

The Diary of a Chambermaid

Octave Mirbeau



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For there is not a door, not a closet, not a drawer, not a bottle, not an article, that does not cry out to us: "Thief! thief!" And also the continuous vexation caused by that terrible inequality, that frightful disproportion in our destinies, which, in spite of familiarities, smiles, and presents, places between our mistresses and ourselves an impassable abyss, a whole world of sullen hatreds, suppressed desires, and future vengeances...

A French chambermaid, who has served in Paris, in the houses of nobility, the bourgeois, and professional people, finally enters the service of a rich couple living in the country, and there begins to keep a diary. In describing the events of her daily life and the people about her, she is frequently reminded of episodes in her past, and digresses to relate them. Thus her diary becomes a piquant panorama of social life and institutions. It is equal part social exposure, grim social satire, crammed with humor, bitterness and truth.

From fetishistic masters to lascivious butlers, rakes that would would prostitute her to the mean that corrupted her, Octave Mirbeau is a wonderfully subversive tale of servants emulating their masters. For the promise of a simple cafe proprietorship, Celestine will sacrifice more than just her morals.



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