

live upon . . . All day yesterday I hoped that perhaps the directors of the bank had made a mistake . . . But . . . this letter is quite definite, so you see you must go . . .

MARTHA. Well, I'm not going, so there . . . !

MISS MATTY. But, Martha . . .

MARTHA. Don't "but Martha" me . . .

MISS MATTY. You must listen to reason . . .

MARTHA. I'll not listen to reason. Reason always means what someone else has got to say. I've money in the Savings Bank, and I've a good stock of clothes, and I'm not going to leave you, Miss MATTY . . . not if you gives me notice every hour of the day . . . *(She puts her arms akimbo in defiance.)*

MISS MATTY. Of course, you would be a great loss to me, Martha . . .

MARTHA. That I would . . .

MISS MATTY. And I don't know what I shall do without you . . .

MARTHA. No more do I . . . So now where have we got to . . . ?

*(Miss MATTY makes a little, helpless gesture with her hands and turns away . . . She is a little tearful . . .)*

You give Jem that five pun, didn't you? When you couldn't afford to . . . and I 'appens to know you was saving it for this year's dress . . . And we didn't ought to have took it . . . But anyways . . . I'm not leaving you.

MISS MATTY. Dear Martha! Do you not understand that I shall not have enough money to support myself . . . let alone

. . .

*(Enter MARY down stairs to C.)*

MARTHA. Money! What's money? I'm surprised you can stand there, Miss Matty, and accuse me of being one to serve Mammon . . .

MISS MATTY *(turning to MARY)*. Mary, you must explain to Martha . . . about . . . about leaving me. I am just going out . . . I shall be gone about an hour . . .

MARY. Would you not like me to come with you, Miss Matty?

MISS MATTY. No thank you dear . . . I am going to pay my

debts . . . I must get them off my conscience . . . and I have just enough money left to clear everything . . .

MARY. Debts?

MISS MATTY. Yes, dear . . . there is five shillings owing at the butcher's from last week . . . and three and sixpence at the grocer's . . . and then the rent . . . *(She pauses with one hand on door.)* You will not mind, Mary, if we have no pudding today . . . ?

MARY. Of course not, Miss Matty . . .

MISS MATTY *(crossing to door)*. Very well, dear . . . I shall be back in time for lunch . . .

*(Exit Miss MATTY. MARY turns to MARTHA.)*

MARTHA. It's no use telling me I've got to leave . . . so you can save your breath, Miss Mary . . .

MARY *(taking MARTHA downstage C.)*. You see, Martha, it's like this. Miss Matty will have so very little money left . . . so very little . . . that, apart from wages, I do not see how she could find you food . . . she will even be pressed for her own . . .

MARTHA *(very earnestly)*. Was that the reason she wouldn't order a pudding today . . . ?

MARY. Yes, Martha . . .

MARTHA *(cheering up at the prospect of something to be accomplished)*. Then don't you tell her, mind, but I'll make her a pudding, and a pudding she'll like, too, and I'll pay for every bit of it myself, so mind you see she eats it . . .

MARY. That is very kind of you, Martha . . .

MARTHA. There's many a one has been comforted in that sorrow by seeing a good pudding . . .

*(She is bustling off to the kitchen when the doorbell rings. She turns and hastens to the window.)*

Lord! It's the half of Cranford on the doorstep . . . MARY *(looking out of the window too)*. I'll talk to them . . . you get on with your pudding . . .

*(MARY opens the door . . . MARTHA goes out.)*

*(Enter Miss POLB.)*

MISS POLB *(in a solemn, important tone)*. Is Miss Mary . . .