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BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

By George Meredith

1897

BOOK 3.

- XIX. LORD PALMET, AND CERTAIN ELECTORS
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CHAPTER XIX

LORD PALMET, AND CERTAIN ELECTORS OF BEVISHAM

Meantime the candidates raised knockers, rang bells, bowed, expounded their views, praised their virtues, begged for votes, and greatly and strangely did the youngest of them enlarge his knowledge of his countrymen. But he had an insatiable appetite, and except in relation to Mr. Cougham, considerable tolerance. With Cougham, he was like a young hound in the leash. They had to run as twins; but Beauchamp's conjunct would not run, he would walk. He imposed his experience on Beauchamp, with an assumption that it must necessarily be taken for the law of Beauchamp's reason in electoral and in political affairs, and this was hard on Beauchamp, who had faith in his reason. Beauchamp's early canvassing brought Cougham down to Bevissham earlier than usual in the days when he and Seymour Austin divided the borough, and he inclined to administer correction to the Radically-disposed youngster. 'Yes, I have gone all over that,' he said, in speech sometimes, in manner perpetually, upon the intrusion of an idea by his junior. Cougham also, Cougham had passed through his Radical phase, as one does on the road to wisdom. So the frog telleth tadpoles: he too has wriggled most preposterous of tails; and he has shoved a circular flat head into corners unadapted to its shape; and that the undeveloped one should dutifully listen to experience and accept guidance, is devoutly to be hoped. Alas! Beauchamp would not be taught that though they were yoked they stood at the opposite ends of the process of evolution.

The oddly coupled pair deplored, among their respective friends, the disastrous Siamese twinship created by a haphazard improvident Liberal camp. Look at us! they said:--Beauchamp is a young demagogue; Cougham is chrysalis Tory. Such Liberals are the ruin of Liberalism; but of such must it be composed when there is no new cry to loosen floods. It was too late to think of an operation to divide them. They held the heart of the cause between them, were bound fast together, and had to go on.

Beauchamp, with a furious tug of Radicalism, spoken or performed, pulled Cougham on his beam-ends. Cougham, to right himself, defined his Liberalism sharply from the politics of the pit, pointed to France and her Revolutions, washed his hands of excesses, and entirely overset Beauchamp. Seeing that he stood in the Liberal interest, the junior could not abandon the Liberal flag; so he seized it and bore it ahead of the time, there where Radicals trip their phantom dances like shadows on a fog, and waved it as the very flag of our perfectible race. So great was the impetus that Cougham had no choice but to step out with him briskly--voluntarily as a man propelled by a hand on his coat-collar. A word saved him: the word practical. 'Are we practical?' he inquired, and shivered Beauchamp's galloping frame with a violent application of the stop abrupt; for that question, 'Are we practical?' penetrates the bosom of an English audience, and will surely elicit a response if not plaudits. Practical or not, the good people affectingly wish to be thought practical. It has been asked by them

If we're not practical, what are we?--Beauchamp, talking to Cougham apart, would argue that the daring and the far-sighted course was often the most practical. Cougham extended a deprecating hand: 'Yes, I have gone over all that.' Occasionally he was maddening.

The melancholy position of the senior and junior Liberals was known abroad and matter of derision.

It happened that the gay and good-humoured young Lord Palmet, heir to the earldom of Elsea, walking up the High Street of Bevisham, met Beauchamp on Tuesday morning as he sallied out of his hotel to canvass. Lord Palmet was one of the numerous half-friends of Cecil Baskellett, and it may be a revelation of his character to you, that he owned to liking Beauchamp because of his having always been a favourite with the women. He began chattering, with Beauchamp's hand in his: 'I've hit on you, have I? My dear fellow, Miss Halkett was talking of you last night. I slept at Mount Laurels; went on purpose to have a peep. I'm bound for Itchincope. They've some grand procession in view there; Lespel wrote for my team; I suspect he's for starting some new October races. He talks of half-a-dozen drags. He must have lots of women there. I say, what a splendid creature Cissy Halkett has shot up! She topped the season this year, and will next. You're for the darkies, Beauchamp. So am I, when I don't see a blonde; just as a fellow admires a girl when there's no married woman or widow in sight. And, I say, it can't be true you've gone in for that crazy Radicalism? There's nothing to be gained by it, you know; the women hate it! A married blonde of five-and-twenty's the Venus of them all. Mind you, I don't forget that Mrs. Wardour-Devereux is a thorough-paced brunette; but, upon my honour, I'd bet on Cissy Halkett at forty. "A dark eye in woman," if you like, but blue and auburn drive it into a corner.'

Lord Palmet concluded by asking Beauchamp what he was doing and whither going.

Beauchamp proposed to him maliciously, as one of our hereditary legislators, to come and see something of canvassing. Lord Palmet had no

objection. 'Capital opportunity for a review of their women,' he remarked.

'I map the places for pretty women in England; some parts of Norfolk, and a spot or two in Cumberland and Wales, and the island over there, I know thoroughly. Those Jutes have turned out some splendid fair women. Devonshire's worth a tour. My man Davis is in charge of my team, and he drives to Itchincope from Washwater station. I am independent; I'll have an hour with you. Do you think much of the women here?'

Beauchamp had not noticed them.

Palmet observed that he should not have noticed anything else.

'But you are qualifying for the Upper House,' Beauchamp said in the tone of an encomium.

Palmet accepted the statement. 'Though I shall never care to figure before peeresses,' he said. 'I can't tell you why. There's a heavy sprinkling of the old bird among them. It isn't that. There's too much plumage; I think it must be that. A cloud of millinery shoots me off a mile from a woman. In my opinion, witches are the only ones for wearing jewels without chilling the feminine atmosphere about them. Fellows think differently.' Lord Palmet waved a hand expressive of purely amiable tolerance, for this question upon the most important topic of human affairs was deep, and no judgement should be hasty in settling it. 'I'm peculiar,' he resumed. 'A rose and a string of pearls: a woman who goes beyond that's in danger of petrifying herself and her fellow man. Two women in Paris, last winter, set us on fire with pale thin gold ornaments--neck, wrists, ears, ruche, skirts, all in a flutter, and so were you. But you felt witchcraft. "The magical Orient," Vivian Ducie called the blonde, and the dark beauty, "Young Endor."'

'Her name?' said Beauchamp.

'A marquise; I forget her name. The other was Countess Rastaglione; you must have heard of her; a towering witch, an empress, Helen of Troy; though Ducie would have it the brunette was Queen of Paris. For French taste, if you like.'

Countess Rastaglione was a lady enamelled on the scroll of Fame. 'Did you see them together?' said Beauchamp. 'They weren't together?'

Palmet looked at him and laughed. 'You're yourself again, are you? Go to Paris in January, and cut out the Frenchmen.'

'Answer me, Palmet: they weren't in couples?'

'I fancy not. It was luck to meet them, so they couldn't have been.'

'Did you dance with either of them?'

Unable to state accurately that he had, Palmet cried, 'Oh! for dancing,

the Frenchwoman beat the Italian.'

'Did you see her often--more than once?'

'My dear fellow, I went everywhere to see her: balls, theatres, promenades, rides, churches.'

'And you say she dressed up to the Italian, to challenge her, rival her?'

'Only one night; simple accident. Everybody noticed it, for they stood for Night and Day,--both hung with gold; the brunette Etruscan, and the blonde Asiatic; and every Frenchman present was epigramizing up and down the rooms like mad.'

'Her husband 's Legitimist; he wouldn't be at the Tuileries?' Beauchamp spoke half to himself.

'What, then, what?' Palmet stared and chuckled. 'Her husband must have taken the Tuileries' bait, if we mean the same woman. My dear old Beauchamp, have I seen her, then? She's a darling! The Rastaglione was nothing to her. When you do light on a grand smoky pearl, the milky ones may go and decorate plaster. That's what I say of the loveliest brunettes. It must be the same: there can't be a couple of dark beauties in Paris without a noise about them. Marquise--? I shall recollect her name presently.'

'Here's one of the houses I stop at,' said Beauchamp, 'and drop that subject.'

A scared servant-girl brought out her wizened mistress to confront the candidate, and to this representative of the sex he addressed his arts of persuasion, requesting her to repeat his words to her husband. The contrast between Beauchamp palpably canvassing and the Beauchamp who was the lover of the Marquise of the forgotten name, struck too powerfully on Palmet for his gravity he retreated.

Beauchamp found him sauntering on the pavement, and would have dismissed him but for an agreeable diversion that occurred at that moment. A suavely smiling unctuous old gentleman advanced to them, bowing, and presuming thus far, he said, under the supposition that he was accosting the junior Liberal candidate for the borough. He announced his name and his principles Tomlinson, progressive Liberal.

'A true distinction from some Liberals I know,' said Beauchamp.

Mr. Tomlinson hoped so. Never, he said, did he leave it to the man of his choice at an election to knock at his door for the vote.

Beauchamp looked as if he had swallowed a cordial. Votes falling into his lap are heavenly gifts to the candidate sick of the knocker and the bell. Mr. Tomlinson eulogized the manly candour of the junior Liberal candidate's address, in which he professed to see ideas that distinguished it from the address of the sound but otherwise conventional

Liberal, Mr. Cougham. He muttered of plumping for Beauchamp. 'Don't plump,' Beauchamp said; and a candidate, if he would be an honourable twin, must say it. Cougham had cautioned him against the heresy of plumping.

They discoursed of the poor and their beverages, of pothouses, of the anti-liquorites, and of the duties of parsons, and the value of a robust and right-minded body of the poor to the country. Palmet found himself following them into a tolerably spacious house that he took to be the old gentleman's until some of the apparatus of an Institute for literary and scientific instruction revealed itself to him, and he heard Mr. Tomlinson exalt the memory of one Wingham for the blessing bequeathed by him to the town of Bevisham. 'For,' said Mr. Tomlinson, 'it is open to both sexes, to all respectable classes, from ten in the morning up to ten at night. Such a place affords us, I would venture to say, the advantages without the seductions of a Club. I rank it next--at a far remove, but next-the church.'

Lord Palmet brought his eyes down from the busts of certain worthies ranged along the top of the book-shelves to the cushioned chairs, and murmured, 'Capital place for an appointment with a woman.'

Mr. Tomlinson gazed up at him mildly, with a fallen countenance. He turned sadly agape in silence to the busts, the books, and the range of scientific instruments, and directed a gaze under his eyebrows at Beauchamp. 'Does your friend canvass with you?' he inquired.

'I want him to taste it,' Beauchamp replied, and immediately introduced the affable young lord--a proceeding marked by some of the dexterity he had once been famous for, as was shown by a subsequent observation of Mr. Tomlinson's:

'Yes,' he said, on the question of classes, 'yes, I fear we have classes in this country whose habitual levity sharp experience will have to correct. I very much fear it.'

'But if you have classes that are not to face realities classes that look on them from the box-seats of a theatre,' said Beauchamp, 'how can you expect perfect seriousness, or any good service whatever?'

'Gently, sir, gently. No; we can, I feel confident, expand within the limits of our most excellent and approved Constitution. I could wish that socially . . . that is all.'

'Socially and politically mean one thing in the end,' said Beauchamp. 'If you have a nation politically corrupt, you won't have a good state of morals in it, and the laws that keep society together bear upon the politics of a country.'

'True; yes,' Mr. Tomlinson hesitated assent. He dissociated Beauchamp from Lord Palmet, but felt keenly that the latter's presence desecrated Wingham's Institute, and he informed the candidate that he thought he would no longer detain him from his labours.

'Just the sort of place wanted in every provincial town,' Palmet remarked by way of a parting compliment.

Mr. Tomlinson bowed a civil acknowledgement of his having again spoken.

No further mention was made of the miraculous vote which had risen responsive to the candidate's address of its own inspired motion; so Beauchamp said, 'I beg you to bear in mind that I request you not to plump.'

'You may be right, Captain Beauchamp. Good day, sir.'

Palmet strode after Beauchamp into the street.

'Why did you set me bowing to that old boy?' he asked.

'Why did you talk about women?' was the rejoinder.

'Oh, aha!' Palmet sang to himself. 'You're a Romfrey, Beauchamp. A blow for a blow! But I only said what would strike every fellow first off. It is the place; the very place. Pastry-cooks' shops won't stand comparison with it. Don't tell me you're the man not to see how much a woman prefers to be under the wing of science and literature, in a good-sized, well-warmed room, with a book, instead of making believe, with a red face, over a tart.'

He received a smart lecture from Beauchamp, and began to think he had enough of canvassing. But he was not suffered to escape. For his instruction, for his positive and extreme good, Beauchamp determined that the heir to an earldom should have a day's lesson. We will hope there was no intention to punish him for having frozen the genial current of Mr. Tomlinson's vote and interest; and it may be that he clung to one who had, as he imagined, seen Renee. Accompanied by a Mr. Oggler, a tradesman of the town, on the Liberal committee, dressed in a pea-jacket and proudly nautical, they applied for the vote, and found it oftener than beauty. Palmet contrasted his repeated disappointments with the scoring of two, three, four and more in the candidate's list, and informed him that he would certainly get the Election. 'I think you're sure of it,' he said. 'There's not a pretty woman to be seen; not one.'

One came up to them, the sight of whom counselled Lord Palmet to reconsider his verdict. She was addressed by Beauchamp as Miss Denham, and soon passed on.

Palmet was guilty of staring at her, and of lingering behind the others for a last look at her.

They were on the steps of a voter's house, calmly enduring a rebuff from him in person, when Palmet returned to them, exclaiming effusively, 'What luck you have, Beauchamp!' He stopped till the applicants descended the steps, with the voice of the voter ringing contempt as well as refusal in their ears; then continued: 'You introduced me neck and heels to that

undertakerly old Tomlinson, of Wingham's Institute; you might have given me a chance with that Miss--Miss Denham, was it? She has a bit of a style!

'She has a head,' said Beauchamp.

'A girl like that may have what she likes. I don't care what she has--there's woman in her. You might take her for a younger sister of Mrs. Wardour-Devereux. Who 's the uncle she speaks of? She ought not to be allowed to walk out by herself.'

'She can take care of herself,' said Beauchamp.

Palmet denied it. 'No woman can. Upon my honour, it's a shame that she should be out alone. What are her people? I'll run--from you, you know --and see her safe home. There's such an infernal lot of fellows about; and a girl simply bewitching and unprotected! I ought to be after her.'

Beauchamp held him firmly to the task of canvassing.

'Then will you tell me where she lives?' Palmet stipulated. He reproached Beauchamp for a notorious Grand Turk exclusiveness and greediness in regard to women, as well as a disposition to run hard races for them out of a spirit of pure rivalry.

'It's no use contradicting, it's universally known of you,' reiterated Palmet. 'I could name a dozen women, and dozens of fellows you deliberately set yourself to cut out, for the honour of it. What's that story they tell of you in one of the American cities or watering-places, North or South? You would dance at a ball a dozen times with a girl engaged to a man--who drenched you with a tumbler at the hotel bar, and off you all marched to the sands and exchanged shots from revolvers; and both of you, they say, saw the body of a drowned sailor in the water, in the moonlight, heaving nearer and nearer, and you stretched your man just as the body was flung up by a wave between you. Picturesque, if you like!'

'Dramatic, certainly. And I ran away with the bride next morning?'

'No!' roared Palmet; 'you didn't. There's the cruelty of the whole affair.'

Beauchamp laughed. 'An old messmate of mine, Lieutenant Jack Wilmore, can give you a different version of the story. I never have fought a duel, and never will. Here we are at the shop of a tough voter, Mr. Oggler. So it says in my note-book. Shall we put Lord Palmet to speak to him first?'

'If his lordship will put his heart into what he says,' Mr. Oggler bowed. 'Are you for giving the people recreation on a Sunday, my lord?'

'Trap-bat and ball, cricket, dancing, military bands, puppet-shows, theatres, merry-go-rounds, bosky dells--anything to make them happy,'

said Palmet.

'Oh, dear! then I 'm afraid we cannot ask you to speak to this Mr. Carpendike.' Oggler shook his head.

'Does the fellow want the people to be miserable?'

'I'm afraid, my lord, he would rather see them miserable.'

They introduced themselves to Mr. Carpendike in his shop. He was a flat-chested, sallow young shoemaker, with a shelving forehead, who seeing three gentlemen enter to him recognized at once with a practised resignation that they had not come to order shoe-leather, though he would fain have shod them, being needy; but it was not the design of Providence that they should so come as he in his blindness would have had them. Admitting this he wished for nothing.

The battle with Carpendike lasted three-quarters of an hour, during which he was chiefly and most effectively silent. Carpendike would not vote for a man that proposed to open museums on the Sabbath day. The striking simile of the thin end of the wedge was recurred to by him for a damning illustration. Captain Beauchamp might be honest in putting his mind on most questions in his address, when there was no demand upon him to do it; but honesty was no antidote to impiety. Thus Carpendike.

As to Sunday museuming being an antidote to the pothouse--no. For the people knew the frequenting of the pothouse to be a vice; it was a temptation of Satan that often in overcoming them was the cause of their flying back to grace: whereas museums and picture galleries were insidious attractions cloaked by the name of virtue, whereby they were allured to abandon worship.

Beauchamp flew at this young monster of unreason: 'But the people are not worshipping; they are idling and sotting, and if you carry your despotism farther still, and shut them out of every shop on Sundays, do you suppose you promote the spirit of worship? If you don't revolt them you unman them, and I warn you we can't afford to destroy what manhood remains to us in England. Look at the facts.'

He flung the facts at Carpendike with the natural exaggeration of them which eloquence produces, rather, as a rule, to assure itself in passing of the overwhelming justice of the cause it pleads than to deceive the adversary. Brewers' beer and publicans' beer, wife-beatings, the homes and the blood of the people, were matters reviewed to the confusion of Sabbatarians.

Carpendike listened with a bent head, upraised eyes, and brows wrinkling far on to his poll: a picture of a mind entrenched beyond the potentialities of mortal assault. He signified that he had spoken. Indeed Beauchamp's reply was vain to one whose argument was that he considered the people nearer to holiness in the: indulging of an evil propensity than in satisfying a harmless curiosity and getting a recreation. The Sabbath claimed them; if they were disobedient, Sin

ultimately might scourge them back to the fold, but never if they were permitted to regard themselves as innocent in their backsliding and rebelliousness.

Such language was quite new to Beauchamp. The parsons he had spoken to were of one voice in objecting to the pothouse. He appealed to Carpendike's humanity. Carpendike smote him with a text from Scripture.

'Devilish cold in this shop,' muttered Palmet.

Two not flourishing little children of the emaciated Puritan burst into the shop, followed by their mother, carrying a child in her arms. She had a sad look, upon traces of a past fairness, vaguely like a snow landscape in the thaw. Palmet stooped to toss shillings with her young ones, that he might avoid the woman's face. It cramped his heart.

'Don't you see, Mr. Carpendike,' said fat Mr. Oggler, 'it's the happiness of the people we want; that's what Captain Beauchamp works for--their happiness; that's the aim of life for all of us. Look at me! I'm as happy as the day. I pray every night, and I go to church every Sunday, and I never know what it is to be unhappy. The Lord has blessed me with a good digestion, healthy pious children, and a prosperous shop that's a competency--a modest one, but I make it satisfy me, because I know it's the Lord's gift. Well, now, and I hate Sabbath-breakers; I would punish them; and I'm against the public-houses on a Sunday; but aboard my little yacht, say on a Sunday morning in the Channel, I don't forget I owe it to the Lord that he has been good enough to put me in the way of keeping a yacht; no; I read prayers to my crew, and a chapter in the Bible-Genesis, Deuteronomy, Kings, Acts, Paul, just as it comes. All's good that's there. Then we're free for the day! man, boy, and me; we cook our victuals, and we must look to the yacht, do you see. But we've made our peace with the Almighty. We know that. He don't mind the working of the vessel so long as we've remembered him. He put us in that situation, exactly there, latitude and longitude, do you see, and work the vessel we must. And a glass of grog and a pipe after dinner, can't be any offence. And I tell you, honestly and sincerely, I'm sure my conscience is good, and I really and truly don't know what it is not to know happiness.'

'Then you don't know God,' said Carpendike, like a voice from a cave.

'Or nature: or the state of the world,' said Beauchamp, singularly impressed to find himself between two men, of whom--each perforce of his tenuity and the evident leaning of his appetites--one was for the barren black view of existence, the other for the fantastically bright. As to the men personally, he chose Carpendike, for all his obstinacy and sourness. Oggler's genial piety made him shrink with nausea.

But Lord Palmet paid Mr. Oggler a memorable compliment, by assuring him that he was altogether of his way of thinking about happiness.

The frank young nobleman did not withhold a reference to the two or three things essential to his happiness; otherwise Mr. Oggler might have been pleased and flattered.

Before quitting the shop, Beauchamp warned Carpendike that he should come again. 'Vote or no vote, you're worth the trial. Texts as many as you like. I'll make your faith active, if it's alive at all. You speak of the Lord loving his own; you make out the Lord to be your own, and use your religion like a drug. So it appears to me. That Sunday tyranny of yours has to be defended.

Remember that; for I for one shall combat it and expose it. Good day.'

Beauchamp continued, in the street: 'Tyrannies like this fellow's have made the English the dullest and wretchedest people in Europe.'

Palmet animadverted on Carpendike: 'The dog looks like a deadly fungus that has poisoned the woman.'

'I'd trust him with a post of danger, though,' said Beauchamp.

Before the candidate had opened his mouth to the next elector he was beamed on. M'Gilliper, baker, a floured brick face, leaned on folded arms across his counter and said, in Scotch: 'My vote? and he that asks me for my vote is the man who, when he was midshipman, saved the life of a relation of mine from death by drowning! my wife's first cousin, Johnny Brownson--and held him up four to five minutes in the water, and never left him till he was out of danger! There 's my hand on it, I will, and a score of householders in Bevisham the same.' He dictated precious names and addresses to Beauchamp, and was curtly thanked for his pains.

Such treatment of a favourable voter seemed odd to Palmet.

'Oh, a vote given for reasons of sentiment!' Beauchamp interjected.

Palmet reflected and said: 'Well, perhaps that's how it is women don't care uncommonly for the men who love them, though they like precious well to be loved. Opposition does it.'

'You have discovered my likeness to women,' said Beauchamp, eyeing him critically, and then thinking, with a sudden warmth, that he had seen Renee: 'Look here, Palmet, you're too late for Itchincope, to-day; come and eat fish and meat with me at my hotel, and come to a meeting after it. You can run by rail to Itchincope to breakfast in the morning, and I may come with you. You'll hear one or two men speak well to-night.'

'I suppose I shall have to be at this business myself some day,' sighed Palmet. 'Any women on the platform? Oh, but political women! And the Tories get the pick of the women. No, I don't think I 'll stay. Yes, I will; I'll go through with it. I like to be learning something. You wouldn't think it of me, Beauchamp, but I envy fellows at work.'

'You might make a speech for me, Palmet.'

'No man better, my dear fellow, if it were proposing a toast to the poor devils and asking them to drink it. But a dry speech, like leading them

over the desert without a well to cheer them--no oasis, as we used to call a five-pound note and a holiday--I haven't the heart for that. Is your Miss Denham a Radical?'

Beauchamp asserted that he had not yet met a woman at all inclining in the direction of Radicalism. 'I don't call furies Radicals. There may be women who think as well as feel; I don't know them.'

'Lots of them, Beauchamp. Take my word for it. I do know women. They haven't a shift, nor a trick, I don't know. They're as clear to me as glass. I'll wager your Miss Denham goes to the meetings. Now, doesn't she? Of course she does. And there couldn't be a gallanter way of spending an evening, so I'll try it. Nothing to repent of next morning! That's to be said for politics, Beauchamp, and I confess I'm rather jealous of you. A thoroughly good-looking girl who takes to a fellow for what he's doing in the world, must have ideas of him precious different from the adoration of six feet three and a fine seat in the saddle. I see that. There's Baskellett in the Blues; and if I were he I should detest my cuirass and helmet, for if he's half as successful as he boasts--it's the uniform.'

Two notorious Radicals, Peter Molyneux and Samuel Killick, were called on. The first saw Beauchamp and refused him; the second declined to see him. He was amazed and staggered, but said little.

Among the remainder of the electors of Bevisham, roused that day to a sense of their independence by the summons of the candidates, only one man made himself conspicuous, by premising that he had two important questions to ask, and he trusted Commander Beauchamp to answer them unreservedly. They were: first, What is a FRENCH MARQUEES? and second: Who was EURYDICEY?

Beauchamp referred him to the Tory camp, whence the placard alluding to those ladies had issued.

'Both of them 's ladies! I guessed it,' said the elector.

'Did you guess that one of them is a mythological lady?'

'I'm not far wrong in guessing t'other's not much better, I reckon. Now, sir, may I ask you, is there any tale concerning your morals?'

'No: you may not ask; you take a liberty.'

'Then I'll take the liberty to postpone talking about my vote. Look here, Mr. Commander; if the upper classes want anything of me and come to me for it, I'll know what sort of an example they're setting; now that's me.'

'You pay attention to a stupid Tory squib?'

'Where there's smoke there's fire, sir.'

Beauchamp glanced at his note-book for the name of this man, who was a ragman and dustman.

'My private character has nothing whatever to do with my politics,' he said, and had barely said it when he remembered having spoken somewhat differently, upon the abstract consideration of the case, to Mr. Tomlinson.

'You're quite welcome to examine my character for yourself, only I don't consent to be catechized. Understand that.'

'You quite understand that, Mr. Tripehallow,' said Oggler, bolder in taking up the strange name than Beauchamp had been.

'I understand that. But you understand, there's never been a word against the morals of Mr. Cougham. Here's the point: Do we mean to be a moral country? Very well, then so let our representatives be, I say. And if I hear nothing against your morals, Mr. Commander, I don't say you shan't have my vote. I mean to deliberate. You young nobs capering over our heads--I nail you down to morals. Politics secondary. Adew, as the dying spirit remarked to weeping friends.'

'Au revoir--would have been kinder,' said Palmet.

Mr. Tripehallow smiled roguishly, to betoken comprehension.

Beauchamp asked Mr. Oggler whether that fellow was to be taken for a humourist or a five-pound-note man.

'It may be both, sir. I know he's called Morality Joseph.'

An all but acknowledged five-pound-note man was the last they visited. He cut short the preliminaries of the interview by saying that he was a four-o'clock man; i.e. the man who waited for the final bids to him upon the closing hour of the election day.

'Not one farthing!' said Beauchamp, having been warned beforehand of the signification of the phrase by his canvassing lieutenant.

'Then you're nowhere,' the honest fellow replied in the mystic tongue of prophecy.

Palmet and Beauchamp went to their fish and meat; smoked a cigarette or two afterward, conjured away the smell of tobacco from their persons as well as they could, and betook themselves to the assembly-room of the Liberal party, where the young lord had an opportunity of beholding Mr. Cougham, and of listening to him for an hour and forty minutes. He heard Mr. Timothy Turbot likewise. And Miss Denham was present. Lord Palmet applauded when she smiled. When she looked attentive he was deeply studious. Her expression of fatigue under the sonorous ring of statistics poured out from Cougham was translated by Palmet into yawns and sighs of a profoundly fraternal sympathy. Her face quickened on the rising of Beauchamp to speak. She kept eye on him all the while, as

Palmet, with the skill of an adept in disguising his petty larceny of the optics, did on her. Twice or thrice she looked pained: Beauchamp was hesitating for the word. Once she looked startled and shut her eyes: a hiss had sounded; Beauchamp sprang on it as if enlivened by hostility, and dominated the factious note. Thereat she turned to a gentleman sitting beside her; apparently they agreed that some incident had occurred characteristic of Nevil Beauchamp; for whom, however, it was not a brilliant evening. He was very well able to account for it, and did so, after he had walked a few steps with Miss Denham on her homeward way.

'You heard Cougham, Palmet! He's my senior, and I'm obliged to come second to him, and how am I to have a chance when he has drenched the audience for close upon a couple of hours!'

Palmet mimicked the manner of Cougham.

'They cry for Turbot naturally; they want a relief,' Beauchamp groaned.

Palmet gave an imitation of Timothy Turbot.

He was an admirable mimic, perfectly spontaneous, without stressing any points, and Beauchamp was provoked to laugh his discontentment with the evening out of recollection.

But a grave matter troubled Palmet's head.

'Who was that fellow who walked off with Miss Denham?'

'A married man,' said Beauchamp: 'badly married; more 's the pity; he has a wife in the madhouse. His name is Lydiard.'

'Not her brother! Where's her uncle?'

'She won't let him come to these meetings. It's her idea; well-intended, but wrong, I think. She's afraid that Dr. Shrapnel will alarm the moderate Liberals and damage Radical me.'

Palmet muttered between his teeth, 'What queer things they let their women do!' He felt compelled to say, 'Odd for her to be walking home at night with a fellow like that.'

It chimed too consonantly with a feeling of Beauchamp's, to repress which he replied: 'Your ideas about women are simply barbarous, Palmet. Why shouldn't she? Her uncle places his confidence in the man, and in her. Isn't that better--ten times more likely to call out the sense of honour and loyalty, than the distrust and the scandal going on in your class?'

'Please to say yours too.'

'I've no class. I say that the education for women is to teach them to rely on themselves.'

'Ah! well, I don't object, if I'm the man.'

'Because you and your set are absolutely uncivilized in your views of women.'

'Common sense, Beauchamp!'

'Prey. You eye them as prey. And it comes of an idle aristocracy. You have no faith in them, and they repay you for your suspicion.'

'All the same, Beauchamp, she ought not to be allowed to go about at night with that fellow. "Rich and rare were the gems she wore": but that was in Erin's isle, and if we knew the whole history, she'd better have stopped at home. She's marvellously pretty, to my mind. She looks a high-bred wench. Odd it is, Beauchamp, to see a lady's-maid now and then catch the style of my lady. No, by Jove! I've known one or two--you couldn't tell the difference! Not till you were intimate. I know one would walk a minuet with a duchess. Of course--all the worse for her. If you see that uncle of Miss Denham's--upon my honour, I should advise him: I mean, counsel him not to trust her with any fellow but you.'

Beauchamp asked Lord Palmet how old he was.

Palmet gave his age; correcting the figures from six-and-twenty to one year more. 'And never did a stroke of work in my life,' he said, speaking genially out of an acute guess at the sentiments of the man he walked with.

It seemed a farcical state of things.

There was a kind of contrition in Palmet's voice, and to put him at his ease, as well as to stamp something in his own mind, Beauchamp said: 'It's common enough.'

CHAPTER XX

A DAY AT ITCHINCOPE

An election in Bevisham was always an exciting period at Itchincope, the large and influential old estate of the Lespels, which at one time, with but a ceremonious drive through the town, sent you two good Whig men to Parliament to sit at Reform banquets; two unswerving party men, blest subscribers to the right Review, and personally proud of its trenchancy. Mr. Grancey Lespel was the survivor of them, and well could he remember the happier day of his grandfather, his father, and his own hot youth. He could be carried so far by affectionate regrets as to think of the Tories of that day benignly:--when his champion Review of the orange and blue livery waved a wondrous sharp knife, and stuck and bled them, proving to his party, by trenchancy alone, that the Whig was the cause of Providence. Then politics presented you a table whereat two parties feasted, with no fear of the intrusion of a third, and your backs were

turned on the noisy lower world, your ears were deaf to it.

Apply we now the knocker to the door of venerable Quotation, and call the aged creature forth, that he, half choked by his eheu!--

'A sound between a sigh and bray,'

may pronounce the familiar but respectable words, the burial-service of a time so happy!

Mr. Grancey Lespel would still have been sitting for Bevisham (or politely at this elective moment bowing to resume the seat) had not those Manchester jugglers caught up his cry, appropriated his colours, displaced and impersonated him, acting beneficent Whig on a scale approaching treason to the Constitution; leaning on the people in earnest, instead of taking the popular shoulder for a temporary lift, all in high party policy, for the clever manoeuvre, to oust the Tory and sway the realm. See the consequences. For power, for no other consideration, those manufacturing rascals have raised Radicalism from its primaeval mire--from its petty backslum bookseller's shop and public-house back-parlour effluvia of oratory--to issue dictates in England, and we, England, formerly the oak, are topsy-turvy, like onions, our heels in the air!

The language of party is eloquent, and famous for being grand at illustration; but it is equally well known that much of it gives us humble ideas of the speaker, probably because of the naughty temper party is prone to; which, while endowing it with vehemence, lessens the stout circumferential view that should be taken, at least historically. Indeed, though we admit party to be the soundest method for conducting us, party talk soon expends its attractiveness, as would a summer's afternoon given up to the contemplation of an encounter of rams' heads. Let us be quit of Mr. Grancey Lespel's lamentations. The Whig gentleman had some reason to complain. He had been trained to expect no other attack than that of his hereditary adversary-ram in front, and a sham ram--no honest animal, but a ramming engine rather--had attacked him in the rear. Like Mr. Everard Romfrey and other Whigs, he was profoundly chagrined by popular ingratitude: 'not the same man,' his wife said of him. It nipped him early. He took to proverbs; sure sign of the sere leaf in a man's mind.

His wife reproached the people for their behaviour to him bitterly. The lady regarded politics as a business that helped hunting-men a stage above sportsmen, for numbers of the politicians she was acquainted with were hunting-men, yet something more by virtue of the variety they could introduce into a conversation ordinarily treating of sport and the qualities of wines. Her husband seemed to have lost in that Parliamentary seat the talisman which gave him notions distinguishing him from country squires; he had sunk, and he no longer cared for the months in London, nor for the speeches she read to him to re-awaken his mind and make him look out of himself, as he had done when he was a younger man and not a suspended Whig. Her own favourite reading was of love-adventures written in the French tongue. She had once been in love, and

could be so sympathetic with that passion as to avow to Cecilia Halkett a tenderness for Nevil Beauchamp, on account of his relations with the Marquise de Rouailout, and notwithstanding the demoniacal flame-halo of the Radical encircling him.

The allusion to Beauchamp occurred a few hours after Cecilia's arrival at Itchincope.

Cecilia begged for the French lady's name to be repeated; she had not heard it before, and she tasted the strange bitter relish of realization when it struck her ear to confirm a story that she believed indeed, but had not quite sensibly felt.

'And it is not over yet, they say,' Mrs. Grancey Lespel added, while softly flipping some spots of the colour proper to radicals in morals on the fame of the French lady. She possessed fully the grave judicial spirit of her countrywomen, and could sit in judgement on the personages of tales which had entranced her, to condemn the heroines: it was impolitic in her sex to pity females. As for the men--poor weak things! As for Nevil Beauchamp, in particular, his case, this penetrating lady said, was clear: he ought to be married. 'Could you make a sacrifice?' she asked Cecilia playfully.

'Nevil Beauchamp and I are old friends, but we have agreed that we are deadly political enemies,' Miss Halkett replied.

'It is not so bad for a beginning,' said Mrs. Lespel.

'If one were disposed to martyrdom.'

The older woman nodded. 'Without that.'

'My dear Mrs. Lespel, wait till you have heard him. He is at war with everything we venerate and build on. The wife you would give him should be a creature rooted in nothing--in sea-water. Simply two or three conversations with him have made me uncomfortable ever since; I can see nothing durable; I dream of surprises, outbreaks, dreadful events. At least it is perfectly true that I do not look with the same eyes on my country. He seems to delight in destroying one's peaceful contemplation of life. The truth is that he blows a perpetual gale, and is all agitation,' Cecilia concluded, affecting with a smile a slight shiver.

'Yes, one tires of that,' said Mrs. Lespel. 'I was determined I would have him here if we could get him to come. Grancey objected. We shall have to manage Captain Beauchamp and the rest as well. He is sure to come late to-morrow, and will leave early on Thursday morning for his canvass; our driving into Bevisham is for Friday or Saturday. I do not see that he need have any suspicions. Those verses you are so angry about cannot be traced to Itchincope. My dear, they are a childish trifle. When my husband stood first for Bevisham, the whole of his University life appeared in print. What we have to do is to forewarn the gentlemen to be guarded, and especially in what they say to my nephew Lord Palmet, for that boy cannot keep a secret; he is as open as a

plate.'

'The smoking-room at night?' Cecilia suggested, remembering her father's words about Itchincope's tobacco-hall.

'They have Captain Beauchamp's address hung up there, I have heard,' said Mrs. Lespel. 'There may be other things--another address, though it is not yet, placarded. Come with me. For fifteen years I have never once put my head into that room, and now I 've a superstitious fear about it.'

Mrs. Lespel led the way to the deserted smoking-room, where the stale reek of tobacco assailed the ladies, as does that dire place of Customs the stranger visiting savage (or too natural) potentates.

In silence they tore down from the wall Beauchamp's electoral Address--flanked all its length with satirical pen and pencil comments and sketches; and they consigned to flames the vast sheet of animated verses relating to the FRENCH MARQUEES. A quarter-size chalk-drawing of a slippered pantaloon having a duck on his shoulder, labelled to say 'Quack-quack,' and offering our nauseated Dame Britannia (or else it was the widow Bevisham) a globe of a pill to swallow, crossed with the consolatory and reassuring name of Shrapnel, they disposed of likewise. And then they fled, chased forth either by the brilliancy of the politically allusive epigrams profusely inscribed around them on the walls, or by the atmosphere. Mrs. Lespel gave her orders for the walls to be scraped, and said to Cecilia: 'A strange air to breathe, was it not? The less men and women know of one another, the happier for them. I knew my superstition was correct as a guide to me. I do so much wish to respect men, and all my experience tells me the Turks know best how to preserve it for us. Two men in this house would give their wives for pipes, if it came to the choice. We might all go for a cellar of old wine. After forty, men have married their habits, and wives are only an item in the list, and not the most important.'

With the assistance of Mr. Stukely Culbrett, Mrs. Lespel prepared the house and those of the company who were in the secret of affairs for the arrival of Beauchamp. The ladies were curious to see him. The gentlemen, not anticipating extreme amusement, were calm: for it is an axiom in the world of buckskins and billiard-cues, that one man is very like another; and so true is it with them, that they can in time teach it to the fair sex. Friends of Cecil Baskellett predominated, and the absence of so sprightly a fellow was regretted seriously; but he was shooting with his uncle at Holdesbury, and they did not expect him before Thursday.

On Wednesday morning Lord Palmet presented himself at a remarkably well-attended breakfast-table at Itchincope. He passed from Mrs. Lespel to Mrs. Wardour-Devsreux and Miss Halkett, bowed to other ladies, shook hands with two or three men, and nodded over the heads of half-a-dozen, accounting rather mysteriously for his delay in coming, it was thought, until he sat down before a plate of Yorkshire pie, and said:

'The fact is I've been canvassing hard. With Beauchamp!'

Astonishment and laughter surrounded him, and Palmet looked from face to face, equally astonished, and desirous to laugh too.

'Ernest! how could you do that?' said Mrs. Lespel; and her husband cried in stupefaction, 'With Beauchamp?'

'Oh! it's because of the Radicalism,' Palmet murmured to himself. 'I didn't mind that.'

'What sort of a day did you have?' Mr. Culbrett asked him; and several gentlemen fell upon him for an account of the day.

Palmet grimaced over a mouthful of his pie.

'Bad!' quoth Mr. Lespel; 'I knew it. I know Bevisham. The only chance there is for five thousand pounds in a sack with a hole in it.'

'Bad for Beauchamp? Dear me, no'; Palmet corrected the error. 'He is carrying all before him. And he tells them,' Palmet mimicked Beauchamp, 'they shall not have one penny: not a farthing. I gave a couple of young ones a shilling apiece, and he rowed me for bribery; somehow I did wrong.'

Lord Palmet described the various unearthly characters he had inspected in their dens: Carpendike, Tripehallow, and the radicals Peter Molyneux and Samuel Killick, and the ex-member for the borough, Cougham, posing to suit sign-boards of Liberal inns, with a hand thrust in his waistcoat, and his head well up, the eyes running over the under-lids, after the traditional style of our aristocracy; but perhaps more closely resembling an urchin on tiptoe peering above park-palings. Cougham's remark to Beauchamp, heard and repeated by Palmet with the object of giving an example of the senior Liberal's phraseology: 'I was necessitated to vacate my town mansion, to my material discomfort and that of my wife, whose equipage I have been compelled to take, by your premature canvass of the borough, Captain Beauchamp: and now, I hear, on undeniable authority, that no second opponent to us will be forthcoming'---this produced the greatest effect on the company.

'But do you tell me,' said Mr. Lespel, when the shouts of the gentlemen were subsiding, 'do you tell me that young Beauchamp is going ahead?'

'That he is. They flock to him in the street.'

'He stands there, then, and jingles a money-bag.'

Palmet resumed his mimicry of Beauchamp: 'Not a stiver; purity of election is the first condition of instruction to the people! Principles! Then they've got a capital orator: Turbot, an Irishman. I went to a meeting last night, and heard him; never heard anything finer in my life. You may laugh he whipped me off my legs; fellow spun me like a top; and while he was orationing, a donkey calls, "Turbot! ain't you a flat fish?" and he swings round, "Not for a fool's hook!" and out they

hustled the villain for a Tory. I never saw anything like it.'

'That repartee wouldn't have done with a Dutchman or a Torbay trawler,' said Stukely Culbrett. 'But let us hear more.'

'Is it fair?' Miss Halkett murmured anxiously to Mrs. Lespel, who returned a flitting shrug.

'Charming women follow Beauchamp, you know,' Palmet proceeded, as he conceived, to confirm and heighten the tale of success. 'There's a Miss Denham, niece of a doctor, a Dr Shot--Shrapnel! a wonderfully good-looking, clever-looking girl, comes across him in half-a-dozen streets to ask how he's getting on, and goes every night to his meetings, with a man who 's a writer and has a mad wife; a man named Lydia-no, that's a woman--Lydiard. It's rather a jumble; but you should see her when Beauchamp's on his legs and speaking.'

'Mr. Lydiard is in Bevisham?' Mrs. Wardour-Devereux remarked.

'I know the girl,' growled Mr. Lespel. 'She comes with that rascally doctor and a bobtail of tea-drinking men and women and their brats to Northeden Heath--my ground. There they stand and sing.'

'Hymns?' inquired Mr. Culbrett.

'I don't know what they sing. And when it rains they take the liberty to step over my bank into my plantation. Some day I shall have them stepping into my house.'

'Yes, it's Mr. Lydiard; I'm sure of the man's name,' Palmet replied to Mrs. Wardour-Devereux.

'We met him in Spain the year before last,' she observed to Cecilia.

The 'we' reminded Palmet that her husband was present.

'Ah, Devereux, I didn't see you,' he nodded obliquely down the table.

'By the way, what's the grand procession? I hear my man Davis has come all right, and I caught sight of the top of your coach-box in the stableyard as I came in. What are we up to?'

'Baskett writes, it's to be for to-morrow morning at ten-the start.'

Mr. Wardour-Devereux addressed the table generally. He was a fair, huge, bush-bearded man, with a voice of unvarying bass: a squire in his county, and energetic in his pursuit of the pleasures of hunting, driving, travelling, and tobacco.

'Old Bask's the captain of us? Very well, but where do we drive the teams? How many are we? What's in hand?'

Cecilia threw a hurried glance at her hostess.

Luckily some witling said, 'Fours-in-hand!' and so dryly that it passed

for humour, and gave Mrs. Lespel time to interpose. 'You are not to know till to-morrow, Ernest.'

Palmet had traced the authorship of the sally to Mr. Algy Borolick, and crowned him with praise for it. He asked, 'Why not know till to-morrow?' A word in a murmur from Mr. Culbrett, 'Don't frighten the women,' satisfied him, though why it should he could not have imagined.

Mrs. Lespel quitted the breakfast-table before the setting in of the dangerous five minutes of conversation over its ruins, and spoke to her husband, who contested the necessity for secrecy, but yielded to her judgement when it was backed by Stukely Culbrett. Soon after Lord Palmet found himself encountered by evasions and witticisms, in spite of the absence of the ladies, upon every attempt he made to get some light regarding the destination of the four-in-hands next day.

'What are you going to do?' he said to Mr. Devereux, thinking him the likeliest one to grow confidential in private.

'Smoke,' resounded from the depths of that gentleman.

Palmet recollected the ground of division between the beautiful brunette and her lord--his addiction to the pipe in perpetuity, and deemed it sweeter to be with the lady.

She and Miss Halkett were walking in the garden.

Miss Halkett said to him: 'How wrong of you to betray the secrets of your friend! Is he really making way?'

'Beauchamp will head the poll to a certainty,' Palmet replied.

'Still,' said Miss Halkett, 'you should not forget that you are not in the house of a Liberal. Did you canvass in the town or the suburbs?'

'Everywhere. I assure you, Miss Halkett, there's a feeling for Beauchamp--they're in love with him!'

'He promises them everything, I suppose?'

'Not he. And the odd thing is, it isn't the Radicals he catches. He won't go against the game laws for them, and he won't cut down army and navy. So the Radicals yell at him. One confessed he had sold his vote for five pounds last election: "you shall have it for the same," says he, "for you're all humbugs." Beauchamp took him by the throat and shook him--metaphorically, you know. But as for the tradesmen, he's their hero; bakers especially.'

'Mr. Austin may be right, then!' Cecilia reflected aloud.

She went to Mrs. Lespel to repeat what she had extracted from Palmet, after warning the latter not, in common loyalty, to converse about his canvass with Beauchamp.

'Did you speak of Mr. Lydiard as Captain Beauchamp's friend?' Mrs. Devereux inquired of him.

'Lydiard? why, he was the man who made off with that pretty Miss Denham,' said Palmet. 'I have the greatest trouble to remember them all; but it was not a day wasted. Now I know politics. Shall we ride or walk? You will let me have the happiness? I'm so unlucky; I rarely meet you!'

'You will bring Captain Beauchamp to me the moment he comes?'

'I'll bring him. Bring him? Nevil Beauchamp won't want bringing.'

Mrs. Devereux smiled with some pleasure.

Grancey Lespel, followed at some distance by Mr. Ferbrass, the Tory lawyer, stepped quickly up to Palmet, and asked whether Beauchamp had seen Dollikins, the brewer.

Palmet could recollect the name of one Tomlinson, and also the calling at a brewery. Moreover, Beauchamp had uttered contempt of the brewer's business, and of the social rule to accept rich brewers for gentlemen. The man's name might be Dollikins and not Tomlinson, and if so, it was Dollikins who would not see Beauchamp. To preserve his political importance, Palmet said, 'Dollikins! to be sure, that was the man.'

'Treats him as he does you,' Mr. Lespel turned to Ferbrass. 'I've sent to Dollikins to come to me this morning, if he's not driving into the town. I'll have him before Beauchamp sees him. I've asked half-a-dozen of these country gentlemen-tradesmen to lunch at my table to-day.'

'Then, sir,' observed Ferbrass, 'if they are men to be persuaded, they had better not see me.'

'True; they're my old supporters, and mightn't like your Tory face,' Mr. Lespel assented.

Mr. Ferbrass congratulated him on the heartiness of his espousal of the Tory cause.

Mr. Lespel winced a little, and told him not to put his trust in that.

'Turned Tory?' said Palmet.

Mr. Lespel declined to answer.

Palmet said to Mrs. Devereux, 'He thinks I'm not worth speaking to upon politics. Now I'll give him some Beauchamp; I learned lots yesterday.'

'Then let it be in Captain Beauchamp's manner,' said she softly.

Palmet obeyed her commands with the liveliest exhibition of his peculiar faculty: Cecilia, rejoining them, seemed to hear Nevil himself in his emphatic political mood. 'Because the Whigs are defunct! They had no root in the people! Whig is the name of a tribe that was! You have Tory, Liberal, and Radical. There is no place for Whig. He is played out.'

'Who has been putting that nonsense into your head?' Mr. Lespel retorted. 'Go shooting, go shooting!'

Shots were heard in the woods. Palmet pricked up his ears; but he was taken out riding to act cavalier to Mrs. Devereux and Miss Halkett.

Cecilia corrected his enthusiasm with the situation. 'No flatteries to-day. There are hours when women feel their insignificance and helplessness. I begin to fear for Mr. Austin; and I find I can do nothing to aid him. My hands are tied. And yet I know I could win voters if only it were permissible for me to go and speak to them.'

'Win them!' cried Palmet, imagining the alacrity of men's votes to be won by her. He recommended a gallop for the chasing away of melancholy, and as they were on the Bevisham high road, which was bordered by strips of turf and heath, a few good stretches brought them on the fir-heights, commanding views of the town and broad water.

'No, I cannot enjoy it,' Cecilia said to Mrs. Devereux; 'I don't mind the grey light; cloud and water, and halftones of colour, are homely English and pleasant, and that opal where the sun should be has a suggestiveness richer than sunlight. I'm quite northern enough to understand it; but with me it must be either peace or strife, and that Election down there destroys my chance of peace. I never could mix reverie with excitement; the battle must be over first, and the dead buried. Can you?'

Mrs. Devereux answered: 'Excitement? I am not sure that I know what it is. An Election does not excite me.'

'There's Nevil Beauchamp himself!' Palmet sang out, and the ladies discerned Beauchamp under a fir-tree, down by the road, not alone. A man, increasing in length like a telescope gradually reaching its end for observation, and coming to the height of a landmark, as if raised by ropes, was rising from the ground beside him. 'Shall we trot on, Miss Halkett?'

Cecilia said, 'No.'

'Now I see a third fellow,' said Palmet. 'It's the other fellow, the Denham-Shrapnel-Radical meeting . . . Lydiard's his name: writes books.!

'We may as well ride on,' Mrs. Devereux remarked, and her horse fretted singularly.

Beauchamp perceived them, and lifted his hat. Palmet made demonstrations

for the ladies. Still neither party moved nearer.

After some waiting, Cecilia proposed to turn back.

Mrs. Devereux looked into her eyes. 'I'll take the lead,' she said, and started forward, pursued by Palmet. Cecilia followed at a sullen canter.

Before they came up to Beauchamp, the long-shanked man had stalked away townward. Lydiard held Beauchamp by the hand. Some last words, after the manner of instructions, passed between them, and then Lydiard also turned away.

'I say, Beauchamp, Mrs. Devereux wants to hear who that man is,' Palmet said, drawing up.

'That man is Dr. Shrapnel,' said Beauchamp, convinced that Cecilia had checked her horse at the sight of the doctor.

'Dr. Shrapnel,' Palmet informed Mrs. Devereux.

She looked at him to seek his wits, and returning Beauchamp's admiring salutation with a little bow and smile, said, 'I fancied it was a gentleman we met in Spain.'

'He writes books,' observed Palmet, to jog a slow intelligence.

'Pamphlets, you mean.'

'I think he is not a pamphleteer', Mrs. Devereux said.

'Mr. Lydiard, then, of course; how silly I am! How can you pardon me!' Beauchamp was contrite; he could not explain that a long guess he had made at Miss Halkett's reluctance to come up to him when Dr. Shrapnel was with him had preoccupied his mind. He sent off Palmet the bearer of a pretext for bringing Lydiard back, and then said to Cecilia, 'You recognized Dr. Shrapnel?'

'I thought it might be Dr. Shrapnel', she was candid enough to reply.

'I could not well recognize him, not knowing him.'

'Here comes Mr. Lydiard; and let me assure you, if I may take the liberty of introducing him, he is no true Radical. He is a philosopher--one of the flirts, the butterflies of politics, as Dr. Shrapnel calls them.'

Beauchamp hummed over some improvised trifles to Lydiard, then introduced him cursorily, and all walked in the direction of Itchincope. It was really the Mr. Lydiard Mrs. Devereux had met in Spain, so they were left in the rear to discuss their travels. Much conversation did not go on in front. Cecilia was very reserved. By-and-by she said, 'I am glad you have come into the country early to-day.'

He spoke rapturously of the fresh air, and not too mildly of his pleasure in meeting her. Quite off her guard, she began to hope he was getting to

be one of them again, until she heard him tell Lord Palmet that he had come early out of Bevisham for the walk with Dr. Shrapnel, and to call on certain rich tradesmen living near Itchincope. He mentioned the name of Dollikins.

'Dollikins?' Palmet consulted a perturbed recollection. Among the entangled list of new names he had gathered recently from the study of politics, Dollikins rang in his head. He shouted, 'Yes, Dollikins! to be sure. Lespel has him to lunch to-day;--calls him a gentleman-tradesman; odd fish! and told a fellow called--where is it now?--a name like brass or copper . . . Copperstone? Brasspot? . . . told him he'd do well to keep his Tory cheek out of sight. It 's the names of those fellows bother one so! All the rest's easy.'

'You are evidently in a state of confusion, Lord Palmet,' said Cecilia.

The tone of rebuke and admonishment was unperceived. 'Not about the facts,' he rejoined. 'I 'm for fair play all round; no trickery. I tell Beauchamp all I know, just as I told you this morning, Miss Halkett. What I don't like is Lespel turning Tory.'

Cecilia put a stop to his indiscretions by halting for Mrs. Devereux, and saying to Beauchamp, 'If your friend would return to Bevisham by rail, this is the nearest point to the station.'

Palmet, best-natured of men, though generally prompted by some of his peculiar motives, dismounted from his horse, leaving him to Beauchamp, that he might conduct Mr. Lydiard to the station, and perhaps hear a word of Miss Denham: at any rate be able to form a guess as to the secret of that art of his, which had in the space of an hour restored a happy and luminous vivacity to the languid Mrs. Wardour-Devereux.

CHAPTER XXI

THE QUESTION AS TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE WHIGS, AND THE FINE BLOW STRUCK BY MR. EVERARD ROMFREY

Itchincope was famous for its hospitality. Yet Beauchamp, when in the presence of his hostess, could see that he was both unexpected and unwelcome. Mrs. Lespel was unable to conceal it; she looked meaningly at Cecilia, talked of the house being very full, and her husband engaged till late in the afternoon. And Captain Baskellett had arrived on a sudden, she said. And the luncheon-table in the dining-room could not possibly hold more.

'We three will sit in the library, anywhere,' said Cecilia.

So they sat and lunched in the library, where Mrs. Devereux served unconsciously for an excellent ally to Cecilia in chatting to Beauchamp, principally of the writings of Mr. Lydiard.

Had the blinds of the windows been drawn down and candles lighted, Beauchamp would have been well contented to remain with these two ladies, and forget the outer world; sweeter society could not have been offered him: but glancing carelessly on to the lawn, he exclaimed in some wonderment that the man he particularly wished to see was there. 'It must be Dollikins, the brewer. I've had him pointed out to me in Bevisham, and I never can light on him at his brewery.'

No excuse for detaining the impetuous candidate struck Cecilia. She betook herself to Mrs. Lespel, to give and receive counsel in the emergency, while Beauchamp struck across the lawn to Mr. Dollikins, who had the squire of Itchincope on the other side of him.

Late in the afternoon a report reached the ladies of a furious contest going on over Dollikins. Mr. Algy Borolick was the first to give them intelligence of it, and he declared that Beauchamp had wrested Dollikins from Grancey Lespel. This was contradicted subsequently by Mr. Stukely Culbrett. 'But there's heavy pulling between them,' he said.

'It will do all the good in the world to Grancey,' said Mrs. Lespel.

She sat in her little blue-room, with gentlemen congregating at the open window.

Presently Grancey Lespel rounded a projection of the house where the drawing-room stood out: 'The maddest folly ever talked!' he delivered himself in wrath. 'The Whigs dead? You may as well say I'm dead.'

It was Beauchamp answering: 'Politically, you're dead, if you call yourself a Whig. You couldn't be a live one, for the party's in pieces, blown to the winds. The country was once a chess-board for Whig and Tory: but that game's at an end. There's no doubt on earth that the Whigs are dead.'

'But if there's no doubt about it, how is it I have a doubt about it?'

'You know you're a Tory. You tried to get that man Dollikins from me in the Tory interest.'

'I mean to keep him out of Radical clutches. Now that 's the truth.'

They came up to the group by the open window, still conversing hotly, indifferent to listeners.

'You won't keep him from me; I have him,' said Beauchamp.

'You delude yourself; I have his promise, his pledged word,' said Grancey Lespel.

'The man himself told you his opinion of renegade Whigs.'

'Renegade!'

'Renegade Whig is an actionable phrase,' Mr. Culbrett observed.

He was unnoticed.

'If you don't like "renegade," take "dead,"' said Beauchamp. 'Dead Whig resurgent in the Tory. You are dead.'

'It's the stupid conceit of your party thinks that.'

'Dead, my dear Mr. Lespel. I'll say for the Whigs, they would not be seen touting for Tories if they were not ghosts of Whigs. You are dead. There is no doubt of it.'

'But,' Grancey Lespel repeated, 'if there's no doubt about it, how is it I have a doubt about it?'

'The Whigs preached finality in Reform. It was their own funeral sermon.'

'Nonsensical talk!'

'I don't dispute your liberty of action to go over to the Tories, but you have no right to attempt to take an honest Liberal with you. And that I've stopped.'

'Aha! Beauchamp; the man's mine. Come, you'll own he swore he wouldn't vote for a Shrapnelite.'

'Don't you remember?--that's how the Tories used to fight you; they stuck an epithet to you, and hooted to set the mob an example; you hit them off to the life,' said Beauchamp, brightening with the fine ire of strife, and affecting a sadder indignation. 'You traded on the ignorance of a man prejudiced by lying reports of one of the noblest of human creatures.'

'Shrapnel? There! I've had enough.' Grancey Lespel bounced away with both hands outspread on the level of his ears.

'Dead!' Beauchamp sent the ghastly accusation after him.

Grancey faced round and said, 'Bo!' which was applauded for a smart retort. And let none of us be so exalted above the wit of daily life as to sneer at it. Mrs. Lespel remarked to Mr. Culbrett, 'Do you not see how much he is refreshed by the interest he takes in this election? He is ten years younger.'

Beauchamp bent to her, saying mock-dolefully, 'I'm sorry to tell you that if ever he was a sincere Whig, he has years of remorse before him.'

'Promise me, Captain Beauchamp,' she answered, 'promise you will give us no more politics to-day.'

'If none provoke me.'

'None shall.'

'And as to Bevisham,' said Mr. Culbrett, 'it's the identical borough for a Radical candidate, for every voter there demands a division of his property, and he should be the last to complain of an adoption of his principles.'

'Clever,' rejoined Beauchamp; 'but I am under government'; and he swept a bow to Mrs. Lespel.

As they were breaking up the group, Captain Baskellett appeared.

'Ah! Nevil,' said he, passed him, saluted Miss Halkett through the window, then cordially squeezed his cousin's hand. 'Having a holiday out of Bevisham? The baron expects to meet you at Mount Laurels to-morrow. He particularly wishes me to ask you whether you think all is fair in war.'

'I don't,' said Nevil.

'Not? The canvass goes on swimmingly.'

'Ask Palmet!

'Palmet gives you two-thirds of the borough. The poor old Tory tortoise is nowhere. They've been writing about you, Nevil.'

'They have. And if there 's a man of honour in the party I shall hold him responsible for it.'

'I allude to an article in the Bevisham Liberal paper; a magnificent eulogy, upon my honour. I give you my word, I have rarely read an article so eloquent. And what is the Conservative misdemeanour which the man of honour in the party is to pay for?'

'I'll talk to you about it by-and-by,' said Nevil.

He seemed to Cecilia too trusting, too simple, considering his cousin's undisguised tone of banter. Yet she could not put him on his guard. She would have had Mr. Culbrett do so. She walked on the terrace with him near upon sunset, and said, 'The position Captain Beauchamp is in here is most unfair to him.'

'There's nothing unfair in the lion's den,' said Stukely Culbrett; adding, 'Now, observe, Miss Halkett; he talks for effect. He discovers that Lespel is a Torified Whig; but that does not make him a bit more alert. It's to say smart things. He speaks, but won't act, as if he were among enemies. He's getting too fond of his bow-wow. Here he is, and he knows the den, and he chooses to act the innocent. You see how ridiculous? That trick of the ingenu, or peculiarly heavenly messenger, who pretends that he ought never to have any harm done to him, though he

carries the lighted match, is the way of young Radicals. Otherwise Beauchamp would be a dear boy. We shall see how he takes his thrashing.'

'You feel sure he will be beaten?'

'He has too strong a dose of fool's honesty to succeed--stands for the game laws with Radicals, for example. He's loaded with scruples and crotchets, and thinks more of them than of his winds and his tides. No public man is to be made out of that. His idea of the Whigs being dead shows a head that can't read the country. He means himself for mankind, and is preparing to be the benefactor of a country parish.'

'But as a naval officer?'

'Excellent.'

Cecilia was convinced that Mr. Culbrett underestimated Beauchamp. Nevertheless the confidence expressed in Beauchamp's defeat reassured and pleased her. At midnight she was dancing with him in the midst of great matronly country vessels that raised a wind when they launched on the waltz, and exacted an anxious pilotage on the part of gentlemen careful of their partners; and why I cannot say, but contrasts produce quaint ideas in excited spirits, and a dancing politician appeared to her so absurd that at one moment she had to bite her lips not to laugh. It will hardly be credited that the waltz with Nevil was delightful to Cecilia all the while, and dancing with others a penance. He danced with none other. He led her to a three o'clock morning supper: one of those triumphant subversions of the laws and customs of earth which have the charm of a form of present deification for all young people; and she, while noting how the poor man's advocate dealt with costly pasties and sparkling wines, was overjoyed at his hearty comrade's manner with the gentlemen, and a leadership in fun that he seemed to have established. Cecil Baskellett acknowledged it, and complimented him on it. 'I give you my word, Nevil, I never heard you in finer trim. Here's to our drive into Bevisham to-morrow! Do you drink it? I beg; I entreat.'

'Oh, certainly,' said Nevil.

'Will you take a whip down there?'

'If you're all insured.'

'On my honour, old Nevil, driving a four-in-hand is easier than governing the country.'

'I'll accept your authority for what you know best,' said Nevil.

The toast of the Drive into Bevisham was drunk.

Cecilia left the supper-table, mortified, and feeling disgraced by her participation in a secret that was being wantonly abused to humiliate Nevil, as she was made to think by her sensitiveness. All the gentlemen were against him, excepting perhaps that chattering pie Lord Palmet, who

did him more mischief than his enemies. She could not sleep. She walked out on the terrace with Mrs. Wardour-Devereux, in a dream, hearing that lady breathe remarks hardly less than sentimental, and an unwearied succession of shouts from the smoking-room.

'They are not going to bed to-night,' said Mrs. Devereux.

'They are mystifying Captain Beauchamp,' said Cecilia.

'My husband tells me they are going to drive him into the town to-morrow.'

Cecilia flushed: she could scarcely get her breath.

'Is that their plot?' she murmured.

Sleep was rejected by her, bed itself. The drive into Bevisham had been fixed for nine A.M. She wrote two lines on note-paper in her room: but found them overfervid and mysterious. Besides, how were they to be conveyed to Nevil's chamber

She walked in the passage for half an hour, thinking it possible she might meet him; not the most lady-like of proceedings, but her head was bewildered. An arm-chair in her room invited her to rest and think--the mask of a natural desire for sleep. At eight in the morning she was awakened by her maid, and at a touch exclaimed, 'Have they gone?' and her heart still throbbed after hearing that most of the gentlemen were in and about the stables. Cecilia was down-stairs at a quarter to nine. The breakfast-room was empty of all but Lord Palmet and Mr. Wardour-Devereux; one selecting a cigar to light out of doors, the other debating between two pipes. She beckoned to Palmet, and commissioned him to inform Beauchamp that she wished him to drive her down to Bevisham in her pony-carriage. Palmet brought back word from Beauchamp that he had an appointment at ten o'clock in the town. 'I want to see him,' she said; so Palmet ran out with the order. Cecilia met Beauchamp in the entrance-hall.

'You must not go,' she said bluntly.

'I can't break an appointment,' said he--'for the sake of my own pleasure,' was implied.

'Will you not listen to me, Nevil, when I say you cannot go?'

A coachman's trumpet blew.

'I shall be late. That's Colonel Millington's team. He starts first, then Wardour-Devereux, then Cecil, and I mount beside him; Palmet's at our heels.'

'But can't you even imagine a purpose for their driving into Bevisham so pompously?'

'Well, men with drags haven't commonly much purpose,' he said.

'But on this occasion! At an Election time! Surely, Nevil, you can guess at a reason.'

A second trumpet blew very martially. Footmen came in search of Captain Beauchamp. The alternative of breaking her pledged word to her father, or of letting Nevil be burlesqued in the sight of the town, could no longer be dallied with.

Cecilia said, 'Well, Nevil, then you shall hear it.'

Hereupon Captain Baskellett's groom informed Captain Beauchamp that he was off.

'Yes,' Nevil said to Cecilia, 'tell me on board the yacht.'

'Nevil, you will be driving into the town with the second Tory candidate of the borough.'

'Which? who?' Nevil 'asked.

'Your cousin Cecil.'

'Tell Captain Baskellett that I don't drive down till an hour later,' Nevil said to the groom. 'Cecilia, you're my friend; I wish you were more. I wish we didn't differ. I shall hope to change you--make you come half-way out of that citadel of yours. This is my uncle Everard! I might have made sure there'd be a blow from him! And Cecil! of all men for a politician! Cecilia, think of it! Cecil Baskellett! I beg Seymour Austin's pardon for having suspected him . . .'

Now sounded Captain Baskellett's trumpet.

Angry though he was, Beauchamp laughed. 'Isn't it exactly like the baron to spring a mine of this kind?'

There was decidedly humour in the plot, and it was a lusty quarterstaff blow into the bargain. Beauchamp's head rang with it. He could not conceal the stunning effect it had on him. Gratitude and tenderness toward Cecilia for saving him, at the cost of a partial breach of faith that he quite understood, from the scandal of the public entry into Bevisham on the Tory coach-box, alternated with his interjections regarding his uncle Everard.

At eleven, Cecilia sat in her pony-carriage giving final directions to Mrs. Devereux where to look out for the Esperanza and the schooner's boat. 'Then I drive down alone,' Mrs. Devereux said.

The gentlemen were all off, and every available maid with them on the coach-boxes, a brilliant sight that had been missed by Nevil and Cecilia.

'Why, here's Lydiard!' said Nevil, supposing that Lydiard must be

approaching him with tidings of the second Tory candidate. But Lydiard knew nothing of it. He was the bearer of a letter on foreign paper--marked urgent, in Rosamund's hand--and similarly worded in the well-known hand which had inscribed the original address of the letter to Steynham.

Beauchamp opened it and read:

Chateau Tourdestelle
'(Eure).

'Come. I give you three days--no more.

'RENEE.'

The brevity was horrible. Did it spring from childish imperiousness or tragic peril?

Beauchamp could imagine it to be this or that. In moments of excited speculation we do not dwell on the possibility that there may be a mixture of motives.

'I fear I must cross over to France this evening,' he said to Cecilia.

She replied, 'It is likely to be stormy to-night. The steamboat may not run.'

'If there's a doubt of it, I shall find a French lugger. You are tired, from not sleeping last night.'

'No,' she answered, and nodded to Mrs. Devereux, beside whom Mr. Lydiard stood: 'You will not drive down alone, you see.'

For a young lady threatened with a tempest in her heart, as disturbing to her as the one gathering in the West for ships at sea, Miss Halkett bore herself well.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DRIVE INTO BEVISHAM

Beauchamp was requested by Cecilia to hold the reins. His fair companion in the pony-carriage preferred to lean back musing, and he had leisure to think over the blow dealt him by his uncle Everard with so sure an aim so ringingly on the head. And in the first place he made no attempt to disdain it because it was nothing but artful and heavy-handed, after the mediaeval pattern. Of old he himself had delighted in artfulness as well as boldness and the unmistakable hit. Highly to prize generalship was in his blood, though latterly the very forces propelling him to his political warfare had forbidden the use of it to him. He saw the patient veteran laying his gun for a long shot--to give as good as he had

received; and in realizing Everard Romfrey's perfectly placid bearing under provocation, such as he certainly would have maintained while preparing his reply to it, the raw fighting humour of the plot touched the sense of justice in Beauchamp enough to make him own that he had been the first to offend.

He could reflect also on the likelihood that other offended men of his uncle's age and position would have sulked or stormed, threatening the Parthian shot of the vindictive testator. If there was godlessness in turning to politics for a weapon to strike a domestic blow, manfulness in some degree signaled it. Beauchamp could fancy his uncle crying out, Who set the example? and he was not at that instant inclined to dwell on the occult virtues of the example he had set. To be honest, this elevation of a political puppet like Cecil Baskett, and the starting him, out of the same family which Turbot, the journalist, had magnified, into Bevisham with such pomp and flourish in opposition to the serious young champion of popular rights and the Puritan style, was ludicrously effective. Conscienceless of course. But that was the way of the Old School.

Beauchamp broke the silence by thanking Cecilia once more for saving him from the absurd exhibition of the Radical candidate on the Tory coach-box, and laughing at the grimmish slyness of his uncle Everard's conspiracy a something in it that was half-smile half-sneer; not exactly malignant, and by no means innocent; something made up of the simplicity of a lighted match, and its proximity to powder, yet neither deadly, in spite of a wicked twinkle, nor at all pretending to be harmless: in short, a specimen of old English practical humour.

He laboured to express these or corresponding views of it, with tolerably natural laughter, and Cecilia rallied her spirits at his pleasant manner of taking his blow.

'I shall compliment the baron when I meet him tonight,' he said. 'What can we compare him to?'

She suggested the Commander of the Faithful, the Lord Haroun, who likewise had a turn for buffooneries to serve a purpose, and could direct them loftily and sovereignty.

'No: Everard Romfrey's a Northerner from the feet up,' said Beauchamp.

Cecilia compliantly offered him a sketch of the Scandinavian Troll: much nearer the mark, he thought, and exclaimed: 'Baron Troll! I'm afraid, Cecilia, you have robbed him of the best part of his fun. And you will owe it entirely to him if you should be represented in Parliament by my cousin Baskett.'

'Promise me, Nevit, that you will, when you meet Captain Baskett, not forget I did you some service, and that I wish, I shall be so glad if you do not resent certain thingsVery objectionable, we all think.'

He released her from the embarrassing petition: 'Oh! now I know my man,

you may be sure I won't waste a word on him. The fact is, he would not understand a word, and would require more--and that I don't do. When I fancied Mr. Austin was the responsible person, I meant to speak to him.'

Cecilia smiled gratefully.

The sweetness of a love-speech would not have been sweeter to her than this proof of civilized chivalry in Nevil.

They came to the fir-heights overlooking Bevisham. Here the breezy beginning of a South-western autumnal gale tossed the ponies' manes and made threads of Cecilia's shorter locks of beautiful auburn by the temples and the neck, blustering the curls that streamed in a thick involution from the silken band gathering them off her uncovered clear-swept ears.

Beauchamp took an impression of her side face. It seemed to offer him everything the world could offer of cultivated purity, intelligent beauty and attractiveness; and 'Wilt thou?' said the winged minute. Peace, a good repute in the mouths of men, home, and a trustworthy woman for mate, an ideal English lady, the rarest growth of our country, and friends and fair esteem, were offered. Last night he had waltzed with her, and the manner of this tall graceful girl in submitting to the union of the measure and reserving her individual distinction, had exquisitely flattered his taste, giving him an auspicious image of her in partnership, through the uses of life.

He looked ahead at the low dead-blue cloud swinging from across channel. What could be the riddle of Renee's letter! It chained him completely.

'At all events, I shall not be away longer than three days,' he said; paused, eyed Cecilia's profile, and added, 'Do we differ so much?'

'It may not be so much as we think,' said she.

'But if we do!'

'Then, Nevil, there is a difference between us.'

'But if we keep our lips closed?'

'We should have to shut our eyes as well!'

A lovely melting image of her stole over him; all the warmer for her unwittingness in producing it: and it awakened a tenderness toward the simple speaker.

Cecilia's delicate breeding saved her from running on figuratively. She continued: 'Intellectual differences do not cause wounds, except when very unintellectual sentiments are behind them:--my conceit, or your impatience, Nevil? "Noi veggiam come quei, che ha mala luce." . . . I can confess my sight to be imperfect: but will you ever do so?'

Her musical voice in Italian charmed his hearing.

'What poet was that you quoted?'

'The wisest: Dante.'

'Dr. Shrapnel's favourite! I must try to read him.'

'He reads Dante?' Cecilia threw a stress on the august name; and it was manifest that she cared not for the answer.

Contemptuous exclusiveness could not go farther.

'He is a man of cultivation,' Beauchamp said cursorily, trying to avoid dissension, but in vain. 'I wish I were half as well instructed, and the world half as charitable as he!--You ask me if I shall admit my sight to be imperfect. Yes; when you prove to me that priests and landlords are willing to do their duty by the people in preference to their churches and their property: but will you ever shake off prejudice?'

Here was opposition sounding again. Cecilia mentally reproached Dr. Shrapnel for it.

'Indeed, Nevil, really, must not--may I not ask you this?--must not every one feel the evil spell of some associations? And Dante and Dr. Shrapnel!'

'You don't know him, Cecilia.'

'I saw him yesterday.'

'You thought him too tall?'

'I thought of his character.'

'How angry I should be with you if you were not so beautiful!'

'I am immensely indebted to my unconscious advocate.'

'You are clad in steel; you flash back; you won't answer me out of the heart. I'm convinced it is pure wilfulness that makes you oppose me.'

'I fancy you must be convinced because you cannot imagine women to have any share of public spirit, Nevil.'

A grain of truth in that remark set Nevil reflecting.

'I want them to have it,' he remarked, and glanced at a Tory placard, probably the puppet's fresh-printed address to the electors, on one of the wayside fir-trees. 'Bevisham looks well from here. We might make a North-western Venice of it, if we liked.'

'Papa told you it would be money sunk in mud.'

'Did I mention it to him?--Thoroughly Conservative!--So he would leave the mud as it is. They insist on our not venturing anything--those Tories! exactly as though we had gained the best of human conditions, instead of counting crops of rogues, malefactors, egoists, noxious and lumbering creatures that deaden the country. Your town down there is one of the ugliest and dirtiest in the kingdom: it might be the fairest.'

'I have often thought that of Bevisham, Nevil.'

He drew a visionary sketch of quays, embankments, bridged islands, public buildings, magical emanations of patriotic architecture, with a practical air, an absence of that enthusiasm which struck her with suspicion when it was not applied to landscape or the Arts; and she accepted it, and warmed, and even allowed herself to appear hesitating when he returned to the similarity of the state of mud-begirt Bevisham and our great sluggish England.

Was he not perhaps to be pitied in his bondage to the Frenchwoman, who could have no ideas in common with him?

The rare circumstance that she and Nevil Beauchamp had found a subject of agreement, partially overcame the sentiment Cecilia entertained for the foreign lady; and having now one idea in common with him, she conceived the possibility that there might be more. There must be many, for he loved England, and she no less. She clung, however, to the topic of Bevisham, preferring to dream of the many more, rather than run risks. Undoubtedly the town was of an ignoble aspect; and it was declining in prosperity; and it was consequently over-populated. And undoubtedly (so she was induced to coincide for the moment) a Government, acting to any extent like a supervising head, should aid and direct the energies of towns and ports and trades, and not leave everything everywhere to chance: schools for the people, public morality, should be the charge of Government. Cecilia had surrendered the lead to him, and was forced to subscribe to an equivalent of 'undoubtedly' the Tories just as little as the Liberals had done these good offices. Party against party, neither of them had a forethoughtful head for the land at large. They waited for the Press to spur a great imperial country to be but defensively armed, and they accepted the so-called volunteers, with a nominal one-month's drill per annum, as a guarantee of defence!

Beauchamp startled her, actually kindled her mind to an activity of wonder and regret, with the statement of how much Government, acting with some degree of farsightedness, might have won to pay the public debt and remit taxation, by originally retaining the lines of railway, and fastening on the valuable land adjoining stations. Hundreds of millions of pounds!

She dropped a sigh at the prodigious amount, but inquired, 'Who has calculated it?'

For though perfectly aware that this kind of conversation was a special compliment paid to her by her friend Nevil, and dimly perceiving that it

implied something beyond a compliment-in fact, that it was his manner of probing her for sympathy, as other men would have conducted the process preliminary to deadly flattery or to wooing, her wits fenced her heart about; the exercise of shrewdness was an instinct of self-preservation. She had nothing but her poor wits, daily growing fainter, to resist him with. And he seemed to know it, and therefore assailed them, never trying at the heart.

That vast army of figures might be but a phantom army conjured out of the Radical mists, might it not? she hinted. And besides, we cannot surely require a Government to speculate in the future, can we?

Possibly not, as Governments go, Beauchamp said.

But what think you of a Government of landowners decreeing the enclosure of millions of acres of common land amongst themselves; taking the property of the people to add to their own! Say, is not that plunder? Public property, observe; decreed to them by their own law-making, under the pretence that it was being reclaimed for cultivation, when in reality it has been but an addition to their pleasure-grounds: a flat robbery of pasture from the poor man's cow and goose, and his right of cutting furze for firing. Consider that! Beauchamp's eyes flashed democratic in reciting this injury to the objects of his warm solicitude--the man, the cow, and the goose. But so must he have looked when fronting England's enemies, and his aspect of fervour subdued Cecilia. She confessed her inability to form an estimate of such conduct.

'Are they doing it still?' she asked.

'We owe it to Dr. Shrapnel foremost that there is now a watch over them to stop them. But for him, Grancey Lespel would have enclosed half of Northeden Heath. As it is, he has filched bits here and there, and he will have to put back his palings.'

However, now let Cecilia understand that we English, calling ourselves free, are under morally lawless rule. Government is what we require, and our means of getting it must be through universal suffrage. At present we have no Government; only shifting Party Ministries, which are the tools of divers interests, wealthy factions, to the sacrifice of the Commonwealth.

She listened, like Rosamund Culling overborne by Dr. Shrapnel, inwardly praying that she might discover a man to reply to him.

'A Despotism, Nevil?'

He hoped not, declined the despot, was English enough to stand against the best of men in that character; but he cast it on Tory, Whig, and Liberal, otherwise the Constitutionalists, if we were to come upon the despot.

'They see we are close on universal suffrage; they've been bidding each in turn for "the people," and that has brought them to it, and now

they're alarmed, and accuse one another of treason to the Constitution, and they don't accept the situation: and there's a fear, that to carry on their present system, they will be thwarting the people or corrupting them: and in that case we shall have our despot in some shape or other, and we shall suffer.'

'Nevil,' said Cecilia, 'I am out of my depth.'

'I'll support you; I can swim for two,' said he.

'You are very self-confident, but I find I am not fit for battle; at least not in the front ranks.'

'Nerve me, then: will you? Try to comprehend once for all what the battle is.'

'I am afraid I am too indifferent; I am too luxurious. That reminds me: you want to meet your uncle Everard and if you will sleep at Mount Laurels to-night, the Esperanza shall take you to France to-morrow morning, and can wait to bring you back.'

As she spoke she perceived a flush mounting over Nevil's face. Soon it was communicated to hers.

The strange secret of the blood electrified them both, and revealed the burning undercurrent running between them from the hearts of each. The light that showed how near they were to one another was kindled at the barrier dividing them. It remained as good as a secret, unchallenged until they had separated, and after midnight Cecilia looked through her chamber windows at the driving moon of a hurricane scud, and read clearly his honourable reluctance to be wafted over to his French love by her assistance; and Beauchamp on board the tossing steamboat perceived in her sympathetic reddening that she had divined him.

This auroral light eclipsed the other events of the day. He drove into a town royally decorated, and still humming with the ravishment of the Tory entrance. He sailed in the schooner to Mount Laurels, in the society of Captain Baskett and his friends, who, finding him tamer than they expected, bantered him in the cheerfullest fashion. He waited for his uncle Everard several hours at Mount Laurels, perused the junior Tory's address to the Electors, throughout which there was not an idea--safest of addresses to canvass upon! perused likewise, at Captain Baskett's request, a broad sheet of an article introducing the new candidate to Bevisham with the battle-axe Romfreys to back him, in high burlesque of Timothy Turbot upon Beauchamp: and Cecil hoped his cousin would not object to his borrowing a Romfrey or two for so pressing an occasion. All very funny, and no doubt the presence of Mr. Everard Romfrey would have heightened the fun from the fountain-head; but he happened to be delayed, and Beauchamp had to leave directions behind him in the town, besides the discussion of a whole plan of conduct with Dr. Shrapnel, so he was under the necessity of departing without seeing his uncle, really to his regret. He left word to that effect.

Taking leave of Cecilia, he talked of his return 'home' within three or four days as a certainty.

She said: 'Canvassing should not be neglected now.'

Her hostility was confused by what she had done to save him from annoyance, while his behaviour to his cousin Cecil increased her respect for him. She detected a pathetic meaning in his mention of the word home; she mused on his having called her beautiful: whither was she hurrying? Forgetful of her horror of his revolutionary ideas, forgetful of the elevation of her own, she thrilled secretly on hearing it stated by the jubilant young Tories at Mount Laurels, as a characteristic of Beauchamp, that he was clever in parrying political thrusts, and slipping from the theme; he who with her gave out unguardedly the thoughts deepest in him. And the thoughts!--were they not of generous origin? Where so true a helpmate for him as the one to whom his mind appealed? It could not be so with the Frenchwoman. Cecilia divined a generous nature by generosity, and set herself to believe that in honour he had not yet dared to speak to her from the heart, not being at heart quite free. She was at the same time in her remains of pride cool enough to examine and rebuke the weakness she succumbed to in now clinging to him by that which yesterday she hardly less than loathed, still deeply disliked.

CHAPTER XXIII

TOURDESTELLE

On the part of Beauchamp, his conversation with Cecilia during the drive into Bevisham opened out for the first time in his life a prospect of home; he had felt the word in speaking it, and it signified an end to the distractions produced by the sex, allegiance to one beloved respected woman, and also a basis of operations against the world. For she was evidently conquerable, and once matched with him would be the very woman to nerve and sustain him. Did she not listen to him? He liked her resistance. That element of the barbarous which went largely to form his emotional nature was overjoyed in wresting such a woman from the enemy, and subduing her personally. She was a prize. She was a splendid prize, cut out from under the guns of the fort. He rendered all that was due to his eminently good cause for its part in so signal a success, but individual satisfaction is not diminished by the thought that the individual's discernment selected the cause thus beneficent to him.

Beauchamp's meditations were diverted by the sight of the coast of France dashed in rain-lines across a weed-strewn sea. The 'three days' granted him by Renee were over, and it scarcely troubled him that he should be behind the time; he detested mystery, holding it to be a sign of pretentious feebleness, often of imposture, it might be frivolity. Punctilious obedience to the mysterious brevity of the summons, and not to chafe at it, appeared to him as much as could be expected of a struggling man. This was the state of the case with him, until he stood

on French earth, breathed French air, and chanced to hear the tongue of France twittered by a lady on the quay. The charm was instantaneous. He reminded himself that Renee, unlike her countrywomen, had no gift for writing letters. They had never corresponded since the hour of her marriage. They had met in Sicily, at Syracuse, in the presence of her father and her husband, and so inanimate was she that the meeting seemed like the conclusion of their history. Her brother Roland sent tidings of her by fits, and sometimes a conventional message from Tourdestelle. Latterly her husband's name had been cited as among the wildfires of Parisian quays, in journals more or less devoted to those unreclaimed spaces of the city. Well, if she was unhappy, was it not the fulfilment of his prophecy in Venice?

Renee's brevity became luminous. She needed him urgently, and knowing him faithful to the death, she, because she knew him, dispatched purely the words which said she needed him. Why, those brief words were the poetry of noble confidence! But what could her distress be? The lover was able to read that, 'Come; I give you three days,' addressed to him, was not language of a woman free of her yoke.

Excited to guess and guess, Beauchamp swept on to speculations of a madness that seized him bodily at last. Were you loved, Cecilia? He thought little of politics in relation to Renee; or of home, or of honour in the world's eye, or of labouring to pay the fee for his share of life. This at least was one of the forms of love which precipitate men: the sole thought in him was to be with her. She was Renee, the girl of whom he had prophetically said that she must come to regrets and tears. His vision of her was not at Tourdestelle, though he assumed her to be there awaiting him: she was under the sea-shadowing Alps, looking up to the red and gold-rosed heights of a realm of morning that was hers inviolably, and under which Renee was eternally his.

The interval between then and now was but the space of an unquiet sea traversed in the night, sad in the passage of it, but featureless--and it had proved him right! It was to Nevil Beauchamp as if the spirit of his old passion woke up again to glorious hopeful morning when he stood in Renee's France.

Tourdestelle enjoyed the aristocratic privilege of being twelve miles from the nearest railway station. Alighting here on an evening of clear sky, Beauchamp found an English groom ready to dismount for him and bring on his portmanteau. The man said that his mistress had been twice to the station, and was now at the neighbouring Chateau Dianet. Thither Beauchamp betook himself on horseback. He was informed at the gates that Madame la Marquise had left for Tourdestelle in the saddle only ten minutes previously. The lodge-keeper had been instructed to invite him to stay at Chateau Dianet in the event of his arriving late, but it would be possible to overtake madame by a cut across the heights at a turn of the valley. Beauchamp pushed along the valley for this visible projection; a towering mass of woodland, in the midst of which a narrow roadway, worn like the track of a torrent with heavy rain, wound upward. On his descent to the farther side, he was to spy directly below in the flat for Tourdestelle. He crossed the wooded neck above the valley, and

began descending, peering into gulfs of the twilight dusk. Some paces down he was aided by a brilliant half-moon that divided the whole underlying country into sharp outlines of dark and fair, and while endeavouring to distinguish the chateau of Tourdestelle his eyes were attracted to an angle of the downward zigzag, where a pair of horses emerged into broad light swiftly; apparently the riders were disputing, or one had overtaken the other in pursuit. Riding-habit and plumed hat signalized the sex of one. Beauchamp sung out a gondolier's cry. He fancied it was answered.

He was heard, for the lady turned about, and as he rode down, still uncertain of her, she came cantering up alone, and there could be no uncertainty.

Moonlight is friendless to eyes that would make sure of a face long unseen. It was Renee whose hand he clasped, but the story of the years on her, and whether she was in bloom, or wan as the beams revealing her, he could not see.

Her tongue sounded to him as if it were loosened without a voice. 'You have come. That storm! You are safe!'

So phantom-like a sound of speech alarmed him. 'I lost no time. But you?'

'I am well.'

'Nothing hangs over you?'

'Nothing.'

'Why give me just three days?'

'Pure impatience. Have you forgotten me?'

Their horses walked on with them. They unlocked their hands.

'You knew it was I?' said he.

'Who else could it be? I heard Venice,' she replied.

Her previous cavalier was on his feet, all but on his knees, it appeared, searching for something that eluded him under the road-side bank. He sprang at it and waved it, leapt in the saddle, and remarked, as he drew up beside Renee: 'What one picks from the earth one may wear, I presume, especially when we can protest it is our property.'

Beauchamp saw him planting a white substance most carefully at the breast buttonhole of his coat. It could hardly be a flower. Some drooping exotic of the conservatory perhaps resembled it.

Renee pronounced his name: 'M. le Comte Henri d'Henriel.'

He bowed to Beauchamp with an extreme sweep of the hat.

'Last night, M. Beauchamp, we put up vows for you to the Marine God, beseeching an exemption from that horrible mal de mer. Thanks to the storm, I suppose, I have won. I must maintain, madame, that I won.'

'You wear your trophy,' said Renee, and her horse reared and darted ahead.

The gentleman on each side of her struck into a trot. Beauchamp glanced at M. d'Henriél's breast-decoration. Renee pressed the pace, and threading dense covers of foliage they reached the level of the valley, where for a couple of miles she led them, stretching away merrily, now in shadow, now in moonlight, between high land and meadow land, and a line of poplars in the meadows winding with the river that fed the vale and shot forth gleams of silvery disquiet by rustic bridge and mill.

The strangeness of being beside her, not having yet scanned her face, marvelling at her voice--that was like and unlike the Renee of old, full of her, but in another key, a mellow note, maturer--made the ride magical to Beauchamp, planting the past in the present like a perceptible ghost.

Renee slackened speed, saying: 'Tourdestelle spans a branch of our little river. This is our gate. Had it been daylight I would have taken you by another way, and you would have seen the black tower burnt in the Revolution; an imposing monument, I am assured. However, you will think it pretty beside the stream. Do you come with us, M. le Comte?'

His answer was inaudible to Beauchamp; he did not quit them.

The lamp at the lodge-gates presented the young man's face in full view, and Beauchamp thought him supremely handsome. He perceived it to be a lady's glove that M. d'Henriél wore at his breast.

Renee walked her horse up the park-drive, alongside the bright running water. It seemed that she was aware of the method of provoking or reproving M. d'Henriél. He endured some minutes of total speechlessness at this pace, and abruptly said adieu and turned back.

Renee bounded like a vessel free of her load. 'But why should we hurry?' said she, and checked her course to the walk again. 'I hope you like our Normandy, and my valley. You used to love France, Nevil; and Normandy, they tell me, is cousin to the opposite coast of England, in climate, soil, people, it may be in manners too. A Beauchamp never can feel that he is a foreigner in Normandy. We claim you half French. You have grander parks, they say. We can give you sunlight.'

'And it was really only the wish to see me?' said Beauchamp.

'Only, and really. One does not live for ever--on earth; and it becomes a question whether friends should be shadows to one another before death. I wrote to you because I wished to see you: I was impatient because I am Renee.'

'You relieve me!'

'Evidently you have forgotten my character, Nevil.'

'Not a feature of it.'

'Ah!' she breathed involuntarily.

'Would you have me forget it?'

'When I think by myself, quite alone, yes, I would. Otherwise how can one hope that one's friend is friendship, supposing him to read us as we are--minutely, accurately? And it is in absence that we desire our friends to be friendship itself. And . . . and I am utterly astray! I have not dealt in this language since I last thought of writing a diary, and stared at the first line. If I mistake not, you are fond of the picturesque. If moonlight and water will satisfy you, look yonder.'

The moon launched her fairy silver fleets on a double sweep of the little river round an island of reeds and two tall poplars.

'I have wondered whether I should ever see you looking at that scene,' said Renee.

He looked from it to her, and asked if Roland was well, and her father; then alluded to her husband; but the unlettering elusive moon, bright only in the extension of her beams, would not tell him what story this face, once heaven to him, wore imprinted on it. Her smile upon a parted mouth struck him as two-edged in replying: 'I have good news to give you of them all: Roland is in garrison at Rouen, and will come when I telegraph. My father is in Touraine, and greets you affectionately; he hopes to come. They are both perfectly happy. My husband is travelling.'

Beauchamp was conscious of some bitter taste; unaware of what it was, though it led him to say, undesigningly: 'How very handsome that M. d'Henriel is!--if I have his name correctly.'

Renee answered: 'He has the misfortune to be considered the handsomest young man in France.'

'He has an Italian look.'

'His mother was Provencale.'

She put her horse in motion, saying: 'I agree with you that handsome men are rarities. And, by the way, they do not set our world on fire quite as much as beautiful women do yours, my friend. Acknowledge so much in our favour.'

He assented indefinitely. He could have wished himself away canvassing in Bevisham. He had only to imagine himself away from her, to feel the

flood of joy in being with her.

'Your husband is travelling?'

'It is his pleasure.'

Could she have intended to say that this was good news to give of him as well as of the happiness of her father and brother?

'Now look on Tourdestelle,' said Renee. 'You will avow that for an active man to be condemned to seek repose in so dull a place, after the fatigues of the season in Paris, it is considerably worse than for women, so I am here to dispense the hospitalities. The right wing of the chateau, on your left, is new. The side abutting the river is inhabited by Dame Philiberte, whom her husband imprisoned for attempting to take her pleasure in travel. I hear upon authority that she dresses in white, and wears a black crucifix. She is many centuries old, and still she lives to remind people that she married a Rouaillout. Do you not think she should have come to me to welcome me? She never has; and possibly of ladies who are disembodied we may say that they know best. For me, I desire the interview--and I am a coward: I need not state it.' She ceased; presently continuing: 'The other inhabitants are my sister, Agnes d'Auffray, wife of a general officer serving in Afric--my sister by marriage, and my friend; the baronne d'Orbec, a relation by marriage; M. d'Orbec, her son, a guest, and a sportsman; M. Livret, an erudite. No young ladies: I can bear much, but not their presence; girls are odious to me. I knew one in Venice.'

They came within the rays of the lamp hanging above the unpretending entrance to the chateau. Renee's broad grey Longueville hat curved low with its black plume on the side farthest from him. He was favoured by the gallant lift of the brim on the near side, but she had overshadowed her eyes.

'He wears a glove at his breast,' said Beauchamp.

'You speak of M. d'Henriel. He wears a glove at his breast; yes, it is mine,' said Renee.

She slipped from her horse and stood against his shoulder, as if waiting to be questioned before she rang the bell of the chateau.

Beauchamp alighted, burning with his unutterable questions concerning that glove.

'Lift your hat, let me beg you; let me see you,' he said.

This was not what she had expected. With one heave of her bosom, and murmuring: 'I made a vow I would obey you absolutely if you came,' she raised the hat above her brows, and lightning would not have surprised him more; for there had not been a single vibration of her voice to tell him of tears running; nay, the absence of the usual French formalities in her manner of addressing him, had seemed to him to indicate her intention

to put him at once on an easy friendly footing, such as would be natural to her, and not painful to him. Now she said:

'You perceive, monsieur, that I have my sentimental fits like others; but in truth I am not insensible to the picturesque or to gratitude, and I thank you sincerely for coming, considering that I wrote like a Sphinx-- to evade writing comme une folle!'

She swept to the bell.

Standing in the arch of the entrance, she stretched her whip out to a black mass of prostrate timber, saying:

'It fell in the storm at two o'clock after midnight, and you on the sea!'

CHAPTER XXIV

HIS HOLIDAY

A single day was to be the term of his holiday at Tourdestelle; but it stood forth as one of those perfect days which are rounded by an evening before and a morning after, giving him two nights under the same roof with Renee, something of a resemblance to three days of her; anticipation and wonder filling the first, she the next, the adieu the last: every hour filled. And the first day was not over yet. He forced himself to calmness, that he might not fritter it, and walked up and down the room he was dressing in, examining its foreign decorations, and peering through the window, to quiet his nerves. He was in her own France with her! The country borrowed hues from Renee, and lent some. This chivalrous France framed and interlaced her image, aided in idealizing her, and was in turn transfigured. Not half so well would his native land have pleaded for the forgiveness of a British damsel who had wrecked a young man's immoderate first love. That glorified self-love requires the touch upon imagination of strangeness and an unaccustomed grace, to subdue it and make it pardon an outrage to its temples and altars, and its happy reading of the heavens, the earth too: earth foremost, we ought perhaps to say. It is an exacting heathen, best understood by a glance at what will appease it: beautiful, however, as everybody has proved; and shall it be decried in a world where beauty is not overcommon, though it would slaughter us for its angry satisfaction, yet can be soothed by a tone of colour, as it were by a novel inscription on a sweetmeat?

The peculiarity of Beauchamp was that he knew the slenderness of the thread which was leading him, and foresaw it twisting to a coil unless he should hold firm. His work in life was much above the love of a woman in his estimation, so he was not deluded by passion when he entered the chateau; it is doubtful whether he would not hesitatingly have sacrificed one of the precious votes in Bevissham for the pleasure of kissing her hand when they were on the steps. She was his first love and only love, married, and long ago forgiven:--married; that is to say, she especially

among women was interdicted to him by the lingering shadow of the reverential love gone by; and if the anguish of the lover's worse than death survived in a shudder of memory at the thought of her not solely lost to him but possessed by another, it did but quicken a hunger that was three parts curiosity to see how she who had suffered this bore the change; how like or unlike she might be to the extinct Renee; what traces she kept of the face he had known. Her tears were startling, but tears tell of a mood, they do not tell the story of the years; and it was that story he had such eagerness to read in one brief revelation: an eagerness born only of the last few hours, and broken by fears of a tarnished aspect; these again being partly hopes of a coming disillusion that would restore him his independence and ask him only for pity. The slavery of the love of a woman chained like Renee was the most revolting of prospects to a man who cherished his freedom that he might work to the end of his time. Moreover, it swung a thunder-cloud across his holiday. He recurred to the idea of the holiday repeatedly, and the more he did so the thinner it waned. He was exhausting the very air and spirit of it with a mind that ran incessantly forward and back; and when he and the lady of so much speculation were again together, an incapacity of observation seemed to have come over him. In reality it was the inability to reflect on his observations. Her presence resembled those dark sunsets throwing the spell of colour across the world; when there is no question with us of morning or of night, but of that sole splendour only.

Owing to their arrival late at the chateau, covers were laid for them in the boudoir of Madame la Marquise, where he had his hostess to himself, and certainly the opportunity of studying her. An English Navy List, solitary on a shelf, and laid within it an extract of a paper announcing the return of the Ariadne to port, explained the mystery of her knowing that he was in England, as well as the correctness of the superscription of her letter to him. 'You see, I follow you,' she said.

Beauchamp asked if she read English now.

'A little; but the paper was dispatched to me by M. Vivian Ducie, of your embassy in Paris. He is in the valley.'

The name of Ducie recalled Lord Palmet's description of the dark beauty of the fluttering pale gold ornaments. She was now dressed without one decoration of gold or jewel, with scarcely a wave in the silk, a modesty of style eloquent of the pride of her form.

Could those eyes fronting him under the lamp have recently shed tears? They were the living eyes of a brilliant unembarrassed lady; shields flinging light rather than well-depths inviting it.

Beauchamp tried to compare her with the Renee of Venice, and found himself thinking of the glove she had surrendered to the handsomest young man in France. The effort to recover the younger face gave him a dead creature, with the eyelashes of Renee, the cast of her mouth and throat, misty as a shape in a dream.

He could compare her with Cecilia, who never would have risked a glove, never have betrayed a tear, and was the statelier lady, not without language: but how much less vivid in feature and the gift of speech! Renee's gift of speech counted unnumbered strings which she played on with a grace that clothed the skill, and was her natural endowment--an art perfected by the education of the world. Who cannot talk!--but who can? Discover the writers in a day when all are writing! It is as rare an art as poetry, and in the mouths of women as enrapturing, richer than their voices in music.

This was the fascination Beauchamp felt weaving round him. Would you, that are separable from boys and mobs, and the object malignly called the Briton, prefer the celestial singing of a woman to her excellently talking? But not if it were given you to run in unison with her genius of the tongue, following her verbal ingenuities and feminine silk-flashes of meaning; not if she led you to match her fine quick perceptions with more or less of the discreet concordance of the violoncello accompanying the viol. It is not high flying, which usually ends in heavy falling. You quit the level of earth no more than two birds that chase from bush to bush to bill in air, for mutual delight to make the concert heavenly. Language flowed from Renee in affinity with the pleasure-giving laws that make the curves we recognize as beauty in sublimer arts. Accept companionship for the dearest of the good things we pray to have, and what equalled her! Who could be her rival!

Her girl's crown of irradiated Alps began to tremble over her dimly, as from moment to moment their intimacy warmed, and Beauchamp saw the young face vanishing out of this flower of womanhood. He did not see it appearing or present, but vanishing like the faint ray in the rosier. Nay, the blot of her faithlessness underwent a transformation: it affected him somewhat as the patch cunningly laid on near a liquid dimple in fair cheeks at once allures and evades a susceptible attention.

Unused in his French of late, he stumbled at times, and she supplied the needed phrase, taking no note of a blunder. Now men of sweet blood cannot be secretly accusing or criticizing a gracious lady. Domestic men are charged with thinking instantly of dark death when an ordinary illness befalls them; and it may be so or not: but it is positive that the gallant man of the world, if he is in the sensitive condition, and not yet established as the lord of her, feels paralyzed in his masculine sense of leadership the moment his lady assumes the initiative and directs him: he gives up at once; and thus have many nimble-witted dames from one clear start retained their advantage.

Concerning that glove: well! the handsomest young man in France wore the glove of the loveliest woman. The loveliest? The very loveliest in the purity of her French style--the woman to challenge England for a type of beauty to eclipse her. It was possible to conceive her country wagering her against all women.

If Renee had faults, Beauchamp thought of her as at sea breasting tempests, while Cecilia was a vessel lying safe in harbour, untried, however promising: and if Cecilia raised a steady light for him, it was

over the shores he had left behind, while Renee had really nothing to do with warning or rescuing, or with imperilling; she welcomed him simply to a holiday in her society. He associated Cecilia strangely with the political labours she would have had him relinquish; and Renee with a pleasant state of indolence, that her lightest smile disturbed. Shun comparisons.

It is the tricky heart which sets up that balance, to jump into it on one side or the other. Comparisons come of a secret leaning that is sure to play rogue under its mien of honest dealer: so Beauchamp suffered himself to be unjust to graver England, and lost the strength she would have given him to resist a bewitchment. The case with him was, that his apprenticeship was new; he had been trotting in harness as a veritable cab-horse of politics--he by blood a racer; and his nature craved for diversions, against his will, against his moral sense and born tenacity of spirit.

Not a word further of the glove. But at night, in his bed, the glove was a principal actor in events of extraordinary magnitude and inconsequence.

He was out in the grounds with the early morning light. Coffee and sweet French bread were brought out to him, and he was informed of the hours of reunion at the chateau, whose mistress continued invisible. She might be sleeping. He strolled about, within view of the windows, wondering at her subservience to sleep. Tourdestelle lay in one of those Norman valleys where the river is the mother of rich pasture, and runs hidden between double ranks of willows, aspens and poplars, that mark its winding line in the arms of trenched meadows. The high land on either side is an unwatered flat up to the horizon, little varied by dusty apple-trees planted in the stubble here and there, and brown mud walls of hamlets; a church-top, a copse, an avenue of dwarf limes leading to the three-parts farm, quarter residence of an enriched peasant striking new roots, or decayed proprietor pinching not to be severed from ancient. Descending on the deep green valley in Summer is like a change of climes. The chateau stood square at a branch of the river, tossing three light bridges of pretty woodwork to park and garden. Great bouquets of swelling blue and pink hydrangia nestled at his feet on shaven grass. An open window showed a cloth of colour, as in a reminiscence of Italy.

Beauchamp heard himself addressed:--'You are looking for my sister-in-law, M. Beauchamp?'

The speaker was Madame d'Auffray, to whom he had been introduced overnight--a lady of the aquiline French outline, not ungentle.

Renee had spoken affectionately of her, he remembered. There was nothing to make him be on his guard, and he stated that he was looking for Madame de Rouailout, and did not conceal surprise at the information that she was out on horseback.

'She is a tireless person,' Madame d'Auffray remarked. 'You will not miss her long. We all meet at twelve, as you know.'

'I grudge an hour, for I go to-morrow,' said Beauchamp.

The notification of so early a departure, or else his bluntness, astonished her. She fell to praising Renee's goodness. He kept her to it with lively interrogations, in the manner of a, guileless boy urging for eulogies of his dear absent friend. Was it duplicity in him or artlessness?

'Has she, do you think, increased in beauty?' Madame d'Auffray inquired: an insidious question, to which he replied:

'Once I thought it would be impossible.'

Not so bad an answer for an Englishman, in a country where speaking is fencing; the race being little famous for dialectical alertness: but was it artful or simple?

They skirted the chateau, and Beauchamp had the history of Dame Philiberte recounted to him, with a mixture of Gallic irony, innuendo, openness, touchingness, ridicule, and charity novel to his ears. Madame d'Auffray struck the note of intimacy earlier than is habitual. She sounded him in this way once or twice, carelessly perusing him, and waiting for the interesting edition of the Book of Man to summarize its character by showing its pages or remaining shut. It was done delicately, like the tap of a finger-nail on a vase. He rang clear; he had nothing to conceal; and where he was reserved, that is, in speaking of the developed beauty and grace of Renee, he was transparent. She read the sort of man he was; she could also hazard a guess as to the man's present state. She ventured to think him comparatively harmless--for the hour: for she was not the woman to be hoodwinked by man's dark nature because she inclined to think well of a particular man; nor was she one to trust to any man subject to temptation. The wisdom of the Frenchwoman's fortieth year forbade it. A land where the war between the sexes is honestly acknowledged, and is full of instruction, abounds in precepts; but it ill becomes the veteran to practise rigorously what she would prescribe to young women. She may discriminate; as thus:-- Trust no man. Still, this man may be better than that man; and it is bad policy to distrust a reasonably guileless member of the preying sex entirely, and so to lose his good services. Hawks have their uses in destroying vermin; and though we cannot rely upon the taming of hawks, one tied by the leg in a garden preserves the fruit.

'There is a necessity for your leaving us to-morrow; M. Beauchamp?'

'I regret to say, it is imperative, madame.'

'My husband will congratulate me on the pleasure I have, and have long desired, of making your acquaintance, and he will grieve that he has not been so fortunate; he is on service in Africa. My brother, I need not say, will deplore the mischance which has prevented him from welcoming you. I have telegraphed to him; he is at one of the Baths in Germany, and will come assuredly, if there is a prospect of finding you here. None? Supposing my telegram not to fall short of him, I may count on his

being here within four days.'

Beauchamp begged her to convey the proper expressions of his regret to M. le Marquis.

'And M. de Croisnel? And Roland, your old comrade and brother-in-arms? What will be their disappointment!' she said.

'I intend to stop for an hour at Rouen on my way back,' said Beauchamp.

She asked if her belle-soeur was aware of the short limitation of his visit.

He had not mentioned it to Madame la Marquise.

'Perhaps you may be moved by the grief of a friend: Renee may persuade you to stay.'

'I came imagining I could be of some use to Madame la Marquise. She writes as if she were telegraphing.'

'Perfectly true of her! For that matter, I saw the letter. Your looks betray a very natural jealousy; but seeing it or not it would have been the same: she and I have no secrets. She was, I may tell you, strictly unable to write more words in the letter. Which brings me to inquire what impression M. d'Henriél made on you yesterday evening.'

'He is particularly handsome.'

'We women think so. Did you take him to be . . . eccentric?'

Beauchamp gave a French jerk of the shoulders.

It confessed the incident of the glove to one who knew it as well as he: but it masked the weight he was beginning to attach to that incident, and Madame d'Auffray was misled. Truly, the Englishman may be just such an ex-lover, uninflamable by virtue of his blood's native coldness; endued with the frozen vanity called pride, which does not seek to be revenged. Under wary espionage, he might be a young woman's friend, though male friend of a half-abandoned wife should write himself down morally saint, mentally sage, medically incurable, if he would win our confidence.

This lady of sharp intelligence was the guardian of Renee during the foolish husband's flights about Paris and over Europe, and, for a proof of her consummate astuteness, Renee had no secrets and had absolute liberty. And hitherto no man could build a boast on her reputation. The liberty she would have had at any cost, as Madame d'Auffray knew; and an attempt to restrict it would have created secrets.

Near upon the breakfast-hour Renee was perceived by them going toward the chateau at a walking pace. They crossed one of the garden bridges to intercept her. She started out of some deep meditation, and raised her whip hand to Beauchamp's greeting. 'I had forgotten to tell you,

monsieur, that I should be out for some hours in the morning.'

'Are you aware,' said Madame d'Auffray, 'that M. Beauchamp leaves us to-morrow?'

'So soon?' It was uttered hardly with a tone of disappointment.

The marquise alighted, crying hold, to the stables, caressed her horse, and sent him off with a smack on the smoking flanks to meet the groom.

'To-morrow? That is very soon; but M. Beauchamp is engaged in an Election, and what have we to induce him to stay?'

'Would it not be better to tell M. Beauchamp why he was invited to come?' rejoined Madame d'Auffray.

The sombre light in Renee's eyes quickened through shadowy spheres of surprise and pain to resolution. She cried, 'You have my full consent,' and left them.

Madame d'Auffray smiled at Beauchamp, to excuse the childishness of the little story she was about to relate; she gave it in the essence, without a commencement or an ending. She had in fact but two or three hurried minutes before the breakfast-bell would ring; and the fan she opened and shut, and at times shaded her head with, was nearly as explicit as her tongue.

He understood that Renee had staked her glove on his coming within a certain number of hours to the briefest wording of invitation possible. Owing to his detention by the storm, M. d'Henriel had won the bet, and now insisted on wearing the glove. 'He is the privileged young madman our women make of a handsome youth,' said Madame d'Auffray.

Where am I? thought Beauchamp--in what land, he would have phrased it, of whirlwinds catching the wits, and whipping the passions? Calmer than they, but unable to command them, and guessing that Renee's errand of the morning, by which he had lost hours of her, pertained to the glove, he said quiveringly, 'Madame la Marquise objects?'

'We,' replied Madame d'Auffray, 'contend that the glove was not loyally won. The wager was upon your coming to the invitation, not upon your conquering the elements. As to his flaunting the glove for a favour, I would ask you, whom does he advertize by that? Gloves do not wear white; which fact compromises none but the wearer. He picked it up from the ground, and does not restore it; that is all. You see a boy who catches at anything to placard himself. There is a compatriot of yours, a M. Ducie, who assured us you must be with an uncle in your county of Sussex. Of course we ran the risk of the letter missing you, but the chance was worth a glove. Can you believe it, M. Beauchamp? it was I, old woman as I am, I who provoked the silly wager. I have long desired to meet you; and we have little society here, we are desperate with loneliness, half mad with our whims. I said, that if you were what I had heard of you, you would come to us at a word. They dared Madame la

Marquise to say the same. I wished to see the friend of Frenchmen, as M. Roland calls you; not merely to see him--to know him, whether he is this perfect friend whose absolute devotion has impressed my dear sister Renee's mind. She respects you: that is a sentiment scarcely complimentary to the ideas of young men. She places you above human creatures: possibly you may not dislike to be worshipped. It is not to be rejected when one's influence is powerful for good. But you leave us to-morrow!

'I might stay . . .' Beauchamp hesitated to name the number of hours. He stood divided between a sense of the bubbling shallowness of the life about him, and a thought, grave as an eye dwelling on blood, of sinister things below it.

'I may stay another day or two,' he said, 'if I can be of any earthly service.'

Madame d'Auffray bowed as to a friendly decision on his part, saying, 'It would be a thousand pities to disappoint M. Roland; and it will be offering my brother an amicable chance. I will send him word that you await him; at least, that you defer your departure as long as possible. Ah! now you perceive, M. Beauchamp, now you have become aware of our purely infantile plan to bring you over to us, how very ostensible a punishment it would be were you to remain so short a period.'

Having no designs, he was neither dupe nor sceptic; but he felt oddly entangled, and the dream of his holiday had fled like morning's beams, as a self-deception will at a very gentle shaking.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BOAT

Madame d'Auffray passed Renee, whispering on her way to take her seat at the breakfast-table.

Renee did not condescend to whisper. 'Roland will be glad,' she said aloud.

Her low eyelids challenged Beauchamp for a look of indifference. There was more for her to unbosom than Madame d'Auffray had revealed, but the comparative innocence of her position in this new light prompted her to meet him defiantly, if he chose to feel injured. He was attracted by a happy contrast of colour between her dress and complexion, together with a cavalierly charm in the sullen brows she lifted; and seeing the reverse of a look of indifference on his face, after what he had heard of her frivolousness, she had a fear that it existed.

'Are we not to have M. d'Henriel to-day? he amuses me,' the baronne d'Orbec remarked.

'If he would learn that he was fashioned for that purpose!' exclaimed little M. Livret.

'Do not ask young men for too much head, my friend; he would cease to be amusing.'

'D'Henriél should have been up in the fields at ten this morning,' said M. d'Orbec. 'As to his head, I back him for a clever shot.'

'Or a duelling-sword,' said Renee. 'It is a quality, count it for what we will. Your favourite, Madame la Baronne, is interdicted from presenting himself here so long as he persists in offending me.'

She was requested to explain, and, with the fair ingenuousness which outshines innocence, she touched on the story of the glove.

Ah! what a delicate, what an exciting, how subtle a question!

Had M. d'Henriél the right to possess it? and, having that, had he the right to wear it at his breast?

Beauchamp was dragged into the discussion of the case.

Renee waited curiously for his judgement.

Pleading an apology for the stormy weather, which had detained him, and for his ignorance that so precious an article was at stake, he held, that by the terms of the wager, the glove was lost; the claim to wear it was a matter of taste.

'Matters of taste, monsieur, are not, I think, decided by weapons in your country?' said M. d'Orbec.

'We have no duelling,' said Beauchamp.

The Frenchman imagined the confession to be somewhat humbling, and generously added, 'But you have your volunteers--a magnificent spectacle of patriotism and national readiness for defence!'

A shrewd pang traversed Beauchamp's heart, as he looked back on his country from the outside and the inside, thinking what amount of patriotic readiness the character of the volunteering signified, in the face of all that England has to maintain. Like a politic islander, he allowed the patriotic spectacle to be imagined; reflecting that it did a sort of service abroad, and had only to be unmasked at home.

'But you surrendered the glove, marquise!' The baronne d'Orbec spoke judicially.

'I flung it to the ground: that made it neutral,' said Renee.

'Hum. He wears it with the dust on it, certainly.'

'And for how long a time,' M. Livret wished to know, 'does this amusing young man proclaim his intention of wearing the glove?'

'Until he can see with us that his Order of Merit is utter kid,' said Madame d'Auffray; and as she had spoken more or less neatly, satisfaction was left residing in the ear of the assembly, and the glove was permitted to be swept away on a fresh tide of dialogue.

The admirable candour of Renee in publicly alluding to M. d'Henriel's foolishness restored a peep of his holiday to Beauchamp. Madame d'Auffray took note of the effect it produced, and quite excused her sister-in-law for intending to produce it; but that speaking out the half-truth that we may put on the mask of the whole, is no new trick; and believing as she did that Renee was in danger with the handsome Count Henri, the practice of such a kind of honesty on her part appeared alarming.

Still it is imprudent to press for confidences when our friend's heart is manifestly trifling with sincerity. Who knows but that some foregone reckless act or word may have superinduced the healthy shame which cannot speak, which must disguise itself, and is honesty in that form, but roughly troubled would resolve to rank dishonesty? So thought the patient lady, wiser in that than in her perceptions.

Renee made a boast of not persuading her guest to stay, avowing that she would not willingly have him go. Praising him equably, she listened to praise of him with animation. She was dumb and statue-like when Count Henri's name was mentioned. Did not this betray liking for one, subjection to the other? Indeed, there was an Asiatic splendour of animal beauty about M. d'Henriel that would be serpent with most women, Madame d'Auffray conceived; why not with the deserted Renee, who adored beauty of shape and colour, and was compassionate toward a rashness of character that her own unnatural solitariness and quick spirit made her emulous of?

Meanwhile Beauchamp's day of adieu succeeded that of his holiday, and no adieu was uttered. The hours at Tourdestelle had a singular turn for slipping. Interlinked and all as one they swam by, brought evening, brought morning, never varied. They might have varied with such a division as when flame lights up the night or a tempest shades the day, had Renee chosen; she had that power over him. She had no wish to use it; perhaps she apprehended what it would cause her to forfeit. She wished him to respect her; felt that she was under the shadow of the glove, slight though it was while it was nothing but a tale of a lady and a glove; and her desire, like his, was that they should meet daily and dream on, without a variation. He noticed how seldom she led him beyond the grounds of the chateau. They were to make excursions when her brother came, she said. Roland de Croisnel's colonel, Coin de Grandchamp, happened to be engaged in a duel, which great business detained Roland. It supplied Beauchamp with an excuse for staying, that he was angry with himself for being pleased to have; so he attacked the practice of duelling, and next the shrug, wherewith M. Livret and M.

d'Orbec sought at first to defend the foul custom, or apologize for it, or plead for it philosophically, or altogether cast it off their shoulders; for the literal interpretation of the shrug in argument is beyond human capacity; it is the point of speech beyond our treasury of language. He attacked the shrug, as he thought, very temperately; but in controlling his native vehemence he grew, perforce of repression, and of incompetency to deliver himself copiously in French, sarcastic. In fine, his contrast of the pretence of their noble country to head civilization, and its encouragement of a custom so barbarous, offended M. d'Orbec and irritated M. Livret.

The latter delivered a brief essay on Gallic blood; the former maintained that Frenchmen were the best judges of their own ways and deeds. Politeness reigned, but politeness is compelled to throw off cloak and jacket when it steps into the arena to meet the encounter of a bull. Beauchamp drew on their word 'solidaire' to assist him in declaring that no civilized nation could be thus independent. Imagining himself in the France of brave ideas, he contrived to strike out sparks of Legitimist ire around him, and found himself breathing the atmosphere of the most primitive nursery of Toryism. Again he encountered the shrug, and he would have it a verbal matter. M. d'Orbec gravely recited the programme of the country party in France. M. Livret carried the war across Channel. You English have retired from active life, like the exhausted author, to turn critic--the critic that sneers: unless we copy you abjectly we are execrable. And what is that sneer? Materially it is an acrid saliva, withering where it drops; in the way of fellowship it is a corpse-emanation. As to wit, the sneer is the cloak of clumsiness; it is the Pharisee's incense, the hypocrite's pity, the post of exaltation of the fat citizen, etc.; but, said M. Livret, the people using it should have a care that they keep powerful: they make no friends. He terminated with this warning to a nation not devoid of superior merit. M. d'Orbec said less, and was less consoled by his outburst.

In the opinion of Mr. Vivian Ducie, present at the discussion, Beauchamp provoked the lash; for, in the first place, a beautiful woman's apparent favourite should be particularly discreet in all that he says: and next, he should have known that the Gallic shrug over matters political is volcanic--it is the heaving of the mountain, and, like the proverbial Russ, leaps up Tartarly at a scratch. Our newspapers also had been flea-biting M. Livret and his countrymen of late; and, to conclude, over in old England you may fly out against what you will, and there is little beyond a motherly smile, a nurse's rebuke, or a fool's rudeness to answer you. In quick-blooded France you have whip for whip, sneer, sarcasm, claw, fang, tussle, in a trice; and if you choose to comport yourself according to your insular notion of freedom, you are bound to march out to the measured ground at an invitation. To begin by saying that your principles are opposed to it, naturally excites a malicious propensity to try your temper.

A further cause, unknown to Mr. Ducie, of M. Livret's irritation was, that Beauchamp had vexed him on a subject peculiarly dear to him. The celebrated Chateau Dianet was about to be visited by the guests at Tourdestelle. In common with some French philosophers and English

matrons, he cherished a sentimental sad enthusiasm for royal concubines; and when dilating upon one among them, the ruins of whose family's castle stood in the neighbourhood-Agrees, who was really a kindly soul, though not virtuous--M. Livret had been traversed by Beauchamp with questions as to the condition of the people, the peasantry, that were sweated in taxes to support these lovely frailties. They came oddly from a man in the fire of youth, and a little old gentleman somewhat seduced by the melting image of his theme might well blink at him to ask, of what flesh are you, then? His historic harem was insulted. Personally too, the fair creature picturesquely soiled, intrepid in her amorousness, and ultimately absolved by repentance (a shuddering narrative of her sins under showers of salt drops), cried to him to champion her. Excited by the supposed cold critical mind in Beauchamp, M. Livret painted and painted this lady, tricked her in casuistical niceties, scenes of pomp and boudoir pathos, with many shifting sidelights and a risky word or two, until Renee cried out, 'Spare us the esprit Gaulois, M. Livret!' There was much to make him angry with this Englishman.

'The esprit Gaulois is the sparkle of crystal common sense, madame, and may we never abandon it for a Puritanism that hides its face to conceal its filthiness, like a stagnant pond,' replied M. Livret, flashing.

'It seems, then, that there are two ways of being objectionable,' said Renee.

'Ah! Madame la Marquise, your wit is French,' he breathed low; 'keep your heart so!'

Both M. Livret and M. d'Orbec had forgotten that when Count Henri d'Henriel was received at Tourdestelle, the arrival of the Englishman was pleasantly anticipated by them as an eclipse of the handsome boy; but a foreign interloper is quickly dispossessed of all means of pleasing save that one of taking his departure; and they now talked of Count Henri's disgrace and banishment in a very warm spirit of sympathy, not at all seeing why it should be made to depend upon the movements of this M. Beauchamp, as it appeared to be. Madame d'Auffray heard some of their dialogue, and hurried with a mouth full of comedy to Renee, who did not reproach them for silly beings, as would be done elsewhere. On the contrary, she appreciated a scene of such absolute comedy, recognizing it instantly as a situation plucked out of human nature. She compared them to republicans that regretted the sovereign they had deposed for a pretender to start up and govern them.

'Who hurries them round to the legitimate king again!' said Madame d'Auffray.

Renee cast her chin up. 'How, my dear?'

'Your husband.'

'What of him?'

'He is returning.'

'What brings him?'

'You should ask who, my Renee! I was sure he would not hear of M. Beauchamp's being here, without an effort to return and do the honours of the chateau.'

Renee looked hard at her, saying, 'How thoughtful of you! You must have made use of the telegraph wires to inform him that M. Beauchamp was with us.'

'More; I made use of them to inform him that M. Beauchamp was expected.'

'And that was enough to bring him! He pays M. Beauchamp a wonderful compliment.'

'Such as he would pay to no other man, my Renee. Virtually it is the highest of compliments to you. I say that to M. Beauchamp's credit; for Raoul has met him, and, whatever his personal feeling may be, must know your friend is a man of honour.'

'My friend is . . . yes, I have no reason to think otherwise,' Renee replied. Her husband's persistent and exclusive jealousy of Beauchamp was the singular point in the character of one who appeared to have no sentiment of the kind as regarded men that were much less than men of honour. 'So, then, my sister Agnes,' she said, 'you suggested the invitation of M. Beauchamp for the purpose of spurring my husband to return! Apparently he and I are surrounded by plotters.'

'Am I so very guilty?' said Madame d'Auffray.

'If that mad boy, half idiot, half panther, were by chance to insult M. Beauchamp, you would feel so.'

'You have taken precautions to prevent their meeting; and besides, M. Beauchamp does not fight.'

Renee flushed crimson.

Madame d'Auffray added, 'I do not say that he is other than a perfectly brave and chivalrous gentleman.'

'Oh!' cried Renee, 'do not say it, if ever you should imagine it. Bid Roland speak of him. He is changed, oppressed: I did him a terrible wrong' She checked herself. 'But the chief thing to do is to keep M. d'Henriél away from him. I suspect M. d'Orbec of a design to make them clash: and you, my dear, will explain why, to flatter me. Believe me, I thirst for flattery; I have had none since M. Beauchamp came: and you, so acute, must have seen the want of it in my face. But you, so skilful, Agnes, will manage these men. Do you know, Agnes, that the pride of a woman so incredibly clever as you have shown me you are should resent their intrigues and overthrow them. As for me, I thought I could command M. d'Henriél, and I find he has neither reason in him nor

obedience. Singular to say, I knew him just as well a week back as I do now, and then I liked him for his qualities--or the absence of any. But how shall we avoid him on the road to Dianet? He is aware that we are going.'

'Take M. Beauchamp by boat,' said Madame d'Auffray.

'The river winds to within a five minutes' walk of Dianet; we could go by boat,' Renee said musingly. 'I thought of the boat. But does it not give the man a triumph that we should seem to try to elude him? What matter! Still, I do not like him to be the falcon, and Nevil Beauchamp the . . . little bird. So it is, because we began badly, Agnes!'

'Was it my fault?'

'Mine. Tell me: the legitimate king returns when?'

'In two days or three.'

'And his rebel subjects are to address him--how?'

Madame d'Auffray smote the point of a finger softly on her cheek.

'Will they be pardoned?' said Renee.

'It is for him to kneel, my dearest.'

'Legitimacy kneeling for forgiveness is a painful picture, Agnes. Legitimacy jealous of a foreigner is an odd one. However, we are women, born to our lot. If we could rise en masse!--but we cannot. Embrace me.'

Madame d'Auffray embraced her, without an idea that she assisted in performing the farewell of their confidential intimacy.

When Renee trifled with Count Henri, it was playing with fire, and she knew it; and once or twice she bemoaned to Agnes d'Auffray her abandoned state, which condemned her, for the sake of the sensation of living, to have recourse to perilous pastimes; but she was revolted, as at a piece of treachery, that Agnes should have suggested the invitation of Nevil Beauchamp with the secret design of winning home her husband to protect her. This, for one reason, was because Beauchamp gave her no notion of danger; none, therefore, of requiring protection; and the presence of her husband could not but be hateful to him, an undeserved infliction. To her it was intolerable that they should be brought into contact. It seemed almost as hard that she should have to dismiss Beauchamp to preclude their meeting. She remembered, nevertheless, a certain desperation of mind, scarce imaginable in the retrospect, by which, trembling, fever-smitten, scorning herself, she had been reduced to hope for Nevil Beauchamp's coming as for a rescue. The night of the storm had roused her heart. Since then his perfect friendliness had lulled, his air of thoughtfulness had interested it; and the fancy that he, who neither reproached nor sentimentalized, was to be infinitely

compassionated, stirred up remorse. She could not tell her friend Agnes of these feelings while her feelings were angered against her friend. So she talked lightly of 'the legitimate king,' and they embraced: a situation of comedy quite as true as that presented by the humble admirers of the brilliant chatelaine.

Beauchamp had the pleasure of rowing Madame la Marquise to the short shaded walk separating the river from Chateau Dianet, whither M. d'Orbec went on horseback, and Madame d'Auffray and M. Livret were driven. The portrait of Diane of Dianet was praised for the beauty of the dame, a soft-fleshed acutely featured person, a fresh-of-the-toilette face, of the configuration of head of the cat, relieved by a delicately aquiline nose; and it could only be the cat of fairy metamorphosis which should stand for that illustration: brows and chin made an acceptable triangle, and eyes and mouth could be what she pleased for mice or monarchs. M. Livret did not gainsay the impeachment of her by a great French historian, tender to women, to frailties in particular--yes, she was cold, perhaps grasping; but dwell upon her in her character of woman; conceive her existing, to estimate the charm of her graciousness. Name the two countries which alone have produced THE WOMAN, the ideal woman, the woman of art, whose beauty, grace, and wit offer her to our contemplation in an atmosphere above the ordinary conditions of the world: these two countries are France and Greece! None other give you the perfect woman, the woman who conquers time, as she conquers men, by virtue of the divinity in her blood; and she, as little as illustrious heroes, is to be judged by the laws and standards of lesser creatures. In fashioning her, nature and art have worked together: in her, poetry walks the earth. The question of good or bad is entirely to be put aside: it is a rustic's impertinence--a bourgeois' vulgarity. She is preeminent, *voila tout*. Has she grace and beauty? Then you are answered: such possessions are an assurance that her influence in the aggregate must be for good. Thunder, destructive to insects, refreshes earth: so she. So sang the rhapsodist. Possibly a scholarly little French gentleman, going down the grey slopes of sixty to second childishness, recovers a second juvenility in these enthusiasms; though what it is that inspires our matrons to take up with them is unimaginable. M. Livret's ardour was a contrast to the young Englishman's vacant gaze at Diane, and the symbols of her goddessship running along the walls, the bed, the cabinets, everywhere that the chaste device could find frontage and a corner.

M. d'Orbec remained outside the chateau inspecting the fish-ponds. When they rejoined him he complimented Beauchamp semi-ironically on his choice of the river's quiet charms in preference to the dusty roads. Madame de Rouaillout said, 'Come, M. d'Orbec; what if you surrender your horse to M. Beauchamp, and row me back?' He changed colour, hesitated, and declined he had an engagement to call on M. d'Henri.

'When did you see him?' said she.

He was confused. 'It is not long since, madame.'

'On the road?'

'Coming along-the road.'

'And our glove?'

'Madame la Marquise, if I may trust my memory, M. d'Henriél was not in official costume.'

Renee allowed herself to be reassured.

A ceremonious visit that M. Livret insisted on was paid to the chapel of Diane, where she had worshipped and laid her widowed ashes, which, said M. Livret, the fiends of the Revolution would not let rest.

He raised his voice to denounce them.

It was Roland de Croisnel that answered: 'The Revolution was our grandmother, monsieur, and I cannot hear her abused.'

Renee caught her brother by the hand. He stepped out of the chapel with Beauchamp to embrace him; then kissed Renee, and, remarking that she was pale, fetched flooding colour to her cheeks. He was hearty air to them after the sentimentalism they had been hearing. Beauchamp and he walked like loving comrades at school, questioning, answering, chattering, laughing,--a beautiful sight to Renee, and she looked at Agnes d'Auffray to ask her whether 'this Englishman' was not one of them in his frankness and freshness.

Roland stopped to turn to Renee. 'I met d'Henriél on my ride here,' he said with a sharp inquisitive expression of eye that passed immediately.

'You rode here from Tourdestelle, then,' said Renee.

'Has he been one of the company, marquise?'

'Did he ride by you without speaking, Roland?'

'Thus.' Roland described a Spanish caballero's formallest salutation, saying to Beauchamp, 'Not the best sample of our young Frenchman;--woman-spoiled! Not that the better kind of article need be spoiled by them--heaven forbid that! Friend Nevil,' he spoke lower, 'do you know, you have something of the prophet in you? I remember: much has come true. An old spoiler of women is worse than one spoiled by them! Ah, well: and Madame Culling? and your seven-feet high uncle? And have you a fleet to satisfy Nevil Beauchamp yet? You shall see a trial of our new field-guns at Rouen.'

They were separated with difficulty.

Renee wished her brother to come in the boat; and he would have done so, but for his objection to have his Arab bestridden by a man unknown to him.

'My love is a four-foot, and here's my love,' Roland said, going outside the gilt gate-rails to the graceful little beast, that acknowledged his ownership with an arch and swing of the neck round to him.

He mounted and called, 'Au revoir, M. le Capitaine.'

'Au revoir, M. le Commandant,' cried Beauchamp.

'Admiral and marshal, each of us in good season,' said Roland. 'Thanks to your promotion, I had a letter from my sister. Advance a grade, and I may get another.'

Beauchamp thought of the strange gulf now between him and the time when he pined to be a commodore, and an admiral. The gulf was bridged as he looked at Renee petting Roland's horse.

'Is there in the world so lovely a creature?' she said, and appealed fondlingly to the beauty that brings out beauty, and, bidding it disdain rivalry, rivalled it insomuch that in a moment of trance Beauchamp with his bodily vision beheld her, not there, but on the Lido of Venice, shining out of the years gone.

Old love reviving may be love of a phantom after all. We can, if it must revive, keep it to the limits of a ghostly love. The ship in the Arabian tale coming within the zone of the magnetic mountain, flies all its bolts and bars, and becomes sheer timbers, but that is the carelessness of the ship's captain; and hitherto Beauchamp could applaud himself for steering with prudence, while Renee's attractions warned more than they beckoned. She was magnetic to him as no other woman was. Then whither his course but homeward?

After they had taken leave of their host and hostess of Chateau Dianet, walking across a meadow to a line of charmilles that led to the river-side, he said, 'Now I have seen Roland I shall have to decide upon going.'

'Wantonly won is deservedly lost,' said Renee. 'But do not disappoint my Roland much because of his foolish sister. Is he not looking handsome? And he is young to be a commandant, for we have no interest at this Court. They kept him out of the last war! My father expects to find you at Tourdestelle, and how account to him for your hurried flight? save with the story of that which brought you to us!'

'The glove? I shall beg for the fellow to it before I depart, marquise.'

'You perceived my disposition to light-headedness, monsieur, when I was a girl.'

'I said that I--But the past is dust. Shall I ever see you in England?'

'That country seems to frown on me. But if I do not go there, nor you come here, except to imperious mysterious invitations, which will not be

repeated, the future is dust as well as the past: for me, at least. Dust here, dust there!--if one could be like a silk-worm, and live lying on the leaf one feeds on, it would be a sort of answer to the riddle--living out of the dust, and in the present. I find none in my religion. No doubt, Madame de Breze did: why did you call Diane so to M. Livret?’

She looked at him smiling as they came out of the shadow of the clipped trees. He was glancing about for the boat.

‘The boat is across the river,’ Renee said, in a voice that made him seek her eyes for an explanation of the dead sound. She was very pale. ‘You have perfect command of yourself? For my sake!’ she said.

He looked round.

Standing up in the boat, against the opposite bank, and leaning with crossed legs on one of the sculls planted in the gravel of the river, Count Henri d’Henriel’s handsome figure presented itself to Beauchamp’s gaze.

With a dryness that smacked of his uncle Everard Romfrey, Beauchamp said of the fantastical posture of the young man, ‘One can do that on fresh water.’

Renee did not comprehend the sailor-sarcasm of the remark; but she also commented on the statuesque appearance of Count Henri: ‘Is the pose for photography or for sculpture?’

Neither of them showed a sign of surprise or of impatience.

M. d’Henriel could not maintain the attitude. He uncrossed his legs deliberately, dropped hat in hand, and came paddling over; apologized indolently, and said, ‘I am not, I believe, trespassing on the grounds of Tourdestelle, Madame la Marquise!’

‘You happen to be in my boat, M. le Comte,’ said Renee.

‘Permit me, madame.’ He had set one foot on shore, with his back to Beauchamp, and reached a hand to assist her step into the boat.

Beauchamp caught fast hold of the bows while Renee laid a finger on Count Henri’s shoulder to steady herself.

The instant she had taken her seat, Count Henri dashed the scull’s blade at the bank to push off with her, but the boat was fast. His manoeuvre had been foreseen. Beauchamp swung on board like the last seaman of a launch, and crouched as the boat rocked away to the stream; and still Count Henri leaned on the scull, not in a chosen attitude, but for positive support. He had thrown his force into the blow, to push off triumphantly, and leave his rival standing. It occurred that the boat’s brief resistance and rocking away agitated his artificial equipoise, and, by the operation of inexorable laws, the longer he leaned across an extending surface the more was he dependent; so that when the measure of

the water exceeded the length of his failing support on land, there was no help for it: he pitched in. His grimace of chagrin at the sight of Beauchamp securely established, had scarcely yielded to the grimness of feature of the man who feels he must go, as he took the plunge; and these two emotions combined to make an extraordinary countenance.

He went like a gallant gentleman; he threw up his heels to clear the boat, dropping into about four feet of water, and his first remark on rising was, 'I trust, madame, I have not had the misfortune to splash you.'

Then he waded to the bank, scrambled to his feet, and drew out his moustachios to their curving ends. Renee nodded sharply to Beauchamp to bid him row. He, with less of wisdom, having seized the floating scull abandoned by Count Henri, and got it ready for the stroke, said a word of condolence to the dripping man.

Count Henri's shoulders and neck expressed a kind of negative that, like a wet dog's shake of the head, ended in an involuntary whole length shudder, dog-like and deplorable to behold. He must have been conscious of this miserable exhibition of himself; he turned to Beauchamp: 'You are, I am informed, a sailor, monsieur. I compliment you on your naval tactics: our next meeting will be on land. Au revoir, monsieur. Madame la Marquise, I have the honour to salute you.'

With these words he retreated.

'Row quickly, I beg of you,' Renee said to Beauchamp. Her desire was to see Roland, and open her heart to her brother; for now it had to be opened. Not a minute must be lost to prevent further mischief. And who was guilty? she. Her heart clamoured of her guilt to waken a cry of innocence. A disdainful pity for the superb young savage just made ludicrous, relieved him of blame, implacable though he was. He was nothing; an accident--a fool. But he might become a terrible instrument of punishment. The thought of that possibility gave it an aspect of retribution, under which her cry of innocence was insufferable in its feebleness. It would have been different with her if Beauchamp had taken advantage of her fever of anxiety, suddenly appeased by the sight of him on the evening of his arrival at Tourdestelle after the storm, to attempt a renewal of their old broken love-bonds. Then she would have seen only a conflict between two men, neither of whom could claim a more secret right than the other to be called her lover, and of whom both were on a common footing, and partly despicable. But Nevil Beauchamp had behaved as her perfect true friend, in the character she had hoped for when she summoned him. The sense of her guilt lay in the recognition that he had saved her. From what? From the consequences of delirium rather than from love--surely delirium, founded on delusion; love had not existed. She had said to Count Henri, 'You speak to me of love. I was beloved when I was a girl, before my marriage, and for years I have not seen or corresponded with the man who loved me, and I have only to lift my finger now and he will come to me, and not once will he speak to me of love.' Those were the words originating the wager of the glove. But what of her, if Nevil Beauchamp had not come?

Her heart jumped, and she blushed ungovernably in his face,--as if he were seeing her withdraw her foot from the rock's edge, and had that instant rescued her. But how came it she had been so helpless? She could ask; she could not answer.

Thinking, talking to her heart, was useless. The deceiver simply feigned utter condemnation to make partial comfort acceptable. She burned to do some act of extreme self-abasement that should bring an unwonted degree of wrath on her externally, and so re-entitle her to consideration in her own eyes. She burned to be interrogated, to have to weep, to be scorned, abused, and forgiven, that she might say she did not deserve pardon. Beauchamp was too English, evidently too blind, for the description of judge-accuser she required; one who would worry her without mercy, until-disgraced by the excess of torture inflicted--he should reinstate her by as much as he had overcharged his accusation, and a little more. Reasonably enough, instinctively in fact, she shunned the hollow of an English ear. A surprise was in reserve for her.

Beauchamp gave up rowing. As he rested on the sculls, his head was bent and turned toward the bank. Renee perceived an over-swollen monster gourd that had strayed from a garden adjoining the river, and hung sliding heavily down the bank on one greenish yellow cheek, in prolonged contemplation of its image in the mirror below. Apparently this obese Narcissus enchained his attention.

She tapped her foot. 'Are you tired of rowing, monsieur?'

'It was exactly here,' said he, 'that you told me you expected your husband's return.'

She glanced at the gourd, bit her lip, and, colouring, said, 'At what point of the river did I request you to congratulate me on it?'

She would not have said that, if she had known the thoughts at work within him.

He set the boat swaying from side to side, and at once the hugeous reflection of that conceivably self-enamoured bulk quavered and distended, and was shattered in a thousand dancing fragments, to re-unite and recompose its maudlin air of imaged satisfaction.

She began to have a vague idea that he was indulging grotesque fancies.

Very strangely, the ridiculous thing, in the shape of an over-stretched likeness, that she never would have seen had he indicated it directly, became transfused from his mind to hers by his abstract, half-amused observation of the great dancing gourd--that capering antiquity, lumbering volatility, wandering, self-adored, gross bald Cupid, elatest of nondescripts! Her senses imagined the impressions agitating Beauchamp's, and exaggerated them beyond limit; and when he amazed her with a straight look into her eyes, and the words, 'Better let it be a youth--and live, than fall back to that!' she understood him immediately;

and, together with her old fear of his impetuosity and downrightness, came the vivid recollection, like a bright finger pointing upon darkness, of what foul destiny, magnified by her present abhorrence of it, he would have saved her from in the days of Venice and Touraine, and unto what loathly example of the hideous grotesque she, in spite of her lover's foresight on her behalf, had become allied.

Face to face as they sat, she had no defence for her scarlet cheeks; her eyes wavered.

'We will land here; the cottagers shall row the boat up,' she said.

'Somewhere--anywhere,' said Beauchamp. 'But I must speak. I will tell you now. I do not think you to blame--barely; not in my sight; though no man living would have suffered as I should. Probably some days more and you would have been lost. You looked for me! Trust your instinct now I'm with you as well as when I'm absent. Have you courage? that 's the question. You have years to live. Can you live them in this place--with honour? and alive really?'

Renee's eyes grew wide; she tried to frown, and her brows merely twitched; to speak, and she was inarticulate. His madness, miraculous penetration, and the super-masculine charity in him, unknown to the world of young men in their treatment of women, excited, awed, and melted her. He had seen the whole truth of her relations with M. d'Henriel!--the wickedness of them in one light, the innocence in another; and without prompting a confession he forgave her. Could she believe it? This was love, and manly love.

She yearned to be on her feet, to feel the possibility of an escape from him.

She pointed to a landing. He sprang to the bank. 'It could end in nothing else,' he said, 'unless you beat cold to me. And now I have your hand, Renee! It's the hand of a living woman, you have no need to tell me that; but faithful to her comrade! I can swear it for her--faithful to a true alliance! You are not married, you are simply chained: and you are terrorized. What a perversion of you it is! It wrecks you. But with me? Am I not your lover? You and I are one life. What have we suffered for but to find this out and act on it? Do I not know that a woman lives, and is not the rooted piece of vegetation hypocrites and tyrants expect her to be? Act on it, I say; own me, break the chains, come to me; say, Nevil Beauchamp or death! And death for you? But you are poisoned and thwart-eddying, as you live now: worse, shaming the Renee I knew. Ah-Venice! But now we are both of us wiser and stronger: we have gone through fire. Who foretold it? This day, and this misery and perversion that we can turn to joy, if we will--if you will! No heart to dare is no heart to love!--answer that! Shall I see you cower away from me again? Not this time!'

He swept on in a flood, uttered mad things, foolish things, and things of an insight electrifying to her. Through the cottager's garden, across a field, and within the park gates of Tourdestelle it continued

unceasingly; and deeply was she won by the rebellious note in all that he said, deeply too by his disregard of the vulgar arts of wooers: she detected none. He did not speak so much to win as to help her to see with her own orbs. Nor was it roughly or chidingly, though it was absolutely, that he stripped her of the veil a wavering woman will keep to herself from her heart's lord if she can.

They arrived long after the boat at Tourdestelle, and Beauchamp might believe he had prevailed with her, but for her forlorn repetition of the question he had put to her idly and as a new idea, instead of significantly, with a recollection and a doubt 'Have I courage, Nevil?'

The grain of common sense in cowardice caused her to repeat it when her reason was bedimmed, and passion assumed the right to show the way of right and wrong.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A cloud of millinery shoots me off a mile from a woman
A string of pearls: a woman who goes beyond that's in danger
Admires a girl when there's no married woman or widow in sight
After forty, men have married their habits
An old spoiler of women is worse than one spoiled by them!
And never did a stroke of work in my life
Are we practical?' penetrates the bosom of an English audience
As to wit, the sneer is the cloak of clumsiness
Contemptuous exclusiveness could not go farther
Discover the writers in a day when all are writing!
Feigned utter condemnation to make partial comfort acceptable
Frozen vanity called pride, which does not seek to be revenged
Half-truth that we may put on the mask of the whole
Hopes of a coming disillusion that would restore him
How angry I should be with you if you were not so beautiful!
I can confess my sight to be imperfect: but will you ever do so?
If there's no doubt about it, how is it I have a doubt about it?
It is not high flying, which usually ends in heavy falling
Let none of us be so exalted above the wit of daily life
No heart to dare is no heart to love!
Ogler's genial piety made him shrink with nausea
Past fairness, vaguely like a snow landscape in the thaw
Planting the past in the present like a perceptible ghost
Pleasure-giving laws that make the curves we recognize as beauty
Practical or not, the good people affectingly wish to be
Shun comparisons
So the frog telleth tadpoles
Socially and politically mean one thing in the end
Story that she believed indeed, but had not quite sensibly felt
The critic that sneers
The language of party is eloquent
The slavery of the love of a woman chained

There may be women who think as well as feel; I don't know them
Trust no man Still, this man may be better than that man
Use your religion like a drug
Who cannot talk!--but who can?
Wives are only an item in the list, and not the most important
Women don't care uncommonly for the men who love them
You are not married, you are simply chained

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