

MISS POLE. Though her circumstances are sadly changed . . .
MISS MATTY. Poor Mrs. Forrester . . .

(*The doorbell is heard again.*)

MISS POLE (*darting to the window*). I thought so . . . It is Mrs. Forrester . . .

(*She turns to MARTHA who has appeared at the kitchen door.*)

Never mind, Martha; it is but Mrs. Forrester, and I will let her in . . .

(*Exit MARTHA . . . MISS POLE lets in MRS. FORRESTER . . . she is rather older than the other ladies . . . and is comfortably fat. She is not very expensively dressed . . . in fact . . . rather plainly so . . . She has a pleasant, kindly face . . .*)

MRS. F. Oh! Miss Pole . . . Is Miss Matty in . . . ?

(*Miss P. moves and sits on chair D.R.*)

MISS MATTY. Dear Mrs. Forrester . . . come in . . .

MRS. F. (*moving to C. and looking round at them all*). There now . . . I can see by your faces that you already know . . . Why—here's Miss Mary—

MARY. How are you, Mrs. Forrester . . . ?

(*Mrs. F. sits L. of Miss M.*)

MISS MATTY. You are in time to help us, Mrs. Forrester . . . we are most perplexed as to the correct mode of addressing a member of the peerage . . .

MRS. F. Why, indeed . . . that is exactly what I was going to ask you . . .

MISS B. (*who is even more of a snob than the others*). Yes, Mrs. Forrester . . .

MISS POLE (*almost accusingly*). And, if I remember rightly, your father was an officer under Wellington . . .

MISS MATTY. And defeated Napoleon . . . at Waterloo . . .

MISS B. And I have frequently heard you tell how he was personally congratulated, after the battle, by the Duchess of Wellington herself . . .

MRS. F. (*wincing under this attack*). That may be . . . but he did not inform me how to address a countess . . .

MISS POLE (*sniffing*). Humph . . . !

MRS. F. (*quite sharply for once so soft*). And if my memory

does not deceive me, Miss Pole, your uncle, on your mother's side, was a colonel in the Army and fought under General Burgoyne in the American war . . .

MISS MATTY (*sincerely . . . for she is always kind*). Why, so he was, Miss Pole . . .

MISS POLE. That was quite different.

MRS. F. Oh yes, of course . . . we won the war in France . . . and we lost the war in America . . .

(*MISS POLE is about to reply with warmth when MARY speaks.*)

MARY (*anxious to change the subject*). Miss Matty . . . I think I remember seeing a copy of the "Peerage" on your bookshelf . . . perhaps it might help us . . .

MISS MATTY. My dear, how clever you are . . . of course, the very thing . . . it's in the dining-room . . . a large book with a brown paper cover . . .

(*MARY is about to fetch it when the doorbell rings again.*)

MISS POLE as usual, is first to the window.)

MISS POLE (*in violent excitement*). It is Mrs. Jamieson's coachman . . . ; her carriage is at the gate . . .

(*There is a chorus of twittering from the ladies who all rise to their feet and run about like chickens.*)

MISS MATTY (*rising*). Oh dear . . . oh dear . . . they are coming to call . . .

(*MARY picks up the newspapers off the carpet.*)

MISS POLE. Mrs. Jamieson is getting out of her carriage . . .

MISS B. (*to fireplace*). And Her Ladyship . . . ? Is she there too?

MRS. F. (*to D.R.*). Miss Matty . . . would you object very much if I left by the back door . . . ? I am afraid I am not dressed for company . . .

MISS POLE. She is coming up the path . . .

MISS MATTY. Mrs. Forrester . . . Ladies! I pray you . . . do not desert me . . .

MISS POLE (*returning to the room*). Perhaps if I might just pop into your dining-room . . . and study your copy of the "Peerage" . . .

(*The bell rings again.*)

MISS B. I have just remembered that I have a most urgent