

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

DE MORTUIS.

A living dog (as said of old the Wise)
Is better than a lion that is dead.
When carrion things are round his fallen head,
And with their damned creed tear out the eyes
Which once had sent them howling to their lair.

But if, on rotting lion surfeit-fed,
Some bird or beast with slanderous surprise
Should vex the world and, boldly shameless, swear
Base, baseless things against his wild career—
Such as "He was a coward or a knave,"—
Would not the forest howl and scream "All lies?"
And the fierce eagle, swooping from the skies
With clangorous rage, would shield the perished brave,
Albeit his rival, from the venomous sneer.

JOHN READE.

KITES AND PIGEONS.

A Novelette, in Two Parts.

(From London Society.)

CHAPTER IV.

WINNING A WAGER THAT NEVER WAS MADE.

Mr. Pigeon senior soon tired of Tom's gallop, and returned to the hotel, while Tom tried to visit Miller's farm by a short cut across the fields.

"Who are the Millers, in this neighbourhood?" old Pigeon asked of the waiter.

"The farmer, you means?" asked the waiter.

"Yes, my son spoke of Miller, the farmer."

"Well, he was warmish once," said the waiter. "A snug farm, and first-rate land; but the Colonel's been and had him, sir; had him at loss-racing, I think; and he's going to leave the farm."

"Lost all his money on the turf, eh?"

"Yes, money and turf too," said the waiter; "for he's got to turn out of the farm; and that's a fact as will go again the Colonel a good deal when the election comes on."

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a messenger with a letter for Theophilus Pigeon, Esquire.

"Thank you, young man," said Mr. Pigeon, with the practised obsequiousness of half a century.

"Thank you, sir," said the messenger.

"My respects to your master," said the old man, opening the letter—"a proud to serve him."

"Yes, sir."

"No, no; I don't mean that," said Mr. Pigeon—"proud to see him."

"Is that the answer, sir?"

"Yes, that's exactly it," said old Pigeon, wishing with all his heart that Tom would return.

The truth was Mr. Pigeon had only met Colonel Tippits once, and that was prior to the retirement of Pigeon and Son to the classic regions of Belgrave Square. He had no difficulty in meeting the Colonel then; but since the Pigeons had become gentlemen, the head of that illustrious house of tailors felt that he had all the manners and habits of his life to relearn. During the first few months of his residence in Belgrave Square he had been caught in the act of touching his hat to some of the inhabitants of the locality, and twice had been seen shaking hands with a valet.

"Look out and see if my son's a-coming, will you, waiter; there's a good fellow," said the old man.

Tom rushed into the room as the waiter was leaving it, much to the physical discomfort of both, seeing that they came into violent collision. When Tom had sufficiently recovered from the shock to call the waiter a "stupid ass," he proceeded to take off his coat, which was covered with mud.

"Why, what have you been doing?" asked his father.

"Getting through a hedge. I didn't know there was a ditch in the way. Not much damage done. Only torn a hole in my favourite coat. Mud will brush off—hole will mend."

"Why, the Colonel and his daughter will be here directly," said the father, taking Tom's coat and examining the torn sleeve.

"The deuce," said Tom.

"In a quarter of an hour," said the old man, fumbling in his overcoat.

"By Jove. What's to be done? I can't go into society with a hole in my coat."

"I always carry a needle and thimble," said the old man, cheerfully.

Tom shrugged his shoulders, and said he knew it.

The implements of his craft were speedily produced, and old Pigeon was preparing to commence work. The old man's face lighted up with pleasure at the thought of plying his needle once more.

"It's many a long year," he said, "since I really did a stitch, but—"

"And it will be many a long year before you do another," exclaimed Tom, taking the torn coat away from his father.

"What! do you think I would permit the wealthy progenitor of my being to mend my coat. Never! I will do it myself."

The old man was more delighted at the thought of Tom "doing a bit of tailoring" than if he had been permitted to mend the coat himself.

"Ah, that will gladden my old eyes, Tommy," he said, stooping down, the better to take in the full picture of Tom at work.

"Will it, then they shall be gladdened with a last final grand exhibition."

With which remark, Tom leaped upon the table and seated himself cross-legged, at which old Pigeon roared with laughter and stamped his feet with delight.

"Never was so glad in all my life. Well done, Tommy; ah, your heart's in the right place after all."

Tommy stitched away and nodded at his father, while the old man laughed and danced, and declared "for his own son, and an honour to the family."

"I am like the picture of old Penn Holder in the play now; but look here, governor, keep your eye on the window; it would be an awful sell if the Colonel turned up," said Tom.

"All right, I'm looking—not such long stitches, Tommy—not so long," said the father, watching Tom's work with critical carefulness.

"Oh, bother! they're splendid stitches; hanged if I don't

enjoy the work myself," said Tom, drawing his arm to and fro briskly, and bending his head to the garment on his knee.

"Bless you, my boy; if you spends all the money we can soon earn some more."

"Now look here," said Tom, suddenly stopping and contemplating his enraptured parent; "no vulgar memories on account of the treat I am giving you; forget it the moment it's over."

"All right, Tommy," said the old man, "all right, my boy, I'll never disgrace you."

"If the Colonel and his daughter only saw us now," said Tom.

The old man went into fits of laughter at the idea.

"What would society say?" gasped the old man between his loud guffaws.

Tom laughed heartily, too, but stopped all in a moment. He was sitting nearly facing the door; and he saw behind his father a tall, pompous gentleman, in a light overcoat, with a lady on his arm, standing in the doorway.

"Why, Tommy, what's the matter?—what are you staring at?" exclaimed the father, in the midst of what otherwise would have been a tremendous peal of laughter.

Tom making no reply, it naturally occurred to the old man to turn round and judge for himself of the nature of the sight which had startled his son. Meanwhile, Tom Pigeon carefully drew up his legs and slipped from the table.

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Tippits, in a round, unctuous voice, and smiling blandly, "I and my daughter, Miss Tippits, have done ourselves the honour of calling upon you; but we beg that we may not disturb your amusement."

Tom Pigeon took the Colonel's cue in an instant; leaping to his feet, and bowing to the lady, he began to laugh.

"I beg you will excuse us, miss," said Tom, feeling for his eye-glass, "must keep moving you see—it is our family motto; I apologise most humbly, yes."

Then turning to his father, he exclaimed, "I have won, sir, I have won, Mr. Pigeon."

Old Pigeon looked at the Colonel, then at Tom, and, finally, at Miss Tippits for an explanation.

"He says he has won," observed Miss Tippits.

"Oh!" said old Pigeon, staring at Tom, who had meanwhile slipped on his coat; "he has won, has he?"

"Yes, I have won," said Tom, "ha, ha, ha, ha!"

The Colonel laughed as heartily as Tom, who, while laughing at one side of his mouth, on the other side, in stage whispers, was urging his father to laugh. "Why don't you laugh, governor?"

Old Pigeon thinking that, by some canon of society, it was necessary to laugh, made an effort to comply with Tom's urgent request; but he made a melancholy failure of it.

"Could I do it to save my life," said the old man.

"You see, Miss Tippits," said Tom, "I had torn my coat; so I said, Mr. Pigeon, senior, I will bet you my opera box against your drag that I mend it in five minutes—I, who never had a needle in my hand—I, your son, will mend that coat in five minutes."

Here old Pigeon put his head into a cupboard, and began to have a violent fit of laughter.

"Did it within the time—won the wager easily."

"Capital idea—very good indeed," said the Colonel, looking at his daughter for approving recognition.

"How very droll," said Miss Tippits.

"Yes, life is droll—everything is droll in its way," said Tom, "yes, yes."

Then he thought Miss Tippits was a very fine woman; and so she was. She wore a light Dolly-Varden costume, which set off to perfection her wealth of golden hair from Vigo Street.

By this time old Pigeon had come out of the cupboard, and out of his fit, too; and Colonel Tippits, making a great show of his respect for the old man, said how gratifying it was to himself and Miss Tippits that his son had consented to accompany him. Old Pigeon said Tom had some business of his own in the neighbourhood; but Tom immediately assured his father that this was only his fun, and the Colonel suggested that they should now adjourn to the Castle.

"Mr. Pigeon junior, will you take my daughter to the carriage?"

"With great pleasure—yes," said Tom, stretching out his left arm, pulling down his cuffs, and offering his right arm to the lady.

Miss Tippits accepted the escort with a smile, and Tom was more and more convinced that she was a very fine woman indeed. For the time being she completely eclipsed poor little Jessie Miller, who had made such a deep impression upon Tom's heart during the Cattle Show week nearly a year ago.

Mr. Pigeon took the Colonel's arm, and presently the whole party were rolling gaily along the highway towards Tinsell Castle.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE TOILET.

Tinsell Castle was a bran-new house of a mixed order of architecture. It had been built chiefly from the design of Colonel Tippits himself. The Blue wags of Inglenook, who were opposed to the Colonel's candidature for the borough, called the house Inglenook Gaol. A commercial traveller once told the boots at the Dragon that he had mistaken it for the Little Tinsell railway station. The castle was, indeed, the subject of much humorous criticism, and not without reason. It was suggestive of prisons, railway stations, almshouses, and model cottages; though it did not look unpicturesque on the bright September day through the elms which had not been erected by the Colonel. The old trees, with their leaves slightly browned by the first tints of autumn, tried to shut out the great staring brick and glass house; but the castellated towers and the curious gables obtruded themselves here and there; and thus it was that the castle looked far more picturesque and imposing than it had any right to do.

The interior of Colonel Tippits' residence had had a narrow escape from insufferable vulgarity. When the Colonel commenced to furnish it Lord Verrier died, and there was a sale by auction at the hall. The Colonel bought many of the principal articles of furniture; and it was easy to see where the taste of the nobleman had neutralized the assumption of the sham aristocrat.

Seated at the piano in the drawing-room, on the morning after the arrival of the Pigeons, was a pretty young lady in a

light morning dress. She was playing the accompaniment of a new song, and wishing herself a hundred miles away from Tinsell Castle. Instead of humming the words of the song, she was saying to herself that she envied the independence of cooks and housemaids. She was wishing, in her poor little heart, that her father had never sent her to school. "If he had not," she said, almost aloud, "I should now be a happy cook or kitchen-maid, instead of a stupid, unhappy companion to a stuck-up nobody."

This was Jessie Miller, a fair example of the modern farmer's daughter of this age of pianos and accomplishments. The English agriculturist always grumbled at the weather and market prices ever since the world began. In the present day he sends his sons to public schools, has French governesses for his daughters, indulges himself in all kinds of modern luxuries, and still makes money and grumbles. Fatty Sorrel has long ceased to exist. She has converted Mrs. Poyser's dairy into a drawing-room, burnt French, donned a chignon and dress-improver, and openly set her Dolly Varden cap at the young squire. Bless her heart, why should she not? Show me a fairer face, a brighter eye, or rounder arms!

How it was that Jessie Miller fell in love with Tom Pigeon is a mystery which the writer of this veritable history will not attempt to solve, any more than he will attempt to explain why so many pretty girls are married to ugly and common-place men. Titania is not the only woman who has not seen the asses' ears; not that Tom Pigeon was an ass. If he had been educated, and had lived in good society, he might have been a dashing, clever fellow; but he was a tailor. Though he always vowed he had a soul above buttons, you could see he was a tailor. He walked like a tailor, swaggered like a tailor, and had a tailor's notions of society. Let it not be thought that I am girding at a useful and respectable class of industrial artists. I have reason to respect the craft. They are patient, long-suffering; and I know members of the profession who are gentlemanlike and full of noble ambition. But Tom Pigeon was no more worthy of Jessie Miller than that scheming Miss Tippits was worthy of Tom Pigeon; and yet Jessie Miller had given her heart to the vulgar, though generous, little tailor who would go into Society.

"Well, Jessie, have you burnt that accompaniment?" asked Miss Tippits, breaking rudely in upon Jessie's thoughts.

"Yes, miss," said Jessie.

"Can you play it perfectly? We have more company at the Castle to-day, and I wish to sing that song this evening."

"I can play it, Miss Tippits," said Jessie.

"Sit down, then, and let us try it."

Jessie's round dimpled little fingers wandered over the keyboard, and Miss Tippits commenced to sing one of the pretty sugar-and-water ballads of Virginia Gabriel. In a voice of remarkable power she requested an evidently stubborn exile to "Come back to Erin," promising him on his return that Killarney should ring with the mirth of a large party of friends and relatives. Jessie followed up the invitation in loud chords and rattling octaves. The exile, however, was deaf to the charmers. Miss Tippits was not pleased with her own share in the performance, and requested Jessie to sing the song herself, which she did, in a sweet, sympathetic voice that would most assuredly have melted the exile's heart if he could only have been brought within the magic influence of the pretty little vocalist.

"Charmingly sung, Miss Miller," said Miss Austin, entering the room as Jessie was finishing the ballad. "You are quite an artist."

"It is a good thing she is," said Miss Tippits. "What would the poor thing do if she had no accomplishments? Ah, education is a great blessing!"

"It is, indeed," said Miss Austin. "Those Pigeons do not seem to have had much acquaintance with the schoolmaster."

Jessie started at the name of Pigeon.

"They can do without the schoolmaster," said Miss Tippits scornfully. "They keep a banker."

"I understand they are very rich," said Miss Austin.

"Rich! They roll in wealth," said Miss Tippits.

"As the Colonel's pigs roll in dirt," said Miss Austin, "and with about as much grace."

"What a coarse expression, Miss Austin!" exclaimed Miss Tippits.

"An appropriate simile," said Miss Austin; and she walked to the window as old Pigeon entered the room.

Miss Tippits was right, nevertheless, in characterizing Miss Austin's remark as somewhat coarse. It was coarse, though it did not sound objectionable, coming from Miss Austin, whose ladylike manner and musical voice would have sanctified almost any expression in the language.

Immediately on being discovered Mr. Pigeon senior said, "Oh! my son is not here—beg your pardon, ladies."

"Pray do not go away, Mr. Pigeon," said Miss Tippits, bouncing up to the old man with a loud demonstration of hospitality. "I am sure we hope you will make yourself quite at home."

"Certainly; thank you, miss," said the old man, looking straight at Jessie Miller, who, at a distance, was betraying an especial interest in Mr. Pigeon.

"Have you been introduced to Miss Austin?" asked Miss Tippits.

"The lady in the window—had the pleasure of meeting her on the stairs," said the old man, nervously.

Miss Austin bowed.

"This is Miss Jessie Miller, my companion," said Miss Tippits, waving her arm in the direction of the farmer's pretty daughter.

"And a very nice companion, too, if I may make bold to say so," said old Pigeon. "I think that is the young lady as my son was running after before breakfast this morning."

"Eh? what?" exclaimed Miss Tippits. "Jessie, Jessie, what is the meaning of this?"

"Some mistake, sir," said Jessie, haughtily. "A ridiculous mistake."

"Well, maybe it is. Beg pardon, I'm sure; mistakes will occur in the best regulated establishments; you can't always ensure a good fit; I mean, that you do not know when—Excuse me, Miss Tippits; I will go and see after my son."

"Ah! Mr. Pigeon," said Mr. Thornton, entering the room at this moment; "you do not take long to dress."

"No, thank you," said old Pigeon; "I was wondering where my son is."

"He said I was to take care of you until he came," said Thornton; "but you are in excellent hands, I see."

"We were talking about riches shortly before you came."