

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

BY THE FIRELIGHT.

A tender haze of sweet repose,
A dreamy, lulling light that glows
Within a happy room,
A careless drow of childish speech,
Whose innocence no thought can reach,
Nor idle verse illumine.

And as the evening's shadows fell,
They seemed to cast around a spell
Of sacred happiness—
And the rich firelight threw a beam
Of radiance like a brilliant dream
Of sudden shining bliss.

But in the twilight's mellow gloom
That lit and beautified the room,
One presence smiled on all
More pure and tranquil than the ray
That crowns the slow departing day,
Before the night shades fall.

I hardly marked the shadows move,
I only watched with silent lore
The smile upon her face:
And as I worshipped at her feet,
I knew what made the silence sweet!
And filled the room with grace!

I gazed, an ardent worshipper,
In dreamy, blissful awe on her,
And in my votive dream,
The tender radiance on the floor,
Was chastened to me evermore,
And not a transient gleam.

I saw no joy but in her eyes,
Whose azure clearness sweetly wise,
Was pure as vernal light,
No sweetness but in one dear face,
No loveliness but in the grace
That hovered near my sight.

For all the calm that filled the place
Was gathered in her darling face,
So innocent and sweet:
I dared not think—I dared not move,—
I only knew—I dared to love
Entraptured at her feet.

I felt I breathed enchanted air,
Imprisoned in the sweetness there,
And chained to youth and grace,
I ventured not to break the spell,
I only knew I loved her well,
Gazing upon her face.

The twilight hush—the pure repose,
The chastened radiance in the glow
Of that illumined day,
Upon my happy senses stole,
Like heaven's blessings on my soul,
And never fades away.

When dear remembrance loves to cast
Her glance upon the phantom past,
The present to illumine,
The memory of that twilight hour,
Shines on me like a lovely flower
Within a darkened room.

Its light and beauty ever bright,
Like my own soul can never die,
And shines in love for her,
That love which she alone did wake,
Living through life for her dear sake,
Her loyal worshipper.

ISIDORE G. ASCHER.

KITES AND PIGEONS.*

A Novelette, in Two Parts.

(From London Society.)

PART I—CHAPTER I.

CONSPIRATORS.

"I HAVE GIVEN MY word to marry you to one of our guests within a month. Have I not?" said Colonel Tippits, of the First Poppleton Militia, to his daughter, Clementina.

"You have, papa! And I am sure you will keep your word," said the lady, rolling a pair of full grey eyes with a languishing air, which she had practised for five-and-twenty years.

"As the daughter of your widowed mother, introduced into the sublunary sphere long before I had the pleasure of knowing the dear departed, society may not consider that I have any special duty to perform in your case; but I have—yes I have, Clementina, and that duty shall be done."

"Thanks, thanks, dear papa; as you were saying over your first cup of coffee, the property of Mr. Thornton's uncle joins your estate, and it certainly would be an advantage if I formed a matrimonial alliance with that gentleman."

"You are a dutiful girl, Clementina. If such a union could be negotiated, I know you would do what is right. I have brought the gentleman here under your own immediate influence. I leave the rest to you."

"The only unfortunate incident in the business is Miss Austin's return," said Clementina, toying pathetically with an empty egg-shell. "Your ward, sir, is always in my way. Why the London season could not have lasted another week I cannot think."

"Another week, and to-morrow is the 1st of September, the glorious first, as they call it. What are you talking of, my dear? It would be an utter impossibility. London could never think of committing such an offence against the social laws. The season last another week, bless the child!"

The child was a gushing young thing of five-and-forty, a plump, round, enthusiastic heap of womanhood, with an armful of false hair hanging down her back, a pair of cheeks that would insist on being red, despite powder and other appliances, and two big gray eyes that rolled, and languished, and searched for a husband. The papa was a tall, weak-headed gentleman, who had made his way from a lowly position to one of comparative affluence. No one ever knew what the Colonel's origin was, and no one inquired. He had been a well-to-do man for more than fifteen years, during five of which he had lived at Tinsell Hall, where our story opens.

"You need not fear Miss Austin, love," said the Colonel, passing his hand carefully through his scanty hair, and looking at himself in a conveniently-placed mirror. "You need not fear poor Miss Austin."

"Poor Miss Austin? I do not understand you," said Clementina. "I only know I hate the mix because she is not poor."

"Hate her no longer, child of my heart—no, I didn't exactly mean that, rather let me say, child of my widowed years. She is not the heiress you imagine. I have sworn to marry you; and in order to do it, I have taken the jewel out of the Austin diadem."

"You are too clever for me, you dear old thing," said Miss Tippits, getting up and kissing her papa-in-law on the forehead.

"There, no demonstration, love. Save your kisses for Mr. Thornton, or Mr. Pigeon, junior. These are the two chances I give you this week. One bird is in the house now; the other is on his way. If you do not bag one of them, it will not be my fault."

"Nor mine, sir," said Miss Tippits, surveying her back hair furtively by the aid of a pier glass and mirror.

"We must not finish breakfast before Mr. Thornton comes down," said the Colonel. "I told him we should not wait for him. These young swells like that sort of thing. It is familiar, and makes them at home; and is, I believe, the correct thing in the very best society."

"Yes, papa dear; but you were going to say something about Miss Austin."

"There are no secrets between us, Clementina," said the Colonel, putting a heavy gold-rimmed glass in his eye, and balancing it there with difficulty. "You have played a daughter's part towards me in the most dutiful and affectionate manner; you have kept my house economically, and looked after my accounts as faithfully as one could expect in a woman, and I reciprocate."

"Yes," said Miss Tippits, impatiently; "yes. Go on."

"Miss Austin, as my ward, possessed a large estate in India. Miss A. came of age a month ago. I have relieved her of the bother of an uncertain kind of property, you know, by settling upon her one thousand a year, in return for which she gives up to Colonel Tippits, of Tinsell Hall, the whole of her lands, tenements, hereditaments, and property whatsoever, and her reversionary interest in old Twizall's will; so we are now worth, my child, something like eight thousand a year more than we possessed a month ago, and your rival is not an heiress."

"Oh, you dear papa! oh, you love!"

"Don't gush; it is not polite," said the Colonel.

"Oh, if you could only make her ten years older, and take away her complexion, I would back myself to beat her in a canter. And you, dear Colonel, you, my dear second father, my papa, and mother, and friend all in one, you now will be able to go into Parliament."

"Ah, there you hit me, Clementina," said the Colonel, rising to his feet, and striking an attitude suggestive of walking into Parliament at the head of the poll. "When I received the Colonelship of my regiment at Inglenook, I said—you remember the vow—my next step is a greater one still. Gentlemen, brother electors, freemen of the glorious borough of Inglenook, the time has now arrived when you are once more called upon to exercise the highest privilege of Englishmen."

"Hear, hear," said Miss Tippits, not, however, without a pang of regret for having led the conversation into a channel which always became tedious.

"The time, I say, has now arrived," continued the Colonel, addressing the breakfast-table, and scowling at Miss Tippits; "the time has now arrived when, according to the laws of your great though unhappy country, you may make your voices heard in the Senate of the land by electing to that assembly a man of your own choice."

Miss Tippits again exclaimed "Hear, hear!" and as she did so, there entered upon the scene Mr. Thornton, a young man of good family, and, what Society would call, excellent prospects. There was, however, a feud between himself and his uncle. Happily this would not prevent Thornton from coming in for his uncle's property some day, seeing that the estate could not be left to any one else. Mr. Thornton liked going down to shoot at Tinsell Hall, because it joined the property to which he was the rightful heir, and he could inspect it from Colonel Tippits's stables.

"Ah, Colonel, rehearsing your hustings' speech?" said Mr. Thornton. "Good morning, Miss Tippits. I hope I have not kept breakfast waiting."

"No, Mr. Thornton; papa said we were to treat you as one of the family, and thus try to make you feel quite at home. Do you take tea or coffee?"

"You are very good," said Mr. Thornton; "I will take coffee."

"No, did not wait, you see, Thornton; make you quite one of ourselves; no stranger, as I shall say to my constituents—true friendship means familiarity."

"But familiarity breeds contempt, they say. You must correct your little speech, sir. Eh, Miss Tippits?"

"Oh, certainly; yes, by all means," said Clementina.

"Happy thought! Thank you, Mr. Thornton. It would never do to lay oneself open to the opposition by a slip of that kind. Two heads are better than one," said the Colonel.

"Oh, yes!" said Miss T.

"If they are only sheep's heads, as the proverb hath it," responded Thornton.

"He means that for a dig at me," thought the Colonel; "no matter, I'll be even with him; I'll marry him to Clementina."

"Proverbs are stupid things as a rule," said the Colonel.

"What do you propose to do this morning, Mr. Thornton?"

"I am going to give Miss Tippits a lesson in billiards, if she will permit me; and then I propose to reconnoitre three or four coveys of birds, so that I may know exactly where they lie in the morning."

"That is very kind of you," said Miss Tippits.

At this moment a servant announced that Miss Austin had arrived. Miss Tippits only said:

"Indeed!"

Mr. Thornton looked curiously at his host.

"Excuse me," he said, "did your servant say Miss Austin? Pray excuse me as one of the family; the name interests me much."

"The servant did say Miss Austin," Colonel Tippits replied.

"Is her name Kate?" asked Mr. Thornton, laying down his knife and fork, and wiping his hands with a napkin, "daughter of an old Indian heiress, staying in Belgrave Square with her aunt?"

"Yes," said Miss Tippits, gasping out the words in an agony of jealous apprehension; "my papa's ward."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Thornton, unable to control his feelings. "This is a pleasure!"

Miss Tippits and the Colonel exchanged looks of chagrin, just as Miss Kate Austin entered the room.

"Back again, you see, Colonel," said Kate.

"Welcome to Tinsell Hall," exclaimed the Colonel, taking Miss Austin's hand.

"Mr. Thornton!" said Miss Austin, suddenly seeing the Colonel's guest. "This is a surprise!"

"It is indeed," said Thornton, shaking her hand with an enthusiasm which was a little foreign to his nature. "Colonel Tippits, you have no idea what a surprise this is. Would you believe it, Miss Tippits, I began to fear I should never see Miss Austin again. I met her at a ball last season. I have hunted after her everywhere this year, and have never been able to find her."

"How singular!" said Miss Tippits.

"Infernally singular," said the Colonel to himself. "Have you breakfasted, Miss Austin?"

"Yes, thank you; an hour ago," Miss Austin replied. "I came from town exactly in forty minutes."

"For my part," said Miss Tippits, "I wonder how any one can exist in town at this time of the year."

"The season has appeared a long one to me, I confess," said Kate; "I was heartily tired of it."

"When my dear papa got his colonelcy a month ago, and his regiment was up for a month's training at Inglenook, and he had to leave town in consequence, I came with him at once, though it was at the sacrifice of a Frogmore garden party."

"A good fib well told," the Colonel thought.

"I am rejoiced to hear you were glad to get into the country," said Mr. Thornton; "London is a wicked place."

"Is it not?" said Clementina, rolling her eyes at Mr. Thornton, and making up her mind to run Miss Austin hard for the hand of her friend.

Here a servant entered with a letter, which the Colonel looked at several times through his eyeglass, and then, with due apology, read, giving the breakfast-room the full benefit of its contents.

"Oh, indeed; ah, very good. Mr. Tom Pigeon, junior, and Mr. Theophilus Pigeon, senior, will arrive at the Inglenook Hotel to-day. Dear me; very good. We must call upon them, Miss Tippits. They are a strange pair, Mr. Thornton."

"The Pigeons?" said Mr. Thornton.

"Yes. Ah, very good, Mr. Thornton—pair of pigeons; pardonable joke; retired merchants, sir; met them in London the other day."

"Now, Mr. Thornton, I am ready for my lesson at billiards, if you have really finished breakfast," said Miss Tippits, interrupting something the guest was saying in an undertone to Kate.

"Certainly," said Mr. Thornton, offering his arm to the buxom coquette of forty-five. "Miss Austin, will you join us? We are going into the billiard-room."

"No, thank you," said the lady; "I must assist my maid to unpack presently. Meanwhile, I will stay with the Colonel."

Miss Tippits congratulated herself that she had made the first score. As she left the room she rolled her eyes significantly at the Colonel; but she did not see the disappointed expression on Mr. Thornton's face as he glanced reproachfully at Kate Austin.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVALS AT THE GREEN DRAGON.

Two voices: the first a husky, panting voice, struggling under a burden; the second a sharp ringing cockney voice, making its way from the hotel yard and through several passages into the best ground-floor private sitting-room.

"I'm blessed if ever I see such a gent in all my life," said the first voice, which was the voice of the Green Dragon boots, "and I've seen a few in my time."

"I say, hi, there! You there!" exclaimed the second voice in the hotel yard; will you fetch this luggage, or will you not? it is not much I ask—will you or won't you?"

"Coming, sir," said the boots, bundling an armful of bags and wrappers upon the floor.

"Will you or won't you?" said the voice from without.

"Coming, sir," said the boots from within.

"Coming; so is the end of the world—never saw such management," answered the cockney in the yard.

At this moment the landlord was heard introducing himself to the noisy visitor, and the voice became more conciliatory; you heard it saying, "Very well, very well; it is not much I ask; if the luggage will be taken in soon, all right."

At the end of the coffee-room, exactly opposite the door leading into the hall and yard, there enters a tall, gaunt figure.

"Who are these new arrivals? fancy I know the voice."

"Oh how do you do, Mr. Kite, beg pardon for not seeing you; the governor's got him in tow now, thank goodness; they're father and son from London, sir—by morning mail—the young'un is like the gent with the cork leg; never saw his equal."

"Ah! yes," says Mr. Kite, aloud, supplementing the remark with a private communication to himself; "my old master, the rich tailor of Bond Street, and his harem scarem son; I'll step aside and reconnoitre."

"Oh, you think you've got all, do you," says the voice from without, evidently following a second porter laden with luggage. "Wonderful! you shall have a medal for thinking, you shall."

With which remark, Mr. Tom Pigeon enters the best private sitting-room.

"Never saw such a set of slow coaches," he continues, as he contemplates the boots and his assistants. "Pity the Green Dragon himself don't turn up; he'd keep you alive."

"Shouldn't want no Green Dragon to do that if you was here, sir," says the boots.

"Hollo! where's the governor?" exclaims Mr. Tom Pigeon, feeling in his pockets as if he expected to find him there; and then suddenly disappearing in the hall and returning with an elderly gentleman.

"Come along, governor, come along—keep moving—the family motto, you know," says Mr. Tom Pigeon.

"Moving," says the governor, who was no other than Tom's

* The Author desires to state that the incidents in this story are partly founded on fact, and partly shaped out of the underplot of an old play of the last century.