

walked round her in a solemn and awestruck silence ; not so much afraid of her, as of Mrs. Pyke and Dunham, whose eyes were upon them.

Pyke, in her thin tremulous voice, expressed her pleasure and admiration ; but the housemaids knew their place too well to speak at all. They made up for this discretion by imparting their opinions afterwards to each other, with the utmost freedom.

"Nothing but a plain black evening dress, hardly even cut low to speak of—an old-fashioned grenadine!" said one disappointed maiden.

"The young ladies in my last place wore the same every night of their lives, and we never took any notice. But I suppose that old Dunham thinks anything is a treat to us," said another.

"Poor thing," said the youngest housemaid. "She's pretty, isn't she, with her neck and arms so white, and her eyes and hair so dark?"

"She has a lovely colour," the first housemaid agreed ; "but she's no way with her, not a bit. Just a simple little thing! Any one could tell she came out of the country and never been nowhere nor seen nobody."

"You take care what you say, Eliza ; for Mr. Hewitt told William it's his belief she'll be Duchess of Monaghan one of these days."

"I'm sure I hope she will, then," said the youngest housemaid sympathetically ; "for she always looks kind and gentle at me as if she'd speak if she dared. But that Dunham's got her under her thumb. I wouldn't be ordered about in my own brother's house, if I was in her place ; no, I wouldn't."

Meanwhile Jeanne—unconscious of the calmness with which her person, and the possibilities of her future, were being discussed by the younger inmates of the household—took her place on the hearthrug of the morning-room, and anxiously awaited her expected guests.

Mr. and Mrs. Hogg-Watson were the first to arrive,