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POACHED EGGS AND PEARLS

POACHED EGGS AND PEARLS

A CANTEEN COMEDY IN TWO
SCENES

By
GERTRUDE JENNINGS

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POACHED EGGS AND PEARLS

Produced at the Apollo Theatre, London, on November 21, 1916, under the management of Mr. André Charlot, with the following cast:—

LADY CLARA TEVIOT	} (Helpers at the Canteen)	{ <i>Miss Doris Lytton.</i>				
LADY MABEL CORROBY			{ <i>Miss Dorothy Fane.</i>			
THE DUCHESS OF FROOM				{ <i>Miss Gertrude Scott.</i>		
MISS DEACON					{ <i>Miss Betty Ward.</i>	
LADY PENZANCE						{ <i>Miss Rosa Sullivan.</i>
A LADY HELPER						
BILL SMITH	} (Soldiers)	{ <i>Mr. Ben Field.</i>				
GEO. WILLIAMS			{ <i>Mr. Eddie Garr.</i>			
JIMMIE ACLAND				{ <i>Mr. Dennis Neilson Terry.</i>		

SCENE I.—The Canteen Dining-room.

SCENE II.—The Pantry.

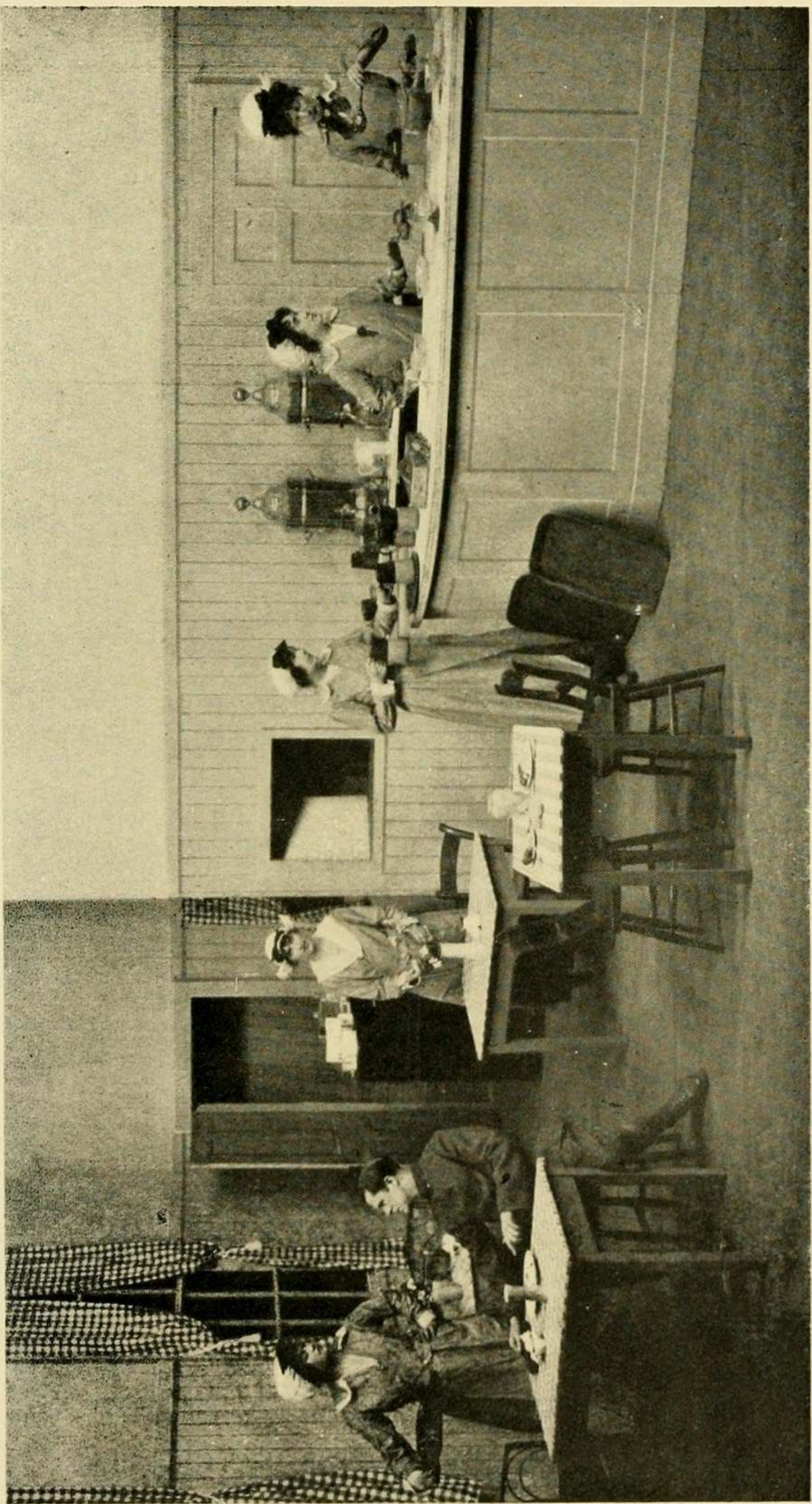
Five minutes elapse between Scenes I and II.

Time in representation—40 minutes.

[BOACHEE EGGS AND BEARLETS]

SCENE I.

[Photo by W. Rathel & Bunn]



POACHED EGGS AND PEARLS

SCENE I.

SCENE.—*The Canteen Dining-room.*

(LADY CLARA TEVIOT and LADY MABEL CORROBY discovered wiping the tables. LADY PENZANCE is at desk. The DUCHESS and MISS DEACON are behind the bar. They are all dressed alike in overalls and caps. LADY CLARA and LADY MABEL begin at table I R. at the back.)

LADY CLARA (*a charmingly pretty young girl, who is mopping the tables*). Awful, having the place so empty, isn't it?

LADY MABEL (*a pretty girl of 18 holds tray for CLARA*). Rotten! But there'll be a train in at half-past four. Then we shall have more than we can do.

LADY CLARA. That's not much fun. We shall be washing up by then. (*Crosses to table 2.*)

LADY MABEL. I'm jolly well not going to wash up to-day. (*Follows to table 2.*)

LADY CLARA. Why not?

LADY MABEL. I've just had my nail's manicured.

LADY CLARA. How are you going to get out of it?

LADY MABEL. Say I've cut my finger—I've tied it up.

LADY CLARA. You are a lazy cat, Mabel, it only means I shall have to do your share.

LADY MABEL. Oh, you don't mind, Clara darling. You're a regular knut at the sink, and I've got to

dine at the *Ritz* to-night with my pet lamb. I can't go with fingers all crumpled and my nose red.

LADY CLARA (*crossing to table 3, front of stage*). What about me? I've got a nose, too. And perhaps I've got a pet lamb.

LADY MABEL (*Follows to table 3.*). Stand by me this once, there's a dear—and I'll keep the Duchess away when your faithful comes in, for seven courses of sausages and mash.

LADY CLARA. My faithful!

LADY MABEL. Yes. Don't turn pink. We've all noticed the lovely airman.

LADY CLARA. Don't be silly, Mabel. (*Holds up pot.*) There's no mustard in this.

LADY MABEL. Never mind! He doesn't need mustard.

LADY CLARA. Mabel! Do you think people really *have* noticed?

LADY MABEL. Noticed! Well, considering he's been in every day for three weeks and always sits at your table and always stays an hour they must be blind not to notice.

LADY CLARA. Do you think the Duchess will say anything to mother? She might take me away from the canteen and put me on to making pyjamas.

LADY MABEL. I don't think the Duchess will tell tales. She's such a sport. But hide him from Violet Penzance, she's the spy.

LADY CLARA. I know, but what can I do?

LADY MABEL. Tell him to come to lunch, when the Canteen is full.

LADY CLARA. He can't get away then.

LADY MABEL. Oh, he's told you that, has he? Oh, Clara, Clara!

LADY CLARA. His father's a Professor at Cambridge.

LADY MABEL. Is he? He must be getting very tired of sausages.

LADY CLARA. He doesn't have sausages any more.

LADY MABEL. Why not?

LADY CLARA. Poached eggs on toast take longer to do.

(MABEL gives a shrill laugh. The DUCHESS taps on the ledge. MABEL makes a face and goes.)

DUCHESS. Not quite so loud, please.

LADY MABEL. I'm so sorry.

DUCHESS (*a tall handsome dignified woman*). Miss Deacon, you have left the tea urn running. Kindly mop it up.

(MISS DEACON *disappears behind counter*.)

(MABEL returns to CLARA.)

(*The DUCHESS exits R.*)

LADY CLARA. What's up?

LADY MABEL. Too much noise.

(GIRLS move to table 4.)

LADY CLARA. She is strict, but she's a good sort. We'd better take the mustard pots to be re-filled.

LADY MABEL. Who's the old lady with the frizzy wig?

LADY CLARA. That's a Miss Deacon. She wears a flannel petticoat.

LADY MABEL. What nonsense!

LADY CLARA. She *does*. I saw it. She's a friend of Sarah's. Isn't she the limit?

LADY MABEL. She's just left the tea urn tap running; there is a pond of tea on the floor. The Duchess gave her a terrible glare. The poor old thing turned quite mauve. Look, now she's buttering the cake.

LADY CLARA. She seems very woolly. I hope I shan't have her in the pantry with me. Oh dear, I am tired! I wish I hadn't gone to that dance last night.

LADY MABEL. Where was it?

LADY CLARA. At the Howarths. Lord Reggie's home on leave, and they had to cheer him up.

LADY MABEL. Reggie's the tall one your mother wants for you, isn't he?

LADY CLARA. Yes! Of course mother's anxious about us after the war as we've nothing a year. But if she would be so early Victorian as to have five daughters what can she expect? (*Put mustard pots on tray.*)

LADY MABEL. Shall you marry Reginald?

LADY CLARA. Rather not! His face is too spotty. Oh! I wish they'd let us sit down! My legs do ache.

LADY MABEL. Let's put these things away and then lean against the wall.

(DUCHESS *re-enters.*)

LADY CLARA. Righto!

(*They take the tray, etc., to hatch and pass the bowl of water through.*)

DUCHESS. If you have mopped up the tea, Miss Deacon, perhaps you would kindly cut some bread.

MISS DEACON (*a nervous, shivery woman of 45, with light fuzzy hair*). Oh, certainly, Duchess. Yes, I would do anything for the dear soldiers.

DUCHESS. Quite so. That is the bread machine. Do not cut your finger off, please.

MISS DEACON. No, no, I won't! How kind of you to think of it.

(*Goes to bread cutter R. of bar and turns the handle.*)

MABEL and CLARA now come up with the tray to bar L. of it.)

LADY CLARA (*to DUCHESS*). The mustard pots, please.

DUCHESS. Thank you. Have you filled up the water jugs, Lady Clara?

LADY CLARA. Yes, Duchess.

DUCHESS. And have you swept the floor and emptied the rubbish baskets?

LADY CLARA. Yes.

DUCHESS. Thank you. Lady Mabel.

LADY MABEL. Yes.

DUCHESS. I shall want you to wash up at four o'clock.

LADY MABEL. Oh, do you mind very much if I don't wash up to-day? I've cut my finger and it's so awkward, isn't it, with only one hand.

DUCHESS. You seem very unlucky. Last week you cut your thumb and the week before you had rheumatism.

LADY MABEL. I am so sorry.

DUCHESS. Well, it cannot be helped. Lady Clara, you will wash up, please.

LADY CLARA. Certainly.

DUCHESS. At four o'clock. (*Turns her back on them.*)

(LADY MABEL and LADY CLARA go to L.C.)

LADY MABEL. Do you think she suspects?

LADY CLARA. Well, I shouldn't try it on again if I were you.

DUCHESS. Miss Deacon, I think it would be better if you put a loaf of bread into the cutter before you turned the handle.

MISS DEACON. Oh, haven't I? How foolish of me! I am quite absent-minded to-day! ¶It's because of my nephew. He is going away to-morrow—Yes! I will put the bread in.

DUCHESS. Perhaps I had better get Lady Penzance to do it. You might cut your finger off and that would cause such a delay. Lady Clara, would you kindly ask Lady Penzance if she will oblige me by cutting some bread?

LADY CLARA. Certainly. (*Crosses the room.*)

DUCHESS. Perhaps you will kindly help me by making the mustard, Miss Deacon.

MISS DEACON. M—m—making mustard?

DUCHESS. Yes. You haven't done it before?

MISS DEACON. Not made it—no. Is it made out of mustard leaves?

DUCHESS. Not exactly. I will do it. You might fill those glass dishes with jam.

MISS DEACON. Oh, I shall be so pleased—so willing. (*She goes to back of bar and brings two large jars of jam to bar.*)

(LADY PENZANCE comes up L. of bar. *She is a pretty woman, with diamond earrings and a pearl necklace.*)

LADY PENZANCE. Yes, Margaret dear?

DUCHESS. Oh, Violet, as there's no one in will you cut bread till they come?

LADY PENZANCE. Certainly, dear Margaret. I notice that Lady Clara and Lady Mabel haven't much to do.

DUCHESS (*at back of bar*). They were very busy at lunch time.

LADY PENZANCE. Of course my place is really at the desk, but I'll cut bread with pleasure.

DUCHESS. Thank you.

(LADY PENZANCE crosses behind MISS DEACON to machine.)

DUCHESS. I think, Miss Deacon, you have just put some marmalade into the strawberry jam.

MISS DEACON. No, really—surely can I—have I?

DUCHESS (*makes mustard and fills the four pots during following*). You have. Will you kindly take it out. The soldiers do not like their jams mixed. (*Hands MISS DEACON a spoon.*)

MISS DEACON. No, certainly! Of course—the brave fellows! Mixed jam! No!

LADY PENZANCE. I'm afraid, Duchess, that some one has put a piece of new bread in the dustbin.

DUCHESS. Disgraceful! In war time. Can it be rescued? I fear not. Who can have done it?

(MISS DEACON looking very nervous, puts jam jars back.)

LADY PENZANCE. Perhaps some one on the last shift. Dear Lady Adela?

DUCHESS. I trust so. (*Looking daggers at MISS DEACON*). I hope no one on my shift would be guilty of such a *bêtise*.

(MISS DEACON *drops a plate of sandwiches*.)

You have dropped the sandwiches, Miss Deacon.

MISS DEACON. Have I? No! Surely not.

DUCHESS. Kindly pick them up.

(MISS DEACON *does so*.)

Thank you. No, don't replace them. Into the scrap bin where the good bread ought to be. Thank you. At four o'clock I should like you to wipe plates in the scullery.

MISS DEACON. Oh, do you mind? At four o'clock I'm expecting my nephew to come in. He's such a dear boy in the air service.

DUCHESS. Pardon me, but as head of the shift, I can't alter my arrangements. And, indeed, the rule of the canteen is that the ladies do not enter into conversation with the men, except to find out their requirements.

MISS DEACON. No, of course not. No—I quite see that—still, a nephew!

DUCHESS. I am so sorry—after working hours, of course. Rules are very strict here.

MISS DEACON (*tearfully, putting pie on plate, and instantly drops it*). Yes, of course. Oh, I quite understand.

DUCHESS. You have dropped a pork pie. In the scrap bin—thank you. I daresay next time the food casualties won't be so heavy.

MISS DEACON. Pork pies! Yes. They're so slippery, aren't they?

LADY PENZANCE. Almost a case of washing up the food after dear Miss Deacon, isn't it? The Head of the canteen *would* be so amused.

DUCHESS. Oh, by the way, Lady Penzance, I hardly like to mention it, but the Head thinks you wear rather too much jewellery in the canteen.

LADY PENZANCE. Really! Poor little me! Oh no, I can't see how I could wear less.

DUCHESS. Well, you know—that pearl necklace!

LADY PENZANCE. Yes, but, dear Duchess, if I don't wear the necklace where am I to keep it? That's the trouble, isn't it? Oh, there are two men coming in! May I go back to the desk?

DUCHESS. Certainly.

(LADY PENZANCE *crosses rapidly to desk.*)

(*There enter two TOMMIES in uniform. Middle-aged men. GEORGE is large and stout, BILL small.*)

LADY MABEL. Oh, here come two men! Thank goodness! No sign of your airman! Is he coming?

LADY CLARA. How can I tell?

(*The two men buy tickets of LADY PENZANCE.*)

LADY CLARA. Now then, whose table?

LADY MABEL. Mine, I hope. No, yours.

BILL. Squattez vous, George.

(*The men sit at table 4, front.*)

(GEORGE R. of table, BILL L.)

LADY CLARA. What do you bet? Poached eggs on toast or soss and mash!

LADY MABEL. Soss and mash.

LADY CLARA (*crosses to the men*). What would you like?

BILL. Sausages and mash, cup of cocoa, bread and butter, please, Miss.

GEORGE. Same here. (*Offers tickets.*)

LADY CLARA (*to LADY MABEL*). Thank you. You've won! (*Goes to hatch.*)

GEORGE (*as she crosses*). Pretty cushy place, this.

BILL. Ah! I tell you.

GEORGE. Glad we didn't go down the road.

BILL. There! Not me! Why, what do yer think they've got there? Paid waitresses.

GEORGE. Have they now?

LADY CLARA (*at hatch*). Two sausages and mash twice please. (*She goes to bar and gets a plate on which she puts bread and butter.*)

GEORGE. I like that one covered all over wiv diamings and pearls.

BILL. Ah! That's worth the money alone, that is.

GEORGE. That lady what's waiting on us is a bit of all right, too.

BILL. Ah! She's a one-er, she is. See 'er with this place full. She can't arf nip about.

GEORGE. Can't she now?

BILL. And the civilness of it. No banging yer plates down and puttin' their thumbs in the gravy—not them!

(MISS DEACON *has her back to the men.*)

GEORGE. Fancy that now! (*Looks at MISS DEACON.*) That's a funny old bird with the frizzy whiskers.

BILL. I don't know 'er. She's new. But I'll lay she's a duchess. They're all titled here.

GEORGE. Think of that!

LADY CLARA (*at bar*). I shall want two cups of cocoa, please.

DUCHESS. Two cups of cocoa, please, Miss Deacon.

MISS DEACON. Two cups of cocoa! Yes, of course! Two cups of cocoa for our brave soldiers!

DUCHESS. Do you know how to make cocoa?

MISS DEACON. Oh yes, indeed yes! I often made it for my dear father. Yes, yes, certainly. (*Makes it.*)

(*Exit DUCHESS R.*)

(Enter JIMMIE ACLAND, L.C., a good-looking young airman. He buys tickets at desk.)

LADY MABEL. Clara! Here he is. (Pulls CLARA R. of stage.)

LADY CLARA. Oh, heavens!

LADY MABEL. Look at Lady Penzance giving him the glad eye!

LADY CLARA. The snark! She'll watch me like a lynx. I almost wish he'd sit at one of your tables.

LADY MABEL. No fear! He's buying rolls of tickets. Here comes your soss.

(LADY CLARA gets the sausages and the cups of cocoa.
JIMMIE sits table L.)

(DUCHESS re-enters.)

DUCHESS. Thank you, Miss Deacon. Now, as there's so little to do, would you kindly go to the pantry and clean knives.

MISS DEACON. Certainly, with pleasure—to clean knives for the Army! Yes, of course.

(Exit MISS DEACON.)

(CLARA comes to GEORGE and BILL and puts the things down in front of them.)

BILL. Thank you, Miss.

(She moves to table L.)

(To GEORGE.) Classy, ain't she? Told you so. And wot price the grub?

GEORGE. A.I.

LADY CLARA (to JIMMIE). What will you have? (She stands L. of his table.)

JIMMIE. I'm late to-day. I was kept at the works. I'm going into a cadet corps to-morrow, and I shall get my commission in the Air Service.

LADY CLARA (coldly). Really?

JIMMIE. Not angry with me, are you?

LADY CLARA. Angry? Why should I be?

JIMMIE. The ice seems rather thick, that's all.

LADY CLARA. I don't understand.

JIMMIE. What have I done?

LADY CLARA. We are not supposed to talk, you know.

JIMMIE. But we always do, don't we?

LADY CLARA. Would you mind telling me what your order is?

JIMMIE. Just one smile on toast.

LADY CLARA. Don't be silly! The Duchess is looking at us. Now then! Two fried eggs and a rasher or sausages and mash?

JIMMIE. It's so hard to decide. Poached eggs on toast take the longest to do, but you can't make a parcel of them.

LADY CLARA. What do you mean?

JIMMIE. Well, you don't think I eat all I order, do you, Lady Clara? No, no, it goes into a newspaper and then I have another lot.

LADY CLARA. But what in the world for?

JIMMIE. So that I can stay longer, of course. Since I can't meet you anywhere else!

LADY CLARA. I've told you you mustn't say things like that.

JIMMIE. Why not? My whole conversation can't consist of fried eggs, one jam and a pork pie. I don't come here for that, you know, Clara!

LADY CLARA. Hush, please! What will you order? Be quick!

JIMMIE. Oh, well! Two poached eggs on toast, bread and butter and a cup of tea.

(DUCHESS *exits* R.)

LADY CLARA. Tickets, please. Why, you've got about a hundred!

JIMMIE. I hope to stay an hour for each ticket.

LADY CLARA. I hope you will.

JIMMIE. And will you be nice to me?

LADY CLARA. Very nice. Only I shan't be here.

JIMMIE. What?

LADY CLARA. I'm due for the pantry at four.

JIMMIE. Clara!

(She crosses room and goes to hatch.)

LADY CLARA *(at hatch)*. Two poached eggs on toast once, please. *(Cross and gets rapidly behind bar.)*

LADY MABEL. Well, what did he say? *(Runs in front of bar.)*

LADY CLARA. Oh, Mabel, he's a darling. He really is! Every time I see him I like him more and more. I should like to get into his aeroplane and float away and never come back again.

LADY MABEL. I don't suppose he ever goes up in an aeroplane. The mechanics never do.

LADY CLARA. Mechanics! He's going to get a commission. Oh, Mabel, isn't he a jam jar! I hope they'll do his eggs nicely.

LADY MABEL. How can you be romantic about eggs. I wish they had never been born.

(They talk aside.)

GEORGE. Bill, old man, I don't 'ardly like to mention it.

BILL. Wot's up?

GEORGE. The soss is grand, the mash is A1, and I ain't tasted such bread and butter since the war. But the cocoa, old son, 'as got a kind of a taste that I 'ardly like ter mention in ladies' society.

BILL. There now! George, if that ain't you all over. Grouse, grouse, grouse! Put you down at the Lord Mayor's banquet and you'd grumble at the lamb's fry! I don't wonder your wife left you for Ted Arris. Bring you to a fine place like this 'ere, with clean tables and reel ladies waiting, and what d'yer do? Grumble, grouse, grouse, and grumble!

GEORGE. Roll on, old man! I ain't saying nothing about the place, which is slap up.

BILL. So I should think.

GEORGE. But this 'ere cocoa!

BILL. There you go again! You ought ter be back in Plug Street, eating Ticklers' jam, that's wot's the matter with *you*. You're one of these ere perishing blighters we read about wot sings: "Oh, send me back to Wipers." That's wot's the matter with *you*!

GEORGE. I can't 'elp it, old man, it fairly makes me 'eave.

BILL. Oh, does it. Well, I'd like to know what you get at 'ome that you don't 'eave at.

GEORGE. Ain't tasted the cocoa yourself, 'ave you, Bill, old face?

BILL. No, I ain't. I've a thankful sperrit, I 'ave.

GEORGE. You take a lick, old pal. Just take a good long lick, that's all.

BILL. Certainly! 'Ere's down with the 'Un!

(He drinks, puts cup down violently.) Oh, 'ell!

GEORGE. Does 'um a bit, don't it?

BILL. Why, what the blooming blue is it?

GEORGE. That's what I arsk myself.

BILL. It's got a sort of a—well, I don't know what about it.

GEORGE. Sort of bites yer, don't it?

BILL. I can't quite lay my tongue to what it reminds me of.

GEORGE. I could, but ladies being present I don't like ter.

BILL. You don't suppose it'll do us any sort of damage, George? I've 'eard of people's insides bein' completely liquidated by a thing like that.

GEORGE. I wonder 'oo's cocoa it is? 'Indenburg's Special, I should say. I'd like to smash 'is bloomin' nut.

BILL. I'm like to throw 'im to the Tanks.

GEORGE. They done us down properly this time —no doubt about it.

BILL. Dropped a diamond in it, p'raps. (*Smells it.*) It smells of scissors.

GEORGE. Tastes more like a couple of ammunition clips.

BILL. Do you reckon we could say we'd changed our minds and like a cup of tea instead?

GEORGE. Not now we've drunk it. That tall one saw me with my beak inside.

BILL. Shut yer eyes and 'op it down.

GEORGE. Shut my eyes. I'd 'ave to shut more'n that. Wot's more it 'ud soon 'op up again. I've got a sort of peculiar feelin' already.

BILL. Tain't as bad as all that. (*Anxiously.*) Don't go and disgrace me, George.

GEORGE. Tell you wot. You 'ave mine.

BILL. You always was a chap to give nothing away, George.

(*The poached eggs are now put through the hatch.*)

Wait till the young lady comes to clear away and I'll see what I can do.

GEORGE. Drives a man to drink a thing like this.

BILL. Ah!

(*LADY CLARA brings eggs to JIMMIE.*)

LADY CLARA. I hope you haven't been very impatient.

JIMMIE. I have been miserable.

LADY CLARA. Oh, why?

JIMMIE. Well, it's rather hard luck, isn't it, to see what you like best in all the world, and not be able to get near it.

LADY CLARA. Do you mean the pork pies? They *are* rather nice. Would you like one?

JIMMIE. Have pity on me, please. The eggs are bad enough.

LADY CLARA. Oh, how can you? They are beautiful! I chose specially good ones. See how fat and round they are.

(DUCHESS *re-enters* R.)

JIMMIE. Too fat! The eggs I've had in the last fortnight! I can hardly look them in the face. Oh, Clara, has any one else ever done for you what I have?

LADY CLARA. If you mind eating eggs how would you like to wash up 150 plates afterwards?

JIMMIE. Can you wash up?

LADY CLARA. Of course I can! We all wash up, even the Duchess.

JIMMIE. What? Can she bend?

LADY CLARA. Rather! She's splendid at the sink.

JIMMIE. Wonderful! What else do you do?

LADY CLARA. Clean knives! Make tea—cook——

JIMMIE. How useful it will be when we are married.

LADY CLARA. Your aeroplane goes about 1,000 miles an hour, doesn't it?

JIMMIE. About that.

LADY CLARA. I thought it must.

JIMMIE. I have to travel rather quickly, because, you see, Clara, I'm going away to-morrow.

LADY CLARA (*frightened*). To the front?

JIMMIE. Not yet. But we shan't be very long now. And I don't suppose I shall be in London again before I go.

(LADY PENZANCE *crosses to* DUCHESS.)

LADY CLARA. How the poached eggs will miss you.

JIMMIE. And how the plates will miss you!

LADY CLARA. But I'm not going.

JIMMIE. Oh yes, you are.

LADY CLARA. Where am I going?

JIMMIE. With me, of course.

LADY CLARA (*primly*). I'm sorry you should be so foolish. Please eat your food, as it is getting cold.

JIMMIE. Clara, I mean every word I say.

LADY CLARA. That makes it all the worse.
(*Moves away.*)

LADY PENZANCE (*to DUCHESS*). Don't you think darling Clara is talking too much to that handsome young airman?

DUCHESS. I will mention it. Lady Clara!

LADY CLARA (*coming quickly to bar*). Yes, Duchess?

DUCHESS. I am so sorry to say anything, but I always think it a pity to delay too long at any one table.

LADY CLARA. Oh yes, I know. I must apologize, but he was asking me if you knew how to wash up and I said how beautifully you did it.

DUCHESS (*flattered*). Really! Oh well, it doesn't matter this once.

(JIMMIE *taps on the table.*)

DUCHESS. He seems to want something else.

LADY CLARA. I don't think it's anything.

DUCHESS. Perhaps the tea wasn't very hot. I am just going to make fresh. See if he would like another cup.

LADY CLARA. Very well. (*Crosses to JIMMIE.*) I don't think this is very nice of you.

JIMMIE. What can you mean? I only wanted to order sausages and mash. I'm tired of the poached eggs.

LADY CLARA. But you haven't touched them.

JIMMIE. No, but their faces bore me. That one has a silly look. Please let me have two sausages and mash and one Clara.

LADY CLARA. I will get the tray. (*Crosses down.*)

GEORGE. There, Bill, that chap over there is goin' to make a change. Let us try.

BILL. All right.

(CLARA returns to JIMMIE'S table, puts eggs on tray.)

JIMMIE. Will you be a little kind to me? Will you come and have tea without eggs after this?

LADY CLARA. I told you I shall be in the pantry.

JIMMIE. Where is the pantry?

LADY CLARA. Through there.

JIMMIE. How dark it must be!

LADY CLARA. Oh no, there's a window.

JIMMIE. Oh, is there? May I look through it?

LADY CLARA. Certainly not.

LADY PENZANCE (to the DUCHESS). You see, Duchess. Every time it's the same.

DUCHESS. Yes. I must speak to her mother.

JIMMIE. Mayn't a poor Tommy even look at the lady he loves?

LADY CLARA (in a whisper). Please don't! (Out loud) Sausages and mash! Certainly. (Crossing.)

BILL. Miss——

LADY CLARA (stopping). Yes?

(JIMMIE goes back to desk L., buys cigarettes.)

BILL. Could my friend and me change this ere cocoa for cups of tea?

LADY CLARA. Change them? Well, I—have you had any?

BILL. Not to deceive you, Miss, we 'ave.

GEORGE. Worse luck!

LADY CLARA. Why? Isn't it good?

BILL. Oh, it's good in its own way, Miss, but my friend here, he ain't as strong as 'e looks.

GEORGE. It's give me a most peculiar feelin', Miss, and that's the truth.

BILL. Somethink may have dropped inside the cup, Miss.

LADY CLARA. I'll take it back and you shall have something else. (*Crosses to hatch.*)

(JIMMIE *stands at window down stage.*)

BILL. There! Wot did I tell you?

GEORGE. A reel lady.

LADY CLARA (*at hatch*). Two sausages and mash, please.

LADY MABEL (*pulls CLARA to L. front*). I say, Clara, you are getting off to-day.

LADY CLARA. Don't be vulgar.

LADY MABEL. That cat of a Lady Penzance has got her knife into you.

LADY CLARA. I don't care!

LADY MABEL. Is he very nice?

LADY CLARA. I'm afraid he's what my maid calls a liberty taker. (*Crosses to bar.*)

LADY MABEL. Oh, how lovely! (*Turns, watches JIMMIE.*)

LADY CLARA. Duchess, the men say this cocoa isn't good.

DUCHESS. Oh, isn't it? I must see about it. And—Lady Clara!

LADY CLARA. Yes.

DUCHESS. We're expecting 100 men in soon. I should like you to go into the pantry at once and send the other ladies in here.

(MABEL *goes to back of stage. JIMMIE returns to table.*)

LADY CLARA. Oh, but it isn't quite four.

DUCHESS. No. But just oblige me, will you?

LADY CLARA. May I finish my order first?

DUCHESS. Well——

LADY PENZANCE. Oh, of course dear Lady Clara would like to finish her order. One can quite understand that!

LADY CLARA. What has it got to do with you, Lady Penzance?

LADY PENZANCE. Nothing, fortunately. I *never* linger at the tables.

LADY CLARA. You never get a chance.

DUCHESS. Now, please, ladies, please—I cannot allow this in the canteen.

LADY PENZANCE. Of course we can't all make appointments with fascinating airmen!

LADY CLARA. Make appointments! How dare you say such a thing! I have made no appointment. I leave that to you and Lord Mornington.

LADY PENZANCE. You impertinent girl! I didn't come here to be insulted.

(The two soldiers are nudging each other.)

DUCHESS. Ladies, you ought to be ashamed to speak like this when you are doing war work! Go in the pantry, please, Lady Clara!

LADY CLARA. It's a shame that I should be sent away in disgrace just because Lady Penzance is a spiteful caterpillar.

DUCHESS. Please, Lady Clara!

LADY CLARA. Oh, all right. But I know what I'd like to give her.

(Bangs out R.)

VOICE THROUGH WINDOW. Sausages and mash!

LADY PENZANCE. I'll take it. Dear Clara! She is so very hysterical.

(She is crossing when LADY MABEL bumps into her and trips her up. She screams, drops the tray and the sausages roll on the floor.)

LADY MABEL. Oh, I'm so sorry! Was it my fault? Do forgive me. I'll tell the man, we'll order another lot.

(Flies over to JIMMIE amid the scene of confusion caused by LADY PENZANCE, picking herself, tray and

sausages up, helped by BILL, GEORGE and the DUCHESS.)

LADY MABEL. A little accident. I'll get some more.

JIMMIE. Isn't that lady coming back?

LADY MABEL. No, she's in disgrace.

JIMMIE. What?

LADY MABEL. Yes, because of you.

JIMMIE. Good lord!

LADY MABEL. You like her, don't you?

JIMMIE. No, I adore her. And I go away tomorrow. What shall I do?

LADY MABEL. Look here—go out, turn to the left and you'll see a window. It's the pantry. Watch your chance and you'll see her. But you must watch your chance when there's no one there.

JIMMIE. You darling!

LADY MABEL. Oh!

(She flies back. Door at back of bar opens and MISS DEACON appears terribly excited and upset, waving two knives.)

MISS DEACON. Oh, Duchess; oh, Duchess! Oh dear, oh dear! Oh dear!

(Every one's attention is attracted to her.)

DUCHESS. Really, Miss Deacon, you must control yourself. I am not at all accustomed to this!

MISS DEACON. Oh! But you don't know, you don't know what's happened?

DUCHESS. Well, what has happened?

MISS DEACON. I was cleaning the knives for our brave men, I was cleaning the knives, you know, and I noticed they didn't rub up very well, and all of a sudden I found out I'd been mistaken in the two tins and, oh, Duchess—

DUCHESS. Well?

MISS DEACON. I made those two cups of cocoa out of the knife polish.

(She falls over front of bar, dropping knives on floor.)

SCENE II

CURTAIN.

SCENE.—*The Pantry.*

Five minutes afterwards.

A narrow room, with distempered walls and wooden floor. A hatch to canteen dining-room L. A hatch to kitchen R. Sink L. at back, drying board and plate rack C. at back and window R. of it. Door R. to bar.

(Discovered LADY CLARA, cleaning knives, and MISS DEACON, very agitated, wiping a teapot.)

MISS DEACON. I think she was a *little* unkind about it; I *must* say I *do* think so! Because, of course, I didn't do it on purpose.

LADY CLARA. I'm sure you don't usually make cocoa out of knife powder.

MISS DEACON. Never! I can assure you, never! My dear father would have been most annoyed if I had. He was very particular about those things. And, of course, to clean the knives with cocoa was quite a mistake. But I noticed it almost at once, but the Duchess said if she hadn't been very short-handed she wouldn't have troubled me further. It was really unkind.

LADY CLARA. Were the men angry?

MISS DEACON. No, indeed, they were so noble, our brave men! They hardly said a word and went away so quietly. And I had such trouble in getting this canteen work! You see we're not in the upper

ten, quite simple people, but I did so want to help, and now it's all spoilt.

VOICE (*from hatch L.*). Two fried eggs and a rasher.

(*A slip of paper comes through hatch.*)

LADY CLARA. Just take it to the kitchen, do you mind?

MISS DEACON (*at hatch R.*). Two fried eggs and a rasher.

LADY MABEL (*through the hatch L.*). Clara!

LADY CLARA. Yes.

LADY MABEL. They're pouring in now—such a rush!

LADY CLARA. Mabel! What's he doing?

LADY MABEL. He's gone!

LADY CLARA. Gone!

LADY MABEL. Yes, but cheer up, he'll come back.

LADY CLARA. He won't. Why should he?

VOICE (*L.*). Two poached eggs on toast twice, two fried eggs and a rasher twice; one sausage and mash.

LADY CLARA. Pass it through, will you, Miss Deacon?

MISS DEACON. Certainly. Oh, yes. (*Does so.*) Who is the lady with the beautiful pearl necklace?

LADY CLARA. That's Lady Penzance.

MISS DEACON. She's very handsome, isn't she? But she wasn't really very sympathetic. Her father is the Duke of Harrowmere, isn't he? Kind hearts are more than coronets, aren't they?

LADY CLARA. Much more.

MISS DEACON. And of course she's a widow, that makes a difference. But I've heard such painful stories about her—really dreadful! Now that young lady who was doing the tables with you—is *she* titled?

LADY CLARA. She's Lady Mabel Corroby.

MISS DEACON. Oh, yes. Let's see now, who was her mother?

LADY MABEL (*voice off L.*). One poached egg on toast.

(MISS DEACON *takes the slip and goes to hatch.*)

MISS DEACON. Her mother, I know, was related to the—to the——

LADY PENZANCE (*voice off L.*). Sausages and mash!

(MISS DEACON *to hatch. A crash of china and some dirty plates, cups, etc., are put through hatch L. CLARA clears plates to above hatch.*)

MISS DEACON. Her mother was a most charming woman, I believe, married twice. Now, who was her first husband?

VOICE (*L.*). One fried egg and a rasher.

(MISS DEACON *to hatch. CLARA returns to knife machine.*)

LADY CLARA. I'm afraid we're going to be very busy.

(*More cups come through. Eggs come through hatch R.*)

MISS DEACON. Oh, here are some fried eggs!

LADY CLARA. Put them across, will you? That's the last knife. I must begin washing up now.

(MISS DEACON *puts eggs across. CLARA goes to the sink, turns on tap, puts in soda and soap during following.*)

MISS DEACON. I don't think the aristocracy are really happier than any one else, do you?

MABEL'S VOICE (*R.*). Sausages and mash.

(MISS DEACON *goes to hatch R.*)

LADY CLARA. I'm afraid not.

(China comes through.)

Mabel! Has he come back?

LADY MABEL (*off L.*). No!

(MISS DEACON crosses with sausages and mash to hatch L.)

MISS DEACON. My dear nephew, a charming boy, has fallen hopelessly in love above his station. Most romantic! No money! Nothing in the wide world but love and hope and——

LADY P'S VOICE (*off R.*). Sausages and mash!

(MISS DEACON goes to hatch R. and returns with two plates of soss and mash which she puts on hatch L.)

LADY CLARA. I think, by the smell, those must be your celebrated cups of cocoa!

MISS DEACON. Yes. Most unfortunate. The Duchess of Port Arthur works here, doesn't she?

LADY CLARA. Yes. She washes up on the Thursday shift at night. It's a five-hour shift.

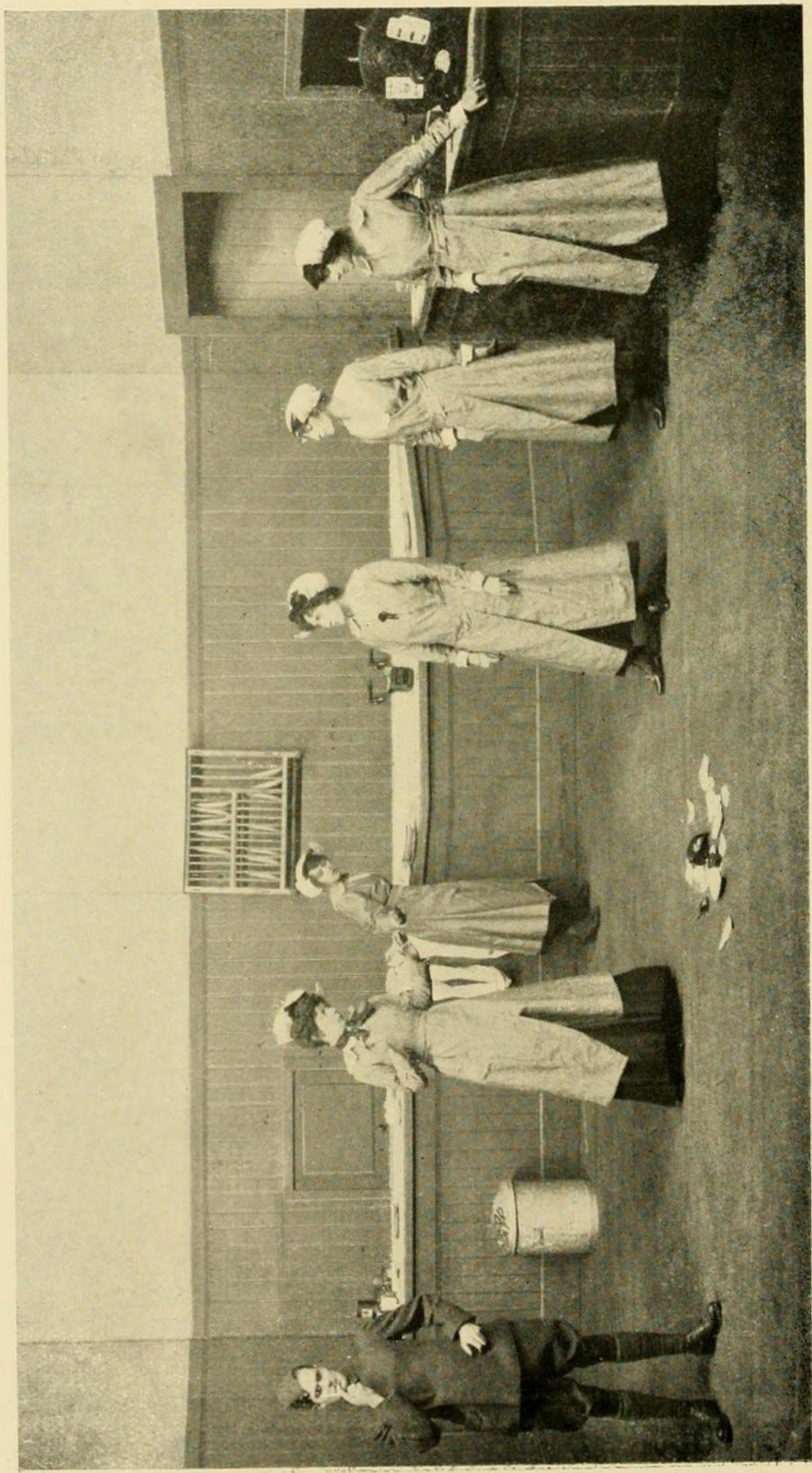
MISS DEACON (*L.*). Really! I shouldn't have thought a Duchess could have stood up so long. But, perhaps they are used to receptions. Ah! There are some poached eggs.

(CLARA now begins to put wet cups on board.)

And that reminds me, there was some very painful scandal about Lady Penzance, wasn't there? I am sure my darling nephew would choose a girl above reproach. Still, one never knows! I fear she is too high up for my poor boy. We are all very much against the match, being quiet people. The aristocracy don't behave quite as we do, do they? I came here really hoping to break it off.

(She gets two plates of fried eggs and stands holding them.)

His father is but a Professor at Cambridge, a clever man, full of brains, full of——



POACHED EGGS AND PEARLS]

SCENE II.

[Photo by Wrather & Buys.

VOICE (L.) Sausages and mash five times, please.

LADY PENZANCE (L.). Are my fried eggs and a rasher coming?

MISS DEACON. Oh, yes. (*Gives it through.*)

(*More china comes through hatch, teacups and small plates.*)

(*Taking a cloth and absently wiping cups.*) The girl he cares for works in this canteen. Do you know any girl here who is in love with a man in the Army?

LADY CLARA. I hope we all are.

MISS DEACON. Yes, the noble, dear men! (*Drops a plate.*) Oh, dear! There now! I've broken it. And I never break anything! If my dear father were alive he'd have been so annoyed!

LADY CLARA. Never mind, Miss Deacon. Just put the pieces in the dustbin, and let's get on.

MISS DEACON (*doing so*). I'm so glad the dear Duchess didn't see. She'll think me quite careless. (*Gets cup.*) And, of course, titled people they don't understand domestic work, do they—and washing up is so useful. Oh dear, there goes a cup. Only the handle off! How lucky!

LADY CLARA. But the Duchess is splendid at washing up.

(*Eggs come through hatch R.*)

MISS DEACON. Oh, I do admire the Duchess. (*Trots to hatch R.*) There are some eggs! (*Takes eggs to hatch L.*) Such fine eyes! They are often so short! And that's disappointing in a Duchess! (*Gets teapot.*) Still, if my dear nephew could have chosen some one not so grand, some simple country girl who could cook and sew. After all, the Tango is *not* important, is it? Some one in our set, useful and quiet! (*Drops a teapot.*) I'm afraid that's gone! (*Takes teapot to dustbin.*)

LADY MABEL (*voice L., at hatch*). One boiled egg, please.

LADY CLARA. Mabel! (*Whispers.*) Couldn't the Duchess let me have some one else? Poor Frizzy is driving me mad! I think her flannel petticoat is in the way.

(*Five soss and mash come through hatch R.*)

LADY MABEL. I'll try, but we're awfully pushed out here——

MISS DEACON (*brightly*). Here are such a lot of sausages and mash! (*There are five.*)

LADY CLARA. I'll help you. (*Carries three plates.*)

MISS DEACON. How they roll, don't they?

LADY CLARA (L.C.). Oh, Miss Deacon. (*Takes the other two plates to hatch left.*) Miss Deacon, have you ever thought of doing Red Cross work? They want such a lot of pyjamas at our depot.

MISS DEACON (R.C.). Oh, I couldn't make pyjamas, dear.

LADY CLARA. Why not?

MISS DEACON. Well, you see, I'm not married. It wouldn't be quite nice, would it?

(*Enter LADY MABEL.*)

LADY MABEL. Clara, there's such a rush for tea and coffee that we can't manage. Could you possibly spare Miss Deacon for ten minutes?

LADY CLARA. Of course I will, with pleasure.

LADY MABEL. Then will you go, Miss Deacon?

MISS DEACON. Oh yes, of course. Anything to oblige. (*Crossing.*) I may get a chance of speaking to my nephew. Pyjamas! No, no!

(*Exit.*)

LADY CLARA. Poor old soul! Mabel! She's broken the whole canteen! Look here. (*Takes lid off dustbin.*)

LADY MABEL (*running up*). Great Scott! Did she jump on it?

LADY CLARA. Almost. Has my boy been back?

LADY MABEL. Not yet.

DUCHESS (*voice off L.*). Lady Mabel!

LADY MABEL. I must fly.

LADY CLARA. But, Mabel, I can't do all this alone!

LADY MABEL. Have a try! I told the Duchess you would just while we're so busy outside. Pile them up and I'll come back as soon as ever I can.

(*Enter the DUCHESS.*)

DUCHESS (L.C.). Oh, Lady Clara, if Miss Deacon is no good here, will you try alone just for ten minutes? I wouldn't ask you, but there's such a rush for tea and coffee.

LADY CLARA (R.C.). Of course I will, Duchess.

DUCHESS. Do you mind?

LADY CLARA. Not a bit.

DUCHESS. Thank you, my dear, you're splendid. I'm awfully sorry to have spoken so sharply just now, for I know Violet is terribly trying, but discipline must be kept up.

LADY CLARA. Oh, I quite understood.

DUCHESS. Good child! Come, Lady Mabel.

LADY MABEL. Don't be surprised at anything that happens.

LADY CLARA. What should happen but egg plates and bacon fat?

LADY MABEL. Wait and see, my dear.

(*Exit.*)

LADY CLARA. What do you mean, Mabel?

(*More plates come through. LADY CLARA works. The window is cautiously pushed open, and JIMMIE climbs in. She does not hear him. He comes up behind her.*)

JIMMIE. Clara!

LADY CLARA (*she jumps*). Oh!!! Jimmie, what on earth! How did you get here?

JIMMIE. I flew in.

LADY CLARA. Then fly out again quickly.

JIMMIE. A thousand miles an hour?

LADY CLARA. Don't argue! You've no business here! It's too awful! A soldier in the pantry! You know it's not allowed! There'd be a most awful scandal.

VOICE (L.). Two poached eggs on toast.

(LADY CLARA gets ticket and crosses rapidly to hatch R.)

LADY CLARA. Go away quickly, please. (She pushes ticket through hatch R.) Well, aren't you going?

JIMMIE. No, frankly, I'm not. I *must* see you, Clara, I simply must.

LADY CLARA. You can't see me *here*, you simply can't.

JIMMIE. Then may I meet you afterwards?

LADY CLARA. No. The maid calls for me at seven and I have to go straight home.

JIMMIE. Then I must risk it and stop here.

LADY CLARA. It's *my* risk, not yours. What would that cat of a Violet Penzance say if she found you here? No more canteen work for me. I should have to go back to making pyjamas. And I do hate sewing. Go *away*, Mr. Acland.

JIMMIE. Clara, have pity on me. I do love you so, and I can't propose to you by letter. You're the dearest thing to me in all the world, and how can we be married if we don't settle the time and place?

LADY CLARA. Who said we were going to be married?

JIMMIE. *I* said so. Didn't you hear me? I've said so five times. I'll say it again if you like. I love you, Clara! I love you like—like——

VOICE (L.). Sausages and mash!

JIMMIE. Oh! What a dreadful place this is.

(LADY CLARA crosses to hatch for ticket, crosses to hatch R., puts it through. JIMMIE runs after her.)

Clara! Just say you love me and I'll be satisfied.

LADY CLARA (R.). I can't say it. How can I? I don't know you.

JIMMIE (L.). Don't know me! Oh, that's soon settled. My age is twenty-three. My name is Jimmie Acland—my father's name is John. My sister's name is Alice. I have no brothers. My hair is brown, my eyes are blue. My height is 5 feet 11. I used to row for Cambridge. I enlisted in the Public Schools Battalion, got wounded and transferred to the Air Service. Now, Clara, you know me.

LADY CLARA. You're quite mad, I'm afraid.

JIMMIE. No, it's only love. I should settle down once we're married. Say you love me, Clara, and you'll see how serious I can be.

LADY CLARA (*tenderly*). Oh, Jimmie!

JIMMIE (*hopefully*). Yes, darling?

DUCHESS' VOICE (*through hatch*). One cup of hot Horlick's, please.

JIMMIE. Oh, hang it!

LADY CLARA. I shall have to make it. (*Goes to top R. corner for bottle.*) Where's the Horlick's? I hope poor old Frizzles hasn't used it to powder her nose. No, here it is!

(*Sausages appear.*)

Take those sausages across, Jimmie, and if you really love me, don't show your sleeve or your great awful hand.

JIMMIE. Clara! (*Throws sausages on hatch left*).

VOICE (L.). Cold ham for one, please.

JIMMIE. Oh, stew this place!

LADY CLARA. Put that through there.

JIMMIE. Put what through where?

LADY CLARA. Why, you're worse than Frizzles. (*Points at hatch.*)

JIMMIE. Who's Frizzles? Now, Clara, I want to talk about our future.

LADY CLARA. We haven't got a future. (*She makes the Horlicks.*)

JIMMIE. You mean we haven't got a past. Well, Clara, I think I ought to tell you—do stop jiggling that thing up and down, darling.

LADY CLARA. I can't. It makes the Horlick's.

(Ham comes through.)

JIMMIE. Hang the Horlick's. Clara, sweetheart, I must ask you one question—

LADY MABEL (*voice L.*). Where is my cold ham?

(More dirty plates come through.)

LADY CLARA (*takes ham from hatch R. and runs to hatch L.*). Sh! Here's the ham and hot Horlick's.

VOICE. Thank you. Will you give me two poached eggs on toast?

(LADY CLARA crosses to R. hatch with the ticket.)

JIMMIE (*runs after her*). Clara, listen to me for one moment.

(LADY CLARA now returns to the sink and washes up.)
Do you have to put your darling hands into that horrid-looking water?

LADY CLARA. Well, you see, they don't give us eau de cologne in this canteen.

JIMMIE (*R. of sink*). Don't be clever, dearest. Because this is far too serious. Let me dry your poor little paws while I ask you a question. *(Takes her hands and dries them.)*

DUCHESS. Two sausages and mash twice, please. *(But they pay no heed. JIMMIE kisses her hand.)*

LADY CLARA. Oh, Jimmie!

JIMMIE. Now, Clara, tell me, do you mind being poor?

LADY CLARA. How much poor?

MISS DEACON (*L.*). Two poached eggs on toast.

JIMMIE. Well, dearest, very poor.

LADY CLARA. I've never been well off, Jimmie. And the war has hit us very badly. There are five of us girls at home, and we seem to live on

herrings. Of course we could have sausages, but —not after five hours' shift at the canteen. As to dress I have to manage on £100 a year.

JIMMIE. A hundred a year seems quite rich to me. I only have 200 and my pay. And I want to stay in the Air Service always if they'll have me. So we shan't be a bit well off. But, later on, when we're grey-haired and stooping and want a bit of comfort I shall have crowds of money. I've got an aunt who's very fond of me, and when she dies I shall be quite cushy. So we'll get herrings when we're young and when we're old and haven't any teeth, we'll get the lobster salad. Clara darling, do you mind all that?

LADY CLARA. Jimmie dear, to tell the truth I don't mind a bit.

(He tries to embrace her.)

No, wait a moment. It's my mother. She will mind. She'll say "no" at the very top of her voice.

JIMMIE. That's a pity. But does it matter?

LADY CLARA. Well, it does in a way. She's very nice and I shouldn't like to worry her.

JIMMIE. But perhaps she'd understand. Don't laugh, Clara, but if you'll only care for me I feel I shall come through the war safe, but if you won't, well—I shan't mind if I never see England again.

LADY CLARA. Oh, Jimmie, I do care!

(They embrace.)

LADY PENZANCE'S VOICE (L., *furious*). Where are my poached eggs on toast?

LADY CLARA (*in JIMMIE'S arms, pensively*). Oh, heavens, where are they?

JIMMIE. Never mind!

LADY MABEL (*at hatch L.*). Clara! (*In a whisper.*) Clara!

LADY CLARA. It's Mabel! (*Goes to hatch.*) Yes?

LADY MABEL. Cat Violet is coming round. Push him out!

LADY CLARA. Jimmie! Fly! Lady Penzance is coming! Quick!

(JIMMIE *runs to window.*)

Hurry, there's a dear! Oh, do be quick.

JIMMIE. I'll come back.

(*He disappears.*)

(CLARA *rushes to sink.* LADY PENZANCE *enters.*)

LADY PENZANCE. Dear Lady Clara, where are my poached eggs? And Miss Ponsonby is champing for sausages. Such a strange delay. (*Crosses to hatch R.*) Oh, there they are. Quite cold! Isn't that a pity?

(*More china comes through.*)

LADY CLARA (*clearing china*). I'm very sorry, but there's been such a lot to do.

LADY PENZANCE. Yes, of course. I quite understand. I must get these eggs warmed up. Kitchen! Will you warm these up, please? Thank you. (*She turns.*) Oh, what a lot of dirty plates. I'll help you till the eggs come. (*Crossing to L.*)

LADY CLARA. Please don't trouble.

LADY PENZANCE. I don't mind at all as you've got so far behind. I'll scrape the plates. (*Crosses R.*) This man has left all his bacon. (*Scrapes the bacon into dustbin R.*)

LADY CLARA. Oh, that's the dustbin! The good meat goes in this tin.

LADY PENZANCE (*crosses to sink with plate*). What a bore! But no one will know. You'll never get through at this rate, will you? I daresay you were thinking of something else. One can't really do fine work, can one, unless one's whole soul is in it. (*Takes another plate from hatch R.*)

LADY CLARA. That's another bit of good meat!

LADY PENZANCE. Sewing now, one can do and still

think of something else. Now I wonder you've never thought of making pyjamas!

(Enter the DUCHESS with dish of tea leaves.)

DUCHESS (*cross R.C.*). What is the matter, Lady Penzance? Your tables are waiting.

LADY PENZANCE. I was just helping Lady Clara, who seems to be so behindhand.

LADY CLARA. I'm afraid I have been fearfully slow.

DUCHESS. She has had three people's work to do. Please lift the lid of the dustbin—these tea leaves.

(LADY PENZANCE does so.)

But what is this? Why is there an entire dinner service in the dustbin? Miss Deacon's been doing her bit, I presume.

LADY CLARA. I'm afraid so. *(Comes c.)*.

DUCHESS. And what do I see? Two bits of good bacon on the top? Was that our new treasure also?

LADY CLARA. No.

DUCHESS. Then who has put good bacon in here? Lady Clara, is it you?

LADY CLARA. I—I don't think so.

DUCHESS. Then it must be you, Violet. Please pick them out again.

LADY PENZANCE (*L. of bin*). Oh no, I really couldn't.

DUCHESS. Please pick them out again, Violet.

(LADY PENZANCE, making a face, does so.)

Put them in the other bin. Thank you. Now, Violet, since you have been so kind in helping I think you may as well do the washing up. The rush is over and Lady Clara can help clear the tables.

LADY CLARA. Oh, but, Duchess—

DUCHESS. Unfortunately Miss Deacon is perfectly useless.

LADY CLARA. Oh, please, Duchess, let me stay

here and finish! I couldn't bear to go and leave it all like this! Besides I look such a sight—my nose is purple.

DUCHESS. Nonsense! Your nose is quite normal—and if it feels purple it shows you need a change.

LADY CLARA. But really I'd rather stay—

DUCHESS (*with her dignity on*). Please, Lady Clara! I'll send Miss Deacon in, Violet. Do not let her touch the china. Let her merely give the kitchen orders. I have not had such a difficult day in the canteen since I came here. Now, Clara!

LADY CLARA. Do you really—?

DUCHESS. Yes, I do. Bring those eggs.

(*Exit with CLARA.*)

(LADY PENZANCE, *much annoyed, stamps and goes to sink, where she begins washing up. JIMMIE cautiously pushes open the window and enters. He sees the figure dressed exactly like CLARA at the sink, and coming near, puts his arm round her waist.*)

JIMMIE. Clara!

(LADY PENZANCE *turns and shrieks.*)

Great Scott! (*Backs to R.C.*)

LADY PENZANCE. Oh! So this is the explanation. (*Coming down L.C.*)

JIMMIE. I beg your pardon!

LADY PENZANCE. I should think so! May I ask what you are doing here?

JIMMIE. Well, it's rather hard to explain!

LADY PENZANCE. Very hard! But, perhaps, Lady Clara could help you?

JIMMIE. Lady Clara! Who is she?

LADY PENZANCE. I think Clara was the name? I'm sure the Duchess will be interested in such a coincidence. You came in by the window, I suppose?

JIMMIE. I'm afraid I did, but please don't blame any one else. It was entirely my fault. I know I oughtn't to have done it, but don't be angry!

LADY PENZANCE. It has nothing whatever to do with me. The Duchess of Froom is the head of this shift; it's for her to say what must be done. (*Going.*)

JIMMIE (*stopping her*). You surely won't tell?

LADY PENZANCE. So sorry, but I certainly shall.

JIMMIE. Please don't. Believe me, I didn't come in just for a lark, or anything silly like that. I love Lady Clara—I want her to marry me, and there was no way of meeting her but this.

LADY PENZANCE. Very romantic, isn't it? But not what the canteen is for. Lady Clara won't be very upset; she's quite used to this sort of thing.

JIMMIE. That's not true.

LADY PENZANCE. Impertinence won't help you. Of course it's very annoying to be found out.

JIMMIE. There's nothing to find out, except what I've told you. Please, Lady Penzance, don't be hard on me. I'm sure you're awfully kind really, and you'd hate to get another girl into a row. Won't you stand by us just this once? Ah, say you will!

(*Takes her hand. At this moment MISS DEACON enters and is horrified at the tableau.*)

MISS DEACON. Jimmie! (*Comes between them.*)

(*The two separate.*)

JIMMIE. Aunt Emily!

MISS DEACON. Oh, Jimmie, my darling boy! How did you come here?

LADY PENZANCE. Through the window, dear Miss Deacon. Is this your son?

MISS DEACON. My son! No! Certainly not! I am not married! It's my nephew, James Acland. And so you are the woman he loves!

LADY PENZANCE. I!!!

JIMMIE. No, no!

MISS DEACON. To think it should be you! Oh, Jimmie dear, have you thought? Oh, Lady Pen-

zance, forgive me, but have you considered? We aren't grand people at all and Jimmie is poor. And he is so impulsive!

JIMMIE. Aunt Emily!

MISS DEACON. And you could marry a Duke, or anything, couldn't you? And Jimmie is so young, only 23! Oh, please, won't you think it over!

LADY PENZANCE. My good woman! Do kindly stop making a speech. There's no occasion for these hysterics! I'm happy to say that this young man is absolutely nothing to do with me. I was amazed to find him in the pantry, and I do not come to the canteen to flirt with Tommies!

MISS DEACON (*infuriated*). Oh, indeed! Well, you might do a great deal worse. And *have*, if all they say is true!

LADY PENZANCE. What!!

JIMMIE. Aunt Emily!

MISS DEACON. There's no reason to insult my dear boy because he doesn't care for you! After all, he's one of our gallant gentlemen. He's been out to the front and been wounded and risked his life for England with the rest of our men, and that's more than you have done. And I think you ought to respect them all, however humble, and not sneer at them, our dear brave gallant soldiers! (*Weeps.*)

(*Enter the DUCHESS.*)

DUCHESS. What in the world is all this noise! (*Sees JIMMIE.*) Violet!

MISS DEACON. She's insulted him! I can't bear it! I don't see why I should! Whoever her father was!

DUCHESS. Kindly explain what all this means?

LADY PENZANCE. Duchess, this man has been carrying on an intrigue with Lady Clara Teviot.

DUCHESS. What!

JIMMIE. It is not an intrigue!

LADY PENZANCE. He got in through the window

and embraced me. He didn't know who I was.

MISS DEACON. No, he certainly didn't.

LADY PENZANCE. And he called me Clara.

DUCHESS (*to JIMMIE*). What have you to say?

JIMMIE. What she has just told you is true. It did happen, and I am deeply sorry to have caused all this trouble. I love Lady Clara Teviot, and I want to marry her. I had no other way of meeting her and I came in here.

DUCHESS. You did very wrong.

JIMMIE. I know it. I see it now. I do ask you to forgive me very humbly. But please don't blame Lady Clara in any way. She didn't know I was coming, and she tried her best to persuade me to go away.

DUCHESS (*opening the door*). Clara! (*Returns c.*)

JIMMIE. You won't be angry with her?

(The DUCHESS is silent.)

MISS DEACON (*softly*). Oh, please, Duchess! If you knew Jimmie—the dearest boy!

(The DUCHESS holds up her hand. CLARA enters.)

DUCHESS. Clara, this gentleman tells me he has been in the pantry with you this afternoon.

LADY CLARA (L.C.). Yes.

DUCHESS. Has it ever happened before?

LADY CLARA. No, Duchess, never.

DUCHESS. How did you get to know him?

LADY CLARA. In the canteen.

DUCHESS. He has asked you to marry him?

LADY CLARA. Yes.

DUCHESS. Do you care for him?

LADY CLARA. Yes.

MISS DEACON (R.C.). Oh, my dear child!

DUCHESS. Hush! You know you have broken our rules?

LADY CLARA. Yes, I know. But I couldn't help liking him, could I? And then all this happened.

LADY PENZANCE. That's the usual excuse, isn't it?

DUCHESS. You can go back to the tables, Lady Penzance. I don't need you any more.

LADY PENZANCE (*going up to door*). Oh, certainly. Quite romantic, isn't it? Picked up in the canteen. Of course we are rather short of men.

(*Exit.*)

MISS DEACON. She's a very nasty woman!

DUCHESS. You can go too, Miss Deacon.

MISS DEACON. Oh, but, Duchess, may I tell you? This is my nephew—the dearest boy. I do want him to be happy, and I like Lady Clara so much. She is so sweet and washes up so well. And I know I'm only a silly old thing, and I've dropped the china and spilt the tea and made the cocoa wrong, but I do want them to be happy, and I've got money, thanks to my dear father, and they shall have it *now*, and not wait till I'm gone, and, oh, Duchess! do be kind to my dear Jimmie.

JIMMIE (R.). Good old Aunt Emily!

DUCHESS. Well, this is a very strange affair, but I believe Mr. Acland meant well. I shall speak to Lady Penzance and I shall not report this on one condition. Mr. Acland must go straight to your mother, Clara, and put the whole matter before her.

JIMMIE. Thank you with all my heart. I'll go at once.

DUCHESS. And you must promise me never to get through the pantry window again.

JIMMIE. I promise.

LADY CLARA. Oh, Duchess, thank you—what a darling you are. Oh, dear Aunt Emily! (*Throws her arms round MISS DEACON.*)

MISS DEACON (*puts her across to JIMMIE*). There, there, dear child, I want only you and Jimmie to be happy, and, after all, what is there in the wide world more important than a happy marriage?

LADY PENZANCE'S VOICE (L., *furious*). Two poached eggs on toast!

(*All start guiltily and rush about the pantry. MISS DEACON takes a heap of plates to hatch.*)

VOICES (*off L. very loud*). Two fried eggs, please. One hot Horlick's. One poached egg on toast. Two sausages and mash.

(MISS DEACON *drops plates.*)

QUICK CURTAIN.

PROPERTY PLOT

SCENE I

INTERIOR SCENE.—Canteen.

Curtains—red and white draught-board pattern—to two windows P.C.—curtains to window up L.C.—with cords. Four deal tables covered with red and white draught-board oil-cloth.

On each—pink earthenware vase (two up stage filled with flowers), cruet (that on table down L. empty of mustard).

Tin tray, bowl, cloth on table up c.

Five Windsor chairs as plot.

Roll-top desk up L.C. with stool—cash-box with money, rolls of tickets, ledger, cigarettes, pencils, boxes of cigars, cigarettes to dress.

Two wicker arm-chairs on P.S. below windows.

Counter R.: on it bread-cutter, Horlick's advertisement, four glass dishes, with dough-nuts, Bath-buns, etc. Six empty glass dishes for jam, two knives, plate with two pieces of cut bread and butter, half dozen plates, one dozen dessertspoons, one dozen knives and forks in deal knife box, four stoneware water jugs.

On shelf below counter: plate of butter, two cups of cocoa (painted), with spoons, four cups, saucers and spoons, three small milk jugs, two dusters.

On bar behind counter : two urns (R. hot water, L. tea), cake (dummy), knife, two long loaves, two large stone jars (one of strawberry—almost empty—the other marmalade—full), wooden spoon in each, tin of cocoa, tin of knife powder, jug of milk, tin of mustard, jug of water, tins to dress.

On return counter : dish of half dozen pork pies, plate of sandwiches, pile of half dozen plates.

Dust-bin, scrap-bin, and enamel jug as plot.

Three large trays and one small oval tray leaning against counter.

Off R. Three plates of sausage and mash (hot).

One plate of two poached eggs on toast (dummy).

Two knives off door R. for Miss Deacon.

Coins for soldiers and airman.

SCENE II

PANTRY SCENE.

Roller blind on window O.P.

Windsor chair in window, dust-bin below window with dust-pan and brush, good-meat bin up R.C.

Up c. sink and long counter.

On it Horlick's patent milk maker and tins to dress, clean plates, cups, dishes and teapot—three cups, three plates and one teapot prepared to break ; in sink two tin bowls, with water, brush, soap-tin and soap ; two dish-cloths ; dirty plates ; two taps (R. dummy, L. with hot water laid on).

On counter P.S. knife machine with three knives in it, knives in box, dirty plates, etc.

Off hatch L. : slips of paper ; and piles of china, etc.

Tray of china (plates, cups, etc.).

More china (two cups of cocoa).

Airman's poached eggs.

More china.

Plates.

Plates.

Plates (two plates with cold bacon).

Off L.U.E. large plate of tea leaves.

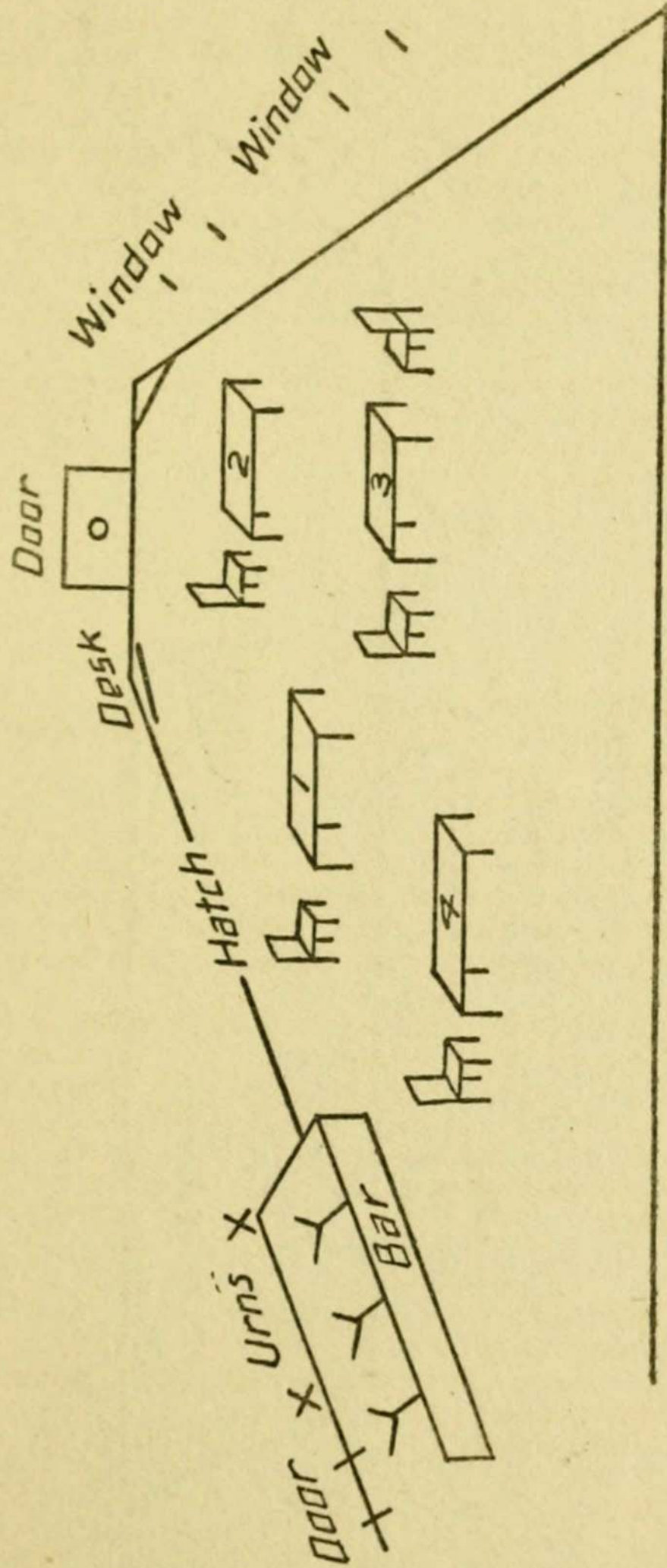
Off hatch R. nine plates sausage and mash (dummy).

Two plates poached eggs on toast.

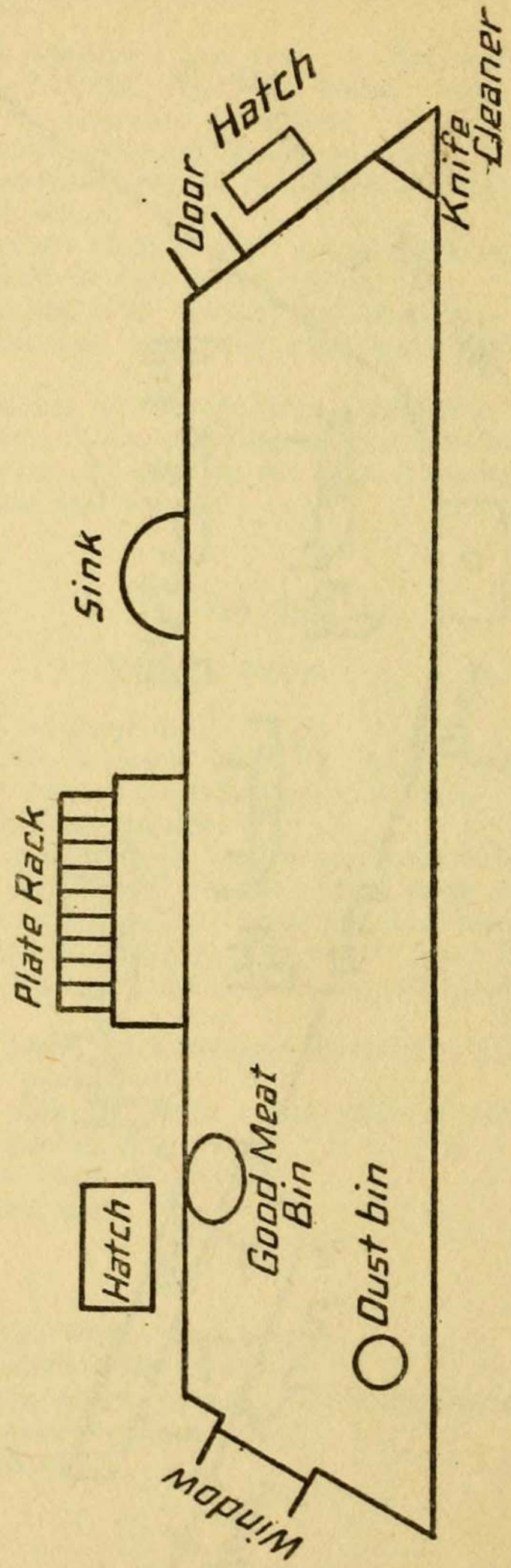
Four plates fried eggs.

One plate ham.

SCENE I.



SCENE II.





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