

The secrets of the world are very marvelous, but they are not themselves half so wonderful as the way in which they become known to the world. There could be no doubt that Mr. Bonteen's high ambition had foundered, and that he had been degraded through the secret enmity of the Duchess of Omnium. It was equally certain that his secret enmity to Phineas Finn had brought this punishment on his head. But before the Ministry had been a week in office almost every body knew that it was so. The rumors were full of falsehood, but yet they contained the truth. The Duchess had done it. The Duchess was the bosom friend of Lady Laura Kennedy, who was in love with Phineas Finn. She had gone on her knees to Mr. Gresham to get a place for her friend's favorite, and Mr. Gresham had refused. Consequently, at her bidding, half a dozen embryo Ministers—her husband among the number—had refused to be amenable to Mr. Gresham. Mr. Gresham had at last consented to sacrifice Mr. Bonteen, who had originally instigated him to reject the claims of Phineas Finn. That the degradation of the one man had been caused by the exclusion of the other all the world knew.

"It shuts the door to me for ever and ever," said Phineas to Madame Goesler.

"I don't see that."

"Of course it does. Such an affair places a mark against a man's name which will never be forgotten."

"Is your heart set upon holding some trifling appointment under a Minister?"

"To tell you the truth, it is—or, rather, it was. The prospect of office to me was more than perhaps to any other expectant. Even this man Bonteen has some fortune of his own, and can live if he be excluded. I have given up every thing for the chance of something in this line."

"Other lines are open."

"Not to me, Madame Goesler. I do not mean to defend myself. I have been very foolish, very sanguine, and am now very unhappy."

"What shall I say to you?"

"The truth."

"In truth, then, I do not sympathize with you. The thing lost is too small, too mean to justify unhappiness."

"But, Madame Goesler, you are a rich woman."

"Well?"

"If you were to lose it all, would you not be unhappy? It has been my ambition to live here in London as one of a special set which dominates all other sets in our English world. To do so a man should have means of his own. I have none; and yet I have tried it—thinking that I could earn my bread at it as men do at other professions. I acknowledge that I should not have thought so. No man should attempt what I have attempted without means, at any rate, to live on if he fail; but I am not the less unhappy because I have been silly."

"What will you do?"

"Ah—what? Another friend asked me that the other day, and I told her that I should vanish."

"Who was that friend?"

"Lady Laura."

"She is in London again now?"

"Yes; she and her father are in Portman Square."

"She has been an injurious friend to you."

"No, by Heaven!" exclaimed Phineas. "But for her I should never have been here at all, never have had a seat in Parliament, never have been in office, never have known you."

"And might have been the better without any of these things."

"No man ever had a better friend than Lady Laura has been to me. Malice, wicked and false as the devil, has lately joined our names together, to the incredible injury of both of us; but it has not been her fault."

"You are energetic in defending her."

"And so would she be in defending me. Circumstances threw us together and made us friends. Her father and her brother were my friends. I happened to be of service to my husband. We belonged to the same party. And, therefore, because she has been unfortunate in her marriage, people tell lies of her."

"It is a pity he should—not die, and leave her," said Madame Goesler, slowly.

"Why so?"

"Because then you might justify yourself in defending her by making her your wife." She paused, but he made no answer to this. "You are in love with her," she said.

"It is untrue."

"Mr. Finn!"

"Well, what would you have? I am not in love with her. To me she is no more than my sister. Were she as free as air, I should not ask her to be my wife. Can a man and woman feel no friendship without being in love with each other?"

"I hope they may," said Madame Goesler. Had he been lynx-eyed he might have seen that she blushed; but it required quick eyes to discover a blush on Madame Goesler's face. "You and I are friends."

"Indeed we are," he said, grasping her hand as he took his leave.

CHAPTER XLII.

I HOPE I'M NOT DISTRUSTED.

GERARD MAULE, as the reader has been informed, wrote three lines to his dearest Adelaide, to inform her that his father would not assent to the suggestion respecting Maule Abbey, which had been made by Lady Chiltern, and then took no further steps in the matter. In the fortnight next after the receipt of his letter nothing was heard of him at Harrington Hall, and Adelaide, though she made no complaint, was unhappy. Then came the letter from Mr. Spooner, with all its rich offers, and Adelaide's mind was for a while occupied with wrath against her second suitor. But as the egregious folly of Mr. Spooner—for to her thinking the aspirations of Mr. Spooner were egregiously foolish—died out of her mind, her thoughts reverted to her engagement. Why did not the man come to her, or why did he not write?

She had received from Lady Chiltern an invitation to remain with them, the Chilterns, till her marriage. "But, dear Lady Chiltern, who knows when it will be?" Adelaide had said. Lady Chiltern had good-naturedly replied that the longer it was put off the better for herself.

"But you'll be going to London or abroad before that day comes." Lady Chiltern declared that she looked forward to no festivities which could under any circumstances remove her four-and-twenty hours' traveling distance from the kennels. Probably she might go up to London for a couple of months as soon as the hunting was over, and the hounds had been drafted, and the horses had been coddled, and every covert had been visited. From the month of May till the middle of July she might, perhaps, be allowed to be in town, as communications by telegram could now be made day and night. After that preparations for cub-hunting would be imminent, and, as a matter of course, it would be necessary that she should be at Harrington Hall at so important a period of the year. During those couple of months she would be very happy to have the companionship of her friend, and she hinted that Gerard Maule would certainly be in town. "I begin to think it would have been better that I should never have seen Gerard Maule," said Adelaide Palliser.

This happened about the middle of March, while hunting was still in force. Gerard's horses were standing in the neighborhood, but Gerard himself was not there. Mr. Spooner, since that short disheartening note had been sent to him by Lord Chiltern, had not been seen at Harrington. There was a Harrington Lawn Meet on one occasion, but he had not appeared till the hounds were at the neighboring covert side. Nevertheless, he had declared that he did not intend to give up the pursuit, and had even muttered something of the sort to Lord Chiltern. "I am one of those fellows who stick to a thing, you know," he said.

"I am afraid you had better give up sticking to her, because she's going to marry somebody else."

"I've heard all about that, my lord. He's a very nice sort of young man, but I'm told he hasn't got his house ready yet for a family." All which Lord Chiltern repeated to his wife. Neither of them spoke to Adelaide again about Mr. Spooner; but this did cause a feeling in Lady Chiltern's mind that perhaps this engagement with young Maule was a foolish thing, and that, if so, she was in a great measure responsible for the folly.

"Don't you think you'd better write to him?" she said one morning.

"Why does he not write to me?"

"But he did—when he told you that his father would not consent to give up the house. You did not answer him then."

"It was two lines, without a date. I don't even know where he lives."

"You know his club?"

"Yes, I know his club. I do feel, Lady Chiltern, that I have become engaged to marry a man as to whom I am altogether in the dark. I don't like writing to him at his club."

"You have seen more of him here and in Italy than most girls see of their future husbands."

"So I have, but I have seen no one belonging to him. Don't you understand what I mean? I feel all at sea about him. I am sure he does not mean any harm."

"Certainly he does not."

"But then he hardly means any good."

"I never saw a man more earnestly in love," said Lady Chiltern.

"Oh yes, he's quite enough in love. But—"
"But what?"

"He'll just remain up in London thinking about it, and never tell himself that there's any thing to be done. And then, down here, what is my best hope? Not that he'll come to see me, but that he'll come to see his horse, and that so, perhaps, I may get a word with him." Then Lady Chiltern suggested, with a laugh, that perhaps it might have been better that she should have accepted Mr. Spooner. There would have been no doubt as to Mr. Spooner's energy and purpose. "Only that if there was not another man in the world I wouldn't marry him, and that I never saw any other man except Gerard Maule whom I even fancied I could marry."

About a fortnight after this, when the hunting was all over, in the beginning of April, she did write to him as follows, and did direct her letter to his club. In the mean time Lord Chiltern had intimated to his wife that if Gerard Maule behaved badly he should consider himself to be standing in the place of Adelaide's father or brother. His wife pointed out to him that were he her father or her brother he could do nothing—that in these days, let a man behave ever so badly, no means of punishing was within reach of the lady's friends. But Lord Chiltern would not assent to this. He muttered something about a horse-whip, and seemed to suggest that one man could, if he were so minded, always have it out with another, if not in this way, then in that. Lady Chiltern protested, and declared that horse-whips could not under any circumstances be efficacious. "He had better mind what he is about," said Lord Chiltern. It was after this that Adelaide wrote her letter:

"HARRINGTON HALL, April 5.

"DEAR GERARD,—I have been thinking that I should hear from you, and have been surprised—I may say unhappy—because I have not done so. Perhaps you thought I ought to have answered the three words which you wrote to me about your father; if so, I will apologize; only they did not seem to give me any thing to say. I was very sorry that your father should have 'cut up rough,' as you call it, but you must remember that we both expected that he would refuse, and that we are only, therefore, where we thought we should be. I suppose we shall have to wait till Providence does something for us—only, if so, it would be pleasanter to me to hear your own opinion about it.

"The Chilterns are surprised that you shouldn't have come back and seen the end of the season. There were some very good runs just at last; particularly one on last Monday. But on Wednesday Trumpeton Wood was again blank, and there was some row about wires. I can't explain it all; but you must come, and Lord Chiltern will tell you. I have gone down to see the horses ever so often; but I don't care to go now, as you never write to me. They are all three quite well, and Fan looks as silken and as soft as any lady need do.

"Lady Chiltern has been kinder than I can tell you. I go up to town with her in May, and shall remain with her while she is there. So far I have decided. After that my future home must, Sir, depend on the resolution and determination, or perhaps on the vagaries and caprices,

of him who is to be my future master. Joking apart, I must know to what I am to look forward before I can make up my mind whether I will or will not go back to Italy toward the end of the summer. If I do, I fear I must do so just in the hottest time of the year; but I shall not like to come down here again after leaving London, unless something by that time has been settled.

"I shall send this to your club, and I hope that it will reach you. I suppose that you are in London. Good-by, dearest Gerard.

"Yours most affectionately,

"ADELAIDE.

"If there is any thing that troubles you, pray tell me. I ask you because I think it would be better for you that I should know. I sometimes think that you would have written if there had not been some misfortune. God bless you."

Gerard was in London, and sent the following note by return of post:

"— CLUB, Tuesday.

"DEAREST ADELAIDE,—All right. If Chiltern can take me for a couple of nights, I'll come down next week, and settle about the horses, and will arrange every thing.

"Ever your own, with all my heart,

"G. M."

"He will settle about his horses, and arrange every thing," said Adelaide, as she showed the letter to Lady Chiltern. "The horses first, and every thing afterward. The every thing, of course, includes all my future happiness, the day of my marriage, whether to-morrow or in ten years' time, and the place where we shall live."

"At any rate, he's coming."

"Yes, but when? He says next week, but he does not name any day. Did you ever hear or see any thing so unsatisfactory?"

"I thought you would be glad to see him."

"So I should be, if there was any sense in him. I shall be glad, and shall kiss him."

"I dare say you will."

"And let him put his arm round my waist and be happy. He will be happy, because he will think of nothing beyond. But what is to be the end of it?"

"He says that he will settle every thing."

"But he will have thought of nothing. What must I settle? That is the question. When he was told to go to his father, he went to his father. When he failed there the work was done, and the trouble was off his mind. I know him so well."

"If you think so ill of him, why did you consent to get into his boat?" said Lady Chiltern, seriously.

"I don't think ill of him. Why do you say that I think ill of him? I think better of him than of any body else in the world; but I know his fault, and, as it happens, it is a fault so very prejudicial to my happiness. You ask me why I got into his boat. Why does any girl get into a man's boat? Why did you get into Lord Chiltern's?"

"I promised to marry him when I was seven years old; so he says."

"But you wouldn't have done it, if you hadn't had a sort of feeling that you were born to be his

wife. I haven't got into this man's boat yet; but I never can be happy unless I do, simply because—"

"You love him."

"Yes; just that. I have a feeling that I should like to be in his boat, and I shouldn't like to be any where else. After you have come to feel like that about a man, I don't suppose it makes any difference whether you think him perfect or imperfect. He's just my own—at least I hope so; the one thing that I've got. If I wear a stuff-frock, I'm not going to despise it because it's not silk."

"Mr. Spooner would be the stuff-frock."

"No; Mr. Spooner is shoddy, and very bad shoddy, too."

On the Saturday in the following week Gerard Maule did arrive at Harrington Hall, and was welcomed as only accepted lovers are welcomed. Not a word of reproach was uttered as to his delinquencies. No doubt he got the kiss with which Adelaide had herself suggested that his coming would be rewarded. He was allowed to stand on the rug before the fire with his arm round her waist. Lady Chiltern smiled on him. His horses had been specially visited that morning, and a lively report as to their condition was made to him. Not a word was said on that occasion which could distress him. Even Lord Chiltern, when he came in, was gracious to him. "Well, old fellow," he said, "you've missed your hunting."

"Yes, indeed. Things kept me in town."

"We had some uncommonly good runs."

"Have the horses stood pretty well?" asked Gerard.

"I felt uncommonly tempted to borrow yours; and should have done so once or twice if I hadn't known that I should have been betrayed."

"I wish you had, with all my heart," said Gerard. And then they went to dress for dinner.

In the evening, when the ladies had gone to bed, Lord Chiltern took his friend off to the smoking-room. At Harrington Hall it was not unusual for the ladies and gentlemen to descend together into the very comfortable Pandemonium which was so called, when, as was the case at present, the terms of intimacy between them were sufficient to warrant such a proceeding. But on this occasion Lady Chiltern went very discreetly up stairs, and Adelaide, with equal discretion, followed her. It had been arranged beforehand that Lord Chiltern should say a salutary word or two to the young man. Maule began about the hunting, asking questions about this and that, but his host stopped him at once. Lord Chiltern, when he had a task on hand, was always inclined to get through it at once—perhaps with an energy that was too sudden in its effects. "Maule," he said, "you ought to make up your mind what you mean to do about that girl."

"Do about her! How?"

"You and she are engaged, I suppose?"

"Of course we are. There isn't any doubt about it."

"Just so. But when things come to be like that, all delays are good fun to the man, but they're the very devil to the girl."

"I thought it was always the other way up, and that girls wanted delay?"

"That's only a theoretical delicacy which never means much. When a girl is engaged she likes to have the day fixed. When there's a

long interval, the man can do pretty much as he pleases, while the girl can do nothing except think about him. Then it sometimes turns out that when he's wanted he's not there."

"I hope I'm not distrusted," said Gerard, with an air that showed that he was almost disposed to be offended.

"Not in the least. The women here think you the finest paladin in the world, and Miss Palliser would fly at my throat if she thought that I said a word against you. But she's in my house, you see, and I'm bound to do exactly as I should if she were my sister."

"And if she were your sister?"

"I should tell you that I couldn't approve of the engagement unless you were prepared to fix the time of your marriage. And I should ask you where you intended to live."

"Wherever she pleases. I can't go to Maule Abbey while my father lives, without his sanction."

"And he may live for the next twenty years."

"Or thirty."

"Then you are bound to decide upon something else. It's no use saying that you leave it to her. You can't leave it to her. What I mean is this, that now you are here, I think you are bound to settle something with her. Good-night, old fellow."

CHAPTER XLII.

BOULOGNE.

GERARD MAULE, as he sat up stairs, half undressed, in his bedroom that night, didn't like it. He hardly knew what it was that he did not like, but he felt that there was something wrong. He thought that Lord Chiltern had not been warranted in speaking to him with a tone of authority, and in talking of a brother's position—and the rest of it. He had lacked the presence of mind for saying any thing at the moment; but he must say something sooner or later. He wasn't going to be driven by Lord Chiltern. When he looked back at his own conduct he thought that it had been more than noble—almost romantic. He had fallen in love with Miss Palliser, and spoken his love out freely, without any reference to money. He didn't know what more any fellow could have done. As to his marrying out of hand, the day after his engagement, as a man of fortune can do, every body must have known that that was out of the question. Adelaide, of course, had known it. It had been suggested to him that he should consult his father as to living at Maule Abbey. Now if there was one thing he hated more than another, it was consulting his father: and yet he had done it. He had asked for a loan of the old house in perfect faith, and it was not his fault that it had been refused. He could not make a house to live in, nor could he coin a fortune. He had £800 a year of his own, but of course he owed a little money. Men with such incomes always do owe a little money. It was almost impossible that he should marry quite at once. It was not his fault that Adelaide had no fortune of her own. When he fell in love with her he had been a great deal too generous to think of fortune, and that ought to be remembered now to his credit. Such was the sum of his thoughts, and his anger

spread itself from Lord Chiltern even on to Adelaide herself. Chiltern would hardly have spoken in that way unless she had complained. She, no doubt, had been speaking to Lady Chiltern, and Lady Chiltern had passed it on to her husband. He would have it out with Adelaide on the next morning, quite decidedly. And he would make Lord Chiltern understand that he would not endure interference. He was quite ready to leave Harrington Hall at a moment's notice, if he were ill-treated. This was the humor in which Gerard Maule put himself to bed that night.

On the following morning he was very late at breakfast—so late that Lord Chiltern had gone over to the kennel. As he was dressing he had resolved that it would be fitting that he should speak again to his host before he said any thing to Adelaide that might impute blame to her. He would ask Chiltern whether any thing was meant by what had been said overnight. But, as it happened, Adelaide had been left alone to pour out his tea for him, and—as the reader will understand to have been certain on such an occasion—they were left together for an hour in the breakfast parlor. It was impossible that such an hour should be passed without some reference to the grievance which was lying heavy on his heart. "Late! I should think you are," said Adelaide, laughing. "It is nearly eleven. Lord Chiltern has been out an hour. I suppose you never get up early except for hunting."

"People always think it is so wonderfully virtuous to get up. What's the use of it?"

"Your breakfast is so cold."

"I don't care about that. I suppose they can boil me an egg. I was very seedy when I went to bed."

"You smoked too many cigars, Sir."

"No, I didn't; but Chiltern was saying things that I didn't like." Adelaide's face at once became very serious. "Yes, a good deal of sugar, please. I don't care about toast, and any thing does for me. He has gone to the kennels, has he?"

"He said he should. What was he saying last night?"

"Nothing particular. He has a way of blowing-up, you know; and he looks at one just as if he expected that every body was to do just what he chooses."

"You didn't quarrel?"

"Not at all; I went off to bed without saying a word. I hate jaws. I shall just put it right this morning; that's all."

"Was it about me, Gerard?"

"It doesn't signify the least."

"But it does signify. If you and he were to quarrel, would it not signify to me very much? How could I stay here with them, or go up to London with them, if you and he had really quarreled? You must tell me. I know that it was about me." Then she came and sat close to him. "Gerard," she continued, "I don't think you understand how much every thing is to me that concerns you."

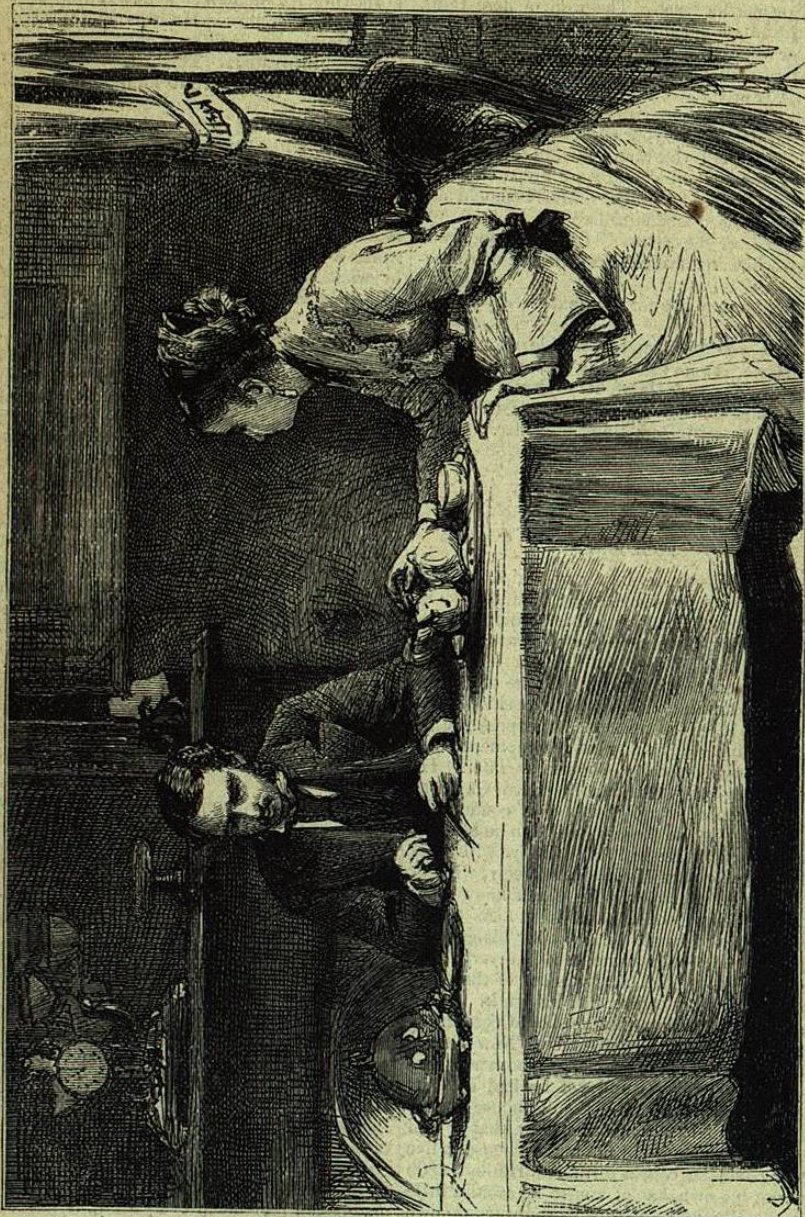
When he began to reflect, he could not quite recollect what it was that Lord Chiltern had said to him. He did remember that something had been suggested about a brother and sister, which had implied that Adelaide might want protection, but there was nothing unnatural or other than

kind in the position which Lord Chiltern had declared that he would assume. "He seemed to think that I wasn't treating you well," said he, turning round from the breakfast-table to the fire, "and that is a sort of thing I can't stand."
"I have never said so, Gerard."

"What does all this mean?"

"You would ask me, you know. I am bothered out of my life by ever so many things, and now he comes and adds his botheration."

"What bothers you, Gerard? If any thing bothers you, surely you will tell me. If there



"ADELAIDE HAD BEEN LEFT ALONE TO POUR OUT HIS TEA FOR HIM."

"I don't know what it is that he expects, or why he should interfere at all. I can't bear to be interfered with. What does he know about it? He has had somebody to pay every thing for him half a dozen times, but I have to look out for myself."

has been any thing to trouble you since you saw your father, why have you not written and told me? Is your trouble about me?"

"Well, of course it is—in a sort of way."

"I will not be a trouble to you."

"Now you are going to misunderstand me!"

Of course you are not a trouble to me. You know that I love you better than any thing in the world."

"I hope so."

"Of course I do." Then he put his arm round her waist and pressed her to his bosom. "But what can a man do? When Lady Chiltern recommended that I should go to my father and tell him, I did it. I knew that no good could come of it. He wouldn't lift his hand to do any thing for me."

"How horrid that is!"

"He thinks it a shame that I should have my uncle's money, though he never had any more right to it than that man out there. He is always saying that I am better off than he is."

"I suppose you are."

"I am very badly off, I know that. People seem to think that £800 is ever so much, but I find it to be very little."

"And it will be much less if you are married," said Adelaide, gravely.

"Of course every thing must be changed. I must sell my horses, and we must cut and run, and go and live at Boulogne, I suppose. But a man can't do that kind of thing all in a moment. Then Chiltern comes and talks as though he were Virtue personified. What business is it of his?"

Then Adelaide became still more grave. She had now removed herself from his embrace, and was standing a little apart from him on the rug. She did not answer him at first; and when she did so, she spoke very slowly. "We have been rash, I fear; and have done what we have done without sufficient thought."

"I don't say that at all."

"But I do. It does seem now that we have been imprudent." Then she smiled as she completed her speech. "There had better be no engagement between us."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is quite clear that it has been a trouble to you rather than a happiness."

"I wouldn't give it up for all the world."

"But it will be better. I had not thought about it as I should have done. I did not understand that the prospect of marrying would make you—so very poor. I see it now. You had better tell Lord Chiltern that it is—done with, and I will tell her the same. It will be better; and I will go back to Italy at once."

"Certainly not. It is not done with, and it shall not be done with."

"Do you think I will marry the man I love when he tells me that by—marrying—me, he will be—banished to—Bou—logne? You had better see Lord Chiltern; indeed you had." And then she walked out of the room.

Then came upon him at once a feeling that he had behaved badly; and yet he had been so generous, so full of intentions to be devoted and true! He had never for a moment thought of breaking off the match, and would not think of it now. He loved her better than ever, and would live only with the intention of making her his wife. But he certainly should not have talked to her of his poverty, nor should he have mentioned Boulogne. And yet what should he have done? She would cross-question him about Lord Chiltern, and it was so essentially necessary that he should make her understand his real condition. It had all come from that man's unjustifiable in-

terference—as he would at once go and tell him. Of course he would marry Adelaide, but the marriage must be delayed. Every body waits twelve months before they are married; and why should she not wait? He was miserable because he knew that he had made her unhappy; but the fault had been with Lord Chiltern. He would speak his mind frankly to Chiltern, and then would explain with loving tenderness to his Adelaide that they would still be all in all to each other, but that a short year must elapse before he could put his house in order for her. After that he would sell his horses. That resolve was in itself so great that he did not think it necessary at the present moment to invent any more plans for the future. So he went out into the hall, took his hat, and marched off to the kennels.

At the kennels he found Lord Chiltern surrounded by the denizens of the hunt. His huntsman, with the kennel-man and feeder, and two whips, and old Doggett, were all there, and the Master of the Hounds was in the middle of his business. The dogs were divided by ages, as well as by sex, and were being brought out and examined. Old Doggett was giving advice—differing almost always from Cox, the huntsman, as to the propriety of keeping this hound or of cashiering that. Nose, pace, strength, and docility were all questioned with an eagerness hardly known in any other business; and on each question Lord Chiltern listened to every body, and then decided with a single word. When he had once resolved, nothing further urged by any man then could avail any thing. Jove never was so autocratic, and certainly never so much in earnest. From the look of Lord Chiltern's brow it almost seemed as though this weight of empire must be too much for any mere man. Very little notice was taken of Gerard Maule when he joined the conclave, though it was felt in reference to him that he was sufficiently stanch a friend to the hunt to be trusted with the secrets of the kennel. Lord Chiltern merely muttered some words of greeting, and Cox lifted the old hunting-cap which he wore. For another hour the conference was held. Those who have attended such meetings know well that a morning on the flags is apt to be a long affair. Old Doggett, who had privileges, smoked a pipe, and Gerard Maule lit one cigar after another. But Lord Chiltern had become too thorough a man of business to smoke when so employed. At last the last order was given—Doggett snarled his last snarl, and Cox uttered his last "my lord." Then Gerard Maule and the Master left the hounds and walked home together.

The affair had been so long that Gerard had almost forgotten his grievance. But now as they got out together upon the park, he remembered the tone of Adelaide's voice as she left him, and remembered also that, as matters stood at present, it was essentially necessary that something should be said. "I suppose I shall have to go and see that woman," said Lord Chiltern.

"Do you mean Adelaide?" asked Maule, in a tone of infinite surprise.

"I mean this new Duchess, who I'm told is to manage every thing herself. That man Fothergill is going on with just the old game at Trumpeton."

"Is he, indeed? I was thinking of something else just at that moment. You remember what you were saying about Miss Palliser last night?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't think, you know, you had a right to speak as you did."

Lord Chiltern almost flew at his companion, as he replied, "I said nothing. I do say that when a man becomes engaged to a girl, he should let her hear from him, so that they may know what each other is about."

"You hinted something about being her brother."

"Of course I did. If you mean well by her, as I hope you do, it can't fret you to think that she has got somebody to look after her till you come in and take possession. It is the commonest thing in the world when a girl is left all alone as she is."

"You seemed to make out that I wasn't treating her well."

"I said nothing of the kind, Maule; but if you ask me—"

"I don't ask you any thing."

"Yes, you do. You come and find fault with me for speaking last night in the most good-natured way in the world. And therefore I tell you now that you will be behaving very badly indeed, unless you make some arrangement at once as to what you mean to do."

"That's your opinion," said Gerard Maule.

"Yes, it is; and you'll find it to be the opinion of any man or woman that you may ask who knows any thing about such things. And I'll tell you what, Master Maule, if you think you're going to face me down you'll find yourself mistaken. Stop a moment, and just listen to me. You haven't a much better friend than I am, and I'm sure she hasn't a better friend than my wife. All this has taken place under our roof, and I mean to speak my mind plainly. What do you propose to do about your marriage?"

"I don't propose to tell you what I mean to do."

"Will you tell Miss Palliser, or my wife?"

"That is just as I may think fit."

"Then I must tell you that you can not meet her at my house."

"I'll leave it to-day."

"You needn't do that either. You sleep on it, and then make up your mind. You can't suppose that I have any curiosity about it. The girl is fond of you, and I suppose that you are fond of her. Don't quarrel for nothing. If I have offended you, speak to Lady Chiltern about it."

"Very well; I will speak to Lady Chiltern."

When they reached the house it was clear that something was wrong. Miss Palliser was not seen again before dinner, and Lady Chiltern was grave and very cold in her manner to Gerard Maule. He was left alone all the afternoon, which he passed with his horses and groom, smoking more cigars, but thinking all the time of Adelaide Palliser's last words, of Lord Chiltern's frown, and of Lady Chiltern's manner to him. When he came into the drawing-room before dinner, Lady Chiltern and Adelaide were both there, and Adelaide immediately began to ask questions about the kennel and the huntsmen. But she studiously kept at a distance from him, and he himself felt that it would be impossible to resume at present the footing on which he stood with them both on the previous evening. Presently Lord Chiltern came in, and another man and his wife who had come to stay at Harrington. Nothing could be more dull than the whole evening. At

least so Gerard found it. He did take Adelaide in to dinner, but he did not sit next to her at table, for which, however, there was an excuse, as, had he done so, the new-comer must have been placed by his wife. He was cross, and would not make an attempt to speak to his neighbor; and, though he tried once or twice to talk to Lady Chiltern—than whom, as a rule, no woman was ever more easy in conversation—he failed altogether. Now and again he strove to catch Adelaide's eye, but even in that he could not succeed. When the ladies left the room, Chiltern and the new-comer—who was not a sporting-man, and therefore did not understand the question—became lost in the mazes of Trumpeton Wood. But Gerard Maule did not put in a word; nor was a word addressed to him by Lord Chiltern. As he sat there sipping his wine, he made up his mind that he would leave Harrington Hall the next morning. When he was again in the drawing-room, things were conducted in just the same way. He spoke to Adelaide, and she answered him; but there was no word of encouragement—not a tone of comfort in her voice. He found himself driven to attempt conversation with the strange lady, and at last was made to play whist with Lady Chiltern and the two new-comers. Later on in the evening, when Adelaide had gone to her own chamber, he was invited by Lady Chiltern into her own sitting-room up stairs, and there the whole thing was explained to him. Miss Palliser had declared that the match should be broken off.

"Do you mean altogether, Lady Chiltern?"

"Certainly I do. Such a resolve can not be a half-and-half arrangement."

"But why?"

"I think you must know why, Mr. Maule."

"I don't in the least. I won't have it broken off. I have as much right to have a voice in the matter as she has, and I don't in the least believe it's her doing."

"Mr. Maule!"

"I do not care; I must speak out. Why does she not tell me so herself?"

"She did tell you so."

"No, she didn't. She said something, but not that. I don't suppose a man was ever so used before; and it's all Lord Chiltern; just because I told him that he had no right to interfere with me. And he has no right."

"You and Oswald were away together when she told me that she had made up her mind. Oswald has hardly spoken to her since you have been in the house. He certainly has not spoken to her about you since you came to us."

"What is the meaning of it, then?"

"You told her that your engagement had overwhelmed you with troubles."

"Of course; there must be troubles."

"And that—you would have to be banished to Boulogne when you were married."

"I didn't mean her to take that literally."

"It wasn't a nice way, Mr. Maule, to speak of your future life to the girl to whom you were engaged. Of course it was her hope to make your life happier, not less happy. And when you made her understand—as you did very plainly—that your married prospects filled you with dismay, of course she had no other alternative but to retreat from her engagement."

"I wasn't dismayed."

"It is not my doing, Mr. Maule."

"I suppose she'll see me?"

"If you insist upon it, she will; but she would rather not."

Gerard, however, did insist, and Adelaide was brought to him there into that room before he went to bed. She was very gentle with him, and spoke to him in a tone very different from that which Lady Chiltern had used; but he found himself utterly powerless to change her. That unfortunate allusion to a miserable exile at Boulogne had completed the work which the former complaints had commenced, and had driven her to a resolution to separate herself from him altogether.

"Mr. Maule," she said, "when I perceived that our proposed marriage was looked upon by you as a misfortune, I could do nothing but put an end to our engagement."

"But I didn't think it a misfortune."

"You made me think that it would be unfortunate for you, and that is quite as strong a reason. I hope we shall part as friends."

"I won't part at all," he said, standing his ground with his back to the fire. "I don't understand it, by Heaven I don't. Because I said some stupid thing about Boulogne, all in a joke—"

"It was not in joke when you said that troubles had come heavy on you since you were engaged."

"A man may be allowed to know himself whether he was in joke or not. I suppose the truth is, you don't care about me?"

"I hope, Mr. Maule, that in time it may come—not quite to that."

"I think that you are—using me very badly. I think that you are—behaving—falsely to me. I think that I am—very—shamefully treated—among you. Of course I shall go. Of course I shall not stay in this house. A man can't make a girl keep her promise. No—I won't shake hands. I won't even say good-by to you. Of course I shall go." So saying, he slammed the door behind him.

"If he cares for you he'll come back to you," Lady Chiltern said to Adelaide that night, who at the moment was lying on her bed in a sad condition, frantic with headache.

"I don't want him to come back; I will never make him go to Boulogne."

"Don't think of it, dear."

"Not think of it! how can I help thinking of it? I shall always think of it. But I never want to see him again—never! How can I want to marry a man who tells me that I shall be a trouble to him. He shall never, never have to go to Boulogne for me."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SECOND THUNDER-BOLT.

THE quarrel between Phineas Finn and Mr. Bonteen had now become the talk of the town, and had taken many various phases. The political phase, though it was perhaps the best understood, was not the most engrossing. There was the personal phase—which had reference to the direct altercation that had taken place between the two gentlemen, and to the correspondence

between them which had followed, as to which phase it may be said that though there were many rumors abroad, very little was known. It was reported in some circles that the two aspirants for office had been within an ace of striking each other; in some, again, that a blow had passed—and in others, further removed probably from the House of Commons and the Universe Club, that the Irishman had struck the Englishman, and that the Englishman had given the Irishman a thrashing. This was a phase that was very disagreeable to Phineas Finn. And there was a third—which may, perhaps, be called the general social phase, and which unfortunately dealt with the name of Lady Laura Kennedy. They all, of course, worked into each other, and were enlivened and made interesting with the names of a great many big persons. Mr. Gresham, the Prime Minister, was supposed to be very much concerned in this matter. He, it was said, had found himself compelled to exclude Phineas Finn from the Government, because of the unfortunate alliance between him and the wife of one of his late colleagues, and had also thought it expedient to dismiss Mr. Bonteen from his Cabinet—for it had amounted almost to dismissal—because Mr. Bonteen had made indiscreet official allusion to that alliance. In consequence of this working in of the first and third phase, Mr. Gresham encountered hard usage from some friends and from many enemies. Then, of course, the scene at Macpherson's Hotel was commented on very generally. An idea prevailed that Mr. Kennedy, driven to madness by his wife's infidelity, which had become known to him through the quarrel between Phineas and Mr. Bonteen, had endeavored to murder his wife's lover, who had with the utmost effrontery invaded the injured husband's presence, with a view of deterring him by threats from a publication of his wrongs. This murder had been nearly accomplished in the centre of the metropolis—by daylight, as if that made it worse—on a Sunday, which added infinitely to the delightful horror of the catastrophe; and yet no public notice had been taken of it! The would-be murderer had been a Cabinet Minister, and the lover who was so nearly murdered had been an Under-Secretary of State, and was even now a member of Parliament. And then it was positively known that the lady's father, who had always been held in the highest respect as a nobleman, favored his daughter's lover, and not his daughter's husband. All which things together filled the public with dismay, and caused a delightful excitement, giving quite a feature of its own to the season.

No doubt general opinion was adverse to poor Phineas Finn, but he was not without his party in the matter. To oblige a friend by inflicting an injury on his enemy is often more easy than to confer a benefit on the friend himself. We have already seen how the young Duchess failed in her attempt to obtain an appointment for Phineas, and also how she succeeded in destroying the high hopes of Mr. Bonteen. Having done so much, of course she clung heartily to the side which she had adopted; and equally, of course, Madame Goesler did the same. Between these two ladies there was a slight difference of opinion as to the nature of the alliance between Lady Laura and their hero. The Duchess was of opinion that young men are upon the whole averse to