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I dropped Pansy's arm and went round to Sophonisba. I leaned helplessly up against her, and she leaned helplessly up against me.

"I was struck dumb—dumb Edward!" said Pansy in an anguished voice.

I said I could hardly believe it—as well as I could say anything. Sophonisba was long past any conversational effort.

"While I was dumb, she said she insisted that I should come into the drawing-room and have tea. So I went into the drawing-room and had tea—a most artistic and refined drawing-room, and perfect tea, the cheek of the creature was beyond words! One of the smartest servants I had ever seen attended on us, and was even more respectful to Jane than Jane had once been to us. When she had gone, Jane, who had told me to be sure and call her by her Christian name now we were 'close relations,' said that she did hope she was not going to find her life complicated by the servant problem. Then she rang the bell and told the girl to bid her master wait on her mistress."

Sophonisba giggled hysterically.

"You can't imagine my feelings. I kept being struck dumb all the time. Your unhappy uncle came up, Sophonisba, he looked thinner and very subdued, and he treated Jane as if she was an employer, and he was a workman, and might get the sack any minute if he wasn't careful. She gave him two cups of tea and told him to drink it, and he drank it. Then she sent him down and told him to wipe all the glasses, and see he wiped them better than he had done last time, and, very meekly, he said he would. It was one of the saddest sights I had ever seen. I went downstairs for a bit to help him, and a little later I came away."

"Before closing time, I hope?" asked Sophonisba