

cogent arguments to country-bred Englishmen. The Brake Hunt had been established for a great many years, and was the central attraction of a district well known for its hunting propensities. The preservation of foxes might be an open question in such counties as Norfolk and Suffolk, but could not be so in the Brake country. Many things are, no doubt, permissible under the law which, if done, would show the doer of them to be the enemy of his species—and this destruction of foxes in a hunting country may be named as one of them. The Duke might have his foxes destroyed if he pleased, but he could hardly do so and remain a popular magnate in England. If he chose to put himself in opposition to the desires and very instincts of the people among whom his property was situated, he must live as a "man forbid." That was the general argument, and then there was the argument special to this particular case. As it happened, Trumpet Wood was, and always had been, the great nursery of foxes for that side of the Brake country. Gorse coverts make, no doubt, the charm of hunting, but gorse coverts will not hold foxes unless the woodlands be preserved. The fox is a traveling animal. Knowing well that "home-staying youths have ever homely wits," he goes out and sees the world. He is either born in the woodlands, or wanders thither in his early youth. If all foxes so wandering be doomed to death—if poison, and wires, and traps, and hostile keepers await them there instead of the tender welcome of the loving fox-preserver, the gorse coverts will soon be empty, and the whole country will be afflicted with a wild dismay. All which Lord Chiltern understood well when he became so loud in his complaint against the Duke.

But our dear old friend, only the other day a duke, Planty Pall, as he was lately called, devoted to work and to Parliament, an unselfish, friendly, wise man, who by no means wanted other men to cut their coats according to his pattern, was the last man in England to put himself forward as the enemy of an established delight. He did not hunt himself—but neither did he shoot, or fish, or play cards. He recreated himself with blue-books, and speculations on Adam Smith had been his distraction; but he knew that he was himself peculiar, and he respected the habits of others. It had fallen out in this wise. As the old Duke had become very old, the old Duke's agent had gradually acquired more than an agent's proper influence in the property; and as the Duke's heir would not shoot himself, or pay attention to the shooting, and as the Duke would not let the shooting of his wood, Mr. Fothergill, the steward, had gradually become omnipotent. Now Mr. Fothergill was not a hunting man; but the mischief did not at all lie there. Lord Chiltern would not communicate with Mr. Fothergill. Lord Chiltern would write to the Duke, and Mr. Fothergill became an established enemy. *Hinc illæ iræ.* From this source sprung all those powerfully argued articles in *The Field*, *Bell's Life*, and *Land and Water*—for on this matter all the sporting papers were of one mind.

There is doubtless something absurd in the intensity of the worship paid to the fox by hunting communities. The animal becomes sacred, and his preservation is a religion. His irregular destruction is a profanity, and words spoken to his

injury are blasphemous. Not long since a gentleman shot a fox running across a woodland ride in a hunting country. He had mistaken it for a hare, and had done the deed in the presence of keepers, owner, and friends. His feelings were so acute and his remorse so great that, in their pity, they all resolved to spare him; and then, on the spot, entered into a solemn compact that no one should be told. Encouraged by the forbearing tenderness, the unfortunate one ventured to return to the house of his friend, the owner of the wood, hoping that, in spite of the sacrilege committed, he might be able to face a world that would be ignorant of his crime. As the vespere, on the afternoon of the day of the deed, went along the corridor to his room, one maid-servant whispered to another, and the poor victim of an imperfect sight heard the words—"That's he as shot the fox!" The gentleman did not appear at dinner, nor was he ever again seen in those parts.

Mr. Fothergill had become angry. Lord Chiltern, as we know, had been very angry. And even the Duke was angry. The Duke was angry because Lord Chiltern had been violent; and Lord Chiltern had been violent because Mr. Fothergill's conduct had been, to his thinking, not only sacrilegious, but one continued course of willful sacrilege. It may be said of Lord Chiltern that in his eagerness as a Master of Hounds he had almost abandoned his own love of riding. To kill a certain number of foxes in the year, after the legitimate fashion, had become to him the one great study of life—and he did it with an energy equal to that which the Duke devoted to decimal coinage. His huntsman was always well mounted, with two horses; but Lord Chiltern would give up his own to the man, and take charge of a weary animal as a common groom, when he found that he might thus further the object of the day's sport. He worked as men work only at pleasure. He never missed a day, even when cub-hunting required that he should leave his bed at 3 A.M. He was constant at his kennel. He was always thinking about it. He devoted his life to the Brake hounds. And it was too much for him that such a one as Mr. Fothergill should be allowed to wire foxes in Trumpet Wood! The Duke's property, indeed! Surely all that was understood in England by this time. Now he had consented to come to Matching, bringing his wife with him, in order that this matter might be settled. There had been a threat that he would give up the country in which it was declared that it would be impossible to carry on the Brake Hunt in a manner satisfactory to masters, subscribers, owners of coverts, or farmers, unless a different order of things should be made to prevail in regard to Trumpet Wood.

The Duke, however, had declined to interfere personally. He had told his wife that he should be delighted to welcome Lord and Lady Chiltern—as he would any other friends of hers. The guests, indeed, at the Duke's house were never his guests, but always hers. But he could not allow himself to be brought into an argument with Lord Chiltern as to the management of his own property. The Duchess was made to understand that she must prevent any such awkwardness. And she did prevent it. "And now, Lord Chiltern," she said, "how about the foxes?"

She had taken care that there should be a council of war around her. Lady Chiltern and Madame Goesler were present, and also Phineas Finn.

"Well, how about them?" said the lord, showing by the fiery eagerness of his eye and the increased redness of the face that though the matter had been introduced somewhat jocosely, there could not really be any joke about it.

"Why couldn't you keep it all out of the newspapers?"

"I don't write the newspapers, Duchess. I can't help the newspapers. When two hundred men ride through Trumpet Wood, and see one fox found, and that fox with only three pads, of course the newspapers will say that the foxes are trapped."

"We may have traps if we like it, Lord Chiltern."

"Certainly; only say so, and we shall know where we are." He looked very angry, and poor Lady Chiltern was covered with dismay. "The Duke can destroy the hunt if he pleases, no doubt," said the lord.

"But we don't like traps, Lord Chiltern—nor yet poison, nor any thing that is wicked. I'd go and nurse the foxes myself if I knew how—wouldn't I, Marie?"

"They have robbed the Duchess of her sleep for the last six months," said Madame Goesler.

"And if they go on being not properly brought up and educated, they'll make an old woman of me. As for the Duke, he can't be comfortable in his arithmetic for thinking of them. But what can one do?"

"Change your keepers," said Lord Chiltern, energetically.

"It is easy to say—change your keepers. How am I to set about it? To whom can I apply to appoint others? Don't you know what vested interests mean, Lord Chiltern?"

"Then nobody can manage his own property as he pleases?"

"Nobody can—unless he does the work himself. If I were to go and live in Trumpet Wood, I could do it; but you see I have to live here. I vote that we have an officer of State, to go in and out with the Government—with a seat in the Cabinet or not, according as things go—and that we call him Foxmaster-General. It would be just the thing for Mr. Finn."

"There would be a salary, of course," said Phineas.

"Then I suppose that nothing can be done," said Lord Chiltern.

"My dear Lord Chiltern, every thing has been done. Vested interests have been attended to. Keepers shall prefer foxes to pheasants, wires shall be unheard of, and Trumpet Wood shall once again be the glory of the Brake Hunt. It won't cost the Duke above a thousand or two a year."

"I should be very sorry indeed to put the Duke to any unnecessary expense," said Lord Chiltern, solemnly, still fearing that the Duchess was only playing with him. It made him angry that he could not imbue other people with his idea of the seriousness of the amusement of a whole county.

"Do not think of it. We have pensioned poor Mr. Fothergill, and he retires from the administration."

"Then it'll be all right," said Lord Chiltern. "I am so glad," said his wife.

"And so the great Mr. Fothergill falls from power, and goes down into obscurity," said Madame Goesler.

"He was an impudent old man, and that's the truth," said the Duchess; "and he has always been my thorough detestation. But if you only knew what I have gone through to get rid of him—and all on account of Trumpet Wood—you'd send me every brush taken in the Brake country during the next season."

"Your Grace shall, at any rate, have one of them," said Lord Chiltern.

On the next day Lord and Lady Chiltern went back to Harrington Hall. When the end of August comes, a Master of Hounds—who is really a master—is wanted at home. Nothing short of an embassy on behalf of the great coverts of his country would have kept this Master away at present; and now, his diplomacy having succeeded, he hurried back to make the most of its results. Lady Chiltern, before she went, made a little speech to Phineas Finn.

"You'll come to us in the winter, Mr. Finn?"

"I should like."

"You must. No one was truer to you than we were, you know. Indeed, regarding you as we do, how should we not have been true? It was impossible to me that my old friend should have been—"

"Oh, Lady Chiltern!"

"Of course you'll come. You owe it to us to come. And may I say this? If there be any body to come with you, that will make it only so much the better. If it should be so, of course there will be letters written." To this question, however, Phineas Finn made no answer.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

MADAME GOESLER'S LEGACY.

ONE morning, very shortly after her return to Harrington, Lady Chiltern was told that Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall had called, and desired to see her. She suggested that the gentleman had probably asked for her husband, who at that moment was enjoying his recovered supremacy in the centre of Trumpet Wood; but she was assured that on this occasion Mr. Spooner's mission was to herself. She had no quarrel with Mr. Spooner, and she went to him at once. After the first greeting he rushed into the subject of the great triumph. "So we've got rid of Mr. Fothergill, Lady Chiltern."

"Yes; Mr. Fothergill will not, I believe, trouble us any more. He is an old man, it seems, and has retired from the Duke's service."

"I can't tell you how glad I am, Lady Chiltern. We were afraid that Chiltern would have thrown it up, and then I don't know where we should have been. England would not have been England any longer, to my thinking, if we hadn't won the day. It'd have been just like a French revolution. Nobody would have known what was coming or where he was going."

That Mr. Spooner should be enthusiastic on any hunting question was a matter of course; but still it seemed to be odd that he should have driven himself over from Spoon Hall to pour his

feelings into Lady Chiltern's ear. "We shall go on very nicely now, I don't doubt," said she; "and I'm sure that Lord Chiltern will be glad to find that you are pleased."

"I am very much pleased, I can tell you." Then he paused, and the tone of his voice was changed altogether when he spoke again. "But I didn't come over only about that, Lady Chiltern. Miss Palliser has not come back with you, Lady Chiltern?"

"We left Miss Palliser at Matching. You know she is the Duke's cousin."

"I wish she wasn't, with all my heart."

"Why should you want to rob her of her relations, Mr. Spooner?"

"Because—because— I don't want to say a word against her, Lady Chiltern. To me she is perfect as a star, beautiful as a rose." Mr. Spooner, as he said this, pointed first to the heavens and then to the earth. "But perhaps she wouldn't have been so proud of her grandfather hadn't he been a duke."

"I don't think she is proud of that."

"People do think of it, Lady Chiltern; and I don't say that they ought not. Of course it makes a difference, and when a man lives altogether in the country, as I do, it seems to signify so much more. But if you go back to old county families, Lady Chiltern, the Spooners have been here pretty nearly as long as the Pallisers—if not longer. The Desponders, from whom we come, came over with William the Conqueror."

"I have always heard that there isn't a more respectable family in the county."

"That there isn't. There was a grant of land which took their name, and became the Manor of Despond; there's where Spoon Hall is now. Sir Thomas Desponder was one of those who demanded the Charter, though his name wasn't always given, because he wasn't a baron. Perhaps Miss Palliser does not know all that."

"I doubt whether she cares about those things."

"Women do care about them—very much. Perhaps she has heard of the two spoons crossed, and doesn't know that that was a stupid, vulgar practical joke. Our crest is a knight's head bowed, with the motto, 'Desperandum.' Soon after the Conquest one of the Desponders fell in love with the Queen, and never would give it up, though it wasn't any good. Her name was Matilda; and so he went as a Crusader and got killed. But wherever he went he had the knight's head bowed and the motto on the shield."

"What a romantic story, Mr. Spooner!"

"Isn't it? And it's quite true. That's the way we became Spooners. I never told her of it, but somehow I wish I had now. It always seemed that she didn't think that I was any body."

"The truth is, Mr. Spooner, that she was always thinking that somebody else was every thing. When a gentleman is told that a lady's affections have been pre-engaged, however much he may regret the circumstances, he can not, I think, feel any hurt to his pride. If I understand the matter, Miss Palliser explained to you that she was engaged when first you spoke to her."

"You are speaking of young Gerard Maule?"

"Of course I am speaking of Mr. Maule."

"But she has quarreled with him, Lady Chiltern."

"Don't you know what such quarrels come to?"

"Well, no. That is to say, every body tells me that it is really broken off, and that he has gone nobody knows where. At any rate he never shows himself. He doesn't mean it, Lady Chiltern."

"I don't know what he means."

"And he can't afford it, Lady Chiltern. I mean it, and I can afford it. Surely that might go for something."

"I can not say what Mr. Maule may mean to do, Mr. Spooner, but I think it only fair to tell you that he is at present staying at Matching, under the same roof with Miss Palliser."

"Maule staying at the Duke's!" When Mr. Spooner heard this, there came a sudden change over his face. His jaw fell, and his mouth was opened, and the redness of his cheeks flew up to his forehead.

"He was expected there yesterday, and I need hardly suggest to you what will be the end of the quarrel."

"Going to the Duke's won't give him an income."

"I know nothing about that, Mr. Spooner. But it really seems to me that you misinterpret the nature of the affections of such a girl as Miss Palliser. Do you think it likely that she should cease to love a man because he is not so rich as another?"

"People, when they are married, want a house to live in, Lady Chiltern. Now at Spoon Hall—"

"Believe me, that is in vain, Mr. Spooner."

"You are quite sure of it?"

"Quite sure."

"I'd have done any thing for her—any thing! She might have had what settlements she pleased. I told Ned that he must go, if she made a point of it. I'd have gone abroad, or lived just any where. I'd come to that, that I didn't mind the hunting a bit."

"I'm sorry for you—I am, indeed."

"It cuts a fellow all to pieces so! And yet what is it all about? A slip of a girl that isn't any thing so very much out of the way after all. Lady Chiltern, I shouldn't care if the horses kicked the trap all to pieces going back to Spoon Hall, and me with it."

"You'll get over it, Mr. Spooner."

"Get over it! I suppose I shall; but I shall never be as I was. I've been always thinking of the day when there must be a lady at Spoon Hall, and putting it off, you know. There'll never be a lady there now—never. You don't think there's any chance at all?"

"I'm sure there is none."

"I'd give half I've got in all the world," said the wretched man, "just to get it out of my head. I know what it will come to." Though he paused, Lady Chiltern could ask no question respecting Mr. Spooner's future prospects. "It'll be two bottles of Champagne at dinner, and two bottles of claret afterward, every day. I only hope she'll know that she did it. Good-by, Lady Chiltern. I thought that perhaps you'd have helped me."

"I can not help you."

"Good-by." So he went down to his trap, and drove himself violently home—without, however, achieving the ruin which he desired. Let us hope that as time cures his wound, that threat as to increased consumption of wine may fall to the ground unfulfilled.

In the mean time Gerard Maule had arrived at

Matching Priory. "We have quarreled," Adelaide had said when the Duchess told her that her lover was to come. "Then you had better make it up again," the Duchess had answered—and there had been an end of it. Nothing more was done; no arrangement was made; and Adelaide was left to meet the man as best she might. The quarrel to her had been as the disruption of the heavens. She had declared to herself that she would bear it; but the misfortune to be borne was a broken world falling about her own ears. She had thought of a nunnery, of Ophelia among the water-lilies, and of an early death-bed. Then she had pictured to herself the somewhat ascetic and very laborious life of an old maiden lady whose only recreation fifty years hence should consist in looking at the portrait of him who had once been her lover. And now she was told that he was coming to Matching, as though nothing had been the matter! She tried to think whether it was not her duty to have her things at once packed, and ask for a carriage to take her to the railway station. But she was in the house of her nearest relative—of him and also of her who were bound to see that things were right; and then there might be a more pleasurable existence than that which would have to depend on a photograph for its keenest delight. But how should she meet him? In what way should she address him? Should she ignore the quarrel, or recognize it, or take some milder course? She was half afraid of the Duchess, and could not ask for assistance. And the Duchess, though good-natured, seemed to her to be rough. There was nobody at Matching to whom she could say a word; so she lived on, and trembled, and doubted from hour to hour whether the world would not come to an end.

The Duchess was rough, but she was very good-natured. She had contrived that the two lovers should be brought into the same house, and did not doubt at all but what they would be able to adjust their own little differences when they met. Her experiences of the world had certainly made her more alive to the material prospects than to the delicate aroma of a love adventure. She had been greatly knocked about herself, and the material prospects had come uppermost. But all that had happened to her had tended to open her hand to other people, and had enabled her to be good-natured with delight, even when she knew that her friends imposed upon her. She didn't care much for Laurence Fitzgibbon; but when she was told that the lady with money would not consent to marry the aristocratic pauper except on condition that she should be received at Matching, the Duchess at once gave the invitation. And now, though she couldn't go into the "fallowery," as she called it to Madame Goesler, of settling a meeting between two young people who had fallen out, she worked hard till she accomplished something perhaps more important to their future happiness. "Plantagenet," she said, "there can be no objection to your cousin having that money."

"My dear!"

"Oh, come; you must remember about Adelaide and that young man who is coming here to-day."

"You told me that Adelaide is to be married. I don't know any thing about the young man."

"His name is Maule, and he is a gentleman,

and all that. Some day, when his father dies, he'll have a small property somewhere."

"I hope he has a profession."

"No, he has not. I told you all that before."

"If he has nothing at all, Glencora, why did he ask a young lady to marry him?"

"Oh dear! what's the use of going into all that? He has got something. They'll do immensely well, if you'll only listen. She is your first cousin."

"Of course she is," said Plantagenet, lifting up his hand to his hair.

"And you are bound to do something for her."

"No, I am not bound. But I'm very willing—if you wish it. Put the thing on a right footing."

"I hate footings—that is, right footings. We can manage this without taking money out of your pocket."

"My dear Glencora, if I am to give my cousin money, I shall do so by putting my hand into my own pocket in preference to that of any other person."

"Madame Goesler says that she'll sign all the papers about the Duke's legacy—the money, I mean—if she may be allowed to make it over to the Duke's niece."

"Of course Madame Goesler may do what she likes with her own. I can not hinder her. But I would rather that you should not interfere. Twenty-five thousand pounds is a very serious sum of money."

"You won't take it?"

"Certainly not."

"Nor will Madame Goesler; and therefore there can be no reason why these young people should not have it. Of course Adelaide being the Duke's niece does make a difference. Why else should I care about it? She is nothing to me; and as for him, I shouldn't know him again if I were to meet him in the street."

And so the thing was settled. The Duke was powerless against the energy of his wife, and the lawyer was instructed that Madame Goesler would take the proper steps for putting herself into possession of the Duke's legacy—as far as the money was concerned—with the view of transferring it to the Duke's niece, Miss Adelaide Palliser. As for the diamonds, the difficulty could not be solved. Madame Goesler still refused to take them, and desired her lawyer to instruct her as to the form by which she could most thoroughly and conclusively renounce that legacy.

Gerard Maule had his ideas about the meeting which would of course take place at Matching. He would not, he thought, have been asked there had it not been intended that he should marry Adelaide. He did not care much for the grandeur of the Duke and Duchess, but he was conscious of certain profitable advantages which might accrue from such an acknowledgment of his position from the great relatives of his intended bride. It would be something to be married from the house of the Duchess, and to receive his wife from the Duke's hand. His father would probably be driven to acquiesce, and people who were almost omnipotent in the world would at any rate give him a start. He expected no money; nor did he possess that character, whether it be good or bad, which is given to such expectation. But there would be encouragement, and the thing would probably be done. As for the meeting, he would take her in his arms, if he

found her alone, and beg her pardon for that cross word about Boulogne. He would assure her that Boulogne itself would be a heaven to him if she were with him—and he thought that she would believe him. When he reached the house he was asked into a room in which a lot of people were playing billiards, or crowded round a billiard-table. The Chilterns were gone, and he was at first ill at ease, finding no friend. Madame Goesler, who had met him at Harrington, came up to him, and told him that the Duchess would be there directly, and then Phineas, who had been playing at the moment of his entrance, shook hands with him, and said a word or two about the Chilterns. "I was so delighted to hear of your acquittal," said Maule.

"We never talk about that now," said Phineas, going back to his stroke. Adelaide Palliser was not present, and the difficulty of the meeting had not yet been encountered. They all remained in the billiard-room till it was time for the ladies to dress, and Adelaide had not yet ventured to show herself. Somebody offered to take him to his room, and he was conducted up stairs, and told that they dined at eight; but nothing had been arranged. Nobody had as yet mentioned her name to him. Surely it could not be that she had gone away when she heard that he was coming, and that she was really determined to make the quarrel perpetual! He had three-quarters of an hour in which to get ready for dinner, and he felt himself to be uncomfortable and out of his element. He had been sent to his chamber prematurely, because nobody had known what to do with him; and he wished himself back in London. The Duchess, no doubt, had intended to be good-natured, but she had made a mistake. So he sat by his open window, and looked out on the ruins of the old Priory, which were close to the house, and wondered why he mightn't have been allowed to wander about the garden instead of being shut up there in a bedroom. But he felt that it would be unwise to attempt any escape now. He would meet the Duke or the Duchess, or perhaps Adelaide herself, in some of the passages—and there would be an embarrassment. So he dawdled away the time, looking out of the window as he dressed, and descended to the drawing-room at eight o'clock. He shook hands with the Duke, and was welcomed by the Duchess, and then glanced round the room. There she was, seated on a sofa between two other ladies, of whom one was his friend Madame Goesler. It was essentially necessary that he should notice her in some way, and he walked up to her and offered her his hand. It was impossible that he should allude to what was past, and he merely muttered something as he stood over her. She blushed up to her eyes, and was absolutely dumb. "Mr. Maule, perhaps you'll take our cousin Adelaide out to dinner," said the Duchess, a moment afterward, whispering in his ear.

"Have you forgiven me?" he said to her, as they passed from one room to the other.

"I will—if you care to be forgiven." The Duchess had been quite right, and the quarrel was all over without any arrangement.

On the following morning he was allowed to walk about the grounds without any impediment, and to visit the ruins which had looked so charming to him from the window. Nor was he alone.

Miss Palliser was now by no means anxious, as she had been yesterday, to keep out of the way, and was willingly persuaded to show him all the beauties of the place.

"I shouldn't have said what I did, I know," pleaded Maule.

"Never mind it now, Gerard."

"I mean about going to Boulogne."

"It did sound so melancholy."

"But I only meant that we should have to be very careful how we lived. I don't know quite whether I am so good at being careful about money as a fellow ought to be."

"You must take a lesson from me, Sir."

"I have sent the horses to Tattersall's," he said, in a tone that was almost funereal.

"What! already?"

"I gave the order yesterday. They are to be sold—I don't know when. They won't fetch any thing. They never do. One always buys bad horses there for a lot of money, and sells good ones for nothing. Where the difference goes to I never could make out."

"I suppose the man gets it who sells them."

"No, he don't. The fellows get it who have their eyes open. My eyes never were open—except as far as seeing you went."

"Perhaps if you had opened them wider, you wouldn't have to go to—"

"Don't, Adelaide. But, as I was saying about the horses—when they're sold, of course the bills won't go on. And I suppose things will come right. I don't owe so very much."

"I've got something to tell you," she said.

"What about?"

"You're to see my cousin to-day at two o'clock."

"The Duke?"

"Yes, the Duke; and he has got a proposition. I don't know that you need sell your horses, as it seems to make you so very unhappy. You remember Madame Goesler?"

"Of course I do. She was at Harrington."

"There's something about a legacy which I can't understand at all. It is ever so much money, and it did belong to the old Duke. They say it is to be mine—or yours, rather, if we should ever be married. And then, you know, Gerard, perhaps, after all, you needn't go—to Boulogne." So she took her revenge, and he had his as he pressed his arm round her waist and kissed her among the ruins of the old Priory.

Precisely at two to the moment he had his interview with the Duke, and very disagreeable it was to both of them. The Duke was bound to explain that the magnificent present which was being made to his cousin was a gift not from him, but from Madame Goesler; and though he was intent on making this as plain as possible, he did not like the task. "The truth is, Mr. Maule, that Madame Goesler is unwilling, for reasons for which I need not trouble you, to take the legacy which was left to her by my uncle. I think her reasons to be insufficient, but it is a matter in which she must, of course, judge for herself. She has decided—very much, I fear, at my wife's instigation, which I must own I regret—to give the money to one of our family, and has been pleased to say that my cousin Adelaide shall be the recipient of her bounty. I have nothing to do with it. I can not stop her generosity if I would, nor can I say that my cousin ought to refuse it. Adelaide will have the en-

tire sum as her fortune, short by the legacy duty, which, as you are probably aware, will be ten per cent., as Madame Goesler was not related to my uncle. The money will of course be settled on my cousin and on her children. I believe that will be all I shall have to say, except that Lady Glencora—the Duchess, I mean—wishes that Adelaide shall be married from our house. If this be so, I shall, of course, hope to have the honor of giving my cousin away." The Duke was by no means a pompous man, and probably there was no man in England of so high rank who thought so little of his rank. But he was stiff and somewhat ungainly, and the task which he was called upon to execute had been very disagreeable to him. He bowed when he had finished his speech, and Gerard Maule felt himself bound to go, almost without expressing his thanks.

"My dear Mr. Maule," said Madame Goesler, "you literally must not say a word to me about it. The money was not mine, and under no circumstances would or could be mine. I have given nothing, and could not have presumed to make such a present. The money, I take it, does undoubtedly belong to the present Duke, and as he does not want it, it is very natural that it should go to his cousin. I trust that you may both live to enjoy it long, but I can not allow any thanks to be given to me by either of you."

After that he tried the Duchess, who was somewhat more gracious. "The truth is, Mr. Maule, you are a very lucky man to find twenty thousand pounds and more going begging about the country in that way."

"Indeed I am, Duchess."

"And Adelaide is lucky too, for I doubt whether either of you are given to any very penetrating economies. I am told that you like hunting."

"I have sent my horses to Tattersall's."

"There is enough now for a little hunting, I suppose, unless you have a dozen children; and now you and Adelaide must settle when it's to be. I hate things to be delayed. People go on quarreling, and fancying this and that, and thinking that the world is full of romance and poetry. When they get married they know better."

"I hope the romance and poetry do not all vanish."

"Romance and poetry are for the most part lies, Mr. Maule, and are very apt to bring people into difficulty. I have seen something of them in my time, and I much prefer downright honest figures. Two and two make four; idleness is the root of all evil; love your neighbor like yourself—and the rest of it. Pray remember that Adelaide is to be married from here, and that we shall be very happy that you should make every use you like of our house until then."

We may so far anticipate in our story as to say that Adelaide Palliser and Gerard Maule were married from Matching Priory, at Matching Church, early in that October, and that, as far as the coming winter was concerned, there certainly was no hunting for the gentleman. They went to Naples instead of Boulogne, and there remained till the warm weather came in the following spring. Nor was that peremptory sale at Tattersall's countermanded as regarded any of the horses. What prices were realized the present writer has never been able to ascertain.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

PHINEAS FINN'S SUCCESS.

WHEN Phineas Finn had been about a week at Matching he received a letter, or rather a very short note, from the Prime Minister, asking him to go up to London; and on the same day the Duke of Omnium spoke to him on the subject of the letter. "You are going up to see Mr. Gresham. Mr. Gresham has written to me, and I hope that we shall be able to congratulate ourselves in having your assistance next session." Phineas declared that he had no idea whatever of Mr. Gresham's object in summoning him up to London. "I have his permission to inform you that he wishes you to accept office." Phineas felt that he was becoming very red in the face, but he did not attempt to make any reply on the spur of the moment. "Mr. Gresham thinks it well that so much should be said to you before you see him, in order that you may turn the matter over in your own mind. He would have written to you probably, making the offer at once, had it not been that there must be various changes, and that one man's place must depend on another. You will go, I suppose."

"Yes, I shall go, certainly. I shall be in London this evening."

"I shall take care that a carriage is ready for you. I do not presume to advise, Mr. Finn, but I hope that there need be no doubt as to your joining us." Phineas was somewhat confounded, and did not know the Duke well enough to give expression to his thoughts at the moment. "Of course you will return to us, Mr. Finn."

Phineas said that he would return and trespass on the Duke's hospitality for yet a few days. He was quite resolved that something must be said to Madame Goesler before he left the roof under which she was living. In the course of the autumn she purposed, as she had told him, to go to Vienna, and to remain there almost up to Christmas. Whatever there might be to be said should be said, at any rate, before that.

He did speak a few words to her before his journey to London, but in those words there was no allusion made to the great subject which must be discussed between them. "I am going up to London," he said.

"So the Duchess tells me."

"Mr. Gresham has sent for me—meaning, I suppose, to offer me the place which he would not give me while that poor man was alive."

"And you will accept it, of course, Mr. Finn?"

"I am not at all so sure of that."

"But you will. You must. You will hardly be so foolish as to let the peevish animosity of an ill-conditioned man prejudice your prospects even after his death."

"It will not be any remembrance of Mr. Bonteen that will induce me to refuse."

"It will be the same thing; rancor against Mr. Gresham because he had allowed the other man's counsel to prevail with him. The action of no individual man should be to you of sufficient consequence to guide your conduct. If you accept office, you should not take it as a favor conferred by the Prime Minister; nor, if you refuse it, should you do so from personal feelings in regard to him. If he selects you, he is presumed to do so because he finds that your services will be valuable to the country."

"He does so because he thinks that I should be safe to vote for him."

"That may be so, or not. You can't read his bosom quite distinctly; but you may read your own. If you go into office you become the servant of the country, not his servant, and should assume his motive in selecting you to be the same as your own in submitting to the selection. Your foot must be on the ladder before you can get to the top of it."

"The ladder is so crooked."

"Is it more crooked now than it was three years ago—worse than it was six months ago, when you and all your friends looked upon it as certain that you would be employed? There is nothing, Mr. Finn, that a man should fear so much as some twist in his convictions arising from a personal accident to himself. When we heard that the devil in his sickness wanted to be a monk, we never thought that he would become a saint in glory. When a man who has been rejected by a lady expresses a general ill opinion of the sex, we are apt to ascribe his opinions to disappointment rather than to judgment. A man falls and breaks his leg at a fence, and can not be induced to ride again—not because he thinks the amusement to be dangerous, but because he can not keep his mind from dwelling on the hardship that has befallen himself. In all such cases self-consciousness gets the better of the judgment."

"You think it will be so with me?"

"I shall think so if you now refuse, because of the misfortune which befell you, that which I know you were most desirous of possessing before that accident. To tell you the truth, Mr. Finn, I wish Mr. Gresham had delayed his offer till the winter."

"And why?"

"Because by that time you will have recovered your health. Your mind now is morbid, and out of tune."

"There was something to make it so, Madame Goesler."

"God knows there was; and the necessity which lay upon you of bearing a bold front during those long and terrible weeks of course consumed your strength. The wonder is that the fibres of your mind should have retained any of their elasticity after such an ordeal. But as you are so strong, it would be a pity that you should not be strong altogether. This thing that is now to be offered to you is what you have always desired."

"A man may have always desired that which is worthless."

"You tried it once, and did not find it worthless. You found yourself able to do good work when you were in office. If I remember right, you did not give it up then because it was irksome to you, or contemptible, or, as you say, worthless, but from difference of opinion on some political question. You can always do that again."

"A man is not fit for office who is prone to do so."

"Then do not you be prone. It means success or failure in the profession which you have chosen, and I shall greatly regret to see you damage your chance of success by yielding to scruples which have come upon you when you are hardly as yet yourself."

She had spoken to him very plainly, and he had found it to be impossible to answer her, and yet she had hardly touched the motives by which he believed himself to be actuated. As he made his journey up to London he thought very much of her words. There had been nothing said between them about money. No allusion had been made to the salary of the office which would be offered to him, or to the terrible shortness of his own means of living. He knew well enough himself that he must take some final step in life, or very shortly return into absolute obscurity. This woman, who had been so strongly advising him to take a certain course as to his future life, was very rich; and he had fully decided that he would sooner or later ask her to be his wife. He knew well that all her friends regarded their marriage as certain. The Duchess had almost told him so in as many words. Lady Chiltern, who was much more to him than the Duchess, had assured him that if he should have a wife to bring with him to Harrington, the wife would be welcome. Of what other wife could Lady Chiltern have thought? Laurence Fitzgibbon, when congratulated on his own marriage, had returned counter-congratulations. Mr. Low had said that it would of course come to pass. Even Mrs. Bunce had hinted at it, suggesting that she would lose her lodger and be a wretched woman. All the world had heard of the journey to Prague, and all the world expected the marriage. And he had come to love the woman with excessive affection, day by day, ever since the renewal of their intimacy at Broughton Spinnies. His mind was quite made up; but he was by no means so sure of her mind as the rest of the world might be. He knew of her what nobody else in all the world knew, except himself. In that former period of his life, on which he now sometimes looked back as though it had been passed in another world, this woman had offered her hand and fortune to him. She had done so in the enthusiasm of her love, knowing his ambition and knowing his poverty, and believing that her wealth was necessary to the success of his career in life. He had refused the offer, and they had parted without a word. Now they had come together again, and she was certainly among the dearest of his friends. Had she not taken that wondrous journey to Prague in his behalf, and been the first among those who had striven—and had striven at last successfully—to save his neck from the halter? Dear to her! He knew well as he sat with his eyes closed in the railway carriage that he must be dear to her! But might it not well be that she had resolved that friendship should take the place of love? And was it not compatible with her nature—with all human nature—that in spite of her regard for him she should choose to be revenged for the evil which had befallen her, when she offered her hand in vain? She must know by this time that he intended to throw himself at her feet; and would hardly have advised him as she had done as to the necessity of following up that success which had hitherto been so essential to him, had she intended to give him all that she had once offered him before. It might well be that Lady Chiltern, and even the Duchess, should be mistaken. Marie Goesler was not a woman, he thought, to reveal the deeper purposes of her life to any such friend as the Duchess of Omnium.

Of his own feelings in regard to the offer which was about to be made to him he had hardly succeeded in making her understand anything. That a change had come upon himself was certain, but he did not at all believe that it had sprung from any weakness caused by his sufferings in regard to the murder. He rather believed that he had become stronger than weaker from all that he had endured. He had learned when he was younger—some years back—to regard the political service of his country as a profession in which a man possessed of certain gifts might earn his bread with more gratification to himself than in any other. The work would be hard, and the emolument only intermittent; but the service would in itself be pleasant; and the rewards of that service—should he be so successful as to obtain reward—would be dearer to him than any thing which could accrue to him from other labors. To sit in the Cabinet for one session would, he then thought, be more to him than to preside over the Court of Queen's Bench as long as did Lord Mansfield. But during the last few months a change had crept across his dream—which he recognized but could hardly analyze. He had seen a man whom he despised promoted, and the place to which the man had been exalted had at once become contemptible in his eyes. And there had been quarrels and jangling, and the speaking of evil words, between men who should have been quiet and dignified. No doubt Madame Goesler was right in attributing the revulsion in his hopes to Mr. Bonteen and Mr. Bonteen's enmity; but Phineas Finn himself did not know that it was so.

He arrived in town in the evening, and his appointment with Mr. Gresham was for the following morning. He breakfasted at his club, and there he received the following letter from Lady Laura Kennedy:

"SAULSBY, August 23, 18—.

"MY DEAR PHINEAS,—I have just received a letter from Barrington in which he tells me that Mr. Gresham is going to offer you your old place at the Colonies. He says that now Fawn has been so upset by this affair of Lady Eustace's husband, he is obliged to resign and go abroad." (This was the first intimation that Phineas had heard of the nature of the office to be offered to him.) "But Barrington goes on to say that he thinks you won't accept Mr. Gresham's offer, and he asks me to write to you. Can this possibly be true? Barrington writes most kindly—with true friendship—and is most anxious for you to join. But he thinks that you are angry with Mr. Gresham because he passed you over before, and that you will not forgive him for having yielded to Mr. Bonteen. I can hardly believe this possible. Surely you will not allow the shade of that unfortunate man to blight your prospects? And after all, of what matter to you is the friendship or enmity of Mr. Gresham? You have to assert yourself, to make your own way, to use your own opportunities, and to fight your battle without reference to the feelings of individuals. Men act together in office constantly, and with constancy, who are known to hate each other. Where there are so many to get what is going, and so little to be given, of course there will be struggling and trampling. I have no doubt that Lord Cantrip has made a point of this with Mr. Gresham—

has, in point of fact, insisted upon it. If so, you are lucky to have such an ally as Lord Cantrip. He and Mr. Gresham are, as you know, sworn friends, and if you get on well with the one, you certainly may with the other also. Pray do not refuse without asking for time to think about it; and if so, pray come here, that you may consult my father.

"I spent two weary weeks at Lough Linter, and then could stand it no longer. I have come here, and here I shall remain for the autumn and winter. If I can sell my interest in the Lough Linter property I shall do so, as I am sure that neither the place nor the occupation is fit for me. Indeed, I know not what place or what occupation will suit me! The dreariness of the life before me is hardly preferable to the disappointments I have already endured. There seems to be nothing left for me but to watch my father to the end. The world would say that such a duty in life is fit for a widowed childless daughter; but to you I can not pretend to say that my bereavements or misfortunes reconcile me to such a fate. I can not cease to remember my age, my ambition, and, I will say, my love. I suppose that every thing is over for me, as though I were an old woman, going down into the grave; but at my time of life I find it hard to believe that it must be so. And then the time of waiting may be so long! I suppose I could start a house in London, and get people around me by feeding and flattering them, and by little intrigues, like that woman of whom you are so fond. It is money that is chiefly needed for that work, and of money I have enough now. And people would know at any rate who I am. But I could not flatter them, and I should wish the food to choke them if they did not please me. And you would not come, and if you did—I may as well say it boldly—others would not. An ill-natured sprite has been busy with me, which seems to deny me every thing which is so freely granted to others.

"As for you, the world is at your foot. I dread two things for you—that you should marry unworthily, and that you should injure your prospects in public life by an uncompromising stiffness. On the former subject I can say nothing to you. As to the latter, let me implore you to come down here before you decide upon any thing. Of course you can at once accept Mr. Gresham's offer; and that is what you should do, unless the office proposed to you be unworthy of you. No friend of yours will think that your old place at the Colonies should be rejected. But if your mind is still turned toward refusing, ask Mr. Gresham to give you three or four days for decision, and then come here. He can not refuse you—nor after all that is passed can you refuse me.

Yours affectionately,
"L. K."

When he had read this letter he at once acknowledged to himself that he could not refuse her request. He must go to Saulsby, and he must do so at once. He was about to see Mr. Gresham immediately, within half an hour; and as he could not expect at the most above twenty-four hours to be allowed to him for consideration, he must go down to Saulsby on the same evening. As he walked to the Prime Minister's house he called at a telegraph office, and sent

down his message. "I will be at Saulsby by the train arriving at 7 P.M. Send to meet me." Then he went on, and in a few minutes found himself in the presence of the great man.

The great man received him with an excellent courtesy. It is the special business of Prime Ministers to be civil in detail, though roughness, and perhaps almost rudeness, in the gross becomes not unfrequently a necessity of their position. To a proposed incoming subordinate a Prime Minister is, of course, very civil, and to a retreating subordinate he is generally more so, unless the retreat be made under unfavorable circumstances. And to give good things is always pleasant, unless there be a suspicion that the good thing will be thought to be not good enough. No such suspicion as that now crossed the mind of Mr. Gresham. He had been pressed very much by various colleagues to admit this young man into the paradise of his government, and had been pressed very much to exclude him; and this had been continued till he had come to dislike the name of the young man. He did believe that the young man had behaved badly to Mr. Robert Kennedy, and he knew that the young man on one occasion had taken to kicking in harness, and running a course of his own. He had decided against the young man—very much, no doubt, at the instance of Mr. Bonteen—and he believed that in doing so he closed the gates of paradise against a peri most anxious to enter it. He now stood with the key in his hand and the gate open, and the seat to be allotted to the re-accepted one was that which he believed the peri would most gratefully fill. He began by making a little speech about Mr. Bonteen. That was almost unavoidable. And he praised in glowing words the attitude which Phineas had maintained during the trial. He had been delighted with the re-election at Tankerville, and thought that the borough had done itself much honor. Then came forth his proposition. Lord Fawn had retired, absolutely broken down by repeated examinations respecting the man in the gray coat, and the office which Phineas had before held with so much advantage to the public, and comfort to his immediate chief, Lord Cantrip, was there for his acceptance. Mr. Gresham went on to express an ardent hope that he might have the benefit of Mr. Finn's services. It was quite manifest from his manner that he did not in the least doubt the nature of the reply which he would receive.

Phineas had come primed with his answer—so ready with it that it did not even seem to be the result of any hesitation at the moment. "I hope, Mr. Gresham, that you will be able to give me a few hours to think of this." Mr. Gresham's face fell, for, in truth, he wanted an immediate answer; and, though he knew from experience that Secretaries of State, and First Lords, and Chancellors, do demand time, and will often drive very hard bargains before they will consent to get into harness, he considered that Under-Secretaries, Junior Lords, and the like, should skip about as they were bidden, and take the crumbs offered them without delay. If every underling wanted a few hours to think about it, how could any government ever be got together? "I am sorry to put you to inconvenience," continued Phineas, seeing that the great man was but ill satisfied, "but I am so placed that I can

not avail myself of your flattering kindness without some little time for consideration."

"I had hoped that the office was one which you would like."

"So it is, Mr. Gresham."

"And I was told that you are now free from any scruples—political scruples, I mean—which might make it difficult for you to support the Government."

"Since the Government came to our way of thinking—a year or two ago—about Tenant Right, I mean—I do not know that there is any subject on which I am likely to oppose it. Perhaps I had better tell you the truth, Mr. Gresham."

"Oh, certainly," said the Prime Minister, who knew very well that on such occasions nothing could be worse than the telling of disagreeable truths.

"When you came into office, after beating Mr. Daubeny on the Church question, no man in Parliament was more desirous of place than I was, and I am sure that none of the disappointed ones felt their disappointment so keenly. It was aggravated by various circumstances—by calumnies in newspapers, and by personal bickerings. I need not go into that wretched story of Mr. Bonteen, and the absurd accusation which grew out of those calumnies. These things have changed me very much. I have a feeling that I have been ill used—not by you, Mr. Gresham, specially, but by the party; and I look upon the whole question of office with altered eyes."

"In filling up the places at his disposal a Prime Minister, Mr. Finn, has a most unenviable task."

"I can well believe it."

"When circumstances, rather than any selection of his own, indicate the future occupant of any office, this abrogation of his patronage is the greatest blessing in the world to him."

"I can believe that also."

"I wish it were so with every office under the Crown. A Minister is rarely thanked, and would as much look for the peace of heaven in his office as for gratitude."

"I am sorry that I should have made no exception to such thanklessness."

"We shall neither of us get on by complaining; shall we, Mr. Finn? You can let me have an answer, perhaps, by this time to-morrow."

"If an answer by telegraph will be sufficient."

"Quite sufficient. Yes or No. Nothing more will be wanted. You understand your own reasons, no doubt, fully; but if they were stated at length, they would perhaps hardly enlighten me. Good-morning." Then, as Phineas was turning his back, the Prime Minister remembered that it behooved him as Prime Minister to repress his temper. "I shall still hope, Mr. Finn, for a favorable answer." Had it not been for that last word Phineas would have turned again, and at once rejected the proposition.

From Mr. Gresham's house he went by appointment to Mr. Monk's, and told him of the interview. Mr. Monk's advice to him had been exactly the same as that given by Madame Goesler and Lady Laura. Phineas, indeed, understood perfectly that no friend could or would give him any other advice. "He has his troubles too," said Mr. Monk, speaking of the Prime Minister.

"A man can hardly expect to hold such an office without trouble."

"Labor of course there must be, though I doubt whether it is so great as that of some other persons; and responsibility. The amount of trouble depends on the spirit and nature of the man. Do you remember old Lord Brock? He was never troubled. He had a triple shield—a thick skin, an equable temper, and perfect self-confidence. Mr. Mildmay was of a softer temper, and would have suffered had he not been protected by the idolatry of a large class of his followers. Mr. Gresham has no such protection. With a finer intellect than either, and a sense of patriotism quite as keen, he has a self-consciousness which makes him sore at every point. He knows the frailty of his temper, and yet can not control it. And he does not understand men as did these others. Every word from an enemy is a wound to him. Every slight from a friend is a dagger in his side. But I can fancy that self-accusations make the cross on which he is really crucified. He is a man to whom I would extend all my mercy, were it in my power to be merciful."

"You will hardly tell me that I should accept office under him by way of obliging him."

"Were I you I should do so—not to oblige him, but because I know him to be an honest man."

"I care but little for honesty," said Phineas, "which is at the disposal of those who are dishonest. What am I to think of a Minister who could allow himself to be led by Mr. Bonteen?"

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE LAST VISIT TO SAULSBY.

PHINEAS, as he journeyed down to Saulsby, knew that he had in truth made up his mind. He was going thither nominally that he might listen to the advice of almost his oldest political friend before he resolved on a matter of vital importance to himself; but in truth he was making the visit because he felt that he could not excuse himself from it without unkindness and ingratitude. She had implored him to come, and he was bound to go, and there were tidings to be told which he must tell. It was not only that he might give her his reasons for not becoming an Under-Secretary of State that he went to Saulsby. He felt himself bound to inform her that he intended to ask Marie Goesler to be his wife. He might omit to do so till he had asked the question, and then say nothing of what he had done should his petition be refused; but it seemed to him that there would be cowardice in this. He was bound to treat Lady Laura as his friend in a special degree, as something more than his sister, and he was bound above all things to make her understand in some plainest manner that she could be nothing more to him than such a friend. In his dealings with her he had endeavored always to be honest—gentle as well as honest; but now it was specially his duty to be honest to her. When he was young he had loved her, and had told her so, and she had refused him. As a friend he had been true to her ever since, but that offer could never be repeated. And the other offer—to the woman whom she was now

accustomed to abuse—must be made. Should Lady Laura choose to quarrel with him, it must be so; but the quarrel should not be of his seeking.

He was quite sure that he would refuse Mr. Gresham's offer, although by doing so he would himself throw away the very thing which he had devoted his life to acquire. In a foolish, soft moment—as he now confessed to himself—he had endeavored to obtain for his own position the sympathy of the Minister. He had spoken of the calumnies which had hurt him, and of his sufferings when he found himself excluded from place in consequence of the evil stories which had been told of him. Mr. Gresham had, in fact, declined to listen to him; had said that Yes or No was all that he required, and had gone on to explain that he would be unable to understand the reasons proposed to be given even were he to hear them. Phineas had felt himself to be repulsed, and would at once have shown his anger, had not the Prime Minister silenced him for the moment by a civilly worded repetition of the offer made.

But the offer should certainly be declined. As he told himself that it must be so, he endeavored to analyze the causes of this decision, but was hardly successful. He had thought that he could explain the reasons to the Minister, but found himself incapable of explaining them to himself. In regard to means of subsistence he was no better off now than when he began the world. He was, indeed, without incumbrance, but was also without any means of procuring an income. For the last twelve months he had been living on his little capital, and two years more of such life would bring him to the end of all that he had. There was, no doubt, one view of his prospects which was bright enough. If Marie Goesler accepted him, he need not, at any rate, look about for the means of earning a living. But he assured himself with perfect confidence that no hope in that direction would have any influence upon the answer he would give to Mr. Gresham. Had not Marie Goesler herself been most urgent with him in begging him to accept the offer; and was he not therefore justified in concluding that she at least had thought it necessary that he should earn his bread? Would her heart be softened toward him—would any further softening be necessary—by his obstinate refusal to comply with her advice? The two things had no reference to each other, and should be regarded by him as perfectly distinct. He would refuse Mr. Gresham's offer, not because he hoped that he might live in idleness on the wealth of the woman he loved, but because the chicaneries and intrigues of office had become distasteful to him. "I don't know which are the falser," he said to himself, "the mock courtesies or the mock indignations of statesmen."

He found the Earl's carriage waiting for him at the station, and thought of many former days, as he was carried through the little town for which he had sat in Parliament up to the house which he had once visited in the hope of wooing Violet Effingham. The women whom he had loved had all, at any rate, become his friends, and his thorough friendships were almost all with women. He and Lord Chiltern regarded each other with warm affection, but there was hardly ground for real sympathy between them. It was