

CHAPTER VI.

THE AUNTS AND UNCLES ARE COMING.

It was Easter week, and Mrs. Tulliver's cheesecakes were more exquisitely light than usual. "A puff o' wind 'ud make 'em blow about like feathers," Kezia the housemaid said, feeling proud to live under a mistress who could make such pastry; so that no season or circumstances could have been more propitious for a family party, even if it had not been advisable to consult sister Glegg and sister Pullet about Tom's going to school.

"I'd as lief not invite sister Deane this time," said Mrs. Tulliver, "for she's as jealous and having as can be, and's allays trying to make the worst o' my poor children to their aunts and uncles."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Tulliver, "ask her to come. I never hardly get a bit o' talk with Deane now; we haven't had him this six months. What's it matter what she says? My children need be beholding to nobody."

"That's what you allays say, Mr. Tulliver; but I'm sure there's nobody o' your side, neither aunt nor uncle, to leave 'em so much as a five-pound note for a leggicy. And there's sister Glegg, and sister Pullet too, saving money unknown, for they put by all their own interest and butter-money too; their husbands buy 'em everything." Mrs. Tulliver was a mild woman, but even a sheep will face about a little when she has lambs.

"Tchuh!" said Mr. Tulliver. "It takes a big loaf when there's many to breakfast. What signifies your sisters' bits o' money when they've got half-a-dozen nevvies and nieces to divide it among? And your sister Deane won't get 'em to leave all to one, I reckon, and make the country cry shame on 'em when they are dead?"

"I don't know what she won't get 'em to do," said Mrs. Tulliver, "for my children are so awk'ard wi' their aunts and uncles. Maggie's ~~than~~ naughtier when they come