# GEORGE MEREDITH

# BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER. VOLUME 3

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# Содержание

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## CHAPTER XIX
## LORD PALMET, AND CERTAIN ELECTORS OF BEVISHAM

Meantime the candidates raised knockers, rang bells, bowed, expounded their views, praised their virtues, begged for votes, and greatly and strangely did the youngest of them enlarge his knowledge of his countrymen. But he had an insatiable appetite, and except in relation to Mr. Cougham, considerable tolerance. With Cougham, he was like a young hound in the leash. They had to run as twins; but Beauchamp's conjunct would not run, he would walk. He imposed his experience on Beauchamp, with an assumption that it must necessarily be taken for the law of Beauchamp's reason in electoral and in political affairs, and this was hard on Beauchamp, who had faith in his reason. Beauchamp's early canvassing brought Cougham down to 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 Renee. Accompanied by a Mr. Oggler, a tradesman of the town, on the Liberal committee, dressed in a pea-jacket and proudly nautical, they applied for the vote, and found it oftener than beauty. Palmet contrasted his repeated disappointments with the scoring of two, three, four and more in the candidate's list, and informed him that he would certainly get the Election. 'I think you're sure of it,' he said. 'There's not a pretty woman to be seen; not one.'

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

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

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

She has a bit of a style!'

'She has a head,' said Beauchamp.

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

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

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

Beauchamp held him firmly to the task of canvassing.

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

'It's no use contradicting, it's universally known of you,' reiterated Palmet. 'I could name a dozen women, and dozens of fellows you deliberately set yourself to cut out, for the honour of it. What's that story they tell of you in one of the American cities or watering-places, North or South? You would dance at a ball a dozen times with a girl engaged to a man—who drenched you with a tumbler at the hotel bar, and off you all marched to the sands and exchanged shots from revolvers; and both of

you, they say, saw the body of a drowned sailor in the water, in the moonlight, heaving nearer and nearer, and you stretched your man just as the body was flung up by a wave between you. Picturesque, if you like!'

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

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

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

'If his lordship will put his heart into what he says,' Mr. Oggler bowed.

'Are you for giving the people recreation on a Sunday, my lord?'

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

'Oh, dear! then I 'm afraid we cannot ask you to speak to this Mr.

Carpendike.' Oggler shook his head.

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

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

They introduced themselves to Mr. Carpendike in his shop.

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

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

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

Beauchamp flew at this young monster of unreason: 'But the people are not worshipping; they are idling and sotting, and if you carry your despotism farther still, and shut them out of every shop on Sundays, do you suppose you promote the spirit of worship? If you don't revolt them you unman them, and I warn you we

can't afford to destroy what manhood remains to us in England. Look at the facts.'

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

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

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

'Devilish cold in this shop,' muttered Palmet.

Two not flourishing little children of the emaciated Puritan burst into the shop, followed by their mother, carrying a child in her arms. She had a sad look, upon traces of a past fairness,

vaguely like a snow landscape in the thaw. Palmet stooped to toss shillings with her young ones, that he might avoid the woman's face. It cramped his heart.

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

don't know what it is not to know happiness.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

people in Europe.'

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

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

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

Such treatment of a favourable voter seemed odd to Palmet.

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

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

'You have discovered my likeness to women,' said Beauchamp, eyeing him critically, and then thinking, with a sudden warmth, that he had seen Renee: 'Look here, Palmet, you're too late for Itchincope, to-day; come and eat fish and meat with me at my hotel, and come to a meeting after it. You can run

by rail to Itchincope to breakfast in the morning, and I may come with you. You'll hear one or two men speak well to-night.'

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

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

'No man better, my dear fellow, if it were proposing a toast to the poor devils and asking them to drink it. But a dry speech, like leading them over the desert without a well to cheer them—no oasis, as we used to call a five-pound note and a holiday—I haven't the heart for that. Is your Miss Denham a Radical?'

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

'Lots of them, Beauchamp. Take my word for it. I do know women. They haven't a shift, nor a trick, I don't know. They're as clear to me as glass. I'll wager your Miss Denham goes to the meetings. Now, doesn't she? Of course she does. And there couldn't be a gallanter way of spending an evening, so I'll try it. Nothing to repent of next morning! That's to be said for politics, Beauchamp, and I confess I'm rather jealous of you. A thoroughly good-looking girl who takes to a fellow for what he's

doing in the world, must have ideas of him precious different from the adoration of six feet three and a fine seat in the saddle. I see that. There's 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? arid second: Who was EURYDICEY?

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

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

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

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

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

'Then I'll take the liberty to postpone talking about my vote. Look here, Mr. Commander; if the upper classes want anything

of me and come to me for it, I'll know what sort of an example they're setting; now that's me.'

'You pay attention to a stupid Tory squib?'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Tripehallow smiled roguishly, to betoken comprehension.

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

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

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

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

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

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

hiss had sounded; Beauchamp sprang on it as if enlivened by hostility, and dominated the factious note. Thereat she turned to a gentleman sitting beside her; apparently they agreed that some incident had occurred characteristic of Nevil Beauchamp; for whom, however, it was not a brilliant evening. He was very well able to account for it, and did so, after he had walked a few steps with Miss Denham on her homeward way.

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

Palmet mimicked the manner of Cougham.

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

Palmet gave an imitation of Timothy Turbot.

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

But a grave matter troubled Palmet's head.

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

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

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

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

Palmet muttered between his teeth, 'What queer things they

let their women do!' He felt compelled to say, 'Odd for her to be walking home at night with a fellow like that.'

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

'Please to say yours too.'

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

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

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

'Common sense, Beauchamp!'

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

'All the same, Beauchamp, she ought not to be allowed to go about at night with that fellow. "Rich and rare were the gems she wore": but that was in Erin's isle, and if we knew the whole history, she'd better have stopped at home. She's marvellously pretty, to my mind. She looks a high-bred wench. Odd it is, Beauchamp, to see a lady's-maid now and then catch the style of my lady. No, by Jove! I've known one or two—you couldn't tell the difference! Not till you were intimate. I know one would walk

a minuet with a duchess. Of course—all the worse for her. If you see that uncle of Miss Denham's—upon my honour, I should advise him: I mean, counsel him not to trust her with any fellow but you.'

Beauchamp asked Lord Palmet how old he was.

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

It seemed a farcical state of things.

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

# CHAPTER XX
# A DAY AT ITCHINCOPE

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

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

'A sound between a sigh and bray,'

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

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

The language of party is eloquent, and famous for being grand at illustration; but it is equally well known that much of it gives us humble ideas of the speaker, probably because of the naughty temper party is prone to; which, while endowing it with vehemence, lessens the stout circumferential view that should be taken, at least historically. Indeed, though we admit party to be the soundest method for conducting us, party talk soon expends its attractiveness, as would a summer's afternoon given up to the contemplation of an encounter of rams' heads. Let us be quit of Mr. Grancey Lespel's lamentations. The Whig gentleman had

some reason to complain. He had been trained to expect no other attack than that of his hereditary adversary-ram in front, and a sham ram—no honest animal, but a ramming engine rather—had attacked him in the rear. Like Mr. Everard Romfrey and other Whigs, he was profoundly chagrined by popular ingratitude: 'not the same man,' his wife said of him. It nipped him early. He took to proverbs; sure sign of the sere leaf in a man's mind.

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

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.