

up, and a question filled the wide-open, steady, grey eyes.

Later, when Aunt Leebie had bustled from the room on absorbing business elsewhere—"Tell me more about it," said Joan. "I know there is more to tell."

And he told her the plain story of Jimmy. They often talked over the terrible facts of life; they were the best of comrades, these two, though one very much in love.

"It's horrible," said Alec, in conclusion. "The mother was a child, barely sixteen; and for men like the father there is no justice in things as they stand. The law, as made, neither can nor will deal justly with these devils."

"No," said Joan. "The law, as made, is man's law, and—oh, you know, you know We've got to get it altered—we women. Women must do it—for women and children—and men. We've got to do it with——"

"Hammers?" put in Alec, whimsically, looking with a curious heart-pang at the tightly-clasped, frail-looking hands.

"With violence, apparently—the kingdom of Heaven has to be taken that way, you know, sometimes. With force, certainly, if—if there is no other way. What other way is there?" she added passionately. "All other ways have been tried—and tried—and tried, for half a hundred years. One instrument, and one alone, will give us power to amend the law; and man's law for men and women has got to be changed. Men will never change it, neither will they give us, without force, that for want of which all our crusades are futile. Therefore"—the voice dropped sadly and very wearily, but not unsteadily; "therefore we shall use—whatever force is necessary, and some of us, I suppose, will die. No," she said, as, remonstrating, he tried to take her hand; "no, I cannot listen now—"

"Yes," broke in Alec, "you shall listen. You know I love you, and—I believe you love me. You don't know it, perhaps, yet; but I believe you will. Joan, marry me. I won't hinder your—your work, however mistaken I think its methods. I want you as my wife. Perhaps the world wants us—both. It

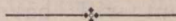
isn't for nothing a man loves a woman as I love you. Marry me, Joan, and—see." He had hold of her hands. As they stood facing each other, he felt them tremble, and her slight body sway a little. Then the curved lashes swept up, revealing eyes dim with tears.

He needed her, this valiant lover. She saw his man's need of her; saw, too, as through a widely-opened window, a vision of her rightful woman's kingdom, its sweet sanctities of wifehood and motherhood and home. And there he stood, the man who held the key to the treasure-house, who loved her, whom she knew she loved.

"And some of us will die." Remorselessly her own words echoed in her heart.

Freeing her hands, she retook both of his and held them tightly.

"I love you," she said. She paused, and her eyes were proud and glad—and loving. "But—while men keep barred the door of justice, shut women in hell, while motherhood can be—what it is to Jimmy's mother, and men within the law can make it so, I will never marry any man. Co and work for us—for the common cause, women's cause and men's. It is true the world wants us both, and together. Co and help to break down the evil wall of partition. And when the cause is won, on the day that victory is ours—if you still want me——" She kissed his hands as she held them, smiling through tender tears. "I love you," she ended. "I will marry you—then."



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