

"It is my duty to look up Sarah," said Miss Clutterbeck with a sigh.

"Nobody has a higher sense of duty in St Swithun's than you," said Mrs Cadwallader. "Sarah is a girl in whom, like you, I have always felt a profound interest. Brought up under the shadow of the dear old Abbey walls, reared in the very bosom of the Church, I have always felt a deep interest in her."

"I know it," said Miss Clutterbeck.

"It distresses me that she must make another move; but it is inevitable."

Mrs Cadwallader shook the cushion which supported her round and well-padded back.

"These constant changes are regrettable. I should have thought nothing could have been nicer for her than her situation at Canon Hope's."

"It will unhinge her mind," said Miss Clutterbeck. "Our new Canon is, I am convinced, mad! Sarah has told me—"

"H—m!" said Mrs Cadwallader, "do you mind just closing that door, my dear? I'm an old lady, and so you will forgive my lack of agility. I couldn't rise to save my life, or, rather, I can't rise to save my poor old bones! Youth is a blessed thing."

But Miss Clutterbeck was not to be put off. Her nose was on the scent, and she was determined to run her fox to ground.

"Sarah says he paces the floor of his bedroom from 10 p.m. till 3 a.m. sometimes. At others he creeps to the oratory (you know he has set up an oratory), and plays music so divinely sad that Sarah says it gives her the creeps; at other times he sleeps in the coal-cellar or on the hard boards anywhere! He eats no meat; he scarcely touches even vegetables. But this is not all. Lately he has had a friend to stay with him—a round-faced man with a queer-cut coat—neither priest nor elder, but who calls himself the 'new apostle' and Sarah says she is frightened to death of the man. He is the founder of some new order, and wants Canon Hope to throw up everything and join him. He says very impolite things about all of us here; and the worst of it is Canon Hope listens. You know how intelligent Sarah always was. My best G.F.S. girl—quite my best."

"Why, Canon Hope has only just come!" said Mrs Cadwallader. "What possesses the man? But from the moment he raved up and down like a Jack-in-the-box that Sunday morning, and disturbed my usual nap, I felt mischief would come of it, and when am I wrong? And, again, directly Mrs Cudlip-Gaye, charming impulsive creature, takes a fancy to anybody, that person is sure to be one of these high-flyers. She has the same taste in everything; she never notices what I call ordinary, proper-minded, every-day people."

"Emma is Emma," said Miss Clutterbeck. "Of course I shouldn't dare tell her what I have now told you; she would 'stare me out of her drawing-room,' and as likely as not she would get the Bishop to entirely remodel the G.F.S., and somehow or other put a stop to our pleasant little avenues for hearing anything we may care to. No, I know very well how to arrange my conversation with our Archdeacon's wife."

"She has great power over the bishop," said Mrs Cadwallader—"anybody can see that. She is a powerful woman, and has admirable and subtle tact; somebody said the bishop proposed to her."

"I can positively deny that," said Miss Clutterbeck. "Emma never had but one downright proposal, and that was the Archdeacon's. Emma and I in that are alike. I had one and refused him, and she had one and accepted him."

"Dear me!" said Mrs Cadwallader as she took up the cat and tenderly smoothed its fur; "then Emma Cudlip-Gaye and you are on the same scale as regards attractiveness."

"Good gracious! Look at the married frights and the scores of proposals registered by them," said Miss Clutterbeck, rising, "and for any sake, my dear lady, don't think proposals are the measure of attractiveness."

"They are the measure of sweetness only, perhaps," said Mrs Cadwallader; "they make folks uncommonly good-tempered. But I'm an old frump!"

CHAPTER XI.

After spending two months with the Cudlip-Gayes in the clerical atmosphere of the Close, I (Angela) have returned to this humble little shop in this narrow little street, to brood on my future in the spasmodic fashion which evolves plans of action. One would have thought that a young person in my position would have felt rather out of it with such a thorough-paced woman of the world as Mrs Cudlip-Gaye; for I don't think there exists a more clarified comprehension of the *motif* that is guiding the flats and sharps and quavers and demi-semiquavers of the endless fantasies, concertos and mazurkas which compose everybody's lives (be they good or bad) than has Emma—for to me she is "Emma."

"You know it will not do for you to introduce old Megiddo's supposed daughter to your friends," I said, when she led me away from my misery on that memorable night which had grown to day—the day Megiddo was gathered to his fathers. How rapidly she turned those full, cool, gray eyes on me and replied:

"Thank God there are yet a few people left who venture to leap that old barricade called 'It will not do.' That barricade I call the

'old snobs' water-jump.' What this century of ours has yet to do is to drown all the old snobs in the water that they can't jump. I have found out, my dear Angela, *what* you are, and now I'm going to find out *who you are*. Grapes are not yet found on thistles. You are a mystery."

I am disposed to believe that there is a good deal of mystery connected with my parentage. That wretch Jabin knows all about it; I almost wish he would return, if only to insist on his giving me a clue. By the bye, to-night I must fulfil Megiddo's request. Under the seven lime-trees (which Megiddo called his dressing-room), those weird trees which have always caught my imagination in the old garden at the back of the house, I am to search for the fortune which he is reputed to have had. How minute were his directions!

I don't know whether it was very wise of me to tell Mr Harrison about it and ask him to assist me in the search; but that man has a strange power over me. I feel I must do his bidding, and yet I am disgusted at myself for doing it. Still, I am not alone in this weakness: look at the power he is rapidly obtaining over Canon Conway Hope and Mrs Cudlip-Gaye. I hope he won't make converts of us. I wonder if his theory is that life shorn of its shams is only to be found in the peaceful seclusion of his happy valley, not far from the city of the great prophet?

I think Mr Harrison likes money, for when I told him the story of the lime-trees and the solemn whisperings of Megiddo I saw a strange light burn in those great black orbs (not eyes) of his, and he said, calling me by name, which would be a liberty from anybody else less than a prophet, "Angela, there should be a witness." Then, of course, I asked him to come. The only uncomfortable part about the proceeding is the hour. Megiddo said I was not to search before twelve o'clock, and he fixed this day and hour because the moon would be at the full.

Impossible to receive even a prophet such as Mr Harrison at midnight; so I had to take Mrs Cudlip-Gaye into my confidence, and she immediately told Canon Hope, and he threw her back upon the Archdeacon, who very proely talked about his night-cap, which Mrs Cudlip-Gaye says he has clung to as the tail of Conservatism, though the things went out just fifty years ago, and are only to be had to order in one particular shop located at the Land's End, and situated close to the lighthouse at that particular point. However, as Mrs Cudlip-Gaye says, life is a series of give and take. She gave in about that night-cap, she declares, and uses it as a screwdriver to get her own way every now and then. So *she* is coming also—Pietra Beckett.

Pietra Beckett deserves a volume of description to herself, she is so peculiar. There are no old maids now, the animal has gone out, and instead this new thing has come in—the thing between the sexes, Cravat, shirt, and fringe—that's Pietra Beckett. She is all that and something more. She has a cigarette-case! The Archdeacon was frightened, really frightened, when he saw it. She immediately made a pun, and said:—"Keep it close, Mr Archdeacon; it's brother Bob's, it really is." Pietra is so cool. When I say cool I don't mean cold; I mean she can put you in the wrong position at any moment. She is the full development of, as I said before, this new thing that has entered the lists with men for the places and positions held hitherto by men. She is decidedly good-looking; her hair is cropped close and her features are regular; her mouth is the best and worst feature: it is pretty but cynical. When I said just now that there are no old maids I forgot Mrs Cudlip-Gaye's intimate friend, Miss Clutterbeck. She is one of the right sort and one of the new old sort. Miss Clutterbeck means to marry, and talks of herself as a "spin" spun at last into matrimony. Pietra does not mean to marry, but to compete for the positions now held by men. I don't think marriage would be possible for Pietra, because she has so completely forgotten that there is any other ground between the sexes than mere position-getting that she has, as it were, outlived the possibility of love. She is not aware that passion is an agent to be reckoned with. Mr Harrison hates her because she calls him a knave. She says it pleasantly enough, too. "Ah, Mr Harrison, you are a knave!" She belongs to that new school which only knows distinction of terms by distinction of actions. I have described all these people roughly enough, all save Canon Conway Hope, and him I hesitate to describe because (well, after all, this is but a piece of paper, not the eyes of this and that person)—because—yes, he attracts me. His extraordinary goodness makes me ashamed. Yet it is not a kind of goodness that awes. I feel at my moral best in his atmosphere.

He has an enthusiasm for the masses, and he takes an interest in me as one of the masses. He views me collectively, and he is as abstracted when he talks to me as if I were a congregation, not an individual. Now, I like this, because before (in that before), when I was Jabin's great "draw" at his horrible shows, it was so difficult to impress individuals with the fact that I was but a piece of machinery that danced and made music and recited—nothing more to them. Ah! people don't know what it is to fold the lily and the snowdrop about their soul's health, till they have had to guard innocence in its alabaster box of experience. Well, all the distinguished people are coming here to-night, coming to this quaint old shop to search beneath