

Susan. "And Biddy has smacked down the bucket on the kitchen flags."

"That is the first stroke of the church bell," said Louis. "Then the others follow; one, two; one, two; one, two."

"Look at the table-cloth, flying white along the table," said Rhoda. "Now there are rounds of white china, and silver streaks beside each plate."

"Suddenly a bee booms in my ear," said Neville. "It is here; it is past."

"I burn, I shiver," said Jinny, "out of this sun, into this shadow."

"Now they have all gone," said Louis. "I am alone. They have gone into the house for breakfast, and I am left standing by the wall among the flowers. It is very early, before lessons. Flower after flower is specked on the depths of green. The petals are harlequins. Stalks rise from the black hollows beneath. The flowers swim like fish made of light upon the dark, green waters. I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre. All tremors shake me, and the weight of the earth is pressed to my ribs. Up here my eyes are green leaves, unseeing. I am a boy in grey flannels with a belt fastened by a brass snake up here. Down there my eyes are the lidless eyes of a stone figure in a desert by the Nile. I see women passing with red pitchers to the river; I see camels swaying and men in turbans. I hear tramlings, tremblings, stirrings round me.

"Up here Bernard, Neville, Jinny and Susan (but not Rhoda) skim the flower-beds with their nets. They skim the butterflies from the nodding tops of the flowers. They brush the surface of the world. Their nets are full of fluttering wings. 'Louis! Louis! Louis!' they shout. But they cannot see me. I am on the other side of the hedge. There are only little eye-holes among the leaves. Oh Lord, let them pass. Lord, let them lay their butterflies