

MISS TESMAN: Well let them have their sleep out. But let us see that they get a good breath of the fresh air.

She goes to the glass door and throws it open.

BERTA: *(Beside the table, at a loss what to do with the bouquet in her hand.)* I declare there isn't a bit of room left.

She places it on the piano.

MISS TESMAN: So you've got a new mistress now, my dear Berta. Heaven knows how it has pained me to part with you.

BERTA: *(On the point of weeping.)* And do you think it wasn't hard for me, too, Miss? After all the blessed years I've been with you and Miss Rina.¹

MISS TESMAN: We must make the best of it, Berta. George can't do without you. He has had you to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTA: Ah but, Miss Julia, I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home there, poor thing. And with only that new girl too!

MISS TESMAN: Oh, I shall manage to train her. And of course, you know, I shall take most of it upon myself.

BERTA: Well, but there's another thing, Miss. I'm so mortally afraid I won't be able to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN: Just at first there may be one or two things—

BERTA: Most like she'll be terrible grand in her ways.

MISS TESMAN: Well, you can't wonder at that—General Gabler's daughter! Think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Don't you remember how we used to see her riding down the road along with the General? In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat?

BERTA: Yes, indeed—But, good Lord, I should never have dreamt in those days that she and Master George would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN: Nor I.—while I think of it: in future you mustn't say Master George. You must say Dr. Tesman.

BERTA: Yes, the young mistress spoke of that too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss?

MISS TESMAN: Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—while he has been abroad, you understand.

BERTA: Well well, he's clever enough for anything, he is. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people.

MISS TESMAN: It's not that sort of doctor he is. *(Nods significantly.)* But let me tell you, we may have to call him something still grander before long.

BERTA: You don't say so! What can that be, Miss?

MISS TESMAN: *(With emotion.)* Ah, dear dear—if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now, and see what his little boy has grown into! *(Looks around.)* But bless me, why have you taken the covers off all the furniture.

BERTA: The mistress told me to. She can't abide covers on the chairs, she says.

MISS TESMAN: Are they going to make this their everyday sitting-room then?

BERTA: Yes, that's what I understood—from the mistress. Master George the doctor—he said nothing.

[2]

GEORGE TESMAN *comes from the right into the inner room, humming to himself, and carrying an unstrapped empty portmanteau. He is a middle-aged, young-looking man of thirty-three, rather stout, with a round, open, cheerful face, fair hair and beard. He wears spectacles, and is somewhat carelessly dressed in comfortable indoor clothes.*

MISS TESMAN: Good morning, good morning, George.

TESMAN: *(In the doorway between the rooms.)* Dear Aunt Julia! *(Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly.)* Come all this way—so early! Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Why, of course I had to come.

TESMAN: In spite of your having had no proper night's rest?

¹ Pronounced "Reena" [Translator's Note]