

THE LETTER

A Play in Three Acts

By

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NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
moulin digital editions



2021

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Characters

Robert Crosbie

Howard Joyce

Geoffrey Hammond

John Withers

Ong Chi Seng

Chung Hi

Leslie

Mrs. Joyce

Mrs. Parker

A Sikh Sergeant of Police, A Chinese Woman, Chinese Boys and Malay Servants

The action takes place on a plantation in the Malay Peninsula and at Singapore.

THE LETTER

ACT ONE

Scene: *The scene is the sitting-room of the Crosbies' bungalow. Along the whole back of the scene runs the verandah, which is approached by steps from the garden. The room is comfortably but quite simply furnished with rattan chairs, in which are cushions; there are tables with bowls of flowers on them and pieces of Malay silver. On the walls are water-colour pictures, and here and there an arrangement of kris and parangs; there are horns of sladang and a couple of tigers' heads. Rattan mats on the floor. On the cottage piano a piece of music stands open. The room is lit by one lamp and this stands by a little table on which is Leslie's pillow lace. Another lamp hangs in the centre of the verandah.*

When the Curtain rises the sound of a shot is heard and a cry from Hammond. He is seen staggering towards the verandah. Leslie fires again.

Hammond

Oh, my God!

(He falls in a heap on the ground. Leslie follows him, firing, and then, standing over him, fires two or three more shots in rapid succession into the prostrate body. There is a little click as she mechanically pulls the trigger. The six chambers are empty. She looks at the revolver and lets it drop from her hand; then her eyes fall on the body, they grow enormous, as though they would start out of her head, and a look of horror comes into her face. She gives a shudder as she looks at the dead man and then, her gaze still fixed on the dreadful sight, backs into the room. There is an excited jabbering from the garden and Leslie gives a start as she hears it. It is immediately followed by the appearance of the Head-Boy and another, and then while they are speaking, two or three more appear. These are Chinese and wear white trousers and singlets, the others are Malays in sarongs. The Head-Boy is a small fat Chinaman of about forty.)

Head-Boy

Missy! Missy! Whatchee matter? I hear gun fire. *(He catches sight of the body.)* Oh!

(The Boy with him speaks to him excitedly in Chinese.)

THE LETTER

Leslie

No, that won't be my retribution. I can do that and do it. gladly. He's so kind and good. My retribution is greater. With all my heart I still love the man I killed.

THE END