

CASTE

T W Robertson

HAWTREE: Tell us all about it- you know I've been away

GEORGE: Well, then, eighteen months ago

HAWTREE: Oh. cut that; you told me all about that. You went to a theatre, and saw a girl in a ballet, and you fell in love.

GEORGE: Yes. I found out that she was an amiable, good girl.

HAWTREE: Of course; cut that. We'll credit her with all the virtues and accomplishments.

GEORGE: Who worked hard to support a drunken father.

HAWTREE: Oh! the father's a drunkard, is he? The father does not inherit the daughter's virtues?

GEORGE: No. I hate him.

HAWTREE: Naturally. Quite so! quite so!

GEORGE: And she—that is, Esther—is very good to her younger sister.

HAWTREE: Younger sister also angelic, amiable, accom→plished, &c., &c.

GEORGE: Um—good enough, but got a temper—large tem→per. Well, with some difficulty I got to speak to her. I mean to Esther. Then I 'was allowed to see her to her door here.

HAWTREE: I know—pastry-cooks—Richmond dinner—and all that.

GEORGE: You're too fast. Pastry-cooks—yes. Richmond— no. Your knowledge of the world, fifty yards round barracks,- misleads you. I saw her nearly every day, and I kept on falling in love—falling and falling, till I thought I should never reach the bottom; then I met you.

HAWTREE: I remember the night when you told me; but I thought it was only an amourette. However, if the fire is a conflagration; subdue it; try dissipation.

GEORGE: I have.

HAWTREE: What success?

GEORGE: None; dissipation brought me bad health and self- contempt, a sick head and a sore heart.

HAWTREE: Foreign travel; absence makes the heart grow (*slight pause*)—stronger. Get leave and cut away..

GEORGE: I did get leave, and I did cut away; and while away, I was miserable and a gone-er coon than ever.

HAWTREE: What's to be done?

(*Sits cross-legged on chair, facing GEORGE*).

- GEORGE: Don't know. That's the reason I asked you to come over and see.
- HAWTREE: Of course, Dal, you're not such a sort as to think of marriage. You know what your mother is Either you are going to behave properly, with a proper regard for the world, and all that, you know; or you're going to do the other thing. Now, the question is, what do you mean to do? The girl is a nice girl, no doubt; but as to your making her Mrs. D'Alroy, the thing is out of the ques-tion.
- GEORGE: Why? -What should prevent me?
- HAWTREE: Caste!-the inexorable law of caste! The social law, so becoming and so good, that commands like to mate with like, and forbids a giraffe to fall in love with a squirrel.
- GEORGE: But my dear Bark
- HAWTREE: My dear Dal, all those marriages of people with common people are all very well in novels and in plays on the stage, because the real people don't exist, and have no relatives who exist, and no connections, and so no harm's done, and it's rather interesting to look at; but in real life with real relations, and real mothers, and so forth, it's absolute bosh. It's worse-it's utter social and personal annihilation and damnation.
- GEORGE: As to my mother, I haven't thought about her.
- HAWTREE: Of course not. Lovers are so damned selfish; they never think of anybody but themselves.
- GEORGE: My father died when I was three years old, and she married again before I was six, and married a Frenchman.
- HAWTREE: A nobleman of the most ancient families in France, of equal blood to her own. She obeyed the duties imposed on her by her station and by caste.
- GEORGE: Still, it caused a separation and a division between us, and I never see my brother, because he lives abroad. Of course the Marquise de St. Maur is my mother, and I look upon her with a sort of superstitious awe.
- HAWTREE: She's a grand Brahmin priestess.
- GEORGE: Just so; and I know I'm a fool. Now you're clever, Bark-a little too clever, I think. You're paying your devoirs-that 's the correct word, isn't it?-to Lady Florence Carberry, the daughter of a countess. She's above you-you've no title. Is she to forget her caste?
- HAWTREE: That argument doesn't apply. A man can be no more than a gentleman.
- GEORGE: `True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.'
- HAWTREE: Now, George, if you're going to consider this question from the point of view of poetry, you're off to No Man's Land, where I won't follow you.
- GEORGE: No gentleman can be ashamed of the woman he loves. No matter what her original station, once his wife, he raises her to his rank.

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HAWTREE: Yes, he raises her–her; but her connections–her relatives. How about them?