

into the fire before presenting it to a guest; but Jeanne reflected that great ladies cannot be expected to understand such details, and decided—as she ate and drank, in the utmost alarm, everything that was set before her—that the tales she had heard of the carelessness of servants in large houses must be only too true.

Having finished her tea, and scorched the side of her face next the roaring log-fire to a perfectly crimson hue, she was invited to inspect her room, and the Duchess led her thither herself, with great kindness of manner, talking all the time in her loud authoritative gabble, and never waiting for an answer, a habit which occasionally relieved her hearers of embarrassment, for her questions were often inconvenient.

“So you live all by yourself in your great house. You must be very dull. But I daresay you have plenty of visitors——” Here Jeanne would fain have told her that the Duke of Monaghan was her only visitor, but the Duchess gave her no time, and she was too frightened to interrupt. “It was always on my conscience that I never called upon your aunt, as *my* dear Duke wished me to do”—thus she alluded to her departed husband—“but you know my son’s accident, which happened there, made me declare I would never enter that house again. So you mustn’t think it unfriendly if I never do. The resolution was taken, you see, before you were born or thought of. Why, you can’t be twenty.” Jeanne tried to interpolate a correct statement of her age, but the Duchess had flown to another subject, as her custom was, pursuing her own train of thought undisturbed. “I suppose you have a companion. Companions are great bores. I had one for a time, but she had neuralgia so badly I was glad to see the last of her. It was quite depressing” (here the Duchess laughed heartily) “whenever I wanted her I was always told she had just taken antipyrin. And of course you know one must not stir till the effects of that have passed off. So bad for the heart. I hope you never drug yourself. However, I am told every one does nowadays. I never touch