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Beauchamp's Career

by George Meredith

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CHAPTER I.
THE CHAMPION OF HIS COUNTRY

When young Nevil Beauchamp was throwing off his midshipman's jacket for a holiday in the garb of peace, we had across Channel a host of dreadful military officers flashing swords at us for some critical observations of ours upon their sovereign, threatening Afric's fires and savagery. The case occurred in old days now and again, sometimes, upon imagined provocation, more furiously than at others. We were unarmed, and the spectacle was distressing. We had done nothing except to speak our minds according to the habit of the free, and such an explosion appeared as irrational and excessive as that of a powder-magazine in reply to nothing more than the light of a spark. It was known that a valorous General of the Algerian wars proposed to make a clean march to the capital of the British Empire at the head of ten thousand men; which seems a small quantity to think much about, but they wore wide red breeches blown out by Fame, big as her cheeks, and a ten thousand of that sort would never think of retreating. Their spectral advance on quaking London through Kentish hopgardens, Sussex corn-fields, or by the pleasant hills of Surrey, after a gymnastic leap over the riband of salt water, haunted many pillows. And now those horrid shouts of the legions of Caesar, crying to the inheritor of an invading name to lead them against us, as the origin of his title had led the army of Gaul of old gloriously, scared sweet sleep. We saw them in imagination lining the opposite shore; eagle and standard-bearers, and *gallifers*, brandishing their fowls and their banners in a manner to frighten the decorum of the universe. Where were our men?

The returns of the census of our population were oppressively satisfactory, and so was the condition of our youth. We could row and ride and fish and shoot, and breed largely: we were athletes with a fine history and a full purse: we had first-rate sporting guns, unrivalled park-hacks and hunters, promising babies to carry on the renown of England to the next generation, and a wonderful Press, and a Constitution the highest reach of practical human sagacity. But where were our armed men? where our great artillery? where our proved captains, to resist a sudden sharp trial of the national mettle? Where was the first line of England's defence, her navy? These were questions, and Ministers were called upon to answer them. The Press answered them boldly, with the appalling statement that we had no navy and no army. At the most we could muster a few old ships, a couple of experimental vessels of war, and twenty-five thousand soldiers indifferently weaponed.

We were in fact as naked to the Imperial foe as the merely painted Britons.

This being apprehended, by the aid of our own shortness of figures and the agitated images of the red-breeched only waiting the signal to jump and be at us, there ensued a curious exhibition that would be termed, in simple language, writing to the newspapers, for it took the outward form of letters: in reality, it was the deliberate saddling of our ancient nightmare of Invasion, putting the postillion on her, and trotting her along the high-road with a winding horn to rouse old Panic. Panic we will, for the sake of convenience, assume to be of the feminine gender, and a spinster, though properly she should be classed with the large mixed race of mental and moral neuters which are the bulk of comfortable nations. She turned in her bed at first like the sluggard of the venerable hymnist: but once fairly awakened, she directed a stare toward the terrific foreign contortionists, and became in an instant all stormy nightcap and fingers starving for the bell-rope. Forthwith she burst into a series of shrieks, howls, and high piercing notes that caused even the parliamentary Opposition, in the heat of an assault on a parsimonious Government, to abandon its temporary advantage and be still awhile. Yet she likewise performed her part with a certain deliberation and method, as if aware that it was a part she had to play in the composition of a singular people. She did a little mischief by dropping on the stock-markets; in other respects she was harmless, and, inasmuch as she established a subject for conversation, useful.

Then, lest she should have been taken too seriously, the Press, which had kindled, proceeded to extinguish her with the formidable engines called leading articles, which fling fire or water, as the occasion may require. It turned out that we had ships ready for launching, and certain regiments coming home from India; hedges we had, and a spirited body of yeomanry; and we had pluck and patriotism, the father and mother of volunteers innumerable. Things were not so bad.

Panic, however, sent up a plaintive whine. What country had anything like our treasures to defend? countless riches, beautiful women, an inviolate soil! True, and it must be done. Ministers were authoritatively summoned to set to work immediately. They replied that they had been at work all the time, and were at work now. They could assure the country, that though they flourished no trumpets, they positively guaranteed the safety of our virgins and coffers.

Then the people, rather ashamed, abused the Press for unreasonably disturbing them. The Press attacked old Panic and stripped her naked. Panic, with a desolate scream, arraigned the parliamentary Opposition for having inflated her to serve base party purposes. The Opposition challenged the allegations of Government, pointed to the trimness of army and navy during its term of office, and proclaimed itself watch-dog of the country, which is at all events an office of a kind. Hereupon the ambassador of yonder ireful soldiery let fall a word, saying, by the faith of his Master, there was no necessity for watch-dogs to bark; an ardent and a reverent army had but fancied its beloved chosen Chief insulted; the Chief and chosen held them in; he, despite obloquy, discerned our merits and esteemed us.

So, then, Panic, or what remained of her, was put to bed again. The Opposition retired into its kennel growling. The People coughed like a man of two minds, doubting whether he has been divinely inspired or has cut a ridiculous figure. The Press interpreted the cough as a warning to Government; and Government launched a big ship with hurrahs, and ordered the recruiting-sergeant to be seen conspicuously.

And thus we obtained a moderate reinforcement of our arms.

It was not arrived at by connivance all round, though there was a look of it. Certainly it did not come of accident, though there was a look of that as well. Nor do we explain much of the secret by attributing it to the working of a complex machinery. The housewife’s remedy of a good shaking for the invalid who will not arise and dance away his gout, partly illustrates the action of the Press upon the country: and perhaps the country shaken may suffer a comparison with the family chariot of the last century, built in a previous one, commodious, furnished agreeably, being all that the inside occupants could require of a conveyance, until the report of horsemen crossing the heath at a gallop sets it dishonourably creaking and complaining in rapid motion, and the squire curses his miserly purse that would not hire a guard, and his dame says, I told you so!—Foolhardy man, to suppose, because we have constables in the streets of big cities, we have dismissed the highwayman to limbo. And here he is, and he will cost you fifty times the sum you would have laid out to keep him at a mile’s respectful distance! But see, the wretch is bowing: he smiles at our carriage, and tells the coachman that he remembers he has been our guest, and really thinks we need not go so fast. He leaves word for you, sir, on your peril to denounce him on another occasion from the magisterial Bench, for that albeit he is a gentleman of the road, he has a mission to right society, and succeeds legitimately to that bold Good Robin Hood who fed the poor.—Fresh from this polite encounter, the squire vows money for his personal protection: and he determines to speak his opinion of Sherwood’s latest captain as loudly as ever. That he will, I do not say. It might involve a large sum per annum.

Similes are very well in their way. None can be sufficient in this case without levelling a finger at the taxpayer—nay, directly mentioning him. He is the key of our ingenuity. He pays his dues; he will not pay the additional penny or two wanted of him, that we may be a step or two ahead of the day we live in, unless he is frightened. But scarcely anything less than the wild alarum of a tocsin will frighten him. Consequently the tocsin has to be sounded; and the effect is woeful past measure: his hugging of his army, his kneeling on the shore to his navy, his implorations of his yeomanry and his hedges, are sad to note. His bursts of pot-valiancy (the male side of the maiden Panic within his bosom) are awful to his friends. Particular care must be taken after he has begun to cool and calculate his chances of security, that he do not gather to him a curtain of volunteers and go to sleep again behind them; for they cost little in proportion to the much they pretend to be to him. Patriotic taxpayers doubtless exist: prophetic ones, provident ones, do not. At least we show that we are wanting in them. The taxpayer of a free land taxes himself, and his disinclination for the bitter task, save under circumstances of screaming urgency—as when the night-gear and bed-linen of old convulsed Panic are like the churned Channel sea in the track of two hundred hostile steamboats, let me say—is of the kind the gentle schoolboy feels when death or an expedition has relieved him of his tyrant, and he is entreated notwithstanding to go to his books.

Will you not own that the working of the system for scaring him and bleeding is very ingenious? But whether the ingenuity comes of native sagacity, as it is averred by some, or whether it shows an instinct labouring to supply the deficiencies of stupidity, according to others, I cannot express an opinion. I give you the position of the country undisturbed by any moralizings of mine. The youth I introduce to you will rarely let us escape from it; for the reason that he was born with so extreme and passionate a love for his country, that he thought all things else of mean importance in comparison: and our union is one in which, following the counsel of a sage and seer, I must try to paint for you what is, not that which I imagine. This day, this hour, this life, and even politics, the centre and throbbing heart of it (enough, when unburlesqued, to blow the down off the gossamer-stump of fiction at a single breath, I have heard tell), must be treated of men, and the ideas of men, which are—it is policy to be emphatic upon truisms—are actually the motives of men in a greater degree than their appetites: these are my theme; and may it be my fortune to keep them at bloodheat, and myself calm as a statue of Memnon in prostrate Egypt! He sits there waiting for the sunlight; I here, and readier to be musical than you think. I can at any rate be impartial; and do but fix your eyes on the sunlight striking him and swallowing the day in rounding him, and you have an image of the passive receptivity of shine and shade I hold it good to aim at, if at the same time I may keep my characters at blood-heat. I shoot my arrows at a mark that is pretty certain to return them to me. And as to perfect success, I should be like the panic-stricken shopkeepers in my alarm at it; for I should believe that genii of the air fly above our tree-tops between us and the incognizable spheres, catching those ambitious shafts they deem it a promise of fun to play pranks with.

Young Mr. Beauchamp at that period of the panic had not the slightest feeling for the taxpayer. He was therefore unable to penetrate the mystery of our roundabout way of enlivening him. He pored over the journals in perplexity, and talked of his indignation nightly to his pretty partners at balls, who knew not they were lesser Andromedas of his dear Andromeda country, but danced and chatted and were gay, and said they were sure he would defend them. The men he addressed were civil. They listened to him, sometimes with smiles and sometimes with laughter, but approvingly, liking the lad’s quick spirit. They were accustomed to the machinery employed to give our land a shudder and to soothe it, and generally remarked that it meant nothing. His uncle Everard, and his uncle’s friend Stukely Culbrett, expounded the nature of Frenchmen to him, saying that they were uneasy when not periodically thrashed; it would be cruel to deny them their crow beforehand; and so the pair of gentlemen pooh-poohed the affair; agreeing with him, however, that we had no great reason to be proud of our appearance, and the grounds they assigned for this were the activity and the prevalence of the ignoble doctrines of Manchester—a power whose very existence was unknown to Mr. Beauchamp. He would by no means allow the burden of our national disgrace to be cast on one part of the nation. We were insulted, and all in a poultry-flutter, yet no one seemed to feel it but himself! Outside the Press and Parliament, which must necessarily be the face we show to the foreigner, absolute indifference reigned. Navy men and red-coats were willing to join him or anybody in sneers at a clipping and paring miserly Government, but they were insensible to the insult, the panic, the startled-poultry show, the shame of our exhibition of ourselves in Europe. It looked as if the blustering French Guard were to have it all their own way. And what would they, what could they but, think of us! He sat down to write them a challenge.

He is not the only Englishman who has been impelled by a youthful chivalry to do that. He is perhaps the youngest who ever did it, and consequently there were various difficulties to be overcome. As regards his qualifications for addressing Frenchmen, a year of his prae-neptunal time had been spent in their capital city for the purpose of acquiring French of Paris, its latest refinements of pronunciation and polish, and the art of conversing. He had read the French tragic poets and Molière; he could even relish the Gallic-classic—“Qu’il mourut!” and he spoke French passably, being quite beyond the Bullish treatment of the tongue. Writing a letter in French was a different undertaking. The one he projected bore no resemblance to an ordinary letter. The briefer the better, of course; but a tone of dignity was imperative, and the tone must be individual, distinctive, Nevil Beauchamp’s, though not in his native language. First he tried his letter in French, and lost sight of himself completely. “Messieurs de la Garde Française,” was a good beginning; the remainder gave him a false air of a masquerader, most uncomfortable to see; it was Nevil Beauchamp in moustache and

imperial, and bagbreeches badly fitting. He tried English, which was really himself, and all that heart could desire, supposing he addressed a body of midshipmen just a little loftily. But the English, when translated, was bald and blunt to the verge of offensiveness.

> "GENTLEMEN OF THE FRENCH GUARD,
>
> "I take up the glove you have tossed us. I am an Englishman. That will do for a reason."

This might possibly pass with the gentlemen of the English Guard. But read:

> "MESSIEURS DE LA GARDE FRANÇAISE,
>
> "J'accepte votre gant. Je suis Anglais. La raison est suffisante."

And imagine French Guardsmen reading it!

Mr. Beauchamp knew the virtue of punctiliousness in epithets and phrases of courtesy toward a formal people, and as the officers of the French Guard were gentlemen of birth, he would have them to perceive in him their equal at a glance. On the other hand, a bare excess of phrasing distorted him to a likeness of Mascarille playing Marquis. How to be English and think French! The business was as laborious as if he had started on the rough sea of the Channel to get at them in an open boat.

The lady governing his uncle Everard's house, Mrs. Rosamund Culling, entered his room and found him writing with knitted brows. She was young, that is, she was not in her middleage; and they were the dearest of friends; each had given the other proof of it. Nevil looked up and beheld her lifted finger.

"You are composing a love-letter, Nevil!" The accusation sounded like irony.

"No," said he, puffing; "I wish I were."

"What can it be, then?"

He thrust pen and paper a hand's length on the table, and gazed at her.

"My dear Nevil, is it really anything serious?" said she.

"I am writing French, ma'am."

"Then I may help you. It must be very absorbing, for you did not hear my knock at your door."

Now, could he trust her? The widow of a British officer killed nobly fighting for his country in India, was a person to be relied on for active and burning sympathy in a matter that touched the country's honour. She was a woman, and a woman of spirit. Men had not pleased him of late. Something might be hoped from a woman.

He stated his occupation, saying that if she would assist him in his French she would oblige him; the letter must be written and must go. This was uttered so positively that she bowed her head, amused by the funny semi-tone of defiance to the person to whom he confided the secret. She had humour, and was ravished by his English boyishness, with the novel blush of the heroical-nonsensical in it.

Mrs. Culling promised him demurely that she would listen, objecting nothing to his plan, only to his French.

"Messieurs de la Garde Française!" he commenced.

Her criticism followed swiftly.

"I think you are writing to the Garde Impériale."

He admitted his error, and thanked her warmly.

"Messieurs de la Garde Impériale!"

"Does not that," she said, "include the non-commissioned officers, the privates, and the cooks, of all the regiments?"

He could scarcely think that, but thought it provoking the French had no distinctive working title corresponding to gentlemen, and suggested "Messieurs les Officiers": which might, Mrs. Culling assured him, comprise the barbers. He frowned, and she prescribed his writing, "Messieurs les Colonels de la Garde Impériale." This he set down. The point was that a stand must be made against the flood of sarcasms and bullyings to which the country was exposed in increasing degrees, under a belief that we would fight neither in the mass nor individually. Possibly, if it became known that the colonels refused to meet a midshipman, the gentlemen of our Household troops would advance a step.

Mrs. Culling's adroit efforts to weary him out of his project were

unsuccessful. He was too much on fire to know the taste of absurdity.

Nevil repeated what he had written in French, and next the English of what he intended to say.

The lady conscientiously did her utmost to reconcile the two languages. She softened his downrightness, passed with approval his compliments to France and the ancient high reputation of her army, and, seeing that a loophole was left for them to apologize, asked how many French colonels he wanted to fight.

“I do not *want*, ma’am,” said Nevil.

He had simply taken up the glove they had again flung at our feet: and he had done it to stop the incessant revilings, little short of positive contempt, which we in our indolence exposed ourselves to from the foreigner, particularly from Frenchmen, whom he liked; and precisely because he liked them he insisted on forcing them to respect us. Let his challenge be accepted, and he would find backers. He knew the stuff of Englishmen: they only required an example.

“French officers are skilful swordsmen,” said Mrs. Culling. “My husband has told me they will spend hours of the day thrusting and parrying. They are used to duelling.”

“We,” Nevil answered, “don’t get apprenticed to the shambles to learn our duty on the field. Duelling is, I know, sickening folly. We go too far in pretending to despise every insult pitched at us. A man may do for his country what he wouldn’t do for himself.”

Mrs. Culling gravely said she hoped that bloodshed would be avoided, and Mr. Beauchamp nodded.

She left him hard at work.

He was a popular boy, a favourite of women, and therefore full of engagements to Balls and dinners. And he was a modest boy, though his uncle encouraged him to deliver his opinions freely and argue with men. The little drummer attached to wheeling columns thinks not more of himself because his short legs perform the same strides as the grenadiers’; he is happy to be able to keep the step; and so was Nevil; and if ever he contradicted a senior, it was in the interests of the country. Veneration of heroes, living and dead, kept down his conceit. He worshipped devotedly. From an early age he exacted of his flattering ladies that they must love his hero. Not to love his hero was to be strangely in error, to be in need of conversion, and he proselytized with the ardour of the Moslem. His uncle Everard was proud of his good looks, fire, and nonsense, during the boy’s extreme youth. He traced him by cousinships back to the great Earl Beauchamp of Froissart, and would have it so; and he would have spoilt him had not the young fellow’s mind been possessed by his reverence for men of deeds. How could he think of himself, who had done nothing, accomplished nothing, so long as he brooded on the images of signal Englishmen whose names were historic for daring, and the strong arm, and artfulness, all given to the service of the country?—men of a magnanimity overcast with simplicity, which Nevil held to be pure insular English; our type of splendid manhood, not discoverable elsewhere. A method of enraging him was to distinguish one or other of them as Irish, Scottish, or Cambrian. He considered it a dismemberment of the country. And notwithstanding the pleasure he had in uniting in his person the strong red blood of the chivalrous Lord Beauchamp with the hard and tenacious Romfrey blood, he hated the title of Norman. We are English—British, he said. A family resting its pride on mere ancestry provoked his contempt, if it did not show him one of his men. He had also a disposition to esteem lightly the family which, having produced a man, settled down after that effort for generations to enjoy the country’s pay. Boys are unjust; but Nevil thought of the country mainly, arguing that we should not accept the country’s money for what we do not ourselves perform. These traits of his were regarded as characteristics hopeful rather than the reverse; none of his friends and relatives foresaw danger in them. He was a capital boy for his elders to trot out and banter.

Mrs. Rosamund Culling usually went to his room to see him and doat on him before he started on his rounds of an evening. She suspected that his necessary attention to his toilet would barely have allowed him time to finish his copy of the letter. Certain phrases had bothered him. The thrice recurrence of “ma patrie” jarred on his ear. “Sentiments” afflicted his acute sense of the declamatory twice. “C’est avec les sentiments du plus profond regret” : and again, “Je suis bien sûr que vous comprendrez mes sentiments, et m’accorderez l’honneur que je réclame au nom de ma patrie outragée.” The word “patrie” was broadcast over the letter, and “honneur” appeared four times, and a more delicate word to harp on

than the others!

“Not to Frenchmen,” said his friend Rosamund. “I would put ‘Je suis convaincu’: it is not so familiar.”

“But I have written out the fair copy, ma’am, and that alteration seems a trifle.”

“I would copy it again and again, Nevil, to get it right.”

“No: I’d rather see it off than have it right,” said Nevil, and he folded the letter.

How the deuce to address it, and what direction to write on it, were further difficulties. He had half a mind to remain at home to conquer them by excogitation.

Rosamund urged him not to break his engagement to dine at the Halketts’, where perhaps from his friend Colonel Halkett, who would never imagine the reason for the inquiry, he might learn how a letter to a crack French regiment should be addressed and directed.

This proved persuasive, and as the hour was late Nevil had to act on her advice in a hurry.

His uncle Everard enjoyed a perusal of the manuscript in his absence.

CHAPTER II.
UNCLE, NEPHEW, AND ANOTHER

The Honourable Everard Romfrey came of a race of fighting earls, toughest of men, whose high, stout, Western castle had weathered our cyclone periods of history without changeing hands more than once, and then but for a short year or two, as if to teach the original possessors the wisdom of inclining to the stronger side. They had a queen's chamber in it, and a king's; and they stood well up against the charge of having dealt darkly with the king. He died among them—how has not been told. We will not discuss the conjectures here. A savour of North Sea foam and ballad pirates hangs about the early chronicles of the family. Indications of an ancestry that had lived between the wave and the cloud were discernible in their notions of right and wrong. But a settlement on solid earth has its influences. They were chivalrous knights bannerets, and leaders in the tented field, paying and taking fair ransom for captures; and they were good landlords, good masters blithely followed to the wars. Sing an old battle of Normandy, Picardy, Gascony, and you celebrate deeds of theirs. At home they were vexatious neighbours to a town of burghers claiming privileges: nor was it unreasonable that the Earl should flout the pretensions of the town to read things for themselves, documents, titleships, rights, and the rest. As well might the flat plain boast of seeing as far as the pillar. Earl and town fought the fight of Barons and Commons in epitome. The Earl gave way; the Barons gave way. Mighty men may thrash numbers for a time; in the end the numbers will be thrashed into the art of beating their teachers. It is bad policy to fight the odds inch by inch. Those primitive school masters of the million liked it, and took their pleasure in that way. The Romfreys did not breed warriors for a parade at Court; wars, though frequent, were not constant, and they wanted occupation: they may even have felt that they were bound in no common degree to the pursuit of an answer to what may be called the parent question of humanity: Am I thy master, or thou mine? They put it to lords of other castles, to town corporations, and sometimes brother to brother: and notwithstanding that the answer often unseated and once discastled them, they swam back to their places, as born warriors, urged by a passion for land, are almost sure to do; are indeed quite sure, so long as they multiply sturdily, and will never take no from Fortune. A family passion for land, that survives a generation, is as effective as genius in producing the object it conceives; and through marriages and conflicts, the seizure of lands, and brides bearing land, these sharp-feeding eagle-eyed earls of Romfrey spied few spots within their top tower's wide circle of the heavens not their own.

It is therefore manifest that they had the root qualities, the prime active elements, of men in perfection, and notably that appetite to flourish at the cost of the weaker, which is the blessed exemplification of strength, and has been man's cheerfulest encouragement to fight on since his comparative subjugation (on the whole, it seems complete) of the animal world. By-and-by the struggle is transferred to higher ground, and we begin to perceive how much we are indebted to the fighting spirit. Strength is the brute form of truth. No conspicuously great man was born of the Romfreys, who were better served by a succession of able sons. They sent undistinguished able men to army and navy—lieutenants given to be critics of their captains, but trustworthy for their work. In the later life of the family, they preferred the provincial state of splendid squires to Court and political honours. They were renowned shots, long-limbed stalking sportsmen in field and bower, fast friends, intemperate enemies, handsome to feminine eyes, resembling one another in build, and mostly of the Northern colour, or betwixt the tints, with an hereditary nose and mouth that cried Romfrey from faces thrice diluted in cousinships.

The Hon. Everard (Stephen Denely Craven Romfrey), third son of the late Earl, had some hopes of the title, and was in person a noticeable gentleman, in mind a mediaeval baron, in politics a crotchety unintelligible Whig. He inherited the estate of Holdesbury, on the borders of Hampshire and Wilts, and espoused that of Steynham in Sussex, where he generally resided. His favourite in the family had been the Lady Emily, his eldest sister, who, contrary to the advice of her other brothers and sisters, had yielded her hand to his not wealthy friend, Colonel Richard Beauchamp. After the death of Nevil's parents, he adopted the boy, being himself childless, and a widower. Childlessness was the affliction of the family. Everard, having no son, could hardly hope that his brother the Earl, and Craven, Lord Avonley, would have

one, for he loved the prospect of the title. Yet, as there were no cousins of the male branch extant, the lack of an heir was a serious omission, and to become the Earl of Romfrey, and be the last Earl of Romfrey, was a melancholy thought, however brilliant. So sinks the sun: but he could not desire the end of a great day. At one time he was a hot Parliamentarian, calling himself a Whig, called by the Whigs a Radical, called by the Radicals a Tory, and very happy in fighting them all round. This was during the decay of his party, before the Liberals were defined. A Liberal deprived him of the seat he had held for fifteen years, and the clearness of his understanding was obscured by that black vision of popular ingratitude which afflicts the free fighting man yet more than the malleable public servant. The latter has a clerkly humility attached to him like a second nature, from his habit of doing as others bid him: the former smacks a voluntarily sweating forehead and throbbing wounds for witness of his claim upon your palpable thankfulness. It is an insult to tell him that he fought for his own satisfaction. Mr. Romfrey still called himself a Whig, though it was Whig mean vengeance on account of his erratic vote and voice on two or three occasions that denied him a peerage and a seat in haven. Thither let your good sheep go, your echoes, your wag-tail dogs, your wealthy pursy manufacturers! He decried the attractions of the sublimer House, and laughed at the transparent Whiggery of his party in replenishing it from the upper shoots of the commonalty: “Dragging it down to prop it up! swamping it to keep it swimming!” he said.

He was nevertheless a vehement supporter of that House. He stood for King, Lords, and Commons, in spite of his personal grievances, harping the triad as vigorously as bard of old Britain. Commons he added out of courtesy, or from usage or policy, or for emphasis, or for the sake of the Constitutional number of the Estates of the realm, or it was because he had an intuition of the folly of omitting them; the same, to some extent, that builders have regarding bricks when they plan a fabric. Thus, although King and Lords prove the existence of Commons in days of the political deluge almost syllogistically, the example of not including one of the Estates might be imitated, and Commons and King do not necessitate the conception of an intermediate third, while Lords and Commons suggest the decapitation of the leading figure. The united three, however, no longer cast reflections on one another, and were an assurance to this acute politician that his birds were safe. He preserved game rigorously, and the deduction was the work of instinct with him. To his mind the game-laws were the corner-stone of Law, and of a man’s right to hold his own; and so delicately did he think the country poised, that an attack on them threatened the structure of justice. The three conjoined Estates were therefore his head gamekeepers; their duty was to back him against the poacher, if they would not see the country tumble. As to his under-gamekeepers, he was their intimate and their friend, saying, with none of the misanthropy which proclaims the virtues of the faithful dog to the confusion of humankind, he liked their company better than that of his equals, and learnt more from them. They also listened deferentially to their instructor.

The conversation he delighted in most might have been going on in any century since the Conquest. Grant him his not unreasonable argument upon his property in game, he was a liberal landlord. No tenants were forced to take his farms. He dragged none by the collar. He gave them liberty to go to Australia, Canada, the Americas, if they liked. He asked in return to have the liberty to shoot on his own grounds, and rear the marks for his shot, treating the question of indemnification as a gentleman should. Still there were grumbling tenants. He swarmed with game, and, though he was liberal, his hares and his birds were immensely destructive: computation could not fix the damage done by them. Probably the farmers expected them not to eat. “There are two parties to a bargain,” said Everard, “and one gets the worst of it. But if he was never obliged to make it, where’s his right to complain?” Men of sense rarely obtain satisfactory answers: they are provoked to despise their kind. But the poacher was another kind of vermin than the stupid tenant. Everard did him the honour to hate him, and twice in a fray had he collared his ruffian, and subsequently sat in condemnation of the wretch: for he who can attest a villany is best qualified to punish it. Gangs from the metropolis found him too determined and alert for their sport. It was the factiousness of here and there an unbroken young scoundrelly colt poacher of the neighbourhood, a born thief, a fellow damned in an inveterate taste for game, which gave him annoyance. One night he took Master Nevil out with him, and they hunted down a couple of sinners that showed fight against odds. Nevil attempted to beg them off because of their boldness. “I don’t set my traps for nothing,” said his

uncle, silencing him. But the boy reflected that his uncle was perpetually lamenting the cowed spirit of the common English-formerly such fresh and merry men! He touched Rosamund Culling's heart with his description of their attitudes when they stood resisting and bawling to the keepers, "Come on we'll die for it." They did not die. Everard explained to the boy that he could have killed them, and was contented to have sent them to gaol for a few weeks. Nevil gaped at the empty magnanimity which his uncle presented to him as a remarkably big morsel. At the age of fourteen he was despatched to sea.

He went unwillingly; not so much from an objection to a naval life as from a wish, incomprehensible to grown men and boys, and especially to his cousin, Cecil Baskelett, that he might remain at school and learn. "The fellow would like to be a parson!" Everard said in disgust. No parson had ever been known of in the Romfrey family, or in the Beauchamp. A legend of a parson that had been a tutor in one of the Romfrey houses, and had talked and sung blandly to a damsel of the blood—degenerate maid—to receive a handsome trouncing for his pains, instead of the holy marriage-tie he aimed at, was the only connection of the Romfreys with the parsonry, as Everard called them. He attributed the boy's feeling to the influence of his great-aunt Beauchamp, who would, he said, infallibly have made a parson of him. "I'd rather enlist for a soldier," Nevil said, and he ceased to dream of rebellion, and of his little property of a few thousand pounds in the funds to aid him in it. He confessed to his dear friend Rosamund Culling that he thought the parsons happy in having time to read history. And oh, to feel for certain *which* side was the wrong side in our Civil War, so that one should not hesitate in choosing! Such puzzles are never, he seemed to be aware, solved in a midshipman's mess. He hated bloodshed, and was guilty of the "cotton-spinners' babble," abhorred of Everard, in alluding to it. Rosamund liked him for his humanity; but she, too, feared he was a slack Romfrey when she heard him speak in precocious contempt of glory. Somewhere, somehow, he had got hold of Manchester sarcasms concerning glory: a weedy word of the newspapers had been sown in his bosom perhaps. He said: "I don't care to win glory; I know all about that; I've seen an old hat in the Louvre." And he would have had her to suppose that he had looked on the campaigning head-cover of Napoleon simply as a shocking bad, bald, brown-rubbed old *tricorne* rather than as the nod of extinction to thousands, the great orb of darkness, the still-trembling gloomy quiver—the brain of the lightnings of battles.

Now this boy nursed no secret presumptuous belief that he was fitted for the walks of the higher intellect; he was not having his impudent boy's fling at superiority over the superior, as here and there a subtle-minded vain juvenile will; nor was he a parrot repeating a line from some Lancastrian pamphlet. He really disliked war and the sword; and scorning the prospect of an idle life, confessing that his abilities barely adapted him for a sailor's, he was opposed to the career opened to him almost to the extreme of shrinking and terror. Or that was the impression conveyed to a not unsympathetic hearer by his forlorn efforts to make himself understood, which were like the tappings of the stick of a blind man mystified by his sense of touch at wrong corners. His bewilderment and speechlessness were a comic display, tragic to him.

Just as his uncle Everard predicted, he came home from his first voyage a pleasant sailor lad. His features, more than handsome to a woman, so mobile they were, shone of sea and spirit, the chance lights of the sea, and the spirit breathing out of it. As to war and bloodshed, a man's first thought must be his country, young Jacket remarked, and *Ich dien* was the best motto afloat. Rosamund noticed the peculiarity of the books he selected for his private reading. They were not boys' books, books of adventure and the like. His favourite author was one writing of Heroes, in (so she esteemed it) a style resembling either early architecture or utter dilapidation, so loose and rough it seemed; a wind-in-the-orchard style, that tumbled down here and there an appreciable fruit with uncouth bluster; sentences without commencements running to abrupt endings and smoke, like waves against a sea-wall, learned dictionary words giving a hand to street-slang, and accents falling on them haphazard, like slant rays from driving clouds; all the pages in a breeze, the whole book producing a kind of electrical agitation in the mind and the joints. This was its effect on the lady. To her the incomprehensible was the abominable, for she had our country's high critical feeling; but he, while admitting that he could not quite master it, liked it. He had dug the book out of a bookseller's shop in Malta, captivated by its title, and had, since the day of his purchase, gone at it again and again, getting nibbles of golden meaning by instalments, as with a solitary pick in a very dark mine, until the illumination of an idea

struck him that there was a great deal more in the book than there was in himself. This was sufficient to secure the devoted attachment of young Mr. Beauchamp. Rosamund sighed with apprehension to think of his unlikeness to boys and men among his countrymen in some things. Why should he hug a book he owned he could not quite comprehend? He said he liked a bone in his mouth; and it was natural wisdom, though unappreciated by women. A bone in a boy's mind for him to gnaw and worry, corrects the vagrancies and promotes the healthy activities, whether there be marrow in it or not. Supposing it furnishes only dramatic entertainment in that usually vacant tenement, or powder-shell, it will be of service.

Nevil proposed to her that her next present should be the entire list of his beloved Incomprehensible's published works, and she promised, and was not sorry to keep her promise dangling at the skirts of memory, to drop away in time. For that fire-and-smoke writer dedicated volumes to the praise of a regicide. Nice reading for her dear boy! Some weeks after Nevil was off again, she abused herself for her half-hearted love of him, and would have given him anything—the last word in favour of the Country versus the royal Martyr, for example, had he insisted on it. She gathered, bit by bit, that he had dashed at his big blustering cousin Cecil to vindicate her good name. The direful youths fought in the Steynham stables, overheard by the grooms. Everard received a fine account of the tussle from these latter, and Rosamund, knowing him to be of the order of gentlemen who, whatsoever their sins, will at all costs protect a woman's delicacy, and a dependant's, man or woman, did not fear to have her ears shocked in probing him on the subject.

Everard was led to say that Nevil's cousins were bedevilled with womanfolk.

From which Rosamund perceived that women had been at work; and if so, it was upon the business of the scandal-monger; and if so, Nevil fought his cousin to protect her good name from a babbler of the family gossip.

She spoke to Stukely Culbrett, her dead husband's friend, to whose recommendation she was indebted for her place in Everard Romfrey's household.

"Nevil behaved like a knight, I hear."

"Your beauty was disputed," said he, "and Nevil knocked the blind man down for not being able to see."

She thought, "Not my beauty! Nevil struck his cousin on behalf of the only fair thing I have left to me!"

This was a moment with her when many sensations rush together and form a knot in sensitive natures. She had been very good-looking. She was good-looking still, but she remembered the bloom of her looks in her husband's days (the tragedy of the mirror is one for a woman to write: I am ashamed to find myself smiling while the poor lady weeps), she remembered his praises, her pride; his death in battle, her anguish: then, on her strange entry to this house, her bitter wish to be older; and then, the oppressive calm of her recognition of her wish's fulfilment, the heavy drop to dead earth, when she could say, or pretend to think she could say—I look old enough: will they tattle of me now? Nevil's championship of her good name brought her history spinning about her head, and threw a finger of light on her real position. In that she saw the slenderness of her hold on respect, as well as felt her personal stainlessness. The boy warmed her chill widowhood. It was written that her, second love should be of the pattern of mother's love. She loved him hungrily and jealously, always in fear for him when he was absent, even anxiously when she had him near. For some cause, born, one may fancy, of the hour of her love's conception, his image in her heart was steeped in tears. She was not, happily, one of the women who betray strong feeling, and humour preserved her from excesses of sentiment.

CHAPTER III.
CONTAINS BARONIAL VIEWS OF THE PRESENT TIME

Upon the word of honour of Rosamund, the letter to the officers of the French Guard was posted.

“Post it, post it,” Everard said, on her consulting him, with the letter in her hand. “Let the fellow stand his luck.” It was addressed to the Colonel of the First Regiment of the Imperial Guard, Paris. That superscription had been suggested by Colonel Halkett. Rosamund was in favour of addressing it to Versailles, Nevil to the Tuileries; but Paris could hardly fail to hit the mark, and Nevil waited for the reply, half expecting an appointment on the French sands: for the act of posting a letter, though it be to little short of the Pleiades even, will stamp an incredible proceeding as a matter of business, so ready is the ardent mind to take footing on the last thing done. The flight of Mr. Beauchamp’s letter placed it in the common order of occurrences for the youthful author of it. Jack Wilmore, a messmate, offered to second him, though he should be dismissed the service for it. Another second would easily be found somewhere; for, as Nevil observed, you have only to set these affairs going, and British blood rises: we are not the people you see on the surface. Wilmore’s father was a parson, for instance. What did he do? He could not help himself: he supplied the army and navy with recruits! One son was in a marching regiment, the other was Jack, and three girls had vowed never to quit the rectory save as brides of officers. Nevil thought that seemed encouraging; we were evidently not a nation of shopkeepers at heart; and he quoted sayings of Mr. Stukely Culbrett’s, in which neither his ear nor Wilmore’s detected the under-ring Stukely was famous for: as that England had saddled herself with India for the express purpose of better obeying the Commandments in Europe; and that it would be a lamentable thing for the Continent and our doctrines if ever beef should fail the Briton, and such like. “Depend upon it we’re a fighting nation naturally, Jack,” said Nevil. “How can we submit!... however, I shall not be impatient. I dislike duelling, and hate war, but I will have the country respected.” They planned a defence of the country, drawing their strategy from magazine articles by military pens, reverberations of the extinct voices of the daily and weekly journals, customary after a panic, and making bloody stands on spots of extreme pastoral beauty, which they visited by coach and rail, looking back on unfortified London with particular melancholy.

Rosamund’s word may be trusted that she dropped the letter into a London post-office in pursuance of her promise to Nevil. The singular fact was that no answer to it ever arrived. Nevil, without a doubt of her honesty, proposed an expedition to Paris; he was ordered to join his ship, and he lay moored across the water in the port of Bevisham, panting for notice to be taken of him. The slight of the total disregard of his letter now affected him personally; it took him some time to get over this indignity put upon him, especially because of his being under the impression that the country suffered, not he at all. The letter had served its object: ever since the transmission of it the menaces and insults had ceased.

But they might be renewed, and he desired to stop them altogether. His last feeling was one of genuine regret that Frenchmen should have behaved unworthily of the high estimation he held them in. With which he dismissed the affair.

He was rallied about it when he next sat at his uncle’s table, and had to pardon Rosamund for telling.

Nevil replied modestly: “I dare say you think me half a fool, sir. All I know is, I waited for my betters to speak first. I have no dislike of Frenchmen.”

Everard shook his head to signify, “not *half*.” But he was gentle enough in his observations. “There’s a motto, Ex pede Herculem. You stepped out for the dogs to judge better of us. It’s an infernally tripping motto for a composite structure like the kingdom of Great Britain and Manchester, boy Nevil. We can fight foreigners when the time comes.” He directed Nevil to look home, and cast an eye on the cotton-spinners, with the remark that they were binding us hand and foot to sell us to the biggest buyer, and were not Englishmen but “Germans and Jews, and quakers and hybrids, diligent clerks and speculators, and commercial travellers, who have raised a fortune from foisting drugged goods on an idiot

population."

He loathed them for the curse they were to the country. And he was one of the few who spoke out. The fashion was to pet them. We stood against them; were halfhearted, and were beaten; and then we petted them, and bit by bit our privileges were torn away. We made lords of them to catch them, and they grocers of us by way of a return. "Already," said Everard, "they have knocked the nation's head off, and dry-rotted the bone of the people."

"Don't they," Nevil asked, "belong to the Liberal party?"

"I'll tell you," Everard replied, "they belong to any party that upsets the party above them. They belong to the GEORGE FOXE party, and my poultry-roosts are the mark they aim at. You shall have a glance at the manufacturing district some day. You shall see the machines they work with. You shall see the miserable lank-jawed half-stewed pantaloons they've managed to make of Englishmen there. My blood's past boiling. They work young children in their factories from morning to night. Their manufactories are spreading like the webs of the devil to suck the blood of the country. In that district of theirs an epidemic levels men like a disease in sheep. Skeletons can't make a stand. On the top of it all they sing Sunday tunes!"

This behaviour of corn-law agitators and protectors of poachers was an hypocrisy too horrible for comment. Everard sipped claret. Nevil lashed his head for the clear idea which objurgation insists upon implanting, but batters to pieces in the act.

"Manchester's the belly of this country!" Everard continued. "So long as Manchester flourishes, we're a country governed and led by the belly. The head and the legs of the country are sound still; I don't guarantee it for long, but the middle's rapacious and corrupt. Take it on a question of foreign affairs, it's an alderman after a feast. Bring it upon home politics, you meet a wolf."

The faithful Whig veteran spoke with jolly admiration of the speech of a famous Tory chief.

"That was the way to talk to them! Denounce them traitors! Up whip, and set the ruffians capering! Hit them facers! Our men are always for the too-clever trick. They pluck the sprouts and eat them, as if the loss of a sprout or two thinned Manchester! Your policy of absorption is good enough when you're dealing with fragments. It's a devilish unlucky thing to attempt with a concrete mass. You might as well ask your head to absorb a wall by running at it like a pugnacious nigger. I don't want you to go into Parliament ever. You're a fitter man out of it; but if ever you're bitten—and it's the curse of our country to have politics as well as the other diseases—don't follow a flag, be independent, keep a free vote; remember how I've been tied, and hold foot against Manchester. Do it blindfold; you don't want counselling, you're sure to be right. I'll lay you a blood-brood mare to a cabstand skeleton, you'll have an easy conscience and deserve the thanks of the country."

Nevil listened gravely. The soundness of the head and legs of the country he took for granted. The inflated state of the unchivalrous middle, denominated Manchester, terrified him. Could it be true that England was betraying signs of decay? and signs how ignoble! Half-a-dozen crescent lines cunningly turned, sketched her figure before the world, and the reflection for one ready to die upholding her was that the portrait was no caricature. Such an emblematic presentation of the land of his filial affection haunted him with hideous mockeries. Surely the foreigner hearing our boasts of her must compare us to showmen bawling the attractions of a Fat Lady at a fair!

Swoln Manchester bore the blame of it. Everard exulted to hear his young echo attack the cotton-spinners. But Nevil was for a plan, a system, immediate action; the descending among the people, and taking an initiative, LEADING them, insisting on their following, not standing aloof and shrugging.

"We lead them in war," said he; "why not in peace? There's a front for peace as well as war, and that's our place rightly. We're pushed aside; why, it seems to me we're treated like old-fashioned ornaments! The fault must be ours. Shrugging and sneering is about as honourable as blazing fireworks over your own defeat. Back we have to go! that's the point, sir. And as for jeering the cotton-spinners, I can't while they've the lead of us. We let them have it! And we have thrice the stake in the country. I don't mean properties and titles."

"Deuce you don't," said his uncle.

"I mean our names, our histories; I mean our duties. As for titles, the way to defend them is to be worthy of them."

“Damned fine speech,” remarked Everard. “Now you get out of that trick of prize-orationing. I call it snuffery, sir; it’s all to your own nose! You’re talking to me, not to a gallery. ‘Worthy of them!’ Caesar wraps his head in his robe: he gets his dig in the ribs for all his attitudinizing. It’s very well for a man to talk like that who owns no more than his barebodkin life, poor devil. Tall talk’s his jewelry: he must have his dandification in bunkum. You ought to know better. Property and titles are worth having, whether you are ‘worthy of them’ or a disgrace to your class. The best way of defending them is to keep a strong fist, and take care you don’t draw your fore-foot back more than enough.”

“Please propose something to be done,” said Nevil, depressed by the recommendation of that attitude.

Everard proposed a fight for every privilege his class possessed. “They say,” he said, “a nobleman fighting the odds is a sight for the gods: and I wouldn’t yield an inch of ground. It’s no use calling things by fine names —the country’s ruined by cowardice. Poursuivez! I cry. Haro! at them! The biggest hart wins in the end. I haven’t a doubt about that. And I haven’t a doubt we carry the tonnage.”

“There’s the people,” sighed Nevil, entangled in his uncle’s haziness.

“What people?”

“I suppose the people of Great Britain count, sir.”

“Of course they do; when the battle’s done, the fight lost and won.”

“Do you expect the people to look on, sir?”

“The people always wait for the winner, boy Nevil.”

The young fellow exclaimed despondingly, “If it were a race!”

“It’s like a race, and we’re confoundedly out of training,” said Everard.

There he rested. A mediaeval gentleman with the docile notions of the twelfth century, complacently driving them to grass and wattling them in the nineteenth, could be of no use to a boy trying to think, though he could set the youngster galloping. Nevil wandered about the woods of Steynham, disinclined to shoot and lend a hand to country sports. The popping of the guns of his uncle and guests hung about his ears much like their speech, which was unobjectionable in itself, but not sufficient; a little hard, he thought, a little idle. He wanted something, and wanted them to give their time and energy to something, that was not to be had in a market. The nobles, he felt sure, might resume their natural alliance with the people, and lead them, as they did of old, to the battle-field. How might they? A comely Sussex lass could not well tell him how. Sarcastic reports of the troublesome questioner represented him applying to a nymph of the country for enlightenment. He thrilled surprisingly under the charm of feminine beauty. “The fellow’s sound at bottom,” his uncle said, hearing of his having really been seen walking in the complete form proper to his budding age, that is, in two halves. Nevil showed that he had gained an acquaintance with the struggles of the neighbouring agricultural poor to live and rear their children. His uncle’s table roared at his enumeration of the sickly little beings, consumptive or bandy-legged, within a radius of five miles of Steynham. Action was what he wanted, Everard said. Nevil perhaps thought the same, for he dashed out of his mooning with a wave of the Tory standard, delighting the ladies, though in that conflict of the Lion and the Unicorn (which was a Tory song) he seemed rather to wish to goad the dear lion than crush the one-horned intrusive upstart. His calling on the crack corps of Peers to enrol themselves forthwith in the front ranks, and to anticipate opposition by initiating measures, and so cut out that funny old crazy old galleon, the People, from under the batteries of the enemy, highly amused the gentlemen.

Before rejoining his ship, Nevil paid his customary short visit of ceremony to his great-aunt Beauchamp—a venerable lady past eighty, hitherto divided from him in sympathy by her dislike of his uncle Everard, who had once been his living hero. That was when he was in frocks, and still the tenacious fellow could not bear to hear his uncle spoken ill of.

“All the men of that family are heartless, and he is a man of wood, my dear, and a bad man,” the old lady said. “He should have kept you at school, and sent you to college. You want reading and teaching and talking to. Such a house as that is should never be a home for you.” She hinted at Rosamund. Nevil defended the persecuted woman, but with no better success than from the attacks of the Romfrey ladies; with this difference, however, that these decried the woman’s vicious arts, and Mistress Elizabeth Mary Beauchamp put all the sin upon the man. Such a man! she said. “Let me hear that he has married her, I will not utter another word.” Nevil echoed, “Married!” in a different key.

“I am as much of an aristocrat as any of you, only I rank morality higher,” said Mrs. Beauchamp. “When you were a child I offered to take you and make you my heir, and *I* would have educated you. You shall see a great-nephew of mine that I did educate; he is eating his dinners for the bar in London, and comes to me every Sunday. I shall marry him to a good girl, and I shall show your uncle what my kind of man-making is.”

Nevil had no desire to meet the other great-nephew, especially when he was aware of the extraordinary circumstance that a Beauchamp great-niece, having no money, had bestowed her hand on a Manchester man defunct, whereof this young Blackburn Tuckham, the lawyer, was issue. He took his leave of Mrs. Elizabeth Beauchamp, respecting her for her constitutional health and brightness, and regretting for the sake of the country that she had not married to give England men and women resembling her. On the whole he considered her wiser in her prescription for the malady besetting him than his uncle. He knew that action was but a temporary remedy. College would have been his chronic medicine, and the old lady’s acuteness in seeing it impressed him forcibly. She had given him a peaceable two days on the Upper Thames, in an atmosphere of plain good sense and just-mindedness. He wrote to thank her, saying:

“My England at sea will be your parlour-window looking down the grass to the river and rushes; and when you do me the honour to write, please tell me the names of those wildflowers growing along the banks in Summer.” The old lady replied immediately, enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds: “Colonel Halkett informs me you are under a cloud at Steynham, and I have thought you may be in want of pocket-money. The wild-flowers are willowherb, meadow-sweet, and loosestrife. I shall be glad when you are here in Summer to see them.”

Nevil despatched the following: “I thank you, but I shall not cash the cheque. The Steynham tale is this:

I happened to be out at night, and stopped the keepers in chase of a young fellow trespassing. I caught him myself, but recognized him as one of a family I take an interest in, and let him run before they came up. My uncle heard a gun; I sent the head gamekeeper word in the morning to out with it all. Uncle E. was annoyed, and we had a rough parting. If you are rewarding me for this, I have no right to it.”

Mrs. Beauchamp rejoined: “Your profession should teach you subordination, if it does nothing else that is valuable to a Christian gentleman. You will receive from the publisher the ‘Life and Letters of Lord Collingwood,’ whom I have it in my mind that a young midshipman should task himself to imitate. Spend the money as you think fit.”

Nevil’s ship, commanded by Captain Robert Hall (a most gallant officer, one of his heroes, and of Lancashire origin, strangely!), flew to the South American station, in and about Lord Cochrane’s waters; then as swiftly back. For, like the frail Norwegian bark on the edge of the maelstrom, liker to a country of conflicting interests and passions, that is not mentally on a level with its good fortune, England was drifting into foreign complications. A paralyzed Minister proclaimed it. The governing people, which is looked to for direction in grave dilemmas by its representatives and reflectors, shouted that it had been accused of pusillanimity. No one had any desire for war, only we really had (and it was perfectly true) been talking gigantic nonsense of peace, and of the everlastingness of the exchange of fruits for money, with angels waving raw-groceries of Eden in joy of the commercial picture. Therefore, to correct the excesses of that fit, we held the standing by the Moslem, on behalf of the Mediterranean (and the Moslem is one of our customers, bearing an excellent reputation for the payment of debts), to be good, granting the necessity. We deplored the necessity. The Press wept over it. That, however, was not the politic tone for us while the Imperial berg of Polar ice watched us keenly; and the Press proceeded to remind us that we had once been bull-dogs. Was there not an animal within us having a right to a turn now and then? And was it not (Falstaff, on a calm world, was quoted) for the benefit of our constitutions now and then to loosen the animal? Granting the necessity, of course. By dint of incessantly speaking of the necessity we granted it unknowingly. The lighter hearts regarded our period of monotonously lyrical prosperity as a man sensible of fresh morning air looks back on the snoring bolster. Many of the graver were glad of a change. After all that maundering over the blessed peace which brings the raisin and the currant for the pudding, and shuts up the cannon with a sheep’s head, it became a principle of popular taste to descant on the vivifying virtues of war; even as, after ten months of money-mongering in smoky London, the citizen hails the sea-breeze and an immersion in unruly brine, despite the cost,

that breeze and brine may make a man of him, according to the doctor's prescription: sweet is home, but health is sweeter! Then was there another curious exhibition of us. Gentlemen, to the exact number of the Graces, dressed in drab of an ancient cut, made a pilgrimage to the icy despot, and besought him to give way for Piety's sake. He, courteous, colossal, and immoveable, waved them homeward. They returned and were hooted for belying the bellicose by their mission, and interpreting too well the peaceful. They were the unparalyzed Ministers of the occasion, but helpless.

And now came war, the purifier and the pestilence.

The cry of the English people for war was pretty general, as far as the criers went. They put on their Sabbath face concerning the declaration of war, and told with approval how the Royal hand had trembled in committing itself to the form of signature to which its action is limited. If there was money to be paid, there was a bugbear to be slain for it; and a bugbear is as obnoxious to the repose of commercial communities as rivals are to kings.

The cry for war was absolutely unanimous, and a supremely national cry, Everard Romfrey said, for it excluded the cotton-spinners.

He smacked his hands, crowing at the vociferations of disgust of those negrophiles and sweaters of Christians, whose isolated clamour amid the popular uproar sounded of gagged mouths.

One of the half-stifled cotton-spinners, a notorious one, a spouter of rank sedition and hater of aristocracy, a political poacher, managed to make himself heard. He was tossed to the Press for morsel, and tossed back to the people in strips. Everard had a sharp return of appetite in reading the daily and weekly journals. They printed logic, they printed sense; they abused the treasonable barking cur unmercifully. They printed almost as much as he would have uttered, excepting the strong salt of his similes, likening that rascal and his crew to the American weed in our waters, to the rotting wild bees' nest in our trees, to the worm in our ships' timbers, and to lamentable afflictions of the human frame, and of sheep, oxen, honest hounds. Manchester was in eclipse. The world of England discovered that the peace-party which opposed was the actual cause of the war: never was indication clearer. But my business is with Mr. Beauchamp, to know whom, and partly understand his conduct in after-days, it will be as well to take a bird'seye glance at him through the war.

"Now," said Everard, "we shall see what staff there is in that fellow Nevil."

He expected, as you may imagine, a true young Beauchamp-Romfrey to be straining his collar like a leash-hound.

CHAPTER IV.
A GLIMPSE OF NEVIL IN ACTION

The young gentleman to whom Everard Romfrey transferred his combative spirit despatched a letter from the Dardanelles, requesting his uncle not to ask him for a spark of enthusiasm. He despised our Moslem allies, he said, and thought with pity of the miserable herds of men in regiments marching across the steppes at the bidding of a despot that we were helping to popularize. He certainly wrote in the tone of a jejune politician; pardonable stuff to seniors entertaining similar opinions, but most exasperating when it runs counter to them: though one question put by Nevil was not easily answerable. He wished to know whether the English people would be so anxious to be at it if their man stood on the opposite shore and talked of trying conclusions on their green fields. And he suggested that they had become so ready for war because of their having grown rather ashamed of themselves, and for the special reason that they could have it at a distance.

"The rascal's liver's out of order," Everard said.

Coming to the sentence: "Who speaks out in this crisis? There is one, and I am with him"; Mr. Romfrey's compassionate sentiments veered round to irate amazement. For the person alluded to was indeed the infamous miauling cotton-spinner. Nevil admired him. He said so bluntly. He pointed to that traitorous George-Foxite as the one heroical Englishman of his day, declaring that he felt bound in honour to make known his admiration for the man; and he hoped his uncle would excuse him. "If we differ, I am sorry, sir; but I should be a coward to withhold what I think of him when he has all England against him, and he is in the right, as England will discover. I maintain he speaks wisely—I don't mind saying, like a prophet; and he speaks on behalf of the poor as well as of the country. He appears to me the only public man who looks to the state of the poor—I mean, their interests. They pay for war, and if we are to have peace at home and strength for a really national war, the only war we can ever call necessary, the poor must be contented. He sees that. I shall not run the risk of angering you by writing to defend him, unless I hear of his being shamefully mishandled, and the bearer of an old name can be of service to him. I cannot say less, and will say no more."

Everard apostrophized his absent nephew: "You jackass!"

I am reminded by Mr. Romfrey's profound disappointment in the youth, that it will be repeatedly shared by many others: and I am bound to forewarn readers of this history that there is no plot in it. The hero is chargeable with the official disqualification of constantly offending prejudices, never seeking to please; and all the while it is upon him the narrative hangs. To be a public favourite is his last thought. Beauchampism, as one confronting him calls it, may be said to stand for nearly everything which is the obverse of Byronism, and rarely woos your sympathy, shuns the statuesque pathetic, or any kind of posturing. For Beauchamp will not even look at happiness to mourn its absence; melodious lamentations, demoniacal scorn, are quite alien to him. His faith is in working and fighting. With every inducement to offer himself for a romantic figure, he despises the pomades and curling-irons of modern romance, its shears and its labels: in fine, every one of those positive things by whose aid, and by some adroit flourishing of them, the nimbus known as a mysterious halo is produced about a gentleman's head. And a highly alluring adornment it is! We are all given to lose our solidity and fly at it; although the faithful mirror of fiction has been showing us latterly that a too superhuman beauty has disturbed popular belief in the bare beginnings of the existence of heroes: but this, very likely, is nothing more than a fit of Republicanism in the nursery, and a deposition of the leading doll for lack of variety in him. That conqueror of circumstances will, the dullest soul may begin predicting, return on his cockhorse to favour and authority. Meantime the exhibition of a hero whom circumstances overcome, and who does not weep or ask you for a tear, who continually forfeits attractiveness by declining to better his own fortunes, must run the chances of a novelty during the interregnum. Nursery Legitimists will be against him to a man; Republicans likewise, after a queer sniff at his pretensions, it is to be feared. For me, I have so little command over him, that in spite of my nursery tastes, he drags me whither he lists. It is artless art and monstrous innovation to present so wilful a figure, but were I to create a striking fable for him, and set him off with scenic effects and contrasts, it would be only a momentary tonic to you, to him instant death. He could not live in such an atmosphere. The simple truth has to be told: how he loved his country, and for

another and a broader love, growing out of his first passion, fought it; and being small by comparison, and finding no giant of the Philistines disposed to receive a stone in his fore-skull, pummelled the obmutescent mass, to the confusion of a conceivable epic. His indifferent England refused it to him. That is all I can say. The greater power of the two, she seems, with a quiet derision that does not belie her amiable passivity, to have reduced in Beauchamp's career the boldest readiness for public action, and some good stout efforts besides, to the flat result of an optically discernible influence of our hero's character in the domestic circle; perhaps a faintly-outlined circle or two beyond it. But this does not forbid him to be ranked as one of the most distinguishing of her children of the day he lived in. Blame the victrix if you think he should have been livelier.

Nevil soon had to turn his telescope from politics. The torch of war was actually lighting, and he was not fashioned to be heedless of what surrounded him. Our diplomacy, after dancing with all the suppleness of stilts, gravely resigned the gift of motion. Our dauntless Lancastrian thundered like a tempest over a gambling tent, disregarded. Our worthy people, consenting to the doctrine that war is a scourge, contracted the habit of thinking it, in this case, the dire necessity which is the sole excuse for giving way to an irritated pugnacity, and sucked the comforting caramel of an alliance with their troublesome next-door neighbour, profuse in comfits as in scorpions. Nevil detected that politic element of their promptitude for war. His recollections of dissatisfaction in former days assisted him to perceive the nature of it, but he was too young to hold his own against the hubbub of a noisy people, much too young to remain sceptical of a modern people's enthusiasm for war while journals were testifying to it down the length of their columns, and letters from home palpitated with it, and shipmates yawned wearily for the signal, and shiploads of red coats and blue, infantry, cavalry, artillery, were singing farewell to the girl at home, and hurrah for anything in foreign waters. He joined the stream with a cordial spirit. Since it must be so! The wind of that haughty proceeding of the Great Bear in putting a paw over the neutral brook brushed his cheek unpleasantly. He clapped hands for the fezzy defenders of the border fortress, and when the order came for the fleet to enter the old romantic sea of storms and fables, he wrote home a letter fit for his uncle Everard to read. Then there was the sailing and the landing, and the march up the heights, which Nevil was condemned to look at. To his joy he obtained an appointment on shore, and after that Everard heard of him from other channels. The two were of a mind when the savage winter advanced which froze the attack of the city, and might be imaged as the hoar god of hostile elements pointing a hand to the line reached, and menacing at one farther step. Both blamed the Government, but they divided as to the origin of governmental inefficiency; Nevil accusing the Lords guilty of foulest sloth, Everard the Quakers of dry-rotting the country. He passed with a shrug Nevil's puling outcry for the enemy as well as our own poor fellows: "At his steppes again!" And he had to be forgiving when reports came of his nephew's turn for overdoing his duty: "show-fighting," as he termed it.

"Braggadocioing in deeds is only next bad to mouthing it," he wrote very rationally. "Stick to your line. Don't go out of it till you are ordered out. Remember that we want *soldiers* and *sailors*, we don't want *suicides*." He condescended to these italics, considering impressiveness to be urgent. In his heart, notwithstanding his implacably clear judgement, he was passably well pleased with the congratulations encompassing him on account of his nephew's gallantry at a period of dejection in Britain: for the winter was dreadful; every kind heart that went to bed with cold feet felt acutely for our soldiers on the frozen heights, and thoughts of heroes were as good as warming-pans. Heroes we would have. It happens in war as in wit, that all the birds of wonder fly to a flaring reputation. He that has done one wild thing must necessarily have done the other; so Nevil found himself standing in the thick of a fame that blew rank eulogies on him for acts he had not performed. The Earl of Romfrey forwarded hampers and a letter of praise. "They tell me that while you were facing the enemy, temporarily attaching yourself to one of the regiments—I forget which, though I have heard it named—you sprang out under fire on an eagle clawing a hare. I like that. I hope you had the benefit of the hare. She is our property, and I have issued an injunction that she shall not go into the newspapers." Everard was entirely of a contrary opinion concerning the episode of eagle and hare, though it was a case of a bird of prey interfering with an object of the chase. Nevil wrote home most entreatingly and imperatively, like one wincing, begging him to contradict that and

certain other stories, and prescribing the form of a public renunciation of his proclaimed part in them. “The hare,” he sent word, “is the property of young Michell of the *Rodney*, and he is the humanest and the gallantest fellow in the service. I have written to my Lord. Pray help to rid me of burdens that make me feel like a robber and impostor.”

Everard replied:

“I have a letter from your captain, informing me that I am unlikely to see you home unless you learn to hold yourself in. I wish you were in another battery than Robert Hall’s. He forgets the force of example, however much of a dab he may be at precept. But there you are, and please clap a hundredweight on your appetite for figuring, will you. Do you think there is any good in helping to Frenchify our army? I loathe a fellow who shoots at a medal. I wager he is easy enough to be caught by circumvention—put me in the open with him. Tom Biggot, the boxer, went over to Paris, and stood in the ring with one of their dancing pugilists, and the first round he got a crack on the chin from the rogue’s foot; the second round he caught him by the lifted leg, and punished him till pec was all he could say of peccavi. Fight the straightforward fight. Hang flan! Battle is a game of give and take, and if our men get elanned, we shall see them refusing to come up to time. This new crossing and medalling is the devil’s own notion for upsetting a solid British line, and tempting fellows to get invalided that they may blaze it before the shopkeepers and their wives in the city. Give us an army!—none of your caperers. Here are lots of circusy heroes coming home to rest after their fatigues. One was spouting at a public dinner yesterday night. He went into it upright, and he ran out of it upright—at the head of his men!—and here he is feasted by the citizens and making a speech upright, and my boy fronting the enemy!”

Everard’s involuntary break-down from his veteran’s roughness to a touch of feeling thrilled Nevil, who began to perceive what his uncle was driving at when he rebuked the coxcombry of the field, and spoke of the description of compliment your hero was paying Englishmen in affecting to give them examples of bravery and preternatural coolness. Nevil sent home humble confessions of guilt in this respect, with fresh praises of young Michell: for though Everard, as Nevil recognized it, was perfectly right in the abstract, and generally right, there are times when an example is needed by brave men—times when the fiery furnace of death’s dragon-jaw is not inviting even to Englishmen receiving the word that duty bids them advance, and they require a leader of the way. A national coxcombry that pretends to an independence of human sensations, and makes a motto of our dandiacal courage, is more perilous to the armies of the nation than that of a few heroes. It is this coxcombry which has too often caused disdain of the wise chief’s maxim of calculation for winners, namely, to have always the odds on your side, and which has bled, shattered, and occasionally disgraced us. Young Michell’s carrying powder-bags to the assault, and when ordered to retire, bearing them on his back, and helping a wounded soldier on the way, did surely well; nor did Mr. Beauchamp himself behave so badly on an occasion when the sailors of his battery caught him out of a fire of shell that raised jets of dust and smoke like a range of geysers over the open, and hugged him as loving women do at a meeting or a parting. He was penitent before his uncle, admitting, first, that the men were not in want of an example of the contempt of death, and secondly, that he doubted whether it was contempt of death on his part so much as pride—a hatred of being seen running.

“I don’t like the fellow to be drawing it so fine,” said Everard. It sounded to him a trifle parsonical. But his heart was won by Nevil’s determination to wear out the campaign rather than be invalided or entrusted with a holiday duty.

“I see with shame (admiration of *them*) old infantry captains and colonels of no position beyond their rank in the army, sticking to their post,” said Nevil, “and a lord and a lord and a lord slipping off as though the stuff of the man in him had melted. I shall go through with it.” Everard approved him. Colonel Halkett wrote that the youth was a skeleton. Still Everard encouraged him to persevere, and said of him:

“I like him for holding to his work *after* the strain’s over. That tells the man.”

He observed at his table, in reply to commendations of his nephew:

“Nevil’s leak is his political craze, and that seems to be going: I hope it is. You can’t rear a man on politics. When I was of his age I never looked at the newspapers, except to read the divorce cases. I came to politics with a ripe judgement. He shines in action, and he’ll find that out, and leave others the palavering.”

It was upon the close of the war that Nevil drove his uncle to avow a downright undisguised indignation with him. He caught a fever in the French camp, where he was dispensing vivers and provends out of English hampers.

“Those French fellows are every man of them trained up to snapping-point,” said Everard. “You’re sure to have them if you hold out long against them. And greedy dogs too: they’re for half our hampers, and all the glory. And there’s Nevil down on his back in the thick of them! Will anybody tell me why the devil he must be poking into the French camp? They were ready enough to run to him and beg potatoes. It’s all for humanity he does it—mark that. Never was a word fitter for a quack’s mouth than ‘humanity.’ Two syllables more, and the parsons would be riding it to sawdust. Humanity! Humanitomtity! It’s the best word of the two for half the things done in the name of it.”

A tremendously bracing epistle, excellent for an access of fever, was despatched to humanity’s curate, and Everard sat expecting a hot rejoinder, or else a black sealed letter, but neither one nor the other arrived.

Suddenly, to his disgust, came rumours of peace between the mighty belligerents.

The silver trumpets of peace were nowhere hearkened to with satisfaction by the bull-dogs, though triumph rang sonorously through the music, for they had been severely mangled, as usual at the outset, and they had at last got their grip, and were in high condition for fighting.

The most expansive panegyrists of our deeds did not dare affirm of the most famous of them, that England had embarked her costly cavalry to offer it for a mark of artillery-balls on three sides of a square: and the belief was universal that we could do more business-like deeds and play the great game of blunders with an ability refined by experience. Everard Romfrey was one of those who thought themselves justified in insisting upon the continuation of the war, in contempt of our allies. His favourite saying that constitution beats the world, was being splendidly manifested by our bearing. He was very uneasy; he would not hear of peace; and not only that, the imperial gentleman soberly committed the naïveté of sending word to Nevil to let him know immediately the opinion of the camp concerning it, as perchance an old Roman knight may have written to some young aquilifer of the Praetorians.

Allies, however, are of the description of twins joined by a membrane, and supposing that one of them determines to sit down, the other will act wisely in bending his knees at once, and doing the same: he cannot but be extremely uncomfortable left standing. Besides, there was the Ottoman cleverly poised again; the Muscovite was battered; fresh guilt was added to the military glory of the Gaul. English grumblers might well be asked what they had fought for, if they were not contented.

Colonel Halkett mentioned a report that Nevil had received a slight thigh-wound of small importance. At any rate, something was the matter with him, and it was naturally imagined that he would have double cause to write home; and still more so for the reason, his uncle confessed, that he had foreseen the folly of a war conducted by milky cotton-spinners and their adjuncts, in partnership with a throned gambler, who had won his stake, and now snapped his fingers at them. Everard expected, he had prepared himself for, the young naval politician’s crow, and he meant to admit frankly that he had been wrong in wishing to fight anybody without having first crushed the cotton faction. But Nevil continued silent.

“Dead in hospital or a Turk hotel!” sighed Everard; “and no more to the scoundrels over there than a body to be shovelled into slack lime.”

Rosamund Culling was the only witness of his remarkable betrayal of grief.

CHAPTER V.
RENÉE

At last, one morning, arrived a letter from a French gentleman signing himself Comte Cresnes de Croisnel, in which Everard was informed that his nephew had accompanied the son of the writer, Captain de Croisnel, on board an Austrian boat out of the East, and was lying in Venice under a return-attack of fever,—not, the count stated pointedly, in the hands of an Italian physician. He had brought his own with him to meet his son, who was likewise disabled.

Everard was assured by M. de Croisnel that every attention and affectionate care were being rendered to his gallant and adored nephew —"vrai type de tout ce qu'il y a de noble et de chevaleresque dans la vieille Angleterre"—from a family bound to him by the tenderest obligations, personal and national; one as dear to every member of it as the brother, the son, they welcomed with thankful hearts to the Divine interposition restoring him to them. In conclusion, the count proposed something like the embrace of a fraternal friendship should Everard think fit to act upon the spontaneous sentiments of a loving relative, and join them in Venice to watch over his nephew's recovery. Already M. Nevil was stronger. The gondola was a medicine in itself, the count said.

Everard knitted his mouth to intensify a peculiar subdued form of laughter through the nose, in hopeless ridicule of a Frenchman's notions of an Englishman's occupations—presumed across Channel to allow of his breaking loose from shooting engagements at a minute's notice, to rush off to a fetid foreign city notorious for mud and mosquitoes, and commence capering and grimacing, pouring forth a jugful of ready-made extravagances, with *mon fils! mon cher neveu! Dieu!* and similar fiddlededee. These were matters for women to do, if they chose: women and Frenchmen were much of a pattern. Moreover, he knew the hotel this Comte de Croisnel was staying at. He gasped at the name of it: he had rather encounter a grisly bear than a mosquito any night of his life, for no stretch of cunning outwits a mosquito; and enlarging on the qualities of the terrific insect, he vowed it was damnation without trial or judgement.

Eventually, Mrs. Culling's departure was permitted. He argued, "Why go? the fellow's comfortable, getting himself together, and you say the French are good nurses." But her entreaties to go were vehement, though Venice had no happy place in her recollections, and he withheld his objections to her going. For him, the fields forbade it. He sent hearty messages to Nevil, and that was enough, considering that the young dog of "humanity" had clearly been running out of his way to catch a jaundice, and was bereaving his houses of the matronly government, deprived of which they were all of them likely soon to be at sixes and sevens with disorderly lacqueys, peccant maids, and cooks in hysterics.

Now if the master of his fortunes had come to Venice!—Nevil started the supposition in his mind often after hope had sunk.—Everard would have seen a young sailor and a soldier the thinner for wear, reclining in a gondola half the day, fanned by a brunette of the fine lineaments of the good blood of France. She chattered snatches of Venetian caught from the gondoliers, she was like a delicate cup of crystal brimming with the beauty of the place, and making one of them drink in all his impressions through her. Her features had the soft irregularities which run to rarities of beauty, as the ripple rocks the light; mouth, eyes, brows, nostrils, and bloomy cheeks played into one another liquidly; thought flew, tongue followed, and the flash of meaning quivered over them like night-lightning. Or oftener, to speak truth, tongue flew, thought followed: her age was but newly seventeen, and she was French.

Her name was Renée. She was the only daughter of the Comte de Croisnel. Her brother Roland owed his life to Nevil, this Englishman proud of a French name—Nevil Beauchamp. If there was any warm feeling below the unruffled surface of the girl's deliberate eyes while gazing on him, it was that he who had saved her brother must be nearly brother himself, yet was not quite, yet must be loved, yet not approached. He was her brother's brother-in-arms, brother-in-heart, not hers, yet hers through her brother. His French name rescued him from foreignness. He spoke her language with a piquant accent, unlike the pitiable English. Unlike them, he was gracious, and could be soft and quick. The battle-scarlet, battle-black, Roland's tales of him threw round him in her imagination, made his gentleness a surprise. If, then, he was hers through her brother, what was she to him? The question did not

spring clearly within her, though she was alive to every gradual change of manner toward the convalescent necessitated by the laws overawing her sex.

Venice was the French girl's dream. She was realizing it hungrily, revelling in it, anatomizing it, picking it to pieces, reviewing it, comparing her work with the original, and the original with her first conception, until beautiful sad Venice threatened to be no more her dream, and in dread of disenchantment she tried to take impressions humbly, really tasked herself not to analyze, not to dictate from a French footing, not to scorn. Not to be petulant with objects disappointing her, was an impossible task. She could not consent to a compromise with the people, the merchandize, the odours of the city. Gliding in the gondola through the narrow canals at low tide, she leaned back simulating stupor, with one word—"Venezia!" Her brother was commanded to smoke: "Fumez, fumez, Roland!" As soon as the steel-crested prow had pushed into her Paradise of the Canal Grande, she quietly shrouded her hair from tobacco, and called upon rapture to recompense her for her sufferings. The black gondola was unendurable to her. She had accompanied her father to the Accademia, and mused on the golden Venetian streets of Carpaccio: she must have an open gondola to decorate in his manner, gaily, splendidly, and mock at her efforts—a warning to all that might hope to improve the prevailing gloom and squalor by levying contributions upon the Merceria! Her most constant admiration was for the English lord who used once to ride on the Lido sands and visit the Armenian convent—a lord and a poet. [Lord Byron D.W.]

This was to be infinitely more than a naval lieutenant. But Nevil claimed her as little personally as he allowed her to be claimed by another. The graces of her freaks of petulance and airy whims, her sprightly jets of wilfulness, fleeting frowns of contempt, imperious decisions, were all beautiful, like silver-shifting waves, in this lustrous planet of her pure freedom; and if you will seize the divine conception of Artemis, and own the goddess French, you will understand his feelings.

But though he admired fervently, and danced obediently to her tunes, Nevil could not hear injustice done to a people or historic poetic city without trying hard to right the mind guilty of it. A newspaper correspondent, a Mr. John Holles, lingering on his road home from the army, put him on the track of an Englishman's books—touching the spirit as well as the stones of Venice, and Nevil thanked him when he had turned some of the leaves.

The study of the books to school Renée was pursued, like the Bianchina's sleep, in gondoletta, and was not unlike it at intervals. A translated sentence was the key to a reverie. Renée leaned back, meditating; he forward, the book on his knee: Roland left them to themselves, and spied for the Bianchina behind the window-bars. The count was in the churches or the Galleries. Renée thought she began to comprehend the spirit of Venice, and chided her rebelliousness.

"But our Venice was the Venice of the decadence, then!" she said, complaining. Nevil read on, distrustful of the perspicuity of his own ideas.

"Ah, but," said she, "when these Venetians were rough men, chanting like our Huguenots, how cold it must have been here!"

She hoped she was not very wrong in preferring the times of the great Venetian painters and martial doges to that period of faith and stone-cutting. What was done then might be beautiful, but the life was monotonous; she insisted that it was Huguenot; harsh, nasal, sombre, insolent, self-sufficient. Her eyes lightened for the flashing colours and pageantries, and the threads of desperate adventure crossing the Rii to this and that palace-door and balcony, like faint blood-streaks; the times of Venice in full flower. She reasoned against the hard eloquent Englishman of the books. "But we are known by our fruits, are we not? and the Venice I admire was surely the fruit of these stonecutters chanting hymns of faith; it could not but be: and if it deserved, as he says, to die disgraced, I think we should go back to them and ask them whether their minds were as pure and holy as he supposes." Her French wits would not be subdued. Nevil pointed to the palaces. "Pride," said she. He argued that the original Venetians were not responsible for their offspring. "You say it?" she cried, "you, of an old race? Oh, no; you do not feel it!" and the trembling fervour of her voice convinced him that he did not, could not.

Renée said: "I know my ancestors are bound up in me, by my sentiments to them; and so do you, M. Nevil. We shame them if we fail in courage and honour. Is it not so? If we break a single pledged word we

cast shame on them. Why, that makes us what we are; that is our distinction: we dare not be weak if we would. And therefore when Venice is reproached with avarice and luxury, I choose to say—what do we hear of the children of misers? and I say I am certain that those old cold Huguenot stonecutters were proud and grasping. I am sure they were, and they *shall* share the blame."

Nevil plunged into his volume.

He called on Roland for an opinion.

"Friend," said Roland, "opinions may differ: mine is, considering the defences of the windows, that the only way into these houses or out of them bodily was the doorway."

Roland complimented his sister and friend on the prosecution of their studies: he could not understand a word of the subject, and yawning, he begged permission to be allowed to land and join the gondola at a distant quarter. The gallant officer was in haste to go.

Renée stared at her brother. He saw nothing; he said a word to the gondoliers, and quitted the boat. Mars was in pursuit. She resigned herself, and ceased then to be a girl.

CHAPTER VI.
LOVE IN VENICE

The air flashed like heaven descending for Nevil alone with Renée. They had never been alone before. Such happiness belonged to the avenue of wishes leading to golden mists beyond imagination, and seemed, coming on him suddenly, miraculous. He leaned toward her like one who has broken a current of speech, and waits to resume it. She was all unsuspecting indolence, with gravely shadowed eyes.

“I throw the book down,” he said.

She objected. “No; continue: I like it.”

Both of them divined that the book was there to do duty for Roland.

He closed it, keeping a finger among the leaves; a kind of anchorage in case of indiscretion.

“Permit me to tell you, M. Nevil, you are inclined to play truant to-day.”

“I am.”

“Now is the very time to read; for my poor Roland is at sea when we discuss our questions, and the book has driven him away.”

“But we have plenty of time to read. We miss the scenes.”

“The scenes are green shutters, wet steps, barcaroli, brown women, striped posts, a scarlet night-cap, a sick fig-tree, an old shawl, faded spots of colour, peeling walls. They might be figured by a trodden melon. They all resemble one another, and so do the days here.”

“That’s the charm. I wish I could look on you and think the same. You, as you are, for ever.”

“Would you not let me live my life?”

“I would not have you alter.”

“Please to be pathetic on that subject after I am wrinkled, monsieur.”

“You want commanding, mademoiselle.”

Renée nestled her chin, and gazed forward through her eyelashes.

“Venice is like a melancholy face of a former beauty who has ceased to rouge, or wipe away traces of her old arts,” she said, straining for common talk, and showing the strain.

“Wait; now we are rounding,” said he; “now you have three of what you call your theatre-bridges in sight. The people mount and drop, mount and drop; I see them laugh. They are full of fun and good-temper. Look on living Venice.”

“Provided that my papa is not crossing when we go under.”

“Would he not trust you to me?”

“Yes.”

“He would? And you?”

“I do believe they are improvizing an operetta on the second bridge.”

“You trust yourself willingly?”

“As to my second brother. You hear them? How delightfully quick and spontaneous they are! Ah, silly creatures! they have stopped. They might have held it on for us while we were passing.”

“Where would the naturalness have been then?”

“Perhaps, M. Nevil, I do want commanding. I am wilful. Half my days will be spent in fits of remorse, I begin to think.”

“Come to me to be forgiven.”

“Shall I? I should be forgiven too readily.”

“I am not so sure of that.”

“Can you be harsh? No, not even with enemies. Least of all with... with us.”

Oh for the black gondola!—the little gliding dusky chamber for two; instead of this open, flaunting, gold and crimson cotton-work, which exacted discretion on his part and that of the mannerly gondoliers, and exposed him to window, balcony, bridge, and borderway.

They slipped on beneath a red balcony where a girl leaned on her folded arms, and eyed them coming and going by with Egyptian gravity.

“How strange a power of looking these people have,” said Renée, whose vivacity was fascinated to a steady sparkle by the girl. “Tell me, is she glancing round at us?”

Nevil turned and reported that she was not. She had exhausted them

while they were in transit; she had no minor curiosity.

“Let us fancy she is looking for her lover,” he said.

Renée added: “Let us hope she will not escape being seen.”

“I give her my benediction,” said Nevil.

“And I,” said Renée; “and adieu to her, if you please. Look for Roland.”

“You remind me; I have but a few instants.”

“M. Nevil, you are a preux of the times of my brother’s patronymic. And there is my Roland awaiting us. Is he not handsome?”

“How glad you are to have him to relieve guard!”

Renée bent on Nevil one of her singular looks of raillery. She had hitherto been fencing at a serious disadvantage.

“Not so very glad,” she said, “if that deprived me of the presence of his friend.”

Roland was her tower. But Roland was not yet on board. She had peeped from her citadel too rashly. Nevil had time to spring the flood of crimson in her cheeks, bright as the awning she reclined under.

“Would you have me with you always?”

“Assuredly,” said she, feeling the hawk in him, and trying to baffle him by fluttering.

“Always? forever? and—listen—give me a title?”

Renée sang out to Roland like a bird in distress, and had some trouble not to appear too providentially rescued. Roland on board, she resumed the attack.

“M. Nevil vows he is a better brother to me than you, who dart away on an impulse and leave us threading all Venice till we do not know where we are, naughty brother!”

“My little sister, the spot where you are,” rejoined Roland, “is precisely the spot where I left you, and I defy you to say you have gone on without me. This is the identical riva I stepped out on to buy you a packet of Venetian ballads.”

They recognized the spot, and for a confirmation of the surprising statement, Roland unrolled several sheets of printed blotting-paper, and rapidly read part of a Canzonetta concerning Una Giovine who reproved her lover for his extreme addiction to wine:

> “Ma sè, ma sè,
> Cotanto bevè,
> Mi nò, mi nò,
> No ve sposerò.”

“This astounding vagabond preferred Nostrani to his heart’s mistress. I tasted some of their Nostrani to see if it could be possible for a Frenchman to exonerate him.”

Roland’s wry face at the mention of Nostrani brought out the chief gondolier, who delivered himself:

“Signore, there be hereditary qualifications. One must be born Italian to appreciate the merits of Nostrani!”

Roland laughed. He had covered his delinquency in leaving his sister, and was full of an adventure to relate to Nevil, a story promising well for him.

CHAPTER VII.
AN AWAKENING FOR BOTH

Renée was downcast. Had she not coquetted? The dear young Englishman had reduced her to defend herself, the which fair ladies, like besieged garrisons, cannot always do successfully without an attack at times, which, when the pursuer is ardent, is followed by a retreat, which is a provocation; and these things are coquettry. Her still fresh convent-conscience accused her of it pitilessly. She could not forgive her brother, and yet she dared not reproach him, for that would have inculpated Nevil. She stepped on to the Piazzetta thoughtfully. Her father was at Florian's, perusing letters from France. "We are to have the marquis here in a week, my child," he said. Renée nodded. Involuntarily she looked at Nevil. He caught the look, with a lover's quick sense of misfortune in it.

She heard her brother reply to him: "Who? the Marquis de Rouaillout? It is a jolly gaillard of fifty who spoils no fun."

"You mistake his age, Roland," she said.

"Forty-nine, then, my sister."

"He is not that."

"He looks it."

"You have been absent."

"Probably, my arithmetical sister, he has employed the interval to grow younger. They say it is the way with green gentlemen of a certain age. They advance and they retire. They perform the first steps of a quadrille ceremoniously, and we admire them."

"What's that?" exclaimed the Comte de Croisnel. "You talk nonsense, Roland. M. le marquis is hardly past forty. He is in his prime."

"Without question, mon pere. For me, I was merely offering proof that he can preserve his prime unlimitedly."

"He is not a subject for mockery, Roland."

"Quite the contrary; for reverence!"

"Another than you, my boy, and he would march you out."

"I am to imagine, then, that his hand continues firm?"

"Imagine to the extent of your capacity; but remember that respect is always owing to your own family, and deliberate before you draw on yourself such a chastisement as mercy from an accepted member of it."

Roland bowed and drummed on his knee.

The conversation had been originated by Renée for the enlightenment of Nevil and as a future protection to herself. Now that it had disclosed its burden she could look at him no more, and when her father addressed her significantly: "Marquise, you did me the honour to consent to accompany me to the Church of the Frari this afternoon?" she felt her self-accusation of coquettry biting under her bosom like a thing alive.

Roland explained the situation to Nevil.

"It is the mania with us, my dear Nevil, to marry our girls young to established men. Your established man carries usually all the signs, visible to the multitude or not, of the stages leading to that eminence. We cannot, I believe, unless we have the good fortune to boast the paternity of Hercules, disconnect ourselves from the steps we have mounted; not even, the priests inform us, if we are ascending to heaven; we carry them beyond the grave. However, it seems that our excellent marquis contrives to keep them concealed, and he is ready to face marriage—the Grandest Inquisitor, next to Death. Two furious matchmakers—our country, beautiful France, abounds in them—met one day; they were a comtesse and a baronne, and they settled the alliance. The bell was rung, and Renée came out of school. There is this to be said: she has no mother; the sooner a girl without a mother has a husband the better. That we are all agreed upon. I have no personal objection to the marquis; he has never been in any great scandals. He is Norman, and has estates in Normandy, Dauphiny, Touraine; he is hospitable, luxurious. Renée will have a fine hôtel in Paris. But I am eccentric: I have read in our old Fabliaux of December and May. Say the marquis is November, say October; he is still some distance removed from the plump Spring month. And we in our family have wits and passions. In fine, a bud of a rose in an old gentleman's button-hole! it is a challenge to the whole world of youth; and if the bud should leap? Enough of this matter, friend Nevil; but sometimes a friend must allow himself to be bothered. I have perfect confidence in my sister, you see; I

simply protest against her being exposed to... You know men. I protest, that is, in the privacy of my cigar-case, for I have no chance elsewhere. The affair is on wheels. The very respectable matchmakers have kindled the marquis on the one hand, and my father on the other, and Renée passes obediently from the latter to the former. In India they sacrifice the widows, in France the virgins."

Roland proceeded to relate his adventure. Nevil's inattention piqued him to salt and salt it wonderfully, until the old story of He and She had an exciting savour in its introductory chapter; but his friend was flying through the circles of the Inferno, and the babble of an ephemeral upper world simply affected him by its contrast with the overpowering horrors, repugnances, despairs, pities, rushing at him, surcharging his senses. Those that live much by the heart in their youth have sharp foretastes of the issues imaged for the soul. St. Mark's was in a minute struck black for him. He neither felt the sunlight nor understood why column and campanile rose, nor why the islands basked, and boats and people moved. All were as remote little bits of mechanism.

Nevil escaped, and walked in the direction of the Frari down calle and campiello. Only to see her—to compare her with the Renée of the past hour! But *that* Renée had been all the while a feast of delusion; she could never be resuscitated in the shape he had known, not even clearly visioned. Not a day of her, not an hour, not a single look had been his own. She had been sold when he first beheld her, and should, he muttered austerely, have been ticketed the property of a middle-aged man, a worn-out French marquis, whom she had agreed to marry, unwooed, without love—the creature of a transaction. But she was innocent, she was unaware of the sin residing in a loveless marriage; and this restored her to him somewhat as a drowned body is given back to mourners.

After aimless walking he found himself on the Zattere, where the lonely Giudecca lies in front, covering mud and marsh and lagune-flames of later afternoon, and you have sight of the high mainland hills which seem to fling forth one over other to a golden sea-cape.

Midway on this unadorned Zattere, with its young trees and spots of shade, he was met by Renée and her father. Their gondola was below, close to the riva, and the count said, "She is tired of standing gazing at pictures. There is a Veronese in one of the churches of the Giudecca opposite. Will you, M. Nevil, act as parade-escort to her here for half an hour, while I go over? Renée complains that she loses the vulgar art of walking in her complaisant attention to the fine Arts. I weary my poor child."

Renée protested in a rapid chatter.

"Must I avow it?" said the count; "she damps my enthusiasm a little."

Nevil mutely accepted the office.

Twice that day was she surrendered to him: once in his ignorance, when time appeared an expanse of many sunny fields. On this occasion it puffed steam; yet, after seeing the count embark, he commenced the parade in silence.

"This is a nice walk," said Renée; "we have not the steps of the Riva dei Schiavoni. It is rather melancholy though. How did you discover it? I persuaded my papa to send the gondola round, and walk till we came to the water. Tell me about the Giudecca."

"The Giudecca was a place kept apart for the Jews, I believe. You have seen their burial-ground on the Lido. Those are, I think, the Euganean hills. You are fond of Petrarch."

"M. Nevil, omitting the allusion to the poet, you have, permit me to remark, the brevity without the precision of an accredited guide to notabilities."

"I tell you what I know," said Nevil, brooding on the finished tone and womanly aplomb of her language. It made him forget that she was a girl entrusted to his guardianship. His heart came out.

"Renée, if you loved him, I, on my honour, would not utter a word for myself. Your heart's inclinations are sacred for me. I would stand by, and be your friend and his. If he were young, that I might see a chance of it!"

She murmured, "You should not have listened to Roland."

"Roland should have warned me. How could I be near you and not... But I am nothing. Forget me; do not think I speak interestedly, except to save the dearest I have ever known from certain wretchedness. To yield yourself hand and foot for life! I warn you that it must end miserably. Your countrywomen... You have the habit in France; but like what are you treated? You! none like you in the whole world! You consent to be

extinguished. And I have to look on! Listen to me now."

Renée glanced at the gondola conveying her father. And he has not yet landed! she thought, and said, "Do you pretend to judge of my welfare better than my papa?"

"Yes; in this. He follows a fashion. You submit to it. His anxiety is to provide for you. But I know the system is cursed by nature, and that means by heaven."

"Because it is not English?"

"O Renée, my beloved for ever! Well, then, tell me, tell me you can say with pride and happiness that the Marquis de Rouaillout is to be your—there's the word—husband!"

Renée looked across the water.

"Friend, if my father knew you were asking me!"

"I will speak to him."

"Useless."

"He is generous, he loves you."

"He cannot break an engagement binding his honour."

"Would you, Renée, would you—it must be said—consent to have it known to him—I beg for more than life—that your are not averse... that you support me?"

His failing breath softened the bluntness.

She replied, "I would not have him ever break an engagement binding his honour."

"You stretch the point of honour."

"It is our way. Dear friend, we are French. And I presume to think that our French system is not always wrong, for if my father had not broken it by treating you as one of us and leaving me with you, should I have heard...?"

"I have displeased you."

"Do not suppose that. But, I mean, a mother would not have left me."

"You wished to avoid it."

"Do not blame me. I had some instinct; you were very pale."

"You knew I loved you."

"No."

"Yes; for this morning..."

"This morning it seemed to me, and I regretted my fancy, that you were inclined to trifle, as, they say, young men do."

"With Renée?"

"With your friend Renée. And those are the hills of Petrarch's tomb? They are mountains."

They were purple beneath a large brooding cloud that hung against the sun, waiting for him to enfold him, and Nevil thought that a tomb there would be a welcome end, if he might lift Renée in one wild flight over the chasm gaping for her. He had no language for thoughts of such a kind, only tumultuous feeling.

She was immoveable, in perfect armour.

He said despairingly, "Can you have realized what you are consenting to?"

She answered, "It is my duty."

"Your duty! it's like taking up a dice-box, and flinging once, to certain ruin!"

"I must oppose my father to you, friend. Do you not understand duty to parents? They say the English are full of the idea of duty."

"Duty to country, duty to oaths and obligations; but with us the heart is free to choose."

"Free to choose, and when it is most ignorant?"

"The heart? ask it. Nothing is surer."

"That is not what we are taught. We are taught that the heart deceives itself. The heart throws your dicebox; not prudent parents."

She talked like a woman, to plead the cause of her obedience as a girl, and now silenced in the same manner that she had previously excited him.

"Then you are lost to me," he said.

They saw the gondola returning.

"How swiftly it comes home; it loitered when it went," said Renée. "There sits my father, brimming with his picture; he has seen one more!

We will congratulate him. This little boulevard is not much to speak of. The hills are lovely. Friend," she dropped her voice on the gondola's approach, "we have conversed on common subjects."

Nevil had her hand in his, to place her in the gondola.

She seemed thankful that he should prefer to go round on foot. At least, she did not join in her father's invitation to him. She leaned back, nestling her chin and half closing her eyes, suffering herself to be divided from him, borne away by forces she acquiesced in.

Roland was not visible till near midnight on the Piazza. The promenaders, chiefly military of the garrison, were few at that period of social protestation, and he could declare his disappointment aloud, ringingly, as he strolled up to Nevil, looking as if the cigar in his mouth and the fists entrenched in his wide trowsers-pockets were mortally at feud. His adventure had not pursued its course luminously. He had expected romance, and had met merchandize, and his vanity was offended. To pacify him, Nevil related how he had heard that since the Venetian rising of "49, Venetian ladies had issued from the ordeal of fire and famine of another pattern than the famous old Benzon one, in which they touched earthiest earth. He praised Republicanism for that. The spirit of the new and short-lived Republic wrought that change in Venice.

"Oh, if they're republican as well as utterly decayed," said Roland, "I give them up; let them die virtuous."

Nevil told Roland that he had spoken to Renée. He won sympathy, but Roland could not give him encouragement. They crossed and recrossed the shadow of the great campanile, on the warm-white stones of the square, Nevil admitting the weight of whatsoever Roland pointed to him in favour of the arrangement according to French notions, and indeed, of aristocratic notions everywhere, saving that it was imperative for Renée to be disposed of in marriage early. Why rob her of her young springtime!

"French girls," replied Roland, confused by the nature of the explication in his head—"well, they're not English; they want a hand to shape them, otherwise they grow all awry. My father will not have one of her aunts to live with him, so there she is. But, my dear Nevil, I owe my life to you, and I was no party to this affair. I would do anything to help you. What says Renée?"

"She obeys."

"Exactly. You see! Our girls are chess-pieces until they're married. Then they have life and character sometimes too much."

"She is not like them, Roland; she is like none. When I spoke to her first, she affected no astonishment; never was there a creature so nobly sincere. She's a girl in heart, not in mind. Think of her sacrificed to this man thrice her age!"

"She differs from other girls only on the surface, Nevil. As for the man, I wish she were going to marry a younger. I wish, yes, my friend," Roland squeezed Nevil's hand, "I wish! I'm afraid it's hopeless. She did not tell you to hope?"

"Not by one single sign," said Nevil.

"You see, my friend!"

"For that reason," Nevil rejoined, with the calm fanaticism of the passion of love, "I hope all the more... because I will not believe that she, so pure and good, can be sacrificed. Put me aside—I am nothing. I hope to save her from that."

"We have now," said Roland, "struck the current of duplicity. You are really in love, my poor fellow."

Lover and friend came to no conclusion, except that so lovely a night was not given for slumber. A small round brilliant moon hung almost globed in the depths of heaven, and the image of it fell deep between San Giorgio and the Dogana.

Renée had the scene from her window, like a dream given out of sleep. She lay with both arms thrown up beneath her head on the pillow, her eyelids wide open, and her visage set and stern. Her bosom rose and sank regularly but heavily. The fluctuations of a night stormy for her, hitherto unknown, had sunk her to this trance, in which she lay like a creature flung on shore by the waves. She heard her brother's voice and Nevil's, and the pacing of their feet. She saw the long shaft of moonlight broken to zigzags of mellow lightning, and wavering back to steadiness; dark San Giorgio, and the sheen of the Dogana's front. But the visible beauty belonged to a night that had shivered repose, humiliated and wounded her, destroyed her confident happy half-infancy of heart, and she had flown for a refuge to hard feelings. Her predominant sentiment

was anger; an anger that touched all and enveloped none, for it was quite fictitious, though she felt it, and suffered from it. She turned it on Nevil, as against an enemy, and became the victim in his place. Tears for him filled in her eyes, and ran over; she disdained to notice them, and blinked offendedly to have her sight clear of the weakness; but these interceding tears would flow; it was dangerous to blame him, harshly. She let them roll down, figuring to herself with quiet simplicity of mind that her spirit was independent of them as long as she restrained her hands from being accomplices by brushing them away, as weeping girls do that cry for comfort. Nevil had saved her brother's life, and had succoured her countrymen; he loved her, and was a hero. He should not have said he loved her; that was wrong; and it was shameful that he should have urged her to disobey her father. But this hero's love of her might plead excuses she did not know of; and if he was to be excused, he, unhappy that he was, had a claim on her for more than tears. She wept resentfully. Forces above her own swayed and hurried her like a lifeless body dragged by flying wheels: they could not unnerve her will, or rather, what it really was, her sense of submission to a destiny. Looked at from the height of the palm-waving cherubs over the fallen martyr in the picture, she seemed as nerveless as a dreamy girl. The raised arms and bent elbows were an illusion of indifference. Her shape was rigid from hands to feet, as if to keep in a knot the resolution of her mind; for the second and in that young season the stronger nature grafted by her education fixed her to the religious duty of obeying and pleasing her father, in contempt, almost in abhorrence, of personal inclinations tending to thwart him and imperil his pledged word. She knew she had inclinations to be tender. Her hands released, how promptly might she not have been confiding her innumerable perplexities of sentiment and emotion to paper, undermining self-governance; self-respect, perhaps! Further than that, she did not understand the feelings she struggled with; nor had she any impulse to gaze on him, the cause of her trouble, who walked beside her brother below, talking betweenwhiles in the night's grave undertones. Her trouble was too overmastering; it had seized her too mysteriously, coming on her solitariness without warning in the first watch of the night, like a spark crackling serpentine along dry leaves to sudden flame. A thought of Nevil and a regret had done it.

CHAPTER VIII.
A NIGHT ON THE ADRIATIC

The lovers met after Roland had spoken to his sister—not exactly to advocate the cause of Nevil, though he was under the influence of that grave night's walk with him, but to sound her and see whether she at all shared Nevil's view of her situation. Roland felt the awfulness of a French family arrangement of a marriage, and the impertinence of a foreign Cupid's intrusion, too keenly to plead for his friend: at the same time he loved his friend and his sister, and would have been very ready to smile blessings on them if favourable circumstances had raised a signal; if, for example, apoplexy or any other cordial ex machina intervention had removed the middle-aged marquis; and, perhaps, if Renée had shown the repugnance to her engagement which Nevil declared she must have in her heart, he would have done more than smile; he would have laid the case deferentially before his father. His own opinion was that young unmarried women were incapable of the passion of love, being, as it were, but half-feathered in that state, and unable to fly; and Renée confirmed it. The suspicion of an advocacy on Nevil's behalf steeled her. His tentative observations were checked at the outset.

"Can such things be spoken of to me, Roland? I am plighted. You know it."

He shrugged, said a word of pity for Nevil, and went forth to let his friend know that it was as he had predicted: Renée was obedience in person, like a rightly educated French girl. He strongly advised his friend to banish all hope of her from his mind. But the mind he addressed was of a curious order; far-shooting, tough, persistent, and when acted on by the spell of devotion, indomitable. Nevil put hope aside, or rather, he clad it in other garments, in which it was hardly to be recognized by himself, and said to Roland: "You must bear this from me; you must let me follow you to the end, and if she wavers she will find me near."

Roland could not avoid asking the use of it, considering that Renée, however much she admired and liked, was not in love with him.

Nevil resigned himself to admit that she was not: and therefore, said he, "you won't object to my remaining."

Renée greeted Nevil with as clear a conventional air as a woman could assume.

She was going, she said, to attend High Mass in the church of S. Moise, and she waved her devoutest Roman Catholicism to show the breadth of the division between them. He proposed to go likewise. She was mute. After some discourse she contrived to say inoffensively that people who strolled into her churches for the music, or out of curiosity, played the barbarian.

"Well, I will not go," said Nevil.

"But I do not wish to number you among them," she said.

"Then," said Nevil, "I will go, for it cannot be barbarous to try to be with you."

"No, that is wickedness," said Renée.

She was sensible that conversation betrayed her, and Nevil's apparently deliberate pursuit signified to her that he must be aware of his mastery, and she resented it, and stumbled into pitfalls whenever she opened her lips. It seemed to be denied to them to utter what she meant, if indeed she had a meaning in speaking, save to hurt herself cruelly by wounding the man who had caught her in the toils: and so long as she could imagine that she was the only one hurt, she was the braver and the harsher for it; but at the sight of Nevil in pain her heart relented and shifted, and discovering it to be so weak as to be almost at his mercy, she defended it with an aggressive unkindness, for which, in charity to her sweeter nature, she had to ask his pardon, and then had to fib to give reasons for her conduct, and then to pretend to herself that her pride was humbled by him; a most humiliating round, constantly recurring; the worse for the reflection that she created it. She attempted silence. Nevil spoke, and was like the magical piper: she was compelled to follow him and dance the round again, with the wretched thought that it must resemble coquettry. Nevil did not think so, but a very attentive observer now upon the scene, and possessed of his half of the secret, did, and warned him. Rosamund Culling added that the French girl might be only an unconscious coquette, for she was young. The critic would not undertake to pronounce on her suggestion, whether the

candour apparent in merely coquettish instincts was not more dangerous than a battery of the arts of the sex. She had heard Nevil's frank confession, and seen Renée twice, when she tried in his service, though not greatly wishing for success, to stir the sensitive girl for an answer to his attachment. Probably she went to work transparently, after the insular fashion of opening a spiritual mystery with the lancet. Renée suffered herself to be probed here and there, and revealed nothing of the pain of the operation. She said to Nevil, in Rosamund's hearing:

"Have you the sense of honour acute in your country?" Nevil inquired for the apropos.

"None," said she.

Such pointed insolence disposed Rosamund to an irritable antagonism, without reminding her that she had given some cause for it.

Renée said to her presently: "He saved my brother's life"; the àpropos being as little perceptible as before.

Her voice dropped to her sweetest deep tones, and there was a supplicating beam in her eyes, unintelligible to the direct Englishwoman, except under the heading of a power of witchery fearful to think of in one so young, and loved by Nevil.

The look was turned upon her, not upon her hero, and Rosamund thought, "Does she want to entangle me as well?"

It was, in truth, a look of entreaty from woman to woman, signifying need of womanly help. Renée would have made a confidante of her, if she had not known her to be Nevil's, and devoted to him. "I would speak to you, but that I feel you would betray me," her eyes had said. The strong sincerity dwelling amid multiform complexities might have made itself comprehensible to the English lady for a moment or so, had Renée spoken words to her ears; but belief in it would hardly have survived the girl's next convolutions. "She is intensely French," Rosamund said to Nevil—a volume of insular criticism in a sentence.

"You do not know her, ma'am," said Nevil. "You think her older than she is, and that is the error I fell into. She is a child."

"A serpent in the egg is none the less a serpent, Nevil. Forgive me; but when she tells you the case is hopeless!"

"No case is hopeless till a man consents to think it is; and I shall stay."

"But then again, Nevil, you have not consulted your uncle."

"Let him see her! let him only see her!"

Rosamund Culling reserved her opinion compassionately. His uncle would soon be calling to have him home: society panted for him to make much of him and here he was, cursed by one of his notions of duty, in attendance on a captious "young French beauty, who was the less to be excused for not dismissing him peremptorily, if she cared for him at all. His career, which promised to be so brilliant, was spoiling at the outset. Rosamund thought of Renée almost with detestation, as a species of sorceress that had dug a trench in her hero's road, and unhorsed and fast fettered him.

The marquis was expected immediately. Renée sent up a little note to Mrs. Calling's chamber early in the morning, and it was with an air of one-day-more-to-ourselves, that, meeting her, she entreated the English lady to join the expedition mentioned in her note. Roland had hired a big Chioggian fishing-boat to sail into the gulf at night, and return at dawn, and have sight of Venice rising from the sea. Her father had declined; but M. Nevil wished to be one of the party, and in that case.... Renée threw herself beseechingly into the mute interrogation, keeping both of Rosamund's hands. They could slip away only by deciding to, and this rare Englishwoman had no taste for the petty overt hostilities. "If I can be of use to you," she said.

"If you can bear sea-pitching and tossing for the sake of the loveliest sight in the whole world," said Renée.

"I know it well," Rosamund replied.

Renée rippled her eyebrows. She divined a something behind that remark, and as she was aware of the grief of Rosamund's life, her quick intuition whispered that it might be connected with the gallant officer dead on the battle-field.

"Madame, if you know it too well..." she said.

"No; it is always worth seeing," said Rosamund, "and I think, mademoiselle, with your permission, I should accompany you."

"It is only a whim of mine, madame. I can stay on shore."

"Not when it is unnecessary to forego a pleasure."

"Say, my last day of freedom."

Renée kissed her hand.

She is terribly winning, Rosamund avowed. Renée was in debate whether the woman devoted to Nevil would hear her and help.

Just then Roland and Nevil returned from their boat, where they had left carpenters and upholsterers at work, and the delicate chance for an understanding between the ladies passed by.

The young men were like waves of ocean overwhelming it, they were so full of their boat, and the scouring and cleaning out of it, and provisioning, and making it worthy of its freight. Nevil was surprised that Mrs. Culling should have consented to come, and asked her if she really wished it—really; and “Really,” said Rosamund; “certainly.”

“Without dubitation,” cried Roland. “And now my little Renée has no more shore-qualms; she is smoothly chaperoned, and madame will present us tea on board. All the etcæteras of life are there, and a mariner’s eye in me spies a breeze at sunset to waft us out of Malamocco.”

The count listened to the recital of their preparations with his usual absent interest in everything not turning upon Art, politics, or social intrigue. He said, “Yes, good, good,” at the proper intervals, and walked down the riva to look at the busy boat, said to Nevil, “You are a sailor; I confide my family to you,” and prudently counselled Renée to put on the dresses she could toss to the deep without regrets. Mrs. Culling he thanked fervently for a wonderful stretch of generosity in lending her presence to the madcaps.

Altogether the day was a reanimation of external Venice. But there was a thunderbolt in it; for about an hour before sunset, when the ladies were superintending and trying not to criticize the ingenious efforts to produce a make-believe of comfort on board for them, word was brought down to the boat by the count’s valet that the Marquis de Rouaillout had arrived. Renée turned her face to her brother superciliously. Roland shrugged. “Note this, my sister,” he said; “an anticipation of dates in paying visits precludes the ripeness of the sentiment of welcome. It is, however, true that the marquis has less time to spare than others.”

“We have started; we are on the open sea. How can we put back?” said Renée.

“You hear, François; we are on the open sea,” Roland addressed the valet.

“Monsieur has cut loose his communications with land,” François responded, and bowed from the landing.

Nevil hastened to make this a true report; but they had to wait for tide as well as breeze, and pilot through intricate mud-channels before they could see the outside of the Lido, and meanwhile the sun lay like a golden altarplatter on mud-banks made bare by the ebb, and curled in drowsy yellow links along the currents. All they could do was to push off and hang loose, bumping to right and left in the midst of volleys and countervolleys of fishy Venetian, Chioggian, and Dalmatian, quite as strong as anything ever heard down the Canalaggio. The representatives of these dialects trotted the decks and hung their bodies half over the sides of the vessels to deliver fire, flashed eyes and snapped fingers, not a whit less fierce than hostile crews in the old wars hurling an interchange of stink-pots, and then resumed the trot, apparently in search of fresh ammunition. An Austrian sentinel looked on passively, and a police inspector peeringly. They were used to it. Happily, the combustible import of the language was unknown to the ladies, and Nevil’s attempts to keep his crew quiet, contrasting with Roland’s phlegm, which a Frenchman can assume so philosophically when his tongue is tied, amused them. During the clamour, Renée saw her father beckoning from the riva. She signified that she was no longer in command of circumstances; the vessel was off. But the count stamped his foot, and nodded imperatively. Thereupon Roland repeated the eloquent demonstrations of Renée, and the count lost patience, and Roland shouted, “For the love of heaven, don’t join this babel; we’re nearly bursting.” The rage of the babel was allayed by degrees, though not appeased, for the boat was behaving wantonly, as the police officer pointed out to the count.

Renée stood up to bend her head. It was in reply to a salute from the Marquis de Rouaillout, and Nevil beheld his rival.

“M. le Marquis, seeing it is out of the question that we can come to you, will you come to us?” cried Roland.

The marquis gesticulated “With alacrity” in every limb.

“We will bring you back on to-morrow midnight’s tide, safe, we promise you.”

The marquis advanced a foot, and withdrew it. Could he have heard correctly? They were to be out a whole night at sea! The count dejectedly confessed his incapability to restrain them: the young desperadoes were ready for anything. He had tried the voice of authority, and was laughed at. As to Renée, an English lady was with her.

“The English lady must be as mad as the rest,” said the marquis.

“The English are mad,” said the count; “but their women are strict upon the proprieties.”

“Possibly, my dear count; but what room is there for the proprieties on board a fishing-boat?”

“It is even as you say, my dear marquis.”

“You allow it?”

“Can I help myself? Look at them. They tell me they have given the boat the fittings of a yacht.”

“And the young man?”

“That is the M. Beauchamp of whom I have spoken to you, the very pick of his country, fresh, lively, original; and he can converse. You will like him.”

“I hope so,” said the marquis, and roused a doleful laugh. “It would seem that one does not arrive by hastening!”

“Oh! but my dear marquis, you have paid the compliment; you are like Spring thrusting in a bunch of lilac while the winds of winter blow. If you were not expected, your expeditiousness is appreciated, be sure.”

Roland fortunately did not hear the marquis compared to Spring. He was saying: “I wonder what those two elderly gentlemen are talking about”; and Nevil confused his senses by trying to realize that one of them was destined to be the husband of his now speechless Renée. The marquis was clad in a white silken suit, and a dash of red round the neck set off his black beard; but when he lifted his broad straw hat, a baldness of sconce shone. There was elegance in his gestures; he looked a gentleman, though an ultra-Gallican one, that is, too scrupulously finished for our taste, smelling of the valet. He had the habit of balancing his body on the hips, as if to emphasize a juvenile vigour, and his general attitude suggested an idea that he had an oration for you. Seen from a distance, his baldness and strong nasal projection were not winning features; the youthful standard he had evidently prescribed to himself in his dress and his ready jerks of acquiescence and delivery might lead a forlorn rival to conceive him something of an ogre straining at an Adonis. It could not be disputed that he bore his disappointment remarkably well; the more laudably, because his position was within a step of the ridiculous, for he had shot himself to the mark, despising sleep, heat, dust, dirt, diet, and lo, that charming object was deliberately slipping out of reach, proving his headlong journey an absurdity.

As he stood declining to participate in the lunatic voyage, and bidding them perforce good speed off the tips of his fingers, Renée turned her eyes on him, and away. She felt a little smart of pity, arising partly from her antagonism to Roland’s covert laughter: but it was the colder kind of feminine pity, which is nearer to contempt than to tenderness. She sat still, placid outwardly, in fear of herself, so strange she found it to be borne out to sea by her sailor lover under the eyes of her betrothed. She was conscious of a tumultuous rush of sensations, none of them of a very healthy kind, coming as it were from an unlocked chamber of her bosom, hitherto of unimagined contents; and the marquis being now on the spot to defend his own, she no longer blamed Nevil: it was otherwise utterly. All the sweeter side of pity was for him.

He was at first amazed by the sudden exquisite transition. Tenderness breathed from her, in voice, in look, in touch; for she accepted his help that he might lead her to the stern of the vessel, to gaze well on setting Venice, and sent lightnings up his veins; she leaned beside him over the vessel’s rails, not separated from him by the breadth of a fluttering riband. Like him, she scarcely heard her brother when for an instant he intervened, and with Nevil she said adieu to Venice, where the faint red Doge’s palace was like the fading of another sunset north-westward of the glory along the hills. Venice dropped lower and lower, breasting the waters, until it was a thin line in air. The line was broken, and ran in dots, with here and there a pillar standing on opal sky. At last the topmost campanile sank.

Renée looked up at the sails, and back for the submerged city.

“It is gone!” she said, as though a marvel had been worked; and swiftly: “we have one night!”

She breathed it half like a question, like a petition, catching her breath. The adieu to Venice was her assurance of liberty, but Venice hidden rolled on her the sense of the return and plucked shrewdly at her tether of bondage.

They set their eyes toward the dark gulf ahead. The night was growing starry. The softly ruffled Adriatic tossed no foam.

“One night?” said Nevil; “one? Why only one?”

Renée shuddered. “Oh! do not speak.”

“Then, give me your hand.”

“There, my friend.”

He pressed a hand that was like a quivering chord. She gave it as though it had been his own to claim. But that it meant no more than a hand he knew by the very frankness of her compliance, in the manner natural to her; and this was the charm, it filled him with her peculiar image and spirit, and while he held it he was subdued.

Lying on the deck at midnight, wrapt in his cloak and a coil of rope for a pillow, considerably apart from jesting Roland, the recollection of that little sanguine spot of time when Renée’s life-blood ran with his, began to heave under him like a swelling sea. For Nevil the starred black night was Renée. Half his heart was in it: but the combative division flew to the morning and the deadly iniquity of the marriage, from which he resolved to save her; in pure devotedness, he believed. And so he closed his eyes. She, a girl, with a heart fluttering open and fearing, felt only that she had lost herself somewhere, and she had neither sleep nor symbols, nothing but a sense of infinite strangeness, as though she were borne superhumanly through space.

CHAPTER IX.
MORNING AT SEA UNDER THE ALPS

The breeze blew steadily, enough to swell the sails and sweep the vessel on smoothly. The night air dropped no moisture on deck.

Nevil Beauchamp dozed for an hour. He was awakened by light on his eyelids, and starting up beheld the many pinnacles of grey and red rocks and shadowy high white regions at the head of the gulf waiting for the sun; and the sun struck them. One by one they came out in crimson flame, till the vivid host appeared to have stepped forward. The shadows on the snow-fields deepened to purple below an irradiation of rose and pink and dazzling silver. There of all the world you might imagine Gods to sit. A crowd of mountains endless in range, erect, or flowing, shattered and arid, or leaning in smooth lustre, hangs above the gulf. The mountains are sovereign Alps, and the sea is beneath them. The whole gigantic body keeps the sea, as with a hand, to right and left.

Nevil's personal rapture craved for Renée with the second long breath he drew; and now the curtain of her tent-cabin parted, and greeting him with a half smile, she looked out. The Adriatic was dark, the Alps had heaven to themselves. Crescents and hollows, rosy mounds, white shelves, shining ledges, domes and peaks, all the towering heights were in illumination from Friuli into farthest Tyrol; beyond earth to the stricken senses of the gazers. Colour was stedfast on the massive front ranks: it wavered in the remoteness, and was quick and dim as though it fell on beating wings; but there too divine colour seized and shaped forth solid forms, and thence away to others in uttermost distances where the incredible flickering gleam of new heights arose, that soared, or stretched their white uncertain curves in sky like wings traversing infinity.

It seemed unlike morning to the lovers, but as if night had broken with a revelation of the kingdom in the heart of night. While the broad smooth waters rolled unlighted beneath that transfigured upper sphere, it was possible to think the scene might vanish like a view caught out of darkness by lightning. Alp over burning Alp, and around them a hueless dawn! The two exulted they threw off the load of wonderment, and in looking they had the delicious sensation of flight in their veins.

Renée stole toward Nevil. She was mystically shaken and at his mercy; and had he said then, "Over to the other land, away from Venice!" she would have bent her head.

She asked his permission to rouse her brother and madame, so that they should not miss the scene.

Roland lay in the folds of his military greatcoat, too completely happy to be disturbed, Nevil Beauchamp chose to think; and Rosamund Culling, he told Renée, had been separated from her husband last on these waters.

"Ah! to be unhappy here," sighed Renée. "I fancied it when I begged her to join us. It was in her voice."

The impressionable girl trembled. He knew he was dear to her, and for that reason, judging of her by himself, he forbore to urge his advantage, conceiving it base to fear that loving him she could yield her hand to another; and it was the critical instant. She was almost in his grasp. A word of sharp entreaty would have swung her round to see her situation with his eyes, and detest and shrink from it. He committed the capital fault of treating her as his equal in passion and courage, not as metal ready to run into the mould under temporary stress of fire.

Even later in the morning, when she was cooler and he had come to speak, more than her own strength was needed to resist him. The struggle was hard. The boat's head had been put about for Venice, and they were among the dusky-red Chioggian sails in fishing quarters, expecting momently a campanile to signal the sea-city over the level. Renée waited for it in suspense. To her it stood for the implacable key of a close and stifling chamber, so different from this brilliant boundless region of air, that she sickened with the apprehension; but she knew it must appear, and soon, and therewith the contraction and the gloom it indicated to her mind. He talked of the beauty. She fretted at it, and was her petulant self again in an epigrammatic note of discord.

He let that pass.

"Last night you said 'one night,'" he whispered. "We will have another sail before we leave Venice."

"One night, and in a little time one hour! and next one minute! and

there's the end," said Renée.

Her tone alarmed him. "Have you forgotten that you gave me your hand?"

"I gave my hand to my friend."

"You gave it to me for good."

"No; I dared not; it is not mine."

"It is mine," said Beauchamp.

Renée pointed to the dots and severed lines and isolated columns of the rising city, black over bright sea.

"Mine there as well as here," said Beauchamp, and looked at her with the fiery zeal of eyes intent on minutest signs for a confirmation, to shake that sad negation of her face.

"Renée, you cannot break the pledge of the hand you gave me last night."

"You tell me how weak a creature I am."

"You are me, myself; more, better than me. And say, would you not rather coast here and keep the city under water?"

She could not refrain from confessing that she would be glad never to land there.

"So, when you land, go straight to your father," said Beauchamp, to whose conception it was a simple act resulting from the avowal.

"Oh! you torture me," she cried. Her eyelashes were heavy with tears. "I cannot do it. Think what you will of me! And, my friend, help me. Should you not help me? I have not once actually disobeyed my father, and he has indulged me, but he has been sure of me as a dutiful girl. That is my source of self-respect. My friend can always be my friend."

"Yes, while it's not too late," said Beauchamp.

She observed a sudden stringing of his features. He called to the chief boatman, made his command intelligible to that portly capitano, and went on to Roland, who was puffing his after-breakfast cigarette in conversation with the tolerant English lady.

"You condescend to notice us, Signor Beauchamp," said Roland. "The vessel is up to some manœuvre?"

"We have decided not to land," replied Beauchamp. "And Roland," he checked the Frenchman's shout of laughter, "I think of making for Trieste. Let me speak to you, to both. Renée is in misery. She must not go back."

Roland sprang to his feet, stared, and walked over to Renée.

"Nevil," said Rosamund Culling, "do you know what you are doing?"

"Perfectly," said he. "Come to her. She is a girl, and I must think and act for her."

Roland met them.

"My dear Nevil, are you in a state of delusion? Renée denies..."

"There's no delusion, Roland. I am determined to stop a catastrophe. I see it as plainly as those Alps. There is only one way, and that's the one I have chosen."

"Chosen! my friend. But allow me to remind you that you have others to consult. And Renée herself..."

"She is a girl. She loves me, and I speak for her."

"She has said it?"

"She has more than said it."

"You strike me to the deck, Nevil. Either you are downright mad—which seems the likeliest, or we are all in a nightmare. Can you suppose I will let my sister be carried away the deuce knows where, while her father is expecting her, and to fulfil an engagement affecting his pledged word?"

Beauchamp simply replied:

"Come to her."

CHAPTER X.
A SINGULAR COUNCIL

The four sat together under the shadow of the helmsman, by whom they were regarded as voyagers in debate upon the question of some hours further on salt water. “No bora,” he threw in at intervals, to assure them that the obnoxious wind of the Adriatic need not disturb their calculations.

It was an extraordinary sitting, but none of the parties to it thought of it so when Nevil Beauchamp had plunged them into it. He compelled them, even Renée—and she would have flown had there been wings on her shoulders—to feel something of the life and death issues present to his soul, and submit to the discussion, in plain language of the market-place, of the most delicate of human subjects for her, for him, and hardly less for the other two. An overmastering fervour can do this. It upsets the vessel we float in, and we have to swim our way out of deep waters by the directest use of the natural faculties, without much reflection on the change in our habits. To others not under such an influence the position seems impossible. This discussion occurred. Beauchamp opened the case in a couple of sentences, and when the turn came for Renée to speak, and she shrank from the task in manifest pain, he spoke for her, and no one heard her contradiction. She would have wished the fearful impetuous youth to succeed if she could have slept through the storm he was rousing.

Roland appealed to her. “You! my sister! it is you that consent to this wild freak, enough to break your father’s heart?”

He had really forgotten his knowledge of her character—what much he knew—in the dust of the desperation flung about her by Nevil Beauchamp.

She shook her head; she had not consented.

“The man she loves is her voice and her will,” said Beauchamp. “She gives me her hand and I lead her.”

Roland questioned her. It could not be denied that she had given her hand, and her bewildered senses made her think that it had been with an entire abandonment; and in the heat of her conflict of feelings, the deliciousness of yielding to him curled round and enclosed her, as in a cool humming sea-shell.

“Renée!” said Roland.

“Brother!” she cried.

“You see that I cannot suffer you to be borne away.”

“No; do not!”

But the boat was flying fast from Venice, and she could have fallen at his feet and kissed them for not countermanding it.

“You are in my charge, my sister.”

“Yes.”

“And now, Nevil, between us two,” said Roland.

Beauchamp required no challenge. He seemed, to Rosamund Culling, twice older than he was, strangely adept, yet more strangely wise of worldly matters, and eloquent too. But it was the eloquence of frenzy, madness, in Roland’s ear. The arrogation of a terrible foresight that harped on present and future to persuade him of the righteousness of this headlong proceeding advocated by his friend, vexed his natural equanimity. The argument was out of the domain of logic. He could hardly sit to listen, and tore at his moustache at each end. Nevertheless his sister listened. The mad Englishman accomplished the miracle of making her listen, and appear to consent.

Roland laughed scornfully. “Why Trieste? I ask you, why Trieste? You can’t have a Catholic priest at your bidding, without her father’s sanction.”

“We leave Renée at Trieste, under the care of madame,” said Beauchamp, “and we return to Venice, and I go to your father. This method protects Renée from annoyance.”

“It strikes me that if she arrives at any determination she must take the consequences.”

“She does. She is brave enough for that. But she is a girl; she has to fight the battle of her life in a day, and I am her lover, and she leaves it to me.”

“Is my sister such a coward?” said Roland.

Renée could only call out his name.

"It will never do, my dear Nevil"; Roland tried to deal with his unreasonable friend affectionately. "I am responsible for her. It's your own fault—if you had not saved my life I should not have been in your way. Here I am, and your proposal can't be heard of. Do as you will, both of you, when you step ashore in Venice."

"If she goes back she is lost," said Beauchamp, and he attacked Roland on the side of his love for Renée, and for him.

Roland was inflexible. Seeing which, Renée said, "To Venice, quickly, my brother!" and now she almost sighed with relief to think that she was escaping from this hurricane of a youth, who swept her off her feet and wrapt her whole being in a delirium.

"We were in sight of the city just now!" cried Roland, staring and frowning. "What's this?"

Beauchamp answered him calmly, "The boat's under my orders."

"Talk madness, but don't act it," said Roland. "Round with the boat at once. Hundred devils! you haven't your wits."

To his amazement, Beauchamp refused to alter the boat's present course.

"You heard my sister?" said Roland.

"You frighten her," said Beauchamp.

"You heard her wish to return to Venice, I say."

"She has no wish that is not mine."

It came to Roland's shouting his command to the men, while Beauchamp pointed the course on for them.

"You will make this a ghastly pleasantry," said Roland.

"I do what I know to be right," said Beauchamp.

"You want an altercation before these fellows?"

"There won't be one; they obey me."

Roland blinked rapidly in wrath and doubt of mind.

"Madame," he stooped to Rosamund Culling, with a happy inspiration, "convince him; you have known him longer than I, and I desire not to lose my friend. And tell me, madame—I can trust you to be truth itself, and you can see it is actually the time for truth to be spoken—is he justified in taking my sister's hand? You perceive that I am obliged to appeal to you. Is he not dependent on his uncle? And is he not, therefore, in your opinion, bound in reason as well as in honour to wait for his uncle's approbation before he undertakes to speak for my sister? And, since the occasion is urgent, let me ask you one thing more: whether, by your knowledge of his position, you think him entitled to presume to decide upon my sister's destiny? She, you are aware, is not so young but that she can speak for herself..."

"There you are wrong, Roland," said Beauchamp; "she can neither speak nor think for herself: you lead her blindfolded."

"And you, my friend, suppose that you are wiser than any of us. It is understood. I venture to appeal to madame on the point in question."

The poor lady's heart beat dismally. She was constrained to answer, and said, "His uncle is one who must be consulted."

"You hear that, Nevil," said Roland.

Beauchamp looked at her sharply; angrily, Rosamund feared. She had struck his hot brain with the vision of Everard Romfrey as with a bar of iron. If Rosamund had inclined to the view that he was sure of his uncle's support, it would have seemed to him a simple confirmation of his sentiments, but he was not of the same temper now as when he exclaimed, "Let him see her!" and could imagine, give him only Renée's love, the world of men subservient to his wishes.

Then he was dreaming; he was now in fiery earnest, for that reason accessible to facts presented to him; and Rosamund's reluctantly spoken words brought his stubborn uncle before his eyes, inflicting a sense of helplessness of the bitterest kind.

They were all silent. Beauchamp stared at the lines of the deck-planks.

His scheme to rescue Renée was right and good; but was he the man that should do it? And was she, moreover, he thought—speculating on her bent head—the woman to be forced to brave the world with him, and poverty? She gave him no sign. He was assuredly not the man to pretend to powers he did not feel himself to possess, and though from a personal, and still more from a lover's, inability to see all round him at one time and accurately to weigh the forces at his disposal, he had gone far, he was not a wilful dreamer nor so very selfish a lover. The instant his

consciousness of a superior strength failed him he acknowledged it.

Renée did not look up. She had none of those lightnings of primitive energy, nor the noble rashness and reliance on her lover, which his imagination had filled her with; none. That was plain. She could not even venture to second him. Had she done so he would have held out. He walked to the head of the boat without replying.

Soon after this the boat was set for Venice again.

When he rejoined his companions he kissed Rosamund's hand, and Renée, despite a confused feeling of humiliation and anger, loved him for it.

Glittering Venice was now in sight; the dome of Sta. Maria Salute shining like a globe of salt.

Roland flung his arm round his friend's neck, and said, "Forgive me."

"You do what you think right," said Beauchamp.

"You are a perfect man of honour, my friend, and a woman would adore you. Girls are straws. It's part of Renée's religion to obey her father. That's why I was astonished!... I owe you my life, and I would willingly give you my sister in part payment, if I had the giving of her; most willingly. The case is, that she's a child, and you?"

"Yes, I'm dependent," Beauchamp assented. "I can't act; I see it. That scheme wants two to carry it out: she has no courage. I feel that I could carry the day with my uncle, but I can't subject her to the risks, since she dreads them; I see it. Yes, I see that! I should have done well, I believe; I should have saved her."

"Run to England, get your uncle's consent, and then try."

"No; I shall go to her father."

"My dear Nevil, and supposing you have Renée to back you—supposing it, I say—won't you be falling on exactly the same bayonet-point?"

"If I leave her!" Beauchamp interjected. He perceived the quality of Renée's unformed character which he could not express.

"But we are to suppose that she loves you?"

"She is a girl."

"You return, my friend, to the place you started from, as you did on the canal without knowing it. In my opinion, frankly, she is best married. And I think so all the more after this morning's lesson. You understand plainly that if you leave her she will soon be pliant to the legitimate authorities; and why not?"

"Listen to me, Roland. I tell you she loves me. I am bound to her, and when—if ever I see her unhappy, I will not stand by and look on quietly."

Roland shrugged. "The future not being born, my friend, we will abstain from baptizing it. For me, less privileged than my fellows, I have never seen the future. Consequently I am not in love with it, and to declare myself candidly I do not care for it one snap of the fingers. Let us follow our usages, and attend to the future at the hour of its delivery. I prefer the sage-femme to the prophet. From my heart, Nevil, I wish I could help you. We have charged great guns together, but a family arrangement is something different from a hostile battery. There's Venice! and, as soon as you land, my responsibility's ended. Reflect, I pray you, on what I have said about girls. Upon my word, I discover myself talking wisdom to you. Girls are precious fragilities. Marriage is the mould for them; they get shape, substance, solidity: that is to say, sense, passion, a will of their own: and grace and tenderness, delicacy; all out of the rude, raw, quaking creatures we call girls. Paris! my dear Nevil. Paris! It's the book of women."

The grandeur of the decayed sea-city, where folly had danced Parisianly of old, spread brooding along the waters in morning light; beautiful; but with that inner light of history seen through the beauty Venice was like a lowered banner. The great white dome and the campanili watching above her were still brave emblems. Would Paris leave signs of an ancient vigour standing to vindicate dignity when her fall came? Nevil thought of Renée in Paris.

She avoided him. She had retired behind her tent-curtains, and reappeared only when her father's voice hailed the boat from a gondola. The count and the marquis were sitting together, and there was a spare gondola for the voyagers, so that they should not have to encounter another babel of the riva. Salutes were performed with lifted hats, nods, and bows.

"Well, my dear child, it has all been very wonderful and uncomfortable?" said the count.

"Wonderful, papa; splendid."

“No qualms of any kind?”

“None, I assure you.”

“And madame?”

“Madame will confirm it, if you find a seat for her.”

Rosamund Culling was received in the count’s gondola, cordially thanked, and placed beside the marquis.

“I stay on board and pay these fellows,” said Roland.

Renée was told by her father to follow madame. He had jumped into the spare gondola and offered a seat to Beauchamp.

“No,” cried Renée, arresting Beauchamp, “it is I who mean to sit with papa.”

Up sprang the marquis with an entreating, “Mademoiselle!”

“M. Beauchamp will entertain you, M. le Marquis.”

“I want him here,” said the count; and Beauchamp showed that his wish was to enter the count’s gondola, but Renée had recovered her aplomb, and decisively said “No,” and Beauchamp had to yield.

That would have been an opportunity of speaking to her father without a formal asking of leave. She knew it as well as Nevil Beauchamp.

Renée took his hand to be assisted in the step down to her father’s arms, murmuring:

“Do nothing—nothing! until you hear from me.”

CHAPTER XI.
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 heroical 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 feastings 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 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?”

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 Renée’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. Nevil’s communications gave the case a worse and worse aspect: Renée 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 Renée. He slipped on from Italy to France. His uncle was besieged by a series of letters, and his cousin, Cecil Baskelett, 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 Baskelett 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 heroical actions in that fashion; for example:

"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, etcætera."

Thus, with scarce a variation from the facts, with but a flowery chaplet cast on a truthful narrative, as it were, Captain Baskelett 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."

The secret of Captain Baskelett'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 Baskelett indulged in it, and why it is popular with those whose humour consists of a readiness to laugh.

The fun between Cecil Baskelett 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 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 Renée—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.

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 smoothes 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 Baskelett 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:

"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 £20, 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.

“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 Baskelett. 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 whereabout 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.

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.”

“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?”

“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 à 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."

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.

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 overflown 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!”

“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.

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 innocency 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 pusses 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.

“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!”

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.”

“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 Renée, 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.

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 chirurgeon, 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.

“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.

“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 villany, 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 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 Baskelett. 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 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 Baskelett 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 Baskelett’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 Baskelett to come to us when they have shot Holdesbury.”

And Captain Baskelett! 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 Baskelett’s malicious derision, and Mr. Romfrey’s nodding assent to it, in an article where all was truth?

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 heroical 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 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. Driblets 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 quirking. 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, 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 from the grasp of an enemy, and then ascend on incalescent 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."

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 rageing 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!"

"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..."

"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. 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. 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.

“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 sends 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?”

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. 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.

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.

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.”

“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?”

“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.

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.”

“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——?”

“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 harryers 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."

"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.

"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.

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 MARQUEES" 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 MARQUEES, 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 *Silliery* 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.

"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 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.

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, 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 Halkettt 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.

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.

"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 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 sconce 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.

CHAPTER XIX.
LORD PALMET, AND CERTAIN ELECTORS OF BEVISHAM

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

The oddly coupled pair deplored, among their respective friends, the disastrous Siamese twinship created by a haphazard improvident Liberal camp. Look at us! they said:—Beauchamp is a young demagogue; Cougham is chrysalis Tory. Such Liberals are the ruin of Liberalism; but of such must it be composed when there is no new cry to loosen floods. It was too late to think of an operation to divide them. They held the heart of the cause between them, were bound fast together, and had to go on. Beauchamp, with a furious tug of Radicalism, spoken or performed, pulled Cougham on his beam-ends. Cougham, to right himself, defined his Liberalism sharply from the politics of the pit, pointed to France and her Revolutions, washed his hands of excesses, and entirely overset Beauchamp. Seeing that he stood in the Liberal interest, the junior could not abandon the Liberal flag; so he seized it and bore it ahead of the time, there where Radicals trip their phantom dances like shadows on a fog, and waved it as the very flag of our perfectible race. So great was the impetus that Cougham had no choice but to step out with him briskly —voluntarily as a man propelled by a hand on his coat-collar. A word saved him: the word practical. "Are we practical?" he inquired, and shivered Beauchamp's galloping frame with a violent application of the stop abrupt; for that question, "Are we practical?" penetrates the bosom of an English audience, and will surely elicit a response if not plaudits. Practical or not, the good people affectingly wish to be thought practical. It has been asked by them.

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

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

It happened that the gay and good-humoured young Lord Palmet, heir to the earldom of Elsea, walking up the High Street of Bevisham, met Beauchamp on Tuesday morning as he sallied out of his hotel to canvass. Lord Palmet was one of the numerous half-friends of Cecil Baskelett, and it may be a revelation of his character to you, that he owned to liking Beauchamp because of his having always been a favourite with the women. He began chattering, with Beauchamp's hand in his: "I've hit on you, have I? My dear fellow, Miss Halkett was talking of you last night. I slept at Mount Laurels; went on purpose to have a peep. I'm bound for Itchincope. They've some grand procession in view there; Lespel wrote for my team; I suspect he's for starting some new October races. He talks of half-a-dozen drags. He must have lots of women there. I *say*, what a splendid creature Cissy Halkett has shot up! She topped the season this year, and will next. You're for the darkies, Beauchamp. So am I, when I don't see a blonde; just as a fellow admires a girl when there's no married woman or widow in sight. And, I say, it can't be true

you've gone in for that crazy Radicalism? There's nothing to be gained by it, you know; the women hate it! A married blonde of five-and-twenty's the Venus of them all. Mind you, I don't forget that Mrs. Wardour-Devereux is a thorough-paced brunette; but, upon my honour, I'd bet on Cissy Halkett at forty. 'A dark eye in woman,' if you like, but blue and auburn drive it into a corner."

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

Beauchamp proposed to him maliciously, as one of our hereditary legislators, to come and see something of canvassing. Lord Palmet had no objection. "Capital opportunity for a review of their women," he remarked.

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

Beauchamp had not noticed them.

Palmet observed that he should not have noticed anything else.

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

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

"Her name?" said Beauchamp.

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

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

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

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

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

"Did you dance with either of them?"

Unable to state accurately that he had, Palmet cried, "Oh! for dancing, the Frenchwoman beat the Italian."

"Did you see her often—more than once?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beauchamp looked as if he had swallowed a cordial. Votes falling into his lap are heavenly gifts to the candidate sick of the knocker and the bell. Mr. Tomlinson eulogized the manly candour of the junior Liberal candidate’s address, in which he professed to see ideas that distinguished it from the address of the sound but otherwise conventional Liberal, Mr. Cougham. He muttered of plumping for Beauchamp. “Don’t plump,” Beauchamp said; and a candidate, if he would be an honourable twin, must say it. Cougham had cautioned him against the heresy of plumping.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No further mention was made of the miraculous vote which had risen

responsive to the candidate's address of its own inspired motion; so Beauchamp said, "I beg you to bear in mind that I request you not to plump."

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

Palmet strode after Beauchamp into the street.

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

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

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

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

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

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

They were on the steps of a voter's house, calmly enduring a rebuff from him in person, when Palmet returned to them, exclaiming effusively, "What luck you have, Beauchamp!" He stopped till the applicants descended the steps, with the voice of the voter ringing contempt as well as refusal in their ears; then continued: "You introduced me neck and heels to that undertakerly old Tomlinson, of Wingham's Institute; you might have given me a chance with that Miss—Miss Denham, was it? She has a bit of a style!"

"She has a head," said Beauchamp.

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

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

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

Beauchamp held him firmly to the task of canvassing.

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

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

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

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

Beauchamp laughed. "An old messmate of mine, Lieutenant Jack

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

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

"Trap-bat and ball, cricket, dancing, military bands, puppet-shows, theatres, merry-go-rounds, bosky dells—anything to make them happy," said Palmet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Carpendike listened with a bent head, upraised eyes, and brows wrinkling far on to his poll: a picture of a mind entrenched beyond the potentialities of mortal assault. He signified that he had spoken. Indeed Beauchamp's reply was vain to one whose argument was that he considered the people nearer to holiness in the indulging of an evil propensity than in satisfying a harmless curiosity and getting a recreation. The Sabbath claimed them; if they were disobedient, Sin ultimately might scourge them back to the fold, but never if they were permitted to regard themselves as innocent in their backsliding and rebelliousness.

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

"Devilish cold in this shop," muttered Palmet.

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

"Don't you see, Mr. Carpendike," said fat Mr. Oggler, "it's the happiness of the people we want; that's what Captain Beauchamp works for—their happiness; that's the aim of life for all of us. Look at me! I'm as happy as the day. I pray every night, and I go to church every Sunday, and I never know what it is to be unhappy. The Lord has blessed me with a good digestion, healthy pious children, and a prosperous shop that's a

competency—a modest one, but I make it satisfy me, because I know it's the Lord's gift. Well, now, and I hate Sabbath-breakers; I would punish them; and I'm against the public-houses on a Sunday; but aboard my little yacht, say on a Sunday morning in the Channel, I don't forget I owe it to the Lord that he has been good enough to put me in the way of keeping a yacht; no; I read prayers to my crew, and a chapter in the Bible—Genesis, Deuteronomy, Kings, Acts, Paul, just as it comes. All's good that's there. Then we're free for the day! man, boy, and me; we cook our victuals, and we *must* look to the yacht, do you see. But we've made our peace with the Almighty. We know that. He don't mind the working of the vessel so long as we've remembered him. He put us in that situation, exactly there, latitude and longitude, do you see, and work the vessel we must. And a glass of grog and a pipe after dinner, can't be any offence. And I tell you, honestly and sincerely, I'm sure my conscience is good, and I really and truly don't know what it is *not* to know happiness."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Such treatment of a favourable voter seemed odd to Palmet.

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

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

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

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

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

"No man better, my dear fellow, if it were proposing a toast to the poor devils and asking them to drink it. But a dry speech, like leading them over the desert without a well to cheer them—no oasis, as we used to call

a five-pound note and a holiday—I haven't the heart for that. Is your Miss Denham a Radical?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You pay attention to a stupid Tory squib?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Au revoir—would have been kinder," said Palmet.

Mr. Tripehallow smiled roguishly, to betoken comprehension.

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

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

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

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

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

Palmet and Beauchamp went to their fish and meat; smoked a cigarette or two afterward, conjured away the smell of tobacco from their persons as well as they could, and betook themselves to the assembly-room of the Liberal party, where the young lord had an opportunity of beholding Mr. Cougham, and of listening to him for an hour and forty minutes. He heard Mr. Timothy Turbot likewise. And Miss Denham was present. Lord Palmet applauded when she smiled. When she looked attentive he was deeply studious. Her expression of fatigue under the sonorous ring of statistics poured out from Cougham was translated by Palmet into yawns and sighs of a profoundly fraternal sympathy. Her face quickened on the rising of Beauchamp to speak. She kept eye on him all the while, as Palmet, with the skill of an adept in disguising his petty larceny of the optics, did on her. Twice or thrice she looked pained: Beauchamp was hesitating for the word. Once she looked startled and shut her eyes: a hiss had sounded; Beauchamp sprang on it as if enlivened by hostility, and dominated the factious note. Thereat she turned to a gentleman sitting beside her; apparently they agreed that some incident had occurred characteristic of Nevil Beauchamp; for whom, however, it was not a brilliant evening. He was very well able to account for it, and did so, after he had walked a few steps with Miss Denham on her homeward way.

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

Palmet mimicked the manner of Cougham.

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

Palmet gave an imitation of Timothy Turbot.

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

But a grave matter troubled Palmet’s head.

“Who was that fellow who walked off with Miss Denham?”

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

“Not her brother! Where’s her uncle?”

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

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

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

“Please to say yours too.”

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

“Ah! well, I don’t object, if I’m the man.”

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

“Common sense, Beauchamp!”

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

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

Beauchamp asked Lord Palmet how old he was.

Palmet gave his age; correcting the figures from six-and-twenty to one year more. “And never did a stroke of work in my life,” he said, speaking

genially out of an acute guess at the sentiments of the man he walked with.

It seemed a farcical state of things.

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

CHAPTER XX.
A DAY AT ITCHINCOPE

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

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

> "A sound between a sigh and bray,"

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

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

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

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

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

Cecilia begged for the French lady's name to be repeated; she had not

heard it before, and she tasted the strange bitter relish of realization when it struck her ear to confirm a story that she believed indeed, but had not quite sensibly felt.

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

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

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

"If one were disposed to martyrdom."

The older woman nodded. "Without that."

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the assistance of Mr. Stukely Culbrett, Mrs. Lespel prepared the house and those of the company who were in the secret of affairs for the arrival of Beauchamp. The ladies were curious to see him. The gentlemen, not anticipating extreme amusement, were calm: for it is an axiom in the world of buckskins and billiard-cues, that one man is very like another; and so true is it with them, that they can in time teach it to

the fair sex. Friends of Cecil Baskelett predominated, and the absence of so sprightly a fellow was regretted seriously; but he was shooting with his uncle at Holdesbury, and they did not expect him before Thursday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Palmet grimaced over a mouthful of his pie.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Hymns?" inquired Mr. Culbrett.

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

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

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

The “we” reminded Palmet that her husband was present.

“Ah, Devereux, I didn’t see you,” he nodded obliquely down the table. “By the way, what’s the grand procession? I hear my man Davis has come all right, and I caught sight of the top of your coach-box in the stableyard as I came in. What are we up to?”

“Baskelett writes, it’s to be for to-morrow morning at ten—the start.” Mr. Wardour-Devereux addressed the table generally. He was a fair, huge, bush-bearded man, with a voice of unvarying bass: a squire in his county, and energetic in his pursuit of the pleasures of hunting, driving, travelling, and tobacco.

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

Cecilia threw a hurried glance at her hostess.

Luckily some witling said, “Fours-in-hand!” and so dryly that it passed for humour, and gave Mrs. Lespel time to interpose. “You are not to know till to-morrow, Ernest.”

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

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

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

“Smoke,” resounded from the depths of that gentleman.

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

She and Miss Halkett were walking in the garden.

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

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

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

“Everywhere. I assure you, Miss Halkett, there’s a feeling for Beauchamp—they’re in love with him!”

“He promises them everything, I suppose?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I’ll bring him. Bring him? Nevil Beauchamp won’t want bringing.”

Mrs. Devereux smiled with some pleasure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Turned Tory?" said Palmet.

Mr. Lespel declined to answer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cecilia said, "No."

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

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

Beauchamp perceived them, and lifted his hat. Palmet made demonstrations for the ladies. Still neither party moved nearer.

After some waiting, Cecilia proposed to turn back.

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

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

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

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

“Dr. Shrapnel,” Palmet informed Mrs. Devereux.

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

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

“Pamphlets, you mean.”

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

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

“I thought it might be Dr. Shrapnel”, she was candid enough to reply. “I could not well recognize him, not knowing him.”

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

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

He spoke rapturously of the fresh air, and not too mildly of his pleasure in meeting her. Quite off her guard, she began to hope he was getting to be one of them again, until she heard him tell Lord Palmet that he had come early out of Bevisham for the walk with Dr. Shrapnel, and to call on certain rich tradesmen living near Itchincope. He mentioned the name of Dollikins.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Renegade!"

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

He was unnoticed.

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

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

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

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

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

“Nonsensical talk!”

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

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

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

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

“Dead!” Beauchamp sent the ghastly accusation after him.

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

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

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

“If none provoke me.”

“None shall.”

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

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

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

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

“I don’t,” said Nevil.

“Not? The canvass goes on swimmingly?”

“Ask Palmet.”

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

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

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

“I’ll talk to you about it by-and-by,” said Nevil.

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

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

“You feel sure he will be beaten?”

“He has too strong a dose of fool’s honesty to succeed—stands for the game laws with Radicals, for example. He’s loaded with scruples and

crotchets, and thinks more of them than of his winds and his tides. No public man is to be made out of that. His idea of the Whigs being dead shows a head that can't read the country. He means himself for mankind, and is preparing to be the benefactor of a country parish."

"But as a naval officer?"

"Excellent."

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

"Oh, certainly," said Nevil.

"Will you take a whip down there?"

"If you're all insured."

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

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

The toast of the Drive into Bevisham was drunk.

Cecilia left the supper-table, mortified, and feeling disgraced by her participation in a secret that was being wantonly abused to humiliate Nevil, as she was made to think by her sensitiveness. All the gentlemen were against him, excepting perhaps that chattering pie Lord Palmet, who did him more mischief than his enemies. She could not sleep. She walked out on the terrace with Mrs. Wardour-Devereux, in a dream, hearing that lady breathe remarks hardly less than sentimental, and an unwearied succession of shouts from the smoking-room.

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

"They are mystifying Captain Beauchamp," said Cecilia.

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

Cecilia flushed: she could scarcely get her breath.

"Is that their plot?" she murmured.

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

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

"You must not go," she said bluntly.

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

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

A coachman's trumpet blew.

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

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

“Well, men with drags haven’t commonly much purpose,” he said.

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

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

Cecilia said, “Well, Nevil, then you shall hear it.”

Hereupon Captain Baskelett’s groom informed Captain Beauchamp that he was off.

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

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

“Which? who?” Nevil asked.

“Your cousin Cecil.”

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

Now sounded Captain Baskelett’s trumpet.

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

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

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

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

“Why, here’s Lydiard!” said Nevil, supposing that Lydiard must be approaching him with tidings of the second Tory candidate. But Lydiard knew nothing of it. He was the bearer of a letter on foreign paper—marked urgent, in Rosamund’s hand—and similarly worded in the well-known hand which had inscribed the original address of the letter to Steynham.

Beauchamp opened it and read:

Château Tourdestelle
“(Eure).

“Come. I give you three days—no more.

“RENÉE.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

For a young lady threatened with a tempest in her heart, as disturbing

to her as the one gathering in the West for ships at sea, Miss Halkett bore herself well.

CHAPTER XXII.
THE DRIVE INTO BEVISHAM

Beauchamp was requested by Cecilia to hold the reins. His fair companion in the pony-carriage preferred to lean back musing, and he had leisure to think over the blow dealt him by his uncle Everard with so sure an aim so ringingly on the head. And in the first place he made no attempt to disdain it because it was nothing but artful and heavy-handed, after the mediaeval pattern. Of old he himself had delighted in artfulness as well as boldness and the unmistakeable hit. Highly to prize generalship was in his blood, though latterly the very forces propelling him to his political warfare had forbidden the use of it to him. He saw the patient veteran laying his gun for a long shot—to give as good as he had received; and in realizing Everard Romfrey's perfectly placid bearing under provocation, such as he certainly would have maintained while preparing his reply to it, the raw fighting humour of the plot touched the sense of justice in Beauchamp enough to make him own that he had been the first to offend.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Promise me, Nevil, that you will, when you meet Captain Baskelett, not forget I did you some service, and that I wish, I shall be so glad if you do not resent certain things.... Very objectionable, we all think."

He released her from the embarrassing petition: "Oh! now I know my man, you may be sure I won't waste a word on him. The fact is, he would not understand a word, and would require more—and that I don't do. When I fancied Mr. Austin was the responsible person, I meant to speak to him."

Cecilia smiled gratefully.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“But if we do!”

“Then, Nevil, there is a difference between us.”

“But if we keep our lips closed?”

“We should have to shut our eyes as well!”

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

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

Her musical voice in Italian charmed his hearing.

“What poet was that you quoted?”

“The wisest: Dante.”

“Dr. Shrapnel’s favourite! I must try to read him.”

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

Contemptuous exclusiveness could not go farther.

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

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

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

“You don’t know him, Cecilia.”

“I saw him yesterday.”

“You thought him too tall?”

“I thought of his character.”

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

“I am immensely indebted to my unconscious advocate.”

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

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

A grain of truth in that remark set Nevil reflecting.

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

“Papa told you it would be money sunk in mud.”

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

“I have often thought that of Bevisham, Nevil.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Possibly not, as Governments go, Beauchamp said.

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

“Are they doing it still?” she asked.

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

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

tools of divers interests, wealthy factions, to the sacrifice of the Commonwealth.

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

“A Despotism, Nevil?”

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

“They see we are close on universal suffrage; they’ve been bidding each in turn for ‘the people,’ and that has brought them to it, and now they’re alarmed, and accuse one another of treason to the Constitution, and they don’t accept the situation: and there’s a fear, that to carry on their present system, they will be thwarting the people or corrupting them: and in that case we shall have our despot in some shape or other, and we shall suffer.”

“Nevil,” said Cecilia, “I am out of my depth.”

“I’ll support you; I can swim for two,” said he.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She said: “Canvassing should not be neglected now.”

Her hostility was confused by what she had done to save him from annoyance, while his behaviour to his cousin Cecil increased her respect for him. She detected a pathetic meaning in his mention of the word home; she mused on his having called her beautiful: whither was she hurrying? Forgetful of her horror of his revolutionary ideas, forgetful of the elevation of her own, she thrilled secretly on hearing it stated by the jubilant young Tories at Mount Laurels, as a characteristic of Beauchamp, that he was clever in parrying political thrusts, and slipping from the theme; he who with her gave out unguardedly the thoughts deepest in him. And the thoughts!—were they not of generous origin? Where so true a helpmate for him as the one to whom his mind appealed? It could not be so with the Frenchwoman. Cecilia divined a generous nature by generosity, and set herself to believe that in honour

he had not yet dared to speak to her from the heart, not being at heart quite free. She was at the same time in her remains of pride cool enough to examine and rebuke the weakness she succumbed to in now clinging to him by that which yesterday she hardly less than loathed, still deeply disliked.

CHAPTER XXIII.
TOURDESTELLE

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

Beauchamp's meditations were diverted by the sight of the coast of France dashed in rain-lines across a weed-strewn sea. The "three days" granted him by Renée were over, and it scarcely troubled him that he should be behind the time; he detested mystery, holding it to be a sign of pretentious feebleness, often of imposture, it might be frivolity. Punctilious obedience to the mysterious brevity of the summons, and not to chafe at it, appeared to him as much as could be expected of a struggling man. This was the state of the case with him, until he stood on French earth, breathed French air, and chanced to hear the tongue of France twittered by a lady on the quay. The charm was instantaneous. He reminded himself that Renée, unlike her countrywomen, had no gift for writing letters. They had never corresponded since the hour of her marriage. They had met in Sicily, at Syracuse, in the presence of her father and her husband, and so inanimate was she that the meeting seemed like the conclusion of their history. Her brother Roland sent tidings of her by fits, and sometimes a conventional message from Tourdestelle. Latterly her husband's name had been cited as among the wildfires of Parisian quays, in journals more or less devoted to those unreclaimed spaces of the city. Well, if she was unhappy, was it not the fulfilment of his prophecy in Venice?

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

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

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

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

worn like the track of a torrent with heavy rain, wound upward. On his descent to the farther side, he was to spy directly below in the flat for Tourdestelle. He crossed the wooded neck above the valley, and began descending, peering into gulfs of the twilight dusk. Some paces down he was aided by a brilliant half-moon that divided the whole underlying country into sharp outlines of dark and fair, and while endeavouring to distinguish the château of Tourdestelle his eyes were attracted to an angle of the downward zigzag, where a pair of horses emerged into broad light swiftly; apparently the riders were disputing, or one had overtaken the other in pursuit. Riding-habit and plumed hat signalized the sex of one. Beauchamp sung out a gondolier's cry. He fancied it was answered.

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

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

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

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

"I am well."

"Nothing hangs over you?"

"Nothing."

"Why give me just three days?"

"Pure impatience. Have you forgotten me?"

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

"You knew it was I?" said he.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You wear your trophy," said Renée, and her horse reared and darted ahead.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“You relieve me!”

“Evidently you have forgotten my character, Nevil.”

“Not a feature of it.”

“Ah!” she breathed involuntarily.

“Would you have me forget it?”

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

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

“I have wondered whether I should ever see you looking at that scene,” said Renée.

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

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

Renée answered: “He has the misfortune to be considered the handsomest young man in France.”

“He has an Italian look.”

“His mother was Provençale.”

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

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

“Your husband is travelling?”

“It is his pleasure.”

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

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

young ladies: I can bear much, but not their presence; girls are odious to me. I knew one in Venice."

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

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

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

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

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

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

This was not what she had expected. With one heave of her bosom, and murmuring: "I made a vow I would obey you absolutely if you came," she raised the hat above her brows, and lightning would not have surprised him more; for there had not been a single vibration of her voice to tell him of tears running: nay, the absence of the usual French formalities in her manner of addressing him, had seemed to him to indicate her intention to put him at once on an easy friendly footing, such as would be natural to her, and not painful to him. Now she said:

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

She swept to the bell.

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

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

CHAPTER XXIV.
HIS HOLIDAY

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

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

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

Beauchamp asked if she read English now.

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

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

Could those eyes fronting him under the lamp have recently shed

tears? They were the living eyes of a brilliant unembarrassed lady; shields flinging light rather than well-depths inviting it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

If Renée had faults, Beauchamp thought of her as at sea breasting tempests, while Cecilia was a vessel lying safe in harbour, untried, however promising: and if Cecilia raised a steady light for him, it was over the shores he had left behind, while Renée had really nothing to do with warning or rescuing, or with imperilling; she welcomed him simply to a holiday in her society. He associated Cecilia strangely with the political labours she would have had him relinquish; and Renée with a pleasant state of indolence, that her lightest smile disturbed. Shun comparisons.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Once I thought it would be impossible."

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

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

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

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

"My husband will congratulate me on the pleasure I have, and have long desired, of making your acquaintance, and he will grieve that he has not been so fortunate; he is on service in Africa. My brother, I need not say, will deplore the mischance which has prevented him from welcoming you. I have telegraphed to him; he is at one of the Baths in Germany, and will come assuredly, if there is a prospect of finding you

here. None? Supposing my telegram not to fall short of him, I may count on his being here within four days."

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

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

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

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

He had not mentioned it to Madame la Marquise.

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

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

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

"He is particularly handsome."

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

Beauchamp gave a French jerk of the shoulders.

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

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

Near upon the breakfast-hour Renée was perceived by them going toward the château at a walking pace. They crossed one of the garden bridges to intercept her. She started out of some deep meditation, and raised her whip hand to Beauchamp's greeting. "I had forgotten to tell you, monsieur, that I should be out for some hours in the morning."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where am I? thought Beauchamp—in what land, he would have phrased it, of whirlwinds catching the wits, and whipping the passions? Calmer than they, but unable to command them, and guessing that Renée's errand of the morning, by which he had lost hours of her,

pertained to the glove, he said quiveringly, “Madame la Marquise objects?”

“We,” replied Madame d’Auffray, “contend that the glove was not loyally won. The wager was upon your coming to the invitation, not upon your conquering the elements. As to his flaunting the glove for a favour, I would ask you, whom does he advertize by that? Gloves do not wear white; which fact compromises none but the wearer. He picked it up from the ground, and does not restore it; that is all. You see a boy who catches at anything to placard himself. There is a compatriot of yours, a M. Ducie, who assured us you must be with an uncle in your county of Sussex. Of course we ran the risk of the letter missing you, but the chance was worth a glove. Can you believe it, M. Beauchamp? it was I, old woman as I am, I who provoked the silly wager. I have long desired to meet you; and we have little society here, we are desperate with loneliness, half mad with our whims. I said, that if you were what I had heard of you, you would come to us at a word. They dared Madame la Marquise to say the same. I wished to see the friend of Frenchmen, as M. Roland calls you; not merely to see him—to know him, whether he is this perfect friend whose absolute devotion has impressed my dear sister Renée’s mind. She respects you: that is a sentiment scarcely complimentary to the ideas of young men. She places you above human creatures: possibly you may not dislike to be worshipped. It is not to be rejected when one’s influence is powerful for good. But you leave us to-morrow!”

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXV.
THE ADVENTURE OF THE BOAT

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

Renée did not condescend to whisper. “Roland will be glad,” she said aloud.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beauchamp was dragged into the discussion of the case.

Renée waited curiously for his judgement.

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

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

“We have no duelling,” said Beauchamp.

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

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

“But you surrendered the glove, marquise!” The baronne d’Orbec spoke judicially.

“I flung it to the ground: that made it neutral,” said Renée.

“Hum. He wears it with the dust on it, certainly.”

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

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile Beauchamp's day of adieu succeeded that of his holiday, and no adieu was uttered. The hours at Tourdestelle had a singular turn for slipping. Interlinked and all as one they swam by, brought evening, brought morning, never varied. They might have varied with such a division as when flame lights up the night or a tempest shades the day, had Renée chosen; she had that power over him. She had no wish to use it; perhaps she apprehended what it would cause her to forfeit. She wished him to respect her; felt that she was under the shadow of the glove, slight though it was while it was nothing but a tale of a lady and a glove; and her desire, like his, was that they should meet daily and dream on, without a variation. He noticed how seldom she led him beyond the grounds of the château. They were to make excursions when her brother came, she said. Roland de Croisnel's colonel, Coïn de Grandchamp, happened to be engaged in a duel, which great business detained Roland. It supplied Beauchamp with an excuse for staying, that he was angry with himself for being pleased to have; so he attacked the practice of duelling, and next the shrug, wherewith M. Livret and M. d'Orbec sought at first to defend the foul custom, or apologize for it, or plead for it philosophically, or altogether cast it off their shoulders; for the literal interpretation of the shrug in argument is beyond human capacity; it is the point of speech beyond our treasury of language. He attacked the shrug, as he thought, very temperately; but in controlling his native vehemence he grew, perforce of repression, and of incompetency to deliver himself copiously in French, sarcastic. In fine, his contrast of the pretence of their noble country to head civilization, and its encouragement of a custom so barbarous, offended M. d'Orbec and irritated M. Livret.

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

In the opinion of Mr. Vivian Ducie, present at the discussion, Beauchamp provoked the lash; for, in the first place, a beautiful woman's apparent favourite should be particularly discreet in all that he says: and next, he should have known that the Gallic shrug over matters political is volcanic—it is the heaving of the mountain, and, like the proverbial Russ, leaps up Tartarly at a scratch. Our newspapers also had been flea-biting M. Livret and his countrymen of late; and, to conclude, over in old England you may fly out against what you will, and there is little beyond a motherly smile, a nurse's rebuke, or a fool's rudeness to answer you. In quick-blooded France you have whip for whip, sneer, sarcasm, claw,

fang, tussle, in a trice; and if you choose to comport yourself according to your insular notion of freedom, you are bound to march out to the measured ground at an invitation. To begin by saying that your principles are opposed to it, naturally excites a malicious propensity to try your temper.

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

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

"It seems, then, that there are two ways of being objectionable," said Renée.

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

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

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

Renée cast her chin up. "How, my dear?"

"Your husband."

"What of him?"

"He is returning."

"What brings him?"

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

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

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

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

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

"My friend is... yes, I have no reason to think otherwise," Renée replied. Her husband's persistent and exclusive jealousy of Beauchamp

was the singular point in the character of one who appeared to have no sentiment of the kind as regarded men that were much less than men of honour. “So, then, my sister Agnès,” she said, “you suggested the invitation of M. Beauchamp for the purpose of spurring my husband to return! Apparently he and I are surrounded by plotters.”

“Am I so very guilty?” said Madame d’Auffray.

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

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

Renée flushed crimson.

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

“Oh!” cried Renée, “do not say it, if ever you should imagine it. Bid Roland speak of him. He is changed, oppressed: I did him a terrible wrong ....” She checked herself. “But the chief thing to do is to keep M. d’Henriel away from him. I suspect M. d’Orbec of a design to make them clash: and you, my dear, will explain why, to flatter me. Believe me, I thirst for flattery; I have had none since M. Beauchamp came: and you, so acute, must have seen the want of it in my face. But you, so skilful, Agnès, will manage these men. Do you know, Agnès, that the pride of a woman so incredibly clever as you have shown me you are should resent their intrigues and overthrow them. As for me, I thought I could command M. d’Henriel, and I find he has neither reason in him nor obedience. Singular to say, I knew him just as well a week back as I do now, and then I liked him for his qualities—or the absence of any. But how shall we avoid him on the road to Dianet? He is aware that we are going.”

“Take M. Beauchamp by boat,” said Madame d’Auffray.

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

“Was it my fault?”

“Mine. Tell me: the legitimate king returns when?”

“In two days or three.”

“And his rebel subjects are to address him—how?”

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

“Will they be pardoned?” said Renée.

“It is for *him* to kneel, my dearest.”

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

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

When Renée trifled with Count Henri, it was playing with fire, and she knew it; and once or twice she bemoaned to Agnès d’Auffray her abandoned state, which condemned her, for the sake of the sensation of living, to have recourse to perilous pastimes; but she was revolted, as at a piece of treachery, that Agnès should have suggested the invitation of Nevil Beauchamp with the secret design of winning home her husband to protect her. This, for one reason, was because Beauchamp gave her no notion of danger; none, therefore, of requiring protection; and the presence of her husband could not but be hateful to him, an undeserved infliction. To her it was intolerable that they should be brought into contact. It seemed almost as hard that she should have to dismiss Beauchamp to preclude their meeting. She remembered, nevertheless, a certain desperation of mind, scarce imaginable in the retrospect, by which, trembling, fever-smitten, scorning herself, she had been reduced to hope for Nevil Beauchamp’s coming as for a rescue. The night of the storm had roused her heart. Since then his perfect friendliness had lulled, his air of thoughtfulness had interested it; and the fancy that he, who neither reproached nor sentimentalized, was to be infinitely compassionated, stirred up remorse. She could not tell her friend Agnès of these feelings while her feelings were angered against her friend. So she talked lightly of “the legitimate king,” and they embraced: a situation of comedy quite as true as that presented by the humble admirers of the brilliant chatelaine.

Beauchamp had the pleasure of rowing Madame la Marquise to the short shaded walk separating the river from Château Dianet, whither M.

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

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

“When did you see him?” said she.

He was confused. “It is not long since, madame.”

“On the road?”

“Coming along the road.”

“And our glove?”

“Madame la Marquise, if I may trust my memory, M. d’Henriel was not in official costume.”

Renée allowed herself to be reassured.

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

He raised his voice to denounce them.

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

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

Roland stopped to turn to Renée. “I met d’Henriel on my ride here,” he said with a sharp inquisitive expression of eye that passed immediately.

“You rode here from Tourdestelle, then,” said Renée.

“Has he been one of the company, marquise?”

“Did he ride by you without speaking, Roland?”

“Thus.” Roland described a Spanish caballero’s formallest salutation, saying to Beauchamp, “Not the best sample of our young Frenchman;—woman-spoiled! Not that the better kind of article need be spoiled by them—heaven forbid that! Friend Nevil,” he spoke lower, “do you know, you have something of the prophet in you? I remember: much has come true. An old spoiler of women is worse than one spoiled by them! Ah,

well: and Madame Culling? and your seven-feet high uncle? And have you a fleet to satisfy Nevil Beauchamp yet? You shall see a trial of our new field-guns at Rouen."

They were separated with difficulty.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That country seems to frown on me. But if I do not go there, nor you come here, except to imperious mysterious invitations, which will not be repeated, the future is dust as well as the past: for me, at least. Dust here, dust there!—if one could be like a silk-worm, and live lying on the leaf one feeds on, it would be a sort of answer to the riddle—living out of the dust, and in the present. I find none in my religion. No doubt, Madame de Brézé did: why did you call Diane so to M. Livret?"

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

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

He looked round.

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

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

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

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

M. d'Henriel could not maintain the attitude. He uncrossed his legs deliberately, drooped hat in hand, and came paddling over; apologized indolently, and said, "I am not, I believe, trespassing on the grounds of

Tourdestelle, Madame la Marquise!”

“You happen to be in my boat, M. le Comte,” said Renée.

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

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

The instant she had taken her seat, Count Henri dashed the scull’s blade at the bank to push off with her, but the boat was fast. His manœuvre had been foreseen. Beauchamp swung on board like the last seaman of a launch, and crouched as the boat rocked away to the stream; and still Count Henri leaned on the scull, not in a chosen attitude, but for positive support. He had thrown his force into the blow, to push off triumphantly, and leave his rival standing. It occurred that the boat’s brief resistance and rocking away agitated his artificial equipoise, and, by the operation of inexorable laws, the longer he leaned across an extending surface the more was he dependent; so that when the measure of the water exceeded the length of his failing support on land, there was no help for it: he pitched in. His grimace of chagrin at the sight of Beauchamp securely established, had scarcely yielded to the grimness of feature of the man who feels he must go, as he took the plunge; and these two emotions combined to make an extraordinary countenance.

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

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

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

With these words he retreated.

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

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

Thinking, talking to her heart, was useless. The deceiver simply feigned utter condemnation to make partial comfort acceptable. She burned to do some act of extreme self-abasement that should bring an

unwonted degree of wrath on her externally, and so re-entitle her to consideration in her own eyes. She burned to be interrogated, to have to weep, to be scorned, abused, and forgiven, that she might say she did not deserve pardon. Beauchamp was too English, evidently too blind, for the description of judge-accuser she required; one who would worry her without mercy, until—disgraced by the excess of torture inflicted—he should reinstate her by as much as he had overcharged his accusation, and a little more. Reasonably enough, instinctively in fact, she shunned the hollow of an English ear. A surprise was in reserve for her.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Very strangely, the ridiculous thing, in the shape of an over-stretched likeness, that she never would have seen had he indicated it directly, became transfused from his mind to hers by his abstract, half-amused observation of the great dancing gourd—that capering antiquity, lumbering volatility, wandering, self-adored, gross bald Cupid, elatest of nondescripts! Her senses imagined the impressions agitating Beauchamp’s, and exaggerated them beyond limit; and when he amazed her with a straight look into her eyes, and the words, “Better let it be a youth—and live, than fall back to that!” she understood him immediately; and, together with her old fear of his impetuosity and downrightness, came the vivid recollection, like a bright finger pointing upon darkness, of what foul destiny, magnified by her present abhorrence of it, he would have saved her from in the days of Venice and Touraine, and unto what loathly example of the hideous grotesque she, in spite of her lover’s foresight on her behalf, had become allied.

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

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

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

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

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

She pointed to a landing. He sprang to the bank. “It could end in nothing else,” he said, “unless you beat cold to me. And now I have your hand, Renée! It’s the hand of a living woman, you have no need to tell me that; but faithful to her comrade! I can swear it for her—faithful to a *true* alliance! You are not married, you are simply chained: and you are terrorized. What a perversion of you it is! It wrecks you. But with me? Am I not your lover? You and I are one life. What have we suffered for but to find this out and act on it? Do I not know that a woman lives, and is not the rooted piece of vegetation hypocrites and tyrants expect her to

be? Act on it, I say; own me, break the chains, come to me; say, Nevil Beauchamp or death! And death for you? But you are poisoned and thwart-eddying, as you live now: worse, shaming the Renée I knew. Ah—Venice! But now we are both of us wiser and stronger: we have gone through fire. Who foretold it? This day, and this misery and perversion that we can turn to joy, if we will—if you will! No heart to dare is no heart to love!—answer that! Shall I see you cower away from me again? Not this time!”

He swept on in a flood, uttered mad things, foolish things, and things of an insight electrifying to her. Through the cottager’s garden, across a field, and within the park gates of Tourdestelle it continued unceasingly; and deeply was she won by the rebellious note in all that he said, deeply too by his disregard of the vulgar arts of wooers: she detected none. He did not speak so much to win as to help her to see with her own orbs. Nor was it roughly or chidingly, though it was absolutely, that he stripped her of the veil a wavering woman will keep to herself from her heart’s lord if she can.

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

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

CHAPTER XXVI.
MR. BLACKBURN TUCKHAM

Some time after Beauchamp had been seen renewing his canvass in Bevisham a report reached Mount Laurels that he was lame of a leg. The wits of the opposite camp revived the FRENCH MARQUEES, but it was generally acknowledged that he had come back without the lady: she was invisible. Cecilia Halkett rode home with her father on a dusky Autumn evening, and found the card of Commander Beauchamp awaiting her. He might have stayed to see her, she thought. Ladies are not customarily so very late in returning from a ride on chill evenings of Autumn. Only a quarter of an hour was between his visit and her return. The shortness of the interval made it appear the deeper gulf. She noticed that her father particularly inquired of the man-servant whether Captain Beauchamp limped. It seemed a piece of kindly anxiety on his part. The captain was mounted, the man said. Cecilia was conscious of rumours being abroad relating to Nevil's expedition to France; but he had enemies, and was at war with them, and she held herself indifferent to tattle. This card bearing his name, recently in his hand, was much more insidious and precise. She took it to her room to look at it. Nothing but his name and naval title was inscribed; no pencilled line; she had not expected to discover one. The simple card was her dark light, as a handkerchief, a flower, a knot of riband, has been for men luridly illuminated by such small sparks to fling their beams on shadows and read the monstrous things for truths. Her purer virgin blood was not inflamed. She read the signification of the card sadly as she did clearly. What she could not so distinctly imagine was, how he could reconcile the devotion to his country, which he had taught her to put her faith in, with his unhappy subjection to Madame de Rouaillout. How could the nobler sentiment exist side by side with one that was lawless? Or was the wildness characteristic of his political views proof of a nature inclining to disown moral ties? She feared so; he did not speak of the clergy respectfully. Reading in the dark, she was forced to rely on her social instincts, and she distrusted her personal feelings as much as she could, for she wished to know the truth of him; anything, pain and heartrending, rather than the shutting of the eyes in an unworthy abandonment to mere emotion and fascination. Cecilia's love could not be otherwise given to a man, however near she might be drawn to love—though she should suffer the pangs of love cruelly.

She placed his card in her writing-desk; she had his likeness there. Commander Beauchamp encouraged the art of photography, as those that make long voyages do, in reciprocating what they petition their friends for. Mrs. Rosamund Culling had a whole collection of photographs of him, equal to a visual history of his growth in chapters, from boyhood to midshipmanship and to manhood. The specimen possessed by Cecilia was one of a couple that Beauchamp had forwarded to Mrs. Grancey Lespel on the day of his departure for France, and was a present from that lady, purchased, like so many presents, at a cost Cecilia would have paid heavily in gold to have been spared, namely, a public blush. She was allowed to make her choice, and she chose the profile, repeating a remark of Mrs. Culling's, that it suggested an arrow-head in the upflight; whereupon Mr. Stukely Culbrett had said, "Then there is the man, for he is undoubtedly a projectile"; nor were politically-hostile punsters on an arrow-head inactive. But Cecilia was thinking of the side-face she (less intently than Beauchamp at hers) had glanced at during the drive into Bevisham. At that moment, she fancied Madame de Rouaillout might be doing likewise; and oh that she had the portrait of the French lady as well!

Next day her father tossed her a photograph of another gentleman, coming out of a letter he had received from old Mrs. Beauchamp. He asked her opinion of it. She said, "I think he would have suited Bevisham better than Captain Baskelett." Of the original, who presented himself at Mount Laurels in the course of the week, she had nothing to say, except that he was very like the photograph, very unlike Nevil Beauchamp. "Yes, there I'm of your opinion," her father observed. The gentleman was Mr. Blackburn Tuckham, and it was amusing to find an exuberant Tory in one who was the reverse of the cavalier type. Nevil and he seemed to have been sorted to the wrong sides. Mr. Tuckham had a round head, square flat forehead, and ruddy face; he stood as if his feet claimed the earth under them for his own, with a certain shortness of leg that detracted from the majesty of his resemblance to our Eighth Harry, but increased his air of solidity; and he was authoritative in speaking. "Let

me set you right, sir," he said sometimes to Colonel Halkett, and that was his modesty. "You are altogether wrong," Miss Halkett heard herself informed, which was his courtesy. He examined some of her water-colour drawings before sitting down to dinner, approved of them, but thought it necessary to lay a broad finger on them to show their defects. On the question of politics, "I venture to state," he remarked, in anything but the tone of a venture, "that no educated man of ordinary sense who has visited our colonies will come back a Liberal." As for a man of sense and education being a Radical, he scouted the notion with a pooh sufficient to awaken a vessel in the doldrums. He said carelessly of Commander Beauchamp, that he might think himself one. Either the Radical candidate for Bevisham stood self-deceived, or—the other supposition. Mr. Tuckham would venture to state that no English gentleman, exempt from an examination by order of the Commissioners of Lunacy, could be sincerely a Radical. "Not a bit of it; nonsense," he replied to Miss Halkett's hint at the existence of Radical views; "that is, those views are out of politics; they are matters for the police. Dutch dykes are built to shut away the sea from cultivated land, and of course it's a part of the business of the Dutch Government to keep up the dykes,—and of ours to guard against the mob; but that is only a political consideration after the mob has been allowed to undermine our defences."

"They speak," said Miss Halkett, "of educating the people to fit them —"

"They speak of commanding the winds and tides," he cut her short, with no clear analogy; "wait till we have a storm. It's a delusion amounting to dementedness to suppose, that with the people inside our defences, we can be taming them and tricking them. As for sending them to school after giving them power, it's like asking a wild beast to sit down to dinner with us—he wants the whole table and us too. The best education for the people is government. They're beginning to see that in Lancashire at last. I ran down to Lancashire for a couple of days on my landing, and I'm thankful to say Lancashire is preparing to take a step back. Lancashire leads the country. Lancashire men see what this Liberalism has done for the Labour-market."

"Captain Beauchamp considers that the political change coming over the minds of the manufacturers is due to the large fortunes they have made," said Miss Halkett, maliciously associating a Radical prophet with him.

He was unaffected by it, and continued: "Property is ballast as well as treasure. I call property funded good sense. I would give it every privilege. If we are to speak of patriotism, I say the possession of property guarantees it. I maintain that the lead of men of property is in most cases sure to be the safe one."

"*I* think so," Colonel Halkett interposed, and he spoke as a man of property.

Mr. Tuckham grew fervent in his allusions to our wealth and our commerce. Having won the race and gained the prize, shall we let it slip out of our grasp? Upon this topic his voice descended to tones of priestlike awe: for are we not the envy of the world? Our wealth is countless, fabulous. It may well inspire veneration. And we have won it with our hands, thanks (he implied it so) to our religion. We are rich in money and industry, in those two things only, and the corruption of an energetic industry is constantly threatened by the profusion of wealth giving it employment. This being the case, either your Radicals do not know the first conditions of human nature, or they do; and if they do they are traitors, and the Liberals opening the gates to them are fools: and some are knaves. We perish as a Great Power if we cease to look sharp ahead, hold firm together, and make the utmost of what we possess. The word for the performance of those duties is Toryism: a word with an older flavour than Conservatism, and Mr. Tuckham preferred it. By all means let workmen be free men but a man must earn his freedom daily, or he will become a slave in some form or another: and the way to earn it is by work and obedience to right direction. In a country like ours, open on all sides to the competition of intelligence and strength, with a Press that is the voice of all parties and of every interest; in a country offering to your investments three and a half and more per cent., secure as the firmament!

He perceived an amazed expression on Miss Halkett's countenance; and "Ay," said he, "that means the certainty of food to millions of mouths, and comforts, if not luxuries, to half the population. A safe percentage on savings is the basis of civilization."

But he had bruised his eloquence, for though you may start a sermon from stones to hit the stars, he must be a practised orator who shall

descend out of the abstract to take up a heavy lump of the concrete without unseating himself, and he stammered and came to a flat ending: “In such a country—well, I venture to say, we have a right to condemn in advance disturbers of the peace, and they must show very good cause indeed for not being summarily held—to account for their conduct.”

The allocution was not delivered in the presence of an audience other than sympathetic, and Miss Halkett rightly guessed that it was intended to strike Captain Beauchamp by ricochet. He puffed at the mention of Beauchamp’s name. He had read a reported speech or two of Beauchamp’s, and shook his head over a quotation of the stuff, as though he would have sprung at him like a lion, but for his enrolment as a constable.

Not a whit the less did Mr. Tuckham drink his claret relishingly, and he told stories incidental to his travels now and then, commended the fishing here, the shooting there, and in some few places the cookery, with much bright emphasis when it could be praised; it appeared to be an endearing recollection to him. Still, as a man of progress, he declared his belief that we English would ultimately turn out the best cooks, having indubitably the best material. “Our incomprehensible political pusillanimity” was the one sad point about us: we had been driven from surrender to surrender.

“Like geese upon a common, I have heard it said,” Miss Halkett assisted him to Dr. Shrapnel’s comparison.

Mr. Tuckham laughed, and half yawned and sighed, “Dear me!”

His laughter was catching, and somehow more persuasive of the soundness of the man’s heart and head than his remarks.

She would have been astonished to know that a gentleman so uncourtly, if not uncouth—judged by the standard of the circle she moved in—and so unskilled in pleasing the sight and hearing of ladies as to treat them like junior comrades, had raised the vow within himself on seeing her: You, or no woman!

The colonel delighted in him, both as a strong and able young fellow, and a refreshingly aggressive recruit of his party, who was for onslaught, and invoked common sense, instead of waving the flag of sentiment in retreat; a very horse-artillery man of Tories. Regretting immensely that Mr. Tuckham had not reached England earlier, that he might have occupied the seat for Bevisham, about to be given to Captain Baskelett, Colonel Halkett set up a contrast of Blackburn Tuckham and Nevil Beauchamp; a singular instance of unfairness, his daughter thought, considering that the distinct contrast presented by the circumstances was that of Mr. Tuckham and Captain Baskelett.

“It seems to me, papa,—that you are contrasting the idealist and the realist,” she said.

“Ah, well, we don’t want the idealist in politics,” muttered the colonel.

Latterly he also had taken to shaking his head over Nevil: Cecilia dared not ask him why.

Mr. Tuckham arrived at Mount Laurels on the eve of the Nomination day in Bevisham. An article in the Bevisham Gazette calling upon all true Liberals to demonstrate their unanimity by a multitudinous show of hands, he ascribed to the writing of a child of Erin; and he was highly diverted by the Liberal’s hiring of Paddy to “pen and spout” for him. “A Scotchman manages, and Paddy does the sermon for *all* their journals,” he said off-hand; adding: “And the English are the compositors, I suppose.” You may take that for an instance of the national spirit of Liberal newspapers!

“Ah!” sighed the colonel, as at a case clearly demonstrated against them.

A drive down to Bevisham to witness the ceremony of the nomination in the town-hall sobered Mr. Tuckham’s disposition to generalize. Beauchamp had the show of hands, and to say with Captain Baskelett, that they were a dirty majority, was beneath Mr. Tuckham’s verbal antagonism. He fell into a studious reserve, noting everything, listening to everybody, greatly to Colonel Halkett’s admiration of one by nature a talker and a thunderer.

The show of hands Mr. Seymour Austin declared to be the most delusive of electoral auspices; and it proved so. A little later than four o’clock in the afternoon of the election-day, Cecilia received a message from her father telling her that both of the Liberals were headed; “Beauchamp nowhere.”

Mrs. Grancey Lespel was the next herald of Beauchamp’s defeat. She merely stated the fact that she had met the colonel and Mr. Blackburn

Tuckham driving on the outskirts of the town, and had promised to bring Cecilia the final numbers of the poll. Without naming them, she unrolled the greater business in her mind.

“A man who in the middle of an Election goes over to France to fight a duel, can hardly expect to win; he has all the morality of an English borough opposed to him,” she said; and seeing the young lady stiffen: “Oh! the duel is positive,” she dropped her voice. “With the husband. Who else could it be? And returns invalided. That is evidence. My nephew Palmet has it from Vivian Ducie, and he is acquainted with her tolerably intimately, and the story is, she was overtaken in her flight in the night, and the duel followed at eight o’clock in the morning; but her brother insisted on fighting for Captain Beauchamp, and I cannot tell you how—but *his* place in it I can’t explain—there was a beau jeune homme, and it’s quite possible that *he* should have been the person to stand up against the marquis. At any rate, he insulted Captain Beauchamp, or thought your hero had insulted him, and the duel was with one or the other. It matters exceedingly little with whom, if a duel was fought, and you see we have quite established that.”

“I hope it is not true,” said Cecilia.

“My dear, that is the Christian thing to do,” said Mrs. Lespel. “Duelling is horrible: though those Romfreys!—and the Beauchamps were just as bad, or nearly. Colonel Richard fought for a friend’s wife or sister. But in these days duelling is incredible. It was an inhuman practice always, and it is now worse—it is a breach of manners. I would hope it is not true; and you may mean that I have it from Lord Palmet. But I know Vivian Ducie as well as I know my nephew, and if he distinctly mentions an occurrence, we may too surely rely on the truth of it; he is not a man to spread mischief. Are you unaware that he met Captain Beauchamp at the château of the marquise? The whole story was acted under his eyes. He had only to take up his pen. Generally he favours me with his French gossip. I suppose there were circumstances in this affair more suitable to Palmet than to me. He wrote a description of Madame de Rouaillout that set Palmet strutting about for an hour. I have no doubt she must be a very beautiful woman, for a Frenchwoman: not regular features; expressive, capricious. Vivian Ducie lays great stress on her eyes and eyebrows, and, I think, her hair. With a Frenchwoman’s figure, that is enough to make men crazy. He says her husband deserves—but what will not young men write? It is deeply to be regretted that Englishmen abroad—women the same, I fear—get the Continental tone in morals. But how Captain Beauchamp could expect to carry on an Election and an intrigue together, only a head like his can tell us. Grancey is in high indignation with him. It does not concern the Election, you can imagine. Something that man Dr. Shrapnel has done, which he says Captain Beauchamp could have prevented. Quarrels of men! I have instructed Palmet to write to Vivian Ducie for a photograph of Madame de Rouaillout. Do you know, one has a curiosity to see the face of the woman for whom a man ruins himself. But I say again, he ought to be married.”

“That there may be two victims?” Cecilia said it smiling.

She was young in suffering, and thought, as the unseasoned and inexperienced do, that a mask is a concealment.

“Married—settled; to have him bound in honour,” said Mrs. Lespel. “I had a conversation with him when he was at Itchincope; and his look, and what I know of his father, that gallant and handsome Colonel Richard Beauchamp, would give one a kind of confidence in him; supposing always that he is not struck with one of those deadly passions that are like snakes, like magic. I positively believe in them. I have seen them. And if they end, they end as if the man were burnt out, and was ashes inside; as you see Mr. Stukely Culbrett, all cynicism. You would not now suspect him of a passion! It is true. Oh, I know it! That is what the men go to. The women die. Vera Winter died at twenty-three. Caroline Ormond was hardly older. You know her story; everybody knows it. The most singular and convincing case was that of Lord Alfred Burnley and Lady Susan Gardiner, wife of the general; and there was an instance of two similarly afflicted—a very rare case, most rare: they never could meet to part! It was almost ludicrous. It is now quite certain that they did not conspire to meet. At last the absolute fatality became so well understood by the persons immediately interested—You laugh?”

“Do I laugh?” said Cecilia.

“We should all know the world, my dear, and you are a strong head. The knowledge is only dangerous for fools. And if romance is occasionally ridiculous, as I own it can be, humdrum, I protest, is everlastingly so. By-the-by, I should have told you that Captain

Beauchamp was one hundred and ninety below Captain Baskelett when the state of the poll was handed to me. The gentleman driving with your father compared the Liberals to a parachute cut away from the balloon. Is he army or navy?”

“He is a barrister, and some cousin of Captain Beauchamp.”

“I should not have taken him for a Beauchamp,” said Mrs. Lespel; and, resuming her worldly sagacity, “I should not like to be in opposition to that young man.”

She seemed to have a fancy unexpressed regarding Mr. Tuckham. Reminding herself that she might be behind time at Itchincope, where the guests would be numerous that evening, and the song of triumph loud, with Captain Baskelett to lead it, she kissed the young lady she had unintentionally been torturing so long, and drove away.

Cecilia hoped it was not true. Her heart sank heavily under the belief that it was. She imagined the world abusing Nevil and casting him out, as those electors of Bevisham had just done, and impulsively she pleaded for him, and became drowned in criminal blushes that forced her to defend herself with a determination not to believe the dreadful story, though she continued mitigating the wickedness of it; as if, by a singular inversion of the fact, her clear good sense excused, and it was her heart that condemned him. She dwelt fondly on an image of the “gallant and handsome Colonel Richard Beauchamp,” conjured up in her mind from the fervour of Mrs. Lespel when speaking of Nevil’s father, whose chivalry threw a light on the son’s, and whose errors, condoned by time, and with a certain brilliancy playing above them, interceded strangely on behalf of Nevil.

CHAPTER XXVII.
A SHORT SIDELOOK AT THE ELECTION

The brisk Election-day, unlike that wearisome but instructive canvass of the Englishman in his castle vicatim, teaches little; and its humours are those of a badly managed Christmas pantomime without a columbine —old tricks, no graces. Nevertheless, things hang together so that it cannot be passed over with a bare statement of the fact of the Liberal-Radical defeat in Bevisham: the day was not without fruit in time to come for him whom his commiserating admirers of the non-voting sex all round the borough called the poor dear commander. Beauchamp's holiday out of England had incited Dr. Shrapnel to break a positive restriction put upon him by Jenny Denham, and actively pursue the canvass and the harangue in person; by which conduct, as Jenny had foreseen, many temperate electors were alienated from Commander Beauchamp, though no doubt the Radicals were made compact: for they may be the skirmishing faction—poor scattered fragments, none of them sufficiently downright for the other; each outstripping each; rudimentary emperors, elementary prophets, inspired physicians, nostrum-devouring patients, whatsoever you will; and still here and there a man shall arise to march them in close columns, if they can but trust him; in perfect subordination, a model even for Tories while they keep shoulder to shoulder. And to behold such a disciplined body is intoxicating to the eye of a leader accustomed to count ahead upon vapourish abstractions, and therefore predisposed to add a couple of noughts to every tangible figure in his grasp. Thus will a realized fifty become five hundred or five thousand to him: the very sense of number is instinct with multiplication in his mind; and those years far on in advance, which he has been looking to with some fatigue to the optics, will suddenly and rollickingly roll up to him at the shutting of his eyes in a temporary fit of gratification. So, by looking and by not looking, he achieves his phantom victory—embraces his cloud.

Dr. Shrapnel conceived that the day was to be a Radical success; and he, a citizen aged and exercised in reverses, so rounded by the habit of them indeed as to tumble and recover himself on the wind of the blow that struck him, was, it must be acknowledged, staggered and cast down when he saw Beauchamp drop, knowing full well his regiment had polled to a man. Radicals poll early; they would poll at cockcrow if they might; they dance on the morning. As for their chagrin at noon, you will find descriptions of it in the poet's Inferno. They are for lifting our clay soil on a lever of Archimedes, and are not great mathematicians. They have perchance a foot of our earth, and perpetually do they seem to be producing an effect, perpetually does the whole land roll back on them. You have not surely to be reminded that it hurts them; the weight is immense. Dr. Shrapnel, however, speedily looked out again on his vast horizon, though prostrate. He regained his height of stature with no man's help. Success was but postponed for a generation or two. Is it so very distant? Gaze on it with the eye of our parent orb! "I shall not see it here; you may," he said to Jenny Denham; and he fortified his outlook by saying to Mr. Lydiard that the Tories of our time walked, or rather stuck, in the track of the Radicals of a generation back. Note, then, that Radicals, always marching to the triumph, never taste it; and for Tories it is Dead Sea fruit, ashes in their mouths! Those Liberals, those temporisers, compromisers, a concourse of atoms! glorify themselves in the animal satisfaction of sucking the juice of the fruit, for which they pay with their souls. They have no true cohesion, for they have no vital principle.

Mr. Lydiard being a Liberal, bade the doctor not to forget the work of the Liberals, who touched on Tory and Radical with a pretty steady swing, from side to side, in the manner of the pendulum of a clock, which is the clock's life, remember that. The Liberals are the professors of the practicable in politics.

"A suitable image for time-servers!" Dr. Shrapnel exclaimed, intolerant of any mention of the Liberals as a party, especially in the hour of Radical discomfiture, when the fact that compromisers should exist exasperates men of a principle. "Your Liberals are the band of Pyrrhus, an army of bastards, mercenaries professing the practicable for pay. They know us the motive force, the Tories the resisting power, and they feign to aid us in battering our enemy, that they may stop the shock. We fight, they profit. What are they? Stranded Whigs, crotchetty manufacturers; dissentient religionists; the half-minded, the hare-hearted; the I would and I would-not—shifty creatures, with youth's

enthusiasm decaying in them, and a purse beginning to jingle; fearing lest we do too much for safety, our enemy not enough for safety. They a party? Let them take action and see! *We* stand a thousand defeats; they not one! Compromise begat them. Once let them leave sucking the teats of compromise, yea, once put on the air of men who fight and die for a cause, they fly to pieces. And whither the fragments? Chiefly, my friend, into the *Tory* ranks. Seriously so I say. You between future and past are for the present—but with the hunted look behind of all godless livers in the present. You Liberals are Tories with foresight, Radicals without faith. You start, in fear of Toryism, on an errand of Radicalism, and in fear of Radicalism to Toryism you draw back. There is your pendulum-swing!"

Lectures to this effect were delivered by Dr. Shrapnel throughout the day, for his private spiritual solace it may be supposed, unto Lydiard, Turbot, Beauchamp, or whomsoever the man chancing to be near him, and never did Sir Oracle wear so extraordinary a garb. The favourite missiles of the day were flour-bags. Dr. Shrapnel's uncommon height, and his outrageous long brown coat, would have been sufficient to attract them, without the reputation he had for desiring to subvert everything old English. The first discharges gave him the appearance of a thawing snowman. Drenchings of water turned the flour to ribs of paste, and in colour at least he looked legitimately the cook's own spitted hare, escaped from her basting ladle, elongated on two legs. It ensued that whenever he was caught sight of, as he walked unconcernedly about, the young street-professors of the decorative arts were seized with a frenzy to add their share to the whitening of him, until he might have been taken for a miller that had gone bodily through his meal. The popular cry proclaimed him a ghost, and he walked like one, impassive, blanched, and silent amid the uproar of mobs of jolly ruffians, for each of whom it was a point of honour to have a shy at old Shrapnel.

Clad in this preparation of pie-crust, he called from time to time at Beauchamp's hotel, and renewed his monologue upon that Radical empire in the future which was for ever in the future for the pioneers of men, yet not the less their empire. "Do we live in our bodies?" quoth he, replying to his fiery interrogation: "Ay, the Tories! the Liberals!"

They lived in their bodies. Not one syllable of personal consolation did he vouchsafe to Beauchamp. He did not imagine it could be required by a man who had bathed in the pure springs of Radicalism; and it should be remarked that Beauchamp deceived him by imitating his air of happy abstraction, or subordination of the faculties to a distant view, comparable to a ship's crew in difficulties receiving the report of the man at the masthead. Beauchamp deceived Miss Denham too, and himself, by saying, as if he cherished the philosophy of defeat, besides the resolution to fight on:

"It's only a skirmish lost, and that counts for nothing in a battle without end: it must be incessant."

"But does incessant battling keep the intellect clear?" was her memorable answer.

He glanced at Lydiard, to indicate that it came of that gentleman's influence upon her mind. It was impossible for him to think that women thought. The idea of a pretty woman exercising her mind independently, and moreover moving him to examine his own, made him smile. Could a sweet-faced girl, the nearest to Renée in grace of manner and in feature of all women known to him, originate a sentence that would set him reflecting? He was unable to forget it, though he allowed her no credit for it.

On the other hand, his admiration of her devotedness to Dr. Shrapnel was unbounded. There shone a strictly feminine quality! according to the romantic visions of the sex entertained by Commander Beauchamp, and by others who would be the objects of it. But not alone the passive virtues were exhibited by Jenny Denham: she proved that she had high courage. No remonstrance could restrain Dr. Shrapnel from going out to watch the struggle, and she went with him as a matter of course on each occasion. Her dress bore witness to her running the gauntlet beside him.

"It was not thrown at me purposely," she said, to quiet Beauchamp's wrath. She saved the doctor from being rough mobbed. Once when they were surrounded she fastened his arm under hers, and by simply moving on with an unswerving air of serenity obtained a passage for him. So much did she make herself respected, that the gallant rascals became emulous in dexterity to avoid powdering her, by loudly execrating any but dead shots at the detested one, and certain boys were maltreated for an ardour involving clumsiness. A young genius of this horde conceiving, in the spirit of the inventors of our improved modern ordnance, that it

was vain to cast missiles which left a thing standing, hurled a stone wrapped in paper. It missed its mark. Jenny said nothing about it. The day closed with a comfortable fight or two in by-quarters of the town, probably to prove that an undaunted English spirit, spite of fickle Fortune, survived in our muscles.

CHAPTER XXVIII.
TOUCHING A YOUNG LADY'S HEART AND HER INTELLECT

Mr. Tuckham found his way to Dr. Shrapnel's cottage to see his kinsman on the day after the election. There was a dinner in honour of the Members for Bevisham at Mount Laurels in the evening, and he was five minutes behind military time when he entered the restive drawing-room and stood before the colonel. No sooner had he stated that he had been under the roof of Dr. Shrapnel, than his unpunctuality was immediately overlooked in the burst of impatience evoked by the name.

"That pestilent fellow!" Colonel Halkett ejaculated. "I understand he has had the impudence to serve a notice on Grancey Lespel about encroachments on common land."

Some one described Dr. Shrapnel's appearance under the flour storm.

"He deserves anything," said the colonel, consulting his mantelpiece clock.

Captain Baskelett observed: "I shall have my account to settle with Dr. Shrapnel." He spoke like a man having a right to be indignant, but excepting that the doctor had bestowed nicknames upon him in a speech at a meeting, no one could discover the grounds for it. He nodded briefly. A Radical apple had struck him on the left cheekbone as he performed his triumphal drive through the town, and a slight disfigurement remained, to which his hand was applied sympathetically at intervals, for the cheek-bone was prominent in his countenance, and did not well bear enlargement. And when a fortunate gentleman, desiring to be still more fortunate, would display the winning amiability of his character, distension of one cheek gives him an afflictingly false look of sweetness.

The bent of his mind, nevertheless, was to please Miss Halkett. He would be smiling, and intimately smiling. Aware that she had a kind of pitiful sentiment for Nevil, he smiled over Nevil—poor Nevil! "I give you my word, Miss Halkett, old Nevil was off his head yesterday. I daresay he meant to be civil. I met him; I called out to him, 'Good day, cousin, I'm afraid you're beaten' and says he, 'I fancy you've gained it, *uncle*.' He didn't know where he was; all abroad, poor boy. Uncle!—to me!"

Miss Halkett would have accepted the instance for a proof of Nevil's distraction, had not Mr. Seymour Austin, who sat beside her, laughed and said to her: "I suppose 'uncle' was a chance shot, but it's equal to a poetic epithet in the light it casts on the story." Then it seemed to her that Nevil had been keenly quick, and Captain Baskelett's impenetrability was a sign of his density. Her mood was to think Nevil Beauchamp only too quick, too adventurous and restless: one that wrecked brilliant gifts in a too general warfare; a lover of hazards, a hater of laws. Her eyes flew over Captain Baskelett as she imagined Nevil addressing him as uncle, and, to put aside a spirit of mockery rising within her, she hinted a wish to hear Seymour Austin's opinion of Mr. Tuckham. He condensed it in an interrogative tone: "The *other* extreme?" The Tory extreme of Radical Nevil Beauchamp. She assented. Mr. Tuckham was at that moment prophesying the Torification of mankind; not as the trembling venturesome idea which we cast on doubtful winds, but as a ship is launched to ride the waters, with huzzas for a thing accomplished. Mr. Austin raised his shoulders imperceptibly, saying to Miss Halkett: "The turn will come to us as to others—and go. Nothing earthly can escape *that* revolution. We have to meet it with a policy, and let it pass with measures carried and our hands washed of some of our party sins. I am, I hope, true to my party, but the enthusiasm of party I do not share. He is right, however, when he accuses the nation of cowardice for the last ten years. One third of the Liberals have been with us at heart, and dared not speak, and we dared not say what we wished. We accepted a compact that satisfied us both—satisfied *us* better than when we were opposed by Whigs—that is, the Liberal reigned, and we governed: and I should add, a very clever juggler was our common chief. Now we have the consequences of hollow peacemaking, in a suffrage that bids fair to extend to the wearing of hats and boots for a qualification. The moral of it seems to be that cowardice is even worse for nations than for individual men, though the consequences come on us more slowly."

"You spoke of party sins," Miss Halkett said incredulously.

"I shall think we are the redoubtable party when we admit the charge."

"Are you alluding to the landowners?"

“Like the land itself, they have rich veins in heavy matter. For instance, the increasing wealth of the country is largely recruiting our ranks; and we shall be tempted to mistake numbers for strength, and perhaps again be reading Conservatism for a special thing of our own—a fortification. That would be a party sin. Conservatism is a principle of government; the best because the safest for an old country; and the guarantee that we do not lose the wisdom of past experience in our struggle with what is doubtful. Liberalism stakes too much on the chance of gain. It is uncomfortably seated on half-a-dozen horses; and it has to feed them too, and on varieties of corn.”

“Yes,” Miss Halkett said, pausing, “and I know you would not talk down to me, but the use of imagery makes me feel that I am addressed as a primitive intelligence.”

“That’s the fault of my trying at condensation, as the hieroglyphists put an animal for a paragraph. I am incorrigible, you see; but the lecture in prose must be for by-and-by, if you care to have it.”

“If you care to read it to me. Did a single hieroglyphic figure stand for so much?”

“I have never deciphered one.”

“You have been speaking to me too long in earnest, Mr. Austin!”

“I accept the admonition, though it is wider than the truth. Have you ever consented to listen to politics before?”

Cecilia reddened faintly, thinking of him who had taught her to listen, and of her previous contempt of the subject.

A political exposition devoid of imagery was given to her next day on the sunny South-western terrace of Mount Laurels, when it was only by mentally translating it into imagery that she could advance a step beside her intellectual guide; and she was ashamed of the volatility of her ideas. She was constantly comparing Mr. Austin and Nevil Beauchamp, seeing that the senior and the junior both talked to her with the familiar recognition of her understanding which was a compliment without the gross corporeal phrase. But now she made another discovery, that should have been infinitely more of a compliment, and it was bewildering, if not repulsive to her:—could it be credited? Mr. Austin was a firm believer in new and higher destinies for women. He went farther than she could concede the right of human speculation to go; he was, in fact, as Radical there as Nevil Beauchamp politically; and would not the latter innovator stare, perchance frown conservatively, at a prospect of woman taking counsel, *in council*, with men upon public affairs, like the women in the Germania! Mr. Austin, if this time he talked in earnest, deemed that Englishwomen were on the road to win such a promotion, and would win it ultimately. He said soberly that he saw more certain indications of the reality of progress among women than any at present shown by men. And he was professedly temperate. He was but for opening avenues to the means of livelihood for them, and leaving it to their strength to conquer the position they might wish to win. His belief that they would do so was the revolutionary sign.

“Are there points of likeness between Radicals and Tories?” she inquired.

“I suspect a cousinship in extremes,” he answered.

“If one might be present at an argument,” said she.

“We have only to meet to fly apart as wide as the Poles,” Mr. Austin rejoined.

But she had not spoken of a particular person to meet him; and how, then, had she betrayed herself? She fancied he looked unwontedly arch as he resumed:

“The end of the argument would see us each entrenched in his party. Suppose me to be telling your Radical friend such truisms as that we English have not grown in a day, and were not originally made free and equal by decree; that we have grown, and must continue to grow, by the aid and the development of our strength; that ours is a fairly legible history, and a fair example of the good and the bad in human growth; that his landowner and his peasant have no clear case of right and wrong to divide them, one being the descendant of strong men, the other of weak ones; and that the former may sink, the latter may rise—there is no artificial obstruction; and if it is difficult to rise, it is easy to sink. Your Radical friend, who would bring them to a level by proclamation, could not adopt a surer method for destroying the manhood of a people: he is for doctoring wooden men, and I for not letting our stout English be cut down short as Laplanders; he would have them in a forcing house, and I in open air, as hitherto. Do you perceive a discussion? and you apprehend the nature of it. We have nerves. That is why it is better for

men of extremely opposite opinions not to meet. I dare say Radicalism has a function, and so long as it respects the laws I am ready to encounter it where it cannot be avoided. Pardon my prosing."

"Recommend me some hard books to study through the Winter," said Cecilia, refreshed by a discourse that touched no emotions, as by a febrifuge. Could Nevil reply to it? She fancied him replying, with that wild head of his—wildest of natures. She fancied also that her wish was like Mr. Austin's not to meet him. She was enjoying a little rest.

It was not quite generous in Mr. Austin to assume that "her Radical friend" had been prompting her. However, she thanked him in her heart for the calm he had given her. To be able to imagine Nevil Beauchamp intellectually erratic was a tonic satisfaction to the proud young lady, ashamed of a bondage that the bracing and pointing of her critical powers helped her to forget. She had always preferred the society of men of Mr. Austin's age. How old was he? Her father would know. And why was he unmarried? A light frost had settled on the hair about his temples; his forehead was lightly wrinkled; but his mouth and smile, and his eyes, were lively as a young man's, with more in them. His age must be something less than fifty. O for peace! she sighed. When he stepped into his carriage, and stood up in it to wave adieu to her, she thought his face and figure a perfect example of an English gentleman in his prime.

Captain Baskelett requested the favour of five minutes of conversation with Miss Halkett before he followed Mr. Austin, on his way to Steynham.

She returned from that colloquy to her father and Mr. Tuckham. The colonel looked straight in her face, with an elevation of the brows. To these points of interrogation she answered with a placid fall of her eyelids. He sounded a note of approbation in his throat.

All the company having departed, Mr. Tuckham for the first time spoke of his interview with his kinsman Beauchamp. Yesterday evening he had slurred it, as if he had nothing to relate, except the finding of an old schoolfellow at Dr. Shrapnel's named Lydiard, a man of ability fool enough to have turned author on no income. But that which had appeared to Miss Halkett a want of observancy, became attributable to depth of character on its being clear that he had waited for the departure of the transient guests of the house, to pour forth his impressions without holding up his kinsman to public scorn. He considered Shrapnel mad and Beauchamp mad. No such grotesque old monster as Dr. Shrapnel had he seen in the course of his travels. He had never listened to a madman running loose who was at all up to Beauchamp. At a loss for words to paint him, he said: "Beauchamp seems to have a head like a firework manufactory, he's perfectly pyrocephalic." For an example of Dr. Shrapnel's talk: "I happened," said Mr. Tuckham, "casually, meaning no harm, and not supposing I was throwing a lighted match on powder, to mention the word Providence. I found myself immediately confronted by Shrapnel—overtopped, I should say. He is a lank giant of about seven feet in height; the kind of show man that used to go about in caravans over the country; and he began rocking over me like a poplar in a gale, and cries out: 'Stay there! away with that! Providence? Can you set a thought on Providence, not seeking to propitiate it? And have you not there the damning proof that you are at the foot of an Idol?'—The old idea about a special Providence, I suppose. These fellows have nothing new but their trimmings. And he went on with: 'Ay, invisible,' and his arm chopping, 'but an Idol! an Idol!'—I was to think of 'nought but Laws.' He admitted there might be one above the Laws. 'To realize him is to fry the brains in their pan,' says he, and struck his forehead—a slap: and off he walked down the garden, with his hands at his coat-tails. I venture to say it may be taken for a proof of incipient insanity to care to hear such a fellow twice. And Beauchamp holds him up for a sage and a prophet!"

"He is a very dangerous dog," said Colonel Halkett.

"The best of it is—and I take this for the strongest possible proof that Beauchamp is mad—Shrapnel stands for an *advocate of morality* against him. I'll speak of it...."

Mr. Tuckham nodded to the colonel, who said: "Speak out. My daughter has been educated for a woman of the world."

"Well, sir, it's nothing to offend a young lady's ears. Beauchamp is for socially enfranchising the sex—that is all. Quite enough. Not a whit politically. Love is to be the test: and if a lady ceases to love her husband... if she sets her fancy elsewhere, she's bound to leave him. The laws are tyrannical, our objections are cowardly. Well, this Dr. Shrapnel harangued about society; and men as well as women are to sacrifice their passions *on that altar*. If he could burlesque himself it would be in

coming out as a cleric—the old Pagan!”

“Did he convince Captain Beauchamp?” the colonel asked, manifestly for his daughter to hear the reply; which was: “Oh dear, no!”

“Were you able to gather from Captain Beauchamp’s remarks whether he is much disappointed by the result of the election?” said Cecilia.

Mr. Tuckham could tell her only that Captain Beauchamp was incensed against an elector named Tomlinson for withdrawing a promised vote on account of lying rumours, and elated by the conquest of a Mr. Carpendike, who was reckoned a tough one to drag by the neck. “The only sane people in the house are a Miss Denham and the cook: I lunched there,” Mr. Tuckham nodded approvingly. “Lydiard must be mad. What he’s wasting his time there for I can’t guess. He says he’s engaged there in writing a prefatory essay to a new publication of Harry Denham’s poems—whoever that may be. And why wasting it there? I don’t like it. He ought to be earning his bread. He’ll be sure to be borrowing money by-and-by. We’ve got ten thousand too many fellows writing already, and they’ve seen a few inches of the world, on the Continent! He can write. But it’s all unproductive—dead weight on the country, these fellows with their writings! He says Beauchamp’s praise of Miss Denham is quite deserved. He tells me, that at great peril to herself—and she nearly had her arm broken by a stone he saved Shrapnel from rough usage on the election-day.”

“Hum!” Colonel Halkett grunted significantly.

“So I thought,” Mr. Tuckham responded. “One doesn’t want the man to be hurt, but he ought to be put down in some way. My belief is he’s a Fire-worshipper. I warrant I would extinguish him if he came before me. He’s an incendiary, at any rate.”

“Do you think,” said Cecilia, “that Captain Beauchamp is now satisfied with his experience of politics?”

“Dear me, no,” said Mr. Tuckham. “It’s the opening of a campaign. He’s off to the North, after he has been to Sussex and Bucks. He’s to be at it all his life. One thing he shows common sense in. If I heard him once I heard him say half-a-dozen times, that he must have money:—‘*I must have money!*’ And so he must if he’s to head the Radicals. He wants to start a newspaper! Is he likely to get money from his uncle Romfrey?”

“Not for his present plan of campaign.” Colonel Halkett enunciated the military word sarcastically. “Let’s hope he won’t get money.”

“He says he must have it.”

“Who is to stand and deliver, then?”

“I don’t know; I only repeat what he says: unless he has an eye on my Aunt Beauchamp; and I doubt his luck there, if he wants money for political campaigning.”

“Money!” Colonel Halkett ejaculated.

That word too was in the heart of the heiress.

Nevil must have money! Could he have said it? Ordinary men might say or think it inoffensively; Captain Baskelett, for instance: but not Nevil Beauchamp.

Captain Baskelett, as she had conveyed the information to her father for his comfort in the dumb domestic language familiar between them on these occasions, had proposed to her unavailingly. Italian and English gentlemen were in the list of her rejected suitors: and hitherto she had seen them come and go, one might say, from a watchtower in the skies. None of them was the ideal she waited for: what their feelings were, their wishes, their aims, she had not reflected on. They dotted the landscape beneath the unassailable heights, busy after their fashion, somewhat quaint, much like the pigmy husbandmen in the fields were to the giant’s daughter, who had more curiosity than Cecilia. But Nevil Beauchamp had compelled her to quit her lofty station, pulled her low as the littlest of women that throb and flush at one man’s footstep: and being well able to read the nature and aspirations of Captain Baskelett, it was with the knowledge of her having been proposed to as heiress of a great fortune that she chanced to hear of Nevil’s resolve to have money. If he did say it! And was anything likelier? was anything unlikelier? His foreign love denied to him, why, now he devoted himself to money: money—the last consideration of a man so single-mindedly generous as he! But he must have money to pursue his contest! But would he forfeit the truth in him for money for any purpose?

The debate on this question grew as incessant as the thought of him. Was it not to be supposed that the madness of the pursuit of his political chimaera might change his character?

She hoped he would not come to Mount Laurels, thinking she should

esteem him less if he did; knowing that her defence of him, on her own behalf, against herself, depended now on an esteem lodged perhaps in her wilfulness. Yet if he did not come, what an Arctic world!

He came on a November afternoon when the woods glowed, and no sun. The day was narrowed in mist from earth to heaven: a moveless and possessing mist. It left space overhead for one wreath of high cloud mixed with touches of washed red upon moist blue, still as the mist, insensibly passing into it. Wet webs crossed the grass, chill in the feeble light. The last flowers of the garden bowed to decay. Dead leaves, red and brown and spotted yellow, fell straight around the stems of trees, lying thick. The glow was universal, and the chill.

Cecilia sat sketching the scene at a window of her study, on the level of the drawing-room, and he stood by outside till she saw him. He greeted her through the glass, then went round to the hall door, giving her time to recover, if only her heart had been less shaken.

Their meeting was like the features of the day she set her brush to picture: characteristic of a season rather than cheerless in tone, though it breathed little cheer. Is there not a pleasure in contemplating that which is characteristic? Her unfinished sketch recalled him after he had gone: he lived in it, to startle her again, and bid her heart gallop and her cheeks burn. The question occurred to her: May not one love, not craving to be beloved? Such a love does not sap our pride, but supports it; increases rather than diminishes our noble self-esteem. To attain such a love the martyrs writhed up to the crown of saints. For a while Cecilia revelled in the thought that she could love in this most saint-like manner. How they fled, the sordid ideas of him which accused him of the world's one passion, and were transferred to her own bosom in reproach that she should have imagined them existing in his! He talked simply and sweetly of his defeat, of time wasted away from the canvass, of loss of money: and he had little to spare, he said. The water-colour drawing interested him. He said he envied her that power of isolation, and the eye for beauty in every season. She opened a portfolio of Mr. Tuckham's water-colour drawings in every clime; scenes of Europe, Asia, and the Americas; and he was to be excused for not caring to look through them. His remark, that they seemed hard and dogged, was not so unjust, she thought, smiling to think of the critic criticized. His wonderment that a young man like his Lancastrian cousin should be "an unmitigated Tory" was perhaps natural.

Cecilia said, "Yet I cannot discern in him a veneration for aristocracy." "That's not wanted for modern Toryism," said Nevil. "One may venerate old families when they show the blood of the founder, and are not dead wood. I do. And I believe the blood of the founder, though the man may have been a savage and a robber, had in his day finer elements in it than were common. But let me say at a meeting that I respect true aristocracy, I hear a growl and a hiss beginning: why? Don't judge them hastily: because the people have seen the aristocracy opposed to the cause that was weak, and only submitting to it when it commanded them to resist at their peril; clinging to traditions, and not anywhere standing for humanity: much more a herd than the people themselves. Ah! well, we won't talk of it now. I say that is no aristocracy, if it does not head the people in virtue—military, political, national: I mean the qualities required by the times for leadership. I won't bother you with my ideas now. I love to see you paint-brush in hand."

Her brush trembled on the illumination of a scarlet maple. "In this country we were not originally made free and equal by decree, Nevil."

"No," said he, "and I cast no blame on our farthest ancestors."

It struck her that this might be an outline of a reply to Mr. Austin.

"So you have been thinking over it?" he asked.

"Not to conclusions," she said, trying to retain in her mind the evanescent suggestiveness of his previous remark, and vexed to find herself upon nothing but a devious phosphorescent trail there.

Her forehead betrayed the unwonted mental action. He cried out for pardon. "What right have I to bother you? I see it annoys you. The truth is, I came for peace. I think of you when they talk of English homes."

She felt then that he was comparing her home with another, a foreign home. After he had gone she felt that there had been a comparison of two persons. She remembered one of his observations: "Few women seem to have courage"; when his look at her was for an instant one of scrutiny or calculation. Under a look like that we perceive that we are being weighed. She had no clue to tell her what it signified.

Glorious and solely glorious love, that has risen above emotion, quite independent of craving! That is to be the bird of upper air, poised on his

wings. It is a home in the sky. Cecilia took possession of it systematically, not questioning whether it would last; like one who is too enamoured of the habitation to object to be a tenant-at-will. If it was cold, it was in recompense immeasurably lofty, a star-girdled place; and dwelling in it she could avow to herself the secret which was now working self-deception, and still preserve her pride unwounded. Her womanly pride, she would have said in vindication of it: but Cecilia Halkett's pride went far beyond the merely womanly.

Thus she was assisted to endure a journey down to Wales, where Nevil would surely not be. She passed a Winter without seeing him. She returned to Mount Laurels from London at Easter, and went on a visit to Steynham, and back to London, having sight of him nowhere, still firm in the thought that she loved ethereally, to bless, forgive, direct, encourage, pray for him, impersonally. She read certain speeches delivered by Nevil at assemblies of Liberals or Radicals, which were reported in papers in the easy irony of the style of here and there a sentence, here and there a summary: salient quotations interspersed with running abstracts: a style terrible to friends of the speaker so reported, overwhelming if they differ in opinion: yet her charity was a match for it. She was obliged to have recourse to charity, it should be observed. Her father drew her attention to the spectacle of R. C. S. Nevil Beauchamp, Commander R.N., fighting those reporters with letters in the newspapers, and the dry editorial comment flanked by three stars on the left. He was shocked to see a gentleman writing such letters to the papers. "But one thing hangs on another," said he.

"But you seem angry with Nevil, papa," said she.

"I do hate a turbulent, restless fellow, my dear," the colonel burst out.

"Papa, he has really been unfairly reported."

Cecilia laid three privately-printed full reports of Commander Beauchamp's speeches (very carefully corrected by him) before her father.

He suffered his eye to run down a page. "Is it possible you read this?—this trash!—dangerous folly, I call it."

Cecilia's reply, "In the interests of justice, I do," was meant to express her pure impartiality. By a toleration of what is detested we expose ourselves to the keenness of an adverse mind.

"Does he write to you, too?" said the colonel.

She answered: "Oh, no; I am not a politician."

"He seems to have expected you to read those tracts of his, though."

"Yes, I think he would convert me if he could," said Cecilia.

"Though you're not a politician."

"He relies on the views he delivers in public, rather than on writing to persuade; that was my meaning, papa."

"Very well," said the colonel, not caring to show his anxiety.

Mr. Tuckham dined with them frequently in London. This gentleman betrayed his accomplishments one by one. He sketched, and was no artist; he planted, and was no gardener; he touched the piano neatly, and was no musician; he sang, and he had no voice. Apparently he tried his hand at anything, for the privilege of speaking decisively upon all things. He accompanied the colonel and his daughter on a day's expedition to Mrs. Beauchamp, on the Upper Thames, and they agreed that he shone to great advantage in her society. Mrs. Beauchamp said she had seen her great-nephew Nevil, but without a comment on his conduct or his person; grave silence. Reflecting on it, Cecilia grew indignant at the thought that Mr. Tuckham might have been acting a sinister part. Mrs. Beauchamp alluded to a newspaper article of her favourite great-nephew Blackburn, written, Cecilia knew through her father, to controvert some tremendous proposition of Nevil's. *That* was writing, Mrs. Beauchamp said. "I am not in the habit of fearing a conflict, so long as we have stout defenders. I rather like it," she said.

The colonel entertained Mrs. Beauchamp, while Mr. Tuckham led Miss Halkett over the garden. Cecilia considered that his remarks upon Nevil were insolent.

"Seriously, Miss Halkett, to take him at his best, he is a very good fellow, I don't doubt; I am told so; and a capital fellow among men, a good friend and not a bad boon-fellow, and for that matter, the smoking-room is a better test than the drawing-room; all he wants is emphatically school—school—school. I have recommended the simple iteration of that one word in answer to him at his meetings, and the printing of it as a foot-note to his letters."

Cecilia's combative spirit precipitated her to say, "I hear the mob in it

shouting Captain Beauchamp down."

"Ay," said Mr. Tuckham, "it would be setting the mob to shout wisely at last."

"The mob is a wild beast."

"Then we should hear wisdom coming out of the mouth of the wild beast."

"Men have the phrase, 'fair play.'"

"Fair play, I say, is not applicable to a man who deliberately goes about to stir the wild beast. He is laughed at, plucked, hustled, and robbed, by those who deafen him with their 'plaudits'—their roars. Did you see his advertisement of a great-coat, lost at some rapscallion gathering down in the North, near my part of the country? A great-coat and a packet of letters. He offers a reward of L10. But that's honest robbery compared with the bleeding he'll get."

"Do you know Mr. Seymour Austin?" Miss Halkett asked him.

"I met him once at your father's table. Why?"

"I think you would like to listen to him."

"Yes, my fault is not listening enough," said Mr. Tuckham.

He was capable of receiving correction.

Her father told her he was indebted to Mr. Tuckham past payment in coin, for services rendered by him on a trying occasion among the miners in Wales during the first spring month. "I dare say he can speak effectively to miners," Cecilia said, outvying the contemptuous young man in superciliousness, but with effort and not with satisfaction.

She left London in July, two days before her father could be induced to return to Mount Laurels. Feverish, and strangely subject to caprices now, she chose the longer way round by Sussex, and alighted at the station near Steynham to call on Mrs. Culling, whom she knew to be at the Hall, preparing it for Mr. Romfrey's occupation. In imitation of her father she was Rosamund's fast friend, though she had never quite realized her position, and did not thoroughly understand her. Would it not please her father to hear that she had chosen the tedious route for the purpose of visiting this lady, whose champion he was?

So she went to Steynham, and for hours she heard talk of no one, of nothing, but her friend Nevil. Cecilia was on her guard against Rosamund's defence of his conduct in France. The declaration that there had been no misbehaviour at all could not be accepted; but the news of Mr. Romfrey's having installed Nevil in Holdesbury to manage that property, and of his having mooted to her father the question of an alliance between her and Nevil, was wonderful. Rosamund could not say what answer her father had made: hardly favourable, Cecilia supposed, since he had not spoken of the circumstance to her. But Mr. Romfrey's influence with him would certainly be powerful.

It was to be assumed, also, that Nevil had been consulted by his uncle. Rosamund said full-heartedly that this alliance had for years been her life's desire, and then she let the matter pass, nor did she once loop at Cecilia searchingly, or seem to wish to probe her. Cecilia disagreed with Rosamund on an insignificant point in relation to something Mr. Romfrey and Captain Baskelett had done, and, as far as she could recollect subsequently, there was a packet of letters, or a pocket-book containing letters of Nevil's which he had lost, and which had been forwarded to Mr. Romfrey; for the pocket-book was originally his, and his address was printed inside. But among these letters was one from Dr. Shrapnel to Nevil: a letter so horrible that Rosamund frowned at the reminiscence of it, holding it to be too horrible for the quotation of a sentence. She owned she had forgotten any three consecutive words. Her known dislike of Captain Baskelett, however, was insufficient to make her see that it was unjustifiable in him to run about London reading it, with comments of the cruellest. Rosamund's greater detestation of Dr. Shrapnel blinded her to the offence committed by the man she would otherwise have been very ready to scorn. So small did the circumstance appear to Cecilia, notwithstanding her gentle opposition at the time she listened to it, that she never thought of mentioning it to her father, and only remembered it when Captain Baskelett, with Lord Palmet in his company, presented himself at Mount Laurels, and proposed to the colonel to read to him "a letter from that scoundrelly old Shrapnel to Nevil Beauchamp, upon women, wives, thrones, republics, British loyalty, et cætera,"—an et cætera that rolled a series of tremendous reverberations down the list of all things held precious by freeborn Englishmen.

She would have prevented the reading. But the colonel would have it.

"Read on," said he. "Mr. Romfrey saw no harm."

Captain Baskelett held up Dr. Shrapnel’s letter to Commander Beauchamp, at about half a yard’s distance on the level of his chin, as a big-chested singer in a concert-room holds his music-scroll.

CHAPTER XXIX.
THE EPISTLE OF DR. SHRAPNEL TO COMMANDER BEAUCHAMP

Before we give ear to the recital of Dr. Shrapnel's letter to his pupil in politics by the mouth of Captain Baskelett, it is necessary to defend this gentleman, as he would handsomely have defended himself, from the charge that he entertained ultimate designs in regard to the really abominable scrawl, which was like a child's drawing of ocean with here and there a sail capsized, and excited his disgust almost as much as did the contents his great indignation. He was prepared to read it, and stood blown out for the task, but it was temporarily too much for him. "My dear Colonel, look at it, I entreat you," he said, handing the letter for exhibition, after fixing his eye-glass, and dropping it in repulsion. The common sentiment of mankind is offended by heterodoxy in mean attire; for there we see the self-convicted villain—the criminal caught in the act; we try it and convict it by instinct without the ceremony of a jury; and so thoroughly aware of our promptitude in this respect has our arch-enemy become since his mediaeval disgraces that his particular advice to his followers is now to scrupulously copy the world in externals; never to appear poorly clothed, nor to impart deceptive communications in bad handwriting. We can tell black from white, and our sagacity has taught him a lesson.

Colonel Halkett glanced at the detestable penmanship. Lord Palmet did the same, and cried, "Why, it's worse than mine!"

Cecilia had protested against the reading of the letter, and she declined to look at the writing. She was entreated, adjured to look, in Captain Baskelett's peculiarly pursuing fashion; a "nay, but you shall," that she had been subjected to previously, and would have consented to run like a schoolgirl to escape from.

To resume the defence of him: he was a man incapable of forming plots, because his head would not hold them. He was an impulsive man, who could impale a character of either sex by narrating fables touching persons of whom he thought lightly, and that being done he was devoid of malice, unless by chance his feelings or his interests were so aggrieved that his original haphazard impulse was bent to embrace new circumstances and be the parent of a line of successive impulses, in the main resembling an extremely far-sighted plot, whereat he gazed back with fondness, all the while protesting sincerely his perfect innocence of anything of the kind. Circumstances will often interwind with the moods of simply irritated men. In the present instance he could just perceive what might immediately come of his reading out of this atrocious epistle wherein Nevil Beauchamp was displayed the dangling puppet of a mountebank wire-pulley, infidel, agitator, leveller, and scoundrel. Cognizant of Mr. Romfrey's overtures to Colonel Halkett, he traced them to that scheming woman in the house at Steynham, and he was of opinion that it was a friendly and good thing to do to let the old colonel and Cissy Halkett know Mr. Nevil through a bit of his correspondence. This, then, was a matter of business and duty that furnished an excuse for his going out of his, way to call at Mount Laurels on the old familiar footing, so as not to alarm the heiress.

A warrior accustomed to wear the burnished breastplates between London and Windsor has, we know, more need to withstand than to discharge the shafts of amorous passion; he is indeed, as an object of beauty, notoriously compelled to be of the fair sex in his tactics, and must practise the arts and whims of nymphs to preserve himself: and no doubt it was the case with the famous Captain Baskelett, in whose mind sweet ladies held the place that the pensive politician gives to the masses, dreadful in their hatred, almost as dreadful in their affection. But an heiress is a distinct species among women; he hungered for the heiress; his elevation to Parliament made him regard her as both the ornament and the prop of his position; and it should be added that his pride, all the habits of thought of a conqueror of women, had been shocked by that stupefying rejection of him, which Cecilia had intimated to her father with the mere lowering of her eyelids. Conceive the highest bidder at an auction hearing the article announce that it will not have *him!* Captain Baskelett talked of it everywhere for a month or so:—the girl could not know her own mind, for she suited him exactly! and he requested the world to partake of his astonishment. Chronicles of the season in London informed him that he was not the only fellow to whom the gates were shut. She could hardly be thinking of Nevil? However, let

the epistle be read. “Now for the Shrapnel shot,” he nodded finally to Colonel Halkett, expanded his bosom, or natural cuirass, as before-mentioned, and was vocable above the common pitch:—

> “‘My brave Beauchamp,—On with your mission, and never a summing of results in hand, nor thirst for *prospects*, nor counting upon harvests; for seed sown in faith day by day is the nightly harvest of the soul, and with the soul we work. With the soul we see.’”

Captain Baskelett intervened: “Ahem! I beg to observe that this delectable rubbish is underlined by old Nevil’s pencil.” He promised to do a little roaring whenever it occurred, and continued with ghastly false accentuation, an intermittent sprightliness and depression of tone in the wrong places.

“‘The soul,’ et cætera. Here we are! ‘Desires to realize our gains are akin to the passion of usury; these are tricks of the usurer to grasp his gold in act and imagination. Have none of them. Work at the people!’ —*At* them, remark!—‘Moveless do they seem to you? Why, so is the earth to the sowing husbandman, and though we cannot forecast a reaping season, we have in history durable testification that our seasons come in the souls of men, yea, as a planet that we have set in motion, and faster and faster are we spinning it, and firmer and firmer shall we set it to regularity of revolution. *That means life!*’—Shrapnel roars: you will have Nevil in a minute.—‘Recognize that now we have bare life; at best for the bulk of men the Saurian lizard’s broad back soaking and roasting in primeval slime; or say, in the so-called teachers of men, as much of life as pricks the frog in March to stir and yawn, and up on a flaccid leap that rolls him over some three inches nearer to the ditchwater besought by his instinct.’

“I ask you, did you ever hear? The flaccid frog! But on we go.”

“‘Professors, prophets, masters, each hitherto has had his creed and system to offer, good mayhap for the term; and each has put it forth for the truth everlasting, to drive the dagger to the heart of time, and put the axe to human growth!—that one circle of wisdom issuing of the experience and needs of their day, should act the despot over all other circles for ever!—so where at first light shone to light the yawning frog to his wet ditch, there, with the necessitated revolution of men’s minds in the course of ages, *darkness radiates*.’

“That’s old Nevil. Upon my honour, I haven’t a notion of what it all means, and I don’t believe the old rascal Shrapnel has himself. And pray be patient, my dear colonel. You will find him practical presently. I’ll skip, if you tell me to. Darkness radiates, does it!

“‘The creed that rose in heaven sets below; and where we had an angel we have claw-feet and fangs. Ask how that is! The creed is much what it was when the followers diverged it from the Founder. But humanity is not *where* it was when that creed was food and guidance. Creeds will not die not fighting. We cannot root them up out of us without blood.’

“He threatens blood!—‘Ours, my Beauchamp, is the belief that humanity advances beyond the limits of creeds, is to be tied to none. We reverence the Master in his teachings; we behold the limits of him in his creed— and that is not his work. We truly are his disciples, who see how far it was in him to do service; not they that made of his creed a strait-jacket for humanity. So, in our prayers we dedicate the world to God, not calling him great for a title, no—showing him we know him great in a limitless world, lord of a truth we tend to, have not grasped. I say Prayer is good. I counsel it to you again and again: in joy, in sickness of heart. The infidel will not pray; the creed-slave prays to the image in his box.’”

“I’ve had enough!” Colonel Halkett ejaculated.

“‘We,’” Captain Baskelett put out his hand for silence with an ineffable look of entreaty, for here was Shrapnel’s hypocrisy in full bloom: “‘We make prayer a part of us, praying for no gifts, no interventions; through the faith in prayer opening the soul to the undiscerned. And take this, my Beauchamp, for the good in prayer, that it makes us repose on the unknown with confidence, makes us flexible to change, makes us ready for revolution—for life, then! He who has the fountain of prayer in him will not complain of hazards. Prayer is the recognition of laws; the soul’s exercise and source of strength; its thread of conjunction with them. Prayer for an object is the cajolery of an idol; the resource of superstition. There you misread it, Beauchamp. We that fight the living world must have the universal for succour of the truth in it. Cast forth the soul in prayer, you meet the effluence of the outer truth, you join with the creative elements giving breath to you; and that crust of habit

which is the soul's tomb; and custom, the soul's tyrant; and pride, our volcano-peak that sinks us in a crater; and fear, which plucks the feathers from the wings of the soul and sits it naked and shivering in a vault, where the passing of a common hodman's foot above sounds like the king of terrors coming,—you are free of them, you live in the day and for the future, by this exercise and discipline of the soul's faith. Me it keeps young everlastingly, like the fountain of...'"

"I say I cannot sit and hear any more of it!" exclaimed the colonel, chafing out of patience.

Lord Palmet said to Miss Halkett: "Isn't it like what we used to remember of a sermon?"

Cecilia waited for her father to break away, but Captain Baskelett had undertaken to skip, and was murmuring in sing-song some of the phrases that warned him off:

"'History—Bible of Humanity;... Permanency—enthusiast's dream—despot's aim—clutch of dead men's fingers in live flesh... Man animal; man angel; man rooted; man winged':... Really, all this is too bad. Ah! here we are: 'At them with outspeaking, Beauchamp!' Here we are, colonel, and you will tell me whether you think it treasonable or not. 'At them,' et cætera: 'We have signed no convention to respect their'—he speaks of Englishmen, Colonel Halkett—'their passive idolatries; a people with whom a mute conformity is as good as worship, but a word of dissent holds you up to execration; and only for the freedom won in foregone days their hate would be active. *As we have them in their present stage*,'—old Nevil's mark—'We are not parties to the tacit agreement to fill our mouths and shut our eyes. We speak because it is better they be roused to lapidate us than soused in their sty, with none to let them hear they live like swine, craving only not to be disturbed at the trough. The religion of this vast English middle-class ruling the land is Comfort. It is their central thought; their idea of necessity; their sole aim. Whatsoever ministers to Comfort, seems to belong to it, pretends to support it, they yield their passive worship to. Whatsoever alarms it they join to crush. There you get at their point of unity. They will pay for the security of Comfort, calling it national worship, or national defence, if too much money is not subtracted from the means of individual comfort: if too much foresight is not demanded for the comfort of their brains. Have at them there. Speak. Moveless as you find them, they are not yet all gross clay, and I say again, the true word spoken has its chance of somewhere alighting and striking root. Look not to that. Seeds perish in nature; good men fail. Look to the truth in you, and deliver it, with no afterthought of hope, for hope is dogged by dread; we give our courage as hostage for the fulfilment of what we hope. Meditate on that transaction. Hope is for boys and girls, to whom nature is kind. For men to hope is to tremble. Let prayer—the soul's overflow, the heart's resignation—supplant it...'

"Pardon, colonel; I forgot to roar, but old Nevil marks all down that page for encomium," said Captain Baskelett. "Oh! here we are. English loyalty is the subject. Now, pray attend to this, colonel. Shrapnel communicates to Beauchamp that if ten Beauchamps were spouting over the country without intermission he might condescend to hope. So on—to British loyalty. We are, so long as our sovereigns are well-conducted persons, and we cannot unseat them—observe; he is eminently explicit, the old traitor!—we are to submit to the outward forms of respect, but we are frankly to say we are Republicans; he has the impudence to swear that England is a Republican country, and calls our thoroughgoing loyalty—yours and mine, colonel—disloyalty. Hark: 'Where kings lead, it is to be supposed they are wanted. Service is the noble office on earth, and where kings do service let them take the first honours of the State: but'—hark at this—'the English middle-class, which has absorbed the upper, and despises, when it is not quaking before it, the lower, will have nothing above it but a ricketty ornament like that you see on a confectioner's twelfth-cake.'"

"The man deserves hanging!" said Colonel Halkett.

"Further, my dear colonel, and Nevil marks it pretty much throughout: 'This loyalty smacks of a terrible perfidy. Pass the lords and squires; they are old trees, old foundations, or joined to them, whether old or new; they naturally apprehend dislocation when a wind blows, a river rises, or a man speaks;—that comes of age or aping age: their hearts are in their holdings! For the loyalty of the rest of the land, it is the shopkeeper's loyalty, which is to be computed by the exact annual sum of his net profits. It is now at high tide. It will last with the prosperity of our commerce.'—The insolent old vagabond!—'Let commercial disasters come on us, and what of the loyalty now paying its hundreds of

thousands, and howling down questioners! In a day of bankruptcies, how much would you bid for the loyalty of a class shivering under deprivation of luxuries, with its God Comfort beggared? Ay, my Beauchamp,'—the most offensive thing to me is that 'my Beauchamp,' but old Nevil has evidently given himself up hand and foot to this ruffian—'ay, when you reflect that fear of the so-called rabble, i.e. the people, the unmoneyed class, which knows not Comfort, tastes not of luxuries, is the main component of their noisy frigid loyalty, and that the people are not with them but against, and yet that the people might be won by visible forthright kingly service to a loyalty outdoing theirs as the sun the moon; ay, that the people verily thirst to love and reverence; and *that their love is the only love worth having*, because it is disinterested love, and endures, and takes heat in adversity,—reflect on it and wonder at the inversion of things! So with a Church. It lives if it is at home with the poor. In the arms of enriched shopkeepers it rots, goes to decay in vestments—vestments! flakes of mummy-wraps for it! or else they use it for one of their political truncheons—to awe the ignorant masses: I quote them. So. Not much ahead of ancient Egyptians in spirituality or in priestcraft! They call it statesmanship. O for a word for it! Let Palsy and Cunning go to form a word. *Deadmanship*, I call it.'—To quote my uncle the baron, this is lunatic dribble!—'Parsons and princes are happy with the homage of this huge passive fleshpot class. It is enough for them. Why not? The taxes are paid and the tithes. Whilst commercial prosperity lasts!'"

Colonel Halkett threw his arms aloft.

"'Meanwhile, note this: the people are the Power to come. Oppressed, unprotected, abandoned; left to the ebb and flow of the tides of the market, now taken on to work, now cast off to starve, committed to the shifting laws of demand and supply, slaves of Capital—the whited name for old accursed Mammon: and of all the ranked and black-uniformed host no pastor to come out of the association of shepherds, and proclaim before heaven and man the primary claim of their cause; they are, I say, the power, worth the seduction of by another Power not mighty in England now: and likely in time to set up yet another Power not existing in England now. What if a passive comfortable clergy hand them over to men on the models of Irish pastors, who will succour, console, enfold, champion them? what if, when they have learnt to use their majority, sick of deceptions and the endless pulling of interests, they raise ONE representative to force the current of action with an authority as little fictitious as their preponderance of numbers? The despot and the priest! There I see *our* danger, Beauchamp. You and I and some dozen labour to tie and knot them to manliness. We are few; they are many and weak. Rome offers them real comfort in return for their mites in coin, and—poor souls! mites in conscience, many of them. A Tyrant offers them to be directly their friend. Ask, Beauchamp, why they should not have comfort for pay as well as the big round—'" Captain Baskelett stopped and laid the letter out for Colonel Halkett to read an unmentionable word, shamelessly marked by Nevil's pencil:—'*belly-class!*' Ask, too, whether the comfort they wish for is not approaching divine compared with the stagnant fleshliness of that fat shopkeeper's Comfort.

"'Warn the people of this. Ay, warn the clergy. It is not only the poor that are caught by ranters. Endeavour to make those accommodating shepherds understand that they stand a chance of losing rich as well as poor! It should awaken them. The helpless poor and the uneasy rich are alike open to the seductions of Romish priests and intoxicated ranters. I say so it will be if that band of forty thousand go on slumbering and nodding. They walk in a dream. The flesh is a dream. The soul only is life.'

"Now for you, colonel.

"'No extension of the army—no! A thousand times no. Let India go, then! Good for India that we hold India? Ay, good: but not at such a cost as an extra tax, or compulsory service of our working man. If India is to be held for the good of India, throw open India to the civilized nations, that they help us in a task that overstrains us. At present India means utter perversion of the policy of England. Adrift India! rather than England red-coated. We dissent, Beauchamp! For by-and-by.'

"That is," Captain Baskelett explained, "by-and-by Shrapnel will have old Nevil fast enough."

"Is there more of it?" said Colonel Halkett, flapping his forehead for coolness.

"The impudence of this dog in presuming to talk about India!—eh, colonel? Only a paragraph or two more: I skip a lot.... Ah! here we are." Captain Baskelett read to himself and laughed in derision: "He calls our

Constitution a compact unsigned by the larger number involved in it. What's this? 'A band of dealers in *fleshpottery*.' Do you detect a gleam of sense? He underscores it. Then he comes to this": Captain Baskelett requested Colonel Halkett to read for himself: "The stench of the trail of Ego in our History."

The colonel perused it with an unsavoury expression of his features, and jumped up.

"Oddly, Mr. Romfrey thought this rather clever," said Captain Baskelett, and read rapidly: "'Trace the course of Ego for them: first the king who conquers and can govern. In his egoism he dubs him holy; his family is of a selected blood; he makes the crown hereditary—Ego. Son by son the shame of egoism increases; valour abates; hereditary Crown, no hereditary qualities. The Barons rise. They in turn hold sway, and for their order—Ego. The traders overturn them: each class rides the classes under it while it can. It is ego—ego, the fountain cry, origin, sole source of war! Then death to ego, I say! If those traders had ruled for other than ego, power might have rested with them on broad basis enough to carry us forward for centuries. The workmen have ever been too anxious *to be ruled*. Now comes on the workman's era. Numbers win in the end: proof of small wisdom in the world. Anyhow, with numbers there is rough nature's wisdom and justice. With numbers ego is inter-dependent and dispersed; it is universalized. Yet these may require correctives. If so, they will have it in a series of despots and revolutions that toss, mix, and bind the classes together: despots, revolutions; *panting alternations of the quickened heart of humanity:*' marked by our friend Nevil in notes of admiration."

"Mad as the writer," groaned Colonel Halkett. "Never in my life have I heard such stuff."

"Stay, colonel; here's Shrapnel defending Morality and Society," said Captain Baskelett.

Colonel Halkett vowed he was under no penal law to listen, and would not; but Captain Baskelett persuaded him: "Yes, here it is: I give you my word. Apparently old Nevil has been standing up for every man's right to run away with... Yes, really! I give you my word; and here we have Shrapnel insisting on respect for the marriage laws. Do hear this; here it is in black and white:—'Society is our one tangible gain, our one roofing and flooring in a world of most uncertain structures built on morasses. Toward the laws that support it men hopeful of progress give their adhesion. If it is martyrdom, what then? Let the martyrdom be. Contumacy is animalism. And attend to me,' says Shrapnel, 'the truer the love the readier for sacrifice! A thousand times yes. Rebellion against Society, and advocacy of Humanity, run counter. Tell me Society is the whited sepulchre, that it is blotched, hideous, hollow: and I say, add not another disfigurement to it; add to the purification of it. And you, if you answer, what can only one? I say that is the animal's answer, and applies also to politics, where the question, *what can one?* put in the relapsing tone, shows the country decaying in the individual. Society is the protection of the weaker, therefore a shield of women, who are our temple of civilization, to be kept sacred; and he that loves a woman will assuredly esteem and pity her sex, and not drag her down for another example of their frailty. Fight this out within you—!'

But you are right, colonel; we have had sufficient. I shall be getting a democratic orator's twang, or a crazy parson's, if I go on much further. He covers thirty-two pages of letter-paper. The conclusion is:—'Jenny sends you her compliments, respects, and best wishes, and hopes she may see you before she goes to her friend Clara Sherwin and the General.'"

"Sherwin? Why, General Sherwin's a perfect gentleman," Colonel Halkett interjected; and Lord Palmet caught the other name: "Jenny? That's Miss Denham, Jenny Denham; an amazingly pretty girl: beautiful thick brown hair, real hazel eyes, and walks like a yacht before the wind."

"Perhaps, colonel, *Jenny* accounts for the defence of society," said Captain Baskelett. "I have no doubt Shrapnel has a scheme for Jenny. The old communist and socialist!" He folded up the letter: "A curious composition, is it not, Miss Halkett?"

Cecilia was thinking that he tempted her to be the apologist of even such a letter.

"One likes to know the worst, and what's possible," said the colonel.

After Captain Baskelett had gone, Colonel Halkett persisted in talking of the letter, and would have impressed on his daughter that the person to whom the letter was addressed must be partly responsible for the

contents of it. Cecilia put on the argumentative air of a Court of Equity to discuss the point with him.

“Then you defend that letter?” he cried.

Oh, no: she did not defend the letter; she thought it wicked and senseless. “But,” said she, “the superior strength of men to women seems to me to come from their examining all subjects, shrinking from none. At least, I should not condemn Nevil on account of his correspondence.”

“We shall see,” said her father, sighing rather heavily. “I must have a talk with Mr. Romfrey about that letter.”

CHAPTER XXX.
THE BAITING OF DR. SHRAPNEL

Captain Baskelett went down from Mount Laurels to Bevisham to arrange for the giving of a dinner to certain of his chief supporters in the borough, that they might know he was not obliged literally to sit in Parliament in order to pay a close attention to their affairs. He had not distinguished himself by a speech during the session, but he had stored a political precept or two in his memory, and, as he told Lord Palmet, he thought a dinner was due to his villains. “The way to manage your Englishman, Palmet, is to dine him.” As the dinner would decidedly be dull, he insisted on having Lord Palmet’s company.

They crossed over to the yachting island, where portions of the letter of Commander Beauchamp’s correspondent were read at the Club, under the verandah, and the question put, whether a man who held those opinions had a right to wear his uniform.

The letter was transmitted to Steynham in time to be consigned to the pocket-book before Beauchamp arrived there on one of his rare visits. Mr. Romfrey handed him the pocketbook with the frank declaration that he had read Shrapnel’s letter. “All is fair in war, Sir!” Beauchamp quoted him ambiguously.

The thieves had amused Mr. Romfrey by their scrupulous honesty in returning what was useless to them, while reserving the coat: but subsequently seeing the advertized reward, they had written to claim it; and, according to Rosamund Culling, he had been so tickled that he had deigned to reply to them, very briefly, but very comically.

Speaking of the matter with her, Beauchamp said (so greatly was he infatuated with the dangerous man) that the reading of a letter of Dr. Shrapnel’s could do nothing but good to any reflecting human creature: he admitted that as the lost pocket-book was addressed to Mr. Romfrey, it might have been by mistake that he had opened it, and read the topmost letter lying open. But he pressed Rosamund to say whether that one only had been read.

“Only Dr. Shrapnel’s letter,” Rosamund affirmed. “The letter from Normandy was untouched by him.”

“Untouched by anybody?”

“Unopened, Nevil. You look incredulous.”

“Not if I have your word, ma’am.”

He glanced somewhat contemptuously at his uncle Everard’s anachronistic notions of what was fair in war.

To prove to him Mr. Romfrey’s affectionate interest in his fortunes, Rosamund mentioned the overtures which had been made to Colonel Halkett for a nuptial alliance between the two houses; and she said: “Your uncle Everard was completely won by your manly way of taking his opposition to you in Bevisham. He pays for Captain Baskelett, but you and your fortunes are nearest his heart, Nevil.”

Beauchamp hung silent. His first remark was, “Yes, I want money. I must have money.” By degrees he seemed to warm to some sense of gratitude. “It was kind of the baron,” he said.

“He has a great affection for you, Nevil, though you know he spares no one who chooses to be antagonistic. All that is over. But do you not second him, Nevil? You admire her? You are not adverse?”

Beauchamp signified the horrid intermixture of yes and no, frowned in pain of mind, and Walked up and down. “There’s no living woman I admire so much.”

“She has refused the highest matches.”

“I hold her in every way incomparable.”

“She tries to understand your political ideas, if she cannot quite sympathize with them, Nevil. And consider how hard it is for a young English lady, bred in refinement, to understand such things.”

“Yes,” Beauchamp nodded; yes. Well, more’s the pity for me!”

“Ah! Nevil, that fatal Renée!”

“Ma’am, I acquit you of any suspicion of your having read her letter in this pocket-book. She wishes me to marry. You would have seen it written here. She wishes it.”

“Fly, clipped wing!” murmured Rosamund, and purposely sent a buzz into her ears to shut out his extravagant talk of Renée’s friendly wishes.

“How is it you women will not believe in the sincerity of a woman!” he

exclaimed.

"Nevil, I am not alluding to the damage done to your election."

"To my candidature, ma'am. You mean those rumours, those lies of the enemy. Tell me how I could suppose you were alluding to them. You bring them forward now to justify your charge of 'fatal' against her. She has one fault; she wants courage; she has none other, not one that is not excuseable. We won't speak of France. What did her father say?"

"Colonel Halkett? I do not know. He and his daughter come here next week, and the colonel will expect to meet you here. That does not look like so positive an objection to you?"

"To me personally, no," said Beauchamp. "But Mr. Romfrey has not told me that I am to meet them."

"Perhaps he has not thought it worth while. It is not his way. He has asked you to come. You and Miss Halkett will be left to yourselves. Her father assured Mr. Romfrey that he should not go beyond advising her. His advice might not be exactly favourable to you at present, but if you sued and she accepted—and she would, I am convinced she would; she was here with me, talking of you a whole afternoon, and I have eyes—then he would not oppose the match, and then I should see you settled, the husband of the handsomest wife and richest heiress in England."

A vision of Cecilia swam before him, gracious in stateliness.

Two weeks back Renée's expression of a wish that he would marry had seemed to him an idle sentence in a letter breathing of her own intolerable situation. The marquis had been struck down by illness. What if she were to be soon suddenly free? But Renée could not be looking to freedom, otherwise she never would have written the wish for him to marry. She wrote perhaps hearing temptation whisper; perhaps wishing to save herself and him by the aid of a tie that would bring his honour into play and fix his loyalty. He remembered Dr. Shrapnel's written words: "*Rebellion against society and advocacy of humanity run counter.*" They had a stronger effect on him than when he was ignorant of his uncle Everard's plan to match him with Cecilia. He took refuge from them in the image of that beautiful desolate Renée, born to be beloved, now wasted, worse than trodden under foot—perverted; a life that looked to him for direction and resuscitation. She was as good as dead in her marriage. It was impossible for him ever to think of Renée without the surprising thrill of his enchantment with her, and tender pity that drew her closer to him by darkening her brightness.

Still a man may love his wife. A wife like Cecilia was not to be imagined coldly. Let the knot once be tied, it would not be regretted, could not be; hers was a character, and hers a smile, firmly assuring him of that.

He told Mr. Romfrey that he should be glad to meet Colonel Halkett and Cecilia. Business called him to Holdesbury. Thence he betook himself to Dr. Shrapnel's cottage to say farewell to Jenny Denham previous to her departure for Switzerland with her friend Clara Sherwin. She had never seen a snow-mountain, and it was pleasant to him to observe in her eyes, which he had known weighing and balancing intellectual questions more than he quite liked, a childlike effort to conjure in imagination the glories of the Alps. She appeared very happy, only a little anxious about leaving Dr. Shrapnel with no one to take care of him for a whole month. Beauchamp promised he would run over to him from Holdesbury, only an hour by rail, as often as he could. He envied her the sight of the Alps, he said, and tried to give her an idea of them, from which he broke off to boast of a famous little Jersey bull that he had won from a rival, an American, deeply in love with the bull; cutting him out by telegraph by just five minutes. The latter had examined the bull in the island and had passed on to Paris, not suspecting there would be haste to sell him. Beauchamp, seeing the bull advertized, took him on trust, galloped to the nearest telegraph station forthwith, and so obtained possession of him; and the bull was now shipped on the voyage. But for this precious bull, however, and other business, he would have been able to spend almost the entire month with Dr. Shrapnel, he said regretfully. Miss Denham on the contrary did not regret his active occupation. The story of his rush from the breakfast-table to the stables, and gallop away to the station, while the American Quaker gentleman soberly paced down a street in Paris on the same errand, in invisible rivalry, touched her risible fancy. She was especially pleased to think of him living in harmony with his uncle—that strange, lofty, powerful man, who by plot or by violence punished opposition to his will, but who must be kind at heart, as well as forethoughtful of his nephew's good; the assurance of it being, that when the conflict was at an end he had immediately installed him as manager of one of his

estates, to give his energy play and make him practically useful.

The day before she left home was passed by the three in botanizing, some miles distant from Bevisham, over sand country, marsh and meadow; Dr. Shrapnel, deep in the science, on one side of her, and Beauchamp, requiring instruction in the names and properties of every plant and simple, on the other. It was a day of summer sweetness, gentle laughter, conversation, and the happiest homeliness. The politicians uttered barely a syllable of politics. The dinner basket was emptied heartily to make way for herb and flower, and at night the expedition homeward was crowned with stars along a road refreshed by mid-day thunder-showers and smelling of the rain in the dust, past meadows keenly scenting, gardens giving out their innermost balm and odour. Late at night they drank tea in Jenny's own garden. They separated a little after two in the morning, when the faded Western light still lay warm on a bow of sky, and on the level of the East it quickened. Jenny felt sure she should long for that yesterday when she was among foreign scenes, even among high Alps—those mysterious eminences which seemed in her imagination to know of heaven and have the dawn of a new life for her beyond their peaks.

Her last words when stepping into the railway carriage were to Beauchamp: "*Will* you take care of him?" She flung her arms round Dr. Shrapnel's neck, and gazed at him under troubled eyelids which seemed to be passing in review every vision of possible harm that might come to him during her absence; and so she continued gazing, and at no one but Dr. Shrapnel until the bend of the line cut him from her sight. Beauchamp was a very secondary person on that occasion, and he was unused to being so in the society of women—unused to find himself entirely eclipsed by their interest in another. He speculated on it, wondering at her concentrated fervency; for he had not supposed her to possess much warmth.

After she was fairly off on her journey, Dr. Shrapnel mentioned to Beauchamp a case of a Steynham poacher, whom he had thought it his duty to supply with means of defence. It was a common poaching case.

Beauchamp was not surprised that Mr. Romfrey and Dr. Shrapnel should come to a collision; the marvel was that it had never occurred before, and Beauchamp said at once: "Oh, my uncle Mr. Romfrey would rather see them stand their ground than not." He was disposed to think well of his uncle. The Jersey bull called him away to Holdesbury.

Captain Baskelett heard of this poaching case at Steynham, where he had to appear in person when he was in want of cheques, and the Bevisham dinner furnished an excuse for demanding one. He would have preferred a positive sum annually. Mr. Romfrey, however, though he wrote his cheques out like the lord he was by nature, exacted the request for them; a system that kept the gallant gentleman on his good behaviour, probably at a lower cost than the regular stipend. In handing the cheque to Cecil Baskelett, Mr. Romfrey spoke of a poacher, of an old poaching family called the Dicketts, who wanted punishment and was to have it, but Mr. Romfrey's local lawyer had informed him that the man Shrapnel was, as usual, supplying the means of defence. For his own part, Mr. Romfrey said, he had no objection to one rascal's backing another, and Shrapnel might hit his hardest, only perhaps Nevil might somehow get mixed up in it, and Nevil was going on quietly now—he had in fact just done capitally in lassoing with a shot of the telegraph a splendid little Jersey bull that a Yankee was after: and on the whole it was best to try to keep him quiet, for he was mad about that man Shrapnel; Shrapnel was his joss: and if legal knocks came of this business Nevil might be thinking of interfering: "Or he and I may be getting to exchange a lot of shindy letters," Mr. Romfrey said. "Tell him I take Shrapnel just like any other man, and don't want to hear apologies, and I don't mix him up in it. Tell him if he likes to have an explanation from me, I'll give it him when he comes here. You can run over to Holdesbury the morning after your dinner."

Captain Baskelett said he would go. He was pleased with his cheque at the time, but hearing subsequently that Nevil was coming to Steynham to meet Colonel Halkett and his daughter, he became displeased, considering it a very silly commission. The more he thought of it the more ridiculous and unworthy it appeared. He asked himself and Lord Palmet also why he should have to go to Nevil at Holdesbury to tell him of circumstances that he would hear of two or three days later at Steynham. There was no sense in it. The only conclusion for him was that the scheming woman Culling had determined to bring down every man concerned in the Bevisham election, and particularly Mr. Romfrey, on his knees before Nevil. Holdesbury had been placed at his disposal, and the

use of the house in London, which latter would have been extremely serviceable to Cecil as a place of dinners to the Parliament of Great Britain in lieu of the speech-making generally expected of Members, and not so effectively performed. One would think the baron had grown afraid of old Nevil! He had spoken as if he were.

Cecil railed unreservedly to Lord Palmet against that woman “Mistress Culling,” as it pleased him to term her, and who could be offended by his calling her so? His fine wit revelled in bestowing titles that were at once batteries directed upon persons he hated, and entrenchments for himself.

At four o’clock on a sultry afternoon he sat at table with his Bevisham supporters, and pledged them correspondingly in English hotel champagne, sherry and claret. At seven he was rid of them, but parched and heated, as he deserved to be, he owned, for drinking the poison. It would be a good subject for Parliament if he could get it up, he reflected.

“And now,” said he to Palmet, “we might be crossing over to the Club if I hadn’t to go about that stupid business to Holdesbury to-morrow morning. We shall miss the race, or, at least, the start.”

The idea struck him: “Ten to one old Nevil’s with Shrapnel,” and no idea could be more natural.

“We’ll call on Shrapnel,” said Palmet. “We shall see Jenny Denham. He gives her out as his niece. Whatever she is she’s a brimming little beauty. I assure you, Bask, you seldom see so pretty a girl.”

Wine, which has directed men’s footsteps upon more marvellous adventures, took them to a chemist’s shop for a cooling effervescent draught, and thence through the town to the address, furnished to them by the chemist, of Dr. Shrapnel on the common.

Bad wine, which is responsible for the fate of half the dismal bodies hanging from trees, weltering by rocks, grovelling and bleaching round the bedabbled mouth of the poet’s Cave of Despair, had rendered Captain Baskelett’s temper extremely irascible; so when he caught sight of Dr. Shrapnel walling in his garden, and perceived him of a giant’s height, his eyes fastened on the writer of the abominable letter with an exultation peculiar to men having a devil inside them that kicks to be out. The sun was low, blazing among the thicker branches of the pollard forest trees, and through sprays of hawthorn. Dr. Shrapnel stopped, facing the visible master of men, at the end of his walk before he turned his back to continue the exercise and some discourse he was holding aloud either to the heavens or bands of invisible men.

“Ahem, Dr. Shrapnel!” He was accosted twice, the second time imperiously.

He saw two gentlemen outside the garden-hedge.

“I spoke, sir,” said Captain Baskelett.

“I hear you now, sir,” said the doctor, walking in a parallel line with them.

“I desired to know, sir, if you are Dr. Shrapnel?”

“I am.”

They arrived at the garden-gate.

“You have a charming garden, Dr. Shrapnel,” said Lord Palmet, very affably and loudly, with a steady observation of the cottage windows.

Dr. Shrapnel flung the gate open.

Lord Palmet raised his hat and entered, crying loudly, “A very charming garden, upon my word!”

Captain Baskelett followed him, bowing stiffly.

“I am,” he said, “Captain Beauchamp’s cousin. I am Captain Baskelett, one of the Members for the borough.”

The doctor said, “Ah.”

“I wish to see Captain Beauchamp, sir. He is absent?”

“I shall have him here shortly, sir.”

“Oh, you will have him!” Cecil paused.

“Admirable roses!” exclaimed Lord Palmet.

“You *have* him, I think,” said Cecil, “if what we hear is correct. I wish to know, sir, whether the case you are conducting against his uncle is one you have communicated to Captain Beauchamp. I repeat, I am here to inquire if he is privy to it. You may hold family ties in contempt—Now, sir! I request you abstain from provocations with me.”

Dr. Shrapnel had raised his head, with something of the rush of a rocket, from the stooping posture to listen, and his frown of non-intelligence might be interpreted as the coming on of the fury Radicals

are prone to, by a gentleman who believed in their constant disposition to explode.

Cecil made play with a pacifying hand. “We shall arrive at no understanding unless you are good enough to be perfectly calm. I repeat, my cousin Captain Beauchamp is more or less at variance with his family, owing to these doctrines of yours, and your extraordinary Michael-Scott-the-wizard kind of spell you seem to have cast upon his common sense as a man of the world. *You have him*, as you say. I do not dispute it. I have no doubt you have him fast. But here is a case demanding a certain respect for decency. Pray, if I may ask you, be still, be quiet, and hear me out if you can. I am accustomed to explain myself to the comprehension of most men who are at large, and I tell you candidly I am not to be deceived or diverted from my path by a show of ignorance.”

“What is your immediate object, sir?” said Dr. Shrapnel, chagrined by the mystification within him, and a fear that his patience was going.

“Exactly,” Cecil nodded. He was acute enough to see that he had established the happy commencement of fretfulness in the victim, which is equivalent to a hook well struck in the mouth of your fish, and with an angler’s joy he prepared to play his man. “Exactly. I have stated it. And you ask me. But I really must decline to run over the whole ground again for you. I am here to fulfil a duty to my family; a highly disagreeable one to me. I may fail, like the lady who came here previous to the Election, for the result of which I am assured I ought to thank your eminently disinterested services. I do. You recollect a lady calling on you?”

Dr. Shrapnel consulted his memory. “I think I have a recollection of some lady calling.”

“Oh! you think you have a recollection of some lady calling.”

“Do you mean a lady connected with Captain Beauchamp?”

“A lady connected with Captain Beauchamp. You are not aware of the situation of the lady?”

“If I remember, she was a kind of confidential housekeeper, some one said, to Captain Beauchamp’s uncle.”

“A kind of confidential housekeeper! She is recognized in our family as a lady, sir. I can hardly expect better treatment at your hands than she met with, but I do positively request you to keep your temper whilst I am explaining my business to you. Now, sir! what now?”

A trifling breeze will set the tall tree bending, and Dr. Shrapnel did indeed appear to display the agitation of a full-driving storm when he was but harassed and vexed.

“Will you mention your business concisely, if you Please?” he said.

“Precisely; it is my endeavour. I supposed I had done so. To be frank, I would advise you to summon a member of your household, wife, daughter, housekeeper, any one you like, to whom you may appeal, and I too, whenever your recollections are at fault.”

“I am competent,” said the doctor.

“But in justice to you,” urged Cecil considerately.

Dr. Shrapnel smoothed his chin hastily. “Have you done?”

“Believe me, the instant I have an answer to my question, I have done.”

“Name your question.”

“Very well, sir. Now mark, I will be plain with you. There is no escape for you from this. You destroy my cousin’s professional prospects—I request you to listen—you blast his career in the navy; it was considered promising. He was a gallant officer and a smart seaman. Very well. You set him up as a politician, to be knocked down, to a dead certainty. You set him against his class; you embroil him with his family ...”

“On all those points,” interposed Dr. Shrapnel, after dashing a hand to straighten his forelock; but Cecil vehemently entreated him to control his temper.

“I say you embroil him with his family, you cause him to be in everlasting altercation with his uncle Mr. Romfrey, materially to his personal detriment; and the question of his family is one that every man of sense would apprehend on the spot; for we, you should know, have, sir, an opinion of Captain Beauchamp’s talents and abilities forbidding us to think he could possibly be the total simpleton you make him appear, unless to the seductions of your political instructions, other seductions were added.... You apprehend me, I am sure.”

“I don’t,” cried the doctor, descending from his height and swinging about forlornly.

“Oh! yes, you do; you do indeed, you cannot avoid it; you quite

apprehend me; it is admitted that you take my meaning: I insist on that. I have nothing to say but what is complimentary of the young lady, whoever she may turn out to be; bewitching, no doubt; and to speak frankly, Dr. Shrapnel, I, and I am pretty certain every honest man would think with me, I take it to be ten times more creditable to my cousin Captain Beauchamp that he should be under a lady's influence than under yours. Come, sir! I ask you. You must confess that a gallant officer and great admirer of the sex does not look such a donkey if he is led in silken strings by a beautiful creature. And mark—stop! mark this, Dr. Shrapnel: I say, to the lady we can all excuse a good deal, and at the same time you are to be congratulated on first-rate diplomacy in employing so charming an agent. I wish, I really wish you did it generally, I assure you: only, mark this—I do beg you to contain yourself for a minute, if possible—I say, my cousin Captain Beauchamp is fair game to hunt, and there is no law to prevent the chase, only you must not expect us to be quiet spectators of your sport; and we have, I say, undoubtedly a right to lay the case before the lady, and induce her to be a peace-agent in the family if we can. Very well."

"This garden is redolent of a lady's hand," sighed Palmet, poetical in his dejection.

"Have you taken too much wine, gentlemen?" said Dr. Shrapnel.

Cecil put this impertinence aside with a graceful sweep of his fingers. "You attempt to elude me, sir."

"Not I! You mention some lady."

"Exactly. A young lady."

"What is the name of the lady?"

"Oh! You ask the name of the lady. And I too. What is it? I have heard two or three names."

"Then you have heard villanies."

"Denham, Jenny Denham, Miss Jenny Denham," said Palmet, rejoiced at the opportunity of trumpeting her name so that she should not fail to hear it.

"I stake my reputation I have heard her called Shrapnel—Miss Shrapnel," said Cecil.

The doctor glanced hastily from one to the other of his visitors. "The young lady is my ward; I am her guardian," he said.

Cecil pursed his mouth. "I have heard her called your niece."

"Niece—ward; she is a lady by birth and education, in manners, accomplishments, and character; and she is under my protection," cried Dr. Shrapnel.

Cecil bowed. "So you are for gentle birth? I forgot you are for morality too, and for praying; exactly; I recollect. But now let me tell you, entirely with the object of conciliation, my particular desire is to see the young lady, in your presence of course, and endeavour to persuade her, as I have very little doubt I shall do, assuming that you give me fair play, to exercise her influence, on this occasion contrary to yours, and save my cousin Captain Beauchamp from a fresh misunderstanding with his uncle Mr. Romfrey. Now, sir; now, there!"

"You will not see Miss Denham with my sanction ever," said Dr. Shrapnel.

"Oh! Then I perceive your policy. Mark, sir, my assumption was that the young lady would, on hearing my representations, exert herself to heal the breach between Captain Beauchamp and his family. You stand in the way. You treat me as you treated the lady who came here formerly to wrest your dupe from your clutches. If I mistake not, she saw the young lady you acknowledge to be your ward."

Dr. Shrapnel flashed back: "I acknowledge? Mercy and justice! is there no peace with the man? You walk here to me, I can't yet guess why, from a town where I have enemies, and every scandal flies touching me and mine; and you—" He stopped short to master his anger. He subdued it so far as to cloak it in an attempt to speak reasoningly, as angry men sometimes deceive themselves in doing, despite the good maxim for the wrathful—speak not at all. "See," said he, "I was never married. My dear friend dies, and leaves me his child to protect and rear; and though she bears her father's name, she is most wrongly and foully made to share the blows levelled at her guardian. Ay, have at me, all of you, as much as you will! Hold off from her. Were it true, the cowardice would be not a whit the smaller. Why, casting a stone like that, were it the size of a pebble and the weight of a glance, is to toss the whole cowardly world on an innocent young girl. And why suspect evil? You talk of that lady who paid me a visit here once, and whom I treated becomingly, I swear. I

never do otherwise. She was a handsome woman; and what was she? The housekeeper of Captain Beauchamp's uncle. Hear me, if you please! To go with the world, I have as good a right to suppose the worst of an attractive lady in that situation as you regarding my ward: better warrant for scandalizing, I think; to go with the world. But now—"

Cecil checked him, ejaculating, "Thank you, Dr. Shrapnel; I thank you most cordially," with a shining smile. "Stay, sir! no more. I take my leave of you. Not another word. No 'buts'! I recognize that conciliation is out of the question: you are the natural protector of poachers, and you will not grant me an interview with the young lady you call your ward, that I may represent to her, as a person we presume to have a chance of moving you, how easily—I am determined you shall hear me, Dr. Shrapnel!—how easily the position of Captain Beauchamp may become precarious with his uncle Mr. Romfrey. And let me add—'but' and 'but' me till Doomsday, sir!—if you were—I *do* hear you, sir, and you shall hear me—if you were a younger man, I say, I would hold you answerable to me for your scandalous and disgraceful insinuations."

Dr. Shrapnel was adroitly fenced and over-shouted. He shrugged, stuttered, swayed, wagged a bulrush-head, flapped his elbows, puffed like a swimmer in the breakers, tried many times to expostulate, and finding the effort useless, for his adversary was copious and commanding, relapsed, eyeing him as an object far removed.

Cecil rounded one of his perplexingly empty sentences and turned on his heel.

"War, then!" he said.

"As you like," retorted the doctor.

"Oh! Very good. Good evening." Cecil slightly lifted his hat, with the short projection of the head of the stately peacock in its walk, and passed out of the garden. Lord Palmet, deeply disappointed and mystified, went after him, leaving Dr. Shrapnel to shorten his garden walk with enormous long strides.

"I'm afraid you didn't manage the old boy," Palmet complained. "They're people who have tea in their gardens; we might have sat down with them and talked, the best friends in the world, and come again to-morrow might have called her Jenny in a week. She didn't show her pretty nose at any of the windows."

His companion pooh-poohed and said: "Foh! I'm afraid I permitted myself to lose my self-command for a moment."

Palmet sang out an amorous couplet to console himself. Captain Baskelett respected the poetic art for its magical power over woman's virtue, but he disliked hearing verses, and they were ill-suited to Palmet. He abused his friend roundly, telling him it was contemptible to be quoting verses. He was irritable still.

He declared himself nevertheless much refreshed by his visit to Dr. Shrapnel. "We shall have to sleep tonight in this unhallowed town, but I needn't be off to Holdesbury in the morning; I've done my business. I shall write to the baron to-night, and we can cross the water to-morrow in time for operations."

The letter to Mr. Romfrey was composed before midnight. It was a long one, and when he had finished it, Cecil remembered that the act of composition had been assisted by a cigar in his mouth, and Mr. Romfrey detested the smell of tobacco. There was nothing to be done but to write the letter over again, somewhat more briefly: it ran thus:

"Thinking to kill two birds at a blow, I went yesterday with Palmet after the dinner at this place to Shrapnel's house, where, as I heard, I stood a chance of catching friend Nevil. The young person living under the man's protection was absent, and so was the 'poor dear commander,' perhaps attending on his bull. Shrapnel said he was expecting him. I write to you to confess I thought myself a cleverer fellow than I am. I talked to Shrapnel and tried hard to reason with him. I hope I can keep my temper under ordinary circumstances. You will understand that it required remarkable restraint when I make you acquainted with the fact that a lady's name was introduced, which, as your representative in relation to her, I was bound to defend from a gratuitous and scoundrelly aspersion. Shrapnel's epistle to 'brave Beauchamp' is Church hymnification in comparison with his conversation. He is indubitably one of the greatest ruffians of his time.

"I took the step with the best of intentions, and all I can plead is that I am not a diplomatist of sixty. His last word was that he is for war with us. As far as we men are concerned it is of small importance. I should think that the sort of society he would scandalize a lady in is not much to be feared. I have given him his warning. He tops me by about a head,

and loses his temper every two minutes. I could have drawn him out deliciously if he had not rather disturbed mine. By this time my equanimity is restored. The only thing I apprehend is your displeasure with me for having gone to the man. I have done no good, and it prevents me from running over to Holdesbury to see Nevil, for if 'shindy letters,' as you call them, are bad, shindy meetings are worse. I should be telling him my opinion of Shrapnel, he would be firing out, I should retort, he would yell, I should snap my fingers, and he would go into convulsions. I am convinced that a cattle-breeder ought to keep himself particularly calm. So unless I have further orders from you I refrain from going.

"The dinner was enthusiastic. I sat three hours among my Commons, they on me for that length of time—fatiguing, but a duty."

Cecil subscribed his name with the warmest affection toward his uncle.

The brevity of the second letter had not brought him nearer to the truth in rescinding the picturesque accessories of his altercation with Dr. Shrapnel, but it veraciously expressed the sentiments he felt, and that was the palpable truth for him.

He posted the letter next morning.

CHAPTER XXXI.
SHOWING A CHIVALROUS GENTLEMAN SET IN MOTION

About noon the day following, on board the steam-yacht of the Countess of Menai, Cecil was very much astonished to see Mr. Romfrey descending into a boat hard by, from Grancey Lespel's hired cutter. Steam was up, and the countess was off for a cruise in the Channel, as it was not a race-day, but seeing Mr. Romfrey's hand raised, she spoke to Cecil, and immediately gave orders to wait for the boat. This lady was a fervent admirer of the knightly gentleman, and had reason to like him, for he had once been her champion. Mr. Romfrey mounted the steps, received her greeting, and beckoned to Cecil. He carried a gold-headed horsewhip under his arm. Lady Menai would gladly have persuaded him to be one of her company for the day's voyage, but he said he had business in Bevisham, and moving aside with Cecil, put the question to him abruptly: "What were the words used by Shrapnel?"

"The identical words?" Captain Baskelett asked. He could have tripped out the words with the fluency of ancient historians relating what great kings, ambassadors, or Generals may well have uttered on State occasions, but if you want the identical words, who is to remember them the day after they have been delivered? He said:

"Well, as for the identical words, I really, and I was tolerably excited, sir, and upon my honour, the identical words are rather difficult to...." He glanced at the horsewhip, and pricked by the sight of it to proceed, thought it good to soften the matter if possible. "I don't quite recollect... I wrote off to you rather hastily. I think he said—but Palmet was there."

"Shrapnel spoke the words before Lord Palmet?" said Mr. Romfrey austerely.

Captain Baskelett summoned Palmet to come near, and inquired of him what he had heard Shrapnel say, suggesting: "He spoke of a handsome woman for a housekeeper, and all the world knew her character?"

Mr. Romfrey cleared his throat.

"Or knew she had *no* character," Cecil pursued in a fit of gratified spleen, in scorn of the woman. "Don't you recollect his accent in pronouncing *housekeeper?*"

The menacing thunder sounded from Mr. Romfrey. He was patient in appearance, and waited for Cecil's witness to corroborate the evidence.

It happened (and here we are in one of the circles of small things producing great consequences, which have inspired diminutive philosophers with ironical visions of history and the littleness of man), it happened that Lord Palmet, the humanest of young aristocrats, well-disposed toward the entire world, especially to women, also to men in any way related to pretty women, had just lit a cigar, and it was a cigar that he had been recommended to try the flavour of; and though he, having his wits about him, was fully aware that shipboard is no good place for a trial of the delicacy of tobacco in the leaf, he had begun puffing and sniffing in a critical spirit, and scarcely knew for the moment what to decide as to this particular cigar. He remembered, however, Mr. Romfrey's objection to tobacco. Imagining that he saw the expression of a profound distaste in that gentleman's more than usually serious face, he hesitated between casting the cigar into the water and retaining it. He decided upon the latter course, and held the cigar behind his back, bowing to Mr. Romfrey at about a couple of yards distance, and saying to Cecil, "Housekeeper; yes, I remember hearing housekeeper. I think so. Housekeeper? yes, oh yes."

"And handsome housekeepers were doubtful characters," Captain Baskelett prompted him.

Palmet laughed out a single "Ha!" that seemed to excuse him for lounging away to the forepart of the vessel, where he tugged at his fine specimen of a cigar to rekindle it, and discharged it with a wry grimace, so delicate is the flavour of that weed, and so adversely ever is it affected by a breeze and a moist atmosphere. He could then return undivided in his mind to Mr. Romfrey and Cecil, but the subject was not resumed in his presence.

The Countess of Menai steamed into Bevisham to land Mr. Romfrey there. "I can be out in the Channel any day; it is not every day that I see you," she said, in support of her proposal to take him over.

They sat together conversing, apart from the rest of the company, until

they sighted Bevisham, when Mr. Romfrey stood up, and a little crowd of men came round him to enjoy his famous racy talk. Captain Baskelett offered to land with him. He declined companionship. Dropping her hand in his, the countess asked him what he had to do in that town, and he replied, “I have to demand an apology.”

Answering the direct look of his eyes, she said, “Oh, I shall not speak of it.”

In his younger days, if the rumour was correct, he had done the same on her account.

He stepped into the boat, and presently they saw him mount the pier-steps, with the riding-whip under his arm, his head more than commonly bent, a noticeable point in a man of his tall erect figure. The ladies and some of the gentlemen thought he was looking particularly grave, even sorrowful.

Lady Menai inquired of Captain Baskelett whether he knew the nature of his uncle’s business in Bevisham, the town he despised.

What could Cecil say but no? His uncle had not imparted it to him.

She was flattered in being the sole confidante, and said no more.

The sprightly ingenuity of Captain Baskelett’s mind would have informed him of the nature of his uncle’s expedition, we may be sure, had he put it to the trial; for Mr. Romfrey was as plain to read as a rudimentary sum in arithmetic, and like the tracings of a pedigree-map his preliminary steps to deeds were seen pointing on their issue in lines of straight descent. But Cecil could protest that he was not bound to know, and considering that he was neither bound to know nor to speculate, he determined to stand on his right. So effectually did he accomplish the task, that he was frequently surprised during the evening and the night by the effervescence of a secret exultation rising imp-like within him, that was, he assured himself, perfectly unaccountable.

CHAPTER XXXII.
AN EFFORT TO CONQUER CECILIA IN BEAUCHAMP'S FASHION

The day after Mr. Romfrey's landing in Bevisham a full South-wester stretched the canvas of yachts of all classes, schooner, cutter and yawl, on the lively green water between the island and the forest shore. Cecilia's noble schooner was sure to be out in such a ringing breeze, for the pride of it as well as the pleasure. She landed her father at the Club steps, and then bore away Eastward to sight a cutter race, the breeze beginning to stiffen. Looking back against sun and wind, she saw herself pursued by a saucy little 15-ton craft that had been in her track since she left the Otley river before noon, dipping and straining, with every inch of sail set; as mad a stern chase as ever was witnessed: and who could the man at the tiller, clad cap-A-pie in tarpaulin, be? She led him dancing away, to prove his resoluteness and laugh at him. She had the powerful wings, and a glory in them coming of this pursuit: her triumph was delicious, until the occasional sparkle of the tarpaulin was lost, the small boat appeared a motionless object far behind, and all ahead of her exceedingly dull, though the race hung there and the crowd of sail.

Cecilia's transient flutter of coquettry created by the animating air and her queenly flight was over. She fled splendidly and she came back graciously. But he refused her open hand, as it were. He made as if to stand across her tack, and, reconsidering it, evidently scorned his advantage and challenged the stately vessel for a beat up against the wind. It was as pretty as a Court minuet. But presently Cecilia stood too far on one tack, and returning to the centre of the channel, found herself headed by seamanship. He waved an ironical salute with his sou'wester. Her retort consisted in bringing her vessel to the wind, and sending a boat for him.

She did it on the impulse; had she consulted her wishes she would rather have seen him at his post, where he seemed in his element, facing the spray and cunningly calculating to get wind and tide in his favour. Partly with regret she saw him, stripped of his tarpaulin, jump into her boat, as though she had once more to say farewell to sailor Nevil Beauchamp; farewell the bright youth, the hero, the true servant of his country!

That feeling of hers changed when he was on board. The stirring cordial day had put new breath in him.

"Should not the flag be dipped?" he said, looking up at the peak, where the white flag streamed.

"Can you really mistake compassion for defeat?" said she, with a smile.

"Oh! before the wind of course I hadn't a chance."

"How could you be so presumptuous as to give chase? And who has lent you that little cutter?"

Beauchamp had hired her for a month, and he praised her sailing, and pretended to say that the race was not always to the strong in a stiff breeze.

"But in point" of fact I was bent on trying how my boat swims, and had no idea of overhauling you. To-day our salt-water lake is as fine as the Mediterranean."

"Omitting the islands and the Mediterranean colour, it is. I have often told you how I love it. I have landed papa at the Club. Are you aware that we meet you at Steynham the day after to-morrow?"

"Well, we can ride on the downs. The downs between three and four of a summer's morning are as lovely as anything in the world. They have the softest outlines imaginable... and remind me of a friend's upper lip when she deigns to smile."

"Is one to rise at that hour to behold the effect? And let me remind you further, Nevil, that the comparison of nature's minor work beside her mighty is an error, if you will be poetical."

She cited a well-known instance of degradation in verse.

But a young man who happens to be intimately acquainted with a certain "dark eye in woman" will not so lightly be brought to consider that the comparison of tempestuous night to the flashing of those eyes of hers topples the scene headlong from grandeur. And if Beauchamp remembered rightly, the scene was the Alps at night.

He was prepared to contest Cecilia's judgement. At that moment the

breeze freshened and the canvas lifted: from due South the yacht swung her sails to drive toward the West, and Cecilia's face and hair came out golden in the sunlight. Speech was difficult, admiration natural, so he sat beside her, admiring in silence.

She said a good word for the smartness of his little yacht.

"This is my first trial of her," said Beauchamp. "I hired her chiefly to give Dr. Shrapnel a taste of salt air. I've no real right to be idling about. His ward Miss Denham is travelling in Switzerland; the dear old man is alone, and not quite so well as I should wish. Change of scene will do him good. I shall land him on the French coast for a couple of days, or take him down Channel."

Cecilia gazed abstractedly at a passing schooner.

"He works too hard," said Beauchamp.

"Who does?"

"Dr. Shrapnel."

Some one else whom we have heard of works too hard, and it would be happy for mankind if he did not.

Cecilia named the schooner; an American that had beaten our crack yachts. Beauchamp sprang up to spy at the American.

"That's the *Corinne*, is she!"

Yankee craftiness on salt water always excited his respectful attention as a spectator.

"And what is the name of your boat, Nevil?"

"The fool of an owner calls her the *Petrel*. It's not that I'm superstitious, but to give a boat a name of bad augury to sailors appears to me... however, I've argued it with him and I will have her called the *Curlew*. Carrying Dr. Shrapnel and me, *Petrel* would be thought the proper title for her—isn't that your idea?"

He laughed and she smiled, and then he became overcast with his political face, and said, "I hope—I believe—you will alter your opinion of him. Can it be an opinion when it's founded on nothing? You know really nothing of him. I have in my pocket what I believe would alter your mind about him entirely. I do think so; and I think so because I feel you would appreciate his deep sincerity and real nobleness."

"Is it a talisman that you have, Nevil?"

"No, it's a letter."

Cecilia's cheeks took fire.

"I should so much like to read it to you," said he.

"Do not, please," she replied with a dash of supplication in her voice.

"Not the whole of it—an extract here and there? I want you so much to understand him."

"I am sure I should not."

"Let me try you!"

"Pray do not."

"Merely to show you..."

"But, Nevil, I do not wish to understand him."

"But you have only to listen for a few minutes, and I want you to know what good reason I have to reverence him as a teacher and a friend."

Cecilia looked at Beauchamp with wonder. A confused recollection of the contents of the letter declaimed at Mount Laurels in Captain Baskelett's absurd sing-song, surged up in her mind revoltingly. She signified a decided negative. Something of a shudder accompanied the expression of it.

But he as little as any member of the Romfrey blood was framed to let the word no stand quietly opposed to him. And the no that a woman utters! It calls for wholesome tyranny. Those old, those hoar-old duellists, Yes and No, have rarely been better matched than in Beauchamp and Cecilia. For if he was obstinate in attack she had great resisting power. Twice to listen to that letter was beyond her endurance. Indeed it cast a shadow on him and disfigured him; and when, affecting to plead, he said: "You must listen to it to please me, for my sake, Cecilia," she answered: "It is for your sake, Nevil, I decline to."

"Why, what do you know of it?" he exclaimed.

"I know the kind of writing it would be."

"How do you know it?"

"I have heard of some of Dr. Shrapnel's opinions."

"You imagine him to be subversive, intolerant, immoral, and the rest! all that comes under your word revolutionary."

“Possibly; but I must defend myself from hearing what I know will be certain to annoy me.”

“But he is the reverse of immoral: and I intend to read you parts of the letter to prove to you that he is not the man you would blame, but I, and that if ever I am worthier... worthier of you, as I hope to become, it will be owing to this admirable and good old man.”

Cecilia trembled: she was touched to the quick. Yet it was not pleasant to her to be wooed obliquely, through Dr. Shrapnel.

She recognized the very letter, crowned with many stamps, thick with many pages, in Beauchamp’s hands.

“When you are at Steynham you will probably hear my uncle Everard’s version of this letter,” he said. “The baron chooses to think everything fair in war, and the letter came accidentally into his hands with the seal broken; well, he read it. And, Cecilia, you can fancy the sort of stuff he would make of it. Apart from that, I want you particularly to know how much I am indebted to Dr. Shrapnel. Won’t you learn to like him a little? Won’t you tolerate him?—I could almost say, for my sake! He and I are at variance on certain points, but taking him altogether, I am under deeper obligations to him than to any man on earth. He has found where I bend and waver.”

“I recognize your chivalry, Nevil.”

“He has done his best to train me to be of some service. Where’s the chivalry in owning a debt? He is one of our true warriors; fearless and blameless. I have had my heroes before. You know how I loved Robert Hall: his death is a gap in my life. He is a light for fighting Englishmen—who fight with the sword. But the scale of the war, the cause, and the end in view, raise Dr. Shrapnel above the bravest I have ever had the luck to meet. Soldiers and sailors have their excitement to keep them up to the mark; praise and rewards. He is in his eight-and-sixtieth year, and he has never received anything but obloquy for his pains. Half of the small fortune he has goes in charities and subscriptions. Will that touch you? But I think little of that, and so does he. Charity is a common duty. The dedication of a man’s life and whole mind to a cause, there’s heroism. I wish I were eloquent; I wish I could move you.”

Cecilia turned her face to him. “I listen to you with pleasure, Nevil; but please do not read the letter.”

“Yes; a paragraph or two I must read.”

She rose.

He was promptly by her side. “If I say I ask you for one sign that you care for me in some degree?”

“I have not for a moment ceased to be your friend, Nevil, since I was a child.”

“But if you allow yourself to be so prejudiced against my best friend that you will not hear a word of his writing, are you friendly?”

“Feminine, and obstinate,” said Cecilia.

“Give me your eyes an instant. I know you think me reckless and lawless: now is not that true? You doubt whether, if a lady gave me her hand I should hold to it in perfect faith. Or, perhaps not that: but you do suspect I should be capable of every sophism under the sun to persuade a woman to break her faith, if it suited me: supposing some passion to be at work. Men who are open to passion have to be taught reflection before they distinguish between the woman they should sue for love because she would be their best mate, and the woman who has thrown a spell on them. Now, what I beg you to let me read you in this letter is a truth nobly stated that has gone into my blood, and changed me. It cannot fail, too, in changeing your opinion of Dr. Shrapnel. It makes me wretched that you should be divided from me in your ideas of him. I, you see—and I confess I think it my chief title to honour—reverence him.”

“I regret that I am unable to utter the words of Ruth,” said Cecilia, in a low voice. She felt rather tremulously; opposed only to the letter and the writer of it, not at all to Beauchamp, except on account of his idolatry of the wicked revolutionist. Far from having a sense of opposition to Beauchamp; she pitied him for his infatuation, and in her lofty mental serenity she warmed to him for the seeming boyishness of his constant and extravagant worship of the man, though such an enthusiasm cast shadows on his intellect.

He was reading a sentence of the letter.

“I hear nothing but the breeze, Nevil,” she said.

The breeze fluttered the letter-sheets: they threatened to fly. Cecilia stepped two paces away.

“Hark; there is a military band playing on the pier,” said she. “I am so

fond of hearing music a little off shore."

Beauchamp consigned the letter to his pocket.

"You are not offended, Nevil?"

"Dear me, no. You haven't a mind for tonics, that's all."

"Healthy persons rarely have," she remarked, and asked him, smiling softly, whether he had a mind for music.

His insensibility to music was curious, considering how impressionable he was to verse, and to songs of birds. He listened with an oppressed look, as to something the particular secret of which had to be reached by a determined effort of sympathy for those whom it affected. He liked it if she did, and said he liked it, reiterated that he liked it, clearly trying hard to comprehend it, as unmoved by the swell and sigh of the resonant brass as a man could be, while her romantic spirit thrilled to it, and was bountiful in glowing visions and in tenderness.

There hung her hand. She would not have refused to yield it. The hero of her childhood, the friend of her womanhood, and her hero still, might have taken her with half a word.

Beauchamp was thinking: She can listen to that brass band, and she shuts her ears to this letter!

The reading of it would have been a prelude to the opening of his heart to her, at the same time that it vindicated his dear and honoured master, as he called Dr. Shrapnel. To speak, without the explanation of his previous reticence which this letter would afford, seemed useless: even the desire to speak was absent, passion being absent.

"I see papa; he is getting into a boat with some one," said Cecilia, and gave orders for the yacht to stand in toward the Club steps. "Do you know, Nevil, the Italian common people are not so subject to the charm of music as other races? They have more of the gift, and I think less of the feeling. You do not hear much music in Italy. I remember in the year of Revolution there was danger of a rising in some Austrian city, and a colonel of a regiment commanded his band to play. The mob was put in good humour immediately."

"It's a soporific," said Beauchamp.

"You would not rather have had them rise to be slaughtered?"

"Would you have them waltzed into perpetual servility?"

Cecilia hummed, and suggested: "If one can have them happy in any way?"

"Then the day of destruction may almost be dated."

"Nevil, your terrible view of life must be false."

"I make it out worse to you than to any one else, because I want our minds to be united."

"Give me a respite now and then."

"With all my heart. And forgive me for beating my drum. I see what others don't see, or else I feel it more; I don't know; but it appears to me our country needs rousing if it's to live. There's a division between poor and rich that you have no conception of, and it can't safely be left unnoticed. I've done."

He looked at her and saw tears on her under-lids.

"My dearest Cecilia!"

"Music makes me childish," said she.

Her father was approaching in the boat. Beside him sat the Earl of Lockrace, latterly classed among the suitors of the lady of Mount Laurels.

A few minutes remained to Beauchamp of his lost opportunity. Instead of seizing them with his usual promptitude, he let them slip, painfully mindful of his treatment of her last year after the drive into Bevisham, when she was England, and Renée holiday France.

This feeling he fervently translated into the reflection that the bride who would bring him beauty and wealth, and her especial gift of tender womanliness, was not yet so thoroughly mastered as to grant her husband his just prevalence with her, or even indeed his complete independence of action, without which life itself was not desireable.

Colonel Halkett stared at Beauchamp as if he had risen from the deep.

"Have you been in that town this morning?" was one of his first questions to him when he stood on board.

"I came through it," said Beauchamp, and pointed to his little cutter labouring in the distance. "She's mine for a month; I came from Holdesbury to try her; and then he stated how he had danced attendance on the schooner for a couple of hours before any notice was taken of

him, and Cecilia with her graceful humour held up his presumption to scorn.

Her father was eyeing Beauchamp narrowly, and appeared troubled.

“Did you see Mr. Romfrey yesterday, or this morning?” the colonel asked him, mentioning that Mr. Romfrey had been somewhere about the island yesterday, at which Beauchamp expressed astonishment, for his uncle Everard seldom visited a yachting station.

Colonel Halkett exchanged looks with Cecilia. Hers were inquiring, and he confirmed her side-glance at Beauchamp. She raised her brows; he nodded, to signify that there was gravity in the case. Here the signalling stopped short; she had to carry on a conversation with Lord Lockrace, one of those men who betray the latent despot in an exhibition of discontentment unless they have all a lady’s hundred eyes attentive to their discourse.

At last Beauchamp quitted the vessel.

When he was out of hearing, Colonel Halkett said to Cecilia: “Grancey Lespel tells me that Mr. Romfrey called on the man Shrapnel yesterday evening at six o’clock.”

“Yes, Papa?”

“Now come and see the fittings below,” the colonel addressed Lord Lockrace, and murmured to his daughter:

“And soundly horsewhipped him!”

Cecilia turned on the instant to gaze after Nevil Beauchamp. She could have wept for pity. Her father’s emphasis on “soundly” declared an approval of the deed, and she was chilled by a sickening abhorrence and dread of the cruel brute in men, such as, awakened by she knew not what, had haunted her for a year of her girlhood.

“And he deserved it!” the colonel pursued, on emerging from the cabin at Lord Lockrace’s heels. “I’ve no doubt he richly deserved it. The writer of that letter we heard Captain Baskelett read the other day deserves the very worst he gets.”

“Baskelett bored the Club the other night with a letter of a Radical fellow,” said Lord Lockrace. “Men who write that stuff should be strung up and whipped by the common hangman.”

“It was a private letter,” said Cecilia.

“Public or private, Miss Halkett.”

Her mind flew back to Seymour Austin for the sense of stedfastness when she heard such language as this, which, taken in conjunction with Dr. Shrapnel’s, seemed to uncloak our Constitutional realm and show it boiling up with the frightful elements of primitive societies.

“I suppose we are but half civilized,” she said.

“If that,” said the earl.

Colonel Halkett protested that he never could quite make out what Radicals were driving at.

“The rents,” Lord Lockrace observed in the conclusive tone of brevity. He did not stay very long.

The schooner was boarded subsequently by another nobleman, an Admiral of the Fleet and ex-minister of the Whig Government, Lord Croyston, who was a friend of Mr. Romfrey’s, and thought well of Nevil Beauchamp as a seaman and naval officer, but shook an old head over him as a politician. He came to beg a passage across the water to his marine Lodge, an accident having happened early in the morning to his yacht, the *Lady Violet*. He was able to communicate the latest version of the horsewhipping of Dr. Shrapnel, from which it appeared that after Mr. Romfrey had handsomely flogged the man he flung his card on the prostrate body, to let men know who was responsible for the act. He expected that Mr. Romfrey would be subjected to legal proceedings. “But if there’s a pleasure worth paying for it’s the trouncing of a villain,” said he; and he had been informed that Dr. Shrapnel was a big one. Lord Croyston’s favourite country residence was in the neighbourhood of old Mrs. Beauchamp, on the Upper Thames. Speaking of Nevil Beauchamp a second time, he alluded to his relations with his great-aunt, said his prospects were bad, that she had interdicted her house to him, and was devoted to her other great-nephew.

“And so she should be,” said Colonel Halkett. “That’s a young man who’s an Englishman without French gunpowder notions in his head. He works for us down at the mine in Wales a good part of the year, and has tided us over a threatening strike there: gratuitously: I can’t get him to accept anything. I can’t think why he does it.”

“He’ll have plenty,” said Lord Croyston, levelling his telescope to sight

the racing cutters.

Cecilia fancied she descried Nevil's *Petrel*, dubbed *Curlew*, to Eastward, and had a faint gladness in the thought that his knowledge of his uncle Everard's deed of violence would be deferred for another two or three hours.

She tried to persuade her father to wait for Nevil, and invite him to dine at Mount Laurels, and break the news to him gently. Colonel Halkett argued that in speaking of the affair he should certainly not commiserate the man who had got his deserts, and saying this he burst into a petty fury against the epistle of Dr. Shrapnel, which appeared to be growing more monstrous in proportion to his forgetfulness of the details, as mountains gather vastness to the eye at a certain remove. Though he could not guess the reason for Mr. Romfrey's visit to Bevisham, he was, he said, quite prepared to maintain that Mr. Romfrey had a perfect justification for his conduct.

Cecilia hinted at barbarism. The colonel hinted at high police duties that gentlemen were sometimes called on to perform for the protection of society. "In defiance of its laws?" she asked; and he answered: "Women must not be judging things out of their sphere," with the familiar accent on "women" which proves their inferiority. He was rarely guilty of it toward his daughter. Evidently he had resolved to back Mr. Romfrey blindly. That epistle of Dr. Shrapnel's merited condign punishment and had met with it, he seemed to rejoice in saying: and this was his abstract of the same: "An old charlatan who tells his dupe to pray every night of his life for the beheading of kings and princes, and scattering of the clergy, and disbanding the army, that he and his rabble may fall upon the wealthy, and show us numbers win; and he'll undertake to make them moral!"

"I wish we were not going to Steynham," said Cecilia.

"So do I. Well, no, I don't," the colonel corrected himself, "no; it's an engagement. I gave my consent so far. We shall see whether Nevil Beauchamp's a man of any sense."

Her heart sank. This was as much as to let her know that if Nevil broke with his uncle, the treaty of union between the two families, which her father submitted to entertain out of consideration for Mr. Romfrey, would be at an end.

The wind had fallen. Entering her river, Cecilia gazed back at the smooth broad water, and the band of golden beams flung across it from the evening sun over the forest. No little cutter was visible. She could not write to Nevil to bid him come and concert with her in what spirit to encounter his uncle Everard at Steynham. And guests would be at Mount Laurels next day; Lord Lockrace, Lord Croyston, and the Lespels; she could not drive down to Bevisham on the chance of seeing him. Nor was it to be acknowledged even to herself that she so greatly desired to see him and advise him. Why not? Because she was one of the artificial creatures called women (with the accent) who dare not be spontaneous, and cannot act independently if they would continue to be admirable in the world's eye, and who for that object must remain fixed on shelves, like other marketable wares, avoiding motion to avoid shattering or tarnishing. This is their fate, only in degree less inhuman than that of Hellenic and Trojan princesses offered up to the Gods, or pretty slaves to the dealers. Their artificiality is at once their bane and their source of superior pride.

Seymour Austin might have reason for seeking to emancipate them, she thought, and blushed in thought that she could never be learning anything but from her own immediate sensations.

Of course it was in her power to write to Beauchamp, just as it had been in his to speak to her, but the fire was wanting in her blood and absent from his mood, so they were kept apart.

Her father knew as little as she what was the positive cause of Mr. Romfrey's chastisement of Dr. Shrapnel. "Cause enough, I don't doubt," he said, and cited the mephitic letter.

Cecilia was not given to suspicions, or she would have had them kindled by a certain wilfulness in his incessant reference to the letter, and exoneration, if not approval, of Mr. Romfrey's conduct.

How did that chivalrous gentleman justify himself for condescending to such an extreme as the use of personal violence? Was there a possibility of his justifying it to Nevil? She was most wretched in her reiteration of these inquiries, for, with a heart subdued, she had still a mind whose habit of independent judgement was not to be constrained, and while she felt that it was only by siding with Nevil submissively and blindly in this lamentable case that she could hope for happiness, she foresaw the

likelihood of her not being able to do so as much as he would desire and demand. This she took for the protest of her pure reason. In reality, grieved though she was on account of that Dr. Shrapnel, her captive heart resented the anticipated challenge to her to espouse his cause or languish.

CHAPTER XXXIII.
THE FIRST ENCOUNTER AT STEYNHAM

The judge pronouncing sentence of condemnation on the criminal is proverbially a sorrowfully-minded man; and still more would he be so had he to undertake the part of executioner as well. This is equivalent to saying that the simple pleasures are no longer with us; it must be a personal enemy now to give us any satisfaction in chastising and slaying. Perhaps by-and-by that will be savourless: we degenerate. There is, nevertheless, ever (and let nature be praised for it) a strong sustainment in the dutiful exertion of our physical energies, and Mr. Everard Romfrey experienced it after he had fulfilled his double office on the person of Dr. Shrapnel by carrying out his own decree. His conscience approved him cheerlessly, as it is the habit of that secret monitor to do when we have no particular advantage coming of the act we have performed; but the righteous labour of his arm gave him high breathing and an appetite.

He foresaw that he and Nevil would soon be having a wrestle over the matter, hand and thigh; but a gentleman in the right engaged with a fellow in the wrong has nothing to apprehend; is, in fact, in the position of a game-preserver with a poacher. The nearest approach to gratification in that day's work which Mr. Romfrey knew was offered by the picture of Nevil's lamentable attitude above his dirty idol. He conceived it in the mock-mediaeval style of our caricaturists:—Shrapnel stretched at his length, half a league, in slashed yellows and blacks, with his bauble beside him, and prodigious pointed toes; Nevil in parti-coloured tights, on one leg, raising his fists in imprecation to a nose in the firmament.

Gentlemen of an unpractised imaginative capacity cannot vision for themselves exactly what they would, being unable to exercise authority over the proportions and the hues of the objects they conceive, which are very much at the mercy of their sportive caprices; and the state of mind of Mr. Romfrey is not to be judged by his ridiculous view of the pair. In the abstract he could be sorry for Shrapnel. As he knew himself magnanimous, he promised himself to be forbearing with Nevil.

Moreover, the month of September was drawing nigh; he had plenty to think of. The entire land (signifying all but all of those who occupy the situation of thinkers in it) may be said to have been exhaling the same thought in connection with September. Our England holds possession of a considerable portion of the globe, and it keeps the world in awe to see her bestowing so considerable a portion of her intelligence upon her recreations. To prosecute them with her whole heart is an ingenious exhibition of her power. Mr. Romfrey was of those who said to his countrymen, "Go yachting; go cricketing; go boat-racing; go shooting; go horseracing, nine months of the year, while the other Europeans go marching and drilling." Those occupations he considered good for us; and our much talking, writing, and thinking about them characteristic, and therefore good. And he was not one of those who do penance for that sweating indolence in the fits of desperate panic. Beauchamp's argument that the rich idler begets the idling vagabond, the rich wagerer the brutal swindler, the general thirst for a mad round of recreation a generally-increasing disposition to avoid serious work, and the unbraced moral tone of the country an indifference to national responsibility (an argument doubtless extracted from Shrapnel, talk tall as the very demagogue when he stood upright), Mr. Romfrey laughed at scornfully, affirming that our manufactures could take care of themselves. As for invasion, we are circled by the sea. Providence has done that for us, and may be relied on to do more in an emergency.—The children of wealth and the children of the sun alike believe that Providence is for them, and it would seem that the former can do without it less than the latter, though the former are less inclined to give it personification.

This year, however, the array of armaments on the Continent made Mr. Romfrey anxious about our navy. Almost his first topic in welcoming Colonel Halkett and Cecilia to Steynham was the rottenness of navy administration; for if Providence is to do anything for us it must have a sea-worthy fleet for the operation. How loudly would his contemptuous laughter have repudiated the charge that he trusted to supernatural agency for assistance in case of need! But so it was: and he owned to believing in English luck. Partly of course he meant that steady fire of combat which his countrymen have got heated to of old till fortune blessed them.

"Nevil is not here?" the colonel asked.

“No, I suspect he’s gruelling and plastering a doctor of his acquaintance,” Mr. Romfrey said, with his nasal laugh composed of scorn and resignation.

“Yes, yes, I’ve heard,” said Colonel Halkett hastily.

He would have liked to be informed of Dr. Shrapnel’s particular offence: he mentioned the execrable letter.

Mr. Romfrey complacently interjected: “Drug-vomit!” and after an interval: “Gallows!”

“That man has done Nevil Beauchamp a world of mischief, Romfrey.”

“We’ll hope for a cure, colonel.”

“Did the man come across you?”

“He did.”

Mr. Romfrey was mute on the subject. Colonel Halkett abstained from pushing his inquiries.

Cecilia could only tell her father when they were alone in the drawing-room a few minutes before dinner that Mrs. Culling was entirely ignorant of any cause to which Nevil’s absence might be attributed.

“Mr. Romfrey had good cause,” the colonel said, emphatically.

He repeated it next day, without being a bit wiser of the cause.

Cecilia’s happiness or hope was too sensitive to allow of a beloved father’s deceiving her in his opposition to it.

She saw clearly now that he had fastened on this miserable incident, expecting an imbroglio that would divide Nevil and his uncle, and be an excuse for dividing her and Nevil. O for the passionate will to make head against what appeared as a fate in this matter! She had it not.

Mr. and Mrs. Wardour-Devereux, Sir John and Lady Baskelett, and the Countess of Welshpool, another sister of Mr. Romfrey’s, arrived at Steynham for a day and a night. Lady Baskelett and Lady Welshpool came to see their brother, not to countenance his household; and Mr. Wardour-Devereux could not stay longer than a certain number of hours under a roof where tobacco was in evil odour. From her friend Louise, his wife, Cecilia learnt that Mr. Lydiard had been summoned to Dr. Shrapnel’s bedside, as Mrs. Devereux knew by a letter she had received from Mr. Lydiard, who was no political devotee of that man, she assured Cecilia, but had an extraordinary admiration for the Miss Denham living with him. This was kindly intended to imply that Beauchamp was released from his attendance on Dr. Shrapnel, and also that it was not he whom the Miss Denham attracted.

“She is in Switzerland,” said Cecilia.

“She is better there,” said Mrs. Devereux.

Mr. Stukely Culbrett succeeded to these visitors. He heard of the case of Dr. Shrapnel from Colonel Halkett, and of Beauchamp’s missing of his chance with the heiress from Mr. Romfrey.

Rosamund Culling was in great perplexity about Beauchamp’s prolonged absence; for he had engaged to come, he had written to her to say he would be sure to come; and she feared he was ill. She would have persuaded Mr. Culbrett to go down to Bevisham to see him: she declared that she could even persuade herself to call on Dr. Shrapnel a second time, in spite of her horror of the man. Her anger at the thought of his keeping Nevil away from good fortune and happiness caused her to speak in resentment and loathing of the man.

“He behaved badly when you saw him, did he?” said Stukely.

“Badly, is no word. He is detestable,” Rosamund replied.

“You think he ought to be whipped?”

She feigned an extremity of vindictiveness, and twisted her brows in comic apology for the unfeminine sentiment, as she said: “I really do.”

The feminine gentleness of her character was known to Stukely, so she could afford to exaggerate the expression of her anger, and she did not modify it, forgetful that a woman is the representative of the sex with cynical men, and escapes from contempt at the cost of her sisterhood.

Looking out of an upper window in the afternoon she beheld Nevil Beauchamp in a group with his uncle Everard, the colonel and Cecilia, and Mr. Culbrett. Nevil was on his feet; the others were seated under the great tulip-tree on the lawn.

A little observation of them warned her that something was wrong. There was a vacant chair; Nevil took it in his hand at times, stamped it to the ground, walked away and sharply back fronting his uncle, speaking vehemently, she perceived, and vainly, as she judged by the cast of his uncle’s figure. Mr. Romfrey’s head was bent, and wagged slightly, as he

screwed his brows up and shot his eyes, queerly at the agitated young man. Colonel Halkett's arms crossed his chest. Cecilia's eyelids drooped their lashes. Mr. Culbrett was balancing on the hind-legs of his chair. No one appeared to be speaking but Nevil.

It became evident that Nevil was putting a series of questions to his uncle. Mechanical nods were given him in reply.

Presently Mr. Romfrey rose, thundering out a word or two, without a gesture.

Colonel Halkett rose.

Nevil flung his hand out straight to the house.

Mr. Romfrey seemed to consent; the colonel shook his head: Nevil insisted.

A footman carrying a tea-tray to Miss Halkett received some commission and swiftly disappeared, making Rosamund wonder whether sugar, milk or cream had been omitted.

She met him on the first landing, and heard that Mr. Romfrey requested her to step out on the lawn.

Expecting to hear of a piece of misconduct on the part of the household servants, she hurried forth, and found that she had to traverse the whole space of the lawn up to the tuliptree. Colonel Halkett and Mr. Romfrey had resumed their seats. The colonel stood up and bowed to her.

Mr. Romfrey said: "One question to you, ma'am, and you shall not be detained. Did not that man Shrapnel grossly insult you on the day you called on him to see Captain Beauchamp about a couple of months before the Election?"

"Look at me when you speak, ma'am," said Beauchamp.

Rosamund looked at him.

The whiteness of his face paralyzed her tongue. A dreadful levelling of his eyes penetrated and chilled her. Instead of thinking of her answer she thought of what could possibly have happened.

"Did he insult you at all, ma'am?" said Beauchamp.

Mr. Romfrey reminded him that he was not a cross-examining criminal barrister.

They waited for her to speak.

She hesitated, coloured, betrayed confusion; her senses telling her of a catastrophe, her conscience accusing her as the origin of it.

"Did Dr. Shrapnel, to your belief, intentionally hurt your feelings or your dignity?" said Beauchamp, and made the answer easier:

"Not intentionally, surely: not... I certainly do not accuse him."

"Can you tell me you feel that he wounded you in the smallest degree? And if so, how? I ask you this, because he is anxious, if he lives, to apologize to you for any offence that he may have been guilty of: he was ignorant of it. I have his word for that, and his commands to me to bear it to you. I may tell you I have never known him injure the most feeble thing—anything alive, or wish to."

Beauchamp's voice choked. Rosamund saw tears leap out of the stern face of her dearest now in wrath with her.

"Is he ill?" she faltered.

"He is. You own to a strong dislike of him, do you not?"

"But not to desire any harm to him."

"Not a whipping," Mr. Culbrett murmured.

Everard Romfrey overheard it.

He had allowed Mrs. Culling to be sent for, that she might with a bare affirmative silence Nevil, when his conduct was becoming intolerable before the guests of the house.

"That will do, ma'am," he dismissed her.

Beauchamp would not let her depart.

"I must have your distinct reply, and in Mr. Romfrey's presence:—say, that if you accused him you were mistaken, or that they were mistaken who supposed you had accused him. I must have the answer before you go."

"Sir, will you learn manners!" Mr. Romfrey said to him, with a rattle of the throat.

Beauchamp turned his face from her.

Colonel Halkett offered her his arm to lead her away.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" she whispered, scarcely able to walk, but declining the colonel's arm.

“You ought not to have been dragged out here,” said he. “Any one might have known there would be no convincing of Captain Beauchamp. That old rascal in Bevisham has been having a beating; that’s all. And a very beautiful day it is!—a little too hot, though. Before we leave, you must give me a lesson or two in gardening.”

“Dr. Shrapnel—Mr. Romfrey!” said Rosamund half audibly under the oppression of the more she saw than what she said.

The colonel talked of her renown in landscape-gardening. He added casually: “They met the other day.”

“By accident?”

“By chance, I suppose. Shrapnel defends one of your Steynham poaching vermin.”

“Mr. Romfrey struck him?—for that? Oh, never!” Rosamund exclaimed.

“I suppose he had a long account to settle.”

She fetched her breath painfully. “I shall never be forgiven.”

“And I say that a gentleman has no business with idols,” the colonel fumed as he spoke. “Those letters of Shrapnel to Nevil Beauchamp are a scandal on the name of Englishman.”

“You have read that shocking one, Colonel Halkett?”

“Captain Baskelett read it out to us.”

“He? Oh! then...” She stopped:—Then the author of this mischief is clear to me! her divining hatred of Cecil would have said, but her humble position did not warrant such speech. A consideration of the lowliness necessitating this restraint at a moment when loudly to denounce another’s infamy with triumphant insight would have solaced and supported her, kept Rosamund dumb.

She could not bear to think of her part in the mischief.

She was not bound to think of it, knowing actually nothing of the occurrence.

Still she felt that she was on her trial. She detected herself running in and out of her nature to fortify it against accusations rather than cleanse it for inspection. It was narrowing in her own sight. The prospect of her having to submit to a further interrogatory, shut it up entrenched in the declaration that Dr. Shrapnel had so far outraged her sentiments as to be said to have offended her: not insulted, perhaps, but certainly offended.

And this was a generous distinction. It was generous; and, having recognized the generosity, she was unable to go beyond it.

She was presently making the distinction to Miss Halkett. The colonel had left her at the door of the house: Miss Halkett sought admission to her private room on an errand of condolence, for she had sympathized with her very much in the semi-indignity Nevil had forced her to undergo: and very little indeed had she been able to sympathize with Nevil, who had been guilty of the serious fault of allowing himself to appear moved by his own commonplace utterances; or, in other words, the theme being hostile to his audience, he had betrayed emotion over it without first evoking the spirit of pathos.

“As for me,” Rosamund replied, to some comforting remarks of Miss Halkett’s, “I do not understand why I should be mixed up in Dr. Shrapnel’s misfortunes: I really am quite unable to recollect his words to me or his behaviour: I have only a positive impression that I left his house, where I had gone to see Captain Beauchamp, in utter disgust, so repelled by his language that I could hardly trust myself to speak of the man to Mr. Romfrey when he questioned me. I did not volunteer it. I am ready to say that I believe Dr. Shrapnel did not intend to be insulting. I cannot say that he was not offensive.

You know, Miss Halkett, I would willingly, gladly have saved him from anything like punishment.”

“You are too gentle to have thought of it,” said Cecilia.

“But I shall never be forgiven by Captain Beauchamp. I see in his eyes that he accuses me and despises me.”

“He will not be so unjust, Mrs. Culling.”

Rosamund begged that she might hear what Nevil had first said on his arrival.

Cecilia related that they had seen him walking swiftly across the park, and that Mr. Romfrey had hailed him, and held his hand out; and that Captain Beauchamp had overlooked it, saying he feared Mr. Romfrey’s work was complete. He had taken her father’s hand and hers and his touch was like ice.

“His worship of that Dr. Shrapnel is extraordinary,” quoth Rosamund.

“And how did Mr. Romfrey behave to him?”

“My father thinks, very forbearingly.”

Rosamund sighed and made a semblance of wringing her hands. “It seems to me that I anticipated ever since I heard of the man... or at least ever since I saw him and heard him, he would be the evil genius of us all: if I dare include myself. But I am not permitted to escape! And, Miss Halkett, can you tell me how it was that my name—that I became involved? I cannot imagine the circumstances which would bring me forward in this unhappy affair.”

Cecilia replied: “The occasion was, that Captain Beauchamp so scornfully contrasted the sort of injury done by Dr. Shrapnel’s defence of a poacher on his uncle’s estate, with the severe chastisement inflicted by Mr. Romfrey in revenge for it. He would not leave the subject.”

“I see him—see his eyes!” cried Rosamund, her bosom heaving and sinking deep, as her conscience quavered within her. “At last Mr. Romfrey mentioned me?”

“He stood up and said you had been personally insulted by Dr. Shrapnel.”

Rosamund meditated in a distressing doubt of her conscientious truthfulness.

“Captain Beauchamp will be coming to me; and how can I answer him? Heaven knows I would have shielded the poor man, if possible—poor wretch! Wicked though he is, one has only to hear of him suffering! But what can I answer? I do recollect now that Mr. Romfrey compelled me from question to question to confess that the man had vexed me. Insulted, I never said. At the worst, I said vexed. I would not have said insulted, or even offended, because Mr. Romfrey... ah! we know him. What I did say, I forget. I have no guide to what I said but my present feelings, and they are pity for the unfortunate man much more than dislike.—Well, I must go through the scene with Nevil!” Rosamund concluded her outcry of ostensible exculpation.

She asked in a cooler moment how it was that Captain Beauchamp had so far forgotten himself as to burst out on his uncle before the guests of the house. It appeared that he had wished his uncle to withdraw with him, and Mr. Romfrey had bidden him postpone private communications. Rosamund gathered from one or two words of Cecilia’s that Mr. Romfrey, until finally stung by Nevil, had indulged in his best-humoured banter.

CHAPTER XXXIV.
THE FACE OF RENÉE

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

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

"You stay with us, Nevil?"

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

"Has Dr. Shrapnel been in danger?"

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

"I declare to you, Nevil..."

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

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

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

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

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

"What? Nevil!" exclaimed Rosamund, gaping.

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

"But you would never tell your uncle that?"

He laughed in his uncle's manner.

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

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

The bell rang.

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

"Oh! Nevil, do you not see Captain Baskelett at work here?"

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

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

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

He went downstairs.

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

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

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

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

nursing him to the end.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cecilia murmured of a general resemblance in the features. Renée enchained her. Though but a sun-shadow, the vividness of this French face came out surprisingly; air was in the nostrils and speech flew from the tremulous mouth. The eyes? were they quivering with internal light, or were they set to seem so in the sensitive strange curves of the eyelids whose awakened lashes appeared to tremble on some borderland between lustreful significance and the mists? She caught at the nerves like certain aoristic combinations in music, like tones of a stringed instrument swept by the wind, enticing, unseizable. Yet she sat there at her father's feet gazing out into the world indifferent to spectators, indifferent even to the common sentiment of gracefulness. Her left hand clasped his right, and she supported herself on the floor with the other hand leaning away from him, to the destruction of conventional symmetry in the picture. None but a woman of consummate breeding dared have done as she did. It was not Southern suppleness that saved her from the charge of harsh audacity, but something of the kind of genius in her mood which has hurried the greater poets of sound and speech to impose their naturalness upon accepted laws, or show the laws to have been our meagre limitations.

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

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

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

them rich; they are pining.

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

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

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

“What’s that?” asked the colonel, at Beauchamp’s heels.

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

Colonel Halkett turned to him.

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

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

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

“Why the downs?” he said.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXXV.
THE RIDE IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

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

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

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

This astute gentleman had caught at the idea of a ride of the young couple to the downs with his customary alacrity of perception as being the very best arrangement for hurrying them to the point. At Steynham Nevil was sure to be howling all day over his tumbled joss Shrapnel. Once away in the heart of the downs, and Cecilia beside him, it was a matter of calculation that two or three hours of the sharpening air would screw his human nature to the pitch. In fact, unless each of them was reluctant, they could hardly return unbetrothed. Cecilia’s consent was foreshadowed by her submission in going: Mr. Romfrey had noticed her fright at the suggestive formalities he cast round the expedition, and felt sure of her. Taking Nevil for a man who could smell the perfume of a ripe affirmative on the sweetest of lips, he was pretty well sure of him likewise. And then a truce to all that Radical rageing and hot-pokering of the country! and lie in peace, old Shrapnel! and get on your legs when you can, and offend no more; especially be mindful not to let fly one word against a woman! With Cecilia for wife, and a year of marriage devoted to a son and heir, Nevil might be expected to resume his duties as a naval officer, and win an honourable name for the inheritance of the young one he kissed.

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

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

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

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

“What’s come to them?” the colonel asked of Mr. Romfrey, who said shrugging, “Something wrong with one of the horses.” It had happened to him on one occasion to set foot in the hole of a baked hedgehog that

had furnished a repast, not without succulence, to some shepherd of the downs. Such a case might have recurred; it was more likely to cause an upset at a walk than at a gallop: or perhaps a shoe had been cast; and young people break no bones at a walking fall; ten to one if they do at their top speed. Horses manage to kill their seniors for them: the young are exempt from accident.

Colonel Halkett nodded and sighed: “I daresay they’re safe. It’s that man Shrapnel’s letter—that letter, Romfrey! A private letter, I know; but I’ve not heard Nevil disown the opinions expressed in it. I submit. It’s no use resisting. I treat my daughter as a woman capable of judging for herself. I repeat, I submit. I haven’t a word against Nevil except on the score of his politics. I like him. All I have to say is, I don’t approve of a republican and a sceptic for my son-in-law. I yield to you, and my daughter, if she...!”

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

“How he goes on about Shrapnel!”

“I shouldn’t think much of him if he didn’t.”

“You’re one in a thousand, Romfrey. I object to seeing a man worshipped.”

“It’s Nevil’s green-sickness, and Shrapnel’s the god of it.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Had a good day?” said Mr. Romfrey.

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

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

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

Cecilia presented herself and kissed him.

“Well?” said he.

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

“No news for me?”

She had no news.

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

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

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

“Where have you heard of him?” Rosamund asked.

“We have been there.”

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

“It was Nevil’s wish,” said Cecilia.

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

Cecilia mentioned a junction railway station they had ridden to; and thence, boxing the horses, by train to Bevisham. Rosamund understood that some haunting anxiety had fretted Nevil during the night; in the morning he could not withstand it, and he begged Cecilia to change their destination, apparently with a vehemence of entreaty that had been irresistible, or else it was utter affection for him had reduced her to

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

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

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

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

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

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

"This terrible Dr. Shrapnel!" Rosamund exclaimed, but reported that no loud voices were raised in the dining-room.

Colonel Halkett came to see his daughter, full of anxiety and curiosity. Affairs had been peaceful below, for he was ignorant of the expedition to Bevisham. On hearing of it he frowned, questioned Cecilia as to whether

she had set foot on that man's grounds, then said: "Ah! well, we leave to-morrow: I must go, I have business at home; I can't delay it. I sanctioned no calling there, nothing of the kind. From Steynham to Bevisham? Goodness, it's rank madness. I'm not astonished you're sick and ill."

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Cecilia did not dismount,” said Beauchamp.

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

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

“We’re not obliged to go and look on men who have had their measure dealt them.”

“Barbarously,” said Beauchamp.

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

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

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

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

“We’ve had what you think of it twice over,” said Mr. Romfrey. “I suppose it was the first time for information, the second time for emphasis, and the rest counts to keep it alive in your recollection.”

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

“I’m sorry for it, and I’ll pay the doctor’s bill.”

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

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

“That’s well said!” came from Colonel Halkett.

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

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

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

“You mean to sit still under Dr. Shrapnel’s forgiveness?”

“He’s taken to copy the Christian religion, has he?”

“You know you were deluded when you struck him.”

“Not a whit.”

“Yes, you know it now: Mrs. Culling—”

“Drag in no woman, Nevil Beauchamp!”

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

“She has done no such nonsense.”

“If she has not!—but I trust her to have done it.”

“You play the trumpeter, you terrorize her.”

“Into opening her lips wider; nothing else. I’ll have the truth from her, and no mincing: and from Cecil Baskelett and Palmet.”

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

“You!” cried Beauchamp.

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

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

“What have you got there?” Colonel Halkett asked him.

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

colonel."

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

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

"Wait till they do say it."

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

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

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

"He can't!" ejaculated the colonel.

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

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

"Common enough to be classed."

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

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

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

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

"He asks for nothing from you."

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

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

"And you're his parrot."

"He pardons you."

"Ha! t' other cheek!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beauchamp would not be goaded.

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

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

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

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

We see the consequence of it in this Shrapnel complication.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You are losing her."

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

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

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

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

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

appeared impregnable, and Beauchamp mad. “He’s foaming again!” said the colonel, and was only ultra-pictorial. “Before breakfast!” was a further slur on Beauchamp.

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

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

“Nevil,” said Cecilia, “you will not think it presumption in me to give you advice?”

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

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

She hinted at expediency; he frankly repudiated it.

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

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

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

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

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

She was tempted to smile.

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

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

“Yes,” she said, not very warmly, though sadly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was that to be thought of, certainly.

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

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

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

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

"Tell her, a first reading—it's difficult to read at first," he said, and burned to read it to Cecilia himself: to read it to her with his comments and explanations appeared imperative. It struck him in a flash that Cecilia's counsel to him to quit Steynham for awhile was good. And if he went to Bevisham he would be assured of Dr. Shrapnel's condition: notes and telegrams from the cottage were too much tempered to console and deceive him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"If you think of bringing my cousin Baskelett, give me warning, sir," cried Beauchamp.

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

CHAPTER XXXVII.
CECILIA CONQUERED

The carriage rolled out of the avenue and through the park, for some time parallel with the wavy downs. Once away from Steynham Colonel Halkett breathed freely, as if he had dropped a load: he was free of his bond to Mr. Romfrey, and so great was the sense of relief in him that he resolved to do battle against his daughter, supposing her still lively blush to be the sign of the enemy's flag run up on a surrendered citadel. His authority was now to be thought of: his paternal sanction was in his own keeping. Beautiful as she looked, it was hardly credible that a fellow in possession of his reason could have let slip his chance of such a prize; but whether he had or had not, the colonel felt that he occupied a position enabling him either to out-manœuvre, or, if need were, interpose forcibly and punish him for his half-heartedness.

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

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

"Iniquitous rubbish!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Not entirely, colonel."

Cecilia danced with Mr. Tuckham at the Yacht Ball, and was vividly mindful of every slight incident leading to and succeeding her lover's

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

He won her confidence by praising and loving her father, and when she alluded to the wonderful services he had rendered on the Welsh estate, he said simply that her father’s thanks repaid him. He recalled his former downrightness only in speaking of the case of Dr. Shrapnel, upon which, both with the colonel and with her, he was unreservedly condemnatory of Mr. Romfrey. Colonel Halkett’s defence of the true knight and guardian of the reputation of ladies, fell to pieces in the presence of Mr. Tuckham. He had seen Dr. Shrapnel, on a visit to Mr. Lydiard, whom he described as hanging about Bevisham, philandering as a married man should not, though in truth he might soon expect to be released by the death of his crazy wife. The doctor, he said, had been severely shaken by the monstrous assault made on him, and had been most unrighteously handled. The doctor was an inoffensive man in his private life, detestable and dangerous though his teachings were. Outside politics Mr. Tuckham went altogether with Beauchamp. He promised also that old Mrs. Beauchamp should be accurately informed of the state of matters between Captain Beauchamp and Mr. Romfrey. He left Mount Laurels to go back in attendance on the venerable lady, without once afflicting Cecilia with a shiver of well-founded apprehension, and she was grateful to him almost to friendly affection in the vanishing of her unjust suspicion, until her father hinted that there was the man of his heart. Then she closed all avenues to her own.

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

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

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

Now Cecilia wished for Mr. Austin’s opinion of Dr. Shrapnel; and as

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

Her father hummed to himself, and immediately begged Seymour Austin not to waste his time on the stuff, though he had no idea that a perusal of it could awaken other than the gravest reprehension in so rational a Tory gentleman.

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

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

“Why, the man’s an infidel!” Colonel Halkett exclaimed.

“There are numbers.”

“They have the grace not to confess, then.”

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

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

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

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

“I do call it insane,” said the colonel.

He separated himself from his daughter by a sharp division.

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

case; behaviour on her part which rendered the colonel inveterate.

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

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

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

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

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

Cecilia faltered: "Do you see a chance?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cecilia looked perplexed.

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

Gratitude to Mr. Tuckham on Beauchamp's behalf caused Cecilia to

praise him, in the tone of compliments. The difficulty of seriously admiring two gentlemen at once is a feminine dilemma, with the maidenly among women.

“He has disappointed me,” said Colonel Halkett.

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

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

“You mean, why should Nevil have money?”

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

“He has not failed.”

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

“What were his words, papa?”

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

“Has he been to France lately?” asked Cecilia.

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

“The woman’s father is dead, I hear,” Colonel Halkett remarked.

“But he has not been there?”

“How can I tell? He’s anywhere, wherever his passions whisk him.”

“No!”

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

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

Colonel Halkett scoffed at her “Oh no,” and called it woman’s logic.

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

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

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

“You misunderstood him, my dear.”

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

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

“Not in matters of business: in matters of thought.”

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

“That I owe to Nevil Beauchamp!”

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

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

with this Frenchwoman!”

“He has never said that he loved me.”

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

“Never, papa.”

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

“The French story is untrue, papa.”

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

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

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

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

“It is not true now.”

“It’s not going on, you mean? How do you know?”

“I know.”

“Has he been swearing it?”

“He has not spoken of it to me.”

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

“I know he is not immoral.”

“There you shoot again! Haven’t you a yes or a no for your father?”

Cecilia cast her arms round his neck, and sobbed.

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

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

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

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

Cecilia gazed away, breathing through tremulous dilating nostrils.

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

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

“If you find out you’re wrong?”

She shook her head.

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

“No, papa, not I. I will not.”

“Well, that’s something for me to hold fast to,” said Colonel Halkett, sighing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.
LORD AVONLEY

Mr. Everard Romfrey was now, by consent, Lord Avonley, mounted on his direct heirship and riding hard at the earldom. His elevation occurred at a period of life that would have been a season of decay with most men; but the prolonged and lusty Autumn of the veteran took new fires from a tangible object to live for. His brother Craven's death had slightly stupefied, and it had grieved him: it seemed to him peculiarly pathetic; for as he never calculated on the happening of mortal accidents to men of sound constitution, the circumstance imparted a curious shake to his own solidity. It was like the quaking of earth, which tries the balance of the strongest. If he had not been raised to so splendid a survey of the actual world, he might have been led to think of the imaginary, where perchance a man may meet his old dogs and a few other favourites, in a dim perpetual twilight. Thither at all events Craven had gone, and goodnight to him! The earl was a rapidly lapsing invalid. There could be no doubt that Everard was to be the head of his House.

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

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

He should have known his uncle Everard better.

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

Cecilia had not pleased him; none had. He did not bear in mind that the sight of Dr. Shrapnel sick and weak, which constantly reanimated his feelings of pity and of wrath, was not given to the others of whom he demanded a corresponding energy of just indignation and sympathy. The sense that he was left unaided to the task of bending his tough uncle, combined with his appreciation of the righteousness of the task to embitter him and set him on a pedestal, from which he descended at every sign of an opportunity for striking, and to which he retired continually baffled and wrathful, in isolation.

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

There came on him a thirst for the haranguing of crowds. They agree with you or they disagree; exciting you to activity in either case. They do not interpose cold Tory exclusiveness and inaccessibility. You have them in the rough; you have nature in them, and all that is hopeful in nature.

You drive at, over, and through them, for their good; you plough them. You sow them too. Some of them perceive that it *is* for their good, and what if they be a minority? Ghastly as a minority is in an Election, in a lifelong struggle it is refreshing and encouraging. The young world and its triumph is with the minority. Oh to be speaking! Condemned to silence beside his uncle, Beauchamp chafed for a loosed tongue and an audience tossing like the well-whipped ocean, or open as the smooth sea-surface to the marks of the breeze. Let them be hostile or amicable, he wanted an audience as hotly as the humped Richard a horse.

At Romfrey Castle he fell upon an audience that became transformed into a swarm of chatterers, advisers, and reprovers the instant his lips were parted. The ladies of the family declared his pursuit of the Apology to be worse and vainer than his politics. The gentlemen said the same, but they were not so outspoken to him personally, and indulged in asides, with quotations of some of his uncle Everard's recent observations concerning him: as for example, "Politically he's a mad harlequin jumping his tights and spangles when nobody asks him to jump; and in private life he's a mad dentist poking his tongs at my sound tooth:" a highly ludicrous image of the persistent fellow, and a reminder of situations in Molière, as it was acted by Cecil Baskelett and Lord Welshpool. Beauchamp had to a certain extent restored himself to favour with his uncle Everard by offering a fair suggestion on the fatal field to account for the accident, after the latter had taken measurements and examined the place in perplexity. His elucidation of the puzzle was referred to by Lord Avonley at Romfrey, and finally accepted as possible and this from a wiseacre who went quacking about the county, expecting to upset the order of things in England! Such a mixing of sense and nonsense in a fellow's noddle was never before met with, Lord Avonley said. Cecil took the hint. He had been unworried by Beauchamp: Dr. Shrapnel had not been mentioned: and it delighted Cecil to let it be known that he thought old Nevil had some good notions, particularly as to the duties of the aristocracy—that first war-cry of his when a midshipman. News of another fatal accident in the hunting-field confirmed Cecil's higher opinion of his cousin. On the day of Craven's funeral they heard at Romfrey that Mr. Wardour-Devereux had been killed by a fall from his horse. Two English gentlemen despatched by the same agency within a fortnight! "He smoked," Lord Avonley said of the second departure, to allay some perturbation in the bosoms of the ladies who had ceased to ride, by accounting for this particular mishap in the most reassuring fashion. Cecil's immediate reflection was that the unfortunate smoker had left a rich widow. Far behind in the race for Miss Halkett, and uncertain of a settled advantage in his other rivalry with Beauchamp, he fixed his mind on the widow, and as Beauchamp did not stand in his way, but on the contrary might help him—for she, like the generality of women, admired Nevil Beauchamp in spite of her feminine good sense and conservatism—Cecil began to regard the man he felt less opposed to with some recognition of his merits. The two nephews accompanied Lord Avonley to London, and slept at his town-house.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cecil dramatized the fun to amuse Mr. Culbrett. Apparently Beauchamp had been staggered on hearing himself asked for the definite article he claimed. He had made a point of speaking of *the* Apology. Lord Avonley did likewise. And each professed to exact it for a deeply aggrieved person: each put it on the ground that it involved the other's rightful ownership of the title of gentleman.

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

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

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

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

No stroke of retributive misfortune could have been severer to Rosamund than to be thrust forward as the object of humiliation for the man she loved. She saw at a glance how much more likely it was (remote as the possibility appeared) that her lord would perform the act of penitence than her beloved Nevil. And she had no occasion to ask herself why. Lord Avonley had done wrong, and Nevil had not. It was inconceivable that Nevil should apologize to her. It was horrible to picture the act in her mind. She was a very rational woman, quite a woman of the world, yet such was her situation between these two men that the childish tale of a close and consecutive punishment for sins, down to our little naughtinesses and naturalnesses, enslaved her intelligence, and amazed her with the example made of her, as it were to prove the tale true of our being surely hauled back like domestic animals learning the habits of good society, to the rueful contemplation of certain of our deeds, however wildly we appeal to nature to stand up for them.

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

Rosamund knew Lord Avonley too well to harass him with further petitions and explanations. Equally vain was it to attempt to persuade Beauchamp. He made use of the house in London, where he met his

uncle occasionally, and he called at Steynham for money, that he could have obtained upon the one condition, which was no sooner mentioned than fiery words flew in the room, and the two separated. The leaden look in Beauchamp, noticed by Cecilia Halkett in their latest interview, was deepening, and was of itself a displeasure to Lord Avonley, who liked flourishing faces, and said: “That fellow’s getting the look of a sweating smith”: presumptively in the act of heating his poker at the furnace to stir the country.

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

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

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

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

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

“If she comes she will hear what I think of her.”

“Then, out of the house!”

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

“I do.”

“I must have it!”

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

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

“Give it up.”

“I shall have to,” said Beauchamp, striving to be prudent.

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

CHAPTER XXXIX.
BETWEEN BEAUCHAMP AND CECILIA

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

In the matter of money, as of his physical health, he wanted to do too much at once; he had spent largely of both in his efforts to repair the injury done to Dr. Shrapnel. He was overworked, anxious, restless, craving for a holiday somewhere in France, possibly; he was all but leaping on board the boat at times, and, unwilling to leave his dear old friend who clung to him, he stayed, keeping his impulses below the tide-mark which leads to action, but where they do not yield peace of spirit. The tone of Renée's letters filled him with misgivings. She wrote word that she had seen M. d'Henriel for the first time since his return from Italy, and he was much changed, and inclined to thank Roland for the lesson he had received from him at the sword's point. And next she urged Beauchamp to marry, so that he and she might meet, as if she felt a necessity for it. "I shall love your wife; teach her to think amiably of me," she said. And her letter contained womanly sympathy for him in his battle with his uncle. Beauchamp thought of his experiences of Cecilia's comparative coldness. He replied that there was no prospect of his marrying; he wished there were one of meeting! He forbore from writing too fervently, but he alluded to happy days in Normandy, and proposed to renew them if she would say she had need of him. He entreated her to deal with him frankly; he reminded her that she must constantly look to him, as she had vowed she would, when in any kind of trouble; and he declared to her that he was unchanged. He meant, of an unchanged disposition to shield and serve her; but the review of her situation, and his knowledge of her quick blood, wrought him to some jealous lover's throbs, which led him to impress his unchangeableness upon her, to bind her to that standard.

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

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

An incessant struggle of one man with the world, which position usually ranks his relatives against him, does not conduce to soundness of judgement. He may nevertheless be right in considering that he is right in the main. The world in motion is not so wise that it can pretend to silence the outcry of an ordinarily generous heart even—the very infant of antagonism to its methods and establishments. It is not so difficult to be right against the world when the heart is really active; but the world is our book of humanity, and before insisting that *his* handwriting shall occupy the next blank page of it, the noble rebel is bound for the sake of his aim to ask himself how much of a giant he is, lest he fall like a blot on the page, instead of inscribing intelligible characters there.

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

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

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

His behaviour to Grancey Lespel was eclipsed by his treatment of Captain Baskelett. Cecil had ample reason to suppose his cousin to be friendly with him. He himself had forgotten Dr. Shrapnel, and all other dissensions, in a supremely Christian spirit. He paid his cousin the compliment to think that he had done likewise. At Romfrey and in London he had spoken to Nevil of his designs upon the widow: Nevil said nothing against it and it was under Mrs. Wardour-Devereux's eyes, and before a man named Lydiard, that, never calling to him to put him on his guard, Nevil fell foul of him with every capital charge that can be brought against a gentleman, and did so abuse, worry, and disgrace him as to reduce him to quit the house to avoid the scandal of a resort to a gentleman's last appeal in vindication of his character. Mrs. Devereux spoke of the terrible scene to Cecilia, and Lydiard to Miss Denham. The injured person communicated it to Lord Avonley, who told Colonel Halkett emphatically that his nephew Cecil deserved well of him in having kept command of his temper out of consideration for the family. There was a general murmur of the family over this incident. The widow was rich, and it ranked among the unwritten crimes against blood for one offshoot of a great house wantonly to thwart another in the wooing of her by humbling him in her presence, doing his utmost to expose him as a schemer, a culprit, and a poltroon.

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

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

A problem of her own conduct disturbed the young lady's clear conception of herself: and this was a ruffling of unfaithfulness in her love of Beauchamp, that was betrayed to her by her forgetfulness of him whenever she chanced to be with Seymour Austin. In Mr. Austin's company she recovered her forfeited repose, her poetry of life, her image of the independent Cecilia throned above our dust of battle, gazing on

broad heaven. She carried the feeling so far that Blackburn Tuckham's enthusiasm for Mr. Austin gave him grace in her sight, and praise of her father's favourite from Mr. Austin's mouth made him welcome to her. The image of that grave capable head, dusty-grey about the temples, and the darkly sanguine face of the tried man, which was that of a seasoned warrior and inspired full trust in him, with his vivid look, his personal distinction, his plain devotion to the country's business, and the domestic solitude he lived in, admired, esteemed, loved perhaps, but unpartnered, was often her refuge and haven from tempestuous Beauchamp. She could see in vision the pride of Seymour Austin's mate. It flushed her reflectively. Conquered but not claimed, Cecilia was like the frozen earth insensibly moving round to sunshine in nature, with one white flower in her breast as innocent a sign of strong sweet blood as a woman may wear. She ascribed to that fair mate of Seymour Austin's many lofty charms of womanhood; above all, stateliness: her especial dream of an attainable superlative beauty in women. And supposing that lady to be accused of the fickle breaking of another love, who walked beside him, matched with his calm heart and one with him in counsel, would the accusation be repeated by them that beheld her husband? might it not rather be said that she had not deviated, but had only stepped higher? She chose no youth, no glistener, no idler: it was her soul striving upward to air like a seed in the earth that raised her to him: and she could say to the man once enchaining her: Friend, by the good you taught me I was led to this!

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

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

But he, though not blind, was keenly wounded.

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

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

Her father was too wary to leave them.

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

They met in London. Beauchamp had not vacated either Holdesbury or the town-house; he was defying his uncle Everard, and Cecilia thought with him that it was a wise temerity. She thought with him passively altogether. On this occasion she had not to wait for directness in his eyes; she had to parry it. They were at a dinner-party at Lady Elsea's, generally the last place for seeing Lord Palmet, but he was present, and arranged things neatly for them, telling Beauchamp that he acted under Mrs. Wardour-Devereux's orders. Never was an opportunity, more propitious for a desperate lover. Had it been Renée next him, no petty worldly scruples of honour would have held him back. And if Cecilia had spoken feelingly of Dr. Shrapnel, or had she simulated a thoughtful interest in his pursuits, his hesitations would have vanished. As it was, he dared to look what he did not permit himself to speak. She was nobly lovely, and the palpable envy of men around cried fool at his delays. Beggar and heiress he said in his heart, to vitalize the three-parts fiction of the point of honour which Cecilia's beauty was fast submerging. When she was leaving he named a day for calling to see her. Colonel Halkett

stood by, and she answered, “Come.”

Beauchamp kept the appointment. Cecilia was absent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cecil accompanied his descent of the steps with the humming of an opera melody: Beauchamp tripped into the hall-passage. A young maid-servant held the door open, and she accosted him: “If you please, there is

a lady up-stairs in the drawing-room; she speaks foreign English, sir."

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

CHAPTER XL.
A TRIAL OF HIM

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

She was trembling.

Beauchamp asked her whisperingly if she had come alone.

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

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

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

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

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

"No."

Her tone was brief; not reassuring.

"You came straight to me?"

"Without a deviation that I know of."

"From Tourdestelle?"

"You have not forgotten Tourdestelle, Nevil?"

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

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

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

So now she was free.

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

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

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

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

"Agnès? I left her at Tourdestelle," said Renée.

"And Roland? He never writes to me."

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

"He will run over to us."

"Do not expect it."

"Why not?"

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

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

speech.

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

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

“That girl in Venice had no courage,” said Renée.

She raised her head and looked about the room.

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

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

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

“Why? Superstitiously?”

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

The fiction of her being free could not be sustained.

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

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

Renée’s dark eyelashes lifted on him, and dropped.

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

She replied: “Almost.”

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

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

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

“I do. There’s nothing I ask for now—if the step can’t be retrieved.”

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

“I am thinking of you, Renée.”

“Yes, I know,” she answered hurriedly.

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

“I am talking of women,” said Renée.

“Why not for women?”

“Honourable women, I mean,” said Renée.

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

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

“You wrote to me that you were unchanged, Nevil.”

“I am.”

“So, then, I came.”

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

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

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

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

She named her hotel in her French English, and the sound of it

penetrated him with remorseful pity. It was for him, and of his doing, that she was in an alien land and an outcast!

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

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

“I love you with all my heart and soul.”

“As in Normandy?”

“Yes.”

“In Venice?”

“As from the first, Renée! That I can swear.”

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

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

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

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

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

“The world does not stone men,” said Renée.

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

“No, friend, I am not complaining.” Renée put out her hand to him; with compassionate irony feigning to have heard excuses. “What right have I to complain? I have not the sensation. I could not expect you to be everlastingly the sentinel of love. Three times I rejected you! Now that I have lost my father—Oh! poor father: I trifled with my lover, I tricked him that my father might live in peace. He is dead. I wished you to marry one of your own countrywomen, Nevil. You said it was impossible; and I, with my snake at my heart, and a husband grateful for nursing and whimpering to me for his youth like a beggar on the road, I thought I owed you this debt of body and soul, to prove to you I have some courage; and for myself, to reward myself for my long captivity and misery with one year of life: and adieu to Roland my brother! adieu to friends! adieu to France! Italy was our home. I dreamed of one year in Italy; I fancied it might be two; more than that was unimaginable. Prisoners of long date do not hope; they do not calculate: air, light, they say; to breathe freely and drop down! They are reduced to the instincts of the beasts. I thought I might give you happiness, pay part of my debt to you. Are you remembering Count Henri? That paints what I was! I could fly to that for a taste of life! a dance to death! And again you ask: Why, if I loved you then, not turn to you in preference? No, you have answered it yourself, Nevil;—on that day in the boat, when generosity in a man so surprised me, it seemed a miracle to me; and it was, in its divination. How I thank my dear brother Roland for saving me the sight of you condemned to fight, against your conscience! He taught poor M. d’Henriel his lesson. You, Nevil, were my teacher. And see how it hangs: there was mercy for me in not having drawn down my father’s anger on my heart’s beloved. He loved you. He pitied us. He reproached himself. In his last days he was taught to suspect our story: perhaps from Roland; perhaps I breathed it without speaking. He called heaven’s blessings on you. He spoke of you with tears, clutching my hand. He made me feel he

would have cried out: ‘If I were leaving her with Nevil Beauchamp!’ and ‘Beauchamp,’ I heard him murmuring once: ‘take down Froissart’: he named a chapter. It was curious: if he uttered my name Renée, yours, ‘Nevil,’ soon followed. That was noticed by Roland. Hope for us, he could not have had; as little as I! But we were his two: his children. I buried him—I thought he would know our innocence, and now pardon our love. I read your letters, from my name at the beginning, to yours at the end, and from yours back to mine, and between the lines, for any doubtful spot: and oh, rash! But I would not retrace the step for my own sake. I am certain of your love for me, though…” She paused: “Yes, I am certain of it. And if I am a burden to you?”

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

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

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

She faltered: “At Tourdestelle…”

“Yes, and I *am* unchanged,” Beauchamp cried out. “Your life there was horrible, and mine’s intolerable.” He stretched his arms cramped like the yawning of a wretch in fetters. That which he would and would not became so intervolved that he deemed it reasonable to instance their common misery as a ground for their union against the world. And what has that world done for us, that a joy so immeasurable should be rejected on its behalf? And what have we succeeded in doing, that the childish effort to move it should be continued at such a cost?

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

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

“Oh! not England, Italy, Italy!” Renée exclaimed: “Italy, or Greece: anywhere where we have sunlight. Mountains and valleys are my dream. Promise it, Nevil. I will obey you; but this is my wish. Take me through Venice, that I may look at myself and wonder. We can live at sea, in a yacht; anywhere with you but in England. This country frowns on me; I can hardly fetch my breath here, I am suffocated. The people all walk in lines in England. Not here, Nevil! They are good people, I am sure; and it is your country: but their faces chill me, their voices grate; I should never understand them; they would be to me like their fogs eternally; and I to them? O me! it would be like hearing sentence in the dampness of the shroud perpetually. Again I say I do not doubt that they are very good: they claim to be; they judge others; they may know how to make themselves happy in their climate; it is common to most creatures to do so, or to imagine it. Nevil! not England!”

Truly “the mad commander and his French marquise” of the Bevisham Election ballad would make a pretty figure in England!

His friends of his own class would be mouthing it. The story would be a dogging shadow of his public life, and, quite as bad, a reflection on his party. He heard the yelping tongues of the cynics. He saw the consternation and grief of his old Bevisham hero, his leader and his teacher.

“Florence,” he said, musing on the prospect of exile and idleness: “there’s a kind of society to be had in Florence.”

Renée asked him if he cared so much for society.

He replied that women must have it, just as men must have exercise.

“Old women, Nevil; intriguers, tattlers.”

“Young women, Renée.”

She signified no.

He shook the head of superior knowledge paternally.

Her instinct of comedy set a dimple faintly working in her cheek.

“Not if they love, Nevil.”

“At least,” said he, “a man does not like to see the woman he loves

banished by society and browbeaten."

"Putting me aside, do you care for it, Nevil?"

"Personally not a jot."

"I am convinced of that," said Renée.

She spoke suspiciously sweetly, appearing perfect candour.

The change in him was perceptible to her. The nature of the change was unfathomable.

She tried her wits at the riddle. But though she could be an actress before him with little difficulty, the torment of her situation roused the fever within her at a bare effort to think acutely. Scarlet suffused her face: her brain whirled.

"Remember, dearest, I have but offered myself: you have your choice. I can pass on. Yes, I know well I speak to Nevil Beauchamp; you have drilled me to trust you and your word as a soldier trusts to his officer—once a faint-hearted soldier! I need not remind you: fronting the enemy now, in hard truth. But I want your whole heart to decide. Give me no silly compassion! Would it have been better to me to have written to you? If I had written I should have clipped my glorious impulse, brought myself down to earth with my own arrow. I did not write, for I believed in you."

So firm had been her faith in him that her visions of him on the passage to England had resolved all to one flash of blood-warm welcome awaiting her: and it says much for her natural generosity that the savage delicacy of a woman placed as she now was, did not take a mortal hurt from the apparent voidness of this home of his bosom. The passionate gladness of the lover was wanting: the chivalrous valiancy of manful joy.

Renée shivered at the cloud thickening over her new light of intrepid defiant life.

"Think it not improbable that I have weighed everything I surrender in quitting France," she said.

Remorse wrestled with Beauchamp and flung him at her feet.

Renée remarked on the lateness of the hour.

He promised to conduct her to her hotel immediately.

"And to-morrow?" said Renée, simply, but breathlessly.

"To-morrow, let it be Italy! But first I telegraph to Roland and Tourdestelle. I can't run and hide. The step may be retrieved: or no, you are right; the step cannot, but the next to it may be stopped—that was the meaning I had! I'll try. It's cutting my hand off, tearing my heart out; but I will. O that you were free! You left your husband at Tourdestelle?"

"I presume he is there at present: he was in Paris when I left."

Beauchamp spoke hoarsely and incoherently in contrast with her composure: "You will misunderstand me for a day or two, Renée. I say if you were free I should have my first love mine for ever. Don't fear me: I have no right even to press your fingers. He may throw you into my arms. Now you are the same as if you were in your own home: and you must accept me for your guide. By all I hope for in life, I'll see you through it, and keep the dogs from barking, if I can. Thousands are ready to give tongue. And if they can get me in the character of a law-breaker! —I hear them."

"Are you imagining, Nevil, that there is a possibility of my returning to him?"

"To your place in the world! You have not had to endure tyranny?"

"I should have had a certain respect for a tyrant, Nevil. At least I should have had an occupation in mocking him and conspiring against him. Tyranny! There would have been some amusement to me in that."

"It was neglect."

"If I could still charge it on neglect, Nevil! Neglect is very endurable. He rewards me for nursing him... he rewards me with a little persecution: wives should be flattered by it: it comes late."

"What?" cried Beauchamp, oppressed and impatient.

Renée sank her voice.

Something in the run of the unaccented French: "Son amour, mon ami": drove the significance of the bitterness of the life she had left behind her burningly through him. This was to have fled from a dragon! was the lover's thought: he perceived the motive of her flight: and it was a vindication of it that appealed to him irresistibly. The proposal for her return grew hideous: and this ever multiplying horror and sting of the love of a married woman came on him with a fresh throbbing shock, more venom.

He felt for himself now, and now he was full of feeling for her. Impossible that she should return! Tourdestelle shone to him like a gaping chasm of fire. And becoming entirely selfish he impressed his total abnegation of self upon Renée so that she could have worshipped him. A lover that was like a starry frost, froze her veins, bewildered her intelligence. She yearned for meridian warmth, for repose in a directing hand; and let it be hard as one that grasps a sword: what matter? unhesitatingness was the warrior virtue of her desire. And for herself the worst might happen if only she were borne along. Let her life be torn and streaming like the flag of battle, it must be forward to the end.

That was a quality of godless young heroism not unexhausted in Beauchamp's blood. Reanimated by him, she awakened his imagination of the vagrant splendours of existence and the rebel delights which have their own laws and "nature" for an applauding mother. Radiant Alps rose in his eyes, and the morning born in the night suns that from mountain and valley, over sea and desert, called on all earth to witness their death. The magnificence of the contempt of humanity posed before him superbly satanesque, grand as thunder among the crags and it was not a sensual cry that summoned him from his pedlar labours, pack on back along the level road, to live and breathe deep, gloriously mated: Renée kindled his romantic spirit, and could strike the feeling into him that to be proud of his possession of her was to conquer the fretful vanity to possess. She was not a woman of wiles and lures.

Once or twice she consulted her watch: but as she professed to have no hunger, Beauchamp's entreaty to her to stay prevailed, and the subtle form of compliment to his knightly manliness in her remaining with him, gave him a new sense of pleasure that hung round her companionable conversation, deepening the meaning of the words, or sometimes contrasting the sweet surface commonplace with the undercurrent of strangeness in their hearts, and the reality of a tragic position. Her musical volubility flowed to entrance and divert him, as it did.

Suddenly Beauchamp glanced upward.

Renée turned from a startled contemplation of his frown, and beheld Mrs. Rosamund Culling in the room.

CHAPTER XLI.
A LAME VICTORY

The intruder was not a person that had power to divide them; yet she came between their hearts with a touch of steel.

“I am here in obedience to your commands in your telegram of this evening,” Rosamund replied to Beauchamp’s hard stare at her; she courteously spoke French, and acquitted herself demurely of a bow to the lady present.

Renée withdrew her serious eyes from Beauchamp. She rose and acknowledged the bow.

“It is my first visit to England, madame!”

“I could have desired, Madame la marquise, more agreeable weather for you.”

“My friends in England will dispel the bad weather for me, madame”; Renée smiled softly: “I have been studying my French-English phrase-book, that I may learn how dialogues are conducted in your country to lead to certain ceremonies when old friends meet, and without my book I am at fault. I am longing to be embraced by you... if it will not be offending your rules?”

Rosamund succumbed to the seductive woman, whose gentle tooth bit through her tutored simplicity of manner and natural graciousness, administering its reproof, and eluding a retort or an excuse.

She gave the embrace. In doing so she fell upon her conscious awkwardness for an expression of reserve that should be as good as irony for irony, though where Madame de Rouaillout’s irony lay, or whether it was irony at all, our excellent English dame could not have stated, after the feeling of indignant prudery responding to it so guiltily had subsided.

Beauchamp asked her if she had brought servants with her; and it gratified her to see that he was no actor fitted to carry a scene through in virtue’s name and vice’s mask with this actress.

She replied, “I have brought a man and a maid-servant. The establishment will be in town the day after tomorrow, in time for my lord’s return from the Castle.”

“You can have them up to-morrow morning.”

“I could,” Rosamund admitted the possibility. Her idolatry of him was tried on hearing him press the hospitality of the house upon Madame de Rouaillout, and observing the lady’s transparent feint of a reluctant yielding. For the voluble Frenchwoman scarcely found a word to utter: she protested languidly that she preferred the independence of her hotel, and fluttered a singular look at him, as if overcome by his vehement determination to have her in the house. Undoubtedly she had a taking face and style. His infatuation, nevertheless, appeared to Rosamund utter dementedness, considering this woman’s position, and Cecilia Halkett’s beauty and wealth, and that the house was no longer at his disposal. He was really distracted, to judge by his forehead, or else he was over-acting his part.

The absence of a cook in the house, Rosamund remarked, must prevent her from seconding Captain Beauchamp’s invitation.

He turned on her witheringly. “The telegraph will do that. You’re in London; cooks can be had by dozens. Madame de Rouaillout is alone here; she has come to see a little of England, and you will do the honours of the house.”

“M. le marquis is not in London?” said Rosamund, disregarding the dumb imprecation she saw on Beauchamp’s features.

“No, madame, my husband is not in London,” Renée rejoined collectedly.

“See to the necessary comforts of the house instantly,” said Beauchamp, and telling Renée, without listening to her, that he had to issue orders, he led Rosamund, who was out of breath at the effrontery of the pair, toward the door. “Are you blind, ma’am? Have you gone foolish? What should I have sent for you for, but to protect her? I see your mind; and off with the prude, pray! Madame will have my room; clear away every sign of me there. I sleep out; I can find a bed anywhere. And bolt and chain the house-door to-night against Cecil Baskelett; he informs me that he has taken possession.”

Rosamund’s countenance had become less austere.

“Captain Baskelett!” she exclaimed, leaning to Beauchamp’s views on

the side of her animosity to Cecil; “he has been promised by his uncle the use of a set of rooms during the year, when the mistress of the house is not in occupation. I stipulated expressly that he was to see you and suit himself to your convenience, and to let me hear that you and he had agreed to an arrangement, before he entered the house. He has no right to be here, and I shall have no hesitation in locking him out.”

Beauchamp bade her go, and not be away more than five minutes; and then he would drive to the hotel for the luggage.

She scanned him for a look of ingenuousness that might be trusted, and laughed in her heart at her credulity for expecting it of a man in such a case. She saw Renée sitting stonily, too proudly self-respecting to put on a mask of flippant ease. These lovers might be accomplices in deceiving her; they were not happy ones, and that appeared to her to be some assurance that she did well in obeying him.

Beauchamp closed the door on her. He walked back to Renée with a thoughtful air that was consciously acted; his only thought being—now she knows me!

Renée looked up at him once. Her eyes were unaccusing, unquestioning.

With the violation of the secresy of her flight she had lost her initiative and her intrepidity. The world of human eyes glared on her through the windows of the two she had been exposed to, paralyzing her brain and caging her spirit of revolt. That keen wakefulness of her self-defensive social instinct helped her to an understanding of her lover’s plan to preserve her reputation, or rather to give her a corner of retreat in shielding the worthless thing—twice detested as her cloak of slavery coming from him! She comprehended no more. She was a house of nerves crowding in against her soul like fiery thorns, and had no space within her torture for a sensation of gratitude or suspicion; but feeling herself hurried along at lightning speed to some dreadful shock, her witless imagination apprehended it in his voice: not what he might say, only the sound. She feared to hear him speak, as the shrinking ear fears a thunder at the cavity; yet suspense was worse than the downward-driving silence.

The pang struck her when he uttered some words about Mrs. Culling, and protection, and Roland.

She thanked him.

So have common executioners been thanked by queenly ladies baring their necks to the axe.

He called up the pain he suffered to vindicate him; and it was really an agony of a man torn to pieces.

“I have done the best.”

This dogged and stupid piece of speech was pitiable to hear from Nevil Beauchamp.

“You think so?” said she; and her glass-like voice rang a tremour in its mildness that swelled through him on the plain submissive note, which was more assent than question.

“I am sure of it. I believe it. I see it. At least I hope so.”

“We are chiefly led by hope,” said Renée.

“At least, if not!” Beauchamp cried. “And it’s not too late. I have no right—I do what I can. I am at your mercy. Judge me later. If I am ever to know what happiness is, it will be with you. It’s not too late either way. There is Roland—my brother as much as if you were my wife!”

He begged her to let him have Roland’s exact address.

She named the regiment, the corps d’armée, the postal town, and the department.

“Roland will come at a signal,” he pursued; “we are not bound to consult others.”

Renée formed the French word of “we” on her tongue.

He talked of Roland and Roland, his affection for him as a brother and as a friend, and Roland’s love of them both.

“It is true,” said Renée.

“We owe him this; he represents your father.”

“All that you say is true, my friend.”

“Thus, you have come on a visit to madame, your old friend here—oh! your hand. What have I done?”

Renée motioned her hand as if it were free to be taken, and smiled faintly to make light of it, but did not give it.

“If you had been widowed!” he broke down to the lover again.

“That man is attached to the remnant of his life: I could not wish him dispossessed of it,” said Renée.

“Parted! who parts us? It’s for a night. Tomorrow!”

She breathed: “To-morrow.”

To his hearing it craved an answer. He had none. To talk like a lover, or like a man of honour, was to lie. Falsehood hemmed him in to the narrowest ring that ever statue stood on, if he meant to be stone.

“That woman will be returning,” he muttered, frowning at the vacant door. “I could lay out my whole life before your eyes, and show you I am unchanged in my love of you since the night when Roland and I walked on the Piazzetta...”

“Do not remind me; let those days lie black!” A sympathetic vision of her maiden’s tears on the night of wonderful moonlight when, as it seemed to her now, San Giorgio stood like a dark prophet of her present abasement and chastisement, sprang tears of a different character, and weak as she was with her soul’s fever and for want of food, she was piteously shaken. She said with some calmness: “It is useless to look back. I have no reproaches but for myself. Explain nothing to me. Things that are not comprehended by one like me are riddles I must put aside. I know where I am: I scarcely know more. Here is madame.”

The door had not opened, and it did not open immediately.

Beauchamp had time to say, “Believe in me.” Even that was false to his own hearing, and in a struggle with the painful impression of insincerity which was denied and scorned by his impulse to fling his arms round her and have her his for ever, he found himself deferentially accepting her brief directions concerning her boxes at the hotel, with Rosamund Culling to witness.

She gave him her hand.

He bowed over the fingers. “Until to-morrow, madame.”

“Adieu!” said Renée.

CHAPTER XLII.
THE TWO PASSIONS

The foggy February night refreshed his head, and the business of fetching the luggage from the hotel—a commission that necessitated the delivery of his card and some very commanding language—kept his mind in order. Subsequently he drove to his cousin Baskelett's Club, where he left a short note to say the house was engaged for the night and perhaps a week further. Concise, but sufficient: and he stated a hope to his cousin that he would not be inconvenienced. This was courteous.

He had taken a bed at Renée's hotel, after wresting her boxes from the vanquished hotel proprietor, and lay there, hearing the clear sound of every little sentence of hers during the absence of Rosamund: her "*Adieu*," and the strange "*Do you think so?*" and "*I know where I am; I scarcely know more*." Her eyes and their darker lashes, and the fitful little sensitive dimples of a smile without joy, came with her voice, but hardened to an aspect unlike her. Not a word could he recover of what she had spoken before Rosamund's intervention. He fancied she must have related details of her journey. Especially there must have been mention, he thought, of her drive to the station from Tourdestelle; and this flashed on him the scene of his ride to the château, and the meeting her on the road, and the white light on the branching river, and all that was Renée in the spirit of the place she had abandoned for him, believing in him. She had proved that she believed in him. What in the name of sanity had been the meaning of his language? and what was it between them that arrested him and caused him to mumble absurdly of "doing best," when in fact he was her bondman, rejoiced to be so, by his pledged word? and when she, for some reason that he was sure she had stated, though he could recollect no more than the formless hideousness of it, was debarred from returning to Tourdestelle?

He tossed in his bed as over a furnace, in the extremity of perplexity of one accustomed to think himself ever demonstrably in the right, and now with his whole nature in insurrection against that legitimate claim. It led him to accuse her of a want of passionate warmth, in her not having supplicated and upbraided him—not behaving theatrically, in fine, as the ranting pen has made us expect of emergent ladies that they will naturally do. Concerning himself, he thought commendingly, a tear would have overcome him. She had not wept. The kaleidoscope was shaken in his fragmentary mind, and she appeared thrice adorable for this noble composure, he brutish.

Conscience and reason had resolved to a dead weight in him, like an inanimate force, governing his acts despite the man, while he was with Renée. Now his wishes and waverings conjured up a semblance of a conscience and much reason to assure him that he had done foolishly as well as unkindly, most unkindly: that he was even the ghastly spectacle of a creature attempting to be more than he can be. Are we never to embrace our inclinations? Are the laws regulating an old dry man like his teacher and guide to be the same for the young and vigorous?

Is a good gift to be refused? And this was his first love! The brilliant Renée, many-hued as a tropic bird! his lady of shining grace, with her sole fault of want of courage devotedly amended! his pupil, he might say, of whom he had foretold that she must come to such a pass, at the same time prefixing his fidelity. And he was handing her over knowingly to one kind of wretchedness—"*son amour, mon ami*," shot through him, lighting up the gulfs of a mind in wreck;—and one kind of happiness could certainly be promised her!

All these and innumerable other handsome pleadings of the simulacra of the powers he had set up to rule, were crushed at daybreak by the realities in a sense of weight that pushed him mechanically on. He telegraphed to Roland, and mentally gave chase to the message to recall it. The slumberer roused in darkness by the relentless insane-seeming bell which hales him to duty, melts at the charms of sleep, and feels that logic is with him in his preference of his pillow; but the tireless revolving world outside, nature's pitiless antagonist, has hung one of its balances about him, and his actions are directed by the state of the scales, wherein duty weighs deep and desireability swings like a pendant doll: so he throws on his harness, astounded, till his blood quickens with work, at the round of sacrifices demanded of nature: which is indeed curious considering what we are taught here and there as to the infallibility of our august mother. Well, the world of humanity had done this for Beauchamp. His afflicted historian is compelled to fling his net

among prosaic similitudes for an illustration of one thus degradedly in its grip. If he had been off with his love like the rover! why, then the Muse would have loosened her lap like May showering flower-buds, and we might have knocked great nature up from her sleep to embellish his desperate proceedings with hurricanes to be danced over, to say nothing of imitative spheres dashing out into hurly-burly after his example.

Conscious rectitude, too, after the pattern of the well-behaved AEneas quitting the fair bosom of Carthage in obedience to the Gods, for an example to his Roman progeny, might have stiffened his backbone and put a crown upon his brows. It happened with him that his original training rather imposed the idea that he was a figure to be derided. The approval of him by the prudent was a disgust, and by the pious tasteless. He had not any consolation in reverting to Dr. Shrapnel's heavy Puritanism. On the contrary, such a general proposition as that of the sage of Bevisham could not for a moment stand against the pathetic special case of Renée: and as far as Beauchamp's active mind went, he was for demanding that Society should take a new position in morality, considerably broader, and adapted to very special cases.

Nevertheless he was hardly grieved in missing Renée at Rosamund's breakfast-table. Rosamund informed him that Madame de Rouaillout's door was locked. Her particular news for him was of a disgraceful alarum raised by Captain Baskelett in the night, to obtain admission; and of an interview she had with him in the early morning, when he subjected her to great insolence. Beauchamp's attention was drawn to her repetition of the phrase "mistress of the house." However, she did him justice in regard to Renée, and thoroughly entered into the fiction of Renée's visit to her as her guest: he passed over everything else.

To stop the mouth of a scandal-monger, he drove full speed to Cecil's Club, where he heard that the captain had breakfasted and had just departed for Romfrey Castle. He followed to the station. The train had started. So mischief was rolling in that direction.

Late at night Rosamund was allowed to enter the chill unlighted chamber, where the unhappy lady had been lying for hours in the gloom of a London Winter's daylight and gaslight.

"Madame de Rouaillout is indisposed with headache," was her report to Beauchamp.

The conventional phraseology appeased him, though he saw his grief behind it.

Presently he asked if Renée had taken food.

"No: you know what a headache is," Rosamund replied.

It is true that we do not care to eat when we are in pain.

He asked if she looked ill.

"She will not have lights in the room," said Rosamund.

Piecemeal he gained the picture of Renée in an image of the death within which welcomed a death without.

Rosamund was impatient with him for speaking of medical aid. These men! She remarked very honestly:

"Oh, no; doctors are not needed."

"Has she mentioned me?"

"Not once."

"Why do you swing your watch-chain, ma'am?" cried Beauchamp, bounding off his chair.

He reproached her with either pretending to indifference or feeling it; and then insisted on his privilege of going up-stairs—accompanied by her, of course; and then it was to be only to the door; then an answer to a message was to satisfy him.

"Any message would trouble her: what message would you send?" Rosamund asked him.

The weighty and the trivial contended; no fitting message could be thought of.

"You are unused to real suffering—that is for women!—and want to be doing instead of enduring," said Rosamund.

She was beginning to put faith in the innocence of these two mortally sick lovers. Beauchamp's outcries against himself gave her the shadows of their story. He stood in tears—a thing to see to believe of Nevil Beauchamp; and plainly he did not know it, or else he would have taken her advice to him to leave the house at an hour that was long past midnight. Her method for inducing him to go was based on her intimate knowledge of him: she made as if to soothe and kiss him compassionately.

In the morning there was a flying word from Roland, on his way to England. Rosamund tempered her report of Renée by saying of her, that she was very quiet. He turned to the window.

“Look, what a climate ours is!” Beauchamp abused the persistent fog. “Dull, cold, no sky, a horrible air to breathe! This is what she has come to! Has she spoken of me yet?”

“No.”

“Is she dead silent?”

“She answers, if I speak to her.”

“I believe, ma’am,” said Beauchamp, “that we are the coldest-hearted people in Europe.”

Rosamund did not defend us, or the fog. Consequently nothing was left for him to abuse but himself. In that she tried to moderate him, and drew forth a torrent of self-vituperation, after which he sank into the speechless misery he had been evading; until sophistical fancy, another evolution of his nature, persuaded him that Roland, seeing Renée, would for love’s sake be friendly to them.

“I should have told you, Nevil, by the way, that the earl is dead,” said Rosamund.

“Her brother will be here to-day; he can’t be later than the evening,” said Beauchamp. “Get her to eat, ma’am; you must. Command her to eat. This terrible starvation!”

“You ate nothing yourself, Nevil, all day yesterday.”

He surveyed the table. “You have your cook in town, I see. Here’s a breakfast to feed twenty hungry families in Spitalfields. Where does the mass of meat go? One excess feeds another. You’re overdone with servants. Gluttony, laziness, and pilfering come of your host of unmanageable footmen and maids; you stuff them, and wonder they’re idle and immoral. If—I suppose I must call him the earl now, or Colonel Halkett, or any one of the army of rich men, hear of an increase of the income-tax, or some poor wretch hints at a sliding scale of taxation, they yell as if they were thumb-screwed: but five shillings in the pound goes to the kitchen as a matter of course—to puff those pompous idiots! and the parsons, who should be preaching against this sheer waste of food and perversion of the strength of the nation, as a public sin, are maundering about schism. There’s another idle army! Then we have artists, authors, lawyers, doctors—the honourable professions! all hanging upon wealth, all ageing the rich, and all bearing upon labour! it’s incubus on incubus. In point of fact, the rider’s too heavy for the horse in England.”

He began to nibble at bread.

Rosamund pushed over to him a plate of the celebrated Steynham pie, of her own invention, such as no house in the county of Sussex could produce or imitate.

“What would you have the parsons do?” she said.

“Take the rich by the throat and show them in the kitchen-mirror that they’re swine running down to the sea with a devil in them.” She had set him off again, but she had enticed him to eating. “Pooh! it has all been said before. Stones are easier to move than your English. May I be forgiven for saying it! an invasion is what they want to bring them to their senses. I’m sick of the work. Why should I be denied—am I to kill the woman I love that I may go on hammering at them? Their idea of liberty is, an evasion of public duty. Dr. Shrapnel’s right—it’s a money-logged Island! Men like the Earl of Romfrey, who have never done work in their days except to kill bears and birds, I say they’re stifled by wealth: and he at least would have made an Admiral of mark, or a General: not of much value, but useful in case of need. But he, like a pretty woman, was under no obligation to contribute more than an ornamental person to the common good. As to that, we count him by tens of thousands now, and his footmen and maids by hundreds of thousands. The rich love the nation through their possessions; otherwise they have no country. If they loved the country they would care for the people. Their hearts are eaten up by property. I am bidden to hold my tongue because I have no knowledge. When men who have this ‘knowledge’ will go down to the people, speak to them, consult and argue with them, and come into suitable relations with them—I don’t say of lords and retainers, but of knowers and doers, leaders and followers—out of consideration for public safety, if not for the common good, I shall hang back gladly; though I won’t hear misstatements. My fault is, that I am too moderate. I should respect myself more if I deserved their hatred. This flood of luxury, which is, as Dr. Shrapnel says, the body’s drunkenness and the soul’s death, cries for execration. I’m too moderate. But I shall

quit the country: I've no place here."

Rosamund ahemed. "France, Nevil? I should hardly think that France would please you, in the present state of things over there."

Half cynically, with great satisfaction, she had watched him fretting at the savoury morsels of her pie with a fork like a sparrow-beak during the monologue that would have been so dreary to her but for her appreciation of the wholesome effect of the letting off of steam, and her admiration of the fire of his eyes. After finishing his plate he had less the look of a ship driving on to reef—some of his images of the country. He called for claret and water, sighing as he munched bread in vast portions, evidently conceiving that to eat unbuttered bread was to abstain from luxury. He praised passingly the quality of the bread. It came from Steynham, and so did the milk and cream, the butter, chicken and eggs. He was good enough not to object to the expenditure upon the transmission of the accustomed dainties. Altogether the gradual act of nibbling had conduced to his eating remarkably well—royally. Rosamund's more than half-cynical ideas of men, and her custom of wringing unanimous verdicts from a jury of temporary impressions, inclined her to imagine him a lover that had not to be so very much condoled with, and a politician less alarming in practice than in theory:—somewhat a gentleman of domestic tirades on politics: as it is observed of your generous young Radical of birth and fortune, that he will become on the old high road to a round Conservatism.

He pitched one of the morning papers to the floor in disorderly sheets, muttering: "So they're at me!"

"Is Dr. Shrapnel better?" she asked. "I hold to a good appetite as a sign of a man's recovery."

Beauchamp was confronting the fog at the window. He swung round: "Dr. Shrapnel is better. He has a particularly clever young female cook."

"Ah! then..."

"Yes, then, naturally! He would naturally hasten to recover to partake of the viands, ma'am."

Rosamund murmured of her gladness that he should be able to enjoy them.

"Oddly enough, he is not an eater of meat," said Beauchamp.

"A vegetarian!"

"I beg you not to mention the fact to my lord. You see, you yourself can scarcely pardon it. He does not exclude flesh from his table. Blackburn Tuckham dined there once. 'You are a thorough revolutionist, Dr. Shrapnel,' he observed. The doctor does not exclude wine, but he does not drink it. Poor Tuckham went away entirely opposed to a Radical he could not even meet as a boon-fellow. I begged him not to mention the circumstances, as I have begged you. He pledged me his word to that effect solemnly; he correctly felt that if the truth were known, there would be further cause for the reprobation of the man who had been his host."

"And that poor girl, Nevil?"

"Miss Denham? She contracted the habit of eating meat at school, and drinking wine in Paris, and continues it, occasionally. Now run upstairs. Insist on food. Inform Madame de Rouaillout that her brother M. le comte de Croisnel will soon be here, and should not find her ill. Talk to her as you women can talk. Keep the blinds down in her room; light a dozen wax-candles. Tell her I have no thought but of her. It's a lie: of no woman but of her: that you may say. But that you can't say. You can say I am devoted—ha, what stuff! I've only to open my mouth!—say nothing of me: let her think the worst—unless it comes to a question of her life: then be a merciful good woman..." He squeezed her fingers, communicating his muscular tremble to her sensitive woman's frame, and electrically convincing her that he was a lover.

She went up-stairs. In ten minutes she descended, and found him pacing up and down the hall. "Madame de Rouaillout is much the same," she said. He nodded, looked up the stairs, and about for his hat and gloves, drew on the gloves, fixed the buttons, blinked at his watch, and settled his hat as he was accustomed to wear it, all very methodically, and talking rapidly, but except for certain precise directions, which were not needed by so careful a housekeeper and nurse as Rosamund was known to be, she could not catch a word of meaning. He had some appointment, it seemed; perhaps he was off for a doctor—a fresh instance of his masculine incapacity to understand patient endurance. After opening the housedoor, and returning to the foot of the stairs, listening and sighing, he disappeared.

It struck her that he was trying to be two men at once.

The litter of newspaper sheets in the morning-room brought his exclamation to her mind: “They’re at me!” Her eyes ran down the columns, and were seized by the print of his name in large type. A leading article was devoted to Commander’s Beauchamp’s recent speech delivered in the great manufacturing town of Gunningham, at a meeting under the presidency of the mayor, and his replies to particular questions addressed to him; one being, what right did he conceive himself to have to wear the Sovereign’s uniform in professing Republican opinions? Rosamund winced for her darling during her first perusal of the article. It was of the sarcastically caressing kind, masterly in ease of style, as the flourish of the executioner well may be with poor Bare-back hung up to a leisurely administration of the scourge. An allusion to “Jack on shore” almost persuaded her that his uncle Everard had inspired the writer of the article. Beauchamp’s reply to the question of his loyalty was not quoted: he was, however, complimented on his frankness. At the same time he was assured that his error lay in a too great proneness to make distinctions, and that there was no distinction between sovereign and country in a loyal and contented land, which could thank him for gallant services in war, while taking him for the solitary example to be cited at the present period of the evils of a comparatively long peace.

“Doubtless the tedium of such a state to a man of the temperament of the gallant commander,” etc., the termination of the article was indulgent. Rosamund recurred to the final paragraph for comfort, and though she loved Beauchamp, the test of her representative feminine sentiment regarding his political career, when personal feeling on his behalf had subsided, was, that the writer of the article must have received an intimation to deal both smartly and forbearingly with the offender: and from whom but her lord? Her notions of the conduct of the Press were primitive. In a summary of the article Beauchamp was treated as naughty boy, formerly brave boy, and likely by-and-by to be good boy. Her secret heart would have spoken similarly, with more emphasis on the flattering terms.

A telegram arrived from her lord. She was bidden to have the house clear for him by noon of the next day.

How could that be done?

But to write blankly to inform the Earl of Romfrey that he was excluded from his own house was another impossibility.

“Hateful man!” she apostrophized Captain Baskelett, and sat down, supporting her chin in a prolonged meditation.

The card of a French lady, bearing the name of Madame d’Auffray, was handed to her.

Beauchamp had gone off to his friend Lydiard, to fortify himself in his resolve to reply to that newspaper article by eliciting counsel to the contrary. Phrase by phrase he fought through the first half of his composition of the reply against Lydiard, yielding to him on a point or two of literary judgement, only the more vehemently to maintain his ideas of discretion, which were, that he would not take shelter behind a single subterfuge; that he would try this question nakedly, though he should stand alone; that he would stake his position on it, and establish his right to speak his opinions: and as for unseasonable times, he protested it was the cry of a gorged middle-class, frightened of further action, and making snug with compromise. Would it be a seasonable time when there was uproar? Then it would be a time to be silent on such themes: they could be discussed calmly now, and without danger; and whether he was hunted or not, he cared nothing. He declined to consider the peculiar nature of Englishmen: they must hear truth or perish.

Knowing the difficulty once afflicting Beauchamp in the art of speaking on politics tersely, Lydiard was rather astonished at his well-delivered cannonade; and he fancied that his modesty had been displaced by the new acquirement; not knowing the nervous fever of his friend’s condition, for which the rattle of speech was balm, and contention a native element, and the assumption of truth a necessity. Beauchamp hugged his politics like some who show their love of the pleasures of life by taking to them angrily. It was all he had: he had given up all for it. He forced Lydiard to lay down his pen and walk back to the square with him, and went on arguing, interjecting, sneering, thumping the old country, raising and oversetting her, treating her alternately like a disrespected grandmother, and like a woman anciently beloved; as a dead lump, and as a garden of seeds; reviewing prominent political men, laughing at the dwarf-giants; finally casting anchor on a Mechanics’ Institute that he had recently heard of, where working men met weekly for the purpose of reading the British poets.

“That’s the best thing I’ve heard of late,” he said, shaking Lydiard’s hand on the door-steps.

“Ah! You’re Commander Beauchamp; I think I know you. I’ve seen you on a platform,” cried a fresh-faced man in decent clothes, halting on his way along the pavement; “and if you were in your uniform, you damned Republican dog! I’d strip you with my own hands, for the disloyal scoundrel you are, with your pimping Republicanism and capsizing everything in a country like Old England. It’s the cat-o’-nine-tails you want, and the bosen to lay on; and I’d do it myself. And mind me, when next I catch sight of you in blue and gold lace, I’ll compel you to show cause why you wear it, and prove your case, or else I’ll make a Cupid of you, and no joke about it. I don’t pay money for a nincompoop to outrage my feelings of respect and loyalty, when he’s in my pay, d’ ye hear? You’re in my pay: and you do your duty, or I’ll kick ye out of it. It’s no empty threat. You look out for your next public speech, if it’s anywhere within forty mile of London. Get along.”

With a scowl, and a very ugly “yah!” worthy of cannibal jaws, the man passed off.

Beauchamp kept eye on him. “What class does a fellow like that come of?”

“He’s a harmless enthusiast,” said Lydiard. “He has been reading the article, and has got excited over it.”

“I wish I had the fellow’s address.” Beauchamp looked wistfully at Lydiard, but he did not stimulate the generous offer to obtain it for him. Perhaps it was as well to forget the fellow.

“You see the effect of those articles,” he said.

“You see what I mean by unseasonable times,” Lydiard retorted.

“He didn’t talk like a tradesman,” Beauchamp mused.

“He may be one, for all that. It’s better to class him as an enthusiast.”

“An enthusiast!” Beauchamp stamped: “for what?”

“For the existing order of things; for his beef and ale; for the titles he is accustomed to read in the papers. You don’t study your countrymen.”

“I’d study that fellow, if I had the chance.”

“You would probably find him one of the emptiest, with a rather worse temper than most of them.”

Beauchamp shook Lydiard’s hand, saying, “The widow?”

“There’s no woman like her!”

“Well, now you’re free—why not? I think I put one man out of the field.”

“Too early! Besides—”

“Repeat that, and you may have to say too late.”

“When shall you go down to Bevisham?”

“When? I can’t tell: when I’ve gone through fire. There never was a home for me like the cottage, and the old man, and the dear good girl—the best of girls! if you hadn’t a little spoilt her with your philosophy of the two sides of the case.”

“I’ve not given her the brains.”

“She’s always doubtful of doing, doubtful of action: she has no will. So she is fatalistic, and an argument between us ends in her submitting, as if she must submit to me, because I’m overbearing, instead of accepting the fact.”

“She feels your influence.”

“She’s against the publication of THE DAWN—for the present. It’s an ‘unseasonable time.’ I argue with her: I don’t get hold of her mind a bit; but at last she says, ‘very well.’ She has your head.”

And you have her heart, Lydiard could have rejoined.

They said good-bye, neither of them aware of the other’s task of endurance.

As they were parting, Beauchamp perceived his old comrade Jack Wilmore walking past.

“Jack!” he called.

Wilmore glanced round. “How do you do, Beauchamp?”

“Where are you off to, Jack?”

“Down to the Admiralty. I’m rather in a hurry; I have an appointment.”

“Can’t you stop just a minute?”

“I’m afraid I can’t. Good morning.”

It was incredible; but this old friend, the simplest heart alive, retreated

without a touch of his hand, and with a sorely wounded air.

“That newspaper article appears to have been generally read,” Beauchamp said to Lydiard, who answered:

“The article did not put the idea of you into men’s minds, but gave tongue to it: you may take it for an instance of the sagacity of the Press.”

“You wouldn’t take that man and me to have been messmates for years! Old Jack Wilmore! Don’t go, Lydiard.”

Lydiard declared that he was bound to go: he was engaged to read Italian for an hour with Mrs. Wardour-Devereux.

“Then go, by all means,” Beauchamp dismissed him.

He felt as if he had held a review of his friends and enemies on the door-step, and found them of one colour. If it was an accident befalling him in a London square during a space of a quarter of an hour, what of the sentiments of universal England? Lady Barbara’s elopement with Lord Alfred last year did not rouse much execration; hardly worse than gossip and compassion. Beauchamp drank a great deal of bitterness from his reflections.

They who provoke huge battles, and gain but lame victories over themselves, insensibly harden to the habit of distilling sour thoughts from their mischances and from most occurrences. So does the world they combat win on them.

“For,” says Dr. Shrapnel, “the world and nature, which are opposed in relation to our vital interests, each agrees to demand of us a perfect victory, on pain otherwise of proving it a stage performance; and the victory over the world, as over nature, is over self: and this victory lies in yielding perpetual service to the world, and none to nature: for the world has to be wrought out, nature to be subdued.”

The interior of the house was like a change of elements to Beauchamp. He had never before said to himself, “I have done my best, and I am beaten!” Outside of it, his native pugnacity had been stimulated; but here, within the walls where Renée lay silently breathing, barely breathing, it might be dying, he was overcome, and left it to circumstance to carry him to a conclusion. He went up-stairs to the drawing-room, where he beheld Madame d’Auffray in conversation with Rosamund.

“I was assured by Madame la Comtesse that I should see you to-day,” the French lady said as she swam to meet him; “it is a real pleasure”: and pressing his hand she continued, “but I fear you will be disappointed of seeing my sister. She would rashly try your climate at its worst period. Believe me, I do not join in decrying it, except on her account: I could have forewarned her of an English Winter and early Spring. You know her impetuosity; suddenly she decided on accepting the invitation of Madame la Comtesse; and though I have no fears of her health, she is at present a victim of the inclement weather.”

“You have seen her, madame?” said Beauchamp. So well had the clever lady played the dupe that he forgot there was a part for him to play. Even the acquiescence of Rosamund in the title of countess bewildered him.

“Madame d’Auffray has been sitting for an hour with Madame de Rouaillout,” said Rosamund.

He spoke of Roland’s coming.

“Ah?” said Madame d’Auffray, and turned to Rosamund: “you have determined to surprise us: then you will have a gathering of the whole family in your hospitable house, Madame la Comtesse.”

“If M. la Marquis will do it that honour, madame.”

“My brother is in London,” Madame d’Auffray said to Beauchamp.

The shattering blow was merited by one who could not rejoice that he had acted rightly.

CHAPTER XLIII.
THE EARL OF ROMFREY AND THE COUNTESS

An extraordinary telegraphic message, followed by a still more extraordinary letter the next morning, from Rosamund Culling, all but interdicted the immediate occupation of his house in town to Everard, now Earl of Romfrey. She begged him briefly not to come until after the funeral, and proposed to give him good reasons for her request at their meeting. “I repeat, I pledge myself to satisfy you on this point,” she wrote. Her tone was that of one of your heroic women of history refusing to surrender a fortress.

Everard’s wrath was ever of a complexion that could suffer postponements without his having to fear an abatement of it. He had no business to transact in London, and he had much at the Castle, so he yielded himself up to his new sensations, which are not commonly the portion of gentlemen of his years. He anticipated that Nevil would at least come down to the funeral, but there was no appearance of him, nor a word to excuse his absence. Cecil was his only supporter. They walked together between the double ranks of bare polls of the tenantry and peasantry, resembling in a fashion old Froissart engravings the earl used to dote on in his boyhood, representing bodies of manacled citizens, whose humbled heads looked like nuts to be cracked, outside the gates of captured French towns, awaiting the disposition of their conqueror, with his banner above him and prancing knights around. That was a glory of the past. He had no successor. The thought was chilling; the solitariness of childlessness to an aged man, chief of a most ancient and martial House, and proud of his blood, gave him the statue’s outlook on a desert, and made him feel that he was no more than a whirl of the dust, settling to the dust.

He listened to the parson curiously and consentingly. We are ashes. Ten centuries had come to an end in him to prove the formula correct. The chronicle of the House would state that the last Earl of Romfrey left no heir.

Cecil was a fine figure walking beside him. Measured by feet, he might be a worthy holder of great lands. But so heartily did the earl despise this nephew that he never thought of trying strength with the fellow, and hardly cared to know what his value was, beyond his immediate uses as an instrument to strike with. Beauchamp of Romfrey had been his dream, not Baskelett: and it increased his disgust of Beauchamp that Baskelett should step forward as the man. No doubt Cecil would hunt the county famously: he would preserve game with the sleepless eye of a General of the Jesuits. These things were to be considered.

Two days after the funeral Lord Romfrey proceeded to London. He was met at the station by Rosamund, and informed that his house was not yet vacated by the French family.

“And where have you arranged for me to go, ma’am?” he asked her complacently.

She named an hotel where she had taken rooms for him.

He nodded, and was driven to the hotel, saying little on the road.

As she expected, he was heavily armed against her and Nevil.

“You’re the slave of the fellow, ma’am. You are so infatuated that you second his amours, in my house. I must wait for a clearance, it seems.”

He cast a comical glance of disapprobation on the fittings of the hotel apartment, abhorring gilt.

“They leave us the day after to-morrow,” said Rosamund, out of breath with nervousness at the commencement of the fray, and skipping over the opening ground of a bold statement of facts. “Madame de Rouaillout has been unwell. She is not yet recovered; she has just risen. Her sister-in-law has nursed her. Her husband seems much broken in health; he is perfect on the points of courtesy.”

“That is lucky, ma’am.”

“Her brother, Nevil’s comrade in the war, was there also.”

“Who came first?”

“My lord, you have only heard Captain Baskelett’s version of the story. She has been my guest since the first day of her landing in England. There cannot possibly be an imputation on her.”

“Ma’am, if her husband manages to be satisfied, what on earth have I to do with it?”

“I am thinking of Nevil, my lord.”

“You’re never thinking of any one else, ma’am.”

“He sleeps here, at this hotel. He left the house to Madame de Rouaillout. I bear witness to that.”

“You two seem to have made your preparations to stand a criminal trial.”

“It is pure truth, my lord.”

“Do you take me to be anxious about the fellow’s virtue?”

“She is a lady who would please you.”

“A scandal in my house does not please me.”

“The only approach to a scandal was made by Captain Baskelett.”

“A poor devil locked out of his bed on a Winter’s night hullabaloos with pretty good reason. I suppose he felt the contrast.”

“My lord, this lady did me the honour to come to me on a visit. I have not previously presumed to entertain a friend. She probably formed no estimate of my exact position.”

The earl with a gesture implied Rosamund’s privilege to act the hostess to friends.

“You invited her?” he said.

“That is, I had told her I hoped she would come to England.”

“She expected you to be at the house in town on her arrival?”

“It was her impulse to come.”

“She came alone?”

“She may have desired to be away from her own people for a time: there may have been domestic differences. These cases are delicate.”

“This case appears to have been so delicate that you had to lock out a fourth party.”

“It is indelicate and base of Captain Baskelett to complain and to hint. Nevil had to submit to the same; and Captain Baskelett took his revenge on the housedoor and the bells. The house was visited by the police next morning.”

“Do you suspect him to have known you were inside the house that night?”

She could not say so: but hatred of Cecil urged her past the bounds of habitual reticence to put it to her lord whether he, imagining the worst, would have behaved like Cecil.

To this he did not reply, but remarked, “I am sorry he annoyed you, ma’am.”

“It is not the annoyance to me; it is the shocking, the unmanly insolence to a lady, and a foreign lady.”

“That’s a matter between him and Nevil. I uphold him.”

“Then, my lord, I am silent.”

Silent she remained; but Lord Romfrey was also silent: and silence being a weapon of offence only when it is practised by one out of two, she had to reflect whether in speaking no further she had finished her business.

“Captain Baskelett stays at the Castle?” she asked.

“He likes his quarters there.”

“Nevil could not go down to Romfrey, my lord. He was obliged to wait, and see, and help me to entertain, her brother and her husband.”

“Why, ma’am? But I have no objection to his making the marquis a happy husband.”

“He has done what few men would have done, that she may be a self-respecting wife.”

“The parson’s in that fellow!” Lord Romfrey exclaimed. “Now I have the story. She came to him, he declined the gift, and you were turned into the curtain for them. If he had only been off with her, he would have done the country good service. Here he’s a failure and a nuisance; he’s a common cock-shy for the journals. I’m tired of hearing of him; he’s a stench in our nostrils. He’s tired of the woman.”

“He loves her.”

“Ma’am, you’re hoodwinked. If he refused to have her, there’s a something he loves better. I don’t believe we’ve bred a downright lackadaisical donkey in our family: I know him. He’s not a fellow for abstract morality: I know him. It’s bargain against bargain with him; I’ll do him that justice. I hear he has ordered the removal of the Jersey bull from Holdesbury, and the beast is mine,” Lord Romfrey concluded in a lower key.

“Nevil has taken him.”

“Ha! pull and pull, then!”

“He contends that he is bound by a promise to give an American gentleman the refusal of the bull, and you must sign an engagement to keep the animal no longer than two years.”

“I sign no engagement. I stick to the bull.”

“Consent to see Nevil to-night, my lord.”

“When he has apologized to you, I may, ma’am.”

“Surely he did more, in requesting me to render him a service.”

“There’s not a creature living that fellow wouldn’t get to serve him, if he knew the trick. We should all of us be marching on London at Shrapnel’s heels. The political mania is just as incurable as hydrophobia, and he’s bitten. That’s clear.”

“Bitten perhaps: but not mad. As you have always contended, the true case is incurable, but it is very rare: and is this one?”

“It’s uncommonly like a true case, though I haven’t seen him foam at the mouth, and shun water—as his mob does.”

Rosamund restrained some tears, betraying the effort to hide the moisture. “I am no match for you, my lord. I try to plead on his behalf;—I do worse than if I were dumb. This I most earnestly say: he is the Nevil Beauchamp who fought for his country, and did not abandon her cause, though he stood there—we had it from Colonel Halkett—a skeleton: and he is the Nevil who—I am poorly paying my debt to him!—defended me from the aspersions of his cousin.”

“Boys!” Lord Romfrey ejaculated.

“It is the same dispute between them as men.”

“Have you forgotten my proposal to shield you from liars and scandalmongers?”

“Could I ever forget it?” Rosamund appeared to come shining out of a cloud. “Princeliest and truest gentleman, I thought you then, and I know you to be, my dear lord. I fancied I had lived the scandal down. I was under the delusion that I had grown to be past backbiting: and that no man could stand before me to insult and vilify me. But, for a woman in any so-called doubtful position, it seems that the coward will not be wanting to strike her. In quitting your service, I am able to affirm that only once during the whole term of it have I consciously overstepped the line of my duties: it was for Nevil: and Captain Baskelett undertook to defend your reputation, in consequence.”

“Has the rascal been questioning your conduct?” The earl frowned.

“Oh, no! not questioning: he does not question, he accuses: he never doubted: and what he went shouting as a boy, is plain matter of fact to him now. He is devoted to you. It was for your sake that he desired me to keep my name from being mixed up in a scandal he foresaw the occurrence of in your house.”

“He permitted himself to sneer at you?”

“He has the art of sneering. On this occasion he wished to be direct and personal.”

“What sort of hints were they?”

Lord Romfrey strode away from her chair that the answer might be easy to her, for she was red, and evidently suffering from shame as well as indignation.

“The hints we call distinct.” said Rosamund.

“In words?”

“In hard words.”

“Then you won’t meet Cecil?”

Such a question, and the tone of indifference in which it came, surprised and revolted her so that the unreflecting reply leapt out:

“I would rather meet a devil.”

Of how tremblingly, vehemently, and hastily she had said it, she was unaware. To her lord it was an outcry of nature, astutely touched by him to put her to proof.

He continued his long leisurely strides, nodding over his feet.

Rosamund stood up. She looked a very noble figure in her broad black-furred robe. “I have one serious confession to make, sir.”

“What’s that?” said he.

“I would avoid it, for it cannot lead to particular harm; but I have an enemy who may poison your ear in my absence. And first I resign my position. I have forfeited it.”

“Time goes forward, ma’am, and you go round. Speak to the point. Do you mean that you toss up the reins of my household?”

“I do. You trace it to Nevil immediately?”

“I do. The fellow wants to upset the country, and he begins with me.”

“You are wrong, my lord. What I have done places me at Captain Baskelett’s mercy. It is too loathsome to think of: worse than the whip; worse than your displeasure. It might never be known; but the thought that it might gives me courage. You have said that to protect a woman everything is permissible. It is your creed, my lord, and because the world, I have heard you say, is unjust and implacable to women. In some cases, I think so too. In reality I followed your instructions; I mean, your example. Cheap chivalry on my part! But it pained me not a little. I beg to urge that in my defence.”

“Well, ma’am, you have tied the knot tight enough; perhaps now you’ll cut it,” said the earl.

Rosamund gasped softly. “M. le Marquis is a gentleman who, after a life of dissipation, has been reminded by bad health that he has a young and beautiful wife.”

“He dug his pit to fall into it:—he’s jealous?”

She shook her head to indicate the immeasurable.

“Senile jealousy is anxious to be deceived. He could hardly be deceived so far as to imagine that Madame la Marquise would visit me, such as I am, as my guest. Knowingly or not, his very clever sister, a good woman, and a friend to husband and wife—a Frenchwoman of the purest type—gave me the title. She insisted on it, and I presumed to guess that she deemed it necessary for the sake of peace in that home.”

Lord Romfrey appeared merely inquisitive; his eyebrows were lifted in permanence; his eyes were mild.

She continued: “They leave England in a few hours. They are not likely to return. I permitted him to address me with the title of countess.”

“Of Romfrey?” said the earl.

Rosamund bowed.

His mouth contracted. She did not expect thunder to issue from it, but she did fear to hear a sarcasm, or that she would have to endure a deadly silence: and she was gathering her own lips in imitation of his, to nerve herself for some stroke to come, when he laughed in his peculiar close-mouthed manner.

“I’m afraid you’ve dished yourself.”

“You cannot forgive me, my lord?”

He indulged in more of his laughter, and abruptly summoning gravity, bade her talk to him of affairs. He himself talked of the condition of the Castle, and with a certain off-hand contempt of the ladies of the family, and Cecil’s father, Sir John. “What are they to me?” said he, and he complained of having been called Last Earl of Romfrey.

“The line ends undegenerate,” said Rosamund fervidly, though she knew not where she stood.

“Ends!” quoth the earl.

“I must see Stukely,” he added briskly, and stooped to her: “I beg you to drive me to my Club, countess.”

“Oh! sir.”

“Once a countess, always a countess!”

“But once an impostor, my lord?”

“Not always, we’ll hope.”

He enjoyed this little variation in the language of comedy; letting it drop, to say: “Be here to-morrow early. Don’t chase that family away from the house. Do as you will, but not a word of Nevil to me: he’s a bad mess in any man’s porringer; it’s time for me to claim exemption of him from mine.”

She dared not let her thoughts flow, for to think was to triumph, and possibly to be deluded. They came in copious volumes when Lord Romfrey, alighting at his Club, called to the coachman: “Drive the countess home.”

They were not thoughts of triumph absolutely. In her cooler mind she felt that it was a bad finish of a gallant battle. Few women had risen against a tattling and pelting world so stedfastly; and would it not have been better to keep her own ground, which she had won with tears and some natural strength, and therewith her liberty, which she prized? The hateful Cecil, a reminder of whom set her cheeks burning and turned her heart to serpent, had forced her to it. So she honestly conceived, owing

to the circumstance of her honestly disliking the pomps of life and not desiring to occupy any position of brilliancy. She thought assuredly of her hoard of animosity toward the scandalmongers, and of the quiet glance she would cast behind on them, and below. That thought came as a fruit, not as a reflection.

But if ever two offending young gentlemen, nephews of a long-suffering uncle, were circumvented, undermined, and struck to earth, with one blow, here was the instance. This was accomplished by Lord Romfrey’s resolution to make the lady he had learnt to esteem his countess: and more, it fixed to him for life one whom he could not bear to think of losing: and still more, it might be; but what more was unwritten on his tablets.

Rosamund failed to recollect that Everard Romfrey never took a step without seeing a combination of objects to be gained by it.

CHAPTER XLIV.
THE NEPHEWS OF THE EARL, AND ANOTHER EXHIBITION OF THE TWO PASSIONS IN BEAUCHAMP

It was now the season when London is as a lighted tower to her provinces, and, among other gentlemen hurried thither by attraction, Captain Baskelett arrived. Although not a personage in the House of Commons, he was a vote; and if he never committed himself to the perils of a speech, he made himself heard. His was the part of chorus, which he performed with a fairly close imitation of the original cries of periods before parliaments were instituted, thus representing a stage in the human development besides the borough of Bevisham. He arrived in the best of moods for the emission of high-pitched vowel-sounds; otherwise in the worst of tempers. His uncle had notified an addition of his income to him at Romfrey, together with commands that he should quit the castle instantly: and there did that woman, Mistress Culling, do the honours to Nevil Beauchamp's French party. He assured Lord Palmet of his positive knowledge of the fact, incredible as the sanction of such immoral proceedings by the Earl of Romfrey must appear to that young nobleman. Additions to income are of course acceptable, but in the form of a palpable stipulation for silence, they neither awaken gratitude nor effect their purpose. Quite the contrary; they prick the moral mind to sit in judgement on the donor. It means, she fears me! Cecil confidently thought and said of the intriguing woman who managed his patron.

The town-house was open to him. Lord Romfrey was at Steynham. Cecil could not suppose that he was falling into a pit in entering it. He happened to be the favourite of the old housekeeper, who liked him for his haughtiness, which was to her thinking the sign of real English nobility, and perhaps it is the popular sign, and a tonic to the people. She raised lamentations over the shame of the locking of the door against him that awful night, declaring she had almost mustered courage to go down to him herself, in spite of Mrs. Culling's orders. The old woman lowered her voice to tell him that her official superior had permitted the French gentleman and ladies to call her countess. This she knew for a certainty, though she knew nothing of French; but the French lady who came second brought a maid who knew English a little, and she said the very words—the countess, and said also that her party took Mrs. Culling for the Countess of Romfrey. What was more, my lord's coachman caught it up, and he called her countess, and he had a quarrel about it with the footman Kendall; and the day after a dreadful affair between them in the mews, home drives madam, and Kendall is to go up to her, and down the poor man comes, and not a word to be got out of him, but as if he had seen a ghost. "She have such power," Cecil's admirer concluded.

"I wager I match her," Cecil said to himself, pulling at his wristbands and letting his lower teeth shine out. The means of matching her were not so palpable as the resolution. First he took men into his confidence. Then he touched lightly on the story to ladies, with the question, "What ought I to do?" In consideration for the Earl of Romfrey he ought not to pass it over, he suggested. The ladies of the family urged him to go to Steynham and boldly confront the woman. He was not prepared for that. Better, it seemed to him, to blow the rumour, and make it the topic of the season, until Lord Romfrey should hear of it. Cecil had the ear of the town for a month. He was in the act of slicing the air with his right hand in his accustomed style, one evening at Lady Elsea's, to protest how vast was the dishonour done to the family by Mistress Culling, when Stukely Culbrett stopped him, saying, "The lady you speak of is the Countess of Romfrey. I was present at the marriage."

Cecil received the shock in the attitude of those martial figures we see wielding two wooden swords in provincial gardens to tell the disposition of the wind: abruptly abandoned by it, they stand transfixed, one sword aloft, the other at their heels. The resemblance extended to his astonished countenance. His big chest heaved. Like many another wounded giant before him, he experienced the insufficiency of interjections to solace pain. For them, however, the rocks were handy to fling, the trees to uproot; heaven's concave resounded companionably to their bellowings. Relief of so concrete a kind is not to be obtained in crowded London assemblies.

"You are jesting?—you are a jester," he contrived to say.

“It was a private marriage, and I was a witness,” replied Stukely.

“Lord Romfrey has made an honest woman of her, has he?”

“A peeress, you mean.”

Cecil bowed. “Exactly. I am corrected. I mean a peeress.”

He got out of the room with as high an air as he could command, feeling as if a bar of iron had flattened his head.

Next day it was intimated to him by one of the Steynham servants that apartments were ready for him at the residence of the late earl: Lord Romfrey’s house was about to be occupied by the Countess of Romfrey. Cecil had to quit, and he chose to be enamoured of that dignity of sulking so seductive to the wounded spirit of man.

Rosamund, Countess of Romfrey, had worse to endure from Beauchamp. He indeed came to the house, and he went through the formalities of congratulation, but his opinion of her step was unconcealed, that she had taken it for the title. He distressed her by reviving the case of Dr. Shrapnel, as though it were a matter of yesterday, telling her she had married a man with a stain on him; she should have exacted the Apology as a nuptial present; ay, and she would have done it if she had cared for the earl’s honour or her own. So little did he understand men! so tenacious was he of his ideas! She had almost forgotten the case of Dr. Shrapnel, and to see it shooting up again in the new path of her life was really irritating.

Rosamund did not defend herself.

“I am very glad you have come, Nevil,” she said; “your uncle holds to the ceremony. I may be of real use to you now; I wish to be.”

“You have only to prove it,” said he. “If you can turn his mind to marriage, you can send him to Bevisham.”

“My chief thought is to serve you.”

“I know it is, I know it is,” he rejoined with some fervour. “You have served me, and made me miserable for life, and rightly. Never mind, all’s well while the hand’s to the axe.” Beauchamp smoothed his forehead roughly, trying hard to inspire himself with the tonic draughts of sentiments cast in the form of proverbs. “Lord Romfrey saw her, you say?”

“He did, Nevil, and admired her.”

“Well, if I suffer, let me think of *her!* For courage and nobleness I shall never find her equal. Have you changed your ideas of Frenchwomen now? Not a word, you say, not a look, to show her disdain of me whenever my name was mentioned!”

“She could scarcely feel disdain. She was guilty of a sad error.”

“Through trusting in me. Will nothing teach you where the fault lies? You women have no mercy for women. She went through the parade to Romfrey Castle and back, and she must have been perishing at heart. That, you English call acting. In history you have a respect for such acting up to the scaffold. Good-bye to her! There’s a story ended. One thing you must promise: you’re a peeress, ma’am: the story’s out, everybody has heard of it; that babbler has done his worst: if you have a becoming appreciation of your title, you will promise me honestly—no, give me your word as a woman I can esteem—that you will not run about excusing me. Whatever you hear said or suggested, say nothing yourself. I insist on your keeping silence. Press my hand.”

“Nevil, how foolish!”

“It’s my will.”

“It is unreasonable. You give your enemies licence.”

“I know what’s in your head. Take my hand, and let me have your word for it.”

“But if persons you like very much, Nevil, should hear?”

“Promise. You are a woman not to break your word.”

“If I decline?”

“Your hand! I’ll kiss it.”

“Oh! my darling.” Rosamund flung her arms round him and strained him an instant to her bosom. “What have I but you in the world? My comfort was the hope that I might serve you.”

“Yes! by slaying one woman as an offering to another. It would be impossible for you to speak the truth. Don’t you see, it would be a lie against her, and making a figure of me that a man would rather drop to the ground than have shown of him? I was to blame, and only I. Madame de Rouaillout was as utterly deceived by me as ever a trusting woman by a brute. I look at myself and hardly believe it’s the same man. I wrote to

her that I was unchanged—and I was entirely changed, another creature, anything Lord Romfrey may please to call me.”

“But, Nevil, I repeat, if Miss Halkett should hear...?”

“She knows by this time.”

“At present she is ignorant of it.”

“And what is Miss Halkett to me?”

“More than you imagined in that struggle you underwent, I think, Nevil. Oh! if only to save her from Captain Baskelett! He gained your uncle’s consent when they were at the Castle, to support him in proposing for her. He is persistent. Women have been snared without loving. She is a great heiress. Reflect on his use of her wealth. You respect her, if you have no warmer feeling. Let me assure you that the husband of Cecilia, if he is of Romfrey blood, has the fairest chance of the estates. That man will employ every weapon. He will soon be here bowing to me to turn me to his purposes.”

“Cecilia can see through Baskelett,” said Beauchamp.

“Single-mindedly selfish men may be seen through and through, and still be dangerous, Nevil. The supposition is, that we know the worst of them. He carries a story to poison her mind. She could resist it, if you and she were in full confidence together. If she did not love you, she could resist it. She does, and for some strange reason beyond my capacity to fathom, you have not come to an understanding. Sanction my speaking to her, just to put her on her guard, privately: not to injure that poor lady, but to explain. Shall she not know the truth? I need say but very little. Indeed, all I can say is, that finding the marquise in London one evening, you telegraphed for me to attend on her, and I joined you. You shake your head. But surely it is due to Miss Halkett. She should be protected from what will certainly wound her deeply. Her father is afraid of you, on the score of your theories. I foresee it: he will hear the scandal: he will imagine you as bad in morals as in politics. And you have lost your friend in Lord Romfrey—though he shall not be your enemy. Colonel Halkett and Cecilia called on us at Steynham. She was looking beautiful; a trifle melancholy. The talk was of your—that—I do not like it, but you hold those opinions—the Republicanism. She had read your published letters. She spoke to me of your sincerity. Colonel Halkett of course was vexed.

It is the same with all your friends. She, however, by her tone, led me to think that she sees you as you are, more than in what you do. They are now in Wales. They will be in town after Easter. Then you must expect that her feeling for you will be tried, unless but you will! You will let me speak to her, Nevil. My position allows me certain liberties I was previously debarred from. You have not been so very tender to your Cecilia that you can afford to give her fresh reasons for sorrowful perplexity. And why should you stand to be blackened by scandalmongers when a few words of mine will prove that instead of weak you have been strong, instead of libertine blameless? I am not using fine phrases: I would not. I would be as thoughtful of you as if you were present. And for her sake, I repeat, the truth should be told to her. I have a lock of her hair.”

“Cecilia’s? Where?” said Beauchamp.

“It is at Steynham.” Rosamund primmed her lips at the success of her probing touch; but she was unaware of the chief reason for his doting on those fair locks, and how they coloured his imagination since the day of the drive into Bevisham.

“Now leave me, my dear Nevil,” she said. “Lord Romfrey will soon be here, and it is as well for the moment that you should not meet him, if it can be avoided.”

Beauchamp left her, like a man out-argued and overcome. He had no wish to meet his uncle, whose behaviour in contracting a misalliance and casting a shadow on the family, in a manner so perfectly objectless and senseless, appeared to him to call for the reverse of compliments. Cecilia’s lock of hair lying at Steynham hung in his mind. He saw the smooth flat curl lying secret like a smile.

The graceful head it had fallen from was dimmer in his mental eye. He went so far in this charmed meditation as to feel envy of the possessor of the severed lock: passingly he wondered, with the wonder of reproach, that the possessor should deem it enough to possess the lock, and resign it to a drawer or a desk. And as when life rolls back on us after the long ebb of illness, little whispers and diminutive images of the old joys and prizes of life arrest and fill our hearts; or as, to men who have been beaten down by storms, the opening of a daisy is dearer than the blazing orient which bids it open; so the visionary lock of Cecilia’s hair became

Cecilia's self to Beauchamp, yielding him as much of her as he could bear to think of, for his heart was shattered.

Why had she given it to his warmest friend? For the asking, probably.

This question was the first ripple of the breeze from other emotions beginning to flow fast.

He walked out of London, to be alone, and to think and from the palings of a road on a South-western run of high land, he gazed, at the great city—a place conquerable yet, with the proper appliances for subjugating it: the starting of his daily newspaper, THE DAWN, say, as a commencement. It began to seem a possible enterprise. It soon seemed a proximate one. If Cecilia! He left the exclamation a blank, but not an empty dash in the brain; rather like the shroud of night on a vast and gloriously imagined land.

Nay, the prospect was partly visible, as the unknown country becomes by degrees to the traveller's optics on the dark hill-tops. It is much, of course, to be domestically well-mated: but to be fortified and armed by one's wife with a weapon to fight the world, is rare good fortune; a rapturous and an infinite satisfaction. He could now support of his own resources a weekly paper. A paper published weekly, however, is a poor thing, out of the tide, behind the date, mainly a literary periodical, no foremost combatant in politics, no champion in the arena; hardly better than a commentator on the events of the six past days; an echo, not a voice. It sits on a Saturday bench and pretends to sum up. Who listens? The verdict knocks dust out of a cushion. It has no steady continuous pressure of influence. It is the organ of sleepers. Of all the bigger instruments of money, it is the feeblest, Beauchamp thought. His constant faith in the good effects of utterance naturally inclined him to value six occasions per week above one; and in the fight he was for waging, it was necessary that he should enter the ring and hit blow for blow sans intermission. A statement that he could call false must be challenged hot the next morning. The covert Toryism, the fits of flunkeyism, the cowardice, of the relapsing middle-class, which is now England before mankind, because it fills the sails of the Press, must be exposed. It supports the Press in its own interests, affecting to speak for the people. It belies the people. And this Press, declaring itself independent, can hardly walk for fear of treading on an interest here, an interest there. It cannot have a conscience. It is a bad guide, a false guardian; its abject claim to be our national and popular interpreter—even that is hollow and a mockery! It is powerful only while subservient. An engine of money, appealing to the sensitiveness of money, it has no connection with the mind of the nation. And that it is not of, but apart from, the people, may be seen when great crises come. Can it stop a war? The people would, and with thunder, had they the medium. But in strong gales the power of the Press collapses; it wheezes like a pricked pigskin of a piper. At its best Beauchamp regarded our lordly Press as a curiously diapered curtain and delusive mask, behind which the country struggles vainly to show an honest feature; and as a trumpet that deafened and terrorized the people; a mere engine of leaguers banded to keep a smooth face upon affairs, quite soullessly: he meanwhile having to be dumb.

But a Journal that should be actually independent of circulation and advertisements: a popular journal in the true sense, very lungs to the people, for them to breathe freely through at last, and be heard out of it, with well-paid men of mark to head and aid them;—the establishment of such a Journal seemed to him brave work of a life, though one should die early. The money launching it would be coin washed pure of its iniquity of selfish reproduction, by service to mankind. This DAWN of his conception stood over him like a rosier Aurora for the country. He beheld it in imagination as a new light rising above hugeous London. You turn the sheets of THE DAWN, and it is the manhood of the land addressing you, no longer that alternately puling and insolent cry of the coffers. The health, wealth, comfort, contentment of the greater number are there to be striven for, in contempt of compromise and "unseasonable times."

Beauchamp's illuminated dream of the power of his DAWN to vitalize old England, liberated him singularly from his wearing regrets and heart-sickness.

Surely Cecilia, who judged him sincere, might be bent to join hands with him for so good a work! She would bring riches to her husband: sufficient. He required the ablest men of the country to write for him, and it was just that they should be largely paid. They at least in their present public apathy would demand it. To fight the brewers, distillers, publicans, the shopkeepers, the parsons, the landlords, the law limpets, and also the indifferents, the logs, the cravens and the fools, high talent

was needed, and an ardour stimulated by rates of pay outdoing the offers of the lucre-journals. A large annual outlay would therefore be needed; possibly for as long as a quarter of a century. Cecilia and her husband would have to live modestly. But her inheritance would be immense. Colonel Halkett had never spent a tenth of his income. In time he might be taught to perceive in THE DAWN the one greatly beneficent enterprise of his day. He might through his daughter's eyes, and the growing success of the Journal. Benevolent and gallant old man, patriotic as he was, and kind at heart, he might learn to see in THE DAWN a broader channel of philanthropy and chivalry than any we have yet had a notion of in England!—a school of popular education into the bargain.

Beauchamp reverted to the shining curl. It could not have been clearer to vision if it had lain under his eyes.

Ay, that first wild life of his was dead. He had slain it. Now for the second and sober life! Who can say? The Countess of Romfrey suggested it:—Cecilia may have prompted him in his unknown heart to the sacrifice of a lawless love, though he took it for simply barren iron duty. Brooding on her, he began to fancy the victory over himself less and less a lame one: for it waxed less and less difficult in his contemplation of it. He was looking forward instead of back.

Who cut off the lock? Probably Cecilia herself; and thinking at the moment that he would see it, perhaps beg for it. The lustrous little ring of hair wound round his heart; smiled both on its emotions and its aims; bound them in one.

But proportionately as he grew tender to Cecilia, his consideration for Renée increased; that became a law to him: pity nourished it, and glimpses of self-contempt, and something like worship of her high-heartedness.

He wrote to the countess, forbidding her sharply and absolutely to attempt a vindication of him by explanations to any persons whomsoever; and stating that he would have no falsehoods told, he desired her to keep to the original tale of the visit of the French family to her as guests of the Countess of Romfrey. Contradictory indeed. Rosamund shook her head over him. For a wilful character that is guilty of issuing contradictory commands to friends who would be friends in spite of him, appears to be expressly angling for the cynical spirit, so surely does it rise and snap at such provocation. He was even more emphatic when they next met. He would not listen to a remonstrance; and though, of course, her love of him granted him the liberty to speak to her in what tone he pleased, there were sensations proper to her new rank which his intemperateness wounded and tempted to revolt when he vexed her with unreason. She had a glimpse of the face he might wear to his enemies.

He was quite as resolute, too, about that slight matter of the Jersey bull. He had the bull in Bevisham, and would not give him up without the sign manual of Lord Romfrey to an agreement to resign him over to the American Quaker gentleman, after a certain term. Moreover, not once had he, by exclamation or innuendo, during the period of his recent grief for the loss of his first love, complained of his uncle Everard's refusal in the old days to aid him in suing for Renée. Rosamund had expected that he would. She thought it unloverlike in him not to stir the past, and to bow to intolerable facts. This idea of him, coming in conjunction with his present behaviour, convinced her that there existed a contradiction in his nature: whence it ensued that she lost her warmth as an advocate designing to intercede for him with Cecilia; and warmth being gone, the power of the scandal seemed to her unassailable. How she could ever have presumed to combat it, was an astonishment to her. Cecilia might be indulgent, she might have faith in Nevil. Little else could be hoped for.

The occupations, duties, and ceremonies of her new position contributed to the lassitude into which Rosamund sank. And she soon had a communication to make to her lord, the nature of which was more startling to herself, even tragic. The bondwoman is a free woman compared with the wife.

Lord Romfrey's friends noticed a glow of hearty health in the splendid old man, and a prouder animation of eye and stature; and it was agreed that matrimony suited him well. Luckily for Cecil he did not sulk very long. A spectator of the earl's first introduction to the House of Peers, he called on his uncle the following day, and Rosamund accepted his homage in her husband's presence. He vowed that my lord was the noblest figure in the whole assembly; that it had been to him the most moving sight he had ever witnessed; that Nevil should have been there to see it and experience what he had felt; it would have done old Nevil incalculable good! and as far as his grief at the idea and some reticence

would let him venture, he sighed to think of the last Earl of Romfrey having been seen by him taking the seat of his fathers.

Lord Romfrey shouted “Ha!” like a checked peal of laughter, and glanced at his wife.

CHAPTER XLV.
A LITTLE PLOT AGAINST CECILIA

Some days before Easter week Seymour Austin went to Mount Laurels for rest, at an express invitation from Colonel Halkett. The working barrister, who is also a working member of Parliament, is occasionally reminded that this mortal machine cannot adapt itself in perpetuity to the long hours of labour by night in the House of Commons as well as by day in the Courts, which would seem to have been arranged by a compliant country for the purpose of aiding his particular, and most honourable, ambition to climb, while continuing to fill his purse. Mr. Austin broke down early in the year. He attributed it to a cold. Other representative gentlemen were on their backs, of whom he could admit that the protracted nightwork had done them harm, with the reservation that their constitutions were originally unsound. But the House cannot get on without lawyers, and lawyers must practise their profession, and if they manage both to practise all day and sit half the night, others should be able to do the simple late sitting; and we English are an energetic people, we must toil or be beaten: and besides, “night brings counsel,” men are cooler and wiser by night. Any amount of work can be performed by careful feeders: it is the stomach that kills the Englishman. Brains are never the worse for activity; they subsist on it.

These arguments and citations, good and absurd, of a man more at home in his harness than out of it, were addressed to the colonel to stop his remonstrances and idle talk about burning the candle at both ends. To that illustration Mr. Austin replied that he did not burn it in the middle.

“But you don’t want money, Austin.”

“No; but since I’ve had the habit of making it I have taken to like it.”

“But you’re not ambitious.”

“Very little; but I should be sorry to be out of the tideway.”

“I call it a system of slaughter,” said the colonel; and Mr. Austin said, “The world goes in that way—love and slaughter.”

“Not suicide though,” Colonel Halkett muttered.

“No, that’s only incidental.”

The casual word “love” led Colonel Halkett to speak to Cecilia of an old love-affair of Seymour Austin’s, in discussing the state of his health with her. The lady was the daughter of a famous admiral, handsome, and latterly of light fame. Mr. Austin had nothing to regret in her having married a man richer than himself.

“I wish he had married a good woman,” said the colonel.

“He looks unwell, papa.”

“He thinks you’re looking unwell, my dear.”

“He thinks that of me?”

Cecilia prepared a radiant face for Mr. Austin.

She forgot to keep it kindled, and he suspected her to be a victim of one of the forms of youthful melancholy, and laid stress on the benefit to health of a change of scene.

“We have just returned from Wales,” she said.

He remarked that it was hardly a change to be within shot of our newspapers.

The colour left her cheeks. She fancied her father had betrayed her to the last man who should know her secret. Beauchamp and the newspapers were rolled together in her mind by the fever of apprehension wasting her ever since his declaration of Republicanism, and defence of it, and an allusion to one must imply the other, she feared: feared, but far from quailingly. She had come to think that she could read the man she loved, and detect a reasonableness in his extravagance. Her father had discovered the impolicy of attacking Beauchamp in her hearing. The fever by which Cecilia was possessed on her lover’s behalf, often overcame discretion, set her judgement in a whirl, was like a delirium. How it had happened she knew not. She knew only her wretched state; a frenzy seized her whenever his name was uttered, to excuse, account for, all but glorify him publicly. And the immodesty of her conduct was perceptible to her while she thus made her heart bare. She exposed herself once of late at Itchincope, and had tried to school her tongue before she went there. She felt that she should inevitably be seen through by Seymour Austin if he took the world’s view of Beauchamp, and this to her was like a descent on the rapids to an end

one shuts eyes from.

He noticed her perturbation, and spoke of it to her father.

“Yes, I’m very miserable about her,” the colonel confessed. “Girls don’t see... they can’t guess... they have no idea of the right kind of man for them. A man like Blackburn Tuckham, now, a man a father could leave his girl to, with confidence! He works for me like a slave; I can’t guess why. He doesn’t look as if he were attracted. There’s a man! but, no; harum-scarum fellows take their fancy.”

“Is *she* that kind of young lady?” said Mr. Austin.

“No one would have thought so. She pretends to have opinions upon politics now. It’s of no use to talk of it!”

But Beauchamp was fully indicated.

Mr. Austin proposed to Cecilia that they should spend Easter week in Rome.

Her face lighted and clouded.

“I should like it,” she said, negatively.

“What’s the objection?”

“None, except that Mount Laurels in Spring has grown dear to me; and we have engagements in London. I am not quick, I suppose, at new projects. I have ordered the yacht to be fitted out for a cruise in the Mediterranean early in the Summer. There is an objection, I am sure—yes; papa has invited Mr. Tuckham here for Easter.”

“We could carry him with us.”

“Yes, but I should wish to be entirely under your tutelage in Rome.”

“We would pair: your father and he; you and I.”

“We might do that. But Mr. Tuckham is like you, devoted to work; and, unlike you, careless of Antiquities and Art.”

“He is a hard and serious worker, and therefore the best of companions for a holiday. At present he is working for the colonel, who would easily persuade him to give over, and come with us.”

“He certainly does love papa,” said Cecilia.

Mr. Austin dwelt on that subject.

Cecilia perceived that she had praised Mr. Tuckham for his devotedness to her father without recognizing the beauty of nature in the young man who could voluntarily take service under the elder he esteemed, in simple admiration of him. Mr. Austin scarcely said so much, or expected her to see the half of it, but she wished to be extremely grateful, and could only see at all by kindling altogether.

“He does himself injustice in his manner,” said Cecilia.

“That has become somewhat tempered,” Mr. Austin assured her, and he acknowledged what it had been with a smile that she reciprocated.

A rough man of rare quality civilizing under various influences, and half ludicrous, a little irritating, wholly estimable, has frequently won the benign approbation of the sex. In addition, this rough man over whom she smiled was one of the few that never worried her concerning her hand. There was not a whisper of it in him. He simply loved her father.

Cecilia welcomed him to Mount Laurels with grateful gladness. The colonel had hastened Mr. Tuckham’s visit in view of the expedition to Rome, and they discoursed of it at the luncheon table. Mr. Tuckham let fall that he had just seen Beauchamp.

“Did he thank you for his inheritance?” Colonel Halkett inquired.

“Not he!” Tuckham replied jovially.

Cecilia’s eyes, quick to flash, were dropped.

The colonel said: “I suppose you told him nothing of what you had done for him?” and said Tuckham: “Oh no: what anybody else would have done”; and proceeded to recount that he had called at Dr. Shrapnel’s on the chance of an interview with his friend Lydiard, who used generally to be hanging about the cottage. “But now he’s free: his lunatic wife is dead, and I’m happy to think I was mistaken as to Miss Denham. Men practising literature should marry women with money. The poor girl changed colour when I informed her he had been released for upwards of three months. The old Radical’s not the thing in health. He’s anxious about leaving her alone in the world; he said so to me. Beauchamp’s for rigging out a yacht to give him a sail. It seems that salt water did him some good last year. They’re both of them rather the worse for a row at one of their meetings in the North in support of that public nuisance, the democrat and atheist Roughleigh. The Radical doctor lost a hat, and Beauchamp almost lost an eye. He would have been a Nelson of politics, if he had been a monops, with an excuse for not seeing. It’s a trifle to

them; part of their education. They call themselves students. Rome will be capital, Miss Halkett. You're an Italian scholar, and I beg to be accepted as a pupil."

"I fear we have postponed the expedition too long," said Cecilia. She could have sunk with languor.

"Too long?" cried Colonel Halkett, mystified.

"Until too late, I mean, papa. Do you not think, Mr. Austin, that a fortnight in Rome is too short a time?"

"Not if we make it a month, my dear Cecilia."

"Is not our salt air better for you? The yacht shall be fitted out."

"I'm a poor sailor!"

"Besides, a hasty excursion to Italy brings one's anticipated regrets at the farewell too close to the pleasure of beholding it, for the enjoyment of that luxury of delight which I associate with the name of Italy."

"Why, my dear child," said her father, "you were all for going, the other day."

"I do not remember it," said she. "One plans agreeable schemes. At least we need not hurry from home so very soon after our return. We have been travelling incessantly. The cottage in Wales is not home. It is hardly fair to Mount Laurels to quit it without observing the changes of the season in our flowers and birds here. And we have visitors coming. Of course, papa, I would not chain you to England. If I am not well enough to accompany you, I can go to Louise for a few weeks."

Was ever transparency so threadbare? Cecilia shrank from herself in contemplating it when she was alone; and Colonel Halkett put the question to Mr. Austin, saying to him privately, with no further reserve: "It's that fellow Beauchamp in the neighbourhood; I'm not so blind. He'll be knocking at my door, and I can't lock him out. Austin, would you guess it was my girl speaking? I never in my life had such an example of intoxication before me. I'm perfectly miserable at the sight. You know her; she was the proudest girl living. Her ideas were orderly and sound; she had a good intellect. Now she more than half defends him—a naval officer! good Lord!—for getting up in a public room to announce that he's a Republican, and writing heaps of mad letters to justify himself. He's ruined in his profession: hopeless! He can never get a ship: his career's cut short, he's a rudderless boat. A gentleman drifting to Bedlam, his uncle calls him. I call his treatment of Grancey Lespel anything but gentlemanly. This is the sort of fellow my girl worships! What can I do? I can't interdict the house to him: it would only make matters worse. Thank God, the fellow hangs fire somehow, and doesn't come to me. I expect it every day, either in a letter or the man in person. And I declare to heaven I'd rather be threading a Khyber Pass with my poor old friend who fell to a shot there."

"She certainly has another voice," Mr. Austin assented gravely.

He did not look on Beauchamp as the best of possible husbands for Cecilia.

"Let her see that you're anxious, Austin," said the colonel. "I'm her old opponent in this affair. She loves me, but she's accustomed to think me prejudiced: you she won't. You may have a good effect."

"Not by speaking."

"No, no; no assault: not a word, and not a word against him. Lay the wind to catch a gossamer. I've had my experience of blowing cold, and trying to run her down. He's at Shrapnel's. He'll be up here to-day, and I have an engagement in the town. Don't quit her side. Let her fancy you are interested in some discussion—Radicalism, if you like."

Mr. Austin readily undertook to mount guard over her while her father rode into Bevisham on business.

The enemy appeared.

Cecilia saw him, and could not step to meet him for trouble of heart. It was bliss to know that he lived and was near.

A transient coldness following the fit of ecstasy enabled her to swim through the terrible first minutes face to face with him.

He folded her round like a mist; but it grew a problem to understand why Mr. Austin should be perpetually at hand, in the garden, in the woods, in the drawing-room, wheresoever she wakened up from one of her trances to see things as they were.

Yet Beauchamp, with a daring and cunning at which her soul exulted, and her feminine nature trembled, as at the divinely terrible, had managed to convey to her no less than if they had been alone together.

His parting words were: "I must have five minutes with your father to-

morrow."

How had she behaved? What could be Seymour Austin's idea of her?

She saw the blind thing that she was, the senseless thing, the shameless; and vulture-like in her scorn of herself, she alighted on that disgraced Cecilia and picked her to pieces hungrily. It was clear: Beauchamp had meant nothing beyond friendly civility: it was only her abject greediness pecking at crumbs. No! he loved her. Could a woman's heart be mistaken? She melted and wept, thanking him: she offered him her remnant of pride, pitiful to behold.

And still she asked herself between-whiles whether it could be true of an English lady of our day, that she, the fairest stature under sun, was ever knowingly twisted to this convulsion. She seemed to look forth from a barred window on flower, and field, and hill. Quietness existed as a vision. Was it impossible to embrace it? How pass into it? By surrendering herself to the flames, like a soul unto death! For why, if they were overpowering, attempt to resist them? It flattered her to imagine that she had been resisting them in their present burning might ever since her lover stepped on the *Esperanza's* deck at the mouth of Otley River. How foolish, seeing that they are fatal! A thrill of satisfaction swept her in reflecting that her ability to reason was thus active. And she was instantly rewarded for surrendering; pain fled, to prove her reasoning good; the flames devoured her gently they cared not to torture so long as they had her to themselves.

At night, candle in hand, on the corridor, her father told her he had come across Grancey Lespel in Bevisham, and heard what he had not quite relished of the Countess of Romfrey. The glittering of Cecilia's eyes frightened him. Taking her for the moment to know almost as much as he, the colonel doubted the weight his communication would have on her; he talked obscurely of a scandalous affair at Lord Romfrey's house in town, and Beauchamp and that Frenchwoman. "But," said he, "Mrs. Grancey will be here to-morrow."

"So will Nevil, papa," said Cecilia.

"Ah! he's coming, yes; well!" the colonel puffed. "Well, I shall see him, of course, but I... I can only say that if his oath's worth having, I ... and I think you too, my dear, if you... but it's no use anticipating. I shall stand out for your honour and happiness. There, your cheeks are flushed. Go and sleep."

Some idle tale! Cecilia murmured to herself a dozen times, undisturbed by the recurrence of it. Nevil was coming to speak to her father tomorrow! Adieu to doubt and division! Happy to-morrow! and dear Mount Laurels! The primroses were still fair in the woods: and soon the cowslips would come, and the nightingale; she lay lapt in images of everything innocently pleasing to Nevil. Soon the *Esperanza* would be spreading wings. She revelled in a picture of the yacht on a tumbling Mediterranean Sea, meditating on the two specks near the tiller,—who were blissful human creatures, blest by heaven and in themselves—with luxurious Olympian benevolence.

For all that, she awoke, starting up in the first cold circle of twilight, her heart in violent action. She had dreamed that the vessel was wrecked. "I did not think myself so cowardly," she said aloud, pressing her side and then, with the dream in her eyes, she gasped: "It would be together!"

Strangely chilled, she tried to recover some fallen load. The birds of the dawn twittered, chirped, dived aslant her window, fluttered back. Instead of a fallen load, she fancied presently that it was an expectation she was desiring to realize: but what? What could be expected at that hour? She quitted her bed, and paced up and down the room beneath a gold-starred ceiling. Her expectation, she resolved to think, was of a splendid day of the young Spring at Mount Laurels—a day to praise to Nevil.

She raised her window-blind at a window letting in sweet air, to gather indications of promising weather. Her lover stood on the grass-plot among the flower-beds below, looking up, as though it had been his expectation to see her which had drawn her to gaze out with an idea of some expectation of her own. So visionary was his figure in the grey solitariness of the moveless morning that she stared at the apparition, scarce putting faith in him as man, until he kissed his hand to her, and had softly called her name.

Impulsively she waved a hand from her lips.

Now there was no retreat for either of them!

She awoke to this conviction after a flight of blushes that burnt her thoughts to ashes as they sprang. Thoughts born blushing, all of the

crimson colour, a rose-garden, succeeded, and corresponding with their speed her feet paced the room, both slender hands crossed at her throat under an uplifted chin, and the curves of her dark eyelashes dropped as in a swoon.

“He loves me!” The attestation of it had been visible. “No one but me!” Was that so evident?

Her father picked up silly stories of him—a man who made enemies recklessly!

Cecilia was petrified by a gentle tapping at her door. Her father called to her, and she threw on her dressing-gown, and opened the door.

The colonel was in his riding-suit.

“I haven’t slept a wink, and I find it’s the same with you,” he said, paining her with his distressed kind eyes. “I ought not to have hinted anything last night without proofs. Austin’s as unhappy as I am.”

“At what, my dear papa, at what?” cried Cecilia.

“I ride over to Steynham this morning, and I shall bring you proofs, my poor child, proofs. That foreign tangle of his…”

“You speak of Nevil, papa?”

“It’s a common scandal over London. That Frenchwoman was found at Lord Romfrey’s house; Lady Romfrey cloaked it. I believe the woman would swear black’s white to make Nevil Beauchamp appear an angel; and he’s a desperately cunning hand with women. You doubt that.”

She had shuddered slightly.

“You won’t doubt if I bring you proofs. Till I come back from Steynham, I ask you not to see him alone: not to go out to him.”

The colonel glanced at her windows.

Cecilia submitted to the request, out of breath, consenting to feel like a tutored girl, that she might conceal her guilty knowledge of what was to be seen through the windows.

“Now I’m off,” said he, and kissed her.

“If you would accept Nevil’s word!” she murmured.

“Not where women are concerned!”

He left her with this remark, which found no jealous response in her heart, yet ranged over certain dispersed inflammable grains, like a match applied to damp powder; again and again running in little leaps of harmless firm keeping her alive to its existence, and surprising her that it should not have been extinguished.

Beauchamp presented himself rather late in the afternoon, when Mr. Austin and Blackburn Tuckham were sipping tea in Cecilia’s boudoir with that lady, and a cousin of her sex, by whom she was led to notice a faint discoloration over one of his eyes, that was, considering whence it came, repulsive to compassion. A blow at a Radical meeting! He spoke of Dr. Shrapnel to Tuckham, and assuredly could not complain that the latter was unsympathetic in regard to the old man’s health, though when he said, “Poor old man! he fears he will die!” Tuckham rejoined: “He had better make his peace.”

“He fears he will die, because of his leaving Miss Denham unprotected,” said Beauchamp.

“Well, she’s a good-looking girl: he’ll be able to leave her something, and he might easily get her married, I should think,” said Tuckham.

“He’s not satisfied with handing her to any kind of man.”

“If the choice is to be among Radicals and infidels, I don’t wonder. He has come to one of the tests.”

Cecilia heard Beauchamp speaking of a newspaper. A great Radical Journal, unmatched in sincerity, superior in ability, soon to be equal in power, to the leader and exemplar of the lucre-Press, would some day see the light.

“You’ll want money for that,” said Tuckham.

“I know,” said Beauchamp.

“Are you prepared to stand forty or fifty thousand a year?”

“It need not be half so much.”

“Counting the libels, I rate the outlay rather low.”

“Yes, lawyers, judges, and juries of tradesmen, dealing justice to a Radical print!”

Tuckham brushed his hand over his mouth and ahemed. “It’s to be a penny journal?”

“Yes, a penny. I’d make it a farthing—”

“Pay to have it read?”

“Willingly.”

Tuckham did some mental arithmetic, quaintly, with rapidly blinking eyelids and open mouth. “You may count it at the cost of two paying mines,” he said firmly. “That is, if it’s to be a consistently Radical Journal, at law with everybody all round the year. And by the time it has won a reputation, it will be undermined by a radicaller Radical Journal. That’s how we’ve lowered the country to this level. That’s an Inferno of Circles, down to the ultimate mire. And what on earth are you contending for?”

“Freedom of thought, for one thing.”

“We have quite enough free-thinking.”

“There’s not enough if there’s not perfect freedom.”

“Dangerous!” quoth Mr. Austin.

“But it’s that danger which makes men, sir; and it’s fear of the danger that makes our modern Englishman.”

“Oh! Oh!” cried Tuckham in the voice of a Parliamentary Opposition. “Well, you start your paper, we’ll assume it: what class of men will you get to write?”

“I shall get good men for the hire.”

“You won’t get the best men; you may catch a clever youngster or two, and an old rogue of talent; you won’t get men of weight. They’re prejudiced, I dare say. The Journals which are commercial speculations give us a guarantee that they mean to be respectable; they must, if they wouldn’t collapse. That’s why the best men consent to write for them.”

“Money will do it,” said Beauchamp.

Mr. Austin disagreed with that observation.

“Some patriotic spirit, I may hope, sir.”

Mr. Austin shook his head. “We put different constructions upon patriotism.”

“Besides—fiddle! nonsense!” exclaimed Tuckham in the mildest interjections he could summon for a vent in society to his offended common sense; “the better your men the worse your mark. You’re not dealing with an intelligent people.”

“There’s the old charge against the people.”

“But they’re not. You can madden, you can’t elevate them by writing and writing. Defend us from the uneducated English! The common English are doltish; except in the North, where you won’t do much with them. Compare them with the Yankees for shrewdness, the Spaniards for sobriety, the French for ingenuity, the Germans for enlightenment, the Italians in the Arts; yes, the Russians for good-humour and obedience—where are they? They’re only worth something when they’re led. They fight well; there’s good stuff in them.”

“I’ve heard all that before,” returned Beauchamp, unruffled. “You don’t know them. I mean to educate them by giving them an interest in their country. At present they have next to none. Our governing class is decidedly unintelligent, in my opinion brutish, for it’s indifferent. My paper shall render your traders justice for what they do, and justice for what they don’t do.”

“My traders, as you call them, are the soundest foundation for a civilized state that the world has yet seen.”

“What is your paper to be called?” said Cecilia.

“The DAWN,” Beauchamp answered.

She blushed fiery red, and turned the leaves of a portfolio of drawings.

“The DAWN!” ejaculated Tuckham. “The grey-eyed, or the red? Extraordinary name for a paper, upon my word!”

“A paper that doesn’t devote half its columns to the vices of the rich—to money-getting, spending and betting—will be an extraordinary paper.”

“I have it before me now!—two doses of flattery to one of the whip. No, no; you haven’t hit the disease. We want union, not division. Turn your mind to being a moralist, instead of a politician.”

“The distinction shouldn’t exist!”

“Only it does!”

Mrs. Grancey Lespel’s entrance diverted their dialogue from a theme wearisome to Cecilia, for Beauchamp shone but darkly in it, and Mr. Austin did not join in it. Mrs. Grancey touched Beauchamp’s fingers. “Still political?” she said. “You have been seen about London with a French officer in uniform.”

“It was M. le comte de Croisnel, a very old friend and comrade of mine,” Beauchamp replied.

“Why do those Frenchmen everlastingly wear their uniforms?—tell me! Don’t you think it detestable style?”

“He came over in a hurry.”

“Now, don’t be huffed. I know you, for defending your friends, Captain Beauchamp! Did he not come over with ladies?”

“With relatives, yes.”

“Relatives of course. But when British officers travel with ladies, relatives or other, they prefer the simplicity of mufti, and so do I, as a question of taste, I must say.”

“It was quite by misadventure that M. de Croisnel chanced to come in his uniform.”

“Ah! I know you, for defending your friends, Captain Beauchamp. He was in too great a hurry to change his uniform before he started, or en route?”

“So it happened.”

Mrs. Grancey let a lingering eye dwell maliciously on Beauchamp, who said, to shift the burden of it: “The French are not so jealous of military uniforms as we are. M. de Croisnel lost his portmanteau.”

“Ah! lost it! Then of course he is excuseable, except to the naked eye. Dear me! you have had a bruise on yours. Was Monsieur votre ami in the Italian campaign?”

“No, poor fellow, he was not. He is not an Imperialist; he had to remain in garrison.”

“He wore a multitude of medals, I have been told. A cup of tea, Cecilia. And how long did he stay in England with his relatives?”

“Two days.”

“Only two days! A very short visit indeed—singularly short. Somebody informed me of their having been seen at Romfrey Castle, which cannot have been true.”

She turned her eyes from Beauchamp silent to Cecilia’s hand on the teapot. “Half a cup,” she said mildly, to spare the poor hand its betrayal of nervousness, and relapsed from her air of mistress of the situation to chatter to Mr. Austin.

Beauchamp continued silent. He took up a book, and presently a pencil from his pocket, then talked of the book to Cecilia’s cousin; and leaving a paper-cutter between the leaves, he looked at Cecilia and laid the book down.

She proceeded to conduct Mrs. Grancey Lespel to her room.

“I do admire Captain Beauchamp’s cleverness; he is as good as a French romance!” Mrs. Grancey exclaimed on the stairs. “He fibs charmingly. I could not help drawing him out. Two days! Why, my dear, his French party were a fortnight in the country. It was the marquise, you know—the old affair; and one may say he’s a constant man.”

“I have not heard Captain Beauchamp’s cleverness much praised,” said Cecilia. “This is your room, Mrs. Grancey.”

“Stay with me a moment. It is the room I like. Are we to have him at dinner?”

Cecilia did not suppose that Captain Beauchamp would remain to dine. Feeling herself in the clutches of a gossip, she would fain have gone.

“I am just one bit glad of it, though I can’t dislike him personally,” said Mrs. Grancey, detaining her and beginning to whisper. “It was really too bad. There was a French *party* at the end, but there was only *one* at the commencement. The brother was got over for a curtain, before the husband arrived in pursuit. They say the trick Captain Beauchamp played his cousin Cecil, to get him out of the house when he had made a discovery, was monstrous—fiendishly cunning. However, Lady Romfrey, as that woman appears to be at last, covered it all. You know she has one of those passions for Captain Beauchamp which completely blind women to right and wrong. He is her saint, let him sin ever so! The story’s in everybody’s mouth. By the way, Palmet saw her. He describes her pale as marble, with dark long eyes, the most innocent look in the world, and a walk, the absurd fellow says, like a statue set gliding. No doubt Frenchwomen do walk well. He says her eyes are terrible traitors; I need not quote Palmet. The sort of eyes that would look fondly on a stone, you know. What her reputation is in France I have only indistinctly heard. She has one in England by this time, I can assure you. She found her match in Captain Beauchamp for boldness. Where any other couple would have seen danger, *they* saw safety; and they contrived to accomplish it, according to those horrid talebearers. You have plenty of time to dress, my dear; I have an immense deal to talk about. There are

half-a-dozen scandals in London already, and you ought to know them, or you will be behind the tittle-tattle when you go to town; and I remember, as a girl, I knew nothing so excruciating as to hear blanks, dashes, initials, and half words, without the key. Nothing makes a girl look so silly and unpalatable. Naturally, the reason why Captain Beauchamp is more talked about than the rest is the politics. Your grand reformer should be careful. Doubly heterodox will not do! It makes him interesting to women, if you like, but he won't soon hear the last of it, if he is for a public career. Grancey literally crowed at the story. And the wonderful part of it is, that Captain Beauchamp refused to be present at the earl's first ceremonial dinner in honour of his countess. Now, that, we all think, was particularly ungrateful: now, was it not?"

"If the countess—if ingratitude had anything to do with it," said Cecilia.

She escaped to her room and dressed impatiently.

Her boudoir was empty: Beauchamp had departed. She recollected his look at her, and turned over the leaves of the book he had been hastily scanning, and had condescended to approve of. On the two pages where the paper-cutter was fixed she perceived small pencil dots under certain words. Read consecutively, with a participle termination struck out to convey his meaning, they formed the pathetically ungrammatical line:

"Hear: none: but: accused: false."

Treble dots were under the word "to-morrow." He had scored the margin of the sentences containing his dotted words, as if in admiration of their peculiar wisdom.

She thought it piteous that he should be reduced to such means of communication. The next instant Cecilia was shrinking from the adept intriguer—French-taught!

In the course of the evening her cousin remarked:

"Captain Beauchamp must see merit in things undiscoverable by my poor faculties. I will show you a book he has marked."

"Did you see it? I was curious to examine it," interposed Cecilia; "and I am as much at a loss as you to understand what could have attracted him. One sentence..."

"About the sheikh in the stables, where he accused the pretended physician? Yes, what was there in that?"

"Where is the book?" said Mrs. Grancey.

"Not here, I think." Cecilia glanced at the drawing-room book-table, and then at Mr. Austin, the victim of an unhappy love in his youth, and unhappy about her, as her father had said. Seymour Austin was not one to spread the contagion of intrigue! She felt herself caught by it, even melting to feel enamoured of herself in consequence, though not loving Beauchamp the more.

"This newspaper, if it's not merely an airy project, will be ruination," said Tuckham. "The fact is, Beauchamp has no *bend* in him. He can't meet a man without trying a wrestle, and as long as he keeps his stiffness, he believes he has won. I've heard an oculist say that the eye that doesn't blink ends in blindness, and he who won't bend breaks. It's a pity, for he's a fine fellow. A Radical daily Journal of Shrapnel's colour, to educate the people by giving them an interest in the country! Goodness, what a delusion! and what a waste of money! He'll not be able to carry it on a couple of years. And there goes his eighty thousand!"

Cecilia's heart beat fast. She had no defined cause for its excitement.

Colonel Halkett returned to Mount Laurels close upon midnight, very tired, coughing and complaining of the bitter blowing East. His guests shook hands with him, and went to bed.

"I think I'll follow their example," he said to Cecilia, after drinking a tumbler of mulled wine.

"Have you nothing to tell me, dear papa?" said she, caressing him timidly.

"A confirmation of the whole story from Lord Romfrey in person—that's all. He says Beauchamp's mad. I begin to believe it. You must use your judgement. I suppose I must not expect you to consider me. You might open your heart to Austin. As to my consent, knowing what I do, you will have to tear it out of me. Here's a country perfectly contented, and that fellow at work digging up grievances to persuade the people they're oppressed by us. Why should I talk of it? He can't do much harm; unless he has money—money! Romfrey says he means to start a furious paper. He'll make a bonfire of himself. I can't stand by and see you in it too. I may die; I may be spared the sight."

Cecilia flung her arms round his neck. "Oh! papa."

“I don’t want to make him out worse than he is, my dear. I own to his gallantry—in the French sense as well as the English, it seems! It’s natural that Romfrey should excuse his wife. She’s another of the women who are crazy about Nevil Beauchamp. She spoke to me of the ‘pleasant visit of her French friends,’ and would have enlarged on it, but Romfrey stopped her. By the way, he proposes Captain Baskelett for you, and we’re to look for Baskelett’s coming here, backed by his uncle. There’s no end to it; there never will be till you’re married: and no peace for me! I hope I shan’t find myself with a cold to-morrow.”

The colonel coughed, and perhaps exaggerated the premonitory symptoms of a cold.

“Italy, papa, would do you good,” said Cecilia.

“It might,” said he.

“If we go immediately, papa; to-morrow, early in the morning, before there is a chance of any visitors coming to the house.”

“From Bevisham?”

“From Steynham. I cannot endure a second persecution.”

“But you have a world of packing, my dear.”

“An hour before breakfast will be sufficient for me.”

“In that case, we might be off early, as you say, and have part of the Easter week in Rome.”

“Mr. Austin wishes it greatly, papa, though he has not mentioned it.”

“Austin, my darling girl, is not one of your impatient men who burst with everything they have in their heads or their hearts.”

“Oh! but I know him so well,” said Cecilia, conjuring up that innocent enthusiasm of hers for Mr. Austin as an antidote to her sharp suffering. The next minute she looked on her father as the key of an enigma concerning Seymour Austin, whom, she imagined, possibly she had not hitherto known at all. Her curiosity to pierce it faded. She and her maid were packing through the night. At dawn she requested her maid to lift the window-blind and give her an opinion of the weather. “Grey, Miss,” the maid reported. It signified to Cecilia: no one roaming outside.

The step she was taking was a desperate attempt at a cure; and she commenced it, though sorely wounded, with pity for Nevil’s disappointment, and a singularly clear-eyed perception of his aims and motives.—“I am rich, and he wants riches; he likes me, and he reads my weakness.”—Jealousy shook her by fits, but she had no right to be jealous, nor any right to reproach him. Her task was to climb back to those heavenly heights she sat on before he distracted her and drew her down.

Beauchamp came to a vacated house that day.

CHAPTER XLVI.
AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FORESEEN

It was in Italy that Cecilia's maiden dreams of life had opened. She hoped to recover them in Italy, and the calm security of a mind untainted. Italy was to be her reviving air.

While this idea of a specific for her malady endured travelling at speed to the ridges of the Italian frontier, across France—she simply remembered Nevil: he was distant; he had no place in the storied landscape, among the images of Art and the names of patient great men who bear, as they bestow, an atmosphere other than earth's for those adoring them. If at night, in her sleep, he was a memory that conducted her through scenes which were lightnings, the cool swift morning of her flight released her. France, too, her rival!—the land of France, personified by her instinctively, though she had no vivid imaginative gift, did not wound her with a poisoned dart.—"She knew him first: she was his first love." The Alps, and the sense of having Italy below them, renewed Cecilia's lofty-perching youth. Then—I am in Italy! she sighed with rapture. The wine of delight and oblivion was at her lips.

But thirst is not enjoyment, and a satiated thirst that we insist on over-satisfying to drown the recollection of past anguish, is baneful to the soul. In Rome Cecilia's vision of her track to Rome was of a run of fire over a heath. She could scarcely feel common pleasure in Rome. It seemed burnt out.

Flung back on herself, she was condemned to undergo the bitter torment she had flown from: jealous love, and reproachful; and a shame in it like nothing she had yet experienced. Previous pains were but Summer lightnings, passing shadows. She could have believed in sorcery: the man had eaten her heart!

A disposition to mocking humour, foreign to her nature, gave her the notion of being off her feet, in the claws of a fabulous bird. It served to veil her dulness. An ultra-English family in Rome, composed, shocking to relate, of a baronet banker and his wife, two faint-faced girls, and a young gentleman of our country, once perhaps a light-limbed boy, chose to be followed by their footman in the melancholy pomp of state livery. Wherever she encountered them Cecilia talked Nevil Beauchamp. Even Mr. Tuckham perceived it. She was extremely uncharitable: she extended her ungenerous criticism to the institution of the footman: England, and the English, were lashed.

"These people are caricatures," Tuckham said, in apology for poor England burlesqued abroad. "You must not generalize on them. Footmen are footmen all the world over. The cardinals have a fine set of footmen."

"They are at home. Those English sow contempt of us all over Europe. We cannot but be despised. One comes abroad foredoomed to share the sentiment. This is your middle-class! What society can they move in, that sanctions a vulgarity so perplexing? They have the air of ornaments on a cottager's parlour mantelpiece."

Tuckham laughed. "Something of that," he said.

"Evidently they seek distinction, and they have it, of that kind," she continued. "It is not wonderful that we have so much satirical writing in England, with such objects of satire. It may be as little wonderful that the satire has no effect. Immense wealth and native obtuseness combine to disfigure us with this aspect of overripeness, not to say monstrosity. I fall in love with the poor, and think they have a cause to be pleaded, when I look at those people. We scoff at the vanity of the French, but it is a graceful vanity; pardonable compared with ours."

"I've read all that a hundred times," quoth Tuckham bluntly.

"So have I. I speak of it because I see it. We scoff at the simplicity of the Germans."

"The Germans live in simple fashion, because they're poor. French vanity's pretty and amusing. I don't know whether it's deep in them, for I doubt their depth; but I know it's in their joints. The first spring of a Frenchman comes of vanity. That you can't say of the English. Peace to all! but I abhor cosmopolitanism. No man has a firm foothold who pretends to it. None despises the English in reality. Don't be misled, Miss Halkett. We're solid: that is the main point. The world feels our power, and has confidence in our good faith. I ask for no more."

"With Germans we are supercilious Celts; with Frenchmen we are sneering Teutons:—Can we be loved, Mr. Tuckham?"

"That's a quotation from my friend Lydiard. Loved? No nation ever was

loved while it lived. As Lydiard says, it may be a good beast or a bad, but a beast it is. A nation's much too big for refined feelings and affections. It must be powerful or out of the way, or down it goes. When a nation's dead you may love it; but I don't see the use of dying to be loved. My aim for my country is to have the land respected. For that purpose we must have power; for power wealth; for wealth industry; for industry internal peace: therefore no agitation, no artificial divisions. All's plain in history and fact, so long as we do not obtrude sentimentalism. Nothing mixes well with that stuff—except poetical ideas!"

Contrary to her anticipation, Cecilia was thrown more into companionship with Mr. Tuckham than with Mr. Austin; and though it often vexed her, she acknowledged that she derived a benefit from his robust antagonism of opinion. And Italy had grown tasteless to her. She could hardly simulate sufficient curiosity to serve for a vacant echo to Mr. Austin's historic ardour. Pliny the Younger might indeed be the model of a gentleman of old Rome; there might be a scholarly pleasure in calculating, as Mr. Austin did, the length of time it took Pliny to journey from the city to his paternal farm, or villa overlooking the lake, or villa overlooking the bay, and some abstruse fun in the tender ridicule of his readings of his poems to friends; for Mr. Austin smiled effusively in alluding to the illustrious Roman pleader's foible of verse: but Pliny bore no resemblance to that island barbarian Nevil Beauchamp: she could not realize the friend of Trajan, orator, lawyer, student, statesman, benefactor of his kind, and model of her own modern English gentleman, though he was. "Yes!" she would reply encouragingly to Seymour Austin's fond brooding hum about his hero; and "Yes!" conclusively: like an incarnation of stupidity dealing in monosyllables. She was unworthy of the society of a scholar. Nor could she kneel at the feet of her especial heroes: Dante, Raphael, Buonarotti: she was unworthy of them. She longed to be at Mount Laurels. Mr. Tuckham's conversation was the nearest approach to it—as it were round by Greenland; but it was homeward.

She was really grieved to lose him. Business called him to England.

"What business can it be, papa?" she inquired: and the colonel replied briefly: "Ours."

Mr. Austin now devoted much of his time to the instruction of her in the ancient life of the Eternal City. He had certain volumes of Livy, Niebuhr, and Gibbon, from which he read her extracts at night, shunning the scepticism and the irony of the moderns, so that there should be no jar on the awakening interest of his fair pupil and patient. A gentle cross-hauling ensued between them, that they grew conscious of and laughed over during their peregrinations in and out of Rome: she pulled for the Republic of the Scipios; his predilections were toward the Rome of the wise and clement emperors. To Cecilia's mind Rome rocked at a period so closely neighbouring her decay: to him, with an imagination brooding on the fuller knowledge of it, the city breathed securely, the sky was clear; jurisprudence, rhetoric, statesmanship, then flourished supreme, and men eminent for culture: the finest flowers of our race, he thought them: and he thought their Age the manhood of Rome.

Struck suddenly by a feminine subtle comparison that she could not have framed in speech, Cecilia bowed to his views of the happiness and elevation proper to the sway of a sagacious and magnanimous Imperialism of the Roman pattern:—he rejected the French. She mused on dim old thoughts of the gracious dignity of a woman's life under high governorship. Turbulent young men imperilled it at every step. The trained, the grave, the partly grey, were fitting lords and mates for women aspiring to moral beauty and distinction. Beside such they should be planted, if they would climb! Her walks and conversations with Seymour Austin charmed her as the haze of a summer evening charms the sight.

Upon the conclusion of her term of exile Cecilia would gladly have remained in Italy another month. An appointment of her father's with Mr. Tuckham at Mount Laurels on a particular day she considered as of no consequence whatever, and she said so, in response to a meaningless nod. But Mr. Austin was obliged to return to work. She set her face homeward with his immediately, and he looked pleased: he did not try to dissuade her from accompanying him by affecting to think it a sacrifice: clearly he knew that to be near him was her greatest delight.

Thus do we round the perilous headland called love by wooing a good man for his friendship, and requiting him with faithful esteem for the grief of an ill-fortuned passion of his youth!

Cecilia would not suffer her fancy to go very far in pursuit of the secret of Mr. Austin's present feelings. Until she reached Mount Laurels she

barely examined her own. The sight of the house warned her instantly that she must have a defence: and then, in desperation but with perfect distinctness, she entertained the hope of hearing him speak the protecting words which could not be broken through when wedded to her consent.

If Mr. Austin had no intentions, it was at least strange that he did not part from her in London.

He whose coming she dreaded had been made aware of the hour of her return, as his card, with the pencilled line, “Will call on the 17th,” informed her. The 17th was the morrow.

After breakfast on the morning of the 17th Seymour Austin looked her in the eyes longer than it is customary for ladies to have to submit to keen inspection.

“Will you come into the library?” he said.

She went with him into the library.

Was it to speak of his anxiousness as to the state of her father’s health that he had led her there, and that he held her hand? He alarmed her, and he pacified her alarm, yet bade her reflect on the matter, saying that her father, like other fathers, would be more at peace upon the establishment of his daughter. Mr. Austin remarked that the colonel was troubled.

“Does he wish for my pledge never to marry without his approval? I will give it,” said Cecilia.

“He would like you to undertake to marry the man of his choice.” Cecilia’s features hung on an expression equivalent to:—“I could almost do that.”

At the same time she felt it was not Seymour Austin’s manner of speaking. He seemed to be praising an unknown person—some gentleman who was rough, but of solid promise and singular strength of character.

The house-bell rang. Believing that Beauchamp had now come, she showed a painful ridging of the brows, and Mr. Austin considerately mentioned the name of the person he had in his mind.

She readily agreed with him regarding Mr. Tuckham’s excellent qualities—if that was indeed the name; and she hastened to recollect how little she had forgotten Mr. Tuckham’s generosity to Beauchamp, and confessed to herself it might as well have been forgotten utterly for the thanks he had received. While revolving these ideas she was listening to Mr. Austin; gradually she was beginning to understand that she was parting company with her original conjectures, but going at so swift a pace in so supple and sure a grasp, that, like the speeding train slipped on new lines of rails by the pointsman, her hurrying sensibility was not shocked, or the shock was imperceptible, when she heard him proposing Mr. Tuckham to her for a husband, by her father’s authority, and with his own warm seconding. He had not dropped her hand: he was very eloquent, a masterly advocate: he pleaded her father’s cause; it was not put to her as Mr. Tuckham’s: her father had set his heart on this union: he was awaiting her decision.

“Is it so urgent?” she asked.

“It is urgent. It saves him from an annoyance. He requires a son-in-law whom he can confidently rely on to manage the estates, which you are woman of the world enough to know should be in strong hands. He gives you to a man of settled principles. It is urgent, because he may wish to be armed with your answer at any instant.”

Her father entered the library. He embraced her, and “Well?” he said.

“I must think, papa, I must think.”

She pressed her hand across her eyes. Disillusioned by Seymour Austin, she was utterly defenceless before Beauchamp: and possibly Beauchamp was in the house. She fancied he was, by the impatient brevity of her father’s voice.

Seymour Austin and Colonel Halkett left the room, and Blackburn Tuckham walked in, not the most entirely self-possessed of suitors, puffing softly under his breath, and blinking eyes as rapidly as a skylark claps wings on the ascent.

Half an hour later Beauchamp appeared. He asked to see the colonel, delivered himself of his pretensions and wishes to the colonel, and was referred to Cecilia; but Colonel Halkett declined to send for her. Beauchamp declined to postpone his proposal until the following day. He went outside the house and walked up and down the grass-plot.

Cecilia came to him at last.

“I hear, Nevil, that you are waiting to speak to me.”
“I’ve been waiting some weeks. Shall I speak here?”
“Yes, here, quickly.”
“Before the house? I have come to ask you for your hand.”
“Mine? I cannot…”
“Step into the park with me. I ask you to marry me.”
“It is too late.”

CHAPTER XLVII.
THE REFUSAL OF HIM

Passing from one scene of excitement to another, Cecilia was perfectly steeled for her bitter task; and having done that which separated her a sphere's distance from Beauchamp, she was cold, inaccessible to the face of him who had swayed her on flood and ebb so long, incapable of tender pity, even for herself. All she could feel was a harsh joy to have struck off her tyrant's fetters, with a determination to cherish it passionately lest she should presently be hating herself: for the shadow of such a possibility fell within the narrow circle of her strung sensations. But for the moment her delusion reached to the idea that she had escaped from him into freedom, when she said, "It is too late." Those words were the sum and voice of her long term of endurance. She said them hurriedly, almost in a whisper, in the manner of one changeing a theme of conversation for subjects happier and livelier, though none followed.

The silence bore back on her a suspicion of a faint reproachfulness in the words; and perhaps they carried a poetical tone, still more distasteful.

"You have been listening to tales of me," said Beauchamp.

"Nevil, we can always be friends, the best of friends."

"Were you astonished at my asking you for your hand? You said 'mine?' as if you wondered. You have known my feelings for you. Can you deny that? I have reckoned on yours—too long?—But not falsely? No, hear me out. The truth is, I cannot lose you. And don't look so resolute. Overlook little wounds: I was never indifferent to you. How could I be—with eyes in my head? The colonel is opposed to me of course: he will learn to understand me better: but you and I! we cannot be mere friends. It's like daylight blotted out—or the eyes gone blind:—Too late? Can you repeat it? I tried to warn you before you left England: I should have written a letter to put you on your guard against my enemies:—I find I have some: but a letter is sure to stumble; I should have been obliged to tell you that I do not stand on my defence; and I thought I should see you the next day. You went: and not a word for me! You gave me no chance. If you have no confidence in me I must bear it. I may say the story is false. With your hand in mine I would swear it."

"Let it be forgotten," said Cecilia, surprised and shaken to think that her situation required further explanations; fascinated and unnerved by simply hearing him. "We are now—we are walking away from the house."

"Do you object to a walk with me?"

They had crossed the garden plot and were at the gate of the park leading to the Western wood. Beauchamp swung the gate open. He cast a look at the clouds coming up from the South-west in folds of grey and silver.

"Like the day of our drive into Bevisham!—without the storm behind," he said, and doated on her soft shut lips, and the mild sun-rays of her hair in sunless light. "There are flowers that grow only in certain valleys, and your home is Mount Laurels, whatever your fancy may be for Italy. You colour the whole region for me. When you were absent, you were here. I called here six times, and walked and talked with you."

Cecilia set her face to the garden. Her heart had entered on a course of heavy thumping, like a sapper in the mine.

Pain was not unwelcome to her, but this threatened weakness.

What plain words could she use? If Mr. Tuckham had been away from the house, she would have found it easier to speak of her engagement; she knew not why. Or if the imperative communication could have been delivered in Italian or French, she was as little able to say why it should have slipped from her tongue without a critic shudder to arrest it. She was cold enough to revolve the words: betrothed, affianced, plighted: and reject them, pretty words as they are. Between the vulgarity of romantic language, and the baldness of commonplace, it seemed to her that our English gives us no choice; that we cannot be dignified in simplicity. And for some reason, feminine and remote, she now detested her "hand" so much as to be unable to bring herself to the metonymic mention of it. The lady's difficulty was peculiar to sweet natures that have no great warmth of passion; it can only be indicated. Like others of the kind, it is traceable to the most delicate of sentiments, and to the flattest:—for Mr. Blackburn's Tuckham's figure was (she thought of it with no personal objection) not of the graceful order, neither cavalierly

nor kingly: and imagining himself to say, “I am engaged,” and he suddenly appearing on the field, Cecilia’s whole mind was shocked in so marked a way did he contrast with Beauchamp.

This was the effect of Beauchamp’s latest words on her. He had disarmed her anger.

“We *must* have a walk to-day,” he said commandingly, but it had stolen into him that he and she were not walking on the same bank of the river, though they were side by side: a chill water ran between them. As in other days, there hung her hand: but not to be taken. Incredible as it was, the icy sense of his having lost her benumbed him. Her beautiful face and beautiful tall figure, so familiar to him that they were like a possession, protested in his favour while they snatched her from him all the distance of the words “too late.”

“Will you not give me one half-hour?”

“I am engaged,” Cecilia plunged and extricated herself, “I am engaged to walk with Mr. Austin and papa.”

Beauchamp tossed his head. Something induced him to speak of Mr. Tuckham. “The colonel has discovered his Tory young man! It’s an object as incomprehensible to me as a Tory working-man. I suppose I must take it that they exist. As for Blackburn Tuckham, I have nothing against him. He’s an honourable fellow enough, and would govern Great Britain as men of that rich middle-class rule their wives—with a strict regard for ostensible humanity and what the law allows them. His manners have improved. Your cousin Mary seems to like him: it struck me when I saw them together. Cecilia! one half-hour! You refuse me: you have not heard me. You will not say too late.”

“Nevil, I have said it finally. I have no longer the right to conceive it unsaid.”

“So we speak! It’s the language of indolence, temper, faint hearts. ‘Too late’ has no meaning. Turn back with me to the park. I offer you my whole heart; I love you. There’s no woman living who could be to me the wife you would be. I’m like your male nightingale that you told me of: I must have my mate to sing to—that is, work for and live for; and she must not delay too long. Did *I?* Pardon me if you think I did. You have known I love you. I have been distracted by things that kept me from thinking of myself and my wishes: and love’s a selfish business while... while one has work in hand. It’s clear I can’t do two things at a time—make love and carry on my taskwork. I have been idle for weeks. I believed you were mine and wanted no lovemaking. There’s no folly in that, if you understand me at all. As for vanity about women, I’ve outlived it. In comparison with you I’m poor, I know:—you look distressed, but one has to allude to it:—I admit that wealth would help me. To see wealth supporting the cause of the people for once would—but you say, too late! Well, I don’t renounce you till I see you giving your hand to a man who’s not myself. You have been offended: groundlessly, on my honour! You are the woman of all women in the world to hold me fast in faith and pride in you. It’s useless to look icy: you feel what I say.”

“Nevil, I feel grief, and beg you to cease. I am——It is——”

“‘Too late’ has not a rag of meaning, Cecilia! I love your name. I love this too: this is mine, and no one can rob me of it.”

He drew forth a golden locket and showed her a curl of her hair.

Crimsoning, she said instantly: “Language of the kind I used is open to misconstruction, I fear. I have not even the right to listen to you. I am ... You ask me for what I have it no longer in my power to give. I am engaged.”

The shot rang through him and partly stunned him; but incredulity made a mocking effort to sustain him. The greater wounds do not immediately convince us of our fate, though we may be conscious that we have been hit.

“Engaged in earnest?” said he.

“Yes.”

“Of your free will?”

“Yes.”

Her father stepped out on the terrace, from one of the open windows, trailing a newspaper like a pocket-handkerchief. Cecilia threaded the flower-beds to meet him.

“Here’s an accident to one of our ironclads,” he called to Beauchamp.

“Lives lost, sir?”

“No, thank heaven! but, upon my word, it’s a warning. Read the telegram; it’s the *Hastings*. If these are our defences, at a cost of half a

million of money, each of them, the sooner we look to our land forces the better."

"The Shop will not be considered safe!" said Beauchamp, taking in the telegram at a glance. "Peppel's a first-rate officer too: she couldn't have had a better captain. Ship seriously damaged!"

He handed back the paper to the colonel.

Cecilia expected him to say that he had foreseen such an event.

He said nothing; and with a singular contraction of the heart she recollected how he had denounced our system of preparing mainly for the defensive in war, on a day when they stood together in the park, watching the slow passage of that very ship, the *Hastings*, along the broad water, distant below them. The "*swarms of swift vessels of attack*," she recollected particularly, and "*small wasps and rams under mighty steam-power*," that he used to harp on when declaring that England must be known for the assailant in war: she was to "ray out" her worrying fleets. "*The defensive is perilous policy in war:*" he had said it. She recollected also her childish ridicule of his excess of emphasis: he certainly had foresight."

Mr. Austin and Mr. Tuckham came strolling in conversation round the house to the terrace. Beauchamp bowed to the former, nodded to the latter, scrutinizing him after he had done so, as if the flash of a thought were in his mind. Tuckham's radiant aspect possibly excited it: "Congratulate me!" was the honest outcry of his face and frame. He was as over-flowingly rosy as a victorious candidate at the hustings commencing a speech. Cecilia laid her hand on an urn, in dread of the next words from either of the persons present. Her father put an arm in hers, and leaned on her. She gazed at her chamber window above, wishing to be wafted thither to her seclusion within. The trembling limbs of physical irresoluteness was a new experience to her.

"Anything else in the paper, colonel? I've not seen it to-day," said Beauchamp, for the sake of speaking.

"No, I don't think there's anything," Colonel Halkett replied. "Our diplomatists haven't been shining much: that's not our forte."

"No: it's our field for younger sons."

"Is it? Ah! There's an expedition against the hilltribes in India, and we're such a peaceful nation, eh? We look as if we were in for a complication with China."

"Well, sir, we must sell our opium."

"Of course we must. There's a man writing about surrendering Gibraltar!"

"I'm afraid we can't do that."

"But where do you draw the line?" quoth Tuckham, very susceptible to a sneer at the colonel, and entirely ignorant of the circumstances attending Beauchamp's position before him. "You defend the Chinaman; and it's questionable if his case is as good as the Spaniard's."

"The Chinaman has a case against our traders. Gibraltar concerns our imperial policy."

"As to the case against the English merchants, the Chinaman is for shutting up his millions of acres of productive land, and the action of commerce is merely a declaration of a universal public right, to which all States must submit."

"Immorality brings its punishment, be sure of that. Some day we shall have enough of China. As to the Rock, I know the argument; I may be wrong. I've had the habit of regarding it as necessary to our naval supremacy."

"Come! there we agree."

"I'm not so certain."

"The counter-argument, I call treason."

"Well," said Beauchamp, "there's a broad policy, and a narrow. There's the Spanish view of the matter—if you are for peace and harmony and disarmament."

"I'm not."

"Then strengthen your forces."

"Not a bit of it!"

"Then bully the feeble and truckle to the strong; consent to be hated till you have to stand your ground."

"Talk!"

"It seems to me logical."

"That's the French notion—c'est lodgique!"

Tuckham's pronunciation caused Cecilia to level her eyes at him passingly.

"By the way," said Colonel Halkett, "there are lots of horrors in the paper to-day; wife kickings, and starvations—oh, dear me! and the murder of a woman: two columns to that."

"That, the Tory reaction is responsible for!" said Tuckham, rather by way of a joke than a challenge.

Beauchamp accepted it as a challenge. Much to the benevolent amusement of Mr. Austin and Colonel Halkett, he charged the responsibility of every crime committed in the country, and every condition of misery, upon the party which declined to move in advance, and which *therefore* apologized for the perpetuation of knavery, villany, brutality, injustice, and foul dealing.

"Stick to your laws and systems and institutions, and so long as you won't stir to amend them, I hold you accountable for that long newspaper list daily."

He said this with a visible fire of conviction.

Tuckham stood bursting at the monstrousness of such a statement.

He condensed his indignant rejoinder to: "Madness can't go farther!"

"There's an idea in it," said Mr. Austin.

"It's an idea foaming at the mouth, then."

"Perhaps it has no worse fault than that of not marching parallel with the truth," said Mr. Austin, smiling. "The party accusing in those terms ... what do you say, Captain Beauchamp?—supposing us to be pleading before a tribunal?"

Beauchamp admitted as much as that he had made the case gigantic, though he stuck to his charge against the Tory party. And moreover: the Tories—and the old Whigs, now Liberals, ranked under the heading of Tories—those Tories possessing and representing the wealth of the country, yet had not started one respectable journal that a lady could read through without offence to her, or a gentleman without disgust! If there was not one English newspaper in existence independent of circulation and advertisements, and of the tricks to win them, the Tories were answerable for the vacancy. They, being the rich who, if they chose, could set an example to our Press by subscribing to maintain a Journal superior to the flattering of vile appetites—"all that nauseous matter," Beauchamp stretched his fingers at the sheets Colonel Halkett was holding, and which he had not read—"those Tories," he bowed to the colonel, "I'm afraid I must say you, sir, are answerable for it."

"I am very well satisfied with my paper," said the colonel.

Beauchamp sighed to himself. "We choose to be satisfied," he said. His pure and mighty DAWN was in his thoughts: the unborn light of a day denied to earth!

One of the doctors of Bevisham, visiting a sick maid of the house, trotted up the terrace to make his report to her master of the state of her health. He hoped to pull her through with the aid of high feeding. He alluded cursorily to a young girl living on the outskirts of the town, whom he had been called in to see at the eleventh hour, and had lost, owing to the lowering of his patient from a prescription of a vegetable diet by a certain Dr. Shrapnel.

That ever-explosive name precipitated Beauchamp to the front rank of the defence.

"I happen to be staying with Dr. Shrapnel," he observed. "I don't eat meat there because he doesn't, and I am certain I take no harm by avoiding it. I think vegetarianism a humaner system, and hope it may be wise. I should like to set the poor practising it, for their own sakes; and I have half an opinion that it would be good for the rich—if we are to condemn gluttony."

"Ah? Captain Beauchamp!" the doctor bowed to him. "But my case was one of poor blood requiring to be strengthened. The girl was allowed to sink so low that stimulants were ineffective when I stepped in. There's the point. It's all very well while you are in health. You may do without meat till your system demands the stimulant, or else—as with this poor girl! And, indeed, Captain Beauchamp, if I may venture the remark—I had the pleasure of seeing you during the last Election in our town—and if I may be so bold, I should venture to hint that the avoidance of animal food—to judge by appearances—has not been quite wholesome for you."

Eyes were turned on Beauchamp.

CHAPTER XLVIII.
OF THE TRIAL AWAITING THE EARL OF ROMFREY

Cecilia softly dropped her father’s arm, and went into the house. The exceeding pallor of Beauchamp’s face haunted her in her room. She heard the controversy proceeding below, and an exclamation of Blackburn Tuckham’s: “Immorality of meat-eating? What nonsense are they up to now?”

Beauchamp was inaudible, save in a word or two. As usual, he was the solitary minority.

But how mournfully changed he was! She had not noticed it, agitated by her own emotions as she had been, and at one time three parts frozen. He was the ghost of the Nevil Beauchamp who had sprung on the deck of the *Esperanza* out of Lieutenant Wilmore’s boat, that sunny breezy day which was the bright first chapter of her new life—of her late life, as it seemed to her now, for she was dead to it, and another creature, the coldest of the women of earth. She felt sensibly cold, coveted warmth, flung a shawl on her shoulders, and sat in a corner of her room, hidden and shivering beside the open window, till long after the gentlemen had ceased to speak.

How much he must have suffered of late! The room she had looked to as a refuge from Nevil was now her stronghold against the man whom she had incredibly accepted. She remained there, the victim of a heart malady, under the term of headache. Feeling entrapped, she considered that she must have been encircled and betrayed. She looked back on herself as a giddy figure falling into a pit: and in the pit she lay.

And how vile to have suspected of unfaithfulness and sordidness the generous and stedfast man of earth! He never abandoned a common friendship. His love of his country was love still, whatever the form it had taken. His childlike reliance on effort and outspeaking, for which men laughed at him, was beautiful.

Where am I? she cried amid her melting images of him, all dominated by his wan features. She was bound fast, imprisoned and a slave. Even Mr. Austin had conspired against him: for only she read Nevil justly. His defence of Dr. Shrapnel filled her with an envy that no longer maligned the object of it, but was humble, and like the desire of the sick to creep into sunshine.

The only worthy thing she could think of doing was (it must be mentioned for a revelation of her fallen state, and, moreover, she was not lusty of health at the moment) to abjure meat. The body loathed it, and consequently the mind of the invalided lady shrank away in horror of the bleeding joints, and the increasingly fierce scramble of Christian souls for the dismembered animals: she saw the innocent pasturing beasts, she saw the act of slaughter. She had actually sweeping before her sight a spectacle of the ludicrous-terrific, in the shape of an entire community pursuing countless herds of poor scampering animal life for blood: she, meanwhile, with Nevil and Dr. Shrapnel, stood apart contemning. For whoso would not partake of flesh in this kingdom of roast beef must be of the sparse number of Nevil’s execrated minority in politics.

The example will show that she touched the borders of delirium. Physically, the doctor pronounces her bilious. She was in earnest so far as to send down to the library for medical books, and books upon diet. These, however, did not plead for the beasts. They treated the subject without question of man’s taking that which he has conquered. Poets and philosophers did the same. Again she beheld Nevil Beauchamp solitary in the adverse rank to the world;—to his countrymen especially. But that it was no material cause which had wasted his cheeks and lined his forehead, she was sure: and to starve with him, to embark with him in his little boat on the seas he whipped to frenzy, would have been a dream of bliss, had she dared to contemplate herself in a dream as his companion.

It was not to be thought of.

No: but this was, and to be thought of seriously: Cecilia had said to herself for consolation that Beauchamp was no spiritual guide; he had her heart within her to plead for him, and the reflection came to her, like a bubble up from the heart, that most of our spiritual guides neglect the root to trim the flower: and thence, turning sharply on herself, she obtained a sudden view of her allurement and her sin in worshipping

herself, and recognized that the aim at an ideal life closely approaches, or easily inclines, to self-worship; to which the lady was woman and artist enough to have had no objection, but that therein visibly she discerned the retributive vain longings, in the guise of high individual superiority and distinction, that had thwarted her with Nevil Beauchamp, never permitting her to love single-mindedly or whole-heartedly, but always in reclaiming her rights and sighing for the loss of her ideal; adoring her own image, in fact, when she pretended to cherish, and regret that she could not sufficiently cherish, the finer elements of nature. What was this ideal she had complained of losing? It was a broken mirror: she could think of it in no other form.

Dr. Shrapnel's "Ego-Ego" yelped and gave chase to her through the pure beatitudes of her earlier days down to her present regrets. It hunted all the saints in the calendar till their haloes top-sided on their heads—her favourite St. Francis of Assisi excepted.

The doctor was called up from Bevisham next day, and pronounced her bilious. He was humorous over Captain Beauchamp, who had gone to the parents of the dead girl, and gathered the information that they were a consumptive family, to vindicate Dr. Shrapnel. "The very family to require strong nourishment," said the doctor.

Cecilia did not rest in her sick-room before, hunting through one book and another, she had found arguments on the contrary side; a waste of labour that heaped oppression on her chest, as with the world's weight. Apparently one had only to be in Beauchamp's track to experience that. She horrified her father by asking questions about consumption. Homoeopathy, hydropathy,—the revolutionaries of medicine attracted her. Blackburn Tuckham, a model for an elected lover who is not beloved, promised to procure all sorts of treatises for her: no man could have been so deferential to a diseased mind. Beyond calling her by her Christian name, he did nothing to distress her with the broad aspect of their new relations together. He and Mr. Austin departed from Mount Laurels, leaving her to sink into an agreeable stupor, like one deposited on a mudbank after buffeting the waves. She learnt that her father had seen Captain Baskelett, and remembered, marvelling, how her personal dread of an interview, that threatened to compromise her ideal of her feminine and peculiar dignity, had assisted to precipitate her where she now lay helpless, almost inanimate.

She was unaware of the passage of time save when her father spoke of a marriage-day. It told her that she lived and was moving. The fear of death is not stronger in us, nor the desire to put it off, than Cecilia's shunning of such a day. The naming of it numbed her blood like a snakebite. Yet she openly acknowledged her engagement; and, happily for Tuckham, his visits, both in London and at Mount Laurels, were few and short, and he inflicted no foretaste of her coming subjection to him to alarm her.

Under her air of calm abstraction she watched him rigorously for some sign of his ownership that should tempt her to revolt from her pledge, or at least dream of breaking loose: the dream would have sufficed. He was never intrusive, never pressing. He did not vex, because he absolutely trusted to the noble loyalty which made her admit to herself that she belonged irrevocably to him, while her thoughts were upon Beauchamp. With a respectful gravity he submitted to her perusal a collection of treatises on diet, classed *pro* and *con*, and paged and pencil-marked to simplify her study of the question. They sketched in company; she played music to him, he read poetry to her, and read it well. He seemed to feel the beauty of it sensitively, as she did critically. In other days the positions had been reversed. He invariably talked of Beauchamp with kindness, deploring only that he should be squandering his money on workmen's halls and other hazy projects down in Bevisham.

"Lydiard tells me he has a very sound idea of the value of money, and has actually made money by cattle breeding; but he has flung ten thousand pounds on a single building outside the town, and he'll have to endow it to support it—a Club to educate Radicals. The fact is, he wants to jam the business of two or three centuries into a life-time. These men of their so-called progress are like the majority of religious minds: they can't believe without seeing and touching. That is to say, they don't believe in the abstract at all, but they go to work blindly by agitating, and proselytizing, and persecuting to get together a mass they can believe in. You see it in their way of arguing; it's half done with the fist. Lydiard tells me he left him last in a horrible despondency about progress. Ha! ha! Beauchamp's no Radical. He hasn't forgiven the Countess of Romfrey for marrying above her rank. He may be a bit of a Republican: but really in this country Republicans are fighting with the

shadow of an old hat and a cockhorse. I beg to state that I have a reverence for constituted authority: I speak of what those fellows are contending with."

"Right," said Colonel Halkett. "But 'the shadow of an old hat and a cockhorse': what does that mean?"

"That's what our Republicans are hitting at, sir."

"Ah! so; yes," quoth the colonel. "And I say this to Nevil Beauchamp, that what we've grown up well with, powerfully with, it's base ingratitude and dangerous folly to throw over."

He blamed Beauchamp for ingratitude to the countess, who had, he affirmed of his own knowledge, married Lord Romfrey to protect Beauchamp's interests.

A curious comment on this allegation was furnished by the announcement of the earl's expectations of a son and heir. The earl wrote to Colonel Halkett from Romfrey Castle inviting him to come and spend some time there.

"Now, that's brave news!" the colonel exclaimed.

He proposed a cruise round by the Cornish coast to the Severn, and so to Romfrey Castle, to squeeze the old lord's hand and congratulate him with all his heart. Cecilia was glad to acquiesce, for an expedition of any description was a lull in the storm that hummed about her ears in the peace of home, where her father would perpetually speak of the day to be fixed. Sailing the sea on a cruise was like the gazing at wonderful colours of a Western sky: an oblivion of earthly dates and obligations. What mattered it that there were gales in August? She loved the sea, and the stinging salt spray, and circling gull and plunging gannet, the sun on the waves, and the torn cloud. The revelling libertine open sea wedded her to Beauchamp in that veiled cold spiritual manner she could muse on as a circumstance out of her life.

Fair companies of racing yachts were left behind. The gales of August mattered frightfully to poor Blackburn Tuckham, who was to be dropped at a town in South Wales, and descended greenish to his cabin as soon as they had crashed on the first wall-waves of the chalk-race, a throw beyond the peaked cliffs edged with cormorants, and were really tasting sea. Cecilia reclined on deck, wrapped in shawl and waterproof. As the Alpine climber claims the upper air, she had the wild sea to herself through her love of it; quite to herself. It was delicious to look round and ahead, and the perturbation was just enough to preserve her from thoughts too deep inward in a scene where the ghost of Nevil was abroad.

The hard dry gale increased. Her father, stretched beside her, drew her attention to a small cutter under double-reefed main-sail and small jib on the *Esperanza's* weather bow—a gallant boat carefully handled. She watched it with some anxiety, but the *Esperanza* was bound for a Devon bay, and bore away from the black Dorsetshire headland, leaving the little cutter to run into haven if she pleased. The passing her was no event.—In a representation of the common events befalling us in these times, upon an appreciation of which this history depends, one turns at whiles a languishing glance toward the vast potential mood, pluperfect tense. For Nevil Beauchamp was on board the cutter, steering her, with Dr. Shrapnel and Lydiard in the well, and if an accident had happened to cutter or schooner, what else might not have happened? Cecilia gathered it from Mrs. Wardour-Devereux, whom, to her surprise and pleasure, she found at Romfrey Castle. Her friend Louise received a letter from Mr. Lydiard, containing a literary amateur seaman's log of a cruise of a fifteen-ton cutter in a gale, and a pure literary sketch of Beauchamp standing drenched at the helm from five in the morning up to nine at night, munching a biscuit for nourishment. The beautiful widow prepared the way for what was very soon to be publicly known concerning herself by reading out this passage of her correspondent's letter in the breakfast room.

"Yes, the fellow's a sailor!" said Lord Romfrey.

The countess rose from her chair and walked out.

"Now, was that abuse of the fellow?" the old lord asked Colonel Halkett. "I said he was a sailor, I said nothing else. He is a sailor, and he's fit for nothing else, and no ship will he get unless he bends his neck never 's nearer it."

He hesitated a moment, and went after his wife.

Cecilia sat with the countess, in the afternoon, at a window overlooking the swelling woods of Romfrey. She praised the loveliness of the view.

“It is fire to me,” said Rosamund.

Cecilia looked at her, startled. Rosamund said no more.

She was an excellent hostess, nevertheless, unpretending and simple in company; and only when it chanced that Beauchamp’s name was mentioned did she cast that quick supplicating nervous glance at the earl, with a shadow of an elevation of her shoulders, as if in apprehension of mordant pain.

We will make no mystery about it. I would I could. Those happy tales of mystery are as much my envy as the popular narratives of the deeds of bread and cheese people, for they both create a tide-way in the attentive mind; the mysterious pricking our credulous flesh to creep, the familiar urging our obese imagination to constitutional exercise. And oh, the refreshment there is in dealing with characters either contemptibly beneath us or supernaturally above! My way is like a Rhone island in the summer drought, stony, unattractive and difficult between the two forceful streams of the unreal and the over-real, which delight mankind —honour to the conjurors! My people conquer nothing, win none; they are actual, yet uncommon. It is the clock-work of the brain that they are directed to set in motion, and—poor troop of actors to vacant benches!— the conscience residing in thoughtfulness which they would appeal to; and if you are there impervious to them, we are lost: back I go to my wilderness, where, as you perceive, I have contracted the habit of listening to my own voice more than is good:—

The burden of a child in her bosom had come upon Rosamund with the visage of the Angel of Death fronting her in her path. She believed that she would die; but like much that we call belief, there was a kernel of doubt in it, which was lively when her frame was enlivened, and she then thought of the giving birth to this unloved child, which was to disinherit the man she loved, in whose interest solely (so she could presume to think, because it had been her motive reason) she had married the earl. She had no wish to be a mother; but that prospect, and the dread attaching to it at her time of life, she could have submitted to for Lord Romfrey’s sake. It struck her like a scoffer’s blow that she, the one woman on earth loving Nevil, should have become the instrument for dispossessing him. The revulsion of her feelings enlightened her so far as to suggest, without enabling her to fathom him, that instead of having cleverly swayed Lord Romfrey, she had been his dupe, or a blind accomplice; and though she was too humane a woman to think of punishing him, she had so much to forgive that the trifles daily and at any instant added to the load, flushed her resentment, like fresh lights showing new features and gigantic outlines. Nevil’s loss of Cecilia she had anticipated; she had heard of it when she was lying in physical and mental apathy at Steynham. Lord Romfrey had repeated to her the nature of his replies to the searching parental questions of Colonel Halkett, and having foreseen it all, and what was more, foretold it, she was not aroused from her torpor. Latterly, with the return of her natural strength, she had shown herself incapable of hearing her husband speak of Nevil; nor was the earl tardy in taking the hint to spare the mother of his child allusions that vexed her. Now and then they occurred perforce. The presence of Cecilia exasperated Rosamund’s peculiar sensitiveness. It required Louise Wardour-Devereux’s apologies and interpretations to account for what appeared to Cecilia strangely ill-conditioned, if not insane, in Lady Romfrey’s behaviour. The most astonishing thing to hear was, that Lady Romfrey had paid Mrs. Devereux a visit at her Surrey house unexpectedly one Sunday in the London season, for the purpose, as it became evident, of meeting Mr. Blackburn Tuckham: and how she could have known that Mr. Tuckham would be there, Mrs. Devereux could not tell, for it was, Louise assured Cecilia, purely by chance that he and Mr. Lydiard were present: but the countess obtained an interview with him alone, and Mr. Tuckham came from it declaring it to have been more terrible than any he had ever been called upon to endure. The object of the countess was to persuade him to renounce his bride.

Louise replied to the natural inquiry—“Upon what plea?” with a significant evasiveness. She put her arms round Cecilia’s neck: “I trust you are not unhappy. You will get no release from him.”

“I am not unhappy,” said Cecilia, musically clear to convince her friend.

She was indeed glad to feel the stout chains of her anchor restraining her when Lady Romfrey talked of Nevil; they were like the safety of marriage without the dreaded ceremony, and with solitude to let her weep. Bound thus to a weaker man than Blackburn Tuckham, though he had been more warmly esteemed, her fancy would have drifted away over the deeps, perhaps her cherished loyalty would have drowned in

her tears—for Lady Romfrey tasked it very severely: but he from whom she could hope for no release, gave her some of the firmness which her nature craved in this trial.

From saying quietly to her: “I thought once you loved him,” when alluding to Nevil, Lady Romfrey passed to mournful exclamations, and by degrees on to direct entreaties. She related the whole story of Renée in England, and appeared distressed with a desperate wonderment at Cecilia’s mildness after hearing it. Her hearer would have imagined that she had no moral sense, if it had not been so perceptible that the poor lady’s mind was distempered on the one subject of Nevil Beauchamp. Cecilia’s high conception of duty, wherein she was a peerless flower of our English civilization, was incommunicable: she could practise, not explain it. She bowed to Lady Romfrey’s praises of Nevil, suffered her hands to be wrung, her heart to be touched, all but an avowal of her love of him to be wrested from her, and not the less did she retain her cold resolution to marry to please her father and fulfil her pledge. In truth, it was too late to speak of Renée to her now. It did not beseem Cecilia to remember that she had ever been a victim of jealousy; and while confessing to many errors, because she felt them, and gained a necessary strength from them—in the comfort of the consciousness of pain, for example, which she sorely needed, that the pain in her own breast might deaden her to Nevil’s jealousy, the meanest of the errors of a lofty soul, yielded no extract beyond the bare humiliation proper to an acknowledgement that it had existed: so she discarded the recollection of the passion which had wrought the mischief. Since we cannot have a peerless flower of civilization without artificial aid, it may be understood how it was that Cecilia could extinguish some lights in her mind and kindle others, and wherefore what it was not natural for her to do, she did. She had, briefly, a certain control of herself.

Our common readings in the fictitious romances which mark out a plot and measure their characters to fit into it, had made Rosamund hopeful of the effect of that story of Renée. A wooden young woman, or a galvanized (sweet to the writer, either of them, as to the reader—so moveable they are!) would have seen her business at this point, and have glided melting to reconciliation and the chamber where romantic fiction ends joyously. Rosamund had counted on it.

She looked intently at Cecilia. “He is ruined, wasted, ill, unloved; he has lost you—I am the cause!” she cried in a convulsion of grief.

“Dear Lady Romfrey!” Cecilia would have consoled her. “There is nothing to lead us to suppose that Nevil is unwell, and you are not to blame for anything: how can you be?”

“I spoke falsely of Dr. Shrapnel; I am the cause. It lies on me! it pursues me. Let me give to the poor as I may, and feel for the poor, as I do, to get nearer to Nevil—I cannot have peace! His heart has turned from me. He despises me. If I had spoken to Lord Romfrey at Steynham, as he commanded me, you and he—Oh! cowardice: he is right, cowardice is the chief evil in the world. He is ill; he is desperately ill; he will die.”

“Have you heard he is very ill, Lady Romfrey?”

“No! no!” Rosamund exclaimed; “it is by not hearing that I *know* it!”

With the assistance of Louise Devereux, Cecilia gradually awakened to what was going on in the house. There had been a correspondence between Miss Denham and the countess. Letters from Bevisham had suddenly ceased. Presumably the earl had stopped them: and if so it must have been for a tragic reason.

Cecilia hinted some blame of Lord Romfrey to her father.

He pressed her hand and said: “You don’t know what that man suffers. Romfrey is fond of Nevil too, but he must guard his wife; and the fact is Nevil is down with fever. It’s in the papers now; he may be able to conceal it, and I hope he will. There’ll be a crisis, and then he can tell her good news—a little illness and all right now! Of course,” the colonel continued buoyantly, “Nevil will recover; he’s a tough wiry young fellow, but poor Romfrey’s fears are natural enough about the countess. Her mind seems to be haunted by the doctor there—Shrapnel, I mean; and she’s exciteable to a degree that threatens the worst—in case of any accident in Bevisham.”

“Is it not a kind of cowardice to conceal it?” Cecilia suggested.

“It saves her from fretting,” said the colonel.

“But she is fretting! If Lord Romfrey would confide in her and trust to her courage, papa, it would be best.”

Colonel Halkett thought that Lord Romfrey was the judge.

Cecilia wished to leave a place where this visible torture of a human

soul was proceeding, and to no purpose. She pointed out to her father, by a variety of signs, that Lady Romfrey either knew or suspected the state of affairs in Bevisham, and repeated her remarks upon Nevil's illness. But Colonel Halkett was restrained from departing by the earl's constant request to him to stay. Old friendship demanded it of him. He began to share his daughter's feelings at the sight of Lady Romfrey. She was outwardly patient and submissive; by nature she was a strong healthy woman; and she attended to all her husband's prescriptions for the regulating of her habits, walked with him, lay down for the afternoon's rest, appeared amused when he laboured to that effect, and did her utmost to subdue the worm devouring her heart but the hours of the delivery of the letter-post were fatal to her. Her woeful: "No letter for me!" was piteous. When that was heard no longer, her silence and famished gaze chilled Cecilia. At night Rosamund eyed her husband expressionlessly, with her head leaning back in her chair, to the sorrow of the ladies beholding her. Ultimately the contagion of her settled misery took hold of Cecilia. Colonel Halkett was induced by his daughter and Mrs. Devereux to endeavour to combat a system that threatened consequences worse than those it was planned to avert. He by this time was aware of the serious character of the malady which had prostrated Nevil. Lord Romfrey had directed his own medical man to go down to Bevisham, and Dr. Gannet's report of Nevil was grave. The colonel made light of it to his daughter, after the fashion he condemned in Lord Romfrey, to whom however he spoke earnestly of the necessity for partially taking his wife into his confidence to the extent of letting her know that a slight fever was running its course with Nevil.

"There will be no slight fever in my wife's blood," said the earl. "I stand to weather the cape or run to wreck, and it won't do to be taking in reefs on a lee-shore. You don't see what frets her, colonel. For years she has been bent on Nevil's marriage. It's off: but if you catch Cecilia by the hand and bring her to us—I swear she loves the fellow!—that's the medicine for my wife. Say: will you do it? Tell Lady Romfrey it shall be done. We shall stand upright again!"

"I'm afraid that's impossible, Romfrey," said the colonel.

"Play at it, then! Let her think it. You're helping me treat an invalid. Colonel! my old friend! You save my house and name if you do that. It's a hand round a candle in a burst of wind. There's Nevil dragged by a woman into one of their reeking hovels—so that Miss Denham at Shrapnel's writes to Lady Romfrey—because the woman's drunken husband voted for him at the Election, and was kicked out of employment, and fell upon the gin-bottle, and the brats of the den died starving, and the man sickened of a fever; and Nevil goes in and sits with him! Out of that tangle of folly is my house to be struck down? It looks as if the fellow with his infernal 'humanity,' were the bad genius of an old nurse's tale. He's a good fellow, colonel, he means well. This fever will cure him, they say it sobers like bloodletting. He's a gallant fellow; you know that. He fought to the skeleton in our last big war. On my soul, I believe he's good for a husband. Frenchwoman or not, that affair's over. He shall have Steynham and Holdesbury. Can I say more? Now, colonel, you go in to the countess. Grasp my hand. Give me that help, and God bless you! You light up my old days. She's a noble woman: I would not change her against the best in the land. She has this craze about Nevil. I suppose she'll never get over it. But there it is: and we must feed her with the spoon."

Colonel Halkett argued stutteringly with the powerful man: "It's the truth she ought to hear, Romfrey; indeed it is, if you'll believe me. It's his life she is fearing for. She knows half."

"She knows positively nothing, colonel. Miss Denham's first letter spoke of the fellow's having headaches, and staggering. He was out on a cruise, and saw your schooner pass, and put into some port, and began falling right and left, and they got him back to Shrapnel's: and here it is—that if you go to him you'll save him, and if you go to my wife you'll save her: and there you have it: and I ask my old friend, I beg him to go to them both."

"But you can't surely expect me to force my daughter's inclinations, my dear Romfrey?"

"Cecilia loves the fellow!"

"She is engaged to Mr. Tuckham."

"I'll see the man Tuckham."

"Really, my dear lord!"

"Play at it, Halkett, play at it! Tide us over this! Talk to her: hint it and nod it. We have to round November. I could strangle the world till that

month’s past. You’ll own,” he added mildly after his thunder, “I’m not much of the despot Nevil calls me. She has not a wish I don’t supply. I’m at her beck, and everything that’s mine. She’s a brave good woman. I don’t complain. I run my chance. But if we lose the child—good night! Boy or girl!—boy!”

Lord Romfrey flung an arm up. The child of his old age lived for him already: he gave it all the life he had. This miracle, this young son springing up on an earth decaying and dark, absorbed him. This reviver of his ancient line must not be lost. Perish every consideration to avert it! He was ready to fear, love, or hate terribly, according to the prospects of his child.

Colonel Halkett was obliged to enter into a consultation, of a shadowy sort, with his daughter, whose only advice was that they should leave the castle. The penetrable gloom there, and the growing apprehension concerning the countess and Nevil, tore her to pieces. Even if she could have conspired with the earl to hoodwink his wife, her strong sense told her it would be fruitless, besides base. Father and daughter had to make the stand against Lord Romfrey. He saw their departure from the castle gates, and kissed his hand to Cecilia, courteously, without a smile.

“He may well praise the countess, papa,” said Cecilia, while they were looking back at the castle and the moveless flag that hung in folds by the mast above it. “She has given me her promise to avoid questioning him and to accept his view of her duty. She said to me that if Nevil should die she…”

Cecilia herself broke down, and gave way to sobs in her father’s arms.

CHAPTER XLIX.
A FABRIC OF BARONIAL DESPOTISM CRUMBLES

The earl’s precautions did duty night and day in all the avenues leading to the castle and his wife’s apartments; and he could believe that he had undertaken as good a defence as the mountain guarding the fertile vale from storms: but him the elements pelted heavily. Letters from acquaintances of Nevil, from old shipmates and from queer political admirers and opponents, hailed on him; things not to be frigidly read were related of the fellow.

Lord Romfrey’s faith in the power of constitution to beat disease battled sturdily with the daily reports of his physician and friends, whom he had directed to visit the cottage on the common outside Bevisham, and with Miss Denham’s intercepted letters to the countess. Still he had to calculate on the various injuries Nevil had done to his constitution, which had made of him another sort of man for a struggle of life and death than when he stood like a riddled flag through the war. That latest freak of the fellow’s, the abandonment of our natural and wholesome sustenance in animal food, was to be taken in the reckoning. Dr. Gannet did not allude to it; the Bevisham doctor did; and the earl meditated with a fury of wrath on the dismal chance that such a folly as this of one old vegetable idiot influencing a younger noodle, might strike his House to the dust.

His watch over his wife had grown mechanical: he failed to observe that her voice was missing. She rarely spoke. He lost the art of observing himself: the wrinkling up and dropping of his brows became his habitual language. So long as he had not to meet inquiries or face tears, he enjoyed the sense of security. He never quitted his wife save to walk to the Southern park lodge, where letters and telegrams were piled awaiting him; and she was forbidden to take the air on the castle terrace without his being beside her, lest a whisper, some accident of the kind that donkeys who nod over their drowsy nose-length-ahead precautions call fatality, should rouse her to suspect, and in a turn of the hand undo his labour: for the race was getting terrible: Death had not yet stepped out of that evil chamber in Dr. Shrapnel’s cottage to aim his javelin at the bosom containing the prized young life to come, but, like the smoke of waxing fire, he shadowed forth his presence in wreaths blacker and thicker day by day: and Everard Romfrey knew that the hideous beast of darkness had only to spring up and pass his guard to deal a blow to his House the direr from all he supposed himself to have gained by masking it hitherto. The young life he looked to for renewal swallowed him: he partly lost human feeling for his wife in the tremendous watch and strain to hurry her as a vessel round the dangerous headland. He was oblivious that his eyebrows talked, that his head was bent low, that his mouth was shut, and that where a doubt had been sown, silence and such signs are like revelations in black night to the spirit of a woman who loves.

One morning after breakfast Rosamund hung on his arm, eyeing him neither questioningly nor invitingly, but long. He kissed her forehead. She clung to him and closed her eyes, showing him a face of slumber, like a mask of the dead.

Mrs. Devereux was present. Cecilia had entreated her to stay with Lady Romfrey. She stole away, for the time had come which any close observer of the countess must have expected.

The earl lifted his wife, and carried her to her sitting-room. A sunless weltering September day whipped the window-panes and brought the roar of the beaten woods to her ears. He was booted and gaitered for his customary walk to the park lodge, and as he bent a knee beside her, she murmured: “Don’t wait; return soon.”

He placed a cord attached to the bellrope within her reach. This utter love of Nevil Beauchamp was beyond his comprehension, but there it was, and he had to submit to it and manœuvre. His letters and telegrams told the daily tale. “He’s better,” said the earl, preparing himself to answer what his wife’s look had warned him would come.

She was an image of peace, in the same posture on the couch where he had left her, when he returned. She did not open her eyes, but felt about for his hand, and touching it, she seemed to weigh the fingers.

At last she said: “The fever should be at its height.”

“Why, my dear brave girl, what ails you?” said he.

“Ignorance.”

She raised her eyelids. His head was bent down over her, like a raven's watching, a picture of gravest vigilance.

Her bosom rose and sank. "What has Miss Denham written to-day?"

"To-day?" he asked her gently.

"I shall bear it," she answered. "You were my master before you were my husband. I bear anything you think is good for my government. Only, my ignorance is fever; I share Nevil's."

"Have you been to my desk at all?"

"No. I read your eyes and your hands: I have been living on them. To-day I find that I have not gained by it, as I hoped I should. Ignorance kills me. I really have courage to bear to hear—just at this moment I have."

"There's no bad news, my love," said the earl.

"High fever, is it?"

"The usual fever. Gannet's with him. I sent for Gannet to go there, to satisfy you."

"Nevil is not dead?"

"Lord! ma'am, my dear soul!"

"He is alive?"

"Quite: certainly alive; as much alive as I am; only going a little faster, as fellows do in the jumps of a fever. The best doctor in England is by his bed. He's doing fairly. You should have let me know you were fretting, my Rosamund."

"I did not wish to tempt you to lie, my dear lord."

"Well, there are times when a woman... as you are: but you're a brave woman, a strong heart, and my wife. You want some one to sit with you, don't you? Louise Devereux is a pleasant person, but you want a man to amuse you. I'd have sent to Stukely, but you want a serious man, I fancy."

So much had the earl been thrown out of his plan for protecting his wife, that he felt helpless, and hinted at the aids and comforts of religion. He had not rejected the official Church, and regarding it now as in alliance with great Houses, he considered that its ministers might also be useful to the troubled women of noble families. He offered, if she pleased, to call in the rector to sit with her—the bishop of the diocese, if she liked.

"But just as you like, my love," he added. "You know you have to avoid fretting. I've heard my sisters talk of the parson doing them good off and on about the time of their being brought to bed. He elevated their minds, they said. I'm sure I've no objection. If he can doctor the minds of women he's got a profession worth something."

Rosamund smothered an outcry. "You mean that Nevil is past hope!"

"Not if he's got a fair half of our blood in him. And Richard Beauchamp gave the fellow good stock. He has about the best blood in England. That's not saying much when they've taken to breed as they build—stuff to keep the plasterers at work; devil a thought of posterity!"

"There I see you and Nevil one, my dear lord," said Rosamund. "You think of those that are to follow us. Talk to me of him. Do not say, 'the fellow.' Say 'Nevil.' No, no; call him 'the fellow.' He was alive and well when you used to say it. But smile kindly, as if he made you love him down in your heart, in spite of you. We have both known that love, and that opposition to him; not liking his ideas, yet liking him so: we were obliged to laugh—I have seen you! as love does laugh! If I am not crying over his grave, Everard? Oh!"

The earl smoothed her forehead. All her suspicions were rekindled. "Truth! truth! give me truth. Let me know what world I am in."

"My dear, a ship's not lost because she's caught in a squall; nor a man buffeting the waves for an hour. He's all right: he keeps up."

"He is delirious? I ask you—I have fancied I heard him."

Lord Romfrey puffed from his nostrils: but in affecting to blow to the winds her foolish woman's wildness of fancy, his mind rested on Nevil, and he said: "Poor boy! It seems he's chattering hundreds to the minute."

His wife's looks alarmed him after he had said it, and he was for toning it and modifying it, when she gasped to him to help her to her feet; and standing up, she exclaimed: "O heaven! now I hear *you;* now I know he lives. See how much better it is for me to know the real truth. It takes me to his bedside. Ignorance and suspense have been poison. I have been washed about like a dead body. Let me read all my letters now. Nothing will harm me now. You will do your best for me, my husband, will you

not?" She tore at her dress at her throat for coolness, panting and smiling. "For me—us—yours—ours! Give me my letters, lunch with me, and start for Bevisham. Now you see how good it is for me to hear the very truth, you will give me your own report, and I shall absolutely trust in it, and go down with it if it's false! But you see I am perfectly strong for the truth. It must be you or I to go. I burn to go; but your going will satisfy me. If *you* look on him, I look. I feel as if I had been nailed down in a coffin, and have got fresh air. I pledge you my word, sir, my honour, my dear husband, that I will think first of my duty. I know it would be Nevil's wish. He has not quite forgiven me—he thought me ambitious—ah! stop: he said that the birth of our child would give him greater happiness than he had known for years: he begged me to persuade you to call a boy Nevil Beauchamp, and a girl Renée. He has never believed in his own long living."

Rosamund refreshed her lord's heart by smiling archly as she said: "The boy to be *educated* to take the side of the people, of course! The girl is to learn a profession."

"Ha! bless the fellow!" Lord Romfrey interjected. "Well, I might go there for an hour. Promise me, no fretting! You have hollows in your cheeks, and your underlip hangs: I don't like it. I haven't seen that before."

"We do not see clearly when we are trying to deceive," said Rosamund. "My letters! my letters!"

Lord Romfrey went to fetch them. They were intact in his desk. His wife, then, had actually been reading the facts through a wall! For he was convinced of Mrs. Devereux's fidelity, as well as of the colonel's and Cecilia's. He was not a man to be disobeyed: nor was his wife the woman to court or to acquiesce in trifling acts of disobedience to him. He received the impression, consequently, that this matter of the visit to Nevil was one in which the poor loving soul might be allowed to guide him, singular as the intensity of her love of Nevil Beauchamp was, considering that they were not of kindred blood.

He endeavoured to tone her mind for the sadder items in Miss Denham's letters.

"Oh!" said Rosamund, "what if I shed the 'screaming eyedrops,' as you call them? They will not hurt me, but relieve. I was sure I should someday envy that girl! If he dies she will have nursed him and had the last of him."

"He's not going to die!" said Everard powerfully.

"We must be prepared. These letters will do that for me. I have written out the hours of your trains. Stanton will attend on you. I have directed him to telegraph to the Dolphin in Bevisham for rooms for the night: that is to-morrow night. To-night you sleep at your hotel in London, which will be ready to receive you, and is more comfortable than the empty house. Stanton takes wine, madeira and claret, and other small necessaries. If Nevil should be *very* unwell, you will not leave him immediately. I shall look to the supplies. You will telegraph to me twice a day, and write once. We lunch at half-past twelve, so that you may hit the twenty-minutes-to-two o'clock train. And now I go to see that the packing is done."

She carried off her letters to her bedroom, where she fell upon the bed, shutting her eyelids hard before she could suffer her eyes to be the intermediaries of that fever-chamber in Bevisham and her bursting heart. But she had not positively deceived her husband in the reassurance she had given him by her collectedness and by the precise directions she had issued for his comforts, indicating a mind so much more at ease. She was firmer to meet the peril of her beloved: and being indeed, when thrown on her internal resources, one among the brave women of earth, though also one who required a lift from circumstances to take her stand calmly fronting a menace to her heart, she saw the evidence of her influence with Lord Romfrey: the level she could feel that they were on together so long as she was courageous, inspirited her sovereignly.

He departed at the hour settled for him. Rosamund sat at her boudoir window, watching the carriage that was conducting him to the railway station. Neither of them had touched on the necessity of his presenting himself at the door of Dr. Shrapnel's house. That, and the disgust belonging to it, was a secondary consideration with Lord Romfrey, after he had once resolved on it as the right thing to do: and his wife admired and respected him for so supreme a loftiness. And fervently she prayed that it might not be her evil fate to disappoint his hopes. Never had she experienced so strong a sense of devotedness to him as when she saw

the carriage winding past the middle oak-wood of the park, under a wet sky brightened from the West, and on out of sight.

CHAPTER L.
AT THE COTTAGE ON THE COMMON

Rain went with Lord Romfrey in a pursuing cloud all the way to Bevisham, and across the common to the long garden and plain little green-shuttered, neat white cottage of Dr. Shrapnel. Carriages were driving from the door; idle men with hands deep in their pockets hung near it, some women pointing their shoulders under wet shawls, and boys. The earl was on foot. With no sign of discomposure, he stood at the half-open door and sent in his card, bearing the request for permission to visit his nephew. The reply failing to come to him immediately, he began striding to and fro. That garden gate where he had flourished the righteous whip was wide. Foot-farers over the sodden common were attracted to the gateway, and lingered in it, looking at the long, green-extended windows, apparently listening, before they broke away to exchange undertone speech here and there. Boys had pushed up through the garden to the kitchen area. From time to time a woman in a dripping bonnet whimpered aloud.

An air of a country churchyard on a Sunday morning when the curate has commenced the service prevailed. The boys were subdued by the moisture, as they are when they sit in the church aisle or organ-loft, before their members have been much cramped.

The whole scene, and especially the behaviour of the boys, betokened to Lord Romfrey that an event had come to pass.

In the chronicle of a sickness the event is death.

He bethought him of various means of stopping the telegraph and smothering the tale, if matters should have touched the worst here. He calculated abstrusely the practicable shortness of the two routes from Bevisham to Romfrey, by post-horses on the straightest line of road, or by express train on the triangle of railway, in case of an extreme need requiring him to hasten back to his wife and renew his paternal-despotic system with her. She had but persuaded him of the policy of a liberal openness and confidence for the moment’s occasion: she could not turn his nature, which ran to strokes of craft and blunt decision whenever the emergency smote him and he felt himself hailed to show generalship.

While thus occupied in thoughtfulness he became aware of the monotony of a tuneless chant, as if, it struck him, an insane young chorister or canon were galloping straight on end hippomaniacally through the Psalms. There was a creak at intervals, leading him to think it a machine that might have run away with the winder’s arm.

The earl’s humour proposed the notion to him that this perhaps was one of the forms of Radical lamentation, ululation, possibly practised by a veteran impietist like Dr. Shrapnel for the loss of his youngster, his political cub—poor lad!

Deriding any such paganry, and aught that could be set howling, Lord Romfrey was presently moved to ask of the small crowd at the gate what that sound was.

“It’s the poor commander, sir,” said a wet-shawled woman, shivering.

“He’s been at it twenty hours already, sir,” said one of the boys.

“Twenty-foor hour he’ve been at it,” said another.

A short dispute grew over the exact number of hours. One boy declared that thirty hours had been reached. “Father heerd ’n yesterday morning as he was aff to ’s work in the town afore six: that brings ’t nigh thirty and he ha’n’t stopped yet.”

The earl was invited to step inside the gate, a little way up to the house, and under the commander’s window, that he might obtain a better hearing.

He swung round, walked away, walked back, and listened.

If it was indeed a voice, the voice, he would have said, was travelling high in air along the sky.

Yesterday he had described to his wife Nevil’s chattering of hundreds to the minute. He had not realized the description, which had been only his manner of painting delirium: there had been no warrant for it. He heard the wild scudding voice imperfectly: it reminded him of a string of winter geese changeing waters. Shower gusts, and the wail and hiss of the rows of fir-trees bordering the garden, came between, and allowed him a moment’s incredulity as to its being a human voice. Such a cry will often haunt the moors and wolds from above at nightfall. The voice hied on, sank, seemed swallowed; it rose, as if above water, in a hush of wind

and trees. The trees bowed their heads rageing, the voice drowned; once more to rise, chattering thrice rapidly, in a high-pitched key, thin, shrill, weird, interminable, like winds through a crazy chamber-door at midnight.

The voice of a broomstick-witch in the clouds could not be thinner and stranger: Lord Romfrey had some such thought.

Dr. Gannet was the bearer of Miss Denham's excuses to Lord Romfrey for the delay in begging him to enter the house: in the confusion of the household his lordship's card had been laid on the table below, and she was in the sick-room.

"Is my nephew a dead man?" said the earl.

The doctor weighed his reply. "He lives. Whether he will, after the exhaustion of this prolonged fit of raving, I don't dare to predict. In the course of my experience I have never known anything like it. He lives: there's the miracle, but he lives."

"On brandy?"

"That would soon have sped him."

"Ha. You have everything here that you want?"

"Everything."

"He's in your hands, Gannet."

The earl was conducted to a sitting-room, where Dr. Gannet left him for a while.

Mindful that he was under the roof of his enemy, he remained standing, observing nothing.

The voice overheard was off at a prodigious rate, like the far sound of a yell ringing on and on.

The earl unconsciously sought a refuge from it by turning the leaves of a book upon the table, which was a complete edition of Harry Denham's Poems, with a preface by a man named Lydiard; and really, to read the preface one would suppose that these poets were the princes of the earth. Lord Romfrey closed the volume. It was exquisitely bound, and presented to Miss Denham by the Mr. Lydiard. "The works of your illustrious father," was written on the title-page. These writers deal queerly with their words of praise of one another. There is no law to restrain them. Perhaps it is the consolation they take for the poor devil's life they lead!

A lady addressing him familiarly, invited him to go upstairs.

He thanked her. At the foot of the stairs he turned; he had recognized Cecilia Halkett.

Seeing her there was more strange to him than being there himself; but he bowed to facts.

"What do you think?" he said.

She did not answer intelligibly.

He walked up.

The crazed gabbling tongue had entire possession of the house, and rang through it at an amazing pitch to sustain for a single minute.

A reflection to the effect that dogs die more decently than we men, saddened the earl. But, then, it is true, we shorten their pangs by shooting them.

A dismal figure loomed above him at the head of the stairs.

He distinguished it in the vast lean length he had once whipped and flung to earth.

Dr. Shrapnel was planted against the wall outside that raving chamber, at the salient angle of a common prop or buttress. The edge of a shoulder and a heel were the supports to him sideways in his distorted attitude. His wall arm hung dead beside his pendent frock-coat; the hair of his head had gone to wildness, like a field of barley whipped by tempest. One hand pressed his eyeballs: his unshaven jaw dropped.

Lord Romfrey passed him by.

The dumb consent of all present affirmed the creature lying on the bed to be Nevil Beauchamp.

Face, voice, lank arms, chicken neck: what a sepulchral sketch of him!

It was the revelry of a corpse.

Shudders of alarm for his wife seized Lord Romfrey at the sight. He thought the poor thing on the bed must be going, resolving to a cry, unwinding itself violently in its hurricane of speech, that was not speech nor exclamation, rather the tongue let loose to run to the death. It seemed to be out in mid-sea, up wave and down wave.

A nurse was at the pillow smoothing it. Miss Denham stood at the foot of the bed.

“Is that pain?” Lord Romfrey said low to Dr. Gannet.

“Unconscious,” was the reply.

Miss Denham glided about the room and disappeared.

Her business was to remove Dr. Shrapnel, that he might be out of the way when Lord Romfrey should pass him again: but Dr. Shrapnel heard one voice only, and moaned, “My Beauchamp!” She could not get him to stir.

Miss Denham saw him start slightly as the earl stepped forth and, bowing to him, said: “I thank you, sir, for permitting me to visit my nephew.”

Dr. Shrapnel made a motion of the hand, to signify freedom of access to his house. He would have spoken, the effort fetched a burst of terrible chuckles. He covered his face.

Lord Romfrey descended. The silly old wretch had disturbed his equanimity as a composer of fiction for the comfort and sustainment of his wife: and no sooner had he the front door in view than the calculation of the three strides requisite to carry him out of the house plucked at his legs, much as young people are affected by a dancing measure; for he had, without deigning to think of matters disagreeable to him in doing so, performed the duty imposed upon him by his wife, and now it behoved him to ward off the coming blow from that double life at Romfrey Castle.

He was arrested in his hasty passage by Cecilia Halkett.

She handed him a telegraphic message: Rosamund requested him to stay two days in Bevisham. She said additionally: “Perfectly well. Shall fear to see you returning yet. Have sent to Tourdestelle. All his friends. Ni espoir, ni crainte, mais point de déceptions. Lumière. Ce sont les ténèbres qui tuent.”

Her nimble wits had spied him on the road he was choosing, and outrun him.

He resigned himself to wait a couple of days at Bevisham. Cecilia begged him to accept a bed at Mount Laurels. He declined, and asked her: “How is it you are here?”

“I called here,” said she, compressing her eyelids in anguish at a wilder cry of the voice overhead, and forgetting to state why she had called at the house and what services she had undertaken. A heap of letters in her handwriting explained the nature of her task.

Lord Romfrey asked her where the colonel was.

“He drives me down in the morning and back at night, but they will give me a bed or a sofa here to-night—I can’t...” Cecilia stretched her hand out, blinded, to the earl.

He squeezed her hand.

“These letters take away my strength: crying is quite useless, I know that,” said she, glancing at a pile of letters that she had partly replied to. “Some are from people who can hardly write. There were people who distrusted him! Some are from people who abused him and maltreated him. See those poor creatures out in the rain!”

Lord Romfrey looked through the venetian blinds of the parlour window.

“It’s as good as a play to them,” he remarked.

Cecilia lit a candle and applied a stick of black wax to the flame, saying: “Envelopes have fallen short. These letters will frighten the receivers. I cannot help it.”

“I will bring letter paper and envelopes in the afternoon,” said Lord Romfrey. “Don’t use black wax, my dear.”

“I can find no other: I do not like to trouble Miss Denham. Letter paper has to be sealed. These letters must go by the afternoon post: I do not like to rob the poor anxious people of a little hope while he lives. Let me have note paper and envelopes quickly: not black-edged.”

“Plain; that’s right,” said Lord Romfrey.

Black appeared to him like the torch of death flying over the country.

“There may be hope,” he added.

She sighed: “Oh! yes.”

“Gannet will do everything that man can do to save him.”

“He will, I am sure.”

“You don’t keep watch in the room, my dear, do you?”

“Miss Denham allows me an hour there in the day: it is the only rest she takes. She gives me her bedroom.”

“Ha: well: women!” ejaculated the earl, and paused. “That sounded like him!”

“At times,” murmured Cecilia. “All yesterday! all through the night! and to-day!”

“He’ll be missed.”

Any sudden light of happier expectation that might have animated him was extinguished by the flight of chatter following the cry which had sounded like Beauchamp.

He went out into the rain, thinking that Beauchamp would be missed. The fellow had bothered the world, but the world without him would be heavy matter.

The hour was mid-day, workmen’s meal-time. A congregation of shipyard workmen and a multitude of children crowded near the door. In passing through them, Lord Romfrey was besought for the doctor’s report of Commander Beauchamp, variously named Beesham, Bosham, Bitcham, Bewsham. The earl heard his own name pronounced as he particularly disliked to hear it—Rumfree. Two or three men scowled at him.

It had not occurred to him ever before in his meditations to separate his blood and race from the common English; and he was not of a character to dwell on fantastical and purposeless distinctions, but the mispronunciation of his name and his nephew’s at an instant when he was thinking of Nevil’s laying down his life for such men as these gross excessive breeders, of ill shape and wooden countenance, pushed him to reflections on the madness of Nevil in endeavouring to lift them up and brush them up; and a curious tenderness for Nevil’s madness worked in his breast as he contrasted this much-abused nephew of his with our general English—the so-called nobles, who were sunk in the mud of the traders: the traders, who were sinking in the mud of the workmen: the workmen, who were like harbour-flats at ebb tide round a stuck-fast fleet of vessels big and little.

Decidedly a fellow like Nevil would be missed by *him!*

These English, huddling more and more in flocks, turning to lumps, getting to be cut in a pattern and marked by a label—how they bark and snap to rend an obnoxious original! One may chafe at the botheration everlastingly raised by the fellow; but if our England is to keep her place she must have him, and many of him. Have him? He’s gone!

Lord Romfrey reasoned himself into pathetic sentiment by degrees.

He purchased the note paper and envelopes in the town for Cecilia. Late in the afternoon he deposited them on the parlour table at Dr. Shrapnel’s. Miss Denham received him. She was about to lie down for her hour of rest on the sofa. Cecilia was upstairs. He inquired if there was any change in his nephew’s condition.

“Not any,” said Miss Denham.

The voice was abroad for proof of that.

He stood with a swelling heart.

Jenny flung out a rug to its length beside the sofa, and; holding it by one end, said: “I must have my rest, to be of service, my lord.”

He bowed. He was mute and surprised.

The young lady was like no person of her age and sex that he remembered ever to have met.

“I will close the door,” he said, retiring softly.

“Do not, my lord.”

The rug was over her, up to her throat, and her eyes were shut. He looked back through the doorway in going out. She was asleep.

“Some delirium. Gannet of good hope. All in the usual course”; he transmitted intelligence to his wife.

A strong desire for wine at his dinner-table warned him of something wrong with his iron nerves.

CHAPTER LI.
IN THE NIGHT

The delirious voice haunted him. It came no longer accompanied by images and likenesses to this and that of animate nature, which were relieving and distracting; it came to him in its mortal nakedness—an afflicting incessant ringing peal, bare as death's ribs in telling of death. When would it stop? And when it stopped, what would succeed? What ghastly silence!

He walked to within view of the lights of Dr. Shrapnel's at night: then home to his hotel.

Miss Denham's power of commanding sleep, as he could not, though contrary to custom he tried it on the right side and the left, set him thinking of her. He owned she was pretty. But that, he contended, was not the word; and the word was undiscoverable. Not Cecilia Halkett herself had so high-bred an air, for Cecilia had not her fineness of feature and full quick eyes, of which the thin eyelids were part of the expression. And Cecilia sobbed, sniffled, was patched about the face, reddish, bluish. This girl was pliable only to service, not to grief: she did her work for three-and-twenty hours, and fell to her sleep of one hour like a soldier. Lord Romfrey could not recollect anything in a young woman that had taken him so much as the girl's tossing out of the rug and covering herself, lying down and going to sleep under his nose, absolutely independent of his presence.

She had not betrayed any woman's petulance with him for his conduct to her uncle or guardian. Nor had she hypocritically affected the reverse, as ductile women do, when they feel wanting in force to do the other. She was not unlike Nevil's marquise in face, he thought: less foreign of course; looking thrice as firm. Both were delicately featured.

He had a dream.

It was of an interminable procession of that odd lot called the People. All of them were quarrelling under a deluge. One party was for umbrellas, one was against them: and sounding the dispute with a question or two, Everard held it logical that there should be protection from the wet: just as logical on the other hand that so frail a shelter should be discarded, considering the tremendous downpour. But as he himself was dry, save for two or three drops, he deemed them all lunatics. He requested them to gag their empty chatter-boxes, and put the mother upon that child's cry.

He was now a simple unit of the procession. Asking naturally whither they were going, he saw them point. "St. Paul's," he heard. In his own bosom it was, and striking like the cathedral big bell.

Several ladies addressed him sorrowfully. He stood alone. It had become notorious that he was to do battle, and no one thought well of his chances. Devil an enemy to be seen! he muttered. Yet they said the enemy was close upon him. His right arm was paralyzed. There was the enemy hard in front, mailed, vizored, gauntleted. He tried to lift his right hand, and found it grasping an iron ring at the bottom of the deep Steynham well, sunk one hundred feet through the chalk. But the unexampled cunning of his left arm was his little secret; and, acting upon this knowledge, he telegraphed to his first wife at Steynham that Dr. Gannet was of good hope, and thereupon he re-entered the ranks of the voluminous procession, already winding spirally round the dome of St. Paul's. And there, said he, is the tomb of Beauchamp. Everything occurred according to his predictions, and he was entirely devoid of astonishment. Yet he would fain have known the titles of the slain admiral's naval battles. He protested he had a right to know, for he was the hero's uncle, and loved him. He assured the stupid scowling people that he loved Nevil Beauchamp, always loved the boy, and was the staunchest friend the fellow had. And saying that, he certainly felt himself leaning up against the cathedral rails in the attitude of Dr. Shrapnel, and crying, "Beauchamp! Beauchamp!" And then he walked firmly out of Romfrey oakwoods, and, at a mile's distance from her, related to his countess Rosamund that the burial was over without much silly ceremony, and that she needed to know nothing of it whatever.

Rosamund's face awoke him. It was the face of a chalk-quarry, featureless, hollowed, appalling.

The hour was no later than three in the morning. He quitted the detestable bed where a dream—one of some half-dozen in the course of his life—had befallen him. For the maxim of the healthy man is: up, and have it out in exercise when sleep is for foisting base coin of dreams

upon you! And as the healthy only are fit to live, their maxims should be law. He dressed and directed his leisurely steps to the common, under a black sky, and stars of lively brilliancy. The lights of a carriage gleamed on Dr. Shrapnel's door. A footman informed Lord Romfrey that Colonel Halkett was in the house, and soon afterward the colonel appeared.

"Is it over? I don't hear him," said Lord Romfrey.

Colonel Halkett grasped his hand. "Not yet," he said. "Cissy can't be got away. It's killing her. No, he's alive. You may hear him now."

Lord Romfrey bent his ear.

"It's weaker," the colonel resumed. "By the way, Romfrey, step out with me. My dear friend, the circumstances will excuse me: you know I'm not a man to take liberties. I'm bound to tell you what your wife writes to me. She says she has it on her conscience, and can't rest for it. You know women. She wants you to speak to the man here—Shrapnel. She wants Nevil to hear that you and he were friendly before he dies; thinks it would console the poor dear fellow. That's only an idea; but it concerns her, you see. I'm shocked to have to talk to you about it."

"My dear colonel, I have no feeling against the man," Lord Romfrey replied. "I spoke to him when I saw him yesterday. I bear no grudges. Where is he? You can send to her to say I have spoken to him twice."

"Yes, yes," the colonel assented.

He could not imagine that Lady Romfrey required more of her husband. "Well, I must be off. I leave Blackburn Tuckham here, with a friend of his; a man who seems to be very sweet with Mrs. Wardour-Devereux."

"Ha! Fetch him to me, colonel; I beg you to do that," said Lord Romfrey.

The colonel brought out Lydiard to the earl.

"You have been at my nephew's bedside, Mr. Lydiard?"

"Within ten minutes, my lord."

"What is your opinion of the case?"

"My opinion is, the chances are in his favour."

"Lay me under obligation by communicating that to Romfrey Castle at the first opening of the telegraph office to-morrow morning."

Lydiard promised.

"The raving has ended?"

"Hardly, sir, but the exhaustion is less than we feared it would be."

"Gannet is there?"

"He is in an arm-chair in the room."

"And Dr. Shrapnel?"

"He does not bear speaking to; he is quiet."

"He is attached to my nephew?"

"As much as to life itself."

Lord Romfrey thanked Lydiard courteously. "Let us hope, sir, that some day I shall have the pleasure of entertaining you, as well as another friend of yours."

"You are very kind, my lord."

The earl stood at the door to see Colonel Halkett drive off: he declined to accompany him to Mount Laurels.

In the place of the carriage stood a man, who growled "Where's your horsewhip, butcher?"

He dogged the earl some steps across the common. Everard returned to his hotel and slept soundly during the remainder of the dark hours.

CHAPTER LII.
QUESTION OF A PILGRIMAGE AND AN ACT OF PENANCE

Then came a glorious morning for sportsmen. One sniffed the dews, and could fancy fresh smells of stubble earth and dank woodland grass in the very streets of dirty Bevisham. Sound sleep, like hearty dining, endows men with a sense of rectitude, and sunlight following the former, as a pleasant spell of conversational ease or sweet music the latter, smiles a celestial approval of the performance: Lord Romfrey dismissed his anxieties. His lady slightly ruffled him at breakfast in a letter saying that she wished to join him. He was annoyed at noon by a message, wherein the wish was put as a request. And later arrived another message, bearing the character of an urgent petition. True, it might be laid to the account of telegraphic brevity.

He saw Dr. Shrapnel, and spoke to him, as before, to thank him for the permission to visit his nephew. Nevil he contemplated for the space of five minutes. He cordially saluted Miss Denham. He kissed Cecilia's hand.

"All here is going on so well that I am with you for a day or two to-morrow," he despatched the message to his wife.

Her case was now the gravest. He could not understand why she desired to be in Bevisham. She must have had execrable dreams!—rank poison to mothers.

However, her constitutional strength was great, and his pride in the restoration of his House by her agency flourished anew, what with fair weather and a favourable report from Dr. Gannet: The weather was most propitious to the hopes of any soul bent on dispersing the shadows of death, and to sportsmen. From the windows of his railway carriage he beheld the happy sportsmen stalking afield. The birds whirred and dropped just where he counted on their dropping. The smoke of the guns threaded to dazzling silver in the sunshine. Say what poor old Nevil will, or *did* say, previous to the sobering of his blood, where is there a land like England? Everard rejoiced in his country temperately. Having Nevil as well,—of which fact the report he was framing in his mind to deliver to his wife assured him—he was rich. And you that put yourselves forward for republicans and democrats, do you deny the aristocracy of an oaklike man who is young upon the verge of eighty?

These were poetic flights, but he knew them not by name, and had not to be ashamed of them.

Rosamund met him in the hall of the castle. "You have not deceived me, my dear lord," she said, embracing him. "You have done what you could for me. The rest is for me to do."

He reciprocated her embrace warmly, in commendation of her fresher good looks.

She asked him, "You have spoken to Dr. Shrapnel?"

He answered her, "Twice."

The word seemed quaint. She recollected that he was quaint.

He repeated, "I spoke to him the first day I saw him, and the second."

"We are so much indebted to him," said Rosamund. "His love of Nevil surpasses ours. Poor man! poor man! At least we may now hope the blow will be spared him which would have carried off his life with Nevil's. I have later news of Nevil than you."

"Good, of course?"

"Ah me! the pleasure of the absence of pain. He is not gone."

Lord Romfrey liked her calm resignation.

"There's a Mr. Lydiard," he said, "a friend of Nevil's, and a friend of Louise Devereux's."

"Yes; we hear from him every four hours," Rosamund rejoined. "Mention him to her before me."

"That's exactly what I was going to tell you to do before me," said her husband, smiling.

"Because, Everard, is it not so?—widows... and she loves this gentleman!"

"Certainly, my dear; I think with you about widows. The world asks them to practise its own hypocrisy. Louise Devereux was married to a pipe; she's the widow of tobacco ash. We'll make daylight round her."

“How good, how kind you are, my lord! I did not think so shrewd! But benevolence is almost all-seeing: You said you spoke to Dr. Shrapnel twice. Was he... polite?”

“Thoroughly upset, you know.”

“What did he say?”

“What was it? ‘Beauchamp! Beauchamp!’ the first time; and the second time he said he thought it had left off raining.”

“Ah!” Rosamund drooped her head.

She looked up. “Here is Louise. My lord has had a long conversation with Mr. Lydiard.”

“I trust he will come here before you leave us,” added the earl.

Rosamund took her hand. “My lord has been more acute than I, or else your friend is less guarded than you.”

“What have you seen?” said the blushing lady.

“Stay. I have an idea you are one of the women I promised to Cecil Baskelett,” said the earl. “Now may I tell him there’s *no* chance?”

“Oh! do.”

They spent so very pleasant an evening that the earl settled down into a comfortable expectation of the renewal of his old habits in the September and October season. Nevil’s frightful cry played on his ear-drum at whiles, but not too affectingly. He conducted Rosamund to her room, kissed her, hoped she would sleep well, and retired to his good hard bachelor’s bed, where he confidently supposed he would sleep. The sleep of a dyspeptic, with a wilder than the monstrous Bevisham dream, befell him, causing him to rise at three in the morning and proceed to his lady’s chamber, to assure himself that at least she slept well. She was awake.

“I thought you might come,” she said.

He reproached her gently for indulging foolish nervous fears.

She replied, “No, I do not; I am easier about Nevil. I begin to think he will live. I have something at my heart that prevents me from sleeping. It concerns me. Whether he is to live or die, I should like him to know he has not striven in vain—not in everything: not where my conscience tells me he was right, and we, I, wrong—utterly wrong, wickedly wrong.”

“My dear girl, you are exciting yourself.”

“No; feel my pulse. The dead of night brings out Nevil to me like the Writing on the Wall. It shall not be said he failed in everything. Shame to us if it could be said! He tried to make me see what my duty was, and my honour.”

“He was at every man Jack of us.”

“I speak of one thing. I thought I might not have to go. Now I feel I must. I remember him at Steynham, when Colonel Halkett and Cecilia were there. But for me, Cecilia would now be his wife. Of that there is no doubt; that is not the point; regrets are fruitless. I see how the struggle it cost him to break with his old love—that endearing Madame de Rouaillout, his Renée—broke his heart; and then his loss of Cecilia Halkett. But I do believe, true as that I am lying here, and you hold my hand, my dear husband, those losses were not so fatal to him as his sufferings he went through on account of his friend Dr. Shrapnel. I will not keep you here.

Go and have some rest. What I shall beg of you tomorrow will not injure my health in the slightest: the reverse: it will raise me from a bitter depression. It shall not be said that those who loved him were unmoved by him. Before he comes back to life, or is carried to his grave, he shall know that I was not false to my love of him.”

“My dear, your pulse is at ninety,” said the earl.

“Look lenient, be kind, be just, my husband. Oh! let us cleanse our hearts. This great wrong was my doing. I am not only quite strong enough to travel to Bevisham, I shall be happy in going: and when I have done it—said: ‘The wrong was all mine,’ I shall rejoice like the pure in spirit. Forgiveness does not matter, though I now believe that poor loving old man who waits outside his door weeping, is wrong-headed only in his political views. We women can read men by their power to love. Where love exists there is goodness. But it is not for the sake of the poor old man himself that I would go: it is for Nevil’s; it is for ours, chiefly for me, for my child’s, if ever...!” Rosamund turned her head on her pillow.

The earl patted her cheek. “We’ll talk it over in the morning,” he said. “Now go to sleep.”

He could not say more, for he did not dare to attempt cajolery with

her. Shading his lamp he stepped softly away to wrestle with a worse nightmare than sleep's. Her meaning was clear: and she was a woman to insist on doing it. She was nevertheless a woman not impervious to reason, if only he could shape her understanding to perceive that the state of her nerves, incident to her delicate situation and the shock of that fellow Nevil's illness—poor lad!—was acting on her mind, rendering her a victim of exaggerated ideas of duty, and so forth.

Naturally, apart from allowing her to undertake the journey by rail, he could not sanction his lady's humbling of herself so egregiously and unnecessarily. Shrapnel had behaved unbecomingly, and had been punished for it. He had spoken to Shrapnel, and the affair was virtually at an end. With his assistance she would see that, when less excited. Her eternal brooding over Nevil was the cause of these mental vagaries.

Lord Romfrey was for postponing the appointed discussion in the morning after breakfast. He pleaded business engagements.

"None so urgent as this of mine," said Rosamund.

"But we have excellent news of Nevil: you have Gannet's word for it," he argued. "There's really nothing to distress you."

"My heart: I must be worthy of good news, to know happiness," she answered. "I will say, let me go to Bevisham two, three, four days hence, if you like, but there is peace for me, and nowhere else."

"My precious Rosamund! have you set your two eyes on it? What you are asking, is for permission to make an *apology* to Shrapnel!"

"That is the word."

"That's Nevil's word."

"It is a prescription to me."

"An apology?"

The earl's gorge rose. Why, such an act was comparable to the circular mission of the dog!

"If I do not make the apology, the mother of your child is a coward," said Rosamund.

"She's not."

"I trust not."

"You are a reasonable woman, my dear. Now listen: the man insulted you. It's past: done with. He insulted you..."

"He did not."

"What?"

"He was courteous to me, hospitable to me, kind to me. He did not insult me. I belied him."

"My dear saint, you're dreaming. He spoke insultingly of you to Cecil."

"Is my lord that man's dupe? I would stand against him before the throne of God, with what little I know of his interview with Dr. Shrapnel, to confront him and expose his lie. Do not speak of him. He stirs my evil passions, and makes me feel myself the creature I was when I returned to Steynham from my first visit to Bevisham, enraged with jealousy of Dr. Shrapnel's influence over Nevil, spiteful, malicious: Oh! such a nest of vileness as I pray to heaven I am not now, if it is granted me to give life to another. Nevil's misfortunes date from that," she continued, in reply to the earl's efforts to soothe her. "Not the loss of the Election: that was no misfortune, but a lesson. He would not have shone in Parliament: he runs too much from first principles to extremes. You see I am perfectly reasonable, Everard: I can form an exact estimate of character and things." She smiled in his face. "And I know my husband too: what he will grant; what he would not, and justly would not. I know to a certainty that vexatious as I must be to you now, you are conscious of my having reason for being so."

"You carry it so far—fifty miles beyond the mark," said he. "The man roughed you, and I taught him manners."

"No!" she half screamed her interposition. "I repeat, he was in no way discourteous or disobliging to me. He offered me a seat at his table, and, heaven forgive me! I believe a bed in his house, that I might wait and be sure of seeing Nevil, because I was very anxious to see him."

"All the same, you can't go to the man."

"I should have said so too, before my destiny touched me."

"A certain dignity of position, my dear, demands a corresponding dignity of conduct: you can't go."

"If I am walking in the very eye of heaven, and feeling it shining on me where I go, there is no question for me of human dignity."

Such flighty talk offended Lord Romfrey.

“It comes to this: you’re in want of a parson.”

Rosamund was too careful to hint that she would have expected succour and seconding from one or other of the better order of clergymen.

She shook her head. “To this, my dear lord: I have a troubled mind; and it is not to listen nor to talk, that I am in need of, but to act.”

“Yes, my dear girl, but not to act insanely. I do love soundness of head. You have it, only just now you’re a little astray. We’ll leave this matter for another time.”

Rosamund held him by the arm. “Not too long!”

Both of them applied privately to Mrs. Wardour-Devereux for her opinion and counsel on the subject of the proposal to apologize to Dr. Shrapnel. She was against it with the earl, and became Rosamund’s echo when with her. When alone, she was divided into two almost equal halves: deeming that the countess should not insist, and the earl should not refuse: him she condemned for lack of sufficient spiritual insight to perceive the merits of his wife’s request: her she accused of some vestige of something underbred in her nature, for putting such fervid stress upon the supplication: i.e. making too much of it—a trick of the vulgar: and not known to the languid.

She wrote to Lydiard for advice.

He condensed a paragraph into a line:

“It should be the earl. She is driving him to it, intentionally or not.”

Mrs. Devereux doubted that the countess could have so false an idea of her husband’s character as to think it possible he would ever be bent to humble himself to the man he had castigated. She was right. It was by honestly presenting to his mind something more loathsome still, the humbling of herself, that Rosamund succeeded in awakening some remote thoughts of a compromise, in case of necessity. Better I than she!

But the necessity was inconceivable.

He had really done everything required of him, if anything was really required, by speaking to Shrapnel civilly. He had spoken to Shrapnel twice.

Besides, the castle was being gladdened by happier tidings of Beauchamp. Gannet now pledged his word to the poor fellow’s recovery, and the earl’s particular friends arrived, and the countess entertained them. October passed smoothly.

She said once: “Ancestresses of yours, my lord, have undertaken pilgrimages as acts of penance for sin, to obtain heaven’s intercession in their extremity.”

“I dare say they did,” he replied. “The monks got round them.”

“It is not to be laughed at, if it eased their hearts.”

Timidly she renewed her request for permission to perform the pilgrimage to Bevisham.

“Wait,” said he, “till Nevil is on his legs.”

“Have you considered where I may then be, Everard?”

“My love, you sleep well, don’t you?”

“You see me every night.”

“I see you sound asleep.”

“I see you watching me.”

“Let’s reason,” said the earl; and again they went through the argument upon the apology to Dr. Shrapnel.

He was willing to indulge her in any amount of it: and she perceived why. Fox! she thought. Grand fox, but fox downright. For her time was shortening to days that would leave her no free-will.

On the other hand, the exercise of her free-will in a fast resolve, was growing all the more a privilege that he was bound to respect. As she became sacreder and doubly precious to him, the less would he venture to thwart her, though he should think her mad. There would be an analogy between his manner of regarding her and the way that superstitious villagers look on their crazy innocents, she thought sadly. And she bled for him too: she grieved to hurt his pride. But she had come to imagine that there was no avoidance of this deed of personal humiliation.

Nevil had scrawled a note to her. She had it in her hand one forenoon in mid November, when she said to her husband: “I have ordered the carriage for two o’clock to meet the quarter to three train to London, and I have sent Stanton on to get the house ready for us tonight.”

Lord Romfrey levelled a marksman’s eye at her.

“Why London? You know my wish that it should be here at the castle.”

“I have decided to go to Bevisham. I have little time left.”

“None, to my thinking.”

“Oh I yes; my heart will be light. I shall gain. You come with me to London?”

“You can’t go.”

“Don’t attempt to reason with me, please, please!”

“I command, madam.”

“My lord, it is past the hour of commanding.”

He nodded his head, with the eyes up amid the puckered brows, and blowing one of his long nasal expirations, cried, “Here we are, in for another bout of argument.”

“No; I can bear the journey, rejoice in confessing my fault, but more argument I cannot bear. I will reason with you when I can: submit to me in this.”

“Feminine reasoning!” he interjected.

“I have nothing better to offer. It will be prudent to attend to me. Take my conduct for the portion I bring you. Before I put myself in God’s care I must be clean. I am unclean. Language like that offends you. I have no better. My reasoning has not touched you; I am helpless, except in this determination that my contrition shall be expressed to Dr. Shrapnel. If I am to have life, to be worthy of living and being a mother, it must be done. Now, my dear lord, see that, and submit. You’re but one voice: I am two.”

He jumped off his chair, frowning up his forehead, and staring awfully at the insulting prospect. “An apology to the man? By you? Away with it.”

“Make allowances for me if you can, my dear lord that is what I am going to do.”

“My wife going there?” He strode along furiously. “No!”

“You will not stop her.”

“There’s a palsy in my arm if I don’t.”

She plucked at her watch.

“Why, ma’am, I don’t know you,” he said, coming close to her. “Let “s reason. Perhaps you overshot it; you were disgusted with Shrapnel. Perhaps I was hasty; I get fired by an insult to a woman. There was a rascal kissed a girl once against her will, and I heard her cry out; I laid him on his back for six months; just to tell you; I’d do the same to lord or beggar. Very well, my dear heart, we’ll own I might have looked into the case when that dog Cecil... what’s the matter?”

“Speak on, my dear husband,” said Rosamund, panting.

“But your making the journey to Bevisham is a foolish notion.”

“Yes? well?”

“Well, we’ll wait.”

“Oh! have we to travel over it all again?” she exclaimed in despair at the dashing out of a light she had fancied. “You see the wrong. You know the fever it is in my blood, and you bid me wait.”

“Drop a line to Nevil.”

“To trick my conscience! I might have done that, and done well, once. Do you think I dislike the task I propose to myself? It is for your sake that I would shun it. As for me, the thought of going there is an ecstasy. I shall be with Nevil, and be able to look in his face. And how can I be actually abasing you when I am so certain that I am worthier of you in what I do?”

Her exaltation swept her on. “Hurry there, my lord, if you will. If you think it prudent that you should go in my place, go: you deprive me of a great joy, but I will not put myself in your way, and I consent. The chief sin was mine; remember that. I rank it viler than Cecil Baskelett’s. And listen: when—can you reckon?—when will he confess his wickedness? We separate ourselves from a wretch like that.”

“Pooh,” quoth the earl.

“But you will go?” She fastened her arms round the arm nearest: “You or I! Does it matter which? We are one. You speak for me; I should have been forced to speak for you. You spare me the journey. I do not in truth suppose it would have injured me; but I would not run one unnecessary risk.”

Lord Romfrey sighed profoundly. He could not shake her off. How could he refuse her?

How on earth had it come about that suddenly he was expected to be

the person to go?

She would not let him elude her; and her stained cheeks and her trembling on his arm pleaded most pressingly and masteringly. It might be that she spoke with a knowledge of her case. Positive it undoubtedly was that she meant to go if he did not. Perhaps the hopes of his House hung on it. Having admitted that a wrong had been done, he was not the man to leave it unamended; only he would have chosen his time, and the manner. Since Nevil's illness, too, he had once or twice been clouded with a little bit of regret at the recollection of poor innocent old Shrapnel posted like a figure of total inebriation beside the doorway of the dreadful sickroom.

There had been women of the earl's illustrious House who would have given their hands to the axe rather than conceal a stain and have to dread a scandal. His Rosamund, after all, was of their pattern; even though she blew that conscience she prattled of into trifles, and swelled them, as women of high birth in this country, out of the clutches of the priests, do not do.

She clung to him for his promise to go.

He said: "Well, well."

"That means, you will," said she.

His not denying it passed for the affirmative.

Then indeed she bloomed with love of him.

"Yet do say yes," she begged.

"I'll go, ma'am," shouted the earl. "I'll go, my love," he said softly.

CHAPTER LIII.
THE APOLOGY TO DR. SHRAPNEL

“You and Nevil are so alike,” Lady Romfrey said to her lord, at some secret resemblance she detected and dwelt on fondly, when the earl was on the point of starting a second time for Bevisham to perform what she had prompted him to conceive his honourable duty, without a single intimation that he loathed the task, neither shrug nor grimace.

“Two ends of a stick are pretty much alike: they’re all that length apart,” said he, very little in the humour for compliments, however well braced for his work.

His wife’s admiring love was pleasant enough. He preferred to have it unspoken. Few of us care to be eulogized in the act of taking a nauseous medical mixture.

For him the thing was as good as done, on his deciding to think it both adviseable and right: so he shouldered his load and marched off with it. He could have postponed the right proceeding, even after the partial recognition of his error:—one drops a word or two by hazard, one expresses an anxiety to afford reparation, one sends a message, and so forth, for the satisfaction of one’s conventionally gentlemanly feeling: but the adviseable proceeding under stress of peculiar circumstances, his clearly-awakened recognition of that, impelled him unhesitatingly. His wife had said it was the portion she brought him. Tears would not have persuaded him so powerfully, that he might prove to her he was glad of her whatever the portion she brought. She was a good wife, a brave woman, likely to be an incomparable mother. At present her very virtues excited her to fancifulness nevertheless she was in his charge, and he was bound to break the neck of his will, to give her perfect peace of wind. The child suffers from the mother’s mental agitation. It might be a question of a nervous or an idiot future Earl of Romfrey. Better death to the House than such a mockery of his line! These reflections reminded him of the heartiness of his whipping of that poor old tumbled signpost Shrapnel, in the name of outraged womankind. If there was no outrage?

Assuredly if there was no outrage, consideration for the state of his wife would urge him to speak the apology in the most natural manner possible. She vowed there was none.

He never thought of blaming her for formerly deceiving him, nor of blaming her for now expediting him.

In the presence of Colonel Halkett, Mr. Tuckham, and Mr. Lydiard, on a fine November afternoon, standing bareheaded in the fir-bordered garden of the cottage on the common, Lord Romfrey delivered his apology to Dr. Shrapnel, and he said:

“I call you to witness, gentlemen, I offer Dr. Shrapnel the fullest reparation he may think fit to demand of me for an unprovoked assault on him, that I find was quite unjustified, and for which I am here to ask his forgiveness.”

Speech of man could not have been more nobly uttered.

Dr. Shrapnel replied:

“To the half of that, sir—“tis over! What remains is done with the hand.”

He stretched his hand out.

Lord Romfrey closed his own on it.

The antagonists, between whom was no pretence of their being other after the performance of a creditable ceremony, bowed and exchanged civil remarks: and then Lord Romfrey was invited to go into the house and see Beauchamp, who happened to be sitting with Cecilia Halkett and Jenny Denham. Beauchamp was thin, pale, and quiet; but the sight of him standing and conversing after that scene of the skinny creature struggling with bareribbed obstruction on the bed, was an example of constitutional vigour and a compliment to the family very gratifying to Lord Romfrey. Excepting by Cecilia, the earl was coldly received. He had to leave early by special express for London to catch the last train to Romfrey. Beauchamp declined to fix a day for his visit to the castle with Lydiard, but proposed that Lydiard should accompany the earl on his return. Lydiard was called in, and at once accepted the earl’s invitation, and quitted the room to pack his portmanteau.

A faint sign of firm-shutting shadowed the corners of Jenny’s lips.

“You have brought my nephew to life,” Lord Romfrey said to her.

“My share in it was very small, my lord.”

“Gannet says that your share in it was very great.”

“And I say so, with the authority of a witness,” added Cecilia.

“And I, from my experience,” came from Beauchamp.

His voice had a hollow sound, unlike his natural voice.

The earl looked at him remembering the bright laughing lad he had once been, and said: “Why not try a month of Madeira? You have only to step on board the boat.”

“I don’t want to lose a month of my friend,” said Beauchamp.

“Take your friend with you. After these fevers our Winters are bad.”

“I’ve been idle too long.”

“But, Captain Beauchamp,” said Jenny, “you proposed to do nothing but read for a couple of years.”

“Ay, there’s the voyage!” sighed he, with a sailor-invalid’s vision of sunny seas dancing in the far sky.

“You must persuade Dr. Shrapnel to come; and he will not come unless you come too, and you won’t go anywhere but to the Alps!” She bent her eyes on the floor. Beauchamp remembered what had brought her home from the Alps. He cast a cold look on his uncle talking with Cecilia: granite, as he thought. And the reflux of that slight feeling of despair seemed to tear down with it in wreckage every effort he had made in life, and cry failure on him. Yet he was hoping that he had not been created for failure.

He touched his uncle’s hand indifferently: “My love to the countess: let me hear of her, sir, if you please.”

“You shall,” said the earl. “But, off to Madeira, and up Teneriffe: sail the Azores. I’ll hire you a good-sized schooner.”

“There is the *Esperanza*,” said Cecilia. “And the vessel is lying *idle*, Nevil! Can you allow it?”

He consented to laugh at himself, and fell to coughing.

Jenny Denham saw a real human expression of anxiety cross the features of the earl at the sound of the cough.

Lord Romfrey said “Adieu,” to her.

He offered her his hand, which she contrived to avoid taking by dropping a formal half-reverence.

“Think of the *Esperanza;* she will be coasting her nominal native land! and adieu for to-day,” Cecilia said to Beauchamp.

Jenny Denham and he stood at the window to watch the leave-taking in the garden, for a distraction. They interchanged no remark of surprise at seeing the earl and Dr. Shrapnel hand-locked: but Jenny’s heart reproached her uncle for being actually servile, and Beauchamp accused the earl of aristocratic impudence.

Both were overcome with remorse when Colonel Halkett, putting his head into the room to say good-bye to Beauchamp and place the *Esperanza* at his disposal for a Winter cruise, chanced to mention in two or three half words the purpose of the earl’s visit, and what had occurred. He took it for known already.

To Miss Denham he remarked: “Lord Romfrey is very much concerned about your health; he fears you have overdone it in nursing Captain Beauchamp.”

“I must be off after him,” said Beauchamp, and began trembling so that he could not stir.

The colonel knew the pain and shame of that condition of weakness to a man who has been strong and swift, and said: “Seven-league boots are not to be caught. You’ll see him soon. Why, I thought some letter of yours had fetched him here! I gave you all the credit of it.”

“No, he deserves it all himself—all,” said Beauchamp and with a dubious eye on Jenny Denham: “You see, we were unfair.”

The “we” meant “you” to her sensitiveness; and probably he did mean it for “you”: for as he would have felt, so he supposed that his uncle must have felt, Jenny’s coldness was much the crueller. Her features, which in animation were summer light playing upon smooth water, could be exceedingly cold in repose: the icier to those who knew her, because they never expressed disdain. No expression of the baser sort belonged to them. Beauchamp was intimate with these delicately-cut features; he would have shuddered had they chilled on him. He had fallen in love with his uncle; he fancied she ought to have done so too; and from his excess of sympathy he found her deficient in it.

He sat himself down to write a hearty letter to his “dear old uncle Everard.”

Jenny left him, to go to her chamber and cry.

CHAPTER LIV.
THE FRUITS OF THE APOLOGY

This clear heart had cause for tears. Her just indignation with Lord Romfrey had sustained her artificially hitherto: now that it was erased, she sank down to weep. Her sentiments toward Lydiard had been very like Cecilia Halkett's in favour of Mr. Austin; with something more to warm them on the part of the gentleman. He first had led her mind in the direction of balanced thought, when, despite her affection for Dr. Shrapnel, her timorous maiden wits, unable to contend with the copious exclamatory old politician, opposed him silently. Lydiard had helped her tongue to speak, as well as her mind to rational views; and there had been a bond of union in common for them in his admiration of her father's writings. She had known that he was miserably yoked, and had respected him when he seemed inclined for compassion without wooing her for tenderness. He had not trifled with her, hardly flattered; he had done no more than kindle a young girl's imaginative liking. The pale flower of imagination, fed by dews, not by sunshine, was born drooping, and hung secret in her bosom, shy as a bell of the frail wood-sorrel. Yet there was pain for her in the perishing of a thing so poor and lowly. She had not observed the change in Lydiard after Beauchamp came on the scene: and that may tell us how passionlessly pure the little maidenly sentiment was. For do but look on the dewy wood-sorrel flower; it is not violet or rose inviting hands to pluck it: still it is there, happy in the woods. And Jenny's feeling was that a foot had crushed it.

She wept, thinking confusedly of Lord Romfrey; trying to think he had made his amends tardily, and that Beauchamp prized him too highly for the act. She had no longer anything to resent: she was obliged to weep. In truth, as the earl had noticed, she was physically depressed by the strain of her protracted watch over Beauchamp, as well as rather heartsick.

But she had been of aid and use in saving him! She was not quite a valueless person; sweet, too, was the thought that he consulted her, listened to her, weighed her ideas. He had evidently taken to study her, as if dispersing some wonderment that one of her sex should have ideas. He had repeated certain of her own which had been forgotten by her. His eyes were often on her with this that she thought humorous intentness. She smiled. She had assisted in raising him from his bed of sickness, whereof the memory affrighted her and melted her. The difficulty now was to keep him indoors, and why he would not go even temporarily to a large house like Mount Laurels, whither Colonel Halkett was daily requesting him to go, she was unable to comprehend. His love of Dr. Shrapnel might account for it.

"Own, Jenny," said Beauchamp, springing up to meet her as she entered the room where he and Dr. Shrapnel sat discussing Lord Romfrey's bearing at his visit, "own that my uncle Everard is a true nobleman. He has to make the round to the right mark, but he comes to it. *I* could not move him—and I like him the better for that. He worked round to it himself. I ought to have been sure he would. You're right: I break my head with impatience."

"No; you sowed seed," said Dr. Shrapnel. "Heed not that girl, my Beauchamp. The old woman's in the Tory, and the Tory leads the young maid. Here's a fable I draw from a Naturalist's book, and we'll set it against the dicta of Jenny Do-nothing, Jenny Discretion, Jenny Wait-for-the-Gods: Once upon a time in a tropical island a man lay sick; so ill that he could not rise to trouble his neighbours for help; so weak that it was lifting a mountain to get up from his bed; so hopeless of succour that the last spark of distraught wisdom perching on his brains advised him to lie where he was and trouble not himself, since peace at least he could command, before he passed upon the black highroad men call our kingdom of peace: ay, he lay there. Now it chanced that this man had a mess to cook for his nourishment. And life said, Do it, and death said, To what end? He wrestled with the stark limbs of death, and cooked the mess; and that done he had no strength remaining to him to consume it, but crept to his bed like the toad into winter. Now, meanwhile a steam arose from the mess, and he lay stretched. So it befel that the birds of prey of the region scented the mess, and they descended and thronged at that man's windows. And the man's neighbours looked up at them, for it was the sign of one who is fit for the beaks of birds, lying unburied. Fail to spread the pall one hour where suns are decisive, and the pall comes down out of heaven! They said, The man is dead within. And they went to his room, and saw him and succoured him. They lifted him out of

death by the last uncut thread.

“Now, my Jenny Weigh-words, Jenny Halt-there! was it they who saved the man, or he that saved himself? The man taxed his expiring breath to sow seed of life. Lydiard shall put it into verse for a fable in song for our people. I say it is a good fable, and sung spiritedly may serve for nourishment, and faith in work, to many of our poor fainting fellows! Now you?”

Jenny said: “I think it is a good fable of self-help. Does it quite illustrate the case? I mean, the virtue of impatience. But I like the fable and the moral; and I think it would do good if it were made popular, though it would be hard to condense it to a song.”

“It would be hard! ay, then we do it forthwith. And you shall compose the music. As for the ‘case of impatience,’ my dear, you tether the soaring universal to your pet-lamb’s post, the special. I spoke of seed sown. I spoke of the fruits of energy and resolution. Cared I for an apology? I took the blows as I take hail from the clouds—which apologize to you the moment you are in shelter, if you laugh at them. So, good night to that matter! Are we to have rain this evening? I must away into Bevisham to the Workmen’s Hall, and pay the men.”

“There will not be rain; there will be frost, and you must be well wrapped if you must go,” said Jenny. “And tell them not to think of deputations to Captain Beauchamp yet.”

“No, no deputations; let them send Killick, if they want to say anything,” said Beauchamp.

“Wrong!” the doctor cried; “wrong! wrong! Six men won’t hurt you more than one. And why check them when their feelings are up? They burn to be speaking some words to you. Trust me, Beauchamp, if we shun to encounter the good warm soul of numbers, our hearts are narrowed to them. The business of our modern world is to open heart and stretch out arms to numbers. In numbers we have our sinews; they are our iron and gold. Scatter them not; teach them the secret of cohesion. Practically, since they gave you not their entire confidence once, you should not rebuff them to suspicions of you as aristocrat, when they rise on the effort to believe a man of, as “tis called, birth their undivided friend. Meet them!”

“Send them,” said Beauchamp.

Jenny Denham fastened a vast cloak and a comforter on the doctor’s heedless shoulders and throat, enjoining on him to return in good time for dinner.

He put his finger to her cheek in reproof of such supererogatory counsel to a man famous for his punctuality.

The day had darkened.

Beauchamp begged Jenny to play to him on the piano.

“Do you indeed care to have music?” said she. “I did not wish you to meet a deputation, because your strength is not yet equal to it. Dr. Shrapnel dwells on principles, forgetful of minor considerations.”

“I wish thousands did!” cried Beauchamp. “When you play I seem to hear ideas. Your music makes me think.”

Jenny lit a pair of candles and set them on the piano. “Waltzes?” she asked.

“Call in a puppet-show at once!”

She smiled, turned over some leaves, and struck the opening notes of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, and made her selections.

At the finish he said: “Now read me your father’s poem, ‘*The Hunt of the Fates.*’”

She read it to him.

“Now read, ‘*The Ascent from the Inferno.*’”

That she read: and also “*Soul and Brute*,” another of his favourites.

He wanted more, and told her to read “*First Love—Last Love.*”

“I fear I have not the tone of voice for love-poems,” Jenny said, returning the book to him.

“I’ll read it,” said he.

He read with more impressiveness than effect. Lydiard’s reading thrilled her: Beauchamp’s insisted too much on particular lines. But it was worth while observing him. She saw him always as in a picture, remote from herself. His loftier social station and strange character precluded any of those keen suspicions by which women learn that a fire is beginning to glow near them.

“How I should like to have known your father!” he said. “I don’t

wonder at Dr. Shrapnel's love of him. Yes, he was one of the great men of his day! and it's a higher honour to be of his blood than any that rank can give. You were ten years old when you lost him. Describe him to me."

"He used to play with me like a boy," said Jenny. She described her father from a child's recollection of him.

"Dr. Shrapnel declares he would have been one of the first surgeons in Europe: and he was one of the first of poets," Beauchamp pursued with enthusiasm. "So he was doubly great. I hold a good surgeon to be in the front rank of public benefactors—where they put rich brewers, bankers, and speculative manufacturers now. Well! the world is young. We shall alter that in time. Whom did your father marry?"

Jenny answered, "My mother was the daughter of a London lawyer. She married without her father's approval of the match, and he left her nothing."

Beauchamp interjected: "Lawyer's money!"

"It would have been useful to my mother's household when I was an infant," said Jenny.

"Poor soul! I suppose so. Yes; well," Beauchamp sighed. "Money! never mind how it comes. We're in such a primitive condition that we catch at anything to keep us out of the cold; dogs with a bone!—instead of living, as Dr. Shrapnel prophecies, for and, with one another. It's war now, and money's the weapon of war. And we're the worst nation in Europe for that. But if we fairly recognize it, we shall be the first to alter our ways. There's the point. Well, Jenny, I can look you in the face to-night. Thanks to my uncle Everard at last!"

"Captain Beauchamp, you have never been blamed."

"I am Captain Beauchamp by courtesy, in public. My friends call me Nevil. I think I have heard the name on your lips?"

"When you were very ill."

He stood closer to her, very close.

"Which was the arm that bled for me? May I look at it? There was a bruise."

"Have you not forgotten that trifle? There is the faintest possible mark of it left."

"I wish to see."

She gently defended the arm, but he made it so much a matter of earnest to see the bruise of the old Election missile on her fair arm, that, with a pardonable soft blush, to avoid making much of it herself, she turned her sleeve a little above the wrist. He took her hand.

"It was for me!"

"It was quite an accident: no harm was intended."

"But it was in my cause—for me!"

"Indeed, Captain Beauchamp..."

"Nevil, we say indoors."

"Nevil—but is it not wiser to say what comes naturally to us?"

"Who told you to-day that you had brought me to life? I am here to prove it true. If I had paid attention to your advice, I should not have gone into the cottage of those poor creatures and taken away the fever. I did no good there. But the man's wife said her husband had been ruined by voting for me: and it was a point of honour to go in and sit with him. You are not to have your hand back: it is mine. Don't you remember, Jenny, how you gave me your arm on the road when I staggered; two days before the fever knocked me over? Shall I tell you what I thought then? I thought that he who could have you for a mate would have the bravest and helpfullest wife in all England. And not a mere beauty, for you have good looks: but you have the qualities I have been in search of. Why do your eyes look so mournfully at me? I am full of hope. We'll sail the *Esperanza* for the Winter: you and I, and our best friend with us. And you shall have a voice in the council, be sure."

"If you are two to one?" Jenny said quickly, to keep from faltering.

Beauchamp pressed his mouth to the mark of the bruise on her arm. He held her fast.

"I mean it, if you will join me, that you and I should rejoice the heart of the dear old man—will you? He has been brooding over your loneliness here if you are unmarried, ever since his recovery. I owe my life to you, and every debt of gratitude to him. Now, Jenny!"

"Oh! Captain Beauchamp—Nevil, if you will... if I may have my hand. You exaggerate common kindness. He loves you. We both esteem you."

“But you don’t love me?”

“Indeed I have no fear that I shall be unable to support myself, if I am left alone.”

“But I want your help. I wake from illness with my eyes open. I must have your arm to lean on now and then.”

Jenny dropped a shivering sigh.

“Uncle is long absent!” she said.

Her hand was released. Beauchamp inspected his watch.

“He may have fallen! He may be lying on the common!”

“Oh!” cried Jenny, “why did I let him go out without me?”

“Let me have his lantern; I’ll go and search over the common.”

“You must not go out,” said she.

“I must. The old man may be perishing.”

“It will be death to you... Nevil!”

“That’s foolish. I can stand the air for a few minutes.”

“I’ll go,” said Jenny.

“Unprotected? No.”

“Cook shall come with me.”

“Two women!”

“Nevil, if you care a little for me, be good, be kind, submit.”

“He is half an hour behind dinner-time, and he’s never late. Something must have happened to him. Way for me, my dear girl.”

She stood firm between him and the door. It came to pass that she stretched her hands to arrest him, and he seized the hands.

“Rather than you should go out in this cold weather, anything!” she said, in the desperation of physical inability to hold him back.

“Ah!” Beauchamp crossed his arms round her. “I’ll wait for five minutes.”

One went by, with Jenny folded, broken and sobbing, senseless, against his breast.

They had not heard Dr. Shrapnel quietly opening the hall door and hanging up his hat. He looked in.

“Beauchamp!” he exclaimed.

“Come, doctor,” said Beauchamp, and loosened his clasp of Jenny considerately.

She disengaged herself.

“Beauchamp! now I die a glad man.”

“Witness, doctor, she’s mine by her own confession.”

“Uncle!” Jenny gasped. “Oh! Captain Beauchamp, what an error! what delusion!... Forget it. I will. Here are more misunderstandings! You shall be excused. But be...”

“Be you the blessedest woman alive on this earth, my Jenny!” shouted Dr. Shrapnel. “You have the choice man on all the earth for husband, sweetheart! Ay, of all the earth! I go with a message for my old friend Harry Denham, to quicken him in the grave; for the husband of his girl is Nevil Beauchamp! The one thing I dared not dream of thousands is established. Sunlight, my Jenny!”

Beauchamp kissed her hand.

She slipped away to her chamber, grovelling to find her diminished self somewhere in the mid-thunder of her amazement, as though it were to discover a pin on the floor by the flash of lightning. Where was she!

This ensued from the apology of Lord Romfrey to Dr. Shrapnel.

CHAPTER LV.
WITHOUT LOVE

At the end of November, Jenny Denham wrote these lines to Mr. Lydiard, in reply to his request that she should furnish the latest particulars of Nevil Beauchamp, for the satisfaction of the Countess of Romfrey:

"There is everything to reassure Lady Romfrey in the state of Captain Beauchamp's health, and I have never seen him so placidly happy as he has been since the arrival, yesterday morning, of a lady from France, Madame la Marquise de Rouaillout, with her brother, M. le Comte de Croisnel. Her husband, I hear from M. de Croisnel, dreads our climate and coffee too much to attempt the voyage. I understand that she writes to Lady Romfrey to-day. Lady Romfrey's letter to her, informing her of Captain Beauchamp's alarming illness, went the round from Normandy to Touraine and Dauphiny, otherwise she would have come over earlier.

"Her first inquiry of me was, 'Il est mort?' You would have supposed her disappointed by my answer. A light went out in her eyes, like that of a veilleuse in the dawn. She looked at me without speaking, while her beautiful eyes regained their natural expression. She shut them and sighed. 'Tell him that M. de Croisnel and his sister are here.'

"This morning her wish to see Miss Halkett was gratified. You know my taste was formed in France; I agree with Captain Beauchamp in his more than admiration of Frenchwomen; ours, though more accomplished, are colder and less plastic. But Miss Halkett is surpassingly beautiful, very amiable, very generous, a perfect friend. She is our country at its best. Probably she is shy of speaking French; she frequently puts the Italian accent. Madame de Rouaillout begged to speak with her alone: I do not know what passed. Miss Halkett did not return to us.

"Dr. Shrapnel and Captain Beauchamp have recently been speculating on our becoming a nation of artists, and authorities in science and philosophy, by the time our coalfields and material wealth are exhausted. That, and the cataclysm, are their themes.

"They say, will things end utterly?—all our gains be lost? The question seems to me to come of that love of earth which is recognition of God: for if they cannot reconcile themselves to believe in extinction, to what must they be looking? It is a confirmation of your saying, that love leads to God, through art or in acts.

"You will regret to hear that the project of Captain Beauchamp's voyage is in danger of being abandoned. A committee of a vacant Radical borough has offered to nominate him. My influence is weak; madame would have him go back with her and her brother to Normandy. My influence is weak, I suppose, because he finds me constantly leaning to expediency—I am your pupil. It may be quite correct that powder is intended for explosion: we do not therefore apply a spark to the barrel. I ventured on that. He pitied me in the snares of simile and metaphor. He is the same, you perceive. How often have we not discussed what would have become of him, with that 'rocket brain' of his, in less quiet times! Yet, when he was addressing a deputation of workmen the other day, he recommended patience to them as one of the virtues that count under wisdom. He is curiously impatient for knowledge. One of his reasons for not accepting Colonel Halkett's offer of his yacht is, that he will not be able to have books enough on board. Definite instead of vast and hazy duties are to be desired for him, I think. Most fervently I pray that he will obtain a ship and serve some years. At the risk of your accusing me of 'sententious posing,' I would say, that men who do not live in the present chiefly, but hamper themselves with giant tasks in excess of alarm for the future, however devoted and noble they may be—and he is an example of one that is—reduce themselves to the dimensions of pigmies; they have the cry of infants. You reply, Foresight is an element of love of country and mankind. But how often is not the foresight guess-work?

"He has not spoken of the DAWN project. To-day he is repeating one of uncle's novelties—'Sultry Tories.' The sultry Tory sits in the sun and prophecies woefully of storm, it appears. Your accusation that I am one at heart amuses me; I am not quite able to deny it. 'Sultriness' I am not conscious of. But it would appear to be an epithet for the Conservatives of wealth. So that England, being very wealthy, we are to call it a sultry country? You are much wanted, for where there is no 'middleman Liberal' to hold the scales for them, these two have it all their own way, which is not good for them.

Captain Beauchamp quotes you too. It seems that you once talked to him of a machine for measuring the force of blows delivered with the fist, and compared his efforts to those of one perpetually practising at it: and this you are said to have called 'The case of the Constitutional Realm and the extreme Radical.' Elsewhere the Radical smites at iron or rotten wood; *in England it is a cushion on springs*. Did you say it? He quotes it as yours, half acquiescingly, and ruefully.

"For visitors, we have had Captain Baskelett for two minutes, and Lord Palmet, who stayed longer, and seems to intend to come daily. He attempts French with Madame de R., and amuses her a little: a silver foot and a ball of worsted. Mr. and Mrs. Grancey Lespel have called, and Lord and Lady Croyston. Colonel Halkett, Miss Halkett, and Mr. Tuckham come frequently. Captain Beauchamp spoke to her yesterday of her marriage. "Madame de R. leaves us to-morrow. Her brother is a delightful, gay-tempered, very handsome boyish Frenchman—not her equal, to my mind, for I do not think Frenchmen comparable to the women of France; but she is exceedingly grave, with hardly a smile, and his high spirits excite Nevil's, so it is pleasant to see them together."

The letter was handed to Lady Romfrey. She read through it thoughtfully till she came to the name of Nevil, when she frowned. On the morrow she pronounced it a disingenuous letter. Renée had sent her these lines:

"I should come to you if my time were not restricted; my brother's leave of absence is short. I have done here what lay in my power, to show you I have learnt something in the school of self-immolation. I have seen Mlle. Halkett. She is a beautiful young woman, deficient only in words, doubtless. My labour, except that it may satisfy you, was the vainest of tasks. She marries a ruddy monsieur of a name that I forget, and of the bearing of a member of the gardes du corps, without the stature. Enfin, madame, I have done my duty, and do not regret it, since I may hope that it will win for me some approbation and a portion of the esteem of a lady to whom I am indebted for that which is now the best of life to me: and I do not undervalue it in saying I would gladly have it stamped on brass and deposited beside my father's. I have my faith. I would it were Nevil's too—and yours, should you be in need of it.

"He will marry Mlle. Denham. If I may foretell events, she will steady him. She is a young person who will not feel astray in society of his rank; she possesses the natural grace we do not expect to see out of our country—from sheer ignorance of what is beyond it. For the moment she affects to consider herself unworthy; and it is excuseable that she should be slightly alarmed at her prospect. But Nevil must have a wife. I presume to think that he could not have chosen better. Above all, make him leave England for the Winter. Adieu, dear countess. Nevil promises me a visit after his marriage. I shall not set foot on England again: but you, should you ever come to our land of France, will find my heart open to you at the gates of undying grateful recollection. I am not skilled in writing. You have looked into me once; look now; I am the same. Only I have succeeded in bringing myself to a greater likeness to the dead, as it becomes a creature to be who is coupled with one of their body. Meanwhile I shall have news of you. I trust that soon I may be warranted in forwarding congratulations to Lord Romfrey."

Rosamund handed the letters to her husband. Not only did she think Miss Denham disingenuous, she saw that the girl was not in love with Beauchamp: and the idea of a loveless marriage for him threw the mournfullest of Hecate's beams along the course of a career that the passionate love of a bride, though she were not well-born and not wealthy, would have rosily coloured.

"Without love!" she exclaimed to herself. She asked the earl's opinion of the startling intelligence, and of the character of that Miss Denham, who could pen such a letter, after engaging to give her hand to Nevil.

Lord Romfrey laughed in his dumb way. "If Nevil must have a wife—and the marquise tells you so, and she ought to know—he may as well marry a girl who won't go all the way down hill with him at his pace. He'll be cogged."

"You do not object to such an alliance?"

"I'm past objection. There's no law against a man's marrying his nurse."

"But she is not even in love with him!"

"I dare say not. He wants a wife: she accepts a husband. The two women who were in love with him he wouldn't have."

Lady Romfrey sighed deeply: "He has lost Cecilia! She might still have been his: but he has taken to that girl. And Madame de Rouaillout

praises the girl because—oh! I see it—she has less to be jealous of in Miss Denham: of whose birth and blood we know nothing. Let that pass! If only she loved him! I cannot endure the thought of his marrying a girl who is not in love with him."

"Just as you like, my dear."

"I used to suspect Mr. Lydiard."

"Perhaps he's the man."

"Oh, what an end of so brilliant a beginning!"

"It strikes me, my dear," said the earl, "it's the proper common sense beginning that may have a fairish end."

"No, but what I feel is that he—our Nevil!—has accomplished hardly anything, if anything!"

"He hasn't marched on London with a couple of hundred thousand men: no, he hasn't done that," the earl said, glancing back in his mind through Beauchamp's career. "And he escapes what Stukely calls his nation's scourge, in the shape of a statue turned out by an English chisel. No: we haven't had much public excitement out of him. But one thing he did do: *he got me down on my knees!*"

Lord Romfrey pronounced these words with a sober emphasis that struck the humour of it sharply into Rosamund's heart, through some contrast it presented between Nevil's aim at the world and hit of a man: the immense deal thought of it by the earl, and the very little that Nevil would think of it—the great domestic achievement to be boasted of by an enthusiastic devotee of politics!

She embraced her husband with peals of loving laughter: the last laughter heard in Romfrey Castle for many a day.

CHAPTER LVI.
THE LAST OF NEVIL BEAUCHAMP

Not before Beauchamp was flying with the Winter gales to warmer climes could Rosamund reflect on his career unshadowed by her feminine mortification at the thought that he was unloved by the girl he had decided to marry. But when he was away and winds blew, the clouds which obscured an embracing imagination of him—such as, to be true and full and sufficient, should stretch like the dome of heaven over the humblest of lives under contemplation—broke, and revealed him to her as one who had other than failed: rather as one in mid career, in mid forest, who, by force of character, advancing in self-conquest, strikes his impress right and left around him, because of his aim at stars. He had faults, and she gloried to think he had; for the woman's heart rejoiced in his portion of our common humanity while she named their prince to men: but where was he to be matched in devotedness and in gallantry? and what man of blood fiery as Nevil's ever fought so to subject it? Rosamund followed him like a migratory bird, hovered over his vessel, perched on deck beside the helm, where her sailor was sure to be stationed, entered his breast, communed with him, and wound him round and round with her love. He has mine! she cried. Her craving that he should be blest in the reward, or flower-crown, of his wife's love of him lessened in proportion as her brooding spirit vividly realized his deeds. In fact it had been but an example of our very general craving for a climax, palpable and scenic. She was completely satisfied by her conviction that his wife would respect and must be subordinate to him. So it had been with her. As for love, let him come to his Rosamund for love, and appreciation, adoration!

Rosamund drew nigh to her hour of peril with this torch of her love of Beauchamp to illuminate her.

There had been a difficulty in getting him to go. One day Cecilia walked down to Dr. Shrapnel's with Mr. Tuckham, to communicate that the *Esperanza* awaited Captain Beauchamp, manned and provisioned, off the pier. Now, he would not go without Dr. Shrapnel, nor the doctor without Jenny; and Jenny could not hold back, seeing that the wish of her heart was for Nevil to be at sea, untroubled by political questions and prowling Radical deputies. So her consent was the seal of the voyage. What she would not consent to, was the proposal to have her finger ringed previous to the voyage, altogether in the manner of a sailor's bride. She seemed to stipulate for a term of courtship. Nevil frankly told the doctor that he was not equal to it; anything that was kind he was quite ready to say; and anything that was pretty: but nothing particularly kind and pretty occurred to him: he was exactly like a juvenile correspondent facing a blank sheet of letter paper:—he really did not know what to say, further than the uncomplicated exposition of his case, that he wanted a wife and had found the very woman. How, then, fathom Jenny's mood for delaying? Dr. Shrapnel's exhortations were so worded as to induce her to comport herself like a Scriptural woman, humbly wakeful to the surpassing splendour of the high fortune which had befallen her in being so selected, and obedient at a sign. But she was, it appeared that she was, a maid of scaly vision, not perceptive of the blessedness of her lot. She could have been very little perceptive, for she did not understand his casual allusion to Beauchamp's readiness to overcome "a natural repugnance," for the purpose of making her his wife.

Up to the last moment, before Cecilia Halkett left the deck of the *Esperanza* to step on the pier, Jenny remained in vague but excited expectation of something intervening to bring Cecilia and Beauchamp together. It was not a hope; it was with pure suspense that she awaited the issue. Cecilia was pale. Beauchamp shook Mr. Tuckham by the hand, and said: "I shall not hear the bells, but send me word of it, will you?" and he wished them both all happiness.

The sails of the schooner filled. On a fair frosty day, with a light wind ruffling from the North-west, she swept away, out of sight of Bevisham, and the island, into the Channel, to within view of the coast of France. England once below the water-line, alone with Beauchamp and Dr. Shrapnel, Jenny Denham knew her fate.

As soon as that grew distinctly visible in shape and colour, she ceased to be reluctant. All about her, in air and sea and unknown coast, was fresh and prompting. And if she looked on Beauchamp, the thought—my husband! palpitated, and destroyed and re-made her. Rapidly she

underwent her transformation from doubtfully-minded woman to woman awakening clear-eyed, and with new sweet shivers in her temperate blood, like the tremulous light seen running to the morn upon a quiet sea. She fell under the charm of Beauchamp at sea.

In view of the island of Madeira, Jenny noticed that some trouble had come upon Dr. Shrapnel and Beauchamp, both of whom had been hilarious during the gales; but sailing into Summer they began to wear that look which indicated one of their serious deliberations. She was not taken into their confidence, and after awhile they recovered partially.

The truth was, they had been forced back upon old English ground by a recognition of the absolute necessity, for her sake, of handing themselves over to a parson. In England, possibly, a civil marriage might have been proposed to the poor girl. In a foreign island, they would be driven not simply to accept the services of a parson, but to seek him and solicit him: otherwise the knot, faster than any sailor's in binding, could not be tied. Decidedly it could not; and how submit? Neither Dr. Shrapnel nor Beauchamp were of a temper to deceive the clerical gentleman; only they had to think of Jenny's feelings. Alas for us!—this our awful baggage in the rear of humanity, these women who have not moved on their own feet one step since the primal mother taught them to suckle, are perpetually pulling us backward on the march. Slaves of custom, forms, shows and superstitions, they are slaves of the priests. "They are so in gratitude perchance, as the matter works," Dr. Shrapnel admitted. For at one period the priests did cherish and protect the weak from animal man. But we have entered a broader daylight now, when the sun of high heaven has crowned our structure with the flower of brain, like him to scatter mists, and penetrate darkness, and shoot from end to end of earth; and must we still be grinning subserviently to ancient usages and stale forms, because of a baggage that it is, woe to us! too true, we cannot cut ourselves loose from? Lydiard might say we are compelling the priests to fight, and that they are compact foemen, not always passive. Battle, then!—The cry was valiant. Nevertheless, Jenny would certainly insist upon the presence of a parson, in spite of her bridegroom's "natural repugnance." Dr. Shrapnel offered to argue it with her, being of opinion that a British consul could satisfactorily perform the ceremony. Beauchamp knew her too well. Moreover, though tongue-tied as to love-making, he was in a hurry to be married. Jenny's eyes were lovely, her smiles were soft; the fair promise of her was in bloom on her face and figure. He could not wait; he must off to the parson.

Then came the question as to whether honesty and honour did not impose it on them to deal openly with that gentle, and on such occasions unobtrusive official, by means of a candid statement to him overnight, to the effect that they were the avowed antagonists of his Church, which would put him on his defence, and lead to an argument that would accomplish his overthrow. You parsons, whose cause is good, marshal out the poor of the land, that we may see the sort of army your stewardship has gained for you. What! no army? only women and hoary men? And in the rear rank, to support you as an institution, none but fanatics, cowards, white-eyeballed dogmatists, timeservers, money-changers, mockers in their sleeves? What is this?

But the prospect of so completely confounding the unfortunate parson warned Beauchamp that he might have a shot in his locker: the parson heavily trodden on will turn. "I suppose we must be hypocrites," he said in dejection. Dr. Shrapnel was even more melancholy. He again offered to try his persuasiveness upon Jenny. Beauchamp declined to let her be disturbed.

She did not yield so very lightly to the invitation to go before a parson. She had to be wooed after all; a Harry Hotspur's wooing. Three clergymen of the Established Church were on the island: "And where won't they be, where there's fine scenery and comforts abound?" Beauchamp said to the doctor ungratefully.

"Whether a celibate clergy ruins the Faith faster than a non-celibate, I won't dispute," replied the doctor; "but a non-celibate interwinds with us, and is likely to keep up a one-storied edifice longer."

Jenny hesitated. She was a faltering unit against an ardent and imperative two in the council. And Beauchamp had shown her a letter of Lady Romfrey's very clearly signifying that she and her lord anticipated tidings of the union. Marrying Beauchamp was no simple adventure. She feared in her bosom, and resigned herself.

She had a taste of what it was to be, at the conclusion of the service. Beauchamp thanked the good-natured clergyman, and spoke approvingly of him to his bride, as an agreeable well-bred gentlemanly person. Then,

fronting her and taking both her hands: “Now, my darling,” he said: “you must pledge me your word to this: I have stooped my head to the parson, and I am content to have done that to win you, though I don’t think much of myself for doing it. I can’t look so happy as I am. And this idle ceremony—however, I thank God I have you, and I thank you for taking me. But you won’t expect me to give in to the parson again.”

“But, Nevil,” she said, fearing what was to come: “they are gentlemen, good men.”

“Yes, yes.”

“They are educated men, Nevil.”

“Jenny! Jenny Beauchamp, they’re not men, they’re Churchmen. My experience of the priest in our country is, that he has abandoned—he’s dead against the only cause that can justify and keep up a Church: the cause of the poor—the people. He is a creature of the moneyed class. I look on him as a pretender. I go through his forms, to save my wife from annoyance, but there’s the end of it: and if ever I’m helpless, unable to resist him, I rely on your word not to let him intrude; he’s to have nothing to do with the burial of me. He’s against the cause of the people. Very well: I make my protest to the death against him. When he’s a Christian instead of a Churchman, then may my example not be followed. It’s little use looking for that.”

Jenny dropped some tears on her bridal day. She sighed her submission. “So long as you do not change,” said she.

“Change!” cried Nevil. “That’s for the parson. Now it’s over: we start fair. My darling! I have you. I don’t mean to bother you. I’m sure you’ll see that the enemies of Reason are the enemies of the human race; you will see that. I can wait.”

“If we can be sure that we ourselves are using reason rightly, Nevil!—not prejudice.”

“Of course. But don’t you see, my Jenny, we have no interest in opposing reason?”

“But have we not all grown up together? And is it just or wise to direct our efforts to overthrow a solid structure that is a part...?”

He put his legal right in force to shut her mouth, telling her presently she might *Lydiardize* as much as she liked. While practising this mastery, he assured her he would always listen to her: yes, whether she Lydiardized, or what Dr. Shrapnel called Jenny-prated.

“That is to say, dear Nevil, that you have quite made up your mind to a toddling chattering little nursery wife?”

Very much the contrary to anything of the sort, he declared; and he proved his honesty by announcing an immediate reflection that had come to him: “How oddly things are settled! Cecilia Halkett and Tuckham; you and I! Now, I know for certain that I have brought Cecilia Halkett out of her woman’s Toryism, and given her at least liberal views, and she goes and marries an arrant Tory; while you, a bit of a Tory at heart, more than anything else, have married an ultra.”

“Perhaps we may hope that the conflict will be seasonable on both sides?—if you give me fair play, Nevil!”

As fair play as a woman’s lord could give her, she was to have; with which, adieu to argumentation and controversy, and all the thanks in life to the parson! On a lovely island, free from the seductions of care, possessing a wife who, instead of starting out of romance and poetry with him to the supreme honeymoon, led him back to those forsaken valleys of his youth, and taught him the joys of colour and sweet companionship, simple delights, a sister mind, with a loveliness of person and nature unimagined by him, Beauchamp drank of a happiness that neither Renée nor Cecilia had promised. His wooing of Jenny Beauchamp was a flattery richer than any the maiden Jenny Denham could have deemed her due; and if his wonder in experiencing such strange gladness was quaintly ingenuous, it was delicious to her to see and know full surely that he who was at little pains to court, or please, independently of the agency of the truth in him, had come to be her lover through being her husband.

Here I would stop. It is Beauchamp’s career that carries me on to its close, where the lanterns throw their beams off the mudbanks by the black riverside; when some few English men and women differed from the world in thinking that it had suffered a loss.

They sorrowed for the earl when tidings came to them of the loss of his child, alive one hour in his arms. Rosamund caused them to be deceived as to her condition. She survived; she wrote to Jenny, bidding her keep her husband cruising. Lord Romfrey added a brief word: he told Nevil

that he would see no one for the present; hoped he would be absent a year, not a day less. To render it the more easily practicable, in the next packet of letters Colonel Halkett and Cecilia begged them not to bring the *Esperanza* home for the yachting season: the colonel said his daughter was to be married in April, and that bridegroom and bride had consented to take an old man off with them to Italy; perhaps in the autumn all might meet in Venice.

“And you’ve never seen Venice,” Beauchamp said to Jenny.

“Everything is new to me,” said she, penetrating and gladly joining the conspiracy to have him out of England.

Dr. Shrapnel was not so compliant as the young husband. Where he could land and botanize, as at Madeira, he let time fly and drum his wings on air, but the cities of priests along the coast of Portugal and Spain roused him to a burning sense of that flight of time and the vacuity it told of in his labours. Greatly to his astonishment, he found that it was no longer he and Beauchamp against Jenny, but Jenny and Beauchamp against him.

“What!” he cried, “to draw breath day by day, and not to pay for it by striking daily at the rock Iniquity? Are you for that, Beauchamp? And in a land where these priests walk with hats curled like the water-lily’s leaf without the flower? How far will you push indolent unreason to gain the delusion of happiness? There is no such thing: but there’s trance. That talk of happiness is a carrion clamour of the creatures of prey. Take it—and you’re helping tear some poor wretch to pieces, whom you might be constructing, saving perchance: some one? some thousands! You, Beauchamp, when I met you first, you were for England, England! for a breadth of the palm of my hand comparatively—the round of a copper penny, no wider! And from that you jumped at a bound to the round of this earth: you were for humanity. Ay, we sailed our planet among the icy spheres, and were at blood-heat for its destiny, you and I! And now you hover for a wind to catch you. So it is for a soul rejecting prayer. This wind and that has it: the well-springs within are shut down fast! I pardon my Jenny, my Harry Denham’s girl. She is a woman, and has a brain like a bell that rings all round to the tongue. It is her kingdom, of the interdicted untraversed frontiers. But what cares she, or any woman, that this Age of ours should lie like a carcase against the Sun? What cares any woman to help to hold up Life to him? He breeds divinely upon life, filthy upon stagnation. Sail you away, if you will, in your trance. I go. I go home by land alone, and I await you. Here in this land of moles upright, I do naught but execrate; I am a pulpit of curses. Counter-anathema, you might call me.”

“Oh! I feel the comparison so, for England shining spiritually bright,” said Jenny, and cut her husband adrift with the exclamation, and saw him float away to Dr. Shrapnel.

“*Spiritually* bright!”

“By comparison, Nevil.”

“There’s neither spiritual nor political brightness in England, but a common resolution to eat of good things and stick to them,” said the doctor: “and we two out of England, there’s barely a voice to cry scare to the feeders. I’m back! I’m home!”

They lost him once in Cadiz, and discovered him on the quay, looking about for a vessel. In getting him to return to the *Esperanza*, they nearly all three fell into the hands of the police. Beauchamp gave him a great deal of his time, reading and discussing with him on deck and in the cabin, and projecting future enterprises, to pacify his restlessness. A translation of Plato had become Beauchamp’s intellectual world. This philosopher singularly anticipated his ideas. Concerning himself he was beginning to think that he had many years ahead of him for work. He was with Dr. Shrapnel, as to the battle, and with Jenny as to the delay in recommencing it. Both the men laughed at the constant employment she gave them among the Greek islands in furnishing her severely accurate accounts of sea-fights and land-fights: and the scenes being before them they could neither of them protest that their task-work was an idle labour. Dr. Shrapnel assisted in fighting Marathon and Salamis over again cordially—to shield Great Britain from the rule of a satrapy.

Beauchamp often tried to conjure words to paint his wife. On grave subjects she had the manner of speaking of a shy scholar, and between grave and playful, between smiling and serious, her clear head, her nobly poised character, seemed to him to have never had a prototype and to elude the art of picturing it in expression, until he heard Lydiard call her whimsically, “Portia disrobing.”

Portia half in her doctor’s gown, half out of it. They met Lydiard and

his wife Louise, and Mr. and Mrs. Tuckham, in Venice, where, upon the first day of October, Jenny Beauchamp gave birth to a son. The thrilling mother did not perceive on this occasion the gloom she cast over the father of the child and Dr. Shrapnel. The youngster would insist on his right to be sprinkled by the parson, to get a legal name and please his mother. At all turns in the history of our healthy relations with women we are confronted by the parson! “And, upon my word, I believe,” Beauchamp said to Lydiard, “those parsons—not bad creatures in private life: there was one in Madeira I took a personal liking to—but they’re utterly ignorant of what men feel to them—more ignorant than women!” Mr. Tuckham and Mrs. Lydiard would not listen to his foolish objections; nor were they ever mentioned to Jenny. Apparently the commission of the act of marriage was to force Beauchamp from all his positions one by one.

“The education of that child?” Mrs. Lydiard said to her husband.

He considered that the mother would prevail.

Cecilia feared she would not.

“Depend upon it, he’ll make himself miserable if he can,” said Tuckham.

That gentleman, however, was perpetually coming fuming from arguments with Beauchamp, and his opinion was a controversialist’s. His common sense was much afflicted. “I thought marriage would have stopped all those absurdities,” he said, glaring angrily, laughing, and then frowning. “I’ve warned him I’ll go out of my way to come across him if he carries on his headlong folly. A man should accept his country for what it is when he’s born into it. Don’t tell me he’s a good fellow. I know he is, but there’s an ass mounted on the good fellow. Talks of the parsons! Why, they’re men of education.”

“They couldn’t steer a ship in a gale, though.”

“Oh! he’s a good sailor. And let him go to sea,” said Tuckham. “His wife’s a prize. He’s hardly worthy of her. If she manages him she’ll deserve a monument for doing a public service.”

How fortunate it is for us that here and there we do not succeed in wresting our temporary treasure from the grasp of the Fates!

This good old commonplace reflection came to Beauchamp while clasping his wife’s hand on the deck of the *Esperanza*, and looking up at the mountains over the Gulf of Venice. The impression of that marvellous dawn when he and Renée looked up hand-in-hand was ineffaceable, and pity for the tender hand lost to him wrought in his blood, but Jenny was a peerless wife; and though not in the music of her tongue, or in subtlety of delicate meaning did she excel Renée, as a sober adviser she did, and as a firm speaker; and she had homelier deep eyes, thoughtfuller brows. The father could speculate with good hope of Jenny’s child. Cecilia’s wealth, too, had gone over to the Tory party, with her incomprehensible espousal of Tuckham. Let it go; let all go for dowerless Jenny!

It was (she dared to recollect it in her anguish) Jenny’s choice to go home in the yacht that decided her husband not to make the journey by land in company with the Lydiards.

The voyage was favourable. Beauchamp had a passing wish to land on the Norman coast, and take Jenny for a day to Tourdestelle. He deferred to her desire to land baby speedily, now they were so near home. They ran past Otley river, having sight of Mount Laurels, and on to Bevisham, with swelling sails. There they parted. Beauchamp made it one of his “points of honour” to deliver the vessel where he had taken her, at her moorings in the Otley. One of the piermen stood before Beauchamp, and saluting him, said he had been directed to inform him that the Earl of Romfrey was with Colonel Halkett, expecting him at Mount Laurels. Beauchamp wanted his wife to return in the yacht. She turned her eyes to Dr. Shrapnel. It was out of the question that the doctor should think of going. Husband and wife parted. She saw him no more.

This is no time to tell of weeping. The dry chronicle is fittest. Hard on nine o’clock in the December darkness, the night being still and clear, Jenny’s babe was at her breast, and her ears were awake for the return of her husband. A man rang at the door of the house, and asked to see Dr. Shrapnel. This man was Killick, the Radical Sam of politics. He said to the doctor: “I’m going to hit you sharp, sir; I’ve had it myself: please put on your hat and come out with me; and close the door. They mustn’t hear inside. And here’s a fly. I knew you’d be off for the finding of the body. Commander Beauchamp’s drowned.”

Dr. Shrapnel drove round by the shore of the broad water past a great hospital and ruined abbey to Otley village. Killick had lifted him into the conveyance, and he lifted him out. Dr. Shrapnel had not spoken a word.

Lights were flaring on the river, illuminating the small craft sombrely. Men, women, and children crowded the hard and landing-places, the marshy banks and the decks of colliers and trawlers. Neither Killick nor Dr. Shrapnel questioned them. The lights were torches and lanterns; the occupation of the boats moving in couples was the dragging for the dead.

“O God, let’s find his body,” a woman called out.

“Just a word; is it Commander Beauchamp?” Killick said to her.

She was scarcely aware of a question. “Here, this one,” she said, and plucked a little boy of eight by the hand close against her side, and shook him roughly and kissed him.

An old man volunteered information. “That’s the boy. That boy was in his father’s boat out there, with two of his brothers, larking; and he and another older than him fell overboard; and just then Commander Beauchamp was rowing by, and I saw him from off here, where I stood, jump up and dive, and he swam to his boat with one of them, and got him in safe: that boy: and he dived again after the other, and was down a long time. Either he burst a vessel or he got cramp, for he’d been rowing himself from the schooner grounded down at the river-mouth, and must have been hot when he jumped in: either way, he fetched the second up, and sank with him. Down he went.”

A fisherman said to Killick: “Do you hear that voice thundering? That’s the great Lord Romfrey. He’s been directing the dragging since five o’ the evening, and will till he drops or drowns, or up comes the body.”

“O God, let’s find the body!” the woman with the little boy called out.

A torch lit up Lord Romfrey’s face as he stepped ashore. “The flood has played us a trick,” he said. “We want more drags, or with the next ebb the body may be lost for days in this infernal water.”

The mother of the rescued boy sobbed, “Oh, my lord, my lord!”

The earl caught sight of Dr. Shrapnel, and went to him.

“My wife has gone down to Mrs. Beauchamp,” he said. “She will bring her and the baby to Mount Laurels. The child will have to be hand-fed. I take you with me. You must not be alone.”

He put his arm within the arm of the heavily-breathing man whom he had once flung to the ground, to support him.

“My lord! my lord!” sobbed the woman, and dropped on her knees.

“What’s this?” the earl said, drawing his hand away from the woman’s clutch at it.

“She’s the mother, my lord,” several explained to him.

“Mother of what?”

“My boy,” the woman cried, and dragged the urchin to Lord Romfrey’s feet, cleaning her boy’s face with her apron.

“It’s the boy Commander Beauchamp drowned to save,” said a man.

All the lights of the ring were turned on the head of the boy. Dr. Shrapnel’s eyes and Lord Romfrey’s fell on the abashed little creature. The boy struck out both arms to get his fists against his eyelids.

This is what we have in exchange for Beauchamp!

It was not uttered, but it was visible in the blank stare at one another of the two men who loved Beauchamp, after they had examined the insignificant bit of mudbank life remaining in this world in the place of him.

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