

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

an arrangement was quite out of the question. He remarked that property was property, by which he meant to intimate that the real owner of substantial wealth could not be allowed to embarrass himself of his responsibilities or strip himself of his privileges by a few generous but idle words. The late Duke's will was a very serious thing, and it seemed to the heir that this abandoning of a legacy bequeathed by the Duke was a making light of the Duke's last act and deed. To refuse money in such circumstances was almost like refusing rain from heaven or warmth from the sun. It could not be done. The things were her property, and though she might, of course, chuck them into the street, they would no less be hers. "But I won't have them, Duke," said Madame Goesler; and the late Chancellor of the Exchequer found that no proposition made by him in the House had ever been received with a firmer opposition. His wife told him that nothing he could say would be of any avail, and rather ridiculed his idea of the solemnity of wills. "You can't make a person take a thing because you write it down on a thick bit of paper any more than if you gave it her across the table. I understand it all, of course. She means to show that she didn't want any thing from the Duke. As she refused the name and title, she won't have the money and jewels. You can't make her take them, and I'm quite sure you can't talk her over." The young Duke was not persuaded, but had to give the battle up—at any rate, for the present.

On the 19th of March Madame Goesler returned to London, having been at Matching Priory for more than three weeks. On her journey back to Park Lane many thoughts crowded on her mind. Had she, upon the whole, done well in reference to the Duke of Omnium? The last three years of her life had been sacrificed to an old man with whom she had not, in truth, possessed aught in common. She had persuaded herself that there had existed a warm friendship between them; but of what nature could have been a friendship with one whom she had not known till he had been in his dotage? What words of the Duke's speaking had she ever heard with pleasure, except certain terms of affection which had been half mawkish and half senile? She had told Phineas Finn, while riding home with him from Broughton Spinnies, that she had clung to the Duke because she loved him; but what had there been to produce such love? The Duke had begun his acquaintance with her by insulting her—and had then offered to make her his wife. This—which would have conferred upon her some tangible advantages, such as rank and wealth and a great name—she had refused, thinking that the price to be paid for them was too high, and that life might ever yet have something better in store for her. After that she had permitted herself to become, after a fashion, head nurse to the old man, and in that pursuit had wasted three years of what remained to her of her youth. People, at any rate, should not say of her that she had accepted payment for the three years' service by taking a casket of jewels. She would take nothing that should justify any man in saying that she had been enriched by her acquaintance with the Duke of Omnium. It might be that she had been foolish, but she

would be more foolish still were she to accept a reward for her folly. As it was, there had been something of romance in it—though the romance of friendship at the bedside of a sick and selfish old man had hardly been satisfactory.

Even in her close connection with the present Duchess there was something which was almost hollow. Had there not been a compact between them, never expressed, but not the less understood? Had not her dear friend, Lady Glen, agreed to bestow upon her support, fashion, and all kinds of worldly good things, on condition that she never married the old Duke? She had liked Lady Glencora—had enjoyed her friend's society and been happy in her friend's company; but she had always felt that Lady Glencora's attraction to herself had been simply on the score of the Duke. It was necessary that the Duke should be pampered and kept in good humor. An old man, let him be ever so old, can do what he likes with himself and his belongings. To keep the Duke out of harm's way Lady Glencora had opened her arms to Madame Goesler. Such, at least, was the interpretation which Madame Goesler chose to give to the history of the last three years. They had not, she thought, quite understood her. When once she had made up her mind not to marry the Duke, the Duke had been safe from her—as his jewels and money should be safe, now that he was dead.

Three years had passed by, and nothing had been done of that which she had intended to do. Three years had passed, which to her, with her desires, were so important. And yet she hardly knew what were her desires, and had never quite defined her intentions. She told herself on this very journey that the time had now gone by, and that in losing these three years she had lost every thing. As yet—so she declared to herself now—the world had done but little for her. Two old men had loved her; one had become her husband, and the other had asked to become so; and to both she had done her duty. To both she had been grateful, tender, and self-sacrificing. From the former she had, as his widow, taken wealth which she valued greatly; but the wealth alone had given her no happiness. From the latter, and from his family, she had accepted a certain position. Some persons, high in repute and fashion, had known her before, but every body knew her now. And yet what had all this done for her? Dukes and duchesses, dinner-parties and drawing-rooms—what did they all amount to? What was it that she wanted?

She was ashamed to tell herself that it was love. But she knew this—that it was necessary for her happiness that she should devote herself to some one. All the elegancies and outward charms of life were delightful, if only they could be used as the means to some end. As an end themselves they were nothing. She had devoted herself to this old man who was now dead, and there had been moments in which she had thought that that sufficed. But it had not sufficed, and instead of being borne down by grief at the loss of her friend, she found herself almost rejoicing at relief from a vexatious burden. Had she been a hypocrite, then? Was it her nature to be false? After that she reflected whether it might not be best for her to become a devotee—it did not matter much in what branch of the Christian religion, so that she could assume some form of

faith. The sour strictness of the confident Calvinist or the asceticism of St. Francis might suit her equally—if she could only believe in Calvin or in St. Francis. She had tried to believe in the Duke of Omnium, but there she had failed. There had been a saint at whose shrine she thought she could have worshiped with a constant and happy devotion, but that saint had repulsed her from his altar.

Mr. Maule, senior, not understanding much of all this, but still understanding something, thought that he might perhaps be the saint. He knew well that audacity in asking is a great merit in a middle-aged wooer. He was a good deal older than the lady, who, in spite of all her experiences, was hardly yet thirty. But then he was, he felt sure, very young for his age, whereas she was old. She was a widow; he was a widower. She had a house in town and an income. He had a place in the country and an estate. She knew all the dukes and duchesses, and he was a man of family. She could make him comfortably opulent. He could make her Mrs. Maule of Maule Abbey. She, no doubt, was good-looking. Mr. Maule, senior, as he tied on his cravat, thought that even in that respect there was no great disparity between them. Considering his own age, Mr. Maule, senior, thought there was not perhaps a better-looking man than himself about Pall Mall. He was a little stiff in the joints and moved rather slowly, but what was wanting in suppleness was certainly made up in dignity.

He watched his opportunity, and called in Park Lane on the day after Madame Goesler's return. There was already between them an amount of acquaintance which justified his calling, and, perhaps, there had been on the lady's part something of that cordiality of manner which is wont to lead to intimate friendship. Mr. Maule had made himself agreeable, and Madame Goesler had seemed to be grateful. He was admitted, and on such an occasion it was impossible not to begin the conversation about the "dear Duke." Mr. Maule could afford to talk about the Duke, and to lay aside for a short time his own cause, as he had not suggested to himself the possibility of becoming pressingly tender on his own behalf on this particular occasion. Audacity in wooing is a great virtue, but a man must measure even his virtues. "I heard that you had gone to Matching as soon as the poor Duke was taken ill," he said.

She was in mourning, and had never for a moment thought of denying the peculiarity of the position she had held in reference to the old man. She could not have been content to wear her ordinary colored garments after sitting so long by the side of the dying man. A hired nurse may do so, but she had not been that. If there had been hypocrisy in her friendship, the hypocrisy must be maintained to the end.

"Poor old man! I only came back yesterday." "I never had the pleasure of knowing his Grace," said Mr. Maule. "But I have always heard him named as a nobleman of whom England might well be proud."

Madame Goesler was not at the moment inclined to tell lies on the matter, and did not think that England had much cause to be proud of the Duke of Omnium. "He was a man who held a very peculiar position," she said.

"Most peculiar—a man of infinite wealth, and of that special dignity which, I am sorry to say, so many men of rank among us are throwing aside as a garment which is too much for them. We can all wear coats, but it is not every one that can carry a robe. The Duke carried his to the last." Madame Goesler remembered how he looked with his night-cap on when he had lost his temper because they would not let him have a glass of Curaçoa. "I don't know that we have any one left that can be said to be his equal," continued Mr. Maule.

"No one like him, perhaps. He was never married, you know."

"But was once willing to marry," said Mr. Maule, "if all that we hear be true." Madame Goesler, without a smile and equally without a frown, looked as though the meaning of Mr. Maule's words had escaped her. "A grand old gentleman! I don't know that any body will ever say as much for his heir."

"The men are very different."

"Very different indeed. I dare say that Mr. Palliser, as Mr. Palliser, has been a useful man. But so is a coal-heaver a useful man. The grace and beauty of life will be clean gone when we all become useful men."

"I don't think we are near that yet."

"Upon my word, Madame Goesler, I am not so sure about it. Here are sons of noblemen going into trade on every side of us. We have earls dealing in butter, and marquises sending their peaches to market. There was nothing of that kind about the Duke. A great fortune had been intrusted to him, and he knew that it was his duty to spend it. He did spend it, and all the world looked up to him. It must have been a great pleasure to you to know him so well."

Madame Goesler was saved the necessity of making any answer to this by the announcement of another visitor. The door was opened, and Phineas Finn entered the room. He had not seen Madame Goesler since they had been together at Harrington Hall, and had never before met Mr. Maule. When riding home with the lady after their unsuccessful attempt to jump out of the wood, Phineas had promised to call in Park Lane whenever he should learn that Madame Goesler was not at Matching. Since that the Duke had died, and the bond with Matching no longer existed. It seemed but the other day that they were talking about the Duke together, and now the Duke was gone. "I see you are in mourning," said Phineas, as he still held her hand. "I must say one word to condole with you for your lost friend."

"Mr. Maule and I were now speaking of him," she said, as she introduced the two gentlemen.—"Mr. Finn and I had the pleasure of meeting your son at Harrington Hall a few weeks since, Mr. Maule."

"I heard that he had been there. Did you know the Duke, Mr. Finn?"

"After the fashion in which such a one as I would know such a one as the Duke, I knew him. He probably had forgotten my existence."

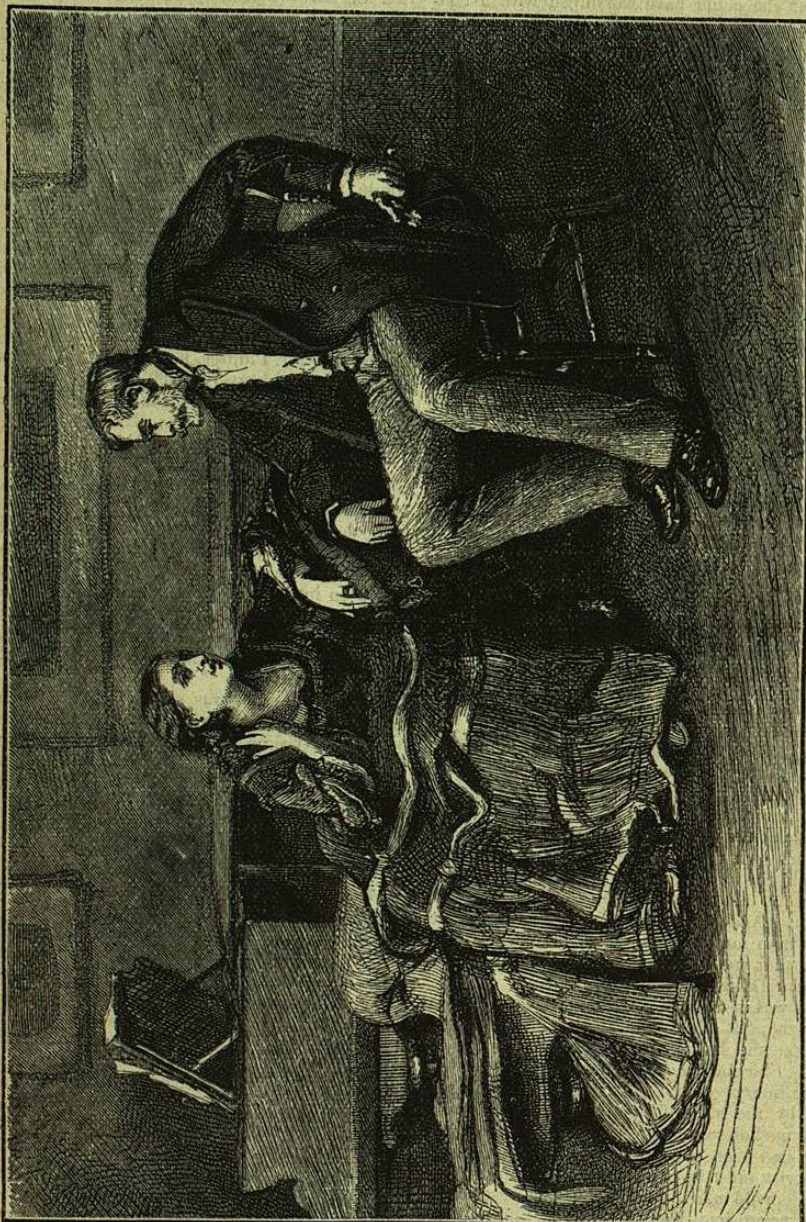
"He never forgot any one," said Madame Goesler.

"I don't know that I was ever introduced to him," continued Mr. Maule, "and I shall always

regret it. I was telling Madame Goesler how profound a reverence I had for the Duke's character." Phineas bowed, and Madame Goesler, who was becoming tired of the Duke as a subject of conversation, asked some question as to what had been going on in the House. Mr.

and as she did so she pushed her hair back from her face in a manner that he remembered well in former days.

"I am so glad to see you," she said. "Is it not odd that he should have gone so soon after what we were saying but the other day?"



"SHE PUSHED HER HAIR BACK FROM HER FACE IN A MANNER THAT HE REMEMBERED WELL IN FORMER DAYS."

Maule, finding it to be improbable that he should be able to advance his cause on that occasion, took his leave. The moment he was gone Madame Goesler's manner changed altogether. She left her former seat and came near to Phineas, sitting on a sofa close to the chair he occupied;

"You thought then that he would not last long."

"Long is comparative. I did not think he would be dead within six weeks, or I should not have been riding there. He was a burden to me, Mr. Finn."

"I can understand that."

"And yet I shall miss him sorely. He had given all the color to my life which it possessed. It was not very bright, but still it was color."

"The house will be open to you just the same."

"I shall not go there. I shall see Lady Glencora in town, of course; but I shall not go to Matching; and as to Gatherum Castle, I would not spend another week there if they would give it me. You haven't heard of his will?"

"No—not a word. I hope he remembered you—to mention your name. You hardly wanted more."

"Just so. I wanted no more than that."

"It was made, perhaps, before you knew him."

"He was always making it, and always altering it. He left me money, and jewels of enormous value."

"I am so glad to hear it."

"But I have refused to take any thing. Am I not right?"

"I don't know why you should refuse."

"There are people who will say that—I was his mistress. If a woman be young, a man's age never prevents such scandal. I don't know that I can stop it, but I can, perhaps, make it seem to be less probable. And after all that has passed, I could not bear that the Pallisers should think that I clung to him for what I could get. I should be easier this way."

"Whatever is best to be done, you will do it; I know that."

"Your praise goes beyond the mark, my friend. I can be both generous and discreet; but the difficulty is to be true. I did take one thing—a black diamond that he always wore. I would show it you, but the goldsmith has it to make it fit me. When does the great affair come off at the House?"

"The bill will be read again on Monday, the first."

"What an unfortunate day! You remember young Mr. Maule? Is he not like his father? And yet in manners they are as unlike as possible."

"What is the father?" Phineas asked.

"A battered old beau about London, selfish and civil, pleasant and penniless, and, I should think, utterly without a principle. Come again soon. I am so anxious to hear that you are getting on. And you have got to tell me all about that shooting with the pistol." Phineas as he walked away thought that Madame Goesler was handsomer even than she used to be.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS IN TOWN.

At the end of March the Duchess of Omnium, never more to be called Lady Glencora by the world at large, came up to London. The Duke, though he was now banished from the House of Commons, was nevertheless wanted in London; and what funeral ceremonies were left might be accomplished as well in town as at Matching Priory. No old Ministry could be turned out and no new Ministry formed without the assistance of the young Duchess. It was a question whether she should not be asked to be

Mistress of the Robes, though those who asked it knew very well that she was the last woman in England to hamper herself by dependence on the Court. Up to London they came; and though, of course, they went into no society, the house in Carlton Gardens was continually thronged with people who had some special reason for breaking the ordinary rules of etiquette in their desire to see how Lady Glencora carried herself as Duchess of Omnium. "Do you think she's altered much?" said Aspasia Fitzgibbon, an elderly spinster, the daughter of Lord Claddagh, and sister of Laurence Fitzgibbon, member for one of the western Irish counties. "I don't think she was quite so loud as she used to be."

Mrs. Bonteen was of opinion that there was a change. "She was always uncertain, you know, and would scratch like a cat if you offended her."

"And won't she scratch now?" asked Miss Fitzgibbon.

"I'm afraid she'll scratch oftener. It was always a trick of hers to pretend to think nothing of rank; but she values her place as highly as any woman in England."

This was Mrs. Bonteen's opinion; but Lady Baldock, who was present, differed. "This Lady Baldock was not the mother, but the sister-in-law, of that Augusta Boreham who had lately become Sister Veronica John. "I don't believe it," said Lady Baldock. "She always seems to me to be like a great school-girl who has been allowed too much of her own way. I think people give way to her too much, you know." As Lady Baldock was herself the wife of a peer, she naturally did not stand so much in awe of a duchess as did Mrs. Bonteen or Miss Fitzgibbon.

"Have you seen the young Duke?" asked Mr. Ratler of Barrington Erle.

"Yes; I have been with him this morning."

"How does he like it?"

"He's bothered out of his life—as a hen would be if you were to throw her into water. He's so shy he hardly knows how to speak to you; and he broke down altogether when I said something about the Lords."

"He'll not do much more."

"I don't know about that," said Erle. "He'll get used to it, and go into harness again. He's a great deal too good to be lost."

"He didn't give himself airs?"

"What!—Planty Pall! If I know any thing of a man, he's not the man to do that because he's a duke. He can hold his own against all comers, and always could. Quiet as he always seemed, he knew who he was, and who other people were. I don't think you'll find much difference in him when he has got over the annoyance." Mr. Ratler, however, was of a different opinion. Mr. Ratler had known many docile members of the House of Commons who had become peers by the death of uncles and fathers, and who had lost all respect for him as soon as they were released from the crack of the whip. Mr. Ratler rather despised peers who had been members of the House of Commons, and who passed by inheritance from a scene of unparalleled use and influence to one of idle and luxurious dignity.

Soon after their arrival in London the Duchess wrote the following very characteristic letter:

"DEAR LORD CHILTERN,—Mr. Palliser—"
(Then, having begun with a mistake, she scratched the word through with her pen.) "The Duke has asked me to write about Trumpeton Wood, as he knows nothing about it, and I know just as little. But if you say what you want, it shall be done. Shall we get foxes and put them there? Or ought there to be a special fox-keeper? You mustn't be angry because the poor old Duke was too feeble to take notice of the matter. Only speak, and it shall be done."

"Yours faithfully,
GLENCORA O.

"Madame Goesler spoke to me about it, but at that time we were in trouble."

The answer was as characteristic:

"DEAR DUCHESS OF OMNIUM,—Thanks. What is wanted is that keepers should know that there are to be foxes. When keepers know that foxes are really expected, there always are foxes. The men latterly have known just the contrary. It is all a question of shooting. I don't mean to say a word against the late Duke. When he got old the thing became bad. No doubt it will be right now."

"Faithfully yours,
CHILTERN.

"Our hounds have been poisoned in Trumpeton Wood. This would never have been done had not the keepers been against the hunting."

Upon receipt of this she sent the letter to Mr. Fothergill, with a request that there might be no more shooting in Trumpeton Wood. "I'll be shot if we stand that, you know," said Mr. Fothergill to one of his underlings. "There are two hundred and fifty acres in Trumpeton Wood, and we're never to kill another pheasant because Lord Chiltern is master of the Brake hounds. Property won't be worth having at that rate."

The Duke by no means intended to abandon the world of politics, or even the narrow sphere of ministerial work, because he had been ousted from the House of Commons, and from the possibility of filling the office which he had best liked. This was proved to the world by the choice of his house for a meeting of the party on the 30th of March. As it happened, this was the very day on which he and the Duchess returned to London; but nevertheless the meeting was held there, and he was present at it. Mr. Gresham then repeated his reasons for opposing Mr. Daubeny's bill; and declared that even while doing so he would, with the approbation of his party, pledge himself to bring in a bill somewhat to the same effect, should he ever again find himself in power. And he declared that he would do this solely with the view of showing how strong was his opinion that such a measure should not be left in the hands of the Conservative party. It was doubted whether such a political proposition had ever before been made in England. It was a simple avowal that on this occasion men were to be regarded, and not measures. No doubt such is the case, and ever has been the case, with the majority of active politicians. The double pleasure of pulling down an opponent and of raising one's self is the charm of a politician's life. And by practice this becomes extended to so many branches that the delights—and also the disappointments—are very wide-spread. Great

satisfaction is felt by us because by some lucky conjunction of affairs our man, whom we never saw, is made Lord-Lieutenant of a county instead of another man of whom we know as little. It is a great thing to us that Sir Samuel Bobwig, an excellent Liberal, is seated high on the bench of justice, instead of that time-serving Conservative, Sir Alexander M'Silk. Men and not measures are, no doubt, the very life of politics. But then it is not the fashion to say so in public places. Mr. Gresham was determined to introduce that fashion on the present occasion. He did not think very much of Mr. Daubeny's bill. So he told his friends at the Duke's house. The bill was full of faults—went too far in one direction, and not far enough in another. It was not difficult to pick holes in the bill. But the sin of sins consisted in this—that it was to be passed, if passed at all, by the aid of men who would sin against their consciences by each vote they gave in its favor. What but treachery could be expected from an army in which every officer and every private was called upon to fight against his convictions? The meeting passed off without dissension, and it was agreed that the House of Commons should be called upon to reject the Church Bill simply because it was proposed from that side of the House on which the minority was sitting. As there were more than two hundred members present on the occasion, by none of whom were any objections raised, it seemed probable that Mr. Gresham might be successful. There was still, however, doubt in the minds of some men. "It's all very well," said Mr. Rattler, "but Turnbull wasn't there, you know."

But from what took place the next day but one in Park Lane it would almost seem that the Duchess had been there. She came at once to see Madame Goesler, having very firmly determined that the Duke's death should not have the appearance of interrupting her intimacy with her friend. "Was it not very disagreeable," asked Madame Goesler—"just the day you came to town?"

"We didn't think of that at all. One is not allowed to think of any thing now. It was very improper, of course, because of the Duke's death—but that had to be put on one side. And then it was quite contrary to etiquette that peers and commoners should be brought together. I think there was some idea of making sure of Plantagenet, and so they all came and wore out our carpets. There wasn't above a dozen peers; but they were enough to show that all the old landmarks have been upset. I don't think any one would have objected if I had opened the meeting myself, and called upon Mrs. Bonteen to second me."

"Why Mrs. Bonteen?"

"Because, next to myself, she's the most talkative and political woman we have. She was at our house yesterday, and I'm not quite sure that she doesn't intend to cut me out."

"We must put her down, Lady Glen."

"Perhaps she'll put me down, now that we're half shelved. The men did make such a racket, and yet no one seemed to speak for two minutes except Mr. Gresham, who stood upon my pet footstool, and kicked it almost to pieces."

"Was Mr. Finn there?"

"Every body was there, I suppose. What makes you ask particularly about Mr. Finn?"



"WE MUST PUT HER DOWN."

"Because he's a friend."

"That's come up again, has it? He's the handsome Irishman, isn't he, that came to Matching the same day that brought you there?"

"He is an Irishman, and he was at Matching that day."

"He's certainly handsome. What a day that was, Marie! When one thinks of it all—of all the perils and all the salvations, how strange it is! I wonder whether you would have liked it now if you were the Dowager Duchess."

"I should have had some enjoyment, I suppose."

"I don't know that it would have done us any harm, and yet how keen I was about it. We can't give you the rank now, and you won't take the money."

"Not the money, certainly."

"Plantagenet says you'll have to take it; but it seems to me he's always wrong. There are so many things that one must do that one doesn't do. He never perceives that every thing gets

changed every five years. So Mr. Finn is the favorite again?"

"He is a friend whom I like. I may be allowed to have a friend, I suppose."

"A dozen, my dear; and all of them good-looking. Good-by, dear. Pray come to us. Don't stand off and make yourself disagreeable. We sha'n't be giving dinner-parties, but you can come whenever you please. Tell me at once; do you mean to be disagreeable?"

Then Madame Goesler was obliged to promise that she would not be more disagreeable than her nature had made her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WORLD BECOMES COLD.

A GREAT deal was said by very many persons in London as to the murderous attack which had been made by Mr. Kennedy on Phineas Finn in Judd Street, but the advice given by Mr. Slide in the *People's Banner* to the police was not taken. No public or official inquiry was made into the circumstance. Mr. Kennedy, under the care of his cousin, retreated to Scotland; and, as it seemed, there was to be an end of it. Throughout the month of March various smaller bolts were thrust both at Phineas and at the police by the editor of the above-named newspaper, but they seemed to fall without much effect.

No one was put in prison; nor was any one ever examined. But, nevertheless, these missiles had their effect. Every body knew that there had been a "row" between Mr. Kennedy and Phineas Finn, and that the "row" had been made about Mr. Kennedy's wife. Every body knew that a pistol had been fired at Finn's head; and a great many people thought that there had been some cause for the assault. It was alleged at one club that the present member for Tankerville had spent the greater part of the last two years at Dresden, and at another that he had called on Mr. Kennedy twice, once down in Scotland, and once at the hotel in Judd Street, with a view of inducing that gentleman to concede to a divorce. There was also a very romantic story afloat as to an engagement which had existed between Lady Laura and Phineas Finn before the lady had been induced by her father to marry the richer suitor. Various details were given in corroboration of these stories. Was it not known that the Earl had purchased the submission of Phineas Finn by a seat for his borough of Loughton? Was it not known that Lord Chiltem, the brother of Lady Laura, had fought a duel with Phineas Finn? Was it not known that Mr. Kennedy himself had been, as it were, coerced into quiescence by the singular fact that he had been saved from garroters in the street by the opportune interference of Phineas Finn? It was even suggested that the scene with the garroters had been cunningly planned by Phineas Finn, that he might in this way be able to restrain the anger of the husband of the lady whom he loved. All these stories were very pretty; but, as the reader, it is hoped, knows, they were all untrue. Phineas had made but one short visit to Dresden in his life. Lady Laura had been engaged to Mr. Kennedy before Phineas had ever spoken to her of his love. The

duel with Lord Chiltem had been about another lady, and the seat at Loughton had been conferred upon Phineas chiefly on account of his prowess in extricating Mr. Kennedy from the garroters—respecting which circumstance it may be said that as the meeting in the street was fortuitous, the reward was greater than the occasion seemed to require.

While all these things were being said Phineas became something of a hero. A man who is supposed to have caused a disturbance between two married people, in a certain rank of life, does generally receive a certain meed of admiration. A man who was asked out to dinner twice a week before such rumors were afloat would probably receive double that number of invitations afterward. And then to have been shot at by a madman in a room, and to be the subject of the venom of a *People's Banner*, tends also to Fame. Other ladies besides Madame Goesler were anxious to have the story from the very lips of the hero, and in this way Phineas Finn became a conspicuous man. But Fame begets envy, and there were some who said that the member for Tankerville had injured his prospects with his party. It may be very well to give a dinner to a man who has caused the wife of a late Cabinet Minister to quarrel with her husband; but it can hardly be expected that he should be placed in office by the head of the party to which that late Cabinet Minister belonged. "I never saw such a fellow as you are," said Barrington Erle to him. "You are always getting into a mess."

"Nobody ought to know better than you how false all these calumnies are." This he said because Erle and Lady Laura were cousins. "Of course they are calumnies; but you had heard them before, and what made you go poking your head into the lion's mouth?" Mr. Bonteen was very much harder upon him than was Barrington Erle. "I never liked him from the first, and always knew he would not run straight. No Irishman ever does." This was said to Viscount Fawn, a distinguished member of the Liberal party, who had but lately been married, and was known to have very strict notions as to the bonds of matrimony. He had been heard to say that any man who had interfered with the happiness of a married couple should be held to have committed a capital offense.

"I don't know whether the story about Lady Laura is true."

"Of course it's true. All the world knows it to be true. He was always there; at Lough Linter, and at Saulsby, and in Portman Square after she had left her husband. The mischief he has done is incalculable. There's a Conservative sitting in poor Kennedy's seat for Dunross-shire."

"That might have been the case any way."

"Nothing could have turned Kennedy out. Don't you remember how he behaved about the Irish land question? I hate such fellows."

"If I thought it true about Lady Laura—"

Lord Fawn was again about to express his opinion in regard to matrimony, but Mr. Bonteen was too impetuous to listen to him. "It's out of the question that he should come in again. At any rate, if he does, I won't. I shall tell Gresham so very plainly. The women will do all that they can for him. They always do for a fellow of that kind."

Phineas heard of it—not exactly by any repetition of the words that were spoken, but by chance phrases, and from the looks of men. Lord Cantrip, who was his best friend among those who were certain to hold high office in a Liberal Government, did not talk to him cheerily—did not speak as though he, Phineas, would, as a matter of course, have some place assigned to him. And he thought that Mr. Gresham was hardly as cordial to him as he might be when they met in the closer intercourse of the House. There was always a word or two spoken, and sometimes a shaking of hands. He had no right to complain. But yet he knew that something was wanting. We can generally read a man's purpose toward us in his manner, if his purposes are of much moment to us.

Phineas had written to Lady Laura, giving her an account of the occurrence in Judd Street on the 1st of March, and had received from her a short answer by return of post. It contained hardly more than a thanksgiving that his life had not been sacrificed, and in a day or two she had written again, letting him know that she had determined to consult her father. Then on the last day of the month he received the following letter:

"DRESDEN, March 27, 18—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—At last we have resolved that we will go back to England—almost at once. Things have gone so rapidly that I hardly know how to explain them all, but that is papa's resolution. His lawyer, Mr. Forster, tells him that it will be best, and goes so far as to say that it is imperative on my behalf that some steps should be taken to put an end to the present state of things. I will not scruple to tell you that he is actuated chiefly by considerations as to money. It is astonishing to me that a man who has all his life been so liberal should now in his old age think so much about it. It is, however, in no degree for himself. It is all for me. He can not bear to think that my position should be withheld from me by Mr. Kennedy while I have done nothing wrong. I was obliged to show him your letter, and what you said about the control of money took hold of his mind at once. He thinks that if my unfortunate husband be insane, there can be no difficulty in my obtaining a separation on terms which would oblige him or his friends to restore this horrid money.

"Of course I could stay if I chose. Papa would not refuse to find a home for me here. But I do agree with Mr. Forster that something should be done to stop the tongues of ill-conditioned people. The idea of having my name dragged through the newspapers is dreadful to me; but if this must be done one way or the other, it will be better that it should be done with truth. There is nothing that I need fear—as you know so well.

"I can not look forward to happiness any where. If the question of separation were once settled, I do not know whether I would not prefer returning here to remaining in London. Papa has got tired of the place, and wants, he says, to see Saulsby once again before he dies. What can I say in answer to this, but that I will go? We have sent to have the house in Portman Square got ready for us, and I suppose we shall be there about the 15th of next month.

Papa has instructed Mr. Forster to tell Mr. Kennedy's lawyer that we are coming, and he is to find out, if he can, whether any interference in the management of the property has been as yet made by the family. Perhaps I ought to tell you that Mr. Forster has expressed surprise that you did not call on the police when the shot was fired. Of course I can understand it all. God bless you.

"Your affectionate friend, L. K."

Phineas was obliged to console himself by reflecting that if she understood him, of course that was every thing. His first and great duty in the matter had been to her. If in performing that duty he had sacrificed himself, he must bear his undeserved punishment like a man. That he was to be punished he began to perceive too clearly. The conviction that Mr. Daubeny must recede from the Treasury Bench after the coming debate became every day stronger, and within the little inner circles of the Liberal party the usual discussions were made as to the Ministry which Mr. Gresham would, as a matter of course, be called upon to form. But in these discussions Phineas Finn did not find himself taking an assured and comfortable part. Laurence Fitzgibbon, his countryman—who in the way of work had never been worth his salt—was eager, happy, and without a doubt. Others of the old stagers, men who had been going in and out ever since they had been able to get seats in Parliament, stood about in clubs, and in lobbies and chambers of the House, with all that busy, magpie air which is worn only by those who have high hopes of good things to come speedily. Lord Mount Thistle was more sublime and ponderous than ever, though they who best understood the party declared that he would never again be invited to undergo the cares of office. His lordship was one of those terrible political burdens, engendered originally by private friendship or family considerations, which one Minister leaves to another. Sir Gregory Grogan, the great Whig lawyer, showed plainly by his manner that he thought himself at last secure of reaching the reward for which he had been struggling all his life; for it was understood by all men who knew any thing that Lord Weazeling was not to be asked again to sit on the Wool-sack. No better advocate or effective politician ever lived; but it was supposed that he lacked dignity for the office of first judge in the land. That most of the old lot would come back was a matter of course.

There would be the Duke—the Duke of St. Bungay, who had for years past been "the Duke" when Liberal administrations were discussed, and the same Duke whom we know so well; and Sir Harry Coldfoot, and Legge Wilson, Lord Cantrip, Lord Thrift, and the rest of them. There would, of course, be Lord Fawn, Mr. Ratler, and Mr. Erle. The thing was so thoroughly settled that one was almost tempted to think that the Prime Minister himself would have no voice in the selections to be made. As to one office, it was acknowledged on all sides that a doubt existed which would at last be found to be very injurious—as some thought, altogether crushing—to the party. To whom would Mr. Gresham intrust the financial affairs of the country? Who would be the new Chancellor of the