BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

By

George Meredith

VOL.-1

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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 Moliere; 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 Francaise,' 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 FRANCAISE,

'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 Francaise!' he commenced.

Her criticism followed swiftly.

'I think you are writing to the Garde Imperiale.'

He admitted his error, and thanked her warmly.

'Messieurs de la Garde Imperiale!'

'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 Imperiale.' 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. Calling'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 scar que vous comprendrez mes sentiments, et m'accorderez l'honneur que je reclame au nom de ma

patrie outrage.' 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 naivete 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. RENEE

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 Renee. 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 Renee 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. Renee 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. Renee 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.

Renee 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.

Renee 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 Renee. 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.'

Renee 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 Renee, 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.

Renee added: 'Let us hope she will not escape being seen.'

'I give her my benediction,' said Nevil.

'And I,' said Renee; '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!'

Renee 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?'

Renee 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:

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'Ma se, ma se,
 Cotanto beve,
 Mi no, mi no,
 No ve sposero.'
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'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

Renee 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. Renee 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 Renee 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 Renee 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. Renee will have a fine hotel 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 Renee 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 Renee of the past hour! But that Renee 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 Renee 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? Renee complains that she loses the vulgar art of walking in her complaisant attention to the fine Arts. I weary my poor child.'

Renee 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 Renee; '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.

'Renee, 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.'

Renee 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 Renee, 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!'

Renee 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, Renee, 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 Renee?'

'With your friend Renee. 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 Renee 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 Renee. '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 Renee. 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 Renee 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 Renee?'

'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.

Renee 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 Renee 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 Renee 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: Renee 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 Renee, 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.'

Renee 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 Renee.

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 Renee 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. Renee

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.

Renee said to her presently: 'He saved my brother's life'; the apropos 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. Renee 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 Renee 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 Renee 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. Renee 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.... Renee 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 Renee.

'I know it well,' Rosamund replied.

Renee 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.'

Renee kissed her hand.

She is terribly winning, Rosamund avowed. Renee 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 Renee has no more shore-qualms; she is smoothly chaperoned, and madame will present us tea on board. All the etcaeteras 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 Renee 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. Renee 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 Renee.

'You hear, Francois; we are on the open sea,' Roland addressed the valet.

'Monsieur has cut loose his communications with land,' Francois 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, Renee 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 Renee, 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.

Renee 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 Renee, 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 Renee. 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, Renee 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.

Renee 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?'

Renee 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 Renee's life-blood ran with his, began to heave under him like a swelling sea. For Nevil the starred black night was Renee. 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 Renee 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.

Renee 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 Renee, had been separated from her husband last on these waters.

'Ah! to be unhappy here,' sighed Renee. '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. Renee 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 Renee.

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.

Renee 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.

'Renee, 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 manoeuvre?'

'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. Renee is in misery. She must not go back.'

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

'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? Renee 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 Renee 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 Renee—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 Renee 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.

'Renee!' 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 Renee at Trieste, under the care of madame,' said Beauchamp, 'and we return to Venice, and I go to your father. This method protects Renee 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.

Renee 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 Renee, and for him.

Roland was inflexible. Seeing which, Renee 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 Renee'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 Renee 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.

Renee 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 Renee, 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 Renee'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 Renee 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 Renee'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 Renee 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.

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

'No,' cried Renee, 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 Renee 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.

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

'Do nothing—nothing! until you hear from me.'

END OF VOLUME-1


Freeditorial