

Experience had taught him to doubt them all. Of all possible Ministers of the Crown at this period, Mr. Daubeny was, he thought, perhaps the worst and the most dangerous. But the thing now offered was too good to be rejected, let it come from what quarter it would. Indeed, might it not be said of all the good things obtained for the people, of all really serviceable reforms, that they were gathered and garnered home in consequence of the squabbles of Ministers? When men wanted power, either to grasp at it or to retain it, then they offered bribes to the people. But in the taking of such bribes there was no dishonesty, and he should willingly take this bribe.

Mr. Monk spoke also. He would not, he said, feel himself justified in refusing the Address to the Crown proposed by Ministers simply because that Address was founded on the proposition of a future reform, as to the expedience of which he had not for many years entertained a doubt. He could not allow it to be said of him that he had voted for the permanence of the Church establishment, and he must therefore support the Government. Then Ratler whispered a few words to his neighbor: "I knew the way he'd run when Gresham insisted on poor old Mildmay's taking him into the Cabinet." "The whole thing has gone to the dogs," said Bonteen. On the fourth night the House was divided, and Mr. Daubeny was the owner of a majority of fifteen.

Very many of the Liberal party expressed an opinion that the battle had been lost through the want of judgment evinced by Mr. Gresham. There was certainly no longer that sturdy adherence to their chief which is necessary for the solidarity of a party. Perhaps no leader of the House was ever more devoutly worshiped by a small number of adherents than was Mr. Gresham now; but such worship will not support power. Within the three days following the division the Ratlers had all put their heads together, and had resolved that the Duke of St. Bungay was now the only man who could keep the party together. "But who should lead our House?" asked Bonteen. Ratler sighed instead of answering. Things had come to that pass that Mr. Gresham was the only possible leader. And the leader of the House of Commons, on behalf of the Government, must be the chief man in the Government, let the so-called Prime Minister be who he may.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DESERTED HUSBAND.

PHINEAS FINN had been in the gallery of the House throughout the debate, and was greatly grieved at Mr. Daubeny's success, though he himself had so strongly advocated the disestablishment of the Church in canvassing the electors of Tankerville. No doubt he had advocated the cause—but he had done so as an advanced member of the Liberal party, and he regarded the proposition when coming from Mr. Daubeny as a horrible and abnormal birth. He, however, was only a looker-on—could be no more than a looker-on for the existing short session. It had already been decided that the judge who was to try the case at Tankerville should visit that town

early in January; and should it be decided on a scrutiny that the seat belonged to our hero, then he would enter upon his privilege in the following session without any further trouble to himself at Tankerville. Should this not be the case—then the abyss of absolute vacuity would be open before him. He would have to make some disposition of himself, but would be absolutely without an idea as to the how or where. He was in possession of funds to support himself for a year or two; but after that, and even during that time, all would be dark. If he should get his seat, then again the power of making an effort would at last be within his hands.

He had made up his mind to spend the Christmas with Lord Brentford and Lady Laura Kennedy at Dresden, and had already fixed the day of his arrival there. But this had been postponed by another invitation which had surprised him much, but which it had been impossible for him not to accept. It had come as follows:

"November 9, LOUGH LINTER.

"DEAR SIR,—I am informed by letter from Dresden that you are in London on your way to that city with the view of spending some days with the Earl of Brentford. You will, of course, be once more thrown into the society of my wife, Lady Laura Kennedy.

"I have never understood, and certainly have never sanctioned, that breach of my wife's marriage vow which has led to her withdrawal from my roof. I never bade her go, and I have bidden her return. Whatever may be her feelings, or mine, her duty demands her presence here, and my duty calls upon me to receive her. This I am, and always have been, ready to do. Were the laws of Europe sufficiently explicit and intelligible I should force her to return to my house—because she sins while she remains away, and I should sin were I to omit to use any means which the law might place in my hands for the due control of my own wife. I am very explicit to you, although we have of late been strangers, because in former days you were closely acquainted with the condition of my family affairs.

"Since my wife left me I have had no means of communicating with her by the assistance of any common friend. Having heard that you are about to visit her at Dresden, I feel a great desire to see you, that I may be enabled to send by you a personal message. My health, which is now feeble, and the altered habits of my life, render it almost impossible that I should proceed to London with this object, and I therefore ask it of your Christian charity that you should visit me here at Lough Linter. You, as a Roman Catholic, can not but hold the bond of matrimony to be irrefragable. You can not, at least, think that it should be set aside at the caprice of an excitable woman who is not able, and never has been able, to assign any reason for leaving the protection of her husband.

"I shall have much to say to you, and I trust you will come. I will not ask you to prolong your visit, as I have nothing to offer you in the way of amusement. My mother is with me, but otherwise I am alone. Since my wife left me I have not thought it even decent to entertain guests or to enjoy society. I have lived a widowed life. I can not even offer you shooting, as I have no keepers on the mountains. There are fish in the

river, doubtless, for the gifts of God are given, let men be ever so unworthy; but this, I believe, is not the month for fishermen. I ask you to come to me not as a pleasure, but as a Christian duty.

Yours truly,

"ROBERT KENNEDY.

"PHINEAS FINN, Esq."

As soon as he had read the letter Phineas felt that he had no alternative but to go. The visit would be very disagreeable, but it must be made. So he sent a line to Robert Kennedy naming a day, and wrote another to Lady Laura postponing his time at Dresden by a week, and explaining the cause of its postponement. As soon as the debate on the Address was over he started for Lough Linter.

A thousand memories crowded on his brain as he made the journey. Various circumstances had in his early life—in that period of his life which had lately seemed to be cut off from the remainder of his days by so clear a line—thrown him into close connection with this man, and with the man's wife. He had first gone to Lough Linter, not as Lady Laura's guest—for Lady Laura had not then been married, or even engaged to be married—but on her persuasion rather than on that of Mr. Kennedy. When there he had asked Lady Laura to be his own wife, and she had then told him that she was to become the wife of the owner of that domain. He remembered the blow as though it had been struck but yesterday, and yet the pain of the blow had not been long-enduring. But though then rejected, he had always been the chosen friend of the woman—a friend chosen after an especial fashion. When he had loved another woman this friend had resented his defection with all a woman's jealousy. He had saved the husband's life, and had then become also the husband's friend, after that cold fashion which an obligation will create. Then the husband had been jealous, and dissension had come, and the ill-matched pair had been divided, with absolute ruin to both of them, as far as the material comforts and well-being of life were concerned. Then he, too, had been ejected, as it were, out of the world, and it had seemed to him as though Laura Standish and Robert Kennedy had been the inhabitants of another hemisphere. Now he was about to see them both again, both separately, and to become the medium of some communication between them. He knew, or thought that he knew, that no communication could avail any thing.

It was dark night when he was driven up to the door of Lough Linter House in a fly from the town of Callender. When he first made the journey, now some six or seven years since, he had done so with Mr. Ratler, and he remembered well that circumstance. He remembered also that on his arrival Lady Laura had scolded him for having traveled in such company. She had desired him to seek other friends—friends higher in general estimation, and nobler in purpose. He had done so, partly at her instance, and with success. But Mr. Ratler was now somebody in the world, and he was nobody. And he remembered also how on that occasion he had been troubled in his mind in regard to a servant, not as yet knowing whether the usages of the world did or did not require that he should

go so accompanied. He had taken the man, and had been thoroughly ashamed of himself for doing so. He had no servant now, no grandly developed luggage, no gun, no elaborate dress for the mountains. On that former occasion his heart had been very full when he reached Lough Linter, and his heart was full now. Then he had resolved to say a few words to Lady Laura, and he had hardly known how best to say them. Now he would be called upon to say a few to Lady Laura's husband, and the task would be almost as difficult.

The door was opened for him by an old servant in black, who proposed at once to show him to his room. He looked round the vast hall, which, when he had before known it, was ever filled with signs of life, and felt at once that it was empty and deserted. It struck him as intolerably cold, and he saw that the huge fireplace was without a spark of fire. Dinner, the servant said, was prepared for half past seven. Would Mr. Finn wish to dress? Of course he wished to dress. And as it was already past seven, he hurried up stairs to his room. Here again every thing was cold and wretched. There was no fire, and the man had left him with a single candle. There were candlesticks on the dressing-table, but they were empty. The man had suggested hot water, but the hot water did not come. In his poorest days he had never known discomfort such as this, and yet Mr. Kennedy was one of the richest commoners of Great Britain.

But he dressed, and made his way down stairs, not knowing where he should find his host or his host's mother. He recognized the different doors, and knew the rooms within them, but they seemed inhospitably closed against him, and he went and stood in the cold hall. But the man was watching for him, and led him into a small parlor. Then it was explained to him that Mr. Kennedy's state of health did not admit of late dinners. He was to dine alone, and Mr. Kennedy would receive him after dinner. In a moment his cheeks became red, and a flash of wrath crossed his heart. Was he to be treated in this way by a man on whose behalf—with no thought of his own comfort or pleasure—he had made this long and abominable journey? Might it not be well for him to leave the house without seeing Mr. Kennedy at all? Then he remembered that he had heard it whispered that the man had become bewildered in his mind. He relented, therefore, and condescended to eat his dinner.

A very poor dinner it was. There was a morsel of flabby white fish, as to the nature of which Phineas was altogether in doubt, a beef-steak as to the nature of which he was not at all in doubt, and a little crumpled-up tart which he thought the driver of the fly must have brought with him from the pastry-cook's at Callender. There was some very hot sherry, but not much of it. And there was a bottle of claret, as to which Phineas, who was not usually particular in the matter of wine, persisted in declining to have any thing to do with it after the first attempt. The gloomy old servant, who stuck to him during the repast, persisted in offering it, as though the credit of the hospitality of Lough Linter depended on it. There are so many men by whom the tennis ratio saporum has not been

achieved that the Caleb Baldersons of those houses in which plenty does not flow are almost justified in hoping that goblets of Gladstone may pass current. Phineas Finn was not a martyr to eating or drinking. He played with his fish without thinking much about it. He worked manfully at the steak. He gave another crumple to the tart, and left it without a pang. But when the old man urged him, for the third time, to take that pernicious draught with his cheese, he angrily demanded a glass of beer. The old man toddled out of the room, and on his return he proffered to him a diminutive glass of white spirit, which he called usquebaugh. Phineas, happy to get a little whisky, said nothing more about the beer, and so the dinner was over.

He rose so suddenly from his chair that the man did not dare to ask him whether he would not sit over his wine. A suggestion that way was indeed made—would he “visit the laird out o’ hand, or would he bide awee?” Phineas decided on visiting the laird out of hand, and was at once led across the hall, down a back passage which he had never before traversed, and introduced to the chamber which had ever been known as the “laird’s ain room.” Here Robert Kennedy rose to receive him.

Phineas knew the man’s age well. He was still under fifty, but he looked as though he were seventy. He had always been thin, but he was thinner now than ever. He was very gray, and stooped so much that, though he came forward a step or two to greet his guest, it seemed as though he had not taken the trouble to raise himself to his proper height. “You find me a much-altered man,” he said. The change had been so great that it was impossible to deny it, and Phineas muttered something of regret that his host’s health should be so bad. “It is trouble of the mind, not of the body, Mr. Finn. It is her doing—her doing. Life is not to me a light thing, nor are the obligations of life light. When I married a wife, she became bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. Can I lose my bones and my flesh—knowing that they are not with God, but still subject elsewhere to the snares of the devil, and live as though I were a sound man? Had she died, I could have borne it. I hope they have made you comfortable, Mr. Finn?”

“Oh yes,” said Phineas.

“Not that Lough Linter can be comfortable now to any one. How can a man whose wife has deserted him entertain his guests? I am ashamed even to look a friend in the face, Mr. Finn.” As he said this he stretched forth his open hand as though to hide his countenance, and Phineas hardly knew whether the absurdity of the movement or the tragedy of the feeling struck him the more forcibly. “What did I do that she should leave me? Did I strike her? Was I faithless? Had she not the half of all that was mine? Did I frighten her by hard words, or exact hard task? Did I not commune with her, telling her all my most inward purposes? In things of this world, and of that better world that is coming, was she not all in all to me? Did I not make her my very wife? Mr. Finn, do you know what made her go away?” He had asked perhaps a dozen questions. As to the eleven which came first, it was evident that no answer was required; and they had been put with that pathetic dignity with which it is so easy to invest the interrogatory

form of address. But to the last question it was intended that Phineas should give an answer, as Phineas presumed at once; and then it was asked with a wink of the eye, a low, eager voice, and a sly twist of the face that were frightfully ludicrous. “I suppose you do know,” said Mr. Kennedy, again working his eye and thrusting his chin forward.

“I imagine that she was not happy.”

“Happy? What right had she to expect to be happy? Are we to believe that we should be happy here? Are we not told that we are to look for happiness there, and to hope for none below?” As he said this he stretched his left hand to the ceiling. “But why shouldn’t she have been happy? What did she want? Did she ever say any thing against me, Mr. Finn?”

“Nothing but this—that your temper and hers were incompatible.”

“I thought at one time that you advised her to go away?”

“Never!”

“She told you about it?”

“Not, if I remember, till she had made up her mind, and her father had consented to receive her. I had known, of course, that things were unpleasant.”

“How were they unpleasant? Why were they unpleasant? She wouldn’t let you come and dine with me in London. I never knew why that was. When she did what was wrong, of course I had to tell her. Who else should tell her but her husband? If you had been her husband, and I only an acquaintance, then I might have said what I pleased. They rebel against the yoke because it is a yoke. And yet they accept the yoke, knowing it to be a yoke. It comes of the devil. You think a priest can put every thing right.”

“No, I don’t,” said Phineas.

“Nothing can put you right but the fear of God; and when a woman is too proud to ask for that, evils like these are sure to come. She would not go to church on Sunday afternoon, but had meetings of Belial at her father’s house instead.” Phineas well remembered those meetings of Belial, in which he with others had been wont to discuss the political prospects of the day. “When she persisted in breaking the Lord’s commandment, and defiling the Lord’s day, I knew well what would come of it.”

“I am not sure, Mr. Kennedy, that a husband is justified in demanding that a wife shall think just as he thinks on matters of religion. If he is particular about it, he should find all that out before.”

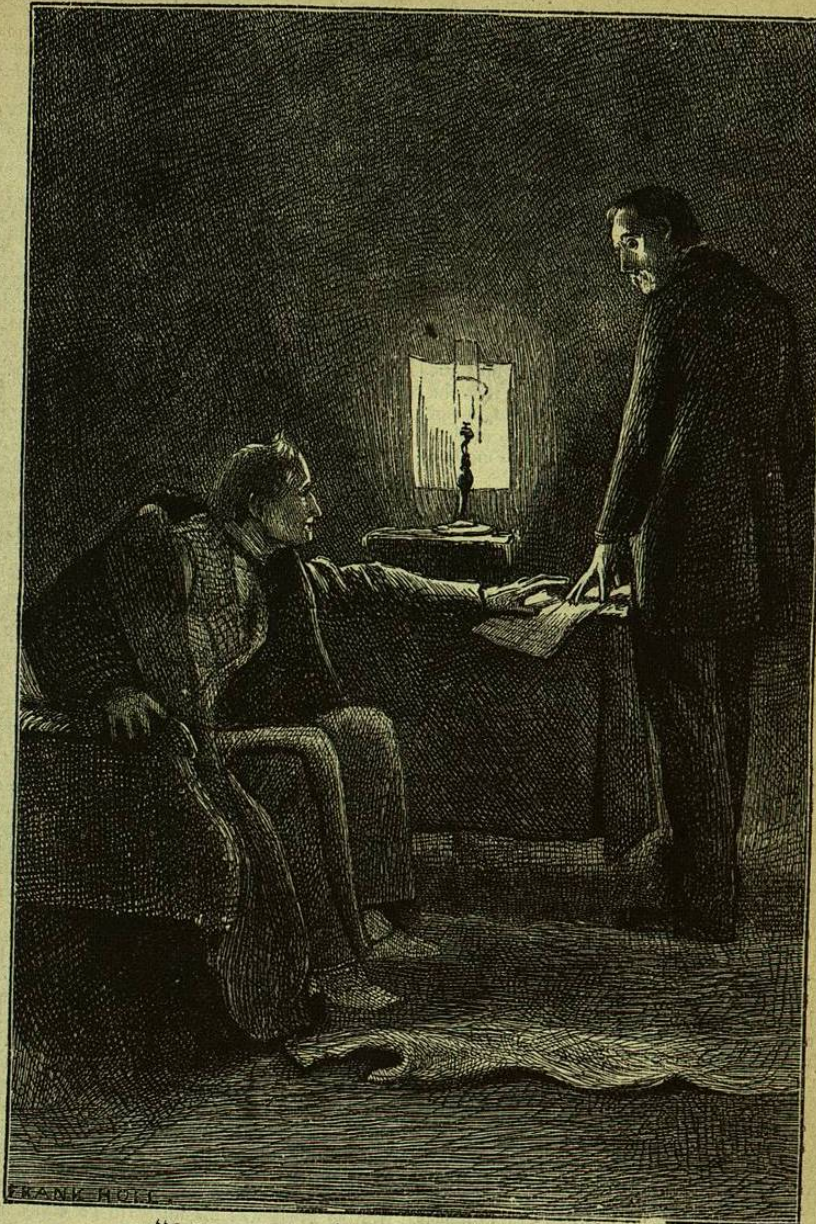
“Particular! God’s word is to be obeyed, I suppose?”

“But people doubt about God’s word.”

“Then people will be damned,” said Mr. Kennedy, rising from his chair. “And they will be damned.”

“A woman doesn’t like to be told so.”

“I never told her so. I never said any thing of the kind. I never spoke a hard word to her in my life. If her head did but ache I hung over her with the tenderest solicitude. I refused her nothing. When I found that she was impatient, I chose the shortest sermon for our Sunday evening’s worship, to the great discomfort of my mother.” Phineas wondered whether this assertion as to the discomfort of old Mrs. Kennedy could



“I HOPE YOU WON’T GO AND MAKE MORE MISCHIEF.”

possibly be true. Could it be that any human being really preferred a long sermon to a short one, except the being who preached it or read it aloud? “There was nothing that I did not do for her. I suppose you really do know why she went away, Mr. Finn?”

“I know nothing more than I have said.”

“I did think once that she was—”

“There was nothing more than I have said,” asserted Phineas, sternly, fearing that the poor insane man was about to make some suggestion

that would be terribly painful. “She felt that she did not make you happy.”

“I did not want her to make me happy. I do not expect to be made happy. I wanted her to do her duty. You were in love with her once, Mr. Finn?”

“Yes, I was. I was in love with Lady Laura Standish.”

“Ah! Yes. There was no harm in that, of course; only when any thing of that kind happens, people had better keep out of each other’s

way afterward. Not that I was ever jealous, you know."

"I should hope not."

"But I don't see why you should go all the way to Dresden to pay her a visit. What good can that do? I think you had much better stay where you are, Mr. Finn; I do indeed. It isn't a decent thing for a young unmarried man to go half across Europe to see a lady who is separated from her husband, and who was once in love with him—I mean he was once in love with her. It's a very wicked thing, Mr. Finn, and I have to beg that you will not do it."

Phineas felt that he had been grossly taken in. He had been asked to come to Lough Linter in order that he might take a message from the husband to the wife, and now the husband made use of his compliance to forbid the visit on some grotesque score of jealousy. He knew that the man was mad, and that therefore he ought not to be angry; but the man was not too mad to require a rational answer, and had some method in his madness.

"Lady Laura Kennedy is living with her father," said Phineas.

"Pshaw!—dotard!"

"Lady Laura Kennedy is living with her father," repeated Phineas, "and I am going to the house of the Earl of Brentford."

"Who was it wrote and asked you?"

"The letter was from Lady Laura."

"Yes—from my wife. What right has my wife to write to you when she will not even answer my appeals? She is my wife—my wife! In the presence of God she and I have been made one, and even man's ordinances have not dared to separate us. Mr. Finn, as the husband of Lady Laura Kennedy, I desire that you abstain from seeking her presence." As he said this he rose from his chair, and took the poker in his hand. The chair in which he was sitting was placed in, upon the rug, and it might be that the fire required his attention. As he stood bending down, with the poker in his right hand, with his eye still fixed on his guest's face, his purpose was doubtful. The motion might be a threat, or simply have a useful domestic tendency. But Phineas, believing that the man was mad, rose from his seat and stood upon his guard. The point of the poker had undoubtedly been raised; but as Phineas stretched himself to his height it fell gradually toward the fire, and at last was buried very gently among the coals. But he was never convinced that Mr. Kennedy had carried out the purpose with which he first rose from his chair. "After what passed, you will no doubt abandon your purpose," said Mr. Kennedy.

"I shall certainly go to Dresden," said Phineas.

"If you have a message to send, I will take it."

"Then you will be accursed among adulterers," said the laird of Lough Linter. "By such a one I will send no message. From the first moment that I saw you I knew you for a child of Apollyon. But the sin was my own. Why did I ask to my house an idolater, one who pretends to believe that a crumb of bread is my God, a Papist, untrue alike to his country and to his Saviour? When she desired it of me, I knew that I was wrong to yield. Yes, it is you who have done it all—you, you, you; and if she be a castaway, the weight of her soul will be doubly heavy on your own."

To get out of the room, and then, at the earliest possible hour of the morning, out of the house, were now the objects to be attained. That his presence had had a peculiarly evil influence on Mr. Kennedy, Phineas could not doubt; as assuredly the unfortunate man would not have been left with mastery over his own actions had his usual condition been such as that which he now displayed. He had been told that "poor Kennedy" was mad—as we are often told of the madness of our friends when they cease for a while to run in the common grooves of life. But the madman had now gone a long way out of the grooves—so far that he seemed to Phineas to be decidedly dangerous. "I think I had better wish you good-night," he said.

"Look here, Mr. Finn."

"Well!"

"I hope you won't go and make more mischief."

"I shall not do that, certainly."

"You won't tell her what I have said?"

"I shall tell her nothing to make her think that your opinion of her is less high than it ought to be."

"Good-night."

"Good-night," said Phineas, again; and then he left the room. It was as yet but nine o'clock, and he had no alternative but to go to bed. He found his way back into the hall, and from thence up to his own chamber. But there was no fire there, and the night was cold. He went to the window, and raised it for a moment, that he might hear the well-remembered sound of the Fall of Linter. Though the night was dark and wintry, a dismal damp November night, he would have crept out of the house and made his way up to the top of the brae, for the sake of auld lang syne, had he not feared that the inhospitable mansion would be permanently closed against him on his return. He rang the bell once, and twice, and after a while the old serving-man came to him. Could he have a cup of tea? The man shook his head, and feared that no boiling water could be procured at that late hour of the night. Could he have his breakfast the next morning at seven, and a conveyance to Callender at half past seven? When the old man again shook his head, seeming to be dazed at the enormity of the demand, Phineas insisted that his request should be conveyed to the master of the house. As to the breakfast, he said he did not care about it, but the conveyance he must have. He did, in fact, obtain both, and left the house early on the following morning without again seeing Mr. Kennedy, and without having spoken a single word to Mr. Kennedy's mother. And so great was his hurry to get away from the place which had been so disagreeable to him, and which he thought might possibly become more so, that he did not even run across the sward that divided the gravel sweep from the foot of the water-fall.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE TRUANT WIFE.

PHINEAS on his return to London wrote a line to Lady Chiltern in accordance with a promise which had been exacted from him. She was

anxious to learn something as to the real condition of her husband's brother-in-law, and, when she heard that Phineas was going to Lough Linter, had begged that he would tell her the truth. "He has become eccentric, gloomy, and very strange," said Phineas. "I do not believe that he is really mad, but his condition is such that I think no friend should recommend Lady Laura to return to him. He seems to have devoted himself to a gloomy religion, and to the saving of money. I had but one interview with him, and that was essentially disagreeable." Having remained two days in London, and having participated, as far as those two days would allow him, in the general horror occasioned by the wickedness and success of Mr. Daubeny, he started for Dresden.

He found Lord Brentford living in a spacious house, with a huge garden round it, close upon the northern confines of the town. Dresden, taken altogether, is a clean, cheerful city, and strikes the stranger on his first entrance as a place in which men are gregarious, busy, full of merriment, and pre-eminently social. Such is the happy appearance of but few towns either in the Old or the New World, and is hardly more common in Germany than elsewhere. Leipzig is decidedly busy, but does not look to be social. Vienna is sufficiently gregarious, but its streets are melancholy. Munich is social, but lacks the hum of business. Frankfort is both practical and picturesque, but it is dirty, and apparently averse to mirth. Dresden has much to recommend it; and had Lord Brentford with his daughter come abroad in quest of comfortable, easy, social life, his choice would have been well made. But, as it was, any of the towns above named would have suited him as well as Dresden, for he saw no society, and cared nothing for the outward things of the world around him. He found Dresden to be very cold in the winter and very hot in the summer, and he liked neither heat nor cold; but he had made up his mind that all places, and indeed all things, are nearly equally disagreeable, and therefore he remained at Dresden, grumbling almost daily as to the climate and manners of the people.

Phineas, when he arrived at the hall door, almost doubted whether he had not been as wrong in visiting Lord Brentford as he had in going to Lough Linter. His friendship with the old Earl had been very fitful, and there had been quarrels quite as pronounced as the friendship. He had often been happy in the Earl's house, but the happiness had not sprung from any love for the man himself. How would it be with him if he found the Earl hardly more civil to him than the Earl's son-in-law had been? In former days the Earl had been a man quite capable of making himself disagreeable, and probably had not yet lost the power of doing so. Of all our capabilities this is the one which clings longest to us. He was thinking of all this when he found himself at the door of the Earl's house. He had traveled all night, and was very cold. At Leipzig there had been a nominal twenty minutes for refreshment, which the circumstances of the station had reduced to five. This had occurred very early in the morning, and had sufficed only to give him a bowl of coffee. It was now nearly ten, and breakfast had become a serious consideration with him. He almost doubted wheth-

er it would not have been better for him to have gone to a hotel in the first instance.

He soon found himself in the hall amidst a cluster of servants, among whom he recognized the face of a man from Saulsby. He had, however, little time allowed him for looking about. He was hardly in the house before Lady Laura Kennedy was in his arms. She had run forward, and, before he could look into her face, she had put up her cheek to his lips and had taken both his hands. "Oh, my friend," she said; "oh, my friend! How good you are to come to me! How good you are to come!" And then she led him into a large room, in which a table had been prepared for breakfast, close to an English-looking open fire. "How cold you must be, and how hungry! Shall I have breakfast for you at once, or will you dress first? You are to be quite at home, you know; exactly as though we were brother and sister. You are not to stand on any ceremonies." And again she took him by the hand. He had hardly looked her yet in the face, and he could not do so now because he knew that she was crying. "Then I will show you to your room," she said, when he had decided for a tub of water before breakfast. "Yes, I will—my own self. And I'd fetch the water for you, only I know it is there already. How long will you be? Half an hour? Very well. And you would like tea best, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly, I should like tea best."

"I will make it for you. Papa never comes down till near two, and we shall have all the morning for talking. Oh, Phineas, it is such a pleasure to hear your voice again. You have been at Lough Linter?"

"Yes, I have been there."

"How very good of you; but I won't ask a question now. You must put up with a stove here, as we have not open fires in the bedrooms. I hope you will be comfortable. Don't be more than half an hour, as I shall be impatient."

Though he was thus instigated to haste, he stood a few minutes with his back to the warm stove that he might be enabled to think of it all. It was two years since he had seen this woman, and when they had parted there had been more between them of the remembrances of old friendship than of present affection. During the last few weeks of their intimacy she had made a point of telling him that she intended to separate herself from her husband; but she had done so as though it were a duty, and an arranged part of her own defense of her own conduct. And in the latter incidents of her London life—that life with which he had been conversant—she had generally been opposed to him, or, at any rate, had chosen to be divided from him. She had said severe things to him, telling him that he was cold, heartless, and uninterested, never trying even to please him with that sort of praise which had once been so common with her in her intercourse with him, and which all men love to hear from the mouths of women. She had then been cold to him, though she would make wretched allusions to the time when he, at any rate, had not been cold to her. She had reproached him, and had at the same time turned away from him. She had repudiated him, first as a lover, then as a friend; and he had hitherto never been able to gauge the depth of the affec-

tion for him which had underlaid all her conduct. As he stood there thinking of it all, he began to understand it.

How natural had been her conduct on his arrival, and how like that of a genuine, true-hearted, honest woman! All her first thoughts had been for his little personal wants, that he should be warmed, and fed, and made outwardly comfortable. Let sorrow be ever so deep, and love ever so true, a man will be cold who travels by winter, and hungry who has traveled by night. And a woman, who is a true, genuine woman, always takes delight in ministering to the natural wants of her friend. To see a man eat and drink, and wear his slippers, and sit at ease in his chair, is delightful to the feminine heart that loves. When I heard the other day that a girl had herself visited the room prepared for a man in her mother's house, then I knew that she loved him, though I had never before believed it. Phineas, as he stood there, was aware that this woman loved him dearly. She had embraced him, and given her face to him to kiss. She had clasped his hands, and clung to him, and had shown him plainly that in the midst of all her sorrow she could be made happy by his coming. But he was a man far too generous to take all this as meaning aught that it did not mean—too generous, and intrinsically too manly. In his character there was much of weakness, much of vacillation, perhaps some deficiency of strength and purpose; but there was no touch of vanity. Women had loved him, and had told him so; and he had been made happy, and also wretched, by their love. But he had never taken pride, personally, to himself because they had loved him. It had been the accident of his life. Now he remembered chiefly that this woman had called herself his sister, and he was grateful.

Then he thought of her personal appearance. As yet he had hardly looked at her, but he felt that she had become old and worn, angular and hard-visaged. All this had no effect upon his feelings toward her, but filled him with ineffable regret. When he had first known her she had been a woman with a noble presence—not soft and feminine as had been Violet Effingham, but handsome and lustrous, with a healthy youth. In regard to age he and she were of the same standing. That he knew well. She had passed her thirty-second birthday, but that was all. He felt himself to be still a young man, but he could not think of her as of a young woman.

When he went down she had been listening for his footsteps, and met him at the door of the room. "Now sit down," she said, "and be comfortable—if you can, with German surroundings. They are almost always late, and never give one any time. Every body says so. The station at Leipsic is dreadful, I know. Good coffee is very well, but what is the use of good coffee if you have no time to drink it? You must eat our omelette. If there is one thing we can do better than you, it is to make an omelette. Yes, that is genuine German sausage. There is always some placed upon the table; but the Germans who come here never touch it themselves. You will have a cutlet, won't you? I breakfasted an hour ago, and more. I would not wait, because then I thought I could talk to you better, and wait upon you. I did not think that any thing would ever please me so much again as your

coming has done. Oh, how much we shall have to say! Do you remember when we last parted—when you were going back to Ireland?"

"I remember it well."  
"Ah me! as I look back upon it all, how strange it seems! I dare say you don't remember the first day I met you at Mr. Mildmay's—when I asked you to come to Portman Square because Barrington had said that you were clever?"

"I remember well going to Portman Square."  
"That was the beginning of it all. Oh dear, oh dear; when I think of it, I find it so hard to see where I have been right, and where I have been wrong. If I had not been very wrong, all this evil could not have come upon me."

"Misfortune has not always been deserved."  
"I am sure it has been so with me. You can smoke here if you like." This Phineas persistently refused to do. "You may if you please. Papa never comes in here, and I don't mind it. You'll settle down in a day or two, and understand the extent of your liberties. Tell me first about Violet. She is happy?"

"Quite happy, I think."  
"I knew he would be good to her. But does she like the kind of life?"

"Oh yes."  
"She has a baby, and therefore, of course, she is happy. She says he is the finest fellow in the world."

"I dare say he is. They all seem to be contented with him, but they don't talk much about him."

"No; they wouldn't. Had you a child you would have talked about him, Phineas. I should have loved my baby better than all the world, but I should have been silent about him. With Violet of course her husband is the first object. It would certainly be so from her nature. And so Oswald is quite tame?"

"I don't know that he is very tame out hunting."

"But to her?"  
"I should think always. She, you know, is very clever."

"So clever!"  
"And would be sure to steer clear of all offense," said Phineas, enthusiastically.

"While I could never for an hour avoid it: Did they say any thing about the journey to Flanders?"

"Chiltern did, frequently. He made me strip my shoulder to show him the place where he hit me."

"How like Oswald!"

"And he told me that he would have given one of his eyes to kill me, only Colepepper wouldn't let him go on. He half quarreled with his second, but the man told him that I had not fired at him, and the thing must drop. 'It's better as it is, you know,' he said. And I agreed with him."

"And how did Violet receive you?"  
"Like an angel—as she is."

"Well, yes. I'll grant she is an angel now. I was angry with her once, you know. You men find so many angels in your travels. You have been honest than some. You have generally been off with the old angel before you were on with the new—as far at least as I knew."

"Is that meant for rebuke, Lady Laura?"  
"No, my friend; no. That is all over. I

said to myself when you told me that you would come, that I would not utter one ill-natured word. And I told myself more than that."

"What more?"  
"That you had never deserved it—at least from me. But surely you were the most simple of men."

"I dare say."  
"Men when they are true are simple. They are often false as hell, and then they are crafty as Lucifer. But the man who is true judges others by himself—almost without reflection. A woman can be true as steel and cunning at the same time. How cunning was Violet, and yet she never deceived one of her lovers, even by a look. Did she?"

"She never deceived me—if you mean that. She never cared a straw about me, and told me so to my face very plainly."

"She did care—many straws. But I think she always loved Oswald. She refused him again and again, because she thought it wrong to run a great risk, but I knew she would never marry any one else. How little Lady Baldock understood her. Fancy your meeting Lady Baldock at Oswald's house!"

"Fancy Augusta Boreham turning nun!"  
"How exquisitely grotesque it must have been when she made her complaint to you."

"I pitied her with all my heart."  
"Of course you did, because you are so soft. And now, Phineas, we will put it off no longer. Tell me all that you have to tell me about him."

## CHAPTER XII.

### KÖNIGSTEIN.

PHINEAS FINN and Lady Laura Kennedy sat together discussing the affairs of the past till the servant told them that "My Lord" was in the next room, and ready to receive Mr. Finn. "You will find him much altered," said Lady Laura, "even more than I am."

"I do not find you altered at all."

"Yes, you do—in appearance. I am a middle-aged woman, and conscious that I may use my privileges as such. But he has become quite an old man—not in health so much as in manner. But he will be very glad to see you." So saying, she led him into a room, in which he found the Earl seated near the fire-place, and wrapped in furs. He got up to receive his guest, and Phineas saw at once that during the two years of his exile from England Lord Brentford had passed from manhood to senility. He almost tottered as he came forward, and he wrapped his coat around him with that air of studious self-preservation which belongs only to the infirm.

"It is very good of you to come and see me, Mr. Finn," he said.

"Don't call him Mr. Finn, papa. I call him Phineas."

"Well, yes; that's all right, I dare say. It's a terrible long journey from London, isn't it, Mr. Finn?"

"Too long to be pleasant, my lord."

"Pleasant! Oh dear! There's no pleasantness about it. And so they've got an autumn session, have they? That's always a very stupid thing to do, unless they want money."

"But there is a money bill which must be passed. That's Mr. Daubeny's excuse."

"Ah, if they've a money bill, of course it's all right. So you're in Parliament again?"

"I'm sorry to say I'm not." Then Lady Laura explained to her father, probably for the third or fourth time, exactly what was their guest's position. "Oh, a scrutiny. We didn't use to have any scrutinies at Loughton, did we? Ah me! well, every thing seems to be going to the dogs. I'm told they're attacking the Church now." Lady Laura glanced at Phineas; but neither of them said a word. "I don't quite understand it; but they tell me that the Tories are going to disestablish the Church. I'm very glad I'm out of it all. Things have come to such a pass that I don't see how a gentleman is to hold office nowadays. Have you seen Chiltern lately?"

After a while, when Phineas had told the Earl all that there was to tell of his son and his grandson, and all of politics and of Parliament, Lady Laura suddenly interrupted them. "You knew, papa, that he was to see Mr. Kennedy. He has been to Lough Linter, and has seen him."

"Oh, indeed!"  
"He is quite assured that I could not with wisdom return to live with my husband."

"It is a very grave decision to make," said the Earl.

"But he has no doubt about it," continued Lady Laura.

"Not a shadow of doubt," said Phineas. "I will not say that Mr. Kennedy is mad; but the condition of his mind is such in regard to Lady Laura that I do not think she could live with him in safety. He is crazed about religion."

"Dear, dear, dear!" exclaimed the Earl.

"The gloom of his house is unsupportable. And he does not pretend that he desires her to return that he and she may be happy together."

"What for, then?"

"That we might be unhappy together," said Lady Laura.

"He repudiates all belief in happiness. He wishes her to return to him chiefly because it is right that a man and wife should live together."

"So it is," said the Earl.

"But not to the utter wretchedness of both of them," said Lady Laura. "He says"—and she pointed to Phineas—"that were I there he would renew his accusation against me. He has not told me all. Perhaps he can not tell me all. But I certainly will not return to Lough Linter."

"Very well, my dear."

"It is not very well, papa; but, nevertheless, I will not return to Lough Linter. What I suffered there neither of you can understand."

That afternoon Phineas went out alone to the galleries, but the next day she accompanied him, and showed him whatever of glory the town had to offer in its winter dress. They stood together before great masters, and together examined small gems. And then from day to day they were always in each other's company. He had promised to stay a month, and during that time he was petted and comforted to his heart's content. Lady Laura would have taken him into the Saxon Switzerland, in spite of the inclemency of the weather and her father's rebukes, had he not declared vehemently that he was happier remaining in the town. But she did succeed in