

as to her innocence. In fact, she knew what was o'clock at any hour of the day except when the young squire was about, and then it was either black midnight or high noon with her. She adored him in a very healthy and sane fashion, and, though she had no heart to break, it beat hard when his eye, hitherto set on foxes and hares and ferrets and rabbits, woke to the fact that the proper pursuit of man was woman. She went to Charteris House on every occasion she could squeeze out an excuse for going. She waylaid him in the lanes and smiled sweetly. Jack became conscious that Molly Botfield was to be met with in woods: he found her picking daffodils. She dropped them and said readily enough:

"Oh, Lord, sir, how you startled me!"

She had a fine colour, a plump figure, and white teeth that could break cobnuts. She was a year older than Jack. That is to say, she was a woman and he was a boy.

"I knew what would happen," said Sir John, as he walked across the fields. "The little devil was always about. Botfield is a sensible man. I believe he would sooner cut the girl's throat than have words with me. He shall have that new cottage. I suppose he knew this a week ago when he