

had not dared to set forth. The paragon of commonsense, pictured by most people as being somehow unliable to human frailties, could not yet screw himself up to the point of ringing a dentist's door-bell.

"He did look funny," said Sophia. "I wonder what he thought. I couldn't help laughing!"

Constance made no answer; but when Sophia had resumed her own clothes, and it was ascertained beyond doubt that the new dress had not suffered, and Constance herself was calmly stitching again, she said, poising her needle as she had poised it to watch Sophia:

"I was just wondering whether something oughtn't to be done for Mr. Povey."

"What?" Sophia demanded.

"Has he gone back to his bedroom?"

"Let's go and listen," said Sophia the adventuress.

They went, through the showroom door, past the foot of the stairs leading to the second storey, down the long corridor broken in the middle by two steps and carpeted with a narrow bordered carpet whose parallel lines increased its apparent length. They went on tiptoe, sticking close to one another. Mr. Povey's door was slightly ajar. They listened; not a sound.

"Mr. Povey!" Constance coughed discreetly.

No reply. It was Sophia who pushed the door open. Constance made an elderly prim plucking gesture at Sophia's bare arm, but she followed Sophia gingerly into the forbidden room, which was, however, empty. The bed had been ruffled, and on it lay a book, "The Harvest of a Quiet Eye."

"Harvest of a quiet tooth!" Sophia whispered, giggling very low.

"Hsh!" Constance put her lips forward.

From the next room came a regular, muffled, oratorical sound, as though some one had begun many years ago to address a meeting and had forgotten to leave off and never would leave off. They were familiar with the sound, and they quitted Mr. Povey's chamber in fear of disturbing it. At the same moment Mr. Povey reappeared, this time in the drawing-room doorway at the other extremity of the long corridor. He seemed to be trying ineffectually to flee from his tooth as a murderer tries to flee from his conscience.

"Oh, Mr. Povey!" said Constance quickly—for he had