

sense—but that I had made up my mind, and was not prepared to disappoint you in order to keep up the traditions of a rather dreary respectability. I said you had written this part for me, and I had promised to play it, and that ended the matter. My ancestors had always kept their promises, and I should keep mine. I laid a good deal of stress on Sibyl.” At this point the beetle got away cleverly, threatening a break in the conversation. This was not what Challis wanted.

“I don’t understand,” said he. “Why ‘stress on Sibyl’?”

“I mean on Sibyl’s being allowed to indulge all her fancies, at any cost; and to take up trade, too—a thing that our ancestors would not have tolerated for a moment. Why is the Great Idea to be capitalised with thousands? . . .”

“And Shakespeare’s trade discountenanced? I see, and agree in the main. I suppose they said it wasn’t a trade—the Great Idea?”

“They did. Sibyl said it was Guilds and Crafts, and Mediæval, and quite another thing. Perhaps it is; I don’t know. But I’m sure ‘*Sibyl Arkroyd Limited*,’ is neither Mediæval nor Guilds, and that’s what they propose to call it.”

“It sounds like six three-farthings, and pay at the desk. They can hardly be in earnest.”

“Well, I don’t know! People of—of condition are getting to take such curious views of things. It’s nothing nowadays for a Countess to promise punctual attention to orders. Was it you told me there was a Curate who preached a Sermon on the New Atheism in its relation to Socialism? . . . No?—oh, then, it was somebody else!”

Challis suspected that Judith was talking in this way to defer telling him the upshot of the family discussion. He said nothing, and the flight of a heron filled out a lapse into silence which followed. And then Judith, who had risen from the tree-root to watch the vanishing bird, turned to Challis, and resumed:

“Shall we go on? . . . Oh, what was I talking about? Sibyl and the Great Idea. Well!—you see, the thing worked out like this: Papa had been wavering a good deal about financing the Great Idea, and Sir Spender Inglis had become very restive indeed, and was ready to jump at any excuse for backing out of his undertaking. He saw