

MISS MATTY (*pushing aside her plate*). Oh, Mary dear . . . and to think that for ever so long I refused to let Martha have a follower . . . !

MARY. Can you not eat any more, Miss Matty . . . ?

MISS MATTY. How can I eat when everyone is so kind . . . ?

MARY. I think Martha has been preparing a special pudding for you . . .

MISS MATTY. But I didn't order one . . .

MARY. But this has been paid for out of her own purse . . . I am afraid we shall offend her if you do not eat it.

MISS MATTY. Then I will eat it, dear, if it chokes me . . .

MARY. Remember . . . it is to be a great surprise!

(*Enter MARTHA bearing aloft a platter on which is a magnificent gelatine pudding made in the representation of a lion couchant! It is a bright pink colour and has currants for eyes. She places it before Miss MATTY, beaming triumphantly.*)

MARTHA. There!

MISS MATTY. How beautiful . . . ! How . . .

(*But she is too much affected to speak, so she rises and shakes MARTHA warmly by the hand . . .*)

I should like to keep it for ever under a glass shade . . . !

MARTHA. Now you eat it up . . . every bit of it . . . the eyes is currants . . . so they're wholesome too.

MISS MATTY (*wiping her eyes with her handkerchief*). Martha!

I should like to tell you . . . it was the luckiest day of my life, when I lost my money . . .

(*At this, MARTHA puts her handkerchief to her face and bolts out of the room.*)

(*Seating herself again.*) Do you remember, dear . . . in the Bible . . . when the Children of Israel were hungry . . . ?

MARY (*puzzled*). Yes, Miss Matty . . . ?

MISS MATTY. I was just thinking, dear . . . that mamma must have looked like this!

(*The lights begin to fade. The gauze drops and MRS.*

GASKELL enters D.L. in front of the gauze and speaks to the audience as MARY and MISS MATTY sit silently over their pudding.)

MRS. GASKELL. I shall never forget that wonderful pudding! And never was there a pudding so difficult to eat, every morsel seemed to choke us . . . our hearts were so full! How long ago it seems . . . but even now I almost imagine I can taste it . . .

(*There is now a COMPLETE BLACKOUT behind MRS. GASKELL who sighs and continues.*)

Well, now you have seen all the ingredients of our revolution. The aristocracy, as represented by Lady Glenmire, has descended to a union with a mere commoner, a middle-class commoner with the name of Hoggins to boot. A very shocking fall! And as for the masses, for the poor under-dog, for poor Jem Hearn . . . you have seen how he came up . . . and how very pleased we were to see him.

(*Lights behind the gauze go slowly up and reveal the same set, but with certain radical changes. Just inside the door of Miss MATTY's parlour is a counter on which is stacked a row of canisters containing tea. They are labelled Gongou, Souchong, Pekoe, Gunpowder, etc., in large gold letters. There is a pair of scales and other evidences of trade. The front door stands open, for it is a summer morning. Leading from the door to the counter is a pathway of carpet . . . two chairs are placed by the counter for the convenience of customers. Miss MATTY sits behind the counter; she is wearing an apron over the same morning dress that we know . . . and her cap is a little plainer than of yore. Behind Miss MATTY is affixed to the wall a small sign: "Miss Matilda Jenkyns, Licensed to sell Tea".*)

On the counter, as well as the canisters are a small basket of eggs, a basket of strawberries, and one or two glass jars containing summer flowers. It is rather like "teacher's desk". There is also a huge glass jar with a stopper in which are sponge fingers. The whole room is flooded with sunlight and warmth.)

MRS. GASKELL (*continues*). I wonder if Miss Matty still thinks she was lucky to lose her money! Things have changed considerably in the last months, as you can see . . . ! This was the day on which I paid my first visit to Miss Matty