"I don't know Mr. Finn's tastes quite so well as you do, Violet. But Mr. Maule is so harmless that no one can dislike him very much."

"As for being harmless, I'm not so sure," said Lady Chiltern. After that they all went to bed.

Phineas remained at Harrington Hall till the 9th, on which day he went to London, so that he might be at Tankerville on the 10th. He rode Lord Chiltern's horses, and took an interest in the hounds, and nursed the baby. "Now tell me what you think of Gerard Maule," Lady Chiltern asked him the day before he started.

"I presume that he is the young man who is dying for Miss Palliser."

"You may answer my question, Mr. Finn, without making any such suggestion."

"Not discreetly. Of course, if he is to be made happy, I am bound at the present moment to say all good things of him. At such a crisis it would be wicked to tinge Miss Palliser's hopes with any hue less warm than rose-color."

"Do you suppose that I tell every thing that is said to me?"

"Not at all; but opinions do ooze out. I take him to be a good sort of a fellow; but why doesn't he talk a bit more?"

"That's just it."

"And why does he pretend to do nothing? When he's out he rides hard; but at other times there's a ha-ha, lackadaisical air about him which I hate. Why men assume it I never could understand. It can recommend them to nobody. A man can't suppose that he'll gain any thing by pretending that he never reads, and never thinks, and never does any thing, and never speaks, and doesn't care what he has for dinner, and, upon the whole, would just as soon lie in bed all day as get up. It isn't that he is really idle. He rides and eats, and does get up, and I dare say talks and thinks. It's simply a poor affectation."

"That's your rose-color, is it?"

"You've promised secrecy, Lady Chiltern. I suppose he's well off?"

"He is an eldest son. The property is not large, and I'm afraid there's something wrong about it."

"He has no profession?"

"None at all. He has an allowance of £800 a year, which in some sort of fashion is independent of his father. He has nothing on earth to do. Adelaide's whole fortune is four thousand pounds. If they were to marry, what would become of them?"

"That wouldn't be enough to live on?"

"It ought to be enough—as he must, I suppose, have the property some day—if only he had something to do. What sort of a life would he lead?"

"I suppose he couldn't become a Master of Hounds?"

"That is ill-natured, Mr. Finn."

"I did not mean it so. I did not, indeed. You must know that I did not."

"Of course Oswald had nothing to do, and of course there was a time when I wished that he should take to Parliament. No one knew all that better than you did. But he was very different from Mr. Maule."

"Very different, indeed."

"Oswald is a man full of energy, and with no touch of that affectation which you described. As it is, he does work hard. No man works harder. The learned people say that you should produce something, and I don't suppose that he produces much. But somebody must keep hounds, and nobody could do it better than he does."

"You don't think that I meant to blame him?"

"I hope not."

"Are he and his father on good terms now?"

"Oh yes. His father wishes him to go to Saulsby, but he won't do that. He hates Saulsby."

Saulsby was the country-seat of the Earl of Brentford, the name of the property which must some day belong to this Lord Chiltern; and Phineas, as he heard this, remembered former days in which he had ridden about Saulsby Woods, and had thought them to be any thing but hateful. "Is Saulsby shut up?" he asked.

"Altogether, and so is the house in Portman Square. There never was any thing more sad or desolate. You would find him altered, Mr. Finn. He is quite an old man now. He was here in the spring for a week or two—in England, that is; but he staid at a hotel in London. He and Laura live at Dresden now, and a very sad time they must have."

"Does she write?"

"Yes, and keeps up all her interest about politics. I have already told her that you are to stand for Tankerville. No one—no other human being in the world—will be so interested for you as she is. If any friend ever felt an interest almost selfish for a friend's welfare, she will feel such an interest for you. If you were to succeed, it would give her a hope in life."

Phineas sat silent, drinking in the words that were said to him. Though they were true, or at least meant to be true, they were full of flattery. Why should this woman of whom they were speaking love him so dearly? She was nothing to him. She was highly born, greatly gifted, wealthy, and a married woman, whose character, as he well knew, was beyond the taint of suspicion, though she had been driven by the hard sullenness of her husband to refuse to live under his roof. Phineas Finn and Lady Laura Kennedy had not seen each other for two years, and when they had parted, though they had lived as friends, there had been no signs of still living friendship. True, indeed, she had written to him, but her letters had been short and cold, merely detailing certain circumstances of her outward life. Now he was told by this woman's dearest friend that his welfare was closer to her heart than any other interest!

"I dare say you often think of her?" said Lady Chiltern.

"Indeed I do."

"What virtues she used to ascribe to you! What sins she forgave you! How hard she fought for you! Now, though she can fight no more, she does not think of it all the less."

"Poor Lady Laura!"

"Poor Laura, indeed! When one sees such shipwreck, it makes a woman doubt whether she ought to marry at all."

"And yet he was a good man. She always said so."

"Men are so seldom really good. They are so little sympathetic. What man thinks of changing himself so as to suit his wife? And yet men expect that women shall put on altogether new characters when they are married, and girls think that they can do so. Look at this Mr. Maule, who is really over head and ears in love with Adelaide Palliser. She is full of hope and energy. He has none. And yet he has the effrontery to suppose that she will adapt herself to his way of living if he marries her."

"Then they are to be married?"

"I suppose it will come to that. It always does if the man is in earnest. Girls will accept men simply because they think it ill-natured to return the compliment of an offer with a hearty 'No.'"

"I suppose she likes him?"

"Of course she does. A girl almost always likes a man who is in love with her—unless, indeed, she positively dislikes him. But why should she like him? He is good-looking, is a gentleman, and not a fool. Is that enough to make such a girl as Adelaide Palliser think a man divine?"

"Is nobody to be accepted who is not credited with divinity?"

"The man should be a demi-god, at least in respect to some part of his character. I can find nothing even demi-divine about Mr. Maule."

"That's because you are not in love with him, Lady Chiltern."

Six or seven very pleasant days Phineas Finn spent at Harrington Hall, and then he started alone, and very lonely, for Tankerville. But he admitted to himself that the pleasure which he had received during his visit was quite sufficient to qualify him in running any risk in an attempt to return to the kind of life which he had formerly led. But if he should fail at Tankerville, what would become of him then?

CHAPTER IV.

TANKERVILLE.

The great Mr. Molescroft himself came over to Tankerville for the purpose of introducing our hero to the electors and to Mr. Ruddles, the local Liberal agent, who was to be employed. They met at the Lambton Arms, and there Phineas established himself, knowing well that he had before him ten days of unmitigated vexation and misery. Tankerville was a dirty, prosperous, ungainly town, which seemed to exude coal-dust or coal-mud at every pore. It was so well recognized as being dirty that people did not expect to meet each other with clean hands and faces. Linen was never white at Tankerville, and even ladies who sat in drawing-rooms were accustomed to the feel and taste and appearance of soot in all their daintiest recesses. We hear that at Oil City the flavor of petroleum is hardly considered to be disagreeable, and so it was with the flavor of coal at Tankerville. And we know that at Oil City the flavor of petroleum must not be openly declared to be objectionable, and so it was with coal at Tankerville. At Tankerville coal was much loved, and was not thought to be dirty. Mr. Ruddles was very much begrimed himself, and some of the leading Liberal electors, upon whom Phineas Finn had already called, seemed to be saturated with the product of the district. It would not, however, in any event be his duty to live at Tankerville, and he had believed from the first moment of his entrance into the town that he would soon depart from it, and know it no more. He felt that the chance of his being elected was quite a forlorn hope, and could hardly understand why he had allowed himself to be embarrassed by so very unprofitable a speculation.

Phineas Finn had thrice before this been chosen to sit in Parliament—twice for the Irish borough of Loughshane, and once for the English borough of Loughton; but he had been so happy as hitherto to have known nothing of the miseries and occasional hopelessness of a contested election. At Loughton he had come forward as the nominee of the Earl of Brentford, and had been returned without any chance of failure by that nobleman's influence. At Loughshane things had nearly been as pleasant with him. He had almost been taught to think that nothing could be easier than getting into Parliament if only a man could live when he was there. But Loughton and Loughshane were gone, with so many other comfortable things of old days, and now he found himself relegated to a borough to which, as it seemed to him, he was sent to fight, not that he might win, but because it was necessary to his party that the seat should not be allowed to be lost without fighting. He had had the pleasant things of Parliamentary adventure, and now must undergo those which were unpleasant. No doubt he could have refused, but he had listened to the tempter, and could not now go back, though Mr. Ruddles was hardly more encouraging than Mr. Molescroft.

"Browborough has been at work for the last three days," said Mr. Ruddles, in a tone of reproach. Mr. Ruddles had always thought that no amount of work could be too heavy for his candidates.

"Will that make much difference?" asked Mr. Molescroft.

"Well, it does. Of course he has been among the colliers—when we ought to have been before him."

"I came when I was told," said Phineas.

"I'd have telegraphed to you if I'd known where you were. But there's no help for spilled milk. We must get to work now—that's all. I suppose you're for disestablishing the Church?"

"Not particularly," said Phineas, who felt that with him, as a Roman Catholic, this was a delicate subject.

"We needn't go into that, need we?" said Mr. Molescroft, who, though a Liberal, was a good Churchman.

Mr. Ruddles was a Dissenter, but the very strong opinion which Mr. Ruddles now expressed as to the necessity that the new candidate should take up the Church question did not spring at all from his own religious convictions. His present duty called upon him to have a Liberal candidate if possible returned for the borough with which he was connected, and not to disseminate the doctrines of his own sect. Nevertheless, his opinion was very strong. "I think we must, Mr. Molescroft," said he; "I'm sure we must. Browborough has taken up the other side. He went to church last Sunday with the Mayor and two of the Aldermen, and I'm told he said all the responses louder than any body else. He dined with the Vicar of Trinity on Monday. He

has been very loud in denouncing Mr. Finn as a Roman Catholic, and has declared that every thing will be up with the State if Tankerville returns a friend and supporter of the Pope. You'll find that the Church will be the cry here this election. You can't get any thing by supporting it, but you may make a strong party by pledging yourself to disendowment."

"Wouldn't local taxation do?" asked Mr. Molescroft, who, indeed, preferred almost any other reform to disendowment.

"I have made up my mind that we must have some check on municipal expenditure," said Phineas.

"It won't do—not alone. If I understand the borough, the feeling at this election will altogether be about the Church. You see, Mr. Finn, your being a Roman Catholic gives them a handle, and they're already beginning to use it. They don't like Roman Catholics here; but if you can manage to give it a sort of Liberal turn—as many of your constituents used to do, you know—as though you disliked Church and State rather than cared for the Pope, maybe it might act on our side rather than on theirs. Mr. Molescroft understands it all."

"Oh yes; I understand."

Mr. Ruddles said a great deal more to the same effect, and though Mr. Molescroft did not express any acquiescence in these views, neither did he dissent. The candidate said but little at this interview, but turned the matter over in his mind. A seat in Parliament would be but a barren honor, and he could not afford to offer his services for barren honor. Honest political work he was anxious to do, but for what work he did he desired to be paid. The party to which he belonged had, as he knew, endeavored to avoid the subject of the disendowment of the Church of England. It is the necessary nature of a political party in this country to avoid, as long as it can be avoided, the consideration of any question which involves a great change. There is a consciousness on the minds of leading politicians that the pressure from behind, forcing upon them great measures, drives them almost quicker than they can go, so that it becomes a necessity with them to resist rather than to aid the pressure which will certainly be at last effective by its own strength. The best carriage-horses are those which can most steadily hold back against the coach as it trundles down the hill. All this Phineas knew, and was of opinion that the Barrington Erles and Ratlers of his party would not thank him for ventilating a measure which, however certain might be its coming, might well be postponed for a few years. Once already in his career he had chosen to be in advance of his party, and the consequences had been disastrous to him. On that occasion his feelings had been strong in regard to the measure upon which he broke away from his party; but, when he first thought of it, he did not care much about Church disendowment.

But he found that he must needs go as he was driven, or else depart out of the place. He wrote a line to his friend Erle, not to ask advice, but to explain the circumstances. "My only possible chance of success will lie in attacking the Church endowments. Of course I think they are bad, and of course I think that they must go. But I have never cared for the matter, and would have been very willing to leave it among those things which will arrange themselves. But I have no choice here." And so he prepared himself to run his race on the course arranged for him by Mr. Ruddles. Mr. Molescroft, whose hours were pressing, soon took his leave, and Phineas Finn was placarded about the town as the sworn foe to all Church endowments.

In the course of his canvass, and the commotions consequent upon it, he found that Mr. Ruddles was right. No other subject seemed at the moment to have any attraction in Tankerville. Mr. Browborough, whose life had not been passed in any strict obedience to the Ten Commandments, and whose religious observances had not hitherto interfered with either the pleasures or the duties of his life, repeated at every meeting which he attended, and almost to every elector whom he canvassed, the great Shibboleth which he had now adopted—"The prosperity of England depends on the Church of her people." He was not an orator. Indeed, it might be hard to find a man, who had for years been conversant with public life, less able to string a few words together for immediate use. Nor could he learn half a dozen sentences by rote. But he could stand up with unabashed brow and repeat with enduring audacity the same words a dozen times over—"The prosperity of England depends on the Church of her people." Had he been asked whether the prosperity which he promised was temporal or spiritual in its nature, not only could he not have answered, but he would not in the least have understood the question. But the words as they came from his mouth had a weight which seemed to insure their truth, and many men in Tankerville thought that Mr. Browborough was eloquent.

Phineas, on the other hand, made two or three great speeches every evening, and astonished even Mr. Ruddles by his oratory. He had accepted Mr. Ruddles's proposition with but lukewarm acquiescence, but in the handling of the matter he became zealous, fiery, and enthusiastic. He explained to his hearers with gracious acknowledgment that Church endowments had undoubtedly been most beneficient in past times. He spoke in the interests of no special creed. Whether in the so-called Popish days of Henry VIII. and his ancestors, or in the so-called Protestant days that had followed, the state of society had required that spiritual teaching should be supplied from funds fixed and devoted to the purpose. The increasing intelligence and population of the country made this no longer desirable—or, if desirable, no longer possible. Could these endowments be increased to meet the needs of the increasing millions? Was it not the fact that even among members of the Church of England they were altogether inefficient to supply the wants of our great towns? Did the people of Tankerville believe that the clergymen of London, of Liverpool, and of Manchester were paid by endowments? The arguments which had been efficacious in Ireland must be efficacious in England. He said this without reference to one creed or to another. He did believe in religious teaching. He had not a word to say against a Protestant Episcopal Church. But he thought, nay, he was sure, that Church and State, as combined institutions, could no longer prevail in this country. If the people of Tankerville would return him to Parliament it should be his first object to put an end to this anomaly.

The Browboroughites were considerably astonished by his success. The colliers on this occasion did not seem to regard the clamor that was raised against Irish Papists. Much dirt was thrown and some heads were broken; but Phineas persevered. Mr. Ruddles was lost in admiration. They had never before had at Tankerville a man who could talk so well. Mr. Browborough without ceasing repeated his well-worn assurance, and it was received with the loudest exclamation of delight by his own party. The clergymen of the town and neighborhood crowded round him and pursued him, and almost seemed to believe in him. They were at any rate fighting their battle as best they knew how to fight it. But the great body of the colliers listened to Phineas, and every collier was now a voter. Then Mr. Ruddles, who had many eyes, began to perceive that the old game was to be played. "There'll be money going to-morrow after all," he whispered to Finn the evening before the election."

"I suppose you expected that."

"I wasn't sure. They began by thinking they could do without it. They don't want to sacrifice the borough."

"Nor do I, Mr. Ruddles."

"But they'll sooner do that than lose the seat. A couple of dozen of men out of the Fallgate would make us safe." Mr. Ruddles smiled as he said this.

And Phineas smiled as he answered, "If any good can be done by talking to the men at the Fallgate, I'll talk to them by the hour together."

"We've about done all that," said Mr. Ruddles.

Then came the voting. Up to two o'clock the polling was so equal that the numbers at Mr. Browborough's committee-room were always given in his favor, and those at the Liberal room in favor of Phineas Finn. At three o'clock Phineas was acknowledged to be ten ahead. He himself was surprised at his own success, and declared to himself that his old luck had not deserted him.

"They're giving £2 10s. a vote at the Fallgate this minute," said Ruddles to him at a quarter past three.

"We shall have to prove it."

"We can do that, I think," said Ruddles.

At four o'clock, when the poll was over, Browborough was declared to have won on the post by seven votes. He was that same evening declared by the Mayor to have been elected sitting member for the borough, and he again assured the people in his speech that the prosperity of England depends on the Church of her people.

"We shall carry the seat on a scrutiny as sure as eggs," said Mr. Ruddles, who had been quite won by the gallant way in which Phineas had fought his battle.

CHAPTER V.

MR. DAUBENY'S GREAT MOVE.

The whole Liberal party was taken very much by surprise at the course which the election ran. Or perhaps it might be more proper to say that the Parliamentary leaders of the party were surprised. It had not been recognized by them as necessary that the great question of Church and State should be generally discussed on this occasion. It was a matter of course that it should be discussed at some places, and by some men. Eager Dissenters would, of course, take advantage of the opportunity to press their views, and no doubt the entire abolition of the Irish Church as a State establishment had taught Liberals to think and Conservatives to fear that the question would force itself forward at no very distant date. But it had not been expected to do so now. The general incompetence of a Ministry who could not command a majority on any measure was intended to be the strong point of the Liberal party, not only at the election, but at the meeting of Parliament. The Church question, which was necessarily felt by all statesmen to be of such magnitude as to dwarf every other, was not wanted as yet. It might remain in the background as the future standing-point for some great political struggle, in which it would be again necessary that every Liberal should fight, as though for life, with his teeth and nails. Men who ten years since regarded almost with abhorrence, and certainly with distrust, the idea of disruption between Church and State in England, were no doubt learning to perceive that such disruption must come, and were reconciling themselves to it after that slow, silent, inargumentative fashion in which convictions force themselves among us. And from reconciliation to the idea some were advancing to enthusiasm on its behalf. "It is only a question of time," was now said by many who hardly remembered how devoted they had been to the Established Church of England a dozen years ago. But the fruit was not yet ripe, and the leaders of the Liberal party by no means desired that it should be plucked. They were, therefore, surprised, and but little pleased, when they found that the question was more discussed than any other on the hustings of enthusiastically political boroughs.

Barrington Erle was angry when he received the letter of Phineas Finn. He was at that moment staying with the Duke of St. Bungay, who was regarded by many as the only possible leader of the Liberal party, should Mr. Gresham for any reason fail them. Indeed, the old Whigs, of whom Barrington Erle considered himself to be one, would have much preferred the Duke to Mr. Gresham, had it been possible to set Mr. Gresham aside. But Mr. Gresham was too strong to be set aside; and Erle and the Duke, with all their brethren, were minded to be thoroughly loyal to their leader. He was their leader, and not to be loyal was, in their minds, treachery. But occasionally they feared that the man would carry them whither they did not desire to go. In the mean time heavy things were spoken of our poor friend Finn.

"After all, that man is an ass," said Erle.

"If so, I believe you are altogether responsible for him," said the Duke.

"Well, yes, in a measure; but not altogether. That, however, is a long story. He has many good gifts. He is clever, good-tempered, and one of the pleasantest fellows that ever lived. The women all like him."

"So the Duchess tells me."

"But he is not what I call loyal. He can

not keep himself from running after strange gods. What need had he to take up the Church question at Tankerville? The truth is, Duke, the thing is going to pieces. We get men into the House now who are clever, and all that sort of thing, and who force their way up, but who can't be made to understand that every body should not want to be Prime Minister." The Duke, who was now a Nestor among politicians, though very green in his age, smiled as he heard remarks which had been familiar to him for the last forty years. He, too, liked his party, and was fond of loyal men; but he had learned at last that all loyalty must be built on a basis of self-advantage. Patriotism may exist without it, but that which Erle called loyalty in politics was simply devotion to the side which a man conceives to be his side, and which he can not leave without danger to himself.

But if discontent was felt at the eagerness with which this subject was taken up at certain boroughs, and was adopted by men whose votes and general support would be essentially necessary to the would-be coming Liberal Government, absolute dismay was occasioned by a speech that was made at a certain county election. Mr. Daubeny had for many years been member for East Barsetshire, and was as sure of his seat as the Queen of her throne. No one would think of contesting Mr. Daubeny's right to sit for East Barsetshire, and no doubt he might have been returned without showing himself to the electors. But he did show himself to the electors, and, as a matter of course, made a speech on the occasion. It so happened that the day fixed for the election in this division of the county was quite at the close of this period of political excitement. When Mr. Daubeny addressed his friends in East Barsetshire, the returns throughout the kingdom were nearly complete. No attention had been paid to this fact during the elections, but it was afterward asserted that the arrangement had been made with a political purpose, and with a purpose which was politically dishonest. Mr. Daubeny, so said the angry Liberals, had not chosen to address his constituents till his speech at the hustings could have no effect on other counties. Otherwise—so said the Liberals—the whole Conservative party would have been called upon to disavow at the hustings the conclusion to which Mr. Daubeny hinted in East Barsetshire that he had arrived. The East Barsetshire men themselves—so said the Liberals—had been too crass to catch the meaning hidden under his ambiguous words; but those words, when read by the light of astute criticism, were found to contain an opinion that Church and State should be dissevered. "By G—! he's going to take the bread out of our mouths again," said Mr. Ratler.

The speech was certainly very ambiguous, and I am not sure that the East Barsetshire folk were so crass as they were accused of being in not understanding it at once. The dreadful hint was wrapped up in many words, and formed but a small part of a very long oration. The bucolic mind of East Barsetshire took warm delight in the eloquence of the eminent personage who represented them, but was wont to extract more actual enjoyment from the music of his periods than from the strength of his arguments. When he would explain to them that he had discovered a new, or rather hitherto unknown, conservative element in the character of his countrymen, which he could best utilize by changing every thing in the Constitution, he manipulated his words with such grace, was so profound, so broad, and so exalted, was so brilliant in mingling a deep philosophy with the ordinary politics of the day, that the bucolic mind could only admire. It was a great honor to the electors of that agricultural county that they should be made the first recipients of these pearls, which were not wasted by being thrown before them. They were picked up by the gentlemen of the Press, and became the pearls, not of East Barsetshire, but of all England. On this occasion it was found that one pearl was very big, very rare, and worthy of great attention; but it was a black pearl, and was regarded by many as an abominable prodigy. "The period of our history is one in which it becomes essential for us to renew those inquiries which have prevailed since man first woke to his destiny as to the amount of connection which exists, and which must exist, between spiritual and simply human forms of government—between our daily religion and our daily politics—between the Crown and the Mitre." The East Barsetshire clergymen and the East Barsetshire farmers like to hear something of the mitre in political speeches at the hustings. The word sounds pleasantly in their ears as appertaining to good old gracious times and good old gracious things. As honey falls fast from the mouth of the practiced speaker, the less practiced hearer is apt to catch more of the words than of the sense. The speech of Mr. Daubeny was taken all in good part by his assembled friends. But when it was read by the quid nunes on the following day, it was found to contain so deep a meaning that it produced from Mr. Ratler's mouth those words of fear which have been already quoted.

Could it really be the case that the man intended to perform so audacious a trick of legerdemain as this for the preservation of his power, and that if he intended it he should have the power to carry it through? The renewal of inquiry as to the connection which exists between the Crown and the Mitre, when the bran was bolted, could only mean the disestablishment of the Church. Mr. Ratler and his friends were not long in bolting the bran. Regarding the matter simply in its own light, without bringing to bear upon it the experience of the last half century, Mr. Ratler would have thought his party strong enough to defy Mr. Daubeny utterly in such an attempt. The ordinary politician, looking at Mr. Daubeny's position as leader of the Conservative party, as a statesman depending on the support of the Church, as a minister appointed to his present place for the express object of defending all that was left of old and dear and venerable in the Constitution, would have declared that Mr. Daubeny was committing political suicide, as to which future history would record a verdict of probably not temporary insanity. And when the speech was a week old this was said in many a respectable household through the country. Many a squire, many a parson, many a farmer was grieved for Mr. Daubeny when the words had been explained to him, who did not for a moment think that the words could be portentous as to the great Conservative party. But Mr. Ratler remembered Catholic emancipation, had himself been in the House when the Corn Laws were repealed, and had been nearly broken-hearted when household suffrage had become the law of the land while a conservative Cabinet and a conservative Government were in possession of dominion in Israel.

Mr. Bonteen was disposed to think that the trick was beyond the conjuring power even of Mr. Daubeny. "After all, you know, there is the party," he said to Mr. Ratler. Mr. Ratler's face was as good as a play, and if seen by that party would have struck that party with dismay and shame. The meaning of Mr. Ratler's face was plain enough. He thought so little of that party, on the score either of intelligence, honesty, or fidelity, as to imagine that it would consent to be led whithersoever Mr. Daubeny might choose to lead it. "If they care about any thing, it's about the Church," said Mr. Bonteen.

"There's something they like a great deal better than the Church," said Mr. Ratler. "Indeed, there's only one thing they care about at all now. They've given up all the old things. It's very likely that if Daubeny were to ask them to vote for pulling down the Throne and establishing a Republic, they'd all follow him into the lobby like sheep. They've been so knocked about by one treachery after another that they don't care now for any thing beyond their places."

"It's only a few of them get any thing, after all."

"Yes, they do. It isn't just so much a year they want, though those who have that won't like to part with it. But they like getting the counties, and the Garters, and the promotion in the army. They like their brothers to be made bishops, and their sisters like the Wardrobe and the Bed-chamber. There isn't one of them that doesn't hang on somewhere—or at least not many. Do you remember Peel's bill for the Corn Laws?"

"There were fifty went against him then," said Bonteen.

"And what are fifty? A man doesn't like to be one of fifty. It's too many for glory, and not enough for strength. There has come up among them a general feeling that it's just as well to let things slide, as the Yankees say. They're down-hearted about it enough within their own houses, no doubt. But what can they do if they hold back? Some stout old Cavalier here and there may shut himself up in his own castle, and tell himself that the world around him may go to wrack and ruin, but that he will not help the evil work. Some are shutting themselves up. Look at old Quin, when they carried their Reform Bill. But men, as a rule, don't like to be shut up. How they reconcile it to their conscience—that's what I can't understand." Such was the wisdom and such were the fears of Mr. Ratler. Mr. Bonteen, however, could not bring himself to believe that the Archenemy would on this occasion be successful. "It mayn't be too hot for him," said Mr. Bonteen, when he reviewed the whole matter, "but I think it 'll be too heavy."

They who had mounted higher than Mr. Ratler and Mr. Bonteen on the political ladder, but who had mounted on the same side, were no less astonished than their inferiors; and, perhaps, were equally disgusted, though they did not allow themselves to express their disgust as plainly. Mr. Gresham was staying in the country with his friend, Lord Cantrip, when the tidings reached them of Mr. Daubeny's speech to the electors of East Barsetshire. Mr. Gresham and Lord Cantrip had long sat in the same Cabinet, and were fast friends, understanding each other's views, and thoroughly trusting each other's loyalty. "He means it," said Lord Cantrip.

"He means to see if it be possible," said the other. "It is thrown out as a feeler to his own party."

"I'll do him the justice of saying that he's not afraid of his party. If he means it, he means it altogether, and will not retract it, even though the party should refuse as a body to support him. I give him no other credit, but I give him that."

Mr. Gresham paused for a few moments before he answered. "I do not know," said he, "whether we are justified in thinking that one man will always be the same. Daubeny has once been very audacious, and he succeeded. But he had two things to help him—a leader, who, though thoroughly trusted, was very idle, and an ill-defined question. When he had won his leader he had won his party. He has no such tower of strength now. And in the doing of this thing, if he means to do it, he must encounter the assured conviction of every man on his own side, both in the Upper and Lower House. When he told them that he would tap a conservative element by reducing the suffrage, they did not know whether to believe him or not. There might be something in it. It might be that they would thus resume a class of suffrage existing in former days, but which had fallen into abeyance, because not properly protected. They could teach themselves to believe that it might be so, and those among them who found it necessary to free their souls did so teach themselves. I don't see how they are to free their souls when they are invited to put down the State establishment of the Church."

"He'll find a way for them."

"It's possible. I'm the last man in the world to contest the possibility, or even the expediency, of changes in political opinion. But I do not know whether it follows that because he was brave and successful once he must necessarily be brave and successful again. A man rides at some outrageous fence, and by the wonderful activity and obedient zeal of his horse is carried over it in safety. It does not follow that his horse will carry him over a house, or that he should be fool enough to ask the beast to do so."

"He intends to ride at the house," said Lord Cantrip; "and he means it because others have talked of it. You saw the line which my rash young friend Finn took at Tankerville."

"And all for nothing."

"I am not so sure of that. They say he is like the rest. If Daubeny does carry the party with him, I suppose the days of the Church are numbered."

"And what if they be?" Mr. Gresham almost sighed as he said this, although he intended to express a certain amount of satisfaction. "What if they be? You know, and I know, that the thing has to be done. Whatever may be our own individual feelings, or even our present judgment on the subject—as to which neither of us can perhaps say that his mind is not so made up that it may not soon be altered—we know that the present union can not remain. It

is unfitted for that condition of humanity to which we are coming; and if so, the change must be for good. Why should not he do it as well as another? Or, rather, would not he do it better than another, if he can do it with less of animosity than we should rouse against us? If the blow would come softer from his hands than from ours, with less of a feeling of injury to those who dearly love the Church, should we not be glad that he should undertake the task?"

"Then you will not oppose him?"

"Ah! there is much to be considered before we can say that. Though he may not be bound by his friends, we may be bound by ours. And then, though I can hint to you at a certain condition of mind, and can sympathize with you, feeling that such may become the condition of your mind, I can not say that I should act upon it as an established conviction, or that I can expect that you will do so. If such be the political programme submitted to us when the House meets, then we must be prepared."

Lord Cantrip also paused a moment before he answered, but he had his answer ready. "I can frankly say that I should follow your leading, but that I should give my voice for opposition."

"Your voice is always persuasive," said Mr. Gresham.

But the consternation felt among Mr. Daubeny's friends was infinitely greater than that which fell among his enemies, when those wonderful words were read, discussed, criticised, and explained. It seemed to every clergyman in England that nothing short of disestablishment could be intended by them. And this was the man to whom they had all looked for protection! This was the bulwark of the Church to whom they had all trusted! This was the hero who had been so sound and so firm respecting the Irish Establishment, when evil counsels had been allowed to prevail in regard to that ill-used but still sacred vineyard! All friends of the Church had then whispered among themselves fearfully, and had, with sad looks and grievous forebodings, acknowledged that the thin edge of the wedge had been driven into the very rock of the Establishment. The enemies of the Church were known to be powerful, numerous, and of course unscrupulous. But surely this Brutus would not raise a dagger against this Cæsar! And yet, if not, what was the meaning of those words? And then men and women began to tell each other—the men and women who are the very salt of the earth in this England of ours—that their Brutus, in spite of his great qualities, had ever been mysterious, unintelligible, dangerous, and given to feats of conjuring. They had only been too submissive to their Brutus. Wonderful feats of conjuring they had endured, understanding nothing of the manner in which they were performed—nothing of their probable results; but this feat of conjuring they would not endure. And so there were many meetings held about the country, though the time for combined action was very short.

Nothing more audacious than the speaking of those few words to the bucolic electors of East Barsetshire had ever been done in the political history of England. Cromwell was bold when he closed the Long Parliament. Shaftesbury was bold when he formed the plot for which Lord Russell and others suffered. Walpole was bold when, in his lust for power, he discarded one political friend after another. And Peel was bold when he resolved to repeal the Corn Laws. But in none of these instances was the audacity displayed more wonderful than when Mr. Daubeny took upon himself to make known throughout the country his intention of abolishing the Church of England. For to such a declaration did those few words amount. He was now the recognized Parliamentary leader of that party to which the Church of England was essentially dear. He had achieved his place by skill rather than principle—by the conviction on men's minds that he was necessary rather than that he was fit. But still, there he was; and though he had alarmed many—had probably alarmed all those who followed him by his eccentric and dangerous mode of carrying on the battle—though no Conservative regarded him as safe—yet on this question of the Church it had been believed that he was sound. What might be the special ideas of his own mind regarding ecclesiastical policy in general, it had not been thought necessary to consider. His utterances had been confusing, mysterious, and perhaps purposely unintelligible; but that was matter of little moment so long as he was prepared to defend the establishment of the Church of England as an institution adapted for English purposes. On that point it was believed that he was sound. To that mast it was supposed he had nailed his own colors and those of his party. In defending that fortress it was thought that he would be ready to fall, should the defense of it require a fall. It was because he was so far safe that he was there. And yet he spoke these words without consulting a single friend, or suggesting the propriety of his new scheme to a single supporter. And he knew what he was doing. This was the way in which he had thought it best to make known to his own followers, not only that he was about to abandon the old Institution, but that they must do so too!

As regarded East Barsetshire itself, he was returned, and fêted, and sent home with his ears stuffed with eulogy before the bucolic mind had discovered his purpose. On so much he had probably calculated. But he had calculated also that after an interval of three or four days his secret would be known to all friends and enemies. On the day after his speech came the report of it in the newspapers; on the next day the leading articles, in which the world was told what it was that the Prime Minister had really said. Then, on the following day, the startled parsons, and the startled squires and farmers, and, above all, the startled peers and members of the Lower House, whose duty it was to vote as he should lead them, were all agog. Could it be that the newspapers were right in this meaning which they had attached to these words? On the day week after the election in East Barsetshire a Cabinet Council was called in London, at which it would, of course, be Mr. Daubeny's duty to explain to his colleagues what it was that he had purpose to do.

In the mean time he saw a colleague or two. "Let us look it straight in the face," he said to a noble colleague; "we must look it in the face before long."

"But we need not hurry it forward."

"There is a storm coming. We knew that before, and we heard the sound of it from every hustling in the country. How shall we rule the storm so that it may pass over the land without devastating it? If we bring in a bill—"

"A bill for disestablishing the Church!" said the horror-stricken lord.

"If we bring in a bill, the purport of which shall be to moderate the ascendency of the Church in accordance with the existing religious feelings of the population, we shall save much that otherwise must fall. If there must be a bill, would you rather that it should be modeled by us who love the Church, or by those who hate it?"

That lord was very wroth, and told the right honorable gentleman to his face that his duty to his party should have constrained him to silence on that subject till he had consulted his colleagues. In answer to this, Mr. Daubeny said with much dignity that, should such be the opinion of his colleagues in general, he would at once abandon the high place which he held in their councils. But he trusted that it might be otherwise. He had felt himself bound to communicate his ideas to his constituents, and had known that in doing so some minds must be shocked. He trusted that he might be able to allay this feeling of dismay. As regarded this noble lord, he did succeed in lessening the dismay before the meeting was over, though he did not altogether allay it.

Another gentleman who was in the habit of sitting at Mr. Daubeny's elbow daily in the House of Commons was much gentler to him, both as to words and manner. "It's a bold throw, but I'm afraid it won't come up sixes," said the right honorable gentleman.

"Let it come up fives, then. It's the only chance we have; and if you think, as I do, that it is essentially necessary for the welfare of the country that we should remain where we are, we must run the risk."

With another colleague, whose mind was really set on that which the Church is presumed to represent, he used another argument. "I am convinced, at any rate, of this," said Mr. Daubeny; "that by sacrificing something of that ascendency which the Establishment is supposed to give us, we can bring the Church, which we love, nearer to the wants of the people." And so it came about that before the Cabinet met, every member of it knew what it was that was expected of him.

CHAPTER VI.

PHINEAS AND HIS OLD FRIENDS.

Phineas Finn returned home from London to Tankerville in much better spirits than those which had accompanied him on his journey thither. He was not elected; but then, before the election, he had come to believe that it was quite out of the question that he should be elected. And now he did think it probable that he should get the seat on a petition. A scrutiny used to be a very expensive business, but under the existing law, made as the scrutiny would be in the borough itself, it would cost but little, and that little, should he be successful, would fall on the shoulders of Mr. Browborough. Should he knock off eight votes and lose none himself, he would be member for Tankerville. He knew that many votes had been given for Browborough which, if the truth were known of them, would be knocked off; and he did not know that the same could be said of any one of those by which he had been supported. But, unfortunately, the judge by whom all this would be decided might not reach Tankerville in his travels till after Christmas, perhaps not till after Easter; and in the mean time what should he do with himself?

As for going back to Dublin, that was now out of the question. He had entered upon a feverish state of existence in which it was impossible that he should live in Ireland. Should he ultimately fail in regard to his seat, he must—vanish out of the world. While he remained in his present condition he would not even endeavor to think how he might in such case best bestow himself. For the present he would remain within the region of politics, and live as near as he could to the whirl of the wheel of which the sound was so dear to him. Of one club he had always remained a member, and he had already been re-elected a member of the Reform. So he took up his residence once more at the house of a certain Mr. and Mrs. Bunce, in Great Marlborough Street, with whom he had lodged when he first became a member of Parliament.

"So you're at the old game, Mr. Finn?" said his landlord.

"Yes; at the old game. I suppose it's the same with you?" Now Mr. Bunce had been a very violent politician, and used to rejoice in calling himself a Democrat.

"Pretty much the same, Mr. Finn. I don't see that things are much better than they used to be. They tell me at the *People's Banner* office that the lords have had as much to do with this election as with any that ever went before it."

"Perhaps they don't know much about it at the *People's Banner* office. I thought Mr. Slide and the *People's Banner* had gone over to the other side, Bunce?"

"Mr. Slide is pretty wide awake, whatever side he's on. Not but what he's disgraced himself by what he's been and done now." Mr. Slide in former days had been the editor of the *People's Banner*, and circumstances had arisen in consequence of which there had been some acquaintance between him and our hero. "I see you was hammering away at the Church down at Tankerville."

"I just said a word or two."

"You was all right there, Mr. Finn. I can't say as I ever saw very much in your religion; but what a man keeps in the way of religion for his own use is never nothing to me—as what I keeps is nothing to him."

"I'm afraid you don't keep much, Mr. Bunce."

"And that's nothing to you, neither, is it, Sir?"

"No, indeed."

"But when we read of Churches as is called State Churches—Churches as have bishops you and I have to pay for, as never goes into them—"

"But we don't pay the bishops, Mr. Bunce."

"Oh yes, we do; because, if they wasn't paid, the money would come to us to do as we pleased with it. We proved all that when we pared them down a bit. What's an Ecclesiastical Commission? Only another name for a box to put the money into till you want to take it out again. When we hear of Churches such as these, as is not kept up by the people who uses them—just as the theatres are, Mr. Finn, or the gin shops