

GEORGE MEREDITH

BEAUCHAMP'S
CAREER,
VOLUME 4

George Meredith
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Beauchamp's Career – Volume 4:*

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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 Baskett.' 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 Baskett, 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 Baskett.

'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 composers, 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 Baskett, 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 reach 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 chateau 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 Baskett 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, crotchety 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 Renee 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 Baskellett 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 cheekbone 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 Baskett'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 Baskett 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.

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