

is the simplest and most absurd story in the world, and yet the greatest and most wonderful thing that had ever happened in the starved life of the woman.

Priscilla Meadows had been a governess—of something of the old school. She had been in one family after another—remaining until the youngest girl in each case had arrived at that mysterious period when it was necessary that she should be “finished”; after which Miss Meadows had moved on somewhere else. She had not a relative in the world that she knew of, and she had sometimes thought with a little shiver of what would happen to her when younger women took her place, and she was no longer wanted.

It is not possible to imagine that anyone had ever been in love with Priscilla Meadows. True, she had the sweetest face one may imagine, and when she smiled the sweet gravity of it broke up, and a thousand little lights and shades seemed to pass over it. It merely happened that love had not come her way, and was not part of the scheme of things for her. If she had heard at any time the flutter of his audacious wings, she may be understood to have hidden herself a little, frightened until he had flown away.

Yet the curious thing about Priscilla Meadows was that she had really loved her work, for the simple reason that it brought her into contact with children. They were rude children sometimes, and openly snubbed and flouted her (learning deep lessons from their parents in those matters), but that had never made any difference. To Priscilla Meadows a child was the most beautiful thing and the most wonderful that had ever been put on the earth by a kindly God.

Lying awake alone in the darkness sometimes, she had wondered what it must be like to have a child