

my belief she'd have wished it. Though how that velvet-pile carpet will stand cigarette ash I can't tell. I remember his poor father used to drop it about long ago."

"Did he indeed? But Louis does not smoke."

"That's not likely by this time, ma'am. Whatever he may have done when he left home," said Dunham, in a pitying voice, as though she thought cigarette-smoking must be hereditary.

"No, I assure you he is not a smoker. He would have told me if he had become one."

"Gentlemen don't tell their sisters everything, ma'am, if you'll excuse me," said Dunham.

Jeanne gave up the attempt to convince the old woman that Louis was the brilliant exception who proved this rule. But about the room she remained firm. Louis must not take Aunt Caroline's room. He would not like it at all. He was not used to a large room, and would think it too luxurious for a soldier.

"Then if Pyke and me is to have the best bedroom floor all to ourselves," said Dunham severely, "which I can't think becoming 'm, but far be it from me to say so—then there's nothing left but the nurseries, what have never been used since we came here."

Jeanne mounted the echoing stone-staircase almost eagerly, to explore the upper floor, in company with her conductress.

"The stairs are very steep," she said, pausing before the little white gate at the top in order to allow Mrs. Dunham to recover breath. "I suppose long ago, when the house was built, they put this gate here to prevent the children falling down the stairs?"

"They put it up too late by all accounts, Miss Jane," said Dunham. "This house belonged to poor Miss Marney's cousin, the late Duke of Monaghan. She bought it from him over twenty years ago; and they put up the gate after the little heir fell down this flight of stairs, and was carried into her Grace's room—for dead."