

"Daphne Carmichael never said anything sensible in Fitzroy Street. Go on please."

"Well, you know when I was a boy I studied over here and in Munich, and all over the place — and I could always make the pattern I wanted. And I saw other men making beautiful patterns, and then just when they were getting more than beautiful there'd be — a — 'a patter of feet and little feet,' don't you know — and the whole design would be trampled out, scattered, kicked to pieces, done for, for ever. There might be a new pattern, but —"

"Yes," said Daphne, "of course that particular pattern that was kicked to pieces was always the finest in the world; the new pattern, whatever it was, could n't possibly be better."

"I thought not, then. And I wanted to be stronger than all these other chaps. I did n't mean to have *my* pattern spoiled. My general attitude, as far as I can reconstruct it, was 'Wha daur meddle wi' me?'"

"A strong, defensive attitude. I see."

"And being friends with other men, and letting all sorts of things that were n't work get into your life — that seemed to me so fatal. And praise — I was afraid of that. I wanted to stand alone and be great — all to myself — I! It is amusing when you come to think of it, is n't it?"

"Is it?" she said.

"And there were girls," he went on, slowly.

"Yes," said Daphne with the air of one who had never been a girl, "there always are."

"It would," he broke off to say reproachfully, "have been easier to say all this to Daphne of Fitzroy Street."