

## Chapter XXXVIII

'C'est beaucoup que le jugement des hommes sur les actions humaines; tot ou tard il devient efficace.' - GUIZOT.

Sir James Chettam could not look with any satisfaction on Mr Brooke's new courses; but it was easier to object than to hinder. Sir James accounted for his having come in alone one day to lunch with the Cadwalladers by saying -

'I can't talk to you as I want, before Celia: it might hurt her. Indeed, it would not be right.'

'I know what you mean - the `Pioneer' at the Grange!' darted in Mrs Cadwallader, almost before the last word was off her friend's tongue. 'It is frightful - this taking to buying whistles and blowing them in everybody's hearing. Lying in bed all day and playing at dominoes, like poor Lord Plessy, would be more private and bearable.'

'I see they are beginning to attack our friend Brooke in the `Trumpet,' said the Rector, lounging back and smiling easily, as he would have done if he had been attacked himself. 'There are tremendous sarcasms against a landlord not a hundred miles from Middlemarch, who receives his own rents, and makes no returns.'

'I do wish Brooke would leave that off,' said Sir James, with his little frown of annoyance.

'Is he really going to be put in nomination, though?' said Mr Cadwallader. 'I saw Farebrother yesterday - he's Whiggish himself, hoists Brougham and Useful Knowledge; that's the worst I know of him; - and he says that Brooke is getting up a pretty strong party. Bulstrode, the banker, is his foremost man. But he thinks Brooke would come off badly at a nomination.'

'Exactly,' said Sir James, with earnestness. 'I have been inquiring into the thing, for I've never known anything about Middlemarch politics before - the county being my business. What Brooke trusts to, is that they are going to turn out Oliver because he is a Peelite. But Hawley tells me that if they send up a Whig at all it is sure to be Bagster, one of those candidates who come from heaven knows where, but dead against Ministers, and an experienced Parliamentary man. Hawley's rather rough: he forgot that he was speaking to me. He said if Brooke wanted a pelting, he could get it cheaper than by going to the hustings.'

'I warned you all of it,' said Mrs Cadwallader, waving her hands outward. 'I said to Humphrey long ago, Mr Brooke is going to make a splash in the mud. And now he has done it.'

'Well, he might have taken it into his head to marry,' said the Rector. 'That would have been a graver mess than a little flirtation with politics.'

'He may do that afterwards,' said Mrs Cadwallader - 'when he has come out on the other side of the mud with an ague.'

'What I care for most is his own dignity,' said Sir James. 'Of course I care the more because of the family. But he's getting on in life now, and I don't like to think of his exposing himself. They will be raking up everything against him.'

'I suppose it's no use trying any persuasion,' said the Rector. 'There's such an odd mixture of obstinacy and changeableness in Brooke. Have you tried him on the subject?'

'Well, no,' said Sir James; 'I feel a delicacy in appearing to dictate. But I have been talking to this young Ladislaw that Brooke is making a factotum of. Ladislaw seems clever enough for anything. I thought it as well to hear what he had to say; and he is against Brooke's standing this time. I think he'll turn him round: I think the nomination may be staved off.'

'I know,' said Mrs Cadwallader, nodding. 'The independent member hasn't got his speeches well enough by heart.'

'But this Ladislaw - there again is a vexatious business,' said Sir James. 'We have had him two or three times to dine at the Hall (you have met him, by the bye) as Brooke's guest and a relation of Casaubon's, thinking he was only on a flying visit. And now I find he's in everybody's mouth in Middlemarch as the editor of the 'Pioneer.' There are stories going about him as a quill-driving alien, a foreign emissary, and what not.'

'Casaubon won't like that,' said the Rector.

'There *is* some foreign blood in Ladislaw,' returned Sir James. 'I hope he won't go into extreme opinions and carry Brooke on.'

'Oh, he's a dangerous young sprig, that Mr Ladislaw,' said Mrs Cadwallader, 'with his opera songs and his ready tongue. A sort of Byronic hero - an amorous conspirator, it strikes me. And Thomas Aquinas is not fond of him. I could see that, the day the picture was brought.'

'I don't like to begin on the subject with Casaubon,' said Sir James. 'He has more right to interfere than I. But it's a disagreeable affair all round. What a character for anybody with decent connections to show himself in! - one of those newspaper fellows! You have only to look at Keck, who manages the 'Trumpet.' I saw him the other day with Hawley. His writing is sound enough, I believe, but he's such a low fellow, that I wished he had been on the wrong side.'

'What can you expect with these peddling Middlemarch papers?' said the Rector. 'I don't suppose you could get a high style of man anywhere to be writing up interests he doesn't really care about, and for pay that hardly keeps him in at elbows.'

'Exactly: that makes it so annoying that Brooke should have put a man who has a sort of connection with the family in a position of that kind. For my part, I think Ladislav is rather a fool for accepting.'

'It is Aquinas's fault,' said Mrs Cadwallader. 'Why didn't he use his interest to get Ladislav made an attache or sent to India? That is how families get rid of troublesome sprigs.'

'There is no knowing to what lengths the mischief may go,' said Sir James, anxiously. 'But if Casaubon says nothing, what can I do?'

'Oh my dear Sir James,' said the Rector, 'don't let us make too much of all this. It is likely enough to end in mere smoke. After a month or two Brooke and this Master Ladislav will get tired of each other; Ladislav will take wing; Brooke will sell the 'Pioneer,' and everything will settle down again as usual.'

'There is one good chance - that he will not like to feel his money oozing away,' said Mrs Cadwallader. 'If I knew the items of election expenses I could scare him. It's no use plying him with wide words like Expenditure: I wouldn't talk of phlebotomy, I would empty a pot of leeches upon him. What we good stingy people don't like, is having our sixpences sucked away from us.'

'And he will not like having things raked up against him,' said Sir James. 'There is the management of his estate. They have begun upon that already. And it really is painful for me to see. It is a nuisance under one's very nose. I do think one is bound to do the best for one's land and tenants, especially in these hard times.'

'Perhaps the 'Trumpet' may rouse him to make a change, and some good may come of it all,' said the Rector. 'I know I should be glad. I should hear less grumbling when my tithe is paid. I don't know what I should do if there were not a modus in Tipton.'

'I want him to have a proper man to look after things - I want him to take on Garth again,' said Sir James. 'He got rid of Garth twelve years ago, and everything has been going wrong since. I think of getting Garth to manage for me - he has made such a capital plan for my buildings; and Lovegood is hardly up to the mark. But Garth would not undertake the Tipton estate again unless Brooke left it entirely to him.'

'In the right of it too,' said the Rector. 'Garth is an independent fellow: an original, simple-minded fellow. One day, when he was doing some valuation for me, he told me point-blank that clergymen seldom understood anything about business, and did mischief when they meddled; but he said it as quietly and respectfully as if he had been talking to me about sailors. He would make a different parish of Tipton, if Brooke would let him manage. I wish, by the help of the 'Trumpet,' you could bring that round.'

'If Dorothea had kept near her uncle, there would have been some chance,' said Sir James. 'She might have got some power over him in time, and she was always uneasy about the estate. She had wonderfully good notions about such things. But now Casaubon takes her up entirely. Celia complains a good deal. We can hardly get her to dine with us, since he had that fit.' Sir James ended with a look of pitying disgust, and Mrs Cadwallader shrugged her shoulders as much as to say that *she* was not likely to see anything new in that direction.

'Poor Casaubon!' the Rector said. 'That was a nasty attack. I thought he looked shattered the other day at the Archdeacon's.'

'In point of fact,' resumed Sir James, not choosing to dwell on 'fits,' 'Brooke doesn't mean badly by his tenants or any one else, but he has got that way of paring and clipping at expenses.'

'Come, that's a blessing,' said Mrs Cadwallader. 'That helps him to find himself in a morning. He may not know his own opinions, but he does know his own pocket.'

'I don't believe a man is in pocket by stinginess on his land,' said Sir James.

'Oh, stinginess may be abused like other virtues: it will not do to keep one's own pigs lean,' said Mrs Cadwallader, who had risen to look out of the window. 'But talk of an independent politician and he will appear.'

'What! Brooke?' said her husband.

'Yes. Now, you ply him with the 'Trumpet,' Humphrey; and I will put the leeches on him. What will you do, Sir James?'

'The fact is, I don't like to begin about it with Brooke, in our mutual position; the whole thing is so unpleasant. I do wish people would behave like gentlemen,' said the good baronet, feeling that this was a simple and comprehensive programme for social well-being.

'Here you all are, eh?' said Mr Brooke, shuffling round and shaking hands. 'I was going up to the Hall by-and-by, Chettam. But it's pleasant to find everybody, you know. Well, what do you think of things? - going on a little fast! It was true enough, what Lafitte said - 'Since yesterday, a century has passed away:' - they're in the next century, you know, on the other side of the water. Going on faster than we are.'

'Why, yes,' said the Rector, taking up the newspaper. 'Here is the 'Trumpet' accusing you of lagging behind - did you see?'

'Eh? no,' said Mr Brooke, dropping his gloves into his hat and hastily adjusting his eye-glass. But Mr Cadwallader kept the paper in his hand, saying, with a smile in his eyes -

'Look here! all this is about a landlord not a hundred miles from Middlemarch, who receives his own rents. They say he is the most retrogressive man in the county. I think you must have taught them that word in the 'Pioneer.'

'Oh, that is Keek - an illiterate fellow, you know. Retrogressive, now! Come, that's capital. He thinks it means destructive: they want to make me out a destructive, you know,' said Mr Brooke, with that cheerfulness which is usually sustained by an adversary's ignorance.

'I think he knows the meaning of the word. Here is a sharp stroke or two. If we had to describe a man who is retrogressive in the most evil sense of the word - we should say, he is one who would dub himself a reformer of our constitution, while every interest for which he is immediately responsible is going to decay: a philanthropist who cannot bear one rogue to be hanged, but does not mind five honest tenants being half-starved: a man who shrieks at corruption, and keeps his farms at rack-rent: who roars himself red at rotten boroughs, and does not mind if every field on his farms has a rotten gate: a man very open-hearted to Leeds and Manchester, no doubt; he would give any number of representatives who will pay for their seats out of their own pockets: what he objects to giving, is a little return on rent-days to help a tenant to buy stock, or an outlay on repairs to keep the weather out at a tenant's barn-door or make his house look a little less like an Irish cottier's. But we all know the wag's definition of

a philanthropist: a man whose charity increases directly as the square of the distance. And so on. All the rest is to show what sort of legislator a philanthropist is likely to make,' ended the Rector, throwing down the paper, and clasping his hands at the back of his head, while he looked at Mr Brooke with an air of amused neutrality.

'Come, that's rather good, you know,' said Mr Brooke, taking up the paper and trying to bear the attack as easily as his neighbor did, but coloring and smiling rather nervously; 'that about roaring himself red at rotten boroughs - I never made a speech about rotten boroughs in my life. And as to roaring myself red and that kind of thing - these men never understand what is good satire. Satire, you know, should be true up to a certain point. I recollect they said that in 'The Edinburgh' somewhere - it must be true up to a certain point.'

'Well, that is really a hit about the gates,' said Sir James, anxious to tread carefully. 'Dagley complained to me the other day that he hadn't got a decent gate on his farm. Garth has invented a new pattern of gate - I wish you would try it. One ought to use some of one's timber in that way.'

'You go in for fancy farming, you know, Chettam,' said Mr Brooke, appearing to glance over the columns of the 'Trumpet.' 'That's your hobby, and you don't mind the expense.'

'I thought the most expensive hobby in the world was standing for Parliament,' said Mrs Cadwallader. 'They said the last unsuccessful candidate at Middlemarch - Giles, wasn't his name? - spent ten thousand pounds and failed because he did not bribe enough. What a bitter reflection for a man!'

'Somebody was saying,' said the Rector, laughingly, 'that East Retford was nothing to Middlemarch, for bribery.'

'Nothing of the kind,' said Mr Brooke. 'The Tories bribe, you know: Hawley and his set bribe with treating, hot codlings, and that sort of thing; and they bring the voters drunk to the poll. But they are not going to have it their own way in future - not in future, you know. Middlemarch is a little backward, I admit - the freemen are a little backward. But we shall educate them - we shall bring them on, you know. The best people there are on our side.'

'Hawley says you have men on your side who will do you harm,' remarked Sir James. 'He says Bulstrode the banker will do you harm.'

'And that if you got pelted,' interposed Mrs Cadwallader, 'half the rotten eggs would mean hatred of your committee-man. Good heavens! Think what it must be to be pelted for wrong opinions. And I

seem to remember a story of a man they pretended to chair and let him fall into a dust-heap on purpose!

'Pelting is nothing to their finding holes in one's coat,' said the Rector. 'I confess that's what I should be afraid of, if we parsons had to stand at the hustings for preferment. I should be afraid of their reckoning up all my fishing days. Upon my word, I think the truth is the hardest missile one can be pelted with.'

'The fact is,' said Sir James, 'if a man goes into public life he must be prepared for the consequences. He must make himself proof against calumny.'

'My dear Chettam, that is all very fine, you know,' said Mr Brooke. 'But how will you make yourself proof against calumny? You should read history - look at ostracism, persecution, martyrdom, and that kind of thing. They always happen to the best men, you know. But what is that in Horace? - 'fiat justitia, ruat . . . something or other.'

'Exactly,' said Sir James, with a little more heat than usual. 'What I mean by being proof against calumny is being able to point to the fact as a contradiction.'

'And it is not martyrdom to pay bills that one has run into one's self,' said Mrs Cadwallader.

But it was Sir James's evident annoyance that most stirred Mr Brooke. 'Well, you know, Chettam,' he said, rising, taking up his hat and leaning on his stick, 'you and I have a different system. You are all for outlay with your farms. I don't want to make out that my system is good under all circumstances - under all circumstances, you know.'

'There ought to be a new valuation made from time to time,' said Sir James. 'Returns are very well occasionally, but I like a fair valuation. What do you say, Cadwallader?'

'I agree with you. If I were Brooke, I would choke the 'Trumpet' at once by getting Garth to make a new valuation of the farms, and giving him carte blanche about gates and repairs: that's my view of the political situation,' said the Rector, broadening himself by sticking his thumbs in his armholes, and laughing towards Mr Brooke.

'That's a showy sort of thing to do, you know,' said Mr Brooke. 'But I should like you to tell me of another landlord who has distressed his tenants for arrears as little as I have. I let the old tenants stay on. I'm uncommonly easy, let me tell you, uncommonly easy. I have my own ideas, and I take my stand on them, you know. A man who does that

is always charged with eccentricity, inconsistency, and that kind of thing. When I change my line of action, I shall follow my own ideas.'

After that, Mr Brooke remembered that there was a packet which he had omitted to send off from the Grange, and he bade everybody hurriedly good-by.

'I didn't want to take a liberty with Brooke,' said Sir James; 'I see he is nettled. But as to what he says about old tenants, in point of fact no new tenant would take the farms on the present terms.'

'I have a notion that he will be brought round in time,' said the Rector. 'But you were pulling one way, Elinor, and we were pulling another. You wanted to frighten him away from expense, and we want to frighten him into it. Better let him try to be popular and see that his character as a landlord stands in his way. I don't think it signifies two straws about the 'Pioneer,' or Ladislaw, or Brooke's speechifying to the Middlemarchers. But it does signify about the parishioners in Tipton being comfortable.'

'Excuse me, it is you two who are on the wrong tack,' said Mrs Cadwallader. 'You should have proved to him that he loses money by bad management, and then we should all have pulled together. If you put him a-horseback on politics, I warn you of the consequences. It was all very well to ride on sticks at home and call them ideas.'