

MISS MATTY. Oh dear . . . she is sadly clumsy . . . I am afraid I have no ability in the training of servants . . . My sister Deborah was so clever, she could take a raw country girl and train her so well . . .

MARY (*crossing in front of Miss Matty*). Don't worry, Miss Matty . . . I expect I can talk to her and after a few weeks she will be quite different . . . But these papers, you should not have taken them up for me . . . (*She starts to lay them again on the strip of sunlight.*)

MISS MATTY. Oh . . . thank you, my dear . . .
(*They carefully arrange them together.*)

It was a very valuable carpet . . . some years ago, and I would not have it fade . . .

(*Enter MARTHA with bag . . . she slams the door behind her . . .*)

Oh . . . ! You see she will always slam the door . . . Take Miss Mary's bag to her room, Martha . . .

(*MARTHA plunges towards the stairs.*)

Ah! Martha! . . . The back stairs, if you please.
(*Exit MARTHA D.R. to kitchen.*)

It saves wear on the stair carpet, you know . . .

MARY. She seems a willing girl . . . she will soon learn . . . MISS MATTY (*sitting L.C.*). It was so kind of you to come, my dear . . . and so kind of your dear father to spare you . . . You are such a practical girl . . . and I am afraid I am not strong-minded enough to break in such a boisterous spirit . . .

MARY (*placing her hat box on sofa and sitting*). Don't worry,

Miss Matty . . . just a little training . . .

MISS MATTY (*rather shyly*). And there are some things that are so difficult to mention . . . to a servant . . .

MARY. You leave it to me . . .

MISS MATTY. There is one thing in particular . . . you see . . .
(*She halts in confusion.*)

MARY. Yes . . . ?

MISS MATTY. My sister Deborah, when she was alive, was most particular about it . . . and I believe it is very necessary . . . at least so I have been told . . . with young girls . . . of the servant classes, I mean, of course . . .

MARY. Yes, Miss Matty . . . ?

MISS MATTY. Oh dear . . . Well, what I refer to is . . . (*She lowers her voice.*) . . . men . . . !

MARY. I'm sure Martha is a good, decent girl . . .

MISS MATTY. Oh, of course . . . but I believe that among the lower classes it is not unusual to encourage followers . . . in the kitchen, you know . . .

MARY (*smiling*). I'll talk to her about it . . .

MISS MATTY (*much relieved*). Thank you, my dear . . . You see, as my sister used to say . . . Our father was the rector of Cranford and we must set an example . . . in all details of our household . . .

MARY. I shall not leave you until Martha is a model to every other maidservant in the town . . .

MISS MATTY. Thank you, Mary . . . then I shall leave everything in your hands . . . (*She rises.*) And now . . . let me take you to your room.

(*MARY rises. MARTHA enters from D.R.*)

Ah . . . your hat-box . . . Martha, Miss Mary's hat-box . . . (*She suddenly remembers something.*) . . . Oh, yes . . . the hat-box . . . Did you . . . did you remember my little commission . . . ?

MARY. Indeed I did . . . as if I could forget . . . ! (*She is moving towards the stairs.*)

MISS MATTY (*rather shy again*). And is it . . . is it . . . in there? (*She indicates the hat-box.*)

MARY (*seeming in no hurry to exhibit the commission*). Yes . . . I have it quite safe . . . and it is very pretty too . . .

MISS MATTY (*with ill-concealed excitement*). Of course, there is no hurry . . . it is not of great importance . . . but . . . (*She adds with a rush.*) I hear that they are quite the thing in London and I believe it will be the first to be seen in Cranford . . .

MARY (*a little nervous now, crossing behind sofa*). Miss Matty . . . I do not wish you to be disappointed . . .

MISS MATTY. Oh, I am sure I shall not be. You have such very good taste . . . such an elegant taste indeed . . . Perhaps we might just look at it . . .