

CHAPTER XL.

MR. TOOGOOD'S IDEAS ABOUT SOCIETY.

A day or two after the interview which was described in the last chapter John Eames dined with his uncle Mr. Thomas Toogood, in Tavistock Square. He was in the habit of doing this about once a month, and was a great favourite both with his cousins and with their mother. Mr. Toogood did not give dinner-parties; always begging those whom he asked to enjoy his hospitality, to take pot luck, and telling young men whom he could treat with familiarity,--such as his nephew,--that if they wanted to be regaled à la Russe they must not come to number 75, Tavistock Square. "A leg of mutton and trimmings; that will be about the outside of it," he would say; but he would add in a whisper,--"and a glass of port such as you don't get every day of your life." Polly and Lucy Toogood were pretty girls, and merry withal, and certain young men were well contented to accept the attorney's invitations,--whether attracted by the promised leg of mutton, or the port wine, or the young ladies, I will not attempt to say. But it had so happened that one young man, a clerk from John Eames' office, had partaken so often of the pot luck and port wine that Polly Toogood had conquered him by her charms, and he was now a slave, waiting an appropriate time for matrimonial sacrifice. William Summerkin was the young man's name; and as it was known that Mr. Summerkin was to inherit a fortune amounting to five thousand pounds from his maiden aunt, it was considered that Polly Toogood was not doing amiss. "I'll give you three hundred pounds, my boy, just to put a few sheets on the beds," said Toogood the father, "and when the old birds are both dead she'll have a thousand pounds out of the nest. That's the extent of Polly's fortune;--so now you know." Summerkin was, however, quite contented to have his own money settled on his darling Polly, and the whole thing was looked at with pleasant and propitious eyes by the Toogood connection.

When John Eames entered the drawing-room Summerkin and Polly were already there. Summerkin blushed up to his eyes, of course, but Polly sat as demurely as though she had been accustomed to having lovers all her life. "Mamma will be down almost immediately, John," said Polly as soon as the first greetings were over, "and papa has come in, I know."

"Summerkin," said Johnny, "I'm afraid you left the office before four o'clock."

"No, I did not," said Summerkin. "I deny it."

"Polly," said her cousin, "you should keep him in better order. He will certainly come to grief if he goes on like this. I suppose you could do without him for half an hour."

"I don't want him, I can assure you," said Polly.

"I have only been here just five minutes," said Summerkin, "and I came because Mrs. Toogood asked me to do a commission."

"That's civil to you, Polly," said John.

"It's quite as civil as I wish him to be," said Polly. "And as for you, John, everybody knows that you're a goose, and that you always were a goose. Isn't he always doing foolish things at the office, William?" But as John Eames was rather a great man at the Income-tax Office, Summerkin would not fall into his sweetheart's joke on this subject, finding it easier and perhaps safer to twiddle the bodkins in Polly's work-basket. Then Toogood and Mrs. Toogood entered the room together, and the lovers were able to be alone again during the general greeting with which Johnny was welcomed.

"You don't know the Silverbridge people,--do you?" asked Mr. Toogood. Eames said that he did not. He had been at Silverbridge more than once, but did not know very much of the Silverbridgians. "Because Walker is coming to dine here. Walker is the leading man in Silverbridge."

"And what is Walker;--besides being leading man in Silverbridge?"

"He's a lawyer. Walker and Winthrop. Everybody knows Walker in Barsestshire. I've been down at Barchester since I saw you."

"Have you indeed?" said Johnny.

"And I'll tell you what I've been about. You know Mr. Crawley; don't you?"

"The Hoglestock clergyman that has come to grief? I don't know him personally. He's a sort of cousin by marriage, you know."

"Of course he is," said Mr. Toogood. "His wife is my first-cousin, and your mother's first-cousin. He came here to me the other day;--or rather to the shop. I had never seen the man before in my life, and a very queer fellow he is too. He came to me about this trouble of his, and of course I must do what I can for him. I got myself introduced to Walker, who has the management of the prosecution, and I asked him to come here and dine to-day."

"And what sort of fellow did you find Crawley, uncle Tom?"

"Such a queer fish;--so unlike anybody else in the world!"

"But I suppose he did take the money?" said Johnny.

"I don't know what to say about it. I don't indeed. If he took it he didn't mean to steal it. I'm as sure that man didn't mean to steal twenty pounds as I ever could be of anything. Perhaps I shall get something about it out of Walker after dinner." Then Mr. Walker entered the room. "This is very kind of you, Mr. Walker; very indeed. I take it quite as a compliment, your coming in in this sort of way. It's just pot luck, you know, and nothing else." Mr. Walker of course assured his host that he was delighted. "Just a leg of mutton and a bottle of old port, Mr. Walker," continued Toogood. "We never get beyond that in the way of dinner-giving; do we, Maria?"

But Maria was at this moment descanting on the good luck of the family to her nephew,--and on one special piece of good luck which had just occurred. Mr.

Summerkin's maiden aunt had declared her intention of giving up the fortune to the young people at once. She had enough to live upon, she said, and would therefore make two lovers happy. "And they're to be married on the first of May," said Lucy,--that Lucy of whom her father had boasted to Mr. Crawley that she knew Byron by heart,--"and won't that be jolly? Mamma is going out to look for a house for them tomorrow. Fancy Polly with a house of her own! Won't it be stunning? I wish you were going to be married too, Johnny."

"Don't be a fool, Lucy."

"Of course I know that you are in love. I hope you are not going to give over being in love, Johnny, because it is such fun."

"Wait till you're caught yourself, my girl."

"I don't mean to be caught till some great swell comes this way. And as great swells never do come into Tavistock Square I shan't have a chance. I'll tell you what I would like; I'd like to have a Corsair,--or else a Giaour;--I think a Giaour would be nicest. Only a Giaour wouldn't be a Giaour here, you know. Fancy a lover 'Who thundering comes on blackest steed, With slackened bit and hoof of speed.' Were not those the days to live in! But all that is over now, you know, and young people take houses in Woburn Place, instead of being locked up, or drowned, or married to a hideous monster behind a veil. I suppose it's better as it is, for some reasons."

"I think it must be more jolly, as you call it, Lucy."

"I'm not quite sure. I know I'd go back and be Medora, if I could. Mamma is always telling Polly that she must be careful about William's dinner. But Conrad didn't care for his dinner. 'Light toil! to cull and dress thy frugal fare! See, I have plucked the fruit that promised best.'"

"And how often do you think Conrad got drunk?"

"I don't think he got drunk at all. There is no reason why he should, any more than William. Come along, and take me down to dinner. After all, papa's leg of mutton is better than Medora's apples, when one is as hungry as I am."

The leg of mutton on this occasion consisted of soup, fish, and a bit of roast beef, and a couple of boiled fowls. "If I had only two children instead of twelve, Mr. Walker," said the host, "I'd give you a dinner à la Russe."

"I don't begrudge Mrs. Toogood a single arrow in her quiver on that score," said Mr. Walker.

"People are getting to be so luxurious that one can't live up to them at all," said Mrs. Toogood. "We dined out here with some new comers in the square only last week. We had asked them before, and they came quite in a quiet way,--just like this; and when we got there we found they'd four kinds of ices after dinner!"

"And not a morsel of food on the table fit to eat," said Toogood. "I never was so poisoned in my life. As for soup,--it was just the washings of the pastrycook's kettle next door."

"And how is one to live with such people, Mr. Walker?" continued Mrs. Toogood. "Of course we can't ask them back again. We can't give them four kinds of ices."

"But would that be necessary? Perhaps they haven't got twelve children."

"They haven't got any," said Toogood, triumphing; "not a chick belonging to them. But you see one must do as other people do. I hate anything grand. I wouldn't want more than this for myself, if bank-notes were as plenty as curl-papers."

"Nobody has any curl-papers now, papa," said Lucy.

"But I can't bear to be outdone," said Mr. Toogood. "I think it's very unpleasant,--people living in that sort of way. It's all very well telling me that I needn't live so too;--and of course I don't. I can't afford to have four men in from the confectioner's, dressed a sight better than myself, at ten shillings a head. I can't afford it, and I don't do it. But the worst of it is that I suffer because other people do it. It stands to reason that I must either be driven along with the crowd, or else be left behind. Now, I don't like either. And what's the end of it? Why, I'm half carried away and half left behind."

"Upon my word, papa, I don't think you're carried away at all," said Lucy.

"Yes, I am; and I'm ashamed of myself. Mr. Walker, I don't dare to ask you to drink a glass of wine with me in my own house,--that's what I don't,--because it's the proper thing for you to wait till somebody brings it you, and then to drink it by yourself. There is no knowing whether I mightn't offend you." And Mr. Toogood as he spoke grasped the decanter at his elbow. Mr. Walker grasped another at his elbow, and the two attorneys took their glass of wine together.

"A very queer case this is of my cousin Crawley's," said Toogood to Walker, when the ladies had left the dining-room.

"A most distressing case. I never knew anything so much talked of in our part of the country."

"He can't have been a popular man, I should say?"

"No; not popular,--not in the ordinary way;--anything but that. Nobody knew him personally before this matter came up."

"But a good clergyman, probably? I'm interested in the case, of course, as his wife is my first-cousin. You will understand, however, that I know nothing of him. My father tried to be civil to him once, but Crawley wouldn't have it at all. We all thought he was mad then. I suppose he has done his duty in his parish?"

"He has quarrelled with the bishop, you know,--out and out."

"Has he, indeed? But I'm not sure that I think so very much about bishops, Mr. Walker."

"That depends very much on the particular bishop. Some people say ours isn't all that a bishop ought to be, while others are very fond of him."

"And Mr. Crawley belongs to the former set; that's all?" said Mr. Toogood.

"No, Mr. Toogood; that isn't all. The worst of your cousin is that he has an aptitude to quarrel with everybody. He is one of those men who always think themselves to be ill-used. Now our dean, Dr. Arabin, has been his very old friend,--and as far as I can learn, a very good friend; but it seems that Mr. Crawley has done his best to quarrel with him too."

"He spoke of the dean in the highest terms to me."

"He may do that,--and yet quarrel with him. He'd quarrel with his own right hand, if he had nothing else to quarrel with. That makes the difficulty, you see. He'll take nobody's advice. He thinks that we're all against him."

"I suppose the world has been heavy on him, Mr. Walker?"

"The world has been very heavy on him," said John Eames, who had now been left free to join the conversation, Mr. Summerkin having gone away to his lady-love. "You must not judge him as you do other men."

"That is just it," said Mr. Walker. "And to what result will that bring us?"

"That we ought to stretch a point in his favour," said Toogood.

"But why?" asked the attorney from Silverbridge. "What do we mean when we say that one man isn't to be trusted as another? We simply imply that he is not what we call responsible."

"And I don't think Mr. Crawley is responsible," said Johnny.

"Then how can he be fit to have charge of a parish?" said Mr. Walker. "You see where the difficulty is. How it embarrasses one all round. The amount of evidence as to the cheque is, I think, sufficient to get a verdict in an ordinary case, and the Crown has no alternative but so to treat it. Then his friends come forward,--and from sympathy with his sufferings, I desire to be ranked among the number,--and say, 'Ah, but you should spare this man, because he is not responsible.' Were he one who filled no position requiring special responsibility, that might be very well. His friends might undertake to look after him, and the prosecution might perhaps be smothered. But Mr. Crawley holds a living, and if he escape he will be triumphant,--especially triumphant over the bishop. Now, if he has really taken this money, and if his only excuse be that he did not know when he took it whether he was stealing or whether he was not,--for the sake of justice that ought not to be allowed." So spoke Mr. Walker.

"You think he certainly did steal the money?" said Johnny.

"You have heard the evidence, no doubt?" said Mr. Walker.

"I don't feel quite sure about it, yet," said Mr. Toogood.

"Quite sure of what?" said Mr. Walker.

"That the cheque was dropped in his house."

"It was at any rate traced to his hands."

"I have no doubt about that," said Toogood.

"And he can't account for it," said Walker.

"A man isn't bound to show where he got his money," said Johnny. "Suppose that sovereign is marked," and Johnny produced a coin from his pocket, "and I don't know but what it is; and suppose it is proved to have belonged to some one who lost it, and then to be traced to my hands,--how am I to say where I got it? If I were asked, I should simply decline to answer."

"But a cheque is not a sovereign, Mr. Eames," said Walker. "It is presumed that a man can account for the possession of a cheque. It may be that a man should have a cheque in his possession and not be able to account for it, and should yet be open to no grave suspicion. In such a case a jury has to judge. Here is the fact: that Mr. Crawley has the cheque, and brings it into use some considerable time after it is drawn; and the additional fact that the drawer of the cheque had lost it, as he thought, in Mr. Crawley's house, and had looked for it there, soon after it was drawn, and long before it was paid. A jury must judge; but, as a lawyer, I should say that the burden of disproof lies with Mr. Crawley."

"Did you find out anything, Mr. Walker," said Toogood, "about the man who drove Mr. Soames that day?"

"No,--nothing."

"The trap was from 'The Dragon' at Barchester, I think?"

"Yes,--from 'The Dragon of Wantly.'"

"A respectable sort of house?"

"Pretty well for that, I believe. I've heard that the people are poor," said Mr. Walker.

"Somebody told me that they'd had a queer lot about the house, and that three or four of them left just then. I think I heard that two or three men from the place went to New Zealand together. It just came out in conversation while I was in the inn-yard."

"I have never heard anything of it," said Mr. Walker.

"I don't say that it can help us."

"I don't see that it can," said Mr. Walker.

After that there was a pause, and Mr. Toogood pushed about the old port, and made some very stinging remarks as to the claret-drinking propensities of the age.

"Gladstone claret the most of it is, I fancy," said Mr. Toogood. "I find that port wine which my father bought in the wood five-and-twenty years ago is good enough for me." Mr. Walker said that it was quite good enough for him, almost too good, and that he thought that he had had enough of it. The host threatened another bottle, and was up to draw the cork,--rather to the satisfaction of John Eames, who liked his uncle's port,--but Mr. Walker stopped him. "Not a drop more for me," he said. "You are quite sure?" "Quite sure." And Mr. Walker moved towards the door.

"It's a great pity, Mr. Walker," said Toogood, going back to the old subject, "that this dean and his wife should be away."

"I understand that they will both be home before the trial," said Mr. Walker.

"Yes,--but you know how very important it is to learn beforehand exactly what your witnesses can prove and what they can't prove. And moreover, though neither the dean nor his wife might perhaps be able to tell us anything themselves, they might help to put us on the proper scent. I think I'll send somebody after them. I think I will."

"It would be a heavy expense, Mr. Toogood."

"Yes," said Toogood, mournfully, thinking of the twelve children; "it would be a heavy expense. But I never like to stick at a thing when it ought to be done. I think I shall send a fellow after them."

"I'll go," said Johnny.

"How can you go?"

"I'll make old Snuffle give me leave."

"But will that lessen the expense?" said Mr. Walker.

"Well, yes, I think it will," said John, modestly.

"My nephew is a rich man, Mr. Walker," said Toogood.

"That alters the case," said Mr. Walker. And thus, before they left the dining-room, it was settled that John Eames should be taught his lesson and should seek both Mrs. Arabin and Dr. Arabin on their travels.