

MARTHA (*moving D. R.*). Jem! Jem, you big oaf....!

MISS MATTY (*moving C.*). Oh...Jem...we thought you were a robber... How did you get in...?

MARTHA (*moving D. R.*). I put the fire irons agin the door...
(*Miss P. breaks D. L.*)

JEM (*rubbing a shin*). That you did, lass... but you didn't lock it...

MISS POLE. Fancy walking into a respectable house at this time of night!

JEM (*moving C.*). I knows it's a bit late, ma'am... but I saw the lights on... and I see'd you a walkin' up the path ma'am... and I was a goin' to ask if it was too late ma'am... when you took to your 'eels and run...

MARY (*with relief*). So it was only Jem, Miss Pole, who followed you...

MISS MATTY. Well, never mind now... but it is late Jem, so give Martha the engagement ring and then you must go...

JEM (*turning to MARTHA*). Well... you see... it's like this... I didn't get no ring...

MARTHA (*very sharply*). Then you been long enough, I must say... gettin' nothing...

JEM (*in great distress*). There, lass... I chose your ring all right... Only when it come to pay for it...

MARTHA. You'd already drunk up your five pun note, I daresay... you good-for-nothin'...

JEM (*appealingly to Miss MATTY*). If you could keep 'er quiet a minute, ma'am...?

MISS MATTY. Now, Martha... do not get excited... let Jem tell us all about it...

JEM. Thank you, ma'am. Well... like I said I picked a ring... and then I come to pay for it and I give him a five pun note... and he looks at it... and says it ain't no good and it's only paper... which I could see... only I got paid with that note... and they tells me paper's as good as money... only now it seems it ain't any more... and that's part of my savings, ma'am... and I don't rightly understand... and mayhap you could explain... and stop

fidgetting, Martha...

MISS MATTY. He told you the bank note was worthless...? MISS POLE. That would be the bank Mr. Hoggins was talking about...

MISS MATTY. What bank was it, Jem...? I mean what bank does your note belong to...?

JEM (*producing it*). It says "Town and County Bank"...

MISS MATTY. Let me see it... (*She takes it.*) Yes, this is the bank Mr. Hoggins mentioned...

MISS POLE. It has gone bankrupt, Jem... that means they haven't any money...

MISS MATTY (*quite proudly*). The Town and County Bank is my bank... My sister, who was very wise about such things, put all our money in it... that means that I am a shareholder.

MARY (*in great alarm*). All... your money, Miss MATTY...? MISS MATTY. Yes, dear. And Jem, as I am a shareholder, it is my duty to re-imburse you the full value of this note...

Hand me my purse, Mary, there are some gold pieces in it... MARY. But Miss MATTY... you can't...

MISS MATTY. Thank you, dear, please do not interrupt me... I know what I am doing. (*She counts out the five sovereigns into JEM's hand.*) There, Jem... that's gold... you can buy

Martha's ring tomorrow... I apologize on behalf of the Town and County Bank for the inconvenience we have caused you...

JEM. Thank you, ma'am... I'm sure I hope you won't be the loser...

MARTHA. It's very kind of you, ma'am... but—

MISS MATTY. Now let Jem out, Martha... and lock the door... and we will go to bed...

MARTHA. But Miss Jenkyns... it's your own money you're giving...

MISS MATTY. That is quite all right, Martha... I shall speak to the director of the bank tomorrow and ask them to put things straight... Good night...

JEM. Good night, ma'am...

(*Exeunt MARTHA and JEM to kitchen.*)