

"He is strong enough, and brave enough."
 "But not enough of a coward. There is nothing cowardly about him. If Phineas Finn could have struck an enemy with a club in a dark passage, behind his back, I will never care to speak to any man again. Nothing shall make me believe it. If I did, I could never again believe in any one. If they told you that your husband had murdered a man, what would you say?"

"But he isn't your husband, Madame Max."
 "No—certainly not. I can not fly at them, when they say so, as you would do. But I can be just as sure. If twenty Lord Fawns swore that they had seen it, I would not believe them. O God! what will they do with him!"

The Duchess behaved very well to her friend, saying not a single word to twit her with the love which she betrayed. She seemed to take it as a matter of course that Madame Goesler's interest in Phineas Finn should be as it was. The Duke, she said, could not come home to dinner, and Madame Goesler should stay with her. Both Houses were in such a ferment about the murder that nobody liked to be away. Every body had been struck with amazement, not simply—not chiefly—by the fact of the murder, but by the double destruction of the two men whose ill-will to each other had been of late so often the subject of conversation. So Madame Goesler remained at Carlton Terrace till late in the evening, and during the whole visit there was nothing mentioned but the murder of Mr. Bonteen and the peril of Phineas Finn. "Some one will go and see him, I suppose," said Madame Goesler.

"Lord Cantrip has been already—and Mr. Monk."

"Could not I go?"

"Well, it would be rather strong."

"If we both went together?" suggested Madame Goesler. And before she left Carlton Terrace she had almost extracted a promise from the Duchess that they would together proceed to the prison and endeavor to see Phineas Finn.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SHOWING WHAT MRS. BUNCE SAID TO THE POLICEMAN.

"We have left Adelaide Palliser down at the Hall. We are up here only for a couple of days to see Laura, and try to find out what had better be done about Kennedy." This was said to Phineas Finn in his own room in Great Marlborough Street by Lord Chiltern, on the morning after the murder, between ten and eleven o'clock. Phineas had not as yet heard of the death of the man with whom he had quarreled. Lord Chiltern had now come to him with some proposition which he as yet did not understand, and which Lord Chiltern certainly did not know how to explain. Looked at simply, the proposition was one for providing Phineas Finn with an income out of the wealth belonging, or that would belong, to the Standish family. Lady Laura's fortune would, it was thought, soon be at her own disposal. They who acted for her husband had assured the Earl that the yearly interest of the money should be at her ladyship's command as soon as the law would allow them so to plan it. Of Robert Kennedy's inability to act for himself there was no

longer any doubt whatever, and there was, they said, no desire to embarrass the estate with so small a disputed matter as the income derived from £40,000. There was great pride of purse in the manner in which the information was conveyed; but not the less on that account was it satisfactory to the Earl. Lady Laura's first thought about it referred to the imminent wants of Phineas Finn. How might it be possible for her to place a portion of her income at the command of the man she loved so that he should not feel disgraced by receiving it from her hand? She conceived some plan as to a loan to be made nominally by her brother—a plan as to which it may at once be said that it could not be made to hold water for a minute. But she did succeed in inducing her brother to undertake the embassy, with the view of explaining to Phineas that there would be money for him when he wanted it. "If I make it over to papa, papa can leave it him in his will; and if he wants it at once there can be no harm in your advancing to him what he must have at papa's death." Her brother had frowned angrily and had shaken his head. "Think how he has been thrown over by all the party," said Lady Laura. Lord Chiltern had disliked the whole affair—had felt with dismay that his sister's name would become subject to reproach if it should be known that this young man was supported by her bounty. She, however, had persisted, and he had consented to see the young man, feeling sure that Phineas would refuse to bear the burden of the obligation.

But he had not touched the disagreeable subject when they were interrupted. A knocking of the door had been heard, and now Mrs. Bunce came up stairs, bringing Mr. Low with her. Mrs. Bunce had not heard of the tragedy, but she had at once perceived from the barrister's manner that there was some serious matter forward—some matter that was probably not only serious, but also calamitous. The expression of her countenance announced as much to the two men, and the countenance of Mr. Low when he followed her into the room told the same story still more plainly. "Is any thing the matter?" said Phineas, jumping up.

"Indeed, yes," said Mr. Low, who then looked at Lord Chiltern and was silent.

"Shall I go?" said Lord Chiltern. Mr. Low did not know him, and of course was still silent.

"This is my friend, Mr. Low. This is my friend, Lord Chiltern," said Phineas, aware that each was well acquainted with the other's name. "I do not know of any reason why you should go. What is it, Low?"

Lord Chiltern had come there about money, and it occurred to him that the impecunious young barrister might already be in some scrape on that head. In nineteen cases out of twenty, when a man is in a scrape, he simply wants money. "Perhaps I can be of help," he said.

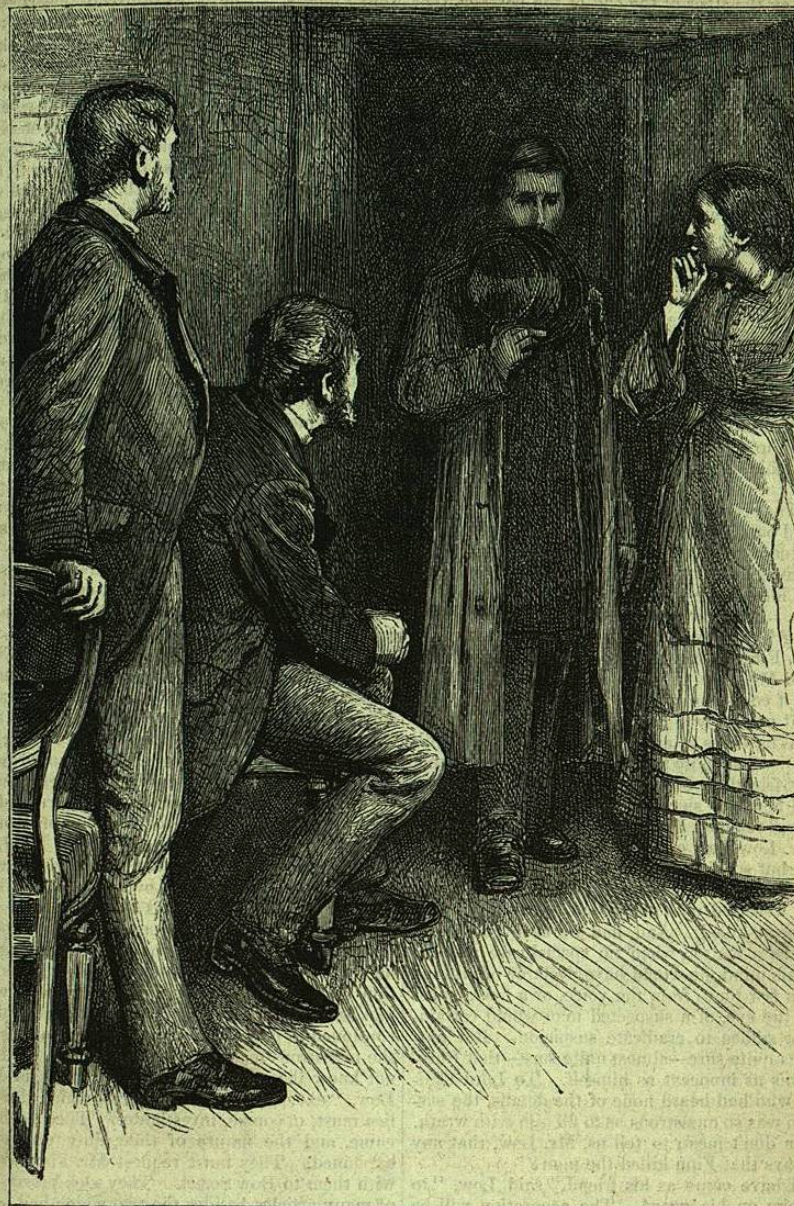
"Have you heard, my lord, what happened last night?" said Mr. Low, with his eyes fixed on Phineas Finn.

"I have heard nothing," said Lord Chiltern.

"What has happened?" asked Phineas, looking aghast. He knew Mr. Low well enough to be sure that the thing referred to was of great and distressing moment.

"You, too, have heard nothing?"

"Not a word—that I know of."



"IS ANY THING THE MATTER?" SAID PHINEAS, JUMPING UP."

"You were at the Universe last night?"

"Certainly I was."

"Did any thing occur?"

"The Prince was there."

"Nothing has happened to the Prince?" said Chiltern.

"His name has not been mentioned to me," said Mr. Low. "Was there not a quarrel?"

"Yes," said Phineas; "I quarreled with Mr. Bonteen."

"What then?"

"He behaved like a brute—as he always

does. Thrashing a brute hardly answers nowadays, but if ever a man deserved a thrashing he does."

"He has been murdered," said Mr. Low.

* * * * *

The reader need hardly be told that, as regards this great offense, Phineas Finn was as white as snow. The maintenance of any doubt on that matter, were it even desirable to maintain a doubt, would be altogether beyond the doubt of the present writer. The reader has probably perceived, from the first moment of the discovery of the

body on the steps at the end of the passage, that Mr. Bonteen had been killed by that ingenious gentleman the Rev. Mr. Emilius, who found it to be worth his while to take the step with the view of suppressing his enemy's evidence as to his former marriage. But Mr. Low, when he entered the room, had been inclined to think that his friend had done the deed. Laurence Fitzgibbon, who had been one of the first to hear the story, and who had summoned Erle to go with him and Major Mackintosh to Downing Street, had, in the first place, gone to the house in Carey Street, in which Bunce was wont to work, and had sent him to Mr. Low. He, Fitzgibbon, had not thought it safe that he himself should warn his countryman, but he could not bear to think that the hare should be knocked over on its form, or that his friend should be taken by policemen without notice. So he had sent Bunce to Mr. Low, and Mr. Low had now come with his tidings.

"Murdered!" exclaimed Phineas.

"Who has murdered him?" said Lord Chiltern, looking first at Mr. Low and then at Phineas.

"That is what the police are now endeavoring to find out." Then there was a pause, and Phineas stood up with his hand on his forehead, looking savagely from one to the other. A glimmer of an idea of the truth was beginning to cross his brain. Mr. Low was there with the object of asking him whether he had murdered the man! "Mr. Fitzgibbon was with you last night," continued Mr. Low.

"Of course he was."

"It was he who has sent me to you."

"What does it all mean?" asked Lord Chiltern. "I suppose they do not intend to say that—our friend here—murdered the man."

"I begin to suppose that is what they intend to say," rejoined Phineas, scornfully.

Mr. Low had entered the room doubting, indeed, but still inclined to believe—as Bunce had very clearly believed—that the hands of Phineas Finn were red with the blood of this man who had been killed. And, had he been questioned on such a matter, when no special case was before his mind, he would have declared of himself that a few tones from the voice, or a few glances from the eye, of a suspected man would certainly not suffice to eradicate suspicion. But now he was quite sure—almost quite sure—that Phineas was as innocent as himself. To Lord Chiltern, who had heard none of the details, the suspicion was so monstrous as to fill him with wrath. "You don't mean to tell us, Mr. Low, that any one says that Finn killed the man?"

"I have come as his friend," said Low, "to put him on his guard. The accusation will be made against him."

To Phineas, not clearly looking at it, not knowing very accurately what had happened, not being, in truth, quite sure that Mr. Bonteen was actually dead, this seemed to be a continuation of the persecution which he believed himself to have suffered from that man's hand. "I can believe any thing from that quarter," he said.

"From what quarter?" asked Lord Chiltern. "We had better let Mr. Low tell us what really has happened."

Then Mr. Low told the story, as well as he knew it, describing the spot on which the body had been found. "Often as I go to the club,"

said Phineas, "I never was through that passage in my life." Mr. Low went on with his tale, telling how the man had been killed with some short bludgeon. "I had that in my pocket," said Finn, producing the life-preserver. "I have almost always had something of the kind when I have been in London, since that affair of Kennedy's. Mr. Low cast one glance at it, to see whether it had been washed or scraped, or in any way cleansed. Phineas saw the glance, and was angry. "There it is, as it is. You can make the most of it. I shall not touch it again till the policeman comes. Don't put your hand on it, Chiltern. Leave it there." And the instrument was left lying on the table, untouched. Mr. Low went on with his story. He had heard nothing of Yosef Mealyus as connected with the murder, but some indistinct reference to Lord Fawn and the top-coat had been made to him. "There is the coat, too," said Phineas, taking it from the sofa on which he had flung it when he came home the previous night. It was a very light coat, fitted for May use, lined with silk, and by no means suited for enveloping the face or person. But it had a collar which might be made to stand up. "That, at any rate, was the coat I wore," said Finn, in answer to some observation from the barrister. "The man that Lord Fawn saw," said Mr. Low, "was, as I understand, enveloped in a heavy great-coat." "So Fawn has got his finger in the pie!" said Lord Chiltern.

Mr. Low had been there an hour, Lord Chiltern remaining also in the room, when there came three men belonging to the police—a superintendent, and with him two constables. When the men were shown up into the room, neither the bludgeon nor the coat had been moved from the small table as Phineas had himself placed them there. Both Phineas and Chiltern had lit cigars, and they were all there sitting in silence. Phineas had entertained the idea that Mr. Low believed the charge, and that the barrister was, therefore, an enemy. Mr. Low had perceived this, but had not felt it to be his duty to declare his opinion of his friend's innocence. What he could do for his friend he would do; but, as he thought, he could serve him better now by silent observation than by protestation. Lord Chiltern, who had been implored by Phineas not to leave him, continued to pour forth unabating execrations on the monstrous malignity of the accusers. "I do not know that there are any accusers," said Mr. Low, "except the circumstances, which the police must, of course, investigate." Then the men came, and the nature of their duty was soon explained. They must request Mr. Finn to go with them to Bow Street. They took possession of many articles besides the two which had been prepared for them—the dress-coat and shirt which Phineas had worn, and the boots. He had gone out to dinner with a Gibus hat, and they took that. They took his umbrella and his latch-key. They asked, even, as to his purse and money, but abstained from taking the purse when Mr. Low suggested that they could have no concern with that. As it happened, Phineas was at the moment wearing the shirt in which he had dined out on the previous day, and the men asked him whether he had any objection to change it in their presence, as it might be necessary, after the examination, that it should be detained as evidence. He did so in the presence of all the men

assembled; but the humiliation of doing it almost broke his heart. Then they searched among his linen, clean and dirty, and asked questions of Mrs. Bunce in audible whispers behind the door. Whatever Mrs. Bunce could do to injure the cause of her favorite lodger by severity of manner, snubbing the policeman, and determination to give no information, she did do. "Had a shirt washed? How do you suppose a gentleman's shirts are washed? You were brought up near enough to a wash-tub yourself to know more than I can tell you!" But the very respectable constable did not seem to be in the least annoyed by the landlady's amenities.

He was taken to Bow Street, going thither in a cab with the two policemen, and the superintendent followed them with Lord Chiltern and Mr. Low. "You don't mean to say that you believe it?" said Lord Chiltern to the officer. "We never believe and we never disbelieve any thing, my lord," replied the man. Nevertheless, the superintendent did most firmly believe that Phineas Finn had murdered Mr. Bonteen.

At the police-office Phineas was met by Lord Cantrip and Barrington Erle, and soon became aware that both Lord Fawn and Fitzgibbon were present. It seemed that every thing else was made to give way to this inquiry, as he was at once confronted by the magistrate. Every body was personally very civil to him, and he was asked whether he would not wish to have professional advice while the charge was being made against him. But this he declined. He would tell the magistrate, he said, all he knew, but, at any rate for the present, he would have no need of advice. He was at last allowed to tell his own story, after repeated cautions. There had been some words between him and Mr. Bonteen in the club; after which, standing at the door of the club with his friends, Mr. Erle and Mr. Fitzgibbon, who were now in court, he had seen Mr. Bonteen walk away toward Berkeley Square. He had soon followed, but had never overtaken Mr. Bonteen. When reaching the square he had crossed over to the fountain, standing there on the south side, and from thence had taken the shortest way up Bruton Street. He had seen Mr. Bonteen for the last time dimly, by the gas-light, at the corner of the square. As far as he could remember, he himself had at that moment passed the fountain. He had not heard the sound of any struggle, or of words, round the corner toward Piccadilly. By the time that Mr. Bonteen would have reached the head of the steps leading into the passage, he would have been near Bruton Street, with his back completely turned to the scene of the murder. He had walked faster than Mr. Bonteen, having gradually drawn near to him; but he had determined in his own mind that he would not pass the man, or get so near him as to attract attention. Nor had he done so. He had certainly worn the gray coat which was now produced. The collar of it had not been turned up. The coat was nearly new, and to the best of his belief the collar had never been turned up. He had carried the life-preserver now produced with him because it had once before been necessary for him to attack garroters in the street. The life-preserver had never been used, and, as it happened, was quite new. It had been bought about a month since, in consequence of some commotion about garroters which had just then taken

place. But before the purchase of the life-preserver he had been accustomed to carry some stick or bludgeon at night. Undoubtedly he had quarreled with Mr. Bonteen before this occasion, and had bought this instrument since the commencement of the quarrel. He had not seen any one on his way from the square to his own house with sufficient observation to enable him to describe such person. He could not remember that he had passed a policeman on his way home.

This took place after the hearing of such evidence as was then given. The statements made, both by Erle and Fitzgibbon, as to what had taken place in the club, and afterward at the door, tallied exactly with that afterward given by Phineas. An accurate measurement of the streets and ways concerned was already furnished. Taking the duration of time as surmised by Erle and Fitzgibbon to have passed after they had turned their back upon Phineas, a constable proved that the prisoner would have had time to hurry back to the corner of the street he had passed, and to be in the place where Lord Fawn saw the man, supposing that Lord Fawn had walked at the rate of three miles an hour, and that Phineas had walked or run at twice that pace. Lord Fawn stated that he was walking very slow—less, he thought, than three miles an hour, and that the man was hurrying very fast—not absolutely running, but going, as he thought, at quite double his own pace. Then two coats were shown to his lordship. Finn knew nothing of the other coat, which had, in truth, been taken from the Rev. Mr. Emilius—a rough, thick, brown coat, which had belonged to the preacher for the last two years. Finn's coat was gray in color. Lord Fawn looked at the coats very attentively, and then said that the man he had seen had certainly not worn the brown coat. The night had been dark, but still he was sure that the coat had been gray. The collar had certainly been turned up. Then a tailor was produced who gave it as his opinion that Finn's coat had been lately worn with the collar raised.

It was considered that the evidence given was sufficient to make a remand imperative, and Phineas Finn was committed to Newgate. He was assured that every attention should be paid to his comfort, and was treated with great consideration. Lord Cantrip, who still believed in him, discussed the subject both with the magistrate and with Major Mackintosh. Of course the strictest search would be made for a second life-preserver, or any such weapon as might have been used. Search had already been made, and no such weapon had been as yet found. Emilius had never been seen with any such weapon. No one about Curzon Street or Mayfair could be found who had seen that man with the quick step and raised collar, who doubtless had been the murderer, except Lord Fawn—so that no evidence was forth-coming tending to show that Phineas Finn could not have been that man. The evidence adduced to prove that Mr. Emilius—or Mealyus, as he was henceforth called—could not have been on the spot was so very strong that the magistrate told the constables that that man must be released on the next examination, unless something could be adduced against him.

The magistrate, with the profoundest regret, was unable to agree with Lord Cantrip in his

opinion that the evidence adduced was not sufficient to demand the temporary committal of Mr. Finn.

CHAPTER L.

WHAT THE LORDS AND COMMONS SAID ABOUT THE MURDER.

WHEN the House met on that Thursday at four o'clock every body was talking about the murder, and certainly four-fifths of the members had made up their minds that Phineas Finn was the murderer. To have known a murdered man is something, but to have been intimate with a murderer is certainly much more. There were many there who were really sorry for poor Bonteen—of whom without a doubt the end had come in a very horrible manner; and there were more there who were personally fond of Phineas Finn—to whom the future of the young member was very sad, and the fact that he should have become a murderer very awful. But, nevertheless, the occasion was not without its consolations. The business of the House is not always exciting, or even interesting. On this afternoon there was not a member who did not feel that something had occurred which added an interest to Parliamentary life.

Very soon after prayers Mr. Gresham entered the House, and men who had hitherto been behaving themselves after a most unparliamentary fashion, standing about in knots, talking by no means in whispers, moving in and out of the House rapidly, all crowded into their places. Whatever pretense of business had been going on was stopped in a moment, and Mr. Gresham rose to make his statement. "It was with the deepest regret—nay, with the most profound sorrow—that he was called upon to inform the House that his right honorable friend and colleague, Mr. Bonteen, had been basely and cruelly murdered during the past night." It was odd then to see how the name of the man, who, while he was alive and a member of that House, could not have been pronounced in that assembly without disorder, struck the members almost with dismay.

"Yes, his friend Mr. Bonteen, who had so lately filled the office of President of the Board of Trade, and whose loss the country and that House could so ill bear, had been beaten to death in one of the streets of the metropolis by the arm of a dastardly ruffian during the silent watches of the night." Then Mr. Gresham paused, and every one expected that some further statement would be made. "He did not know that he had any further communication to make on the subject. Some little time must elapse before he could fill the office. As for adequately supplying the loss, that would be impossible. Mr. Bonteen's services to the country, especially in reference to decimal coinage, were too well known to the House to allow of his holding out any such hope." Then he sat down without having as yet made an allusion to Phineas Finn.

But the allusion was soon made. Mr. Daubeny rose, and with much graceful and mysterious circumlocution asked the Prime Minister whether it was true that a member of the House had been arrested, and was now in confinement, on the charge of having been concerned in the

murder of the late much-lamented President of the Board of Trade. He—Mr. Daubeny—had been given to understand that such a charge had been made against an honorable member of that House who had once been a colleague of Mr. Bonteen's, and who had always supported the right honorable gentleman opposite. Then Mr. Gresham rose again. "He regretted to say that the honorable member for Tankerville was in custody on that charge. The House would of course understand that he only made that statement as a fact, and that he was offering no opinion as to who was the perpetrator of the murder. The case seemed to be shrouded in great mystery. The two gentlemen had unfortunately differed, but he did not at all think that the House would on that account be disposed to attribute guilt so black and damning to a gentleman they had all known so well as the honorable member for Tankerville." So much and no more was spoken publicly to the reporters, but members continued to talk about the affair the whole evening.

There was nothing, perhaps, more astonishing than the absence of rancor or abhorrence with which the name of Phineas was mentioned, even by those who felt most certain of his guilt. All those who had been present at the club acknowledged that Bonteen had been the sinner in reference to the transaction there; and it was acknowledged to have been almost a public misfortune that such a man as Bonteen should have been able to prevail against such a one as Phineas Finn in regard to the presence of the latter in the Government. Stories which were exaggerated, accounts worse even than the truth, were bandied about as to the perseverance with which the murdered man had destroyed the prospects of the supposed murderer, and robbed the country of the services of a good workman. Mr. Gresham, in the official statement which he had made, had, as a matter of course, said many fine things about Mr. Bonteen. A man can always have fine things said about him for a few hours after his death. But in the small private conferences which were held the fine things said all referred to Phineas Finn. Mr. Gresham had spoken of a "dastardly ruffian in the silent watches;" but one would have almost thought, from overhearing what was said by various gentlemen in different parts of the House, that, upon the whole, Phineas Finn was thought to have done rather a good thing in putting poor Mr. Bonteen out of the way.

And another pleasant feature of excitement was added by the prevalent idea that the Prince had seen and heard the row. Those who had been at the club at the time of course knew that this was not the case; but the presence of the Prince at the Universe between the row and the murder had really been a fact, and therefore it was only natural that men should allow themselves the delight of mixing the Prince with the whole concern. In remote circles the Prince was undoubtedly supposed to have had a great deal to do with the matter, though whether as abettor of the murdered or of the murderer was never plainly declared. A great deal was said about the Prince that evening in the House, so that many members were able to enjoy themselves thoroughly.

"What a godsend for Gresham!" said one gentleman to Mr. Ratler, very shortly after the strong eulogium which had been uttered on poor Mr. Bonteen by the Prime Minister.

"Well, yes; I was afraid that the poor fellow would never have got on with us."

"Got on! He'd have been a thorn in Gresham's side as long as he held office. If Finn should be acquitted, you ought to do something handsome for him." Whereupon Mr. Ratler laughed heartily.

"It will pretty nearly break them up," said Sir Orlando Drought, one of Mr. Daubeny's late Secretaries of State, to Mr. Roby, Mr. Daubeny's late patronage secretary.

"I don't quite see that. They'll be able to drop their decimal coinage with a good excuse, and that will be a great comfort. They are talking of getting Monk to go back to the Board of Trade."

"Will that strengthen them?"

"Bonteen would have weakened them. The man had got beyond himself, and lost his head. They are better without him."

"I suppose Finn did it?" asked Sir Orlando.

"Not a doubt about it, I'm told. The queer thing is that he should have declared his purpose beforehand to Erle. Gresham says that all that must have been part of his plan, so as to make men think afterward that he couldn't have done it. Grogan's idea is that he had planned the murder before he went to the club."

"Will the Prince have to give evidence?"

"No, no," said Mr. Roby. "That's all wrong. The Prince had left the club before the row commenced. Confucius Putt says that the Prince didn't hear a word of it. He was talking to the Prince all the time." Confucius Putt was the distinguished artist with whom the Prince had shaken hands on leaving the club.

Lord Drummond was in the Peers' Gallery, and Mr. Boffin was talking to him over the railings. It may be remembered that those two gentlemen had conscientiously left Mr. Daubeny's Cabinet because they had been unable to support him in his views about the Church. After such sacrifice on their parts, their minds were of course intent on Church matters. "There doesn't seem to be a doubt about it," said Mr. Boffin.

"Cantrip won't believe it," said the peer.

"He was at the Colonies with Cantrip, and Cantrip found him very agreeable. Every body says that he was one of the pleasant fellows going. This makes it out of the question that they should bring in any Church Bill this session."

"Do you think so?"

"Oh yes; certainly. There will be nothing else thought of now till the trial."

"So much the better," said his lordship.

"It's an ill wind that blows no one any good. Will they have evidence for a conviction?"

"Oh dear, yes; not a doubt about it. Fawn can swear to him," said Mr. Boffin.

Barrington Erle was telling his story for the tenth time, when he was summoned out of the Library to the Duchess of Omnium, who had made her way up into the lobby. "Oh, Mr. Erle, do tell me what you really think," said the Duchess.

"That is just what I can't do."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know what to think."

"He can't have done it, Mr. Erle."

"That's just what I say to myself, Duchess."

"But they do say that the evidence is so very strong against him."

"Very strong."

"I wish we could get that Lord Fawn out of the way."

"Ah, but we can't."

"And will they—hang him?"

"If they convict him, they will."

"A man we all knew so well! And just when we had made up our minds to do every thing for him. Do you know I'm not a bit surprised? I've felt before now as though I should like to have done it myself."

"He could be very nasty, Duchess!"

"I did so hate that man. But I'd give—oh, I don't know what I'd give to bring him to life again this minute. What will Lady Laura do?" In answer to this, Barrington Erle only shrugged his shoulders. Lady Laura was his cousin. "We mustn't give him up, you know, Mr. Erle."

"What can we do?"

"Surely we can do something. Can't we get it in the papers that he must be innocent—so that every body should be made to think so? And if we could get hold of the lawyers, and make them not want to—destroy him! There's nothing I wouldn't do. There's no getting hold of a judge, I know."

"No, Duchess. The judges are stone."

"Not that they are a bit better than any body else, only they like to be safe."

"They do like to be safe."

"I'm sure we could do it if we put our shoulders to the wheel. I don't believe, you know, for a moment that he murdered him. It was done by Lizzie Eustace's Jew."

"It will be sifted, of course."

"But what's the use of sifting if Mr. Finn is to be hung while it's being done? I don't think any thing of the police. Do you remember how they bungled about that woman's necklace? I don't mean to give him up, Mr. Erle; and I expect you to help me." Then the Duchess returned home, and, as we know, found Madame Goesler at her house.

Nothing whatever was done that night either in the Lords or Commons. A "statement" about Mr. Bonteen was made in the Upper as well as in the Lower House, and after that statement any real work was out of the question. Had Mr. Bonteen absolutely been Chancellor of the Exchequer and in the Cabinet when he was murdered, and had Phineas Finn been once more an Under-Secretary of State, the commotion and excitement could hardly have been greater. Even the Duke of St. Bungay had visited the spot—well known to him, as there the urban domains meet of two great Whig peers, with whom and whose predecessors he had long been familiar. He also had known Phineas Finn, and not long since had said civil words to him and of him. He, too, had, of late days, especially disliked Mr. Bonteen, and had almost insisted that the man now murdered should not be admitted into the Cabinet. He had heard what was the nature of the evidence; had heard of the quarrel, the life-preserver, and the gray coat. "I suppose he must have done it," said the Duke of St. Bungay to himself as he walked away up Hay Hill.

CHAPTER LI.

YOU THINK IT SHAMEFUL.

THE tidings of what had taken place first reached Lady Laura Kennedy from her brother on his return to Portman Square after the scene in the police court. The object of his visit to Finn's lodgings has been explained, but the nature of Lady Laura's vehemence in urging upon her brother the performance of a very disagreeable task has not been sufficiently described. No brother would willingly go on such a mission from a married sister to a man who had been publicly named as that sister's lover, and no brother could be less likely to do so than Lord Chiltern. But Lady Laura had been very stout in her arguments, and very strong-willed in her purpose. The income arising from this money—which had been absolutely her own—would again be exclusively her own should the claim to it on behalf of her husband's estate be abandoned. Surely she might do what she liked with her own. If her brother would not assist her in making this arrangement, it must be done by other means. She was quite willing that it should appear to come to Mr. Finn from her father and not from herself. Did her brother think any ill of her? Did he believe in the calumnies of the newspapers. Did he or his wife for a moment conceive that she had a lover? When he looked at her, worn-out, withered, an old woman before her time, was it possible that he should so believe? She herself asked him these questions. Lord Chiltern of course declared that he had no suspicion of the kind. "No, indeed," said Lady Laura. "I defy any one to suspect me who knows me. And if so, why am not I as much entitled to help a friend as you might be? You need not even mention my name." He endeavored to make her understand that her name would be mentioned, and others would believe and would say evil things. "They can not say worse than they have said," she continued. "And yet what harm have they done to me—or you?" Then he demanded why she desired to go so far out of her way with the view of spending her money upon one who was in no way connected with her. "Because I like him better than any one else," she answered, boldly. "There is very little left for which I care at all; but I do care for his prosperity. He was once in love with me and told me so, but I had chosen to give my hand to Mr. Kennedy. He is not in love with me now, nor I with him; but I choose to regard him as my friend." He assured her over and over again that Phineas Finn would certainly refuse to touch her money; but this she declined to believe. At any rate the trial might be made. He would not refuse money left to him by will, and why should he not now enjoy that which was intended for him? Then she explained how certain it was that he must speedily vanish out of the world altogether, unless some assurance of an income were made to him.

So Lord Chiltern went on his mission, hardly meaning to make the offer, and confident that it would be refused if made. We know the nature of the new trouble in which he found Phineas Finn enveloped. It was such that Lord Chiltern did not open his mouth about money, and now, having witnessed the scene at the police-office, he had come back to tell his tale to his

sister. She was sitting with his wife when he entered the room.

"Have you heard any thing?" he asked at once. "Heard what?" said his wife.

"Then you have not heard it. A man has been murdered."

"What man?" said Lady Laura, jumping suddenly from her seat. "Not Robert!" Lord Chiltern shook his head. "You do not mean that Mr. Finn has been—killed!" Again he shook his head; and then she sat down, as though the asking of the two questions had exhausted her.

"Speak, Oswald," said his wife. "Why do you not tell us? Is it one whom we knew?"

"I think that Laura used to know him. Mr. Bonteen was murdered last night in the streets."

"Mr. Bonteen! The man who was Mr. Finn's enemy," said Lady Chiltern.

"Mr. Bonteen!" said Lady Laura, as though the murder of twenty Mr. Bonteens were nothing to her.

"Yes; the man whom you talk of as Finn's enemy. It would be better if there were no such talk."

"And who killed him?" said Lady Laura, again getting up and coming close to her brother.

"Who was it, Oswald?" asked his wife; and she also was now too deeply interested to keep her seat.

"They have arrested two men," said Lord Chiltern; "that Jew who married Lady Eustace, and—" But there he paused. He had determined beforehand that he would tell his sister the double arrest, that the doubt this implied might lessen the weight of the blow; but now he found it almost impossible to mention the name.

"Who is the other, Oswald?" said his wife.

"Not Phineas!" screamed Lady Laura.

"Yes, indeed; they have arrested him, and I have just come from the court." He had no time to go on, for his sister was crouching prostrate on the floor before him. She had not fainted. Women do not faint under such shocks. But in her agony she had crouched down rather than fallen, as though it were vain to attempt to stand upright with so crushing a weight of sorrow on her back. She uttered one loud shriek, and then, covering her face with her hands, burst out into a wail of sobs. Lady Chiltern and her brother both tried to raise her, but she would not be lifted. "Why will you not hear me through, Laura?" said he.

"You do not think he did it?" said his wife.

"I'm sure he did not," replied Lord Chiltern.

The poor woman, half lying, half seated on the floor, still hiding her face with her hands, still bursting with half-suppressed sobs, heard and understood both the question and the answer. But the fact was not altered to her, nor the condition of the man she loved. She had not yet begun to think whether it were possible that he should have been guilty of such a crime. She had heard none of the circumstances, and knew nothing of the manner of the man's death. It might be that Phineas had killed the man, bringing himself within the reach of the law, and that yet he should have done nothing to merit her reproaches—hardly even her reprobation! Hitherto she felt only the sorrow, the annihilation of the blow; but not the shame with which it would overwhelm the man for whom she so much coveted the good opinion of the world.

"You hear what he says, Laura."

"They are determined to destroy him," she sobbed out through her tears.

"They are not determined to destroy him at all," said Lord Chiltern. "It will have to go by evidence. You had better sit up, and let me tell you all. I will tell you nothing till you are seated again. You disgrace yourself by sprawling there."

"Do not be hard to her, Oswald."

"I am disgraced," said Lady Laura, slowly rising and placing herself again on the sofa. "If there is any thing more to tell, you can tell it. I do not care what happens to me now, or who knows it. They can not make my life worse than it is."

Then he told all the story—of the quarrel, and the position of the streets, of the coat, and the bludgeon, and the three blows, each on the head, by which the man had been killed. And he told them also how the Jew was said never to have been out of his bed, and how the Jew's coat was not the coat Lord Fawn had seen, and how no stain of blood had been found about the raiment of either of the men. "It was the Jew who did it, Oswald, surely," said Lady Chiltern.

"It was not Phineas Finn who did it," he replied.

"And they will let him go again?"

"They will let him go when they find out the truth, I suppose. But those fellows blunder so, I would never trust them. He will get some sharp lawyer to look into it; and then perhaps every thing will come out. I shall go and see him to-morrow. But there is nothing further to be done."

"And I must see him," said Lady Laura, slowly.

Lady Chiltern looked at her husband, and his face became redder than usual with an angry flush. When his sister had pressed him to take her message about the money, he had assured her that he suspected her of no evil. Nor had he ever thought evil of her. Since her marriage with Mr. Kennedy he had seen but little of her or of her ways of life. When she had separated herself from her husband, he had approved of the separation, and had even offered to assist her should she be in difficulty. While she had been living a sad lonely life at Dresden, he had simply pitied her, declaring to himself and his wife that her lot in life had been very hard. When these calumnies about her and Phineas Finn had reached his ears, or his eyes, as such calumnies always will reach the ears and eyes of those whom they are most capable of hurting, he had simply felt a desire to crush some Quintus Slide, or the like, into powder for the offense. He had received Phineas in his own house with all his old friendship. He had even this morning been with the accused man as almost his closest friend. But, nevertheless, there was creeping into his heart a sense of the shame with which he would be afflicted, should the world really be taught to believe that the man had been his sister's lover. Lady Laura's distress on the present occasion was such as a wife might show, or a girl weeping for her lover, or a mother for her son, or a sister for a brother, but was extravagant and exaggerated in regard to such friendship as might be presumed to exist between the wife of Mr. Robert Kennedy and the member for Tankerville. He could see that his wife felt this as

he did, and he thought it necessary to say something at once that might force his sister to moderate, at any rate, her language, if not her feelings. Two expressions of face were natural to him; one eloquent of good humor, in which the reader of countenances would find some promise of coming frolic, and the other replete with anger, sometimes to the extent almost of savagery. All those who were dependent on him were wont to watch his face with care and sometimes with fear. When he was angry it would almost seem that he was about to use personal violence on the object of his wrath. At the present moment he was rather grieved than enraged; but there came over his face that look of wrath with which all who knew him were so well acquainted. "You can not see him," he said.

"Why not I, as well as you?"

"If you do not understand, I can not tell you. But you must not see him; and you shall not."

"Who will hinder me?"

"If you put me to it, I will see that you are hindered. What is the man to you that you should run the risk of evil tongues, for the sake of visiting him in jail? You can not save his life, though it may be that you might endanger it."

"Oswald," she said, very slowly, "I do not know that I am in any way under your charge, or bound to submit to your orders."

"You are my sister."

"And I have loved you as a sister. How should it be possible that my seeing him should endanger his life?"

"It will make people think that the things are true which have been said."

"And will they hang him because I love him? I do love him. Violet knows how well I have always loved him!" Lord Chiltern turned his angry face upon his wife. Lady Chiltern put her arm round her sister-in-law's waist, and whispered some words into her ear. "What is that to me?" continued the half-frantic woman. "I do love him. I have always loved him. I shall love him to the end. He is all my life to me."

"Shame should prevent your telling it," said Lord Chiltern.

"I feel no shame. There is no disgrace in love. I did disgrace myself when I gave the hand for which he asked to another man, because—because—" But she was too noble to tell her brother even then that at the moment of her life to which she was alluding she had married the rich man, rejecting the poor man's hand, because she had given up all her fortune to the payment of her brother's debts. And he, though he had well known what he had owed to her, and had never been easy till he had paid the debt, remembered nothing of all this now. No lending and paying back of money could alter the nature either of his feelings or his duty in such an emergency as this. "And mind you," she continued, turning to her sister-in-law, "there is no place for the shame of which he is thinking," and she pointed her finger out at her brother. "I love him—as a mother might love her child, I fancy; but he has no love for me; none—none. When I am with him, I am only a trouble to him. He comes to me because he is good; but he would sooner be with you. He did love me once; but then I could not afford to be so loved."

"You can do no good by seeing him," said her brother.

"But I will see him. You need not scowl at me as though you wished to strike me. I have gone through that which makes me different from other women, and I care not what they say of me. Violet understands it all; but you understand nothing.

"Be calm, Laura," said her sister-in-law, "and Oswald will do all that can be done."

"But they will hang him."

"Nonsense!" said her brother. "He has not been as yet committed for his trial. Heaven knows how much has to be done. It is as likely as not that in three days' time he will be out at large, and all the world will be running after him, just because he has been in Newgate."

"But who will look after him?"

"He has plenty of friends. I will see that he is not left without every thing that he wants."

"But he will want money."

"He has plenty of money for that. Do you take it quietly, and not make a fool of yourself. If the worst comes to the worst—"

"O Heavens!"

"Listen to me, if you can listen. Should the worst come to the worst, which I believe to be altogether impossible—mind, I think it next to impossible, for I have never for a moment believed him to be guilty—we will—visit him—together. Good-by, now. I am going to see that friend of his, Mr. Low." So saying, Lord Chiltern went, leaving the two women together.

"Why should he be so savage with me?" said Lady Laura.

"He does not mean to be savage."

"Does he speak to you like that? What right has he to tell me of shame? Has my life been so bad, and his so good? Do you think it shameful that I should love this man?" She sat looking into her friend's face, but her friend for a while hesitated to answer. "You shall tell me, Violet. We have known each other so well that I can bear to be told by you. Do not you love him?"

"I love him! certainly not."

"But you did."

"Not as you mean. Who can define love, and say what it is? There are so many kinds of love. We say that we love the Queen."

"Pshaw!"

"And we are to love all our neighbors. But as men and women talk of love, I never at any moment of my life loved any man but my husband. Mr. Finn was a great favorite with me—always."

"Indeed he was."

"As any other man might be—or any woman. He is so still, and with all my heart I hope that this may be untrue."

"It is false as the devil. It must be false. Can you think of the man—his sweetness, the gentle nature of him, his open, free speech, and courage, and believe that he would go behind his enemy and knock his brains out in the dark? I can conceive it of myself that I should do it much easier than of him."

"Oswald says it is false."

"But he says it as partly believing that it is true. If it be true, I will hang myself. There will be nothing left among men or women fit to live for. You think it shameful that I should love him."

"I have not said so."

"But you do."

"I think there is cause for shame in your confessing it."

"I do confess it."

"You ask me, and press me, and because we have loved one another so well I must answer you. If a woman—a married woman—be oppressed by such a feeling, she should lay it down at the bottom of her heart, out of sight, never mentioning it, even to herself."

"You talk of the heart as though we could control it."

"The heart will follow the thoughts, and they may be controlled. I am not passionate, perhaps, as you are, and I think I can control my heart. But my fortune has been kind to me, and I have never been tempted. Laura, do not think I am preaching to you."

"Oh no; but your husband; think of him, and think of mine! You have babies."

"May God make me thankful. I have every good thing on earth that God can give."

"And what have I? To see that man prosper in life who they tell me is a murderer; that man who is now in a felon's jail—whom they will hang, for aught we know—to see him go forward and justify my thoughts of him! that yesterday was all I had. To-day I have nothing—except the shame with which you and Oswald say that I have covered myself."

"Laura, I have never said so."

"I saw it in your eye when he accused me. And I know that it is shameful. I do know that I am covered with shame. But I can bear my own disgrace better than his danger." After a long pause—a silence of probably some fifteen minutes—she spoke again. "If Robert should die, what would happen then?"

"It would be—a release, I suppose," said Lady Chiltern, in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper.

"A release, indeed; and I would become that man's wife the next day at the foot of the gallows—if he would have me. But he would not have me."

CHAPTER LII.

MR. KENNEDY'S WILL.

MR. KENNEDY had fired a pistol at Phineas Finn in Macpherson's Hotel with the manifest intention of blowing out the brains of his presumed enemy, and no public notice had been taken of the occurrence. Phineas himself had been only too willing to pass the thing by as a trifling accident, if he might be allowed to do so, and the Macphersons had been by far too true to their great friend to think of giving him in charge to the police. The affair had been talked about, and had come to the knowledge of reporters and editors. Most of the newspapers had contained paragraphs giving various accounts of the matter; and one or two had followed the example of the *People's Banner* in demanding that the police should investigate the matter. But the matter had not been investigated. The police were supposed to know nothing about it—as how should they, no one having seen or heard the shot but they who were determined to be silent? Mr. Quintus Slide had been indignant all in vain, so far as Mr. Kennedy and his offense had been con-

cerned. As soon as the pistol had been fired and Phineas had escaped from the room, the unfortunate man had sunk back in his chair, conscious of what he had done, knowing that he had made himself subject to the law, and expecting every minute that constables would enter the room to seize him. He had seen his enemy's hat lying on the floor, and, when nobody would come to fetch it, had thrown it down the stairs. After that he had sat waiting for the police, with the pistol, still loaded in every barrel but one, lying by his side—hardly repenting the attempt, but trembling for the result—till Macpherson, the landlord, who had been brought home from chapel, knocked at his door. There was very little said between them, and no positive allusion was made to the shot that had been fired; but Macpherson succeeded in getting the pistol into his possession—as to which the unfortunate man put no impediment in his way, and he managed to have it understood that Mr. Kennedy's cousin should be summoned on the following morning. "Is any body else coming?" Robert Kennedy asked, when the landlord was about to leave the room. "Naebody as I ken o' yet, laird," said Macpherson, "but likes they will." Nobody, however, did come, and the "laird" had spent the evening by himself in very wretched solitude.

On the following day the cousin had come, and to him the whole story was told. After that no difficulty was found in taking the miserable man back to Lough Linter, and there he had been for the last two months in the custody of his more wretched mother and of his cousin. No legal steps had been taken to deprive him of the management either of himself or of his property, so that he was in truth his own master. And he exercised his mastery in acts of petty tyranny about his domain, becoming more and more close-fisted in regard to money, and desirous, as it appeared, of starving all living things about the place—cattle, sheep, and horses, so that the value of their food might be saved. But every member of the establishment knew that the laird was "nae just himself," and consequently his orders were not obeyed. And the laird knew the same of himself, and, though he would give the orders not only resolutely, but with imperious threats of penalties to follow disobedience, still he did not seem to expect compliance. While he was in this state letters addressed to him came for a while into his own hands, and thus more than one reached him from Lord Brentford's lawyer, demanding that restitution should be made of the interest arising from Lady Laura's fortune. Then he would fly out into bitter wrath, calling his wife foul names, and swearing that she should never have a farthing of his money to spend upon her paramour. Of course it was his money, and his only. All the world knew that. Had she not left his roof, breaking her marriage vows, throwing aside every duty, and bringing him down to his present state of abject misery? Her own fortune! If she wanted the interest of her wretched money, let her come to Lough Linter and receive it there. In spite of all her wickedness, her cruelty, her misconduct, which had brought him, as he now said, to the verge of the grave, he would still give her shelter and room for repentance. He recognized his vows, though she did not. She should still be his wife, though she had utterly disgraced both herself and him. She

should still be his wife, though she had so lived as to make it impossible that there should be any happiness in their household.

It was thus he spoke when first one and then another letter came from the Earl's lawyer, pointing out to him the injustice to which Lady Laura was subjected by the loss of her fortune. No doubt these letters would not have been written in the line assumed had not Mr. Kennedy proved himself to be unfit to have the custody of his wife by attempting to shoot the man whom he accused of being his wife's lover. An act had been done, said the lawyer, which made it quite out of the question that Lady Laura should return to her husband. To this, when speaking of the matter to those around him—which he did with an energy which seemed to be foreign to his character—Mr. Kennedy made no direct allusion; but he swore most positively that not a shilling should be given up. The fear of policemen coming down to Lough Linter to take account of that angry shot had passed away; and though he knew, with an uncertain knowledge, that he was not in all respects obeyed as he used to be—that his orders were disobeyed by stewards and servants, in spite of his threats of dismissal—he still felt that he was sufficiently his own master to defy the Earl's attorney, and to maintain his claim upon his wife's person. Let her return to him first of all!

But after a while the cousin interfered still further; and Robert Kennedy, who so short a time since had been a member of the Government, graced by permission to sit in the Cabinet, was not allowed to open his own post-bag. He had written a letter to one person, and then again to another, which had induced those who received them to return answers to the cousin. To Lord Brentford's lawyer he had used a few very strong words. Mr. Forster had replied to the cousin, stating how grieved Lord Brentford would be, how much grieved would be Lady Laura, to find themselves driven to take steps in reference to what they conceived to be the unfortunate condition of Mr. Robert Kennedy, but that such steps must be taken unless some arrangement could be made which should be at any rate reasonable. Then Mr. Kennedy's post-bag was taken from him, the letters which he wrote were not sent, and he took to his bed. It was during this condition of affairs that the cousin took upon himself to intimate to Mr. Forster that the managers of Mr. Kennedy's estate were by no means anxious of embarrassing their own duty by so trumpery an additional matter as the income derived from Lady Laura's forty thousand pounds.

But things were in a terrible confusion at Lough Linter. Rents were paid as heretofore on receipts given by Robert Kennedy's agent, but the agent could only pay the money to Robert Kennedy's credit at his bank. Robert Kennedy's checks would, no doubt, have drawn the money out again, but it was almost impossible to induce Robert Kennedy to sign a check. Even in bed he inquired daily about his money, and knew accurately the sum lying at his banker's, but he could be persuaded to disgorge nothing. He postponed from day to day the signing of certain checks that were brought to him, and alleged very freely that an attempt was being made to rob him. During all his life he had been very generous in subscribing to public charities, but