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DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers, 18 Ann St., N. Y.

SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS

An Original Comedy in Two Scenes

BY
HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH

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SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS.

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CHARACTERS

ANNETTE JAQUES *Alias, Comtesse de la Valette*
 MRS. CHARLIE CHICK *An American Tourist*
 MISS ANGELINA CHICK } *Her Daughters*
 MISS THEODOSIA CHICK }
 SUSANNE *Femme de Chambre*

TIME.—The Present.

PLACE.—Paris.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—About forty-five minutes.

COSTUMES

ANNETTE JAQUES. In Scene I., handsome, stylish outdoor costume. In Scene II., elaborate dinner costume; necklace; handsome opera cloak.

MRS. CHICK and DAUGHTERS. In Scene I., neat house dresses. In Scene II., evening costume.

SUSANNE. Neatly fitting print dress, skirt rather short, small white apron, white lace cap.

PROPERTIES

In addition to the articles mentioned in the description of each scene, the trunk should contain opilies, silver dishes, sofa cushions, a Roman blanket, a small knitted shawl, a large plaid shawl, an umbrella and a table-cover. A book and a Japanese folding screen for THEODOSIA. A letter; a round tin bathtub; a tray and dishes; a hot-water bottle; a dish of fish; a large milliner's box containing a dress-waist, low in the neck and short sleeves. A pair of white kid gloves for ANNETTE.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

R. is right hand; L., left hand of the stage, as seen by a performer facing the audience.

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SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS.



SCENE I.

SCENE.—*Bedroom in Paris pension, somewhat shabbily furnished. At right back corner a cot bed, not made up. At back centre a toilet table draped in white muslin, with mirror and toilet articles on it. At side of left centre a bureau. In centre a moderately large round table; upon it a book and a call-bell. Trunk at foot of cot. Four straight-back chairs. Entrances back and left side. THEODOSIA discovered sitting at table, elbows on table and chin in hands, reading.*

THEODOSIA (*turning page and reading*). "Another popular and interesting day's excursion from Naples is—" (*Closes book, keeping place with finger.*) How I should love to make that excursion! That and a thousand others! Baedeker has such a charming way of putting things. He may not be ranked with Thackeray and all those literary standards, but I'm sure he's a classic. Anyhow, his work will live in posterity, and that is more than can be said about most of to-day's popular writers. (*Opens book again.*) He comes so clearly to the point, too. See what he says about Rome. (*Turns pages and reads.*) "Ah, Rome! Rome! how my artistic soul pants for your antiquities! I long to see your Ship of State standing in majestic ruins on the Palatine Hill!" (*Speaks.*) Oh, why can't mamma give up trying to get into foreign society, and travel? *That* is what we came abroad for. But Angelina got acquainted with that funny Countess who kept the cab driver from overcharging us, and who has "taken us up." So we've bought some fine clothes and must get into Parisian society!

ENTER SUSANNE, *back, with letter.* THEO. *takes letter indifferently, still reading book. Then she glances at it and jumps up excitedly, knocking book on floor.* SUSANNE *picks up book, puts it on table, then crosses to corner and proceeds to make up the bed.*

THEO. (*excitedly, examining letter*). A coronet! It must be a letter from the Countess! I don't think much of her handwriting. Looks like a servant girl's. And *ugh!* (*sniffing it*). What awfully strong scent she uses! Ugh! Musk! Well, let's see what she says. (*Starts to open letter, then stops.*) Oh, it's addressed to momma. Well, that's proper enough. Now to have the momentous question settled of whether the Countess will take supper with us to-night!

[EXIT THEODOSIA, L.

SUSANNE (*making bed*). Eet ees de queer visitor we have now at de pension, *je crois bien*. De ladies dey arrive. Dey are cheerful, amiable; dey want to stay two, t'ree—dey know not how many day. Long enough to buy de gowns. T'ree day in Paris for to buy clothes! Ha! ha! Dey buy dem ready-made at de shop, *peut être*. Eh, *bien!* Yet dey remain. Dey have plenty of *monnaie*, but dey know not how to spend it. No visitor, no leetle dinner, no *petit excursion*. Dey go nowhere, dey know no *personne*. Den, all at once, dis talk of a *Comtesse*. What *Comtesse?* Where she live? Who ees she? She promise to introduce dem into de *grand monde* of Paris! Ha! ha! Dere is more *Comtesses* in de city of Paris dan ees recorded in de books! (*Smooths down bed wearily.*) Ah, I am so overwork! Eet ees already late in de afternoon an' I have but jus' feenish de young ladies' room. (*Looks about.*) *Voilà*, eet ees done. Ah, no. I have not return de young ladies' bath—de tub. I go for eet.

[EXIT SUSANNE, *back*. ENTER MRS. CHICK, ANGELINA and THEO., *side*. MRS. CHICK holds open letter, while a daughter clings to each arm, reading over her shoulder. All three advance front, reading aloud.

MRS. CHICK }
ANGELINA } (*together, reading letter*). "My dear Madame
THEO. } *Chic*: It gif me much plaisir to dine wit'
you dis night. I shall arrive on de hour. Until then, *ma chère, au revoir. Je suis toute à vous*, Annette, Comtesse de la Valette." (*They repeat slowly, with great unction.*) Comtesse de la Valette!

ANG. (*rapturously*). So she is really coming! Oh, mom, how perfect! A *Countess* to dinner! (*Embraces MRS. CHICK.*)

THEO. (*in matter-of-fact tone*). To supper, you mean. And a jolly poor one in a lamp-smelling dining-room.

MRS. C. (*with dignity*). I shall order special dishes. The

landlady will take pains when she knows I am willing to pay for it.

THEO. (*with ironic cheerfulness*). And the light is so dim that the Countess won't observe the grease spots on the table-cloth.

ANG. (*crossly*). Theodosia, don't be so vulgar.

THEO. (*innocently*). But, Angie, I did not put the grease spots there! It isn't *my* fault. Our predecessors—

ANG. *Ugh!* Do stop it! But, mamma, we really can't have the Countess to dine.

MRS. C. (*who has been re-reading note and mouthing the word "Countess" delightedly*). Eh! What's that? Not have the Countess to dine! Why, she's the key to our road into society!

THEO. (*giggling*). You don't lock *roads*, mom. Call it puzzle.

ANG. (*frowning*). If you would only let me finish my sentence! We can't have the Countess to dine in the public dining-room. It would not be proper.

MRS. C. (*amazed*). Not *proper!*

ANG. Not the thing. Not—not—

THEO. (*sotto voce*). Not *Chick*, perhaps?

ANG. (*frowning*). Puns are *so* common, Theodosia. But it *would not* be "*chic*," so there. I've been reading up on etiquette and things, and nice people—the people, you know—always seem to have their own private apartment. They dine in their own *salon* (*pronounced here "saloon"*).

MRS. C. (*aghast*). Their own saloon! Angelina, I am *shocked!* (*Sinks into chair, but straightens at once.*) Ouch! These uncomfortable chairs! I wish I had brought a rocker from home.

ANG. You don't understand. *Salon* (*corrects herself hurriedly*), I mean *salong*, is the French for drawing-room.

THEO. Parlor, mamma.

ANG. People take a whole apartment, you see. Enough bedrooms to go round, and their own parlor. Then when people come to dine with them—

THEO. Or sup!

ANG. Why, they have their meal served up there.

MRS. C. (*much impressed*). Well, I want to know!

ANG. (*positively*). It's *common* to dine in the public room. Why, mamma, imagine a *Countess* in that dining-room!

MRS. C. (*curtly*). It may be a little dingy, but I found it good enough for me. The sights and smells never took *my* appetite away. And (*settling herself squarely upon her chair*) I guess a free-born American citizen is as good as a French Countess! My land!

THEO. Bravo, mom! Hurrah! (*She marches about stage pretending to wave a flag and singing: "Yankee Doodle went to town, riding on a pony. Stuck a feather in his crown—"* Speaks.) But what are you going to do about it, Angie? You've asked the Countess, she's coming, and we haven't any private parlor—with a capital P or without.

ANG. (*crossly*). I wish we'd gone to a decent hotel to begin with! It's silly and stupid to be shut off in this shabby old hole when we can afford to stay at the Continental.

MRS. C. (*beginning to sob*). But you *told* me to come here! You said it was *vulgar* to go to big, flashy hotels. Boo-hoo! My land! I *like* the gay people and red plush seats. It's much more interesting to be around where there's bright lights and things going on! Boo-hoo!

THEO. For the land's sake, don't you two get to quarrelling! What are we going to do with this Countess that's coming? We've *got* to impress her with our importance, if we expect her to introduce us into the best society.

ANG. I've got a plan, if you'll only agree.

MRS. C. (*drying her eyes*). I'm sure we're as good as the next one. I have a right to be acquainted with *any one*, even if she *has* got a tail to her name.

THEO. (*trying to be funny*). Or a tale in her life, by the "Duchess."

ANG. My plan is to have our dinner in here.

MRS. C. } (*together, in astonishment*). *In here!* A dinner

THEO. } *in a bedroom!*

ANG. (*quickly*). The Countess need not know that it's a bedroom. We can arrange things nicely. I've thought it all out. We'll just make the bed into a couch with a cover and some cushions—

THEO. (*entering into idea*). Yes, and put another cover over the dressing-table, and screen off the trunk—

MRS. C. (*looking about room*). How about the bureau?

ANG. (*taken aback*). That? Why, that—

THEO. (*triumphantly*). Why, *that* can be the *sideboard!* Come on, Angie, let's get to work. Oh, I'm so glad now that we bought all that brocade and trash!

[*She runs to trunk, opens it and pulls out a brocaded table-cover. She brushes things pell-mell off the dressing-table, removes muslin drapery and covers it with brocade. ANGELINA takes handsome lace doilies and silver dishes out of trunk, pushes articles on bureau into top drawer and sets doilies and dishes on it, MRS. CHICK helping.*

THEO. (*gathering up discarded toilet articles*). I'll fetch the screen out of your room, mom. Angie, the so-called Roman blanket that you bought at the *Bon Marché* will be just the thing to put over the bed.

[EXIT THEO.]

MRS. C. (*lifting Roman blanket out of trunk*). We can eat off the centre table. I'm glad it's a round one. What shall we have for supper?

ANG. (*taking embroidered sofa-cushions out of trunk and helping MRS. C. to cover and arrange bed to resemble couch*). Oh, I don't know. A nice little dinner of four or five courses. Of course, we must have wine.

THEO. (*re-entering, L., carrying Japanese screen*). Of course we must—champagne.

MRS. C. (*helping THEO. to place screen around trunk*). Dear me, that sounds very wicked!

ANG. (*superiorly*). Nonsense! The Countess will expect nothing less. Let us order things at once. It's almost time to dress. (*Rings bell*.) You will have to give Susanne a big fee for waiting on us, mom. It's outside her regular work.

THEO. (*bending over open trunk*). Oh, mom! Here is that piece of drawn work you bought yesterday. Let's use it for a table-cloth over Angelina's square of pink felt, a sort of "Pink Tea" effect!

ANG. The very thing! I'll go for the felt at once.

[EXIT ANGELINA, L. ENTER SUSANNE, *back, with large box*.]

SUS. (*coming forward*). A package for the Madame.

[SUSANNE *gives* THEO. *the box*. EXIT, *back*.]

THEO. (*taking box*). It's your new waist, mom.

ANG. (*entering L.*). Oh, I'm so glad! It has come just in time to wear to-night.

MRS. C. (*opening box and holding up décolleté waist*). Wear to-night. But it isn't finished.

ANG. } (*together, examining waist*). Not finished! Why,
THEO. { what is left out?

MRS. C. (*spreading out waist*). Why, the neck and sleeves, to be sure!

[THEO. and ANGELINA *laugh*.]

ANG. But it's *meant* to be that way, mamma. It is *décolleté*; for evening wear, you know.

THEO. Angie and I each have them, too.

MRS. C. (*indignantly*). I wear that? I—I—why, it wouldn't be *proper*!

ANG. (*stiffly*). It wouldn't be proper *not* to wear it at a dinner party.

MRS. C. Now, you need not tell me—

SUS. (*in doorway at back*). *Madame la Comtesse de la Valette!*

MRS. C. (*thrusting waist into box, aside to ANGELINA*). Hide that improper waist, quick!

ANG. (*laying box, open, on chair, aside to MRS. CHICK*). Nonsense! I shall show it to the Countess. She will think it lovely. Don't let her see that you are not *used* to wearing it.

ENTER ANNETTE *at back, dressed in handsome, stylish outdoor costume*. ANGELINA and THEO. *greet her effusively*.

MRS. C. (*aside, raising her hands*). *Used* to wearing it! For the land's sake!

ANNETTE (*advancing with hands outstretched*). *Ma chère, Madame!* Eet ees such a joy to see you! Eet gif me what you call—ah—a heart-throb to see all my so dear friends again, eh? (*She looks around at them all beamingly, then advances and kisses MRS. CHICK upon each cheek.*) *Non, non, merci!* (*as ANGELINA and THEO. each offer her a chair*). I haf stop in for but one leetle moment to gif you a word of greeting. I pass by here on my way home from a *musicale chez la Duchesse de la Reine* (*looks about her, aside*). Eet ees a privat salon! I did not know dey haf dat. *Eh, bien!* Dey are all right. I help dem into de *grand monde*, an' (*making gesture as though lifting something*) dey tak' me wit' dem. Ah, de *monnaie*, de *monnaie!* Eet ees dat which count! (*Clasps her hands.*)

[MRS. CHICK, ANGELINA and THEO. *talk aside, exchanging appreciative nods.*]

ANG. (*aside to MRS. CHICK and THEO.*). She is admiring the room.

THEO. (*aside to MRS. CHICK and ANGELINA*). She is taken in completely.

MRS. C. (*aside to ANGELINA and THEO.*). I wish we had had time to tidy up the mess that box has made.

ANN. (*turning*). I am just' admire your so preety leetle room, eh? Eet ees—ah—w'at you call sweetly preety, eh? Eet ees so *simple*, in such good—ah—good taste. (*Seats herself.*) De *maison* I haf jus' quit was so beeg, so decorate, so—so over-

whelming, eh? *De musique?* Ah, good, good, but (*shrugging her shoulders languidly*) one hears eet so of-ten. Ah! M. Jean Dereski an' (*waving her hand*) two, t'ree oders.

MRS. C. (*much impressed*). I want to know!

ANG. } (*together*). Oh, tell us about it! Who was there?

THEO. } Any Princesses?

ANN. (*aside*). I had de honair to peek up de *mouchoir* of a *Princesse* in de dressing-room while waiting for my *maitresse*. (*Aloud, indifferently*.) Ah, yes! *Princesse Blanche* an' her suite were dere. Also de *Grande Duchesse de*— But ah! (*rising quickly*) I mus' remain no longer now. I weel tell you all at de dinner, if I may? You surely—*want me, eh?* (*Looks from one to the other coquettishly*.)

MRS. C. } (*together, curtseying*). We are so honored, Coun-

ANG. }

THEO. }

tess!

ENTER SUSANNE *at back with round tin bath tub*. THEO and ANGELINA *wave her away frantically*. MRS. CHICK *tries to engage ANNETT's attention*. SUSANNE *stands looking at them in surprise*.

MRS. C. (*flustered, but trying to divert ANNETTE*). What a becoming hat you have on Mrs.—I mean *Countess!* And such a pretty (*looks around and sees SUSANNE still standing centre, back, with tub*)—oh, dear! *why don't she take it out?*

[ANNETTE *looks around in wonder*.

ANG. } (*together, angrily, to SUSANNE*). Take it away, I tell

THEO. } you!

SUS. (*advancing front with tub*). Tak' eet away? But *why?* Ees eet not de young lady's bath? In de morning she weel wish eet, eet weel not be here. She weel ring violent—*br-r-r-r-r!* I weel be blame! (*Sets down tub*.) No, I weel not tak' eet away! (*Aside*.) *I haf seen dat Comtesse somewhere in a position where she could not be a Comtesse*. What does eet mean?

ANG. }

THEO. }

(*together, angrily, to SUSANNE*). Oh, you *stupid!*

[*They catch up the tub between them and run with it out L., SUSANNE looking after them in astonishment*.

MRS. C. (*with dignity*). Susanne, surely you know that we do not want bath tubs in the parl—drawing-room.

SUS. (*puzzled, looking about*). In ze drawing-room? But, Madame—

MRS. C. (*quickly*). You may go.

SUS. (*aside*). *Je ne comprends pas!* Eet ees very queer—very mysterious. *Where* was dat drawing-room?

[EXIT SUSANNE, *back*. *Re-enter* ANGELINA and THEO.,
L., *flushed and out of breath*.

ANN. (*aside*). Eet ees very odd, these behavior. I wonder—

ANG. Susanne seems to think that she can put a bath tub anywhere with impunity.

THEO. (*giggling*). She must have waited on English people.

MRS. C. I am *so* mortified, Countess.

ANN. Ah, *chère, Madame*, do not be embarrass before so—so ole a frien' as me, eh? (*Kisses her on both cheeks.*) *Adieu, mes chères.* (*Kissing* ANGELINA and THEO.) In one hour I return—dat ees right, eh?

ANG. }
THEO. } (*together*). Yes, Countess, we dine at seven.

ANG. If that hour suits you.

THEO. We can easily put it off.

MRS. C. (*aside*). If they do I shall starve! We always have supper at six at home.

ANN. (*graciously*). Ah, no. Eet ees *my* hour to dine; a very pop-u-lar hour in de high *société*, *n'est ce pas?* (*Aside.*) I shall be much rush to dress my lady, wait on her to her carriage, an' den borrow enough of her wardrobe to come here in de correct *toilette!* (*Aloud, turning at door.*) Ah—eef I am a leetle—ah—late, you weel pardon, eh? I haf so many duties—ah—*of State!*

MRS. C. }
ANG. } (*together, curtseying*). We are at your disposition,
THEO. } *Countess!*

[EXIT ANNETTE *at back*.

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.

SCENE.—*Same as first. A little more has been done to change the aspect from bedroom to drawing-room. Two decanters stand on the improvised sideboard. The centre table is spread with a white cloth and set with glass and silver, laid for four. A large bowl of roses in middle.*

ENTER SUSANNE *with plate of rolls, which she places, one at each cover on table.*

Sus. (*arranging table*). I wis' dat I know where I haf seen dat *Comtesse!* (*Clasps her hands suddenly.*) *Voila!* I haf eet! (*Puts one hand to her forehead.*) *Oui, oui!* Eet ees de same! W'en I was maid to Madame Hough dere was a young maid to one of de house-party ladies—Annette Jaques, who wait on Madame Ballaque. She haf aspirations—social aspirations. (*Words pronounced slowly and with French pronunciation.*) Eet ees she—de very same! She t'ink she rise by flattering an' using dese innocent ladies, who haf also de disease of social aspiration. *Monnaie* an' a name—dose are need. Dey haf de *monnaie*. Annette assume de name. *Voila!* But eet s'all not happen so! Dese ladies are kin', seemple, *ingénues!* I betray de *Comtesse!* *Voila!*

[EXIT SUSANNE, *back*. ENTER ANGELINA and THEO., *side, in evening dress.*

ANG. (*surveying the room*). Doesn't everything look nice?

THEO. Awfully nice. But, Angie, have you a ten-franc piece handy? The boy is waiting to be paid for the flowers.

ANG. (*arranging sideboard*). Get it from momma.

THEO. I don't want to interrupt her dressing. Don't be stingy.

ANG. (*indignantly*). I'm *not* stingy. But why don't you pay him yourself?

THEO. Haven't got it. Fact is (*reluctantly*), I lent fifty francs to the Countess. But you had a lot this morning.

ANG. (*starting*). Lent it to the Countess! Why, so did I. Lent her all I had.

[*They look at each other a moment.*

ANG. It's odd. (*Quickly.*) But she had very good reasons for asking.

THEO. Yes, she had very good reasons. But (*uneasily*) do you think she's—all *right?*

ANG. (*positively*). Of course. Remember the invitation to the Baroness Brun's ball that she sent us?

THEO. (*doubtfully*). I know, but—

[*Sounds without of breaking glass and falling articles.*

ENTER MRS. CHICK *precipitately, dressed in handsome evening gown. She is flushed and dishevelled. Pauses in centre.*

MRS. C. (*dramatically*). *Look at me!* Do you think I am

going to sit down to my supper *like this?* Well, I *won't*. So there!

[*She seats herself determinedly, centre front, and folds her arms.*]

ANG. } (*together, in dismay*). Oh, mamma, you'll spoil *every-*
THEO. } *thing.*

MRS. C. (*drily*). I shan't be spoiling my self-respect.

ANG. (*appeasingly*). Well, then, mom, wear a shawl or a scarf of some sort over your shoulders. You can say you have a cold, or make some excuse. Only *don't* change.

THEO. No, don't, dear. It would be such a bother. (*Aside to ANGELINA*). Her arms will show bare under the shawl, and the Countess will know she's correctly dressed underneath.

ANG. (*aside to THEO.*). Even if she is covered up. I'll lend her my hand-painted liberty scarf.

[EXEUNT ANGELINA and THEO.]

MRS. C. (*alone*). Well, I might put on a shawl. It would be a nuisance to change my clothes again, and I'm too hungry for much exertion. (*Rises.*) But it must be a *big* shawl.

[*She goes behind screen, which is so arranged about trunk as to permit audicue to see any one standing behind it, and opening trunk, bends over and searches among its contents. Door at back opens softly and ANNETTE enters, dressed magnificently, a handsome opera cloak half concealing her elaborate dinner toilet. She sweeps down centre with a grand air. Door slams to loudly. ANNETTE starts and looks back.*]

ANN. (*indignantly*). That insolent Susanne! She haf not even announce me. Ees eet possible that I am recognize? Does she know me beneath de—ah—rouge an' de *title*? But she would not betray me! Ah, *non, non!* Not w'en my troubles are so heap up an' de safety ees in sight. Madame Ballaque, my *mâitresse*, haf learn dat I sometime—ah—borrow, eh?—her clothes. Eef I do eet again, she say, she gif me warning. To-night, by ill-luck, she dine in dis very *pension*. *Et regardez-moi!* Eef she *see* me, oh! my *foie-gras* ees cook, as de *American* say. Stay, de young ladies haf not come down. Dey not know eef I haf arrive. I t'ink I slip out sof'ly an' see w'ere eet ees dat my *mâitresse* dine. Eet ees well to know w'ere de danger sleep, eh? I return in one leetle moment.

[EXIT ANNETTE, *back*. MRS. CHICK lifts small knitted

shawl from trunk and comes from behind screen. Draping shawl around her shoulders, she crosses and looks at herself in bureau mirror.

MRS. C. (*screaming*). Oh, it isn't half big enough!

[*She runs behind screen again, dropping shawl on chair just in front of screen. Door opens at back. Pause. SUSANNE and ANNETTE seen in background, arguing. Then:—*

SUS. (*sullenly, in loud voice*). Madame la Comtesse de la Valette.

[ANNETTE enters with magnificent air. SUSANNE shakes her fist from doorway. EXIT SUSANNE.

MRS. C. (*behind screen, in dismay*). For the land's sake! How am I to get out?

ANN. (*looking about in surprise*). Why, de young ladies are not yet here. Ees eet possible dat I am airly, eh?

[MRS. CHICK *digs frantically in trunk.*

MRS. C. (*excitedly*). Oh, where is that plaid shawl? I am sure I put it in here. (*Turns.*) Well, that little one would be better than nothing.

[*She tries to reach the shawl on chair in front of screen. ANNETTE sees bare arm protruding around screen and screams. MRS. CHICK draws back her arm hurriedly. She takes umbrella out of trunk and tries to reach shawl with that.*

ANN. (*aside*). Ees some one dressing behin' dat screen? Haf I come to de wrong room? (*Looks about her.*) Mais, non, eet ees de same. W'at does eet mean? Dat arm—dat screen? Am I deceive? Ees eet dat dey but *preten' de grandes dames avec l'argent?*

MRS. C. (*behind screen*). Pshaw! I can't reach it. Well, I can't appear this way.

[*She puts aside umbrella and searches in trunk again.*

ANN. (*starting and listening*). Eh? I t'ought I hear some one speak. Ah! (*She turns quickly as ANGELINA enters from L., hastily.*)

ANG. (*greeting ANNETTE*). Oh, my dear, dear Countess, here alone! I hope we've not kept you waiting. I thought mamma was in here.

MRS. C. (*behind screen, aside*). And so she is!

THEO. (*running in L., not seeing ANNETTE*). Oh, Angie, where's momma? She's not in her room. Do you suppose that low-necked dress— Oh! (*Sees ANNETTE.*) I beg your pardon. How de do? (*Greets ANNETTE.*)

ANG. (*calmly*). I dare say momma's giving some last orders. Let me help you remove your cloak, Countess.

MRS. C. (*peeping around screen*). Ahem! ahem!

[THEO. *looks up and sees her mother, who beckons.*

THEO. *goes behind screen. There ensues a vigorous pantomime, MRS. CHICK explaining her search for a larger shawl. THEO. tries to persuade her to come out as she is. MRS. CHICK shakes her head. THEO. pulls her arm out. MRS. CHICK draws back and searches trunk again. Meanwhile ANGELINA helps Countess off with cloak. ANNETTE wears superb evening gown, décolleté, trained, and a necklace.*

ANN. (*arranging her train*). I dress hurriedly. Eef anyt'ing ees amees you weel pardon eet? I haf so many demands on my time! (*Aside, eyeing screen.*) Dere ees some one behin' dat screen! W'at does eet mean? Can dere be deceitfulness here? Eet ees very mysterious.

ANG. You must be very gay, Countess. I have heard that the "smart set" in Paris give grand entertainments.

ANN. (*clasping her hands rapturously*). Ah, wait until you haf atten' some of dem! *La Baronne Brun; Comtesse de Faux-Pas; la Duchesse de la Keine; la Princesse Niente*—an Italian Princess of great *beauté*, who ees quite the—the—what you call eet?—*fury*, in Paris.

ANG. Quite the rage.

ANN. (*shrugging her shoulders*). *Bien*, rage, fury; dey are de same in de *dictionnaire*. I haf all dose ladies on my lis'. You weel haf introduction to dem all. (*Aside.*) After I leaf *Madame's* service an' become your distinguish' gues'.

THEO. (*peeping around screen*). Ahem! ahem!

[ANGELINA *looks. THEO. beckons. ANGELINA shakes her head. THEO. beckons again. ANNETTE looks up suddenly from fastening her glove.*

ANN. (*surprised*). *Eh, bien?*

[THEO. *disappears, with a last imperative beckon.*

ANG. (*confused*). Oh—oh, I guess the—the *cakes* have come from the *patisserie*. *Theodosia* wants me to see if they are all right. Will you excuse me a moment, Countess?

[ANGELINA *goes behind screen.*

ANN. (*with a sigh of relief*). Ah, eet ees explain. De screen conceal a serving table. Eet was de maid I saw. *Eh, bien.*

THEO. (*sotto voce to ANGELINA*). Mom won't come out without a shawl on big enough to cover her.

[*They expostulate with MRS. CHICK.*

ANN. (*looking toward screen*). Ah, eet *mus'* be de cakes. Eet *mus'* be all right. Dey are too—too *naïve* to play trick about *monnaie*. *Non*, dey are truly reech, *je suis certain*. An' I haf everyt'ing plan. (*Takes letter from pocket.*) I fin' dis *lettre, écrite* by Madame Ballaque to introduce her "charming foreign frien's," but wit' *no names* of dose frien's. I gif eet to dese ladies as soon as Madame Ballaque leaf town. Dey mak' calls wit' eet. Dey go everyw'ere—no one question *de lettre d'introduction de Madame Ballaque!* I go wit' dem. I am not recognize. We are receive by all *de grande monde*. (*Spreads her arms.*) But ah! we stay not long in dis country, *non*. I persuade dem to return to *Amerique*. I go, too, as deir gues'. I lif upon deir bounty. I become a—a *lioness* in *société Americaine* because of dis leetle so powerful tail handle I haf attach, home-made, to my name. Ah!

MRS. C. (*behind screen, lifting large plaid shawl out of trunk*). There, I *knew* it was in here! (*She wraps the shawl, folded cornerwise, around her. It covers her completely to the waist.*)

ANG. (*horrified*). Oh, *momma*, it is disgraceful.

THEO. (*giggling*). It's hardly the garb of high society.

MRS. C. I don't care. It's respectable.

[*MRS. CHICK, enveloped in shawl with head and hands emerging, comes from behind screen, followed by ANGELINA and THEO.*

MRS. C. (*graciously, extending hand*). How de do, Countess. So sorry to keep you waiting.

ANN. (*regarding her odd costume with astonishment*). Ah, pray do not mention eet, *ma chère Madame Chick!* Eet ees not'ing—*rien du tout!* (*Kisses her on both cheeks, still regarding shawl curiously.*)

ANG. } (*together, approaching MRS. CHICK from behind, one*

THEO. } (*on each side*). *Momma* has caught such a bad cold. Isn't it too bad, when she has such a pretty dress on? (*They catch at shawl and pull it off, laughing.*)

MRS. C. (*screaming and huddling herself together*). Oh, girls, how dare you! I feel so—so—

THEO. (*quickly*). So chilly? Well, put it on again. The Countess will excuse you.

ANG. Shall I ring for dinner, momma? Countess, let us be seated. You sit there, please.

[*They gather about table. ANGELINA draws out for ANNETTE the chair facing bed. THEO. helps her mother sit opposite. MRS. CHICK rings bell on table. ANGELINA and THEO. seat themselves.*]

ENTER SUSANNE *at back, carrying tray with dishes.*

SUS. (*setting tray on sideboard and placing dish of fish in front of MRS. CHICK*). De Madame—lan'lady—say she haf rule' against de sairving of a meal in de bedroom unless illness ees present. But dis time—

ANG. (*quickly*). Susanne, fill the Countess's glass.

MRS. C. (*embarrassed, frowning at SUSANNE and turning her back on her*). Countess, may I give you some of this turbot? Susanne, offer the sauce to the Countess.

SUS. (*aside, sniffing*). Humph! *Comtesse*, indeed! (*She brings sauce from sideboard and passes it sullenly.*)

THEO. (*frowning at SUSANNE*). What a lovely necklace that is, Countess. Perfectly exquisite!

SUS. (*aside*). Eet ees Madame Ballaque's. I remember eet well at de house party.

[EXIT SUSANNE, *back.*]

ANG. (*unstopping a decanter*). Countess, let me fill your glass. Momma, will you have some claret?

[MRS. CHICK *starts to refuse. ANGELINA and THEO. frown and shake their heads. ANGELINA fills all glasses.*]

ANN. (*taking up glass*). Ah, I t'ank you. (*Sips. Aside, making wry face.*) *Vin ordinaire!* (*Aloud.*) W'at a delecticious flavor! At de musicale of de Duchesse dey haf de, oh! so atrocious punch. Eet ees a delight to remove de tas' of eet from my mout' wit' dis.

[*They eat. Door opens at back.*]

ENTER SUSANNE *with hot-water bottle. Crossing to couch, she quickly removes sofa-cushions and Roman blanket, turns down the bed and tucks hot-water bottle between the sheets. ANNETTE sees her, and sits with suspended fork, gazing at her in horror. MRS. CHICK, ANGELINA and THEO. see ANNETTE'S expression, endeavor to attract her attention, then turn to look. They are struck dumb with dismay for*

a moment, then rising, gesticulate wildly to SUSANNE. At length:—

MRS. C. }

ANG. }

THEO. }

(together, wildly, rising). Susanne! STOP IT!!!

SUS. (innocently, coming forward). Eh? Stop eet? *Mais, pourquoi?* Eet ees w'at I do every evening. De night ees col'. *Mademoiselle* weel be glad of de leetle hot bottle, eh?

[MRS. CHICK, ANGELINA, THEO. and SUSANNE talk aside.

ANN. (aside, tragically). Den dis ees a bedroom! I had *mes soupçons*. *Sacre-Bleu!* Dey are not reech! Dey haf not de *monnaie!* Dey preten'! Ah, I am los'!

MRS. C. (turning). Ah, pardon, my dear Countess. It is nothing. (Airily.) A mere nothing. Come, let us finish our dinner.

[EXIT SUSANNE, back, scowling.

ANG. } (together briskly, reseating themselves). Yes, a mere

THEO. } nothing! Countess, will you—

ANN. (severely). Not'ing? You call eet *not'ing?* (Slowly and dramatically.) You haf *deceive* me!

MRS. C. (dropping into chair). There, girls, I told you so!

ANG. } (together, rising and running to ANNETTE). Oh, don't

THEO. } take it that way!

ANG. We only meant it as a compliment.

THEO. We did not suppose Susanne would be so stupid.

ANN. (looking from one to the other). As a compliment? (French pronunciation.)

THEO. (hastily). Yes, of course. You see, Angie had been reading some sort of Society Notes, and thought it wouldn't be the thing to eat in the public dining-room—

ANG. (interrupting). And there are no private parlors here—

THEO. So we thought we'd better turn this bedroom into one until we could *move*.

MRS. C. (triumphantly). I knew we ought to have gone to a big, cheerful hotel, with music and six-course dinners.

THEO. But Angie thought them vulgar.

ANG. (turning up her nose). And flashy!

ANN. (relieved). Den eet was not because you could not afford a private *salon* dat you do—do *dis* (motioning to the exposed bed).

MRS. C. (bridling). Land's sake, no! What do you suppose?

THEO. (giggling). La! I guess ma could buy out this whole pension.

ANG. But I read so much about the elegant private hotels in Paris.

ANN. (*laughing*). *Eh, bien!* but zere you haf made one droll mistake! A hotel in French ees w'at you call a—a domicile, a home, eh?

ANG. (*confused*). Then——

SUS. (*opening door at back*). Annette Jaques!

[ANNETTE looks around involuntarily and screams. MRS. CHICK, ANGELINA and THEO. turn in astonishment.

MRS. C. What are you talking about. Susanne?

SUS. (*pointing to ANNETTE*). *She know.* I was talking to her. Ask her.

ANN. (*trying to appear indignant*). How dare you address me so, *fille de chambre?* (*To the others.*) Eet ees my name—Annette Jaques, *Comtesse de la Valette*—but she use eet wit'out de—de——

SUS. *De disguise.* Annette Jaques, your *maîtresse, Madame Ballaque*, ees below, awaiting your service.

MRS. C. }
ANG. } (*together*). What do you mean?
THEO. }

ANG. (*indignantly*). How dare you insult the Countess so?

THEO. (*astonished*). Are you out of your mind, Susanne?

MRS. C. (*sternly*). Explain yourself!

SUS. (*meeckly, but with suppressed triumph*). *Oui, Madame Annette Jaques* (*pointing to ANNETTE*), ees de lady's maid to Madame Ballaque.

MRS. C. (*screaming*). What? A lady's maid? A *Countess* a lady's maid!

SUS. (*curtseying*). A lady's maid, but *not* a *Comtesse, Madame*.

MRS. C. }
ANG. } (*together*). It is impossible!
THEO. }

SUS. (*pointing to ANNETTE*). Ask her. *She weel not deny eet.*

[*They all turn to ANNETTE, who shrinks away and hangs her head guiltily. Tableau.*]

ANG. (*reproachfully*). Then you *have* deceived us?

THEO. (*disappointedly*). And you can't take us to those grand palaces?

MRS. C. (*raising her hands*). Well, I want to know!

ANN. (*wringing her hands in distress*). Oh, I weel explain! Eet can all be explain, ladies, eef you weel lis-ten. I confess. I repent. But I can still tak' you to dose house eef you accep' my plan.

[*She motions them to come to her, pointing SUSANNE to*

the door. MRS. CHICK, ANGELINA and THEO group themselves about her hesitatingly.

SUS. (*triumphantly, at door*). She cannot explain away de *fac's!*

[EXIT SUSANNE, *back*.

ANN. (*frankly*). I am a lady's maid. But I, too, have *les ambitions*. (*Takes letter from her pocket.*) Dis leetle *lettre*, which speak no name, weel introduce you to de bes' *société* here in Paris. I accompanay you as your distinguish' gues'. I he'p you wit' de French tongue, eh? You haf much *plaisaire*. An' w'en you go back to America, a French *Comtesse* goes wit' you! Eh? W'at a—a *triumph!*

MRS. C. (*shocked*). How deceitful! You had better leave us at *once!*

ANG. (*scornfully*). Yes, go back to your *mistress*, Annette Jaques!

THEO. And practise your theatricals—somewhere else.

ANN. (*in dismay*). W'at? You t'row me off? Ah, *non, Madame!* Ah, *mesdemoiselles!* (*Appealing from one to the other, who turn their backs.*) Ah, haf peety! I meant de bes'. I meant to do you *plaisaire*. My lady, she haf gif me warning. I shall be *desolée*. *Sans sous!* Ah, Madame, *chère Madame*, tak' me! Haf peety! (*She throws herself on knees before MRS. C.*)

MRS. C. (*aside*). Oh! A waiting-maid, and I called her a Countess! I, a free-born American citizen, *looked up to her!* (*Raises her hands in protesting horror.*)

ANG. (*regarding kneeling figure*). She might do as a lady's maid, momma. It would make a good impression at a big hotel to have a neat maid.

ANN. (*turning on her knees to ANGELINA*). Ah, tak' me anyway—as maid eef not frien'. I sairve you well.

THEO. (*giggling*). She might serve as a sort of advertisement of our respectability.

ANN. (*turning on her knees to THEO.*). Ah, *mademoiselle*, I sairve you mos' respec'able.

MRS. C. Annette Jaques, stop crawling on your knees. Stand up!

ANN. (*rising, aside*). She call me Annette! She take me, goot! (*To MRS. CHICK.*) Ees eet agree? Ah, a million t'anks! (*Starts to embrace MRS. CHICK, who draws back indignantly.*) Ah! (*Curtseying.*) *Pardon, Madame!* (*Curtseying again.*) I weel not offend again. (*Aside.*) De bargain ees goot, *malgré*

la découverte! Dey weel pay me two, t'ree times de wage Madame Ballaque gif. Dey are *Americains*. *Eh, bien*, dey are reech, *alors*.

MRS. C. You miserable woman! I need neither your thanks nor yourself. How dare you suppose that I would force my way into society by a stolen letter of recommendation! Go! Get out of my sight this moment. (*Points to door.*)

ANN. (*goes half-way toward the door, then turns, laughing*). Ha! ha! You varyy funny ol' woman! De two droll demoiselles! Oh, how I fool dem! (*Mimics.*) "De de-ar *Comtesse*." I kees dem. Ha! ha! I tell ev'ry one! How ev'rybody weel laugh! Dey—

SUS. (*opening door at back*). Madame Ballaque eenseest you go to her queeck. She is fury! An' w'en she sees you in dat costume she hav' you arrest'.

[EXIT *with* ANNETTE.]

MRS. C. Girls, pack up everything. We go at once to the "Continental." To-morrow we leave Paris. I think we have all had enough of

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

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ACT III.—HOME AGAIN. Preparing for festivities.—The doctor mesmerizes the darkey, with startling results.—Mrs. Potter to the rescue.—Kate's awakening to love and duty.—"Angels in dress coats."—An unexpected reckoning.—"Release that lady!"—A broken troth and a dissolved partnership.—The working-man's friend.—Bellows has another scare.—"My new partner, Mr. Cartwright, vice Mr. Ferguson, resigned."—The end of the strike.—Happy denouement.

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