

Themes: *Growth, Womanhood, Literacy, Schooling, Passions, Aspirations*

Summary

In this section, Agatha Christie describes how Madge's marriage, combined with Monty being overseas and the sudden lack of a father figure, brought on a new dynamic in the household. We also learn of the financial implications of their father's death. Throughout, Christie discusses the books she read, and the new friends she makes.

Young Agatha then welcomes a nephew, after Madge gives birth. Christie reflects on her own aspirations in her early teens; that she had never considered becoming an author, instead she simply aspired to marry. We learn about delightfully gluttonous Christmases at Abney Hall with Madge's new family in-law, as well as Christie's newfound passions for roller-skating and bathing.

It's at this point that Agatha's mother Clara decided it was time for her to experience a more structured education. She took lessons in Torquay, before heading off to study in Paris, overcoming homesickness. She moves from this school onto another, and then on to another - thanks to Clara's penchant for new ideas. Christie rounds off this section with a story of an anxiety-wracked piano recital, after which she regretfully accepted that she was not destined to become a pianist, or indeed had no "temperament for exhibition of any kind."

Quotes

"How much more interesting it would be if I could say that I always longed to be a writer, and was determined that someday I would succeed, but, honestly, such an idea never came into my head."

"There is nothing more wonderful to have in one's life, than time."

"To my mother trying a school was exactly like trying a new restaurant."

"The most blessed thing about being an author is that you do it in private and in your own time."

Questions

- Does it surprise you to learn that Agatha Christie struggled with spelling and grammar, and that she never considered becoming a writer when she was young?
- What did you learn about Christie's outlook on life?
- What do you make of Christie's volatile schooling experiences?
- Of the pastimes and passions described in this section, are there any that stand out?
- What did you learn about the era that Christie grew up in?