

Beauchamp's Career — Volume 2 eBook

Beauchamp's Career — Volume 2 by George Meredith

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CAPTAIN BASKELETT

Our England, meanwhile, was bustling over the extinguished war, counting the cost of it, with a rather rueful eye on Manchester, and soothing the taxed by an exhibition of heroes at brilliant feasts. Of course, the first to come home had the cream of the praises. She hugged them in a manner somewhat suffocating to modest men, but heroism must be brought to bear upon these excesses of maternal admiration; modesty, too, when it accepts the place of honour at a public banquet, should not protest overmuch. To be just, the earliest arrivals, which were such as reached the shores of Albion before her war was at an end, did cordially reciprocate the hug. They were taught, and they believed most naturally, that it was quite as well to repose upon her bosom as to have stuck to their posts. Surely there was a conscious weakness in the Spartans, who were always at pains to discipline their men in heroic conduct, and rewarded none save the stand-fasts. A system of that sort seems to betray the sense of poverty in the article. Our England does nothing like it. All are welcome home to her so long as she is in want of them. Besides, she has to please the taxpayer. You may track a shadowy line or crazy zigzag of policy in almost every stroke of her domestic history: either it is the forethought finding it necessary to stir up an impulse, or else dashing impulse gives a lively pull to the afterthought: policy becomes evident somehow, clumsily very possibly. How can she manage an enormous middle-class, to keep it happy, other than a little clumsily? The managing of it at all is the wonder. And not only has she to stupefy the taxpayer by a timely display of feasting and fireworks, she has to stop all that nonsense (to quote a satiated man lightened in his purse) at the right moment, about the hour when the old standfasts, who have simply been doing duty, return, poor jog-trot fellows, and a complimentary motto or two is the utmost she can present to them. On the other hand, it is true she gives her first loves, those early birds, fully to understand that a change has come in their island mother's mind. If there is a balance to be righted, she leaves that business to society, and if it be the season for the gathering of society, it will be righted more or less; and if no righting is done at all, perhaps the Press will incidentally toss a leaf of laurel on a name or two: thus in the exercise of grumbling doing good.

With few exceptions, Nevil Beauchamp's heroes received the motto instead of the sweetmeat. England expected them to do their duty; they did it, and she was not dissatisfied, nor should they be. Beauchamp, at a distance from the scene, chafed with customary vehemence, concerning the unjust measure dealt to his favourites: Captain Hardist, of the Diomed, twenty years a captain, still a captain! Young Michell denied the cross! Colonel Evans

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Cuff, on the heights from first to last, and not advanced a step! But Prancer, and Plunger, and Lammakin were thoroughly well taken care of, this critic of the war wrote savagely, reviving an echo of a queer small circumstance occurring in the midst of the high dolour and anxiety of the whole nation, and which a politic country preferred to forget, as we will do, for it was but an instance of strong family feeling in high quarters; and is not the unity of the country founded on the integrity of the family sentiment? Is it not certain, which the master tells us, that a line is but a continuation of a number of dots? Nevil Beauchamp was for insisting that great Government officers had paid more attention to a dot or two than to the line. He appeared to be at war with his country after the peace. So far he had a lively ally in his uncle Everard; but these remarks of his were a portion of a letter, whose chief burden was the request that Everard Romfrey would back him in proposing for the hand of a young French lady, she being, Beauchamp smoothly acknowledged, engaged to a wealthy French marquis, under the approbation of her family. Could mortal folly outstrip a petition of that sort? And apparently, according to the wording and emphasis of the letter, it was the mature age of the marquis which made Mr. Beauchamp so particularly desirous to stop the projected marriage and take the girl himself. He appealed to his uncle on the subject in a 'really—really' remonstrative tone, quite overwhelming to read. 'It ought not to be permitted: by all the laws of chivalry, I should write to the girl's father to interdict it: I really am particeps criminis in a sin against nature if I don't!' Mr. Romfrey interjected in burlesque of his ridiculous nephew, with collapsing laughter. But he expressed an indignant surprise at Nevil for allowing Rosamund to travel alone.

'I can take very good care of myself,' Rosamund protested.

'You can do hundreds of things you should never be obliged to do while he's at hand, or I, ma'am,' said Mr. Romfrey. 'The fellow's insane. He forgets a gentleman's duty. Here's his "humanity" dogging a French frock, and pooh!—the age of the marquis! Fifty? A man's beginning his prime at fifty, or there never was much man in him. It's the mark of a fool to take everybody for a bigger fool than himself—or he wouldn't have written this letter to me. He can't come home yet, not yet, and he doesn't know when he can! Has he thrown up the service? I am to preserve the alliance between England and France by getting this French girl for him in the teeth of her marquis, at my peril if I refuse!'

Rosamund asked, 'Will you let me see where Nevil says that, sir?'

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Mr. Romfrey tore the letter to strips. 'He's one of your fellows who cock their eyes when they mean to be cunning. He sends you to do the wheedling, that's plain. I don't say he has hit on a bad advocate; but tell him I back him in no mortal marriage till he shows a pair of epaulettes on his shoulders. Tell him lieutenants are fledglings—he's not marriageable at present. It's a very pretty sacrifice of himself he intends for the sake of the alliance, tell him that, but a lieutenant's not quite big enough to establish it. You will know what to tell him, ma'am. And say, it's the fellow's best friend that advises him to be out of it and home quick. If he makes one of a French trio, he's dished. He's too late for his luck in England. Have him out of that mire, we can't hope for more now.'

Rosamund postponed her mission to plead. Her heart was with Nevil; her understanding was easily led to side against him, and for better reasons than Mr. Romfrey could be aware of: so she was assured by her experience of the character of Mademoiselle de Croisnel. A certain belief in her personal arts of persuasion had stopped her from writing on her homeward journey to inform him that Nevil was not accompanying her, and when she drove over Steynham Common, triumphal arches and the odour of a roasting ox richly browning to celebrate the hero's return afflicted her mind with all the solid arguments of a common-sense country in contravention of a wild lover's vaporous extravagances. Why had he not come with her? The disappointed ox put the question in a wavering drop of the cheers of the villagers at the sight of the carriage without their bleeding hero. Mr. Romfrey, at his hall-doors, merely screwed his eyebrows; for it was the quality of this gentleman to foresee most human events, and his capacity to stifle astonishment when they trifled with his prognostics. Rosamund had left Nevil fast bound in the meshes of the young French sorceress, no longer leading, but submissively following, expecting blindly, seeing strange new virtues in the lurid indication of what appeared to border on the reverse. How could she plead for her infatuated darling to one who was common sense in person?

Everard's pointed interrogations reduced her to speak defensively, instead of attacking and claiming his aid for the poor enamoured young man. She dared not say that Nevil continued to be absent because he was now encouraged by the girl to remain in attendance on her, and was more than half inspired to hope, and too artfully assisted to deceive the count and the marquis under the guise of simple friendship. Letters passed between them in books given into one another's hands with an audacious openness of the saddest augury for the future of the pair, and Nevil could be so lost to reason as to glory in Renee's intrepidity, which he justified by their mutual situation, and cherished for a proof that she was getting courage. In fine, Rosamund abandoned her task of pleading.

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Nevil's communications gave the case a worse and worse aspect: Renee was prepared to speak to her father; she delayed it; then the two were to part; they were unable to perform the terrible sacrifice and slay their last hope; and then Nevil wrote of destiny—language hitherto unknown to him, evidently the tongue of Renee. He slipped on from Italy to France. His uncle was besieged by a series of letters, and his cousin, Cecil Baskett, a captain in England's grand reserve force—her Horse Guards, of the Blue division—helped Everard Romfrey to laugh over them.

It was not difficult, alack! Letters of a lover in an extremity of love, crying for help, are as curious to cool strong men as the contortions of the proved heterodox tied to a stake must have been to their chastening ecclesiastical judges. Why go to the fire when a recantation will save you from it? Why not break the excruciating faggot-bands, and escape, when you have only to decide to do it? We naturally ask why. Those martyrs of love or religion are madmen. Altogether, Nevil's adjurations and supplications, his threats of wrath and appeals to reason, were an odd mixture. 'He won't lose a chance while there's breath in his body,' Everard said, quite good-humouredly, though he deplored that the chance for the fellow to make his hero-parade in society, and haply catch an heiress, was waning. There was an heiress at Steynham, on her way with her father to Italy, very anxious to see her old friend Nevil—Cecilia Halkett—and very inquisitive this young lady of sixteen was to know the cause of his absence. She heard of it from Cecil.

'And one morning last week mademoiselle was running away with him, and the next morning she was married to her marquis!'

Cecil was able to tell her that.

'I used to be so fond of him,' said the ingenuous young lady. She had to thank Nevil for a Circassian dress and pearls, which he had sent to her by the hands of Mrs. Culling—a pretty present to a girl in the nursery, she thought, and in fact she chose to be a little wounded by the cause of his absence.

'He's a good creature-really,' Cecil spoke on his cousin's behalf. 'Mad; he always will be mad. A dear old savage; always amuses me. He does! I get half my entertainment from him.'

Captain Baskett was gifted with the art, which is a fine and a precious one, of priceless value in society, and not wanting a benediction upon it in our elegant literature, namely, the art of stripping his fellow-man and so posturing him as to make every movement of the comical wretch puppet-like, constrained, stiff, and foolish. He could present you heroic actions in that fashion; for example:

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'A long-shanked trooper, bearing the name of John Thomas Drew, was crawling along under fire of the batteries. Out pops old Nevil, tries to get the man on his back. It won't do. Nevil insists that it's exactly one of the cases that ought to be, and they remain arguing about it like a pair of nine-pins while the Muscovites are at work with the bowls. Very well. Let me tell you my story. It's perfectly true, I give you my word. So Nevil tries to horse Drew, and Drew proposes to horse Nevil, as at school. Then Drew offers a compromise. He would much rather have crawled on, you know, and allowed the shot to pass over his head; but he's a Briton, old Nevil the same; but old Nevil's peculiarity is that, as you are aware, he hates a compromise—won't have it—retro Sathanas! and Drew's proposal to take his arm instead of being carried pickaback disgusts old Nevil. Still it won't do to stop where they are, like the cocoa-nut and the pincushion of our friends, the gipsies, on the downs: so they take arms and commence the journey home, resembling the best of friends on the evening of a holiday in our native clime—two steps to the right, half-a-dozen to the left, etcaetera.'

Thus, with scarce a variation from the facts, with but a flowery chaplet cast on a truthful narrative, as it were, Captain Baskellett could render ludicrous that which in other quarters had obtained honourable mention. Nevil and Drew being knocked down by the wind of a ball near the battery, 'Confound it!' cries Nevil, jumping on his feet, 'it's because I consented to a compromise!'—a transparent piece of fiction this, but so in harmony with the character stripped naked for us that it is accepted. Imagine Nevil's love-affair in such hands! Recovering from a fever, Nevil sees a pretty French girl in a gondola, and immediately thinks, 'By jingo, I'm marriageable.' He hears she is engaged. 'By jingo, she's marriageable too.' He goes through a sum in addition, and the total is a couple; so he determines on a marriage. 'You can't get it out of his head; he must be married instantly, and to her, because she is going to marry somebody else. Sticks to her, follows her, will have her, in spite of her father, her marquis, her brother, aunts, cousins, religion, country, and the young woman herself. I assure you, a perfect model of male fidelity! She is married. He is on her track. He knows his time will come; he has only to be handy. You see, old Nevil believes in Providence, is perfectly sure he will one day hear it cry out, "Where's Beauchamp?"—"Here I am!"—"And here's your marquise!"—"I knew I should have her at last," says Nevil, calm as Mont Blanc on a reduced scale.'

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The secret of Captain Baskett's art would seem to be to show the automatic human creature at loggerheads with a necessity that winks at remarkable pretensions, while condemning it perpetually to doll-like action. You look on men from your own elevation as upon a quantity of our little wooden images, unto whom you affix puny characteristics, under restrictions from which they shall not escape, though they attempt it with the enterprising vigour of an extended leg, or a pair of raised arms, or a head awry, or a trick of jumping; and some of them are extraordinarily addicted to these feats; but for all they do the end is the same, for necessity rules, that exactly so, under stress of activity must the doll Nevil, the doll Everard, or the dolliest of dolls, fair woman, behave. The automatic creature is subject to the laws of its construction, you perceive. It can this, it can that, but it cannot leap out of its mechanism. One definition of the art is, humour made easy, and that may be why Cecil Baskett indulged in it, and why it is popular with those whose humour consists of a readiness to laugh.

The fun between Cecil Baskett and Mr. Romfrey over the doll Nevil threatened an intimacy and community of sentiment that alarmed Rosamund on behalf of her darling's material prospects. She wrote to him, entreating him to come to Steynham. Nevil Beauchamp replied to her both frankly and shrewdly: 'I shall not pretend that I forgive my uncle Everard, and therefore it is best for me to keep away. Have no fear. The baron likes a man of his own tastes: they may laugh together, if it suits them; he never could be guilty of treachery, and to disinherit me would be that. If I were to become his open enemy to-morrow, I should look on the estates as mine-unless I did anything to make him disrespect me. You will not suppose it likely. I foresee I shall want money. As for Cecil, I give him as much rope as he cares to have. I know very well Everard Romfrey will see where the point of likeness between them stops. I apply for a ship the moment I land.'

To test Nevil's judgement of his uncle, Rosamund ventured on showing this letter to Mr. Romfrey. He read it, and said nothing, but subsequently asked, from time to time, 'Has he got his ship yet?' It assured her that Nevil was not wrong, and dispelled her notion of the vulgar imbroglio of a rich uncle and two thirsty nephews. She was hardly less relieved in reflecting that he could read men so soberly and accurately. The desperation of the youth in love had rendered her one little bit doubtful of the orderliness of his wits. After this she smiled on Cecil's assiduities. Nevil obtained his appointment to a ship bound for the coast of Africa to spy for slavers. He called on his uncle in London, and spent the greater part of the hour's visit with Rosamund; seemed cured of his passion, devoid of rancour, glad of the prospect of a run among the slaving hulls. He and his uncle shook hands

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manfully, at the full outstretch of their arms, in a way so like them, to Rosamund's thinking—that is, in a way so unlike any other possible couple of men so situated—that the humour of the sight eclipsed all the pleasantries of Captain Baskelett. 'Good-bye, sir,' Nevil said heartily; and Everard Romfrey was not behind-hand with the cordial ring of his 'Good-bye, Nevil'; and upon that they separated. Rosamund would have been willing to speak to her beloved of his false Renee—the Frenchwoman, she termed her, *i.e.* generically false, needless to name; and one question quivered on her tongue's tip: 'How, when she had promised to fly with you, how could she the very next day step to the altar with him now her husband?' And, if she had spoken it, she would have added, 'Your uncle could not have set his face against you, had you brought her to England.' She felt strongly the mastery Nevil Beauchamp could exercise even over his uncle Everard. But when he was gone, unquestioned, merely caressed, it came to her mind that he had all through insisted on his possession of this particular power, and she accused herself of having wantonly helped to ruin his hope—a matter to be rejoiced at in the abstract; but what suffering she had inflicted on him! To quiet her heart, she persuaded herself that for the future she would never fail to believe in him and second him blindly, as true love should; and contemplating one so brave, far-sighted, and self-assured, her determination seemed to impose the lightest of tasks.

Practically humane though he was, and especially toward cattle and all kinds of beasts, Mr. Romfrey entertained no profound fellow-feeling for the negro, and, except as the representative of a certain amount of working power commonly requiring the whip to wind it up, he inclined to despise that black spot in the creation, with which our civilization should never have had anything to do. So he pronounced his mind, and the long habit of listening to oracles might grow us ears to hear and discover a meaning in it. Nevil's captures and releases of the grinning freights amused him for awhile. He compared them to strings of bananas, and presently put the vision of the whole business aside by talking of Nevil's banana-wreath. He desired to have Nevil out of it. He and Cecil handed Nevil in his banana-wreath about to their friends. Nevil, in his banana-wreath, was set preaching 'humanitomtity.' At any rate, they contrived to keep the remembrance of Nevil Beauchamp alive during the period of his disappearance from the world, and in so doing they did him a service.

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There is a pause between the descent of a diver and his return to the surface, when those who would not have him forgotten by the better world above him do rightly to relate anecdotes of him, if they can, and to provoke laughter at him. The encouragement of the humane sense of superiority over an object of interest, which laughter gives, is good for the object; and besides, if you begin to tell sly stories of one in the deeps who is holding his breath to fetch a pearl or two for you all, you divert a particular sympathetic oppression of the chest, that the extremely sensitive are apt to suffer from, and you dispose the larger number to keep in mind a person they no longer see. Otherwise it is likely that he will, very shortly after he has made his plunge, fatigue the contemplative brains above, and be shuffled off them, even as great ocean smooths away the dear vanished man's immediate circle of foam, and rapidly confounds the rippling memory of him with its other agitations. And in such a case the apparition of his head upon our common level once more will almost certainly cause a disagreeable shock; nor is it improbable that his first natural snorts in his native element, though they be simply to obtain his share of the breath of life, will draw down on him condemnation for eccentric behaviour and unmannerly; and this in spite of the jewel he brings, unless it be an exceedingly splendid one. The reason is, that our brave world cannot pardon a breach of continuity for any petty bribe.

Thus it chanced, owing to the prolonged efforts of Mr. Romfrey and Cecil Baskett to get fun out of him, at the cost of considerable inventiveness, that the electoral Address of the candidate, signing himself 'R. C. S. Nevil Beauchamp,' to the borough of Bevisham, did not issue from an altogether unremembered man.

He had been cruising in the Mediterranean, commanding the *Ariadne*, the smartest corvette in the service. He had, it was widely made known, met his marquise in Palermo. It was presumed that he was dancing the round with her still, when this amazing Address appeared on Bevisham's walls, in anticipation of the general Election. The Address, moreover, was ultra-Radical: museums to be opened on Sundays; ominous references to the Land question, *etc.*; no smooth passing mention of Reform, such as the Liberal, become stately, adopts in speaking of that property of his, but swinging blows on the heads of many a denounced iniquity.

Cecil forwarded the Address to Everard Romfrey without comment.

Next day the following letter, dated from Itchincope, the house of Mr. Grancey Lespel, on the borders of Bevisham, arrived at Steynham:

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'I have despatched you the proclamation, folded neatly. The electors of Bevisham are summoned, like a town at the sword's point, to yield him their votes. Proclamation is the word. I am your born representative! I have completed my political education on salt water, and I tackle you on the Land question. I am the heir of your votes, gentlemen!—I forgot, and I apologize; he calls them fellow-men. Fraternal, and not so risky. Here at Lespel's we read the thing with shouts. It hangs in the smoking-room. We throw open the curacoa to the intelligence and industry of the assembled guests; we carry the right of the multitude to our host's cigars by a majority. C'est un farceur que notre bon petit cousin. Lespel says it is sailorlike to do something of this sort after a cruise. Nevil's Radicalism would have been clever anywhere out of Bevisham. Of all boroughs! Grancey Lespel knows it. He and his family were Bevisham's Whig M.P.'s before the day of Manchester. In Bevisham an election is an arrangement made by Providence to square the accounts of the voters, and settle arrears. They reckon up the health of their two members and the chances of an appeal to the country when they fix the rents and leases. You have them pointed out to you in the street, with their figures attached to them like titles. Mr. Tomkins, the twenty-pound man; an elector of uncommon purity. I saw the ruffian yesterday. He has an extra breadth to his hat. He has never been known to listen to a member under L20, and is respected enormously—like the lady of the Mythology, who was an intolerable Tartar of virtue, because her price was nothing less than a god, and money down. Nevil will have to come down on Bevisham in the Jupiter style. Bevisham is downright the dearest of boroughs—"vaulting-boards," as Stukely Culbrett calls them—in the kingdom. I assume we still say "kingdom."

'He dashed into the Radical trap exactly two hours after landing. I believe he was on his way to the Halketts at Mount Laurels. A notorious old rascal revolutionist retired from his licenced business of slaughterer—one of your gratis doctors—met him on the high-road, and told him he was the man. Up went Nevil's enthusiasm like a bottle rid of the cork. You will see a great deal about faith in the proclamation; "faith in the future," and "my faith in you." When you become a Radical you have faith in any quantity, just as an alderman gets turtle soup. It is your badge, like a livery-servant's cockade or a corporal's sleeve stripes—your badge and your bellyful. Calculations were gone through at the Liberal newspaper-office, old Nevil adding up hard, and he was informed that he was elected by something like a topping eight or nine hundred and some fractions. I am sure that a fellow who can let himself be gulled by a pile of figures trumped up in a Radical newspaper-office must have great faith in the fractions. Out came Nevil's proclamation.

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'I have not met him, and I would rather not. I shall not pretend to offer you advice, for I have the habit of thinking your judgement can stand by itself. We shall all find this affair a nuisance. Nevil will pay through the nose. We shall have the ridicule spattered on the family. It would be a safer thing for him to invest his money on the Turf, and I shall advise his doing it if I come across him.

'Perhaps the best course would be to telegraph for the marquise!'

This was from Cecil Baskett. He added a postscript:

'Seriously, the "mad commander" has not an ace of a chance. Grancey and I saw some Working Men (you have to write them in capitals, king and queen small); they were reading the Address on a board carried by a red-nosed man, and shrugging. They are not such fools.

'By the way, I am informed Shrapnel has a young female relative living with him, said to be a sparkler. I bet you, sir, she is not a Radical. Do you take me?'

Rosamund Culling drove to the railway station on her way to Bevisham within an hour after Mr. Romfrey's eyebrows had made acute play over this communication.

CHAPTER XII

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE INFAMOUS DR. SHRAPNEL

In the High street of the ancient and famous town and port of Bevisham, Rosamund met the military governor of a neighbouring fortress, General Sherwin, once colonel of her husband's regiment in India; and by him, as it happened, she was assisted in finding the whereabouts of the young Liberal candidate, without the degrading recourse of an application at the newspaper-office of his party. The General was leisurely walking to a place of appointment to fetch his daughter home from a visit to an old school-friend, a Miss Jenny Denham, no other than a ward, or a niece, or an adoption of Dr. Shrapnel's: 'A nice girl; a great favourite of mine,' the General said. Shrapnel he knew by reputation only as a wrong-headed politician; but he spoke of Miss Denham pleasantly two or three times, praising her accomplishments and her winning manners. His hearer suspected that it might be done to dissociate the idea of her from the ruffling agitator. 'Is she pretty?' was a question that sprang from Rosamund's intimate reflections. The answer was, 'Yes.'

'Very pretty?'

'I think very pretty,' said the General.

'Captivatingly?'

'Clara thinks she is perfect; she is tall and slim, and dresses well. The girls were with a French Madam in Paris. But, if you are interested about her, you can come on with me, and we shall meet them somewhere near the head of the street. I don't,' the General hesitated and hummed— 'I don't call at Shrapnel's.'

'I have never heard her name before to-day,' said Rosamund.

'Exactly,' said the General, crowing at the aimlessness of a woman's curiosity.

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The young ladies were seen approaching, and Rosamund had to ask herself whether the first sight of a person like Miss Denham would be of a kind to exercise a lively influence over the political and other sentiments of a dreamy sailor just released from ship-service. In an ordinary case she would have said no, for Nevil enjoyed a range of society where faces charming as Miss Denham's were plentiful as roses in the rose-garden. But, supposing him free of his bondage to the foreign woman, there was, she thought and feared, a possibility that a girl of this description might capture a young man's vacant heart sighing for a new mistress. And if so, further observation assured her Miss Denham was likely to be dangerous far more than professedly attractive persons, enchantresses and the rest. Rosamund watchfully gathered all the superficial indications which incite women to judge of character profoundly. This new object of alarm was, as the General had said of her, tall and slim, a friend of neatness, plainly dressed, but exquisitely fitted, in the manner of Frenchwomen. She spoke very readily, not too much, and had the rare gift of being able to speak fluently with a smile on the mouth. Vulgar archness imitates it. She won and retained the eyes of her hearer sympathetically, it seemed. Rosamund thought her as little conscious as a woman could be. She coloured at times quickly, but without confusion. When that name, the key of Rosamund's meditations, chanced to be mentioned, a flush swept over Miss Denham's face. The candour of it was unchanged as she gazed at Rosamund, with a look that asked, 'Do you know him?'

Rosamund said, 'I am an old friend of his.'

'He is here now, in this town.'

'I wish to see him very much.'

General Sherwin interposed: 'We won't talk about political characters just for the present.'

'I wish you knew him, papa, and would advise him,' his daughter said.

The General nodded hastily. 'By-and-by, by-and-by.'

They had in fact taken seats at a table of mutton pies in a pastrycook's shop, where dashing military men were restrained solely by their presence from a too noisy display of fascinations before the fashionable waiting-women.

Rosamund looked at Miss Denham. As soon as they were in the street the latter said, 'If you will be good enough to come with me, madam . . .?' Rosamund bowed, thankful to have been comprehended. The two young ladies kissed cheeks and parted. General Sherwin raised his hat, and was astonished to see Mrs. Culling join Miss Denham in accepting the salute, for they had not been introduced, and what could they have in common? It was another of the oddities of female nature.



'My name is Mrs. Culling, and I will tell you how it is that I am interested in Captain Beauchamp,' Rosamund addressed her companion. 'I am his uncle's housekeeper. I have known him and loved him since he was a boy. I am in great fear that he is acting rashly.'

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'You honour me, madam, by speaking to me so frankly,' Miss Denham answered.

'He is quite bent upon this Election?'

'Yes, madam. I am not, as you can suppose, in his confidence, but I hear of him from Dr. Shrapnel.'

'Your uncle?'

'I call him uncle: he is my guardian, madam.'

It is perhaps excuseable that this communication did not cause the doctor to shine with added lustre in Rosamund's thoughts, or ennoble the young lady.

'You are not relatives, then?' she said.

'No, unless love can make us so.'

'Not blood-relatives?'

'No.'

'Is he not very . . . extreme?'

'He is very sincere.'

'I presume you are a politician?'

Miss Denham smiled. 'Could you pardon me, madam, if I said that I was?' The counter-question was a fair retort enfolding a gentler irony. Rosamund felt that she had to do with wits as well as with vivid feminine intuitions in the person of this Miss Denham.

She said, 'I really am of opinion that our sex might abstain from politics.'

'We find it difficult to do justice to both parties,' Miss Denham followed. 'It seems to be a kind of clanship with women; hardly even that.'

Rosamund was inattentive to the conversational slipshod, and launched one of the heavy affirmatives which are in dialogue full stops. She could not have said why she was sensible of anger, but the sentiment of anger, or spite (if that be a lesser degree of the same affliction), became stirred in her bosom when she listened to the ward of Dr. Shrapnel. A silly pretty puss of a girl would not have excited it, nor an avowed blood-relative of the demagogue.

Nevil's hotel was pointed out to Rosamund, and she left her card there. He had been absent since eight in the morning. There was the probability that he might be at Dr. Shrapnel's, so Rosamund walked on.

'Captain Beauchamp gives himself no rest,' Miss Denham said.

'Oh! I know him, when once his mind is set on anything,' said Rosamund.

'Is it not too early to begin to—canvass, I think, is the word?'

'He is studying whatever the town can teach him of its wants; that is, how he may serve it.'

'Indeed! But if the town will not have him to serve it?'

'He imagines that he cannot do better, until that has been decided, than to fit himself for the post.'

'Acting upon your advice? I mean, of course, your uncle's; that is, Dr. Shrapnel's.'

'Dr. Shrapnel thinks it will not be loss of time for Captain Beauchamp to grow familiar with the place, and observe as well as read.'

'It sounds almost as if Captain Beauchamp had submitted to be Dr. Shrapnel's pupil.'

'It is natural, madam, that Dr. Shrapnel should know more of political ways at present than Captain Beauchamp.'

'To Captain Beauchamp's friends and relatives it appears very strange that he should have decided to contest this election so suddenly. May I inquire whether he and Dr. Shrapnel are old acquaintances?'

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'No, madam, they are not. They had never met before Captain Beauchamp landed, the other day.'

'I am surprised, I confess. I cannot understand the nature of an influence that induces him to abandon a profession he loves and shines in, for politics, at a moment's notice.'

Miss Denham was silent, and then said:

'I will tell you, madam, how it occurred, as far as circumstances explain it. Dr. Shrapnel is accustomed to give a little country feast to the children I teach, and their parents if they choose to come, and they generally do. They are driven to Northeden Heath, where we set up a booth for them, and try with cakes and tea and games to make them spend one of their happy afternoons and evenings. We succeed, I know, for the little creatures talk of it and look forward to the day. When they are at their last romp, Dr. Shrapnel speaks to the parents.'

'Can he obtain a hearing?' Rosamund asked.

'He has not so very large a crowd to address, madam, and he is much beloved by those that come.'

'He speaks to them of politics on those occasions?'

'Adouci a leur intention. It is not a political speech, but Dr. Shrapnel thinks, that in a so-called free country seeking to be really free, men of the lowest class should be educated in forming a political judgement.'

'And women too?'

'And women, yes. Indeed, madam, we notice that the women listen very creditably.'

'They can put on the air.'

'I am afraid, not more than the men do. To get them to listen is something. They suffer like the men, and must depend on their intelligence to win their way out of it.'

Rosamund's meditation was exclamatory: What can be the age of this pretentious girl?

An afterthought turned her more conciliatorily toward the person, but less to the subject. She was sure that she was lending ear to the echo of the dangerous doctor, and rather pitied Miss Denham for awhile, reflecting that a young woman stuffed with such ideas would find it hard to get a husband. Mention of Nevil revived her feeling of hostility.

We had seen a gentleman standing near and listening attentively,' Miss Denham resumed, 'and when Dr. Shrapnel concluded a card was handed to him. He read it and gave it to me, and said, "You know that name." It was a name we had often talked about during the war.

He went to Captain Beauchamp and shook his hand. He does not pay many compliments, and he does not like to receive them, but it was impossible for him not to be moved by Captain Beauchamp's warmth in thanking him for the words he had spoken. I saw that Dr. Shrapnel became interested in Captain Beauchamp the longer they conversed. We walked home together. Captain Beauchamp supped with us. I left them at half-past eleven at night, and in the morning I found them walking in the garden. They had not gone to bed at all. Captain Beauchamp has remained in Bevisham ever since. He soon came to the decision to be a candidate for the borough.'

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Rosamund checked her lips from uttering: To be a puppet of Dr. Shrapnel's!

She remarked, 'He is very eloquent—Dr. Shrapnel?'

Miss Denham held some debate with herself upon the term.

'Perhaps it is not eloquence; he often . . . no, he is not an orator.'

Rosamund suggested that he was persuasive, possibly.

Again the young lady deliberately weighed the word, as though the nicest measure of her uncle or adoptor's quality in this or that direction were in requisition and of importance—an instance of a want of delicacy of perception Rosamund was not sorry to detect. For good-looking, refined-looking, quick-witted girls can be grown; but the nimble sense of fitness, ineffable lightning-footed tact, comes of race and breeding, and she was sure Nevil was a man soon to feel the absence of that.

'Dr. Shrapnel is persuasive to those who go partly with him, or whose condition of mind calls on him for great patience,' Miss Denham said at last.

'I am only trying to comprehend how it was that he should so rapidly have won Captain Beauchamp to his views,' Rosamund explained; and the young lady did not reply.

Dr. Shrapnel's house was about a mile beyond the town, on a common of thorn and gorse, through which the fir-bordered highway ran. A fence waist-high enclosed its plot of meadow and garden, so that the doctor, while protecting his own, might see and be seen of the world, as was the case when Rosamund approached. He was pacing at long slow strides along the gravel walk, with his head bent and bare, and his hands behind his back, accompanied by a gentleman who could be no other than Nevil, Rosamund presumed to think; but drawing nearer she found she was mistaken.

'That is not Captain Beauchamp's figure,' she said.

'No, it is not he,' said Miss Denham.

Rosamund saw that her companion was pale. She warmed to her at once; by no means on account of the pallor in itself.

'I have walked too fast for you, I fear.'

'Oh no; I am accused of being a fast walker.'

Rosamund was unwilling to pass through the demagogue's gate. On second thoughts, she reflected that she could hardly stipulate to have news of Nevil tossed to her over the spikes, and she entered.

While receiving Dr. Shrapnel's welcome to a friend of Captain Beauchamp, she observed the greeting between Miss Denham and the younger gentleman. It reassured her. They met like two that have a secret.

The dreaded doctor was an immoderately tall man, lean and wiry, carelessly clad in a long loose coat of no colour, loose trowsers, and huge shoes.

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He stooped from his height to speak, or rather swing the stiff upper half of his body down to his hearer's level and back again, like a ship's mast on a billowy sea. He was neither rough nor abrupt, nor did he roar bullmouthedly as demagogues are expected to do, though his voice was deep. He was actually, after his fashion, courteous, it could be said of him, except that his mind was too visibly possessed by distant matters for Rosamund's taste, she being accustomed to drawing-room and hunting and military gentlemen, who can be all in the words they utter. Nevertheless he came out of his lizard-like look with the down-dropped eyelids quick at a resumption of the dialogue; sometimes gesturing, sweeping his arm round. A stubborn tuft of iron-grey hair fell across his forehead, and it was apparently one of his life's labours to get it to lie amid the mass, for his hand rarely ceased to be in motion without an impulsive stroke at the refractory forelock. He peered through his eyelashes ordinarily, but from no infirmity of sight. The truth was, that the man's nature counteracted his spirit's intenser eagerness and restlessness by alternating a state of repose that resembled dormancy, and so preserved him. Rosamund was obliged to give him credit for straightforward eyes when they did look out and flash. Their filmy blue, half overflowed with grey by age, was poignant while the fire in them lasted. Her antipathy attributed something electrical to the light they shot.

Dr. Shrapnel's account of Nevil stated him to have gone to call on Colonel Halkett, a new resident at Mount Laurels, on the Otley river. He offered the welcome of his house to the lady who was Captain Beauchamp's friend, saying, with extraordinary fatuity (so it sounded in Rosamund's ears), that Captain Beauchamp would certainly not let an evening pass without coming to him. Rosamund suggested that he might stay late at Mount Laurels.

'Then he will arrive here after nightfall,' said the doctor. 'A bed is at your service, ma'am.'

The offer was declined. 'I should like to have seen him to-day; but he will be home shortly.'

'He will not quit Bevisham till this Election's decided unless to hunt a stray borough vote, ma'am.'

'He goes to Mount Laurels.'

'For that purpose.'

'I do not think he will persuade Colonel Halkett to vote in the Radical interest.'

'That is the probability with a landed proprietor, ma'am. We must knock, whether the door opens or not. Like,' the doctor laughed to himself up aloft, 'like a watchman in the night to say that he smells smoke on the premises.'

'Surely we may expect Captain Beauchamp to consult his family about so serious a step as this he is taking,' Rosamund said, with an effort to be civil.

Why should he?' asked the impending doctor.

His head continued in the interrogative position when it had resumed its elevation. The challenge for a definite reply to so outrageous a question irritated Rosamund's nerves, and, loth though she was to admit him to the subject, she could not forbear from saying, 'Why? Surely his family have the first claim on him!'

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'Surely not, ma'am. There is no first claim. A man's wife and children have a claim on him for bread. A man's parents have a claim on him for obedience while he is a child. A man's uncles, aunts, and cousins have no claim on him at all, except for help in necessity, which he can grant and they require. None—wife, children, parents, relatives—none has a claim to bar his judgement and his actions. Sound the conscience, and sink the family! With a clear conscience, it is best to leave the family to its own debates. No man ever did brave work who held counsel with his family. The family view of a man's fit conduct is the weak point of the country. It is no other view than, "Better thy condition for our sakes." Ha! In this way we breed sheep, fatten oxen: men are dying off. Resolution taken, consult the family means—waste your time! Those who go to it want an excuse for altering their minds. The family view is everlastingly the shopkeeper's! Purse, pence, ease, increase of worldly goods, personal importance—the pound, the English pound! Dare do that, and you forfeit your share of Port wine in this world; you won't be dubbed with a title; you'll be fingered at! Lord, Lord! is it the region inside a man, or out, that gives him peace? Out, they say; for they have lost faith in the existence of an inner. They haven't it. Air-sucker, blood-pump, cooking machinery, and a battery of trained instincts, aptitudes, fill up their vacuum. I repeat, ma'am, why should young Captain Beauchamp spend an hour consulting his family? They won't approve him; he knows it. They may annoy him; and what is the gain of that? They can't move him; on that I let my right hand burn. So it would be useless on both sides. He thinks so. So do I. He is one of the men to serve his country on the best field we can choose for him. In a ship's cabin he is thrown away. Ay, ay, War, and he may go aboard. But now we must have him ashore. Too few of such as he!'

'It is matter of opinion,' said Rosamund, very tightly compressed; scarcely knowing what she said.

How strange, besides hateful, it was to her to hear her darling spoken of by a stranger who not only pretended to appreciate but to possess him! A stranger, a man of evil, with monstrous ideas! A terribly strong inexhaustible man, of a magical power too; or would he otherwise have won such a mastery over Nevil?

Of course she could have shot a rejoinder, to confute him with all the force of her indignation, save that the words were tumbling about in her head like a world in disruption, which made her feel a weakness at the same time that she gloated on her capacity, as though she had an enormous army, quite overwhelming if it could but be got to move in advance. This very common condition of the silent-stricken, unused in dialectics, heightened Rosamund's disgust by causing her to suppose that Nevil had been similarly silenced, in his case vanquished, captured, ruined; and he dwindled in her estimation for a moment or two. She felt that among a sisterhood of gossips she would soon have found her voice, and struck down the demagogue's audacious sophisms: not that they affected her in the slightest degree for her own sake.

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Shrapnel might think what he liked, and say what he liked, as far as she was concerned, apart from the man she loved. Rosamund went through these emotions altogether on Nevil's behalf, and longed for her affirmatizing inspiring sisterhood until the thought of them threw another shade on him.

What champion was she to look to? To whom but to Mr. Everard Romfrey?

It was with a spasm of delighted reflection that she hit on Mr. Romfrey. He was like a discovery to her. With his strength and skill, his robust common sense and rough shrewd wit, his prompt comparisons, his chivalry, his love of combat, his old knightly blood, was not he a match, and an overmatch, for the ramping Radical who had tangled Nevil in his rough snares? She ran her mind over Mr. Romfrey's virtues, down even to his towering height and breadth. Could she but once draw these two giants into collision in Nevil's presence, she was sure it would save him. The method of doing it she did not stop to consider: she enjoyed her triumph in the idea.

Meantime she had passed from Dr. Shrapnel to Miss Denham, and carried on a conversation becomingly.

Tea had been made in the garden, and she had politely sipped half a cup, which involved no step inside the guilty house, and therefore no distress to her antagonism. The sun descended. She heard the doctor reciting. Could it be poetry? In her imagination the sombre hues surrounding an incendiary opposed that bright spirit. She listened, smiling incredulously. Miss Denham could interpret looks, and said, 'Dr. Shrapnel is very fond of those verses.'

Rosamund's astonishment caused her to say, 'Are they his own?'—a piece of satiric innocence at which Miss Denham laughed softly as she answered, 'No.'

Rosamund pleaded that she had not heard them with any distinctness.

'Are they written by the gentleman at his side?'

'Mr. Lydiard? No. He writes, but the verses are not his.'

'Does he know—has he met Captain Beauchamp?'

'Yes, once. Captain Beauchamp has taken a great liking to his works.'

Rosamund closed her eyes, feeling that she was in a nest that had determined to appropriate Nevil. But at any rate there was the hope and the probability that this Mr. Lydiard of the pen had taken a long start of Nevil in the heart of Miss Denham: and struggling to be candid, to ensure some meditative satisfaction, Rosamund admitted to herself that the girl did not appear to be one of the wanton giddy-pated pussies who play

two gentlemen or more on their line. Appearances, however, could be deceptive: never pretend to know a girl by her face, was one of Rosamund's maxims.

She was next informed of Dr. Shrapnel's partiality for music toward the hour of sunset. Miss Denham mentioned it, and the doctor, presently sauntering up, invited Rosamund to a seat on a bench near the open window of the drawing-room. He nodded to his ward to go in.

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'I am a fire-worshipper, ma'am,' he said. 'The God of day is the father of poetry, medicine, music: our best friend. See him there! My Jenny will spin a thread from us to him over the millions of miles, with one touch of the chords, as quick as he shoots a beam on us. Ay! on her wretched tinkler called a piano, which tries at the whole orchestra and murders every instrument in the attempt. But it's convenient, like our modern civilization—a taming and a diminishing of individuals for an insipid harmony!'

'You surely do not object to the organ?—I fear I cannot wait, though,' said Rosamund.

Miss Denham entreated her. 'Oh! do, madam. Not to hear me—I am not so perfect a player that I should wish it—but to see him. Captain Beauchamp may now be coming at any instant.'

Mr. Lydiard added, 'I have an appointment with him here for this evening.'

'You build a cathedral of sound in the organ,' said Dr. Shrapnel, casting out a league of leg as he sat beside his only half-persuaded fretful guest. 'You subject the winds to serve you; that's a gain. You do actually accomplish a resonant imitation of the various instruments; they sing out as your two hands command them—trumpet, flute, dulcimer, hautboy, drum, storm, earthquake, ethereal quire; you have them at your option. But tell me of an organ in the open air? The sublimity would vanish, ma'am, both from the notes and from the structure, because accessories and circumstances produce its chief effects. Say that an organ is a despotism, just as your piano is the Constitutional bourgeois. Match them with the trained orchestral band of skilled individual performers, indoors or out, where each grasps his instrument, and each relies on his fellow with confidence, and an unrivalled concord comes of it. That is our republic each one to his work; all in union! There's the motto for us! Then you have music, harmony, the highest, fullest, finest! Educate your men to form a band, you shame dexterous trickery and imitation sounds. Then for the difference of real instruments from clever shams! Oh, ay, one will set your organ going; that is, one in front, with his couple of panting air-pumpers behind—his ministers!' Dr. Shrapnel laughed at some undefined mental image, apparently careless of any laughing companionship. 'One will do it for you, especially if he's born to do it. Born!' A slap of the knee reported what seemed to be an immensely contemptuous sentiment. 'But free mouths blowing into brass and wood, ma'am, beat your bellows and your whifflers; your artificial choruses—crash, crash! your unanimous plebiscitums! Beat them? There's no contest: we're in another world; we're in the sun's world,—yonder!'

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Miss Denham's opening notes on the despised piano put a curb on the doctor. She began a Mass of Mozart's, without the usual preliminary rattle of the keys, as of a crier announcing a performance, straight to her task, for which Rosamund thanked her, liking that kind of composed simplicity: she thanked her more for cutting short the doctor's fanatical nonsense. It was perceptible to her that a species of mad metaphor had been wriggling and tearing its passage through a thorn-bush in his discourse, with the furious urgency of a sheep in a panic; but where the ostensible subject ended and the metaphor commenced, and which was which at the conclusion, she found it difficult to discern—much as the sheep would, be when he had left his fleece behind him. She could now have said, 'Silly old man!'

Dr. Shrapnel appeared most placable. He was gazing at his Authority in the heavens, tangled among gold clouds and purple; his head bent acutely on one side, and his eyes upturned in dim speculation. His great feet planted on their heels faced him, suggesting the stocks; his arms hung loose. Full many a hero of the alehouse, anciently amenable to leg-and-foot imprisonment in the grip of the parish, has presented as respectable an air. His forelock straggled as it willed.

Rosamund rose abruptly as soon as the terminating notes of the Mass had been struck.

Dr. Shrapnel seemed to be concluding his devotions before he followed her example.

'There, ma'am, you have a telegraphic system for the soul,' he said. 'It is harder work to travel from this place to this' (he pointed at ear and breast) 'than from here to yonder' (a similar indication traversed the distance between earth and sun). 'Man's aim has hitherto been to keep men from having a soul for this world: he takes it for something infernal. He?—I mean, they that hold power. They shudder to think the conservatism of the earth will be shaken by a change; they dread they won't get men with souls to fetch and carry, dig, root, mine, for them. Right!—what then? Digging and mining will be done; so will harping and singing. But then we have a natural optimacy! Then, on the one hand, we whip the man-beast and the man-sloth; on the other, we seize that old fatted iniquity—that tyrant! that tempter! that legitimated swindler cursed of Christ! that palpable Satan whose name is Capital! by the neck, and have him disgorging within three gasps of his life. He is the villain! Let him live, for he too comes of blood and bone. He shall not grind the faces of the poor and helpless—that's all.'

The comicality of her having such remarks addressed to her provoked a smile on Rosamund's lips.

'Don't go at him like Samson blind,' said Mr. Lydiard; and Miss Denham, who had returned, begged her guardian to entreat the guest to stay.

She said in an undertone, 'I am very anxious you should see Captain Beauchamp, madam.'

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'I too; but he will write, and I really can wait no longer,' Rosamund replied, in extreme apprehension lest a certain degree of pressure should overbear her repugnance to the doctor's dinner-table. Miss Denham's look was fixed on her; but, whatever it might mean, Rosamund's endurance was at an end. She was invited to dine; she refused. She was exceedingly glad to find herself on the high-road again, with a prospect of reaching Steynham that night; for it was important that she should not have to confess a visit to Bevisham now when she had so little of favourable to tell Mr. Everard Romfrey of his chosen nephew. Whether she had acted quite wisely in not remaining to see Nevil, was an agitating question that had to be silenced by an appeal to her instincts of repulsion, and a further appeal for justification of them to her imaginary sisterhood of gossips. How could she sit and eat, how pass an evening in that house, in the society of that man? Her tuneful chorus cried, 'How indeed.' Besides, it would have offended Mr. Romfrey to hear that she had done so. Still she could not refuse to remember Miss Denham's marked intimations of there being a reason for Nevil's friend to seize the chance of an immediate interview with him; and in her distress at the thought, Rosamund reluctantly, but as if compelled by necessity, ascribed the young lady's conduct to a strong sense of personal interests.

'Evidently she has no desire he should run the risk of angering a rich uncle.'

This shameful suspicion was unavoidable: there was no other opiate for Rosamund's blame of herself after letting her instincts gain the ascendancy.

It will be found a common case, that when we have yielded to our instincts, and then have to soothe conscience, we must slaughter somebody, for a sacrificial offering to our sense of comfort.

CHAPTER XIII

A SUPERFINE CONSCIENCE

However much Mr. Everard Romfrey may have laughed at Nevil Beauchamp with his 'banana-wreath,' he liked the fellow for having volunteered for that African coast-service, and the news of his promotion by his admiral to the post of commander through a death vacancy, had given him an exalted satisfaction, for as he could always point to the cause of failures, he strongly appreciated success. The circumstance had offered an occasion for the new commander to hit him hard upon a matter of fact. Beauchamp had sent word of his advance in rank, but requested his uncle not to imagine him wearing an additional epaulette; and he corrected the infallible gentleman's error (which had of course been reported to him when he was dreaming of Renee, by Mrs. Culling) concerning a lieutenant's shoulder decorations, most gravely; informing him of the anchor on the lieutenant's pair of epaulettes, and the anchor and star on a commander's, and the crown on a captain's, with a well-feigned solicitousness to save

his uncle from blundering further. This was done in the dry neat manner which Mr. Romfrey could feel to be his own turned on him.

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He began to conceive a vague respect for the fellow who had proved him wrong upon a matter of fact. Beauchamp came from Africa rather worn by the climate, and immediately obtained the command of the Ariadne corvette, which had been some time in commission in the Mediterranean, whither he departed, without visiting Steynham; allowing Rosamund to think him tenacious of his wrath as well as of love. Mr. Romfrey considered him to be insatiable for service. Beauchamp, during his absence, had shown himself awake to the affairs of his country once only, in an urgent supplication he had forwarded for all his uncle's influence to be used to get him appointed to the first vacancy in Robert Hall's naval brigade, then forming a part of our handful in insurgent India. The fate of that chivalrous Englishman, that born sailor-warrior, that truest of heroes, imperishable in the memory of those who knew him, and in our annals, young though he was when death took him, had wrung from Nevil Beauchamp such a letter of tears as to make Mr. Romfrey believe the naval crown of glory his highest ambition. Who on earth could have guessed him to be bothering his head about politics all the while! Or was the whole stupid business a freak of the moment?

It became necessary for Mr. Romfrey to contemplate his eccentric nephew in the light of a mannikin once more. Consequently he called to mind, and bade Rosamund Culling remember, that he had foreseen and had predicted the mounting of Nevil Beauchamp on his political horse one day or another; and perhaps the earlier the better. And a donkey could have sworn that when he did mount he would come galloping in among the Radical rough-riders. Letters were pouring upon Steynham from men and women of Romfrey blood and relationship concerning the positive tone of Radicalism in the commander's address. Everard laughed at them. As a practical man, his objection lay against the poor fool's choice of the peccant borough of Bevisham. Still, in view of the needfulness of his learning wisdom, and rapidly, the disbursement of a lot of his money, certain to be required by Bevisham's electors, seemed to be the surest method for quickening his wits. Thus would he be acting as his own surgeon, gaily practising phlebotomy on his person to cure him of his fever. Too much money was not the origin of the fever in Nevil's case, but he had too small a sense of the value of what he possessed, and the diminishing stock would be likely to cry out shrilly.

To this effect, never complaining that Nevil Beauchamp had not come to him to take counsel with him, the high-minded old gentleman talked. At the same time, while indulging in so philosophical a picture of himself as was presented by a Romfrey mildly accounting for events and smoothing them under the infliction of an offence, he could not but feel that Nevil had challenged him: such was the reading of it; and he waited for some justifiable excitement to fetch him out of the magnanimous mood, rather in the image of an angler, it must be owned.

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'Nevil understands that I am not going to pay a farthing of his expenses in Bevisham?' he said to Mrs. Culling.

She replied blandly and with innocence, 'I have not seen him, sir.'

He nodded. At the next mention of Nevil between them, he asked, 'Where is it he's lying perdu, ma'am?'

'I fancy in that town, in Bevisham.'

'At the Liberal, Radical, hotel?'

'I dare say; some place; I am not certain'

'The rascal doctor's house there? Shrapnel's?'

'Really . . . I have not seen him.'

'Have you heard from him?'

'I have had a letter; a short one.'

'Where did he date his letter from?'

'From Bevisham.'

'From what house?'

Rosamund glanced about for a way of escaping the question. There was none but the door. She replied, 'From Dr. Shrapnel's.'

'That's the Anti-Game-Law agitator.'

'You do not imagine, sir, that Nevil subscribes to every thing the horrid man agitates for?'

'You don't like the man, ma'am?'

'I detest him.'

'Ha! So you have seen Shrapnel?'

'Only for a moment; a moment or two. I cannot endure him. I am sure I have reason.'

Rosamund flushed exceedingly red. The visit to Dr. Shrapnel's house was her secret, and the worming of it out made her feel guilty, and that feeling revived and heated her antipathy to the Radical doctor.

'What reason?' said Mr. Romfrey, freshening at her display of colour.

She would not expose Nevil to the accusation of childishness by confessing her positive reason, so she answered, 'The man is a kind of man . . . I was not there long; I was glad to escape. He . . .' she hesitated: for in truth it was difficult to shape the charge against him, and the effort to be reticent concerning Nevil, and communicative, now that he had been spoken of, as to the detested doctor, reduced her to some confusion. She was also fatally anxious to be in the extreme degree conscientious, and corrected and modified her remarks most suspiciously.

'Did he insult you, ma'am?' Mr. Romfrey inquired.

She replied hastily, 'Oh no. He may be a good man in his way. He is one of those men who do not seem to think a woman may have opinions. He does not scruple to outrage those we hold. I am afraid he is an infidel. His ideas of family duties and ties, and his manner of expressing himself, shocked me, that is all. He is absurd. I dare say there is no harm in him, except for those who are so unfortunate as to fall under his influence—and that, I feel sure, cannot be permanent. He could not injure me personally. He could not offend me, I mean. Indeed, I have nothing whatever to say against him, as far as I . . .'

'Did he fail to treat you as a lady, ma'am?'

Rosamund was getting frightened by the significant pertinacity of her lord.

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'I am sure, sir, he meant no harm.'

'Was the man uncivil to you, ma'am?' came the emphatic interrogation.

She asked herself, had Dr. Shrapnel been uncivil toward her? And so conscientious was she, that she allowed the question to be debated in her mind for half a minute, answering then, 'No, not uncivil. I cannot exactly explain He certainly did not intend to be uncivil. He is only an unpolished, vexatious man; enormously tall.'

Mr. Romfrey ejaculated, 'Ha! humph!'

His view of Dr. Shrapnel was taken from that instant. It was, that this enormously big blustering agitator against the preservation of birds, had behaved rudely toward the lady officially the chief of his household, and might be considered in the light of an adversary one would like to meet. The size of the man increased his aspect of villainy, which in return added largely to his giant size. Everard Romfrey's mental eye could perceive an attractiveness about the man little short of magnetic; for he thought of him so much that he had to think of what was due to his pacifical disposition (deeply believed in by him) to spare himself the trouble of a visit to Bevisham.

The young gentleman whom he regarded as the Radical doctor's dupe, fell in for a share of his view of the doctor, and Mr. Romfrey became less fitted to observe Nevil Beauchamp's doings with the Olympian gravity he had originally assumed.

The extreme delicacy of Rosamund's conscience was fretted by a remorseful doubt of her having conveyed a just impression of Dr. Shrapnel, somewhat as though the fine sleek coat of it were brushed the wrong way. Reflection warned her that her deliberative intensely sincere pause before she responded to Mr. Romfrey's last demand, might have implied more than her words. She consoled herself with the thought that it was the dainty susceptibility of her conscientiousness which caused these noble qualms, and so deeply does a refined nature esteem the gift, that her pride in it helped her to overlook her moral perturbation. She was consoled, moreover, up to the verge of triumph in her realization of the image of a rivalling and excelling power presented by Mr. Romfrey, though it had frightened her at the time. Let not Dr. Shrapnel come across him! She hoped he would not. Ultimately she could say to herself, 'Perhaps I need not have been so annoyed with the horrid man.' It was on Nevil's account. Shrapnel's contempt of the claims of Nevil's family upon him was actually a piece of impudence, impudently expressed, if she remembered correctly. And Shrapnel was a black malignant, the foe of the nation's Constitution, deserving of punishment if ever man was; with his ridiculous metaphors, and talk of organs and pianos, orchestras and despotisms, and flying to the sun! How could Nevil listen to the creature! Shrapnel must be a shameless, hypocrite to mask his wickedness from one so clear-sighted as Nevil, and

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no doubt he indulged in his impudence out of wanton pleasure in it. His business was to catch young gentlemen of family, and to turn them against their families, plainly. That was thinking the best of him. No doubt he had his objects to gain. 'He might have been as impudent as he liked to me; I would have pardoned him!' Rosamund exclaimed. Personally, you see, she was generous. On the whole, knowing Everard Romfrey as she did, she wished that she had behaved, albeit perfectly discreet in her behaviour, and conscientiously just, a shade or two differently. But the evil was done.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LEADING ARTICLE AND MR. TIMOTHY TURBOT

Nevil declined to come to Steynham, clearly owing to a dread of hearing Dr. Shrapnel abused, as Rosamund judged by the warmth of his written eulogies of the man, and an ensuing allusion to Game. He said that he had not made up his mind as to the Game Laws. Rosamund mentioned the fact to Mr. Romfrey. 'So we may stick by our licences to shoot to-morrow,' he rejoined. Of a letter that he also had received from Nevil, he did not speak. She hinted at it, and he stared. He would have deemed it as vain a subject to discourse of India, or Continental affairs, at a period when his house was full for the opening day of sport, and the expectation of keeping up his renown for great bags on that day so entirely occupied his mind. Good shots were present who had contributed to the fame of Steynham on other opening days. Birds were plentiful and promised not to be too wild. He had the range of the Steynham estate in his eye, dotted with covers; and after Steynham, Holdesbury, which had never yielded him the same high celebrity, but both lay mapped out for action under the profound calculations of the strategist, ready to show the skill of the field tactician. He could not attend to Nevil. Even the talk of the forthcoming Elections, hardly to be avoided at his table, seemed a puerile distraction. Ware the foe of his partridges and pheasants, be it man or vermin! The name of Shrapnel was frequently on the tongue of Captain Baskett. Rosamund heard him, in her room, and his derisive shouts of laughter over it. Cecil was a fine shot, quite as fond of the pastime as his uncle, and always in favour with him while sport stalked the land. He was in gallant spirits, and Rosamund, brooding over Nevil's fortunes, and sitting much alone, as she did when there were guests in the house, gave way to her previous apprehensions. She touched on them to Mr. Stukely Culbrett, her husband's old friend, one of those happy men who enjoy perceptions without opinions, and are not born to administer comfort to other than themselves. As far as she could gather, he fancied Nevil Beauchamp was in danger of something, but he delivered his mind only upon circumstances and characters: Nevil risked his luck, Cecil knew his game, Everard Romfrey was the staunchest

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of mankind: Stukely had nothing further to say regarding the situation. She asked him what he thought, and he smiled. Could a reasonable head venture to think anything in particular? He repeated the amazed, 'You don't say so' of Colonel Halkett, on hearing the name of the new Liberal candidate for Bevisham at the dinner-table, together with some of Cecil's waggish embroidery upon the theme.

Rosamund exclaimed angrily, 'Oh! if I had been there he would not have dared.'

'Why not be there?' said Stukely. 'You have had your choice for a number of years.'

She shook her head, reddening.

But supposing that she had greater privileges than were hers now? The idea flashed. A taint of personal pique, awakened by the fancied necessity for putting her devotedness to Nevil to proof, asked her if she would then be the official housekeeper to whom Captain Baskett bowed low with affected respect and impertinent affability, ironically praising her abroad as a wonder among women, that could at one time have played the deuce in the family, had she chosen to do so.

'Just as you like,' Mr. Culbrett remarked. It was his ironical habit of mind to believe that the wishes of men and women—women as well as men—were expressed by their utterances.

'But speak of Nevil to Colonel Halkett,' said Rosamund, earnestly carrying on what was in her heart. 'Persuade the colonel you do not think Nevil foolish—not more than just a little impetuous. I want that marriage to come off! Not on account of her wealth. She is to inherit a Welsh mine from her uncle, you know, besides being an only child. Recall what Nevil was during the war. Miss Halkett has not forgotten it, I am sure, and a good word for him from a man of the world would, I am certain, counteract Captain Baskett's—are they designs? At any rate, you can if you like help Nevil with the colonel. I am convinced they are doing him a mischief. Colonel Halkett has bought an estate—and what a misfortune that is!—close to Bevisham. I fancy he is Toryish. Will you not speak to him? At my request? I am so helpless I could cry.

'Fancy you have no handkerchief,' said Mr. Culbrett, 'and give up scheming, pray. One has only to begin to scheme, to shorten life to half-a-dozen hops and jumps. I could say to the colonel, "Young Beauchamp's a political cub: he ought to have a motherly wife.'"

'Yes, yes, you are right; don't speak to him at all,' said Rosamund, feeling that there must be a conspiracy to rob her of her proud independence, since not a soul could be won to spare her from taking some energetic step, if she would be useful to him she loved.



Colonel Halkett was one of the guests at Steynham who knew and respected her, and he paid her a visit and alluded to Nevil's candidature, apparently not thinking much the worse of him. 'We can't allow him to succeed,' he said, and looked for a smiling approval of such natural opposition, which Rosamund gave him readily after he had expressed the hope that Nevil Beauchamp would take advantage of his proximity to Mount Laurels during the contest to try the hospitality of the house. 'He won't mind meeting his uncle?' The colonel's eyes twinkled. 'My daughter has engaged Mr. Romfrey and Captain Baskett to come to us when they have shot Holdesbury.'

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And Captain Baskett! thought Rosamund; her jealousy whispering that the mention of his name close upon Cecilia Halkett's might have a nuptial signification.

She was a witness from her window—a prisoner's window, her 'eager heart could have termed it—of a remarkable ostentation of cordiality between the colonel and Cecil, in the presence of Mr. Romfrey. Was it his humour to conspire to hand Miss Halkett to Cecil, and then to show Nevil the prize he had forfeited by his folly? The three were on the lawn a little before Colonel Halkett's departure. The colonel's arm was linked with Cecil's while they conversed. Presently the latter received his afternoon's letters, and a newspaper. He soon had the paper out at a square stretch, and sprightly information for the other two was visible in his crowing throat. Mr. Romfrey raised the gun from his shoulder-pad, and grounded it. Colonel Halkett wished to peruse the matter with his own eyes, but Cecil could not permit it; he must read it aloud for them, and he suited his action to his sentences. Had Rosamund been accustomed to leading articles which are the composition of men of an imposing vocabulary, she would have recognized and as good as read one in Cecil's gestures as he tilted his lofty stature forward and back, marking his commas and semicolons with flapping of his elbows, and all but doubling his body at his periods. Mr. Romfrey had enough of it half-way down the column; his head went sharply to left and right. Cecil's peculiar foppish slicing down of his hand pictured him protesting that there was more and finer of the inimitable stuff to follow. The end of the scene exhibited the paper on the turf, and Colonel Halkett's hand on Cecil's shoulder, Mr. Romfrey nodding some sort of acquiescence over the muzzle of his gun, whether reflective or positive Rosamund could not decide. She sent out a footman for the paper, and was presently communing with its eloquent large type, quite unable to perceive where the comicality or the impropriety of it lay, for it would have struck her that never were truer things of Nevil Beauchamp better said in the tone befitting them. This perhaps was because she never heard fervid praises of him, or of anybody, delivered from the mouth, and it is not common to hear Englishmen phrasing great eulogies of one another. Still, as a rule, they do not object to have it performed in that region of our national eloquence, the Press, by an Irishman or a Scotchman. And what could there be to warrant Captain Baskett's malicious derision, and Mr. Romfrey's nodding assent to it, in an article where all was truth?

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The truth was mounted on an unusually high wind. It was indeed a leading article of a banner-like bravery, and the unrolling of it was designed to stir emotions. Beauchamp was the theme. Nevil had it under his eyes earlier than Cecil. The paper was brought into his room with the beams of day, damp from the presses of the Bevisham Gazette, exactly opposite to him in the White Hart Hotel, and a glance at the paragraphs gave him a lively ardour to spring to his feet. What writing! He was uplifted as 'The heroic Commander Beauchamp, of the Royal Navy,' and 'Commander Beauchamp, R.N., a gentleman of the highest connections': he was 'that illustrious Commander Beauchamp, of our matchless, navy, who proved on every field of the last glorious war of this country that the traditional valour of the noble and indomitable blood transmitted to his veins had lost none of its edge and weight since the battle-axes of the Lords de Romfrey, ever to the fore, clove the skulls of our national enemy on the wide and fertile campaigns of France.' This was pageantry.

There was more of it. Then the serious afflatus of the article condescended, as it were, to blow a shrill and well-known whistle:—the study of the science of navigation made by Commander Beauchamp, R.N., was cited for a jocose warranty of a seaman's aptness to assist in steering the Vessel of the State. After thus heeling over, to tip a familiar wink to the multitude, the leader tone resumed its fit deportment. Commander Beauchamp, in responding to the invitation of the great and united Liberal party of the borough of Bevisham, obeyed the inspirations of genius, the dictates of humanity, and what he rightly considered the paramount duty, as it is the proudest ambition, of the citizen of a free country.

But for an occasional drop and bump of the sailing gasbag upon catch-words of enthusiasm, which are the rhetoric of the merely windy, and a collapse on a poetic line, which too often signalizes the rhetorician's emptiness of his wind, the article was eminent for flight, sweep, and dash, and sailed along far more grandly than ordinary provincial organs for the promoting or seconding of public opinion, that are as little to be compared with the mighty metropolitan as are the fife and bugle boys practising on their instruments round melancholy outskirts of garrison towns with the regimental marching full band under the presidency of its drum-major. No signature to the article was needed for Bevisham to know who had returned to the town to pen it. Those long-stretching sentences, comparable to the very ship Leviathan, spanning two Atlantic billows, appertained to none but the renowned Mr. Timothy Turbot, of the Corn Law campaigns, Reform agitations, and all manifestly popular movements requiring the heaven-endowed man of speech, an interpreter of multitudes, and a prompter. Like most men who have little to say, he was an orator in print, but that was a poor medium for him—his body

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without his fire. Mr. Timothy's place was the platform. A wise discernment, or else a lucky accident (for he came hurriedly from the soil of his native isle, needing occupation), set him on that side in politics which happened to be making an established current and strong headway. Oratory will not work against the stream, or on languid tides. Dribblets of movements that allowed the world to doubt whether they were so much movements as illusions of the optics, did not suit his genius. Thus he was a Liberal, no Radical, fountain. Liberalism had the attraction for the orator of being the active force in politics, between two passive opposing bodies, the aspect of either of which it can assume for a menace to the other, Toryish as against Radicals; a trifle red in the eyes of the Tory. It can seem to lean back on the Past; it can seem to be amorous of the Future. It is actually the thing of the Present and its urgencies, therefore popular, pouring forth the pure waters of moderation, strong in their copiousness. Delicious and rapturous effects are to be produced in the flood of a Liberal oration by a chance infusion of the fierier spirit, a flavour of Radicalism. That is the thing to set an audience bounding and quivering. Whereas if you commence by tilling a Triton pitcher full of the neat liquor upon them, 'you have to resort to the natural element for the orator's art of variation, you are diluted—and that's bathos, to quote Mr. Timothy. It was a fine piece of discernment in him. Let Liberalism be your feast, Radicalism your spice. And now and then, off and on, for a change, for diversion, for a new emotion, just for half an hour or so—now and then the Sunday coat of Toryism will give you an air. You have only to complain of the fit, to release your shoulders in a trice. Mr. Timothy felt for his art as poets do for theirs, and considered what was best adapted to speaking, purely to speaking. Upon no creature did he look with such contempt as upon Dr. Shrapnel, whose loose disjunct audiences he was conscious he could, giving the doctor any start he liked, whirl away from him and have compact, enchained, at his first flourish; yea, though they were composed of 'the poor man,' with a stomach for the political distillery fit to drain relishingly every private bogside or mountain-side tap in old Ireland in its best days—the illicit, you understand.

Further, to quote Mr. Timothy's points of view, the Radical orator has but two notes, and one is the drawling pathetic, and the other is the ultra-furious; and the effect of the former we liken to the English working man's wife's hob-set queasy brew of well-meant villany, that she calls by the innocent name of tea; and the latter is to be blown, asks to be blown, and never should be blown without at least seeming to be blown, with an accompaniment of a house on fire. Sir, we must adapt ourselves to our times. Perhaps a spark or two does lurk about our house, but we have vigilant watchmen in plenty,

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and the house has been pretty fairly insured. Shrieking in it is an annoyance to the inmates, nonsensical; weeping is a sickly business. The times are against Radicalism to the full as much as great oratory is opposed to extremes. These drag the orator too near to the matter. So it is that one Radical speech is amazingly like another—they all have the earth-spots. They smell, too; they smell of brimstone. Soaring is impossible among that faction; but this they can do, they can furnish the Tory his opportunity to soar. When hear you a thrilling Tory speech that carries the country with it, save when the incendiary Radical has shrieked? If there was envy in the soul of Timothy, it was addressed to the fine occasions offered to the Tory speaker for vindicating our ancient principles and our sacred homes. He admired the tone to be assumed for that purpose: it was a good note. Then could the Tory, delivering at the right season the Shakesperian 'This England . . .' and Byronic—'The inviolate Island . . .' shake the frame, as though smiting it with the tail of the *gymnotus electricus*. Ah, and then could he thump out his Horace, the Tory's mentor and his cordial, with other great ancient comic and satiric poets, his old Port of the classical cellarage, reflecting veneration upon him who did but name them to an audience of good dispositions. The Tory possessed also an innate inimitably easy style of humour, that had the long reach, the jolly lordly indifference, the comfortable masterfulness, of the whip of a four-in-hand driver, capable of flicking and stinging, and of being ironically caressing. Timothy appreciated it, for he had winced under it. No professor of Liberalism could venture on it, unless it were in the remote district of a back parlour, in the society of a cherishing friend or two, and with a slice of lemon requiring to be refloated in the glass.

But gifts of this description were of a minor order. Liberalism gave the heading cry, devoid of which parties are dogs without a scent, orators mere pump-handles. The Tory's cry was but a whistle to his pack, the Radical howled to the moon like any chained hound. And no wonder, for these parties had no established current, they were as hard-bound waters; the Radical being dyked and dammed most soundly, the Tory resembling a placid lake of the plains, fed by springs and no confluents. For such good reasons, Mr. Timothy rejoiced in the happy circumstances which had expelled him from the shores of his native isle to find a refuge and a vocation in Manchester at a period when an orator happened to be in request because dozens were wanted. That centre of convulsions and source of streams possessed the statistical orator, the reasoning orator, and the inspired; with others of quality; and yet it had need of an ever-ready spontaneous imperturbable speaker, whose bubbling generalizations and ability to beat the drum humorous could swing halls of meeting

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from the grasp of an enemy, and then ascend on incandescent adjectives to the popular idea of the sublime. He was the artistic orator of Corn Law Repeal—the Manchester flood, before which time Whigs were, since which they have walked like spectral antediluvians, or floated as dead canine bodies that are sucked away on the ebb of tides and flung back on the flow, ignorant whether they be progressive or retrograde. Timothy Turbot assisted in that vast effort. It should have elevated him beyond the editorship of a country newspaper. Why it did not do so his antagonists pretended to know, and his friends would smile to hear. The report was that he worshipped the nymph Whisky.

Timothy's article had plucked Beauchamp out of bed; Beauchamp's card in return did the same for him.

'Commander Beauchamp? I am heartily glad to make your acquaintance, sir; I've been absent, at work, on the big business we have in common, I rejoice to say, and am behind my fellow townsmen in this pleasure and lucky I slept here in my room above, where I don't often sleep, for the row of the machinery—it's like a steamer that won't go, though it's always starting ye,' Mr. Timothy said in a single breath, upon entering the back office of the Gazette, like unto those accomplished violinists who can hold on the bow to finger an incredible number of notes, and may be imaged as representing slow paternal Time, that rolls his capering dot-headed generation of mortals over the wheel, hundreds to the minute. 'You'll excuse my not shaving, sir, to come down to your summons without an extra touch to the neck-band.'

Beauchamp beheld a middle-sized round man, with loose lips and pendant indigo jowl, whose eyes twinkled watery, like pebbles under the shore-wash, and whose neck-band needed an extra touch from fingers other than his own.

'I am sorry to have disturbed you so early,' he replied.

'Not a bit, Commander Beauchamp, not a bit, sir. Early or late, and ay ready—with the Napiers; I'll wash, I'll wash.'

'I came to speak to you of this article of yours on me. They tell me in the office that you are the writer. Pray don't "Commander" me so much. —It's not customary, and I object to it.'

'Certainly, certainly,' Timothy acquiesced.

'And for the future, Mr. Turbot, please to be good enough not to allude in print to any of my performances here and there. Your intentions are complimentary, but it happens that I don't like a public patting on the back.'

'No, and that's true,' said Timothy.

His appreciative and sympathetic agreement with these sharp strictures on the article brought Beauchamp to a stop.

Timothy waited for him; then, smoothing his prickly cheek, remarked: 'If I'd guessed your errand, Commander Beauchamp, I'd have called in the barber before I came down, just to make myself decent for a 'first introduction.'

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Beauchamp was not insensible to the slyness of the poke at him. 'You see, I come to the borough unknown to it, and as quietly as possible, and I want to be taken as a politician,' he continued, for the sake of showing that he had sufficient to say to account for his hasty and peremptory summons of the writer of that article to his presence. 'It's excessively disagreeable to have one's family lugged into notice in a newspaper—especially if they are of different politics. I feel it.'

All would, sir,' said Timothy.

'Then why the deuce did you do it?'

Timothy drew a lading of air into his lungs. 'Politics, Commander Beauchamp, involves the doing of lots of disagreeable things to ourselves and our relations; it's positive. I'm a soldier of the Great Campaign: and who knows it better than I, sir? It's climbing the greasy pole for the leg o' mutton, that makes the mother's heart ache for the jacket and the nether garments she mended neatly, if she didn't make them. Mutton or no mutton, there's grease for certain! Since it's sure we can't be disconnected from the family, the trick is to turn the misfortune to a profit; and allow me the observation, that an old family, sir, and a high and titled family, is not to be despised for a background of a portrait in naval uniform, with medal and clasps, and some small smoke of powder clearing off over there:—that's if we're to act sagaciously in introducing an unknown candidate to a borough that has a sneaking liking for the kind of person, more honour to it. I'm a political veteran, sir; I speak from experience. We must employ our weapons, every one of them, and all off the grindstone.'

'Very well,' said Beauchamp. 'Now understand; you are not in future to employ the weapons, as you call them, that I have objected to.'

Timothy gaped slightly.

'Whatever you will, but no puffery,' Beauchamp added. 'Can I by any means arrest—purchase—is it possible, tell me, to lay an embargo—stop to-day's issue of the Gazette?'

'No more—than the bite of a mad dog,' Timothy replied, before he had considered upon the monstrous nature of the proposal.

Beauchamp humphed, and tossed his head. The simile of the dog struck him with intense effect.

'There'd be a second edition,' said Timothy, 'and you might buy up that. But there'll be a third, and you may buy up that; but there'll be a fourth and a fifth, and so on ad infinitum, with the advertisement of the sale of the foregoing creating a demand like a raging thirst in a shipwreck, in Bligh's boat, in the tropics. I'm afraid, Com—Captain

Beauchamp, sir, there's no stopping the Press while the people have an appetite for it —and a Company's at the back of it.'

'Pooh, don't talk to me in that way; all I complain of is the figure you have made of me,' said Beauchamp, fetching him smartly out of his nonsense; 'and all I ask of you is not to be at it again. Who would suppose from reading an article like that, that I am a candidate with a single political idea!'

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'An article like that,' said Timothy, winking, and a little surer of his man now that he suggested his possession of ideas, 'an article like that is the best cloak you can put on a candidate with too many of 'em, Captain Beauchamp. I'll tell you, sir; I came, I heard of your candidature, I had your sketch, the pattern of ye, before me, and I was told that Dr. Shrapnel fathered you politically. There was my brief! I had to persuade our constituents that you, Commander Beauchamp of the Royal Navy, and the great family of the Earls of Romfrey, one of the heroes of the war, and the recipient of a Royal Humane Society's medal for saving life in Bevisham waters, were something more than the Radical doctor's political son; and, sir, it was to this end, aim, and object, that I wrote the article I am not ashamed to avow as mine, and I do so, sir, because of the solitary merit it has of serving your political interests as the liberal candidate for Bevisham by counteracting the unpopularity of Dr. Shrapnel's name, on the one part, and of reviving the credit due to your valour and high bearing on the field of battle in defence of your country, on the other, so that Bevisham may apprehend, in spite of party distinctions, that it has the option, and had better seize upon the honour, of making a M.P. of a hero.'

Beauchamp interposed hastily: 'Thank you, thank you for the best of intentions. But let me tell you I am prepared to stand or fall with Dr. Shrapnel, and be hanged to all that humbug.'

Timothy rubbed his hands with an abstracted air of washing. 'Well, commander, well, sir, they say a candidate's to be humoured in his infancy, for he has to do all the humouring before he's many weeks old at it; only there's the fact!—he soon finds out he has to pay for his first fling, like the son of a family sowing his oats to reap his Jews. Credit me, sir, I thought it prudent to counteract a bit of an apothecary's shop odour in the junior Liberal candidate's address. I found the town sniffing, they scented Shrapnel in the composition.'

'Every line of it was mine,' said Beauchamp.

'Of course it was, and the address was admirably worded, sir, I make bold to say it to your face; but most indubitably it threatened powerful drugs for weak stomachs, and it blew cold on votes, which are sensitive plants like nothing else in botany.'

'If they are only to be got by abandoning principles, and by anything but honesty in stating them, they may go,' said Beauchamp.

'I repeat, my dear sir, I repeat, the infant candidate delights in his honesty, like the babe in its nakedness, the beautiful virgin in her innocence. So he does; but he discovers it's time for him to wear clothes in a contested election. And what's that but to preserve the outlines pretty correctly, whilst he doesn't shock and horrify the optics? A dash of conventionalism makes the whole civilized world kin, ye know. That's the truth. You must appear to be one of them, for them to choose you. After all, there's no harm in a dyer's hand; and, sir, a candidate looking at his own, when he has won the Election . . .'

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'Ah, well,' said Beauchamp, swinging on his heel, 'and now I'll take my leave of you, and I apologize for bringing you down here so early. Please attend to what I have said; it's peremptory. You will give me great pleasure by dining with me to-night, at the hotel opposite. Will you? I don't know what kind of wine I shall be able to offer you. Perhaps you know the cellar, and may help me in that.'

Timothy grasped his hand, 'With pleasure, Commander Beauchamp. They have a bucellas over there that 's old, and a tolerable claret, and a Port to be inquired for under the breath, in a mysteriously intimate tone of voice, as one says, "I know of your treasure, and the corner under ground where it lies." Avoid the champagne: 'tis the banqueting wine. Ditto the sherry. One can drink them, one can drink them.'

'At a quarter to eight this evening, then,' said Nevil.

'I'll be there at the stroke of the clock, sure as the date of a bill,' said Timothy.

And it's early to guess whether you'll catch Bevisham or you won't, he reflected, as he gazed at the young gentleman crossing the road; but female Bevisham's with you, if that counts for much. Timothy confessed, that without the employment of any weapon save arrogance and a look of candour, the commander had gone some way toward catching the feminine side of himself.

CHAPTER XV

CECILIA HALKETT

Beauchamp walked down to the pier, where he took a boat for H.M.S. Isis, to see Jack Wilmore, whom he had not met since his return from his last cruise, and first he tried the efficacy of a dive in salt water, as a specific for irritation. It gave the edge to a fine appetite that he continued to satisfy while Wilmore talked of those famous dogs to which the navy has ever been going.

'We want another panic, Beauchamp,' said Lieutenant Wilmore. 'No one knows better than you what a naval man has to complain of, so I hope you'll get your Election, if only that we may reckon on a good look-out for the interests of the service. A regular Board with a permanent Lord High Admiral, and a regular vote of money to keep it up to the mark. Stick to that. Hardist has a vote in Bevisham. I think I can get one or two more. Why aren't you a Tory? No Whigs nor Liberals look after us half so well as the Tories. It's enough to break a man's heart to see the troops of dockyard workmen marching out as soon as ever a Liberal Government marches in. Then it's one of our infernal panics again, and patch here, patch there; every inch of it make-believe! I'll prove to you from examples that the humbug of Government causes exactly the same humbugging workmanship. It seems as if it were a game of "rascals all." Let them sink us! but, by

heaven! one can't help feeling for the country. And I do say it's the doing of those Liberals. Skilled workmen, mind you, not to be netted again so easily.

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America reaps the benefit of our folly That was a lucky run of yours up the Niger; the admiral was friendly, but you deserved your luck. For God's sake, don't forget the state of our service when you're one of our cherubs up aloft, Beauchamp. This I'll say, I've never heard a man talk about it as you used to in old midshipmite days, whole watches through—don't you remember? on the North American station, and in the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. And that girl at Malta! I wonder what has become of her? What a beauty she was! I dare say she wasn't so fine a girl as the Armenian you unearthed on the Bosphorus, but she had something about her a fellow can't forget. That was a lovely creature coming down the hills over Granada on her mule. Ay, we've seen handsome women, Nevil Beauchamp. But you always were lucky, invariably, and I should bet on you for the Election.'

'Canvass for me, Jack,' said Beauchamp, smiling at his friend's unconscious double-skeining of subjects. 'If I turn out as good a politician as you are a seaman, I shall do. Pounce on Hardist's vote without losing a day. I would go to him, but I've missed the Halketts twice. They're on the Otley river, at a place called Mount Laurels, and I particularly want to see the colonel. Can you give me a boat there, and come?'

'Certainly,' said Wilmore. 'I've danced there with the lady, the handsomest girl, English style, of her time. And come, come, our English style's the best. It wears best, it looks best. Foreign women . . . they're capital to flirt with. But a girl like Cecilia Halkett—one can't call her a girl, and it won't do to say Goddess, and queen and charmer are out of the question, though she's both, and angel into the bargain; but, by George! what a woman to call wife, you say; and a man attached to a woman like that never can let himself look small. No such luck for me; only I swear if I stood between a good and a bad action, the thought of that girl would keep me straight, and I've only danced with her once!'

Not long after sketching this rough presentation of the lady, with a masculine hand, Wilmore was able to point to her in person on the deck of her father's yacht, the *Esperanza*, standing out of Otley river. There was a gallant splendour in the vessel that threw a touch of glory on its mistress in the minds of the two young naval officers, as they pulled for her in the ship's gig.

Wilmore sang out, 'Give way, men!'

The sailors bent to their oars, and presently the schooner's head was put to the wind.

'She sees we're giving chase,' Wilmore said. 'She can't be expecting me, so it must be you. No, the colonel doesn't race her. They've only been back from Italy six months: I mean the schooner. I remember she talked of you when I had her for a partner. Yes, now I mean Miss Halkett. Blest if I think she talked of anything else. She sees us.'

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I'll tell you what she likes: she likes yachting, she likes Italy, she likes painting, likes things old English, awfully fond of heroes. I told her a tale of one of our men saving life. "Oh!" said she, "didn't your friend Nevil Beauchamp save a man from drowning, off the guardship, in exactly the same place?" And next day she sent me a cheque for three pounds for the fellow. Steady, men! I keep her letter.'

The boat went smoothly alongside the schooner. Miss Halkett had come to the side. The oars swung fore and aft, and Beauchamp sprang on deck.

Wilmore had to decline Miss Halkett's invitation to him as well as his friend, and returned in his boat. He left the pair with a ruffling breeze, and a sky all sail, prepared, it seemed to him, to enjoy the most delicious you-and-I on salt water that a sailor could dream of; and placidly envying, devoid of jealousy, there was just enough of fancy quickened in Lieutenant Wilmore to give him pictures of them without disturbance of his feelings—one of the conditions of the singular visitation we call happiness, if he could have known it.

For a time his visionary eye followed them pretty correctly. So long since they had parted last! such changes in the interval! and great animation in Beauchamp's gaze, and a blush on Miss Halkett's cheeks.

She said once, 'Captain Beauchamp.' He retorted with a solemn formality. They smiled, and immediately took footing on their previous intimacy.

'How good it was of you to come twice to Mount Laurels,' said she. 'I have not missed you to-day. No address was on your card. Where are you staying in the neighbourhood? At Mr. Lespel's?'

'I'm staying at a Bevisham hotel,' said Beauchamp.

'You have not been to Steynham yet? Papa comes home from Steynham to-night.'

'Does he? Well, the Ariadne is only just paid off, and I can't well go to Steynham yet. I —' Beauchamp was astonished at the hesitation he found in himself to name it: 'I have business in Bevisham.'

'Naval business?' she remarked.

'No,' said he.

The sensitive prescience we have of a critical distaste of our proceedings is, the world is aware, keener than our intuition of contrary opinions; and for the sake of preserving the sweet outward forms of friendliness, Beauchamp was anxious not to speak of the

business in Bevisham just then, but she looked and he had hesitated, so he said flatly, 'I am one of the candidates for the borough.'

'Indeed!'

'And I want the colonel to give me his vote.'

The young lady breathed a melodious 'Oh!' not condemnatory or reproachful—a sound to fill a pause. But she was beginning to reflect.

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'Italy and our English Channel are my two Poles,' she said. 'I am constantly swaying between them. I have told papa we will not lay up the yacht while the weather holds fair. Except for the absence of deep colour and bright colour, what can be more beautiful than these green waves and that dark forest's edge, and the garden of an island! The yachting-water here is an unrivalled lake; and if I miss colour, which I love, I remind myself that we have temperate air here, not a sun that fiends you under cover. We can have our fruits too, you see.' One of the yachtsmen was handing her a basket of hot-house grapes, reclining beside crisp home-made loaflets. 'This is my luncheon. Will you share it, Nevil?'

His Christian name was pleasant to hear from her lips. She held out a bunch to him.

'Grapes take one back to the South,' said he. 'How do you bear compliments? You have been in Italy some years, and it must be the South that has worked the miracle.'

'In my growth?' said Cecilia, smiling. 'I have grown out of my Circassian dress, Nevil.'

'You received it, then?'

'I wrote you a letter of thanks—and abuse, for your not coming to Steynham. You may recognize these pearls.'

The pearls were round her right wrist. He looked at the blue veins.

'They're not pearls of price,' he said.

'I do not wear them to fascinate the jewellers,' rejoined Miss Halkett. 'So you are a candidate at an Election. You still have a tinge of Africa, do you know? But you have not abandoned the navy?'

'—Not altogether.'

'Oh! no, no: I hope not. I have heard of you, . . . but who has not? We cannot spare officers like you. Papa was delighted to hear of your promotion. Parliament!'

The exclamation was contemptuous.

'It's the highest we can aim at,' Beauchamp observed meekly.

'I think I recollect you used to talk politics when you were a midshipman,' she said. 'You headed the aristocracy, did you not?'

'The aristocracy wants a head,' said Beauchamp.

'Parliament, in my opinion, is the best of occupations for idle men,' said she.

'It shows that it is a little too full of them.'

'Surely the country can go on very well without so much speech-making?'

'It can go on very well for the rich.'

Miss Halkett tapped with her foot.

'I should expect a Radical to talk in that way, Nevil.'

'Take me for one.'

'I would not even imagine it.'

'Say Liberal, then.'

'Are you not'—her eyes opened on him largely, and narrowed from surprise to reproach, and then to pain—are you not one of us? Have you gone over to the enemy, Nevil?'

'I have taken my side, Cecilia; but we, on our side, don't talk of an enemy.'

'Most unfortunate! We are Tories, you know, Nevil. Papa is a thorough Tory. He cannot vote for you. Indeed I have heard him say he is anxious to defeat the plots of an old Republican in Bevisham—some doctor there; and I believe he went to London to look out for a second Tory candidate to oppose to the Liberals. Our present Member is quite safe, of course. Nevil, this makes me unhappy. Do you not feel that it is playing traitor to one's class to join those men?'

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Such was the Tory way of thinking, Nevil Beauchamp said: the Tories upheld their Toryism in the place of patriotism.

'But do we not owe the grandeur of the country to the Tories?' she said, with a lovely air of conviction. 'Papa has told me how false the Whigs played the Duke in the Peninsula: ruining his supplies, writing him down, declaring, all the time he was fighting his first hard battles, that his cause was hopeless—that resistance to Napoleon was impossible. The Duke never, never had loyal support but from the Tory Government. The Whigs, papa says, absolutely preached submission to Napoleon! The Whigs, I hear, were the Liberals of those days. The two Pitts were Tories. The greatness of England has been built up by the Tories. I do and will defend them: it is the fashion to decry them now. They have the honour and safety of the country at heart. They do not play disgracefully at reductions of taxes, as the Liberals do. They have given us all our heroes. Non fu mai gloria senza invidia. They have done service enough to despise the envious mob. They never condescend to supplicate brute force for aid to crush their opponents. You feel in all they do that the instincts of gentlemen are active.'

Beauchamp bowed.

'Do I speak too warmly?' she asked. 'Papa and I have talked over it often, and especially of late. You will find him your delighted host and your inveterate opponent.'

'And you?'

'Just the same. You will have to pardon me; I am a terrible foe.'

'I declare to you, Cecilia, I would prefer having you against me to having you indifferent.'

'I wish I had not to think it right that you should be beaten. And now— can you throw off political Nevil, and be sailor Nevil? I distinguish between my old friend, and my . . . our . . .'

'Dreadful antagonist?'

'Not so dreadful, except in the shock he gives us to find him in the opposite ranks. I am grieved. But we will finish our sail in peace. I detest controversy. I suppose, Nevil, you would have no such things as yachts? they are the enjoyments of the rich!'

He reminded her that she wished to finish her sail in peace; and he had to remind her of it more than once. Her scattered resources for argumentation sprang up from various suggestions, such as the flight of yachts, mention of the shooting season, sight of a royal palace; and adopted a continually heightened satirical form, oddly intermixed with an undisguised affectionate friendliness. Apparently she thought it possible to worry him out of his adhesion to the wrong side in politics. She certainly had no conception of the nature of his political views, for one or two extreme propositions flung to him in jest,

he swallowed with every sign of a perfect facility, as if the Radical had come to regard stupendous questions as morsels barely sufficient for his daily sustenance.

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Cecilia reflected that he must be playing, and as it was not a subject for play she tacitly reproved him by letting him be the last to speak of it. He may not have been susceptible to the delicate chastisement, probably was not, for when he ceased it was to look on the beauty of her lowered eyelids, rather with an idea that the weight of his argument lay on them. It breathed from him; both in the department of logic and of feeling, in his plea for the poor man and his exposition of the poor man's rightful claims, he evidently imagined that he had spoken overwhelmingly; and to undeceive him in this respect, for his own good, Cecilia calmly awaited the occasion when she might show the vanity of arguments in their effort to overcome convictions. He stood up to take his leave of her, on their return to the mouth of the Otley river, unexpectedly, so that the occasion did not arrive; but on his mentioning an engagement he had to give a dinner to a journalist and a tradesman of the town of Bevisham, by way of excuse for not complying with her gentle entreaty that he would go to Mount Laurels and wait to see the colonel that evening, 'Oh! then your choice must be made irrevocably, I am sure,' Miss Halkett said, relying upon intonation and manner to convey a great deal more, and not without a minor touch of resentment for his having dragged her into the discussion of politics, which she considered as a slime wherein men hustled and tussled, no doubt worthily enough, and as became them; not however to impose the strife upon the elect ladies of earth. What gentleman ever did talk to a young lady upon the dreary topic seriously? Least of all should Nevil Beauchamp have done it. That object of her high imagination belonged to the exquisite sphere of the feminine vision of the pure poetic, and she was vexed by the discord he threw between her long-cherished dream and her unanticipated realization of him: if indeed it was he presenting himself to her in his own character, and not trifling, or not passing through a phase of young man's madness.

Possibly he might be the victim of the latter and more pardonable state, and so thinking she gave him her hand.

'Good-bye, Nevil. I may tell papa to expect you tomorrow?'

'Do, and tell him to prepare for a field-day.'

She smiled. 'A sham fight that will not win you a vote! I hope you will find your guests this evening agreeable companions.'

Beauchamp half-shrugged involuntarily. He obliterated the piece of treason toward them by saying that he hoped so; as though the meeting them, instead of slipping on to Mount Laurels with her, were an enjoyable prospect.

He was dropped by the Esperanza's boat near Otley ferry, to walk along the beach to Bevisham, and he kept eye on the elegant vessel as she glided swan-like to her moorings off Mount Laurels park through dusky merchant craft, colliers, and trawlers,

loosely shaking her towering snow-white sails, unchallenged in her scornful supremacy; an image of a refinement of beauty, and of a beautiful servicelessness.

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As the yacht, so the mistress: things of wealth, owing their graces to wealth, devoting them to wealth—splendid achievements of art both! and dedicated to the gratification of the superior senses.

Say that they were precious examples of an accomplished civilization; and perhaps they did offer a visible ideal of grace for the rough world to aim at. They might in the abstract address a bit of a monition to the uncultivated, and encourage the soul to strive toward perfection, in beauty: and there is no contesting the value of beauty when the soul is taken into account. But were they not in too great a profusion in proportion to their utility? That was the question for Nevil Beauchamp. The democratic spirit inhabiting him, temporarily or permanently, asked whether they were not increasing to numbers which were oppressive? And further, whether it was good, for the country, the race, ay, the species, that they should be so distinctly removed from the thousands who fought the grand, and the grisly, old battle with nature for bread of life. Those grimy sails of the colliers and fishing-smacks, set them in a great sea, would have beauty for eyes and soul beyond that of elegance and refinement. And do but look on them thoughtfully, the poor are everlastingly, unrelievedly, in the abysses of the great sea

One cannot pursue to conclusions a line of meditation that is half-built on the sensations as well as on the mind. Did Beauchamp at all desire to have those idly lovely adornments of riches, the Yacht and the Lady, swept away? Oh, dear, no. He admired them, he was at home with them. They were much to his taste. Standing on a point of the beach for a last look at them before he set his face to the town, he prolonged the look in a manner to indicate that the place where business called him was not in comparison at all so pleasing: and just as little enjoyable were his meditations opposed to predilections. Beauty plucked the heart from his breast. But he had taken up arms; he had drunk of the questioning cup, that which denieth peace to us, and which projects us upon the missionary search of the How, the Wherefore, and the Why not, ever afterward. He questioned his justification, and yours, for gratifying tastes in an ill-regulated world of wrong-doing, suffering, sin, and bounties unrighteously dispensed—not sufficiently dispersed. He said by-and-by to pleasure, battle to-day. From his point of observation, and with the store of ideas and images his fiery yet reflective youth had gathered, he presented himself as it were saddled to that hard-riding force known as the logical impetus, which spying its quarry over precipices, across oceans and deserts, and through systems and webs, and into shops and cabinets of costliest china, will come at it, will not be refused, let the distances and the breakages be what they may. He went like the meteoric man with the mechanical legs in the song, too quick for a cry of protestation, and reached results amazing to his instincts, his tastes, and his training, not less rapidly and naturally than tremendous Ergo is shot forth from the clash of a syllogism.

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CHAPTER XVI

A PARTIAL DISPLAY OF BEAUCHAMP IN HIS COLOURS

Beauchamp presented himself at Mount Laurels next day, and formally asked Colonel Halkett for his vote, in the presence of Cecilia.

She took it for a playful glance at his new profession of politician: he spoke half-playfully. Was it possible to speak in earnest?

'I 'm of the opposite party,' said the colonel; as conclusive a reply as could be: but he at once fell upon the rotten navy of a Liberal Government. How could a true sailor think of joining those Liberals! The question referred to the country, not to a section of it, Beauchamp protested with impending emphasis: Tories and Liberals were much the same in regard to the care of the navy. 'Nevil!' exclaimed Cecilia. He cited beneficial Liberal bills recently passed, which she accepted for a concession of the navy to the Tories, and she smiled. In spite of her dislike of politics, she had only to listen a few minutes to be drawn into the contest: and thus it is that one hot politician makes many among women and men of a people that have the genius of strife, or else in this case the young lady did unconsciously feel a deep interest in refuting and overcoming Nevil Beauchamp. Colonel Halkett denied the benefits of those bills. 'Look,' said he, 'at the scarecrow plight of the army under a Liberal Government!' This laid him open to the charge that he was for backing Administrations instead of principles.

'I do,' said the colonel. 'I would rather have a good Administration than all your talk of principles: one's a fact, but principles? principles?' He languished for a phrase to describe the hazy things. 'I have mine, and you have yours. It's like a dispute between religions. There's no settling it except by main force. That's what principles lead you to.'

Principles may be hazy, but heavy artillery is disposable in defence of them, and Beauchamp fired some reverberating guns for the eternal against the transitory; with less of the gentlemanly fine taste, the light and easy social semi-irony, than Cecilia liked and would have expected from him. However, as to principles, no doubt Nevil was right, and Cecilia drew her father to another position. 'Are not we Tories to have principles as well as the Liberals, Nevil?'

'They may have what they call principles,' he admitted, intent on pursuing his advantage over the colonel, who said, to shorten the controversy: 'It's a question of my vote, and my liking. I like a Tory Government, and I don't like the Liberals. I like gentlemen; I don't like a party that attacks everything, and beats up the mob for power, and repays it with sops, and is dragging us down from all we were proud of.'

'But the country is growing, the country wants expansion,' said Beauchamp; 'and if your gentlemen by birth are not up to the mark, you must have leaders that are.'

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'Leaders who cut down expenditure, to create a panic that doubles the outlay! I know them.'

'A panic, Nevil.' Cecilia threw stress on the memorable word.

He would hear no reminder in it. The internal condition of the country was now the point for seriously-minded Englishmen.

'My dear boy, what have you seen of the country?' Colonel Halkett inquired.

'Every time I have landed, colonel, I have gone to the mining and the manufacturing districts, the centres of industry; wherever there was dissatisfaction. I have attended meetings, to see and hear for myself. I have read the papers'

'The papers!'

'Well, they're the mirror of the country.'

'Does one see everything in a mirror, Nevil?' said Cecilia: 'even in the smoothest?'

He retorted softly: 'I should be glad to see what you see,' and felled her with a blush.

For an example of the mirror offered by the Press, Colonel Halkett touched on Mr. Timothy Turbot's article in eulogy of the great Commander Beauchamp. 'Did you like it?' he asked. 'Ah, but if you meddle with politics, you must submit to be held up on the prongs of a fork, my boy; soaped by your backers and shaved by the foe; and there's a figure for a gentleman! as your uncle Romfrey says.'

Cecilia did not join this discussion, though she had heard from her father that something grotesque had been written of Nevil. Her foolishness in blushing vexed body and mind. She was incensed by a silly compliment that struck at her feminine nature when her intellect stood in arms. Yet more hurt was she by the reflection that a too lively sensibility might have conjured up the idea of the compliment. And again, she wondered at herself for not resenting so rare a presumption as it implied, and not disdaining so outworn a form of flattery. She wondered at herself too for thinking of resentment and disdain in relation to the familiar commonplaces of licenced impertinence. Over all which hung a darkened image of her spirit of independence, like a moon in eclipse.

Where lay his weakness? Evidently in the belief that he had thought profoundly. But what minor item of insufficiency or feebleness was discernible? She discovered that he could be easily fretted by similes and metaphors they set him staggering and groping like an ancient knight of faery in a forest bewitched.



'Your specific for the country is, then, Radicalism,' she said, after listening to an attack on the Tories for their want of a policy and indifference to the union of classes.

'I would prescribe a course of it, Cecilia; yes,' he turned to her.

'The Dr. Dulcamara of a single drug?'

'Now you have a name for me! Tory arguments always come to epithets.'

'It should not be objectionable. Is it not honest to pretend to have only one cure for mortal maladies? There can hardly be two panaceas, can there be?'

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'So you call me quack?'

'No, Nevil, no,' she breathed a rich contralto note of denial: 'but if the country is the patient, and you will have it swallow your prescription . . .'

'There's nothing like a metaphor for an evasion,' said Nevil, blinking over it.

She drew him another analogy, longer than was at all necessary; so tedious that her father struck through it with the remark:

'Concerning that quack—that's one in the background, though!'

'I know of none,' said Beauchamp, well-advised enough to forbear mention of the name of Shrapnel.

Cecilia petitioned that her stumbling ignorance, which sought the road of wisdom, might be heard out. She had a reserve entanglement for her argumentative friend. 'You were saying, Nevil, that you were for principles rather than for individuals, and you instanced Mr. Cougham, the senior Liberal candidate of Bevisham, as one whom you would prefer to see in Parliament instead of Seymour Austin, though you confess to Mr. Austin's far superior merits as a politician and servant of his country: but Mr. Cougham supports Liberalism while Mr. Austin is a Tory. You are for the principle.'

'I am,' said he, bowing.

She asked: 'Is not that equivalent to the doctrine of election by Grace?'

Beauchamp interjected: 'Grace! election?'

Cecilia was tender to his inability to follow her allusion.

'Thou art a Liberal—then rise to membership,' she said. 'Accept my creed, and thou art of the chosen. Yes, Nevil, you cannot escape from it. Papa, he preaches Calvinism in politics.'

'We stick to men, and good men,' the colonel flourished. 'Old English for me!'

'You might as well say, old timber vessels, when Iron's afloat, colonel.'

'I suspect you have the worst of it there, papa,' said Cecilia, taken by the unexpectedness and smartness of the comparison coming from wits that she had been undervaluing.

'I shall not own I'm worsted until I surrender my vote,' the colonel rejoined.

'I won't despair of it,' said Beauchamp.

Colonel Halkett bade him come for it as often as he liked. You'll be beaten in Bevisham, I warn you. Tory reckonings are safest: it's an admitted fact: and we know you can't win. According to my judgement a man owes a duty to his class.'

'A man owes a duty to his class as long as he sees his class doing its duty to the country,' said Beauchamp; and he added, rather prettily in contrast with the sententious commencement, Cecilia thought, that the apathy of his class was proved when such as he deemed it an obligation on them to come forward and do what little they could. The deduction of the proof was not clearly consequent, but a meaning was expressed; and in that form it brought him nearer to her abstract idea of Nevil Beauchamp than when he raged and was precise.

After his departure she talked of him with her father, to be charitably satirical over him, it seemed.

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The critic in her ear had pounced on his repetition of certain words that betrayed a dialectical stiffness and hinted a narrow vocabulary: his use of emphasis, rather reminding her of his uncle Everard, was, in a young man, a little distressing. 'The apathy of the country, papa; the apathy of the rich; a state of universal apathy. Will you inform me, papa, what the Tories are doing? Do we really give our consciences to the keeping of the parsons once a week, and let them dogmatize for us to save us from exertion? We must attach ourselves to principles; nothing is permanent but principles. Poor Nevil! And still I am sure you have, as I have, the feeling that one must respect him. I am quite convinced that he supposes he is doing his best to serve his country by trying for Parliament, fancying himself a Radical. I forgot to ask him whether he had visited his great-aunt, Mrs. Beauchamp. They say the dear old lady has influence with him.'

'I don't think he's been anywhere,' Colonel Halkett half laughed at the quaint fellow. 'I wish the other great-nephew of hers were in England, for us to run him against Nevil Beauchamp. He's touring the world. I'm told he's orthodox, and a tough debater. We have to take what we can get.'

'My best wishes for your success, and you and I will not talk of politics any more, papa. I hope Nevil will come often, for his own good; he will meet his own set of people here. And if he should dogmatize so much as to rouse our apathy to denounce his principles, we will remember that we are British, and can be sweet-blooded in opposition. Perhaps he may change, even *tra le tre ore a le quattro*: electioneering should be a lesson. From my recollection of Blackburn Tuckham, he was a boisterous boy.'

'He writes uncommonly clever letters home to his aunt Beauchamp. She has handed them to me to read,' said the colonel. 'I do like to see tolerably solid young fellows: they give one some hope of the stability of the country.'

'They are not so interesting to study, and not half so amusing,' said Cecilia.

Colonel Halkett muttered his objections to the sort of amusement furnished by firebrands.

'Firebrand is too strong a word for poor Nevil,' she remonstrated.

In that estimate of the character of Nevil Beauchamp, Cecilia soon had to confess that she had been deceived, though not by him.

CHAPTER XVII

HIS FRIEND AND FOE



Looking from her window very early on a Sunday morning, Miss Halkett saw Beauchamp strolling across the grass of the park. She dressed hurriedly and went out to greet him, smiling and thanking him for his friendliness in coming.

He said he was delighted, and appeared so, but dashed the sweetness. 'You know I can't canvass on Sundays!

'I suppose not,' she replied. 'Have you walked up from Bevisham? You must be tired.'

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'Nothing tires me,' said he.

With that they stepped on together.

Mount Laurels, a fair broad house backed by a wood of beeches and firs, lay open to view on the higher grassed knoll of a series of descending turfy mounds dotted with gorseclumps, and faced South-westerly along the run of the Otley river to the gleaming broad water and its opposite border of forest, beyond which the downs of the island threw long interlapping curves. Great ships passed on the line of the water to and fro; and a little mist of masts of the fishing and coasting craft by Otley village, near the river's mouth, was like a web in air. Cecilia led him to her dusky wood of firs, where she had raised a bower for a place of poetical contemplation and reading when the clear lapping salt river beneath her was at high tide. She could hail the *Esperanza* from that cover; she could step from her drawing-room window, over the flower-beds, down the gravel walk to the hard, and be on board her yacht within seven minutes, out on her salt-water lake within twenty, closing her wings in a French harbour by nightfall of a summer's day, whenever she had the whim to fly abroad. Of these enviable privileges she boasted with some happy pride.

'It's the finest yachting-station in England,' said Beauchamp.

She expressed herself very glad that he should like it so much. Unfortunately she added, 'I hope you will find it pleasanter to be here than canvassing.'

'I have no pleasure in canvassing,' said he. 'I canvass poor men accustomed to be paid for their votes, and who get nothing from me but what the baron would call a parsonical exhortation. I'm in the thick of the most spiritless crew in the kingdom. Our southern men will not compare with the men of the north. But still, even among these fellows, I see danger for the country if our commerce were to fail, if distress came on them. There's always danger in disunion. That's what the rich won't see. They see simply nothing out of their own circle; and they won't take a thought of the overpowering contrast between their luxury and the way of living, that's half-starving, of the poor. They understand it when fever comes up from back alleys and cottages, and then they join their efforts to sweep the poor out of the district. The poor are to get to their work anyhow, after a long morning's walk over the proscribed space; for we must have poor, you know. The wife of a parson I canvassed yesterday, said to me, "Who is to work for us, if you do away with the poor, Captain Beauchamp?"'

Cecilia quitted her bower and traversed the wood silently.

'So you would blow up my poor Mount Laurels for a peace-offering to the lower classes?'

'I should hope to put it on a stronger foundation, Cecilia.'

'By means of some convulsion?'

'By forestalling one.'

'That must be one of the new ironclads,' observed Cecilia, gazing at the black smoke-pennon of a tower that slipped along the water-line. 'Yes? You were saying? Put us on a stronger——?'

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'It's, I think, the Hastings: she broke down the other day on her trial trip,' said Beauchamp, watching the ship's progress animatedly. 'Peppel commands her—a capital officer. I suppose we must have these costly big floating barracks. I don't like to hear of everything being done for the defensive. The defensive is perilous policy in war. It's true, the English don't wake up to their work under half a year. But, no: defending and looking to defences is bad for the fighting power; and there's half a million gone on that ship. Half a million! Do you know how many poor taxpayers it takes to make up that sum, Cecilia?'

'A great many,' she slurred over them; 'but we must have big ships, and the best that are to be had.'

'Powerful fast rams, sea-worthy and fit for running over shallows, carrying one big gun; swarms of harriers and worriers known to be kept ready for immediate service; readiness for the offensive in case of war —there's the best defence against a declaration of war by a foreign State.'

'I like to hear you, Nevil,' said Cecilia, beaming: 'Papa thinks we have a miserable army—in numbers. He says, the wealthier we become the more difficult it is to recruit able-bodied men on the volunteering system. Yet the wealthier we are the more an army is wanted, both to defend our wealth and to preserve order. I fancy he half inclines to compulsory enlistment. Do speak to him on that subject.'

Cecilia must have been innocent of a design to awaken the fire-flash in Nevil's eyes. She had no design, but hostility was latent, and hence perhaps the offending phrase.

He nodded and spoke coolly. 'An army to preserve order? So, then, an army to threaten civil war!'

'To crush revolutionists.'

'Agitators, you mean. My dear good old colonel—I have always loved him—must not have more troops at his command.'

'Do you object to the drilling of the whole of the people?'

'Does not the colonel, Cecilia? I am sure he does in his heart, and, for different reasons, I do. He won't trust the working-classes, nor I the middle.'

'Does Dr. Shrapnel hate the middle-class?'

'Dr. Shrapnel cannot hate. He and I are of opinion, that as the middle-class are the party in power, they would not, if they knew the use of arms, move an inch farther in Reform, for they would no longer be in fear of the class below them.'

'But what horrible notions of your country have you, Nevil! It is dreadful to hear. Oh! do let us avoid politics for ever. Fear!'

'All concessions to the people have been won from fear.'

'I have not heard so.'

'I will read it to you in the History of England.'

'You paint us in a condition of Revolution.'

'Happily it's not a condition unnatural to us. The danger would be in not letting it be progressive, and there's a little danger too at times in our slowness. We change our blood or we perish.'

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'Dr. Shrapnel?'

'Yes, I have heard Dr. Shrapnel say that. And, by-the-way, Cecilia—will you? can you?—take me for the witness to his character. He is the most guileless of men, and he's the most unguarded. My good Rosamund saw him. She is easily prejudiced when she is a trifle jealous, and you may hear from her that he rambles, talks wildly. It may seem so. I maintain there is wisdom in him when conventional minds would think him at his wildest. Believe me, he is the humanest, the best of men, tenderhearted as a child: the most benevolent, simple-minded, admirable old man—the man I am proudest to think of as an Englishman and a man living in my time, of all men existing. I can't overpraise him.'

'He has a bad reputation.'

'Only with the class that will not meet him and answer him.'

'Must we invite him to our houses?'

'It would be difficult to get him to come, if you did. I mean, meet him in debate and answer his arguments. Try the question by brains.'

'Before mobs?'

'Not before mobs. I punish you by answering you seriously.'

'I am sensible of the flattery.'

'Before mobs!' Nevil ejaculated. 'It's the Tories that mob together and cry down every man who appears to them to threaten their privileges. Can you guess what Dr. Shrapnel compares them to?'

'Indeed, Nevil, I have not an idea. I only wish your patriotism were large enough to embrace them.'

'He compares them to geese claiming possession of the whole common, and hissing at every foot of ground they have to yield. They're always having to retire and always hissing. "Retreat and menace," that's the motto for them.'

'Very well, Nevil, I am a goose upon a common.'

So saying, Cecilia swam forward like a swan on water to give the morning kiss to her papa, by the open window of the breakfast-room.

Never did bird of Michaelmas fling off water from her feathers more thoroughly than this fair young lady the false title she pretended to assume.

'I hear you're of the dinner party at Grancey Lespel's on Wednesday,' the colonel said to Beauchamp. 'You'll have to stand fire.'

'They will, papa,' murmured Cecilia. 'Will Mr. Austin be there?'

'I particularly wish to meet Mr. Austin,' said Beauchamp.

'Listen to him, if you do meet him,' she replied.

His look was rather grave.

'Lespel 's a Whig,' he said.

The colonel answered. 'Lespel was a Whig. Once a Tory always a Tory,— but court the people and you're on quicksands, and that's where the Whigs are. What he is now I don't think he knows himself. You won't get a vote.'

Cecilia watched her friend Nevil recovering from his short fit of gloom. He dismissed politics at breakfast and grew companionable, with the charm of his earlier day. He was willing to accompany her to church too.

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'You will hear a long sermon,' she warned him.

'Forty minutes.' Colonel Halkett smothered a yawn that was both retro and prospective.

'It has been fifty, papa.'

'It has been an hour, my dear.'

It was good discipline nevertheless, the colonel affirmed, and Cecilia praised the Rev. Mr. Brisk of Urplesdon vicarage as one of our few remaining Protestant clergymen.

'Then he ought to be supported,' said Beauchamp. 'In the dissensions of religious bodies it is wise to pat the weaker party on the back—I quote Stukely Culbrett.'

'I 've heard him,' sighed the colonel. 'He calls the Protestant clergy the social police of the English middle-class. Those are the things he lets fly. I have heard that man say that the Church stands to show the passion of the human race for the drama. He said it in my presence. And there 's a man who calls himself a Tory

You have rather too much of that playing at grudges and dislikes at Steynham, with squibs, nicknames, and jests at things that—well, that our stability is bound up in. I hate squibs.'

'And I,' said Beauchamp. Some shadow of a frown crossed him; but Stukely Culbrett's humour seemed to be a refuge. 'Protestant parson-not clergy,' he corrected the colonel. 'Can't you hear Mr. Culbrett, Cecilia? The Protestant parson is the policeman set to watch over the respectability of the middle-class. He has sharp eyes for the sins of the poor. As for the rich, they support his church; they listen to his sermon—to set an example: discipline, colonel. You discipline the tradesman, who's afraid of losing your custom, and the labourer, who might be deprived of his bread. But the people? It's put down to the wickedness of human nature that the parson has not got hold of the people. The parsons have lost them by senseless Conservatism, because they look to the Tories for the support of their Church, and let the religion run down the gutters. And how many thousands have you at work in the pulpit every Sunday? I'm told the Dissenting ministers have some vitality.'

Colonel Halkett shrugged with disgust at the mention of Dissenters.

'And those thirty or forty thousand, colonel, call the men that do the work they ought to be doing demagogues. The parsonry are a power absolutely to be counted for waste, as to progress.'

Cecilia perceived that her father was beginning to be fretted.

She said, with a tact that effected its object: 'I am one who hear Mr. Culbrett without admiring his wit.'

'No, and I see no good in this kind of Steynham talk,' Colonel Halkett said, rising. 'We're none of us perfect. Heaven save us from political parsons!'

Beauchamp was heard to utter, 'Humanity.'

The colonel left the room with Cecilia, muttering the Steynham tail to that word: 'tomtity,' for the solace of an aside repartee.

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She was on her way to dress for church. He drew her into the library, and there threw open a vast placard lying on the table. It was printed in blue characters and red. 'This is what I got by the post this morning. I suppose Nevil knows about it. He wants tickling, but I don't like this kind of thing. It's not fair war. It's as bad as using explosive bullets in my old game.'

'Can he expect his adversaries to be tender with him?' Cecilia simulated vehemence in an underbreath. She glanced down the page:

'French markees' caught her eye.

It was a page of verse. And, oh! could it have issued from a Tory Committee?

'The Liberals are as bad, and worse,' her father said.

She became more and more distressed. 'It seems so very mean, papa; so base. Ungenerous is no word for it. And how vulgar! Now I remember, Nevil said he wished to see Mr. Austin.'

'Seymour Austin would not sanction it.'

'No, but Nevil might hold him responsible for it.'

'I suspect Mr. Stukely Culbrett, whom he quotes, and that smoking-room lot at Lespel's. I distinctly discountenance it. So I shall tell them on Wednesday night. Can you keep a secret?'

'And after all Nevil Beauchamp is very young, papa!—of course I can keep a secret.'

The colonel exacted no word of honour, feeling quite sure of her.

He whispered the secret in six words, and her cheeks glowed vermilion.

'But they will meet on Wednesday after this,' she said, and her sight went dancing down the column of verse, of which the following trotting couplet is a specimen:—

'O did you ever, hot in love, a little British middy see,
Like Orpheus asking what the deuce to do without Eurydice?'

The middy is jilted by his *French markees*, whom he 'did adore,' and in his wrath he recommends himself to the wealthy widow Bevisham, concerning whose choice of her suitors there is a doubt: but the middy is encouraged to persevere:

'Up, up, my pretty middy; take a draught of foaming Sillery;
Go in and win the uriddy with your Radical artillery.'

And if Sillery will not do, he is advised, he being for superlatives, to try the sparkling Sillery of the Radical vintage, selected grapes.

This was but impudent nonsense. But the reiterated apostrophe to '*my French marquees*' was considered by Cecilia to be a brutal offence.

She was shocked that her party should have been guilty of it. Nevil certainly provoked, and he required, hard blows; and his uncle Everard might be right in telling her father that they were the best means of teaching him to come to his understanding. Still a foul and stupid squib did appear to her a debasing weapon to use.

'I cannot congratulate you on your choice of a second candidate, papa,' she said scornfully.

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'I don't much congratulate myself,' said the colonel.

'Here's a letter from Mrs. Beauchamp informing me that her boy Blackburn will be home in a month. There would have been plenty of time for him. However, we must make up our minds to it. Those two 'll be meeting on Wednesday, so keep your secret. It will be out tomorrow week.'

'But Nevil will be accusing Mr. Austin.'

'Austin won't be at Lespel's. And he must bear it, for the sake of peace.'

'Is Nevil ruined with his uncle, papa?'

'Not a bit, I should imagine. It's Romfrey's fun.'

'And this disgraceful squib is a part of the fun?'

'That I know nothing about, my dear. I'm sorry, but there's pitch and tar in politics as well as on shipboard.'

'I do not see that there should be,' said Cecilia resolutely.

'We can't hope to have what should be.'

'Why not? I would have it: I would do my utmost to have it,' she flamed out.

'Your utmost?' Her father was glancing at her foregone mimicry of Beauchamp's occasional strokes of emphasis. 'Do your utmost to have your bonnet on in time for us to walk to church. I can't bear driving there.'

Cecilia went to her room with the curious reflection, awakened by what her father had chanced to suggest to her mind, that she likewise could be fervid, positive, uncompromising—who knows? Radicalish, perhaps, when she looked eye to eye on an evil. For a moment or so she espied within herself a gulf of possibilities, wherein black night-birds, known as queries, roused by shot of light, do flap their wings.—Her utmost to have be what should be! And why not?

But the intemperate feeling subsided while she was doing duty before her mirror, and the visionary gulf closed immediately.

She had merely been very angry on Nevil Beauchamp's behalf, and had dimly seen that a woman can feel insurgent, almost revolutionary, for a personal cause, Tory though her instinct of safety and love of smoothness make her.

No reflection upon this casual piece of self or sex revelation troubled her head. She did, however, think of her position as the friend of Nevil in utter antagonism to him. It beset her with contradictions that blew rough on her cherished serenity; for she was of the order of ladies who, by virtue of their pride and spirit, their port and their beauty, decree unto themselves the rank of princesses among women, before our world has tried their claim to it. She had lived hitherto in upper air, high above the clouds of earth. Her ideal of a man was of one similarly disengaged and lofty-loftier. Nevil, she could honestly say, was not her ideal; he was only her old friend, and she was opposed to him in his present adventure. The striking at him to cure him of his mental errors and excesses was an obligation; she could descend upon him calmly with the chastening rod, pointing to the better way; but

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the shielding of him was a different thing; it dragged her down so low, that in her condemnation of the Tory squib she found herself asking herself whether haply Nevil had flung off the yoke of the French lady; with the foolish excuse for the question, that if he had not, he must be bitterly sensitive to the slightest public allusion to her. Had he? And if not, how desperately faithful he was! or else how marvellously seductive she!

Perhaps it was a lover's despair that had precipitated him into the mire of politics. She conceived the impression that it must be so, and throughout the day she had an inexplicable unsweet pleasure in inciting him to argumentation and combating him, though she was compelled to admit that he had been colloquially charming antecedent to her naughty provocation; and though she was indebted to him for his patient decorum under the weary wave of the Reverend Mr. Brisk. Now what does it matter what a woman thinks in politics? But he deemed it of great moment. Politically, he deemed that women have souls, a certain fire of life for exercise on earth. He appealed to reason in them; he would not hear of convictions. He quoted the Bevisham doctor

'Convictions are generally first impressions that are sealed with later prejudices,' and insisted there was wisdom in it. Nothing tired him, as he had said, and addressing woman or man, no prospect of fatigue or of hopeless effort daunted him in the endeavour to correct an error of judgement in politics—his notion of an error. The value he put upon speaking, urging his views, was really fanatical. It appeared that he canvassed the borough from early morning till near midnight, and nothing would persuade him that his chance was poor; nothing that an entrenched Tory like her father, was not to be won even by an assault of all the reserve forces of Radical pathos, prognostication, and statistics.

Only conceive Nevil Beauchamp knocking at doors late at night, the sturdy beggar of a vote! or waylaying workmen, as he confessed without shame that he had done, on their way trooping to their midday meal; penetrating malodoriferous rooms of dismal ten-pound cottagers, to exhort bedraggled mothers and babes, and besotted husbands; and exposed to rebuffs from impertinent tradesmen; and lampooned and travestied, shouting speeches to roaring men, pushed from shoulder to shoulder of the mob! . . .

Cecilia dropped a curtain on her mind's picture of him. But the blinding curtain rekindled the thought that the line he had taken could not but be the desperation of a lover abandoned. She feared it was, she feared it was not. Nevil Beauchamp's foe persisted in fearing that it was not; his friend feared that it was. Yet why? For if it was, then he could not be quite in earnest, and might be cured. Nay, but earnestness works out its own cure more surely than frenzy, and it should be preferable to think him sound of heart, sincere though mistaken. Cecilia could not decide upon what she dared wish for his health's good. Friend and foe were not further separable within her bosom than one

tick from another of a clock; they changed places, and next his friend was fearing what his foe had feared: they were inextricable.

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Why had he not sprung up on a radiant aquiline ambition, whither one might have followed him, with eyes and prayers for him, if it was not possible to do so companionably? At present, in the shape of a canvassing candidate, it was hardly honourable to let imagination dwell on him, save compassionately.

When he rose to take his leave, Cecilia said, 'Must you go to Itchincope on Wednesday, Nevil?'

Colonel Halkett added: 'I don't think I would go to Lespel's if I were you. I rather suspect Seymour Austin will be coming on Wednesday, and that 'll detain me here, and you might join us and lend him an ear for an evening.'

'I have particular reasons for going to Lespel's; I hear he wavers toward a Tory conspiracy of some sort,' said Beauchamp.

The colonel held his tongue.

The untiring young candidate chose to walk down to Bevisham at eleven o'clock at night, that he might be the readier to continue his canvass of the borough on Monday morning early. He was offered a bed or a conveyance, and he declined both; the dog-cart he declined out of consideration for horse and groom, which an owner of stables could not but approve.

Colonel Halkett broke into exclamations of pity for so good a young fellow so misguided.

The night was moonless, and Cecilia, looking through the window, said whimsically, 'He has gone out into the darkness, and is no light in it!'

Certainly none shone. She however carried a lamp that revealed him footing on with a wonderful air of confidence, and she was rather surprised to hear her father regret that Nevil Beauchamp should be losing his good looks already, owing to that miserable business of his in Bevisham. She would have thought the contrary, that he was looking as well as ever.

'He dresses just as he used to dress,' she observed.

The individual style of a naval officer of breeding, in which you see neatness trifling with disorder, or disorder plucking at neatness, like the breeze a trim vessel, had been caught to perfection by Nevil Beauchamp, according to Cecilia. It presented him to her mind in a cheerful and a very undemocratic aspect, but in realizing it, the thought, like something flashing black, crossed her—how attractive such a style must be to a Frenchwoman!

'He may look a little worn,' she acquiesced.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCERNING THE ACT OF CANVASSING

Tories dread the restlessness of Radicals, and Radicals are in awe of the organization of Tories. Beauchamp thought anxiously of the high degree of confidence existing in the Tory camp, whose chief could afford to keep aloof, while he slaved all day and half the night to thump ideas into heads, like a cooper on a cask:—an impassioned cooper on an empty cask! if such an image is presentable. Even so enviously sometimes the writer and the barrister,

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men dependent on their active wits, regard the man with a business fixed in an office managed by clerks. That man seems by comparison celestially seated. But he has his fits of trepidation; for new tastes prevail and new habits are formed, and the structure of his business will not allow him to adapt himself to them in a minute. The secure and comfortable have to pay in occasional panics for the serenity they enjoy. Mr. Seymour Austin candidly avowed to Colonel Halkett, on his arrival at Mount Laurels, that he was advised to take up his quarters in the neighbourhood of Bevisham by a recent report of his committee, describing the young Radical's canvass as redoubtable. Cougham he did not fear: he could make a sort of calculation of the votes for the Liberal thumping on the old drum of Reform; but the number for him who appealed to feelings and quickened the romantic sentiments of the common people now huddled within our electoral penfold, was not calculable. Tory and Radical have an eye for one another, which overlooks the Liberal at all times except when he is, as they imagine, playing the game of either of them.

'Now we shall see the passions worked,' Mr. Austin said, deploring the extension of the franchise.

He asked whether Beauchamp spoke well.

Cecilia left it to her father to reply; but the colonel appealed to her, saying, 'Inclined to dragoon one, isn't he?'

She did not think that. 'He speaks . . . he speaks well in conversation. I fancy he would be liked by the poor. I should doubt his being a good public speaker. He certainly has command of his temper: that is one thing. I cannot say whether it favours oratory. He is indefatigable. One may be sure he will not faint by the way. He quite believes in himself. But, Mr. Austin, do you really regard him as a serious rival?'

Mr. Austin could not tell. No one could tell the effect of an extended franchise. The untried venture of it depressed him. 'Men have come suddenly on a borough before now and carried it,' he said.

'Not a borough like Bevisham?'

He shook his head. 'A fluid borough, I'm afraid.'

Colonel Halkett interposed: 'But Ferbrass is quite sure of his district.'

Cecilia wished to know who the man was, of the mediaevally sounding name.

'Ferbrass is an old lawyer, my dear. He comes of five generations of lawyers, and he 's as old in the county as Grancey Lespel. Hitherto he has always been to be counted on

for marching his district to the poll like a regiment. That's our strength—the professions, especially lawyers.'

'Are not a great many lawyers Liberals, papa?'

'A great many barristers are, my dear.'

Thereat the colonel and Mr. Austin smiled together.

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It was a new idea to Cecilia that Nevil Beauchamp should be considered by a man of the world anything but a well-meaning, moderately ridiculous young candidate; and the fact that one so experienced as Seymour Austin deemed him an adversary to be grappled with in earnest, created a small revolution in her mind, entirely altering her view of the probable pliability of his Radicalism under pressure of time and circumstances. Many of his remarks, that she had previously half smiled at, came across her memory hard as metal. She began to feel some terror of him, and said, to reassure herself: 'Captain Beauchamp is not likely to be a champion with a very large following. He is too much of a political mystic, I think.'

'Many young men are, before they have written out a fair copy of their meaning,' said Mr. Austin.

Cecilia laughed to herself at the vision of the fiery Nevil engaged in writing out a fair copy of his meaning. How many erasures! what foot-notes!

The arrangement was for Cecilia to proceed to Itchincope alone for a couple of days, and bring a party to Mount Laurels through Bevisham by the yacht on Thursday, to meet Mr. Seymour Austin and Mr. Everard Romfrey. An early day of the next week had been agreed on for the unmasking of the second Tory candidate. She promised that in case Nevil Beauchamp should have the hardihood to enter the enemy's nest at Itchincope on Wednesday, at the great dinner and ball there, she would do her best to bring him back to Mount Laurels, that he might meet his uncle Everard, who was expected there. At least he may consent to come for an evening,' she said. 'Nothing will take him from that canvassing. It seems to me it must be not merely distasteful . . . ?'

Mr. Austin replied: 'It 's disagreeable, but it's' the practice. I would gladly be bound by a common undertaking to abstain.'

'Captain Beauchamp argues that it would be all to your advantage. He says that a personal visit is the only chance for an unknown candidate to make the people acquainted with him.'

'It's a very good opportunity for making him acquainted with them; and I hope he may profit by it.'

'Ah! pah! "To beg the vote and wink the bribe," Colonel Halkett subjoined abhorrently:

"It well becomes the Whiggish tribe
To beg the vote and wink the bribe."

Canvassing means intimidation or corruption.'

'Or the mixture of the two, called cajolery,' said Mr. Austin; 'and that was the principal art of the Whigs.'

Thus did these gentlemen converse upon canvassing.

It is not possible to gather up in one volume of sound the rattle of the knocks at Englishmen's castle-gates during election days; so, with the thunder of it unheard, the majesty of the act of canvassing can be but barely appreciable, and he, therefore, who would celebrate it must follow the candidate obsequiously from door to door, where, like a cross between a postman delivering a bill and a beggar craving an alms, patiently he attempts the extraction of the vote, as little boys pick periwinkles with a pin.

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'This is your duty, which I most abjectly entreat you to do,' is pretty nearly the form of the supplication.

How if, instead of the solicitation of the thousands by the unit, the meritorious unit were besought by rushing thousands?—as a mound of the plains that is circumvented by floods, and to which the waters cry, Be thou our island. Let it be answered the questioner, with no discourteous adjectives, Thou fool! To come to such heights of popular discrimination and political ardour the people would have to be vivified to a pitch little short of eruptive: it would be Boreas blowing AEtna inside them; and we should have impulse at work in the country, and immense importance attaching to a man's whether he will or he won't—enough to womanize him. We should be all but having Parliament for a sample of our choicest rather than our likest: and see you not a peril in that?

Conceive, for the fleeting instants permitted to such insufferable flights of fancy, our picked men ruling! So despotic an oligarchy as would be there, is not a happy subject of contemplation. It is not too much to say that a domination of the Intellect in England would at once and entirely alter the face of the country. We should be governed by the head with a vengeance: all the rest of the country being base members indeed; Spartans—helots. Criticism, now so helpful to us, would wither to the root: fun would die out of Parliament, and outside of it: we could never laugh at our masters, or command them: and that good old-fashioned shouldering of separate interests, which, if it stops progress, like a block in the pit entrance to a theatre, proves us equal before the law, puts an end to the pretence of higher merit in the one or the other, and renders a stout build the safest assurance for coming through ultimately, would be transformed to a painful orderliness, like a City procession under the conduct of the police, and to classifications of things according to their public value: decidedly no benefit to burly freedom. None, if there were no shouldering and hustling, could tell whether actually the fittest survived; as is now the case among survivors delighting in a broad-chested fitness.

And consider the freezing isolation of a body of our quintessential elect, seeing below them none to resemble them! Do you not hear in imagination the land's regrets for that amiable nobility whose pretensions were comically built on birth, acres, tailoring, style, and an air? Ah, that these unchallengeable new lords could be exchanged for those old ones! These, with the traditions of how great people should look in our country, these would pass among us like bergs of ice—a pure Polar aristocracy, inflicting the woes of wintriness upon us. Keep them from concentrating! At present I believe it to be their honest opinion, their wise opinion, and the sole opinion common to a majority of them, that it is more salutary, besides more diverting, to

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have the fools of the kingdom represented than not. As professors of the sarcastic art they can easily take the dignity out of the fools' representative at their pleasure, showing him at antics while he supposes he is exhibiting an honourable and a decent series of movements. Generally, too, their archery can check him when he is for any of his measures; and if it does not check, there appears to be such a property in simple sneering, that it consoles even when it fails to right the balance of power. Sarcasm, we well know, confers a title of aristocracy straightway and sharp on the scone of the man who does but imagine that he is using it. What, then, must be the elevation of these princes of the intellect in their own minds! Hardly worth bartering for worldly commanderships, it is evident.

Briefly, then, we have a system, not planned but grown, the outcome and image of our genius, and all are dissatisfied with parts of it; but, as each would preserve his own, the surest guarantee is obtained for the integrity of the whole by a happy adjustment of the energies of opposition, which—you have only to look to see—goes far beyond concord in the promotion of harmony. This is our English system; like our English pudding, a fortuitous concourse of all the sweets in the grocer's shop, but an excellent thing for all that, and let none threaten it. Canvassing appears to be mixed up in the system; at least I hope I have shown that it will not do to reverse the process, for fear of changes leading to a sovereignty of the austere and antipathetic Intellect in our England, that would be an inaccessible tyranny of a very small minority, necessarily followed by tremendous convulsions.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A dash of conventionalism makes the whole civilized world kin
Aimlessness of a woman's curiosity
All concessions to the people have been won from fear
Appealed to reason in them; he would not hear of convictions
Automatic creature is subject to the laws of its construction
Beautiful servicelessness
Canvassing means intimidation or corruption
Comfortable have to pay in occasional panics for the serenity
Consult the family means—waste your time
Convictions are generally first impressions
Country can go on very well without so much speech-making
Crazy zigzag of policy in almost every stroke (of history)
Dialectical stiffness
Effort to be reticent concerning Nevil, and communicative
Give our consciences to the keeping of the parsons
Hates a compromise



Man owes a duty to his class
Mark of a fool to take everybody for a bigger fool than himself
Martyrs of love or religion are madmen
Never pretend to know a girl by her face
No stopping the Press while the people have an appetite for it
Oratory will not work against the stream, or on languid tides
Parliament, is the best of occupations for idle men

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Protestant clergy the social police of the English middle-class
The defensive is perilous policy in war
The family view is everlastingly the shopkeeper's
The infant candidate delights in his honesty
There is no first claim
There's nothing like a metaphor for an evasion
They're always having to retire and always hissing
Those happy men who enjoy perceptions without opinions
Those whose humour consists of a readiness to laugh
Threatened powerful drugs for weak stomachs
To beg the vote and wink the bribe
We can't hope to have what should be
We have a system, not planned but grown
World cannot pardon a breach of continuity