

you are informed that the latter was at least half-a-head shorter than a woman of medium height.

On the little finger of her right hand she wore a heavy seal ring of gold. If you had known her well enough to hold her hand — to the light, I mean, — you would have been able to decipher the markings of a crest, notwithstanding the fact that age had all but obliterated the lines.

Dinner was formal only in the manner in which it was served. Behind the chair of the Marchioness, Moody posed loftily when not otherwise employed. A critical observer would have taken note of the threadbare condition of his coat, especially at the elbows, and the somewhat snug way in which it adhered to him, fore and aft. Indeed, there was an ever-present peril in its snugness. He was painfully deliberate and detached.

From time to time, a second footman, addressed as McFaddan, paused back of Lady Jane. His chin was not quite so high in the air as Moody's; the higher he raised it the less it looked like a chin. McFaddan, you would remark, carried a great deal of weight above the hips. The ancient butler, Cricklewick, decanted the wine, lifted his right eyebrow for the benefit of Moody, the left in directing McFaddan, and cringed slightly with each trip upward of the dumb-waiter.

The Marchioness and Lady Jane were in a gay mood despite the studied solemnity of the three servants. As dinner has no connection with this narrative except to introduce an effect of opulence, we will hurry through with it and allow Moody and McFaddan to draw back the chairs on a signal transmitted by Cricklewick, and return to the drawing-room with the ladies.