

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."

deeds. Instead of doing so, he has had them destroyed."

"It's as bad as voting against the Church establishment," said Madame Goesler.

There was a very large meet at Copperhouse Cross, and both Madame Goesler and Phineas Finn found many old acquaintances there. As Phineas had formerly sat in the House for five years, and had been in office, and had never made himself objectionable either to his friends or adversaries, he had been widely known. He now found half a dozen men who were always members of Parliament—men who seem, though commoners, to have been born legislators—who all spoke to him as though his being member for Tankerville and hunting with the Brake hounds were equally matters of course. They knew him, but they knew nothing of the break in his life. Or if they remembered that he had not been seen about the House for the last two or three years, they remembered also that accidents do happen to some men. It will occur now and again that a regular denizen of Westminster will get a fall in the political hunting field, and have to remain about the world for a year or two without a seat. That Phineas had lately triumphed over Browborough at Tankerville was known, the event having been so recent; and men congratulated him, talking of poor Browborough—whose heavy figure had been familiar to them for many a year—but by no means recognizing that the event of which they spoke had been, as it were, life and death to their friend. Roby was there, who was at this moment Mr. Daubeny's head-whip and patronage secretary. If any one should have felt acutely the exclusion of Mr. Browborough from the House—any one beyond the sufferer himself—it should have been Mr. Roby; but he made himself quite pleasant, and even condescended to be jocose upon the occasion. "So you've beat poor Browborough in his own borough," said Mr. Roby.

"I've beat him," said Phineas; "but not, I hope, in a borough of his own."

"He's been there for the last fifteen years. Poor old fellow! He's awfully cut up about this Church Question. I shouldn't have thought he'd have taken any thing so much to heart. There are worse fellows than Browborough, let me tell you. What's all this I hear about the Duke poisoning the foxes?" But the crowd had begun to move, and Phineas was not called upon to answer the question.

Copperhouse Cross in the Brake hunt was a very popular meet. It was easily reached by a train from London, was in the centre of an essentially hunting country, was near to two or three good coverts, and was in itself a pretty spot. Two roads intersected each other on the middle of Copperhouse Common, which, as all the world knows, lies just on the outskirts of Copperhouse Forest. A steep winding hill leads down from the wood to the cross, and there is no such thing within sight as an inclosure. At the foot of the hill, running under the wooden bridge, straggles the Copperhouse Brook—so called by the hunting men of the present day, though men who know the country of old, or rather the county, will tell you that it is properly called the river Cobber, and that the spacious old farm buildings above were once known as the Cobber Manor-house. He would be a vain man who would now try to

change the name, as Copperhouse Cross has been printed in all the lists of hunting meets for at least the last thirty years; and the Ordnance map has utterly rejected the two b's. Along one of the cross-roads there was a broad extent of common, some seven or eight hundred yards in length, on which have been erected the butts used by those well-known defenders of their country, the Copperhouse Volunteer Rifles; and just below the bridge the sluggish water becomes a little lake, having probably at some time been artificially widened, and there is a little island and a decoy for ducks. On the present occasion carriages were drawn up on all the roads, and horses were clustered on each side of the brook, and the hounds sat stately on their haunches where riflemen actually are used to kneel to fire, and there was a hum of merry voices, and the bright coloring of pink coats and the sheen of ladies' hunting toilets, and that mingled look of business and amusement which is so peculiar to our national sports. Two hundred men and women had come there for the chance of a run after a fox—for a chance against which the odds are more than two to one at every hunting day—for a chance as to which the odds are twenty to one against the success of the individuals collected; and yet, for every horseman and every horsewoman there, not less than £5 a head will have been spent for this one day's amusement. When we give a guinea for a stall at the opera we think that we pay a large sum; but we are fairly sure of having our music. When you go to Copperhouse Cross you are by no means sure of your opera.

Why is it that when men and women congregate, though the men may beat the women in numbers by ten to one, and though they certainly speak the louder, the concrete sound that meets the ear of any outside listener is always a sound of women's voices? At Copperhouse Cross almost every one was talking, but the feeling left upon the senses was that of an amalgam of feminine laughter, feminine affectation, and feminine eagerness. Perhaps at Copperhouse Cross the determined perseverance with which Lady Gertrude Fitzakerley addressed herself to Lord Chiltern, to Cox the huntsman, to the two whips, and at last to Mr. Spooner, may have specially led to the remark on this occasion. Lord Chiltern was very short with her, not loving Lady Gertrude. Cox bestowed upon her two "my lady's," and then turned from her to some peccant hound. But Spooner was partly gratified, and partly incapable, and underwent a long course of questions about the Duke and the poisoning. Lady Gertrude, whose father seemed to have owned half the coverts in Ireland, had never before heard of such enormity. She suggested a round robin, and would not be at all ashamed to put her own name to it. "Oh, for the matter of that," said Spooner, "Chiltern can be round enough himself without any robin." "He can't be too round," said Lady Gertrude, with a very serious aspect.

At last they moved away, and Phineas found himself riding by the side of Madame Goesler. It was natural that he should do so, as he had come with her. Maule had of course remained with Miss Palliser, and Chiltern and Spooner had taken themselves to their respective duties. Phineas might have avoided her, but in doing

so he would have seemed to avoid her. She accepted his presence apparently as a matter of course, and betrayed by her words and manner no memory of past scenes. It was not customary with them to draw the forest, which, indeed, as it now stood, was a forest only in name, and they trotted off to a gorse a mile and a half distant. This they draw blank—then another gorse also blank—and two or three little fringes of wood, such as there are in every country, and through which huntsmen run their hounds, conscious that no fox will lie there. At one o'clock they had not found, and the hilarity of the really hunting men as they ate their sandwiches and lit their cigars was on the decrease. The ladies talked more than ever, Lady Gertrude's voice was heard above them all, and Lord Chiltern trotted on close behind his hounds in obdurate silence. When things were going bad with him no one in the field dared to speak to him.

Phineas had never seen his horse till he reached the meet, and there found a fine-looking, very strong bay animal, with shoulders like the top of a hay-stack, short-backed, short-legged, with enormous quarters, and a wicked-looking eye. "He ought to be strong," said Phineas to the groom. "Oh, Sir, strong ain't no word for him," said the groom; "e can carry a 'ouse." "I don't know whether he's fast?" inquired Phineas. "He's fast enough for any 'ounds, Sir," said the man, with that tone of assurance which always carries conviction. "And he can jump?" "He can jump!" continued the groom; "no 'orse in my lord's stables can't beat him." "But he won't?" said Phineas. "It's only sometimes, Sir, and then the best thing is to stick him at it till he do. He'll go, he will, like a shot at last; and then he's right for the day." Hunting men will know that all this was not quite comfortable. When you ride your own horse, and know his special defect, you know also how far that defect extends, and what real prospect you have of overcoming it. If he be slow through the mud, you keep a good deal on the road in heavy weather, and resolve that the present is not an occasion for distinguishing yourself. If he be bad at timber, you creep through a hedge. If he pulls, you get as far from the crowd as may be. You gauge your misfortune, and make your little calculation as to the best mode of remedying the evil. But when you are told that your friend's horse is perfect—only that he does this or that—there comes a weight on your mind from which you are unable to release it. You can not discount your trouble at any percentage. It may amount to absolute ruin, as far as that day is concerned; and in such a circumstance you always look forward to the worst. When the groom had done his description, Phineas Finn would almost have preferred a day's canvass at Tankerville under Mr. Ruddle's authority to his present position.

When the hounds entered Broughton Spinnies, Phineas and Madame Goesler were still together. He had not been riding actually at her side all the morning. Many men and two or three ladies had been talking to her. But he had never been far from her in the rack, and now he was again close by her horse's head. Broughton Spinnies were in truth a series of small woods, running one into another almost without intermission, never thick, and of no

breadth. There was always a litter or two of cubs at the place, and in no part of the Brake country was greater care taken in the way of preservation and encouragement to interesting vixens; but the lying was bad; there was little or no real covert; and foxes were very apt to travel and get away into those big woods belonging to the Duke—where, as the Brake sportsmen now believed, they would almost surely come to an untimely end. "If we draw this blank I don't know what we are to do," said Mr. Spooner, addressing himself to Madame Goesler with lachrymose anxiety.

"Have you nothing else to draw?" asked Phineas.

"In the common course of things we should take Muggery Gorse, and so on to Trumpeton Wood. But Muggery is on the Duke's land, and Chiltern 'is in such a fix! He won't go there unless he can't help it. Muggery Gorse is only a mile this side of the big wood."

"And foxes of course go to the big wood?" asked Madame Max.

"Not always. They often come here—and as they can't hang here, we have the whole country before us. We get as good runs from Muggery as from any covert in the country. But Chiltern won't go there to-day unless the hounds show a line. By George, that's a fox! That's Dido. That's a find!" And Spooner galloped away, as though Dido could do nothing with the fox she had found unless he was there to help her.

Spooner was quite right, as he generally was on such occasions. He knew the hounds even by voice, and knew what hound he could believe. Most hounds would lie occasionally, but Dido never lied. And there were many besides Spooner who believed in Dido. The whole pack rushed to her music, though the body of them would have remained utterly unmoved at the voice of any less revered and less trustworthy colleague. The whole wood was at once in commotion—men and women riding hither and thither, not in accordance with any judgment, but as they saw, or thought they saw, others riding who were supposed to have judgment. To get away well is so very much! And to get away well is often so very difficult! There are so many things of which the horseman is bound to think in that moment. Which way does the wind blow? And then, though a fox will not long run up wind, he will break covert up wind as often as not. From which of the various rides can you find a fair exit into the open country, without a chance of breaking your neck before the run begins? When you hear some wild halloo, informing you that one fox has gone in the direction exactly opposite to that in which the hounds are hunting, are you sure that the noise is not made about a second fox? On all these matters you are bound to make up your mind without losing a moment; and if you make up your mind wrongly, the five pounds you have invested in that day's amusement will have been spent for nothing. Phineas and Madame Goesler were in the very centre of the wood when Spooner rushed away from them down one of the rides on hearing Dido's voice; and at that time they were in a crowd. Almost immediately the fox was seen to cross another ride, and a body of horsemen rushed away in that direction,

knowing that the covert was small, and there the animal must soon leave the wood. Then there was a shout of "Away!" repeated over and over again, and Lord Chiltern, running up like a flash of lightning, and passing our two friends, galloped down a third ride to the right of the others. Phineas at once followed the master of the pack, and Madame Goesler followed Phineas. Men were still riding hither and thither; and a farmer, meeting them, with his horse turned back toward the centre of the wood which they were leaving, halloed out as they passed that there was no way out at the bottom. They met another man in pink, who screamed out something as to "the devil of a bank down there." Chiltern, however, was still going on, and our hero had not the heart to stop his horse in its gallop and turn back from the direction in which the hounds were running. At that moment he hardly remembered the presence of Madame Goesler, but he did remember every word that had been said to him about Dandolo. He did not in the least doubt but that Chiltern had chosen his direction rightly, and that if he were once out of the wood he would find himself with the hounds; but what if this brute should refuse to take him out of the wood? That Dandolo was very fast he soon became aware, for he gained upon his friend before him as they neared the fence. And then he saw what there was before him. A new broad ditch had been cut, with the express object of preventing egress or ingress at that point; and a great bank had been constructed with the clay. In all probability there might be another ditch on the other side. Chiltern, however, had clearly made up his mind about it. The horse he was riding went at it gallantly, cleared the first ditch, balanced himself for half a moment on the bank, and then, with a fresh spring, got into the field beyond. The tail hounds were running past outside the covert, and the Master had placed himself exactly right for the work in hand. How excellent would be the condition of Finn if only Dandolo would do just as Chiltern's horse had done before him!

And Phineas almost began to hope that it might be so. The horse was going very well, and very willingly. His head was stretched out, he was pulling, not more, however, than pleasantly, and he seemed to be as anxious as his rider. But there was a little twitch about his ears which his rider did not like, and then it was impossible not to remember that awful warning given by the groom, "It's only sometimes, Sir." And after what fashion should Phineas ride him at the obstacle? He did not like to strike a horse that seemed to be going well, and was unwilling, as are all good riders, to use his heels. So he spoke to him, and proposed to lift him at the ditch. To the very edge the horse galloped—too fast, indeed, if he meant to take the bank as Chiltern's horse had done—and then stopping himself so suddenly that he must have shaken every joint in his body, he planted his fore-feet on the very brink, and there he stood, with his head down, quivering in every muscle. Phineas Finn, following naturally the momentum which had been given to him, went over the brute's neck head-foremost into the ditch. Madame Max was immediately off her horse. "Oh, Mr. Finn, are you hurt?"

But Phineas, happily, was not hurt. He was

shaken and dirty, but not so shaken and not so dirty but that he was on his legs in a minute, imploring his companion not to mind him, but go on. "Going on doesn't seem to be so easy," said Madame Goesler, looking at the ditch as she held her horse in her hand. But to go back in such circumstances is a terrible disaster. It amounts to complete defeat; and is tantamount to a confession that you must go home, because you are unable to ride to hounds. A man, when he is compelled to do this, is almost driven to resolve at the spur of the moment that he will give up hunting for the rest of his life. And if one thing be more essential than any other to the horseman in general, it is that he, and not the animal which he rides, shall be the master. "The best thing is to stick him at it till he do," the groom had said; and Phineas resolved to be guided by the groom.

But his first duty was to attend on Madame Goesler. With very little assistance she was again in her saddle, and she at once declared herself certain that her horse could take the fence. Phineas again instantly jumped into his saddle, and turning Dandolo again at the ditch, rammed the rowels into the horse's sides. But Dandolo would not jump yet. He stood with his fore-feet on the brink; and when Phineas with his whip struck him severely over the shoulders, he went down into the ditch on all fours, and then scrambled back again to his former position. "What an infernal brute!" said Phineas, gnashing his teeth.

"He is a little obstinate, Mr. Finn; I wonder whether he'd jump if I gave him a lead." But Phineas was again making the attempt, urging the horse with spurs, whip, and voice. He had brought himself now to that condition in which a man is utterly reckless as to falling himself—or even to the kind of fall he may get—if he can only force his animal to make the attempt. But Dandolo would not make the attempt. With ears down and head outstretched, he either stuck obstinately on the brink, or allowed himself to be forced again and again into the ditch. "Let me try it once, Mr. Finn," said Madame Goesler in her quiet way.

She was riding a small horse, very nearly thorough-bred, and known as a perfect hunter by those who habitually saw Madame Goesler ride. No doubt he would have taken the fence readily enough had his rider followed immediately after Lord Chiltern; but Dandolo had balked at the fence nearly a dozen times, and evil communications will corrupt good manners. Without any show of violence, but still with persistent determination, Madame Goesler's horse also declined to jump. She put him at it again and again, and he would make no slightest attempt to do his business. Phineas, raging, fuming, out of breath, miserably unhappy, shaking his reins, plying his whip, rattling himself about in the saddle, and banging his legs against the horse's sides, again and again plunged away at the obstacle. But it was all to no purpose. Dandolo was constantly in the ditch, sometimes lying with his side against the bank, and had now been so hustled and driven that, had he been on the other side, he would have had no breath left to carry his rider, even in the ruck of the hunt. In the mean time the hounds and the leading horsemen were far away—never

more to be seen on that day by either Phineas Finn or Madame Max Goesler. For a while, during the frantic efforts that were made, an occasional tardy horseman was viewed galloping along outside the covert, following the tracks of those who had gone before. But before the frantic efforts had been abandoned as utterly useless every vestige of the morning's work had left the neighborhood of Broughton Spinnies, except these two unfortunate ones. At last it was necessary that the defeat should be acknowledged. "We're beaten, Madame Goesler," said Phineas, almost in tears.

"Altogether beaten, Mr. Finn."
"I've a good mind to swear that I'll never come out hunting again."

"Swear what you like, if it will relieve you, only don't think of keeping such an oath. I've known you before this to be depressed by circumstances quite as distressing as these, and to be certain that all hope was over; but yet you have recovered." This was the only allusion she had yet made to their former acquaintance. "And now we must think of getting out of the wood."
"I haven't the slightest idea of the direction of any thing."

"Nor have I; but as we clearly can't get out this way, we might as well try the other. Come along. We shall find somebody to put us in the right road. For my part, I'm glad it is no worse. I thought at one time that you were going to break your neck." They rode on for a few minutes in silence, and then she spoke again: "Is it not odd, Mr. Finn, that after all that has come and gone, you and I should find ourselves riding about Broughton Spinnies together?"

CHAPTER XVII.

MADAME GOESLER'S STORY.

"AFTER all that has come and gone, is it not odd that you and I should find ourselves riding about Broughton Spinnies together?" That was the question which Madame Goesler asked Phineas Finn when they had both agreed that it was impossible to jump over the bank out of the wood, and it was, of course, necessary that some answer should be given to it.

"When I saw you last in London," said Phineas, with a voice that was gruff, and a manner that was abrupt, "I certainly did not think that we should meet again so soon."

"No; I left you as though I had grounds for quarreling; but there was no quarrel. I wrote to you, and tried to explain that."

"You did; and though my answer was necessarily short, I was very grateful."

"And here you are back among us; and it does seem so odd. Lady Chiltern never told me that I was to meet you."

"Nor did she tell me."

"It is better so, for otherwise I should not have come, and then, perhaps, you would have been all alone in your discomfiture at the bank."
"That would have been very bad."

"You see I can be quite frank with you, Mr. Finn. I am heartily glad to see you, but I should not have come had I been told. And when I did see you, it was improbable that we should be thrown together as we are now—was

it not? Ah! here is a man, and he can tell us the way to Copperhouse Cross. But I suppose we had better ask for Harrington Hall at once."

The man knew nothing at all about Harrington Hall, and very little about Copperhouse; but he did direct them on to the road, and they found that they were about sixteen miles from Lord Chiltern's house. The hounds had gone away in the direction of Trumpeton Wood, and it was agreed that it would be useless to follow them. The wagonette had been left at an inn about two miles from Copperhouse Cross, but they resolved to abandon that and to ride direct to Harrington Hall. It was now nearly three o'clock, and they would not be subjected to the shame which falls upon sportsmen who are seen riding home very early in the day. To get one's self lost before twelve, and then to come home, is a very degrading thing; but at any time after two you may be supposed to have ridden the run of the season, and to be returning after an excellent day's work.

Then Madame Goesler began to talk about herself, and to give a short history of her life during the last two and a half years. She did this in a frank, natural manner, continuing her tale in a low voice, as though it were almost a matter of course that she should make the recital to so old a friend. And Phineas soon began to feel that it was natural that she should do so. "It was just before you left us," she said, "that the Duke took to coming to my house." The Duke spoken of was the Duke of Omnium, and Phineas well remembered to have heard some rumors about the Duke and Madame Max. It had been hinted to him that the Duke wanted to marry the lady, but that rumor he had never believed. The reader, if he has duly studied the history of the age, will know that the Duke did make an offer to Madame Goesler, pressing it with all his eloquence, but that Madame Goesler, on mature consideration, thought it best to decline to become a duchess. Of all this, however, the reader who understands Madame Goesler's character will be quite sure that she did not say a word to Phineas Finn. Since the business had been completed she had spoken of it to no one but to Lady Glencora Palliser, who had forced herself into a knowledge of all the circumstances while they were being acted.

"I met the Duke once at Matching," said Phineas.

"I remember it well. I was there, and first made the Duke's acquaintance on that occasion. I don't know how it was that we became intimate; but we did, and then I formed a sort of friendship with Lady Glencora, and somehow it has come about that we have been a great deal together since."

"I suppose you like Lady Glencora?"

"Very much indeed—and the Duke too. The truth is, Mr. Finn, that let one boast as one may of one's independence—and I very often do boast of mine to myself—one is inclined to do more for a Duke of Omnium than for a Mr. Jones."

"The Dukes have more to offer than the Joneses; I don't mean in the way of wealth only, but of what one enjoys most in society generally."

"I suppose they have. At any rate, I am glad that you should make some excuse for me.

But I do like the man. He is gracious and noble in his bearing. He is now very old, and sinking fast into the grave; but even the wreck is noble."

"I don't know that he ever did much," said Phineas.

"I don't know that he ever did any thing according to your idea of doing. There must be some men who do nothing."

"But a man with his wealth and rank has opportunities so great! Look at his nephew!"

"No doubt Mr. Palliser is a great man. He never has a moment to speak to his wife or to any body else, and is always thinking so much about the country that I doubt if he knows any thing about his own affairs. Of course he is a man of a different stamp—and of a higher stamp, if you will. But I have an idea that such characters as that of the present Duke are necessary to the maintenance of a great aristocracy. He has had the power of making the world believe in him simply because he has been rich and a duke. His nephew, when he comes to the title, will never receive a tithe of the respect that has been paid to this old faineant."

"But he will achieve much more than ten times the reputation," said Phineas.

"I won't compare them, nor will I argue, but I like the Duke. Nay, I love him. During the last two years I have allowed the whole fashion of my life to be remodeled by this intimacy. You knew what were my habits. I have only been in Vienna for one week since I last saw you, and I have spent months and months at Matching."

"What do you do there?"

"Read to him—talk to him—give him his food, and do all that in me lies to make his life bearable. Last year, when it was thought necessary that very distinguished people should be entertained at the great family castle, in Barsetshire, you know—"

"I have heard of the place."

"A regular treaty or agreement was drawn up. Conditions were sealed and signed. One condition was that both Lady Glencora and I should be there. We put our heads together to try to avoid this, as, of course, the Prince would not want to see me particularly, and it was altogether so grand an affair that things had to be weighed. But the Duke was inexorable. Lady Glencora at such a time would have other things to do, and I must be there, or Gatherum Castle should not be opened. I suggested whether I could not remain in the background and look after the Duke as a kind of upper nurse, but Lady Glencora said it would not do."

"Why should you subject yourself to such indignity?"

"Simply from love of the man. But, you see, I was not subjected. For two days I wore my jewels beneath royal eyes—eyes that will sooner or later belong to absolute majesty. It was an awful bore, and I ought to have been at Vienna. You ask me why I did it. The fact is that things sometimes become too strong for one, even when there is no real power of constraint. For years past I have been used to have my own way, but when there came a question of the entertainment of royalty I found myself reduced to blind obedience. I had to go to Gatherum Castle, to the absolute neglect of my business; and I went."

"Do you still keep it up?"

"Oh dear, yes. He is at Matching now, and I doubt whether he will ever leave it again. I shall go there from here as a matter of course, and relieve guard with Lady Glencora."

"I don't see what you get for it all."

"Get!—what should I get? You don't believe in friendship, then?"

"Certainly I do; but this friendship is so unequal. I can hardly understand that it should have grown from personal liking on your side."

"I think it has," said Madame Goesler, slowly. "You see, Mr. Finn, that you as a young man can hardly understand how natural it is that a young woman—if I may call myself young—should minister to an old man."

"But there should be some bond to the old man."

"There is a bond."

"You must not be angry with me," said Phineas.

"I am not in the least angry."

"I should not venture to express any opinion, of course, only that you ask me."

"I do ask you, and you are quite welcome to express your opinion. And were it not expressed, I should know that you thought just the same. I have wondered at it myself sometimes that I should have become, as it were, ingulfed in this new life, almost without will of my own. And when he dies, how shall I return to the other life? Of course I have the house in Park Lane still, but my very maid talks of Matching as my home."

"How will it be when he has gone?"

"Ah!—how, indeed? Lady Glencora and I will have to courtesy to each other, and there will be an end of it. She will be a duchess then, and I shall no longer be wanted."

"But even if you were wanted—"

"Oh, of course. It must last the Duke's time, and last no longer. It would not be a healthy kind of life were it not that I do my very best to make the evening of his days pleasant for him, and in that way to be of some service in the world. It has done me good to think that I have in some small degree sacrificed myself. Let me see; we are to turn here to the left. That goes to Copperhouse Cross, no doubt. Is it not odd that I should have told you all this history?"

"Just because this brute would not jump over the fence."

"I dare say I should have told you, even if he had jumped over; but certainly this has been a great opportunity. Do you tell your friend Lord Chiltern not to abuse the poor Duke any more before me. I dare say our host is all right in what he says, but I don't like it. You'll come and see me in London, Mr. Finn?"

"But you'll be at Matching?"

"I do get a few days at home sometimes. You see I have escaped for the present, or otherwise you and I would not have come to grief together in Broughton Spinnies."

Soon after this they were overtaken by others who were returning home, and who had been more fortunate than they in getting away with the hounds. The fox had gone straight for Trumpeton Wood, not daring to try the gorse on the way, and then had been run to ground. Chiltern was again in a towering passion, as the earth, he said, had been purposely left open. But on this matter the men who had overtaken our

friends were both of opinion that Chiltern was wrong. He had allowed it to be understood that he would not draw Trumpeton Wood, and he had therefore no right to expect that the earths should be stopped. But there were and had been various opinions on this difficult point, as the laws of hunting are complex, recondite, numerous, traditional, and not always perfectly understood. Perhaps the day may arrive in which they shall be codified under the care of some great and laborious Master of Hounds.

"And they did nothing more?" asked Phineas.

"Yes; they chopped another fox before they left the place—so that in point of fact they have drawn Trumpeton. But they didn't mean it."

When Madame Max Goesler and Phineas had reached Harrington Hall they were able to give their own story of the day's sport to Lady Chiltern, as the remainder of the party had not as yet returned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPOONER OF SPOON HALL.

ADELAIDE PALLISER was a tall, fair girl, exquisitely made, with every feminine grace of motion, highly born, and carrying always the warranty of her birth in her appearance, but with no special loveliness of face. Let not any reader suppose that therefore she was plain. She possessed much more than a sufficiency of charm to justify her friends in claiming her as a beauty, and the demand had been generally allowed by public opinion. Adelaide Palliser was always spoken of as a girl to be admired; but she was not one whose countenance would strike with special admiration any beholder who did not know her. Her eyes were pleasant and bright, and, being in truth green, might, perhaps with propriety, be described as gray. Her nose was well formed. Her mouth was perhaps too small. Her teeth were perfect. Her chin was somewhat too long, and was on this account the defective feature of her face. Her hair was brown and plentiful, but in no way peculiar. No doubt she wore a chignon; but if so, she wore it with the special view of being in no degree remarkable in reference to her head-dress. Such as she was, beauty or no beauty, her own mind on the subject was made up, and she had resolved long since that the gift of personal loveliness had not been bestowed upon her. And yet, after a fashion, she was proud of her own appearance. She knew that she looked like a lady, and she knew also that she had all that command of herself which health and strength can give to a woman when she is without feminine affectation.

Lady Chiltern, in describing her to Phineas Finn, had said that she talked Italian and wrote for the *Times*. The former assertion was, no doubt, true, as Miss Palliser had passed some years of her childhood in Florence; but the latter statement was made probably with reference to her capability rather than her performance. Lady Chiltern intended to imply that Miss Palliser was so much better educated than young ladies in general that she was able to express herself intelligibly in her own language. She had been well educated, and would, no doubt,

have done the *Times* credit had the *Times* chosen to employ her.

She was the youngest daughter of the youngest brother of the existing Duke of Omnium, and the first cousin, therefore, of Mr. Plantagenet Palliser, who was the eldest son of the second brother. And as her mother had been a Baviard, there could be no better blood. But Adelaide had been brought up so far away from the lofty Pallisers and lofty Baviards as almost to have lost the flavor of her birth. Her father and mother had died when she was an infant, and she had gone to the custody of a much older half-sister, Mrs. Atterbury, whose mother had been not a Baviard, but a Brown. And Mr. Atterbury was a mere nobody, a rich, erudite, highly accomplished gentleman, whose father had made his money at the bar, and whose grandfather had been a country clergyman. Mrs. Atterbury, with her husband, was still living at Florence; but Adelaide Palliser had quarreled with Florence life, and had gladly consented to make a long visit to her friend Lady Chiltern.

In Florence she had met Gerard Maule, and the acquaintance had not been viewed with favor by the Atterburys. Mrs. Atterbury knew the history of the Maule family, and declared to her sister that no good could come from any intimacy. Old Mr. Maule, she said, was disreputable. Mrs. Maule, the mother—who, according to Mr. Atterbury, had been the only worthy member of the family—was long since dead. Gerard Maule's sister had gone away with an Irish cousin, and they were now living in India on the professional income of a captain in a foot regiment. Gerard Maule's younger brother had gone utterly to the dogs, and nobody knew any thing about him. Maule Abbey, the family seat in Herefordshire, was—so said Mrs. Atterbury—absolutely in ruins. The furniture, as all the world knew, had been sold by the squire's creditors under the sheriff's orders ten years ago, and not a chair or a table had been put into the house since that time. The property, which was small—£2000 a year at the outside—was, no doubt, entailed on the eldest son; and Gerard, fortunately, had a small fortune of his own, independent of his father. But then he was also a spendthrift—so said Mrs. Atterbury—keeping a stable full of horses, for which he could not afford to pay; and he was, moreover, the most insufferably idle man who ever wandered about the world without any visible occupation for his hours. "But he hunts," said Adelaide. "Do you call that an occupation?" asked Mrs. Atterbury, with scorn. Now Mrs. Atterbury painted pictures, copied Madonnas, composed sonatas, corresponded with learned men in Rome, Berlin, and Boston, had been the intimate friend of Cavour, had paid a visit to Garibaldi on his island with the view of explaining to him the real condition of Italy—and was supposed to understand Bismarck. Was it possible that a woman who so filled her own life should accept hunting as a creditable employment for a young man, when it was admitted to be his sole employment? And, moreover, she desired that her sister Adelaide should marry a certain Count Brudi, who, according to her belief, had more advanced ideas about things in general than any other living human being. Adelaide Palliser had determined