

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

not stopped. Then there came tidings of a terrible calamity. A dying fox, with a trap to its pad, was found in the outskirts of the wood, and Lord Chiltern wrote to the Duke. He drew the wood in regular course before any answer could be received; and three of his hounds picked up poison, and died beneath his eyes. He wrote to the Duke again—a cutting letter; and then came from the Duke's man of business, Mr. Fothergill, a very short reply, which Lord Chiltern regarded as an insult. Hitherto the affair had not got into the sporting papers, and was simply a matter of angry discussion at every meet in the neighboring counties. Lord Chiltern was very full of wrath, and always looked as though he desired to avenge those poor hounds on the Duke and all belonging to him. To a Master of Hounds the poisoning of one of his pack is murder of the deepest dye. There probably never was a Master who in his heart of hearts would not think it right that a detected culprit should be hung for such an offense. And most Masters would go further than this, and declare that in the absence of such detection the owner of the covert in which the poison had been picked up should be held to be responsible. In this instance the condition of ownership was unfortunate. The Duke himself was old, feeble, and almost imbecile. He had never been eminent as a sportsman; but, in a not energetic manner, he had endeavored to do his duty by the country. His heir, Plantagenet Palliser, was simply a statesman, who, as regarded himself, had never a day to spare for amusement, and who, in reference to sport, had unfortunate fantastic notions that pheasants and rabbits destroyed crops, and that foxes were injurious to old women's poultry. He, however, was not the owner, and had refused to interfere. There had been family quarrels, too, adverse to the sporting interests of the younger Palliser scions, so that the shooting of this wood had drifted into the hands of Mr. Fothergill and his friends. Now Lord Chiltern had settled it in his own mind that the hounds had been poisoned, if not in compliance with Mr. Fothergill's orders, at any rate in furtherance of his wishes, and, could he have had his way, he certainly would have sent Mr. Fothergill to the gallows. Now Miss Palliser, who was still staying at Lord Chiltern's house, was niece to the old Duke, and first cousin to the heir. "They are nothing to me," she said once, when Lord Chiltern had attempted to apologize for the abuse he was heaping on her relatives. "I haven't seen the Duke since I was a little child, and I shouldn't know my cousin were I to meet him."

"So much the more gracious is your condition," said Lady Chiltern—"at any rate in Oswald's estimation."

"I know them, and once spent a couple of days at Matching with them," said Lord Chiltern. "The Duke is an old fool, who always gave himself greater airs than any other man in England—and as far as I can see, with less to excuse them. As for Planty Pall, he and I belong so essentially to different orders of things that we can hardly be reckoned as being both men."

"And which is the man, Lord Chiltern?"

"Whichever you please, my dear; only not both. Doggett was over there yesterday, and found three separate traps."

"What did he do with the traps?" said Lady Chiltern.

"I wasn't fool enough to ask him, but I don't in the least doubt that he threw them into the water—or that he'd throw Palliser there too if he could get hold of him. As for taking the hounds to Trumpeton again, I wouldn't do it if there were not another covert in the country."

"Then leave it so, and have done with it," said his wife. "I wouldn't fret as you do for what another man did with his own property, for all the foxes in England."

"That is because you understand nothing of hunting, my dear. A man's property is his own in one sense, but isn't his own in another. A man can't do what he likes with his coverts."

"He can cut them down."

"But he can't let another pack hunt them, and he can't hunt them himself. If he's in a hunting county he is bound to preserve foxes."

"What binds him, Oswald? A man can't be bound without a penalty."

"I should think it penalty enough for every body to hate me. What are you going to do about Phineas Finn?"

"I have asked him to come on the 1st and stay till Parliament meets."

"And is that woman coming?"

"There are two or three women coming."

"She with the German name, whom you made me dine with in Park Lane?"

"Madame Max Goesler is coming. She brings her own horses, and they will stand at Doggett's."

"They can't stand here, for there is not a stall."

"I am so sorry that my poor little fellow should incommode you," said Miss Palliser. "You're a licensed offender—though, upon my honor, I don't know whether I ought to give a feed of oats to any one having a connection with Trumpeton Wood. And what is Phineas to ride?"

"He shall ride my horses," said Lady Chiltern, whose present condition in life rendered hunting inopportune to her.

"Neither of them would carry him a mile. He wants about as good an animal as you can put him upon. I don't know what I'm to do. It's all very well for Laura to say that he must be mounted."

"You wouldn't refuse to give Mr. Finn a mount!" said Lady Chiltern, almost with dismay.

"I'd give him my right hand to ride, only it wouldn't carry him. I can't make horses. Harry brought home that brown mare on Tuesday with an overreach that she won't get over this season. What the deuce they do with their horses to knock them about so I can't understand. I've killed horses in my time, and ridden them to a stand-still, but I never bruised them and battered them about as these fellows do."

"Then I'd better write to Mr. Finn, and tell him," said Lady Chiltern, very gravely.

"Oh, Phineas Finn!" said Lord Chiltern; "oh, Phineas Finn! what a pity it was that you and I didn't see the matter out when we stood opposite to each other on the sands at Blankenberg!"

"Oswald," said his wife, getting up, and putting her arm over his shoulder, "you know you would give your best horse to Mr. Finn, as long as he chose to stay here, though you rode upon a donkey yourself."

"I know that if I didn't, you would," said Lord Chiltern. And so that matter was settled.

At night, when they were alone together, there was further discussion as to the visitors who were coming to Harrington Hall. "Is Gerard Maule to come back?" asked the husband.

"I have asked him. He left his horses at Doggett's, you know."

"I didn't know."

"I certainly told you, Oswald. Do you object to his coming? You can't really mean that you care about his riding?"

"It isn't that. You must have some whipping-post, and he's as good as another. But he shilly-shallies about that girl. I hate all that stuff like poison."

"All men are not so—abrupt, shall I say?—as you were."

"I had something to say, and I said it. When I had said it a dozen times, I got to have it believed. He doesn't say it as though he meant to have it believed."

"You were always in earnest, Oswald."

"I was."

"To the extent of the three minutes which you allowed yourself. It sufficed, however, did it not? You are glad you persevered?"

"What fools women are."

"Never mind that. Say you are glad. I like you to tell me so. Let me be a fool if I will."

"What made you so obstinate?"

"I don't know. I never could tell. I wasn't that I didn't dote upon you, and think about you, and feel quite sure that there never could be any other one than you."

"I've no doubt it was all right; only you very nearly made me shoot a fellow, and now I've got to find horses for him. I wonder whether he could ride Dandolo?"

"Don't put him up on any thing very hard."

"Why not? His wife is dead, and he hasn't got a child, nor yet an acre of property. I don't know who is entitled to break his neck if he is not. And Dandolo is as good a horse as there is in the stable, if you can once get him to go. Mind, I have to start to-morrow at nine, for it's all eighteen miles." And so the Master of the Brake Hounds took himself to his repose.

Lady Laura Kennedy had written to Barrington Erle respecting her friend's political interests, and to her sister-in-law, Lady Chiltern, as to his social comfort. She could not bear to think that he should be left alone in London till Parliament should meet, and had therefore appealed to Lady Chiltern as to the memory of many past events. The appeal had been unnecessary and superfluous. It can not be said that Phineas and his affairs were matters of as close an interest to Lady Chiltern or to Lady Lanra.

If any woman loved her husband beyond all things, Lord Chiltern's wife did, and ever had done so. But there had been a tenderness in regard to the young Irish Member of Parliament, which Violet Effingham had in old days shared with Lady Laura, and which made her now think that all good things should be done for him. She believed him to be addicted to hunting, and therefore horses must be provided for him. He was a widower, and she remembered of old that he was fond of pretty women, and she knew that in coming days he might

probably want money; and therefore she had asked Madame Max Goesler to spend a fortnight at Harrington Hall. Madame Max Goesler and Phineas Finn had been acquainted before, as Lady Chiltern was well aware. But perhaps Lady Chiltern, when she summoned Madame Max into the country, did not know how close the acquaintance had been.

Madame Max came a couple of days before Phineas, and was taken out hunting on the morning after her arrival. She was a lady who could ride to hounds—and who, indeed, could do nearly any thing to which she set her mind. She was dark, thin, healthy, good-looking, clever, ambitious, rich, unsatisfied, perhaps unscrupulous—but not without a conscience. As has been told in a former portion of this chronicle, she could always seem to be happy with her companion of the day, and yet there was ever present a gnawing desire to do something more and something better than she had as yet achieved. Of course, as he took her to the meet, Lord Chiltern told her his grievance respecting Trumpeton Wood. "But, my dear Lord Chiltern, you must not abuse the Duke of Omnium to me."

"Why not to you?"

"He and I are sworn friends."

"He's a hundred years old."

"And why shouldn't I have a friend a hundred years old? And as for Mr. Palliser, he knows no more of your foxes than I know of his taxes. Why don't you write to Lady Glencora? She understands every thing."

"Is she a friend of yours too?"

"My particular friend. She and I, you know, look after the poor dear Duke between us."

"I can understand why she should sacrifice herself."

"But not why I do. I can't explain it myself; but so it has come to pass, and I must not hear the Duke abused. May I write to Lady Glencora about it?"

"Certainly—if you please; but not as giving her any message from me. Her uncle's property is mismanaged most damnably. If you choose to tell her that I say so, you can. I'm not going to ask any thing as a favor. I never do ask favors. But the Duke or Planty Palliser among them should do one of two things. They should either stand by the hunting, or they should let it alone; and they should say what they mean. I like to know my friends, and I like to know my enemies."

"I am sure the Duke is not your enemy, Lord Chiltern."

"These Pallisers have always been running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. They are great aristocrats, and yet are always going in for the people. I'm told that Planty Pall calls fox-hunting barbarous. Why doesn't he say so out loud, and stub up Trumpeton Wood and grow corn?"

"Perhaps he will when Trumpeton Wood belongs to him."

"I should like that much better than poisoning hounds and trapping foxes." When they got to the meet conclaves of men might be seen gathered together here and there, and in each conclave they were telling something new or something old as to the iniquities perpetrated at Trumpeton Wood.

On that evening, before dinner, Madame Goesler was told by her hostess that Phineas Finn was expected on the following day. The communication was made quite as a matter of course; but Lady Chiltern had chosen a time in which the lights were shaded, and the room was dark. Adelaide Palliser was present, as was also a certain Lady Baldock—not that Lady Baldock who had abused all Papists to poor Phineas, but her son's wife. They were drinking tea together over the fire, and the dim lights were removed from the circle. This, no doubt, was simply an accident; but the gloom served Madame Goesler during one moment of embarrassment. "An old friend of yours is coming here to-morrow," said Lady Chiltern.

"An old friend of mine! Shall I call my friend he or she?"

"You remember Mr. Finn?"

That was the moment in which Madame Goesler rejoiced that no strong glare of light fell upon her face. But she was a woman who would not long leave herself subject to any such embarrassment.

"Surely," she said, confining herself at first to the single word.

"He is coming here. He is a great friend of mine."

"He always was a good friend of yours, Lady Chiltern."

"And of yours, too, Madame Max. A sort of general friend, I think, was Mr. Finn in the old days. I hope you will be glad to see him."

"Oh dear, yes."

"I thought him very nice," said Adelaide Palliser.

"I remember mamma saying, before she was mamma, you know," said Lady Baldock, "that Mr. Finn was very nice indeed, only he was a Papist; and only he had got no money, and only he would fall in love with every body. Does he go on falling in love with people, Violet?"

"Never with married women, my dear. He has had a wife himself since that, Madame Goesler, and the poor thing died."

"And now he is beginning all over again," said Lady Baldock.

"And as pleasant as ever," said her cousin. "You know he has done all manner of things for our family. He picked Oswald up once after one of those terrible hunting accidents; and he saved Mr. Kennedy when men were murdering him."

"That was questionable kindness," said Lady Baldock.

"And he sat for Lord Brentford's borough."

"How good of him!" said Miss Palliser.

"And he has done all manner of things," said Lady Chiltern.

"Didn't he once fight a duel?" asked Madame Goesler.

"That was the grandest thing of all," said his friend, "for he didn't shoot somebody whom perhaps he might have shot had he been as blood-thirsty as somebody else. And now he has come back to Parliament, and all that kind of thing, and he's coming here to hunt. I hope you'll be glad to see him, Madame Goesler."

"I shall be very glad to see him," said Madame Goesler, slowly; "I heard about his success at that town, and I knew that I should meet him somewhere."

CHAPTER XV.

HOW WELL YOU KNEW!

It was necessary also that some communication should be made to Phineas, so that he might not come across Madame Goesler unawares. Lady Chiltern was more alive to that necessity than she had been to the other, and felt that the gentleman, if not warned of what was to take place, would be much more likely than the lady to be awkward at the trying moment. Madame Goesler would in any circumstances be sure to recover her self-possession very quickly, even were she to lose it for a moment; but so much could hardly be said for the social powers of Phineas Finn. Lady Chiltern therefore contrived to see him alone for a moment on his arrival. "Who do you think is here?"

"Lady Laura has not come!"

"Indeed, no; I wish she had. An old friend, but not so old as Laura!"

"I can not guess—not Lord Fawn?"

"Lord Fawn! What would Lord Fawn do here? Don't you know that Lord Fawn goes nowhere since his last matrimonial trouble? It's a friend of yours, not of mine."

"Madame Goesler?" whispered Phineas.

"How well you knew when I said it was a friend of yours! Madame Goesler is here—not altered in the least."

"Madame Goesler!"

"Does it annoy you?"

"Oh no. Why should it annoy me?"

"You never quarreled with her?"

"Never!"

"There is no reason why you should not meet her?"

"None at all; only I was surprised. Did she know that I was coming?"

"I told her yesterday. I hope that I have not done wrong or made things unpleasant. I knew that you used to be friends."

"And as friends we parted, Lady Chiltern."

He had nothing more to say in the matter; nor had she. He could not tell the story of what had taken place between himself and the lady, and she could not keep herself from surmising that something had taken place, which, had she known it, would have prevented her from bringing the two together at Harrington.

Madame Goesler, when she was dressing, acknowledged to herself that she had a task before her which would require all her tact and all her courage. She certainly would not have accepted Lady Chiltern's invitation had she known that she would encounter Phineas Finn at the house. She had twenty-four hours to think of it, and at one time had almost made up her mind that some sudden business should recall her to London. Of course her motive would be suspected. Of course Lady Chiltern would connect her departure with the man's arrival. But even that, bad as it would be, might be preferable to the meeting! What a fool had she been—so she accused herself—in not foreseeing that such an accident might happen, knowing as she did that Phineas Finn had reappeared in the political world, and that he and the Chiltern people had ever been fast friends! As she had thought about it, lying awake at night, she had told herself that she must certainly be recalled back to London by business. She would telegraph up



"I AM SO BLIND THAT I CAN HARDLY SEE OUT OF MY EYES."

to town, raising a question about any trifle, and on receipt of the answer she could be off with something of an excuse. The shame of running away from the man seemed to be a worse evil than the shame of meeting him. She had, in truth, done nothing to disgrace herself. In her desire to save a man whom she had loved from the ruin which she thought had threatened him, she had—offered him her hand. She had made the offer, and he had refused it! That was all. No; she would not be driven to confess to herself that she had ever fled from the face of man

or woman. This man would be again in London, and she could not always fly. It would be only necessary that she should maintain her own composure, and the misery of the meeting would pass away after the first few minutes. One consolation was assured to her. She thoroughly believed in the man—feeling certain that he had not betrayed her, and would not betray her. But now, as the time for the meeting drew near, as she stood for a moment before the glass, pretending to look at herself in order that her maid might not remark her uneasiness, she found that

her courage, great as it was, hardly sufficed her. She almost plotted some scheme of a headache, by which she might be enabled not to show herself till after dinner. "I am so blind that I can hardly see out of my eyes," she said to the maid, actually beginning the scheme. The woman assumed a look of painful solicitude, and declared that "Madame did not look quite her best." "I suppose I shall shake it off," said Madame Goesler; and then she descended the stairs.

The condition of Phineas Finn was almost as bad, but he had a much less protracted period of anticipation than that with which the lady was tormented. He was sent up to dress for dinner with the knowledge that in half an hour he would find himself in the same room with Madame Goesler. There could be no question of his running away, no possibility even of his escaping by a headache. But it may be doubted whether his dismay was not even more than hers. She knew that she could teach herself to use no other than fitting words; but he was almost sure that he would break down if he attempted to speak to her. She would be safe from blushing, but he would assuredly become as red as a turkey-cock's comb up to the roots of his hair. Her blood would be under control, but his would be coursing hither and thither through his veins, so as to make him utterly unable to rule himself. Nevertheless, he also plucked up his courage and descended, reaching the drawing-room before Madame Goesler had entered it. Chiltern was going on about Trumpeton Wood to Lord Baldock, and was renewing his fury against all the Pallisers, while Adelaide stood by and laughed. Gerard Maule was lounging on a chair, wondering that any man could expend such energy on such a subject. Lady Chiltern was explaining the merits of the case to Lady Baldock—who knew nothing about hunting—and the other guests were listening with eager attention. A certain Mr. Spooner, who rode hard and did nothing else, and who acted as an unacknowledged assistant master under Lord Chiltern—there is such a man in every hunt—acted as chorus, and indicated, chiefly with dumb show, the strong points of the case.

"Finn, how are you?" said Lord Chiltern, stretching out his left hand. "Glad to have you back again, and congratulate you about the seat. It was put down in red herrings, and we found nearly a dozen of them afterward—enough to kill half the pack."

"Picked up nine," said Mr. Spooner.

"Children might have picked them up quite as well—and eaten them," said Lady Chiltern.

"They didn't care about that," continued the Master. "And now they've wires and traps over the whole place.—Palliser's a friend of your's—isn't he, Finn?"

"Of course I knew him—when I was in office."

"I don't know what he may be in office, but he's an uncommon bad sort of fellow to have in a county."

"Shameful!" said Mr. Spooner, lifting up both his hands.

"This is my first cousin, you know," whispered Adelaide to Lady Baldock.

"If he were my own brother, or my grandmother, I should say the same," continued the angry lord. "We must have a meeting about it, and let the world know it—that's all." At

this moment the door was again opened, and Madame Goesler entered the room.

When one wants to be natural, of necessity one becomes the reverse of natural. A clever actor—or more frequently a clever actress—will assume the appearance; but the very fact of the assumption renders the reality impossible. Lady Chiltern was generally very clever in the arrangement of all little social difficulties, and, had she thought less about it, might probably have managed the present affair in an easy and graceful manner. But the thing had weighed upon her mind, and she had decided that it would be expedient that she should say something when those two old friends first met each other again in her drawing-room. "Madame Max," she said, "you remember Mr. Finn." Lord Chiltern for a moment stopped the torrent of his abuse. Lord Baldock made a little effort to look uninterested, but quite in vain. Mr. Spooner stood on one side. Lady Baldock stared with all her eyes—with some feeling of instinct that there would be something to see; and Gerard Maule, rising from the sofa, joined the circle. It seemed as though Lady Chiltern's words had caused the formation of a ring in the midst of which Phineas and Madame Goesler were to renew their acquaintance.

"Very well indeed," said Madame Max, putting out her hand and looking full into our hero's face with her sweetest smile. "And I hope Mr. Finn will not have forgotten me." She did it admirably—so well that surely she need not have thought of running away.

But poor Phineas was not happy. "I shall never forget you," said he; and then that unavoidable blush suffused his face, and the blood began to career through his veins.

"I am so glad you are in Parliament again," said Madame Max.

"Yes; I've got in again, after a struggle. Are you still living in Park Lane?"

"Oh yes; and shall be most happy to see you." Then she seated herself—as did also Lady Chiltern by her side. "I see the poor Duke's iniquities are still under discussion. I hope Lord Chiltern recognizes the great happiness of having a grievance. It would be a pity that so great a blessing should be thrown away upon him." For the moment Madame Max had got through her difficulty, and, indeed, had done so altogether till the moment should come in which she should find herself alone with Phineas. But he slunk back from the gathering before the fire, and stood solitary and silent till dinner was announced. It became his fate to take an old woman into dinner who was not very clear-sighted. "Did you know that lady before?" she asked.

"Oh yes; I knew her two or three years ago in London."

"Do you think she is pretty?"

"Certainly."

"All the men say so, but I never can see it. They have been saying ever so long that the old Duke of Omnium means to marry her on his death-bed, but I don't suppose there can be any thing in it."

"Why should he put it off for so very inopportune an occasion?" asked Phineas.

CHAPTER XVI.

COPPERHOUSE CROSS AND BROUGHTON SPINNIES.

AFTER all, the thing had not been so very bad. With a little courage and hardihood, we can survive very great catastrophes, and go through them even without broken bones. Phineas, when he got up to his room, found that he had spent the evening in company with Madame Goesler, and had not suffered materially, except at the very first moment of the meeting. He had not said a word to the lady, except such as were spoken in mixed conversation with her and others; but they had been together, and no bones had been broken. It could not be that his old intimacy should be renewed, but he could now encounter her in society, as the Fates might direct, without a renewal of that feeling of dismay which had been so heavy on him.

He was about to undress, when there came a knock at the door, and his host entered the room. "What do you mean to do about smoking?" Lord Chiltern asked.

"Nothing at all."

"There's a fire in the smoking-room, but I'm tired, and I want to go to bed. Baldock doesn't smoke. Gerard Maule is smoking in his own room, I take it. You'll probably find Spooner at this moment established somewhere in the back slums, having a pipe with old Doggett, and planning retribution. You can join them if you please."

"Not to-night, I think. They wouldn't trust me—and I should spoil their plans."

"They certainly wouldn't trust you—or any other human being. You don't mind a horse that balks a little, do you?"

"I'm not going to hunt, Chiltern."

"Yes, you are. I've got it all arranged. Don't you be a fool, and make us all uncomfortable. Every body rides here—every man, woman, and child about the place. You shall have one of the best horses I've got—only you must be particular about your spurs."

"Indeed, I'd rather not. The truth is, I can't afford to ride my own horses, and therefore I'd rather not ride my friends'."

"That's all gammon. When Violet wrote she told you you'd be expected to come out. Your old flame, Madame Max, will be there, and I tell you she has a very pretty idea of keeping to hounds. Only Dandolo has that little defect."

"Is Dandolo the horse?"

"Yes; Dandolo is the horse. He's up to a stone over your weight, and can do any mortal thing within a horse's compass. Cox won't ride him because he balks, and so he has come into my stable. If you'll only let him know that you're on his back, and have got a pair of spurs on your heels with rowels in them, he'll take you any where. Good-night, old fellow. You can smoke if you choose, you know."

Phineas had resolved that he would not hunt; but, nevertheless, he had brought boots with him, and breeches, fancying that if he did not he would be forced out without those comfortable appurtenances. But there came across his heart a feeling that he had reached a time of life in which it was no longer comfortable for him to live as a poor man with men who were rich. It had been his lot to do so when he was younger,

and there had been some pleasure in it; but now he would rather live alone and dwell upon the memories of the past. He, too, might have been rich, and have had horses at command, had he chosen to sacrifice himself for money.

On the next morning they started in a huge wagonette for Copperhouse Cross—a meet that was suspiciously near to the Duke's fatal wood. Spooner had explained to Phineas overnight that they never did draw Trumpeton Wood on Copperhouse Cross days, and that under no possible circumstances would Chiltern now draw Trumpeton Wood. But there is no saying where a fox may run. At this time of the year, just the beginning of February, dog-foxes from the big woods were very apt to be away from home, and when found would go straight for their own earths. It was very possible that they might find themselves in Trumpeton Wood, and then certainly there would be a row. Spooner shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head, and seemed to insinuate that Lord Chiltern would certainly do something very dreadful to the Duke or to the Duke's heirs if any law of venery should again be found to have been broken on this occasion.

The distance to Copperhouse Cross was twelve miles, and Phineas found himself placed in the carriage next to Madame Goesler. It had not been done of fixed design; but when a party of six are seated in a carriage, the chances are that one given person will be next to or opposite to any other given person. Madame Max had remembered this, and had prepared herself, but Phineas was taken aback when he found how close was his neighborhood to the lady. "Get in, Phineas," said his lordship. Gerard Maule had already seated himself next to Miss Palliser, and Phineas had no alternative but to take the place next to Madame Max.

"I didn't know that you rode to hounds?" said Phineas.

"Oh yes; I have done so for years. When we met it was always in London, Mr. Finn; and people there never know what other people do. Have you heard of this terrible affair about the Duke?"

"Oh dear, yes."

"Poor Duke! He and I have seen a great deal of each other since—since the days when you and I used to meet. He knows nothing about all this, and the worst of it is, he is not in a condition to be told."

"Lady Glencora could put it all right."

"I'll tell Lady Glencora, of course," said Madame Max. "It seems so odd in this country that the owner of a property does not seem at all to have any exclusive right to it. I suppose the Duke could shut up the wood if he liked."

"But they poisoned the hounds."

"Nobody supposes the Duke did that—or even the Duke's servants, I should think. But Lord Chiltern will hear us if we don't take care."

"I've heard every word you've been saying," exclaimed Lord Chiltern.

"Has it been traced to any one?"

"No—not traced, I suppose."

"What then, Lord Chiltern? You may speak to me. When I'm wrong I like to be told so."

"Then you're wrong now," said Lord Chiltern, "if you take the part of the Duke or of any of his people. He is bound to find foxes for the Brake hunt. It is almost a part of his title."