

were the servants who waited upon her. Such people were to her little more than the tables and chairs with which she was brought in contact. They were persons with whom it seemed to her to be impossible that she should have any thing in common, who were her inferiors as completely as were the menials around her. Why she should thus despise Mr. Spooner, while in her heart of hearts she loved Gerard Maule, it would be difficult to explain. It was not simply an affair of age, nor of good looks, nor altogether of education. Gerard Maule was by no means wonderfully erudite. They were both addicted to hunting. Neither of them did any thing useful. In that respect Mr. Spooner stood the higher, as he managed his own property successfully. But Gerard Maule so wore his clothes, and so carried his limbs, and so pronounced his words that he was to be regarded as one entitled to make love to any lady; whereas poor Mr. Spooner was not justified in proposing to marry any woman much more gifted than his own house-maid. Such, at least, were Adelaide Palliser's ideas.

"I don't think any thing of the kind," she said, "only I want you to go away. I shall go back to the house, and I hope you won't accompany me. If you do, I shall turn the other way." Whereupon she did retire at once, and he was left standing in the path.

There was a seat there, and he sat down for a moment to think of it all. Should he persevere in his suit, or should he rejoice that he had escaped from such an ill-conditioned mix? He remembered that he had read, in his younger days, that lovers in novels generally do persevere, and that they are almost always successful at last. In affairs of the heart such perseverance was, he thought, the correct thing. But in this instance the conduct of the lady had not given him the slightest encouragement. When a horse balked with him at a fence, it was his habit to force the animal till he jumped it, as the groom had recommended Phineas to do. But when he had encountered a decided fall, it was not sensible practice to ride the horse at the same place again. There was probably some occult cause for failure. He could not but own that he had been thrown on the present occasion—and, upon the whole, he thought that he had better give it up. He found his way back to the house, put up his things, and got away to Spoon Hall in time for dinner, without seeing Lady Chiltern or any of her guests.

"What has become of Mr. Spooner?" Maule asked, as soon as he returned to Harrington Hall.

"Nobody knows," said Lady Chiltern; "but I believe he has gone."

"Has any thing happened?"

"I have heard no tidings, but if you ask for my opinion, I think something has happened. A certain lady seems to have been ruffled, and a certain gentleman has disappeared. I am inclined to think that a few unsuccessful words have been spoken." Gerard Maule saw that there was a smile in her eye, and he was satisfied.

"My dear, what did Mr. Spooner say to you during his walk?" This question was asked by the ill-natured old lady in the presence of nearly all the party.

"We were talking of hunting," said Adelaide.

"And did the poor old woman get her half sovereign?"

"No—he forgot that. We did not go into the village at all. I was tired and came back."

"Poor old woman—and poor Mr. Spooner!"

Every body in the house knew what had occurred, as Mr. Spooner's discretion in the conduct of this affair had not been equal to his valor; but Miss Palliser never confessed openly, and almost taught herself to believe that the man had been mad or dreaming during that special hour.

## CHAPTER XX.

### PHINEAS AGAIN IN LONDON.

PHINEAS, on his return to London, before he had taken his seat in the House, received the following letter from Lady Laura Kennedy:

*DRESDEN, February 8, 1870.*

"DEAR FRIEND,—I thought that perhaps you would have written to me from Harrington. Violet has told me of the meeting between you and Madame Goesler, and says that the old friendship seems to have been perfectly re-established. She used to think once that there might be more than friendship, but I never quite believed that. She tells me that Chiltern is quarreling with the Pallisers. You ought not to let him quarrel with people. I know that he would listen to you. He always did.

"I write now especially because I have just received so dreadful a letter from Mr. Kennedy! I would send it you were it not that there are in it a few words which on his behalf I shrink from showing even to you. It is full of threats. He begins by quotations from the Scriptures and from the Prayer-book to show that a wife has no right to leave her husband—and he then goes on to the law. One knows all that of course. And then he asks whether he ever ill-used me? Was he ever false to me? Do I think that, were I to choose to submit the matter to the iniquitous practices of the present Divorce Court, I could prove any thing against him by which even that low earthly judge would be justified in taking from him his marital authority? And if not, have I no conscience? Can I reconcile it to myself to make his life utterly desolate and wretched simply because duties which I took upon myself at my marriage have become distasteful to me?"

"These questions would be very hard to answer were there not other questions that I could ask. Of course I was wrong to marry him. I know that now, and I repent my sin in sackcloth and ashes. But I did not leave him after I married him till he had brought against me horrid accusations—accusations which a woman could not bear, which, if he believed them himself, must have made it impossible for him to live with me. Could any wife live with a husband who declared to her face that he believed that she had a lover? And in this very letter he says that which almost repeats the accusation. He has asked me how I can have dared to receive you, and desires me never either to see you or to wish to see you again. And yet he sent for you to Lough Linter before you came, in order that you might act as a friend between us. How

could I possibly return to a man whose power of judgment has so absolutely left him?

"I have a conscience in the matter—a conscience that is very far from being at ease. I have done wrong, and have shipwrecked every hope in this world. No woman was ever more severely punished. My life is a burden to me, and I may truly say that I look for no peace this side the grave. I am conscious, too, of continued sin—a sin unlike other sins—not to be avoided, of daily occurrence—a sin which weighs me to the ground. But I should not sin the less were I to return to him. Of course he can plead his marriage. The thing is done. But it can't be right that a woman should pretend to love a man whom she loathes. I couldn't live with him. If it were simply to go and die, so that his pride would be gratified by my return, I would do it; but I should not die. There would come some horrid scene, and I should be no more a wife to him than I am while living here.

"He now threatens me with publicity. He declares that unless I return to him he will put into some of the papers a statement of the whole case. Of course this would be very bad. To be obscure and untalked of is all the comfort that now remains to me. And he might say things that would be prejudicial to others—especially to you. Could this in any way be prevented? I suppose the papers would publish any thing; and you know how greedily people will read slander about those whose names are in any way remarkable. In my heart I believe he is insane; but it is very hard that one's privacy should be at the mercy of a madman. He says that he can get an order from the Court of Queen's Bench which will oblige the judges in Saxony to send me back to England in the custody of the police; but that I do not believe. I had the opinion of Sir Gregory Gram before I came away, and he told me that it was not so. I do not fear his power over my person, while I remain here, but that the matter should be dragged forward before the public.

"I have not answered him yet, nor have I shown his letter to papa. I hardly liked to tell you when you were here, but I almost fear to talk to papa about it. He never urges me to go back, but I know that he wishes that I should do so. He has ideas about money which seem singular to me, knowing, as I do, how very generous he has been himself. When I married, my fortune, as you knew, had been just used in paying Chiltern's debts. Mr. Kennedy had declared himself to be quite indifferent about it, though the sum was large. The whole thing was explained to him, and he was satisfied. Before a year was over he complained to papa, and then papa and Chiltern together raised the money—£40,000—and it was paid to Mr. Kennedy. He has written more than once to papa's lawyer to say that, though the money is altogether useless to him, he will not return a penny of it, because by doing so he would seem to abandon his rights. Nobody has asked him to return it. Nobody has asked him to defray a penny on my account since I left him. But papa continues to say that the money should not be lost to the family. I can not, however, return to such a husband for the sake of £40,000. Papa is very angry about the money, because he says that if it had been paid in the usual way at my mar-

riage, settlements would have been required that it should come back to the family after Mr. Kennedy's death in the event of my having no child. But, as it is now, the money would go to his estate after my death. I don't understand why it should be so, but papa is always harping upon it, and declaring that Mr. Kennedy's pretended generosity has robbed us all. Papa thinks that were I to return, this could be arranged; but I could not go back to him for such a reason. What does it matter? Chiltern and Violet will have enough; and of what use would it be to such a one as I am to have a sum of money to leave behind me? I should leave it to your children, Phineas, and not to Chiltern's.

"He bids me neither see you nor write to you—but how can I obey a man whom I believe to be mad? And when I will not obey him in the greater matter by returning to him, it would be absurd were I to attempt to obey him in smaller details. I don't suppose I shall see you very often. His letter has, at any rate, made me feel that it would be impossible for me to return to England, and it is not likely that you will soon come here again. I will not even ask you to do so, though your presence gave a brightness to my life for a few days which nothing else could have produced. But when the lamp for a while burns with special brightness there always comes afterward a corresponding dullness. I had to pay for your visit, and for the comfort of my confession to you at Königstein. I was determined that you should know it all; but, having told you, I do not want to see you again. As for writing, he shall not deprive me of the consolation—nor, I trust, will you.

"Do you think that I should answer his letter, or will it be better that I should show it to papa? I am very averse to doing that, as I have explained to you; but I would do so if I thought that Mr. Kennedy really intended to act upon his threats. I will not conceal from you that it would go nigh to kill me if my name were dragged through the papers. Can any thing be done to prevent it? If he were known to be mad, of course the papers would not publish his statements; but I suppose that if he were to send a letter from Lough Linter with his name to it, they would print it. It would be very, very cruel.

"God bless you. I need not say how faithfully I am  
Your friend,  
L. K."

This letter was addressed to Phineas at his club, and there he received it on the evening before the meeting of Parliament. He sat up for nearly an hour thinking of it after he read it. He must answer it at once. That was a matter of course. But he could give her no advice that would be of any service to her. He was, indeed, of all men the least fitted to give her counsel in her present emergency. It seemed to him that as she was safe from any attack on her person, she need only remain at Dresden, answering his letter by what softest negatives she could use. It was clear to him that in his present condition she could take no steps whatever in regard to the money. That must be left to his conscience, to time, and to chance. As to the threat of publicity, the probability, he thought, was that it would lead to nothing. He doubted whether any respectable newspaper would insert such a

statement as that suggested. Were it published, the evil must be borne. No diligence on her part, or on the part of her lawyers, could prevent it.

But what had she meant when she wrote of continual sin, sin not to be avoided, of sin repeated daily, which nevertheless weighed her to the ground? Was it expected of him that he should answer that portion of her letter? It amounted to a passionate renewal of that declaration of affection for himself which she had made at Königstein, and which had pervaded her whole life since some period antecedent to her wretched marriage. Phineas, as he thought of it, tried to analyze the nature of such a love. He also, in those old days, had loved her, and had at once resolved that he must tell her so, though his hopes of success had been poor indeed. He had taken the first opportunity, and had declared his purpose. She, with the imperturbable serenity of a matured kind-hearted woman, had patted him on the back, as it were, as she told him of her existing engagement with Mr. Kennedy. Could it be that at that moment she could have loved him as she now said she did, and that she should have been so cold, so calm, and so kind; while, at that very moment, this coldness, calmness, and kindness was but a thin crust over so strong a passion? How different had been his own love! He had been neither calm nor kind. He had felt himself for a day or two to be so terribly knocked about that the world was nothing to him. For a month or two he had regarded himself as a man peculiarly circumstanced—marked for misfortune and for a solitary life. Then he had retricked his beams, and before twelve months were passed had almost forgotten his love. He knew now, or thought that he knew, that the continued indulgence of a hopeless passion was a folly opposed to the very instincts of man and woman—a weakness showing want of fibre and of muscle in the character. But here was a woman who could calmly conceal her passion in its early days, and marry a man whom she did not love in spite of it, who could make her heart, her feelings, and all her feminine delicacy subordinate to material considerations, and nevertheless could not rid herself of her passion in the course of years, although she felt its existence to be an intolerable burden on her conscience. On which side lay strength of character and on which side weakness? Was he strong, or was she?

And he tried to examine his own feelings in regard to her. The thing was so long ago that she was to him as some aunt, or sister, so much the elder as to be almost venerable. He acknowledged to himself a feeling which made it incumbent upon him to spend himself in her service, could he serve her by any work of his. He was, or would be, devoted to her. He owed her a never-dying gratitude. But were she free to marry again to-morrow, he knew that he could not marry her. She herself had said the same thing. She had said that she would be his sister. She had specially required of him that he should make known to her his wife, should he ever marry again. She had declared that she was incapable of further jealousy; and yet she now told him of daily sin of which her conscience could not assuage itself.

"Phineas," said a voice close to his ears, "are you repenting your sins?"

"Oh, certainly. What sins?"

It was Barrington Erle. "You know that we are going to do nothing to-morrow," continued he. "So I am told."

"We shall let the Address pass almost without a word. Gresham will simply express his determination to oppose the Church Bill to the knife. He means to be very plain-spoken about it. Whatever may be the merits of the bill, it must be regarded as an unconstitutional effort to retain power in the hands of the minority, coming from such hands as those of Mr. Daubeny. I take it he will go at length into the question of majorities, and show how inexpedient it is on behalf of the nation that any ministry should remain in power who can not command a majority in the House on ordinary questions. I don't know whether he will do that to-morrow or at the second reading of the bill."

"I quite agree with him."

"Of course you do. Every body agrees with him. No gentleman can have a doubt on the subject. Personally, I hate the idea of Church Reform. Dear old Mildmay, who taught me all I know, hates it too. But Mr. Gresham is the head of our party now, and much as I may differ from him on many things, I am bound to follow him. If he proposes Church Reform in my time, or any thing else, I shall support him."

"I know those are your ideas."

"Of course they are. There are no other ideas on which things can be made to work. Were it not that men get drilled into it by the force of circumstances, any government in this country would be impossible. Were it not so, what should we come to? The Queen would find herself justified in keeping in any set of Ministers who could get her favor, and ambitious men would prevail without any support from the country. The Queen must submit to dictation from some quarter."

"She must submit to advice, certainly."

"Don't cavil at a word when you know it to be true," said Barrington, energetically. "The constitution of the country requires that she should submit to dictation. Can it come safely from any other quarter than that of a majority of the House of Commons?"

"I think not."

"We are all agreed about that. Not a single man in either House would dare to deny it. And if it be so, what man in his senses can think of running counter to the party which he believes to be right in its general views? A man so burdened with scruples as to be unable to act in this way should keep himself aloof from public life. Such a one can not serve the country in Parliament, though he may possibly do so with pen and ink in his closet."

"I wonder, then, that you should have asked me to come forward again after what I did about the Irish land question," said Phineas.

"A first fault may be forgiven when the sinner has in other respects been useful. The long and the short of it is that you must vote with us against Daubeny's bill. Browborough sees it plainly enough. He supported his chief in the teeth of all his protestations at Tankerville."

"I am not Browborough."

"Nor half so good a man if you desert us," said Barrington Erle, with anger.

"I say nothing about that. He has his ideas of duty, and I have mine. But I will go so far as this. I have not yet made up my mind. I shall ask advice; but you must not quarrel with me if I say that I must seek it from some one who is less distinctly a partisan than you are."

"From Monk?"

"Yes—from Mr. Monk. I do think it will be bad for the country that this measure should come from the hands of Mr. Daubeny."

"Then why the d— should you support it, and oppose your own party at the same time? After that you can't do it.—Well, Ratler, my guide and philosopher, how is it going to be?"

Mr. Ratler had joined them, but was still standing before the seat they occupied, not condescending to sit down in amicable intercourse with a man as to whom he did not yet know whether to regard him as a friend or foe. "We shall be very quiet for the next month or six weeks," said Ratler.

"And then?" asked Phineas.

"Well, then it will depend on what may be the number of a few insane men who never ought to have seats in the House."

"Such as Mr. Monk and Mr. Turnbull?"

Now it was well known that both those gentlemen, who were recognized as leading men, were strong Radicals, and it was supposed that they both would support any bill, come whence it might, which would separate Church and State.

"Such as Mr. Monk," said Ratler. "I will grant that Turnbull may be an exception. It is his business to go in for every thing in the way of agitation, and he at any rate is consistent. But when a man has once been in office—why, then—"

"When he has taken the shilling?" said Phineas.

"Just so. I confess I do not like a deserter."

"Phineas will be all right," said Barrington Erle.

"I hope so," said Mr. Ratler, as he passed on.

"Ratler and I run very much in the same groove," said Barrington, "but I fancy there is some little difference in the motive power."

"Ratler wants place."

"And so do I."

"He wants it just as most men want professional success," said Phineas. "But if I understand your object, it is chiefly the maintenance of the old-established political power of the Whigs. You believe in families?"

"I do believe in the patriotism of certain families. I believe that the Mildmays, Fitz-Howards, and Pallisers have for some centuries brought up their children to regard the well-being of their country as their highest personal interest, and that such teaching has been generally efficacious. Of course there have been failures. Every child won't learn its lesson, however well it may be taught. But the school in which good training is most practiced will, as a rule, turn out the best scholars. In this way I believe in families. You have come in for some of the teaching, and I expect to see you a scholar yet."

The House met on the following day, and the Address was moved and seconded, but there was

no debate. There was not even a full House. The same ceremony had taken place so short a time previously that the whole affair was flat and uninteresting. It was understood that nothing would, in fact, be done. Mr. Gresham, as leader of his side of the House, confined himself to asserting that he should give his firmest opposition to the proposed measure, which was, it seemed, so popular with the gentlemen who sat on the other side, and who supported the so-called Conservative Government of the day. His reasons for doing so had been stated very lately, and must unfortunately be repeated very soon, and he would not, therefore, now trouble the House with them. He did not on this occasion explain his ideas as to majorities, and the Address was carried by seven o'clock in the evening. Mr. Daubeny named a day a month hence for the first reading of his bill, and was asked the cause of the delay by some member on a back bench. "Because it can not be ready sooner," said Mr. Daubeny. "When the honorable gentleman has achieved a position which will throw upon him the responsibility of bringing forward some great measure for the benefit of his country, he will probably find it expedient to devote some little time to details. If he do not, he will be less anxious to avoid attack than I am." A Minister can always give a reason; and, if he be clever, he can generally when doing so punish the man who asks for it. The punishing of an influential enemy is an indiscretion; but an obscure questioner may often be crushed with good effect.

Mr. Monk's advice to Phineas was both simple and agreeable. He intended to support Mr. Gresham, and of course counseled his friend to do the same.

"But you supported Mr. Daubeny on the Address before Christmas," said Phineas.

"And shall therefore be bound to explain why I oppose him now; but the task will not be difficult. The Queen's speech to Parliament was in my judgment right, and therefore I concurred in the Address. But I certainly can not trust Mr. Daubeny with Church Reform. I do not know that many will make the same distinction, but I shall do so."

Phineas soon found himself sitting in the House as though he had never left it. His absence had not been long enough to make the place feel strange to him. He was on his legs before a fortnight was over asking some question of some Minister, and of course insinuating as he did so that the Minister in question had been guilty of some enormity of omission or commission. It all came back upon him as though he had been born to the very manner. And as it became known to the Ratlers that he meant to vote right on the great coming question—to vote right and to speak right in spite of his doings at Tankerville—every body was civil to him. Mr. Bonteen did express an opinion to Mr. Ratler that it was quite impossible that Phineas Finn should ever again accept office, as of course the Tankervillians would never replace him in his seat after manifest apostasy to his pledge; but Mr. Ratler seemed to think very little of that. "They won't remember, Lord bless you!—and then he's one of those fellows that always get in somewhere. He's not a man I particularly like, but you'll always see him in the House—up and down, you know. When a fellow begins early, and has got it in

him, it's hard to shake him off." And thus even Mr. Ratler was civil to our hero.

Lady Laura Kennedy's letter had, of course, been answered—not without very great difficulty. "My dear Laura," he had begun, for the first time in his life. She had told him to treat her as a brother would do, and he thought it best to comply with her instructions. But beyond that, till he declared himself at the end to be hers affectionately, he made no further protestation of affection. He made no allusion to that sin which weighed so heavily on her, but answered all her questions. He advised her to remain at Dresden. He assured her that no power could be used to enforce her return. He expressed his belief that Mr. Kennedy would abstain from making any public statement, but suggested that if any were made, the answering of it should be left to the family lawyer. In regard to the money, he thought it impossible that any step should be taken. He then told her all there was to tell of Lord and Lady Chiltern, and something also of himself. When the letter was written he found that it was cold and almost constrained. To his own ears it did not sound like the hearty letter of a generous friend. It savored of the caution with which it had been prepared. But what could he do? Would he not sin against her and increase her difficulties if he addressed her with warm affection? Were he to say a word that ought not to be addressed to any woman he might do her an irreparable injury; and yet the tone of his own letter was odious to him.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### MR. MAULE, SENIOR.

THE life of Mr. Maurice Maule of Maule Abbey, the father of Gerard Maule, had certainly not been prosperous. He had from his boyhood enjoyed a reputation for cleverness, and at school had done great things—winning prizes, spouting speeches on speech days, playing in elevens, and looking always handsome. He had been one of those show boys of which two or three are generally to be found at our great schools, and all manner of good things had been prophesied on his behalf. He had been in love before he was eighteen, and very nearly succeeded in running away with the young lady before he went to college. His father had died when he was an infant, so that at twenty-one he was thought to be in possession of comfortable wealth. At Oxford he was considered to have got into a good set—men of fashion who were also given to talking of books—who spent money, read poetry, and had opinions of their own respecting the tracts and Mr. Newman. He took his degree, and then started himself in the world upon that career which is of all the most difficult, to follow with respect and self-comfort. He proposed to himself the life of an idle man with a moderate income—a life which should be luxurious, refined, and graceful, but to which should be attached the burden of no necessary occupation. His small estate gave him but little to do, as he would not farm any portion of his own acres. He became a magistrate in his county, but he would not interest himself with the price of a good yoke of bullocks, as did Mr. Justice Shal-

low, nor did he ever care how a score of ewes went at any fair. There is no harder life than this. Here and there we may find a man who has so trained himself that day after day he can devote his mind without compulsion to healthy pursuits, who can induce himself to work, though work be not required from him for any ostensible object, who can save himself from the curse of misusing his time, though he has for it no defined and necessary use; but such men are few, and are made of better metal than was Mr. Maule. He became an idler, a man of luxury, and then a spendthrift. He was now hardly beyond middle life, and he assumed for himself the character of a man of taste. He loved music and pictures and books and pretty women. He loved also good eating and drinking, but conceived of himself that in his love for them he was an artist and not a glutton. He had married early, and his wife had died soon. He had not given himself up with any special zeal to the education of his children, nor to the preservation of his property. The result of his indifference has been told in a previous chapter. His house was deserted, and his children were scattered about the world. His eldest son, having means of his own, was living an idle, desultory life, hardly with prospects of better success than had attended his father.

Mr. Maule was now something about fifty-five years of age, and almost considered himself young. He lived in chambers on a flat in Westminster, and belonged to two excellent clubs. He had not been near his property for the last ten years, and as he was addicted to no country sport, there were ten weeks in the year which were terrible to him. From the middle of August to the end of October for him there was no whist, no society, it may almost be said no dinner. He had tried going to the sea-side; he had tried going to Paris; he had endeavored to enjoy Switzerland and the Italian lakes; but all had failed, and he had acknowledged to himself that this sad period of the year must always be endured without relaxation and without comfort.

Of his children he now took but little notice. His daughter was married and in India. His younger son had disappeared, and the father was perhaps thankful that he was thus saved from trouble. With his elder son he did maintain some amicable intercourse, but it was very slight in its nature. They never corresponded unless the one had something special to say to the other. They had no recognized ground for meeting. They did not belong to the same clubs. They did not live in the same circles. They did not follow the same pursuits. They were interested in the same property; but, as on that subject there had been something approaching to a quarrel, and as neither looked for assistance from the other, they were now silent on the matter. The father believed himself to be a poorer man than his son, and was very sore on the subject; but he had nothing beyond a life interest in his property, and there remained to him a certain amount of prudence which induced him to abstain from eating more of his pudding—lest absolute starvation and the poor-house should befall him. There still remained to him the power of spending some five or six hundred a year, and upon this practice had taught him to live with a very considerable amount of self-indul-

gence. He dined out a great deal, and was known every where as Mr. Maule of Maule Abbey.

He was a slight, bright-eyed, gray-haired, good-looking man, who had once been very handsome. He had married, let us say for love—probably very much by chance. He had ill-used his wife, and had continued a long-continued liaison with a complaisant friend. This had lasted some twenty years of his life, and had been to him an intolerable burden. He had come to see the necessity of employing his good looks, his conversational powers, and his excellent manners on a second marriage which might be lucrative; but the unpleasant lady had stood in his way. Perhaps there had been a little cowardice on his part; but at any rate he had hitherto failed. The season for such a mode of relief was not, however, as yet clean gone with him, and he was still on the look-out. There are women always in the market ready to buy for themselves the right to hang on the arm of a real gentleman. That Mr. Maurice Maule was a real gentleman no judge in such matters had ever doubted.

On a certain morning just at the end of February Mr. Maule was sitting in his library—so called—eating his breakfast, at about twelve o'clock, and at his side there lay a note from his son Gerard. Gerard had written to say that he would call on that morning, and the promised visit somewhat disturbed the father's comfort. He was in his dressing-gown and slippers, and had his newspaper in his hand. When his newspaper and breakfast should be finished—as they would be certainly at the same moment—there were in store for him two cigarettes, and perhaps some new French novel which had just reached him. They would last him till two o'clock. Then he would dress and saunter out in his great-coat, made luxurious with furs. He would see a picture, or perhaps some china vase, of which news had reached him, and would talk of them as though he might be a possible buyer. Every body knew that he never bought any thing; but he was a man whose opinion on such matters was worth having. Then he would call on some lady whose acquaintance at the moment might be of service to him; for that idea of blazing once more out into the world on a wife's fortune was always present to him. At about five he would saunter into his club, and play a rubber in a gentle unexcited manner till seven. He never played for high points, and would never be enticed into any bet beyond the limits of his club stakes. Were he to lose £10 or £20 at a sitting his arrangements would be greatly disturbed, and his comfort seriously affected. But he played well, taking pains with his game, and some who knew him well declared that his whist was worth a hundred a year to him. Then he would dress, and generally dine in society. He was known as a good diner out, though in what his excellence consisted they who entertained him might find it difficult to say. He was not witty, nor did he deal in anecdotes. He spoke with a low voice, never addressing himself to any but his neighbor, and even to his neighbor saying but little. But he looked like a gentleman, was well dressed, and never awkward. After dinner he would occasionally play another rubber; but twelve o'clock always saw him back

into his own rooms. No one knew better than Mr. Maule that the continual bloom of lasting summer which he affected requires great accuracy in living. Late hours, nocturnal cigars, and midnight drinkings, pleasurable though they may be, consume too quickly the free-flowing lamps of youth, and are fatal at once to the husbanded candle ends of age.

But such as his days were, every minute of them was precious to him. He possessed the rare merit of making a property of his time, and not a burden. He had so shuffled off his duties that he had now rarely any thing to do that was positively disagreeable. He had been a spendthrift; but his creditors, though perhaps never satisfied, had been quieted. He did not now deal with reluctant and hard-tasked tenants, but with punctual though inimical trustees, who paid to him with charming regularity that portion of his income which he was allowed to spend. But that he was still tormented with the ambition of a splendid marriage it might be said of him that he was completely at his ease. Now, as he lit his cigarette, he would have been thoroughly comfortable, were it not that he was threatened with disturbance by his son. Why should his son wish to see him, and thus break in upon him at the most charming hour of the day? Of course his son would not come to him without having some business in hand which must be disagreeable. He had not the least desire to see his son—and yet, as they were on amiable terms, he could not deny himself after the receipt of his son's note. Just at one, as he finished his first cigarette, Gerard was announced.

"Well, Gerard!"

"Well, father—how are you? You are looking as fresh as paint, Sir."

"Thanks for the compliment, if you mean one. I am pretty well. I thought you were hunting somewhere."

"So I am; but I have just come up to town to see you. I find you have been smoking; may I light a cigar?"

"I never do smoke cigars here, Gerard. I'll offer you a cigarette." The cigarette was reluctantly offered, and accepted with a shrug. "But you didn't come home merely to smoke, I dare say."

"Certainly not, Sir. We do not often trouble each other, father; but there are things about which I suppose we had better speak. I'm going to be married!"

"To be married!" The tone in which Mr. Maule, senior, repeated the words was much the same as might be used by any ordinary father if his son expressed an intention of going into the shoe-black business.

"Yes, Sir. It's a kind of thing men do sometimes."

"No doubt; and it's a kind of thing that they sometimes repent of having done."

"Let us hope for the best. It is too late, at any rate, to think about that, and as it is to be done, I have come to tell you."

"Very well. I suppose you are right to tell me. Of course you know that I can do nothing for you; and I don't suppose that you can do any thing for me. As far as your own welfare goes, if she has a large fortune—"

"She has no fortune."

"No fortune!"

"Two or three thousand pounds perhaps."

"Then I look upon it as an act of simple madness, and can only say that as such I shall treat it. I have nothing in my power, and therefore I can neither do you good nor harm; but I will not hear any particulars, and I can only advise you to break it off, let the trouble be what it may."

"I certainly shall not do that, Sir."

"Then I have nothing more to say. Don't ask me to be present, and don't ask me to see her."

"You haven't heard her name yet."

"I do not care one straw what her name is."

"It is Adelaide Palliser."

"Adelaide Muggins would be exactly the same thing to me. My dear Gerard, I have lived too long in the world to believe that men can coin into money the noble blood of well-born wives. Twenty thousand pounds is worth more than all the blood of all the Howards, and a wife even with twenty thousand pounds would make you a poor, embarrassed, and half-famished man."

"Then I suppose I shall be whole famished, as she certainly has not got a quarter of that sum."

"No doubt you will."

"Yet, Sir, married men with families have lived on my income."

"And on less than a quarter of it. The very respectable man who brushes my clothes no doubt does so. But then, you see, he has been brought up in that way. I suppose that you, as a bachelor, put by every year at least half your income?"

"I never put by a shilling, Sir. Indeed, I owe a few hundred pounds."

"And yet you expect to keep a house over your head, and an expensive wife and family, with lady's-maid, nurses, cook, footman, and grooms, on a sum which has been hitherto insufficient for your own wants! I didn't think you were such an idiot, my boy."

"Thank you, Sir."

"What will her dress cost?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"I dare say not. Probably she is a horse-woman. As far as I know any thing of your life, that is the sphere in which you will have made the lady's acquaintance."

"She does ride."

"No doubt, and so do you; and it will be very easy to say whither you will ride together if you are fools enough to get married. I can only advise you to do nothing of the kind. Is there any thing else?"

There was much more to be said if Gerard could succeed in forcing his father to hear him. Mr. Maule, who had hitherto been standing, seated himself as he asked that last question, and took up the book which had been prepared for his morning's delectation. It was evidently his intention that his son should leave him. The news had been communicated to him, and he had said all that he could say on the subject. He had at once determined to confine himself to a general view of the matter, and to avoid details—which might be personal to himself. But Gerard had been specially required to force his father into details. Had he been left to himself, he would certainly have thought that the conversation had gone far enough. He was inclined, almost as well as his father, to avoid present discomfort. But when Miss Palliser had suddenly—almost suddenly—accepted him; and when he

had found himself describing the prospects of his life in her presence and in that of Lady Chiltern, the question of the Maule Abbey inheritance had of necessity been discussed. At Maule Abbey there might be found a home for the married couple, and—so thought Lady Chiltern—the only fitting home. Mr. Maule, the father, certainly did not desire to live there. Probably arrangements might be made for repairing the house and furnishing it with Adelaide's money. Then, if Gerard Maule would be prudent, and give up hunting, and farm a little himself—and if Adelaide would do her own housekeeping and dress upon forty pounds a year, and if they would both live an exemplary, model, energetic, and strictly economical life, both ends might be made to meet. Adelaide had been quite enthusiastic as to the forty pounds, and had suggested that she would do it for thirty. The housekeeping was a matter of course, and the more so as a leg of mutton, roast or boiled, would be the beginning and the end of it. To Adelaide the discussion had been exciting and pleasurable, and she had been quite in earnest when looking forward to a new life at Maule Abbey. After all, there could be no such great difficulty for a young married couple to live on £800 a year, with a house and garden of their own. There would be no carriage and no manservant till—till old Mr. Maule was dead. The suggestion as to the ultimate and desirable haven was wrapped up in ambiguous words. "The property must be yours some day," suggested Lady Chiltern. "If I outlive my father." "We take that for granted; and then, you know—" So Lady Chiltern went on, dilating upon a future state of squirearchical bliss and rural independence. Adelaide was enthusiastic; but Gerard Maule—after he had assented to the abandonment of his hunting, much as a man assents to being hung when the antecedents of his life have put any option in the matter out of his power—had sat silent and almost moody while the joys of his coming life were described to him. Lady Chiltern, however, had been urgent in pointing out to him that the scheme of living at Maule Abbey could not be carried out without his father's assistance. They all knew that Mr. Maule himself could not be affected by the matter, and they also knew that he had but very little power in reference to the property. But the plan could not be matured without some sanction from him. Therefore there was still much more to be said when the father had completed the exposition of his views on marriage in general. "I wanted to speak to you about the property," said Gerard. He had been specially enjoined to be stanch in bringing his father to the point.

"And what about the property?"

"Of course my marriage will not affect your interests."

"I should say not. It would be very odd if it did. As it is, your income is much larger than mine."

"I don't know how that is, Sir; but I suppose you will not refuse to give me a helping hand if you can do so without disturbance to your own comfort."

"In what sort of way? Don't you think any thing of that kind can be managed better by the lawyer? If there is a thing I hate, it is business."

Gerard, remembering his promise to Lady Chiltern, did persevere, though the perseverance

went much against the grain with him. "We thought, Sir, that if you would consent, we might live at Maule Abbey."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

"Is there any objection?"

"Simply the fact that it is my house, and not yours."

"It belongs, I suppose, to the property; and as—"

"As what?" asked the father, turning upon the son with sharp angry eyes, and with something of real animation in his face.

Gerard was very awkward in conveying his meaning to his father. "And as," he continued—"as it must come to me, I suppose, some day, and it will be the proper sort of thing that we should live there then, I thought that you would agree that if we went and lived there now, it would be a good sort of thing to do."

"That was your idea?"

"We talked it over with our friend, Lady Chiltern."

"Indeed! I am so much obliged to your friend, Lady Chiltern, for the interest she takes in my affairs. Pray make my compliments to Lady Chiltern, and tell her at the same time that though, no doubt, I have one foot in the grave, I should like to keep my house for the other foot, though too probably I may never be able to drag it so far as Maule Abbey."

"But you don't think of living there."

"My dear boy, if you will inquire among any friends you may happen to know who understand the world better than Lady Chiltern seems to do, they will tell you that a son should not suggest to his father the abandonment of the family property, because the father may—probably—soon—be conveniently got rid of under-ground."

"There was no thought of such a thing," said Gerard.

"It isn't decent. I say that with all due deference to Lady Chiltern's better judgment. It's not the kind of thing that men do. I care less about it than most men, but even I object to such a proposition when it is made so openly. No doubt I am old." This assertion Mr. Maule made in a weak, quavering voice, which showed that had his attention been that way turned in his youth, he might probably have earned his bread on the stage.

"Nobody thought of your being old, Sir."

"I sha'n't last long, of course. I am a poor feeble creature. But while I do live I should prefer not to be turned out of my own house—if Lady Chiltern could be induced to consent to such an arrangement. My doctor seems to think that I might linger on for a year or two—with great care."

"Father, you know I was thinking of nothing of the kind."

"We won't act the king and the prince any further, if you please. The prince protested very well, and, if I remember right, the father pretended to believe him. In my weak state you have rather upset me. If you have no objection I would choose to be left to recover myself a little."

"And is that all that you will say to me?"

"Good Heavens! what more can you want? I will not—consent—to give up—my house at Maule Abbey for your use—as long as I live. Will that do? And if you choose to marry a

wife and starve, I won't think that any reason why I should starve too. Will that do? And your friend, Lady Chiltern, may—go—and be d—d. Will that do?"

"Good-morning, Sir."

"Good-morning, Gerard." So the interview was over, and Gerard Maule left the room. The father, as soon as he was alone, immediately lit another cigarette, took up his French novel, and went to work as though he was determined to be happy and comfortable again without losing a moment. But he found this to be beyond his power. He had been really disturbed, and could not easily compose himself. The cigarette was almost at once chucked into the fire, and the little volume was laid on one side. Mr. Maule rose almost impetuously from his chair, and stood with his back to the fire, contemplating the proposition that had been made to him.

It was actually true that he had been offended by the very faint idea of death which had been suggested to him by his son. Though he was a man bearing no palpable signs of decay, in excellent health, with good digestion—who might live to be ninety—he did not like to be warned that his heir would come after him. The claim which had been put forward to Maule Abbey by his son had rested on the fact that when he should die the place must belong to his son; and the fact was unpleasant to him. Lady Chiltern had spoken of him behind his back as being mortal, and in doing so had been guilty of an impertinence. Maule Abbey, no doubt, was a ruined old house, in which he never thought of living—which was not let to a tenant by the creditors of his estate only because its condition was unfit for tenancy. But now Mr. Maule began to think whether he might not possibly give the lie to these people who were compassing his death by returning to the halls of his ancestors, if not in the bloom of youth, still in the pride of age. Why should he not live at Maule Abbey if this successful marriage could be effected? He almost knew himself well enough to be aware that a month at Maule Abbey would destroy him; but it is the proper thing for a man of fashion to have a place of his own, and he had always been alive to the glory of being Mr. Maule of Maule Abbey. In preparing the way for the marriage that was to come he must be so known. To be spoken of as the father of Maule of Maule Abbey would have been fatal to him. To be the father of a married son at all was disagreeable, and therefore when the communication was made to him he had managed to be very unpleasant. As for giving up Maule Abbey—! He fretted and fumed as he thought of the proposition through the hour which should have been to him an hour of enjoyment, and his anger grew hot against his son as he remembered all that he was losing. At last, however, he composed himself sufficiently to put on with becoming care his luxurious furled great-coat, and then he sallied forth in quest of the lady.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## "PURITY OF MORALS, FINN."

MR. QUINTUS SLIDE was now, as formerly, the editor of the *People's Banner*, but a change had come over the spirit of his dream. His