

tion for him which had underlain 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

carrying him off to the fortress of Königstein; and there, as they wandered along the fortress constructed on that wonderful rock, there occurred between them a conversation which he never forgot, and which it would not have been easy to forget. His own prospects had of course been frequently discussed. He had told her every thing, down to the exact amount of money which he had to support him till he should again be enabled to earn an income, and had received assurances from her that every thing would be just as it should be after the lapse of a few months. The Liberals would, as a matter of course, come in, and equally, as a matter of course, Phineas would be in office. She spoke of this with such certainty that she almost convinced him. Having tempted him away from the safety of permanent income, the party could not do less than provide for him. If he could only secure a seat he would be safe; and it seemed that Tankerville would be a certain seat. This certainty he would not admit; but, nevertheless, he was comforted by his friends. When you have done the rashest thing in the world, it is very pleasant to be told that no man of spirit could have acted otherwise. It was a matter of course that he should return to public life—so said Lady Laura—and doubly a matter of course when he found himself a widower without a child. “Whether it be a bad life or a good life,” said Lady Laura, “you and I understand equally well that no other life is worth having after it. We are like the actors, who can not bear to be away from the gas-lights when once they have lived amidst their glare.” As she said this, they were leaning together over one of the parapets of the great fortress, and the sadness of the words struck him as they bore upon herself. She also had lived amidst the gas-lights, and now she was self-banished into absolute obscurity. “You could not have been content with your life in Dublin,” she said.

“Are you content with your life in Dresden?”

“Certainly not. We all like exercise; but the man who has had his leg cut off can't walk. Some can walk with safety; others only with a certain peril; and others can not at all. You are in the second position, but I am in the last.”

“I do not see why you should not return.”

“And if I did, what would come of it? In place of the seclusion of Dresden, there would be the seclusion of Portman Square or of Saulsby. Who would care to have me at their houses, or to come to mine? You know what a hazardous, chancy, short-lived thing is the fashion of a woman. With wealth, and wit, and social charm, and impudence, she may preserve it for some years, but when she has once lost it she can never recover it. I am as much lost to the people who did know me in London as though I had been buried for a century. A man makes himself really useful, but a woman can never do that.”

“All those general rules mean nothing,” said Phineas. “I should try it.”

“No, Phineas, I know better than that. It would only be disappointment. I hardly think that, after all, you ever did understand when it was that I broke down utterly, and marred my fortunes forever.”

“I know the day that did it.”

“When I accepted him?”

“Of course it was. I know that, and so do you. There need be no secret between us.”

“There need be no secret between us, certainly, and on my part there shall be none. On my part there has been none.”

“Nor on mine.”

“There has been nothing for you to tell—since you blurted out your short story of love that day over the water-fall, when I tried so hard to stop you.”

“How was I to be stopped then?”

“No; you were too simple. You came there with but one idea, and you could not change it on the spur of the moment. When I told you that I was engaged, you could not swallow back the words that were not yet spoken. Ah, how well I remember it! But you are wrong, Phineas. It was not my engagement or my marriage that has made the world a blank for me. A feeling came upon him which half choked him, so that he could ask her no further questions. “You know that, Phineas.”

“It was your marriage,” he said, gruffly.

“It was, and has been, and still will be my strong, unalterable, unquenchable love for you. How could I behave to that other man with even seeming tenderness when my mind was always thinking of you, when my heart was always fixed upon you? But you have been so simple, so little given to vanity”—she leaned upon his arm as she spoke—“so pure and so manly, that you have not believed this, even when I told you. Has it not been so?”

“I do not wish to believe it now.”

“But you do believe it? You must and shall believe it. I ask for nothing in return. As my God is my judge, if I thought it possible that your heart should be to me as mine is to you, I could have put a pistol to my ear sooner than speak as I have spoken.” Though she paused for some word from him, he could not utter a word. He remembered many things, but even in his present mood he could not allude to them;—how he had kissed her at the Falls, how she had bade him not come back to the house because his presence to her was insupportable; how she had again encouraged him to come, and had then forbidden him to accept even an invitation to dinner from her husband. And he remembered, too, the fierceness of her anger to him when he told her of his love for Violet Effingham.

“I must insist upon it,” she continued, “that you shall take me now as I really am—as your dearest friend, your sister, your mother, if you will. I know what I am. Were my husband not still living it would be the same. I should never under any circumstances marry again. I have passed the period of a woman's life when as a woman she is loved; but I have not outlived the power of loving. I shall fret about you, Phineas, like an old hen after her one chick; and though you turn out to be a duck, and get away into waters where I can not follow you, I shall go cackling round the pond, and always have my eye upon you.” He was holding her now by the hand, but he could not speak, for the tears were trickling down his cheeks. “When I was young,” she continued, “I did not credit myself with capacity for so much passion. I told myself that love, after all, should be a servant and not a master, and I married my husband

fully intending to do my duty to him. Now we see what has come of it.”

“It has been his fault, not yours,” said Phineas.

“It was my fault—mine; for I never loved him. Had you not told me what manner of man he was before? And I had believed you, though I denied it. And I knew when I went to Lough Linter that it was you whom I loved. And I knew too—I almost knew that you would ask me to be your wife were not that other thing settled first. And I declared to myself that, in spite of both our hearts, it should not be so. I had no money then—nor had you.”

“I would have worked for you.”

“Ah, yes; but you must not reproach me now, Phineas. I never deserted you as regarded your interests, though what little love you had for me was short-lived indeed. Nay; you are not accused, and shall not excuse yourself. You were right—always right. When you had failed to win one woman, your heart, with a true natural spring, went to another. And so entire had been the cure that you went to the first woman with the tale of your love for the second.”

“To whom was I to go but to a friend?”

“You did come to a friend, and though I could not drive out of my heart the demon of jealousy, though I was cut to the very bone, I would have helped you, had help been possible. Though it had been the fixed purpose of my life that Violet and Oswald should be man and wife, I would have helped you because that other purpose of serving you in all things had become more fixed. But it was to no good end that I sang your praises. Violet Effingham was not the girl to marry this man or that at the bidding of any one, was she?”

“No, indeed.”

“It is of no use now talking of it, is it? But I want you to understand me from the beginning; to understand all that was evil, and any thing that was good. Since first I found that you were to me the dearest of human beings I have never once been untrue to your interests, though I have been unable not to be angry with you. Then came that wonderful episode in which you saved my husband's life.”

“Not his life.”

“Was it not singular that it should come from your hand? It seemed like Fate. I tried to use the accident, to make his friendship for you as thorough as my own. And then I was obliged to separate you, because—because, after all, I was so mere a woman that I could not bear to have you near me. I can bear it now.”

“Dear Laura!”

“Yes; as your sister. I think you can not but love me a little when you know how entirely I am devoted to you. I can bear to have you near me now, and think of you only as the hen-thinks of her duckling. For a moment you are out of the pond, and I have gathered you under my wing. You understand?”

“I know that I am unworthy of what you say of me.”

“Worth has nothing to do with it, has no bearing on it. I do not say that you are more worthy than all whom I have known. But when did worth create love? What I want is that you should believe me, and know that there is one bound to you who will never be unbound, one whom you can trust in all things—one to whom

you can confess that you have been wrong if you go wrong, and yet be sure that you will not lessen her regard. And with this feeling you must pretend to nothing more than friendship. You will love again, of course.”

“Oh no.”

“Of course you will. I tried to blaze into power by a marriage, and I failed, because I was a woman. A woman should marry only for love. You will do it yet, and will not fail. You may remember this too—that I shall never be jealous again. You may tell me every thing with safety. You will tell me every thing?”

“If there be any thing to tell, I will.”

“I will never stand between you and your wife, though I would fain hope that she should know how true a friend I am. Now we have walked here till it is dark, and the sentry will think we are taking plans of the place. Are you cold?”

“I have not thought about the cold.”

“Nor have I. We will go down to the inn and warm ourselves before the train comes. I wonder why I should have brought you here to tell you my story. Oh, Phineas!” Then she threw herself into his arms, and he pressed her to his heart, and kissed first her forehead and then her lips. “It shall never be so again,” she said. “I will kill it out of my heart, even though I should crucify my body. But it is not my love that I will kill. When you are happy, I will be happy. When you prosper, I will prosper. When you fail, I will fail. When you rise—as you will rise—I will rise with you. But I will never again feel the pressure of your arm round my waist. Here is the gate, and the old guide.—So, my friend, you see that we are not lost.” Then they walked down the very steep hill to the little town below the fortress, and there they remained till the evening train came from Prague, and took them back to Dresden.

Two days after this was the day fixed for Finn's departure. On the intermediate day the Earl begged for a few minutes' private conversation with him, and the two were closeted together for an hour. The Earl, in truth, had little or nothing to say. Things had so gone with him that he had hardly a will of his own left, and did simply that which his daughter directed him to do. He pretended to consult Phineas as to the expedience of his returning to Saulsby. Did Phineas think that his return would be of any use to the party? Phineas knew very well that the party would not recognize the difference whether the Earl lived at Dresden or in London. When a man has come to the end of his influence as the Earl had done, he is as much a nothing in politics as though he had never risen above that quantity. The Earl had never risen very high, and even Phineas, with all his desire to be civil, could not say that the Earl's presence would materially save the interests of the Liberal party. He made what most civil excuses he could, and suggested that if Lord Brentford should choose to return, Lady Laura would very willingly remain at Dresden alone. “But why shouldn't she come too?” asked the Earl. And then, with the tardiness of old age, he proposed his little plan. “Why should she not make an attempt to live once more with her husband?”

“She never will,” said Phineas.

“But think how much she loses,” said the Earl.

"I am quite sure she never will. And I am quite sure that she ought not to do so. The marriage was a misfortune. As it is, they are better apart." After that the Earl did not dare to say another word about his daughter; but discussed his son's affairs. Did not Phineas think that Chiltern might now be induced to go into Parliament? "Nothing would make him do so," said Phineas.

"But he might farm?"

"You see he has his hands full."

"But other men keep hounds and farm too," said the Earl.

"But Chiltern is not like other men. He gives his whole mind to it, and finds full employment. And then he is quite happy, and so is she. What more can you want for him? Every body respects him."

"That goes a very great way," said the Earl. Then he thanked Phineas cordially, and felt that now as ever he had done his duty by her family.

There was no renewal of the passionate conversation which had taken place on the ramparts, but much of tenderness and of sympathy arose from it. Lady Laura took upon herself the tone and manners of an elder sister—of a sister very much older than her brother—and Phineas submitted to them not only gracefully but with delight to himself. He had not thanked her for her love when she expressed it, and he did not do so afterward. But he accepted it, and bowed to it, and recognized it as constituting one of the future laws of his life. He was to do nothing of importance without her knowledge, and he was to be at her command should she at any time want assistance in England. "I suppose I shall come back some day," she said, as they were sitting together late on the evening before his departure.

"I can not understand why you should not do so now. Your father wishes it."

"He thinks he does; but were he told that he was to go to-morrow, or next summer, it would fret him. I am assured that Mr. Kennedy could demand my return—by law."

"He could not enforce it."

"He would attempt it. I will not go back until he consents to my living apart from him. And, to tell the truth, I am better here for a while. They say that the sick animals always creep somewhere under cover. I am a sick animal, and now that I have crept here I will remain till I am stronger. How terribly anxious you must be about Tankerville!"

"I am anxious."

"You will telegraph to me at once? You will be sure to do that?"

"Of course I will, the moment I know my fate."

"And if it goes against you?"

"Ah! what then?"

"I shall at once write to Barrington Erle. I don't suppose he would do much now for his poor cousin, but he can at any rate say what can be done. I should bid you come here, only that stupid people would say that you were my lover. I should not mind, only that he would hear it, and I am bound to save him from annoyance. Would you not go down to Oswald again?"

"With what object?"

"Because any thing will be better than returning to Ireland. Why not go down and look after Saulsby? It would be a home, and you need

not tie yourself to it. I will speak to papa about that. But you will get the seat."

"I think I shall," said Phineas.

"Do; pray do! If I could only get hold of that judge by the ears! Do you know what time it is? It is twelve, and your train starts at eight." Then he arose to bid her adieu. "No," she said; "I shall see you off."

"Indeed you will not. It will be almost night when I leave this, and the frost is like iron."

"Neither the night nor the frost will kill me.

Do you think I will not give you your last breakfast? God bless you, dear."

And on the following morning she did give him his breakfast by candle-light, and went down with him to the station. The morning was black, and the frost was, as he had said, as hard as iron, but she was thoroughly good-humored, and apparently happy. "It has been so much to me to have you here that I might tell you every thing," she said. "You will understand me now."

"I understand, but I know not how to believe," she said.

"You do believe. You would be worse than a Jew if you did not believe me. But you understand also. I want you to marry, and you must tell her all the truth. If I can, I will love her almost as much as I do you. And if I live to see them, I will love your children as dearly as I do you. Your children shall be my children, or at least one of them shall be mine. You will tell me when it is to be."

"If I ever intend such a thing, I will tell you."

"Now, good-by. I shall stand back there till the train starts, but do not you notice me. God bless you, Phineas." She held his hand tight within her own for some seconds, and looked into his face with an unutterable love. Then she drew down her veil, and went and stood apart till the train had left the platform.

"He has gone, papa," Lady Laura said, as she stood afterward by her father's bedside.

"Has he? Yes; I know he was to go, of course. I was very glad to see him, Laura."

"So was I, papa—very glad indeed. Whatever happens to him, we must never lose sight of him again."

"We shall hear of him, of course, if he is in the House."

"Whether he is in the House or out of it, we must hear of him. While we have aught, he must never want." The Earl stared at his daughter. The Earl was a man of large possessions, and did not as yet understand that he was to be called upon to share them with Phineas Finn. "I know, papa, you will never think ill of me."

"Never, my dear."

"I have sworn that I will be a sister to that man, and I will keep my oath."

"I know you are a very good sister to Chiltern," said the Earl. Lady Laura had at one time appropriated her whole fortune, which had been large, to the payment of her brother's debts. The money had been returned, and had gone to her husband. Lord Brentford now supposed that she intended at some future time to pay the debts of Phineas Finn.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I HAVE GOT THE SEAT."

WHEN Phineas returned to London, the autumn session, though it had been carried on so near to Christmas as to make many members very unhappy, had already been over for a fortnight. Mr. Daubeny had played his game with consummate skill to the last. He had brought in no bill, but had stated his intention of doing so early in the following session. He had, he said, of course been aware from the first that it would have been quite impossible to carry such a measure as that proposed during the few weeks in which it had been possible for them to sit between the convening of Parliament and the Christmas holidays; but he thought that it was expedient that the proposition should be named to the House and ventilated as it had been, so that members on both sides might be induced to give their most studious attention to the subject before a measure, which must be so momentous, should be proposed to them. As had happened, the unforeseen division to which the House had been pressed on the Address had proved that the majority of the House was in favor of the great reform which it was the object of his ambition to complete. They were aware that they had been assembled at a somewhat unusual and inconvenient period of the year, because the service of the country had demanded that certain money bills should be passed. He, however, rejoiced greatly that this earliest opportunity had been afforded to him of explaining the intentions of the Government with which he had the honor of being connected. In answer to this there arose a perfect torrent of almost vituperative antagonism from the opposite side of the House. Did the Right Honorable gentleman dare to say that the question had been ventilated in the country, when it had never been broached by him or any of his followers till after the general election had been completed? Was it not notorious to the country that the first hint of it had been given when the Right Honorable gentleman was elected for East Barseshire, and was it not equally notorious that that election had been so arranged that the marvelous proposition of the Right Honorable gentleman should not be known even to his own party till there remained no possibility of the expression of any condemnation from the hustings? It might be that the Right Honorable could so rule his own followers in that House as to carry them with him even in a matter so absolutely opposite to their own most cherished convictions. It certainly seemed that he had succeeded in doing so for the present. But would any one believe that he would have carried the country had he dared to face the country with such a measure in his hands? Ventilation, indeed! He had not dared to ventilate his proposition. He had used this short session in order that he might keep his clutch fastened on power, and in doing so was indifferent alike to the Constitution, to his party, and to the country.

Harder words had never been spoken in the House than were uttered on this occasion. But the Minister was successful. He had been supported on the Address; and he went home to East Barseshire at Christmas, perhaps with some little fear of the parsons around him, but

with a full conviction that he would at least carry the second reading of his bill.

London was more than usually full and busy this year immediately after Christmas. It seemed as though it were admitted by all the Liberal party generally that the sadness of the occasion ought to rob the season of its usual festivities. Who could eat mince-pies or think of twelfth-night while so terribly wicked a scheme was in progress for keeping the real majority out in the cold? It was the injustice of the thing that rankled so deeply—that, and a sense of inferiority to the cleverness displayed by Mr. Daubeny! It was as when a player is checkmated by some audacious combination of two pawns and a knight, such being all the remaining forces of the victorious adversary, when the beaten man has two castles and a queen upon the board. It was, indeed, worse than this—for the adversary had appropriated to his own use the castles and the queen of the unhappy vanquished one. This Church Reform was the legitimate property of the Liberals, and had not been as yet used by them only because they had felt it right to keep in the background for some future great occasion so great and so valuable a piece of ordnance. It was theirs so safely that they could afford to bide their time. And then—so they all said, and so some of them believed—the country was not ready for so great a measure. It must come; but there must be tenderness in the mode of producing it. The parsons must be respected, and the great Church-of-England feeling of the people must be considered with affectionate regard. Even the most rabid Dissenter would hardly wish to see a structure so nearly divine attacked and destroyed by rude hands. With grave and slow and sober earnestness, with loving touches and soft caressing manipulation, let the beautiful old Church be laid to its rest, as something too exquisite, too lovely, too refined for the present rough manners of the world! Such were the ideas as to Church Reform of the leading Liberals of the day; and now this man, without even a majority to back him, this audacious Cagliostro among statesmen, this destructive leader of all declared Conservatives, had come forward without a moment's warning, and pretended that he would do the thing out of hand! Men knew that it had to be done. The country had begun to perceive that the old Establishment must fall; and, knowing this, would not the liberal backbone of Great Britain perceive the enormity of this Cagliostro's wickedness—and rise against him and bury him beneath its scorn as it ought to do? This was the feeling that made a real Christmas impossible to Messrs. Ratler and Bonteen.

"The one thing incredible to me," said Mr. Ratler, "is that Englishmen should be so mean." He was alluding to the Conservatives who had shown their intention of supporting Mr. Daubeny, and whom he accused of doing so, simply with a view to power and patronage, without any regard to their own consistency or to the welfare of the country. Mr. Ratler probably did not correctly read the minds of the men whom he was accusing, and did not perceive, as he should have done with his experience, how little there was among them of cemented action. To defend the Church was a duty to each of them; but then so also was it a duty to support his

party. And each one could see his way to the one duty, whereas the other was vague, and too probably ultimately impossible. If it were proper to throw off the incubus of their conqueror's authority, surely some wise and great and bold man would get up and so declare. Some junto of wise men of the party would settle that he should be deposed. But where were they to look for the wise and bold men? where even for the junto? Of whom did the party consist? Of honest, chivalrous, and enthusiastic men, but mainly of men who were idle, and unable to take upon their own shoulders the responsibility of real work. Their leaders had been selected from the outside—clever, eager, pushing men, but of late had been hardly selected from among themselves. As used to be the case with Italian powers, they intrusted their cause to mercenary foreign generals, soldiers of fortune, who carried their good swords whither they were wanted; and, as of old, the leaders were ever ready to fight, but would themselves declare what should and what should not be the *casus belli*. There was not so much meanness as Mr. Ratler supposed in the Conservative ranks, but very much more unhappiness. Would it not be better to go home and live at the family park all the year round, and hunt, and attend Quarter Sessions, and be able to declare morning and evening with a clear conscience that the country was going to the dogs? Such was the mental working of many a Conservative who supported Mr. Daubeny on this occasion.

At the instance of Lady Laura, Phineas called upon the Duke of St. Bungay soon after his return, and was very kindly received by his Grace. In former days, when there were Whigs instead of Liberals, it was almost a rule of political life that all leading Whigs should be uncles, brothers-in-law, or cousins to each other. This was pleasant, and gave great consistency to the party; but the system has now gone out of vogue. There remains of it, however, some traces, so that among the nobler-born Liberals of the day there is still a good deal of agreeable family connection. In this way the St. Bungay Fitz-Howards were related to the Mildmays and Standishes, and such a man as Barrington Erle was sure to be cousin to all of them. Lady Laura had thus only sent her friend to a relation of her own, and as the Duke and Phineas had been in the same Government, his Grace was glad enough to receive the returning aspirant. Of course there was something said at first as to the life of the Earl at Dresden. The Duke recollected the occasion of such banishment, and shook his head, and attempted to look unhappy when the wretched condition of Mr. Kennedy was reported to him. But he was essentially a happy man, and shook off the gloom at once when Phineas spoke of politics. "So you are coming back to us, Mr. Finn?"

"They tell me I may perhaps get the seat."

"I am heartily glad, for you were very useful. I remember how Cantrip almost cried when he told me you were going to leave him. He had been rather put upon, I fancy, before."

"There was perhaps something in that, your Grace."

"There will be nothing to return to now beyond barren honors."

"Not for a while."

"Not for a long while," said the Duke—"for a long while, that is, as candidates for office regard time. Mr. Daubeny will be safe for this session at least. I doubt whether he will really attempt to carry his measure this year. He will bring it forward, and after the late division he must get his second reading. He will then break down gracefully in Committee, and declare that the importance of the interests concerned demands further inquiry. It wasn't a thing to be done in one year."

"Why should he do it at all?" asked Phineas.

"That's what every body asks, but the answer seems to be so plain! Because he can do it, and we can't. He will get from our side much support, and we should get none from his."

"There is something to me sickening in their dishonesty," said Phineas, energetically.

"The country has the advantage; and I don't know that they are dishonest. Ought we to come to a dead lock in legislation in order that parties might fight out their battle till one had killed the other?"

"I don't think a man should support a measure which he believes to be destructive."

"He doesn't believe it to be destructive. The belief is theoretic—or not even quite that. It is hardly more than romantic. As long as acres are dear, and he can retain those belonging to him, the country gentleman will never really believe his country to be in danger. It is the same with commerce. As long as the Three per Cents. do not really mean Four per Cent.—I may say as long as they don't mean Five per Cent.—the country will be rich, though every one should swear that it be ruined."

"I'm very glad, at the same time, that I don't call myself a Conservative," said Phineas.

"That shows how disinterested you are, as you certainly would be in office. Good-by. Come and see the Duchess when she comes to town. And if you've nothing better to do, give us a day or two at Longroyston at Easter." Now Longroyston was the Duke's well-known country-seat, at which Whig hospitality had been dispensed with a lavish hand for two centuries.

On the 20th January Phineas traveled down to Tankerville again in obedience to a summons served upon him at the instance of the judge who was to try his petition against Browborough. It was the special and somewhat unusual nature of this petition that the complainants not only sought to oust the sitting member, but also to give the seat to the late unsuccessful candidate. There was to be a scrutiny, by which, if it should be successful, so great a number of votes would be deducted from those polled on behalf of the unfortunate Mr. Browborough as to leave a majority for his opponent, with the additional disagreeable obligation upon him of paying the cost of the transaction by which he would thus lose his seat. Mr. Browborough, no doubt, looked upon the whole thing with the greatest disgust. He thought that a battle when once won should be regarded as over till the occasion should come for another battle. He had spent his money like a gentleman, and hated these mean ways. No one could ever say that he had ever petitioned. That was his way of looking at it. That Shibboleth of his as to the prospects of England and the Church of her people had, no doubt, made the House less agreeable to him during the last

short session than usual; but he had stuck to his party, and voted with Mr. Daubeny on the Address—the obligation for such vote having inconveniently pressed itself upon him before the presentation of the petition had been formally completed. He had always stuck to his party. It was the pride of his life that he had been true and consistent. He also was summoned to Tankerville, and he was forced to go, although he knew that the Shibboleth would be thrown in his teeth.

Mr. Browborough spent two or three very uncomfortable days at Tankerville, whereas Phineas was triumphant. There were worse things in store for poor Mr. Browborough than his repudiated Shibboleth, or even than his lost seat. Mr. Ruddles, acting with wondrous energy, succeeded in knocking off the necessary votes, and succeeded also in proving that these votes were void by reason of gross bribery. He astonished Phineas by the cool effrontery with which he took credit to himself for not having purchased votes in the Fallgate on the Liberal side, but Phineas was too wise to remind him that he himself had hinted at one time that it would be well to lay out a little money in that way. No one at the present moment was more clear than was Ruddles as to the necessity of purity at elections. Not a penny had been misspent by the Finmites. A vote or two from their score was knocked off on grounds which did not touch the candidate or his agents. One man had personated a vote, but this appeared to have been done at the instigation of some very cunning Browborough partisan. Another man had been wrongly described. This, however, amounted to nothing. Phineas Finn was seated for the borough, and the judge declared his purpose of recommending the House of Commons to issue a commission with reference to the expediency of instituting a prosecution. Mr. Browborough left the town in great disgust, not without various publicly expressed intimations from his opponents that the prosperity of England depended on the Church of her people. Phineas was gloriously entertained by the Liberals of the borough, and then informed that, as so much had been done for him, it was hoped that he would now open his pockets on behalf of the charities of the town. "Gentlemen," said Phineas to one or two of the leading Liberals, "it is as well that you should know at once that I am a very poor man." The leading Liberals made wry faces, but Phineas was member for the borough.

The moment that the decision was announced, Phineas, shaking off for the time his congratulatory friends, hurried to the post-office, and sent his message to Lady Laura Standish at Dresden: "I have got the seat." He was almost ashamed of himself as the telegraph boy looked up at him when he gave in the words, but this was a task which he could not have intrusted to any one else. He almost thought that this was, in truth, the proudest and happiest moment of his life. She would so thoroughly enjoy his triumph, would receive from it such great and unselfish joy, that he almost wished that he could have taken the message himself. Surely, had he done so, there would have been fit occasion for another embrace.

He was again a member of the British House of Commons—was again in possession of that

privilege for which he had never ceased to sigh since the moment in which he lost it. A drunkard or a gambler may be weaned from his ways, but not a politician. To have been in the House and not to be there was, to such a one as Phineas Finn, necessarily a state of discontent. But now he had worked his way up again, and he was determined that no fears for the future should harass him. He would give his heart and soul to the work while his money lasted. It would surely last him for the session. He was all alone in the world, and would trust to the chapter of accidents for the future.

"I never knew a fellow with such luck as yours," said Barrington Erle to him on his return to London. "A seat always drops into your mouth when the circumstances seem to be most forlorn."

"I have been lucky, certainly."

"My cousin, Laura Kennedy, has been writing to me about you."

"I went over to see them, you know."

"So I heard. She talks some nonsense about the Earl being willing to do any thing for you. What could the Earl do? He has no more influence in the Loughton borough than I have. All that kind of thing is clean done for—with one or two exceptions. We got much better men while it lasted than we do now."

"I should doubt that."

"We did—much truer men—men who went straighter. By-the-bye, Phineas, we must have no tricks on this Church matter. We mean to do all we can to throw out the second reading."

"You know what I said at the hustings."

"D— the hustings. I know what Browborough said, and Browborough voted like a man with his party. You were against the Church at the hustings, and he was for it. You will vote just the other way. There will be a little confusion, but the people of Tankerville will never remember the particulars."

"I don't know that I can do that."

"By Heavens, if you don't, you shall never more be officer of ours—though Laura Kennedy should cry her eyes out!"

CHAPTER XIV.

TRUMPETON WOOD.

In the mean time the hunting season was going on in the Brake country with checkered success. There had arisen the great Trumpeton Wood question, about which the sporting world was doomed to hear so much for the next twelve months—and Lord Chiltern was in an unhappy state of mind. Trumpeton Wood belonged to that old friend of ours, the Duke of Omnium, who had now almost fallen into second childhood. It was quite out of the question that the Duke should himself interfere in such a matter, or know any thing about it; but Lord Chiltern, with headstrong resolution, had persisted in writing to the Duke himself. Foxes had always hitherto been preserved in Trumpeton Wood, and the earths had always been stopped on receipt of due notice by the keepers. During the cubbing season there had arisen quarrels. The keepers complained that no effort was made to kill the foxes. Lord Chiltern swore that the earths were