

MARTHA (*to below sofa*). Very well, Miss. Though it do seem hard on a girl. If you ask me, Miss Jenkyns herself would have done better to take Mr. Holbrook when he offered for her...

MARY (*to whom this is news*). Mr. Holbrook? What are you talking about... who is he?

MARTHA. He lives a ways out... in the country. My mother used to do for him, days. She said as how everybody knew he was sweet on Miss Matty years ago a id many's the time she's seen him looking at a lock of her hair in the back of his watch...

MARY. The first thing you must learn, Martha... is never to gossip about your employer.

(*The doorbell rings.*)

MARY. Oh dear... Here they come and it is not yet half past five. Quickly, Martha... the candles...

(MARTHA runs round lighting candles while MARY draws the curtains. Presently MARTHA goes to the window for the usual inspection...)

You need not bother with the window this evening, Martha, we know who our guests will be... I wonder if Miss Matty is finished cutting the bread and butter.

(*The voice of Miss POLE is heard through the letter-box.*)

MISS POLE (*off*). It is only I... Miss Pole...

(MARY nods to MARTHA who opens the door... and in bounces Miss POLE... she is wearing a cape and, over her head, a calash, which is a large covering designed to be worn over caps... she also carries a large book.

Good evening, Mary... I know I am too early but do not disturb yourselves for me. I have just found out all about Lady Glenmire in this copy of the "Peerage" and could not wait to read it to you...

MARY. Take Miss Pole's calash, Martha... and put it in the hall room.

(Miss POLE removes her outer coverings and hands them to MARTHA who takes them to hall, Miss P. chattering the while.)

MISS POLE. Of course, it is no more than I expected... and

I said as much to Betty yesterday... "Member of the Peerage", I said, "Well, there's peerage... and then again there's peerage..."

(*During this time Miss MATTY peeps out of the kitchen door... wiping her hands on a cloth. She pops the cloth back into the kitchen and a second later descends the front stairs as if just coming from her bedroom.*)

MISS MATTY. Good evening, Miss Pole... how kind of you to come early...

(Exit MARTHA.)

MISS POLE (*moving U. C. as they come down stage*). I felt I had to let you know how we have been imposed upon by this (*Moves below sofa.*) Lady Glenmire, who is to be kept under a glass case... I have it all here in the book...

MISS MATTY (*a. below sofa*). I really feel it might be more dignified not to discuss the lady at all.

MISS POLE (*sitting on sofa*). And that is exactly what I feel too... which is the reason why I came early so that I might tell you before the others get here. (*She seats herself and opens the book.*) Now, Lady Glenmire, I will have you know... is nothing more than the widow of a Scottish peer...!

MISS MATTY. But a real earl, nonetheless...

MISS POLE (*sniffing*). But never sat in the House of Lords... and as poor as Job I dare say... and my Lady Glenmire no more than the fifth daughter of some Mr. Campbell or other... who nobody ever heard of...

MISS MATTY. Well, Lady Glenmire... whoever her father may have been... has not personally injured me... and she may be a very good sort of woman for all I know...

MISS POLE. I for one will show Mrs. Jamieson... that I don't give a fig for her fine relations... (*The doorbell is heard. Enter MARTHA U.C.... she looks enquiringly at Miss MATTY.*)... and if she was to come to me on bended knees and beseech me to meet My Lady... I'd... well... I'd show her that you cannot trifle with a Pole...!

MISS MATTY. Open the door, Martha... it will be Miss Barker and Mrs. Forrester.

(MARTHA goes to the front door and we hear a man's voice