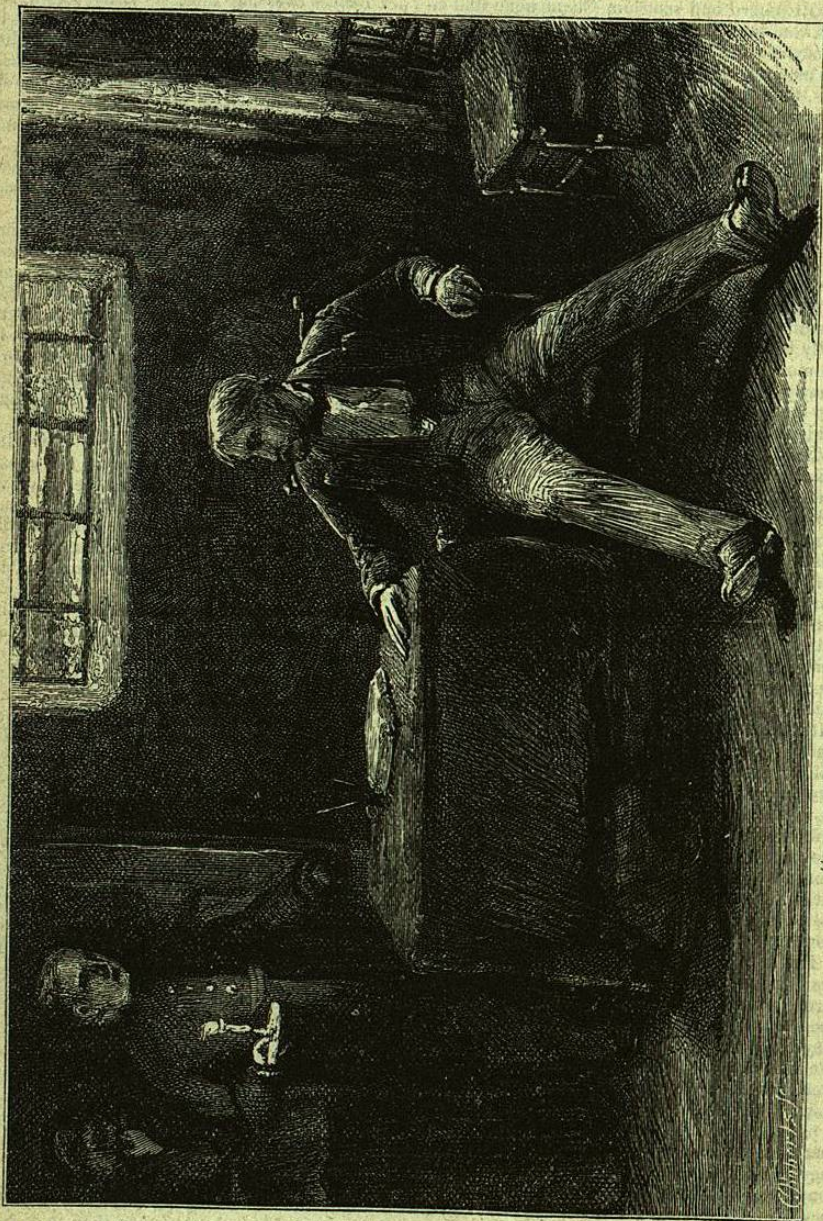


"Injured me! No, indeed. I am a rich woman—very rich. All Lough Linter is my own—for life. But of what use can it be to me?" He in his present state could tell her of no uses for such a property. "I suppose, Phineas, it can not be that you are really in danger?"



"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."

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!"

"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

ladies, but for that inopportune return of the head of the family, as two other lodgers had been inclined to look out upon the dead-wall, or else into the cheerful back-yard; which circumstance came to have some bearing upon our story, as Mrs. Meager had been driven by the press of her increased household to let that good-natured Mr. Emilius know that, if "he didn't mind it," the latch-key might be an accommodation on occasions. To give him his due, indeed, he had, when first taking the rooms, offered to give up the key when not intending to be out at night.

After the murder Mr. Emilius had been arrested, and had been kept in durance for a week. Miss Meager had been sure that he was innocent; Mrs. Meager had trusted the policemen, who evidently thought that the clergyman was guilty. Of the policemen who were concerned on the occasion, it may be said in a general way that they believed that both the gentlemen had committed the murder, so anxious were they not to be foiled in the attempts at discovery which their duty called upon them to make. Mr. Meager had left the house on the morning of the arrest, having arranged that little matter of the five-pound note by a compromise. When the policemen came for Mr. Emilius, Mr. Meager was gone. For a day or two the lodger's rooms were kept vacant for the clergyman, till Mrs. Meager became quite convinced that he had committed the murder, and then all his things were packed up and placed in the passage. When he was liberated he returned to the house, and expressed unbounded anger at what had been done. He took his two boxes away in a cab, and was seen no more by the ladies of Northumberland Street.

But a further gleam of prosperity fell upon them in consequence of the tragedy which had been so interesting to him. Hitherto the inquiries made at their house had had reference solely to the habits and doings of their lodger during the last few days; but now there came to them a visitor who made a more extended investigation; and this one was of their own sex. It was Madame Goesler who got out of the cab at the work-house corner, and walked from thence to Mrs. Meager's house. This was her third appearance in Northumberland Street, and at each coming she had spoken kind words, and had left behind her liberal recompense for the trouble which she gave. She had no scruples as to paying for the evidence which she desired to obtain—no fear of any questions which might afterward be asked in cross-examination. She dealt out sovereigns—womanfully, and had had Mrs. and Miss Meager at her feet. Before the second visit was completed they were both certain that the Bohemian converted Jew had murdered Mr. Bonteen, and were quite willing to assist in hanging him.

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Meager, "he did take the key with him. Amelia remembers we were a key short at the time he was away." The absence here alluded to was that occasioned by the journey which Mr. Emilius took to Prague, when he heard that evidence of his former marriage was being sought against him in his own country.

"That he did," said Amelia, "because we were put out ever so. And he had no business, for he was not paying for the room."

"You have only one key?"

"There is three, ma'am. The front attic has one regular, because he's on a daily paper, and of course he doesn't get to bed till morning. Meager always takes another, and we can't get it from him ever so."

"And Mr. Emilius took the other away with him?" asked Madame Goesler.

"That he did, ma'am. When he came back he said it had been in a drawer, but it wasn't in the drawer. We always knows what's in the drawers."

"The drawer wasn't left locked, then?"

"Yes, it was, ma'am, and he took that key—unbeknownst to us," said Mrs. Meager. "But there is other keys that open the drawers. We are obliged in our line to know about the lodgers, ma'am."

This was certainly no time for Madame Goesler to express disapprobation of the practices which were thus divulged. She smiled, and nodded her head, and was quite sympathetic with Mrs. Meager. She had learned that Emilius had taken the latch-key with him to Bohemia, and was convinced that a dozen other latch-keys might have been made after the pattern without any apparent detection by the London police. "And now about the coat, Mrs. Meager."

"Well, ma'am?"

"Mr. Meager has not been here since?"

"No, ma'am. Mr. Meager, ma'am, isn't what he ought to be. I never do own it up, only when I'm driven. He hasn't been home."

"I suppose he still has the coat?"

"Well, ma'am, no. We sent a young man after him, as you said, and the young man found him at the Newmarket Spring."

"Some water-cure?" asked Madame Goesler.

"No, ma'am. It ain't a water-cure, but the races. He hadn't got the coat. He does always manage a tidy great-coat when November is coming on, because it covers every thing, and is respectable, but he mostly parts with it in April. He gets short, and then he—just pawns it."

"But he had it the night of the murder?"

"Yes, ma'am, he had. Amelia and I remembered it especial. When we went to bed, which we did soon after ten, it was kept in this room, lying there on the sofa." They were now sitting in the little back-parlor, in which Mrs. and Miss Meager were accustomed to live.

"And it was there in the morning?"

"Father had it on when he went out," said Amelia.

"If we paid him, he would get it out of the pawn shop and bring it to us, would he not?" asked the lady.

To this Mrs. Meager suggested that it was quite on the cards that Mr. Meager might have been able to do better with his coat by selling it, and if so, it certainly would have been sold, as no prudent idea of redeeming his garment for the next winter's wear would ever enter his mind. And Mrs. Meager seemed to think that such a sale would not have taken place between her husband and any old friend. "He wouldn't know where he sold it," said Mrs. Meager.

"Anyways, he'd tell us so," said Amelia.

"But if we paid him to be more accurate?" said Madame Goesler.

"They is so afraid of being took up themselves," said Mrs. Meager. There was, however, enough ample evidence that Mr. Meager had

possessed a gray great-coat, which during the night of the murder had been left in the little sitting-room, and which they had supposed to have lain there all night. To this coat Mr. Emilius might have had easy access. "But then it was a big man that was seen, and Emilius isn't noways a big man. Meager's coat would be too long for him, ever so much."

"Nevertheless, we must try and get the coat," said Madame Goesler. "I'll speak to a friend about it. I suppose we can find your husband when we want him?"

"I don't know, ma'am. We never can find him; but then we never do want him—not now. The police know him at the races, no doubt. You won't go and get him into trouble, ma'am, worse than he is? He's always been in trouble, but I wouldn't like to be the means of making it worse on him than it is."

Madame Goesler, as she again paid the woman for her services, assured her that she would do no injury to Mr. Meager. All that she wanted of Mr. Meager was his gray coat, and that not with any view that could be detrimental either to his honor or to his safety, and she was willing to pay any reasonable price—or almost any unreasonable price—for the coat. But the coat must be made to be forth-coming if it were still in existence, and had not been as yet torn to pieces by the shoddy-makers.

"It ain't near come to that yet," said Amelia. "I don't know that I ever see father more respectable—that is, in the way of a great-coat."

CHAPTER LVII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SEARCH FOR THE KEY AND THE COAT.

WHEN Madame Goesler revealed her plans and ideas to Mr. Wickerby, the attorney, who had been employed to bring Phineas Finn through his troubles, that gentleman evidently did not think much of the unprofessional assistance which the lady proposed to give him. "I'm afraid it is far fetched, ma'am—if you understand what I mean," said Mr. Wickerby. Madame Goesler declared that she understood very well what Mr. Wickerby meant, but that she could hardly agree with him. "According to that, the gentleman must have plotted the murder more than a month before he committed it," said Mr. Wickerby.

"And why not?"

"Murder plots are generally the work of a few hours at the longest, Madame Goesler. Anger, combined with an indifference to self-sacrifice, does not endure the wear of many days. And the object here was insufficient. I don't think we can ask to have the trial put off in order to find out whether a false key may have been made in Prague."

"And you will not look for the coat?"

"We can look for it, and probably get it, if the woman has not lied to you; but I don't think it will do us any good. The woman probably is lying. You have been paying her very liberally, so that she has been making an excellent livelihood out of the murder. No jury would believe her. And a gray coat is a very common thing. After all, it would prove nothing. It

would only let the jury know that Mr. Meager had a gray coat as well as Mr. Finn. That Mr. Finn wore a gray coat on that night is a fact which we can't upset. If you got hold of Meager's coat, you wouldn't be a bit nearer to proof that Emilius had worn it."

"There would be the fact that he might have worn it."

"Madame Goesler, indeed it would not help our client. You see what are the difficulties in our way. Mr. Finn was on the spot at the moment, or so near it as to make it certainly possible that he might have been there. There is no such evidence as to Emilius, even if he could be shown to have had a latch-key. The man was killed by such an instrument as Mr. Finn had about him. There is no evidence that Mr. Emilius had such an instrument in his hand. A tall man in a gray coat was seen hurrying to the spot at the exact hour. Mr. Finn is a tall man, and wore a gray coat at the time. Emilius is not a tall man, and, even though Meager had a gray coat, there is no evidence to show that Emilius ever wore it. Mr. Finn had quarreled violently with Mr. Bonteen within the hour. It does not appear that Emilius ever quarreled with Mr. Bonteen, though Mr. Bonteen had exerted himself in opposition to Emilius."

"Is there to be no defense, then?"

"Certainly there will be a defense, and such a defense as I think will prevent any jury from being unanimous in convicting my client. Though there is a great deal of evidence against him, it is all—what we call circumstantial."

"I understand, Mr. Wickerby."

"Nobody saw him commit the murder."

"Indeed, no," said Madame Goesler.

"Although there is personal similarity, there is no personal identity. There is no positive proof of any thing illegal on his part, or of any thing that would have been suspicious had no murder been committed, such as the purchase of poison or carrying of a revolver. The life-preserver, had no such instrument been unfortunately used, might have been regarded as a thing of custom."

"But I am sure that that Bohemian did murder Mr. Bonteen," said Madame Goesler, with enthusiasm.

"Madame," said Mr. Wickerby, holding up both his hands, "I can only wish that you could be upon the jury."

"And you won't try to show that the other man might have done it?"

"I think not. Next to an alibi that breaks down—you know what an alibi is, Madame Goesler?"

"Yes, Mr. Wickerby; I know what an alibi is."

"Next to an alibi that breaks down, an unsuccessful attempt to affix the fault on another party is the most fatal blow which a prisoner's counsel can inflict upon him. It is always taken by the jury as so much evidence against him. We must depend altogether on a different line of defense."

"What line, Mr. Wickerby?"

"Juries are always unwilling to hang"—Madame Goesler shuddered as the horrid word was broadly pronounced—"and are apt to think that simply circumstantial evidence can not be suffered to demand so disagreeable a duty. They are peculiarly averse to hanging a gentleman, and will hardly be induced to hang a member of

Parliament. Then Mr. Finn is very good-looking, and has been popular—which is all in his favor. And we shall have such evidence on the score of character as was never before brought into one of our courts. We shall have half the Cabinet. There will be two dukes." Madame Goesler, as she listened to the admiring enthusiasm of the attorney while he went on with his list, acknowledged to herself that her dear friend, the Duchess, had not been idle. "There will be three Secretaries of State. The Secretary of State for the Home Department himself will be examined. I am not quite sure that we mayn't get the Lord Chancellor. There will be Mr. Monk—about the most popular man in England, who will speak of the prisoner as his particular friend. I don't think any jury would hang a particular friend of Mr. Monk's. And there will be ever so many ladies. That has never been done before, but we mean to try it." Madame Goesler had heard all this, and had herself assisted in the work. "I rather think we shall get four or five leading members of the Opposition, for they all disliked Mr. Bonteen. If we could manage Mr. Daubeny and Mr. Gresham, I think we might reckon ourselves quite safe. I forgot to say that the Bishop of Barchester has promised."

"All that won't prove his innocence, Mr. Wickerby." Mr. Wickerby shrugged his shoulders. "If he be acquitted after that fashion, men then will say—that he was guilty."

"We must think of his life first, Madame Goesler," said the attorney.

Madame Goesler when she left the attorney's room was very ill-satisfied with him. She desired some adherent to her cause who would with affectionate zeal resolve upon washing Phineas Finn white as snow in reference to the charge now made against him. But no man would so resolve who did not believe in his innocence—as Madame Goesler believed herself. She herself knew that her own belief was romantic and unpractical. Nevertheless, the conviction of the guilt of that other man, toward which she still thought that much could be done if that coat were found and the maker of a secret key were present, was so strong upon her that she would not allow herself to drop it. It would not be sufficient for her that Phineas Finn should be acquitted. She desired that the real murderer should be hung for the murder, so that all the world might be sure—as she was sure—that her hero had been wrongfully accused.

"Do you mean that you are going to start yourself," the Duchess said to her that same afternoon.

"Yes, I am."

"Then you must be very far gone in love, indeed."

"You would do as much, Duchess, if you were free as I am. It isn't a matter of love at all. It's womanly enthusiasm for the cause one has taken up."

"I'm quite as enthusiastic—only I shouldn't like to go to Prague in June."

"I'd go to Siberia in January if I could find out that that horrid man really committed the murder."

"Who are going with you?"

"We shall be quite a company. We have got a detective policeman, and an interpreter

who understands Greek and German to go about with the policeman, and a lawyer's clerk, and there will be my own maid."

"Every body will know all about it before you get there."

"We are not to go quite together. The policeman and the interpreter are to form one party, and I and my maid another. The poor clerk is to be alone. If they get the coat, of course you'll telegraph to me."

"Who is to have the coat?"

"I suppose they'll take it to Mr. Wickerby. He says he doesn't want it—that it would do no good. But I think that if we could show that the man might very easily have been out of the house—that he had certainly provided himself with means of getting out of the house secretly—the coat would be of service. I am going, at any rate, and shall be in Paris to-morrow morning."

"I think it very grand of you, my dear; and for your sake I hope he may live to be Prime Minister. Perhaps, after all, he may give Plantagenet 'his Garter.'"

When the old Duke died, a Garter became vacant, and had, of course, fallen to the gift of Mr. Gresham. The Duchess had expected that it would be continued in the family, as had been the Lieutenancy of Bassetshire, which also had been held by the old Duke. But the Garter had been given to Lord Cantrip, and the Duchess was sore. With all her radical propensities and inclination to laugh at dukes and marquises, she thought very much of Garters and Lieutenancies; but her husband would not think of them at all, and hence there were words between them. The Duchess had declared that the Duke should insist on having the Garter. "These are things that men do not ask for," the Duke had said.

"Don't tell me Plantagenet, about not asking. Every body asks for every thing nowadays."

"Your every body is not correct, Glencora. I never yet asked for any thing, and never shall. No honor has any value in my eyes unless it comes unasked." Thereupon it was that the Duchess now suggested that Phineas Finn, when Prime Minister, might perhaps bestow a Garter upon her husband.

And so Madame Goesler started for Prague with the determination of being back, if possible, before the trial began. It was to be commenced at the Old Bailey toward the end of June, and people already began to foretell that it would extend over a very long period. The circumstances seemed to be simple; but they who understood such matters declared that the duration of a trial depended a great deal more on the public interest felt in the matter than upon its own nature. Now it was already perceived that no trial of modern days had ever been so interesting as would be this trial. It was already known that the Attorney-General, Sir Gregory Grogam, was to lead the case for the prosecution, and that the Solicitor-General, Sir Simon Slope, was to act with him. It had been thought to be due to the memory and character of Mr. Bonteen, who when he was murdered had held the office of President of the Board of Trade, and who had very nearly been Chancellor of the Exchequer, that so unusual a task should be imposed on these two high legal officers of the Government. No doubt there would be a crowd of juniors with them, but it was understood that Sir Gregory

Grogam would himself take the burden of the task upon his own shoulders. It was declared every where that Sir Gregory did believe Phineas Finn to be guilty—but it was also declared that Sir Simon Slope was convinced that he was innocent. The defense was to be intrusted to the well-practiced but now aged hands of that most experienced practitioner Mr. Chaffanbrass, than whom no barrister, living or dead, ever rescued more culprits from the fangs of the law. With Mr. Chaffanbrass, who quite late in life had consented to take a silk gown, was to be associated Mr. Sergeant Birdbolt, who was said to be employed in order that the case might be in safe hands should the strength of Mr. Chaffanbrass fail him at the last moment; and Mr. Snow, who was supposed to handle a witness more judiciously than any of the rising men; and that subtle, courageous, eloquent, and painstaking youth, Mr. Golightly, who now, with no more than ten or fifteen years' practice, was already known to be earning his bread and supporting a wife and family.

But the glory of this trial would not depend chiefly on the array of counsel, nor on the fact that the Lord Chief Justice himself would be the judge, so much as on the social position of the murdered man and of the murderer. Noble lords and great statesmen would throng the bench of the court to see Phineas Finn tried, and all the world who could find an entrance would do the same to see the great statesmen and the noble lords. The importance of such an affair increases like a snow-ball as it is rolled on. Many people talk much, and then very many people talk very much more. The under-sheriffs of the City, praiseworthy gentlemen not hitherto widely known to fame, became suddenly conspicuous and popular, as being the dispensers of admission to seats in the court. It had been already admitted by judges and counsel that sundry other cases must be postponed, because it was known that the Bonteen murder would occupy at least a week. It was supposed that Mr. Chaffanbrass would consume a whole day at the beginning of the trial in getting a jury to his mind—a matter on which he was known to be very particular—and another whole day at the end of the trial in submitting to the jury the particulars of all the great cases on record in which circumstantial evidence was known to have led to improper verdicts. It was therefore understood that the last week in June would be devoted to the trial, to the exclusion of all other matters of interest. When Mr. Gresham, hard pressed by Mr. Turnbull for a convenient day, offered that gentleman Thursday, the 24th of June, for suggesting to the House a little proposition of his own with reference to the English Church establishment, Mr. Turnbull openly repudiated the offer, because on that day the trial of Phineas Finn would be commenced. "I hope," said Mr. Gresham, "that the work of the country will not be impeded by that unfortunate affair." "I am afraid," said Mr. Turnbull, "that the right honorable gentleman will find that the member for Tankerville will on that day monopolize the attention of this House." The remark was thought to have been made in very bad taste, but nobody doubted its truth. Perhaps the interest was enhanced among politicians by the existence very generally of an opinion that though Phineas Finn had murdered Mr. Bonteen,

he would certainly be acquitted. Nothing could then prevent the acquitted murderer from resuming his seat in the House, and gentlemen were already beginning to ask themselves after what fashion it would become them to treat him.

Would the Speaker catch his eye when he rose to speak? Would he still be "Phineas" to the very large number of men with whom his general popularity had made him intimate? Would he be cold-shouldered at the clubs, and treated as one whose hands were red with blood? Or would he become more popular than ever, and receive an ovation after his acquittal?

In the mean time Madame Goesler started on her journey for Prague.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE TWO DUKES.

It was necessary that the country should be governed, even though Mr. Bonteen had been murdered; and in order that it should be duly governed it was necessary that Mr. Bonteen's late place at the Board of Trade should be filled. There was some hesitation as to the filling it, and when the arrangement was completed people were very much surprised indeed. Mr. Bonteen had been appointed chiefly because it was thought that he might in that office act as a quasi House of Commons deputy to the Duke of Omnium in carrying out his great scheme of a five-farthinged penny and a ten-pennied shilling. The Duke, in spite of his wealth and rank and honor, was determined to go on with his great task. Life would be nothing to him now unless he could at least hope to arrange the five farthings. When his wife had bullied him about the Garter, he had declared to her, and with perfect truth, that he had never asked for any thing. He had gone on to say that he never would ask for any thing; and he certainly did not think that he was betraying himself with reference to that assurance when he suggested to Mr. Gresham that he would himself take the place left vacant by Mr. Bonteen—of course retaining his seat in the Cabinet.

"I should hardly have ventured to suggest such an arrangement to your Grace," said the Prime Minister.

"Feeling that it might be so, I thought that I would venture to ask," said the Duke. "I am sure you know that I am the last man to interfere as to place or the disposition of power."

"Quite the last man," said Mr. Gresham.

"But it has always been held that the Board of Trade is not incompatible with the Peerage."

"Oh dear, yes."

"And I can feel myself nearer to this affair of mine there than I can elsewhere."

Mr. Gresham, of course, had no objection to urge. This great nobleman, who was now asking for Mr. Bonteen's shoes, had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and would have remained Chancellor of the Exchequer had not the mantle of his nobility fallen upon him. At the present moment he held an office in which peers are often temporarily shelved, or put away, perhaps, out of harm's way for the time, so that they may be brought down and used when wanted, without having received crack or detriment from that in-