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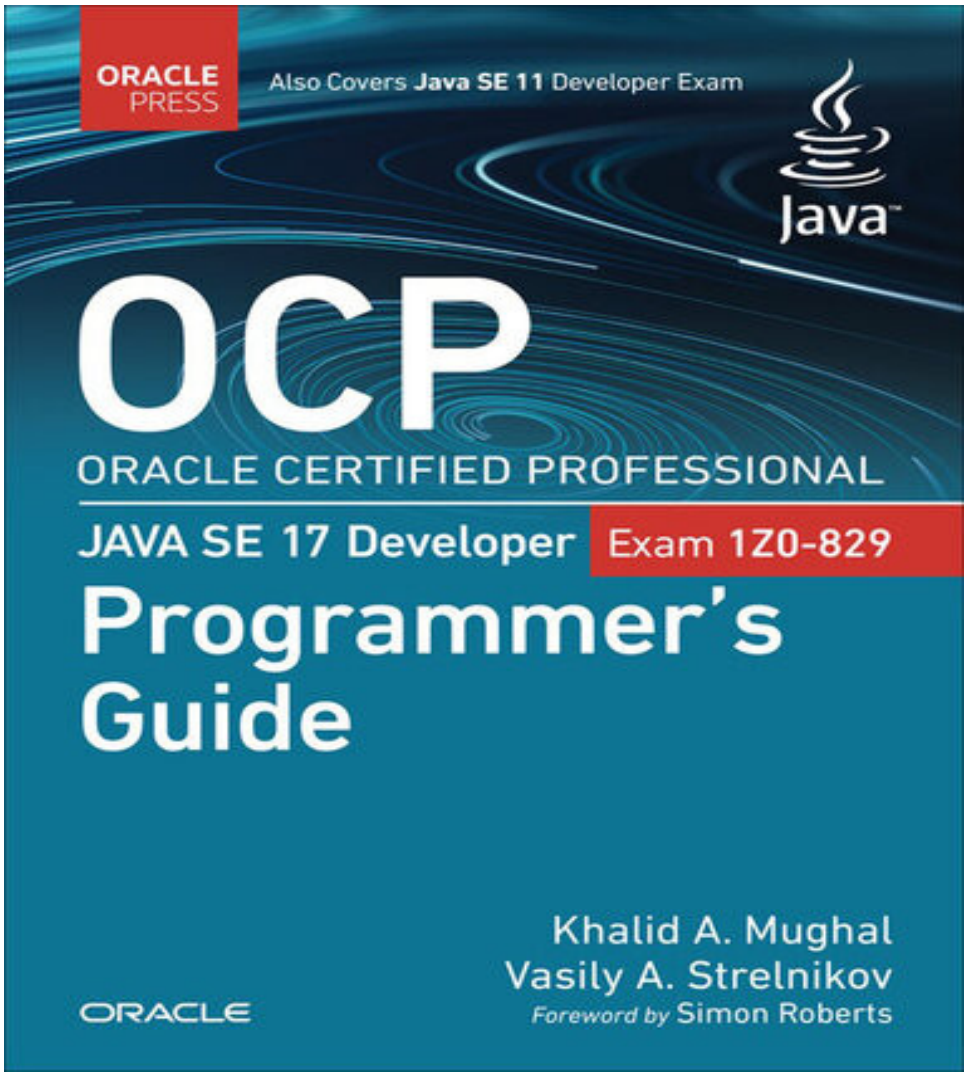

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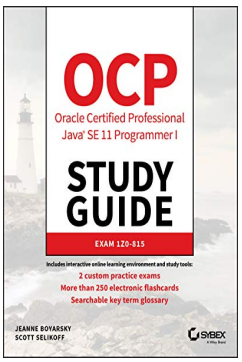

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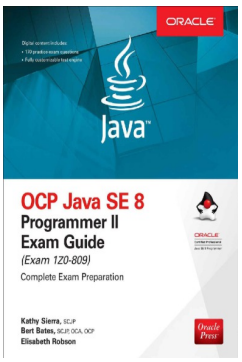

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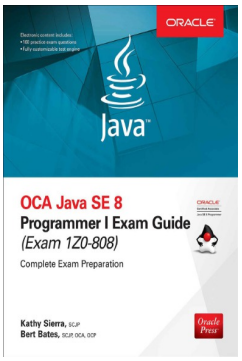

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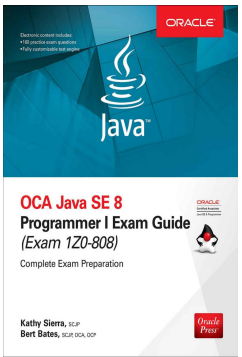

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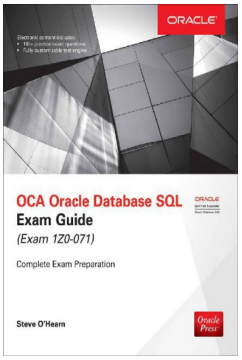

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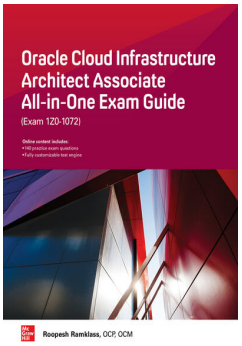

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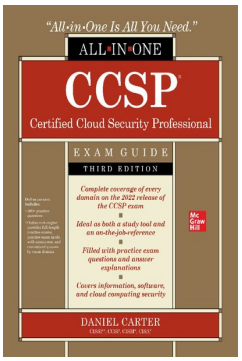

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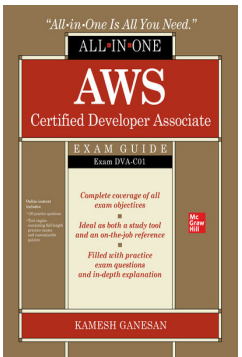

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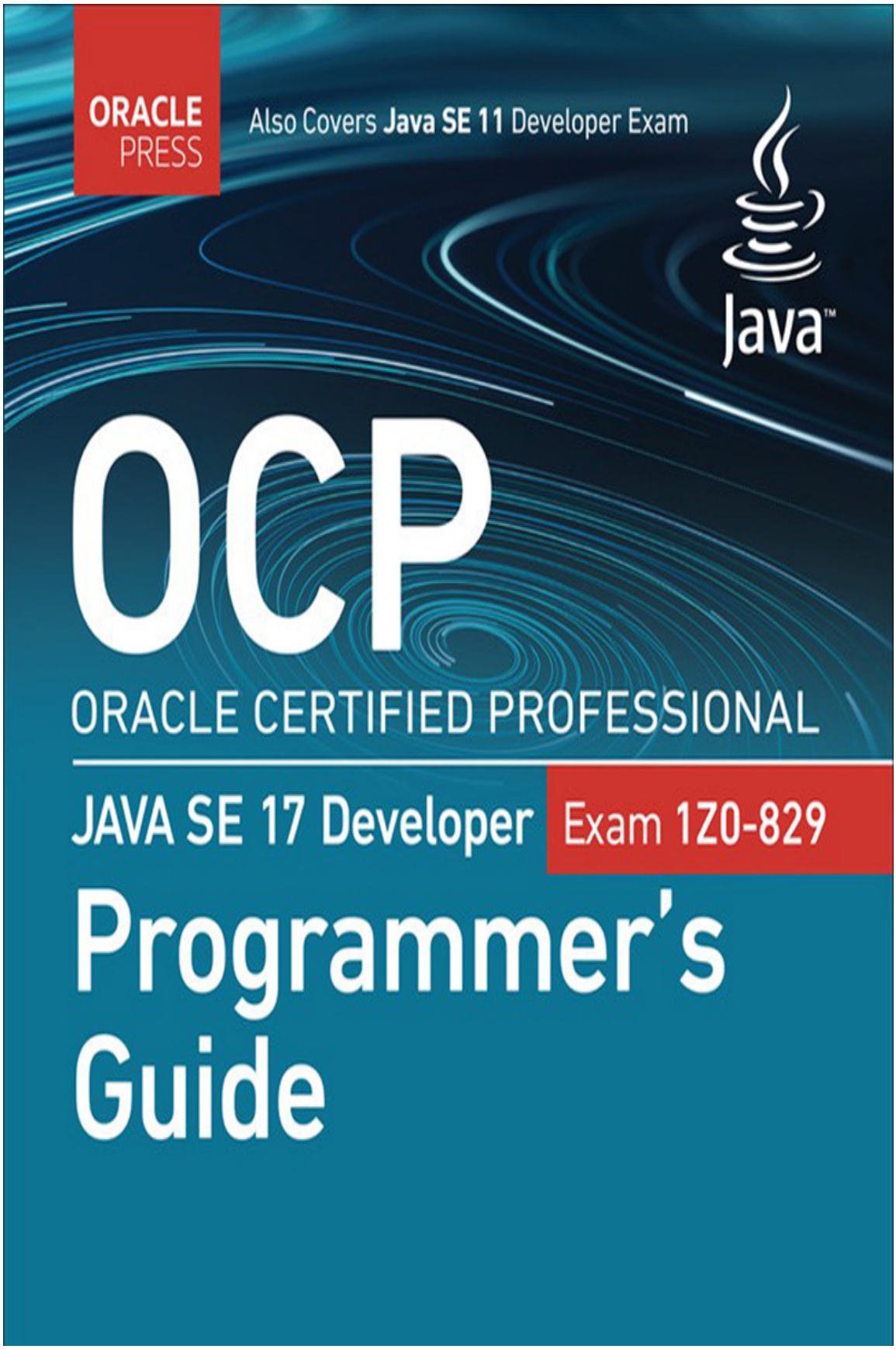
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To the loving memory of my mother, Zubaida Begum, and my father, Mohammed Azim.
And to the future generation: Tobias Albert, Ronja Johanne and Serine Begum—with all my love.
—K.A.M.

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condemned as pawings about. The Pinners never pawed, nor did any of their friends. Nice, that was, thought Sally wistfully; knew where you were. Among these here Lukes—so ran her dejected thoughts, with no intention of irreverence but unable, from her habit of language, to run otherwise—one never could tell where one wasn't going to be kissed next. Hands, hair, face—nothing seemed to come amiss to them when they once got going. Kept one on the hop; made one squirmy. And Mr. Luke—*he* was different here. But then he kept on being different. While as for that there lady——

At this point of her meditations Sally had turned her face to the pillow and buried it, and to her surprise she found the pillow was wet, and on looking into this she discovered that it was her own tears making it wet. Then she was ashamed. But being ashamed didn't stop her crying; once she had begun she seemed to get worse every minute. And the little maid, coming in with the hot water, had found her crying quite hard.

§

Mrs. Luke made short work of the little maid. She merely said, in that gentle voice before which all servants went down flat as ninepins, 'Hammond, I am surprised at your disturbing Mrs. Jocelyn's sleep—' and the little maid, very red and with downcast eyes, sidled deprecatingly out of the room.

Then Mrs. Luke took Sally in hand, sitting in her turn on the edge of the bed.

'Salvatia, dear—' she said, laying her hand on the arm outlined beneath the counterpane, and addressing the averted face. 'Salvatia, dear——'

Sally's tears dried up instantly, for she was much too much afraid to cry, but she buried her face still deeper, and kept her eyes tight shut.

'Don't make confidences to a servant, dear child,' said Mrs. Luke gently. 'Come to Jocelyn, or to me. We're the *natural* ones for you to come to in any of your little troubles. Oh, I know honeymoons are trying for a girl, and often, without knowing why, she wants a good cry. Isn't it so, Salvatia? Then come to me, or to your husband, when you feel like that, but don't say things to Hammond you may afterwards regret. You see, Salvatia dear, you're a lady, aren't you—a grown-up married lady now, and your place is with your husband and me. What, dear child? What did you say?'

Sally, however, hadn't said anything; she had only gulped, trying to choke down her misgivings at this picture of where her place was. With the lady? 'Shouldn't be surprised,' she thought, in great discomfort of mind as she more and more perceived that her marriage was going to include Mrs. Luke, 'if I ain't bitten off more as I can chew——' and immediately was shocked at herself for having thought it. Manners were manners. They had to be inside one, as well as out. No good saying Excuse me, Pardon, and Sorry, if inside you were thinking rude. God saw. God knew. And if you were only polite with your lips, and it wasn't going right through you, you were being, as she remembered from her father's teaching, a whited sepulchre.

And Mrs. Luke, contemplating the *profil perdu* on the pillow, the tip of the little ear, the lovely curve of the flushed cheek, and the tangle of bright hair, bent down and kissed it with a view to comfort and encouragement, and Sally, trying not to shrink farther into the pillow, said to herself, 'At it again.'

'Why did you cry, Salvatia?' asked Mrs. Luke, gently.

'Dunno,' murmured Sally, withdrawing into the furthermost corner of her shell.

'Then, dear, it was simply childish, wasn't it—to cry without a reason, and to cry before a servant too. Things like that lower one's dignity, Salvatia. And you haven't only your own dignity to consider now, but Jocelyn's, your husband's.'

'Oh dear,' sighed Sally to herself, recognising from the tone, through all its gentleness, that she was being given What for—a new kind, and one which it was extremely difficult to follow and understand, however painstakingly she listened. Which parts, for instance, of herself and Mr. Luke were their dignities? 'Good job I ain't a nursin' mother,' she thought, for she knew all about nursing mothers, 'or the lady'd turn my milk sour'—and immediately was much shocked at herself for having thought it. Manners were manners. They had to be inside one, as well as out. 'Never think what you wouldn't say,' had been her father's teaching; and fancy saying what she had just thought!

'*Oh Gawd*,' silently prayed Sally, who had been made to repeat a collect every Sunday to Mr. Pinner, and in whose mind bits had stuck, '*send down*

the 'Oly Spirit and cleanse the thoughts of my 'eart with 'im forasmuch as without thee I ain't able to....'

'Perhaps, dear,' said Mrs. Luke, finding it difficult in the face of Sally's silence to go on—not for want of things to say, for there were so many and all so important that she hardly knew where to begin,—'the best thing you can do is to bathe your eyes in the nice hot water Hammond has put ready, and tidy yourself a little, and then come downstairs. What do you think of that? Isn't it a good idea? It is dull for you up here alone. But bathe your eyes well. We don't want Jocelyn to see we've been crying, do we, dear child——'

And in the act of stooping to give Sally a parting kiss she heard her name being called, loud and cheerily, downstairs in the hall.

She started to her feet.

'Margery! Margery!' called the voice, with the cheerful insistence of one who, being betrothed, has the right to be cheerful and insistent in his fiancée's hall.

Edgar. Come hours before his time.

§

'Oh, hush, *hush*——' besought Mrs. Luke, hurrying down to him.

'Hush, eh?'

'Jocelyn——'

She glanced fearfully along the passage to the backdoor.

'He's arrived,' said Mr. Thorpe, not hushing at all. 'Know that. Saw his —well, you can hardly call it a car, can you—his contraption, outside the gate.'

'But I haven't had time yet to tell him——'

'That he's been a fool?' interrupted Mr. Thorpe.

'Come in here,' said Mrs. Luke, taking him by the arm and pressing him into the parlour, the door of which she shut.

'Brought you this,' said Mr. Thorpe, holding up a fish-basket, a big one, in front of her face. 'Salmon. Prime cut. Thought it would be a bit of something worth eating for your—well, you don't have dinner, do you—

meal, then, to-night. Came back early from the City on purpose to get it here soon enough.'

'How kind, how kind,' murmured Mrs. Luke distractedly.

'Plenty of it, too,' said Mr. Thorpe, slapping the basket.

'Too much, too much,' murmured Mrs. Luke, not quite sure whether it were the salmon she was talking about.

'Too much? Not a bit of it,' said Mr. Thorpe. 'I hate skimp.'

And he was going to put down his present on the nearest chair and then, she knew, fold her in one of those strong hugs that scrunched, when she bent forward and hastily took the basket from him. She couldn't, she simply couldn't, on this occasion be folded—not with Jocelyn sitting out there, all unsuspecting, under the cedar.

'Never mind the basket,' said Mr. Thorpe, who felt he had deserved well of Margery in this matter of the fish.

'I must take it to the kitchen at once,' said Mrs. Luke, evading his wide-opened arms, 'or it won't be ready in time for supper.'

'What? No thanks, eh?'

'Yes, yes—afterwards,' said Mrs. Luke, slipping away to the door. 'Jocelyn doesn't know yet. About us, I mean. I haven't had time——'

'Time, eh? Not had time to tell him, you've netted me?'

Mr. Thorpe took out his watch. 'Five minutes,' he said. 'Two would be enough, but I'll give you five. Trot along now, and come back to me sharp in five minutes. If you don't, I'll fetch you. Trot along.'

Trot along....

Mrs. Luke, shutting him into the parlour, asked herself, as she went down the passage bearing the heavy basket in both her delicate hands, how long it would take after marriage to weed out Mr. Thorpe's language. To be told to trot along, however, was so grotesque—she to trot, she, surely the most dignified of South Winch's ladies!—that it seemed to restore her composure. She would not trot. Nor would she, in the emotional sphere, do anything that corresponded to it. She would neither trot nor hurry; neither physically, nor spiritually. She declined to be bound by five minutes, and a watch in Edgar's hand. Really he must, somehow, come up more to her level, and not be so comfortably certain that she was coming down to his. And what a way to speak of their marriage—that she had netted him!

Frozen, then, once more into calm by Mr. Thorpe's words, she proceeded down the passage with almost more than her usual dignity, and as she passed the kitchen door she held out the fish-basket to the little maid, who came out of the shady corner where the sink was with reluctance, merely saying, 'Boil it.' Then, with her head held high as the heads of those are held who face the inevitable, she went out into the garden, and crossed the grass to where Jocelyn was waiting for her on the seat beneath the cedar.

This took her one minute out of the five. In another four Mr. Thorpe would come out too into the garden, to see why she didn't return. Let him, thought Mrs. Luke, filled with the courage of the cornered. This thing couldn't be done in five minutes; it couldn't be fired off at Jocelyn's head like a pistol. Foolish Edgar.

§

'Well, Mother?' said Jocelyn, getting up as she approached.

He had been smoking, content to leave whatever it was Sally had been doing in his mother's capable hands, yet wishing to goodness Sally hadn't done it. This trick of wanting to be with servants must revolt his mother. It revolted him; how much more, then, his fastidious mother.

'I can guess what it is, I'm afraid,' he said, as she sat down beside him.

'No,' said Mrs. Luke. 'You haven't any idea.'

'*What* has she been doing, Mother?' he asked, seriously alarmed, and throwing away his cigarette.

'Salvatia? Nothing. Nothing that matters, poor dear child. It's not about her I want to talk. It's about Mr. Thorpe.'

'Mr. Thorpe?'

'Yes. Abergeldie. That's Mr. Thorpe's. That's why you are going there—because it is Mr. Thorpe's.'

'But why should we——?'

'Now Jocelyn,' she interrupted, 'please keep well in mind that Mr. Thorpe is the most absolutely reliable, trustworthy, excellent, devoted man. I can find no flaw in his character. He is generous to a fault—really to a fault. He has a perfect genius for kindness. Indeed, I can't tell you how highly I think of him.'

Jocelyn's heart went cold and heavy with foreboding.

There was a little silence.

‘Yes, Mother. And?’ he said, after a minute.

‘And he is rich. Very.’

‘Yes, Mother. And?’ said Jocelyn, as she paused.

‘When I got your first letter I was, of course, very much upset,’ said Mrs. Luke, looking straight in front of her.

‘Yes, Mother. And?’ said Jocelyn, for she paused again.

‘Everything seemed to go to pieces—all I had believed in and hoped for.’

There was a longer pause.

‘Yes, Mother. And?’ said Jocelyn at last, keeping his voice as level as possible.

‘I’m not a religious woman, as you know. I hadn’t got God.’

‘No, Mother. So?’

‘So I—I turned to Mr. Thorpe.’

‘Yes, Mother. Quite.’

The bitterness of Jocelyn’s soul was complete. A black fog of anger, jealousy, wounded trust, hurt pride and cruellest disappointment engulfed him.

‘Why not say at once,’ he said, lighting another cigarette with hands he was grimly determined should be perfectly steady, ‘that you are going to marry him?’

‘If it hadn’t been for your marriage it never would have happened,’ said Mrs. Luke.

‘Quite,’ said Jocelyn, very bitter, pitching the newly-lit cigarette away. ‘Oh, quite.’

Sally again. Always, at the bottom of everything, Sally.

Then he thought, ashamed, ‘My God, I’m a mean cur’—and sat in silence, his head in his hands, not looking up at all, while his mother did her best to make him see Mr. Thorpe as she wanted him to be seen.

In her low voice, the low, educated voice Jocelyn had so much loved, she explained Mr. Thorpe and his advantages, determined that at this important, this vital moment she would not allow herself to be vexed by anything Jocelyn said.

He, however, said nothing. It simply was too awful for speech—his mother, who never during his whole life had shown signs of wanting to marry, going now, now that she was at an age when she might surely, in Jocelyn's twenty-two year old vision, be regarded as immune, to give herself to a complete stranger, and leave him, her son who needed her, God knew, more than ever before, to his fate. That he should hate this Thorpe with a violent hatred seemed natural. Who cared for his damned money? Why should Sally—his mother kept on harping on that—be going to be expensive? As if money, much money, according to what his mother was saying, now that Sally had come on the scene, Sally who was used to being penniless, was indispensable. Masters? What need was there for masters? His mother could teach her. Clothes? Why, whatever she put on seemed to catch beauty from her—he had seen that in the shop in London where he bought the wrap: every blessed thing the women tried on her, however unattractive to begin with, the minute it touched her body became part of beauty. And how revolting, anyhow—marriage. Oh, how he hated the thought of it, how he wanted now beyond anything in the world to be away from its footling worries and complications, away from women altogether, and back at Cambridge, back in a laboratory, absorbed once more in the great tranquil splendours of research!

'He is in the sitting-room,' said Mrs. Luke, when she had said everything she could think of that she wished Jocelyn to suppose was true.

'Who is?' said Jocelyn.

'Ah, I was afraid you would be angry,' she said, putting her hand on his arm, 'but I hoped that when it was all explained you would understand, and see the great, the immense advantages. Apparently you don't, or——' she sighed—'won't. Then I must be patient till you do, or will. But Mr. Thorpe is waiting.'

'Who cares?' inquired Jocelyn, his head in his hands; and it suddenly struck Mrs. Luke that Mr. Thorpe was waiting very quietly. The five minutes must have been up long ago; she must have been sitting there quite twenty, and yet he hadn't come after her as he had threatened. Knowing him, as she did, for a man absolutely of his word, this struck her as odd.

'Dear Jocelyn,' she said, remembering the fits of dark obstinacy that had at times seized her boy in his childhood, and out of which he had only been

got by the utmost patience and gentleness, ‘I won’t bother you to come in now and see Mr. Thorpe. But as he is going to be your host to-night——’

‘He isn’t,’ said Jocelyn, his head still in his hands, and his eyes still fixed on the grass at his feet.

‘But, *dearest* boy——’

‘I decline to go near him.’

‘But there’s *positively* no room here for you both——’

‘There’s London, and hotels, I suppose?’

‘Oh, Jocelyn!’

She looked at him in dismay. He didn’t move. She again put her hand on his arm. He took no notice. And aware, from past experiences, that for the next two hours at least he would probably be completely inaccessible to reason, she got up with a sigh and left him.

Well, she had told him; she had done what she had to do. She would now go back to Mr. Thorpe.

And she did go back; and opening the parlour door slowly and gently, for she was absorbed in painful thought, she found Mr. Thorpe sitting on the sofa, busily kissing Sally.

X

§

THE following brief dialogue had taken place between him and Sally, before he began to kiss:

‘Crikey!’ he exclaimed, on her appearing suddenly in the doorway.

‘Pardon?’ said she, hesitating, and astonished to find a strange old gentleman where she had thought to find the Lukes.

‘It’s crikey all right,’ he said, staring. ‘Know who I am?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Sir, eh?’

He took a step forward and shut the door.

‘Father—that’s who I am. Yours. Father-in-law. Same thing as father, only better,’ said he. ‘What does one do to a father, eh? Kisses him. How do, daughter. Kiss me.’

Sally kissed him; or rather, having no reason to doubt that the old gentleman was what he said he was, docilely submitted while he kissed her, regarding his behaviour as merely another example of the inability of all Lukes to keep off pawings; and though she was mildly surprised at the gusto with which this one gave himself up to them, she was pleased to notice his happy face. If only everybody would be happy she wouldn’t mind anything. She hadn’t felt that the lady’s kisses were expressions of happiness, and Mr. Luke’s, when he started, made her think of a funeral that had got the bit between its teeth and couldn’t stop running away, more than of anything happy. Father-in-law, on the contrary, seemed as jolly as a sand-boy. And anyhow it was better than having to talk.

This was the way the situation arose in which Mrs. Luke found them.

‘Making friends with my new daughter,’ said Mr. Thorpe, not without confusion, on perceiving her standing looking on.

‘Quite,’ said Mrs. Luke, who sometimes talked like Jocelyn.

§

Now to have caught Mr. Thorpe kissing somebody else—she didn't like it when he kissed her, but she discovered she liked it still less when it was somebody else—was painful to Mrs. Luke. Every aspect of it was painful. The very word *caught* was an unpleasant one; and she felt that to be placed in a position in life in which she might be liable to catch would be most disagreeable. What she saw put everything else for the moment out of her head. Edgar must certainly be told that he couldn't behave like this. No marriage could stand it. If a woman couldn't trust her husband not to humiliate her, whom could she trust? And to behave like this to Salvatia, of all people! Salvatia, who was to live with them at Abergeldie during term time, while Jocelyn pursued his career undisturbed at Cambridge—this had been another of Mrs. Luke's swift decisions,—live with them, and be given advantages, and be trained to become a fit wife for him,—how could any of these plans be realised if Edgar's tendency to kiss, of which Mrs. Luke had only been too well aware, but which she had supposed was concentrated entirely on herself, included also Salvatia?

And if the situation was disagreeable to Mrs. Luke, it was very nearly as disagreeable to Mr. Thorpe. He didn't like it one little bit. He knew quite well that there had been gusto in his embrace, and that Margery must have seen it. 'Damn these women,' he thought, unfairly.

The only person without disagreeable sensations was Sally, who, unconscious of anything but dutiful behaviour, was standing wiping her face with a big, honest-looking handkerchief, observing while she did so that she wasn't half hot.

'Jocelyn is in the garden, Salvatia,' said Mrs. Luke.

Regarding this as mere news, imparted she knew not to what end, Sally could think of nothing to say back, though it was evident from the lady's eyes that she was expected to make some sort of a reply. She searched, therefore, in her *répertoire*, and after a moment said, 'Fancy that,' and went on wiping her face.

'Won't you go to him?' then said Mrs. Luke, speaking very distinctly.

'Right O,' said Sally, hastily then, for the lady's eyebrows had suddenly become rather frightening; and, stuffing the handkerchief yard by yard into her pocket as she went, she exquisitely slid away.

'I'll be off too,' said Mr. Thorpe briskly, who for the first time didn't feel at home with Margery. 'Back on the tick of ten to fetch 'em both——'

‘Oh, but please—wait just one moment,’ said Mrs. Luke, raising her hand as he began to move towards the door.

‘Got to have my wigging first, eh?’ he said, pausing and squaring his shoulders to meet it.

‘What is a wigging, Edgar?’ inquired Mrs. Luke gently, opening her clear grey eyes slightly wider.

‘Oh Lord, Margery, cut the highbrow cackle,’ said Mr. Thorpe. ‘Why shouldn’t I kiss the girl? She’s my daughter-in-law. Or will be soon.’

‘Really, Edgar, it would be very strange if you didn’t wish to kiss her,’ said Mrs. Luke, still with gentleness. ‘Anybody would wish to.’

‘Well, then,’ said Mr. Thorpe sulkily; for not only didn’t he see what Margery was driving at, but for the first time he didn’t think her particularly good-looking. Moth-eaten, thought Mr. Thorpe, eyeing her. A lady, of course, and all that; but having to sleep later on with a moth-eaten lady wouldn’t, it suddenly struck him, be much fun. ‘Need a pitch dark night to turn *her* into a handsome woman,’ he thought indelicately; but then he was angry, because he had been discovered doing wrong.

‘I wanted to tell you,’ said Mrs. Luke, ignoring for the moment what she had just witnessed, ‘that I have told Jocelyn.’

And Mr. Thorpe was so much relieved to find she wasn’t pursuing the kissing business further that he thought, ‘Not a bad old girl, Marge—’ in his thoughts he called her Marge, though not to her face because she didn’t like it—‘not a bad old girl. Better than Annie, anyhow.’

Yes, better than Annie; but less good—ah, how much less good—than young beauty.

‘That’s all right, then,’ he said, cheerful again. ‘Nothing like coughing things up.’

No—Edgar was too rough a diamond, Mrs. Luke said to herself, shrinking from this dreadful phrase. She hadn’t heard this one before. Was there no end to his dreadful phrases?

‘He is much annoyed,’ she said, her eyebrows still drawn together with the pain Mr. Thorpe’s last sentence had given her.

‘Annoyed, eh? Annoyed, is he? I like that,’ said Mr. Thorpe vehemently, his cheerfulness vanishing. Annoyed because his mother was making a

rattling good match? Annoyed because the richest man for miles round was taking her on for the rest of her life? Of all the insolent puppies....

Mr. Thorpe had no words with which to express his opinion of Jocelyn; no words, that is, fit for a drawing-room—he supposed the room he was in would be called a drawing-room, though he was blest if there was a single stick of stuff in it to justify such a name—for, having now seen Sally, his feeling for Jocelyn, which had been one of simple contemptuous indifference, had changed into something much more active. Fancy *him* getting her, he thought—him, with only a beggarly five hundred a year, him, who wouldn't even be able to dress her properly. Why, a young beauty like that ought to be a blaze of diamonds, and never put her feet to the ground except to step out of a Rolls.

'I'm very sorry, Edgar,' said Mrs. Luke, 'but he says he doesn't wish to accept your hospitality.'

'Doesn't wish, eh? Doesn't wish, does he? I like that,' said Mr. Thorpe, more vehemently still.

That his good-natured willingness to help Marge out of a fix, and his elaborate preparations for the comfort of the first guests he had had for years should be flouted in this way not only angered but hurt him. And what would the servants say? And he had taken such pains to have the bridal suite filled with everything calculated to make the young prig, who thought his sorts of brains were the only ones worth having, see for himself that they weren't. Brains, indeed. What was the good of brains that you couldn't get enough butter out of to butter your bread properly? Dry-bread brains, that's what this precious prig's were. Crust-and-cold-water brains. Brains? Pooh.

This last word Mr. Thorpe said out loud; very loud; and Mrs. Luke shrank again. It strangely afflicted her when he said pooh.

'And I'm afraid,' she went on, her voice extra gentle, for it did seem to her that considering the position she had found him in Edgar was behaving rather high-handedly, 'that if he knew you had kissed his wife, kissed her in the way you did kiss her, he might still less wish to.'

'*Now* we've got it!' burst out Mr. Thorpe, slapping his thigh. '*Now* we're getting down to brass tacks!'

'Brass tacks, Edgar?' said Mrs. Luke, to whom this expression, too, was unfamiliar.

‘Spite,’ said Mr. Thorpe.

‘Spite?’ repeated Mrs. Luke, her grey eyes very wide.

‘Feminine spite. Don’t believe a word about him not wanting to come and stay at my place. You’ve made it up. Because I kissed the girl.’

And Mr. Thorpe in his anger inquired of Mrs. Luke whether she had ever heard about hell holding no fury like a woman scorned—for in common with other men who know little poetry he knew that—and he also called her Marge to her face, because he no longer saw any reason why he shouldn’t.

‘My *dear* Edgar,’ was all she could find to say, her shoulders drawn up slightly to her ears as if to ward off these blows of speech, violence never yet having crossed her path.

She didn’t get angry herself. She behaved with dignity. She remembered that she was a lady.

She did, however, at last suggest that perhaps it would be better if he went away, for not only was he making more noise than she cared about—really a most noisy man, she thought, gliding to the window and softly shutting it—but it had occurred to her as a possibility that Salvatia, out in the back garden, might be telling Jocelyn that Mr. Thorpe had kissed her, and that on hearing this Jocelyn, who in any case was upset, might be further upset into coming and joining Edgar and herself in the sitting-room.

This, she was sure, would be a pity; so she suggested to Mr. Thorpe that he should go.

‘Oh, I’m *going* all right,’ said Mr. Thorpe, who somehow, instead of being the one to be wigged, was the one who was wigging.

‘We’ll talk it all over quietly to-morrow, dear Edgar,’ said Mrs. Luke, attempting to placate.

‘Dear Edgar, eh?’ retorted Mr. Thorpe, not to be shaken by fair words from his conviction that Marge regarded herself as a woman scorned, and therefore that she outrivalled the worst of the ladies of hell. ‘Fed-up Edgar’s more like it,’ he said; and strode, banging doors, out of the house.

§

Mrs. Luke stood motionless where he had left her. What an unexpected turn things had taken. How very violent Edgar really was; and how rude. A woman scorned? Feminine spite? Such expressions, applied to herself,

would be merely ludicrous if they hadn't, coming from Edgar in connection with Salvatia, been so extraordinarily rude.

In connection with Salvatia. She paused on the thought. All this was because of Salvatia. From beginning to end, everything unpleasant and difficult that had happened to her during the last few weeks was because of Salvatia.

But she mustn't be unfair. If Salvatia had been the cause of her engagement to Edgar, she was now being the cause of its breaking off. For surely, surely, breaking off was the only course to take?

'Let me *think*,' said Mrs. Luke, pressing her hand to her forehead, which was burning.

Yes; surely no amount of money could make up for the rest of Edgar? Surely no amount, however great, could make up for the hourly fret and discomfort of having to live with the wrong sort—no, not necessarily the wrong sort, but the entirely different sort, corrected Mrs. Luke, at pains to be just—of mind? Besides, of what use could she be to Jocelyn and Salvatia, married to Edgar, if Jocelyn wouldn't go near him, and Salvatia couldn't because of his amorousness? It would merely make the cleavage between herself and Jocelyn complete at the very moment when he more than ever before in his life needed her. And the grotesqueness of accusing *her*, who had remained so quiet and calm, of being a fury, the sheer imbecility of imagining *her* actuated by feminine spite! Really, really, said Mrs. Luke to herself, drawing her shoulders up to her ears again at the recollection. And then there was—no, she turned her mind away from those expressions of his; she positively couldn't bear to think of cough it up, bunkum, and pooh.

She went to her little desk and sat down to write a letter to Mr. Thorpe, because in some circumstances letters are so much the best; nor did she want to lose any time, in case it should occur to him too to write a letter, and it seemed to her important that when it comes to shedding anybody one should get there first, and be the shedder rather than the shed; and she had got as far as *Dear Edgar, I feel that I owe it to you*—when Jocelyn appeared in the doorway, with blazing eyes.

§

What had taken place in the garden between Jocelyn and Sally was this:

She had gone out obediently to him, as she had been told. ‘Do as you’re told,’ her father and mother had taught her, ‘and not much can go wrong with you.’ Innocent Pinners. Inadequate teaching. It was to lead her, before she had done, into many difficulties.

She went, then, as she had been told, over to where she saw Jocelyn, and sat down beside him beneath the cedar.

He didn’t move, and didn’t look up, and she sat for a long while not daring to speak, because of the expression on his face.

Naturally she thought it was his stomach again, for what else could it be? Last time she had seen him he was smiling as happy as happy, and kissing his mother’s hand. Clear to Sally as daylight was it that he was having another of those attacks to which her father had been such a martyr, and which were familiar to the Pinners under the name of the Dry Heaves. So too had her father sat when they came on, frowning hard at nothing, and looking just like ink. The only difference was that Jocelyn, she supposed because of being a gentleman, held his head in his hands, and her father held the real place the heaves were in. But presently, when the simple remedy he took on these occasions had begun to work, he was better; and it seemed to Sally a great pity that she should be too much afraid of Usband to tell him about it,—a great pity, and wrong as well. Hadn’t she promised God in church the day she was married to look after him in sickness and in health? And here he was sick, plain as a pikestaff.

So at last she pulled her courage together, and did tell him.

‘Father’s stomach,’ she began timidly, ‘was just like that.’

‘What?’ said Jocelyn, roused from his black thoughts by this surprising remark, and turning his head and looking at her.

‘You got the same stomachs,’ said Sally, shrinking under his look but continuing to hold on to her courage, ‘you and Father ’as. Like as two peas.’

Jocelyn stared at her. What, in the name of all that was fantastic, had Pinner’s stomach to do with him?

‘Sit just like that, ’e would, when they come on,’ continued Sally, lashing herself forward.

‘Do you mind,’ requested Jocelyn with icy politeness, ‘making yourself clear?’

‘Now, Mr. Luke, don’t—please don’t talk that way, begged Sally. ‘I only want to tell you what Father did when they come on.’

‘When what comes on, and where?’

‘These ’ere dry ’eaves,’ said Sally. ‘You’d be better if you’d take what Father did. ’Ad them somethin’ awful, ’e did. And you’d be better——’

But her voice faded away. When Jocelyn looked at her like that and said not a word, her voice didn’t seem able to go on talking, however hard she tried to make it.

And Jocelyn’s thoughts grew if possible blacker. This was to be his life’s companion—his *life’s*, mind you, he said to himself. Alone and unaided, he was to live out the years with her. A child; and presently not a child. A beauty; and presently not a beauty. But always to the end, now that his mother had deserted him, unadulterated Pinner.

‘There’s an h in heaves,’ he said, glowering at her, his gloom really inspissate. ‘I don’t know what the beastly things are, but I’m sure they’ve got an h in them.’

‘Sorry,’ breathed Sally humbly, casting down her eyes before his look.

Then he became aware of the unusual flush on her face,—one side was quite scarlet.

‘Why are you so red?’ he asked suddenly.

‘Me?’ said Sally, starting at the peremptoriness in his tone. ‘Oh—*that*.’

She put up her hand and felt her burning cheek. ‘Father-in-law,’ she said.

‘Father *who*?’ asked Jocelyn, astonished out of his gloom.

‘In-law,’ said Sally. ‘ ’Im in the ’ouse. The old gentleman,’ she explained, as Jocelyn stared in greater and greater astonishment.

Thorpe? The man who was to be his stepfather? But why——?

A flash of something quite, quite horrible darted into his mind. ‘But why,’ he asked, ‘are you so very red? What has that to do——?’

He broke off, and caught hold of her wrist.

‘Daresay it ain’t the gentleman’s day for shavin’,’ suggested Sally.

And on Jocelyn’s flinging away her wrist and jumping up, she watched him running indoors with recovered complacency. ‘Soon be better now,’ she said to herself, pleased; for her father always ran like that too, just when the heaves were going to leave off.

§

And she was right. Next time she saw him, which was at supper, he was quite well. His face had cleared, he could eat his food, and he kissed the top of her head as he passed behind her to his chair.

'Well, *that's* over,' thought Sally, much relieved, though still remaining, through her lowered eyelashes, watchful and cautious. With these Lukes one never knew what was going to happen next; and as she sat doing her anxious best with the forks and other pitfalls of the meal, and the little maid came in and out, free in her movements, independent, able to give notice and go at any moment she chose, Sally couldn't help comparing her lot with her own, and thinking that Ammond was singularly blest. And then she thought what a wicked girl she was to have such thoughts, and bent her head lower over her plate in shame, and Mrs. Luke said gently, 'Sit up, dear child.'

That night a bed was made for Jocelyn on the sitting-room sofa, Sally slept upstairs in the tiny Spartan room he used to sleep in, and Abergeldie wasn't mentioned. Nor did they have Mr. Thorpe's salmon for supper, because the idea of eating poor Edgar's gift seemed, in the circumstances, cynical to Mrs. Luke; so Hammond ate it, and never afterwards could be got to touch fish.

Mr. Thorpe had now become poor Edgar to Mrs. Luke. Only a few hours before, he had been thought of as a godsend. Well, he shouldn't have kissed Salvatia. But indeed what a mercy that he had, for it brought clarity into what had been troubled and obscure. Without this action—and it wasn't just kissing, it was enjoyment—Mrs. Luke would, she knew, have gone stumbling on, doing her duty by him, trying to get everybody to like each other and be happy in the way that was so obviously the best for them, the way which would quite certainly have been the best for them if poor Edgar had been as decent as, at his age, it was reasonable to expect. She could, she was sure, have managed Jocelyn, for had she not managed him all his life? And after marriage she could, she had no doubt, have managed Edgar too; but what hard work it would have been, what a ceaseless weeding, to take only one aspect of him, of his language!

The enjoyment—it was the only word for it—with which he had kissed Salvatia had spared her all these pains. Certainly it was beneath her dignity, beyond her patience, altogether outside any possible compensation by

wealth, to marry and manage a man who enjoyed kissing other women. That she couldn't do. She could do much, but not that. Like the Canon's wife, she would have forgiven everything except enjoyment. And she wrote an urbane letter—why not? Surely finality can afford to be urbane?—after having had a talk with Jocelyn when he arrived with blazing eyes in the sitting-room, a talk which began in violence—his,—and continued in patience—hers,—and ended in peace—theirs; and by the time they sat down to supper the letter, sealed—it seemed to be the sort of letter one ought to seal—was already lying in the pillar box at the corner of the road, and the last trying weeks were wiped out as though they had never been.

At least, that was Mrs. Luke's firm intention, that they should be wiped out; and she thought as she gazed at Jocelyn, so content again, eating a supper purged of the least reminder of Mr. Thorpe, that the *status quo ante* was now thoroughly restored. Ah, happy *status quo ante*, thought Mrs. Luke, whose mind was well-furnished with pieces of Latin, happy *status quo ante*, with her boy close knit to her again, more than ever unable to do without her, and she in her turn finding the very breath of her being and reason for her existence in him and all his concerns. Not a cloud was now between them. She had quickly reassured him as to Salvatia's red cheek,—Mr. Thorpe's greeting, she had explained, was purely perfunctory, and witnessed by herself, but the child had such a delicate skin that a touch would mark it.

'You mustn't ever bruise her,' she had said, smiling. 'It would show for weeks.'

'Oh, Mother!' Jocelyn had said, smiling too, so happy, he too, to know he had been lifted out of the region of angers, out of the black places where people bruise hearts, not bodies, and in so doing mangle their own.

Yes, she could manage Jocelyn. Tact and patience were all that was needed. Never, never should he know of Edgar's amorousness, any more than he was ever, ever to know of Edgar's other drawbacks. Let him think of him in the future as the kind, reliable rich man who once had wanted to marry her, but whom she had refused for her boy's sake. She made this sacrifice willingly, happily, for her darling son—so she gave Jocelyn to understand, during the talk they had alone together in the sitting-room.

The truth? No, not altogether the truth, she admitted as she sat eating her supper, her pure, pure supper, with all those horrible gross delicacies, under

which she had so long groaned, banished out of sight, her glance resting fondly first on her boy, and then in amazed admiration, renewed with a start each time she looked at her, on the flame of loveliness that was her boy's wife. No; what she had said to Jocelyn in the sitting-room wasn't altogether the truth, she admitted that, but the mutilated form of it called tact. Or, rather, not mutilated, which suggested disfigurement, but pruned. Pruned truth. Truth pruned into acceptability to susceptibility. Was not that tact? Was not that the nearest one dared go in speech with the men one loved? They seemed not able to bear truth whole. Children, they were. And the geniuses—she smiled proudly and fondly at Jocelyn's dark head bent over his plate—were the simplest children of them all.

Yes, she thought, the *status quo ante* was indeed restored, and everything was going to be as it used to be. The only difference was Salvatia.

§

Before a week was over Mrs. Luke left out the word 'only' from this sentence, and was inclined to say—again with Wordsworth; curious how that, surely antiquated, poet cropped up—*But oh, the difference*, instead. Salvatia was—well, why had one been given intelligence if not to cope, among other things, with what Salvatia was?

That first night of reunion with Jocelyn, Mrs. Luke had lain awake nearly all of it, making plans. Very necessary, very urgent it was to get them cut and dried by the morning. The headache she had had earlier in the evening vanished before the imperativeness of thinking and seeing clearly. Many things had to be thought out and decided, some of them sordid, such as the question of living now that there was another mouth to feed, and others difficult, such as the best line to take with South Winch in regard to Mr. Thorpe. She thought and thought, lying on her back, her hands clasped behind her head, staring into the darkness, frowning in her concentration.

Towards morning she saw that the line to take with South Winch about poor Edgar was precisely the line she had taken with Jocelyn: she had given up the hope of marriage, she would say, so as to be able to devote herself exclusively to her boy and his wife.

'See,' she would say, indicating Salvatia, careful at once to draw attention to what anyhow, directly the child began to speak, couldn't remain unnoticed, 'how this untrained, delicious baby needs me. No mother, no

education, no idea of what the world demands—could I possibly, thinking only of myself, selfishly leave her without help and guidance? I do feel the young have a very great claim on us.' And then she would add that as long as she lived she would never forget how well, how splendidly, Mr. Thorpe had behaved.

Pruned truth, again. And truth pruned, she was afraid, in a way that would cover her with laurels she hadn't deserved. But what was she to do? One needs must find the easiest and best way out of a difficulty,—easiest and best for those one loves.

In order, however, to indicate Salvatia and explain things by means of her, Mrs. Luke would have to produce her, have to show her to South Winch, and in order to do that she would have to give a party. Yes; she would give a party, a tea-party, and invite every one she knew to it—except, of course, Mr. Thorpe.

Mrs. Luke had hitherto been sparing of parties, considering them not only difficult with one servant, and wastefully expensive, but also so very ordinary. Anybody not too positively poor could give tea-parties, and invite a lot of people and let them entertain each other. She chose the better way, which was to have one friend, at most two, at a time, and really talk, really exchange ideas, over a simple but attractive tea. Of course the friends had to have ideas, or one couldn't exchange them. But now she would have a real party, with no ideas and many friends, the sort of party called an At Home, and at it Salvatia should be revealed to South Winch in all her wonder.

The party, however, couldn't be given for at least a week, because of first having to drill Salvatia. A week wasn't much; was, indeed, terribly little; but if the drill were intensive, Mrs. Luke thought she could get the child's behaviour into sufficient shape to go on with by the end of it.

Hidden indoors—and in any case they would both at first hide indoors from a possible encounter with poor Edgar—she would devote the whole of every day to exercising Salvatia in the art of silence. That was all she needed to be perfect: silence. And how few words were really necessary for a girl with a face like that! No need whatever to exert herself,—her face did everything for her. Yes; no; please; thank you; what couldn't be done with just these, if accompanied by that heavenly smile? Why, if she kept only to these, if she carefully refrained from more, from, especially, the use of any out of her own deplorable stock, it wouldn't even be necessary for Mrs.

Luke to say anything about her having had no education; and if she could be trained to add, ‘So kind of you,’ at the proper moment, and perhaps, ‘Yes, we are very happy,’ her success would be overwhelming.

But almost immediately on beginning the drill, which she did the next day, Mrs. Luke perceived that this last sentence must be dropped. Poor Salvatia. The poor child was precluded from speaking of happiness, because of its h. Really rather sad, when one came to think of it. She could, relatively easily, be taught to speak of sorrow, of pain, of misfortune, of sickness and of death, but she couldn’t be taught, not in a week Mrs. Luke was afraid, to speak of happiness.

Well, Rome wasn’t built in a day. ‘We must be patient,’ she said, smiling at Sally, who seemed to tumble over herself in her haste to smile back.

Almond Tree Cottage was now the scene of tireless activity. The At Home was fixed for the following Thursday week,—eight days ahead; and Mrs. Luke sent Jocelyn off to Cambridge the very morning after he arrived, in order to rearrange matters with his College and look about, as he seemed bent on it, for a suitable little house for them all, though she privately was bent on staying where she was, and keeping Sally with her. But it did no harm to let him look, and it kept him out of the way for a couple of days, in case Mr. Thorpe should think fit to come round in person, instead of writing. And, having cleared the field, she settled down to devoting herself entirely to Sally.

But Sally, seeing Jocelyn preparing to depart—for some time she couldn’t believe her eyes—without going to take her too, was smitten into speech.

‘You ain’t goin’ to leave me ’ere, Mr. Luke?’ she asked in tones of horrified incredulity, when at last it began to look exactly as if he were.

‘Two days only, darling,’ said Jocelyn. ‘And you’ll be very happy with my mother.’

‘But—can’t I come with you? I wouldn’t be no trouble. I—I’d do anything sooner than—’

She looked over her shoulder; Mrs. Luke, however, was in the kitchen giving her orders for the day.

‘—be as ’appy as all that,’ she finished, under her breath.

‘I shall be much too busy, darling,’ said Jocelyn, pleased at the way she was taking their first separation, and not hearing the last words because he was rummaging among coats.

‘There’s Father,’ persisted Sally anxiously. ‘ *’E* could take me in. I wouldn’t be no trouble to nobody——’

‘Darling, I’m afraid it can’t possibly be managed,’ said Jocelyn, very thankful to leave her safe with his mother; but she looked so enchanting in her obvious sorrow at being parted from him that he took her in his arms, and kissed her warmly.

‘*Kissin’s* no good,’ said Sally. ‘Goin’ too’s what I’d like.’

‘And if I took you too, my beautiful one,’ whispered Jocelyn, flaming up at the touch of her, ‘I’d do nothing but kiss you instead of doing my business——’ which wasn’t true, but with Sally in his arms he thought it was; besides, they had been separated for a whole night.

‘Turtle doves—oh, *turtle* doves!’ exclaimed Mrs. Luke, managing to smile, though she didn’t like it, when she came out of the kitchen and found them locked together; for this was happening in what Mr. Thorpe refused to call the hall.

And later on when Jocelyn had gone, she put her arm through Sally’s, who was standing at the window staring after him as though it couldn’t be true that he had really left her, and drew her away into the little dining-room at the back of the house, because of its greater privacy—she had to consider the possible movements of Mr. Thorpe—and at once began to put the plans she had made in the night into practice, not only taking immense pains with the child’s words and pronunciation, but leaving no stone unturned—‘As the quaint phrase goes,’ she said, smiling at Sally, for why hide her intentions?—in order to win her confidence and love.

Sally was most depressed. She didn’t want to love—‘Too much of that about as it is,’ she thought,—and she hadn’t an idea what her confidence was.

The table was arranged with paper and ink, and Mrs. Luke began by kissing her affectionately, and telling her that they were now going to be very busy and happy. ‘Like bees,’ said Mrs. Luke, looking cheerful and encouraging, but also terrifyingly clever, with her clear grey eyes that seemed to see everything all at once and never were half as much pleased as

her mouth was. ‘You know how bees store up honey—the bright, golden honey, don’t you, dear. Say honey, Salvatia dear. Say it after me——’

Sally was most depressed. Mixed up with her efforts to say honey were puzzled thoughts about her husband’s having left her. She understood, from her study of the Bible, that one of the principal jobs of husbands was to cleave to their wives. Till death, the Bible said. Nobody had died. It wasn’t cleaving to go away to Cambridge and leave her high and dry with the lady. And though Usband was often very strange, he wasn’t anything like as strange as the lady; and though he often frightened her, there were moments when he didn’t frighten her at all—when, on the contrary, she seemed able to do pretty much as she liked with him. And she had great hopes that some day she and he would get on quite nicely together, once they had set up housekeeping and he went off first thing after breakfast to his work, and she got everything tidy and ready for him when he came back to his dinner. Yes; she and Usband would settle down nicely then. And later on, when she had a little baby—Sally thought frequently and complacently of the time when she would have a little baby, several little babies—things would be as pleasant as could be. All she wanted, so as to be happy, was no lady, a couple of rooms, Usband to do her duty by, God’s Word to study, and every now and then a little baby. It was all she asked. It was her idea of bliss. That, and being let alone.

‘Peace an’ quiet,’ she said to herself, as she sat painfully trying, at Mrs. Luke’s request, to discuss with her the habits of bees. She hadn’t known they had any habits. She doubted whether she would know a bee if she saw one. There were no bees in Islington. Wasps, now—she knew a thing or two about wasps. Raw onion was the stuff for when they stung.... ‘Peace an’ quiet,’ she said to herself. ‘All one asks. This ain’t neither.’

In an agony of application Sally perspired through the two days of Jocelyn’s absence. Lessons didn’t leave off when the paper and ink were cleared away because of the rissoles of lunch and the poached eggs of supper, but went on just as bad while she was eating. ‘Salvatia dear, don’t ’old your fork like that——’ ‘Salvatia dear, don’t go makin’ all that there noise when you drinks——’ so did Mrs. Luke’s admonishments present themselves to Sally’s ill-attuned ear. And after that the lessons were continued in the garden, where she was walked up and down, up and down, till her head, as she said to herself, fair reeled. Never before had Sally been walked up and down the same spot. She used to walk straight sometimes to

places, and then come home again and done with it, but never up and down and keeping on turning round. No escape. The lady had her by the arm. Exercise, she called it. And talk! Not only talk herself, but keep on dragging her into it too. Education, the lady called it. Lessons, that's to say. What ones these Lukes were for lessons, thought Sally, remembering her experience at St. Mawes. And there, through the kitchen window every time she passed it, she could see Ammond, washing up as free as air.

The garden was small; the turnings accordingly frequent; and Sally's head, strained by the excessive attention Mrs. Luke insisted on, did indeed reel. Her head.... How was it, Mrs. Luke was asking herself by the evening of that first day, ostensibly pleasantly chatting, but carefully observing Sally, who, pale and beautiful, with faint shadows under her eyes, sat looking at her lap so as not to see the lady looking at her,—how was it that so noble a little head, with a brow so happily formed, one would have supposed, for the harbouring of intelligence, should apparently be without any?

Apparently. Mrs. Luke was careful not to come to any hasty conclusion, but by this time she had been drilling Sally ceaselessly for a whole day, and she had been so clear and patient, and so very, very simple, that she began to think her vocation was probably that of a teacher; yet no sign of real comprehension had up to then appeared. Goodwill there was; much goodwill. But no real *grasp*. And, of course, most lamentably little ear. Those h's—it would have been disheartening, if Mrs. Luke hadn't refused to be disheartened, the way Salvatia didn't even seem to know if they were in a word or not. She simply didn't hear them.

'Do you like music, Salvatia?' said Mrs. Luke, getting up and preparing to test her ear on the clavichord at the other end of the room, an instrument which gave her great pleasure because it wasn't so gross as a piano.

'Yes,' said Sally, who had been strictly drilled that day in naked monosyllables.

'Do you sing, dear child?'

' 'Ymns,' said Sally.

'Ah, dear, *dearest* child!' cried Mrs. Luke, drawing her shoulders up to her ears, for after all the pains and labours of the day she was tired, and she couldn't help being, perhaps, a little less patient. 'How do you spell that

poor small word? It is such a tiny, short word, and can't afford to lose any of its letters——'

And in the kitchen, Sally knew, with her hearth swept and neat, and everything put nicely away for the day, sat Ammond, doing her sewing as free as air.

§

Jocelyn came home on the evening of the third day. He hadn't found a house, and seemed dispirited about that, and looked a great deal at Salvatia, Mrs. Luke thought,—almost as if he had never seen her before; indeed he looked at her so much that he hardly had eyes or attention for anything else.

Mrs. Luke didn't like it.

Certainly the girl was quite extraordinarily beautiful that evening, and seemed even more alight than usual with the strange, surprising flame-effect she somehow made, but one would have supposed that these outwardnesses, once one knew that they were not the symbols of any corresponding inwardnesses, could hardly be sufficient for a man like Jocelyn.

A little pang of something that hurt—it couldn't of course be jealousy, for the very word in such a connection was ludicrous—shot through Mrs. Luke's heart when she more than once caught a look in her boy's eyes as they rested on his wife that she had never seen in any man's eyes when they rested on her herself, but which she nevertheless instantly recognised. The love-look. The look of burning, impatient passion. She had been loved, but never like that, never with that intent adoration.

Sally sat quietly there, neither speaking nor moving, but over her face rippled gladness. Nice, she thought, to get Usband back. It hadn't been half awful without him. Finished now, though; wouldn't happen again. 'Let's forget it,' she said to herself.

And that night, after every one was in bed, Mrs. Luke heard cautious steps creaking up the stairs, and the door of the room Sally slept in across the little landing was softly opened, and some one went in and softly shut it again; and Mrs. Luke didn't like it at all, and ended by crying herself to sleep.

Next day, however, Jocelyn was restored to the self she knew, and was reasonable and detached. They talked over the house in Cambridge question, and he quite agreed with his mother that when he went up, which he was due to do in nine days time, while he continued in his spare moments there to search for one she would keep Sally with her at Almond Tree Cottage.

'And even if you find one, dearest,' said Mrs. Luke, 'remember we can't afford to take it till I have got rid of this one.'

'Quite, Mother,' said Jocelyn—so reasonable, so completely detached.

'And meanwhile, the best thing will be for Salvatia to stay quietly here with me.'

'Far and away the best, Mother,' said Jocelyn, whose thoughts had gone off with renewed eagerness to his work, to the two spacious months of undisturbed labour ahead of him in those quiet rooms of his in Austen's Court.

What was Sally's surprise to find that Jocelyn's return made no difference to the lessons. They went on just the same; indeed, they seemed every day to get worse, and he, except at meals and when he crept into her room at night, stayed at the top of the house shut up by himself, or went out for his daily walk after lunch and didn't take her with him.

At night she tried to ask him about these things, because this was the time he was most likely to answer, but he only whispered, 'Hush—Mother will hear.'

'Not if you whispers,' whispered Sally.

'She'd hear the whispers,' whispered Jocelyn.

Why Mother shouldn't hear whispers Sally was unable to make out.

And there at night was Usband, all for being friendly and loving, and in the day didn't seem to know she was alive. Warmed up a bit, he did, towards evening, but else sat hardly opening his mouth, his eyes looking at something that wasn't there. Was this, Sally might well in her turn have asked if she had been able to formulate such a question, companionship? But even if she had formulated it she wouldn't have asked it, because she was so meek.

Strange, however, how the meek go on being meek till the very moment when they do something from which bold persons would shrink. This is

what Sally did, after having progressed that week steadily towards despair.

Gradually but steadily, by piecing together bit by bit the things Mrs. Luke and Jocelyn said to each other at meals and in the evening, she became aware of what was in store for her. First, a party; an enormous party, at which everybody who wasn't a gentleman was going to be a lady; and she was to be at it too, and it was for this that her mind and manners were being fattened up so ceaselessly by Mrs. Luke. Then, two days after the party, Jocelyn, her husband who had promised in church to cherish her, was going away to Cambridge, and going to stay there by himself till the summer, just as if he weren't married. How could he cherish her from Cambridge? It was evident even to Sally that it couldn't be done. Finally, she was to be left at Almond Tree Cottage alone with Mrs. Luke, being educated, being made fit, being fattened inside just as you fatten animals outside. What for? She hadn't married Mrs. Luke. Wasn't she able, just as she was, to be a good wife to Usband, and a good mother later on to the little babies? What more could a girl do than be ready to work her fingers to the bone for him? And she could cook so nicely, give her a chance; and she could mend as well as any one; and as for keeping the house clean, hadn't her mother taught her never to dream of sitting down and taking up her sewing while there was so much as a single speck of dirt about?

With growing horror, and steadily increasing despair, Sally listened to the talk at meals. She had learned to say nothing now but yes, no, thank you, and please, and either kept her eyes on her plate or, through her eyelashes, watched with pangs of envy the happy Hammond's free entrances and departures. She herself never moved without Mrs. Luke's arm through hers or round her shoulders,—'We are quite inseparable,' Mrs. Luke would say, smiling at Jocelyn, when the meals were over and the time had arrived for going somewhere else, as she either encircled Sally's shrinking shoulder or put her hand through her limp arm. 'Aren't we, Salvatia?'

And Sally, starting—she had got into a curious habit, which Mrs. Luke much deplored, of starting when she was spoken to, however gently—hurriedly said, 'Yes.'

Queer, thought Mrs. Luke, who noticed everything but was without the power of correct deduction, seeing that the child so obviously was anxious to please and she herself so certainly was anxious to help her, queer how

difficult it was to do anything with her in the way of confidence and love. And to Jocelyn in the evenings, after Sally had been told she was tired and must wish to go to bed, which she quickly learnt meant that she was to get up at once and say goodnight and go to it, Mrs. Luke would talk about her lovingly and humorously, and laughingly describe what she called the intensive methods of cultivation she was applying to the marvellous child.

'You'll see how beautifully she'll behave at our little party,' she said. 'And as for what she'll be like after a few months—well, dearest, all I can say is that I promise to hand her over to you fit to be your real companion, and not only—' Mrs. Luke shivered slightly at the thought of the creaking stairs—'just a wife.'

Two evenings before the day of the party, Mrs. Luke, who had made, she knew, no headway at all in spite of the most untiring efforts in winning the confidence and love she expected, remarked hesitatingly, when she and Jocelyn were alone together after Sally's departure for bed, that the child appeared to have rather curious and disconcerting resistances.

'Do you mean she doesn't obey you?' asked Jocelyn, much surprised.

'Oh, with almost too much eagerness. No. I mean something mental. Or rather,' amended Mrs. Luke, who by this time was definitely disappointed in Sally's mind but was still prepared to concede her a soul, 'spiritual. Spiritual resistances. Disconcerting *spiritual* resistances. She seems to shut herself up. And I ask myself, what in? A child like that, with a—well, really rather blank mind at present. What is she withdrawing into? Where does she *go*, Jocelyn?'

And that night when, having given his mother time to go to sleep and the house was quiet, Jocelyn stole upstairs to Sally, full of nothing but love for her, she made a scene. He called it a scene; she called it mentioning. She had screwed herself up to mentioning to him that it was wrong to leave her, as she now beyond any possibility of doubt knew that he was going to leave her, and go away by himself to Cambridge.

A scene with Sally. Jocelyn was as much amazed, and correspondingly outraged, as if his fountain-pen had turned on him and declared that what he was making it write was all wrong. For Sally took her stand on the New Testament, on the Gospel of St. Mark, Chapter X, Verses 7 and 8, and not only declared there was no mistaking the words, and that it wasn't his wife a man had to leave but his father and mother, and that he had to leave them

so as to cleave to his wife, and that they two were to be one flesh, but asked him how he could either cleave or be one flesh if he were in Cambridge and she in South Winch?

It was past midnight and pitch dark, so he couldn't see her face, and accordingly wasn't bewitched. Also, he had found her waiting up for him, not gone to bed at all, but dressed and sitting in a chair, so that, again, he wasn't bewitched. When one neither saw nor touched Sally it was quite easy not to be bewitched.

'For heaven's sake don't *talk*,' he said in a low voice, when he had got over his first astonishment. 'Don't you know Mother will hear?'

Sally couldn't help that. She had got to say it. God was on her side. His laws were going to be broken, and nothing made Sally so brave as having to take up the cudgels in defence of God's laws. Besides, if the dark prevented Jocelyn from seeing her beauty it saved her from seeing the icy displeased look on his face that made her falter off into silence. And she was in despair. Apart from the right or the wrong of it, she felt she couldn't possibly be left alone with Mrs. Luke. Therefore, having mentioned God's laws to him, she proceeded to entreat him to take her with him, it didn't matter into what hole, or let her go to her father's, and he come and see her whenever he had time.

'I told you—I told you the other day,' said Sally, trying to subdue her voice to a whisper, but it kept on breaking through, 'when you was only goin' to be away for two days that I didn't 'alf like it. 'Ow do you suppose I'm goin' to like weeks and weeks? And it ain't *right*, Mr. Luke—it ain't *right*. You only got to read St. Mark——'

Jocelyn was amazed. Sally talking like this? Sally suddenly making difficulties, and having an opinion, and judging? Dragging in the Bible, too, just like somebody's cook.

'You don't understand,' he said in a low voice because of his mother, but a voice quite as full of anger as if he had been shouting. 'How can you? What do you know about anything?'

'I know what ain't bein' one flesh,' persisted Sally, greatly helped in the matter of courage by the dark.

He gathered his dressing-gown round him; it sounded exactly as if a servant were daring to talk familiarly to him.

'This isn't the time,' he whispered, infinitely disgusted, 'to argue.'

‘P’raps you’ll tell me when the time is, then,’ said Sally, who knew she could never be alone with him in the day because of Mrs. Luke; and really in the dark, unable to see her, Jocelyn had the impression of some woman of the lower classes confronting him with arms akimbo.

‘Certainly not at one in the morning,’ he said freezingly. ‘I shall go downstairs again. I didn’t come up here to listen to outrageous rot.’

‘Mr. *Luke*! Rot? When it’s God’s Word I’m talkin’ about? Ain’t you my ’usband? Didn’t you vow——’

There was a tap at the door.

‘You see?’ said Jocelyn, starting and extraordinarily put out that Mrs. Luke should know he was in there. ‘You *have* disturbed my mother.’

‘What is it, Jocelyn?’ his mother’s voice asked anxiously from outside.

He opened the door. She too was in a dressing-gown, and her long hair hung down in thick plaits.

‘What is it, Jocelyn?’ she asked again.

‘Only that Sally has gone out of her senses,’ he said shortly; and he stalked away downstairs, ashamed to have been caught by his mother upstairs, angry with himself for being ashamed, and seriously enraged with Sally.

‘Salvatia, Jocelyn dearest—*do* remember,’ called Mrs. Luke plaintively after him.

‘Oh, Christ!’ muttered Jocelyn, banging the sitting-room door behind him and throwing himself on the hard narrow sofa from which, only a quarter of an hour before, he had got up, all warm with love, to go to his wife.

And in the room overhead Mrs. Luke put her arms round Sally, and did her best, while tactfully asking no questions, to soothe and calm the child. But how can one soothe and calm anything that behaves exactly as if it were a very rigid, unresponsive, and entirely dumb stone?

§

There were explanations next day. Mrs. Luke put the whole situation patiently and clearly before Sally. It wasn’t fair, she said to Jocelyn, after a private talk with him during which he had told her the sorts of things Sally had said in the night, it wasn’t fair to keep the child quite in the dark as to