

"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.

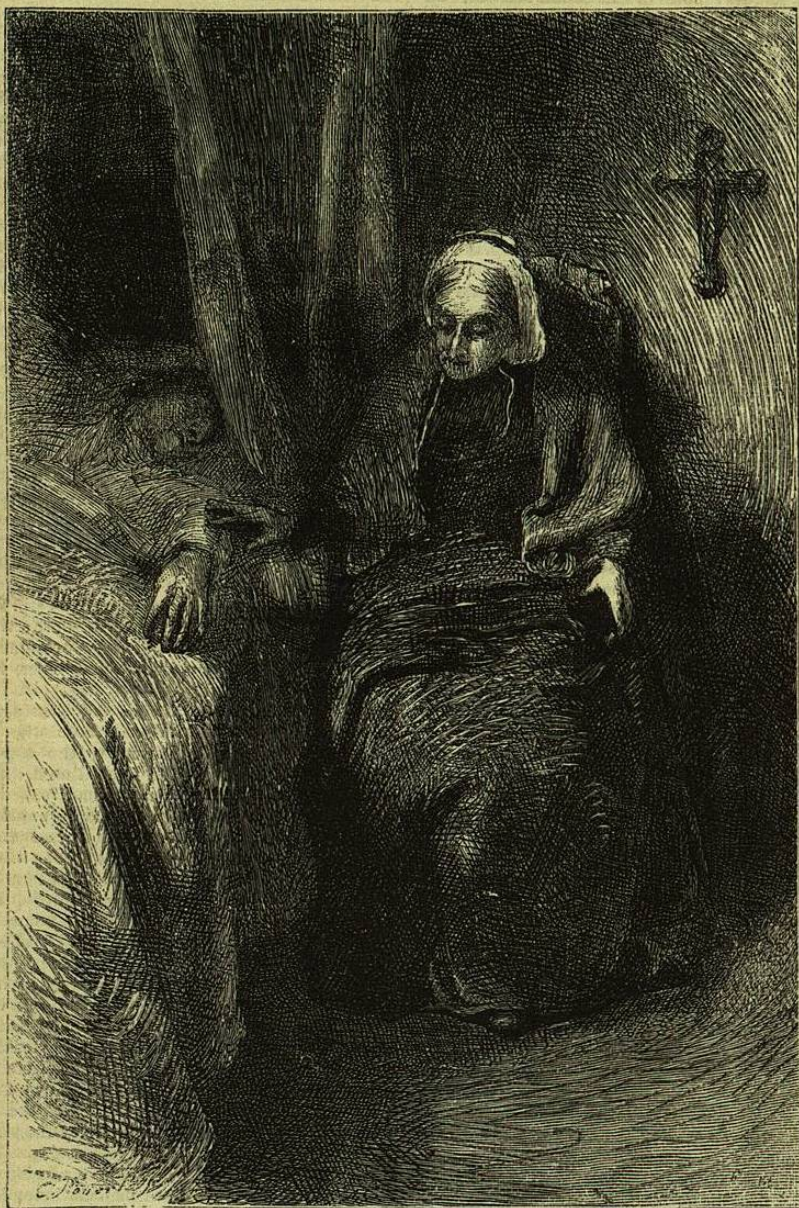
On the following day the cousin had come, and to him the whole story was told. After that no difficulty was found in taking the miserable man back to Lough Linter, and there he had been for the last two months in the custody of his more wretched mother and of his cousin. No legal steps had been taken 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



"THE OLD WOMAN, HIS MOTHER, WAS SEATED BY HIS BEDSIDE."

now he stopped all his subscriptions. The cousin had to provide even for the payment of wages, and things went very badly at Lough Linter. Then there arose the question whether legal steps should be taken for placing the management of the estate in other hands, on the ground of the owner's insanity. But the wretched old mother begged that this might not be done, and Dr. Macnuthrie, from Callender, was of opinion that no steps should be taken at present. Mr. Kennedy was very ill—very ill indeed; would take no nourishment, and seemed to be sinking under

the pressure of his misfortunes. Any steps such as those suggested would probably send their friend out of the world at once.

In fact, Robert Kennedy was dying; and in the first week of May, when the beauty of the spring was beginning to show itself on the braes of Lough Linter, he did die. The old woman, his mother, was seated by his bedside, and into her ears he murmured his last wailing complaint, "If she had the fear of God before her eyes, she would come back to me." "Let us pray that He may soften her heart," said the old lady.

"Eh, mother! nothing can soften the heart Satan has hardened till it be hard as the nether millstone." And in that faith he died, believing, as he had ever believed, that the spirit of evil was stronger than the spirit of good.

For some time past there had been perturbation in the mind of that cousin, and of all other Kennedys of that ilk, as to the nature of the will of the head of the family. It was feared lest he should have been generous to the wife who was believed by them all to have been so wicked and treacherous to her husband; and so it was found to be when the will was read. During the last few months no one near him had dared to speak to him of his will, for it had been known that his condition of mind rendered him unfit to alter it; nor had he ever alluded to it himself. As a matter of course there had been a settlement, and it was supposed that Lady Laura's own money would revert to her; but when it was found that in addition to this the Lough Linter estate became hers for life, in the event of Mr. Kennedy dying without a child, there was great consternation among the Kennedys generally. There were but two or three of them concerned, and for those there was money enough; but it seemed to them now that the bad wife, who had utterly refused to acclimatize herself to the soil to which she had been transplanted, was to be rewarded for her wicked stubbornness. Lady Laura would become mistress of her own fortune and of all Lough Linter, and would be once more a free woman, with all the power that wealth and fashion can give. Alas! alas! it was too late now for the taking of any steps to sever her from her rich inheritance! "And the false harlot will come and play havoc here, in my son's mansion," said the old woman, with the extremest bitterness.

The tidings were conveyed to Lady Laura through her lawyer, but did not reach her in full till some eight or ten days after the news of her husband's death. The telegram announcing that event had come to her at her father's house in Portman Square, on the day after that on which Phineas had been arrested, and the Earl had of course known that his great longing for the recovery of his wife's fortune had been now realized. To him there was no sorrow in the news. He had only known Robert Kennedy as one who had been thoroughly disagreeable to himself, and who had persecuted his daughter throughout their married life. There had come no happiness, not even prosperity, through the marriage. His daughter had been forced to leave the man's house, and had been forced also to leave her money behind her. Then she had been driven abroad, fearing persecution, and had only dared to return when the man's madness became so notorious as to annul his power of annoying her. Now by his death a portion of the injury which he had inflicted on the great family of Standish would be remedied. The money would come back, together with the stipulated jointure, and there could no longer be any question of return. The news delighted the old lord—and he was almost angry with his daughter because she also would not confess her delight.

"Oh, papa, he was my husband."

"Yes, yes, no doubt. I was always against it, you will remember."

"Pray do not talk in that way now, papa. I

know that I was not to him what I should have been."

"You used to say it was all his fault."

"We will not talk of it now, papa. He is gone, and I remember his past goodness to me."

She clothed herself in the deepest of mourning, and made herself a thing of sorrow by the sacrificial uncouthness of her garments. And she tried to think of him—to think of him, and not to think of Phineas Finn. She remembered with real sorrow the words she had spoken to her sister-in-law, in which she had declared, while still the wife of another man, that she would willingly marry Phineas at the foot even of the gallows if she were free. She was free now; but she did not repeat her assertion. It was impossible not to think of Phineas in his present strait, but she abstained from speaking of him as far as she could, and for the present never alluded to her former purpose of visiting him in his prison.

From day to day, for the first few days of her widowhood, she heard what was going on. The evidence against him became stronger and stronger; whereas the other man, Yosef Mealyus, had been already liberated. There were still many who felt sure that Mealyus had been the murderer, among whom were all those who had been ranked among the staunch friends of our hero. The Chilterns so believed, and Lady Laura; the Duchess so believed, and Madame Goesler. Mr. Low felt sure of it, and Mr. Monk and Lord Cantrip; and nobody was more sure than Mrs. Bunce. There were many who professed that they doubted—men such as Barrington Erle, Laurence Fitzgibbon, the two Dukes—though the younger Duke never expressed such doubt at home—and Mr. Gresham himself. Indeed, the feeling of Parliament in general was one of great doubt. Mr. Daubeny never expressed an opinion one way or the other, feeling that the fate of two second-class Liberals could not be matter of concern to him; but Sir Orlando Drought, and Mr. Roby, and Mr. Boffin were as eager as though they had not been Conservatives, and were full of doubt. Surely, if Phineas Finn were not the murderer, he had been more ill-used by Fate than had been any man since Fate first began to be unjust. But there was also a very strong party by whom no doubt whatever was entertained as to his guilt, at the head of which, as in duty bound, was the poor widow, Mrs. Bonteen. She had no doubt as to the hand by which her husband had fallen, and clamored loudly for the vengeance of the law. All the world, she said, knew how bitter against her husband had been this wretch, whose villainy had been exposed by her dear gracious lord; and now the evidence against him was, to her thinking, complete. She was supported strongly by Lady Eustace, who, much as she wished not to be the wife of the Bohemian Jew, thought even that preferable to being known as the widow of a murderer who had been hung. Mr. Ratler, with one or two others in the House, was certain of Finn's guilt. The *People's Banner*, though it prefaced each one of its daily paragraphs on the subject with a statement as to the manifest duty of an influential newspaper to abstain from the expression of any opinion on such a subject till the question had been decided by a jury, nevertheless from day to day recapitulated the evidence against the member for Tankerville, and showed how strong were the motives which

had existed for such a deed. But among those who were sure of Finn's guilt, there was no one more sure than Lord Fawn, who had seen the coat and the height of the man—and the step. He declared among his intimate friends that he could not swear to the person. He could not venture, when upon his oath, to give an opinion. But the man who had passed him at so quick a pace had been half a foot higher than Mealyus; of that there could be no doubt. Nor could there be any doubt as to the gray coat. Of course there might be other men with gray coats besides Mr. Phineas Finn, and other men half a foot taller than Yosef Mealyus. And there might be other men with that peculiarly energetic step. And the man who hurried by him might not have been the man who murdered Mr. Bonteen. Of all that Lord Fawn could say nothing. But what he did say, of that he was sure. And all those who knew him were well aware that in his own mind he was convinced of the guilt of Phineas Finn. And there was another man equally convinced. Mr. Maule, senior, remembered well the manner in which Madame Goesler spoke of Phineas Finn in reference to the murder, and was quite sure that Phineas was the murderer.

For a couple of days Lord Chiltern was constantly with the poor prisoner, but after that he was obliged to return to Harrington Hall. This he did a day after the news arrived of the death of his brother-in-law. Both he and Lady Chiltern had promised to return home, having left Adelaide Palliser alone in the house, and already they had overstaid their time. "Of course I will remain with you," Lady Chiltern had said to her sister-in-law; but the widow had preferred to be left alone. For these first few days—when she must make pretense of sorrow because her husband had died, and had such real cause for sorrow in the miserable condition of the man she loved—she preferred to be alone. Who could sympathize with her now, or with whom could she speak of her grief? Her father was talking to her always of her money; but from him she could endure it. She was used to him, and could remember when he spoke to her of her forty thousand pounds, and of her twelve hundred a year of jointure, that it had not always been with him like that. As yet nothing had been heard of the will, and the Earl did not in the least anticipate any further accession of wealth from the estate of the man whom they had all hated. But his daughter would now be a rich woman, and was yet young, and there might still be splendor. "I suppose you won't care to buy land," he said. "Oh, papa, do not talk of buying any thing yet."

"But, my dear Laura, you must put your money into something. You can get very nearly five per cent. from Indian stock."

"Not yet, papa," she said. But he proceeded to explain to her how very important an affair money is, and that persons who have got money can not be excused for not considering what they had better do with it. No doubt she could get four per cent. on her money by buying up certain existing mortgages on the Saulsby property, which would no doubt be very convenient if, hereafter, the money should go to her brother's child. "Not yet, papa," she said again, having, however, already made up her mind that her money should have a different destination.

She could not interest her father at all in the fate of Phineas Finn. When the story of the murder had first been told to him, he had been amazed, and, no doubt, somewhat gratified, as we all are, at tragic occurrences which do not concern ourselves. But he could not be made to tremble for the fate of Phineas Finn. And yet he had known the man during the last few years most intimately, and had had much in common with him. He had trusted Phineas in respect to his son, and had trusted him also in respect to his daughter. Phineas had been his guest at Dresden; and on his return to London, had been the first friend he had seen, with the exception of his lawyer. And yet he could hardly be induced to express the slightest interest as to the fate of this friend who was to be tried for murder. "Oh! he's committed, is he? I think I remember that Protheroe once told me that in thirty-nine cases out of forty men committed for serious offenses have been guilty of them." The Protheroe here spoken of as an authority in criminal matters was at present Lord Weazeling, the Lord Chancellor.

"But Mr. Finn has not been guilty, papa."
"There is always the one chance out of forty. But, as I was saying, if you like to take up the Saulsby mortgages, Mr. Forster can't be told too soon."

"Papa, I shall do nothing of the kind," said Lady Laura. And then she rose and walked out of the room.

At the end of ten days from the death of Mr. Kennedy there came the tidings of the will. Lady Laura had written to Mrs. Kennedy a letter which had taken her much time in composition, expressing her deep sorrow, and condoling with the old woman. And the old woman had answered: "Madam, I am too old now to express either grief or anger. My dear son's death, caused by domestic wrong, has robbed me of any remaining comfort which the undeserved sorrows of his latter years had not already dispelled. Your obedient servant, Sarah Kennedy." From which it may be inferred that she had also taken considerable trouble in the composition of her letter. Other communications between Lough Linter and Portman Square there were none, but there came through the lawyers a statement of Mr. Kennedy's will, as far as the interests of Lady Laura were concerned. This reached Mr. Forster first, and he brought it personally to Portman Square. He asked for Lady Laura, and saw her alone. "He has bequeathed to you the use of Lough Linter for your life, Lady Laura."

"To me!"
"Yes, Lady Laura. The will is dated in the first year of his marriage, and has not been altered since."

"What can I do with Lough Linter? I will give it back to them." Then Mr. Forster explained that the legacy referred not only to the house and immediate grounds, but to the whole estate known as the domain of Lough Linter. There could be no reason why she should give it up, but very many why she should not do so. Circumstanced as Mr. Kennedy had been, with no one nearer to him than a first cousin, with a property purchased with money saved by his father—a property to which no cousin could by inheritance have any claim—he could not have done better with it than to leave it to his widow in

fault of any issue of his own. Then the lawyer explained that, were she to give it up, the world would of course say that she had done so from a feeling of her own unworthiness. "Why should I feel myself to be unworthy?" she asked. The lawyer smiled, and told her that of course she would retain Lough Linter.

Then, at her request, he was taken to the Earl's room and there repeated the good news. Lady Laura preferred not to hear her father's first exultations. But while this was being done she also exulted. Might it not still be possible that there should be before her a happy evening to her days, and that she might stand once more beside the Falls of Linter, contented, hopeful, nay, almost glorious, with her hand in his to whom she had once refused her own on that very spot?

CHAPTER LIII.

NONE BUT THE BRAVE DESERVE THE FAIR.

THOUGH Mr. Robert Kennedy was lying dead at Lough Linter, and though Phineas Finn, a member of Parliament, was in prison, accused of murdering another member of Parliament, still the world went on with its old ways, down in the neighborhood of Harrington Hall and Spoon Hall as at other places. The hunting with the Brake hounds was now over for the season—had, indeed, been brought to an auspicious end three weeks since—and such gentlemen as Thomas Spooner had time on their hands to look about their other concerns. When a man hunts five days a week, regardless of distances, and devotes a due proportion of his energies to the necessary circumstances of hunting, the preservation of foxes, the maintenance of good humor with the farmers, the proper compensation for poultry really killed by four-legged favorites, the growth and arrangement of coverts, the lying-in of vixens, and the subsequent guardianship of nurseries, the persecution of enemies, and the warm protection of friends—when he follows the sport, accomplishing all the concomitant duties of a true sportsman, he has not much time left for any thing. Such a one as Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall finds that his off day is occupied from breakfast to dinner with grooms, keepers, old women with turkeys' heads, and gentlemen in velveteens with information about wires and unknown earths. His letters fall naturally to the Sunday afternoon, and are hardly written before sleep overpowers him. Many a large fortune has been made with less of true devotion to the work than is given to hunting by so genuine a sportsman as Mr. Spooner.

Our friend had some inkling of this himself, and felt that many of the less important affairs of his life were neglected because he was so true to the one great object of his existence. He had wisely endeavored to prevent wreck and ruin among the affairs of Spoon Hall, and had thoroughly succeeded by joining his cousin Ned with himself in the administration of his estate; but there were things which Ned, with all his zeal and all his cleverness, could not do for him. He was conscious that, had he been as remiss in the matter of hunting as that hard-riding but otherwise idle young scamp, Gerard Maule, he might have succeeded much better than he had hitherto done

with Adelaide Palliser. "Hanging about and philandering—that's what they want," he said to his cousin Ned.

"I suppose it is," said Ned. "I was fond of a girl once myself, and I hung about a good deal. But we hadn't sixpence between us."

"That was Polly Maxwell. I remember. You behaved very badly then."

"Very badly, Tom; about as bad as a man could behave; and she was as bad. I loved her with all my heart, and I told her so. And she told me the same. There never was any thing worse. We had just nothing between us, and nobody to give us any thing."

"It don't pay, does it, Ned, that kind of thing?"

"It doesn't pay at all. I wouldn't give her up, nor she me. She was about as pretty a girl as I remember to have seen."

"I suppose you were a decent-looking fellow in those days yourself. They say so, but I never quite believed it."

"There wasn't much in that," said Ned. "Girls don't want a man to be good-looking, but that he should speak up and not be afraid of them. There were lots of fellows came after her. You remember Blinks, of the Carabineers? He was full of money, and he asked her three times. She is an old maid to this day, and is living as companion to some crusty, crotchety countess."

"I think you did behave badly, Ned. Why didn't you set her free?"

"Of course I behaved badly. And why didn't she set me free, if you come to that? I might have found a female Blinks of my own, only for her. I wonder whether it will come against us when we die, and whether we shall be brought up together to receive punishment."

"Not if you repent, I suppose," said Tom Spooner, very seriously.

"I sometimes ask myself whether she has repented. I made her swear that she'd never give me up. She might have broken her word a score of times, and I wish she had."

"I think she was a fool, Ned."

"Of course she was a fool. She knows that now, I dare say. And perhaps she has repented. Do you mean to try it again with that girl at Harrington Hall?"

Mr. Thomas Spooner did mean to try it again with the girl at Harrington Hall. He had never quite trusted the note which he had got from his friend Chiltern, and had made up his mind that, to say the least of it, there had been very little friendship shown in the letter. Had Chiltern meant to have stood to him "like a brick," as he ought to have stood by his right-hand man in the Brake country, at any rate a fair chance might have been given him. "Where the devil would he be in such a country as this without me," Tom had said to his cousin, "not knowing a soul, and with all the shooting men against him? I might have had the hounds myself, and might have 'em now if I cared to take them. It's not standing by a fellow as he ought to do. He writes to me, by George! just as he might do to some fellow who never had a fox about his place."

"I suppose he didn't put the two things together," said Ned Spooner.

"I hate a fellow that can't put two things together. If I stand to you, you've a right to stand

to me. That's what you mean by putting two things together. I mean to have another shy at her. She has quarreled with that fellow Maule altogether. I've learned that from the gardener's girl at Harrington."

Yes, he would make another attempt. All history, all romance, all poetry, and all prose taught him that perseverance in love was generally crowned with success; that true love rarely was crowned with success except by perseverance. Such a simple little tale of boy's passion as that told him by his cousin had no attraction for him. A wife would hardly be worth having and worth keeping so won. And all proverbs were on his side. "None but the brave deserve the fair," said his cousin. "I shall stick to it," said Tom Spooner. "Labor omnia vincit," said his cousin. But what should be his next step? Gerard Maule had been sent away with a flea in his ear—so, at least, Mr. Spooner asserted, and expressed an undoubting opinion that this imperative dismissal had come from the fact that Gerard Maule, when "put through his facings" about income, was not able to "show the money." "She's not one of your Polly Maxwells, Ned." Ned said that he supposed she was not one of that sort. "Heaven knows I couldn't show the money," said Ned, "but that didn't make her any wiser." Then Tom gave it as his opinion that Miss Palliser was one of those young women who won't go any where without having every thing about them. "She could have her own carriage with me, and her own horses, and her own maid, and every thing."

"Her own way into the bargain," said Ned. Whereupon Tom Spooner winked, and suggested that that might be as things turned out after the marriage. He was quite willing to run chance for that.

But how was he to get at her to prosecute his suit? As to writing to her direct, he didn't much believe in that. "It looks as though one were afraid of her, you know, which I ain't the least. I stood up to her before, and I wasn't a bit more nervous than I am at this moment. Were you nervous in that affair with Miss Maxwell?"

"Ah, it's a long time ago. There wasn't much nervousness there."

"A sort of milkmaid affair?"

"Just that."

"That is different, you know. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll just drive slap over to Harrington and chance it. I'll take the two bays in the phaeton. Who's afraid?"

"There's nothing to be afraid of," said Ned.

"Old Chiltern is such a d—d cantankerous fellow, and perhaps Lady C. may say that I oughtn't to have taken advantage of her absence. But what's the odds? If she takes me, there'll be an end of it. If she don't, they can't eat me."

"The only thing is whether they'll let you in."

"I'll try, at any rate," said Tom, "and you shall go with me. You won't mind trotting about the ground while I'm carrying on the war inside? I'll take the two bays, and Dick Farren behind, and I don't think there's a prettier got-up trap in the county. We'll go to-morrow."

And on the morrow they did start, having heard on that very morning of the arrest of Phineas Finn. "By George, don't it feel odd!" said Tom, just as they started—"a fellow that we used to know down here, having him out hunting and

all that, and now he's—a murderer! Isn't it a coincidence?"

"It startles one," said Ned.

"That's what I mean. It's such a strange thing that it should be the man we know ourselves. These things always are happening to me. Do you remember when poor Fred Fellows got his bad fall and died the next year? You weren't here then."

"I've heard you speak of it."

"I was in the very same field, and should have been the man to pick him up, only the hounds had just turned to the left. It's very odd that these coincidences always are happening to some men and never do happen to others. It makes one feel that he's marked out, you know."

"I hope you'll be marked out by victory to-day."

"Well—yes. That's more important just now than Mr. Bonteen's murder. Do you know, I wish you'd drive. These horses are pulling, and I don't want to be all in a flurry when I get to Harrington." Now it was a fact very well known to all concerned with Spoon Hall that there was nothing as to which the Squire was so jealous as the driving of his own horses. He would never trust the reins to a friend, and even Ned had hardly ever been allowed the honor of the whip when sitting with his cousin. "I'm apt to get red in the face when I'm overheated," said Tom, as he made himself comfortable and easy in the left-hand seat.

There were not many more words spoken during the journey. The lover was probably justified in feeling some trepidation. He had been quite correct in suggesting that the matter between him and Miss Palliser bore no resemblance at all to that old affair between his cousin Ned and Polly Maxwell. There had been as little trepidation as money in that case—simply love and kisses, parting, despair, and a broken heart. Here things were more august. There was plenty of money, and let affairs go as they might, there would be no broken heart. But that perseverance in love of which Mr. Spooner intended to make himself so bright an example does require some courage. The Adelaide Pallisers of the world have a way of making themselves uncommonly unpleasant to a man when they refuse him for the third or fourth time. They allow themselves sometimes to express a contempt which is almost akin to disgust, and to speak to a lover as though he were no better than a footman. And then the lover is bound to bear it all, and, when he has borne it, finds it so very difficult to get out of the room. Mr. Spooner had some idea of all this as his cousin drove him up to the door, at what he then thought a very fast pace. "D—it all," he said, "you needn't have brought them up so confoundedly hot." But it was not of the horses that he was really thinking, but of the color of his own nose. There was something working within him which had flurried him, in spite of the tranquillity of his idle seat.

Not the less did he spring out of the phaeton with a quite youthful jump. It was well that every one about Harrington Hall should know how alert he was on his legs; a little weather-beaten about the face he might be; but he could get in and out of his saddle as quickly as Gerard Maule even yet; and for a short distance would run

Gerard Maule for a ten-pound note. He dashed briskly up to the door, and rang the bell as though he feared neither Adelaide nor Lord Chiltern any more than he did his own servants at Spoon Hall. "Was Miss Palliser at home?" The maid-servant who opened the door told him that Miss Palliser was at home, with a celerity which he certainly had not expected. The male members of the establishment were probably sporting themselves in the absence of their master and mistress, and Adelaide Palliser was thus left to the insufficient guardianship of young women who were altogether without discretion. "Yes, Sir; Miss Palliser is at home." So said the indiscreet female, and Mr. Spooner was for the moment confounded by his own success. He had hardly told himself what reception he had expected, or whether, in the event of the servant informing him at the front-door that the young lady was not at home, he would make any further immediate effort to prolong the siege so as to force an entry; but now, when he had carried the very fortress by surprise, his heart almost misgave him. He certainly had not thought, when he descended from his chariot like a young Bacchus in quest of his Ariadne, that he should so soon be enabled to repeat the tale of his love. But there he was, confronted with Ariadne before he had had a moment to shake his godlike locks or arrange the divinity of his thoughts.

"Mr. Spooner," said the maid, opening the door. "Oh dear!" exclaimed Ariadne, feeling the vainness of her wish to fly from the god. "You know, Mary, that Lady Chiltern is up in London."

"But he didn't ask for Lady Chiltern, miss." Then there was a pause, during which the maid-servant managed to shut the door and to escape.

"Lord Chiltern is up in London," said Miss Palliser, rising from her chair, "and Lady Chiltern is with him. They will be at home, I think, to-morrow, but I am not quite sure." She looked at him rather as Diana might have looked at poor Orion than as any Ariadne at any Bacchus; and for a moment Mr. Spooner felt that the pale chilliness of the moon was entering in upon his very heart and freezing the blood in his veins.

"Miss Palliser—" he began.

But Adelaide was for the moment an unmitigated Diana. "Mr. Spooner," she said, "I can not for an instant suppose that you wish to say any thing to me."

"But I do," said he, laying his hand upon his heart.

"Then I must declare that—that—that you ought not to. And I hope you won't. Lady Chiltern is not in the house, and I think that—that you ought to go away. I do, indeed."

But Mr. Spooner, though the interview had been commenced with unexpected and almost painful suddenness, was too much a man to be driven off by the first angry word. He remembered that this Diana was but mortal; and he remembered, too, that though he had entered in upon her privacy, he had done so in a manner recognized by the world as lawful. There was no reason why he should allow himself to be congealed, or even banished out of the grotto of the nymph, without speaking a word on his own behalf. Were he to fly now, he must fly forever; whereas, if he fought now—fought well, even though not successfully at the moment—he

might fight again. While Miss Palliser was scowling at him he resolved upon fighting. "Miss Palliser," he said, "I did not come to see Lady Chiltern; I came to see you. And now that I have been happy enough to find you, I hope you will listen to me for a minute. I sha'n't do you any harm."

"I'm not afraid of any harm, but I can not think that you have any thing to say that can do any body any good." She sat down, however, and so far yielded. "Of course I can not make you go away, Mr. Spooner; but I should have thought, when I asked you—"

Mr. Spooner also seated himself, and uttered a long sigh. Making love to a sweet, soft, blushing, willing, though silent girl is a pleasant employment, but the task of declaring love to a stony-hearted, obdurate, ill-conditioned Diana is very disagreeable for any gentleman. And it is the more so when the gentleman really loves, or thinks that he loves, his Diana. Mr. Spooner did believe himself to be verily in love. Having sighed, he began: "Miss Palliser, this opportunity of declaring to you the state of my heart is too valuable to allow me to give it up without—without using it."

"It can't be of any use."

"Oh, Miss Palliser—if you knew my feelings!"

"But I know my own."

"They may change, Miss Palliser."

"No, they can't."

"Don't say that, Miss Palliser."

"But I do say it. I say it over and over again. I don't know what any gentleman can gain by persecuting a lady. You oughtn't to have been shown up here at all."

Mr. Spooner knew well that women have been won even at the tenth time of asking, and this with him was only the third. "I think if you knew my heart—" he commenced.

"I don't want to know your heart."

"You might listen to a man, at any rate."

"I don't want to listen. It can't do any good. I only want you to leave me alone, and go away."

"I don't know what you take me for," said Mr. Spooner, beginning to wax angry.

"I haven't taken you for any thing at all. This is very disagreeable and very foolish. A lady has a right to know her own mind, and she has a right not to be persecuted." She would have referred to Lord Chiltern's letter had not all the hopes of her heart been so terribly crushed since that letter had been written. In it he had openly declared that she was already engaged to be married to Mr. Maule, thinking that he would thus put an end to Mr. Spooner's little adventure. But since the writing of Lord Chiltern's letter that unfortunate reference had been made to Boulogne, and every particle of her happiness had been destroyed. She was a miserable, blighted young woman, who had quarreled irretrievably with her lover, feeling greatly angry with herself because she had made the quarrel, and yet conscious that her own self-respect had demanded the quarrel. She was full of regret, declaring to herself from morning to night that, in spite of all his manifest wickedness in having talked of Boulogne, she never could care at all for any other man. And now there was this aggravation to her misery—this horrid suitor, who disgraced her by making

those around her suppose it to be possible that she should ever accept him; who had probably heard of her quarrel, and had been mean enough to suppose that therefore there might be a chance for himself! She did despise him, and wanted him to understand that she despised him.

"I believe I am in a condition to offer my hand and fortune to any young lady without impropriety," said Mr. Spooner.

"I don't know any thing about your condition."

"But I will tell you every thing."

"I don't want to know any thing about it."

"I have an estate of—"

"I don't want to know about your estate. I won't hear about your estate. It can be nothing to me."

"It is generally considered to be a matter of some importance."

"It is of no importance to me at all, Mr. Spooner; and I won't hear any thing about it. If all the parish belonged to you, it would not make any difference."

"All the parish does belong to me, and nearly all the next," replied Mr. Spooner, with great dignity.

"Then you'd better find some lady who would like to have two parishes. They haven't any weight with me at all." At that moment she told herself how much she would prefer even Boulogne to Mr. Spooner's two parishes.

"What is it that you find so wrong about me?" asked the unhappy suitor.

Adelaide looked at him, and longed to tell him that his nose was red. And though she would not quite do that, she could not bring herself to spare him. What right had he to come to her—a nasty, red-nosed old man, who knew nothing about any thing but foxes and horses—to her, who had never given him the encouragement of a single smile? She could not allude to his nose, but in regard to his other defects she would not spare him.

"Our tastes are not the same, Mr. Spooner."

"You are very fond of hunting."

"And our ages are not the same."

"I always thought that there should be a difference of age," said Mr. Spooner, becoming very red.

"And—and—and—it's altogether quite preposterous. I don't believe that you can really think it yourself."

"But I do."

"Then you must unthink it. And, indeed, Mr. Spooner, since you drive me to say so, I consider it to be very unmanly of you, after what Lord Chiltern told you in his letter."

"But I believe that is all over."

Then her anger flashed up very high. "And if you do believe it, what a mean man you must be to come to me when you must know how miserable I am, and to think that I should be driven to accept you after losing him! You never could have been any thing to me. If you wanted to get married at all, you should have done it before I was born." This was hard upon the man, as at that time he could not have been much more than twenty. "But you don't know any thing of the difference in people if you think that any girl would look at you, after having been—loved by Mr. Maule. Now as you do not seem inclined to go away, I shall leave you." So saying, she walked away with stately step out of the room,

leaving the door open behind her to facilitate her escape.

She had certainly been very rude to him, and had treated him very badly. Of that he was sure. He had conferred upon her what is commonly called the highest compliment which a gentleman can pay to a lady, and she had insulted him—had doubly insulted him. She had referred to his age, greatly exaggerating his misfortune in that respect; and she had compared him to that poor beggar Maule in language most offensive. When she left him, he put his hand beneath his waistcoat, and turned with an air almost majestic toward the window. But in an instant he remembered that there was nobody there to see how he bore his punishment, and he sank down into human nature. "Damnation!" he said, as he put his hands into his trowsers pockets.

Slowly he made his way down into the hall, and slowly he opened for himself the front-door, and escaped from the house on to the gravel drive. There he found his cousin Ned still seated in the phaeton, and slowly driving round the circle in front of the hall door. The Squire succeeded in gaining such command over his own gait and countenance that his cousin divined nothing of the truth as he clambered up into his seat. But he soon showed his temper. "What the devil have you got the reins in this way for?"

"The reins are all right," said Ned.

"No, they ain't; they're all wrong." And then he drove down the avenue to Spoon Hall as quickly as he could make the horses trot.

"Did you see her?" said Ned, as soon as they were beyond the gates.

"See your grandmother!"

"Do you mean to say that I'm not to ask?"

"There's nothing I hate so much as a fellow that's always asking questions," said Tom Spooner. "There are some men so d—d thick-headed that they never know when they ought to hold their tongue."

For a minute or two Ned bore the reproof in silence, and then he spoke. "If you are unhappy, Tom, I can bear a good deal; but don't overdo it, unless you want me to leave you."

"She's the d—t vixen that ever had a tongue in her head," said Tom Spooner, lifting his whip and striking the poor off horse in his agony. Then Ned forgave him.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE DUCHESS TAKES COUNSEL.

PHINEAS FINN, when he had been thrice remanded before the Bow Street magistrate, and four times examined, was at last committed to be tried for the murder of Mr. Bonteen. This took place on Wednesday, May 19, a fortnight after the murder. But during those fourteen days little was learned, or even surmised, by the police, in addition to the circumstances which had transpired at once. Indeed the delay, slight as it was, had arisen from a desire to find evidence that might affect Mr. Emilius, rather than with a view to strengthen that which did affect Phineas Finn. But no circumstance could be found tending in any way to add to the suspicion to which the converted Jew was made subject by his own character, and by the supposition that he

would have been glad to get rid of Mr. Bonteen. He did not even attempt to run away, for which attempt certain pseudo-facilities were put in his way by police ingenuity. But Mr. Emilius stood his ground and courted inquiry. Mr. Bonteen had been to him, he said, a very bitter, unjust, and cruel enemy. Mr. Bonteen had endeavored to rob him of his dearest wife; had charged him with bigamy; had got up false evidence in the hope of ruining him. He had undoubtedly hated Mr. Bonteen, and might probably have said so. But, as it happened, through God's mercy, he was enabled to prove that he could not possibly have been at the scene of the murder when the murder was committed. During that hour of the night he had been in his own bed; and, had he been out, could not have re-entered the house without calling up the inmates. But, independently of his alibi, Mealyus was able to rely on the absolute absence of any evidence against him. No gray coat could be traced to his hands even for an hour. His height was very much less than that attributed by Lord Fawn to the man whom he had seen hurrying to the spot. No weapon was found in his possession by which the deed could have been done. Inquiry was made as to the purchase of life-preservers, and the reverend gentleman was taken to half a dozen shops at which such instruments had lately been sold. But there had been a run upon life-preservers, in consequence of recommendations as to their use given by certain newspapers, and it was found as impossible to trace one particular purchase as it would be that of a loaf of bread. At none of the half-dozen shops to which he was taken was Mr. Emilius remembered; and then all further inquiry in that direction was abandoned, and Mr. Emilius was set at liberty. "I forgive my persecutors from the bottom of my heart," he said; "but God will requite it to them."

In the mean time Phineas was taken to Newgate, and was there confined, almost with the glory and attendance of a state prisoner. This was no common murder, and no common murderer. Nor were they who interested themselves in the matter the ordinary Rag, Tag, and Bobtail of the people—the mere wives and children, or perhaps fathers and mothers, or brothers and sisters of the slayer or slain. Dukes and earls, duchesses and countesses, members of the Cabinet, great statesmen, judges, bishops, and Queen's counselors, beautiful women, and women of highest fashion, seemed for a while to think of but little else than the fate of Mr. Bonteen and the fate of Phineas Finn. People became intimately acquainted with each other through similar sympathies in this matter, who had never before spoken or seen each other. On the day after the full committal of the man Mr. Low received a most courteous letter from the Duchess of Omnium, begging him to call in Carlton Terrace if his engagements would permit him to do so. The Duchess had heard that Mr. Low was devoting all his energies to the protection of Phineas Finn, and as a certain friend of hers, a lady, was doing the same, she was anxious to bring them together. Indeed, she herself was equally prepared to devote her energies for the present to the same object. She had declared to all her friends, especially to her husband and to the Duke of St. Bungay, her absolute conviction of the innocence of the accused man, and had called upon them to

defend him. "My dear," said the elder Duke, "I do not think that in my time any innocent man has ever lost his life upon the scaffold."

"Is that a reason why our friend should be the first instance?" said the Duchess.

"He must be tried according to the laws of his country," said the younger Duke.

"Plantagenet, you always speak as if every thing were perfect, whereas you know very well that every thing is imperfect. If that man is— is hung, I—"

"Glencora," said her husband, "do not connect yourself with the fate of a stranger from any misdirected enthusiasm."

"I do connect myself. If that man be hung—I shall go into mourning for him. You had better look to it."

Mr. Low obeyed the summons, and called on the Duchess. But, in truth, the invitation had been planned by Madame Goesler, who was present when the lawyer, about five o'clock in the afternoon, was shown into the presence of the Duchess. Tea was immediately ordered, and Mr. Low was almost embraced. He was introduced to Madame Goesler, of whom he did not remember that he had before heard the name, and was at once given to understand that the fate of Phineas was now in question. "We know so well," said the Duchess, "how true you are to him."

"He is an old friend of mine," said the lawyer, "and I can not believe him to have been guilty of a murder."

"Guilty! He is no more guilty than I am. We are as sure of that as we are of the sun. We know that he is innocent; do we not, Madame Goesler? And we, too, are very dear friends of his—that is, I am."

"And so am I," said Madame Goesler, in a voice very low and sweet, but yet so energetic as to make Mr. Low almost rivet his attention upon her.

"You must understand, Mr. Low, that Mr. Finn is a man horribly hated by certain enemies. That wretched Mr. Bonteen hated his very name. But there are other people who think very differently of him. He must be saved."

"Indeed I hope he may," said Mr. Low.

"We wanted to see you for ever so many reasons. Of course you understand that—that any sum of money can be spent that the case may want."

"Nothing will be spared on that account, certainly," said the lawyer.

"But money will do a great many things. We would send all round the world if we could get evidence against that other man—Lady Eustace's husband, you know."

"Can any good be done by sending all round the world?"

"He went back to his own home not long ago—in Poland, I think," said Madame Goesler. "Perhaps he got the instrument there, and brought it with him." Mr. Low shook his head. "Of course we are very ignorant; but it would be a pity that every thing should not be tried."

"He might have got in and out of the window, you know," said the Duchess. Still Mr. Low shook his head. "I believe things can always be found out, if only you take trouble enough. And trouble means money, does it not? We wouldn't mind how many thousand pounds it cost; would we, Marie?"