Richard Carvel

Winston Churchill

RICHARD CARVEL

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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RICHARD CARVEL

TO

JAMES E. YEATMAN, ESQUIRE

Of Saint Louis

AN AMERICAN GENTLEMAN WHOSE LIFE IS

AN EXAMPLE TO HIS COUNTRYMEN

FOREWORD

My sons and daughters have tried to persuade me to remodel these memoirs of my grandfather into a latter-day romance. But I have thought it wiser to leave them as he wrote them. Albeit they contain some details not of interest to the general public, to my notion it is such imperfections as these which lend to them the reality they bear. Certain it is, when reading them, I live his life over again.

Needless to say, Mr. Richard Carvel never intended them for publication. His first apology would be for his Scotch, and his only defence is that he was not a Scotchman.

The lively capital which once reflected the wit and fashion of Europe has fallen into decay. The silent streets no more echo with the rumble of coaches and gay chariots, and grass grows where busy merchants trod. Stately ball-rooms, where beauty once reigned, are cold and empty and mildewed, and halls, where laughter rang, are silent. Time was when every wide-throated chimney poured forth its cloud of smoke, when every andiron held a generous log, — andirons which are now gone to decorate Mr. Centennial's home in New York or lie with a tag in the window of some curio shop. The mantel, carved in delicate wreaths, is boarded up, and an unsightly stove mocks the gilded ceiling. Children romp in that room with the silver door-knobs, where my master and his lady were

wont to sit at cards in silk and brocade, while liveried blacks entered on tiptoe. No marble Cupids or tall Dianas fill the niches in the staircase, and the mahogany board, round which has been gathered many a famous toast and wit, is gone from the dining room.

But Mr. Carvel's town house in Annapolis stands to-day, with its neighbours, a mournful relic of a glory that is past.

DANIEL CLAPSADDLE CARVEL.

CALVERT HOUSE, PENNSYLVANIA,
December 21, 1876.

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RICHARD CARVEL

CHAPTER I

LIONEL CARVEL, OF CARVEL HALL

Lionel Carvel, Esq., of Carvel Hall, in the county of Queen Anne, was no inconsiderable man in his Lordship's province of Maryland, and indeed he was not unknown in the colonial capitals from Williamsburg to Boston. When his ships arrived out, in May or June, they made a goodly showing at the wharves, and his captains were ever shrewd men of judgment who sniffed a Frenchman on the horizon, so that none of the Carvel tobacco ever went, in that way, to gladden a Gallic heart. Mr. Carvel's acres were both rich and broad, and his house wide for the stranger who might seek its shelter, as with God's help so it ever shall be. It has yet to be said of the Carvels that their guests are hurried away, or that one, by reason of his worldly goods or position, shall be more welcome than another.

I take no shame in the pride with which I write of my grandfather, albeit he took the part of his Majesty and Parliament against the Colonies. He was no palavering turncoat, like my Uncle Grafton, to cry "God save the King!" again when an English fleet sailed up the bay. Mr. Carvel's hand was large and his heart was large, and he was respected and even loved by the patriots as a man above paltry subterfuge. He was born at Carvel Hall in the year of our Lord 1696, when the house was, I am told, but a small dwelling. It was his father, George Carvel, my great-grandsire, reared the present house in the year 1720, of brick brought from England

as ballast for the empty ships; he added on, in the years following, the wide wings containing the ball-room, and the banquet-hall, and the large library at the eastern end, and the offices. But it was my grandfather who built the great stables and the kennels where he kept his beagles and his fleeter hounds. He dearly loved the saddle and the chase, and taught me to love them too. Many the sharp winter day I have followed the fox with him over two counties, and lain that night, and a week after, forsooth, at the plantation of some kind friend who was only too glad to receive us. Often, too, have we stood together from early morning until dark night, waist deep, on the duck points, I with a fowling-piece I was all but too young to carry, and brought back a hundred red-heads or canvas-backs in our bags. He went with unfailing regularity to the races at Annapolis or Chestertown or Marlborough, often to see his own horses run, where the coaches of the gentry were fifty and sixty around the course; where a negro or a hogshead of tobacco, or a pipe of Madeira was often staked at a single throw. Those times, my child, are not ours, and I thought it not strange that Mr. Carvel should delight in a good main between two cocks, or a bull-baiting, or a breaking of heads at the Chestertown fair, where he went to show his cattle and fling a guinea into the ring for the winner.

But it must not be thought that Lionel Carvel, your ancestor, was wholly unlettered because he was a sportsman, though it must be confessed that books occupied him only when the weather compelled, or when on his back with the gout. At times he would fain have me read to him as he lay in his great four-post bed with the flowered counterpane, from the *Spectator*, stopping me now and anon at some awakened memory of his youth. He never forgave Mr. Addison for killing stout, old Sir Roger de Coverley, and would never listen to the butler's account of his death. Mr. Carvel, too, had walked in Gray's Inn Gardens and met adventure at Fox Hall, and seen the great Marlborough himself. He had a fondness for Mr. Congreve's Comedies, some of which he had seen acted; and was partial to Mr. Gay's *Trivia*, which brought him many a recol-

lection. He would also listen to Pope. But of the more modern poetry I think Mr. Gray's *Elegy* pleased him best. He would laugh over Swift's gall and wormwood, and would never be brought by my mother to acknowledge the defects in the Dean's character. Why? He had once met the Dean in a London drawing-room, when my grandfather was a young spark at Christ Church, Oxford. He never tired of relating that interview. The hostess was a very great lady indeed, and actually stood waiting for a word with his Reverence, whose whim it was rather to talk to the young provincial. He was a forbidding figure, in his black gown and periwig, so my grandfather said, with a piercing blue eye and shaggy brow. He made the mighty to come to him, while young Carvel stood between laughter and fear of the great lady's displeasure.

"I knew of your father," said the Dean, "before he went to the colonies. He had done better at home, sir. He was a man of parts."

"He has done indifferently well in Maryland, sir," said Mr. Carvel, making his bow.

"He hath gained wealth, forsooth," says the Dean, wrathfully, "and might have had both wealth and fame had his love for King James not turned his head. I have heard much of the colonies, and have read that doggerel 'Sot Weed Factor' which tells of the gluttonous life of ease you lead in your own province. You can have no men of mark from such conditions, Mr. Carvel. Tell me," he adds contemptuously, "is genius honoured among you?"

"Faith, it is honoured, your Reverence," said my grandfather, "but never encouraged."

This answer so pleased the Dean that he bade Mr. Carvel dine with him next day at Button's Coffee House, where they drank mulled wine and old sack, for which young Mr. Carvel paid. On which occasion his Reverence endeavoured to persuade the young man to remain in England, and even went so far as to promise his influence to obtain him preferment. But Mr. Carvel chose rather (wisely or not, who can judge?) to come back to Carvel Hall and to the lands of which he was to be master, and to play the country squire and provincial mag-

nate rather than follow the varying fortunes of a political party at home. And he was a man much looked up to in the province before the Revolution, and sat at the council board of his Excellency the Governor, as his father had done before him, and represented the crown in more matters than one when the French and savages were upon our frontiers.

Although a lover of good cheer, Mr. Carvel was never intemperate. To the end of his days he enjoyed his bottle after dinner, nay, could scarce get along without it; and mixed a punch or a posset as well as any in our colony. He chose a good London-brewed ale or porter, and his ships brought Madeira from that island by the pipe, and sack from Spain and Portugal, and red wine from France when there was peace. And puncheons of rum from Jamaica and the Indies for his people, holding that no gentleman ever drank rum in the raw, though fairly supportable as punch.

Mr. Carvel's house stands in Marlborough Street, a dreary mansion enough. Praised be Heaven that those who inherit it are not obliged to live there on the memory of what was in days gone by. The heavy green shutters are closed; the high steps, though stoutly built, are shaky after these years of disuse; the host of faithful servants who kept its state are nearly all laid side by side at Carvel Hall. Harvey and Chess and Scipio are no more. The kitchen, whither a boyish hunger oft directed my eyes at twilight, shines not with the welcoming gleam of yore. Chess no longer prepares the dainties which astonished Mr. Carvel's guests, and which he alone could cook. The coach still stands in the stables where Harvey left it, a lumbering relic of those lumbering times when methinks there was more of goodwill and less of haste in the world. The great brass knocker, once resplendent from Scipio's careful hand, no longer fantastically reflects the guest as he beats his tattoo, and Mr. Peale's portrait of my grandfather is gone from the dining-room wall, adorning, as you know, our own drawing-room at Calvert House.

I shut my eyes, and there comes to me unbidden that dining-room in Marlborough Street of a gray winter's afternoon, when I was but a lad. I see my dear grandfather in his wig and

silver-laced waistcoat and his blue velvet coat, seated at the head of the table, and the precise Scipio has put down the dumb-waiter filled with shining cut-glass at his left hand, and his wine chest at his right, and with solemn pomp driven his black assistants from the room. Scipio was Mr. Carvel's butler. He was forbid to light the candles after dinner. As dark grew on, Mr. Carvel liked the blazing logs for light, and presently sets the decanter on the corner of the table and draws nearer the fire, his guests following. I recall well how jolly Governor Sharpe, who was a frequent visitor with us, was wont to display a comely calf in silk stocking; and how Captain Daniel Clapsaddle would spread his feet with his toes out, and settle his long pipe between his teeth. And there were besides a host of others who sat at that fire whose names have passed into Maryland's history, — Whig and Tory alike. And I remember a tall slip of a lad who sat listening by the deep-recessed windows on the street, which somehow are always covered in these pictures with a fine rain. Then a coach passes, — a mahogany coach emblazoned with the Manners's coat of arms, and Mistress Dorothy and her mother within. And my young lady gives me one of those demure bows which ever set my heart agoing like a smith's hammer of a Monday.