what could she do? Yet, even as Lady Carrie was speaking, she knew what she should do.

“You can’t pretend to think that if Derry had married in his own order, married *me*, for instance, the Ranmores would have behaved as they are doing now? I wouldn’t hurt your feelings for the world, but you know what these people are—proud as Lucifer, thinking the Ranmores really do count in the scheme of creation. You did not expect them to be pleased when Terence’s heir ran away with and married his aunt’s maid.”

“I was not expecting anything,” Rosaleen answered forlornly, with paling lips. She knew so much more about that marriage than did Lady Carrie.

“Now, do think of all this before it is too late. You can, as I say, play on his good-nature, and keep him boxed up here, but is it wise? I’m only speaking for your own good. Nobody understands what it means. For all the social position you are taking, you might just as well not have been married to him at all. Of course, you know that is what some people are saying. . . .”

She paused. Rosaleen was gazing at her with startled eyes.

“They’re saying *that!*” she gasped.

“What can you expect?” Carrie shrugged her shoulders again. “It is rather a pity. . . .” This time the pause was more abrupt.

“You’re thinking it’s a pity he ever married me at all.”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“Poor old Derry! After all it is only natural that I should feel sorry for all his deprivations. . . .” She looked round the room again, expressively, “and his lack of freedom. . . .” She sighed impatiently. “But there is no use talking of it.”

“Derry goes out by himself every single day.” The words came with a sob.

“For an hour or two,” Lady Carrie said, scornfully. “Your hand is on the end of the chain all the time.”

“It’s me that’s holding him?”

“What else are you doing? This Ascot visit, now . . .”

“Have done with your Ascot visit.” Now Rosa-leen’s hands went up to hide her face. She was seeing Derry pulling at his chain, wearying of it. “And what can I do?” broke from her.

“You can go away, down to Folkestone, for instance, give him a chance of getting back among his own friends. He can pull you up with him, later on, you know. But he has got to get back by himself first. You must know it as well as I do, you are dragging him down.”

All at once it seemed as if she did know it, and had known it all along. She put her arms down, and her face went down too. Hadn’t it been in her own heart this long time? She was a drag upon him, and it was through her that they were keeping him out of Ranmore, the place that belonged to him, that he fitted; from the stables, and the horses on which he would ride forth in his pink coat to the meet, from the woods which he would stride through with his gun on his shoulder, from the streams that were his to whip for trout, to cast the fly, from the green and glory of Ranmore. There, amid the blue mountains and blue, soft sky was his home, and it was she that stood between him and it.

She lifted her head again. Lady Carrie had taken

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

another piece of bread and butter. She had an idea the fight was over. She had not meant to go quite so far when she came here. But it would be a very good thing for Derry if the creature would go away from him for a time. It was a nuisance his always wanting to get back to her for lunch or dinner. Derry as a free lance would be much more agreeable.

“You say I’m standing between Derry and his home, between him and friends?”

“Well! you don’t doubt it, do you? You don’t really think that Mossy Leon, and all those theatrical people, represent the social circle to which Lord Ranmore belongs?”

“I hadn’t thought,” Rosaleen answered; but thought looked out now from her mournful eyes.

“Well, you will now, and do the right thing, I am sure.” Lady Carrie rose, her manner was kindly patronising, as if she were patting on the head a repentant village child. “You will not go on standing in his way.”

Rosaleen rose too, she had done with trying to hide the truth from herself. She would brave the full blast of it. He had set her in the cool breeze, and her aching feet in running water; but she was back in the fire now, and all of her was burning.

“It was you he ought to have married, it was you he *would* have married . . .?”

Lady Carrie, waiting, looking at her curiously, paused at the door.

“He . . . he cared for you before—before Terence died? Tell me that, tell me the truth of it. I’ll go away,” she cried, wildly, for the pain was very bad, and made her cry out, “if it’s you that he cares about, and me that’s only in his way. . . .”

It was not in Lady Carrie to say that Derry did not care for her, never had cared for her, and would not even put

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on that little affectation of caring that is called flirtation. She could not, if she would, be honest, or truthful or straightforward, and of compassion she knew as little as a Liberal Government of economy. She only laughed, that little low half contemptuous laugh, and went a step nearer toward the door.

“Tell me,” cried Rosaleen, obstructing her passage.

“My dear woman, why do you want to know? What object does it serve? It was you he married.”

“Tell me.”

“Well, if you must have it . . .”

“Tell me . . .”

Lady Carrie's eyes gleamed maliciously, and then they dropped modestly.

She hesitated, but it was only to bring out her phrase more effectively: “I think you ought not to ask me, not to press the question, it is hardly fair. Supposing Derry *does* care for me, it isn't strange, we have so much in common. And there *are* class distinctions . . . but I am sure he is trying to do his duty. You must not fret about it.”

Rosaleen turned her face away, like a wounded animal; but not before Carrie had seen it.

*Not fret about it!* The room swayed, and the day went black. *Not fret about it!*

Lady Carrie was glad to get out of the flat, and into the luxurious victoria.

“What a fool the woman is, what a fool! Rumpelmayer's,” she directed the footman.

Leaning back, on her way to that fashionable rendezvous, her sunshade open, and pleased in the instinct that told her the purpose of her visit had been achieved, she said to herself many times: “What a fool! She cannot even see that her husband is in love with her.”

## CHAPTER XXIX

ROSALEEN knew now what she must do for Derry. Purpose dawned on her as she lay, with her face hidden, in the swaying room, on the day that had gone black. It had a grey, cold dawning, that Purpose of hers, very slow. There would be no sun upon it, and there is but grey dawn to a day without sun.

Soon she grew more composed. To battle with the waves in a desperate death-struggle makes the heart tumultuous, shakes the courage, hurries into irregularity the heaving, painful breath. But now the struggle with the waves was over, and she was drifting on that slow tide that "moving seems asleep." Already she felt that she had parted from him for ever. Hadn't he made his great sacrifice, in that stone church at Marylebone, and wasn't she ready to make hers for him? *She was standing in his way.*

When she knew what she must do, she did it so well, and so bravely, that he never guessed the mistake she was making, nor where it was leading her. Rosaleen could not speak to him of Lady Carrie's visit, and Lady Carrie, too, avoided telling him. Therefore, when Rosaleen told him, that she had changed her mind about Folkestone, and thought the visit would be good for both herself and the boy, although he was surprised, he had no reason for thinking she was disingenuous.

When she pressed upon him the week at Ascot, and was quite urgent that he should not miss the chance of meeting the Duchess, he could question her conclusions,



## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

but he could not doubt her *bona fides*. He argued with her about it, but perhaps the argument was a little half-hearted. It was going to be an exceptional Ascot.

“But you’ll be dull at the seaside without me!”

“Not with Sonny, and the needlework, and I don’t know what beside.”

“Well, it’s brighter you’re looking this morning, anyway. I believe it is at the prospect of getting rid of me. Now, tell me, is that the way of it?”

She was feeling brighter. Already she was in the calm of the slow-moving tide.

“I’m glad you are going to have the pleasure of the visit.”

“I’m not at all so sure I am going. I don’t like seeing you so happy in your mind. Is it a *tête-à-tête* with Mossy you’re projecting? Have you invited him to come down with you? Or is it thinking of Mr. Nat Simons you are after, and his opinion that you’d be an ornament to the stage?” He had the Irishman’s love of light-hearted banter, and Mossy’s admiration was a good peg upon which to hang it.

She could smile at him, perhaps it was not a very gay smile.

“It’s a grand time you’ll be having, surely,” she said.

“It would be grander if you were coming with me.”

“But the Duchess would rather be seeing you alone.”

“Not she! And who is to say Margaret will be there? I don’t seem to call to mind hearing of her staying at the Brinmores.”

Margaret’s comings and goings had been freely discussed between him and Terence in the old days. Terence always knew where his sister was to be found, and the two were never very long apart.

“I don’t recollect the name at all.”

“Well, maybe she’ll be there, all the same.”

“And you’re sure you’ll not be missing me?”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

The more he queried and doubted, and seemed as if he were loath to part with her, the nearer the dark day of her purpose reached to its meridian. She was keeping him from his natural pursuits and friends, and the ache at his heart for Ranmore, was one she had been making worse by pressing too closely against his side. She had been blind, struggling with the salt spray in her mouth and eyes—now she was in the calm. Of course Terence's mother, and Terence's sister, would have been willing that Derry should be back there amongst them. He was of their own people. It was she, O'Daly's daughter, that they could not stomach. Now and again the sobbing breath woke again convulsively, for she loved him so terribly, and wanted neither grandeur nor riches, but only to be near him. Yet she was strong that he should neither see, nor guess that she suffered. He must get back to Ranmore. Somehow or other, the thought that he cared for Lady Carrie, or she for him, sank now into the background of her mind. It was as if, so near to the eternal verities, some faint light was shed upon her passage, to give her heart peace. It was to Ranmore and his people she was giving him up; there he would be when she had taken herself out of his way, not in London with Lady Carrie.

In those few days that intervened between Lady Carrie's visit and the Ascot Monday, Rosaleen never faltered, although Derry was not of the same mind for two hours together. Some instinct must have warned him, although afterwards he said he had had no instinct at all. Only he loved her, and was reluctant to part with her even for a few days. It was the Folkestone scheme that reconciled him.

“I'll be picturing you playing there with the boy, and the wind ruffling up his curls. I'll be seeing the brown coming over that white skin of yours, and the sun kissing you for me. But I'd rather be doing it myself . . .” And the action followed swiftly on the word.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

He went down with them to Folkestone on the Saturday before he was due at the Brinmores. He settled them in comfortable rooms, a bedroom for Rosaleen and one for nurse and baby, a fine airy sitting-room with a great window looking right on to the sea. He told the landlady, who was quite carried away by his title and his Irish accent, that they were “two treasures he was leaving in her charge.” She was to mind and take care of them. No lodger had ever tipped her before. This open-handed gentleman pressed a five-pound note upon her.

“Now that’s to buy yourself a new bonnet, and grand you’ll be looking in it, and I’ll come down myself to see . . .”

Mrs. Peach was buxom, and not long past fifty. She bridled and smiled, and thought this was really a fine, appreciative gentleman.

“But mind about my treasures, even when you’ve got that new bonnet on your head. From the moment I set eyes on you, I said ‘that woman’s a treasure herself, and she’ll guard mine for me.’ I wouldn’t so much as look at any other rooms once I saw you open the door to me.”

Of course she vowed she would do her best. When Rosaleen went into the bedroom to help nurse with the unpacking, Mrs. Peach told stories of other lodgers who had come there, recovering from illness, or what she was pleased to call “their neuralitis,” and had “picked up wonderful.” She promised milk puddings, and plenty of new-laid eggs.

“I hold by eggs myself, beat up with brandy for the lady.” And she spoke of junket and boiled fowls, and her skill as a cook.

Derry stayed that night. There was an afternoon train on Sunday that would take him to town in plenty of time. The lodging-house was served by a maid-of-all-work, and a foreign butler, or footman, waiter or boy, who completed the household. This nondescript person was a Swiss,

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

who had come to England to learn the language, and was intent only on achieving his object and getting home. But he was one with the rest of them in his anxiety to serve Derry, and to wait upon his lady. Derry's five shillings made him say that he would be glad to carry up the meals and the salt water for nurse. Sunday morning he lugged out the perambulator for that bonny, gold-haired baby boy, who held out friendly arms, and laughed at him out of the loveliest pair of blue eyes he had ever seen.

Derry was out on the Leas with them both, all that magnificent Sunday morning. The sun was high in the heaven, and the wind was playful, almost sweeping Sonny off his feet, sometimes, when, the perambulator discarded, he walked or gambolled on the grass beside them.

“It's health that's blowing in to you; and it's roses instead of lilies I'll be finding in your cheeks when I come back. I'm glad I persuaded you down here. If it wasn't for Lady Carrie, and having promised her, and all that, I'd be stopping myself. It was only air I was needing.” A word would have kept him.

She reminded him, instead, of the possibility of seeing the Duchess. There was no doubt that was in his mind, for quite a flush came into his cheek.

“Ah! I'd like to see Margaret,” was all he said. But she knew now how deep it was in him, that longing for reconciliation.

She had not faltered in London when she had been looking out his racquets and tennis-shoes, mending his socks and underclothes, pressing and packing and preparing. She had left everything ready for him at the flat. She did not falter when she walked with him to the station in the afternoon.

The wind had got up since the morning, and now it whistled about their ears. The sun had gone, and in the

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

station it was cold and draughty. The train stood there waiting, but already steam was up, and the engine was shrieking. Derry was not the man to catch a train with too much time to spare. He jumped in almost as it was going, his last kiss being taken in a hurry; he called to her out of the window to get along home as quickly as she could, not to take cold. That was the last she saw of him, his face at the window. She watched the train until it rounded the corner, and was out of sight.

She walked back very slowly. How good he had been to her, from first to last! He had married her out of pity, and loyalty to Terence, with the desire to shield his memory. He had treated her as the “greatest lady in the land.” The phraseology of Rosaleen’s mind was all in that simple sentence. And the boy—Terence’s boy—he had taken, too, into his great heart, and he loved him. Rosaleen knew Derry loved the boy who grew more like Terence every day, he had already the same glint of laughter in his blue eyes, the same beguiling ways. He was a Ranmore sure enough. But what was she but O’Daly’s daughter, with no tie to the house but gratitude and service? Yet it was she who was standing between Derry and his people and the home of all of them.

Her thoughts flew to Ranmore, the great grey pile at the foot of the blue mountains, the vast woods, and the lake in the midst of them, the wild waving grass, and the cry of the corncrake, in the wood, the soft air that had whispered of love and happiness, singing in the tree-tops. This wind here that tore about her ears as she walked slowly from the station to her lodgings, shrieking from the sea, was not more different from the soft wind that blew at Ranmore, than herself from the Ranmores. It was a peasant she was; she had read the word in Carrie’s

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

eyes. Yes, Derry had married her out of pity, out of infinite great chivalry. Was the sacrifice to be only on his side? She would give her life for him, she would lie down that he might walk over her body, but what she was going to do was the greatest sacrifice of all.

She was going to leave him. Then the Duchess would open her doors to him, and Lady Ranmore her heart. Then he would come into his kingdom, and be the greatest king of them all, over there at Ranmore, where his people's people lived, whose servants she and her father had been.

Because of the wild strain of superstition in her, and the deeper one of melancholy, it seemed that it was she who had brought the ill-luck upon them all, first upon Terence, now upon Derry. It was in little Terence's light, too, she was standing. She saw the flat in Westminster through Lady Carrie's eyes, and she knew that Derry and little Terence ought to be in the beloved Irish home that belonged to them. Derry had done everything for her; now she must do something for him. She had thought and thought, but the thinking done under that mountain pile of accumulating gratitude was dark thought bred in darkness. She could not see Derry's love, she only saw that she stood in his way, between him and Ranmore.

She left him at the station, on his way to Ascot, to Lady Carrie, but, above all, to Ranmore. She never doubted that. She walked back to the lodgings with the wind singing in her ears, and the pain almost deadened by the greatness of her sacrifice. She would rather have died than separated herself from him; but she was going to do this that he might be free. Could she but have died! That would have been the greatest boon of all, to have been able to die for him. Again that lantern-slide scene from the wilds of Siam came back to her mind, and the great

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

Sacrifice was illumined before her. She saw Him on the Cross. Again and again she had gone over this, and could not bring herself to it. Once before, in the most awful, the most terrible of situations, she had contemplated suicide, and thought wildly of the still lake on Gabriel. But then it had been impossible, the life in her was too young and strong to be quenched, and the flesh was weak. Yet she would have left him that way, if it had not been for a pale gleam of truth that threw a light on his relations with Lady Carrie. The light was faint, but it enabled her to see. After her wild cry, and the answer to it, that now rang falsely in her ears, she had not doubted but that love and Lady Carrie were incompatible. She did not reason, she *knew*. She would have died for him, if it had been necessary, if she had been standing between him and a woman he loved, who loved him even as she did. Her courage would have held, she was just the woman who would have died for her man, but her fine instincts told her that he could not care for such a one as Lady Carrie. All she need do, therefore, was to go out of his life, to disappear, and leave him to go free. It was only freedom he needed. More than once, in the flat, when she had seen him stretch out his long arms, widen his great shoulders, and throw back his head, she seemed to hear him calling out for freedom. She knew when he talked of air, and exercise and the cramped London flat, it was really of Ranmore he was thinking. He would be back there soon now, whether he met the Duchess at Ascot or not. No longer would a barrier of shame stand between Lord Ranmore and the home of his ancestors. The peasant-wife that he had taken out of pity would be gone.

There was no hurry. She had a whole week before her. All her plans had been laid before she left London. Daily

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

she saw the roses deepen on the baby's cheeks, and the brown in his sturdy limbs. The blue of his eyes was a thing to wonder at, and it seemed as if a bloom came over him, such a ripening and sun-glow of health was his.

“It's meself that will be sending them a fine present,” she thought, when she watched him digging in the sands in the morning with his hat off, his red-gold head glistening, the curls lying wet, his feet and legs bare, and his prattle never ceasing. Not a child on the sands came near him for looks, he was a king amongst the others. In the afternoons, in the beautiful white frocks her hands had worked for him, his white socks and white shoes, he would run about on the grass of the Leas, and again he was beyond compare. Oh! it was a fine present she was sending them.

There would be a letter coming to her from Ascot. She could wait for that. Please God it would tell her the Duchess was there, and that Derry was reconciled to her. The letter came, more than one letter came, but it seemed the Duchess was still at Dunstans. Surely, therefore, Rosaleen must send her a peace-offering. All that week she lay awake at nights, and the harsh wind shrieked and howled at the bedroom window. But when she closed her eyes, or drifted into light half-sleep, she heard the soft winds of Ranmore sougning in the trees.

It was to the Duchess she would send Terence's son. The Duchess had no children of her own; she would cherish her brother's boy, if his mother, that was the shame of them both, of all of them, were out of the way. Rosaleen was slow with her pen, but she would have to write to the Duchess. Afterwards she would write to Derry. Then she could go away and trouble none of them ever again.

The landlady had been as good as her words, Rosaleen's appetite was tempted with rice puddings and junket,

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

new-laid eggs and tender chickens. The boy, waxing strong and sturdy, was promoted from baby food to eggs, and bread and butter, to a taste of minced chicken, and the junket he despised, and dispersed about the floor and the table with his unsteady spoon. But the roses that were to bloom in Rosaleen's cheeks found no soil to suit them.

The Swiss waiter and the maid-of-all-work confided in each other, and Terence's nurse talked it over with the landlady, and all of them were agreed that his lordship would be disappointed, when he came down at the end of the week, to see her ladyship as pale as ever.

“She takes nothing, or next to nothing, of the good meals you send up, Mrs. Peach. I don't hold with waste, nor yet with extravagance, but I'd try her with something different to the chicken, a sole, now, or a sweetbread. It's my belief she is fretting after him. The baby comes second to him—don't you, my bonny boy?” The nurse snatched him up and gave him the meed of kisses his mother was supposed to deny him, and he clutched at her hair, and did not seem in the least impressed by the secondary position of which he was told. “She worships the very ground his lordship treads upon, and this is the first time they have been separated; I heard him say so. I should try her with the sweetbread. You might fry it in bread-crumbs, Mrs. Peach, and I'll give him a taste of it with his gravy. He enjoys his meals, don't you, my precious? You never saw such an appetite as the sea gives him!”

Mrs. Peach tried the sweetbread, and the sole, duck, and green peas and the tenderest loin of lamb which the butcher in the High Street could find. Yet Rosaleen's colour did not improve as the week wore on. And her eyes were sad to see. She sent Derry the little daily notes for which he had asked, it was easy to fill them. But her letter to the Duchess, and the other one that she must

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

write to him, were more difficult. She went to bed, night after night, with the task still before her, to lie awake and listen to the wind; to lie awake and think of Derry, never again to lie warm and sleepy by her side. Sometimes a dumb panic of desolation seized and shook her, at the thought that he would lie by her side no more. But she would force herself from that to follow him, in his freedom, back to Ranmore. She could smell the woods sometimes, as well as hear the sough of the soft winds. The Duchess would help him to get there. Everybody knew it was the good heart the Duchess had. Everyone knew, too, how greatly she had loved her brother, and that it was half her life he had taken with him that day when the horse threw him. The Duchess was not at the Brinmores as Derry and she had hoped, and Lady Carrie had promised, so it was to Dunstans Rosaleen must send her present. It was from Terence, this gift she was sending to buy kindness for Derry. It was for Terence he had done it all, and out of pity. But how could she tell how it came about that she had this gift to bestow? There were no words at her command for telling, but no words would be needed; they had but to look at him; every day the likeness grew.

The letter got itself written at last, and bewildered the Duchess when she received it, up there at Dunstans.

“YOUR GRACE,—Nurse is taking you this letter, and my beautiful boy. I want you to have him. He is a red Ranmore, and it’s proud of him you’ll all be, if you have him to yourself, without me. I’ve wanted to write to Lady Ranmore, and tell her that I wasn’t ungrateful like I must have seemed to her when I went away. My heart was just full of her goodness, and all of your goodness to me. I haven’t forgot she kept me all those years in

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## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

the convent, and let me come back to wait on her at Ranmore. I would have liked to stay and wait on her for ever. Won't you let her know that, and that I'm not ungrateful? I'm keeping her right in my heart for ever and ever, and the sorrow of her. It's meself that's known sorrow, too. And I've never forgotten dear, beautiful Ranmore, the woods, and the coppice, and down where the little cascade runs, where Terence found the heron with the broken wing, you'll mind the day. I know you'll never tell the darlint that his mother was not a lady, only O'Daly's daughter, him that was murdered for collecting the rents. Derry only married me out of pity. I can't tell you the goodness of him, and how he loves you all, and wants you to care for him again. It was me that was standing in the way. But I'm never going to see him, or any of you again; it's his freedom I'm giving him back. How can I pray you to care for my little Sonny, so that he doesn't ever miss that he has no mother, that loved him well enough to give him up, so he might come into his own. . . .”

It was not all, nor half she had meant to say; but there was Derry to write to as well; and already it was Thursday. Derry seemed to be having a great time up there with the racing, and it was only hurried notes he sent her after all. He wrote that there was so much to do, and there were so many people to do it with, that he was never alone, he never had a minute to write, he would tell her all about everything when he saw her. He was “ever and always.” But she read, through the hurry of the letters, that he was happy, and enjoying himself. They were glad to have him amongst them, no doubt. Now she had no jealousy of Lady Carrie, who was of the party, but whom he did not mention.

On Friday, instead of a letter, there came quite a long

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

telegram, answer paid. It was brought to her when her letter to the Duchess was finished, and lay ready for nurse to take with her to Dunstons to-morrow. She had waited to part from the boy until the last possible moment.

“Do you mind very much if I stay week end answer frankly question of racquet match Brinmore pressing been so hospitable don't like to refuse longing for you and will come to Folkestone in a moment if you say the word otherwise flat on Monday.”

She knew he would come if she sent to him. There had never been a flaw in his chivalry, or desire to be good to her. Now it was racquets he was playing, as he did in Siam; Derry loved playing games. She saw him with his coat off, the silk shirt clinging to his wide shoulders and deep chest, the head thrown back, and the swing of the racquet. And to go back to the dull flat instead, wearing out long days watching her mend his socks, as Lady Carrie had said, with no alternative but Carrie's drawing-room or Mossy's club! Rosaleen was long past hesitation.

“Don't be hurrying back on any account Leaving Folkestone Saturday Letter follows.”

“Letter follows.” That was the trouble; it had to be written. She could not write coldly, yet she must not let him see that it was her heart she was tearing out by the roots to give him.

If she had written her letter to the Duchess a dozen times, it was fifty times she tore up the sheet that held her trembling last lines to Derry.

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## CHAPTER XXX

DERRY enjoyed the racing, and the society of men of his own breed. He played in a cricket match on Saturday, and on Sunday he and Brinmore had engaged Captain Foster and Major Lester at racquets. They were the runners-up for the Military Cup two years ago, but he and Brinmore had managed to give them a game. Then again he was no ascetic. He saw *baccarat* played, for the first time, and, courageous ignorance having stood him in good stead, he had let his stake accumulate in a run of fourteen against the syndicate bank. He won over £200. There were lavish tips for everybody; there was £100 for Carrie, who demurred but accepted, and there was £100 for him to take home to Rosaleen. They would have a week together at Goodwood. He travelled back to town with Major Lester, who was a married man too. Major Lester and he thought it would be a good idea to share a little cottage of which he knew, two miles from Chichester, quite a small affair. They planned it all out, and what the whole thing would cost. Major Lester had done it before, and for under £50 had included a dog-cart. There was room for two dog-carts in the stable attached to the cottage, he was almost sure.

Then Major Lester had spoken of his wife, and of what a good "pal" she was, adding that anyone could get on with her. And Derry had certainly not been backward in talking of Rosaleen. They agreed that, although the Brinmores had a fine place, and had "done" them magnificently, it was a pity they made a habit of not asking

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husband and wife together. All the couples had been disconnected, as it were, thrown together haphazard. Derry had not been as attentive to Lady Carrie, nor the Major to Mrs. McDougall, as had been expected of them. It had resolved itself into something of a man's party. Comparing notes in the train, they said Brinmore was a good fellow and Bet was all right; but the other women were rather a nuisance. Major Lester carried his wife's portrait cut into a circle, and pasted into the back of his watch. Derry thought it a splendid idea; he would make Rosaleen sit for her likeness the first thing he got back. Secretly he thought Major Lester's Nell was rather plain, and would have given anything to have been able to exhibit his beautiful Rosaleen. It was arranged that Mrs. Lester should call at the flat, and the four of them would have a little dinner together somewhere, and talk about the Goodwood scheme.

They were only an hour getting up from Ascot, and the time seemed quite short. But, once they were at Paddington, Derry did not linger in saying good-bye to Major Lester. He wanted to tell Rosaleen all about everything, to see her, to have her in his arms. Now it seemed to him that they had been separated for a long time.

He had no foreboding. Why should he have? There had never been any angry word between them; he had never looked at another woman in admiration, or with anything but an indifferent eye. Rosaleen had been his first love, was, and would be, his last, and if she was dwelling sometimes on her memories of Terence, and the old cloud, he never thought about it more than he could help. Terence was dead, and he was alive, and loving her always. Now he was on his way home.

He was almost too impatient to collect his luggage at Paddington. In his light clothes, standing on the platform,

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he looked bigger than ever. He was imperious and cheerful in his impatience; and the porters helped him with a will. He told the taxi-cab driver to go as fast as “they’d let him.”

It seemed a long way from Paddington to Westminster, but it was June, and although he was no Londoner, London had its charm for him this day. The Parks flung out their wealth of green, the trees in the Squares were bright with early summer, the leaves were still young, dancing as they met the sun. He had said that London trees were dusty and dreary, and he felt no companionship with them as he did with the trees in Ranmore woods, but to-day there was no dust upon them, and they sparkled as the light wind sported with their young green, rippling shadows and light; the sky was blue, with white clouds floating. Ah! it was good even in London to-day, with Rosaleen at the end of the drive.

He left the commissionaire to pay the cab and carry up the portmanteau. He was even too impatient for the lift. His long legs could scale the stairs more quickly than the slow lift could mount. Possibly he expected Rosaleen to have met him at the station. He had wired what time he would be home; but not what time the train arrived. Surely she would meet him at the door. She would have the stars in her eyes for his greeting, and the flush under her white skin.

But, when he found the door of the flat closed, and, only after prolonged ringing, he heard the dilatory step of the parlourmaid, then the slow unchaining of the door, he did not know what to think. Had she not expected him, and where was Lady Ranmore, and had his wire not arrived? Half a dozen other questions were poured out at once. The dishevelled parlourmaid was rather flustered by them. Derry pushed past her. The rooms were half

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covered up ; they were dishevelled, like the parlourmaid, and more than a stratum of dust seemed to have settled on them. They had the air of being unoccupied. The blinds were drawn down and no sun came through them. Surely he had never before noticed what dull rooms they were, and how close and stagnant. Mary brought him his own telegram, unopened, from the hall table, and a few letters. There was one in Rosaleen's small, stiff conventional writing.

“Of course she is staying on, she has never got my wire. I hope I haven't missed one from her. I hope there is nothing wrong with her, or the boy.”

His hopes and fears contended whilst he was opening the letter. Perhaps a sense, or premonition of, trouble came to him then.

He rubbed his eyes over the letter, read it, re-read it ; took it over to the window, bringing down the blind in dusty disaster with the impatience of his pull. It made the desolation of the room more complete.

*“I'm never coming back to the flat any more. I'm leaving you to-day for ever and ever. You're quite free now. It will be no use looking for me, but perhaps you won't be thinking to look. And Sonny, too, I've left. It's me that isn't fit to be with either of you, or at Ranmore.”*

A more desperate failure of a letter could hardly have been conceived. It told him nothing, explained nothing, although he read it again and again, wondering what was the matter with his head, what had gone out of the world.

*“I'm never coming back to the flat any more. I'm leaving you to-day for ever and ever.”*

But what had he done to her, and where had she gone ? It was like a knock-down blow to him, it stunned him ; he could not collect his thoughts, he could not think at all. He



## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

called the parlourmaid. By now Mary had her own grievances to support. She did not know he was coming home to-day, she had not heard a word from the mistress. It was not her fault that the rooms were in disorder, and nothing was prepared. She wasn't used to such ways, and she murmured something about "Irish." She exclaimed over the window-blind that had come down, and "supposed" she would have to see to that too. Mary's mental attitude might be described as "tantrum." She was a good servant, and had been caught napping, taken by surprise. Certainly she had no information to give him, and no comfort.

"Maybe you're wanting lunch at home?" she asked him, prepared for another grievance. He only stared at her; he had forgotten she was there, and that he had been talking to her.

"*It's me that isn't fit to be with either of you.*" He had forgotten the old cloud. Incredible, impossible things, like winged monsters, flew about, and tried to find entrance to his brain. Mossy. How came Mossy to be in his head at all? But once the thought of Mossy found entrance, it could not be got rid of, but buzzed and stayed, and moved him to action. He must get rid of this buzzing; he was quite dazed, and stumbled in his walk.

The portmanteau was still in the hall. Surely it must have been yesterday he flung it down where it stood, and bolted up the stairs. How everything had altered since then! It could not be the same day. The commissionaire looked at him wonderingly, and Derry returned the stare. He did not know why, but everything was strange.

"What are you staring at me for?" he asked, dully.

The man apologised, he thought his lordship looked at him. Was there anything he could do? Derry thought. He knew he had come down here for something, now

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he had forgotten what it was. Oh! of course, it was a cab he wanted, a fast cab.

Mossy was not in at Grosvenor Square. The very polite butler, who was quite sure Lord Ranmore had been drinking, reminded him politely that Mr. Leon very seldom was at home at that time. He was quite apologetic in mentioning such a possibility, having always before lived in the best families, but he thought Mr. Leon might be at his office. He had a habit of going to his office.

Derry looked at him as if he did not hear what he was saying, and redirected his cabman.

In Great Quebec Street the clerk hesitated, and said he believed Mr. Leon had gone out to lunch. He, too, thought Derry had taken more than was good for him, for his eyes looked strange, and his voice was hurried and incoherent.

“He can't be out to lunch. I don't believe he has been here at all.”

“Oh, yes, milord, he was here quite early. We have the Jarndyce case coming on; he may have gone down to the Courts.”

“I don't care what case you've got on, don't stand there talking. Go and find Mr. Leon, tell him I must see him.”

The clerk knew quite well that Mossy was in the office, but it was not a wholly unusual thing for a distraught client to rush in, and insist upon an unwelcome interview. These distraught clients had generally to be eased off gradually, the managing clerk seeing them, or a later appointment made, or the writing of a letter suggested. Seeing Lord Ranmore so unlike himself, the clerk thought he had better gain time. He asked Derry to take a seat, and he would make inquiries. Derry was much too impatient to take a seat. This waiting-room of Mossy's had none of

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the luxuriousness of the upstairs office. There were two writing-tables, four chairs, and a bookcase with gilt wires, like a bird-cage. He was offered the *Daily Telegraph*. He had not even a word of civility for the courtesy.

Fortunately he was not kept waiting more than a minute.

“Ranmore! Lord Ranmore! Of course he can come up. Not quite himself. What on earth do you mean? Rubbish! Go and bring him up.”

“Derry, old chap! Why, Derry!”

Mossy Leon was struck by the alteration in him, by the grey pallor, and the stupid, half-dazed look.

“Where has she gone?” Derry asked. “Where is she?”

“What’s the matter?” Mossy would not notice that Derry had not shaken hands with him. He rang the bell that stood on the office table, sharply. “See that we are not disturbed,” he said to the clerk. He knew there was something wrong. Derry sank into the easy chair; he looked at Mossy, and the fly in his head ceased buzzing.

“I’m a damned fool, I think!” said Derry, slowly.

“Well, that’s nothing new, is it?” But Mossy saw it was no case for humour. “Now, don’t bother to talk, you’ve had a shock of some sort, an upset, or a spill? You shall tell me all about it in a few minutes; but first I’m going to mix you a whisky-and-soda.”

Mossy had all the material at hand. The reticulated Chippendale bookcase held more than books. Derry sat in the easy chair, and watched Mossy take the Tantalus out of the cupboard, measure the whisky into a wineglass, then press the syphon of soda, and let it fizz up. Mossy’s hand was quite steady. Derry’s shook when he took the glass from him.

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“Having a go at it on your own; last night or this morning?” Mossy asked, with apparent carelessness. He thought Derry looked awfully bad. “Nothing wrong at home, I hope?”

Derry drank off the whisky; it cleared his head a little. It was easier to clear his head now that buzzing had ceased, and Mossy was standing opposite him, full of concern.

“Well?”

“Rosaleen has left me. She has left me for ever,” he said, stupidly.

The words sounded incredible in the room. Mossy stared at him, and he at Mossy.

“You don’t believe me?”

“Pull yourself together. What do you mean?” Mossy could not make him out; he looked as if he believed what he was saying.

“Rosaleen has left me . . . she says she is never coming back. . . .”

It was so absurd and incredible, he began to revive; it was impossible. Even before Mossy laughed, he saw, as clearly as the little lawyer, that he was taking matters too seriously, that, whatever was the matter, he had only to see her . . . Already he was ashamed of being here, ashamed of his breakdown.

“Never coming back! Rats, she’s devoted to you. What was the row about? Pull yourself together, man, and let me hear the trouble. What’s the story? You gave me the jumps, coming in like that. What have you been up to? I thought you were at Ascot. Ethel has talked about leaving me half a dozen times; whenever she doesn’t get all her own way in fact, or someone sends her an anonymous letter, or any little thing like that. Who is the woman? Whatever it is, we’ll explain

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it away. One can always explain things away. And, if not, a bit of jewellery. . . .”

But he remembered of whom he was talking. Jewellery had no charm for Rosaleen Ranmore.

“I thought there was something seriously wrong, and now it turns out to be nothing but a little matrimonial squabble. You *are* a fellow!”

Derry began to think he had attached too much importance to Rosaleen’s letter; and yet he was still bewildered by it.

“I came home this morning from the Brinmores. I expected her to meet me at the station, or to be at the flat. We’ve never had a wry word. There was a letter there to say she was not coming back, she was never going to see me again.”

“But she knew you were going to the Brinmores, I suppose? That’s the woman Lady Carrie is so thick with, isn’t it?—a racing woman who smokes cigarettes, and dresses in tweeds. There was nothing in that?”

“She urged me to go; she begged me to go. I’ve a telegram from her about stopping on, she said I wasn’t to hurry.”

“Did she write you while you were there?”

“Nearly every day—only a line or two, I can’t make it out at all.”

Mossy couldn’t make it out either, although he made light of it, and pooh-poohed its being serious. After a certain amount of pressure, Derry showed him Rosaleen’s letter.

“I tell you what, it’s not one o’clock yet. We’ll go out, and get a bit of lunch, and I’ll ’phone the stables and get the car. We’ll run down to Folkestone this afternoon, and pick up the clue there. We shall hear something. She can’t have disappeared, and the boy, too, without

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leaving a trace. I shouldn't be surprised if you found her just where you left her, and some devil of a tale. . . .”

Derry's was a grateful nature, he never forgot what Mossy did for him that day. The whole thing, although it was so inexplicable, grew so much more bearable when it was borne in company, and talked over from every point of view, except a really serious one. Mossy would not allow that there was anything but a temporary misunderstanding, brought about he knew not how, but bound to prove as simple as possible to put right when once the two should come face to face. And of course they would come face to face, probably this evening at Folkestone.

Derry lunched with Mossy, the good food and the good drink putting heart into him. They drove down to Folkestone in Mossy's fine new Charron, a non-stop run. Long before they had reached Hastings, they had both convinced themselves, and each other, that Rosaleen would be there to meet them, already, perhaps, sorry for her letter, longing to give the explanation they were longing to hear. So sure were they, that at Ashford they decided to wire her they were on their way. But they reconsidered it, for, after all, they would get there as soon as the wire. They ought to have thought of telegraphing before they left London. Derry grew a little more silent, and a little less certain, as they drove past the marshes. But then, the low horizon, and flat country, depressed him; he said if he couldn't have bog, he'd have mountain. Derry found it difficult to keep up his spirits during the last half-hour of the journey, but Mossy himself had no doubt. Where should she be gone?

The “Furnished Apartments” bill in the window of the drawing-room at St. Leonard's Terrace, drove the blood from Derry's face.

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“Do you see it?” he asked Mossy, as they waited for Mrs. Peach to answer the bell.

“They always put the notices back, a week before the rooms are vacant,” said Mossy, uneasily. “Pull that damned bell again!”

Mrs. Peach herself opened the door, and was very pleased indeed to see his lordship, until his lordship asked, or rather the other gentleman asked for him, whether Lady Ranmore was still there.

“Still here? Oh, no, milord! She went yesterday afternoon. Baby and nurse went on Saturday.”

“Didn’t they go together?” Mossy put in.

“No, milord; leastways, mister.” She did not know to whom she was talking, but led the way, always talking, to that drawing-room upstairs, where Rosaleen had sat in the long evenings, and thought out each step in the dreary road she must travel.

Mrs. Peach told them all about the little food she took, and the letters she was always writing, “though she would tear them up most of the times. Karl told me she used enough paper to light the kitchen fire. . . .”

“You haven’t got any of those torn-up papers?” Mossy was quick on a possible clue.

“No, sir; they came in handy for the kitchen fire.”

There were no papers, she had left no clue. They heard she looked pale, and always paler, though the baby was a perfect picture. Nurse and baby had gone on Saturday, and Lady Ranmore had seen them off. Nurse said it was a long journey for such a little child. . . . Again Mossy interpolated sharp questions. Where were they going? How far? Did she say what her destination was to be? Was it Ireland by any chance?

Mrs. Peach had not heard where it was nurse was going, but she did happen to know it wasn’t Ireland—that is, if

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you couldn't get to Ireland by land? She had heard tell you could now with “them new wireless telegraphems . . .” Mossy assured her she was mistaken, but he could not help thinking it would be a good line for the new play.

“For I do remember nurse saying ‘Thank goodness, it is only a train journey, for the sea I can't abide,’” Mrs. Peach went on.

There was only one other thing she said that arrested Mossy's attention.

“Wherever it was she was sending him, she wasn't expecting to see him for a long time, for, after she had said good-bye to him, she came back, and Anna Maria, who went in with the hot water, said she was lying on the bed, and crying, crying just as if her heart would break.”

Derry could not bear to hear of it; he got up and walked about. . . .

“Let's get out of this,” he said to Mossy. “There's nothing more to be learnt here. Let's get out of it.”

Mossy tried to hear all there was to be heard, but it amounted to nothing. Lady Ranmore seemed to have been unhappy all the week, Mrs. Peach now scenting a mystery and wanting to be part of it, remembered, or invented, incident. But Derry cut it short; there was nothing to be learnt in St. Leonard's Terrace.

They walked round to the Grand Hotel, quite silent now. Mossy was for staying the night, and talking things over. Derry said he should get back to London; he was terribly depressed. It was impossible to ask the chauffeur to do the return journey, so they decided to go by train. There was a train at 9.30 that would land them before midnight.

They dined together at the hotel, and still Mossy talked hopefully. He said:

“It's all rot, you know, people don't disappear. The world isn't big enough. It's only a question of a day or



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two. Somebody has been making mischief. Ten to one it's some woman. I shouldn't be surprised if it was Ethel, put up to it by that infernal Mrs. Jobson. What does Rosaleen mean by 'not fit'? It's some damned bit of snobbishness, you mark my word. We'll have to find out who has been down here, and what they said to her.”

Derry choked over his dinner, and bit into his cigar, and said shortly that Mossy did not know what he was talking about. Derry was seeing Rosaleen crying on her bed; he did not see anything else. Over again he would recall his letters from Ascot to her, and hers to him; he was searching into his conduct.

When they got to London, Mossy would not let him go back to the deserted flat. He had sent a wire to Ethel, and she was waiting up for them.

Grosvenor Square was alight to welcome Lord Ranmore, the butler and the footman were agog about the mystery that was afoot. Ethel had changed her dress twice since dinner. At first she thought she would receive him in *grande evening tenue*, but afterwards she had decided on a soft *crêpe de Chine* tea-gown. Mossy had only wired “Ranmore staying the night, send to flat for portmanteau.”

The portmanteau was unpacked, and its contents neatly spread out by the time they arrived. Mossy kept expensive servants, and saw that they were up to their work.

Ethel was effusive. She knew nothing of what brought him here, but she looked forward to saying carelessly to Mrs. Jobson:

“Oh yes, Lord Ranmore; he is staying with us, you know. . . .”

She did not know why Mossy was bringing him home, but she was careful to keep on the diamond tiara in which

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she had dined in solitary state. For it looked well with the *crêpe de Chine* tea-gown, and as if she were "going on," after she had welcomed him. She meant to say to Lord Ranmore: "I don't think I shall go out again . . ." as if she had many engagements, but would give them up for him.

Mossy brushed all that away impatiently.

"Oh, for God's sake, keep out of the way, and don't make speeches. He's had a nasty shock, and I've brought him here for peace and quietness. Leave him alone. James, take his lordship up some hot water, the whisky and a lemon. I'll come up after you in ten minutes," he said to Derry.

Mossy would have passed the night with Derry. But Derry had enough sense left to send him away, after exhausting conjecture until about two in the morning.

"All right, I'll go, perhaps you're right. We're only saying the same things over and over again. Don't get up too early. I'll think of something. We haven't begun to look for her yet. Keep up your spirits, old man. She can't have gone far."

## CHAPTER XXXI

DERRY passed a restless night, full of broken dreams. Mossy Leon slept like a top, yet he was awake before the other, with his brain alert and keen for the clue that had escaped him at Folkestone. He had sent round to the flat, to hear if there was any letter or message, before Derry had opened his eyes. Derry did not wake until ten, and then it was to see Mossy, in the most elaborate mauve-quilted satin dressing-suit that had ever been devised by a West End hosier, standing by his bedside.

"Hullo!" said Derry, who awoke with but dim remembrance. It was a minute or more before he recollected where he was, and all that had happened yesterday. Then he sat up quickly enough. "You've got news?" he exclaimed.

"I sent round to the flat, and there was nothing, but at the office I heard there had been a telephone from Carruthers' firm, asking for your address. I thought that was good enough to go on with, so I telephoned to know what they wanted it for. It seems they've got a wire there for you. He's such a damned ass, and a prig, that man, that he wouldn't send on the telegram. I've told James to get your bath, and have breakfast ready in half an hour. It may be nothing on earth to do with her, but then again, it might."

"She's gone to Ranmore! It's from Ranmore."

Derry was out of bed. He looked even bigger in pyjamas than in ordinary dress. "I'll engage that she has gone to Ranmore."

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“Well! we’ll soon know. It’s time one of you went there, they’ve had it all their own way up to now. I’ll get dressed, it’s damned cold this morning.” Mossy shivered in his fine suit. “What bath salts do you use? there’s lavender and mimosa in my room. Ethel has some other things. Ask for what you want.” Derry had hardly even heard of such a thing as bath salts. “We shall have to put up with the brougham, the car hasn’t come back.”

“Can’t I speak to Carruthers through the telephone, and tell him it’s myself? Then he could read me the wire?”

“And suppose there is something in it you don’t want him to see? He is a cold-blooded dogfish of a fellow. If whoever sent the wire had wanted Carruthers to know its contents, they would have wired to him, instead of to you at his office.”

Within the half-hour Derry had had his cold bath, shaved, dressed, and was ready for breakfast. He felt ever so much better and happier this morning; sleep is a great restorative. The telegram would tell him where Rosaleen was; he would not doubt it.

Ethel’s morning toilette had been thought out quite as carefully as her evening one. Derry was sufficiently himself to congratulate her on looking like the top of the morning itself.

She bridled behind the coffee-pot, and apologised for the absence of James. James combined the duties of valet and butler; and Mossy took a great deal of valeting. Mossy, who came down very late, said the tea was “hog’s wash,” and he thought it was coffee. He then had half the dishes taken away to be made hot, and, when they came back, he pushed them away, and said everything was uneatable and he would have a piece of cold ham. Derry wondered at his irritability, but Ethel was

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used to it. There was generally a reason for Mossy's breakfast mood. Insistent bills, "third applications," or the remembrance of overnight promises had a way of making an early appearance. This morning he had remembered, whilst in his bath, that Carruthers said the telegram had been there since Saturday. It could not, therefore, be from Rosaleen at Ranmore. Derry gave quite a good account of breakfast, but he was more than ready for the brougham when it came round.

Ethel had been told nothing of Rosaleen's flight, nor of the letter. She understood that Rosaleen was in Folkestone. There was no use spreading the news about. Mossy said: "Women did cackle so. What Ethel knew, Mrs. Jobson would know, and it would be disseminated in Kensington. What was the good of talking?"

He drove Derry to Carruthers' office, it was only a stone's-throw from his own. In the brougham he said to Derry:

"I feel it in my boots now that that little devil Lady Carrie Carthew is at the bottom of this. I can't tell you how I've got at it, but, you mark my words, she's at the bottom of it. There's nothing like a night's sleep; it came to me when I woke up this morning, first thing. I'd forgotten all about it; then, with the first yawn, like a flash, all our yesterday was before me. I know I'm right; you see. I could tell you some stories about Lady Carrie. Here we are, I'll wait; you bolt in and get the wire."

Derry went into the office. Mossy lolled back in the brougham, smoked a cigarette, and thought of Lady Carrie. A pretty type-writing girl, in the traditional black, tripped up the steps. He leaned forward, tried to catch her eyes, and succeeded, even in obtaining a slight smile.

"By Jove! Carruthers does himself well," Mossy

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thought. He had not noticed that the house into which the girl had disappeared was next door to Carruthers' office. He philosophised about men and women whilst he blew out his smoke-rings, and waited for Derry. He meant to write a book about women one day. What a lot of them he had known! And he hoped to know as many more.

Derry did not keep him waiting long; he was back before Mossy had decided on a title. “Wickedness and Woman” wouldn't be bad, “Coquettes and Cocottes” had something to recommend it. . . . Derry's face was perplexed, but rather happy.

“He's got good news,” Mossy said to himself. “I wonder if I shall ever know what it was all about. Well?” he asked, “What does it say?”

“Here's the wire. It's from my cousin Margaret. I can't quite make it out, but it's all right.”

*“Boy arrived safely, delighted to have him, but cannot understand letter first I've heard that you are in England, do come down at once and explain, carriage shall meet four-forty, wire Margaret.”*

“What do you make of it?” Derry asked. But he could not conceal that he was pleased. “She is there all right,” he went on. “I don't understand it at all—but if she is with Margaret . . .”

But Mossy had read the wire quickly, differently. He could not help but damp the other's expectation.

“My dear fellow, don't make any mistake. She has sent the boy to the Duchess, and she has written her a letter. But don't expect to find her there, or you'll be disappointed. If Rosaleen had gone to Dunstons, what's the letter the Duchess can't understand, and why should she want an explanation of it from you? Take my word, the Duchess knows no more than you do, if as much. It's some move Carrie has put your wife up to. I'm not much clearer

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than I was before, but one thing I am sure of; Lady Carrie is at the bottom of it.”

Derry talked through the telephone to Dunstons, announcing his arrival by the earliest possible train. Then he asked if the boy was there alone, or if his mother was with him. No, Rosaleen was not there; and she had written a most incomprehensible letter. Derry asked if he might bring Mossy Leon down with him. He might help them both to understand the letter she spoke of. . . . The Duchess was as cordial as possible before she was cut off. She was saying that Derry could bring whom he liked with him when . . . buzz . . . buzz . . . buzz was all that came through.

Ethel had the immeasurable gratification of telling Mrs. Jobson that Mr. Leon had gone to stay with “Her Grace the Duchess of Towcester.” “She really did not know how long a visit he would be making; he had gone down with her cousin, Lord Ranmore. It would probably be for some time. Lord Ranmore was so devoted to Mr. Leon.”

All the sisters had letters that night, and a luncheon-party was immediately improvised, where it could be brought in—quite casually—that Mr. Leon was at Dunstons; staying with the Duchess of Towcester.

## CHAPTER XXXII

MOSSY LEON had never stayed with a duchess before, but he was not in the least perturbed about it. Why should he be? He had stayed with Letty Temple, he said. He only hoped that at Dunstons he would find a man who could look after him properly. He would have brought James, but Ethel had a confounded luncheon-party—she always had when he wanted any of the servants. Mossy liked to have a little grievance against Ethel. Their train was to leave at 1.30 from Euston, and Derry was impatient. Mossy brought more bags, and a greater variety of them, more portmanteaus, rugs, and paraphernalia, than anyone Derry had ever met travelling. When he exclaimed about it, Mossy said that it was a damned nuisance to be without the very things you were wanting, and as he never knew what he would be wanting, he liked to be on the safe side. They had a five hours' journey before them. Well, of course, he had brought a luncheon basket. Charles had gone to Fortnum and Mason's for it whilst James was dressing him.

“I don't believe in roughing it,” Mossy said. “I did all my roughing-it before I was eighteen. My father was a reader at the Synagogue. I don't suppose you know what that means. There were nine of us, and his salary was one hundred and twenty pounds a year; he made as much more by teaching Hebrew, but it was a tight fit.”

Mossy was not often retrospective; the present and



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the future were good enough for him, he used to say. The present, which he would fill with eating and drinking, and pretty women; the future, when he would realise all his ambitions. He hardly knew what these ambitions were now, they had been so dissipated of late amongst leading ladies, and ladies who wanted to lead. Perhaps he was, after all, a little excited at the prospect before him, and so reverted to the days when he shared a bedroom with his four brothers, and was clothed in their discarded garments.

Mossy's eldest brother had paid for his education at University College.

“He's dead now. Two of the others are in America. They all made fortunes except me. . . .” Mossy puffed at his cigarette.

“Come, you're not so badly off,” Derry suggested, encouragingly.

“My dear fellow! I'm spending fifteen thousand a year in Grosvenor Square and making six! Ethel can't help thinking she's got a position to keep up, it's that that plays the devil with my income. I can always make money, but it comes in a spoon, and goes out in a shovel. . . .” He said a little more about Ethel. It was curious that he saw through her pretensions, and yet was proud of them.

“I've got three sisters,” he went on presently, “three of the nicest women you ever knew, but you never meet them at my place. They're Jewesses, and they've married Jews, and they're not good enough for Ethel. I often go and see them. I've got one of my nephews in my office, a charming boy, keen as mustard. . . . His father has that big tailor's shop in Conduit Street, Kilt House they call it. The boy has been at Eton, and I sent him up to Oxford. I took him to see Lady Carrie one day,

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and she kept him to tea. That reminds me. . . . I've meant to ask you half a dozen times. What sort of a hold has she on you? I suppose it's a question of letters? Funny how you and Terence both got into her toils. Not but what she's an attractive little woman, in her way. The fact is, I'm not at all sure I'm not responsible for some of this trouble, though I give you my word for it, I never thought of it until I was on my way here. I did give your wife a hint to put the brake on with you and Lady Carrie. She must have had a devil of a lot of money out of you one way or another. If Lady Carrie is at the bottom of it, I believe it's my fault.”

Derry answered slowly :

“Lady Carrie has nothing to do with me and Rosaleen. Nor is there any mischief she's after making. You know well enough about me and Lady Carrie.”

“Me! my dear fellow, how should I know? Don't forget I never knew of your existence until the day I met you in her drawing-room, and she asked me to look after things for you.”

“But . . .”

“I suppose you are going to insist I know all about it?”

“But you were there . . .”

“Where? In Carrie's drawing-room?”

“At the Club.”

“What Club?”

“At the Ralyn Club; the night Sir Harry Carthew was killed.”

“Was killed! What do you mean? The night he came to the Club roaring drunk, and tumbled down-stairs. Yes, I was there, of course. I gave evidence at the inquest. What's that to do with you and Carrie Carthew?”

“It was you saw Terence strike him.”

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“What? What? Terence never touched him. What put that into your head?”

“Terence never touched him!”

Derry stared at Mossy, and Mossy looked back at him. An express train thundered past them.

“Thank God we can hear ourselves speak. Now, tell me what you’ve got hold of. What bee have you got in your bonnet? Terence and I were standing together at the top of the stairs, when Harry Carthew came staggering up. Carthew and I had had business together, and he attacked me about it, but he was so infernally drunk that it didn’t matter what he was saying. He wanted to make a scene, and Terence tried to persuade him to go away quietly. I believe what he said was that he ‘wouldn’t b—y well stir until . . .’ something or other. I think he may have meant to have a go at me. Anyway Terence put himself between us. But he never touched the man, I’ll swear to that. Carthew had hold of the balustrade, whether he raised his arms, and meant fighting, or whether he only let go, and hadn’t the sense to know he couldn’t stand without holding on to something or the other, I don’t know. The stairs are marble, and for some reason or another, the carpet was up, and he went down backwards with a sickening crash. You know what Terence was; he was off like lightning, swinging himself down after him. I took my time, I didn’t want to mix myself up in it.”

Derry drew a long breath.

“Is it the truth you’re telling me, the whole truth?”

They were in the station now; a fat woman with a dog in her arms tried the door. Mossy let down the window, and called the porter.

“Keep her out of here!” He threw him half a crown. “Say I’m a lunatic, travelling with my keeper,

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say I've got the small-pox. Send the inspector.” Mossy secured privacy for the rest of the journey.

“Now, go on,” he said to Derry. “I don't know what you're getting at and I want to get clear about it. This is a devilish old story; who has raked it up again?”

“To the day of his death,” Derry said, seriously, “Terence believed himself responsible for Harry Carthew's accident.”

Mossy stared at him, leaving his cigarette to hang from his lower lip; it was a trick he had. Derry went on:

“On his death-bed Terence told me it was he that killed Harry Carthew. Lady Carrie said it was you that hushed it up for her. . . .”

Mossy recaptured his cigarette with his upper lip.

“Now, that's what I call a clever woman!” he exclaimed. “A devilish clever woman. What a mind! What an invention! And Terence believed that, did he? And paid her to keep her mouth shut? Well, I'm hanged if she didn't deserve all she got out of him for thinking of it. It would make a play, wouldn't it? Terence was just the sort of man to be black-mailed. God! if men had no consciences, what a lot of women—ah! and some men too—would be thrown out of a fat living. I never did understand why Lady Carrie sent for me in such a hurry, and was so anxious to know what evidence I was going to give at the inquest. By God! I do believe now she actually fooled me!”

That seemed a great feat in Mossy's eyes; he could not disguise his admiration.

“She made Terence go over to Ireland before the inquest. I saw him for her, and urged it. I remember it now as if it were yesterday. I was to tell him to keep out of the way, out of decency, you know. Their names *had* been connected. Why, she must have actually

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persuaded him he did give the fellow a push . . . and then let him think I was keeping it dark. . . . What a woman! She'd have married Terence if he'd lived long enough. I'd bet my bottom dollar she'd have married him. But you . . . where do you come in? She was very interested in you, I know, when she brought us together; and in the value of the estates. Of course she is an attractive little woman. Up at Melton, before Carthew died, they used to call her the Yellow Peril. But with a wife like yours . . . I suppose we are all alike, whatever woman we've got, we want someone else's. I know I've spent days thinking of one woman, doing all I know to get her to go out to supper with me, sent her notes, and flowers, and jewellery, thought and planned; at last she has said 'yes,' and I've ordered the supper, and spread myself out over the enjoyment I was going to get out of it, kept the rendezvous with all the expectation in the world. . . . Then I've seen another man at the next table with someone else, someone I had never seen before, but who was prettier, or had some grace, or *cachet* about her that was new; and all my evening has been spoilt. Somehow or other, it's always the other fellow's woman we want. I suppose that was the way with you and Lady Carrie, it was Terence being there first that attracted you?"

Derry had such different ideals from Mossy, and felt so differently, that it was difficult for him to explain himself. He never had a thought in his mind toward Lady Carrie that all the world could not have known; that is, as far as any personal, or amorous emotion was concerned. And he had never wanted any other man's woman; never anyone but Rosaleen, whom he had looked at, before Terence glanced that way, and from whom he had never looked back. It took him all the way from Grantham to

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Dunstans to explain himself to Mossy. Then Mossy said he supposed it was all right, but he was damned if he understood it.

“Do you mean to say you’ve supplied that little b . . . with money, and given her the sums you have, that you have run about after her, and probably—mind, I’m still as sure as I was before that she is at the bottom of this trouble—estranged yourself from your wife, and brought about a devil of a hullabaloo, all because Terence told you on his death-bed that he had killed her husband? What if he had? Of course he hadn’t, the thing is ridiculous, he had no more hand in it than I had, less, if the truth were known. I believe Harry Carthew meant to have a go at me. A bill of his had gone back that morning. It was nothing to do with me, I was only acting for the Levine estate. I can’t make it out at all. You’re no fool, Ranmore; and yet . . . well! every now and then I think you must be. . . . What were you going to get out of it?”

“I did not want anything out of it. If, through Terence, she was a widow, and with less money than she had been accustomed to, and Terence asked me on his death-bed to look after her, to take care of her—well, you couldn’t expect me to do anything else. It’s hard lines on a woman, Mossy, to be alone in the world.”

“Rot, my dear fellow, rot! That is second-hand Lady Carrie, I’ll go bail. Women have the finest time possible, especially when they are ‘poor little widows, alone in the world.’ It’s the best gag they can get; brings down the house every time. I like the idea of Carrie Carthew ‘alone in the world!’”

He gave Derry a short outline of Lady Carrie’s career. Derry still did not see how he should have acted differently, but he did begin to wonder if Carrie could have anything

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to do with Rosaleen's disappearance. There did not seem room between him and Rosaleen for anyone to have made mischief, so close they'd been together; yet, had not a wild, mad moment of unreasoning jealousy wrought havoc with his own heart and brain? Jealousy of Mossy—Mossy Leon, of all impossible people! Could his Rosaleen have been jealous of Carrie? His beautiful Rosaleen, and Carrie Carthew! The idea of comparison was preposterous—yet he had been jealous of Mossy! Nothing was impossible, it seemed.

The luggage-motor from Dunstans met them at the station, with the phaeton and pair for Derry to drive. The Duchess's intimacy with her brother had taught her the probable direction of Derry's tastes. After four or five hours in the train he would like the reins in his hand and two good horses in front of him. But if she were wrong, then there was the groom to drive him. Mossy was rather uneasy at trusting himself to Derry's charioteership, and asked if he were used to driving; he said he thought he would rather go in the motor. Physical courage was not Mossy's strong point. But Derry laughed at him, and made him jump up beside him, promising he should come to no harm.

“Don't make any mistake about it,” Mossy said. “I don't want to run any risks. There is no such fool in the world as the fool they call ‘a brave man.’ He is either too stupid to realise the meaning of danger, or too unimaginative to see where it leads. I don't want a broken leg, and to be laid up for three months in order that someone I don't know should write in the papers that ‘Mr. Mossy Leon behaved with great courage.’ I'd rather be called a coward, and keep my legs whole.”

However, they got to Dunstans quite safely. The big, square Georgian house, where John Gould Percival Van-

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sittart, Duke of Towcester, had been carried, after the railway accident which had begun, and ended, his honeymoon, was still the scene of his death-in-life.

Up and down the trim gravelled paths of his celebrated gardens, with the famous yew trees ; his donkey-chair was driven daily, an attendant in front, an attendant beside. The inheritor of all these noble names, the owner not only of Dunstans, but of Brinston Towers, and Barstowe, the shooting-box in Scotland, and the salmon river, the Villa Flora at Beaulieu, and heaven only knows how many places beside, sat in the chair, propped with pillows. He sat, huddled up like Jack-in-the-Box, with his heavy head drooping on his chest. He had no use in his legs, nor in his arms ; he dribbled when they fed him. His mind was a blank, and his memory gone. He was paralysed, and powerless, and dumb, a mere lay figure that had to be washed, and dressed, and tended as if he had been a baby. Science had done this for him, as it had tried to do for Terence Ranmore ; it had kept the spark of life in him.

The Duke of Towcester was married to the most beautiful woman in England. A virgin bride she had been brought to her husband's ancestral home, and faithfully she had kept the marriage vows that had never held any meaning for her. She lived out the tragedy of her loneliness, ever gaining in dignity, never lacking in courage. There was nothing of herself she could give the man to whom her life was bound, for there was nothing he needed but mere tendance. For years he might live like this, ten years had already passed since first they brought him here, and nothing seemed to have altered.

She bore his name nobly, and added lustre to it. After the first bitterness had passed, and she knew the meaning of the hopes with which the doctor had lured her, she neither complained, nor weakened. She accepted her fate.



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A week's impulsive courtship, a six weeks' engagement, and this was the end . . . the imbecile in the Bath-chair. It was only Terence who had understood. Terence had had that gift of sympathy, but, since Terence's death there had been no one who understood. She was nineteen when she married, she was twenty-nine now, and the donkey-chair in the grounds held all there was to love and cherish her. It was fortunate that Dunstans was in a hunting centre, for hunting was the only thing that helped her at all. She loved her horses, there was nothing else for her to love. The very intensity with which their mother had cared for Terence kept mother and daughter apart. Each was secretly jealous of the other's grief. It is only a mother without a son who knows what it is to grieve, the Dowager said. It is only a girl who has never reached the crown of womanhood who realizes the good gift of a brother's love, the Duchess thought. Her mother had memories of happiness; whilst she had only memories of Terence. None but Terence had understood the whole tragedy of the grand wedding, and the end, in the donkey-chair.

But Derry had been always with Terence, and with her, in her free, untroubled girlhood. He was so much younger, adaptable and loyal, a willing slave to both of them. Later on he became a good companion for Terence, steady and sober, loyally devoted to him. They, she and Terence, had grown quite proud of Derry; it was a younger branch of the house he represented, but Terence said many a time he had the brains and sinews that ought to have belonged to the elder. Derry was associated in so many of her memories of Terence.

That day at Claridge's Hotel, nearly three years ago now, when she had last seen him, she was still under the first shock of her trouble. She had not been fair to Derry. Many

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and many a time she had regretted it, and wanted her opportunity to tell him so. But when she had inquired, she had heard he was abroad; and that he had not cared to take up his residence at Ranmore. She seemed to understand that; she knew nothing of the legal difficulties that had been put in his way. She was sorry, and sorry again, that she had not been kinder to him. In her mind he was always the great boy who had been a dog at Terence's heels, and that he could not bear to go to Ranmore since Terence was no longer there, gradually made the thought of him a dear one. She knew the improvements had all been stopped, and the place was fast becoming a ruin; she had seen it only last year when she went there on the anniversary of Terence's death. But, vaguely, she had attributed it all to Derry's absenteeism.

Then, out of the clouds, as it were, suddenly, bringing back all her self-reproach, and her memories, came the child, and the letter from Rosaleen. It was all mystery. She was bewildered with it, and beneath her bewilderment ran something like fear. But Derry was coming; he would explain, and she could tell him that she had been sorry for her conduct to him, had thought of him often, missing him out of her life . . .

There came the sound of the horses' hoofs in the avenue. She went into the hall to meet him, the great hall of this great cold English house of hers. One moment she heard his voice, and the sound brought the quick tears into her eyes. It was so long since she had heard the accent that never seemed to alter, at which she and Terence had so often laughed. The next moment, quite unexpectedly, Derry was holding both her hands; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes were full of tears, and so were his. Whatever had kept them apart was forgotten. It was her youth she met again. Just the tears in his eyes, and those in hers, reunited

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them brother and sister. “Shure, and isn’t he the only brother we’ve ever had,” Terence had often said, with a mimicry of his Irish. Derry had her hands, and was looking into her wet eyes, and kissing her on her cheek before she had done more than remember Terence’s mimicry.

“Perhaps I oughtn’t to have done that! But oh! it’s glad I am to see you, Margaret. And how like him you are still. . . . And we’ll never forget, neither of us, will we? . . .” Derry began, incoherently. He hadn’t altered a bit, he was only the great boy still. There was a sob in his voice behind his incoherent words :

“I oughtn’t to have done it, but he always said it was your brother I was to be.” She was quickly ashamed of her emotion, but the kiss had been given, and not resented. It ended all the estrangement that had been between them. Now, there was nothing but welcome to Dunstons, and a quick return to commonplace. In the drawing-room Derry brought Mossy forward, and introduced him. Mossy Leon arrested the attention of the Duchess, taking it off Derry for the moment. Mossy had forgotten to take his cigarette out of his mouth, and kept it hanging on his lower lip, as he shook hands with his hostess :

“How de do; glad to meet you. You’ve got quite a nice place down here. If one must live in the country, I suppose this is the sort of place that makes it possible. That’s a Harpignies, isn’t it, in the corner there? I say, wouldn’t the London dealers like to get hold of that cabinet of china! I’d give you a hundred pounds myself for that David Cox. Don’t mind me if you want to talk to Derry. I can amuse myself very well here,” Mossy said, continuing to look about him. He was probably a little shy, and tried to hide it by an excess of volubility.

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“I hope we are going to clear up this mystery amongst us,” he went on. “It’s an extraordinary thing, though, how tragedy pursues a family, like a man with a writ, dodging about until it gets in. There’s the Duke now . . . I suppose he’s no better?”

Derry hurried him off to his room as soon as he could. Even he perceived that Mossy did not shine in this environment.

“I say! hullo! don’t go away. I shall never be able to find my way . . .” But Derry, having piloted him to his room, was off again.

“Send him up a man, will you?” he asked Margaret, when he had rejoined her. “He can’t do a thing for himself, and he hates to be alone for a moment.”

“What a curious person!” said the Duchess.

“He’s the best fellow in the world,” answered Derry, stoutly.

But oh! he was glad to be here with her again. Talk was congested between them for a little, they had so much to say. They were not oblivious of Mossy, they sent tea up to his room, but they had such stores of memory in which, of course, he could have no share. They had been together long summer days at Ranmore, when they were all three of them but children. She was a few years older than Derry, but, until within a few months of her hurried marriage, her years had added no weight to her spirits. She had ridden and hunted and fished with Terence and Derry, forgetting that she was a girl, and grown up. Ah me! the years that had passed since then.

And hadn’t they been together that fatal day at Sandown? In all those long, slow weeks of Terence’s dying, it was Derry who had done all the comforting that was possible, who had hoped with her, when there was no hope, who had despaired with her, wept with her. And it was

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Derry who had gone with them, when they carried Terence back to Ranmore, to leave him in the cold of that stone mausoleum, where they had all three played together. It was Derry who had knelt by her in the chapel. Even now she felt his hard young hand put out to grasp hers, and heard his sobs, that mingled with her own. Together they had spent those few awful days, when all the world had grown suddenly empty, and cold, cold, cold. Why had she lost sight of him, the only warm thing in this cold, empty world? Now she would never let him go again.

“Your hands don’t look like an engineer’s hands any more,” she said, *apropos* of nothing, but remembering how they had clasped hers in the chapel that day. Now, laughingly, he spread them out, they were brown and shapely. For a moment her eyes were piteous. Terence’s hands had been so white and small, so were hers. Derry took one in his own, and laid it on the broad palm. Margaret’s hands were famous. Small and ivory-white, it lay in his a moment, tapering and pink at the fingertips, with the hint of a dimple at the knuckles. Terence had been proud of Margaret’s hands—Ranmore hands, he called them—and used to talk about them. Sadness lay behind all their disjointed talk, there were tears in all they remembered. It would get better soon, but at first tears lay too near for talk. They forgot what had brought them together, they forgot what had set them apart, Terence’s spirit was so near to them.

“He would have been sorry about the estrangement between us,” she said, brokenly.

“I’ve never thought of you but with love,” he answered, with no less emotion. The Dowager had been able to keep him out of the estate, but she had not been able to banish either of them from his affection. Derry could not alter.

“Where is she now?” he asked.

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“She is in Dublin, busy about the orphanage. You have heard about her orphanage; she doesn't get over her grief at all. She is bitterly unhappy, and bitter in her unhappiness. She has resented it with me, because I grieve too, always. Derry, we must try and get her here. She must see little Sonny. Derry, how like he is, how wonderfully like Terence!”

Margaret saw the faint colour rise in Derry's cheek, the troubled look come into his eyes. She only wondered at it then, but it came back to her presently. They said a word or two about Rosaleen and her letter, but they were agreed that nothing could be done that night. They would discuss the matter thoroughly the next day, with that odd friend of Derry's. Meanwhile, did he remember this? . . . had she forgotten that? . . . Surely, Terence's spirit hovered about them, glad they were together, joining in their reminiscences, as they talked and remembered.

The Duchess thought it would be dull for Mr. Leon alone with them at dinner; she had, therefore, invited the vicar. Derry assured her that Mossy would not be dull.

“He'll amuse himself, and you too, if you'll only let him talk,” Derry said, but the invitation to the vicar had already been issued.

Mossy came down to dinner in his shiny evening dress, with brilliantine on his scanty hair and black moustache. The country footman had not valeted him very well, but Mossy had managed to tie his own tie. His stomach looked a little more protuberant than usual in his double-breasted white waistcoat, buttoned with enamel and diamond buttons. He apologised to the Duchess for his sleeve-links. They did not match the buttons; it was his fool of a man that had packed the wrong ones. He gave Derry a look as much as to say ‘I told you so.’

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As he talked, his black Jewish eyes roved about the drawing-room, appraising everything.

“Your cousin Derry thinks I travel with too much luggage. I am sure you agree with me, Duchess, that you can't have too much. Look at these links, now. If I'd brought all the links I'd got, I should have had the ones that matched the buttons.”

Margaret agreed with him, and commiserated with him, quite gravely. He grew more at home with her every minute, offering her his arm when dinner was announced. He acknowledged her introduction to the Rev. Mr. Mason with a curt nod.

“I don't like parsons,” he told the Duchess, on the way to the drawing-room. “Somehow or other I always associate them with cold boiled pork, and greens cooked in water. Hanged if I know why. There are quite a lot of ‘clergymen's daughters’ at the Frivolity, but they are not usually very devoted to their parents!” He was amused himself at the number of parsons' daughters who had gone on the stage, and he laughed about it.

“You've got a very decent cook,” he said after the first entrée. “How do you manage to get good servants to live down here? I thought there were only three private houses in Europe where you could get *volaille au truffes* as well done as this, and one of them is my own. I'm told the Rothschilds have all their fowls fed on chopped truffles for weeks before they are killed, to get the right flavour; perhaps you do the same here?”

He told her a great deal about cookery during the dinner, and more about the young ladies of the “Frivolity.” Meanwhile Mr. Mason and Derry talked of sport.

Mr. Mason was an old Blue. Now he took great interest in the village cricket, and tried to enlist Derry's sympathies. But it was for rowing he had won his blue, and

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the talk drifted easily to Henley, and the prospect of the Belgian carrying off the Diamonds. That was where Mossy broke into the conversation, he saw the Duchess's attention had wandered from him, and that she was attempting to follow it.

“I never could understand why a man should sweat to pull a boat for himself, when he can get a navvy to do it for him for half a crown an hour. A ragged ruffian on the tow-path, with a good stout rope, could give him a start, and win every time. You don't mind my saying so, I hope, Mr. Mason, but this rowing seems to me such a fool's trick. A man might just as well put himself in harness, and pull his own carriage along! Tell me, now, have you ever been in a good motor-boat?”

The Rev. John Mason had never before met anybody who held such curious views as Mr. Leon. He took him quite seriously, and began to discuss the value of muscular development, and the influence of athletics on character.

“The influence of athletics on character?” repeated Mossy, “I like that! I know two old ‘Blues,’ as you call them, and one boxer. One of the Blues has thirty thousand a year, and spends his entire time in seeing how much of it he can save. He used to enjoy a game of picquet at the Portland; but he gave it up one day when he lost three pounds. He cried about it in the Club, and said he would be ruined if it went on. When he took his son up to Scotland with him, he docked his quarter's allowance of the railway fare. When he isn't saving money, he is saving himself. He wouldn't visit his sister when she was dying, because he had heard pneumonia was infectious. He owns a yacht that never moves out of harbour unless it is a dead calm; and a motor that is not allowed to go more than eight miles an hour. The other fellow was superannuated from his public school, and left Cambridge without



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a degree. Now he stays in bed until twelve, and then loafs at the Bath Club until he can get three fellows to play cards with him. That is what he does for ten months out of every year. During six or eight weeks he shouts through a megaphone. ‘Coaching the crew,’ he calls it. I grant you he’s a charming fellow, and one of the best companions in the world. I’m fond of him myself, but I don’t know how you are going to make out that athletics have benefited his character. In my opinion there is nothing in the world he could not have done, if he had not wasted the best years of his life in cultivating his muscles at the expense of his brain.

“Then there is Bill Barrasford, the amateur boxing champion ; he is a son of Lord Facius. He married Flossie Delaporte’s sister, and he proves the ‘influence of athleticism on character’ by living on what she earns, and knocking her about when he’s drunk, which is twice a day at least, and three times on Sunday. I could give you a score more instances. Half the paper marked ‘worthless’ in Sam Levine’s safe came from youngsters who called themselves sportsmen. Thank God, I was born with brains instead of muscles. I can get my exercise taken for me.”

He told many anecdotes of aristocratic blackguards, who played cricket, or racquets, or polo. It was the strangest possible conversation to the Duchess and Mr. Mason, but the butler was so interested that he forgot to fill the glasses, and the footmen waited badly.

Mossy committed none of the solecisms of which Rosaleen had been guilty at his table on the occasion of her first visit. Yet there was a certain analogy in the position, and all of his conversation was strange to his hostess. After the Duchess had left the table—she had no opportunity for word with Derry, and withdrew as soon as it was possible—Mossy grew still more outspoken, and dogmatic in his

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speech. He felt he could hold his own with any country parson. There was some allusion to politics, and the so-called People's Budget. In truth, Mr. Mason was hard-driven for topics. It seemed Mossy objected to all direct taxation; he said it was nothing but swindling a fellow out of his rightful earnings.

“Why the devil should I pay to keep up a fleet, when I am always sea-sick crossing the Channel?” he asked, pertinently. “They would get all the money they want if they put a tax on women . . .”

When he really embarked on this theme, his arguments became eloquent. The clergyman followed the Duchess into the drawing-room with what speed he could.

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### CHAPTER XXXIII

**M**OSSY'S stay at Dunstans was not prolonged. The Duchess had no fault at all to find with him, she was sure he was most amusing, and had been a good friend to Derry, but, nevertheless, she asked Derry to get rid of him as soon as he conveniently could.

"I'm really not inhospitable, Derry dear, and I like you to feel you can bring your friends here, but he is so obviously out of his element."

Mossy was no more anxious to prolong his visit than she to detain him. He was bored to extinction, or to practical extinction. Nothing would ever really extinguish Mossy. He wandered about, talked and smoked and coughed, and looked incongruous. He was a thorough good fellow, and considered a wit in musical-comedy circles; but here, his good fellowship was wasted, for he could only make guesses as to where Rosaleen had hidden herself, just as Derry himself could, and all his suggestions were met by the Duchess's doubts. He was not of any use to anybody, although he had been brought down here to be of use. His wit fell upon bewildered ears, dulled a little, perhaps, by tradition. He had now made up his mind that Rosaleen had only left her husband to try her fortune on the stage. He brought interminable argument to bear upon, and prove, his point. Look at the people she had met at his house, all of them able to do something. She had got jealous of Lady Carrie, and had joined some touring company or other. Nothing moved him from this view once he had adopted it, and

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he was only irritated by the incredulity of Derry, and the negation of the Duchess.

“What the deuce can you know about it, compared to me?” he asked Derry. “I’ve known more women who have run away from more men—and with them too . . .” But, by now, the Duchess was in possession of Rosaleen’s letter to Derry, and had compared it with the one she had received. She scoffed at the idea that the writer of them was venturing on to the boards.

“Get rid of him as soon as you can,” she told Derry.

Derry, too, found Mossy difficult to entertain, although he was ashamed of himself for the difficulty. He took him round the stables, but Mossy said he knew nothing of horses, except the odds, and he cared less. He said he disliked all animals; they either kicked, or bit, made incoherent noises, or bred fleas. The same objections held good when the home farm was suggested:

“My dear fellow, what the devil do I care about cows and pigs? Collect me all the newspapers you can find, I suppose they get the London papers here some time or other? And I’ll amuse myself until you and the Duchess have done your rounds. We’ve settled what has got to be done, and I’ll put it in train directly I get back.”

It had been agreed that Mossy should have all the provincial companies interrogated as to a new recruit, and that he should make every possible inquiry in the direction he suggested. There was no harm in his making inquiries. Mossy was nettled at the Duchess’s doubts; he was quite sure he would find Rosaleen.

After a day or two had passed, Mossy was quite as eager to get back to London, as they were for him to go. He was really a cockney, and never happy beyond the sound of Bow bells. Dunstons was the back of beyond to him; he made no secret of it to Derry. The famous

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yew trees, trimmed into the likenesses of peacocks, and owls, various animals and birds, bored him, the hot-houses gave him a headache. He did show a gleam of interest in the great vinery, although he only cared for muscatel grapes himself, he said. He added that he could buy all the fruit he wanted at Covent Garden; and that there was a tropical scene in Nat Simons's new play as superior to the hot-houses here, as fine old English oaks to Japanese dwarf trees. Mossy liked scenery in its proper place, he said, and that was on the stage. The country drive they took him made him yawn. He did not disguise any of his feelings from Derry.

“I say, you must get me out of this,” he said to him already on the third day of his visit. “I'm only wasting time here, I could be getting on the track in London. And really and truly I can't stand the country. It's so noisy . . .” He was used to traffic, but the birds woke him at four, and the barking of the dogs kept him nervous and fidgety.

“Then you'll not be coming to stay with me at Ranmore, when I've found Rosaleen, and we're getting back?” Derry answered, jestingly.

Margaret had comforted him. He thought it wouldn't be long now without his having news of Rosaleen; and when once he had speech with her, he would persuade her she was fit to be at Dunstons, or Ranmore, or anywhere.

“Oh, I shouldn't mind Ranmore so much,” Mossy admitted. “But this place is so infernally tidy and trim, it gives me the hump. There is something warm and homely about Ireland. You always feel there that it's washing-day, and everything is in a muddle; that there won't be any meals, and if there are, they'll be late; it is a nice comfortable mess all round. And the Irish people talk all the time, and never leave you alone a

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minute. I like their picturesque lies, too, and their blessings when you give them things. I can't stand the ordered row there is going on here all the time. Do you hear that infernal peacock screaming ?”

When the time came he thanked the Duchess for her hospitality, and said that he and Ethel would be very glad to see her when she came to London.

“And I can get you up a show that would really amuse you, that will be a complete change for you. Give me a few days' notice when you are coming, and make it Sunday, if possible. None of your starch and stiff parties, but a few really amusing people.”

The Duchess said courteously that she should look forward to it; she would certainly give him due notice.

Mossy was quite sorry for Derry, left alone in that huge barracks of a place, without a theatre or a music-hall within miles, with only one post a day, and no newspaper with his breakfast. Derry had driven him to the station, and when Mossy had settled himself luxuriously in the train, he really thanked God that he would be in town by the evening. He felt he had been away for weeks. They had been the longest three days in his life.

Having left Mossy at the station, Derry went back to his cousin. The Duchess had her own theory about Rosaleen's disappearance. It was quite different from Mossy's. She thought Rosaleen had made away with herself. She would not, for untold worlds, have let Derry know what she feared, or why she feared it. She never dreamed that if she had the clue to a secret, there were no secrets between Rosaleen and Derry. Her mission was to comfort Derry, to be good to him for Terence's sake, because Terence had been fond of him. It was a mission she had neglected too long. She was very sweet and tender and womanly to him in her mistaken pity. One

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day, perhaps, she would tell him what she feared, and why.

She had to listen, for hours together, after Mossy left them, whilst Derry told her what a wonderful wife Rosaleen had made him. He told of the days at Petchaburi and at Wat Poh Pra, of cooking and catering in the wilds, of fine needlework, and sick-nursing, of bravery in discomfort, and courage in privation.

He was never tired of talking about Rosaleen's qualities, and, apparently, the Duchess was never tired of listening. She had such a great, such an overwhelming, pity for him, as the days, empty of news, went by, and Derry's face grew haggard with doubt and uncertainty. They had not left everything to Mossy. The Duchess's own lawyer was making inquiries, and employing detectives, but the certainty that was at the bottom of the Duchess's own heart seemed in some subtle way to have been conveyed to them. They found nothing, they seemed to be searching for someone in whose existence they only half believed.

The suspense became harder and harder for Derry to bear. It is no hyperbole to say he ached for Rosaleen. There were times when he could neither sleep nor eat, when the horses failed to interest him, when he wearied even of talking about the past; when he was frankly and unmistakably miserable, and Margaret was at her wits' end to find comfort for him. He stayed on at Dunstons' as she begged him to; and "where else would he be going?"

She made excuses to send him for a week or two to Scotland, she said the keepers wanted looking after. He could not refuse anything she might ask him, but he had no heart for the grouse, he had no heart for anything.

Sonny stood between the Duchess and her talks with Derry. She could play with the little fellow, love him, care for his well-being, but she could not say to Derry,

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“Let the boy comfort you for his mother’s absence.” She could not say it. The mere sight of the boy stirred in her some nameless feeling, some feeling to which she would not give a name, that paralysed her tongue when she spoke of him to Derry.

Derry played with the child, too, but took little pleasure or comfort from him, she noted that. And never again did she say to him that Sonny was like Terence. In those red-gold curls and blue eyes, an echo of a childish laugh, a carriage, or a gesture, lay hidden the pain for Derry, the secret which she would not, dare not try to penetrate.

The search went on, governess-agencies and hospitals, registry offices, accident wards, even refuges and work-houses. Not a stone was left unturned. Newspaper advertisements were inserted, now cautiously worded, now boldly, private detectives, and Scotland Yard, were requisitioned. Nothing came of it all. The summer dragged on, the last Drawing Room was over, Goodwood had come and gone, and the London season was a thing of the past. The 12th of August saw the grouse exodus, the 1st of September supplanted grouse with partridge. In October the beaters were out, and the pheasants rose whirring in the coverts. But the mystery of Rosaleen’s disappearance remained unsolved.

By October Derry had lost a stone in weight. His eyes were strained as from constant watching, he was almost intolerably restless. He had followed a hundred clues and they had all snapped in his hands. The Duchess thought the time had nearly come to voice her fears. Surely any certainty was better than this terrible doubt. And, if she could tell him that this girl, whose loss was killing him, had not been what he thought her, if the wound were opened, could she not the better pour balm into it?



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“There was never an angry word between us,” Derry said, for about the thousand and first time, walking restlessly about the boudoir, taking up first one thing and then another.

“If she had a secret she was afraid you would guess, if there was anything in her past . . . anything she had not told you?” Margaret began, hesitatingly, desperately.

“There was nothing she would have kept from me? She was the joy of my life, and the heart of my heart? We talked of everything together?” he answered.

“Derry,” she began again, abruptly, and then again paused; “I want to say something to you. . . . Yet I hardly dare . . .”

“Is there anything you couldn’t say to me, you that’s been the saint, and the angel in heaven, to me?”

“Sometimes girls, very young women . . . Rosaleen was only a slip of a girl when she came to Ranmore . . .”

“The prettiest colleen in the three countries, Terence called her.”

Margaret had the opening, but she could not use it. She relapsed into silence again, dreading her own voice. Yet she knew she must speak.

“Derry,” she recommenced, summoning all her courage. “You remember that day in the tent . . . Terence spoke of her to me, to us both. She was but a girl, Derry, and Terence had the charm—there was no one like him.”

She did not know how much she was going to say or suggest, what plea she must put forward. If Rosaleen had gone away because she had a secret, and saw that secret being blazoned out in red-gold hair and blue eyes, and dimpled cheek, must Derry learn it without armour against it? Would not the clue she was putting into his hands be some mitigation of his grief. She could

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not bear to see him fretting like this for a girl who practically admitted herself unworthy of his devotion. Very close to the secret, the Duchess failed in exact interpretation. She was, as the children say in their games of hide-and-seek, warm, but that was all; she was warm, but had not found the exact spot. It was just a dark glimpse she saw, not the great whole.

"She left you deliberately. Perhaps . . . perhaps we have been wrong in trying to find her. She may have had a secret . . ."

Derry turned, and faced her; there was that flush under his skin. When had she seen it there before, or the look in his eyes?

"And was afraid lest you should come to know . . ."

"What if she had a secret?" he said. The flush grew deeper. "If she had a secret, it was no secret from me. It was one I shared with her."

"You . . . you shared!"

"What are you thinking of her, Margaret—of my Rosaleen? Is it she who would be keeping anything from me; me that loved her from the first . . . before ever he thought of her at all. . . ."

"Derry, Derry, what are you saying?" she cried, half sick at heart, and fearful, she hardly knew of what.

"Tell me what you've been thinking?" She put out a hand, as if to ward him off. "Tell me," he persisted hotly, "tell me."

"Give me a minute." She shaded her eyes with her hands. He waited. It was Rosaleen he had to defend; Terence's memory was as nothing in comparison. For the moment he forgot that he must defend Terence too. She spoke slowly; but now she took her hands from her eyes, and faced him, sadly enough.

"It's Terence I've been thinking of, Derry. And

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that Sonny is the living image of him; that Rosaleen may have seen the growing likeness, feared . . .”

“Feared—feared *me!* who loved every hair of her head; and of his too?”

“Feared lest you should suspect . . .”

“Suspect!”

“Forgive me. . . . I hardly know what I’m saying, I’m in a maze of doubts and fears. I seem to be standing on the edge of a precipice. I dare not look down. Yet if what I don’t dare to think is nevertheless the truth! . . . She was under my mother’s protection, Terence could never have . . . Derry, Derry, I am wild with fear. *Why is Sonny so like Terence.*”

Derry grew quite white, and a little cold, for her eyes were wild into his in her questioning. “Why did she go away, but for fear lest you should see . . .”

He made a step forward.

“It wasn’t for that she went away, Margaret, it wasn’t for that. Margaret, don’t be thinking hard thoughts of him, or of her . . . If it is his, if it was Terence’s widow that I married . . .”

“*Terence’s widow!* but what are you telling me?” she cried to him.

“I’m telling you nothing . . . it’s Rosaleen’s secret as well as me own. I was brother to you both . . . and if he hadn’t time to do all he meant, and if I fathered the boy . . .” He was incoherent, but his eyes were wet, as well as pleading; “it’s not harshly you will think of him, or of Rosaleen. I waited . . . you’ll not be harsh in your judgment.

“Derry, Derry!” She put out her hands to him; she had no words for him just then. He kissed both her hands, and she felt his eyes left them wet.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

WHAT had Derry done for Terence? She looked at him now with new eyes, they had been compassionate, now they were wondering, but the love in them deepened. She had heard of bearing one another's burdens, Derry had shouldered Terence's silently. And she little less than her mother, had resented his silence, misunderstood his great loyalty. . . . She forgot Rosaleen, it was only of Derry she was thinking, and she could have kissed *his* hands.

Up there in Dublin her mother was planning the orphanage that was to be built in Terence's honour. The Duchess was in ignorance of the estopped rents, and the threatening law-suits, and all Mr. Carruthers was doing, and had done, in her mother's name, and with her mother's sanction, to keep Derry out of his own. But she knew that her mother harboured in her heart a deep resentment against Derry, because he stood in Terence's place, because he had left them alone in their trouble, taking the girl with him. Margaret, too, had thought of Derry as recreant from his inheritance, an absentee landlord, spending the money abroad that should have been spent on the Castle. For she did know something of what was happening over there at Ranmore, and the ruin that was settling on the place. There had been a coolness between her and her mother since Terence's death, an unspoken, unembittered estrangement, that only meant jealousy of each other's grief. She had not completely realized that, all this time, ever since Terence's death, the Dowager had been

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planning, and scheming, intermittently perhaps, and half-heartedly, except when Mr. Carruthers went over to Dublin to strengthen her, for the ruin of Ranmore. All the years of her life had gone to building it up, all the years since Terence had been a baby. Now, “let the roof fall in,” was the burden of her cry. She would build an orphanage in his memory, and never look upon the place where his children, and his children’s children, should have played.

She was draining Ranmore of money for the orphanage, depriving the estate, under Mr. Carruthers’ tutelage, of all the benefit of cottages she had rebuilt, and the dilapidations she had made good. The boats, and the sheds, and the drying and salting-houses for the fishing fell into disrepair. The coal-mine which, having cost so much to open, had not yet entered on its paying stage, was abandoned. The shadow of the law brooded over everything. All the workmen had been called off the day that Terence died. Now the turret that had been taken down and was to have been rebuilt, let in the rain and the wind, the tower that had been shored up, had fallen again, carrying the broken masonry with it, making a greater ruin than had been before. Very little of the Castle was habitable now.

The Duchess had not quite realized what was going on, but when Derry left her that morning, she seized her pen, and wrote with a full heart to her mother, begging her to visit Dunstans, saying Derry was there with her, and Derry’s son. She wrote with a full heart; but her letter was not very long. It would be better, she thought, to tell her mother by word of mouth, or, perhaps, not to tell her at all of the strange new truth that had come to light, but to let it dawn slowly on her.

The Dowager’s reply was like a douche of cold water.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

She said she would wait to pay her visit until Derry Malone had left, and as for the boy, of whom her daughter wrote, she had no interest at all in Dennis O'Daly's grandson. She went on to say that she had just decided to accept the plans Mr. Ash had submitted for the orphanage. It would cost about £25,000. She said that she thought Margaret might like to bear part of the cost, or of the endowment. It was of her brother she ought to be thinking, not the black Protestant, with the heart that matched his hair, who would never stand in Terence's shoes as long as she could keep him out of them. She was surprised Margaret had so far forgotten herself as to entertain him at Dunstons. "But, of course, you cannot understand a mother's feelings," she had added, disconnectedly. The Dowager had never been the woman she was before Terence's death. To the Duchess this letter read as if the priests were taking advantage of the confusion in her unhappy mind.

But, in thinking this, Margaret wronged the Church. It was Mossy's unfortunate visit and threat, and the lever which Mr. Carruthers had made of it, that had distracted her.

The Duchess, in hurried reply, urged that the orphanage should be abandoned, and the money used to recommence the restoration of Ranmore.

The Dowager sent her a verse on a postcard, written in a shaky hand, the handwriting of old age :

*“Let the roof fall in ; let silence  
On the house for ever fall,  
Where my son lay dead and heard not  
His lone mother call.”*

“Derry, you had better go back to London for a time, or you can go up to Scotland, if you would prefer it. My mother will not meet you yet, and I want her to come here. You don't mind being banished, do you, dear?”

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“I’m sure it is not going to be for long,” she said to him, quietly.

“I’ve inflicted myself on you an unconscionable time already. But there’s no one else I’ve got belonging to me,” the poor fellow answered. Time was doing nothing toward reconciling him to his loss, and the look of him made the Duchess’s heart ache. Now she no longer thought that Rosaleen had made away with herself; she had arrived at the far wiser, if still incorrect, opinion, that she was keeping out of the way until the family knew the truth as to little Terence’s birth.

As soon as Derry had departed from Dunstons, Margaret wrote to her mother again.

The Dowager arrived in the dusk of the autumn evening. Every time Margaret saw her mother, she was struck by the speed with which age was overtaking her. Three years ago her hair had been brown, her figure well preserved, the light of youth still lingered in her eyes, and when they fell upon her son, they were always bright. Now her hair was quite grey, she stooped, and halted a little in her walk. Her eyes, though they were bright still, wandered, and seemed to be for ever seeking, she knew not what. These three years seemed to have added twenty to her age. Margaret was her only daughter; she ought to have been all the world to her. Only Margaret knew how strangely the tragedy of her marriage had affected her mother’s feeling towards her. Terence knew of it, and they had sometimes spoken of it, under their breath, for it was not a thing they could talk of openly. Once she said to him, brokenly, that he was mother and brother in one to her. He had kissed her, and answered that he would make mother see with his eyes one day. There was no hurry. Poor Terence, who was so hurried in the end! It was as if Lady Ranmore resented the mis-

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fortune, more than she pitied the victim of it. It was Margaret's brave, fine acceptance of her circumstances that her mother had resented. When Lady Ranmore knew that the Duke's case was hopeless, that it was only a travesty of marriage her daughter was enduring, she had urged upon her to try to get a dispensation from the Pope, or a decree of nullity from the Courts. When Margaret would not listen to such a proposition, when she expressed her absolute decision to keep what she could of her mutilated marriage vows, Lady Ranmore had been angry. The incompleteness of her daughter's life hurt her, and her surface calm acceptance of it turned pity to exasperation. Since Terence's death the resentment seemed to have grown. It was bitter to her that her seed should die out. And it was only obstinacy on Margaret's part. Surely she, her mother, ought to know what was right and best for her to do. The strawberry leaves she wore could be no substitute for the woman's crown of which her head must be for ever bare.

The Dowager came in time for dinner, and her daughter welcomed her at the station, and drove home with her in the brougham. Already she felt there was a new antagonism between them. She was struck again by the alteration three months had made, and she was full of self-reproach that she had let her mother be so long alone. Margaret had never failed in love.

Lady Ranmore was growing old, but she was not at peace with her daughter, nor with Providence, nor the world. She had been ill-used, and all she could do now was to strike back. Misery had turned her bitter. Even this orphanage she would build and endow in Terence's name, was not being contemplated in a loving spirit. It was not the care of the little ones, without mothers or fathers, that moved her heart in planning it. It was to despite the heir of Ranmore, who would find his castle



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in ruins, and his lands laid bare. She was spending the money as a measure of self-defence, that no softening should come to her at the last, and lead her to restore the revenues she drew, and the lands that had always gone with the title; it was to add embarrassment to embarrassment. Yet it must be supposed that there was some weakness or doubt, for the scheme had lingered all these three years; everything had been settled, and nothing had been done. Now, it seemed to her there must be no further delay. Her daughter's letters about Derry precipitated action.

The Duchess felt it, and was meant to feel it, all through that first dinner and evening. Lady Ranmore talked of little else. She had brought the plans for the orphanage with her, and wanted Margaret to look at them that night. The land had been secured, and a deposit paid until the lease should be signed. It was not as a philanthropist, as a benefactor to the little riff-raff of the Dublin slums, that Lady Ranmore talked. It was as one who at least was accomplishing a deed of vengeance. She was pulling down the temple she had builded with her hands; and she gloried in the deed. All the money that could be screwed from Ranmore was to be put into this orphanage, royalties from the mines, and rents from the cottages, the profits from the fisheries, and all that had been done to clear the estate. Margaret's indignation grew apace as she listened, and understood that Derry would be the victim of her mother's mis-directed philanthropy. But presently her pity blotted out her indignation. This was her mother's first evening under her roof, and she knew nothing of what Margaret knew. The Dowager talked quickly, in order to give no opportunity for argument, or persuasion, but the Duchess had no thought of either. Triumphantly the Dowager told how, with Mr. Carruthers' aid, she had mulcted Derry

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of all that was possible, and would mulct him of more yet ; claiming against him for all that had been done in the long years of Terence's minority, and after Terence had come of age.

It seemed dreadful to the Duchess that this sad old age should come to her mother, bringing with it only unkindness.

“But why, why, mother, should you want to do this, to ruin poor Derry for the sake of some orphans that you have never seen. Derry was the orphan you made a home for when Terence and he were boys together.”

The slow flush came into the old face.

“I won't have you speak your brother's name to me ; you, that want to put another in his place.”

“But, mother darling, I never wanted him to be there. God knows, Terence was all and more to me that brother could be and the world is empty without him. But it is Derry's place now, by right . . .”

“And he'll never stand in it whilst I can prevent it.”

The old hands were trembling. It was as if some malignant spirit had been born in the travail of her grief, and now it was only that which she mothered, and it had become part of her.

“Derry Malone will never stand in my son's shoes whilst I've life to keep him out.”

The Duchess's anger warred under her compassion, whilst yet she realised that her mother was not wholly responsible for what she said ; grief had bred a maggot in her brain. It was Mr. Carruthers who was influencing her conduct, the Duchess understood that too, although, of course, she did not understand his motive, and that “costs” for himself and his firm was the pivot upon which turned all his evil advice to her poor sorrow-weakened mother.

Since Mossy Eeon had been imported into the case,

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as Lord Ranmore's representative, Mr. Carruthers had been doubly keen in protecting his client's rights, as he worded his keenness for costs. There were sufficient intricacies and difficulties in the succession, for the whole matter to be brought into Court. This was the end Mr. Carruthers had in view; a long, intricate law case, with pleadings and interpleadings, endless applications and adjournments, costs always mounting up, and accumulating, with no possible benefit to anyone but himself, and the legal profession generally. Already he had briefed counsel, and decided upon juniors. That Mossy Leon had delayed so long in opening proceedings, was a great vexation of the spirit to Mr. Carruthers. It was most irregular; and it proved Mossy to be a solicitor of no standing. To protect one's client's interests by keeping a good case out of court was really an irregular proceeding in Henry Carruthers' eyes. Mossy *had* a good case; so had he. But Derry would not go to law with his relations, he said from the beginning that he would not fight against them. He would wait for the possession of Ranmore until they welcomed him there. Mossy knew his views; otherwise he might have been tempted, knowing as well as Carruthers did that a law-suit would benefit everybody but the litigants. Mossy was quite as alive as Carruthers to what was expected of him, but he had not yet issued that writ for which the other side was waiting.

The Dowager came down to breakfast in the same mood as that in which she had gone to bed. She wanted to talk of Ranmore, and let her daughter see how firm she was in her decision to keep Derry out of it.

She was disappointed if she expected to be persuaded. The Duchess asked how she had slept, and spoke of common friends and acquaintances, ignoring the argument that was expected of her. She saw that nearly all her

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mother's grievances against Derry, and half the rancour, was bred by talk. All that day she held her peace. She might plead, but she would not argue. She cared for her mother's physical comforts. She saw to her sofa cushions, and footstool, and every now and again she would say a loving word, put a soft cheek down against the wrinkled one, trying for a wordless caress. The response was very small:

“He has been here then?”

“Yes, mother, Derry has been staying here.”

“I wonder at you, I do!”

“You wouldn't wonder if you saw him. There is nothing in his heart but love for you, and for us all.”

“Was it love for us that made him send that Jew lawyer to me, threatening to bar me from saying me prayers where me husband and son are lying? Not that I'm wanting his love. Didn't he come to us at Ranmore when he was a bit of a boy, and now isn't he wanting it for himself, and trying to bar me out?” The trembling, impotent anger of old age shook her as if with palsy.

“Mother, it is his own,” she urged gently.

“His own, is it?” And then she began to cry, and rock herself to and fro. “Ranmore, that was for Terence, and for Terence's son! Me, to be turned out in me old age! Me, that's without a son . . .”

“He would have been a son to you, if you had let him. Terence loved him, mother, and he loved Terence.” She pleaded well.

“Didn't he leave us in the first week of the trouble, running away to London from the sorrow he had helped to bring on the house?” For, by now, she had persuaded herself it was Derry who had urged Terence to ride on that fatal day.

“I won't argue with you, mother dearie. I want you to be as happy as possible with me whilst you are here. It is an abiding grief to me that you care so seldom to

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come to me, or to have me with you. We must not quarrel; both of us so alone in the world. But I know Derry, and so do you; and if he left us abruptly, and, as it seemed then, heartlessly, he had some good reason for it. I am convinced of it now, some reason for which, if you knew, you would honour him. There is not a thought in his mind against anyone of us, not even against you, for all you have done, and are doing, to thwart him.”

“He, to dare to be angered against me! Derry Malone—and him scarcely a Ranmore at all! . . . *What's this? . . . What's this? . . .*” Her voice broke into a high quaver.

*This*, was an impudent little figure, with blue eyes that laughed, and red-gold curls clustering about his head, who came to say “good-night” to Auntie Margaret, as he came every evening, unchecked, sure of a welcome. Such a gay, dancing, little figure, in a white frock, and with bare feet. There was something in his hand, he had run out to gather daisies for Auntie Margaret; and he had gathered some of the grass with them, too, they were all crumpled together in his hot hand. But he was quite proud of his offering.

“For you, for you!” he cried. And then, because he was full of life and spirit, a little boy that no one had ever scolded, he threw them at her, and they fell on her dress, and on the ground. She caught him up in her arms, she could swing a baby in her arms, and toss him until he crowed, and crowed again, for all she had none of her own, and her life was barren. This one gave her pain and pleasure; but to-day the pain seemed in excess. She held him close in her arms for an instant, for she knew the moment had come. She told him he was a bad boy to throw the flowers at her, and he must say “good night” properly, and say that he was sorry he flung the flowers instead of presenting them, like the young gentleman that he was. And now he was to show he knew how to behave, for she

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was going to present him to a lady. Her eyes were full of tears, and he looked at her wonderingly. He knew he had been naughty, but he did not want her to cry.

“*This, mother, this . . . is Derry’s son. Is it no Ranmore you’re calling him? Look at him.*”

She put the boy down, and he stood there a moment, shyly. Then he ran quickly to the old lady in the chair, for her eyes drew him. He did not understand the wonder of yearning in them, but he went to her. Never a word had she said since she called out, and she was breathing unevenly.

“Terence good now.” He put up his face for a kiss. “Terence good now,” he repeated. She laid a tremulous, uncertain hand on his head. Oh! the curls she had felt like that under her hand, the silk and gold of them!

“Is it . . . is it Derry’s son you’re telling me?” Her voice was quite broken.

“Yes, it is Derry’s son. He has called him Terence. Mother, you are not going to refuse to kiss him? See, his lip is quivering, he is going to cry, he doesn’t know there is such a thing as hate in the world. You can’t carry it on to him.”

Then all at once she ran to her mother, and put her arms about her; for the words that came were as the broken words of delirium.

“It’s lies, lies you’re telling me! *It’s Terence’s son, my son’s son!*” Her voice rose to a wail. “Oh, God, the day! My boy’s son! Let me be, I tell you, let me be.” She shook off the encircling arms. “I want to see his face, to feel the curls of him. . . . Oh, my boy, my little son, my dear, dead son.” The old head went down on the red curls. She was shaken with sobs; dry, wordless sobs.

The Duchess hesitated, paused a moment, and then went out softly, closing the door behind her, leaving them together.

## CHAPTER XXXV

IF the Duchess had expected her mother to exchange confidences that night, she was disappointed. The Dowager kept the child with her for a long time, until the nurse went for him, in fact. She did not appear at dinner, and she refused her daughter's offer to go up and sit with her. She sent down word that she wanted to be alone, she had a sick headache. The next day, and the next, Margaret waited for question or comment. None came. Her mother was singularly quiet, sitting about in her black silk dress, and lace cap, with her shawl over her shoulders, saying no word of what had happened. She complained of the cold, and Margaret was solicitous about her health, asking her if she would like to see a doctor.

"Why should I see a doctor? I am quite well," she answered. "You are for ever thinking people are ill, there is nothing the matter with me." She always resented the Duke's nurses, and the fuss that was made about him.

"Would you like the child to come in and see you this morning?" This was Margaret's next attempt to draw her into talk.

"And why not?" Now the Dowager's eyes began to watch the Duchess, even as the Duchess, but differently, was watching her. The Duchess was uneasy about her mother; she did not understand this quiet attitude, she was waiting to be questioned, she began to fear lest her hopes for Derry would be disappointed. It seemed to her that, if her mother had become withered, and arid, and old, this was a fountain of life from which

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drink. Must she trace its source, and see from what muddy inlet the stream had birth? Was it not enough that now it was clean and sweet, an Irish stream, that ran clear from the mountains? It had welled out through the fronds of a hart's-tongue fern, it would widen through flowers and plants, slipping round boulders, clattering over stones, now cool and deep with sleeping golden showers, now gliding in a thin line of silver. She could drink and drink again from it, she had but to look, to see it was undefiled.

The Duchess thought to see something of her mother's active middle age come back to her, those proud and happy days when she had been the mother of a son. She had looked to see the maggot in her brain die, and butterflies spring from it, gossamer-coloured, playful, and pursuing in the sunshine.

The last thing she had dreamed was that the secret of Sonny's birth was one that the Dowager thought must be kept at all hazards from her daughter, lest she should resent it, especially lest she should resent it to him! Already there was only one "*him*" for the Dowager, as there had been in Terence's lifetime. The Duchess took a long time to read the cunning that began to gleam in those old eyes; or to see that her mother would be a miser over the treasure that she thought was known only to herself. Nobody must know. How it had come about she had no time, or wish, to think, but that this was her son's son Lady Ranmore had no doubt. And nobody must guess it. She planned and contrived, using subterfuge and feints, to have the child with her, or to spend an hour in the nursery with him. She would say:

“Are you going out in the carriage this afternoon?”

“Just as you like, mother. I will do whatever you are wanting me to.”



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“I’ll not be going out at all then, I like to sit about in the grounds.” With the boy playing beside her. Or it was :

“If you’re not using the carriage this afternoon, I’d not mind driving into town. There’s some shopping I’d like to be doing.” Then she would add, indifferently, quite as an after-thought : “I might take the child along with me, he won’t be in my way at all.”

She would smuggle toys to the nursery, watching, out of those cunning eyes, to see if her daughter noticed anything. Once, when Margaret surprised her with the child in her bedroom, talking baby-talk, it was quite apologetically she had said :

“It isn’t unlike Terence he is !” while she looked to see if Margaret had noted the words.

The Duchess began to understand. She was drinking of the well ; she was holding herself more erect, some of the years were slipping away from her, and some of the sorrow. But she was drinking surreptitiously, not because she feared the source, but lest others should query it.

Meanwhile Derry was being kept away from Dunstans, and his rights were in abeyance. Margaret thought the time had come when she might venture again to introduce the subject of Derry’s rights. She missed him ; she knew he would be more desolate away in Scotland than here, within reach of her sympathy. Chance aided her, but she would have spoken soon, even if all the chances had been the other way.

Dunstans was an ordered English home, with wide, terraced lawns, close-cropped, rare tropical trees as well as the trimmed yews ; there were great banks of flowers, and pergolas where still the late roses lingered. There were hot-houses full of flowers and fruit, but these were the gardeners’ preserves. Sonny’s toddling, straying feet took

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him from the green lawns to the tempting open door of a greenhouse; he thought flowers grew for the plucking. Already there had been complaints that little Terence was bringing disorder. He was not always satisfied with daisies and grass, nor could Nurse always quickly restrain him from dragging at a leafless rose-tree, upheld in its decrepit path by a stouter twig, or from pulling at a narcissus that the soft weather had brought into late flower. Master Terence was not to be trusted in the garden, and the head gardener laid his formal complaint. He intercepted the Duchess in the grounds when she was walking with her mother, and brought his charge.

“And why shouldn't he pick the flowers if he wants?” the Dowager interrupted, indignantly. “Are the flowers only to be looked at? And what if his feet disturb the beds? Can't they be planted again? . . .”

Margaret said a quieting word or two to the gardener. The man was within his rights, and doing what he thought was his duty. She said she would tell Nurse to let Master Terence take his walks a little farther afield, then Thomson need not fear that anything within view of the house would be spoiled. But the Dowager went on muttering her indignation. She asked for whose benefit the flower gardens were maintained.

“Is it for the omadhaun in the donkey-chair?”

It was then that Margaret took the first firm step, without pausing to see where the next would land her.

“It's in Ranmore woods he ought to be playing, mother, and you know it as well as I. It's wild roses, and woodbine that call to him, climbing about Ranmore. He should be roaming in the freedom of his own home. Dennis McCreagh, and Peter, and all of them, would well like to be watching over him. They'd not be checking him when he gathered the flowers, or broke down the beds . . .”

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She stopped at that, hurrying a little so that her mother need not answer, but the Dowager had no answer ready. She looked at her daughter sharply, and then turned away. How easily she saw him, as Margaret had said, flitting through Ranmore woods, playing in its untidy grounds, free from English trammels, the ordered meal-times, the starched white clothes, the regularity that irked herself.

That night, at dinner, as carelessly as she was able, and as if the subject of Derry had never been approached between them, and she had never spoken an unkind word of him, she asked, with that strange new cunning which had come upon her, “And when is Derry coming to visit you again?” She eyed her daughter, when she asked this, as if she were her antagonist, as if it were she that was purposely keeping Derry away.

Margaret did not mind how it came about, at least it *had* come about, that her mother wanted speech with Derry. She answered just as carelessly as she had been asked.

“Some time next week, I hope. The first meet is on Tuesday, and we have a hunt breakfast here. I would like Derry to come down for that, if you didn’t mind.”

“It’s not a very devoted father he makes, I’m thinking. How comes it he leaves the child here all the time with you? I suppose if I’d be carrying him off with me to Dublin, nobody would be missing him? His mother is away from England, Nurse tells me. It’s attentive parents he has, poor baby!”

Her daughter suspected her of knowing a little more about Rosaleen’s absence than she pretended. Nurse was something of a gossip, and her mother not above listening, she felt sure.

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However, it was her policy now to let her mother come to the point at which she was surely arriving, in her own circuitous way. Certainly there had been no talk of the orphanage lately, and that was a good sign. That she wanted to see Derry was even better. The Duchess felt sure it was with the idea of asking him to let the boy go back with her to Dublin that she wished to see him. But it really did not matter with what intention she was enquiring for him. The Duchess walked warily and delicately among the quicksands of her mother's humours. She told her quite simply, and without comment, that Derry's wife had left him. The Dowager examined, and cross-examined, her as to the cause. Margaret had the girl's letter to Derry, as well as the one to herself. She showed the Dowager both of them, and the Dowager read, and returned them.

“And I suppose he's glad to be rid of her?” she commented.

“Oh, no, mother! He is heart-broken about it; Derry is a miserable man to-day.”

“And why shouldn't he be miserable? Hasn't he got his deserts?” but there was no longer any rancour in her voice.

“Oh, mother! you don't think that any more; you don't think poor Derry has got his deserts amongst us! . . .”

If her mother did not think so, she could not be brought to admit it.

Derry, who was summoned quickly from Scotland, was warned that he must walk warily.

“My mother has altered very much since Terence's death, Derry. You'll hardly know her, and I'm not sure . . . well, I think I ought to tell you that I am not quite sure her head is as clear as it used to be. She takes things differently from what one would expect.”

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“What is it you’re trying to tell me?”

“Nothing, except to behave as if nothing has happened, not to be surprised or disturbed at anything she may say, or ask you. . . .”

But there was nothing to surprise, or disturb, him when his aunt came into the hall, and he went forward to meet her.

He said he was very glad to see her, and, because he thought she was looking old and ill, he exclaimed how young and well she was seeming. “It’s a long time since I’ve seen you, surely!” he went on awkwardly. She retorted that he had always known where she was to be found. He had no answer ready for that, and the Duchess intervened pleasantly, and suggested he had had a long journey, and perhaps he would like to go to his room and change.

At dinner they talked of grouse, and something of to-morrow’s meet. The first meet of the season was traditionally at Dunstons. The Duchess told Derry jestingly that she was glad he had lost weight, he would be easier to mount.

“He is not a great figure of a man,” the Dowager said, eyeing him unfavourably. She was trying to maintain her attitude of antagonism to him, but there was no antagonism in her eyes when she thought no one was observing, and they fell upon him unawares. As it had been with the Duchess, so it was now with the Dowager. She could not keep from looking at him, and remembering how familiar a feature of the house he had been in those days when they had all been happy, and there was no weight at the back of her head, or secrets she had to be keeping.

Derry and Margaret talked during dinner, and in the drawing-room through the quiet evening that followed. The Dowager was listening to them, although she sat

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

as if she heard nothing. She was back in the days when he and Terence and Margaret had shaken the old walls with laughter and prank; when, as quite little boys, they had gone off with their fishing creels, or their guns, or on their rough ponies. She remembered calling after them that they were to be careful and Terence impatiently crying out to Derry to “Come on! what did the mother think was likely to happen to them?” But Derry had often stayed a minute to answer, “Shure, an’ I’ll be looking after Terence all the while.”

She had always known that he worshipped Terence, would guard him with his own life, if need arose. Her hatred and rancour were dropping from her so quickly. What was that Margaret and Derry were telling? Some old hunting exploit of wild Terence, when he had heard the call of the huntsman in the distance, and had rushed to the field where the horse was grazing, leaping on his back. . . .

She broke into their talk :

“You mind he was not twelve years old then, and it was neither saddle nor bridle he had . . .”

“It wasn’t the want of a saddle or bridle would have stopped Terence, when he heard the hounds,” Derry ejaculated.

She had not meant to be joining in their talk, but all the ice about her heart was breaking up, and it was true that the maggot in her brain was breeding butterflies.

When it was bedtime, it was Derry who lit her candle, as he had done for her so many times.

“I’ll walk upstairs with you,” he said; “we mustn’t be dropping the candle-grease about here, like we do at home.” He fell so easily into the old ways, as if there had never been bitter feeling between them. But Derry had had no bitter feeling against her.

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“How old she looks, and altered,” he said to Margaret when he came downstairs again, “and how sad! When I got her to her room, I just asked her, ‘You’ll not be having any bad feeling against me any more, Auntie?’”

“Oh, you shouldn’t have said that, Derry! You shouldn’t have reminded her.”

“It didn’t do any harm. I gave her a kiss with it; she seemed very shaky and frail. Biddy was there, she said, ‘Ah, Mr. Derry, and you’re a sight for sore eyes!’ It’s all right. I came away quickly, but I know it’s all right. Oh, Margaret, Margaret! what’s the good of it, what’s the good of it all, with Rosaleen not here!”

## CHAPTER XXXVI

THE first meet of the Oakmore Hunt always took place at Dunstans. Lord Brampton, who was the Duke's cousin, was Master of the Hounds. He was the most eligible bachelor in the three counties, yet the most persistent mothers and chaperons had given him up as hopeless game. Everybody knew how it was with him and the Duchess, except, perhaps, the Duchess. She only knew he was persistently kind to her. Hunting was her one and only unalloyed pleasure, and he facilitated her enjoyment of it in every possible way. That was all she knew, or would know; whilst the Duke lived, she had his name in her keeping. Vansittart Brampton was no seducer of women, hardly a *preux chevalier*. He was a short, spare man, with a cropped red head, clean-shaven, hard-featured, weather-beaten, something over forty, and not talkative. But he had a genius for friendship, and was the most popular M.F.H. the Oakmore Hunt had ever had.

The meet was at twelve, and already by eleven, carriages began to drive up, dog-carts, and even the unpopular motor. In the field beyond the gardens there were grooms leading horses, some with side-saddles, and a couple of small boys, sons of a local farmer, were impatient on their caracoling ponies.

The Duchess was dressed and out early, she was at her best on horseback, one with her mount. The fine



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chestnut she tried this morning seemed to feel the honour that was being done to him; he tossed his head and played with his bit, and curvetted at the touch of her light hand on the rein. Her dark habit defined the lines of her moulded figure; the red-gold hair was wound in plaits under her workmanlike felt hat. These were the days when her blue eyes still shone as when she had been a girl in her mother's house, and the colour flushed in her cheeks. Derry was in top-boots, cut-away coat, and white tie. She had provided him with a great raking bay horse that promised to keep him fully employed. Derry, too, could sit a horse. He was in a reckless mood. Sometimes he did not care whether he came to grief or not. Without Rosaleen life seemed to have lost its savour for him. Time had done nothing to mitigate his loss.

The field gathered slowly; now the grooms with the led horses were being replaced by pink-coated masters, by ladies in faultless hunting get-up. The picturesque huntsmen arrived with the hounds. The hounds gave tongue causelessly, put noses to ground, or sniffed the air, moving about the huntsmen. There seemed many more of them than there really were. Greetings were exchanged, friend meeting friend after long absence, and there was much to be gossiped about and discussed; the chances of the day, for instance, and the weather. Dunstons was always a sure find. It was a true hunting morning, grey and soft, the dew hardly off the grass, and the sun behind the morning clouds. At twelve to the minute the Master rode into the field. His first glance was at the hounds, but his second was at Margaret. She rode up to him, and after a word or two, led the way to the house. Quite a number of people followed them. Those who had driven over

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for the meet only, and to breakfast at Dunstons, would linger over their meal; while the others who took a glass of wine, or a biscuit, standing, were all impatience to be off.

Lady Carrie Carthew was among the latter. She and Derry had not met for months, not since they had been at Ascot together. But the Goodwood week had made a great change in Lady Carrie's prospects. An American multi-millionaire had been of the party she was with, the type of person one only meets in books. In real life American multi-millionaires have wives and children, generally a divorce or two to their names, and a whole history of misdemeanour or fraud. Cyrus J. Wood was unattached, he had been too busy making money to have time for making history, matrimonial or criminal. Lady Carrie had heard that American men never married English women, and this, combined with Derry's defection, had given impetus to her wooing. For, of course, it was she who wooed Cyrus in her yellow-perilous way, not he her. First, by bemoaning her incapacity, and playing the fluffy fool that is usually a strong man's objective. Afterwards, when she discovered it was more efficacious, showing her real ability. Finally, when she became sure of her ground, she exhibited a quite impressive and unique comprehension of figures and of the vagaries of the American stock-markets. Cyrus J. went down slowly, he had been a shrewd man until then; but it is notorious that America will be the first to suffer from the Yellow Peril. The very last sensation of the season had been the announcement of Lady Carrie Carthew's engagement. She had had no time to think of Derry, and no need of him. She knew from Mossy of Rosaleen's disappearance. But her new prospects had lessened her interest in Derry and his

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affairs. Also she had resented his attitude to her during that Ascot week at the Brinmores. She had given him every encouragement and “oaf” was the name she attached to him when he proved dense to her allurements.

She exclaimed at his altered appearance to-day, standing up with her glass of claret in her hand. Lady Carrie was genuine where hunting was concerned, any horse could carry her, the smaller the better, if it were swift; to-day there was nothing reminiscent of the tea-gown in her well-cut habit.

“What on earth have you been doing with yourself?” she asked Derry. “You have gone to a shadow; you are not half the size you were.” She still looked kindly at him. What a fine fellow he was, even although he had grown so thin! It was a pity Cyrus was only five feet six or seven, and the colour of a dried pea. Carrie felt suddenly that, after all, she was very fond of Derry Ranmore. There was no reason he should not help toward her trousseau.

“I’m very glad to see you here, you know. In a way, I suppose you owe your reconciliation with your family to me.”

“Do I?” he said. It was difficult for him to respond to Lady Carrie’s cordiality. Seeing her, brought back the remembrance of what Mossy had told him in the train.

“The Dowager is here, too, isn’t she? I hope she has given up that absurd orphanage of hers. Well, all’s well that ends well. I suppose you are reconciled to them all, and on your way to Ranmore. And you’ve never congratulated me, although I’m congratulating you. I knew it would all come right if she took herself out of the way. Mossy tells me you’ve no idea where she is . . .”

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She took another sip at her claret, never noting how pale Derry's lips had gone.

"It's nothing you've got to congratulate me upon," he got out. Could he have heard what she said aright?

"Nothing! That's good. Why, you were always longing for your aunt and cousin to forgive you, and now, here you are, in the bosom of your family. I knew exactly what was wrong. The day I went to see your wife, before Ascot, you know, I told her she had only got to make herself scarce . . ."

The Dowager had come up, and seemed to be listening. Lady Carrie gave her an affable nod, and went on.

"I told her they wouldn't have her at any price. I explained to her that she was standing in your way."

Derry had gone pale, now he got red, and his breath came quickly. He said, although his words came with difficulty:

"You, you told her that?"

"That, and a few things more," Carrie went on, coolly. "It was time something was done, you know. You were all at a deadlock. She took it very well. . . . I said she had only got to remove the chain, and give you head room. . . ."

"Set you up, Carrie Carthew, set you up! And what had you to be doing with Derry's wife, or Derry either? You tell me that. You, that's Wickford's daughter, and him the greatest blackguard in the three counties!" The Dowager's voice was shrill, and already there were others listening.

Lady Carrie paled.

"Has she gone out of her mind? Is she mad? What does she mean? Let's get away," she said to Derry.

"Was it you that drove my Rosaleen from me?" Derry stammered, making no move.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

“She would do that, she would,” the Dowager went on, never heeding her growing audience, or that the Duchess herself, seeing something amiss, was hurrying over to them.

“Isn’t it time we started?” Lady Carrie said nervously, hastily putting down her glass.

“A bad and cruel woman you are, Carrie Carthew, and a bad child you were, like your father before you. . . . What did you say to her? What dared you say to Derry’s wife?”

“My dear Lady Ranmore, pray don’t make a scene. Derry and I were great friends. I knew he was longing for his own people. . . . I really forget exactly what I said. Old madwoman!” she murmured; but it was impossible to get away.

“Up in Dublin I’ve heard how you used, and misused, Harry Carthew; that he, who had been a sober man until his fortieth year, was a drunkard before he had been married to you two years; that he, who had been a saving and a solvent man, died a bankrupt, with his good name in the dust. Many a time I’ve talked to Terence about you, and about your father. . . .”

“Mother! mother, dear. . . .” The Duchess interposed, although she had no liking for Lady Carthew. She tried to draw her mother away, she had not realised what the scene was about; only that there was a scene, and the time inappropriate. It was Derry now who startled her, for his eyes were bloodshot, and his voice hoarse.

“Margaret, it was she who told Rosaleen she was standing in my way, chaining me up.”

“Another time, dear, another time!” But she could not still her mother’s voice.

“Haven’t I known you since you’ve been a girl, Carrie Carthew, always mischief-making, with that smooth tongue

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of yours? Haven't I wondered they tolerated you in this county, you that's caused more women's tears wantonly, more heartaches, dissensions, and disunions, than if you had been the Yellow Peril they name you! Didn't Terence tell me he wished he'd never seen you? Now it's Derry you've made the unhappy man he is to-day. What was it you told his wife?”

Then all at once her voice seemed to waver, and her virulence. She looked from Carrie to her daughter, and then at Derry. She seemed to have suddenly forgotten what she was saying, to have grown uncertain and wavering. . . .

“I wanted to speak to Derry's wife meself, she isn't here, is she? . . . What was it I wanted to ask her? About Terence. . . I can't remember. . . Derry's wife. . . is Derry's wife here?” A flush came over the old face and a film before her eyes. Her voice slowed, and stopped, like a clock that has run down. The Duchess's arm was about her, or she would have fallen.

“She hit me on the head! Someone hit me on the head!” The words came thickly, incoherently, as she slid through her daughter's arms.

Now all was confusion.

“It's a stroke.”

“Apoplexy.”

“Of course she didn't know what she was talking about.”

“She ought not to have been allowed to excite herself.”

“Get a doctor, someone, quick! Can't someone get a doctor?”

“Open all the windows!”

“Give her brandy.”

“Put a pillow under her head.”

Lord Brampton and Derry carried Lady Ranmore upstairs. There were nurses in the house, who knew

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better than old Bidy how to undress her gently, and lay her in her bed. Everything was done quickly and quietly, once they realised what had occurred.

Lady Ranmore had had a stroke of paralysis. But apparently it was very slight. As soon as it was seen that she was already recovering consciousness the Duchess expressed her wish that the hunt should proceed.

Downstairs, people were hurrying out of the house as quickly as possible. Lady Carrie was explaining what had happened, explaining it in her own way, but people looked at her coldly, or wonderingly. More had been heard, more had been understood, or misunderstood, than she could explain away. There had been ugly stories of Lady Carrie before this. Derry Ranmore was popular, and many people knew that his wife had left him. Now it was all at once in the air that Lady Carrie was responsible.

It would be spoken of everywhere, and it would have a far-reaching effect. Lady Carrie would never again be accepted at her own valuation. The half-heard words would be repeated, and would stand for justice; there was so much in them that was true. The weal of the Dowager's words across Lady Carrie's reputation was worse than the weal of a hunting-crop would have been across her face. Rosa-leen, had she but known it, had her vengeance in that hour.

Lady Carrie put a bold face on it as she rode with the hounds that day, but she did not underrate what had occurred. She even decided, before the hounds had found, and they had really got going, that she must rearrange the scheme for her wedding. No chance now for that picturesque hunt-wedding she had planned, and of which she had already spoken to Cyrus. She must be married in London. In those first quick ten minutes, over Hallam, and then in the Gilkes fields, pressing on

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the hounds, without a break, and without a stop, she had made up her mind to sell her house here, and go for a time to the States, as Cyrus had suggested.

Lady Ranmore recovered consciousness completely before the evening. She had some loss of power in her right hand, and her mind worked slowly, but that it did work there was no doubt, because she asked where she was, and what had happened to her. She thought she had been struck on the head. It was a small blood-vessel in her brain that had given way, and all the symptoms pointed to a recovery. Her health would always be precarious, of course, but the probabilities were that from this first attack she would recover completely. Bromides and quiet were prescribed, nature being allowed to do its healing work; and the result was as had been predicted.

At the end of a week she remembered things that had happened before her seizure. Her speech was a little affected, but it was evident that her mind was working, and, to Margaret's astonishment, she asked her, quite as if it were an ordinary question, if Derry's wife were in the house. At the end of a fortnight she was sitting in her easy-chair by the window, complaining of nothing but the nurses, and the visits of the doctor. She said she was quite well. It was still a little difficult to know how much she knew. Margaret began to suspect it was more than she talked about. It was obvious, for instance, that she liked the child brought in to her night and morning. Presently the Duchess realised that her mother sat up in her easy-chair by the window just so long as he played in the garden, and she could follow the little figure flitting about in the distance. After that she arranged he should be often in front of the house, in despite of Thomson and the flower-beds.

The doctors said Lady Ranmore was making a wonderful



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recovery, wonderful. The power was coming back to her arm, and her speech clearing daily.

“Where is it that Derry has been seeking his wife?” she asked, abruptly, one day when the Duchess was sitting with her. The question was quite unexpected, the subject had been naturally avoided, orders having been issued the patient was not to be in any way excited. The Duchess hesitated, but the question was repeated. It was evident she had been brooding upon it, and therefore it seemed wise to give her the information she asked.

She heard of everything that had been done, from the dramatic touring companies, to the private detectives.

“And has he tried the Convent of the Sacred Heart, where I put her to school?”

Derry had come in whilst they were talking, and now stood behind the easy-chair, listening, with his heart beating in his ears when he found what they were discussing.

“The fool that I am! the fool! I never thought of it.”

“He has not been there? Nor to the farm in Tralee, to her aunt, O’Daly’s sister, the farm from which Dan Maguire was evicted . . . ?”

Derry had never even heard of the farm in Tralee. It was new hope that was beating up from his heart.

“And if he hasn’t tried the farm, nor the convent, has he been over to Ireland, and seen Father Prout, who was the confessor at the convent? Rosaleen was a Protestant born, and she kept her religion, as I promised her mother on her death-bed that she should, but she would have known where to go for kindness.”

Derry’s heart was leaping; it was as if the sun was dazzling before his eyes. He had never thought of the convent, he had never heard of the aunt, Father Prout

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

was a new name to him. It was England they had been searching, from London to the Land's End.

“I never thought of her going back to Ireland, without me by her side, me that brought her over . . . and putting the water between her, and me, and the boy!” he exclaimed incoherently. But now he felt he had been blind and dull, now he was mad to be off. He would find her, he would send no one, but go himself. The voice of the invalid in the easy-chair was as the voice of an oracle to him.

He would go over to Ireland that very night; soft, gracious Ireland that was guarding her for him. He'd never leave it again, but with her by his side. He felt like the Chinese prisoner must have felt, who, after languishing for many years behind the iron doors, suddenly found they had never been barred, and all the time he had been free to turn the handle, and walk out. It was Ireland he ought to have been searching, whilst Mossy had been investigating touring companies in England, America, and the Colonies. Mossy Leon never thought but that a woman who left her husband and had her living to earn, a woman as beautiful as Rosaleen Ranmore, for instance, would be found as an aspirant for stage honours. All his fears had been lest she should have fallen into bad hands, among agents, or derelict *entrepreneurs*. But Derry knew, all at once, that he had been mad to listen to him. Of course, she had gone back to the dear country. To-night he would follow her, with never a doubt but that he would find her.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

DERRY sped upon his quest with fresh hope, and fresh life. Never had he longed more acutely for his wife, never it seemed had he such need of her. He went first to the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Bandon. The convent lay on a rising slope; it was built of grey stone, square and solid, high above Kinsale Harbour, surrounded by rich pasture-land, set in the generous green of its wide gardens. To-day, when Derry drove up in hot haste, there were girl-children playing about the lawn in their dark uniform dresses, as Rosaleen, in her day, must have played, flitting amongst the trees. He saw them here in couples with arms entwined, and there in groups; now a solitary figure detached from the others. His heart went out to them all, for it was amongst such as these that his Rosaleen had grown up. He pictured them all as something of what she had been, gracious girl-children, growing to beautiful womanhood, helpful and loyal and loving. All this she had been to him, his dark Rosaleen. He never dreamed of disappointment. She was surely here with the Mother Superior. How his heart leapt!

Mother Superior, interviewed in that stiff oak parlour, with its ordered chairs in a row, its table without a cloth, and for only ornament the crucifix over the mantelpiece, showed angular in her long black robes and white coif, with the cross hanging on the brown rosary. It seemed she had only been appointed a few short weeks. She had no memory of one Rosaleen O'Daly, nor knowledge of Rosaleen Ranmore. She had no human interest in his

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errand, nor did she show commiseration for the bitter look of disappointment and misery that clouded over his face. She was set apart for the service of the Church, she had no other service or sympathy to give. As for Father Prout, he, she believed, was in Rome. Father Maguire was now the confessor to the convent. She was in haste for Derry to leave, it was time for matins.

Father Maguire was portly, his tonsure had spread, until now only a little scant stubble of grey hair lay between it and the creases of fat at the back of the neck, between it and the benevolent forehead. He did not know who this gentleman was that came hot-foot to his house from the convent; but he saw that he was tired and eager, although prepared now for disappointment, and unhappy.

Father Maguire was standing at his garden gate when Derry came up. He would not hear nor answer any questions, until he had led the way into the parlour. Then his guest must have wine and cake, or a glass of milk, after his drive; but, when Father Maguire heard Derry's story, or an outline of it, he was full of comforting words.

Derry said that he was searching for his wife, who had left him under a misapprehension, and who, he thought, might perhaps have sought shelter under the roof that had nurtured her childhood. Father Maguire was sure she had not written to Father Prout, all Father Prout's letters came here first, and were forwarded by him, or kept, as their contents suggested. For Father Maguire was here temporarily, holding his office only as trustee for Father Prout. He knew positively there had been no letter, and no visit, but Lord Ranmore—for now he knew his visitor's name—must not be disheartened by that, for she was sure to be found soon, and quite safe. Derry had had a wild thought, when he heard Father Prout was in Rome,

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of going over there, and wresting information from him. The idea died in its birth.

Now it was only the farm at Tralee that lay between him and despair. He did not want to eat or drink or rest, he wanted only to get to Tralee.

Father Maguire made inquiries about trains and connections, but persuaded him to lie in his house that night, since he could neither walk nor fly, and there were no trains that left until to-morrow. There is no hospitality like the Irish hospitality. Father Maguire was delighted to have a guest, and the particular O'Toole that waited upon them, an ancient widow woman, who had her husband's pedigree at her gnarled old fingers' ends, was as good a cook as is to be found in the south of Ireland, although that may not be saying very much.

Derry was disheartened, and tired, and eager to be seeking further, although now he was depressed with misgiving, and no longer was sure that on the morrow he would hold Rosaleen in his arms, as the priest had predicted. Meanwhile, he was fed with bacon and potatoes, and cauliflower that came out of the garden and was just ripe for cutting; also biscuits, cheese and radishes. Later on, there was a glass of hot whisky and water, mixed by Father Maguire himself, to help Derry to sleep. All the time there had been kindly, comforting talk either addressed to him, or between his host and the relict of the four hundred and seventieth O'Toole, “in direct descent, mind you,” who discussed the position, and who were full of optimism. “Where should she have gone but to the farm; he would find her there for shure on the morrow, and wouldn't her heart lep to see him! . . .”

Father Maguire had a sense of humour, and drew his housekeeper out to amuse his guest. It was a king her departed husband would have been in his own rights, this

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

last of the O'Tooles, if the murdering Saxons, and the rebellion, and a few other things, had not intervened. Derry tried to repay all that was being done for him by sympathising with the throneless O'Toole, and answering the twinkle in Father Maguire's eye; but really he was only thinking how early he could get away.

He was up betimes the next morning, but not before his host. He heard that the outside car had been ordered, and would be round in no time at all. He was told that the train would be waiting for him at Dunmanway, and from Dunmanway he'd get easily to Bantry. Then it was but a step, surely, from Bantry to Killarney; and from Killarney to Tralee he could travel in half a day.

There was breakfast ready for him before he went, and a basket with sandwiches and cake was thrust into his hands at the last moment. There was the heartfelt “God-speed” from the priest, and a wish, from both of them, that his journey would be successful. Father Maguire asked a blessing on his journey, and the widow of the O'Toole echoed it. Being an Irishman himself, Derry knew better than to offer them anything for their hospitality save thanks, and a wring of the hand for the priest; but they had lightened his wearisome journey with their kindness. Again he pictured himself coming up with Rosaleen at the journey's end.

“Journeys end in lovers' meeting.” This snatch of quotation, heard he knew not where, came back to him, and lilted in his brain, hopefully, whilst he was in the slow train between Dunmanway and Bantry.

At Bantry he found there were no trains at all to Tralee.

He was offered a passage in a boat, which unfortunately was bound for somewhere quite different. Outside cars were pressed upon him, with spavined horses, and eager drivers. He was persuaded to get into slow local trains

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

that led nowhere, hearing always too late that by some other way or route he could have saved time and fatigue. He was being constantly misdirected, and always encouraged; everyone seemed to want to detain him with desultory talk. The statement that it was “but a step” led him from one fatigue to another. He was nearly two days getting from Bandon to Tralee. Afterwards he found it could have been accomplished in a few hours.

And when he got to Tralee, it was only to hear that Widow O'Brian's farm, she that was O'Daly's sister, was not at Tralee at all, but at Listowel; and strongly they advised him not to go there. For she and her niece that was staying with her were surely being boycotted. Widow O'Brian's farm was, rightly speaking, Dan Maguire's farm.

Derry had hard work to get away from the inn at Tralee without hearing a complete history of the feud between Dan Maguire and Widow O'Brian. It was all about a bit of land that did not amount to half a dozen Irish acres. It had led the two belligerents, and their respective sympathisers into unheard of raids and reprisals. The feud between Dan Maguire and Widow O'Brian was the topic of the whole country-side, but now things were getting serious. For Dan's rick had been fired, and there was talk of cattle-maimers, and one of the widow's men had been shot at from behind a hedge. All Tralee congregated in the public-house to tell him about the feud and the farm, once the news got about that there was a gentleman inquiring.

But the only word of it Derry heeded was that the widow had a niece staying with her.

Widow O'Brian's farm was as little like an English homestead as the fair domain of Dunstons was like the wild disorder, and picturesque ruin, of Castle Ranmore. Derry saw broken hedges, and a field that seemed to be

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bearing only a fine crop of stones. It was a cloudy November day, murky and lowering. Turkeys and scraggy fowls, with scraggier, scuttling chickens, made the foreground of what might have been a cattle-pen, but turned out to be a mean stone house, standing too high for its width, although of only two floors. The front was as flat as an Italian house in poor quarters, without any ornament at all of portico or verandah. There were weeds, or cabbages, about the front door, and lines with clothes hanging out to dry. Somewhere in the immediate vicinity there must have been pigs, there was a muck-heap close against the side of the house, its aroma reaching him where he stood. Was this where she had sheltered ?

Rosaleen saw him coming, a mile away, it seemed. Who else was there who would drive up like that, and get down so quickly, and shout so lustily ? Jim and John O'Moro, and the boys, and all of them, threw down what they were doing, and ran to see what the bother was about, expecting Dan Maguire, with a fine skirmish on the way. Rosaleen had been working in the field in her scant cotton dress, with the big, flapping bonnet, cotton too, that protected her head, and covered her white face. Derry had not seen her, for all his anxious, roving eyes ; but she had seen him. He had come in pursuit of her. How her heart stopped beating, and then went racing !

At first she was for running away and hiding, then she was for running forward, and now for standing still. Her legs wouldn't carry her, and she could neither run nor stand. It seemed no time at all since she had first seen his figure in the distance, and her heart had leapt, and stopped beating, and started again at racing speed, yet here he was, already out here in the field. For a moment she neither saw nor heard anything : “ And it's yourself ! ” she thought she heard him say. “ Is it yourself ? Oh, God ! ”



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She had not thought there was so much happiness in the world as to stand here, with his arms about her, and know that his heart was beating as fast as hers, here against her own. It wasn't November at all, and no rain was beginning to come down. It must be spring, with the birds singing, she heard them; it wasn't anything else at all she heard.

Neither Derry nor she heeded the gaping, curious little crowd that gathered, open-eyed and wondering, about them where they stood, and presently began to throw sentences to each other, and exclamations. But the Irish peasant has an extraordinary tact; the people seemed to melt away, to dissolve in the rain and mist which Rosaleen never saw at all, but which was there all the time.

“How did you think of finding me here?”

“How could you leave me?”

But feeling came too quick for query, it was hot in Derry's lips, and in the arms he was holding round her, it was deep in Rosaleen's eyes, and at last he could read what was in them.

“How could you do it?”

“But I was between you and Ranmore.”

“If it was between me and Paradise you'd stood, wouldn't I have given up Paradise?”

And she had never known that he cared for her, only that he had married her out of pity! Now she let happiness surge over her like a warm wind, scented with flowers, a wind that excited her pulses, flushed her eyes and cheeks, took away her breath, intoxicated her.

“It's yourself that was caring for me all the time?”

“But what have you been thinking?”

“I thought . . .”

And then he caught her to him again, and she was too close for thinking.

## “LET THE ROOF FALL IN”

The oblivion to their surroundings lasted a long time, but they found themselves in the shanty presently: the cottage was little but that, and the smell of the pigs pursued them.

Then he did not wait at all, he was quite beyond talk, and he wanted no explanations. With one hand he pulled at the string of her bonnet, until it fell back behind her hair, with the other he held her face up, and looked again and again into her eyes, until they fell beneath his, and she blushed and blushed. Then he laid his lips upon hers, and both his arms around her and kissed and kissed.

What talk need there be between them, now he had got her for himself again? He questioned her, and never listened to the answer. It wasn't Lady Carrie's name he wanted upon her lips, but his own. She stammered out something of what Lady Carrie had said, but words were never an easy medium for Rosaleen.

“I'll never let go of you,” he said. “You'll never be out of the reach of my arm again. It's not fit to be trusted you are.” He laid his lips on her hair. “And how I've hungered for you! And you say you never knew that I cared! And how is it then that I've never told you? Don't talk, it's your lips on me own I'm wanting, I can't believe it's true yet that I've found you, and that you're here in my arms.”

He whispered into her ear that he did not want to know why she had left him, he only wanted to stand here, holding her against him. He would never let her go again. Another long, long kiss he must have, on her lips this time. What were words between them?

This state of affairs lasted until Rosaleen's aunt, Mrs. O'Brian, came home, full of exclamation and surprise, but indomitable hospitality.

“An' hasn't she offered you so much as a cup of tea, or

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the taste of the pot? To think of it! And come all the way from Tralee to find her!”

She was very flustered, and full of the “paper” she had got against Dan Maguire, and all that had happened. But that her niece’s husband had had neither bite nor sup in her house was the immediate thing that mattered. Not because he was Lord Ranmore; it would have been the same if he’d been John Moro, or Dennis O’Flanagan. She busied herself over the peat-fire, talking and exclaiming all the time.

Derry was all haste to carry his newly found wife off with him, but he had to wait for the meal that was being prepared, which he shared, by the way, with the driver of the outside car, whom Mrs. O’Brian “couldn’t be thinking to lave outside there with nothing in his stummick but the rain,” that now was coming down heavily. During the meal he heard how Rosaleen had come to the farm, and the surprise it had been.

“I hadn’t seen her since she was a baby, since me poor brother was killed, and I went all the way to Dunmanway only to hear that her ladyship was taking care of the child, bringing her up to be a lady, and a companion to herself when she was old enough.”

Something was said about the convent, and the surprise it was that her ladyship had carried out her promise that Rosaleen should remain a Protestant. There was a whole, long, running story of how the O’Dalys came to be Protestants, and about Rosaleen’s English mother. Derry scarcely listened; he was watching Rosaleen, thinking how beautiful she was, and reading now quite easily that it was love of himself that filled her eyes and heart.

That her niece had made a grand marriage, and then come back to the farm at Tralee, and asked to be taken in, seemed to have made very little impression on Mrs. O’Brian. Wasn’t she her own brother’s child? Rosaleen

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had her quiet word of gratitude for the home that had been given her without question, but Mrs. O'Brian brushed that aside. She talked endlessly about herself and Dan Maguire, and it was to that the man who drove the outside car wanted to listen. He would go back to Tralee primed with the very latest intelligence.

Derry controlled his impatience as well as he was able; but all he wanted to do was to get back quickly to the town, to send a telegram to Dunstons, and be alone with his wife.

They were too late for trains at Tralee, and they lay that night at the inn, where the innkeeper, and the boots, the ostler and the shock-headed boy, who was supposed to assist everybody, but was in everybody's way, took the deepest interest in them, though not more interest than they displayed in the Maguire-O'Brian feud. It was the one comedy of the country-side, all they had to amuse them. The rick-burning and the cattle-maiming were really imported melodrama, there was no evidence of either.

The innkeeper's wife wanted to tell the whole story over again whilst she was serving them with supper, but it was Rosaleen's story, and his own, Derry wanted to hear, and to tell, and he rid himself of her volubility as soon as was possible.

It was long and sweet in the telling, lasting through the night, far into the dawn of the morning.

“You thought it was out of pity I married you? It was only the pity made me dare to ask it. I'd loved you from the first moment my eyes fell upon you.”

“And how could I know?”

“But who could be seeing you without loving you? Lie close.”

“But it's me that's only a peasant . . .”

“And it's me that's only your lover. Put your heart against my heart and your lips to my lips. . . .”

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“I was between you and Ranmore.”

“And now you’re between me and the world! You’ll never get away again. Lie closer. How came you not to know? I thought I told you all the time. The sweet breath of you! . . . don’t stir. And how much is it you love me?”

“Enough to leave you. It tore me heart out by the roots.”

“You’ll not be doubting again? You feel how close I’m holding you.”

“I’ll not be doubting.”

“You have never loved anyone but me? Breathe it to me in me mouth, it’s that I’m thirsting to hear.”

“I’d not know what love was, without you’d taught it me. I’d spend my days in cold and shadow, thinking of you in the sunshine. I’d kiss the place your feet have trod, many a time I’ve kissed where you walked.”

“And it was only of me you were thinking, when I’ve seen you sad?”

“Only of you. And that I wasn’t worthy of you; I wasn’t fit.”

“You’re fit for a queen! Don’t think to take your lips away for a minute. It’s husband and wife we are, thank God!”

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

THEY went as far as Killarney, and lingered there, honeymooning. Derry had to have his newly-found wife to himself for a while. It seemed that only now had they completely found each other. Something had been missing from the fulness of their lives together, some completion of confidence or understanding. He had to realise how little Terence had ever counted with her, save for what she had suffered through him, and that from the first it was he, and he only, who had held her heart.

He learnt this during long mornings, when the grey mists hung low against the mountains, whose blue tops lost themselves in the darker skies. He learnt it when the lake before them lay mist-shrouded, and only the patter of the rain broke the silence of the deserted grounds of the hotel. They felt they were all in all to each other for evermore, when the shadows were purple in the cold evenings that fell so quickly, and the wind soughed through the stripped autumn trees about them. Their feet sank in the sodden ground, deep amongst the fallen leaves of the year's decaying. For they had caught Killarney in its most sombre mood, and all the beauties of its scenery were shrouded in the melancholy of weeping skies and waning days. Rosaleen had ever a streak of melancholy in her, her womanhood had been born in bitter travail; never could she forget the manner of its birth.

Unveiling her soul to her husband, that fearful and

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trembling soul, she let him see that it had emerged from tribulation, and was as a fitful light that came and went, swayed by his every breath. It was he that had kept it alive. Now it would burn steadily, and ever more brightly. In the dust Terence had stamped her, and from the dust Derry had raised her. She thought of this always, but Derry could teach her there was no raising, for nothing essential had been trampled. The grey days and nights closed softly around them, and ever the skies wept, yet beyond the grey days was the sure promise of a rose-lit dawn. Always amid the grey and the shadows they felt the sun would shine out.

They lingered in Killarney eight or ten days. Then the word came for which they had waited, and they started for home. The shabby family coach met them at the station, and they turned under that carved stone gate, set so strangely at the entrance to the park. They skirted the woods, on the left lay the chapel, with the stone mausoleum beyond it. Now Castle Ranmore itself lay before them, the great pile, with its turret and towers half fallen in, and in ruins, with the scattered masonry, and the ivy overgrowing old walls. There were no roses, although even in November the green of the grass that grew breast high, where in England would have been ordered lawn, was rich and vivid. If it was neglect that they read in wild gardens and in the front of the new stables, where a water-pipe had burst, and already green fungi had started to run along the damp, it was a picturesque and beautiful neglect.

“Isn't the green of it dazzling! isn't it beautiful it's looking in the sunset! Oh! my Rosaleen, to be bringing you home with me here!”

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Derry's heart was so full, some of it came spontaneously through his lips.

“They'll be here, Derry, I'm—I'm afraid.”

“Hold tight to me hand, don't be afraid of anything. But it's Ranmore we've come to?”

“What will they say to me?”

“Me aunt's but an invalid, and it's Margaret will be welcoming you; there's nothing to fear. Shall I tell him to stop? Will we be walking up to the house? You mind the woods . . . ?”

“Yes, let us get out, let us walk.”

They walked quickly. The time had been, the time would come again, when they would love to linger. But Derry was impatient to be in the house, and it seemed to Rosaleen that her ordeal was all to come.

They were nearly there, the carriage had preceded them, and was standing at the door, when she said, with white lips that trembled a little:

“Derry! *do they know?*”

“Don't be speaking of it. Margaret knows.”

“And his mother?”

“Knows nothing. Be still now! Don't I see them through the trees?”

“Does she still think it was the saint he was, and the young sun-god?”

“She's still thinking it.”

“And what must I do? What will I say to her . . . me that waited on her. *Derry?*”

Her courage gave way all at once, gave way completely. She wasn't Lady Ranmore at all, she was only the poor girl to whom they had been so good. A panic seized her, she said she could not go on. He took her into the shelter of his arms, and talked to her and persuaded her, and comforted her. He said again and



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again it was only a girl she had been . . . and wasn't she the heart of his life? She let herself be comforted presently, and went on with a little new courage, a little more confidence, it wasn't much farther they had to go.

“ Derry, wouldn't it be to Sonny it would all be belonging, and not us at all, if they knew ? ”

“ No. ”

Terence's act had placed Terence's son outside all human rights and relationships, it was Derry who had restored them to him. Only as Derry's son could little Terence inherit his own, Derry explained it as well as he was able.

“ And it's you that has given it back to him ! ”

He had done his best ; no man can do more.

The Dowager had been fatigued from the journey, and had gone to her room. The Duchess was awaiting them on the terrace. She called out to them as they came slowly in sight.

“ You must hurry, or the tea will be getting cold. I told them to wait with the cakes until they heard the carriage drive up ; and that was ten minutes ago ! Derry, how well you're looking ! ” She kissed Rosaleen ; stooped, and kissed her quickly. “ You've done him good already ; he has quite a colour in his cheeks. Rosaleen, after tea you must go up and see my mother. She's been asking for you. And you will want to see the boy. Oh ! that's right ; here he comes. I told Nurse to be on the watch. Well, haven't I taken care of him for you ? ”

The Duchess behaved as if nothing had happened, as if it were all as simple and natural as possible ; as if Rosaleen had never waited upon the Dowager, nor run away after Terence had died, and now come back to be Lady Ranmore ; as if it were all ordinary, and natural.

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The colour that had left Rosaleen's lips came back to them.

“Oh! but it's beautiful he looks! And how he's grown! Indeed, and indeed, it's the grand care you've taken of him!” she exclaimed.

Then came tea, with Sonny chattering; he had learnt so many new words and ways, he was on his best behaviour, but he seemed to be on wires all the time. Now here, now there, darting about the room, and filling up any little awkwardness, or pauses, in the talk, though the Duchess took care there should be little pause, or awkwardness. It was she who suggested that Rosaleen should carry Sonny off to the nursery, and that Derry should see Mike, and Pat, and Peter McCreagh, who were all waiting to welcome him. She told her which rooms had been set aside for nurseries for Sonny.

“They are near my mother's; they are Terence's old rooms. You'll make your own arrangements of course, when you've had time to look around you; but, for the present, he's in the west wing, near my mother.”

The tact with which she acknowledged it was Rosaleen who was the hostess, and she the guest only, was inimitable. This was the way to help her to fill her place here. The Duchess knew Rosaleen must grow to fill it; she had all the qualities, only, just for the moment, perhaps, a lack of self-confidence. She had yet to face the Dowager, Terence's mother. And what she should say to her was the question that beat in her beating heart.

Up there, in the room she had shut against them all, and outside of which Bidy had keened the night they brought Terence home, the Dowager waited. She had been very quiet, very patient, but at the back of her patience there trembled an immensity of overwhelming, overpowering restlessness. It was Rosaleen she wanted;

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it was only Rosaleen who could tell her what she wanted to know.

*“I had thought to hear thy children  
Laugh with thine own blue eyes,  
But my sorrow's voice is silent  
Where my life's love lies.”*

*Was it? Was it? Was it?*

She had been so quiet, so patient, trying to get strong, questioning no one, hardly speaking, except to ask if Rosaleen were found, if Derry had come with his wife. She must *know*, she must.

She had borne the long journey from Dunstons to Ranmore quite well. The Duchess had discovered that her mother would keep quiet, taking her nourishment, obeying directions of nurse and doctor, if only Sonny were in sight or hearing. Therefore he shared their saloon with them in the train, was allowed to run in and out of their cabin on the boat. And here he had Terence's old rooms, where she could hear him at play.

But it wasn't for little Terence she was listening now. She had heard the carriage drive up ten minutes ago, a quarter of an hour ago, half an hour ago. Her patience was all exhausted, her quiet was all broken up.

“Biddy! Where are you, Biddy?” And old Biddy hurried panting to her call.

“And haven't they come? Go and fetch her to me. Why doesn't she come?”

“An' why must they be hurrying so? An' why don't you sit still, and not be tiring yourself?”

But, before Biddy had time to answer question with question in the true Irish way, Rosaleen was in the room, the same room where, three years ago, she had knelt, and called out in her anguish, and been rebuffed. It

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was the same room, but it was not quite the same girl who knocked with quick nervousness, stood a moment on the threshold, and then came swiftly over to where old Lady Ranmore sat, and flung herself on her knees, as she had flung herself that night.

The Dowager was in the easy-chair before the open window. It was past five o'clock on a November evening, but the sunset still lingered behind the mausoleum. It reddened that grey stone cairn where Terence lay sleeping. When his mother heard the quick, nervous knock, she sent Biddy away. Now it was coming; now the truth was coming. Her trembling limbs could not support her, and she had sunk into the easy-chair. Yes, there was his tomb; there, in the dim, shrouded distance, against the dying sunset. But here, here at her knees, lay the truth. It had lain there before her, long ago, in the dust, on the ground, and she had spurned it, turned it away, rebuffed it. Now there was no rebuff; now her trembling hands were laid on the girl's head. How cold it was in the room!

“Cease crying now; cease crying. Tell me.”

“I've come back . . .”

“Cease crying now. It's his—tell me it's his! I'm whispering to you—no one can hear us. It's his?”

“What'll you be thinking of me?”

“It isn't of you I'm thinking at all. Tell me. It is his son, my boy's son?”

“Yes.” Her voice was so low, but the mother heard it, and triumphed in hearing it.

“Terence's little son!”

“Terence's son.”

“Now my God be praised! His own son! My son's son!”

Rosaleen's sobs quieted down gradually; but still

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she knelt at the Dowager's knees. Now she felt the old hands trembling on her hair, caressing her, and she heard the words too, although they were mumbled words, not very clear, coming slowly :

“In my old age—to be a son to my old age! To me, that doubted His goodness. I didn't deserve it, didn't I question and complain? And then I saw him, Terence himself, and the quick smile of him . . . come back to me. My own baby boy, with the sunny hair, and all the pretty ways of him. Not dead at all, never dead. What had I been thinking about?”

She had lapses of memory, not only that night when Rosaleen knelt at her feet, with quieting sobs, and quieting heart, but often in the after days. Presently the knowledge came to Rosaleen that her ordeal was over, and done with, and that, without words, or any explanation that must cover her with shame, or stain the memory that Derry had helped to keep white, Terence's mother had accepted Terence's son.

Often, after that night, they had to humour her, and bear with her. The broken blood-vessel in her brain leaked, and obscured her judgment. It became difficult, later on, sometimes to make her understand why they called Derry, Lord Ranmore. She never resented his being there. On the contrary, she came to depend upon, and to consult him, and lean upon him, but never as Ranmore's lord. The sturdy middle age the Duchess had hoped would come again to her was not hers; but its passion returned. Again she wanted nothing but that Ranmore should stand fair and clear for Ranmore's heir. That she saw the heir in Terence's son, and not in Derry, mattered little, whilst yet he was but a baby. For him the workmen were recalled, and the pick of the miners echoed in the valley. For him the rents were released, and the fishing-

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boats sailed once more from out the harbour. For Sonny, the roof that had fallen in was restored; tower and turret rising again to be a landmark in the valley.

But before the end came, the time when it might have been awkward and difficult for any of them to set before her, however gently, that it was Derry, and not Sonny, to whom all the land belonged, God spoke. He spoke abruptly, but who could doubt it was His voice speaking, when the horses took fright in the thunderstorm, and the fatal accident happened that swept Terence's son, and Terence's mother, into His own safe keeping, with the secret still untold, and the title and estate still undivided?

All that Terence's mother would have done for him, she did for his son, that would have had neither name, nor father, had not Derry fathered him. But, in the end, it was Derry, and Derry's sons that profited. For that was God's way.

There are three of them already, worthy children of their parents, sturdy and strong, black Ranmores all, Protestant and fearless, with their wills in their own keeping, obscured by no incense, directed from no confession-box. They are loyal to their King, and faithful to their faith; spreading peace upon their land, singing “God save Ireland” with a single heart.

THE END

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