

had been so sorry for it that he had thrust his pudgy hand into the cage, and taken the poor sufferer out with the intention of nursing it in his pinafore for a little, and then letting it go free, since it was so unhappy in captivity.

But when he had bidden it fly away it had had no strength to do so. It had lain helpless in his hands, and the strange quivering thrills that had passed through its slender body had communicated themselves to the child. Something was taking place—some change was coming. Without previous knowledge he had been sure of that.

And the change had come, with the drawing of the thin grey membrane from the corners next the beak, over the round yellow-rimmed eyes. Then the upper and under-lids had sealed themselves over the veiled eyeballs—the quick panting had changed to long gasps, the head had rolled to one side helplessly—and with a long shuddering convulsion the thing had taken place. The slender body had stiffened in Carolan's hand, the glossy wings had closed down tightly against its dappled sides, its scaly legs had stretched out rigidly and not been drawn back again. And a voice that seemed to speak inside Carolan had said to him: "This is death!"

Now broke in upon his immature brain a flash of blinding brilliancy. Milly, who had been his mother, was dead, like the thrush. The snuffing Thing that had come out of the jungle had frightened her, and she had died under canvas by the roadside. He shut his eyes, and saw her lying, very pale and pretty and helpless, with ruffled brown hair the exact colour of the bird's feathers, and beautiful brown eyes—why was he so certain that they had been brown?—all dim and filmy, and her slender body and long graceful limbs now quivering and convulsed, and now growing rigid and stiff. And a lump rose in his throat, and a tear splashed on the front of the brand-new