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BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

By George Meredith

1897

BOOK 5.

XXXIV. THE FACE OF RENEE

XXXV. THE RIDE IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

XXXVI. PURSUIT OF THE APOLOGY OF MR. ROMFREY TO DR. SHRAPNEL

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CHAPTER XXXIV

THE FACE OF RENEE

Shortly before the ringing of the dinner-bell Rosamund knocked at Beauchamp's dressing-room door, the bearer of a telegram from Bevisham. He read it in one swift run of the eyes, and said: 'Come in, ma'am, I have something for you. Madame de Rouaillout sends you this.'

Rosamund saw her name written in a French hand on the back of the card.

'You stay with us, Nevil?'

'To-night and to-morrow, perhaps. The danger seems to be over.'

'Has Dr. Shrapnel been in danger?'

'He has. If it's quite over now!'

'I declare to you, Nevil . . .'

'Listen to me, ma'am; I'm in the dark about this murderous business--an old man, defenceless, harmless as a child!--but I know this, that you are somewhere in it.'

'Nevil, do you not guess at some one else?'

'He! yes, he! But Cecil Baskellett led no blind man to Dr. Shrapnel's gate.'

'Nevil, as I live, I knew nothing of it!'

'No, but you set fire to the train. You hated the old man, and you

taught Mr. Romfrey to think that you had been insulted. I see it all. Now you must have the courage to tell him of your error. There's no other course for you. I mean to take Mr. Romfrey to Dr. Shrapnel, to save the honour of our family, as far as it can be saved.'

'What? Nevil!' exclaimed Rosamund, gaping.

'It seems little enough, ma'am. But he must go. I will have the apology spoken, and man to man.'

'But you would never tell your uncle that?'

He laughed in his uncle's manner.

'But, Nevil, my dearest, forgive me, I think of you--why are the Halketts here? It is not entirely with Colonel Halkett's consent. It is your uncle's influence with him that gives you your chance. Do you not care to avail yourself of it? Ever since he heard Dr. Shrapnel's letter to you, Colonel Halkett has, I am sure, been tempted to confound you with him in his mind: ah! Nevil, but recollect that it is only Mr. Romfrey who can help to give you your Cecilia. There is no dispensing with him. Postpone your attempt to humiliate--I mean, that is, Oh! Nevil, whatever you intend to do to overcome your uncle, trust to time, be friends with him; be a little worldly! for her sake! to ensure her happiness!'

Beauchamp obtained the information that his cousin Cecil had read out the letter of Dr. Shrapnel at Mount Laurels.

The bell rang.

'Do you imagine I should sit at my uncle's table if I did not intend to force him to repair the wrong he has done to himself and to us?' he said.

'Oh! Nevil, do you not see Captain Baskellett at work here?'

'What amends can Cecil Baskellett make? My uncle is a man of honour: it is in his power. There, I leave you to speak to him; you will do it to-night, after we break up in the drawing-room.'

Rosamund groaned: 'An apology to Dr. Shrapnel from Mr. Romfrey! It is an impossibility, Nevil! utter!'

'So you say to sit idle: but do as I tell you.'

He went downstairs.

He had barely reproached her. She wondered at that; and then remembered his alien sad half-smile in quitting the room.

Rosamund would not present herself at her lord's dinner-table when there were any guests at Steynham. She prepared to receive Miss Halkett in the drawing-room, as the guests of the house this evening chanced to be her friends.

Madame de Rouaillout's present to her was a photograph of M. de Croisnel, his daughter and son in a group. Rosamund could not bear to look at the face of Renee, and she put it out of sight. But she had looked. She was reduced to look again.

Roland stood beside his father's chair; Renee sat at his feet, clasping his right hand. M. de Croisnel's fallen eyelids and unshorn white chin told the story of the family reunion. He was dying: his two children were nursing him to the end.

Decidedly Cecilia was a more beautiful woman than Renee: but on which does the eye linger longest--which draws the heart? a radiant landscape, where the tall ripe wheat flashes between shadow and shine in the stately march of Summer, or the peep into dewy woodland on to dark water?

Dark-eyed Renee was not beauty but attraction; she touched the double chords within us which are we know not whether harmony or discord, but a divine discord if an uncertified harmony, memorable beyond plain sweetness or majesty. There are touches of bliss in anguish that superhumanize bliss, touches of mystery in simplicity, of the eternal in the variable. These two chords of poignant antiphony she struck throughout the range of the hearts of men, and strangely interwove them in vibrating unison. Only to look at her face, without hearing her voice, without the charm of her speech, was to feel it. On Cecilia's entering the drawing-room sofa, while the gentlemen drank claret, Rosamund handed her the card of the photographic artist of Tours, mentioning no names.

'I should say the portrait is correct. A want of spirituality,' Rosamund said critically, using one of the insular commonplaces, after that manner of fastening upon what there is not in a piece of Art or nature.

Cecilia's avidity to see and study the face preserved her at a higher mark.

She knew the person instantly; had no occasion to ask who this was. She sat over the portrait blushing burningly: 'And that is a brother?' she said.

'That is her brother Roland, and very like her, except in complexion,' said Rosamund.

Cecilia murmured of a general resemblance in the features. Renee enthralled her. Though but a sun-shadow, the vividness of this French face came out surprisingly; air was in the nostrils and speech flew from the tremulous mouth. The eyes? were they quivering with internal light, or were they set to seem so in the sensitive strange curves of the eyelids whose awakened lashes appeared to tremble on some borderland between lustreful significance and the mists? She caught at the nerves like certain aoristic combinations in music, like tones of a stringed instrument swept by the wind, enticing, unseizable. Yet she sat there at her father's feet gazing out into the world indifferent to spectators,

indifferent even to the common sentiment of gracefulness. Her left hand clasped his right, and she supported herself on the floor with the other hand leaning away from him, to the destruction of conventional symmetry in the picture. None but a woman of consummate breeding dared have done as she did. It was not Southern suppleness that saved her from the charge of harsh audacity, but something of the kind of genius in her mood which has hurried the greater poets of sound and speech to impose their naturalness upon accepted laws, or show the laws to have been our meagre limitations.

The writer in this country will, however, be made safest, and the excellent body of self-appointed thongmen, who walk up and down our ranks flapping their leathern straps to terrorize us from experiments in imagery, will best be satisfied, by the statement that she was indescribable: a term that exacts no labour of mind from him or from them, for it flows off the pen as readily as it fills a vacuum.

That posture of Renee displeased Cecilia and fascinated her. In an exhibition of paintings she would have passed by it in pure displeasure: but here was Nevil's first love, the woman who loved him; and she was French. After a continued study of her Cecilia's growing jealousy betrayed itself in a conscious rivalry of race, coming to the admission that Englishwomen cannot fling themselves about on the floor without agonizing the graces: possibly, too, they cannot look singularly without risks in the direction of slyness and brazen archness; or talk animatedly without dipping in slang. Conventional situations preserve them and interchange dignity with them; still life befits them; pre-eminently that judicial seat from which in briefest speech they deliver their judgements upon their foreign sisters. Jealousy it was that plucked Cecilia from her majestic place and caused her to envy in Renee things she would otherwise have disapproved.

At last she had seen the French lady's likeness! The effect of it was a horrid trouble in Cecilia's cool blood, abasement, a sense of eclipse, hardly any sense of deserving worthiness: 'What am I but an heiress!' Nevil had once called her beautiful; his praise had given her beauty. But what is beauty when it is outshone! Ask the owners of gems. You think them rich; they are pining.

Then, too, this Renee, who looked electrical in repose, might really love Nevil with a love that sent her heart out to him in his enterprises, justifying and adoring him, piercing to the hero in his very thoughts. Would she not see that his championship of the unfortunate man Dr. Shrapnel was heroic?

Cecilia surrendered the card to Rosamund, and it was out of sight when Beauchamp stepped in the drawing-room. His cheeks were flushed; he had been one against three for the better part of an hour.

'Are you going to show me the downs to-morrow morning?' Cecilia said to him; and he replied, 'You will have to be up early.'

'What's that?' asked the colonel, at Beauchamp's heels.

He was volunteering to join the party of two for the early morning's ride to the downs. Mr. Romfrey pressed his shoulder, saying, 'There's no third horse can do it in my stables.'

Colonel Halkett turned to him.

'I had your promise to come over the kennels with me and see how I treat a cry of mad dog, which is ninety-nine times out of a hundred mad fool man,' Mr. Romfrey added.

By that the colonel knew he meant to stand by Nevil still and offer him his chance of winning Cecilia.

Having pledged his word not to interfere, Colonel Halkett submitted, and muttered, 'Ah! the kennels.' Considering however what he had been witnessing of Nevil's behaviour to his uncle, the colonel was amazed at Mr. Romfrey's magnanimity in not cutting him off and disowning him.

'Why the downs?' he said.

'Why the deuce, colonel?' A question quite as reasonable, and Mr. Romfrey laughed under his breath. To relieve an uncertainty in Cecilia's face, that might soon have become confusion, he described the downs fronting the paleness of earliest dawn, and then their arch and curve and dip against the pearly grey of the half-glow; and then, among their hollows, lo, the illumination of the East all around, and up and away, and a gallop for miles along the turfy thymy rolling billows, land to left, sea to right, below you. 'It's the nearest hit to wings we can make, Cecilia.' He surprised her with her Christian name, which kindled in her the secret of something he expected from that ride on the downs. Compare you the Alps with them? If you could jump on the back of an eagle, you might. The Alps have height. But the downs have swiftness. Those long stretching lines of the downs are greyhounds in full career. To look at them is to set the blood racing! Speed is on the downs, glorious motion, odorous air of sea and herb, exquisite as in the isles of Greece. And the Continental travelling ninnies leave England for health!--run off and forth from the downs to the steamboat, the railway, the steaming hotel, the tourist's shivering mountain-top, in search of sensations! There on the downs the finest and liveliest are at their bidding ready to fly through them like hosts of angels.

He spoke somewhat in that strain, either to relieve Cecilia or prepare the road for Nevil, not in his ordinary style; on the contrary, with a swing of enthusiasm that seemed to spring of ancient heartfelt fervours. And indeed soon afterward he was telling her that there on those downs, in full view of Steynham, he and his wife had first joined hands.

Beauchamp sat silent. Mr. Romfrey despatched orders to the stables, and Rosamund to the kitchen. Cecilia was rather dismayed by the formal preparations for the ride. She declined the early cup of coffee. Mr. Romfrey begged her to take it. 'Who knows the hour when you 'll be back?' he said. Beauchamp said nothing.

The room grew insufferable to Cecilia. She would have liked to be wafted to her chamber in a veil, so shamefully unveiled did she seem to be. But the French lady would have been happy in her place! Her father kissed her as fathers do when they hand the bride into the travelling-carriage. His 'Good-night, my darling!' was in the voice of a soldier on duty. For a concluding sign that her dim apprehensions pointed correctly, Mr. Romfrey kissed her on the forehead. She could not understand how it had come to pass that she found herself suddenly on this incline, precipitated whither she would fain be going, only less hurriedly, less openly, and with her secret merely peeping, like a dove in the breast.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE RIDE IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

That pure opaque of the line of downs ran luminously edged against the pearly morning sky, with its dark landward face crepuscine yet clear in every combe, every dotting copse and furze-bush, every wavy fall, and the ripple, crease, and rill-like descent of the turf. Beauty of darkness was there, as well as beauty of light above.

Beauchamp and Cecilia rode forth before the sun was over the line, while the West and North-west sides of the rolling downs were stamped with such firmness of dusky feature as you see on the indentations of a shield of tarnished silver. The mounting of the sun behind threw an obscurer gloom, and gradually a black mask overcame them, until the rays shot among their folds and windings, and shadows rich as the black pansy, steady as on a dialplate rounded with the hour.

Mr. Everard Romfrey embraced this view from Steynham windows, and loved it. The lengths of gigantic 'greyhound backs' coursing along the South were his vision of delight; no image of repose for him, but of the life in swiftness. He had known them when the great bird of the downs was not a mere tradition, and though he owned conscientiously to never having beheld the bird, a certain mystery of holiness hung about the region where the bird had been in his time. There, too, with a timely word he had gained a wealthy and good wife. He had now sent Nevil to do the same.

This astute gentleman had caught at the idea of a ride of the young couple to the downs with his customary alacrity of perception as being the very best arrangement for hurrying them to the point. At Steynham Nevil was sure to be howling all day over his tumbled joss Shrapnel. Once away in the heart of the downs, and Cecilia beside him, it was a matter of calculation that two or three hours of the sharpening air would screw his human nature to the pitch. In fact, unless each of them was reluctant, they could hardly return unbetrothed. Cecilia's consent was foreshadowed by her submission in going: Mr. Romfrey had noticed her fright at the suggestive formalities he cast round the expedition, and

felt sure of her. Taking Nevil for a man who could smell the perfume of a ripe affirmative on the sweetest of lips, he was pretty well sure of him likewise. And then a truce to all that Radical rageing and hot-pokering of the country! and lie in peace, old Shrapnel! and get on your legs when you can, and offend no more; especially be mindful not to let fly one word against a woman! With Cecilia for wife, and a year of marriage devoted to a son and heir, Nevil might be expected to resume his duties as a naval officer, and win an honourable name for the inheritance of the young one he kissed.

There was benevolence in these previsions of Mr. Romfrey, proving how good it is for us to bow to despotic authority, if only we will bring ourselves unquestioningly to accept the previous deeds of the directing hand.

Colonel Halkett gave up his daughter for lost when she did not appear at the breakfast-table: for yet more decidedly lost when the luncheon saw her empty place; and as time drew on toward the dinner-hour, he began to think her lost beyond hope, embarked for good and all with the madbrain. Some little hope of a dissension between the pair, arising from the natural antagonism of her strong sense to Nevil's extravagance, had buoyed him until it was evident that they must have alighted at an inn to eat, which signified that they had overleaped the world and its hurdles, and were as dreamy a leash of lovers as ever made a dreamland of hard earth. The downs looked like dreamland through the long afternoon. They shone as in a veil of silk-softly fair, softly dark. No spot of harshness was on them save where a quarry South-westward gaped at the evening sun.

Red light struck into that round chalk maw, and the green slopes and channels and half-circle hollows were brought a mile-stride higher Steynham by the level beams.

The poor old colonel fell to a more frequent repetition of the 'Well!' with which he had been unconsciously expressing his perplexed mind in the kennels and through the covers during the day. None of the gentlemen went to dress. Mr. Culbrett was indoors conversing with Rosamund Culling.

'What's come to them?' the colonel asked of Mr. Romfrey, who said shrugging, 'Something wrong with one of the horses.' It had happened to him on one occasion to set foot in the hole of a baked hedgehog that had furnished a repast, not without succulence, to some shepherd of the downs. Such a case might have recurred; it was more likely to cause an upset at a walk than at a gallop: or perhaps a shoe had been cast; and young people break no bones at a walking fall; ten to one if they do at their top speed. Horses manage to kill their seniors for them: the young are exempt from accident.

Colonel Halkett nodded and sighed: 'I daresay they're safe. It's that man Shrapnel's letter--that letter, Romfrey! A private letter, I know; but I've not heard Nevil disown the opinions expressed in it. I submit. It's no use resisting. I treat my daughter as a woman capable of judging

for herself. I repeat, I submit. I haven't a word against Nevil except on the score of his politics. I like him. All I have to say is, I don't approve of a republican and a sceptic for my son-in-law. I yield to you, and my daughter, if she . . . !'

'I think she does, colonel. Marriage 'll cure the fellow. Nevil will slough his craze. Off! old coat. Cissy will drive him in strings. "My wife!" I hear him.' Mr. Romfrey laughed quietly. 'It's all "my country," now. The dog'll be uxorious. He wants fixing; nothing worse.'

'How he goes on about Shrapnell!'

'I shouldn't think much of him if he didn't.'

'You're one in a thousand, Romfrey. I object to seeing a man worshipped.'

'It's Nevil's green-sickness, and Shrapnel's the god of it.'

'I trust to heaven you're right. It seems to me young fellows ought to be out of it earlier.'

'They generally are.' Mr. Romfrey named some of the processes by which they are relieved of brain-flightiness, adding philosophically, 'This way or that.'

His quick ear caught a sound of hoofs cantering down the avenue on the Northern front of the house.

He consulted his watch. 'Ten minutes to eight. Say a quarter-past for dinner. They're here, colonel.'

Mr. Romfrey met Nevil returning from the stables. Cecilia had disappeared.

'Had a good day?' said Mr. Romfrey.

Beauchamp replied: 'I'll tell you of it after dinner,' and passed by him.

Mr. Romfrey edged round to Colonel Halkett, conjecturing in his mind: They have not hit it; as he remarked: 'Breakfast and luncheon have been omitted in this day's fare,' which appeared to the colonel a confirmation of his worst fears, or rather the extinction of his last spark of hope.

He knocked at his daughter's door in going upstairs to dress.

Cecilia presented herself and kissed him.

'Well?' said he.

'By-and-by, papa,' she answered. 'I have a headache. Beg Mr. Romfrey to excuse me.'

'No news for me?'

She had no news.

Mrs. Culling was with her. The colonel stepped on mystified to his room.

When the door had closed Cecilia turned to Rosamund and burst into tears. Rosamund felt that it must be something grave indeed for the proud young lady so to betray a troubled spirit.

'He is ill--Dr. Shrapnel is very ill,' Cecilia responded to one or two subdued inquiries in as clear a voice as she could command.

'Where have you heard of him?' Rosamund asked.

'We have been there.'

'Bevisham? to Bevisham?' Rosamund was considering the opinion Mr. Romfrey would form of the matter from the point of view of his horses.

'It was Nevil's wish,' said Cecilia.

'Yes? and you went with him,' Rosamund encouraged her to proceed, gladdened at hearing her speak of Nevil by that name; 'you have not been on the downs at all?'

Cecilia mentioned a junction railway station they had ridden to; and thence, boxing the horses, by train to Bevisham. Rosamund understood that some haunting anxiety had fretted Nevil during the night; in the morning he could not withstand it, and he begged Cecilia to change their destination, apparently with a vehemence of entreaty that had been irresistible, or else it was utter affection for him had reduced her to undertake the distasteful journey. She admitted that she was not the most sympathetic companion Nevil could have had on the way, either going or coming. She had not entered Dr. Shrapnel's cottage. Remaining on horseback she had seen the poor man reclining in his garden chair. Mr. Lydiard was with him, and also his ward Miss Denham, who had been summoned by telegraph by one of the servants from Switzerland. And Cecilia had heard Nevil speak of his uncle to her, and too humbly, she hinted. Nor had the expression of Miss Denham's countenance in listening to him pleased her; but it was true that a heavily burdened heart cannot be expected to look pleasing. On the way home Cecilia had been compelled in some degree to defend Mr. Romfrey. Blushing through her tears at the remembrance of a past emotion that had been mixed with foresight, she confessed to Rosamund she thought it now too late to prevent a rupture between Nevil and his uncle. Had some one whom Nevil trusted and cared for taken counsel with him and advised him before uncle and nephew met to discuss this most unhappy matter, then there might have been hope. As it was, the fate of Dr. Shrapnel had gained entire possession of Nevil. Every retort of his uncle's in reference to it rose up in him: he used language of contempt neighbouring abhorrence: he stipulated for one sole thing to win back his esteem for his uncle; and that was, the apology to Dr. Shrapnel.

'And to-night,' Cecilia concluded, 'he will request Mr. Romfrey to accompany him to Bevisham to-morrow morning, to make the apology in person. He will not accept the slightest evasion. He thinks Dr. Shrapnel may die, and the honour of the family--what is it he says of it?' Cecilia raised her eyes to the ceiling, while Rosamund blinked in impatience and grief, just apprehending the alien state of the young lady's mind in her absence of recollection, as well as her bondage in the effort to recollect accurately.

'Have you not eaten any food to-day, Miss Halkett?' she said; for it might be the want of food which had broken her and changed her manner.

Cecilia replied that she had ridden for an hour to Mount Laurels.

'Alone? Mr. Romfrey must not hear of that,' said Rosamund.

Cecilia consented to lie down on her bed. She declined the dainties Rosamund pressed on her. She was feverish with a deep and unconcealed affliction, and behaved as if her pride had gone. But if her pride had gone she would have eased her heart by sobbing outright. A similar division harassed her as when her friend Nevil was the candidate for Bevisham. She condemned his extreme wrath with his uncle, yet was attracted and enchained by the fire of passionate attachment which aroused it: and she was conscious that she had but shown obedience to his wishes throughout the day, not sympathy with his feelings. Under cover of a patient desire to please she had nursed irritation and jealousy; the degradation of the sense of jealousy increasing the irritation. Having consented to the ride to Dr. Shrapnel, should she not, to be consistent, have dismounted there? O half heart! A whole one, though it be an erring, like that of the French lady, does at least live, and has a history, and makes music: but the faint and uncertain is jarred in action, jarred in memory, ever behind the day and in the shadow of it! Cecilia reviewed herself: jealous, disappointed, vexed, ashamed, she had been all day a graceless companion, a bad actress: and at the day's close she was loving Nevil the better for what had dissatisfied, distressed, and wounded her. She was loving him in emulation of his devotedness to another person: and that other was a revolutionary common people's doctor! an infidel, a traitor to his country's dearest interests! But Nevil loved him, and it had become impossible for her not to covet the love, or to think of the old offender without the halo cast by Nevil's attachment being upon him. So intensely was she moved by her intertwisting reflections that in an access of bodily fever she stood up and moved before the glass, to behold the image of the woman who could be the victim of these childish emotions: and no wonderful contrast struck her eyes; she appeared to herself as poor and small as they. How could she aspire to a man like Nevil Beauchamp? If he had made her happy by wooing her she would not have adored him as she did now. He likes my hair, she said, smoothing it out, and then pressing her temples, like one insane. Two minutes afterward she was telling Rosamund her head ached less.

'This terrible Dr. Shrapnel!' Rosamund exclaimed, but reported that no

loud voices were raised in the dining-room.

Colonel Halkett came to see his daughter, full of anxiety and curiosity. Affairs had been peaceful below, for he was ignorant of the expedition to Bevisham. On hearing of it he frowned, questioned Cecilia as to whether she had set foot on that man's grounds, then said: 'Ah! well, we leave to-morrow: I must go, I have business at home; I can't delay it. I sanctioned no calling there, nothing of the kind. From Steynham to Bevisham? Goodness, it's rank madness. I'm not astonished you're sick and ill.'

He waited till he was assured Cecilia had no special matter to relate, and recommending her to drink the tea Mrs. Culling had made for her, and then go to bed and sleep, he went down to the drawing-room, charged with the worst form of hostility toward Nevil, the partly diplomatic.

Cecilia smiled at her father's mention of sleep. She was in the contest of the two men, however inanimately she might be lying overhead, and the assurance in her mind that neither of them would give ground, so similar were they in their tenacity of will, dissimilar in all else, dragged her this way and that till she swayed lifeless between them. One may be as a weed of the sea while one's fate is being decided. To love is to be on the sea, out of sight of land: to love a man like Nevil Beauchamp is to be on the sea in tempest. Still to persist in loving would be noble, and but for this humiliation of utter helplessness an enviable power. Her thoughts ran thus in shame and yearning and regret, dimly discerning where her heart failed in the strength which was Nevil's, though it was a full heart, faithful and not void of courage. But he never brooded, he never blushed from insufficiency-the faintness of a desire, the callow passion that cannot fly and feed itself: he never tottered; he walked straight to his mark. She set up his image and Renee's, and cowered under the heroic shapes till she felt almost extinct. With her weak limbs and head worthlessly paining, the little infantile I within her ceased to wail, dwindled beyond sensation. Rosamund, waiting on her in the place of her maid, saw two big drops come through her closed eyelids, and thought that if it could be granted to Nevil to look for a moment on this fair and proud young lady's loveliness in abandonment, it would tame, melt, and save him. The Gods presiding over custom do not permit such renovating sights to men.

CHAPTER XXXVI

PURSUIT OF THE APOLOGY OF Mr. ROMFREY TO DR. SHRAPNEL

The contest, which was an alternation of hard hitting and close wrestling, had recommenced when Colonel Halkett stepped into the drawing-room.

'Colonel, I find they've been galloping to Bevisham and back,' said Mr. Romfrey.

'I've heard of it,' the colonel replied. Not perceiving a sign of dissatisfaction on his friend's face, he continued: 'To that man Shrapnel.'

'Cecilia did not dismount,' said Beauchamp.

'You took her to that man's gate. It was not with my sanction. You know my ideas of the man.'

'If you were to see him now, colonel, I don't think you would speak harshly of him.'

'We 're not obliged to go and look on men who have, had their measure dealt them.'

'Barbarously,' said Beauchamp.

Mr. Romfrey in the most placid manner took a chair. 'Windy talk, that!' he said.

Colonel Halkett seated himself. Stukely Culbrett turned a sheet of manuscript he was reading.

Beauchamp began a caged lion's walk on the rug under the mantelpiece.

'I shall not spare you from hearing what I think of it, sir.'

'We 've had what you think of it twice over,' said Mr. Romfrey.

'I suppose it was the first time for information, the second time for emphasis, and the rest counts to keep it alive in your recollection.'

'This is what you have to take to heart, sir; that Dr. Shrapnel is now seriously ill.'

'I'm sorry for it, and I'll pay the doctor's bill.'

'You make it hard for me to treat you with respect.'

'Fire away. Those Radical friends of yours have to learn a lesson, and it's worth a purse to teach them that a lady, however feeble she may seem to them, is exactly of the strength of the best man of her acquaintance.'

'That's well said!' came from Colonel Halkett.

Beauchamp stared at him, amazed by the commendation of empty language.

'You acted in error; barbarously, but in error,' he addressed his uncle.

'And you have got a fine topic for mouthing,' Mr. Romfrey rejoined.

'You mean to sit still under Dr. Shrapnel's forgiveness?'

'He's taken to copy the Christian religion, has he?'

'You know you were deluded when you struck him.'

'Not a whit.'

'Yes, you know it now: Mrs. Culling--'

'Drag in no woman, Nevil Beauchamp!'

'She has confessed to you that Dr. Shrapnel neither insulted her nor meant to ruffle her.'

'She has done no such nonsense.'

'If she has not!--but I trust her to have done it.'

'You play the trumpeter, you terrorize her.'

'Into opening her lips wider; nothing else. I'll have the truth from her, and no mincing: and from Cecil Baskellett and Palmet.'

'Give Cecil a second licking, if you can, and have him off to Shrapnel.'

'You!' cried Beauchamp.

At this juncture Stukely Culbrett closed the manuscript in his hands, and holding it out to Beauchamp, said:

'Here's your letter, Nevil. It's tolerably hard to decipher. It's mild enough; it's middling good pulpit. I like it.'

'What have you got there?' Colonel Halkett asked him.

'A letter of his friend Dr. Shrapnel on the Country. Read a bit, colonel.'

'I? That letter! Mild, do you call it?' The colonel started back his chair in declining to touch the letter.

'Try it,' said Stukely. 'It's the letter they have been making the noise about. It ought to be printed. There's a hit or two at the middle-class that I should like to see in print. It's really not bad pulpit; and I suspect that what you object to, colonel, is only the dust of a well-thumped cushion. Shrapnel thumps with his fist. He doesn't say much that's new. If the parsons were men they'd be saying it every Sunday. If they did, colonel, I should hear you saying, amen.'

'Wait till they do say it.'

'That's a long stretch. They're turn-cocks of one Water-company--to wash the greasy citizens!'

'You're keeping Nevil on the gape;' said Mr. Romfrey, with a whimsical shrewd cast of the eye at Beauchamp, who stood alert not to be foiled, arrow-like in look and readiness to repeat his home-shot. Mr. Romfrey wanted to hear more of that unintelligible 'You!' of Beauchamp's. But Stukely Culbrett intended that the latter should be foiled, and he continued his diversion from the angry subject.

'We'll drop the sacerdotals,' he said. 'They're behind a veil for us, and so are we for them. I'm with you, colonel; I wouldn't have them persecuted; they sting fearfully when whipped. No one listens to them now except the class that goes to sleep under them, to "set an example" to the class that can't understand them. Shrapnel is like the breeze shaking the turf-grass outside the church-doors; a trifle fresher. He knocks nothing down.'

'He can't!' ejaculated the colonel.

'He sermonizes to shake, that's all. I know the kind of man.'

'Thank heaven, it's not a common species in England!'

'Common enough to be classed.'

Beauchamp struck through the conversation of the pair: 'Can I see you alone to-night, sir, or to-morrow morning?'

'You may catch me where you can,' was Mr. Romfrey's answer.

'Where's that? It's for your sake and mine, not for Dr. Shrapnel's. I have to speak to you, and must. You have done your worst with him; you can't undo it. You have to think of your honour as a gentleman. I intend to treat you with respect, but wolf is the title now, whether I say it or not.'

'Shrapnel's a rather long-legged sheep?'

'He asks for nothing from you.'

'He would have got nothing, at a cry of peccavi!'

'He was innocent, perfectly blameless; he would not lie to save himself. You mistook that for--but you were an engine shot along a line of rails. He does you the justice to say you acted in error.'

'And you're his parrot.'

'He pardons you.'

'Ha! t' other cheek!'

'You went on that brute's errand in ignorance. Will you keep to the character now you know the truth? Hesitation about it doubles the infamy. An old man! the best of men! the kindest and truest! the most

unselfish!

'He tops me by half a head, and he's my junior.'

Beauchamp suffered himself to give out a groan of sick derision: 'Ah!'

'And it was no joke holding him tight,' said Mr. Romfrey, 'I 'd as lief snap an ash. The fellow (he leaned round to Colonel Halkett) must be a fellow of a fine constitution. And he took his punishment like a man. I've known worse: and far worse: gentlemen by birth. There's the choice of taking it upright or fighting like a rabbit with a weasel in his hole. Leave him to think it over, he'll come right. I think no harm of him, I've no animus. A man must have his lesson at some time of life. I did what I had to do.'

'Look here, Nevil,' Stukely Culbrett checked Beauchamp in season: 'I beg to inquire what Dr. Shrapnel means by "the people." We have in our country the nobles and the squires, and after them, as I understand it, the people: that's to say, the middle-class and the working-class--fat and lean. I'm quite with Shrapnel when he lashes the fleshpots. They want it, and they don't get it from "their organ," the Press. I fancy you and I agree about their organ; the dimmest organ that ever ground a hackneyed set of songs and hymns to madden the thoroughfares.'

'The Press of our country!' interjected Colonel Halkett in moaning parenthesis.

'It's the week-day Parson of the middle-class, colonel. They have their thinking done for them as the Chinese have their dancing. But, Nevil, your Dr. Shrapnel seems to treat the traders as identical with the aristocracy in opposition to his "people." The traders are the cursed middlemen, bad friends of the "people," and infernally treacherous to the nobles till money hoists them. It's they who pull down the country. They hold up the nobles to the hatred of the democracy, and the democracy to scare the nobles. One's when they want to swallow a privilege, and the other's when they want to ring-fence their gains. How is it Shrapnel doesn't expose the trick? He must see through it. I like that letter of his. People is one of your Radical big words that burst at a query. He can't mean Quince, and Bottom, and Starveling, Christopher Sly, Jack Cade, Caliban, and poor old Hodge? No, no, Nevil. Our clowns are the stupidest in Europe. They can't cook their meals. They can't spell; they can scarcely speak. They haven't a jig in their legs. And I believe they're losing their grin! They're nasty when their blood's up. Shakespeare's Cade tells you what he thought of Radicalizing the people. "And as for your mother, I 'll make her a duke"; that 's one of their songs. The word people, in England, is a dyspeptic agitator's dream when he falls nodding over the red chapter of French history. Who won the great liberties for England? My book says, the nobles. And who made the great stand later?--the squires. What have the middlemen done but bid for the people they despise and fear, dishonour us abroad and make a hash of us at home? Shrapnel sees that. Only he has got the word people in his mouth. The people of England, my dear fellow, want heading. Since the traders obtained power we have been a country on all fours. Of

course Shrapnel sees it: I say so. But talk to him and teach him where to look for the rescue.'

Colonel Halkett said to Stukely: 'If you have had a clear idea in what you have just spoken, my head's no place for it!'

Stukely's unusually lengthy observations had somewhat heated him, and he protested with earnestness: 'It was pure Tory, my dear colonel.'

But the habitually and professedly cynical should not deliver themselves at length: for as soon as they miss their customary incision of speech they are apt to aim to recover it in loquacity, and thus it may be that the survey of their ideas becomes disordered.

Mr. Culbrett endangered his reputation for epigram in a good cause, it shall be said.

These interruptions were torture to Beauchamp. Nevertheless the end was gained. He sank into a chair silent.

Mr. Romfrey wished to have it out with his nephew, of whose comic appearance as a man full of thunder, and occasionally rattling, yet all the while trying to be decorous and politic, he was getting tired. He foresaw that a tussle between them in private would possibly be too hot for his temper, admirably under control though it was.

'Why not drag Cecil to Shrapnel?' he said, for a provocation.

Beauchamp would not be goaded.

Colonel Halkett remarked that he would have to leave Steynham the next day. His host remonstrated with him. The colonel said: 'Early.' He had very particular business at home. He was positive, and declined every inducement to stay. Mr. Romfrey glanced at Nevil, thinking, You poor fool! And then he determined to let the fellow have five minutes alone with him.

This occurred at midnight, in that half-armoury, half-library, which was his private room.

Rosamund heard their voices below. She cried out to herself that it was her doing, and blamed her beloved, and her master, and Dr. Shrapnel, in the breath of her self-recrimination. The demagogue, the over-punctilious gentleman, the faint lover, surely it must be reason wanting in the three for each of them in turn to lead the other, by an excess of some sort of the quality constituting their men's natures, to wreck a calm life and stand in contention! Had Shrapnel been commonly reasonable he would have apologized to Mr. Romfrey, or had Mr. Romfrey, he would not have resorted to force to punish the supposed offender, or had Nevil, he would have held his peace until he had gained his bride. As it was; the folly of the three knocked at her heart, uniting to bring the heavy accusation against one poor woman, quite in the old way: the Who is she? of the mocking Spaniard at mention of a social catastrophe. Rosamund had

a great deal of the pride of her sex, and she resented any slur on it. She felt almost superciliously toward Mr. Romfrey and Nevil for their not taking hands to denounce the plotter, Cecil Baskett. They seemed a pair of victims to him, nearly as much so as the wretched man Shrapnel. It was their senselessness which made her guilty! And simply because she had uttered two or three exclamations of dislike of a revolutionary and infidel she was compelled to groan under her present oppression! Is there anything to be hoped of men? Rosamund thought bitterly of Nevil's idea of their progress. Heaven help them! But the unhappy creatures have ceased to look to a heaven for help.

We see the consequence of it in this Shrapnel complication.

Three men: and one struck down; the other defeated in his benevolent intentions; the third sacrificing fortune and happiness: all three owing their mischance to one or other of the vague ideas disturbing men's heads! Where shall we look for mother wit?--or say, common suckling's instinct? Not to men, thought Rosamund.

She was listening to the voices of Mr. Romfrey and Beauchamp in a fever. Ordinarily the lord of Steynham was not out of his bed later than twelve o'clock at night. His door opened at half-past one. Not a syllable was exchanged by the couple in the hall. They had fought it out. Mr. Romfrey came upstairs alone, and on the closing of his chamber-door she slipped down to Beauchamp and had a dreadful hour with him that subdued her disposition to sit in judgement upon men. The unavailing attempt to move his uncle had wrought him to the state in which passionate thoughts pass into speech like heat to flame. Rosamund strained her mental sight to gain a conception of his prodigious horror of the treatment of Dr. Shrapnel that she might think him sane: and to retain a vestige of comfort in her bosom she tried to moderate and make light of as much as she could conceive. Between the two efforts she had no sense but that of helplessness. Once more she was reduced to promise that she would speak the whole truth to Mr. Romfrey, even to the fact that she had experienced a common woman's jealousy of Dr. Shrapnel's influence, and had alluded to him jealously, spitefully, and falsely. There was no mercy in Beauchamp. He was for action at any cost, with all the forces he could gather, and without delays. He talked of Cecilia as his uncle's bride to him. Rosamund could hardly trust her ears when he informed her he had told his uncle of his determination to compel him to accomplish the act of penitence. 'Was it prudent to say it, Nevil?' she asked. But, as in his politics, he disdained prudence. A monstrous crime had been committed, involving the honour of the family. No subtlety of insinuation, no suggestion, could wean him from the fixed idea that the apology to Dr. Shrapnel must be spoken by his uncle in person.

'If one could only imagine Mr. Romfrey doing it!' Rosamund groaned.

'He shall: and you will help him,' said Beauchamp.

'If you loved a woman half as much as you do that man!'

'If I knew a woman as good, as wise, as noble as he!'

'You are losing her.'

'You expect me to go through ceremonies of courtship at a time like this! If she cares for me she will feel with me. Simple compassion--but let Miss Halkett be. I'm afraid I overtasked her in taking her to Bevisham. She remained outside the garden. Ma'am, she is unsullied by contact with a single shrub of Dr. Shrapnel's territory.'

'Do not be so bitterly ironical, Nevil. You have not seen her as I have.'

Rosamund essayed a tender sketch of the fair young lady, and fancied that she drew forth a sigh; she would have coloured the sketch, but he commanded her to hurry off to bed, and think of her morning's work.

A commission of which we feel we can accurately forecast the unsuccessful end is not likely to be undertaken with an ardour that might perhaps astound the presaging mind with unexpected issues. Rosamund fulfilled hers in the style of one who has learnt a lesson, and, exactly as she had anticipated, Mr. Romfrey accused her of coming to him from a conversation with that fellow Nevil overnight. He shrugged and left the house for his morning's walk across the fields.

Colonel Halkett and Cecilia beheld him from the breakfast-room returning with Beauchamp, who had waylaid him and was hammering his part in the now endless altercation. It could be descried at any distance; and how fine was Mr. Romfrey's bearing!--truly noble by contrast, as of a grave big dog worried by a small barking dog. There is to an unsympathetic observer an intense vexatiousness in the exhibition of such pertinacity. To a soldier accustomed at a glance to estimate powers of attack and defence, this repeated puny assailing of a fortress that required years of siege was in addition ridiculous. Mr. Romfrey appeared impregnable, and Beauchamp mad. 'He's foaming again!' said the colonel, and was only ultra-pictorial. 'Before breakfast!' was a further slur on Beauchamp.

Mr. Romfrey was elevated by the extraordinary comicality of the notion of the proposed apology to heights of humour beyond laughter, whence we see the unbounded capacity of the general man for folly, and rather commiserate than deride him. He was quite untroubled. It demanded a steady view of the other side of the case to suppose of one whose control of his temper was perfect, that he could be in the wrong. He at least did not think so, and Colonel Halkett relied on his common sense. Beauchamp's brows were smouldering heavily, except when he had to talk. He looked paleish and worn, and said he had been up early. Cecilia guessed that he had not been to bed.

It was dexterously contrived by her host, in spite of the colonel's manifest anxiety to keep them asunder, that she should have some minutes with Beauchamp out in the gardens. Mr. Romfrey led them out, and then led the colonel away to offer him a choice of pups of rare breed.

'Nevil,' said Cecilia, 'you will not think it presumption in me to give

you advice?'

Her counsel to him was, that he should leave Steynham immediately, and trust to time for his uncle to reconsider his conduct.

Beauchamp urged the counter-argument of the stain on the family honour.

She hinted at expediency; he frankly repudiated it.

The downs faced them, where the heavenly vast 'might have been' of yesterday wandered thinner than a shadow of to-day; weaving a story without beginning, crisis, or conclusion, flowerless and fruitless, but with something of infinite in it sweeter to brood on than the future of her life to Cecilia.

'If meanwhile Dr. Shrapnel should die, and repentance comes too late!' said Beauchamp.

She had no clear answer to that, save the hope of its being an unfounded apprehension. 'As far as it is in my power, Nevil, I will avoid injustice to him in my thoughts.'

He gazed at her thankfully. 'Well,' said he, 'that's like sighting the cliffs. But I don't feel home round me while the colonel is so strangely prepossessed. For a high-spirited gentleman like your father to approve, or at least accept, an act so barbarous is incomprehensible. Speak to him, Cecilia, will you? Let him know your ideas.'

She assented. He said instantly, 'Persuade him to speak to my uncle Everard.'

She was tempted to smile.

'I must do only what I think wise, if I am to be of service, Nevil.'

'True, but paint that scene to him. An old man, utterly defenceless, making no defence! a cruel error. The colonel can't, or he doesn't, clearly get it inside him, otherwise I'm certain it would revolt him: just as I am certain my uncle Everard is at this moment a stone-blind man. If he has done a thing, he can't question it, won't examine it. The thing becomes a part of him, as much as his hand or his head. He 's a man of the twelfth century. Your father might be helped to understand him first.'

'Yes,' she said, not very warmly, though sadly.

'Tell the colonel how it must have been brought about. For Cecil Baskellett called on Dr. Shrapnel two days before Mr. Romfrey stood at his gate.'

The name of Cecil caused her to draw in her shoulders in a half-shudder. 'It may indeed be Captain Baskellett who set this cruel thing in motion!'

'Then point that out to your father, said he, perceiving a chance of winning her to his views through a concrete object of her dislike, and cooling toward the woman who betrayed a vulgar characteristic of her sex; who was merely woman, unable sternly to recognize the doing of a foul wrong because of her antipathy, until another antipathy enlightened her.

He wanted in fact a ready-made heroine, and did not give her credit for the absence of fire in her blood, as well as for the unexercised imagination which excludes young women from the power to realize unwonted circumstances. We men walking about the world have perhaps no more imagination of matters not domestic than they; but what we have is quick with experience: we see the thing we hear of: women come to it how they can.

Cecilia was recommended to weave a narrative for her father, and ultimately induce him, if she could, to give a gentleman's opinion of the case to Mr. Romfrey.

Her sensitive ear caught a change of tone in the directions she received. 'Your father will say so and so: answer him with this and that.' Beauchamp supplied her with phrases. She was to renew and renew the attack; hammer as he did. Yesterday she had followed him: to-day she was to march beside him--hardly as an equal. Patience! was the word she would have uttered in her detection of the one frailty in his nature which this hurrying of her off her feet opened her eyes to with unusual perspicacity. Still she leaned to him sufficiently to admit that he had grounds for a deep disturbance of his feelings.

He said: 'I go to Dr. Shrapnel's cottage, and don't know how to hold up my head before Miss Denham. She confided him to me when she left for Switzerland!'

There was that to be thought of, certainly.

Colonel Halkett came round a box-bush and discovered them pacing together in a fashion to satisfy his paternal scrutiny.

'I've been calling you several times, my dear,' he complained. 'We start in seven minutes. Bustle, and bonnet at once. Nevil, I'm sorry for this business. Good-bye. Be a good boy, Nevil,' he murmured kindheartedly, and shook Beauchamp's hand with the cordiality of an extreme relief in leaving him behind.

The colonel and Mr. Romfrey and Beauchamp were standing on the hall-steps when Rosamund beckoned the latter and whispered a request for that letter of Dr. Shrapnel's. 'It is for Miss Halkett, Nevil.'

He plucked the famous epistle from his bulging pocketbook, and added a couple of others in the same handwriting.

'Tell her, a first reading--it's difficult to read at first,' he said, and burned to read it to Cecilia himself: to read it to her with his comments and explanations appeared imperative. It struck him in a flash

that Cecilia's counsel to him to quit Steynham for awhile was good. And if he went to Bevisham he would be assured of Dr. Shrapnel's condition: notes and telegrams from the cottage were too much tempered to console and deceive him.

'Send my portmanteau and bag after me to Bevisham,' he said Rosamund, and announced to the woefully astonished colonel that he would have the pleasure of journeying in his company as far as the town.

'Are you ready? No packing?' said the colonel.

'It's better to have your impediments in the rear of you, and march!' said Mr. Romfrey.

Colonel Halkett declined to wait for anybody. He shouted for his daughter. The lady's maid appeared, and then Cecilia with Rosamund.

'We can't entertain you, Nevil; we're away to the island: I'm sorry,' said the colonel; and observing Cecilia's face in full crimson, he looked at her as if he had lost a battle by the turn of events at the final moment.

Mr. Romfrey handed Cecilia into the carriage. He exchanged a friendly squeeze with the colonel, and offered his hand to his nephew. Beauchamp passed him with a nod and 'Good-bye, sir.'

'Have ready at Holdesbury for the middle of the month,' said Mr. Romfrey, unruffled, and bowed to Cecilia.

'If you think of bringing my cousin Baskellett, give me warning, sir,' cried Beauchamp.

'Give me warning, if you want the house for Shrapnel,' replied his uncle, and remarked to Rosamund, as the carriage wheeled round the mounded laurels to the avenue, 'He mayn't be quite cracked. The fellow seems to have a turn for catching his opportunity by the tail. He had better hold fast, for it's his last.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

CECILIA CONQUERED

The carriage rolled out of the avenue and through the park, for some time parallel with the wavy downs. Once away from Steynham Colonel Halkett breathed freely, as if he had dropped a load: he was free of his bond to Mr. Romfrey, and so great was the sense of relief in him that he resolved to do battle against his daughter, supposing her still lively blush to be the sign of the enemy's flag run up on a surrendered citadel. His authority was now to be thought of: his paternal sanction was in his own keeping. Beautiful as she looked, it was hardly credible that a fellow

in possession of his reason could have let slip his chance of such a prize; but whether he had or had not, the colonel felt that he occupied a position enabling him either to out-manoeuvre, or, if need were, interpose forcibly and punish him for his half-heartedness.

Cecilia looked the loveliest of women to Beauchamp's eyes, with her blush, and the letters of Dr. Shrapnel in her custody, at her express desire. Certain terms in the letters here and there, unsweet to ladies, began to trouble his mind.

'By the way, colonel,' he said, 'you had a letter of Dr. Shrapnel's read to you by Captain Baskett.'

'Iniquitous rubbish!'

'With his comments on it, I dare say you thought it so. I won't speak of his right to make it public. He wanted to produce his impressions of it and me, and that is a matter between him and me. Dr. Shrapnel makes use of strong words now and then, but I undertake to produce a totally different impression on you by reading the letter myself--sparing you' (he turned to Cecilia) 'a word or two, common enough to men who write in black earnest and have humour.' He cited his old favourite, the black and bright lecturer on Heroes. 'You have read him, I know, Cecilia. Well, Dr. Shrapnel is another, who writes in his own style, not the leading-article style or modern pulpit stuff. He writes to rouse.'

'He does that to my temper,' said the colonel.

'Perhaps here and there he might offend Cecilia's taste,' Beauchamp pursued for her behoof. 'Everything depends on the mouthpiece. I should not like the letter to be read without my being by;--except by men: any just-minded man may read it: Seymour Austin, for example. Every line is a text to the mind of the writer. Let me call on you to-morrow.'

'To-morrow?' Colonel Halkett put on a thoughtful air. 'To-morrow we're off to the island for a couple of days; and there's Lord Croyston's garden party, and the Yacht Ball. Come this evening-dine with us. No reading of letters, please. I can't stand it, Nevil.'

The invitation was necessarily declined by a gentleman who could not expect to be followed by supplies of clothes and linen for evening wear that day.

'Ah, we shall see you some day or other,' said the colonel.

Cecilia was less alive to Beauchamp's endeavour to prepare her for the harsh words in the letter than to her father's insincerity. She would have asked her friend to come in the morning next day, but for the dread of deepening her blush.

'Do you intend to start so early in the morning, papa?' she ventured to say; and he replied, 'As early as possible.'

'I don't know what news I shall have in Bevisham, or I would engage to run over to the island,' said Beauchamp, with a flattering persistency or singular obtuseness.

'You will dance,' he subsequently observed to Cecilia, out of the heart of some reverie. He had been her admiring partner on the night before the drive from Itchincope into Bevisham, and perhaps thought of her graceful dancing at the Yacht Ball, and the contrast it would present to his watch beside a sick man-struck down by one of his own family.

She could have answered, 'Not if you wish me not to'; while smiling at the quaint sorrowfulness of his tone.

'Dance!' quoth Colonel Halkett, whose present temper discerned a healthy antagonism to misanthropic Radicals in the performance, 'all young people dance. Have you given over dancing?'

'Not entirely, colonel.'

Cecilia danced with Mr. Tuckham at the Yacht Ball, and was vividly mindful of every slight incident leading to and succeeding her lover's abrupt, 'You will dance' which had all passed by her dream-like up to that hour his attempt to forewarn her of the phrases she would deem objectionable in Dr. Shrapnel's letter; his mild acceptation of her father's hostility; his adieu to her, and his melancholy departure on foot from the station, as she drove away to Mount Laurels and gaiety. Why do I dance? she asked herself. It was not in the spirit of happiness. Her heart was not with Dr. Shrapnel, but very near him, and heavy as a chamber of the sick. She was afraid of her father's favourite, imagining, from the colonel's unconcealed opposition to Beauchamp, that he had designs in the interests of Mr. Tuckham. But the hearty gentleman scattered her secret terrors by his bluffness and openness. He asked her to remember that she had recommended him to listen to Seymour Austin, and he had done so, he said. Undoubtedly he was much improved, much less overbearing.

He won her confidence by praising and loving her father, and when she alluded to the wonderful services he had rendered on the Welsh estate, he said simply that her father's thanks repaid him. He recalled his former downrightness only in speaking of the case of Dr. Shrapnel, upon which, both with the colonel and with her, he was unreservedly condemnatory of Mr. Romfrey. Colonel Halkett's defence of the true knight and guardian of the reputation of ladies, fell to pieces in the presence of Mr. Tuckham. He had seen Dr. Shrapnel, on a visit to Mr. Lydiard, whom he described as hanging about Bevisham, philandering as a married man should not, though in truth he might soon expect to be released by the death of his crazy wife. The doctor, he said, had been severely shaken by the monstrous assault made on him, and had been most unrighteously handled. The doctor was an inoffensive man in his private life, detestable and dangerous though his teachings were. Outside politics Mr. Tuckham went altogether with Beauchamp. He promised also that old Mrs. Beauchamp should be accurately informed of the state of

matters between Captain Beauchamp and Mr. Romfrey. He left Mount Laurels to go back in attendance on the venerable lady, without once afflicting Cecilia with a shiver of well-founded apprehension, and she was grateful to him almost to friendly affection in the vanishing of her unjust suspicion, until her father hinted that there was the man of his heart. Then she closed all avenues to her own.

A period of maidenly distress not previously unknown to her ensued. Proposals of marriage were addressed to her by two untitled gentlemen, and by the Earl of Lockrace: three within a fortnight. The recognition of the young heiress's beauty at the Yacht Ball was accountable for the bursting out of these fires. Her father would not have deplored her acceptance of the title of Countess of Lockrace. In the matter of rejections, however, her will was paramount, and he was on her side against relatives when the subject was debated among them. He called her attention to the fact impressively, telling her that she should not hear a syllable from him to persuade her to marry: the emphasis of which struck the unspoken warning on her intelligence: Bring no man to me of whom I do not approve!

'Worthier of you, as I hope to become,' Beauchamp had said. Cecilia lit on that part of Dr. Shrapnel's letter where 'Fight this out within you,' distinctly alluded to the unholy love. Could she think ill of the man who thus advised him? She shared Beauchamp's painful feeling for him in a sudden tremour of her frame; as it were through his touch. To the rest of the letter her judgement stood opposed, save when a sentence here and there reminded her of Captain Baskellett's insolent sing-song declamation of it: and that would have turned Sacred Writing to absurdity.

Beauchamp had mentioned Seymour Austin as one to whom he would willingly grant a perusal of the letter. Mr. Austin came to Mount Laurels about the close of the yachting season, shortly after Colonel Halkett had spent his customary days of September shooting at Steynham. Beauchamp's folly was the colonel's theme, for the fellow had dragged Lord Palmet there, and driven his uncle out of patience. Mr. Romfrey's monumental patience had been exhausted by him. The colonel boiled over with accounts of Beauchamp's behaviour toward his uncle, and Palmet, and Baskellett, and Mrs. Culling: how he flew at and worried everybody who seemed to him to have had a hand in the proper chastisement of that man Shrapnel. That pestiferous letter of Shrapnel's was animadverted on, of course; and, 'I should like you to have heard it, Austin,' the colonel said, 'just for you to have a notion of the kind of universal blow-up those men are scheming, and would hoist us with, if they could get a little more blasting-powder than they mill in their lunatic heads.'

Now Cecilia wished for Mr. Austin's opinion of Dr. Shrapnel; and as the delicate state of her inclinations made her conscious that to give him the letter covertly would be to betray them to him, who had once, not knowing it, moved her to think of a possible great change in her life, she mustered courage to say, 'Captain Beauchamp at my request lent me the letter to read; I have it, and others written by Dr. Shrapnel.'

Her father hummed to himself, and immediately begged Seymour Austin not

to waste his time on the stuff, though he had no idea that a perusal of it could awaken other than the gravest reprehension in so rational a Tory gentleman.

Mr. Austin read the letter through. He asked to see the other letters mentioned by Cecilia, and read them calmly, without a frown or an interjection. She sat sketching, her father devouring newspaper columns.

'It's the writing of a man who means well,' Mr. Austin delivered his opinion.

'Why, the man's an infidel!' Colonel Halkett exclaimed.

'There are numbers.'

'They have the grace not to confess, then.'

'It's as well to know what the world's made of, colonel. The clergy shut their eyes. There's no treating a disease without reading it; and if we are to acknowledge a "vice," as Dr. Shrapnel would say of the so-called middle-class, it is the smirking over what they think, or their not caring to think at all. Too many time-servers rot the State. I can understand the effect of such writing on a mind like Captain Beauchamp's. It would do no harm to our young men to have those letters read publicly and lectured on-by competent persons. Half the thinking world may think pretty much the same on some points as Dr. Shrapnel; they are too wise or too indolent to say it: and of the other half, about a dozen members would be competent to reply to him. He is the earnest man, and flies at politics as uneasy young brains fly to literature, fancying they can write because they can write with a pen. He perceives a bad adjustment of things: which is correct. He is honest, and takes his honesty for a virtue: and that entitles him to believe in himself: and that belief causes him to see in all opposition to him the wrong he has perceived in existing circumstances: and so in a dream of power he invokes the people: and as they do not stir, he takes to prophecy. This is the round of the politics of impatience. The study of politics should be guided by some light of statesmanship, otherwise it comes to this wild preaching.

These men are theory-tailors, not politicians. They are the men who make the "strait-waistcoat for humanity." They would fix us to first principles like tethered sheep or hobbled horses. I should enjoy replying to him, if I had time. The whole letter is composed of variations upon one idea. Still I must say the man interests me; I should like to talk to him.'

Mr. Austin paid no heed to the colonel's 'Dear me! dear me!' of amazement. He said of the style of the letters, that it was the puffing of a giant: a strong wind rather than speech: and begged Cecilia to note that men who labour to force their dreams on mankind and turn vapour into fact, usually adopt such a style. Hearing that this private letter had been deliberately read through by Mr. Romfrey, and handed by him to Captain Baskett, who had read it out in various places, Mr. Austin said:

'A strange couple!' He appeared perplexed by his old friend's approval of them. 'There we decidedly differ,' said he, when the case of Dr. Shrapnel was related by the colonel, with a refusal to condemn Mr. Romfrey. He pronounced Mr. Romfrey's charges against Dr. Shrapnel, taken in conjunction with his conduct, to be baseless, childish, and wanton. The colonel would not see the case in that light; but Cecilia did. It was a justification of Beauchamp; and how could she ever have been blind to it?--scarcely blind, she remembered, but sensitively blinking her eyelids to distract her sight in contemplating it, and to preserve her repose. As to Beauchamp's demand of the apology, Mr. Austin considered that it might be an instance of his want of knowledge of men, yet could not be called silly, and to call it insane was the rhetoric of an adversary.

'I do call it insane,' said the colonel.

He separated himself from his daughter by a sharp division.

Had Beauchamp appeared at Mount Laurels, Cecilia would have been ready to support and encourage him, boldly. Backed by Mr. Austin, she saw some good in Dr. Shrapnel's writing, much in Beauchamp's devotedness. He shone clear to her reason, at last: partly because her father in his opposition to him did not, but was on the contrary unreasonable, cased in mail, mentally clouded. She sat with Mr. Austin and her father, trying repeatedly, in obedience to Beauchamp's commands, to bring the latter to a just contemplation of the unhappy case; behaviour on her part which rendered the colonel inveterate.

Beauchamp at this moment was occupied in doing secretary's work for Dr. Shrapnel. So Cecilia learnt from Mr. Lydiard, who came to pay his respects to Mrs. Wardour-Devereux at Mount Laurels. The pursuit of the apology was continued in letters to his uncle and occasional interviews with him, which were by no means instigated by the doctor, Mr. Lydiard informed the ladies. He described Beauchamp as acting in the spirit of a man who has sworn an oath to abandon every pleasure in life, that he may, as far as it lies in his power, indemnify his friend for the wrong done to him.

'Such men are too terrible for me,' said Mrs. Devereux.

Cecilia thought the reverse: Not for me! But she felt a strain upon her nature, and she was miserable in her alienation from her father. Kissing him one night, she laid her head on his breast, and begged his forgiveness. He embraced her tenderly. 'Wait, only wait; you will see I am right,' he said, and prudently said no more, and did not ask her to speak.

She was glad that she had sought the reconciliation from her heart's natural warmth, on hearing some time later that M. de Croisnel was dead, and that Beauchamp meditated starting for France to console his Renee. Her continual agitations made her doubtful of her human feelings: she clung to that instance of her filial steadfastness.

The day before Cecilia and her father left Mount Laurels for their season in Wales, Mr. Tuckham and Beauchamp came together to the house, and were closeted an hour with her father. Cecilia sat in the drawing-room, thinking that she did indeed wait, and had great patience. Beauchamp entered the room alone. He looked worn and thin, of a leaden colour, like the cloud that bears the bolt. News had reached him of the death of Lord Avonley in the hunting-field, and he was going on to Steynham to persuade his uncle to accompany him to Bevisham and wash the guilt of his wrong-doing off him before applying for the title. 'You would advise me not to go?' he said. 'I must. I should be dishonoured myself if I let a chance pass. I run the risk of being a beggar: I'm all but one now.'

Cecilia faltered: 'Do you see a chance?'

'Hardly more than an excuse for trying it,' he replied.

She gave him back Dr. Shrapnel's letters. 'I have read them,' was all she said. For he might have just returned from France, with the breath of Renee about him, and her pride would not suffer her to melt him in rivalry by saying what she had been led to think of the letters.

Hearing nothing from her, he silently put them in his pocket. The struggle with his uncle seemed to be souring him or deadening him.

They were not alone for long. Mr. Tuckham presented himself to take his leave of her. Old Mrs. Beauchamp was dying, and he had only come to Mount Laurels on special business. Beauchamp was just as anxious to hurry away.

Her father found her sitting in the solitude of a drawing-room at midday, pale-faced, with unoccupied fingers, not even a book in her lap.

He walked up and down the room until Cecilia, to say something, said: 'Mr. Tuckham could not stay.'

'No,' said her father; 'he could not. He has to be back as quick as he can to cut his legacy in halves!'

Cecilia looked perplexed.

'I'll speak plainly,' said the colonel. 'He sees that Nevil has ruined himself with his uncle. The old lady won't allow Nevil to visit her; in her condition it would be an excitement beyond her strength to bear. She sent Blackburn to bring Nevil here, and give him the option of stating before me whether those reports about his misconduct in France were true or not. He demurred at first: however, he says they are not true. He would have run away with the Frenchwoman, and he would have fought the duel: but he did neither. Her brother ran ahead of him and fought for him: so he declares and she wouldn't run. So the reports are false. We shall know what Blackburn makes of the story when we hear of the legacy. I have been obliged to write word to Mrs. Beauchamp that I believe Nevil to have made a true statement of the facts. But I distinctly say, and so

I told Blackburn, I don't think money will do Nevil Beauchamp a farthing's worth of good. Blackburn follows his own counsel. He induced the old lady to send him; so I suppose he intends to let her share the money between them. I thought better of him; I thought him a wiser man.'

Gratitude to Mr. Tuckham on Beauchamp's behalf caused Cecilia to praise him, in the tone of compliments. The difficulty of seriously admiring two gentlemen at once is a feminine dilemma, with the maidenly among women.

'He has disappointed me,' said Colonel Halkett.

'Would you have had him allow a falsehood to enrich him and ruin Nevil, papa?'

'My dear child, I'm sick to death of romantic fellows. I took Blackburn for one of our solid young men. Why should he share his aunt's fortune?'

'You mean, why should Nevil have money?'

'Well, I do mean that. Besides, the story was not false as far as his intentions went: he confessed it, and I ought to have put it in a postscript. If Nevil wants money, let him learn to behave himself like a gentleman at Steynham.'

'He has not failed.'

'I'll say, then, behave himself, simply. He considers it a point of honour to get his uncle Everard to go down on his knees to Shrapnel. But he has no moral sense where I should like to see it: none: he confessed it.'

'What were his words, papa?'

'I don't remember words. He runs over to France, whenever it suits him, to carry on there . . .' The colonel ended in a hum and buzz.

'Has he been to France lately?' asked Cecilia.

Her breath hung for the answer, sedately though she sat.

'The woman's father is dead, I hear,' Colonel Halkett remarked.

'But he has not been there?'

'How can I tell? He's anywhere, wherever his passions whisk him.'

'No!'

'I say, yes. And if he has money, we shall see him going sky-high and scattering it in sparks, not merely spending; I mean living immorally, infidelizing, republicanizing, scandalizing his class and his country.'

'Oh no!' exclaimed Cecilia, rising and moving to the window to feast her eyes on driving clouds, in a strange exaltation of mind, secretly sure now that her idea of Nevil's having gone over to France was groundless; and feeling that she had been unworthy of him who strove to be 'worthier of her, as he hoped to become.'

Colonel Halkett scoffed at her 'Oh no,' and called it woman's logic.

She could not restrain herself. 'Have you forgotten Mr. Austin, papa? It is Nevil's perfect truthfulness that makes him appear worse to you than men who are timeservers. Too many time-servers rot the State, Mr. Austin said. Nevil is not one of them. I am not able to judge or speculate whether he has a great brain or is likely to distinguish himself out of his profession: I would rather he did not abandon it: but Mr. Austin said to me in talking of him . . .'

'That notion of Austin's of screwing women's minds up to the pitch of men's!' interjected the colonel with a despairing flap of his arm.

'He said, papa, that honestly active men in a country, who decline to practise hypocrisy, show that the blood runs, and are a sign of health.'

'You misunderstood him, my dear.'

'I think I thoroughly understood him. He did not call them wise. He said they might be dangerous if they were not met in debate. But he said, and I presume to think truly, that the reason why they are decried is, that it is too great a trouble for a lazy world to meet them. And, he said, the reason why the honest factions agitate is because they encounter sneers until they appear in force. If they were met earlier, and fairly--I am only quoting him--they would not, I think he said, or would hardly, or would not generally, fall into professional agitation.'

'Austin's a speculative Tory, I know; and that's his weakness,' observed the colonel. 'But I'm certain you misunderstood him. He never would have called us a lazy people.'

'Not in matters of business: in matters of thought.'

'My dear Cecilia! You've got hold of a language!.... a way of speaking! Who set you thinking on these things?'

'That I owe to Nevil Beauchamp!'

Colonel Halkett indulged in a turn or two up and down the room. He threw open a window, sniffed the moist air, and went to his daughter to speak to her resolutely.

'Between a Radical and a Tory, I don't know where your head has been whirled to, my dear. Your heart seems to be gone: more sorrow for us! And for Nevil Beauchamp to be pretending to love you while carrying on with this Frenchwoman!'

'He has never said that he loved me.'

The splendour of her beauty in humility flashed on her father, and he cried out: 'You are too good for any man on earth! We won't talk in the dark, my darling. You tell me he has never, as they say, made love to you?'

'Never, papa.'

'Well, that proves the French story. At any rate, he 's a man of honour. But you love him?'

'The French story is untrue, papa.'

Cecilia stood in a blush like the burning cloud of the sunset.'

'Tell me frankly: I'm your father, your old dada, your friend, my dear girl! do you think the man cares for you, loves you?'

She replied: 'I know, papa, the French story is untrue.'

'But when I tell you, silly woman, he confessed it to me out of his own mouth!'

'It is not true now.'

'It's not going on, you mean? How do you know?'

'I know.'

'Has he been swearing it?'

'He has not spoken of it to me.'

'Here I am in a woman's web!' cried the colonel. 'Is it your instinct tells you it's not true? or what? what? You have not denied that you love the man.'

'I know he is not immoral.'

'There you shoot again! Haven't you a yes or a no for your father?'

Cecilia cast her arms round his neck, and sobbed.

She could not bring it to her lips to say (she would have shunned the hearing) that her defence of Beauchamp, which was a shadowed avowal of the state of her heart, was based on his desire to read to her the conclusion of Dr. Shrapnel's letter touching a passion to be overcome; necessarily therefore a passion that was vanquished, and the fullest and bravest explanation of his shifting treatment of her: nor would she condescend to urge that her lover would have said he loved her when they were at Steynham, but for the misery and despair of a soul too noble to be diverted from his grief and sense of duty, and, as she believed,

unwilling to speak to win her while his material fortune was in jeopardy.

The colonel cherished her on his breast, with one hand regularly patting her shoulder: a form of consolation that cures the disposition to sob as quickly as would the drip of water.

Cecilia looked up into his eyes, and said, 'We will not be parted, papa, ever.'

The colonel said absently: 'No'; and, surprised at himself, added: 'No, certainly not. How can we be parted? You won't run away from me? No, you know too well I can't resist you. I appeal to your judgement, and I must accept what you decide. But he is immoral. I repeat that. He has no roots. We shall discover it before it's too late, I hope.'

Cecilia gazed away, breathing through tremulous dilating nostrils.

'One night after dinner at Steynham,' pursued the colonel, 'Nevil was rattling against the Press, with Stukely Culbrett to prime him: and he said editors of papers were growing to be like priests, and as timid as priests, and arrogant: and for one thing, it was because they supposed themselves to be guardians of the national morality. I forget exactly what the matter was: but he sneered at priests and morality.'

A smile wove round Cecilia's lips, and in her towering superiority to one who talked nonsense, she slipped out of maiden shame and said: 'Attack Nevil for his political heresies and his wrath with the Press for not printing him. The rest concerns his honour, where he is quite safe, and all are who trust him.'

'If you find out you're wrong?'

She shook her head.

'But if you find out you're wrong about him,' her father reiterated piteously, 'you won't tear me to strips to have him in spite of it?'

'No, papa, not I. I will not.'

'Well, that's something for me to hold fast to,' said Colonel Halkett, sighing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

LORD AVONLEY

Mr. Everard Romfrey was now, by consent, Lord Avonley, mounted on his direct heirship and riding hard at the earldom. His elevation occurred at a period of life that would have been a season of decay with most men; but the prolonged and lusty Autumn of the veteran took new fires from a

tangible object to live for. His brother Craven's death had slightly stupefied, and it had grieved him: it seemed to him peculiarly pathetic; for as he never calculated on the happening of mortal accidents to men of sound constitution, the circumstance imparted a curious shake to his own solidity. It was like the quaking of earth, which tries the balance of the strongest. If he had not been raised to so splendid a survey of the actual world, he might have been led to think of the imaginary, where perchance a man may meet his old dogs and a few other favourites, in a dim perpetual twilight. Thither at all events Craven had gone, and goodnight to him! The earl was a rapidly lapsing invalid. There could be no doubt that Everard was to be the head of his House.

Outwardly he was the same tolerant gentleman who put aside the poor fools of the world to walk undisturbed by them in the paths he had chosen: in this aspect he knew himself: nor was the change so great within him as to make him cognizant of a change. It was only a secret turn in the bent of the mind, imperceptible as the touch of the cunning artist's brush on a finished portrait, which will alter the expression without discomposing a feature, so that you cannot say it is another face, yet it is not the former one. His habits were invariable, as were his meditations. He thought less of Romfrey Castle than of his dogs and his devices for trapping vermin; his interest in birds and beasts and herbs, 'what ninnies call Nature in books,' to quote him, was undiminished; imagination he had none to clap wings to his head and be off with it. He betrayed as little as he felt that the coming Earl of Romfrey was different from the cadet of the family.

A novel sharpness in the 'Stop that,' with which he crushed Beauchamp's affectedly gentle and unusually roundabout opening of the vexed Shrapnel question, rang like a shot in the room at Steynham, and breathed a different spirit from his customary easy pugnacity that welcomed and lured on an adversary to wild outhitting. Some sorrowful preoccupation is, however, to be expected in the man who has lost a brother, and some degree of irritability at the intrusion of past disputes. He chose to repeat a similar brief forbidding of the subject before they started together for the scene of the accident and Romfrey Castle. No notice was taken of Beauchamp's remark, that he consented to go though his duty lay elsewhere. Beauchamp had not the faculty of reading inside men, or he would have apprehended that his uncle was engaged in silently heaping aggravations to shoot forth one fine day a thundering and astonishing counterstroke.

He should have known his uncle Everard better.

In this respect he seemed to have no memory. But who has much that has given up his brains for a lodging to a single idea? It is at once a devouring dragon, and an intractable steamforce; it is a tyrant that has eaten up a senate, and a prophet with a message. Inspired of solitariness and gigantic size, it claims divine origin. The world can have no peace for it.

Cecilia had not pleased him; none had. He did not bear in mind that the sight of Dr. Shrapnel sick and weak, which constantly reanimated his

feelings of pity and of wrath, was not given to the others of whom he demanded a corresponding energy of just indignation and sympathy. The sense that he was left unaided to the task of bending his tough uncle, combined with his appreciation of the righteousness of the task to embitter him and set him on a pedestal, from which he descended at every sign of an opportunity for striking, and to which he retired continually baffled and wrathful, in isolation.

Then ensued the dreadful division in his conception of his powers: for he who alone saw the just and right thing to do, was incapable of compelling it to be done. Lay on to his uncle as he would, that wrestler shook him off. And here was one man whom he could not move! How move a nation?

There came on him a thirst for the haranguing of crowds. They agree with you or they disagree; exciting you to activity in either case. They do not interpose cold Tory exclusiveness and inaccessibility. You have them in the rough; you have nature in them, and all that is hopeful in nature. You drive at, over, and through them, for their good; you plough them. You sow them too. Some of them perceive that it is for their good, and what if they be a minority? Ghastly as a minority is in an Election, in a lifelong struggle it is refreshing and encouraging. The young world and its triumph is with the minority. Oh to be speaking! Condemned to silence beside his uncle, Beauchamp chafed for a loosed tongue and an audience tossing like the well-whipped ocean, or open as the smooth sea-surface to the marks of the breeze. Let them be hostile or amicable, he wanted an audience as hotly as the humped Richard a horse.

At Romfrey Castle he fell upon an audience that became transformed into a swarm of chatterers, advisers, and reprovers the instant his lips were parted. The ladies of the family declared his pursuit of the Apology to be worse and vainer than his politics. The gentlemen said the same, but they were not so outspoken to him personally, and indulged in asides, with quotations of some of his uncle Everard's recent observations concerning him: as for example, 'Politically he's a mad harlequin jumping his tights and spangles when nobody asks him to jump; and in private life he's a mad dentist poking his tongs at my sound tooth:' a highly ludicrous image of the persistent fellow, and a reminder of situations in Moliere, as it was acted by Cecil Baskellett and Lord Welshpool. Beauchamp had to a certain extent restored himself to favour with his uncle Everard by offering a fair suggestion on the fatal field to account for the accident, after the latter had taken measurements and examined the place in perplexity. His elucidation of the puzzle was referred to by Lord Avonley at Romfrey, and finally accepted as possible and this from a wiseacre who went quacking about the county, expecting to upset the order of things in England! Such a mixing of sense and nonsense in a fellow's noddle was never before met with, Lord Avonley said. Cecil took the hint. He had been unworried by Beauchamp: Dr. Shrapnel had not been mentioned: and it delighted Cecil to let it be known that he thought old Nevil had some good notions, particularly as to the duties of the aristocracy--that first war-cry of his when a midshipman. News of another fatal accident in the hunting-field confirmed Cecil's higher opinion of his cousin. On the day of Craven's funeral they heard at Romfrey that Mr. Wardour-Devereux had been killed by a fall from his

horse. Two English gentlemen despatched by the same agency within a fortnight! 'He smoked,' Lord Avonley said of the second departure, to allay some perturbation in the bosoms of the ladies who had ceased to ride, by accounting for this particular mishap in the most reassuring fashion. Cecil's immediate reflection was that the unfortunate smoker had left a rich widow. Far behind in the race for Miss Halkett, and uncertain of a settled advantage in his other rivalry with Beauchamp, he fixed his mind on the widow, and as Beauchamp did not stand in his way, but on the contrary might help him--for she, like the generality of women, admired Nevil Beauchamp in spite of her feminine good sense and conservatism--Cecil began to regard the man he felt less opposed to with some recognition of his merits. The two nephews accompanied Lord Avonley to London, and slept at his town-house.

They breakfasted together the next morning on friendly terms. Half an hour afterward there was an explosion; uncle and nephews were scattered fragments: and if Cecil was the first to return to cohesion with his lord and chief, it was, he protested energetically, common policy in a man in his position to do so: all that he looked for being a decent pension and a share in the use of the town-house. Old Nevil, he related, began cross-examining him and entangling him with the cunning of the deuce, in my lord's presence, and having got him to make an admission, old Nevil flung it at the baron, and even crossed him and stood before him when he was walking out of the room. A furious wrangle took place. Nevil and the baron gave it to one another unmercifully. The end of it was that all three flew apart, for Cecil confessed to having a temper, and in contempt of him for the admission wrung out of him, Lord Avonley had pricked it. My lord went down to Steynham, Beauchamp to Holdesbury, and Captain Baskett to his quarters; whence in a few days he repaired penitently to my lord--the most placable of men when a full submission was offered to him.

Beauchamp did nothing of the kind. He wrote a letter to Steynham in the form of an ultimatum.

This egregious letter was handed to Rosamund for a proof of her darling's lunacy. She in conversation with Stukely Culbrett unhesitatingly accused Cecil of plotting his cousin's ruin.

Mr. Culbrett thought it possible that Cecil had been a little more than humorous in the part he had played in the dispute, and spoke to him.

Then it came out that Lord Avonley had also delivered an ultimatum to Beauchamp.

Time enough had gone by for Cecil to forget his ruffling, and relish the baron's grandly comic spirit in appropriating that big word Apology, and demanding it from Beauchamp on behalf of the lady ruling his household. What could be funnier than the knocking of Beauchamp's blunderbuss out of his hands, and pointing the muzzle at him!

Cecil dramatized the fun to amuse Mr. Culbrett. Apparently Beauchamp had been staggered on hearing himself asked for the definite article he

claimed. He had made a point of speaking of the Apology. Lord Avonley did likewise. And each professed to exact it for a deeply aggrieved person: each put it on the ground that it involved the other's rightful ownership of the title of gentleman.

"An apology to the amiable and virtuous Mistress Culling?" says old Nevil: "an apology? what for?"--"For unbecoming and insolent behaviour," says my lord.'

'I am that lady's friend,' Stukely warned Captain Baskellett. 'Don't let us have a third apology in the field.'

'Perfectly true; you are her friend, and you know what a friend of mine she is,' rejoined Cecil. 'I could swear "that lady" flings the whole affair at me. I give you my word, old Nevil and I were on a capital footing before he and the baron broke up. I praised him for tickling the aristocracy. I backed him heartily; I do now; I'll do it in Parliament. I know a case of a noble lord, a General in the army, and he received an intimation that he might as well attend the Prussian cavalry manoeuvres last Autumn on the Lower Rhine or in Silesia--no matter where. He couldn't go: he was engaged to shoot birds! I give you my word. Now there I see old Nevil's right. It's as well we should know something about the Prussian and Austrian cavalry, and if our aristocracy won't go abroad to study cavalry, who is to? no class in the kingdom understands horses as they do. My opinion is, they're asleep. Nevil should have stuck to that, instead of trying to galvanize the country and turning against his class. But fancy old Nevil asked for the Apology! It petrified him. "I've told her nothing but the truth," says Nevil. "Telling the truth to women is an impertinence," says my lord. Nevil swore he'd have a revolution in the country before he apologized.'

Mr. Culbrett smiled at the absurdity of the change of positions between Beauchamp and his uncle Everard, which reminded him somewhat of the old story of the highwayman innkeeper and the market farmer who had been thoughtful enough to recharge his pistols after quitting the inn at midnight. A practical 'tu quoque' is astonishingly laughable, and backed by a high figure and manner it had the flavour of triumphant repartee. Lord Avonley did not speak of it as a retort upon Nevil, though he reiterated the word Apology amusingly. He put it as due to the lady governing his household; and his ultimatum was, that the Apology should be delivered in terms to satisfy him within three months of the date of the demand for it: otherwise blank; but the shadowy index pointed to the destitution of Nevil Beauchamp.

No stroke of retributive misfortune could have been severer to Rosamund than to be thrust forward as the object of humiliation for the man she loved. She saw at a glance how much more likely it was (remote as the possibility appeared) that her lord would perform the act of penitence than her beloved Nevil. And she had no occasion to ask herself why. Lord Avonley had done wrong, and Nevil had not. It was inconceivable that Nevil should apologize to her. It was horrible to picture the act in her mind. She was a very rational woman, quite a woman of the world, yet such was her situation between these two men that the childish tale

of a close and consecutive punishment for sins, down to our little naughtinesses and naturalnesses, enslaved her intelligence, and amazed her with the example made of her, as it were to prove the tale true of our being surely hauled back like domestic animals learning the habits of good society, to the rueful contemplation of certain of our deeds, however wildly we appeal to nature to stand up for them.

But is it so with all of us? No, thought Rosamund, sinking dejectedly from a recognition of the heavenliness of the justice which lashed her and Nevil, and did not scourge Cecil Baskett. That fine eye for celestially directed consequences is ever haunted by shadows of unfaith likely to obscure it completely when chastisement is not seen to fall on the person whose wickedness is evident to us. It has been established that we do not wax diviner by dragging down the Gods to our level.

Rosamund knew Lord Avonley too well to harass him with further petitions and explanations. Equally vain was it to attempt to persuade Beauchamp. He made use of the house in London, where he met his uncle occasionally, and he called at Steynham for money, that he could have obtained upon the one condition, which was no sooner mentioned than fiery words flew in the room, and the two separated. The leaden look in Beauchamp, noticed by Cecilia Halkett in their latest interview, was deepening, and was of itself a displeasure to Lord Avonley, who liked flourishing faces, and said: 'That fellow's getting the look of a sweating smith': presumptively in the act of heating his poker at the furnace to stir the country.

It now became an offence to him that Beauchamp should continue doing this in the speeches and lectures he was reported to be delivering; he stamped his foot at the sight of his nephew's name in the daily journals; a novel sentiment of social indignation was expressed by his crying out, at the next request for money: 'Money to prime you to turn the country into a rat-hole? Not a square inch of Pennsylvanian paper-bonds! What right have you to be lecturing and orationing? You've no knowledge. All you've got is your instincts, and that you show in your readiness to exhibit them like a monkey. You ought to be turned inside out on your own stage. You've lumped your brains on a point or two about Land, and Commonland, and the Suffrage, and you pound away upon them, as if you had the key of the difficulty. It's the Scotchman's metaphysics; you know nothing clear, and your working-classes know nothing at all; and you blow them with wind like an over-stuffed cow. What you're driving at is to get hob-nail boots to dance on our heads. Stukely says you should be off over to Ireland. There you'd swim in your element, and have speechifying from instinct, and howling and pummelling too, enough to last you out. I'll hand you money for that expedition. You're one above the number wanted here. You've a look of bad powder fit only to flash in the pan. I saved you from the post of public donkey, by keeping you out of Parliament. You're braying and kicking your worst for it still at these meetings of yours. A naval officer preaching about Republicanism and parcelling out the Land!'

Beauchamp replied quietly, 'The lectures I read are Dr. Shrapnel's. When I speak I have his knowledge to back my deficiencies. He is too ill to work, and I consider it my duty to do as much of his work as I can

undertake.'

'Ha! You're the old infidel's Amen clerk. It would rather astonish orthodox congregations to see clerks in our churches getting into the pulpit to read the sermon for sick clergymen,' said Lord Avonley. His countenance furrowed. 'I'll pay that bill,' he added.

'Pay down half a million!' thundered Beauchamp; and dropping his voice, 'or go to him.'

'You remind me,' his uncle observed. 'I recommend you to ring that bell, and have Mrs. Culling here.'

'If she comes she will hear what I think of her.'

'Then, out of the house!'

'Very well, sir. You decline to supply me with money?'

'I do.'

'I must have it!'

'I dare say. Money's a chain-cable for holding men to their senses.'

'I ask you, my lord, how I am to carry on Holdesbury?'

'Give it up.'

'I shall have to,' said Beauchamp, striving to be prudent.

'There isn't a doubt of it,' said his uncle, upon a series of nods diminishing in their depth until his head assumed a droll interrogative fixity, with an air of 'What next?'

CHAPTER XXXIX

BETWEEN BEAUCHAMP AND CECILIA

Beauchamp quitted the house without answering as to what next, and without seeing Rosamund.

In the matter of money, as of his physical health, he wanted to do too much at once; he had spent largely of both in his efforts to repair the injury done to Dr. Shrapnel. He was overworked, anxious, restless, craving for a holiday somewhere in France, possibly; he was all but leaping on board the boat at times, and, unwilling to leave his dear old friend who clung to him, he stayed, keeping his impulses below the tide-mark which leads to action, but where they do not yield peace of spirit. The tone of Renee's letters filled him with misgivings. She wrote word

that she had seen M. d'Henriél for the first time since his return from Italy, and he was much changed, and inclined to thank Roland for the lesson he had received from him at the sword's point. And next she urged Beauchamp to marry, so that he and she might meet, as if she felt a necessity for it. 'I shall love your wife; teach her to think amiably of me,' she said. And her letter contained womanly sympathy for him in his battle with his uncle. Beauchamp thought of his experiences of Cecilia's comparative coldness. He replied that there was no prospect of his marrying; he wished there were one of meeting! He forbore from writing too fervently, but he alluded to happy days in Normandy, and proposed to renew them if she would say she had need of him. He entreated her to deal with him frankly; he reminded her that she must constantly look to him, as she had vowed she would, when in any kind of trouble; and he declared to her that he was unchanged. He meant, of an unchanged disposition to shield and serve her; but the review of her situation, and his knowledge of her quick blood, wrought him to some jealous lover's throbs, which led him to impress his unchangeableness upon her, to bind her to that standard.

She declined his visit: not now; 'not yet': and for that he presumed to chide her, half-sincerely. As far as he knew he stood against everybody save his old friend and Renee; and she certainly would have refreshed his heart for a day. In writing, however, he had an ominous vision of the morrow to the day; and, both for her sake and his own, he was not unrejoiced to hear that she was engaged day and night in nursing her husband. Pursuing his vision of the morrow of an unreproachful day with Renee, the madness of taking her to himself, should she surrender at last to a third persuasion, struck him sharply, now that he and his uncle were foot to foot in downright conflict, and money was the question. He had not much remaining of his inheritance--about fifteen hundred pounds. He would have to vacate Holdesbury and his uncle's town-house in a month. Let his passion be never so desperate, for a beggared man to think of running away with a wife, or of marrying one, the folly is as big as the worldly offence: no justification is to be imagined. Nay, and there is no justification for the breach of a moral law. Beauchamp owned it, and felt that Renee's resistance to him in Normandy placed her above him. He remembered a saying of his moralist: 'We who interpret things heavenly by things earthly must not hope to juggle with them for our pleasures, and can look to no absolution of evil acts.' The school was a hard one. It denied him holidays; it cut him off from dreams. It ran him in heavy harness on a rough highroad, allowing no turnings to right or left, no wayside croppings; with the simple permission to him that he should daily get thoroughly tired. And what was it Jenny Denham had said on the election day? 'Does incessant battling keep the intellect clear?'

His mind was clear enough to put the case, that either he beheld a tremendous magnification of things, or else that other men did not attach common importance to them; and he decided that the latter was the fact.

An incessant struggle of one man with the world, which position usually ranks his relatives against him, does not conduce to soundness of judgement. He may nevertheless be right in considering that he is right in the main. The world in motion is not so wise that it can pretend to

silence the outcry of an ordinarily generous heart even--the very infant of antagonism to its methods and establishments. It is not so difficult to be right against the world when the heart is really active; but the world is our book of humanity, and before insisting that his handwriting shall occupy the next blank page of it, the noble rebel is bound for the sake of his aim to ask himself how much of a giant he is, lest he fall like a blot on the page, instead of inscribing intelligible characters there.

Moreover, his relatives are present to assure him that he did not jump out of Jupiter's head or come of the doctor. They hang on him like an ill-conditioned prickly garment; and if he complains of the irritation they cause him, they one and all denounce his irritable skin.

Fretted by his relatives he cannot be much of a giant.

Beauchamp looked from Dr. Shrapnel in his invalid's chair to his uncle Everard breathing robustly, and mixed his uncle's errors with those of the world which honoured and upheld him. His remainder of equability departed; his impatience increased. His appetite for work at Dr. Shrapnel's writing-desk was voracious. He was ready for any labour, the transcribing of papers, writing from dictation, whatsoever was of service to Lord Avonley's victim: and he was not like the Spartan boy with the wolf at his vitals; he betrayed it in the hue his uncle Everard detested, in a visible nervousness, and indulgence in fits of scorn. Sharp epigrams and notes of irony provoked his laughter more than fun. He seemed to acquiesce in some of the current contemporary despair of our immovable England, though he winced at a satire on his country, and attempted to show that the dull dominant class of moneymakers was the ruin of her. Wherever he stood to represent Dr. Shrapnel, as against Mr. Grancey Lespel on account of the Itchincope encroachments, he left a sting that spread the rumour of his having become not only a black torch of Radicalism--our modern provincial estateholders and their wives bestow that reputation lightly--but a gentleman with the polish scratched off him in parts. And he, though individually he did not understand how there was to be game in the land if game-preserving was abolished, signed his name R. C. S. NEVIL BEAUCHAMP for Dr. SHRAPNEL, in the communications directed to solicitors of the persecutors of poachers.

His behaviour to Grancey Lespel was eclipsed by his treatment of Captain Baskellett. Cecil had ample reason to suppose his cousin to be friendly with him. He himself had forgotten Dr. Shrapnel, and all other dissensions, in a supremely Christian spirit. He paid his cousin the compliment to think that he had done likewise. At Romfrey and in London he had spoken to Nevil of his designs upon the widow: Nevil said nothing against it and it was under Mrs. Wardour-Devereux's eyes, and before a man named Lydiard, that, never calling to him to put him on his guard, Nevil fell foul of him with every capital charge that can be brought against a gentleman, and did so abuse, worry, and disgrace him as to reduce him to quit the house to avoid the scandal of a resort to a gentleman's last appeal in vindication of his character. Mrs. Devereux spoke of the terrible scene to Cecilia, and Lydiard to Miss Denham. The injured person communicated it to Lord Avonley, who told Colonel Halkett

emphatically that his nephew Cecil deserved well of him in having kept command of his temper out of consideration for the family. There was a general murmur of the family over this incident. The widow was rich, and it ranked among the unwritten crimes against blood for one offshoot of a great house wantonly to thwart another in the wooing of her by humbling him in her presence, doing his utmost to expose him as a schemer, a culprit, and a poltroon.

Could it be that Beauchamp had reserved his wrath with his cousin to avenge Dr. Shrapnel upon him signally? Miss Denham feared her guardian was the cause. Lydiard was indefinitely of her opinion. The idea struck Cecilia Halkett, and as an example of Beauchamp's tenacity of purpose and sureness of aim it fascinated her. But Mrs. Wardour-Devereux did not appear to share it. She objected to Beauchamp's intemperateness and unsparingness, as if she was for conveying a sisterly warning to Cecilia; and that being off her mind, she added, smiling a little and colouring a little: 'We learn only from men what men are.' How the scene commenced and whether it was provoked, she failed to recollect. She described Beauchamp as very self-contained in manner throughout his tongue was the scorpion. Cecilia fancied he must have resembled his uncle Everard.

Cecilia was conquered, but unclaimed. While supporting and approving him in her heart she was dreading to receive some new problem of his conduct; and still while she blamed him for not seeking an interview with her, she liked him for this instance of delicacy in the present state of his relations with Lord Avonley.

A problem of her own conduct disturbed the young lady's clear conception of herself: and this was a ruffling of unfaithfulness in her love of Beauchamp, that was betrayed to her by her forgetfulness of him whenever she chanced to be with Seymour Austin. In Mr. Austin's company she recovered her forfeited repose, her poetry of life, her image of the independent Cecilia throned above our dust of battle, gazing on broad heaven. She carried the feeling so far that Blackburn Tuckham's enthusiasm for Mr. Austin gave him grace in her sight, and praise of her father's favourite from Mr. Austin's mouth made him welcome to her. The image of that grave capable head, dusty-grey about the temples, and the darkly sanguine face of the tried man, which was that of a seasoned warrior and inspired full trust in him, with his vivid look, his personal distinction, his plain devotion to the country's business, and the domestic solitude he lived in, admired, esteemed, loved perhaps, but unpartnered, was often her refuge and haven from tempestuous Beauchamp. She could see in vision the pride of Seymour Austin's mate. It flushed her reflectively. Conquered but not claimed, Cecilia was like the frozen earth insensibly moving round to sunshine in nature, with one white flower in her breast as innocent a sign of strong sweet blood as a woman may wear. She ascribed to that fair mate of Seymour Austin's many lofty charms of womanhood; above all, stateliness: her especial dream of an attainable superlative beauty in women. And supposing that lady to be accused of the fickle breaking of another love, who walked beside him, matched with his calm heart and one with him in counsel, would the accusation be repeated by them that beheld her husband? might it not rather be said that she had not deviated, but had only stepped higher?

She chose no youth, no glistener, no idler: it was her soul striving upward to air like a seed in the earth that raised her to him: and she could say to the man once enchaining her: Friend, by the good you taught me I was led to this!

Cecilia's reveries fled like columns of mist before the gale when tidings reached her of a positive rupture between Lord Avonley and Nevil Beauchamp, and of the mandate to him to quit possession of Holdesbury and the London house within a certain number of days, because of his refusal to utter an apology to Mrs. Culling. Angrily on his behalf she prepared to humble herself to him. Louise Wardour-Devereux brought them to a meeting, at which Cecilia, with her heart in her hand, was icy. Mr. Lydiard, prompted by Mrs. Devereux, gave him better reasons for her singular coldness than Cecilia could give to herself, and some time afterward Beauchamp went to Mount Laurels, where Colonel Halkett mounted guard over his daughter, and behaved, to her thinking, cruelly. 'Now you have ruined yourself there's nothing ahead for you but to go to the Admiralty and apply for a ship,' he said, sugaring the unkindness with the remark that the country would be the gainer. He let fly a side-shot at London men calling themselves military men who sought to repair their fortunes by chasing wealthy widows, and complimented Beauchamp: 'You're not one of that sort.'

Cecilia looked at Beauchamp stedfastly. 'Speak,' said the look.

But he, though not blind, was keenly wounded.

'Money I must have,' he said, half to the colonel, half to himself.

Colonel Halkett shrugged. Cecilia waited for a directness in Beauchamp's eyes.

Her father was too wary to leave them.

Cecilia's intuition told her that by leading to a discussion of politics, and adopting Beauchamp's views, she could kindle him. Why did she refrain? It was that the conquered young lady was a captive, not an ally. To touch the subject in cold blood, voluntarily to launch on those vexed waters, as if his cause were her heart's, as much as her heart was the man's, she felt to be impossible. He at the same time felt that the heiress, endowing him with money to speed the good cause, should be his match in ardour for it, otherwise he was but a common adventurer, winning and despoiling an heiress.

They met in London. Beauchamp had not vacated either Holdesbury or the town-house; he was defying his uncle Everard, and Cecilia thought with him that it was a wise temerity. She thought with him passively altogether. On this occasion she had not to wait for directness in his eyes; she had to parry it. They were at a dinner-party at Lady Elsea's, generally the last place for seeing Lord Palmet, but he was present, and arranged things neatly for them, telling Beauchamp that he acted under Mrs. Wardour-Devereux's orders. Never was an opportunity, more propitious for a desperate lover. Had it been Renee next him, no petty

worldly scruples of honour would have held him back. And if Cecilia had spoken feelingly of Dr. Shrapnel, or had she simulated a thoughtful interest in his pursuits, his hesitations would have vanished. As it was, he dared to look what he did not permit himself to speak. She was nobly lovely, and the palpable envy of men around cried fool at his delays. Beggar and heiress he said in his heart, to vitalize the three-parts fiction of the point of honour which Cecilia's beauty was fast submerging. When she was leaving he named a day for calling to see her. Colonel Halkett stood by, and she answered, 'Come.'

Beauchamp kept the appointment. Cecilia was absent.

He was unaware that her father had taken her to old Mrs. Beauchamp's death-bed. Her absence, after she had said, 'Come,' appeared a confirmation of her glacial manner when they met at the house of Mrs. Wardour-Devereux; and he charged her with waywardness. A wound of the same kind that we are inflicting is about the severest we can feel.

Beauchamp received intelligence of his venerable great-aunt's death from Blackburn Tuckham, and after the funeral he was informed that eighty thousand pounds had been bequeathed to him: a goodly sum of money for a gentleman recently beggared; yet, as the political enthusiast could not help reckoning (apart from a fervent sentiment of gratitude toward his benefactress), scarcely enough to do much more than start and push for three or more years a commanding daily newspaper, devoted to Radical interests, and to be entitled THE DAWN.

True, he might now conscientiously approach the heiress, take her hand with an open countenance, and retain it.

Could he do so quite conscientiously? The point of honour had been centred in his condition of beggary. Something still was in his way. A quick spring of his blood for air, motion, excitement, holiday freedom, sent his thoughts travelling whither they always shot away when his redoubtable natural temper broke loose.

In the case of any other woman than Cecilia Halkett he would not have been obstructed by the minor consideration as to whether he was wholly heart-free to ask her in marriage that instant; for there was no hindrance, and she was beautiful. She was exceedingly beautiful; and she was an unequalled heiress. She would be able with her wealth to float his newspaper, THE DAWN, so desired of Dr. Shrapnel!--the best restorative that could be applied to him! Every temptation came supplicating him to take the step which indeed he wished for: one feeling opposed. He really respected Cecilia: it is not too much to say that he worshipped her with the devout worship rendered to the ideal Englishwoman by the heart of the nation. For him she was purity, charity, the keeper of the keys of whatsoever is held precious by men; she was a midway saint, a light between day and darkness, in whom the spirit in the flesh shone like the growing star amid thin sanguine colour, the sweeter, the brighter, the more translucent the longer known. And if the image will allow it, the nearer down to him the holier she seemed.

How offer himself when he was not perfectly certain that he was worthy of her?

Some jugglery was played by the adept male heart in these later hesitations. Up to the extent of his knowledge of himself, the man was fairly sincere. Passion would have sped him to Cecilia, but passion is not invariably love; and we know what it can be.

The glance he cast over the water at Normandy was withdrawn. He went to Bevissham to consult with Dr. Shrapnel about the starting of a weekly journal, instead of a daily, and a name for it--a serious question: for though it is oftener weekly than daily that the dawn is visible in England, titles must not invite the public jest; and the glorious project of the daily DAWN was prudently abandoned for by-and-by. He thought himself rich enough to put a Radical champion weekly in the field and this matter, excepting the title, was arranged in Bevissham. Thence he proceeded to Holdesbury, where he heard that the house, grounds, and farm were let to a tenant preparing to enter. Indifferent to the blow, he kept an engagement to deliver a speech at the great manufacturing town of Gunningham, and then went to London, visiting his uncle's town-house for recent letters. Not one was from Renee: she had not written for six weeks, not once for his thrice! A letter from Cecil Baskellett informed him that 'my lord' had placed the town-house at his disposal. Returning to dress for dinner on a thick and murky evening of February, Beauchamp encountered his cousin on the steps. He said to Cecil, 'I sleep here to-night: I leave the house to you tomorrow.'

Cecil struck out his underjaw to reply: 'Oh! good. You sleep here to-night. You are a fortunate man. I congratulate you. I shall not disturb you. I have just entered on my occupation of the house. I have my key. Allow me to recommend you to go straight to the drawing-room. And I may inform you that the Earl of Romfrey is at the point of death. My lord is at the castle.'

Cecil accompanied his descent of the steps with the humming of an opera melody: Beauchamp tripped into the hall-passage. A young maid-servant held the door open, and she accosted him: 'If you please, there is a lady up-stairs in the drawing-room; she speaks foreign English, sir.'

Beauchamp asked if the lady was alone, and not waiting for the answer, though he listened while writing, and heard that she was heavily veiled, he tore a strip from his notebook, and carefully traced half-a-dozen telegraphic words to Mrs. Culling at Steynham. His rarely failing promptness, which was like an inspiration, to conceive and execute measures for averting peril, set him on the thought of possibly counteracting his cousin Cecil's malignant tongue by means of a message to Rosamund, summoning her by telegraph to come to town by the next train that night. He despatched the old woman keeping the house, as trustier than the young one, to the nearest office, and went up to the drawing-room, with a quick thumping heart that was nevertheless as little apprehensive of an especial trial and danger as if he had done nothing at all to obviate it. Indeed he forgot that he had done anything when he turned the handle of the drawing-room door.

CHAPTER XL

A TRIAL OF HIM

A low-burning lamp and fire cast a narrow ring on the shadows of the dusky London room. One of the window-blinds was drawn up. Beauchamp discerned a shape at that window, and the fear seized him that it might be Madame d'Auffray with evil news of Renee: but it was Renee's name he called. She rose from her chair, saying, 'I!'

She was trembling.

Beauchamp asked her whisperingly if she had come alone.

'Alone; without even a maid,' she murmured.

He pulled down the blind of the window exposing them to the square, and led her into the light to see her face.

The dimness of light annoyed him, and the miserable reception of her; this English weather, and the gloomy house! And how long had she been waiting for him? and what was the mystery? Renee in England seemed magical; yet it was nothing stranger than an old dream realized. He wound up the lamp, holding her still with one hand. She was woefully pale; scarcely able to bear the increase of light.

'It is I who come to you': she was half audible.

'This time!' said he. 'You have been suffering?'

'No.'

Her tone was brief; not reassuring.

'You came straight to me?'

'Without a deviation that I know of.'

'From Tourdestelle?'

'You have not forgotten Tourdestelle, Nevil?'

The memory of it quickened his rapture in reading her features. It was his first love, his enchantress, who was here: and how? Conjectures shot through him like lightnings in the dark.

Irrationally, at a moment when reason stood in awe, he fancied it must be that her husband was dead. He forced himself to think it, and could have smiled at the hurry of her coming, one, without even a maid: and deeper

down in him the devouring question burned which dreaded the answer.

But of old, in Normandy, she had pledged herself to join him with no delay when free, if ever free!

So now she was free.

One side of him glowed in illumination; the other was black as Winter night; but light subdues darkness; and in a situation like Beauchamp's, the blood is livelier than the prophetic mind.

'Why did you tell me to marry? What did that mean?' said he. 'Did you wish me to be the one in chains? And you have come quite alone!--you will give me an account of everything presently:--You are here! in England! and what a welcome for you! You are cold.'

'I am warmly clad,' said Renee, suffering her hand to be drawn to his breast at her arm's-length, not bending with it.

Alive to his own indirectness, he was conscious at once of the slight sign of reservation, and said: 'Tell me . . .' and swerved sheer away from his question: 'how is Madame d'Auffray?'

'Agnes? I left her at Tourdestelle,' said Renee.

'And Roland? He never writes to me.'

'Neither he nor I write much. He is at the military camp of instruction in the North.'

'He will run over to us.'

'Do not expect it.'

'Why not?'

Renee sighed. 'We shall have to live longer than I look for . . .' she stopped. 'Why do you ask me why not? He is fond of us both, and sorry for us; but have you forgotten Roland that morning on the Adriatic?'

Beauchamp pressed her hand. The stroke of Then and Now rang in his breast like a bell instead of a bounding heart. Something had stunned his heart. He had no clear central feeling; he tried to gather it from her touch, from his joy in beholding her and sitting with her alone, from the grace of her figure, the wild sweetness of her eyes, and the beloved foreign lips bewitching him with their exquisite French and perfection of speech.

His nature was too prompt in responding to such a call on it for resolute warmth.

'If I had been firmer then, or you one year older!' he said.

'That girl in Venice had no courage,' said Renee.

She raised her head and looked about the room.

Her instinct of love sounded her lover through, and felt the deficiency or the contrariety in him, as surely as musical ears are pained by a discord that they require no touchstone to detect. Passion has the sensitiveness of fever, and is as cruelly chilled by a tepid air.

'Yes, a London house after Venice and Normandy!' said Beauchamp, following her look.

'Sicily: do not omit Syracuse; you were in your naval uniform: Normandy was our third meeting,' said Renee. 'This is the fourth. I should have reckoned that.'

'Why? Superstitiously?'

'We cannot be entirely wise when we have staked our fate. Sailors are credulous: you know them. Women are like them when they embark . . . Three chances! Who can boast of so many, and expect one more! Will you take me to my hotel, Nevil?'

The fiction of her being free could not be sustained.

'Take you and leave you? I am absolutely at your command. But leave you? You are alone: and you have told me nothing.'

What was there to tell? The desperate act was apparent, and told all.

Renee's dark eyelashes lifted on him, and dropped.

'Then things are as I left them in Normandy?' said he.

She replied: 'Almost.'

He quivered at the solitary word; for his conscience was on edge. It ran the shrewdest irony through him, inexplicably. 'Almost': that is, 'with this poor difference of one person, now finding herself worthless, subtracted from the list; no other; it should be little to them as it is little to you': or, reversing it, the substance of the word became magnified and intensified by its humble slightness: 'Things are the same, but for the jewel of the province, a lustre of France, lured hither to her eclipse'--meanings various, indistinguishable, thrilling and piercing sad as the half-tones humming round the note of a strung wire, which is a blunt single note to the common ear.

Beauchamp sprang to his feet and bent above her: 'You have come to me, for the love of me, to give yourself to me, and for ever, for good, till death? Speak, my beloved Renee.'

Her eyes were raised to his: 'You see me here. It is for you to speak.'

'I do. There's nothing I ask for now--if the step can't be retrieved.'

'The step retrieved, my friend? There is no step backward in life.'

'I am thinking of you, Renee.'

'Yes, I know,' she answered hurriedly.

'If we discover that the step is a wrong one?' he pursued: 'why is there no step backward?'

'I am talking of women,' said Renee.

'Why not for women?'

'Honourable women, I mean,' said Renee.

Beauchamp inclined to forget his position in finding matter to contest.

Yet it is beyond contest that there is no step backward in life. She spoke well; better than he, and she won his deference by it. Not only she spoke better: she was truer, distincter, braver: and a man ever on the look-out for superior qualities, and ready to bow to them, could not refuse her homage. With that a saving sense of power quitted him.

'You wrote to me that you were unchanged, Nevil.'

'I am.'

'So, then, I came.'

His rejoinder was the dumb one, commonly eloquent and satisfactory.

Renee shut her eyes with a painful rigour of endurance. She opened them to look at him steadily.

The desperate act of her flight demanded immediate recognition from him in simple language and a practical seconding of it. There was the test.

'I cannot stay in this house, Nevil; take me away.'

She named her hotel in her French English, and the sound of it penetrated him with remorseful pity. It was for him, and of his doing, that she was in an alien land and an outcast!

'This house is wretched for you,' said he: 'and you must be hungry. Let me . . .'

'I cannot eat. I will ask you': she paused, drawing on her energies, and keeping down the throbs of her heart: 'this: do you love me?'

'I love you with all my heart and soul.'

'As in Normandy?'

'Yes.'

'In Venice?'

'As from the first, Renee! That I can swear.'

'Oaths are foolish. I meant to ask you--my friend, there is no question in my mind of any other woman: I see you love me: I am so used to consider myself the vain and cowardly creature, and you the boldest and faithfullest of men, that I could not abandon the habit if I would: I started confiding in you, sure that I should come to land. But I have to ask you: to me you are truth: I have no claim on my lover for anything but the answer to this:--Am I a burden to you?'

His brows flew up in furrows. He drew a heavy breath, for never had he loved her more admiringly, and never on such equal terms. She was his mate in love and daring at least. A sorrowful comparison struck him, of a little boat sailing out to a vessel in deep seas and left to founder.

Without knotting his mind to acknowledge or deny the burden, for he could do neither, he stood silent, staring at her, not so much in weakness as in positive mental division. No, would be false; and Yes, not less false; and if the step was irretrievable, to say Yes would be to plunge a dagger in her bosom; but No was a vain deceit involving a double wreck. Assuredly a man standing against the world in a good cause, with a runaway wife on his hands, carries a burden, however precious it be to him.

A smile of her lips, parted in an anguish of expectancy, went to death over Renee's face. She looked at him tenderly. 'The truth,' she murmured to herself, and her eyelids fell.

'I am ready to bear anything,' said Beauchamp. 'I weigh what you ask me, that is all. You a burden to me? But when you ask me, you make me turn round and inquire how we stand before the world.'

'The world does not stone men,' said Renee.

'Can't I make you feel that I am not thinking of myself?' Beauchamp stamped in his extreme perplexity. He was gagged; he could not possibly talk to her, who had cast the die, of his later notions of morality and the world's dues, fees, and claims on us.

'No, friend, I am not complaining.' Renee put out her hand to him; with compassionate irony feigning to have heard excuses. 'What right have I to complain? I have not the sensation. I could not expect you to be everlastingly the sentinel of love. Three times I rejected you! Now that I have lost my father--Oh! poor father: I trifled with my lover, I tricked him that my father might live in peace. He is dead. I wished you to marry one of your own countrywomen, Nevil. You said it was

impossible; and I, with my snake at my heart, and a husband grateful for nursing and whimpering to me for his youth like a beggar on the road, I thought I owed you this debt of body and soul, to prove to you I have some courage; and for myself, to reward myself for my long captivity and misery with one year of life: and adieu to Roland my brother! adieu to friends! adieu to France! Italy was our home. I dreamed of one year in Italy; I fancied it might be two; more than that was unimaginable. Prisoners of long date do not hope; they do not calculate: air, light, they say; to breathe freely and drop down! They are reduced to the instincts of the beasts. I thought I might give you happiness, pay part of my debt to you. Are you remembering Count Henri? That paints what I was! I could fly to that for a taste of life! a dance to death! And again you ask: Why, if I loved you then, not turn to you in preference? No, you have answered it yourself, Nevil;--on that day in the boat, when generosity in a man so surprised me, it seemed a miracle to me; and it was, in its divination. How I thank my dear brother Roland for saving me the sight of you condemned to fight, against your conscience! He taught poor M. d'Henriel his lesson. You, Nevil, were my teacher. And see how it hangs: there was mercy for me in not having drawn down my father's anger on my heart's beloved. He loved you. He pitied us. He reproached himself. In his last days he was taught to suspect our story: perhaps from Roland; perhaps I breathed it without speaking. He called heaven's blessings on you. He spoke of you with tears, clutching my hand. He made me feel he would have cried out: "If I were leaving her with Nevil Beauchamp!" and "Beauchamp," I heard him murmuring once: "take down Froissart": he named a chapter. It was curious: if he uttered my name Renee, yours, "Nevil," soon followed. That was noticed by Roland. Hope for us, he could not have had; as little as I! But we were his two: his children. I buried him--I thought he would know our innocence, and now pardon our love. I read your letters, from my name at the beginning, to yours at the end, and from yours back to mine, and between the lines, for any doubtful spot: and oh, rash! But I would not retrace the step for my own sake. I am certain of your love for me, though . . .' She paused: 'Yes, I am certain of it. And if I am a burden to you?'

'About as much as the air, which I can't do without since I began to breathe it,' said Beauchamp, more clear-mindedly now that he supposed he was addressing a mind, and with a peril to himself that escaped his vigilance. There was a secret intoxication for him already in the half-certainty that the step could not be retraced. The idea that he might reason with her, made her seductive to the heart and head of him.

'I am passably rich, Nevil,' she said. 'I do not care for money, except that it gives wings. Roland inherits the chateau in Touraine. I have one in Burgundy, and rentes and shares, my notary informs me.'

'I have money,' said he. His heart began beating violently. He lost sight of his intention of reasoning. 'Good God! if you were free!'

She faltered: 'At Tourdestelle . . .'

'Yes, and I am unchanged,' Beauchamp cried out. 'Your life there was horrible, and mine's intolerable.' He stretched his arms cramped like

the yawning of a wretch in fetters. That which he would and would not became so interwoven that he deemed it reasonable to instance their common misery as a ground for their union against the world. And what has that world done for us, that a joy so immeasurable should be rejected on its behalf? And what have we succeeded in doing, that the childish effort to move it should be continued at such a cost?

For years, down to one year back, and less--yesterday, it could be said--all human blessedness appeared to him in the person of Renee, given him under any condition whatsoever. She was not less adorable now. In her decision, and a courage that he especially prized in women, she was a sweeter to him than when he was with her in France: too sweet to be looked at and refused.

'But we must live in England,' he cried abruptly out of his inner mind.

'Oh! not England, Italy, Italy!' Renee exclaimed: 'Italy, or Greece: anywhere where we have sunlight. Mountains and valleys are my dream. Promise it, Nevil. I will obey you; but this is my wish. Take me through Venice, that I may look at myself and wonder. We can live at sea, in a yacht; anywhere with you but in England. This country frowns on me; I can hardly fetch my breath here, I am suffocated. The people all walk in lines in England. Not here, Nevil! They are good people, I am sure; and it is your country: but their faces chill me, their voices grate; I should never understand them; they would be to me like their fogs eternally; and I to them? O me! it would be like hearing sentence in the dampness of the shroud perpetually. Again I say I do not doubt that they are very good: they claim to be; they judge others; they may know how to make themselves happy in their climate; it is common to most creatures to do so, or to imagine it. Nevil! not England!'

Truly 'the mad commander and his French marquise' of the Bevisham Election ballad would make a pretty figure in England!

His friends of his own class would be mouthing it. The story would be a dogging shadow of his public life, and, quite as bad, a reflection on his party. He heard the yelping tongues of the cynics. He saw the consternation and grief of his old Bevisham hero, his leader and his teacher.

'Florence,' he said, musing on the prospect of exile and idleness: 'there's a kind of society to be had in Florence.'

Renee asked him if he cared so much for society.

He replied that women must have it, just as men must have exercise.

'Old women, Nevil; intriguers, tattlers.'

'Young women, Renee.'

She signified no.

He shook the head of superior knowledge paternally.

Her instinct of comedy set a dimple faintly working in her cheek.

'Not if they love, Nevil.'

'At least,' said he, 'a man does not like to see the woman he loves banished by society and browbeaten.'

'Putting me aside, do you care for it, Nevil?'

'Personally not a jot.'

'I am convinced of that,' said Renee.

She spoke suspiciously sweetly, appearing perfect candour.

The change in him was perceptible to her. The nature of the change was unfathomable.

She tried her wits at the riddle. But though she could be an actress before him with little difficulty, the torment of her situation roused the fever within her at a bare effort to think acutely. Scarlet suffused her face: her brain whirled.

'Remember, dearest, I have but offered myself: you have your choice. I can pass on. Yes, I know well I speak to Nevil Beauchamp; you have drilled me to trust you and your word as a soldier trusts to his officer --once a faint-hearted soldier! I need not remind you: fronting the enemy now, in hard truth. But I want your whole heart to decide. Give me no silly, compassion! Would it have been better to me to have written to you? If I had written I should have clipped my glorious impulse, brought myself down to earth with my own arrow. I did not write, for I believed in you.'

So firm had been her faith in him that her visions of him on the passage to England had resolved all to one flash of blood-warm welcome awaiting her: and it says much for her natural generosity that the savage delicacy of a woman placed as she now was, did not take a mortal hurt from the apparent voidness of this home of his bosom. The passionate gladness of the lover was wanting: the chivalrous valiancy of manful joy.

Renee shivered at the cloud thickening over her new light of intrepid defiant life.

'Think it not improbable that I have weighed everything I surrender in quitting France,' she said.

Remorse wrestled with Beauchamp and flung him at her feet.

Renee remarked on the lateness of the hour.

He promised to conduct her to her hotel immediately.

'And to-morrow?' said Renee, simply, but breathlessly.

'To-morrow, let it be Italy! But first I telegraph to Roland and Tourdestelle. I can't run and hide. The step may be retrieved: or no, you are right; the step cannot, but the next to it may be stopped--that was the meaning I had! I'll try. It's cutting my hand off, tearing my heart out; but I will. O that you were free! You left your husband at Tourdestelle?'

'I presume he is there at present: he was in Paris when I left.'

Beauchamp spoke hoarsely and incoherently in contrast with her composure:

'You will misunderstand me for a day or two, Renee. I say if you were free I should have my first love mine for ever. Don't fear me: I have no right even to press your fingers. He may throw you into my arms. Now you are the same as if you were in your own home: and you must accept me for your guide. By all I hope for in life, I'll see you through it, and keep the dogs from barking, if I can. Thousands are ready to give tongue. And if they can get me in the character of a law-breaker!-- I hear them.'

'Are you imagining, Nevil, that there is a possibility of my returning to him?'

'To your place in the world! You have not had to endure tyranny?'

'I should have had a certain respect for a tyrant, Nevil. At least I should have had an occupation in mocking him and conspiring against him. Tyranny! There would have been some amusement to me in that.'

'It was neglect.'

'If I could still charge it on neglect, Nevil! Neglect is very endurable. He rewards me for nursing him . . . he rewards me with a little persecution: wives should be flattered by it: it comes late.'

'What?' cried Beauchamp, oppressed and impatient.

Renee sank her voice.

Something in the run of the unaccented French: 'Son amour, mon ami': drove the significance of the bitterness of the life she had left behind her burning through him. This was to have fled from a dragon! was the lover's thought: he perceived the motive of her flight: and it was a vindication of it that appealed to him irresistibly. The proposal for her return grew hideous: and this ever multiplying horror and sting of the love of a married woman came on him with a fresh throbbing shock, more venom.

He felt for himself now, and now he was full of feeling for her. Impossible that she should return! Tourdestelle shone to him like a gaping chasm of fire. And becoming entirely selfish he impressed his

total abnegation of self upon Renee so that she could have worshipped him. A lover that was like a starry frost, froze her veins, bewildered her intelligence. She yearned for meridian warmth, for repose in a directing hand; and let it be hard as one that grasps a sword: what matter? unhesitatingness was the warrior virtue of her desire. And for herself the worst might happen if only she were borne along. Let her life be torn and streaming like the flag of battle, it must be forward to the end.

That was a quality of godless young heroism not unexhausted in Beauchamp's blood. Reanimated by him, she awakened his imagination of the vagrant splendours of existence and the rebel delights which have their own laws and 'nature' for an applauding mother. Radiant Alps rose in his eyes, and the morning born in the night suns that from mountain and valley, over sea and desert, called on all earth to witness their death. The magnificence of the contempt of humanity posed before him superbly satanesque, grand as thunder among the crags and it was not a sensual cry that summoned him from his pedlar labours, pack on back along the level road, to live and breathe deep, gloriously mated: Renee kindled his romantic spirit, and could strike the feeling into him that to be proud of his possession of her was to conquer the fretful vanity to possess. She was not a woman of wiles and lures.

Once or twice she consulted her watch: but as she professed to have no hunger, Beauchamp's entreaty to her to stay prevailed, and the subtle form of compliment to his knightly manliness in her remaining with him, gave him a new sense of pleasure that hung round her companionable conversation, deepening the meaning of the words, or sometimes contrasting the sweet surface commonplace with the undercurrent of strangeness in their hearts, and the reality of a tragic position. Her musical volubility flowed to entrance and divert him, as it did.

Suddenly Beauchamp glanced upward.

Renee turned from a startled contemplation of his frown, and beheld Mrs. Rosamund Culling in the room.

CHAPTER XLI

A LAME VICTORY

The intruder was not a person that had power to divide them; yet she came between their hearts with a touch of steel.

'I am here in obedience to your commands in your telegram of this evening,' Rosamund replied to Beauchamp's hard stare at her; she courteously spoke French, and acquitted herself demurely of a bow to the lady present.

Renee withdrew her serious eyes from Beauchamp. She rose and

acknowledged the bow.

'It is my first visit to England, madame!

'I could have desired, Madame la marquise, more agreeable weather for you.'

'My friends in England will dispel the bad weather for me, madame'; Renee smiled softly: 'I have been studying my French-English phrase-book, that I may learn how dialogues are conducted in your country to lead to certain ceremonies when old friends meet, and without my book I am at fault. I am longing to be embraced by you . . . if it will not be offending your rules?'

Rosamund succumbed to the seductive woman, whose gentle tooth bit through her tutored simplicity of manner and natural graciousness, administering its reproof, and eluding a retort or an excuse.

She gave the embrace. In doing so she fell upon her conscious awkwardness for an expression of reserve that should be as good as irony for irony, though where Madame de Rouaillout's irony lay, or whether it was irony at all, our excellent English dame could not have stated, after the feeling of indignant prudery responding to it so guiltily had subsided.

Beauchamp asked her if she had brought servants with her; and it gratified her to see that he was no actor fitted to carry a scene through in virtue's name and vice's mask with this actress.

She replied, 'I have brought a man and a maid-servant. The establishment will be in town the day after tomorrow, in time for my lord's return from the Castle.'

'You can have them up to-morrow morning.'

'I could,' Rosamund admitted the possibility. Her idolatry of him was tried on hearing him press the hospitality of the house upon Madame de Rouaillout, and observing the lady's transparent feint of a reluctant yielding. For the voluble Frenchwoman scarcely found a word to utter: she protested languidly that she preferred the independence of her hotel, and fluttered a singular look at him, as if overcome by his vehement determination to have her in the house. Undoubtedly she had a taking face and style. His infatuation, nevertheless, appeared to Rosamund utter dementedness, considering this woman's position, and Cecilia Halkett's beauty and wealth, and that the house was no longer at his disposal. He was really distracted, to judge by his forehead, or else he was over-acting his part.

The absence of a cook in the house, Rosamund remarked, must prevent her from seconding Captain Beauchamp's invitation.

He turned on her witheringly. 'The telegraph will do that. You're in London; cooks can be had by dozens. Madame de Rouaillout is alone here;

she has come to see a little of England, and you will do the honours of the house.'

'M. le marquis is not in London?' said Rosamund, disregarding the dumb imprecation she saw on Beauchamp's features.

'No, madame, my husband is not in London,' Renee rejoined collectedly.

'See to the necessary comforts of the house instantly,' said Beauchamp, and telling Renee, without listening to her, that he had to issue orders, he led Rosamund, who was out of breath at the effrontery of the pair, toward the door. 'Are you blind, ma'am? Have you gone foolish? What should I have sent for you for, but to protect her? I see your mind; and off with the prude, pray! Madame will have my room; clear away every sign of me there. I sleep out; I can find a bed anywhere. And bolt and chain the house-door to-night against Cecil Baskellett; he informs me that he has taken possession.'

Rosamund's countenance had become less austere.

'Captain Baskellett!' she exclaimed, leaning to Beauchamp's views on the side of her animosity to Cecil; 'he has been promised by his uncle the use of a set of rooms during the year, when the mistress of the house is not in occupation. I stipulated expressly that he was to see you and suit himself to your convenience, and to let me hear that you and he had agreed to an arrangement, before he entered the house. He has no right to be here, and I shall have no hesitation in locking him out.'

Beauchamp bade her go, and not be away more than five minutes; and then he would drive to the hotel for the luggage.

She scanned him for a look of ingenuousness that might be trusted, and laughed in her heart at her credulity for expecting it of a man in such a case. She saw Renee sitting stonily, too proudly self-respecting to put on a mask of flippant ease. These lovers might be accomplices in deceiving her; they were not happy ones, and that appeared to her to be some assurance that she did well in obeying him.

Beauchamp closed the door on her. He walked back to Renee with a thoughtful air that was consciously acted; his only thought being--now she knows me!

Renee looked up at him once. Her eyes were unaccusing, unquestioning.

With the violation of the secrecy of her flight she had lost her initiative and her intrepidity. The world of human eyes glared on her through the windows of the two she had been exposed to, paralyzing her brain and caging her spirit of revolt. That keen wakefulness of her self-defensive social instinct helped her to an understanding of her lover's plan to preserve her reputation, or rather to give her a corner of retreat in shielding the worthless thing--twice detested as her cloak of slavery coming from him! She comprehended no more. She was a house of nerves crowding in against her soul like fiery thorns, and had no

space within her torture for a sensation of gratitude or suspicion; but feeling herself hurried along at lightning speed to some dreadful shock, her witless imagination apprehended it in his voice: not what he might say, only the sound. She feared to hear him speak, as the shrinking ear fears a thunder at the cavity; yet suspense was worse than the downward-driving silence.

The pang struck her when he uttered some words about Mrs. Culling, and protection, and Roland.

She thanked him.

So have common executioners been thanked by queenly ladies baring their necks to the axe.

He called up the pain he suffered to vindicate him; and it was really an agony of a man torn to pieces.

'I have done the best.'

This dogged and stupid piece of speech was pitiable to hear from Nevil Beauchamp.

'You think so?' said she; and her glass-like voice rang a tremour in its mildness that swelled through him on the plain submissive note, which was more assent than question.

'I am sure of it. I believe it. I see it. At least I hope so.'

'We are chiefly led by hope,' said Renee.

'At least, if not!' Beauchamp cried. 'And it's not too late. I have no right--I do what I can. I am at your mercy. Judge me later. If I am ever to know what happiness is, it will be with you. It's not too late either way. There is Roland--my brother as much as if you were my wife!'

He begged her to let him have Roland's exact address.

She named the regiment, the corps d'armee, the postal town, and the department.

'Roland will come at a signal,' he pursued; 'we are not bound to consult others.'

Renee formed the French word of 'we' on her tongue.

He talked of Roland and Roland, his affection for him as a brother and as a friend, and Roland's love of them both.

'It is true,' said Renee.

'We owe him this; he represents your father.'

'All that you say is true, my friend.'

'Thus, you have come on a visit to madame, your old friend here--oh! your hand. What have I done?'

Renee motioned her hand as if it were free to be taken, and smiled faintly to make light of it, but did not give it.

'If you had been widowed!' he broke down to the lover again.

'That man is attached to the remnant of his life: I could not wish him dispossessed of it,' said Rende.

'Parted! who parts us? It's for a night. Tomorrow!'

She breathed: 'To-morrow.'

To his hearing it craved an answer. He had none. To talk like a lover, or like a man of honour, was to lie. Falsehood hemmed him in to the narrowest ring that ever statue stood on, if he meant to be stone.

'That woman will be returning,' he muttered, frowning at the vacant door.

'I could lay out my whole life before your eyes, and show you I am unchanged in my love of you since the night when Roland and I walked on the Piazzetta . . .'

'Do not remind me; let those days lie black!' A sympathetic vision of her maiden's tears on the night of wonderful moonlight when, as it seemed to her now, San Giorgio stood like a dark prophet of her present abasement and chastisement, sprang tears of a different character, and weak as she was with her soul's fever and for want of food, she was piteously shaken. She said with some calmness: 'It is useless to look back. I have no reproaches but for myself. Explain nothing to me. Things that are not comprehended by one like me are riddles I must put aside. I know where I am: I scarcely know more. Here is madame.'

The door had not opened, and it did not open immediately.

Beauchamp had time to say, 'Believe in me.' Even that was false to his own hearing, and in a struggle with the painful impression of insincerity which was denied and scorned by his impulse to fling his arms round her and have her his for ever, he found himself deferentially accepting her brief directions concerning her boxes at the hotel, with Rosamund Culling to witness.

She gave him her hand.

He bowed over the fingers. 'Until to-morrow, madame.'

'Adieu!' said Renee.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A wound of the same kind that we are inflicting
Affectedly gentle and unusually roundabout opening
Carry a scene through in virtue's name and vice's mask
Cordiality of an extreme relief in leaving
Dark-eyed Renee was not beauty but attraction
Decline to practise hypocrisy
Fine eye for celestially directed consequences is ever haunted
Fretted by his relatives he cannot be much of a giant
Given up his brains for a lodging to a single idea
He never calculated on the happening of mortal accidents
He smoked, Lord Avonley said of the second departure
Heights of humour beyond laughter
Irony provoked his laughter more than fun
Irritability at the intrusion of past disputes
Led him to impress his unchangeableness upon her
Money's a chain-cable for holding men to their senses
On which does the eye linger longest--which draws the heart?
Once called her beautiful; his praise had given her beauty
Passion is not invariably love
People is one of your Radical big words that burst at a query
Scotchman's metaphysics; you know nothing clear
Their not caring to think at all
There is no step backward in life
They have their thinking done for them
They may know how to make themselves happy in their climate
Thirst for the haranguing of crowds
Too many time-servers rot the State
We are chiefly led by hope
Welcomed and lured on an adversary to wild outbitting
What ninnies call Nature in books

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is attached to the remnant of his life: I could not wish him

dispossessed of it,' said Rende.

'Parted! who parts us? It's for a night. Tomorrow!'

She breathed: 'To-morrow.'

To his hearing it craved an answer. He had none. To talk like a lover, or like a man of honour, was to lie. Falsehood hemmed him in to the narrowest ring that ever statue stood on, if he meant to be stone.

'That woman will be returning,' he muttered, frowning at the vacant door.

'I could lay out my whole life before your eyes, and show you I am unchanged in my love of you since the night when Roland and I walked on the Piazzetta . . .'

'Do not remind me; let those days lie black!' A sympathetic vision of her maiden's tears on the night of wonderful moonlight when, as it seemed to her now, San Giorgio stood like a dark prophet of her present abasement and chastisement, sprang tears of a different character, and weak as she was with her soul's fever and for want of food, she was piteously shaken. She said with some calmness: 'It is useless to look back. I have no reproaches but for myself. Explain nothing to me. Things that are not comprehended by one like me are riddles I must put aside. I know where I am: I scarcely know more. Here is madame.'

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