

air-ship for convalescence — if ever those days were reached.) Certainly, and this reflection further upset the world for him, a quite diabolically-tangled web of contributory causes had combined to produce that God-forsaken slip of wretchedness whose pitiful offspring had lain stark and mute to-day on the operating table, while several highly-skilled workers put forth their finest efforts to save if possible one deplorable little body rotten with disease. To what end? What was likely to be the end of Jimmy, who, in his own words, "hadn't got no father"? The lump was gone from his shoulder, and it seemed rather more than likely that the arm might have to follow; and Jimmy—doubtful subject for thankfulness—was alive still. Why, anyway, were Jimmies allowed to come in such promiscuous abundance into this already overcrowded corner of a rotten world?—a world, nevertheless, which produced daffodils golden in April sunshine, and in which the blades of grass were springing emerald green after April rain. He had obviously overpaid the flower-seller for these daffodils, but they would help to brighten up the corners of the cosy room at Maitland Road, particularly if—it was Joan Marchmont he saw putting them into bowls where the light would find them.

Would she have run in from her studio this afternoon to see Aunt Leebie? Her face painted itself for him as he strode across the Green. Joan, with her hazel-grey eyes and the lashes curling upwards, her gold-brown hair with the wavy tendrils on the temples, her serious mouth so sweet in the dimpled corners; Joan with her ridiculous devotion to work and independence and—causes. Why, she could have her studio just the same if—yes, and paint as many pictures as she liked! And as to causes? Yes, yes, of course; he couldn't separate Joan and causes, and he wouldn't if he could. Causes were necessary evils; Jimmy and his mother were pretty clear proofs of that. For Jimmy's was a common case, the old, old story of a bad man and his prey; and the man, as usual, had escaped all punishment. He

hated the thought of Joan and Jimmy's mother as two aspects of one question. Joan and her blossoming face; motherhood, as it so often was and as it might be—mixed up and muddled; but, oh, the Lord preserve her—and him—from hammers and Holloway!

Would she be there this afternoon? That "little more," the muchness of which he realized in a daily increasing vividness; would it be any nearer to-day? Perhaps the question was too manifestly in his eyes as he presented his flowers. Perhaps it accounted for the sudden readjustment of Joan's, as she held out eager hands for the daffodils and made haste to find bowls for them, and became very busy in corners as Miss Elizabeth marshalled the tea-cups. There was an almost perceptibly exultant rattle of the little thin silver spoons in their delicate old blue saucers. To hold the fate of the two people you love best in the world poised in the hollow of your hand; to give two hawing, foolish bodies one more chance to make an end to folly; to lead Opportunity firmly but discreetly by the fingers—Miss Sampson foresaw the imminent hour when prayer must surely be merged in thanksgiving.

"Eh, Joan, and you'll maybe find a mat," remarked Aunt Leebie, affecting, with only partial success, an unawareness of the dramatic moment; "I'm not for water-droppings all over my polished mahogany. And, for any sake, child, come and sit you down in comfort to your tea."

For answer a pair of arms came round the little low shoulders and a kiss descended on the soft and silvery hair. "It's just beautiful this afternoon," said artful Joan. "I'd give anything to have lovely white hair like yours, Leebie dear."

"And what'll be the matter with your own, I'm wondering? Alec, you'll find the scones perhaps. And what thirsty work will you have been doing this afternoon?" added Miss Elizabeth, manipulating with a nicety and justness the cream.

"Interfering with Nature's merciful destructiveness," answered Alec grimly, and Joan's curving eyelashes went