

woman they would have shaken hands with each other as a mark of sympathy. Taking her eyes off the clergyman, she addressed his aunt:

"I presume you require rooms for yourself and this gentleman, who is —," and here she stopped.

The aunt, being by no means proud of her nephew, and not wishing him to be regarded

"Are you the mistress of this house?" asked the aunt, wishing to get all the information she could from Miss Rickton about her private affairs before she discussed the subject of bedrooms.

"Yes, but what rooms do you require?" answered Miss Rickton, vainly endeavouring to divert the conversation from himself.

"Well, I must say you are rather young, and I would add, inexperienced, to have charge of a house this size. Would it not be better if you had some elderly relative or friend to assist you in your duties?"

This remark sent the colour to Miss Rickton's cheeks, but being accustomed to rude observations, she did not resent it, but calmly said:

"We cannot always pick and choose, madam, how we shall conduct our business in life, but do the best we can under existing circumstances. Would you be so good as to inform me what rooms you require, as I have much to occupy my time?"

After this remark it was impossible for the old lady to pump Miss Rickton any further about her private affairs, so she replied in rather an offended manner:

"I don't require a bedroom myself, but my nephew might take one if it suited him."

"We have several to let, as we are rather empty at present. There's the front room on the first floor at three and a-half guineas; one on the second floor, two pounds; two on the third at thirty shillings. Of course this includes board."

"Much too dear for my nephew's means," said the aunt, in a very determined way.

"I have two on the fourth floor at twenty-five shillings; they might suit."

"I may as well have a look at them, though the stairs are very trying for my breath."

So the three ascended the stairs together, and with much hard breathing the old lady managed to reach the fourth floor.

"Young woman," she said, gasping, "I'll sit down for a few minutes to recover my breath before we resume business." Then after the requisite rest: "Twenty-five!



THE DOOR WAS OPENED BY A PLEASANT
LOOKING MAID.

as a nearer relation than he actually was, hastily replied: "He is not my son, only my nephew."

"Indeed," said the landlady, whose name was Miss Rickton.