

still be hampered by ignorance, prejudice, and favor for the great. He was quite sure that no injunction would have been granted in favor of Mr. Joseph Smith and Mr. John Jones.

He went boldly up to one of the policemen who sit guarding the door of the lobby of our House of Commons, and asked for Mr. Finn. The Cerberus on the left was not sure whether Mr. Finn was in the House, but would send in a card if Mr. Slide would stand on one side. For the next quarter of an hour Mr. Slide heard no more of his message, and then applied again to the Cerberus. The Cerberus shook his head, and again desired the applicant to stand on one side. He had done all that in him lay. The other watchful Cerberus standing on the right, observing that the intruder was not accommodated with any member, intimated to him the propriety of standing back in one of the corners. Our editor turned round upon the man as though he would bite him; but he did stand back, meditating an article on the gross want of attention to the public shown in the lobby of the House of Commons. Is it possible that any editor should endure any inconvenience without meditating an article? But the judicious editor thinks twice of such things. Our editor was still in his wrath when he saw his prey come forth from the House with a card—no doubt his own card. He leaped forward in spite of the policeman, in spite of any Cerberus, and seized Phineas by the arm. "I want just to have a few words," he said. He made an effort to repress his wrath, knowing that the whole world would be against him should he exhibit any violence of indignation on that spot; but Phineas could see it all in the fire of his eye.

"Certainly," said Phineas, retiring to the side of the lobby, with a conviction that the distance between him and the House was already sufficient.

"Can't you come down into Westminster Hall?"

"I should only have to come up again. You can say what you've got to say here."

"I've got a great deal to say. I never was so badly treated in my life; never." He could not quite repress his voice, and he saw that a policeman looked at him. Phineas saw it also.

"Because we have hindered you from publishing an untrue and very slanderous letter about a lady!"

"You promised me that you'd come to me yesterday."

"I think not. I think I said that you should hear from me—and you did."

"You call that truth—and honesty!"

"Certainly I do. Of course it was my first duty to stop the publication of the letter."

"You haven't done that yet."

"I've done my best to stop it. If you have nothing more to say I'll wish you good evening."

"I've a deal more to say. You were shot at, weren't you?"

"I have no desire to make any communication to you on any thing that has occurred, Mr. Slide. If I staid with you all the afternoon I could tell you nothing more. Good-evening."

"I'll crush you," said Quintus Slide, in a stage-whisper; "I will, as sure as my name is Slide."

Phineas looked at him and retired into the House, whither Quintus Slide could not follow

him, and the editor of the *People's Banner* was left alone in his anger.

"How a cock can crow on his own dunghill!" That was Mr. Slide's first feeling, as with a painful sense of diminished consequence he retraced his steps through the outer lobbies and down into Westminster Hall. He had been browbeaten by Phineas Finn, simply because Phineas had been able to retreat within those happy doors. He knew that to the eyes of all the policemen and strangers assembled Phineas Finn had been a hero, a Parliamentary hero, and he had been some poor outsider—to be ejected at once should he make himself disagreeable to the members. Nevertheless, had he not all the columns of the *People's Banner* in his pocket? Was he not great in the Fourth Estate—much greater than Phineas Finn in his estate? Could he not thunder every night so that an audience to be counted by hundreds of thousands should hear his thunder, whereas this poor member of Parliament must struggle night after night for an opportunity of speaking, and could then only speak to benches half deserted, or to a few members half asleep—unless the Press should choose to convert his words into thunder-bolts? Who could doubt for a moment with which lay the greater power? And yet this wretched Irishman, who had wriggled himself into Parliament on a petition, getting the better of a good, downright English John Bull by a quibble, had treated him with scorn—the wretched Irishman being for the moment like a cock on his own dunghill. Quintus Slide was not slow to tell himself that he also had an elevation of his own, from which he could make himself audible. In former days he had forgiven Phineas Finn more than once. If he ever forgave Phineas Finn again, might his right hand forget its cunning, and never again draw blood or tear a scalp.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FIRST THUNDER-BOLT.

It was not till after Mr. Slide had left him that Phineas wrote the following letter to Lady Laura:

"HOUSE OF COMMONS, March 1, 18—.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have a long story to tell, which I fear I shall find difficult in the telling; but it is so necessary that you should know the facts that I must go through with it as best I may. It will give you very great pain; but the result as regards your own position will not, I think, be injurious to you.

"Yesterday, Sunday, a man came to me who edits a newspaper, and whom I once knew. You will remember when I used to tell you in Portman Square of the amenities and angers of Mr. Slide—the man who wanted to sit for Loughton. He is the editor. He brought me a long letter from Mr. Kennedy himself, intended for publication, and which was already printed, giving an elaborate and, I may say, a most cruelly untrue account of your quarrel. I read the letter, but of course can not remember the words; nor, if I could remember them, should I repeat them. They contained all the old charges with which you are familiar, and which your unfortunate husband now desired to publish in consumma-

tion of his threats. Why Mr. Slide should have brought me the paper before publishing it I can hardly understand. But he did so, and told me that Mr. Kennedy was in town. We have managed among us to obtain a legal warrant for preventing the publication of the letter, and I think I may say that it will not see the light.

"When Mr. Slide left me I called on Mr. Kennedy, whom I found in a miserable little hotel in Judd Street, kept by Scotch people named Macpherson. They had come from the neighborhood of Lough Linter, and knew Mr. Kennedy well. This was yesterday afternoon, Sunday, and I found some difficulty in making my way into his presence. My object was to induce him to withdraw the letter, for at that time I doubted whether the law could interfere quickly enough to prevent the publication.

"I found your husband in a very sad condition. What he said or what I said I forget; but he was, as usual, intensely anxious that you should return to him. I need not hesitate now to say that he is certainly mad. After a while, when I expressed my assured opinion that you would not go back to Lough Linter, he suddenly turned round, grasped a revolver, and fired at my head. How I got out of the room I don't quite remember. Had he repeated the shot, which he might have done over and over again, he must have hit me. As it was, I escaped, and blundered down the stairs to Mrs. Macpherson's room.

"They whom I have consulted in the matter, namely, Barrington Erle and my particular friend, Mr. Low—to whom I went for legal assistance in stopping the publication—seem to think that I should have at once sent for the police, and given Mr. Kennedy in charge. But I did not do so, and hitherto the police have, I believe, no knowledge of what occurred. A paragraph appeared in one of the morning papers to-day, giving almost an accurate account of the matter, but mentioning neither the place nor any of the names. No doubt it will be repeated in all the papers, and the names will soon be known. But the result will be simply a general conviction as to the insanity of poor Mr. Kennedy—as to which they who know him have had for a long time but little doubt.

"The Macphersons seem to have been very anxious to screen their guest. At any other hotel, no doubt, the landlord would have sent for the police; but in this case the attempt was kept quite secret. They did send for George Kennedy, a cousin of your husband's, whom I think you know, and whom I saw this morning. He assures me that Robert Kennedy is quite aware of the wickedness of the attempt he made, and that he is plunged in deep remorse. He is to be taken down to Lough Linter to-morrow, and is—so says his cousin—as tractable as a child. What George Kennedy means to do I can not say; but for myself, as I did not send for the police at the moment, as I am told I ought to have done, I shall now do nothing. I don't know that a man is subject to punishment because he does not make complaint. I suppose I have a right to regard it all as an accident if I please.

"But for you this must be very important. That Mr. Kennedy is insane there can not now, I think, be a doubt; and therefore the question of your returning to him—as far as there has

been any question—is absolutely settled. None of your friends would be justified in allowing you to return. He is undoubtedly mad, and has done an act which is not murderous only on that conclusion. This settles the question so perfectly that you could, no doubt, reside in England now without danger. Mr. Kennedy himself would feel that he could take no steps to enforce your return after what he did yesterday. Indeed, if you could bring yourself to face the publicity, you could, I imagine, obtain a legal separation, which would give you again the control of your own fortune. I feel myself bound to mention this; but I give you no advice. You will no doubt explain all the circumstances to your father.

"I think I have now told you every thing that I need tell you. The thing only happened yesterday, and I have been all the morning busy getting the injunction, and seeing Mr. George Kennedy. Just before I began this letter that horrible editor was with me again, threatening me with all the penalties which an editor can inflict. To tell the truth, I do feel confused among them all, and still fancy that I hear the click of the pistol. That newspaper paragraph says that the ball went through my whiskers, which was certainly not the case; but a foot or two off is quite near enough for a pistol-ball.

"The Duke of Omnium is dying, and I have heard to-day that Madame Goesler, our old friend, has been sent for to Matching. She and I renewed our acquaintance the other day at Harrington.

"God bless you. Your most sincere friend,

"PHINEAS FINN.

"Do not let my news oppress you. The firing of the pistol is a thing done and over without evil results. The state of Mr. Kennedy's mind is what we have long suspected, and, melancholy though it be, should contain for you, at any rate, this consolation—that the accusations made against you would not have been made had his mind been unclouded."

Twice while Finn was writing this letter was he rung into the House for a division, and once it was suggested to him to say a few words of angry opposition to the Government on some not important subject under discussion. Since the beginning of the session hardly a night had passed without some verbal sparring, and very frequently the limits of Parliamentary decorum had been almost surpassed. Never within the memory of living politicians had political rancor been so sharp, and the feeling of injury so keen, both on the one side and on the other. The taunts thrown at the Conservatives, in reference to the Church, had been almost unendurable—and the more so because the strong expressions of feeling from their own party throughout the country were against them. Their own convictions also were against them. And there had for a while been almost a determination through the party to deny their leader and disclaim the bill. But a feeling of duty to the party had prevailed, and this had not been done. It had not been done; but the not doing of it was a sore burden on the half-broken shoulders of many a man who sat gloomily on the benches behind Mr. Daubeny. Men goaded as they were, by their opponents, by their natural friends, and by their

own consciences, could not hear it in silence, and very bitter things were said in return. Mr. Gresham was accused of a degrading lust for power. No other feeling could prompt him to oppose with a factious acrimony never before exhibited in that House—so said some wretched Conservative with broken back and broken heart—a measure which he himself would only be too willing to carry were he allowed the privilege of passing over to the other side of the House for the purpose. In these encounters Phineas Finn had already exhibited his prowess, and, in spite of his declarations at Tankerville, had become prominent as an opponent to Mr. Daubeny's bill. He had, of course, himself been taunted, and held up in the House to the execration of his own constituents; but he had enjoyed his fight, and had remembered how his friend Mr. Monk had once told him that the pleasure lay all on the side of opposition. But on this evening he declined to speak. "I suppose you have hardly recovered from Kennedy's pistol," said Mr. Ratler, who had, of course, heard the whole story. "That, and the whole affair together, have upset me," said Phineas. "Fitzgibbon will do it for you; he's in the House." And so it happened that on that occasion the Honorable Laurence Fitzgibbon made a very effective speech against the Government.

On the next morning, from the columns of the *People's Banner* was hurled the first of those thunder-bolts with which it was the purpose of Mr. Slide absolutely to destroy the political and social life of Phineas Finn. He would not miss his aim as Mr. Kennedy had done. He would strike such blows that no constituency should ever venture to return Mr. Finn again to Parliament; and he thought that he could also so strike his blows that no mighty nobleman, no distinguished commoner, no lady of rank, should again care to entertain the miscreant and feed him with the dainties of fashion. The first thunder-bolt was as follows:

"We abstained yesterday from alluding to a circumstance which occurred at a small hotel in Judd Street on Sunday afternoon, and which, as we observe, was mentioned by one of our contemporaries. The names, however, were not given, although the persons implicated were indicated. We can see no reason why the names should be concealed. Indeed, as both the gentlemen concerned have been guilty of very great criminality, we think that we are bound to tell the whole story—and this the more especially as certain circumstances have in a very peculiar manner placed us in possession of the facts.

"It is no secret that for the last two years Lady Laura Kennedy has been separated from her husband, the Honorable Robert Kennedy, who, in the last administration, under Mr. Millemay, held the office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and, we believe, as little a secret that Mr. Kennedy has been very persistent in endeavoring to recall his wife to her home. With equal persistence she has refused to obey, and we have in our hands the clearest possible evidence that Mr. Kennedy has attributed her obstinate refusal to influence exercised over her by Mr. Phineas Finn, who three years since was her father's nominee for the then existing borough of Loughton, and who lately succeeded in ousting poor Mr. Browborough from his seat for

Tankerville by his impetuous promises to support that very measure of Church Reform which he is now opposing with that venom which makes him valuable to his party. Whether Mr. Phineas Finn will ever sit in another Parliament we can not, of course, say, but we think we can at least assure him that he will never again sit for Tankerville.

"On last Sunday afternoon Mr. Finn, knowing well the feeling with which he is regarded by Mr. Kennedy, outraged all decency by calling upon that gentleman, whose address he obtained from our office. What took place between them no one knows, and, probably, no one ever will know. But the interview was ended by Mr. Kennedy firing a pistol at Mr. Finn's head. That he should have done so without the grossest provocation no one will believe. That Mr. Finn had gone to the husband to interfere with him respecting his wife is an undoubted fact—a fact which, if necessary, we are in a position to prove. That such interference must have been most heart-rending every one will admit. This intruder, who had thrust himself upon the unfortunate husband on the Sabbath afternoon, was the very man whom the husband accuses of having robbed him of the company and comfort of his wife. But we can not, on that account, absolve Mr. Kennedy of the criminality of his act. It should be for a jury to decide what view should be taken of that act, and to say how far the outrageous provocation offered should be allowed to palliate the offense. But hitherto the matter has not reached the police. Mr. Finn was not struck, and managed to escape from the room. It was his manifest duty as one of the community, and more especially so as a member of Parliament, to have reported all the circumstances at once to the police. This was not done by him, nor by the persons who keep the hotel. That Mr. Finn should have reasons of his own for keeping the whole affair secret, and for screening the attempt at murder, is clear enough. What inducements have been used with the people of the house we can not, of course, say. But we understand that Mr. Kennedy has been allowed to leave London without molestation.

"Such is the true story of what occurred on Sunday afternoon in Judd Street, and, knowing what we do, we think ourselves justified in calling upon Major Mackintosh to take the case into his own hands." (Now Major Mackintosh was at this time the head of the London constabulary.) "It is quite out of the question that such a transaction should take place in the heart of London at three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, and be allowed to pass without notice. We intend to keep as little of what we know from the public as possible, and do not hesitate to acknowledge that we are debarred by an injunction of the Vice-Chancellor from publishing a certain document which would throw the clearest light upon the whole circumstance. As soon as possible after the shot was fired Mr. Finn went to work, and, as we think, by misrepresentations, obtained the injunction early on yesterday morning. We feel sure that it would not have been granted had the transaction in Judd Street been at the time known to the Vice-Chancellor in all its enormity. Our hands are, of course, tied. The document in question is still with us, but it is sacred. When called upon to show it by any proper au-

thority we shall be ready; but, knowing what we do know, we should not be justified in allowing the matter to sleep. In the mean time we call upon those whose duty it is to preserve the public peace to take the steps necessary for bringing the delinquents to justice.

"The effect upon Mr. Finn, we should say, must be his immediate withdrawal from public life. For the last year or two he has held some subordinate but permanent place in Ireland, which he has given up on the rumor that the party to which he has attached himself is likely to return to office. That he is a seeker after office is notorious. That any possible Government should now employ him, even as a tide-waiter, is quite out of the question; and it is equally out of the question that he should be again returned to Parliament, were he to resign his seat on accepting office. As it is, we believe, notorious that this gentleman can not maintain the position which he holds without being paid for his services, it is reasonable to suppose that his friends will recommend him to retire, and seek his living in some obscure and, let us hope, honest profession."

Mr. Slide, when his thunder-bolt was prepared, read it over with delight, but still with some fear as to probable results. It was expedient that he should avoid a prosecution for libel, and essential that he should not offend the majesty of the Vice-Chancellor's injunction. Was he sure that he was safe in each direction? As to the libel, he could not tell himself that he was certainly safe. He was saying very hard things both of Lady Laura and of Phineas Finn, and sailing very near the wind. But neither of those persons would probably be willing to prosecute; and, should he be prosecuted, he would then, at any rate, be able to give in Mr. Kennedy's letter as evidence in his own defense. He really did believe that what he was doing was all done in the cause of morality. It was the business of such a paper as that which he conducted to run some risk in defending morals, and exposing distinguished culprits on behalf of the public. And then, without some such risk, how could Phineas Finn be adequately punished for the atrocious treachery of which he had been guilty? As to the Chancellor's order, Mr. Slide thought that he had managed that matter very completely. No doubt he had acted in direct opposition to the spirit of the injunction, but legal orders are read by the letter, and not by the spirit. It was open to him to publish any thing he pleased respecting Mr. Kennedy and his wife, subject, of course, to the general laws of the land in regard to libel. The Vice-Chancellor's special order to him referred simply to a particular document, and from that document he had not quoted a word, though he had contrived to repeat all the bitter things which it contained, with much added venom of his own. He felt secure of being safe from any active anger on the part of the Vice-Chancellor.

The article was printed and published. The reader will perceive that it was full of lies. It began with a lie in that statement that "we abstained yesterday from alluding to circumstances" which had been unknown to the writer when his yesterday's paper was published. The indignant reference to poor Finn's want of delicacy in forcing himself upon Mr. Kennedy on the Sabbath afternoon was, of course, a tissue of lies. The visit had been made almost at the instigation of

the editor himself. The paper from beginning to end was full of falsehood and malice, and had been written with the express intention of creating prejudice against the man who had offended the writer. But Mr. Slide did not know that he was lying, and did not know that he was malicious. The weapon which he used was one to which his hand was accustomed, and he had been led by practice to believe that the use of such weapons by one in his position was not only fair, but also beneficial to the public. Had any body suggested to him that he was stabbing his enemy in the dark, he would have averred that he was doing nothing of the kind, because the anonymous accusation of sinners in high rank was, on behalf of the public, the special duty of writers and editors attached to the public press. Mr. Slide's blood was running high with virtuous indignation against our hero as he inserted those last cruel words as to the choice of an obscure but honest profession.

Phineas Finn read the article before he sat down to breakfast on the following morning, and the dagger went right into his bosom. Every word told upon him. With a jaunty laugh within his own sleeve, he had assured himself that he was safe against any wound which could be inflicted on him from the columns of the *People's Banner*. He had been sure that he would be attacked, and thought that he was armed to bear it. But the thin blade penetrated every joint of his harness, and every particle of the poison curdled in his blood. He was hurt about Lady Laura; he was hurt about his borough of Tankerville; he was hurt by the charges against him of having outraged delicacy; he was hurt by being handed over to the tender mercies of Major Mackintosh; he was hurt by the craft with which the Vice-Chancellor's injunction had been evaded; but he was specially hurt by the allusions to his own poverty. It was necessary that he should earn his bread, and no doubt he was a seeker after place. But he did not wish to obtain wages without working for them; and he did not see why the work and wages of a public office should be less honorable than those of any other profession. To him, with his ideas, there was no profession so honorable, as certainly there was none which demanded greater sacrifices or was more precarious. And he did believe that such an article as that would have the effect of shutting against him the gates of that dangerous paradise which he desired to enter. He had no great claim upon his party; and in giving away the good things of office the giver is only too prone to recognize any objections against an individual which may seem to relieve him from the necessity of bestowing aught in that direction. Phineas felt that he would almost be ashamed to show his face at the clubs or in the House. He must do so, as a matter of course, but he knew that he could not do so without confessing by his visage that he had been deeply wounded by the attack in the *People's Banner*.

He went, in the first instance, to Mr. Low, and was almost surprised that Mr. Low should not yet even have heard that such an attack had been made. He had almost felt, as he walked to Lincoln's Inn, that every body had looked at him, and that passers-by in the street had declared to each other that he was the unfortunate one who had been doomed by the editor of the *People's*

Banner to seek some obscure way of earning his bread. Mr. Low took the paper, read, or probably only half read, the article, and then threw the sheet aside as worthless. "What ought I to do?"

"Nothing at all."

"One's first desire would be to beat him to a jelly."

"Of all courses that would be the worst, and would most certainly conduce to his triumph."

"Just so; I only allude to the pleasure one would have, but which one has to deny one's self. I don't know whether he has laid himself open for libel."

"I should think not. I have only just glanced at it, and therefore can't give an opinion; but I should think you would not dream of such a thing. Your object is to screen Lady Laura's name."

"I have to think of that first."

"It may be necessary that steps should be taken to defend her character. If an accusation be made with such publicity as to enforce belief if not denied, the denial must be made, and may probably be best made by an action for libel. But that must be done by her or her friends—but certainly not by you."

"He has laughed at the Vice-Chancellor's injunction."

"I don't think that you can interfere. If, as you believe, Mr. Kennedy be insane, that fact will probably soon be proved, and will have the effect of clearing Lady Laura's character. A wife may be excused for leaving a mad husband."

"And you think I should do nothing?"

"I don't see what you can do. You have encountered a chimney-sweeper, and of course you get some of the soot. What you do do, and what you do not do, must depend, at any rate, on the wishes of Lady Laura Kennedy and her father. It is a matter in which you must make yourself subordinate to them."

Fuming and fretting, and yet recognizing the truth of Mr. Low's words, Phineas left the chambers, and went down to his club. It was a Wednesday, and the House was to sit in the morning; but before he went to the House he put himself in the way of certain of his associates, in order that he might hear what would be said, and learn, if possible, what was thought. Nobody seemed to treat the accusations in the newspaper as very serious, though all around him congratulated him on his escape from Mr. Kennedy's pistol. "I suppose the poor man really is mad," said Lord Cantrip, whom he met on the steps of one of the clubs.

"No doubt, I should say."

"I can't understand why you didn't go to the police."

"I had hoped that the thing would not become public," said Phineas.

"Every thing becomes public; every thing of that kind. It is very hard upon poor Lady Laura."

"That is the worst of it, Lord Cantrip."

"If I were her father I should bring her to England, and demand a separation in a regular and legal way. That is what he should do now in her behalf. She would then have an opportunity of clearing her character from imputations which, to a certain extent, will affect it, even though they come from a madman, and from the very scum of the Press."

"You have read that article?"

"Yes; I saw it but a minute ago."

"I need not tell you that there is not the faintest ground in the world for the imputation made against Lady Laura there."

"I am sure that there is none; and therefore it is that I tell you my opinion so plainly. I think that Lord Brentford should be advised to bring Lady Laura to England, and to put down the charges openly in Court. It might be done either by an application to the Divorce Court for a separation, or by an action against the newspaper for libel. I do not know Lord Brentford quite well enough to intrude upon him with a letter, but I have no objection whatever to having my name mentioned to him. He and I and you and poor Mr. Kennedy sat together in the same Government, and I think that Lord Brentford would trust my friendship so far." Phineas thanked him, and assured him that what he had said should be conveyed to Lord Brentford.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SPOONER CORRESPONDENCE.

It will be remembered that Adelaide Palliser had accepted the hand of Mr. Maule, junior, and that she and Lady Chiltern between them had dispatched him up to London on an embassy to his father, in which he failed very signally. It had been originally Lady Chiltern's idea that the proper home for the young couple would be the ancestral hall, which must be theirs some day, and in which, with exceeding prudence, they might be able to live as Maules of Maule Abbey upon the very limited income which would belong to them. How slight were the grounds for imputing such stern prudence to Gerard Maule both the ladies felt; but it had become essential to do something; the young people were engaged to each other, and a manner of life must be suggested, discussed, and, as far as possible, arranged. Lady Chiltern was useful at such work, having a practical turn of mind, and understanding well the condition of life for which it was necessary that her friend should prepare herself. The lover was not vicious; he neither drank, nor gambled, nor ran himself hopelessly in debt. He was good-humored and tractable and docile enough when nothing disagreeable was asked from him. He would have, he said, no objection to live at Maule Abbey if Adelaide liked it. He didn't believe much in farming, but would consent at Adelaide's request to be the owner of bullocks. He was quite ready to give up hunting, having already taught himself to think that the very few good runs in a season were hardly worth the trouble of getting up before daylight all the winter. He went forth, therefore, on his embassy, and we know how he failed. Another lover would have communicated the disastrous tidings at once to the lady; but Gerard Maule waited a week before he did so, and then told his story in half a dozen words. "The governor cut up rough about Maule Abbey, and will not hear of it. He generally does cut up rough."

"But he must be made to hear of it," said Lady Chiltern. Two days afterward the news reached Harrington of the death of the Duke of Omnium. A letter of an official nature reached Adelaide from Mr. Fothergill, in which the writ-

er explained that he had been desired by Mr. Palliser to communicate to her and the relatives the sad tidings. "So the poor old man has gone at last," said Lady Chiltern, with that affectation of funereal gravity which is common to all of us.

"Poor old Duke!" said Adelaide. "I have been hearing of him as a sort of bugbear all my life. I don't think I ever saw him but once, and then he gave me a kiss and a pair of earrings. He never paid any attention to us at all, but we were taught to think that Providence had been very good to us in making the Duke our uncle."

"He was very rich?"

"Horribly rich, I have always heard."

"Won't he leave you something? It would be very nice, now that you are engaged, to find that he has given you five thousand pounds."

"Very nice indeed; but there is not a chance of it. It has always been known that every thing is to go to the heir. Papa had his fortune, and spent it. He and his brother were never friends, and though the Duke did once give me a kiss, I imagine that he forgot my existence immediately afterward."

"So the Duke of Omnium is dead," said Lord Chiltern when he came home that evening.

"Adelaide has had a letter to tell her so this afternoon."

"Mr. Fothergill wrote to me," said Adelaide—"the man who is so wicked about the foxes."

"I don't care a straw about Mr. Fothergill; and now my mouth is closed against your uncle. But it's quite frightful to think that a Duke of Omnium must die like any body else."

"The Duke is dead—long live the Duke!" said Lady Chiltern. "I wonder how Mr. Palliser will like it."

"Men always do like it, I suppose," said Adelaide.

"Women do," said Lord Chiltern. "Lady Glencora will be delighted to reign—though I can hardly fancy her by any other name. By-the-bye, Adelaide, I have got a letter for you."

"A letter for me, Lord Chiltern!"

"Well—yes; I suppose I had better give it you. It is not addressed to you, but you must answer it."

"What on earth is it?"

"I think I can guess," said Lady Chiltern, laughing. She had guessed rightly, but Adelaide Palliser was still altogether in the dark, when Lord Chiltern took a letter from his pocket and handed it to her. As he did so he left the room, and his wife followed him. "I shall be up stairs, Adelaide, if you want advice," said Lady Chiltern.

The letter was from Mr. Spooner. He had left Harrington Hall after the uncourteous reception which had been accorded to him by Miss Palliser in deep disgust, resolving that he would never again speak to her, and almost resolving that Spoon Hall should never have a mistress in his time. But with his wine after dinner his courage came back to him, and he began to reflect once more that it is not the habit of young ladies to accept their lovers at the first offer. There was living with Mr. Spooner at this time a very attached friend, whom he usually consulted in all emergencies, and to whom on this occasion he opened his heart. Mr. Edward Spoon-

er, commonly called Ned by all who knew him, and not infrequently so addressed by those who did not, was a distant cousin of the Squire's, who unfortunately had no particular income of his own. For the last ten years he had lived at Spoon Hall, and had certainly earned his bread. The Squire had achieved a certain credit for success as a country gentleman. Nothing about his place was out of order. His own farming, which was extensive, succeeded. His bullocks and sheep won prizes. His horses were always useful and healthy. His tenants were solvent, if not satisfied, and he himself did not owe a shilling. Now many people in the neighborhood attributed all this to the judicious care of Mr. Edward Spooner, whose eye was never off the place, and whose discretion was equal to his zeal. In giving the Squire his due one must acknowledge that he recognized the merits of his cousin, and trusted him in every thing. That night, as soon as the customary bottle of claret had succeeded the absolutely normal bottle of port after dinner, Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall opened his heart to his cousin.

"I shall have to walk, then," said Ned.

"Not if I know it," said the Squire. "You don't suppose I'm going to let any woman have the command of Spoon Hall?"

"They do command—inside, you know."

"No woman shall ever turn you out of this house, Ned."

"I'm not thinking of myself, Tom," said the cousin. "Of course you'll marry some day, and of course I must take my chance. I don't see why it shouldn't be Miss Palliser as well as another."

"The jade almost made me angry."

"I suppose that's the way with most of 'em. 'Ludit exultim metuitque tangi.'" For Ned Spooner had himself preserved some few tattered shreds of learning from his school-days. "You don't remember about the filly?"

"Yes, I do; very well," said the Squire.

"Nuptiarum expers." That's what it is, I suppose. Try it again." The advice on the part of the cousin was genuine and unselfish. That Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall should be rejected by a young lady without any fortune seemed to him to be impossible. At any rate it is the duty of a man in such circumstances to persevere. As far as Ned knew the world, ladies always required to be asked a second or a third time. And then no harm can come from such perseverance. "She can't break your bones, Tom."

There was much honesty displayed on this occasion. The Squire, when he was thus instigated to persevere, did his best to describe the manner in which he had been rejected. His powers of description were not very great, but he did not conceal any thing willfully. "She was as hard as nails, you know."

"I don't know that that means much. Horace's filly kicked a few, no doubt."

"She told me that if I'd go one way she'd go the other!"

"They always say about the hardest things that come to their tongues. They don't curse and swear as we do, or there'd be no bearing them. If you really like her—"

"She's such a well-built creature! There's a look of blood about her I don't see in any of 'em."

That sort of breeding is what one wants to get through the mud with."

Then it was that the cousin recommended a letter to Lord Chiltern. Lord Chiltern was at the present moment to be regarded as the lady's guardian, and was the lover's intimate friend. A direct proposal had already been made to the young lady, and this should now be repeated to the gentleman who for the time stood in the position of her father. The Squire for a while hesitated, declaring that he was averse to make his secret known to Lord Chiltern. "One doesn't want every fellow in the country to know it," he said. But in answer to this the cousin was very explicit. There could be but little doubt that Lord Chiltern knew the secret already; and he would certainly be rather induced to keep it as a secret than to divulge it if it were communicated to him officially. And what other step could the Squire take? It would not be likely that he should be asked again to Harrington Hall with the express view of repeating his offer. The cousin was quite of opinion that a written proposition should be made; and on that very night the cousin himself wrote out a letter for the Squire to copy in the morning. On the morning the Squire copied the letter—not without additions of his own, as to which he had very many words with his discreet cousin—and in a formal manner handed it to Lord Chiltern toward the afternoon of that day, having devoted his whole morning to the finding of a proper opportunity for doing so. Lord Chiltern had read the letter, and had, as we see, delivered it to Adelaide Palliser. "That's another proposal from Mr. Spooner," Lady Chiltern said, as soon as they were alone.

"Exactly that."

"I knew he'd go on with it. Men are such fools."

"I don't see that he's a fool at all," said Lord Chiltern, almost in anger. "Why shouldn't he ask a girl to be his wife? He's a rich man, and she hasn't got a farthing."

"You might say the same of a butcher, Oswald."

"Mr. Spooner is a gentleman."

"You do not mean to say that he's fit to marry such a girl as Adelaide Palliser?"

"I don't know what makes fitness. He's got a red nose, and if she don't like a red nose—that's unfitness. Gerard Maule's nose isn't red, and I dare say therefore he's fitter. Only, unfortunately, he has no money."

"Adelaide Palliser would no more think of marrying Mr. Spooner than you would have thought of marrying the cook."

"If I had liked the cook I should have asked her, and I don't see why Mr. Spooner shouldn't ask Miss Palliser. She needn't take him."

In the mean time Miss Palliser was reading the following letter:

"SPOON HALL, March 11, 18—.

"MY DEAR LORD CHILTERN,—I venture to suppose that at present you are acting as the guardian of Miss Palliser, who has been staying at your house all the winter. If I am wrong in this, I hope you will pardon me, and consent to act in that capacity for this occasion. I entertain feelings of the greatest admiration and warmest affection for the young lady I have

named, which I ventured to express when I had the pleasure of staying at Harrington Hall in the early part of last month. I can not boast that I was received on that occasion with much favor; but I know that I am not very good at talking, and we are told in all the books that no man has a right to expect to be taken at the first time of asking. Perhaps Miss Palliser will allow me, through you, to request her to consider my proposal with more deliberation than was allowed to me before, when I spoke to her perhaps with injudicious hurry." (So far the Squire adopted his cousin's words without alteration.)

"I am the owner of my own property—which is more than every body can say. My income is nearly £4000 a year. I shall be willing to make any proper settlement that may be recommended by the lawyers—though I am strongly of opinion that an estate shouldn't be crippled for the sake of the widow. As to refurnishing the old house, and all that, I'll do any thing that Miss Palliser may please. She knows my taste about hunting, and I know hers, so that there need not be any difference of opinion on that score."

"Miss Palliser can't suspect me of any interested motives. I come forward because I think she is the most charming girl I ever saw, and because I love her with all my heart. I haven't got very much to say for myself, but if she'll consent to be the mistress of Spoon Hall, she shall have all that the heart of a woman can desire. Pray believe me, my dear Lord Chiltern,

"Yours very sincerely,

"THOMAS PLATTER SPOONER.

"As I believe that Miss Palliser is fond of books, it may be well to tell her that there is an uncommon good library at Spoon Hall. I shall have no objection to go abroad for the honeymoon for three or four months in the summer."

The postscript was the Squire's own, and was inserted in opposition to the cousin's judgment. "She won't come for the sake of the books," said the cousin. But the Squire thought that the attractions should be piled up. "I wouldn't talk of the honey-moon till I'd got her to come round a little," said the cousin. The Squire thought that the cousin was falsely delicate, and pleaded that all girls like to be taken abroad when they're married. The second half of the body of the letter was very much disfigured by the Squire's petulance, so that the modesty with which he commenced was almost put to the blush by a touch of arrogance in the conclusion. That sentence in which the Squire declared that an estate ought not to be crippled for the sake of the widow was very much questioned by the cousin. "Such a word as 'widow' never ought to go into such a letter as this." But the Squire protested that he would not be mealy-mouthed. "She can bear to think of it, I'll go bail; and why shouldn't she hear about what she can think about?" "Don't talk about furniture yet, Tom," the cousin said; but the Squire was obstinate, and the cousin became hopeless. That word about loving her with all his heart was the cousin's own, but what followed as to her being mistress of Spoon Hall was altogether opposed to his judgment. "She'll be proud enough of Spoon Hall if she comes here," said the Squire. "I'd let her come first," said the cousin.

We all know that the phraseology of the letter was of no importance whatever. When it was received the lady was engaged to another man; and she regarded Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall as being guilty of unpardonable impudence in approaching her at all.

"A red-faced vulgar old man, who looks as if he did nothing but drink," she said to Lady Chiltern.

"He does you no harm, my dear."

"But he does do harm. He makes things very uncomfortable. He has no business to think it possible. People will suppose that I gave him encouragement."

"I used to have lovers coming to me year after year—the same people—whom I don't think I ever encouraged; but I never felt angry with them."

"But you didn't have Mr. Spooner."

"Mr. Spooner didn't know me in those days, or there is no saying what might have happened." Then Lady Chiltern argued the matter on views directly opposite to those which she had put forward when discussing the matter with her husband. "I always think that any man who is privileged to sit down to table with you is privileged to ask. There are disparities, of course, which may make the privilege questionable—disparities of age, rank, and means."

"And of tastes," said Adelaide.

"I don't know about that. A poet doesn't want to marry a poetess, nor a philosopher a philosopheress. A man may make himself a fool by putting himself in the way of certain refusal; but I take it the broad rule is that a man may fall in love with any lady who habitually sits in his company."

"I don't agree with you at all. What would be said if the curate at Long Royston were to propose to one of the Fitz-Howard girls?"

"The Duchess would probably ask the Duke to make the young man a bishop out of hand, and the Duke would have to spend a morning in explaining to her the changes which have come over the making of bishops since she was young. There is no other rule that you can lay down, and I think that girls should understand that they have to fight their battles subject to that law. It's very easy to say 'No.'"

"But a man won't take 'No.'"

"And it's lucky for us sometimes that they don't," said Lady Chiltern, remembering certain passages in her early life.

The answer was written that night by Lord Chiltern after much consultation. As to the nature of the answer—that it should be a positive refusal—of course there could be no doubt; but then arose a question whether a reason should be given, or whether the refusal should be simply a refusal. At last it was decided that a reason should be given, and the letter ran as follows:

"MY DEAR MR. SPOONER,—I am commissioned to inform you that Miss Palliser is engaged to be married to Mr. Gerard Maule.

"Yours faithfully,

"CHILTERN."

The young lady had consented to be thus explicit because it had been already determined that no secret should be kept as to her future prospects.

"He is one of those poverty-stricken, wheeling fellows that one meets about the world every day," said the Squire to his cousin—"a fellow that rides horses that he can't pay for, and owes some poor devil of a tailor for the breeches that he sits in. They eat and drink and get along Heaven only knows how. But they're sure to come to smash at last. Girls are such fools nowadays."

"I don't think there has ever been much difference in that," said the cousin.

"Because a man greases his whiskers and colors his hair and paints his eyebrows and wears kid gloves, by George! they'll go through fire and water after him. He'll never marry her."

"So much the better for her."

"But I hate such d— impudence. What right has a man to come forward in that way who hasn't got a house over his head, or the means of getting one? Old Maule is so hard up that he can barely get a dinner at his club in London. What I wonder at is that Lady Chiltern shouldn't know better."

CHAPTER XXX.

REGRETS.

MADAME GOESLER remained at Matching till after the return of Mr. Palliser—or, as we must now call him, the Duke of Omnium—from Gatherum Castle, and was therefore able to fight her own battle with him respecting the gems and the money which had been left her. He brought to her with his own hands the single ring which she had requested, and placed it on her finger. "The goldsmith will soon make that all right," she said, when it was found to be much too large for the largest finger on which she could wear a ring. "A bit shall be taken out, but I will not have it reset."

"You got the lawyer's letter and the inventory, Madame Goesler?"

"Yes, indeed. What surprises me is that the dear old man should never have spoken of so magnificent a collection of gems."

"Orders have been given that they shall be packed."

"They may be packed or unpacked, of course, as your Grace pleases, but pray do not connect me with the packing."

"You must be connected with it."

"But I wish not to be connected with it, Duke. I have written to the lawyer to renounce the legacy, and if your Grace persists, I must employ a lawyer of my own to renounce them after some legal form. Pray do not let the case be sent to me, or there will be so much trouble, and we shall have another great jewel robbery. I won't take it in, and I won't have the money, and I will have my own way. Lady Glen will tell you that I can be very obstinate when I please."

Lady Glencora had told him so already. She had been quite sure that her friend would persist in her determination as to the legacy, and had thought that her husband should simply accept Madame Goesler's assurances to that effect. But a man who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer could not deal with money, or even with jewels, so lightly. He assured his wife that such