

When he came into the library at breakfast-time on the second day, his clothes were shapeless and dusty, his face unshaven and grey with fatigue.

"The doctor says it's a boy," he told me hoarsely. "Is there any water in the room? I've had nothing to eat or drink since first I went up there; and then I must get some air into my lungs."

He sighed and dropped limply on to a sofa.

"How's Sonia?" I asked him.

"They can't say yet. She's doped. They've given her as much as they dare, as much as her heart will stand. . . . My God! I'm glad I'm not a woman! I can understand their having *one* child, because they don't know what's in store for them, but their courage in having a second . . .!"

I poured him out a cup of coffee and buttered him two slices of toast.

"I wouldn't try to talk overmuch," I told him.

"It's a bit of a relief to me," he answered with a smile. "All this time——" He lifted his right hand above his head and began stiffly to open and shut the fingers. "I was gripping her wrist," he explained; "I only let go twice, and the first time it was bruised purple, as if she'd shut it in a door. . . . And nobody *said* anything. . . . Sonia kept getting spasms of pain which made her moan or cry out, and her nerve gave way from time to time . . . and then I—I tried to hypnotise her, I found that by repeating 'Sonia, Sonia, Sonia,' very distinctly and very low, I could capture her mind. . . . God! how it got on my nerves!"

The first cup of coffee was followed by a second, which he gulped in scalding mouthfuls, asking at short intervals what the time was and how long he had already stayed away.

"Violet and the nurse are pretty well beat out," he explained; "I want to pack them off for a bit of a rest while I mount guard. And we've got to shift the boy before Sonia comes round . . ."

"You're not moving him—yet?"