Mrs. Meager's house on the night in question, that would not have sufficed at all to prove that therefore he had committed a murder in Berkeley Street. No doubt Mr. Bonteen had been his enemy—and Mr. Bonteen had been murdered by an enemy. But so great had been the man's luck that no real evidence seemed to touch him. Nobody doubted; but then but few had doubted before as to the guilt of Phineas Finn.

There was one other fact by which the truth might, it was hoped, still be reached. Mr. Bonteen had, of course, been killed by the weapon which had been found in the garden. As to that a general certainty prevailed. Mrs. Meager and Miss Meager, and the maid-of-all-work belonging to the Meagers, and even Lady Eustace, were examined as to this bludgeon. Had any thing of the kind ever been seen in the possession of the clergyman? The clergyman had been so sly that nothing of the kind had been seen. Of the drawers and cupboards which he used Mrs. Meager had always possessed duplicate keys, and Miss Meager frankly acknowledged that she had a general and fairly accurate acquaintance with the contents of these receptacles; but there had always been a big trunk with an impenetrable lock—a lock which required that even if you had the key, you should be acquainted with a certain combination of letters before you could open it—and of that trunk no one had seen the inside. As a matter of course, the weapon, when brought to London, had been kept altogether hidden in the trunk. Nothing could be easier. But a man can not be hung because he has a secret hiding-place in which a murderous weapon may have been stowed away.

But might it not be possible to trace the weapon? Mealyus, on his return from Prague, had certainly come through Paris. So much was learned—and it was also learned as a certainty that the article was of French, and probably of Parisian, manufacture. If it could be proved that the man had bought this weapon, or even such a weapon, in Paris, then—so said all the police authorities—it might be worth while to make an attempt to hang him. Men very skillful in unraveling such mysteries were sent to Paris, and the police of that capital entered upon the search with most praiseworthy zeal. But the number of life-preservers which had been sold altogether baffled them. It seemed that nothing was so common as that gentlemen should walk about with bludgeons in their pockets covered with leathern thongs. A young woman and an old man who thought that they could recollect something of a special sale were brought over—and saw the splendors of London under very favorable circumstances; but when confronted with Mr. Emilius, neither could venture to identify him. A large sum of money was expended—no doubt justified by the high position which poor Mr. Bonteen had filled in the councils of the nation; but it was expended in vain. Mr. Bonteen had been murdered in the streets at the West End of London. The murderer was known to every body. He had been seen a minute or two before the murder. The motive which had induced the crime was apparent. The weapon with which it had been perpetrated had been found. The murderer's disguise had been discovered. The cunning with which he had endeavored to prove that he was in bed at home had been unraveled, and the criminal purpose of his cunning made altogether manifest. Every man's eye could see the whole thing from the moment in which the murderer crept out of Mrs. Meager's house, with Mr. Meager's coat upon his shoulders and the life-preserver in his pocket, till he was seen by Lord Fawn hurrying out of the mews to his prey. The blows from the bludgeon could be counted. The very moment in which they had been struck had been ascertained. His very act in hurling the weapon over the wall was all but seen. And yet nothing could be done. "It is a very dangerous thing hanging a man on circumstantial evidence," said Sir Gregory Grogram, who, a couple of months since, had felt almost sure that his honorable friend Phineas Finn would have to be hung on circumstantial evidence. The police and magistrates and lawyers all agreed that it would be useless, and indeed wrong, to send the case before a jury. But there had been quite sufficient evidence against Phineas Finn!

In the mean time the trial for bigamy proceeded, in order that poor little Lizzie Eustace might be freed from the incubus which afflicted her. Before the end of July she was made once more a free woman, and the Rev. Joseph Emilius—under which name it was thought proper that he should be tried—was convicted and sentenced to penal servitude for five years. A very touching appeal was made for him to the jury by a learned sergeant, who declared that his client was to lose his wife and to be punished with extreme severity as a bigamist because it was found to be impossible to bring home against him a charge of murder. There was, perhaps, some truth in what the learned sergeant said, but the truth had no effect upon the jury. Mr. Emilius was found guilty as quickly as Phineas Finn had been acquitted, and was, perhaps, treated with a severity which the single crime would hardly have elicited. But all this happened in the middle of the efforts which were being made to trace the purchase of the bludgeon, and when men hoped two, or five, or twenty-five years of threatened incarceration might be all the same to Mr. Emilius. Could they have succeeded in discovering where he had bought the weapon, his years of penal servitude would have afflicted him but little. They did not succeed; and though it can not be said that any mystery was attached to the Bonteen murder, it has remained one of those crimes which are unavenged by the flagging law. And so the Rev. Mr. Emilius will pass away from our story.

There must be one or two words further respecting poor little Lizzie Eustace. She still had her income almost untouched, having been herself unable to squander it during her late married life, and having succeeded in saving it from the clutches of her pseudo-husband. And she had her title, of which no one could rob her, and her castle down in Ayrshire—which, however, as a place of residence she had learned to hate most thoroughly. Nor had she done any thing which of itself must necessarily have put her out of the pale of society. As a married woman she had had no lovers, and, when a widow, very little fault in that line had been brought home against her. But the world at large seemed to be sick of her. Mr. Bonteen had been her best friend, and, while it was still thought that Phineas Finn

had committed the murder, with Mrs. Bonteen she had remained. But it was impossible that the arrangement should be continued when it became known—for it was known—that Mr. Bonteen had been murdered by the man who was still Lizzie's reputed husband. Not that Lizzie perceived this, though she was averse to the idea of her husband having been a murderer. But Mrs. Bonteen perceived it, and told her friend that she must—go. It was most unwillingly that the wretched widow changed her faith as to the murderer; but at last she found herself bound to believe as the world believed; and then she hinted to the wife of Mr. Emilius that she had better find another home.

"I don't believe it a bit," said Lizzie.

"It is not a subject I can discuss," said the widow.

"And I don't see that it makes any difference. He isn't my husband. You have said that yourself very often, Mrs. Bonteen."

"It is better that we shouldn't be together, Lady Eustace."

"Oh, I can go, of course, Mrs. Bonteen. There needn't be the slightest trouble about that. I had thought that perhaps it might be convenient; but of course you know best."

She went forth into lodgings in Half Moon Street, close to the scene of the murder, and was once more alone in the world. She had a child, indeed, the son of her first husband, as to whom it behooved many to be anxious who stood high in rank and high in repute; but such had been Lizzie's manner of life that neither her own relations nor those of her husband could put up with her, or endure her contact. And yet she was conscious of no special sins, and regarded herself as one who, with a tender heart of her own, and a too confiding spirit, had been much injured by the cruelty of those with whom she had been thrown. Now she was alone, weeping in solitude, pitying herself with deepest compassion; but it never occurred to her that there was any thing in her conduct that she need alter. She would still continue to play her game as before, would still scheme, would still lie, and might still, at last, land herself in that Elysium of life of which she had been always dreaming. Poor Lizzie Eustace! Was it nature or education which had made it impossible to her to tell the truth when a lie came to her hand? Lizzie, the liar! Poor Lizzie!

CHAPTER LXXIII.

PHINEAS FINN RETURNS TO HIS DUTIES.

The election at Tankerville took place during the last week in July, and as Parliament was doomed to sit that year as late as the 10th of August, there was ample time for Phineas to present himself and take the oaths before the session was finished. He had calculated that this could hardly be so when the matter of re-election was first proposed to him, and had hoped that his re-appearance might be deferred till the following year. But there he was, once more member for Tankerville, while yet there was nearly a fortnight's work to be done, pressed by his friends, and told by one or two of those whom he most trusted that he would neglect his duty and show himself to be a coward if he abstained from taking his place.

"Coward is a hard word," he said to Mr. Low, who had used it.

"So men think when this or that man is accused of running away in battle or the like. Nobody will charge you with cowardice of that kind. But there is moral cowardice as well as physical."

"As when a man lies. I am telling no lie."

"But you are afraid to meet the eyes of your fellow-creatures."

"Yes, I am. You may call me a coward if you like. What matters the name, if the charge be true? I have been so treated that I am afraid to meet the eyes of my fellow-creatures. I am like a man who has had his knees broken or his arms cut off. Of course I can not be the same afterward as I was before."

Mr. Low said a great deal more to him on the subject, and all that Mr. Low said was true; but he was somewhat rough, and did not succeed. Barrington Erle and Lord Cantrip also tried their eloquence upon him; but it was Mr. Monk who at last drew from him a promise that he would go down to the House and be sworn in early on a certain Tuesday afternoon. "I am quite sure of this," Mr. Monk had said, "that the sooner you do it the less will be the annoyance. Indeed, there will be no trouble in the doing of it. The trouble is all in the anticipation, and is therefore only increased and prolonged by delay." "Of course it is your duty to go at once," Mr. Monk had said again, when his friend argued that he had never undertaken to sit before the expiration of Parliament. "You did consent to be put in nomination, and you owe your immediate services just as does any other member."

"If a man's grandmother dies he is held to be exempted."

"But your grandmother has not died, and your sorrow is not of the kind that requires, or is supposed to require, retirement."

He gave way at last, and on the Tuesday afternoon Mr. Monk called for him at Mrs. Bunce's house, and went down with him to Westminster. They reached their destination somewhat too soon, and walked the length of Westminster Hall two or three times while Phineas tried to justify himself. "I don't think," said he, "that Low quite understands my position when he calls me a coward."

"I am sure, Phineas, he did not mean to do that."

"Do not suppose that I am angry with him. I owe him a great deal too much for that. He is one of the few friends I have who are entitled to say to me just what they please. But I think he mistakes the matter. When a man becomes crooked from age, it is no good telling him to be straight. He'd be straight if he could. A man can't eat his dinner with a diseased liver as he could when he was well."

"But he may follow advice as to getting his liver in order again."

"And so am I following advice. But Low seems to think the disease shouldn't be there. The disease is there, and I can't banish it by simply saying that it is not there. If they had hung me outright, it would be almost as reasonable to come and tell me afterward to shake myself and be again alive. I don't think that Low realizes what it is to stand in the dock for a week

together, with the eyes of all men fixed on you, and a conviction at your heart that every one there believes you to have been guilty of an abominable crime of which you know yourself to have been innocent. For weeks I lived under the belief that I was to be made away with by the hangman, and to leave behind me a name that would make every one who has known me shudder."

"God in His mercy has delivered you from that."

"He has—and I am thankful. But my back is not strong enough to bear the weight without bending under it. Did you see Ratler going in? There is a man I dread. He is intimate enough with me to congratulate me, but not friend enough to abstain, and he will be sure to say something about his murdered colleague. Very well; I'll follow you. Go up rather quick, and I'll come close after you." Whereupon Mr. Monk entered between the two lamp-posts in the hall, and hurrying along the passages, soon found himself at the door of the House. Phineas, with an effort at composure, and a smile that was almost ghastly at the door-keeper, who greeted him with some muttered word of recognition, held on his way close behind his friend, and walked up the House hardly conscious that the benches on each side were empty. There were not a dozen members present, and the Speaker had not as yet taken the chair. Mr. Monk stood by him while he took the oath, and in two minutes he was on a back seat below the gangway, with his friend by him, while the members, in slowly increasing numbers, took their seats. Then there were prayers, and as yet not a single man had spoken to him. As soon as the doors were again open gentlemen streamed in, and some few whom Phineas knew well came and sat near him. One or two shook hands with him, but no one said a word to him of the trial. No one at least did so in this early stage of the day's proceedings, and after half an hour he almost ceased to be afraid.

Then came up an irregular debate on the great Church question of the day, as to which there had been no cessation of the badgering with which Mr. Gresham had been attacked since he came into office. He had thrown out Mr. Daubeny by opposing that gentleman's stupendous measure for disestablishing the Church of England altogether, although—as was almost daily asserted by Mr. Daubeny and his friends—he was himself in favor of such total disestablishment. Over and over again Mr. Gresham had acknowledged that he was in favor of disestablishment, protesting that he had opposed Mr. Daubeny's bill without any reference to its merits—solely on the ground that such a measure should not be accepted from such a quarter. He had been stout enough, and, as his enemies had said, insolent enough, in making these assurances. But still he was accused of keeping his own hand dark, and of omitting to say what bill he would himself propose to bring in respecting the Church in the next session. It was essentially necessary—so said Mr. Daubeny and his friends—that the country should know and discuss the proposed measure during the vacation. There was, of course, a good deal of retaliation. Mr. Daubeny had not given the country, or even his own party, much time to discuss his Church Bill. Mr. Gresham assured Mr. Daubeny that he would not feel himself equal to producing a measure that should change the religious position of every individual in the country, and annihilate the traditions and systems of centuries, altogether complete out of his own unaided brain; and he went on to say that were he to do so, he did not think that he should find himself supported in such an effort by the friends with whom he usually worked. On this occasion he declared that the magnitude of the subject, and the immense importance of the interests concerned, forbade him to anticipate the passing of any measure of general Church Reform in the next session. He was undoubtedly in favor of Church Reform, but was by no means sure that the question was one which required immediate settlement. Of this he was sure—that nothing in the way of legislative indiscretion could be so injurious to the country as any attempt at a hasty and ill-considered measure on this most momentous of all questions.

The debate was irregular, as it originated with a question asked by one of Mr. Daubeny's supporters, but it was allowed to proceed for a while. In answer to Mr. Gresham, Mr. Daubeny himself spoke, accusing Mr. Gresham of almost every known Parliamentary vice in having talked of a measure coming, like Minerva, from his, Mr. Daubeny's, own brain. The plain and simple words by which such an accusation might naturally be refuted would be unparliamentary, but it would not be unparliamentary to say that it was reckless, unfounded, absurd, monstrous, and incredible. Then there were various very spirited references to Church matters, which concern us chiefly because Mr. Daubeny congratulated the House upon seeing a Roman Catholic gentleman with whom they were all well acquainted, and whose presence in that House was desired by each side alike, again take his seat for an English borough. And he hoped that he might at the same time take the liberty of congratulating that gentleman on the courage and manly dignity with which he had endured the unexampled hardships of the cruel position in which he had been placed by an untoward combination of circumstances. It was thought that Mr. Daubeny did the thing very well, and that he was right in doing it; but during the doing of it poor Phineas winced in agony. Of course every member was looking at him, and every stranger in the galleries. He did not know at the moment whether it behooved him to rise and make some gesture to the House, or to say a word, or to keep his seat and make no sign. There was a general hum of approval, and the Prime Minister turned round and bowed graciously to the newly sworn member. As he said afterward, it was just this which he had feared. But there must surely have been something of consolation in the general respect with which he was treated. At the moment he behaved with natural instinctive dignity, though himself doubting the propriety of his own conduct. He said not a word, and made no sign, but sat with his eyes fixed upon the member from whom the compliment had come. Mr. Daubeny went on with his tirade, and was called violently to order. The Speaker declared that the whole debate had been irregular, but had been allowed by him in deference to what seemed to be the general will of the House. Then the two leaders of the two parties composed themselves, throwing off their indignation while they covered themselves well up with their hats; and, in accordance with the order of the day, an honourable member rose to propose a pet measure of his own for preventing the adulteration of beer by the publicans. He had made a calculation that the annual average mortality of England would be reduced one and a half per cent., or, in other words, that every English subject born would live seven months longer if the action of the Legislature could provide that the publicans should sell the beer as it came from the brewers. Immediately there was such a rush of members to the door that not a word said by the philanthropic would-be purifier of the national beverage could be heard. The quarrels of rival Ministers were dear to the House, and as long as they could be continued the benches were crowded by gentlemen inthralled by the interest of the occasion. But to sink from that to private legislation about beer was to fall into a bathos which gentlemen could not endure; and so the House was emptied, and at about half past seven there was a count out. That gentleman whose statistics had been procured with so much care, and who had been at work for the last twelve months on his effort to prolong the lives of his fellow-countrymen, was almost broken-hearted. But he knew the world too well to complain. He would try again next year, if by dint of energetic perseverance he could procure a day.

Mr. Monk and Phineas Finn, behaving no better than the others, slipped out in the crowd. It had, indeed, been arranged that they should leave the House early, so that they might dine together at Mr. Monk's house. Though Phineas had been released from his prison now for nearly a month, he had not as yet once dined out of his own rooms. He had not been inside a club, and hardly ventured during the day into the streets about Pall Mall and Piccadilly. He had been frequently to Portman Square, but had not even seen Madame Goesler. Now he was to dine out for the first time; but there was to be no guest but himself.

"It wasn't so bad after all," said Mr. Monk, when they were seated together.

"At any rate it has been done."

"Yes—and there will be no doing of it over again. I don't like Mr. Daubeny, as you know; but he is happy at that kind of thing."

"I hate men who are what you call happy, but who are never in earnest," said Phineas.

"He was earnest enough, I thought."

"I don't mean about myself, Mr. Monk. I suppose he thought that it was suitable to the occasion that he should say something, and he said it neatly. But I hate men who can make capital out of occasions, who can be neat and appropriate at the spur of the moment—having, however, probably had the benefit of some forethought—but whose words never savor of truth. If I had happened to have been hung at this time—as was so probable—Mr. Daubeny would have devoted one of his half hours to the composition of a dozen tragic words which also would have been neat and appropriate. I can hear him say them now, warning young members around him to abstain from imbittered words against each other, and I feel sure that the funereal grace of such an occasion would have become him even better than the generosity of his congratulations."

"It is rather grim matter for joking, Phineas."

"Grim enough; but the grimness and the jokes are always running through my mind together. I used to spend hours in thinking what my dear friends would say about it when they found that I had been hung in mistake—how Sir Gregory Grogram would like it, and whether men would think about it as they went home from the Universe at night. I had various questions to ask and answer for myself—whether they would pull up my poor body, for instance, from what unhallowed ground is used for gallows corpses, and give it decent burial; placing 'M. P. for Tankerville' after my name on some more or less explicit tablet."

"Mr. Daubeny's speech was, perhaps, preferable on the whole."

"Perhaps it was—though I used to feel assured that the explicit tablet would be as clear to my eyes in purgatory as Mr. Daubeny's words have been to my ears this afternoon. I never for a moment doubted that the truth would be known before long, but did doubt so very much whether it would be known in time. I'll go home now, Mr. Monk, and endeavor to get the matter off my mind. I will resolve, at any rate, that nothing shall make me talk about it any more."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

AT MATCHING.

For about a week in the August heat of a hot summer Phineas attended Parliament with fair average punctuality, and then prepared for his journey down to Matching Priory. During that week he spoke no word to any one as to his past tribulation, and answered all allusions to it simply by a smile. He had determined to live exactly as though there had been no such episode in his life as that trial at the Old Bailey, and in most respects he did so. During this week he dined at the club, and called at Madame Goesler's house in Park Lane—not, however, finding the lady at home. Once, and once only, did he break down. On the Wednesday evening he met Barrington Erle, and was asked by him to go to the Universe. At the moment he became very pale, but he at once said that he would go. Had Erle carried him off in a cab the adventure might have been successful; but as they walked, and as they went together through Clarges Street and Bolton Row and Curzon Street, and as the scenes which had been so frequently and so graphically described in court appeared before him, one after another, his heart gave way, and he couldn't do it. "I know I'm a fool, Barrington; but, if you don't mind, I'll go home. Don't mind me, but just go on." Then he turned and walked home, passing through the passage in which the murder had been committed.

"I brought him as far as the next street," Barrington Erle said to one of their friends at the club, "but I couldn't get him in. I doubt if he'll ever be here again."

It was past six o'clock in the evening when he reached Matching Priory. The Duchess had especially assured him that a brougham should be waiting for him at the nearest station, and on arriving there he found that he had the brougham to himself. He had thought a great deal about

it, and had endeavored to make his calculations. He knew that Madame Goesler would be at Matching, and it would be necessary that he should say something of his thankfulness at their first meeting. But how should he meet her, and in what way should he greet her when they met? Would any arrangement be made, or would all be left to chance? Should he go at once to his own chamber, so as to show himself first when dressed for dinner, or should he allow himself to be taken into any of the morning-rooms in which the other guests would be congregated? He had certainly not sufficiently considered the character of the Duchess when he imagined that she would allow these things to arrange themselves. She was one of those women whose minds are always engaged on such matters, and who are able to see how things will go. It must not be asserted of her that her delicacy was untainted, or her taste perfect; but she was clever—discreet in the midst of indiscretions—thoughtful, and good-natured. She had considered it all, arranged it all, and given her orders with accuracy. When Phineas entered the hall—the brougham with the luggage having been taken round to some back-door—he was at once ushered by a silent man in black into the little sitting-room on the ground-floor in which the old Duke used to take delight. Here he found two ladies—but only two ladies—waiting to receive him. The Duchess came forward to welcome him, while Madame Goesler remained in the background, with composed face, as though she by no means expected his arrival, and he had chanced to come upon them as she was standing by the window. He was thinking of her much more than of her companion, though he knew also how much he owed to the kindness of the Duchess. But what she had done for him had come from caprice, whereas the other had been instigated and guided by affection. He understood all that, and must have shown his feeling on his countenance. "Yes, there she is," said the Duchess, laughing. She had already told him that he was welcome to Matching, and had spoken some short word of congratulation at his safe deliverance from his troubles. "If ever one friend was grateful to another, you should be grateful to her, Mr. Finn." He did not speak, but walking across the room to the window by which Marie Goesler stood, took her right hand in his, and passing his left arm round her waist, kissed her first on one cheek and then on the other. The blood flew to her face and suffused her forehead, but she did not speak, or resist him, or make any effort to escape from his embrace. As for him, he had not thought of it at all. He had made no plan. No idea of kissing her when they should meet had occurred to him till the moment came. "Excellently well done," said the Duchess, still laughing with silent, pleasant laughter. "And now tell us how you are after all your troubles."

He remained with them for half an hour, till the ladies went to dress, when he was handed over to some groom of the chambers to show him his room. "The Duke ought to be here to welcome you, of course," said the Duchess; "but you know official matters too well to expect a President of the Board of Trade to do his domestic duties. We dine at eight; five minutes before that time he will begin adding up his last row of figures for the day. You never added up rows of figures, I think. You only managed colonies." So they parted till dinner, and Phineas remembered how very little had been spoken by Madame Goesler, and how few of the words which he had spoken had been addressed to her. She had sat silent, smiling, radiant, very beautiful as he had thought, but contented to listen to her friend the Duchess. She, the Duchess, had asked questions of all sorts, and made many statements; and he had found that with those two women he could speak without discomfort, almost with pleasure, on subjects which he could not bear to have touched by men. "Of course you knew all along who killed the poor man," the Duchess had said. "We did—did we not, Marie?—just as well as if we had seen it. She was quite sure that he had got out of the house and back into it, and that he must have had a key. So she started off to Prague to find the key—and she found it. And we were quite sure, too, about the coat—weren't we? That poor blundering Lord Fawn couldn't explain himself, but we knew that the coat he saw was quite different from any coat you would wear in such weather. We discussed it all over so often—every point of it. Poor Lord Fawn! They say it has made quite an old man of him. And as for those policemen who didn't find the life-preserver, I only think that something ought to be done to them."

"I hope that nothing will ever be done to any body, Duchess."

"Not to the Reverend Mr. Emilius—poor dear Lady Eustace's Mr. Emilius? I do think that you ought to desire that an end should be put to his enterprising career! I'm sure I do." This was said while the attempt was still being made to trace the purchase of the bludgeon in Paris. "We've got Sir Gregory Grogram here on purpose to meet you, and you must fraternize with him immensely to show that you bear no grudge."

"He only did his duty."

"Exactly—though I think he was an addle-pated old ass not to see the thing more clearly. As you'll be coming into the Government before long, we thought that things had better be made straight between you and Sir Gregory. I wonder how it was that nobody but women did see it clearly? Look at that delightful woman, Mrs. Bunce. You must bring Mrs. Bunce to me some day—or take me to her."

"Lord Chiltern saw it clearly enough," said Phineas.

"My dear Mr. Finn, Lord Chiltern is the best fellow in the world, but he has only one idea. He was quite sure of your innocence because you ride to hounds. If it had been found possible to accuse poor Mr. Fothergill, he would have been as certain that Mr. Fothergill committed the murder, because Mr. Fothergill thinks more of his shooting. However, Lord Chiltern is to be here in a day or two, and I mean to go absolutely down on my knees to him—and all for your sake. If foxes can be had, he shall have foxes. We must go and dress now, Mr. Finn, and I'll ring for somebody to show you your room."

Phineas, as soon as he was alone, thought not of what the Duchess had said, but of the manner in which he had greeted his friend Madame Goesler. As he remembered what he had done, he also blushed. Had she been angry with him, and intended to show her anger by her silence? And why had he done it? What

"'YES, THERE SHE IS,' SAID THE DUCHESS, LAUGHING."

had he meant? He was quite sure that he would not have given those kisses had he and Madame Goesler been alone in the room together. The Duchess had applauded him—but yet he thought that he regretted it. There had been matters between him and Marie Goesler of which he was quite sure that the Duchess knew nothing.

When he went down stairs he found a crowd in the drawing-room, from among whom the Duke came forward to welcome him. "I am particularly happy to see you at Matching," said the Duke. "I wish we had shooting to offer you, but we are too far south for the grouse. That was a bitter passage of arms the other day, wasn't it? I am not fond of bitterness in debate myself, but I do regret the roughness of the House of Commons. I must confess that I do." The Duke did not say a word about the trial, and the Duke's guests followed their host's example.

The house was full of people, most of whom had before been known to Phineas, and many of whom had been asked specially to meet him.

Lord and Lady Cantrip were there, and Mr. Monk, and Sir Gregory, his accuser, and the Home Secretary, Sir Harry Coldfoot, with his wife. Sir Harry had at one time been very keen about hanging our hero, and was now, of course, hot with reactionary zeal. To all those who had been in any way concerned in the prosecution the accidents by which Phineas had been enabled to escape had been almost as fortunate as to Phineas himself. Sir Gregory himself quite felt that had he prosecuted an innocent and very popular young member of Parliament to the death, he could never afterward have hoped to wear his ermine in comfort. Barrington Erle was there, of course, intending, however, to return to the duties of his office on the following day, and our old friend Laurence Fitzgibbon, with a newly married wife, a lady possessing a reputed fifty thousand pounds, by which it was hoped that the member for Mayo might be placed steadily upon his legs forever. And Adelaide Palliser was there also—the Duke's first cousin—on whose behalf the Duchess was anxious to be more than ordinarily good-natured. Mr. Maule, Adelaide's rejected lover, had dined on one occasion with the Duke and Duchess in London. There had been nothing remarkable at the dinner, and he had not at all understood why he had been asked. But when he took his leave the Duchess had told him that she would hope to see him at Matching. "We expect a friend of yours to be with us," the Duchess had said. He had afterward received a written invitation, and had accepted it; but he was not to reach Matching till the day after that on which Phineas arrived. Adelaide had been told of his coming only on this morning, and had been much flurried by the news. "But we have quarreled," she said. "Then the best thing you can do is to make it up again, my dear," said the Duchess. Miss Palliser was undoubtedly of that opinion herself, but she hardly believed that so terrible an evil as a quarrel with her lover could be composed by so rough a remedy as this. The Duchess, who had become used to all the disturbing excitements of life, and who didn't pay so much respect as some do to the niceties of a young lady's feelings, thought that it would be only necessary to bring the young people together again. If she could do that, and provide them with an income, of course they would marry. On the present occasion Phineas was told off to take Miss Palliser down to dinner. "You saw the Chilterns before they left town, I know," she said.

"Oh yes. I am constantly in Portman Square."

"Of course. Lady Laura has gone down to Scotland, has she not—and all alone?"

"She is alone now, I believe."

"How dreadful! I do not know any one that I pity so much as I do her. I was in the house with her for some time, and she gave me the idea of being the most unhappy woman I had ever met with. Don't you think that she is very unhappy?"

"She has had very much to make her so," said Phineas. "She was obliged to leave her husband because of the gloom of his insanity; and now she is a widow."

"I don't suppose she ever really—cared for him, did she?" The question was no sooner asked than the poor girl remembered the whole story which she had heard some time back—the rumor of the husband's jealousy and of the wife's love—and she became as red as fire, and unable to help herself. She could think of no word to say, and confessed her confusion by her sudden silence.

Phineas saw it all, and did his best for her. "I am sure she cared for him," he said, "though I do not think it was a well-assorted marriage. They had different ideas about religion, I fancy. So you saw the hunting in the Brake country to the end? How is our old friend Mr. Spooner?"

"Don't talk of him, Mr. Finn."

"I rather like Mr. Spooner; and as for hunting the country, I don't think Chiltern could get on without him. What a capital fellow your cousin the Duke is!"

"I hardly know him."

"He is such a gentleman—and, at the same time, the most abstract and the most concrete man that I know."

"Abstract and concrete!"

"You are bound to use adjectives of that sort now, Miss Palliser, if you mean to be any body in conversation."

"But how is my cousin concrete? He is always abstracted when I speak to him, I know."

"No Englishman whom I have met is so broadly and intuitively and unceremoniously imbued with the simplicity of the character of a gentleman. He could no more lie than he could eat grass."

"Is that abstract or concrete?"

"That's abstract. And I know no one who is so capable of throwing himself into one matter for the sake of accomplishing that one thing at a time. That's concrete." And so the red color faded away from poor Adelaide's face, and the unpleasantness was removed.

"What do you think of Laurence's wife?" Erle said to him late in the evening.

"I have only just seen her. The money is there, I suppose."

"The money is there, I believe; but then it will have to remain there. He can't touch it. There's about £2000 a year, which will have to go back to her family unless they have children."

"I suppose she's—forty?"

"Well, yes, or perhaps forty-five. You were locked up at the time, poor fellow, and had other things to think of; but all the interest we had for any thing beyond you through May and June was devoted to Laurence and his prospects. It was off and on, and on and off, and he was in a most wretched condition. At last she wouldn't consent unless she was to be asked here."

"And who managed it?"

"Laurence came and told it all to the Duchess, and she gave him the invitation at once."

"Who told you?"

"Not the Duchess—nor yet Laurence. So it may be untrue, you know; but I believe it. He did ask me whether he'd have to stand another election at his marriage. He has been going in and out of office so often, and always going back to the County Mayo at the expense of half a year's salary, that his mind had got confused, and he didn't quite know what did and what did not vacate his seat. We must all come to it sooner or later, I suppose, but the question is whether we could do better than an annuity of £2000 a year on the life of the lady. Office isn't very permanent; but one has not to attend the

House above six months a year, while you can't get away from a wife much above a week at a time. It has crippled him in appearance very much, I think."

"A man always looks changed when he's married."

"I hope, Mr. Finn, that you owe me no grudge," said Sir Gregory, the Attorney-General.

"Not in the least; why should I?"

"It was a very painful duty that I had to perform—the most painful that ever befell me. I had no alternative but to do it, of course, and to do it in the hope of reaching the truth. But a counsel for the prosecution must always appear to the accused and his friends like a hound running down his game, and anxious for blood. The habitual and almost necessary acrimony of the defense creates acrimony in the attack. If you were accustomed as I am to criminal courts, you would observe this constantly. A gentleman gets up and declares in perfect faith that he is simply anxious to lay before the jury such evidence as has been placed in his hands. And he opens his case in that spirit. Then his witnesses are cross-examined with the affected incredulity and assumed indignation which the defending counsel is almost bound to use on behalf of his client, and he finds himself gradually imbued with pugnacity. He becomes strenuous, energetic, and perhaps eager for what must, after all, be regarded as success, and at last he fights for a verdict rather than for the truth."

"The judge, I suppose, ought to put all that right?"

"So he does—and it comes right. Our criminal practice does not sin on the side of severity. But a barrister employed on the prosecution should keep himself free from that personal desire for a verdict which must animate those engaged on the defense."

"Then I suppose you wanted to—hang me, Sir Gregory?"

"Certainly not. I wanted the truth. But you, in your position, must have regarded me as a blood-hound?"

"I did not. As far as I can analyze my own feelings, I entertained anger only against those who, though they knew me well, thought that I was guilty."

"You will allow me, at any rate, to shake hands with you," said Sir Gregory, "and to assure you that I should have lived a broken-hearted man if the truth had been known too late. As it is, I tremble and shake in my shoes as I walk about and think of what might have been done." Then Phineas gave his hand to Sir Gregory, and from that time forth was inclined to think well of Sir Gregory.

Throughout the whole evening he was unable to speak to Madame Goesler, but to the other people around him he found himself talking quite at his ease, as though nothing peculiar had happened to him. Almost every body, except the Duke, made some slight allusion to his adventure, and he, in spite of his resolution to the contrary, found himself driven to talk of it. It had seemed quite natural that Sir Gregory—who had in truth been eager for his condemnation, thinking him to have been guilty—should come to him and make peace with him by telling him of the nature of the work that had been imposed upon him; and when Sir Harry Coldfoot assured him that never in his life had his mind been relieved of so heavy a weight as when he received the information about the key, that also was natural. A few days ago he had thought that these allusions would kill him. The prospect of them had kept him a prisoner in his lodgings; but now he smiled and chatted, and was quiet and at ease.

"Good-night, Mr. Finn," the Duchess said to him; "I know the people have been boring you."

"Not in the least."

"I saw Sir Gregory at it, and I can guess what Sir Gregory was talking about."

"I like Sir Gregory, Duchess."

"That shows a very Christian disposition on your part. And then there was Sir Harry. I understood it all, but I could not hinder it. But it had to be done, hadn't it? And now there will be an end of it."

"Every body has treated me very well," said Phineas, almost in tears. "Some people have been so kind to me that I can not understand why it should have been so."

"Because some people are your very excellent good friends. We—that is, Marie and I, you know—thought it would be the best thing for you to come down and get through it all here. We could see that you weren't driven too hard. By-the-bye, you have hardly seen her, have you?"

"Hardly, since I was up stairs with your Grace."

"My Grace will manage better for you to-morrow. I didn't like to tell you to take her out to dinner, because it would have looked a little particular after her very remarkable journey to Prague. If you ain't grateful you must be a wretch."

"But I am grateful."

"Well, we shall see. Good-night. You'll find a lot of men going to smoke somewhere, I don't doubt."

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE TRUMPETON FEUD IS SETTLED.

In these fine early autumn days spent at Matching the great Trumpeton Wood question was at last settled. During the summer considerable acerbity had been added to the matter by certain articles which had appeared in certain sporting papers, in which the new Duke of Omnium was accused of neglecting his duty to the county in which a portion of his property lay. The question was argued at considerable length. Is a landed proprietor bound, or is he not, to keep foxes for the amusement of his neighbors? To ordinary thinkers, to unprejudiced outsiders—to Americans, let us say, or Frenchmen—there does not seem to be room even for an argument. By what law of God or man can a man be bound to maintain a parcel of injurious vermin on his property, in the pursuit of which he finds no sport himself, and which are highly detrimental to another sport in which he takes, perhaps, the keenest interest? Trumpeton Wood was the Duke's own—to do just as he pleased with it. Why should foxes be demanded from him, then, any more than a bear to be baited, or a badger to be drawn, in, let us say, his London dining-room? But a good deal had been said, which, though not perhaps capable of convincing the unprejudiced American or Frenchman, had been regarded as