

Tippits, who is rolling her languishing eyes at a young curate, supposed to have great influence with the bishop.

"Yes, very," says Miss Tippits.

"Eccentric," continues Mr. Thornton, "very odd there should be a Kite in the same company."

Thornton glances at the card tables as he makes the remark.

"I do not think it at all singular," says Miss Tippits; "there is a Mr. Green and also a Miss White here."

"Yes, true, true," says Thornton; "you do not object to the name of Pigeon now, Miss Tippits."

"You are always facetious, Mr. Thornton. I suppose Miss Austin does not object to the name of Thornton," says Miss Tippits, withdrawing her eyes from the curate and rolling them upon Mr. Thornton.

"She has just done me the honour to say that she does not," replies Thornton, accepting the optical charge with remarkable coolness.

Miss Austin, who has been discussing the relative powers of Browning and Tennyson with a gentleman (he has heard "The Brook" sung at a Penny Reading, and been advised to get up "How they Brought the Good News to Ghent"), comes to Miss Tippits's ottoman at this moment, and asks her friends what Harry is so earnest about.

"About you," says Miss Tippits; "he was asking me to be one of the bridesmaids."

"Harry!" exclaims Miss Austin, in a pretty confusion.

Thornton is rather taken aback at the unexpected smartness of Miss Tippits.

"I congratulate you both," says that lady, with as little asperity as she can put into her voice.

Miss Austin bows. Mr. Thornton is about to make a suitable reply when the conversation is interrupted by high words at one of the card tables.

"Hollo! what is this!" says Mr. Thornton, "a storm in Society?"

"I saw you do it," says young Pigeon, in loud angry tones, "you are a cheat."

He is addressing Kite, who rises from the table.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," remonstrates the Colonel, in his blindest manner.

The whole company rise from their seats in various parts of the room.

"An infernal cheat!" exclaims Pigeon.

"Before ladies, too," says the Colonel, attempting to take Tom's arm.

"You son of a tailor," shouts Kite, beginning a withering reply to Tom, who immediately upsets the table, and seizing Kite by the throat, gasps out, "Ladies or no ladies—tailors or no tailors—you shall give up that card!"

The ladies hurriedly leave the room; the gentlemen throng round Pigeon and Kite, just in time to see Mr. Pigeon, junior, fling his adversary, and pull out of Kite's coat-pocket an ace of spades.

Tableau and end of scene to turbulent music.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE STORM.

In one of his "Roundabout Papers," or somewhere else, Thackeray promised to write a story that should be all dialogue. He never did it. The idea has borne fruit in this poor narrative of Tom Pigeon's expedition into Society. I have eschewed description. I leave the actors in this little drama to play their own parts in their own way. The reader has formed her own idea (I say *her* own idea for what *he* is capable of such a formation) of the character, manner, and appearance of every individual visitor at Tinsell Castle. She also knows exactly what would be said about the disgraceful scene at the Castle. It is not necessary to tell her how the few good people who had been got there by misrepresentations concerning whom they would meet, considered themselves insulted and defamed. She knows all about persons of the Tippits character, who try to thrust themselves into Society. She has never met them of course, but she has heard of them and read of them in books. The Pigeons are mysteries to her perhaps, but she can easily imagine what sort of a figure Mr. Shoddy, who made her last riding-habit, would cut with a house in Belgrave Square, and a vulgar son dreaming of Society. Why should I, the humble reporter of these few insignificant scenes, in the insignificant lives of the Kites and Pigeons, trespass upon the intellectual and indulgent reader with my own views? The very thought is presumptuous. I return to the dialogue, with an humble apology, for this almost unpardonable reference to my own existence. I will only venture to say that we are back again in the drawing-room of Tinsell Castle on the day after the storm. Kite and Mr. Thornton are in the room.

"I assure you," says Kite, "it was quite a mistake—I assure you, on my honour."

"Appearances were against you," says Thornton.

"By all that is good I swear to you it was a mistake; you must prevent scandal, Mr. Thornton, or the Colonel's chances of election for Inglenook are at an end."

"I don't think there is any danger of Tippits ever being a member of parliament even for Inglenook," says Thornton.

"You are wrong, sir, believe me," says Kite; "but, no matter, whether right or wrong, sir, you must use your influence with Mr. Pigeon, pray do, sir, he respects you."

"You called him a son of a tailor," says Thornton.

"I did not mean it personally, it was only figurative, just as you say a son of a gun; I meant no harm, Mr. Thornton, I assure you; the term might even be construed into one of endearment."

At this moment there enters Mr. Thomas Pigeon, at sight of whom there disappears with almost miraculous rapidity his old friend Kite. Young Pigeon has been going about the house, asking nearly every person he meets, if he experiences any pain in the region of the heart. Mr. Thomas Pigeon has had a severe and continuous attack of that peculiarly uncomfortable pain, which he was told on the previous day belonged to Society. It had attacked him most seriously on hearing that Miss Jessie Miller had made up her mind to leave the Castle; and more particularly since she had met him on the stairs and insisted upon cutting him dead. The pain had been so intense during the morning, that Tom began to wonder whether his father was not quite right in attributing it to what he was pleased to call this new-fangled humbug of being in Society, and doing everything that you didn't want to do and pretending that you liked it. Tom had been closeted with Colonel Tippits; he had also had a serious conversation with

Mr. Thornton; Miss Miller had looked prettier than ever she had done as if only for the purpose of cutting him; his father had solemnly warned him that he was being swindled, bought and sold, and made mince-meat of; so that altogether Mr. Pigeon, junior, may be said to have had anything but a lively time of it during the last twenty-four hours.

"Ah, Mr. Thornton," he said, on entering the drawing-room, from which Kite had just disappeared, "how are you, sir—how are you?"

"Well, thank you, very well," said Thornton, thrusting his hands into the pockets of a loose morning coat, and surveying the odd figure of the ambitious young merchant tailor, formerly of Bond Street.

"Got no pain here?" Tom asked, ruefully planting his left hand upon that part of his light waistcoat which covered his heart.

"No, no," said Thornton, laughing.

"Ah, I have—a confounded pain, sir!" said Tom. "I don't think being in Society, as you call it, is good for me."

"Society! My poor, dear young friend, you have never been there yet. But is there no other reason for your heart-ache? I saw you watching that pretty Jessie Miller this morning, when you were dressing. I saw you, sir; I saw you looking out at your bed-room window."

"Well, I did not say that you did not see me."

"Don't be angry."

"I am not angry."

"You are blushing, then."

"I beg your pardon, I am not," Tom said, turning his head away from Mr. Thornton, and trying to hide his face behind his eye-glass.

"Mr. Kite is anxious to have your forgiveness, said Thornton, considerably changing the subject; "he declares that the whole thing was a mistake; he vows it, upon his honour."

"Upon what?"

"His honour."

"Don't like the guarantee. The Colonel assured me he had kicked the brute out of doors."

"He may have done so," said Thornton; "but Kite is one of those persons who, being kicked out at the front door, come in at the back."

"Why, he had the audacity to call me the—"

"Yes, yes," said Thornton, before Tom could finish the sentence, "he says that was not meant personally; in fact, that it was more in the light of a term of endearment, just as you say a son of a gun—do you see?"

"Yes, yes," said Tom, promptly, and with evident relief, "very good; I thought that was all he meant, after all. He is a clever fellow."

"You knew him, then, before you met him down here?"

"Slightly, yes, yes," said Tom, plucking up his collar and his courage at the same time. "I gave him a winner, eh? It astonished him rather, and the Castle too. By Jove! I almost forgave him for falling so cleanly when I hit out from the shoulder. It was as good as a play."

"Yes, no doubt," said Mr. Thornton. "Now look here, Mr. Pigeon, junior, I know all about that pain of yours. You don't care for Miss Tippits. Don't frown, my friend, don't frown. You would rather be out of the bargain. Forgive Kite; he is no worse than his friends, between ourselves. Let us go into the garden and have a chat."

Mr. Thornton had a way of making people do what he wished, and he found no difficulty in persuading Mr. Pigeon to act upon some very wholesome advice which he gave him under a tree on Colonel Tippits's lawn.

Meanwhile, Mr. Theophilus Pigeon had encountered Miss Jessie Miller in the breakfast-room, and had, in the frankest way possible, obtruded himself upon her confidence. He admired her morning dress; he expressed his great regret that Miss Miller was going to leave the Castle; he candidly told her that he neither cared for the Castle nor its society, and he was sure in his heart of hearts that his son Tom was of the same opinion.

"I don't want to hear anything about your son Tom," said Jessie, impatiently stamping her pretty right foot upon a full-blown rose in the Brussels carpet.

"Ah, you once thought differently," said old Pigeon, coaxingly.

"Perhaps I did."

"You liked him once."

"Perhaps I did."

"Why don't you now?"

"Because he doesn't care for me."

"How do you know he doesn't?"

"What a silly question, begging your pardon. It would not be right to care for a poor farmer's daughter now he's in society."

Jessie emphasised the last two words, and tossed up her head with an air of defiance and contempt.

"Hang society! blow society!" said old Pigeon. "Don't be angry with me, Miss Jessie, because I love you already as a father might, and I want to know all about this affair between you and Tom. How long have you known my son?"

"A year," said Jessie, looking upon the ground and sighing.

"He came to the hotel with father from the Cattle Show, and we all went to the theatre."

"The sly dog! I remember him saying he had met some very nice people at the show."

"And he came and had tea with us," continued Jessie; "and we have written to each other ever since; and the other day my father had to leave the farm, because he lost his money horse-racing."

"Oh, that was it," said old Pigeon; "and the Colonel was your father's landlord. Between ourselves, Miss Jessie, I don't think much of this Mister Colonel. What do you say?"

"Nothing," said Jessie.

"You are mum, as they say."

"Yes."

"Jessie! Jessie!" called the unmistakable voice of Miss Tippits at this period of the conversation; "where are you?"

"But if Tommy was to ask you to be his wife?" said old Pigeon, hurriedly, determined to make the most of his time.

"Tommy!" exclaimed Jessie, snapping her pretty fingers, "I would not have him if his hair was hung with diamonds."

Then saying:

"I am coming, Miss Tippits," she darted out of the room, and left old Pigeon to his own reflections.

"Not if his hair was hung with diamonds!" said old Pigeon, looking at the door which Jessie banged as she fled; "that's one for Tommy."

It is impossible to say how many times Mr. Pigeon would have repeated Jessie's words had he not been interrupted by Colonel Tippits, who, having searched the house for his friend, had found him at last, mentally staggering under the startling rebuff of Miss Jessie Miller.

"My dear Mr. Pigeon," said the Colonel, in his loud pompous voice, "I have been looking for you everywhere."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pigeon; "well, if you repeat the same exercise to-morrow you'll have to go further afield to look for me."

"Why, sir, why?" asked the Colonel.

"Cos I means to cut this, sir, if not to-day, by the first train in the morning. I'm too plain a man for this sort of thing. I've never been in a castle before."

"Every Englishman's home is his castle," said the Colonel, majestically.

"No, not exactly," said Mr. Pigeon, senior; "every Englishman's home is not a castle, sir, begging your pardon; and a good thing too, Colonel. But we will not argue the point; let us come to business. About that mortgage; I'm willing to renew it, as you know, but on one condition."

"Name it," said the Colonel, promptly, prepared to concede much.

"You must let my son off this bargain, sir, about Miss Tippits."

The Colonel started and looked fixedly at old Pigeon.

"It's very kind of you," said Mr. Pigeon, undaunted—"it's very kind, and a great honour—we know that; but it's a mistake altogether. We Pigeons are only humble birds; and it's like mating one of us to a pheasant, or a peacock, or a nostrich—it ain't natural Colonel; and it will never do."

While the Colonel is endeavouring to explain to Mr. Pigeon that the intermarrying of the middle with the upper classes of society is acknowledged to be an important element in the social system, let us look in upon Miss Tippits, and Mr. Kite, who are playing out an interesting little scene in the library.

"I have told you before," says Miss Tippits, "that your suit is hopeless in both cases. I decline your hand again, as I have previously done. You know my reasons."

"That contemptible Pigeon is one of your reasons," says Kite.

"You had my answer before I ever heard of or saw Mr. Tom Pigeon," says Miss Tippits; "and I will not stay in the room, sir, to hear papa's guests spoken of with rudeness."

"Stay, stay, Clementina!" says Kite, seizing her hand.

"You cannot hope to have last night's affair overlooked," continues Miss Tippits, allowing Mr. Kite to retain her hand, as though his ecstatic seizure of it were a very ordinary occurrence.

"It was quite accidental that mistake of the card—on my honour. Miss Tippits, once for all I now lay my life and fortune at your feet. For three long years I have loved you; it is only that passion which has induced me to work and slave, day and night, in your father's political interest. It is now impossible that he can do without me."

"That is no concern of mine," says Miss Tippits.

"It is—it is, Clementina! Let us be a happy family; say what your heart prompts you to say—that you do not love this Pigeon—that you will now reward the love and faithful service of a true, devoted heart!"

Miss Tippits, looking into the garden, sees Tom Pigeon and Jessie in close conversation: she knows that Thornton is beyond her reach. Taking her cue from Fate, without a moment's hesitation, she returns Kite's pressure of her hand.

"There is some one coming, Mr. Kite," she says; "take me into the drawing-room."

Kite at once takes the blooming husband-hunter under his arm, kisses her fat and rosy fingers, and disappears with her just as the Colonel and old Pigeon enter the room.

"We shall be alone here, sir," says the Colonel. "Pray be seated."

"Thank you, Colonel!" says old Pigeon, determined not to be influenced by the largest possible amount of politeness.

"Now, Mr. Pigeon, you do not surely mean to say you are serious?" begins the Colonel.

"I am, sir."

"Think of the honour and the position which your son would obtain by such a marriage."

A knock at the door interrupts the Colonel's speech.

"Confound the people! why cannot they leave us alone? Come in!" he exclaims.

"It is only me," says Tom Pigeon, entering and looking at his father with a peculiarly satisfied smile.

"We were just talking about you, Tommy," says old Pigeon.

"Yes; I know all about it," says Tom. "It's all right. I've got rid of that infernal pain I had—got rid of it and all other pains too. Don't be surprised, Colonel; nothing ought to surprise nobody in these days. Now look here—I'm plain and aboveboard, father, and I ain't up to this kind of life; and, what's more, without meaning to be offensive, you've been playing a sort of come-into-my-parlour-said-the-spider game, and—"

"Sir!" exclaimed the Colonel, "I do not understand you."

"No; but you will," says Tom.

"I do," says old Pigeon. "My dear boy, you have come to your senses, that's it—ain't it?"

"Right you are, governor," says Tom.

"I await an explanation," says the Colonel, taking up a dignified position upon the hearth-rug and looking as calmly as he could, first at Tom, and then at old Pigeon.

"If you will come into the drawing-room, where several friends are now assembled, and request the presence of Miss Tippits and Mr. Kite, I shall give you a full and complete explanation," says Tom, taking his father's arm and leading the astonished old man from the room.

We leave him standing in the doorway and telling the Colonel that "No offence is intended, Colonel Tippits—only we all means business, and that business is to be settled at once, sir, with all respect, in the drawing-room of this noble Castle."

The prompter—who, in this case, is the story-teller—proceeds to ring up the drawing-room scene accordingly.

CHAPTER IX.

AND LAST.

The change which had come over Tom Pigeon during the last few hours was almost as remarkable as the transformation

(Continued on Page 30.)