

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?"

"I fear that the spending of thousands can do no good," said Mr. Low.

"But something must be done. You don't mean to say that Mr. Finn is to be hung because Lord Fawn says that he saw a man running along the street in a gray coat?"

"Certainly not."

"There is nothing else against him; nobody else saw him."

"If there be nothing else against him, he will be acquitted."

"You think, then," said Madame Goesler, "that there will be no use in tracing what the man Mealyus did when he was out of England. He might have bought a gray coat then, and have hidden it till this night, and then have thrown it away." Mr. Low listened to her with close attention, but again shook his head. "If it could be shown that the man had a gray coat at that time, it would certainly weaken the effect of Mr. Finn's gray coat."

"And if he bought a bludgeon there, it would weaken the effect of Mr. Finn's bludgeon. And if he bought rope to make a ladder, it would show that he had got out. It was a dark night, you know, and nobody would have seen it. We have been talking it all over, Mr. Low, and we really think you ought to send somebody."

"I will mention what you say to the gentlemen who are employed on Mr. Finn's defense."

"But will not you be employed?" Then Mr. Low explained that the gentlemen to whom he referred were the attorneys who would get up the case on their friend's behalf, and that as he himself practiced in the Courts of Equity only, he could not defend Mr. Finn on his trial.

"He must have the very best men," said the Duchess.

"He must have good men, certainly."

"And a great many. Couldn't we get Sir Gregory Grogam?" Mr. Low shook his head. "I know very well that if you get men who are really, really swells—for that is what it is, Mr. Low—and pay them well enough, and so make it really an important thing, they can browbeat any judge and hoodwink any jury. I dare say it is very dreadful to say so, Mr. Low; but, nevertheless, I believe it, and as this man is certainly innocent it ought to be done. I dare say it's very shocking, but I do think that twenty thousand pounds spent among the lawyers would get him off."

"I hope we can get him off without expending twenty thousand pounds, Duchess."

"But you can have the money and welcome; can not he, Madame Goesler?"

"He could have double that, if double were necessary."

"I would fill the court with lawyers for him," continued the Duchess. "I would cross-examine the witnesses off their legs. I would rake up every wicked thing that horrid Jew has done since he was born. I would make witnesses speak. I would give a carriage and pair of horses to every one of the jurors' wives, if that would do any good. You may shake your head, Mr. Low, but I would. And I'd carry Lord Fawn off to the antipodes, too; and I shouldn't care if you left him there. I know that this man is innocent, and I'd do any thing to save him. A woman, I know, can't do much; but she has this privilege, that she can speak out what men only think. I'd

give them two carriages and two pairs of horses apiece, if I could do it that way."

Mr. Low did his best to explain to the Duchess that the desired object could hardly be effected after the fashion she proposed, and he endeavored to persuade her that justice was sure to be done in an English court of law. "Then why are people so very anxious to get this lawyer or that to bamboozle the witnesses?" said the Duchess. Mr. Low declared it to be his opinion that the poorest man in England was not more likely to be hung for a murder he had not committed than the richest. "Then why would you, if you were accused, have ever so many lawyers to defend you?" Mr. Low went on to explain. "The more money you spend," said the Duchess, "the more fuss you make. And the longer a trial is about and the greater the interest, the more chance a man has to escape. If a man is tried for three days, you always think he'll get off; but if it lasts ten minutes, he is sure to be convicted and hung. I'd have Mr. Finn's trial made so long that they never could convict him. I'd tire out all the judges and juries in London. If you get lawyers enough, they may speak forever." Mr. Low endeavored to explain that this might prejudice the prisoner. "And I'd examine every member of the House of Commons, and all the Cabinet, and all their wives. I'd ask them all what Mr. Bon-teen had been saying. I'd do it in such a way as a trial was never done before; and I'd take care that they should know what was coming."

"And if he were convicted afterward?"

"I'd buy up the Home Secretary. It's very horrid to say so, of course, Mr. Low; and I dare say there is nothing wrong ever done in Chancery. But I know what Cabinet Ministers are. If they could get a majority by granting a pardon, they'd do it quick enough."

"You are speaking of a Liberal Government, of course, Duchess."

"There isn't twopence to choose between them in that respect. Just at this moment I believe Mr. Finn is the most popular member of the House of Commons; and I'd bring all that to bear. You can't but know that if every thing of that kind is done it will have an effect. I believe you could make him so popular that the people would pull down the prison rather than have him hung—so that a jury would not dare to say he was guilty."

"Would that be justice, ladies?" asked the just man.

"It would be success, Mr. Low, which is a great deal the better thing of the two."

"If Mr. Finn were found guilty, I could not in my heart believe that that would be justice," said Madame Goesler.

Mr. Low did his best to make them understand that the plan of pulling down Newgate by the instrumentality of Phineas Finn's popularity, or of buying up the Home Secretary by threats of Parliamentary defection, would hardly answer their purpose. He would, he assured them, suggest to the attorneys employed the idea of searching for evidence against the man Mealyus in his own country, and would certainly take care that nothing was omitted from want of means. "You had better let us put a check in your hands," said the Duchess. But to this he would not assent. He did admit that it would be well to leave no stone unturned, and that the turning of

such stones must cost money; but the money, he said, would be forth-coming. "He's not a rich man himself," said the Duchess. Mr. Low assured her that if money were really wanting he would ask for it. "And now," said the Duchess, "there is one other thing that we want. Can we see him?"

"You yourself?"

"Yes; I myself, and Madame Goesler. You look as if it would be very wicked." Mr. Low thought that it would be wicked; that the Duke would not like it; and that such a visit would occasion ill-natured remarks. "People do visit him, I suppose. He's not locked up like a criminal."

"I visit him," said Mr. Low, "and one or two other friends have done so. Lord Chiltern has been with him, and Mr. Erle."

"Has no lady seen him?" asked the Duchess.

"Not to my knowledge."

"Then it's time some lady should do so. I suppose we could be admitted. If we were his sisters they'd let us in."

"You must excuse me, Duchess, but—"

"Of course I will excuse you. But what?"

"You are not his sisters."

"If I were engaged to him, to be his wife?" said Madame Goesler, standing up. "I am not so. There is nothing of that kind. You must not misunderstand me. But if I were?"

"On that plea I presume you could be admitted."

"Why not as a friend? Lord Chiltern is admitted as his friend."

"Because of the prudery of a prison," said the Duchess. "All things are wrong to the lookers after wickedness, my dear. If it would comfort him to see us, why should he not have that comfort?"

"Would you have gone to him in his own lodgings?" asked Mr. Low.

"I would, if he'd been ill," said Madame Goesler.

"Madam," said Mr. Low, speaking with a gravity which for a moment had its effect even upon the Duchess of Omnium, "I think, at any rate, that if you visit Mr. Finn in prison, you should do so through the instrumentality of his Grace, your husband."

"Of course you suspect me of all manner of evil."

"I suspect nothing; but I am sure that it should be so."

"It shall be so," said the Duchess. "Thank you, Sir. We are much obliged to you for your wise counsel."

"I am obliged to you," said Madame Goesler, "because I know that you have his safety at heart."

"And so am I," said the Duchess, relenting, and giving him her hand. "We are really ever so much obliged to you. You don't quite understand about the Duke; and how should you? I never do any thing without telling him, but he hasn't time to attend to things."

"I hope I have not offended you?"

"Oh dear, no. You can't offend me unless you mean it. Good-by—and remember to have a great many lawyers, and all with new wigs; and let them all get in a great rage that any body should suppose it possible that Mr. Finn is a murderer. I'm sure I am. Good-by, Mr. Low."

"You'll never be able to get to him," said the Duchess, as soon as they were alone.

"I suppose not."

"And what good could you do? Of course I'd go with you if we could get in; but what would be the use?"

"To let him know that people do not think him guilty."

"Mr. Low will tell him that. I suppose, too, we can write to him. Would you mind writing?"

"I would rather go."

"You might as well tell the truth, when you are about it. You are breaking your heart for him."

"If he were to be condemned, and—executed, I should break my heart. I could never appear bright before the world again."

"That is just what I told Plantagenet. I said I would go into mourning."

"And I should really mourn. And yet were he free to-morrow, he would be no more to me than any other friend."

"Do you mean you would not marry him?"

"No; I would not. Nor would he ask me. I will tell you what will be his lot in life, if he escapes from the present danger."

"Of course he will escape. They don't really hang innocent men."

"Then he will become the husband of Lady Laura Kennedy."

"Poor fellow! If I believed that, I should think it cruel to help him to escape from Newgate."

## CHAPTER LV.

## PHINEAS IN PRISON.

PHINEAS FINN himself, during the fortnight in which he was carried backward and forward between his prison and the Bow Street Police Office, was able to maintain some outward show of manly dignity—as though he felt that the terrible accusation and great material inconvenience to which he was subjected were only, and could only be, temporary in their nature, and that the truth would soon prevail. During this period he had friends constantly with him—either Mr. Low, or Lord Chiltern, or Barrington Erle, or his landlord, Mr. Bunce, who, in these days, was very true to him. And he was very frequently visited by the attorney, Mr. Wickerby, who had been expressly recommended to him for this occasion. If any body could be counted upon to see him through his difficulty, it was Wickerby. But the company of Mr. Wickerby was not pleasant to him, because, as far as he could judge, Mr. Wickerby did not believe in his innocence. Mr. Wickerby was willing to do his best for him; was, so to speak, moving heaven and earth on his behalf; was fully conscious that this case was a great affair, and in no respect similar to those which were constantly placed in his hands; but there never fell from him a sympathetic expression of assurance of his client's absolute freedom from all taint of guilt in the matter. From day to day, and ten times a day, Phineas would express his indignant surprise that any one should think it possible that he had done this deed, but to all these expressions Mr. Wickerby would make no answer whatever. At last Phineas asked him the direct question. "I never suspect

any body of any thing," said Mr. Wickerby. "Do you believe in my innocence?" demanded Phineas. "Every body is entitled to be believed innocent till he has been proved to be guilty," said Mr. Wickerby. Then Phineas appealed to his friend Mr. Low, asking whether he might not be allowed to employ some lawyer whose feelings would be more in unison with his own. But Mr. Low adjured him to make no change. Mr. Wickerby understood the work, and was a most zealous man. His client was entitled to his services, but to nothing more than his services. And so Mr. Wickerby carried on the work, fully believing that Phineas Finn had in truth murdered Mr. Bonteen.

But the prisoner was not without sympathy and confidence. Mr. Low, Lord Chiltern, and Lady Chiltern, who, on one occasion, came to visit him with her husband, entertained no doubts prejudicial to his honor. They told him perhaps almost more than was quite true of the feelings of the world in his favor. He heard of the friendship and faith of the Duchess of Omnium, of Madame Goesler, and of Lady Laura Kennedy, hearing also that Lady Laura was now a widow. And then, at length, his two sisters came over to him from Ireland, and wept and sobbed, and fell into hysterics in his presence. They were sure that he was innocent, as was every one, they said, throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. And Mrs. Bunce, who came to see Phineas in his prison, swore that she would tear the judge from his bench if he did not at once pronounce a verdict in favor of her darling without waiting for any nonsense of a jury. And Bunce, her husband, having convinced himself that his lodger had not committed the murder, was zealous in another way, taking delight in the case, and proving that no jury could find a verdict of guilty.

During that week Phineas, buoyed up by the sympathy of his friends, and in some measure supported by the excitement of the occasion, carried himself well, and bore bravely the terrible misfortune to which he had been subjected by untoward circumstances. But when the magistrate fully committed him, giving the first public decision on the matter from the bench, declaring to the world at large that on the evidence as given, *prima facie*, he, Phineas Finn, must be regarded as the murderer of Mr. Bonteen, our hero's courage almost gave way. If such was now the judicial opinion of the magistrate, how could he expect a different verdict from a jury in two months' time, when he would be tried before a final court? As far as he could understand, nothing more could be learned on the matter. All the facts were known that could be known—as far as he, or rather his friends on his behalf, were able to search for facts. It seemed to him that there was no tittle whatever of evidence against him. He had walked straight home from his club with the life-preserver in his pocket, and had never turned to the right or to the left. Till he found himself committed, he would not believe that any serious and prolonged impediment could be thrown in the way of his liberty. He would not believe that a man altogether innocent could be in danger of the gallows on a false accusation. It had seemed to him that the police had kept their hold on him with a rabid ferocity, straining every point with the view of showing that it was possible that he should have been the murderer.

Every policeman who had been near him, carrying him backward and forward from his prison, or giving evidence as to the circumstances of the locality and of his walk home on that fatal night, had seemed to him to be an enemy. But he had looked for impartiality from the magistrate, and now the magistrate had failed him. He had seen in court the faces of men well known to him—men known in the world—with whom he had been on pleasant terms in Parliament, who had sat upon the bench while he was standing as a culprit between two constables; and they who had been his familiar friends had appeared at once to have been removed from him by some unmeasurable distance. But all that he had, as it were, discounted, believing that a few hours—at the very longest a few days—would remove the distance; but now he was sent back to his prison, there to await his trial for the murder.

And it seemed to him that his committal startled no one but himself. Could it be that even his dearest friends thought it possible that he had been guilty? When that day came, and he was taken back to Newgate on his last journey there from Bow Street, Lord Chiltern had returned for a while to Harrington Hall, having promised that he would be back in London as soon as his business would permit; but Mr. Low came to him almost immediately to his prison room. "This is a pleasant state of things," said Phineas, with a forced laugh. But as he laughed he also sobbed, with a low, irrepressible, convulsive movement in his throat.

"Phineas, the time has come in which you must show yourself to be a man."

"A man! Oh yes, I can be a man. A murderer, you mean. I shall have to be—hung, I suppose."

"May God in His mercy forbid!"

"No; not in His mercy; in His justice. There can be no need for mercy here—not even from Heaven. When they take my life, may He forgive my sins through the merits of my Saviour! But for this there can be no mercy. Why do you not speak? Do you mean to say that I am guilty?"

"I am sure that you are innocent."

"And yet, look here. What more can be done to prove it than has been done? That blundering fool will swear my life away." Then he threw himself on his bed, and gave way to his sobs.

That evening he was alone—as, indeed, most of his evenings had been spent, and the minutes were minutes of agony to him. The external circumstances of his position were as comfortable as circumstances would allow. He had a room to himself looking out through heavy iron bars into one of the courts of the prison. The chamber was carpeted, and was furnished with bed and chairs and two tables. Books were allowed him as he pleased, and pen and ink. It was May, and no fire was necessary. At certain periods of the day he could walk alone in the court below, the restriction on such liberty being that at other certain hours the place was wanted for other prisoners. As far as he knew, no friend who called was denied to him, though he was by no means certain that his privilege in that respect would not be curtailed now that he had been committed for trial. His food had been plentiful and well cooked, and even luxuries, such as fish and wine

and fruit, had been supplied to him. That the fruit had come from the hot-houses of the Duchess of Omnium, and the wine from Mr. Low's cellar, and the fish and lamb and spring vegetables, the cream and coffee and fresh butter, from the unrestricted orders of another friend; that Lord Chiltern had sent him Champagne and cigars, and that Lady Chiltern had given directions about the books and stationery—he did not know. But as far as he could be consoled by such comforts, there had been the consolation. If lamb and salad could make him happy, he might have enjoyed his sojourn in Newgate. Now, this evening, he was past all enjoyment. It was impossible that he should read. How could a man fix his attention on any book, with a charge of murder against himself affirmed by the deliberate decision of a judge? And he knew himself to be as innocent as the magistrate himself. Every now and then he would rise from his bed, and almost rush across the room as though he would dash his head against the wall. Murder! They really believed that he had deliberately murdered the man; he, Phineas Finn, who had served his country with repute, who had sat in Parliament, who had prided himself on living with the best of his fellow-creatures, who had been the friend of Mr. Monk and of Lord Cantrip, the trusted intimate of such women as Lady Laura and Lady Chiltern, who had never put his hand to a mean action, or allowed his tongue to speak a mean word! He laughed in his wrath, and then almost howled in his agony. He thought of the young loving wife who had lived with him little more than for one fleeting year, and wondered whether she was looking down upon him from heaven, and how her spirit would bear this accusation against the man upon whose bosom she had slept, and in whose arms she had gone to her long rest. "They can't believe it," he said, aloud. "It is impossible. Why should I have murdered him?" And then he remembered an example in Latin from some rule of grammar, and repeated it to himself over and over again: "No one at an instant—of a sudden—becomes most base." It seemed to him that there was such a want of knowledge of human nature in the supposition that it was possible that he should have committed such a crime. And yet—there he was, committed to take his trial for the murder of Mr. Bonteen.

The days were long, and it was daylight till nearly nine. Indeed, the twilight lingered, even through those iron bars, till after nine. He had once asked for candles, but had been told that they could not be allowed him without an attendant in the room, and he had dispensed with them. He had been treated, doubtless, with great respect, but nevertheless he had been treated as a prisoner. They hardly denied him any thing that he asked, but when he asked for that which they did not choose to grant they would annex conditions which induced him to withdraw his request. He understood their ways now, and did not rebel against them.

On a sudden he heard the key in the door, and the man who attended him entered the room with a candle in his hand. A lady had come to call, and the governor had given permission for her entrance. He would return for the light, and for the lady, in half an hour. He had said all this before Phineas could see who the lady was. And

when he did see the form of her who followed the jailer, and who stood with hesitating steps behind him in the doorway, he knew her by her sombre, solemn raiment, and not by her countenance. She was dressed from head to foot in the deepest weeds of widowhood, and a heavy veil fell from her bonnet over her face. "Lady Laura, is it you?" said Phineas, putting out his hand. Of course it was Lady Laura. While the Duchess of Omnium and Madame Goesler were talking about such a visit, allowing themselves to be deterred by the wisdom of Mr. Low, she had made her way through bolts and bars, and was now with him in his prison.

"Oh, Phineas!" She slowly raised her veil, and stood gazing at him. "Of all my troubles, this, to see you here, is the heaviest."

"And of all my consolations, to see you here is the greatest." He should not have so spoken. Could he have thought of things as they were, and have restrained himself, he should not have uttered words to her which were pleasant, but not true. There came a gleam of sunshine across her face as she listened to him, and then she threw herself into his arms, and wept upon his shoulder. "I did not expect that you would have found me," he said.

She took the chair opposite to that on which he usually sat, and then began her tale. Her cousin, Barrington Erle, had brought her there, and was below, waiting for her in the governor's house. He had procured an order for her admission that evening direct from Sir Harry Coldfoot, the Home Secretary, which, however, as she admitted, had been given under the idea that she and Erle were to see him together. "But I would not let him come with me," she said. "I could not have spoken to you had he been here; could I?"

"It would not have been the same, Lady Laura." He had thought much of his mode of addressing her on occasions before this, at Dresden and at Portman Square, and had determined that he would always give her her title. Once or twice he had lacked the courage to be so hard to her. Now as she heard the name the gleam of sunshine passed from her altogether. "We hardly expected that we should ever meet in such a place as this?" he said.

"I can not understand it. They can not really think you killed him." He smiled, and shook his head. Then she spoke of her own condition. "You have heard what has happened? You know that I am—a widow?"

"Yes; I had heard." And then he smiled again. "You will have understood why I could not come to you—as I should have done but for this little accident."

"He died on the day that they arrested you. Was it not strange that such a double blow should fall together? Oswald, no doubt, told you all."

"He told me of your husband's death."

"But not of his will? Perhaps he has not seen you since he heard it." Lord Chiltern had heard of the will before his last visit to Phineas in Newgate, but had not chosen then to speak of his sister's wealth.

"I have heard nothing of Mr. Kennedy's will."

"It was made immediately after our marriage, and he never changed it, though he had so much cause of anger against me."

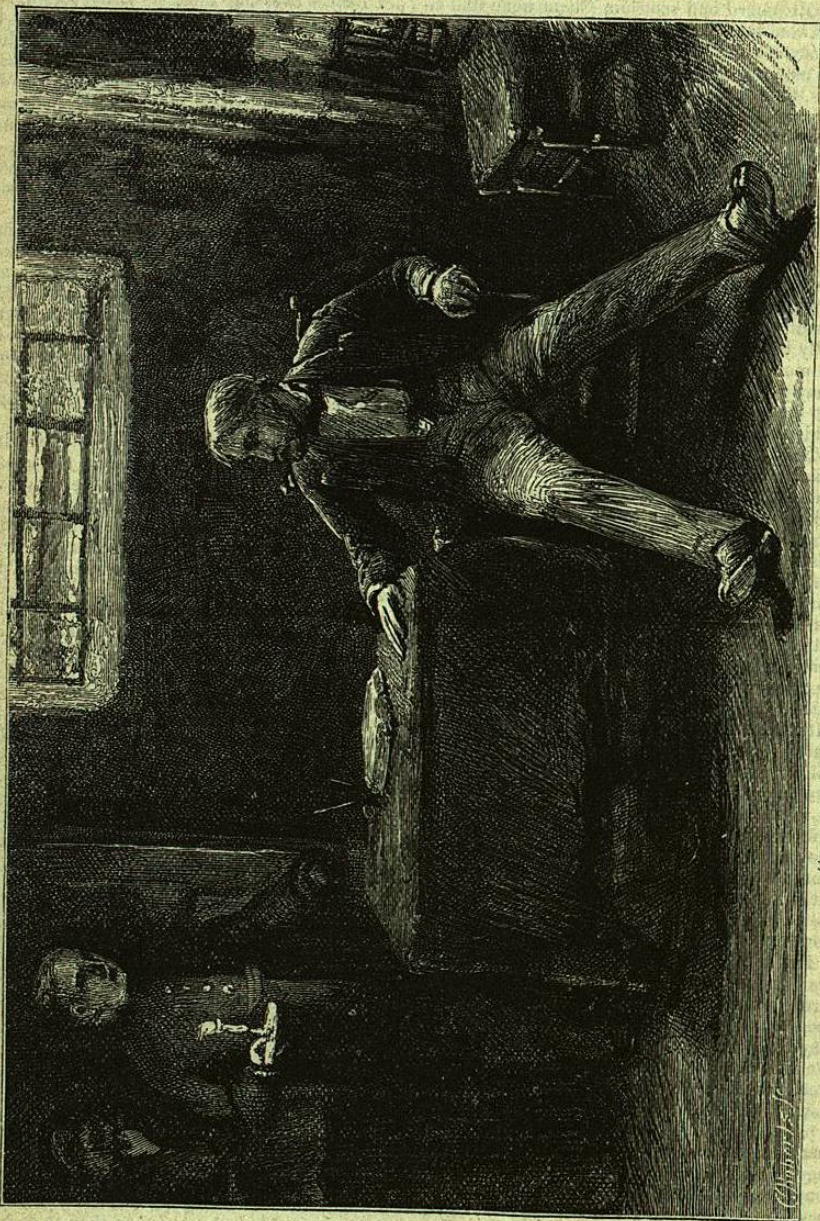
"He has not injured you, then, as regards money."

"Injured me! No, indeed. I am a rich woman—very rich. All Lough Linter is my own—for life. But of what use can it be to me?" He in his present state could tell her of no uses for such a property. "I suppose, Phineas, it can not be that you are really in danger?"

Barrington says that it can not be. Oswald and Violet are sure that such a thing can never happen. It was that Jew who did it."

"I can not say who did it. I did not."

"You! Oh, Phineas! The world must be mad when any can believe it!"



"ON A SUDDEN HE HEARD THE KEY IN THE DOOR."

"In the greatest danger, I fancy."

"Do you mean that they will say—you are guilty?"

"The magistrates have said so already."

"But surely that is nothing. If I thought so, I should die. If I believed it, they should never take me out of the prison while you are here."

"But they do believe it?" This he said, meaning to ask a question as to that outside world.

"We do not. Barrington says—"

"What does Barrington say?"

"That there are some who do; just a few, who were Mr. Bonteen's special friends."

"The police believe it. That is what I can not understand—men who ought to be keen-eyed and quick-witted. That magistrate believes it. I saw men in the court who used to know me well, and I could see that they believed it. Mr. Monk was here yesterday."

"Does he believe it?"

"I asked him, and he told me—no. But I did not quite trust him as he told me. There are two or three who believe me innocent."

"Who are they?"

"Low, and Chiltern and his wife, and that man Bunce and his wife. If I escape from this—if they do not hang me—I will remember them. And there are two other women who know me well enough not to think me a murderer."

"Who are they, Phineas?"

"Madame Goesler and the Duchess of Omnium."

"Have they been here?" she asked, with jealous eagerness.

"Oh no. But I hear that it is so, and I know it. One learns to feel even from hearsay what is in the minds of people."

"And what do I believe, Phineas? Can you read my thoughts?"

"I know them of old, without reading them now." Then he put forth his hand and took hers. "Had I murdered him in real truth, you would not have believed it."

"Because I love you, Phineas."

Then the key was again heard in the door, and Barrington Erle appeared with the jailers. The time was up, he said, and he had come to redeem his promise. He spoke cordially to his old friend, and grasped the prisoner's hand cordially; but not the less did he believe that there was blood on it, and Phineas knew that such was his belief. It appeared on his arrival that Lady Laura had not at all accomplished the chief object of his visit. She had brought with her various checks, all drawn by Barrington Erle on his banker, amounting altogether to many hundreds of pounds, which it was intended that Phineas should use from time to time for the necessities of his trial. Barrington Erle explained that the money was, in fact, to be a loan from Lady Laura's father, and was simply passed through his banker's account. But Phineas knew that the loan must come from Lady Laura, and he positively refused to touch it. His friend, Mr. Low, was managing all that for him, and he would not embarrass the matter by a fresh account. He was very obstinate, and at last the checks were taken away in Barrington Erle's pocket.

"Good-night, old fellow," said Erle, affectionately. "I'll see you again before long. May God send you through it all!"

"Good-night, Barrington. It was kind of you to come to me." Then Lady Laura, watching to see whether her cousin would leave her alone for a moment with the object of her idolatry, paused before she gave him her hand.

"Good-night, Lady Laura," he said.

"Good-night!" Barrington Erle was now just outside the door.

"I shall not forget your coming here to me."

"How should we, either of us, forget it?"

"Come, Laura," said Barrington Erle, "we had better make an end of it."

"But if I should never see him again?"

"Of course you will see him again."

"When? and where? O God, if they should murder him!" Then she threw herself into his arms, and covered him with kisses, though her cousin had returned into the room and stood over her as she embraced him.

"Laura," said he, "you are doing him an injury. How should he support himself if you behave like this! Come away."

"Oh my God, if they should kill him!" she exclaimed. But she allowed her cousin to take her in his arms, and Phineas Finn was left alone without having spoken another word to either of them.

## CHAPTER LVI.

### THE MEAGER FAMILY.

ON the day after the committal a lady, who had got out of a cab at the corner of Northumberland Street, in the Marylebone Road, walked up that very uninviting street, and knocked at a door just opposite to the deadiest part of the dead-wall of the Marylebone work-house. Here lived Mrs. and Miss Meager, and also on occasions Mr. Meager, who, however, was simply a trouble and annoyance in the world, going about to race-courses, and occasionally, perhaps, to worse places, and being of no slightest use to the two poor hard-worked women—mother and daughter—who endeavored to get their living by letting lodgings. The task was difficult, for it is not every body who likes to look out upon the dead-wall of a work-house, and they who do are disposed to think that their willingness that way should be considered in the rent. But Mr. Emilius, when the cruelty of his wife's friends deprived him of the short-lived luxury of his mansion in Lowndes Square, had found in Northumberland Street a congenial retreat, and had for a while trusted to Mrs. and Miss Meager for all his domestic comforts. Mr. Emilius was always a favorite with new friends, and had not as yet had his Northumberland Street gloss rubbed altogether off him when Mr. Bonteen was murdered. As it happened, on that night—or rather early in the day, for Meager had returned to the bosom of his family after a somewhat prolonged absence in the provinces, and therefore the date had become specially remarkable in the Meager family from the double event—Mr. Meager had declared that unless his wife could supply him with a five-pound note he must cut his throat instantly. His wife and daughter had regretted the necessity, but had declared the alternative to be out of the question. Whereupon Mr. Meager had endeavored to force the lock of an old bureau with a carving knife, and there had been some slight personal encounter, after which he had had some gin, and had gone to bed. Mrs. Meager remembered the day very well indeed, and Miss Meager, when the police came the next morning, had accounted for her black eye by a tragical account of a fall she had had against the bed-post in the dark. Up to that period Mr. Emilius had been every thing that was sweet and good—an excellent, eloquent clergyman, who was being ill-treated by his wife's wealthy relations, who was soft in his manners and civil in his words, and never gave more trouble than was necessary. The period, too, would have been one of comparative prosperity to the Meager