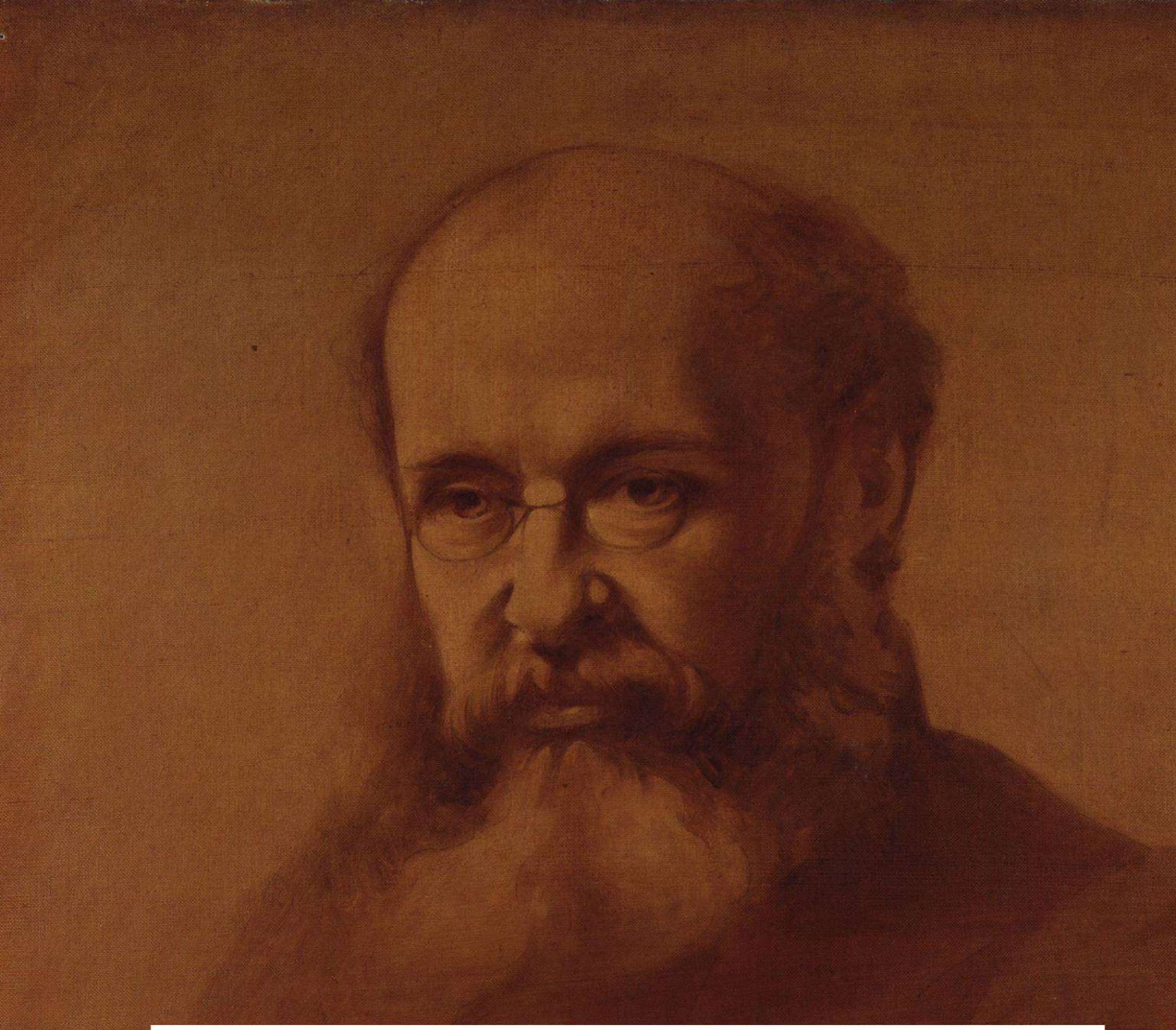

Anthony Trollope

Phineas Redux

Phineas Redux

Phineas Redux

TEMPTATION

The circumstances of the general election of 18— will be well remembered by all those who take an interest in the political matters of the country. There had been a coming in and a going out of Ministers previous to that, —somewhat rapid, very exciting, and, upon the whole, useful as showing the real feeling of the country upon sundry questions of public interest. Mr. Gresham had been Prime Minister of England, as representative of the Liberal party in politics. There had come to be a split among those who should have been his followers on the terribly vexed question of the Ballot. Then Mr. Daubeny for twelve months had sat upon the throne distributing the good things of the Crown amidst Conservative birdlings, with beaks wide open and craving maws, who certainly for some years previous had not received their share of State honours or State emoluments. And Mr. Daubeny was still so sitting, to the infinite dismay of the Liberals, every man of whom felt that his party was entitled by numerical strength to keep the management of the Government within its own hands.

Let a man be of what side he may in politics,—unless he be much more of a partisan than a patriot,—he will think it well that there should be some equity of division in the bestowal of crumbs of comfort. Can even any old Whig wish that every Lord Lieutenant of a county should be an old Whig? Can it be good for the administration of the law that none but Liberal lawyers should become Attorney-Generals, and from thence Chief Justices or Lords of Appeal? Should no Conservative Peer ever represent the majesty of England in India, in Canada, or at St. Petersburgh? So arguing, moderate Liberals had been glad to give Mr. Daubeny and his merry men a

chance. Mr. Daubeny and his merry men had not neglected the chance given them. Fortune favoured them, and they made their hay while the sun shone with an energy that had never been surpassed, improving upon Fortune, till their natural enemies waxed impatient. There had been as yet but one year of it, and the natural enemies, who had at first expressed themselves as glad that the turn had come, might have endured the period of spoliation with more equanimity. For to them, the Liberals, this cutting up of the Whitehall cake by the Conservatives was spoliation when the privilege of cutting was found to have so much exceeded what had been expected. Were not they, the Liberals, the real representatives of the people, and, therefore, did not the cake in truth appertain to them? Had not they given up the cake for a while, partly, indeed, through idleness and mismanagement, and quarrelling among themselves; but mainly with a feeling that a moderate slicing on the other side would, upon the whole, be advantageous? But when the cake came to be mauled like that—oh, heavens! So the men who had quarrelled agreed to quarrel no more, and it was decided that there should be an end of mismanagement and idleness, and that this horrid sight of the weak pretending to be strong, or the weak receiving the reward of strength, should be brought to an end. Then came a great fight, in the last agonies of which the cake was sliced manfully. All the world knew how the fight would go; but in the meantime lord-lieutenancies were arranged; very ancient judges retired upon pensions; vice-royal Governors were sent out in the last gasp of the failing battle; great places were filled by tens, and little places by twenties; private secretaries were established here and there; and the hay was still made even after the sun had gone down.

In consequence of all this the circumstances of the election of 18— were peculiar. Mr. Daubeny had dissolved the House, not probably with any idea that he could thus retrieve his fortunes, but feeling that in doing so he was occupying the last normal position of a properly-fought Constitutional

battle. His enemies were resolved, more firmly than they were resolved before, to knock him altogether on the head at the general election which he had himself called into existence. He had been disgracefully out-voted in the House of Commons on various subjects. On the last occasion he had gone into his lobby with a minority of 37, upon a motion brought forward by Mr. Palliser, the late Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, respecting decimal coinage. No politician, not even Mr. Palliser himself, had expected that he would carry his Bill in the present session. It was brought forward as a trial of strength; and for such a purpose decimal coinage was as good a subject as any other. It was Mr. Palliser's hobby, and he was gratified at having this further opportunity of ventilating it. When in power, he had not succeeded in carrying his measure, awed, and at last absolutely beaten, by the infinite difficulty encountered in arranging its details. But his mind was still set upon it, and it was allowed by the whole party to be as good as anything else for the purpose then required. The Conservative Government was beaten for the third or fourth time, and Mr. Daubeny dissolved the House.

The whole world said that he might as well have resigned at once. It was already the end of July, and there must be an autumn Session with the new members. It was known to be impossible that he should find himself supported by a majority after a fresh election. He had been treated with manifest forbearance; the cake had been left in his hands for twelve months; the House was barely two years old; he had no "cry" with which to meet the country; the dissolution was factious, dishonest, and unconstitutional. So said all the Liberals, and it was deduced also that the Conservatives were in their hearts as angry as were their opponents. What was to be gained but the poor interval of three months? There were clever men who suggested that Mr. Daubeny had a scheme in his head—some sharp trick of political conjuring, some "hocus-pocus presto" sleight of hand, by which he might be able to retain power, let the elections go as

they would. But, if so, he certainly did not make his scheme known to his own party.

He had no cry with which to meet the country, nor, indeed, had the leaders of the Opposition. Retrenchment, army reform, navy excellence, Mr. Palliser's decimal coinage, and general good government gave to all the old-Whig moderate Liberals plenty of matter for speeches to their future constituents. Those who were more advanced could promise the Ballot, and suggest the disestablishment of the Church. But the Government of the day was to be turned out on the score of general incompetence. They were to be made to go, because they could not command majorities. But there ought to have been no dissolution, and Mr. Daubeny was regarded by his opponents, and indeed by very many of his followers also, with an enmity that was almost ferocious. A seat in Parliament, if it be for five or six years, is a blessing; but the blessing becomes very questionable if it have to be sought afresh every other Session.

One thing was manifest to thoughtful, working, eager political Liberals. They must have not only a majority in the next Parliament, but a majority of good men—of men good and true. There must be no more mismanagement; no more quarrelling; no more idleness. Was it to be borne that an unprincipled so-called Conservative Prime Minister should go on slicing the cake after such a fashion as that lately adopted? Old bishops had even talked of resigning, and Knights of the Garter had seemed to die on purpose. So there was a great stir at the Liberal political clubs, and every good and true man was summoned to the battle.

Now no Liberal soldier, as a young soldier, had been known to be more good and true than Mr. Finn, the Irishman, who had held office two years ago to the satisfaction of all his friends, and who had retired from office because he had found himself compelled to support a measure which had

since been carried by those very men from whom he had been obliged on this account to divide himself. It had always been felt by his old friends that he had been, if not ill-used, at least very unfortunate. He had been twelve months in advance of his party, and had consequently been driven out into the cold. So when the names of good men and true were mustered, and weighed, and discussed, and scrutinised by some active members of the Liberal party in a certain very private room not far removed from our great seat of parliamentary warfare; and when the capabilities, and expediencies, and possibilities were tossed to and fro among these active members, it came to pass that the name of Mr. Finn was mentioned more than once. Mr. Phineas Finn was the gentleman's name—which statement may be necessary to explain the term of endearment which was occasionally used in speaking of him.

"He has got some permanent place," said Mr. Ratler, who was living on the well-founded hope of being a Treasury Secretary under the new dispensation; "and of course he won't leave it."

It must be acknowledged that Mr. Ratler, than whom no judge in such matters possessed more experience, had always been afraid of Phineas Finn.

"He'll lave it fast enough, if you'll make it worth his while," said the Honourable Laurence Fitzgibbon, who also had his expectations.

"But he married when he went away, and he can't afford it," said Mr. Bonteen, another keen expectant.

"Devil a bit," said the Honourable Laurence; "or, anyways, the poor thing died of her first baby before it was born. Phinny hasn't an impidiment, no more than I have."

"He's the best Irishman we ever got hold of," said Barrington Erle —"present company always excepted, Laurence."

"Bedad, you needn't except me, Barrington. I know what a man's made of, and what a man can do. And I know what he can't do. I'm not bad at the outside skirmishing. I'm worth me salt. I say that with a just reliance on me own powers. But Phinny is a different sort of man. Phinny can stick to a desk from twelve to seven, and wish to come back again after dinner. He's had money left him, too, and 'd like to spend some of it on an English borough."

"You never can quite trust him," said Bonteen. Now Mr. Bonteen had never loved Mr. Finn.

"At any rate we'll try him again," said Barrington Erle, making a little note to that effect. And they did try him again.

Phineas Finn, when last seen by the public, was departing from parliamentary life in London to the enjoyment of a modest place under Government in his own country, with something of a shattered ambition. After various turmoils he had achieved a competency, and had married the girl of his heart. But now his wife was dead, and he was again alone in the world. One of his friends had declared that money had been left to him. That was true, but the money had not been much. Phineas Finn had lost his father as well as his wife, and had inherited about four thousand pounds. He was not at this time much over thirty; and it must be acknowledged in regard to him that, since the day on which he had accepted place and retired from London, his very soul had sighed for the lost glories of Westminster and Downing Street.

There are certain modes of life which, if once adopted, make contentment in any other circumstances almost an impossibility. In old age a man may

retire without repining, though it is often beyond the power even of the old man to do so; but in youth, with all the faculties still perfect, with the body still strong, with the hopes still buoyant, such a change as that which had been made by Phineas Finn was more than he, or than most men, could bear with equanimity. He had revelled in the gas-light, and could not lie quiet on a sunny bank. To the palate accustomed to high cookery, bread and milk is almost painfully insipid. When Phineas Finn found himself discharging in Dublin the routine duties of his office,—as to which there was no public comment, no feeling that such duties were done in the face of the country,—he became sick at heart and discontented. Like the warhorse out at grass he remembered the sound of the battle and the noise of trumpets. After five years spent in the heat and full excitement of London society, life in Ireland was tame to him, and cold, and dull. He did not analyse the difference between metropolitan and quasi-metropolitan manners; but he found that men and women in Dublin were different from those to whom he had been accustomed in London. He had lived among lords, and the sons and daughters of lords; and though the official secretaries and assistant commissioners among whom his lot now threw him were for the most part clever fellows, fond of society, and perhaps more than his equals in the kind of conversation which he found to be prevalent, still they were not the same as the men he had left behind him, —men alive with the excitement of parliamentary life in London. When in London he had often told himself that he was sick of it, and that he would better love some country quiet life. Now Dublin was his Tibur, and the fickle one found that he could not be happy unless he were back again at Rome. When, therefore, he received the following letter from his friend, Barrington Erle, he neighed like the old warhorse, and already found himself shouting "Ha, ha," among the trumpets.

—— *Street, 9th July, 18—.*

My dear Finn,

Although you are not now immediately concerned in such trifling matters you have no doubt heard that we are all to be sent back at once to our constituents, and that there will be a general election about the end of September. We are sure that we shall have such a majority as we never had before; but we are determined to make it as strong as possible, and to get in all the good men that are to be had. Have you a mind to try again? After all, there is nothing like it.

Perhaps you may have some Irish seat in your eye for which you would be safe. To tell the truth we know very little of the Irish seats—not so much as, I think, we ought to do. But if you are not so lucky I would suggest Tankerville in Durham. Of course there would be a contest, and a little money will be wanted; but the money would not be much. Browborough has sat for the place now for three Parliaments, and seems to think it all his own. I am told that nothing could be easier than to turn him out. You will remember the man—a great, hulking, heavy, speechless fellow, who always used to sit just over Lord Macaw's shoulder. I have made inquiry, and I am told that he must walk if anybody would go down who could talk to the colliers every night for a week or so. It would just be the work for you. Of course, you should have all the assistance we could give you, and Molescroft would put you into the hands of an agent who wouldn't spend money for you. £500 would do it all.

I am very sorry to hear of your great loss, as also was Lady Laura, who, as you are aware, is still abroad with her father. We have all thought that the loneliness of your present life might perhaps make you willing to come back among us. I write instead of Ratler, because I am helping him in the Northern Counties. But you will understand all about that.

Yours, ever faithfully,

Barrington Erle.

Of course Tankerville has been dirty. Browborough has spent a fortune there. But I do not think that that need dishearten you. You will go there with clean hands. It must be understood that there shall not be as much as a glass of beer. I am told that the fellows won't vote for Browborough unless he spends money, and I fancy he will be afraid to do it heavily after all that has come and gone. If he does you'll have him out on a petition. Let us have an answer as soon as possible.

He at once resolved that he would go over and see; but, before he replied to Erle's letter, he walked half-a-dozen times the length of the pier at Kingston meditating on his answer. He had no one belonging to him. He had been deprived of his young bride, and left desolate. He could ruin no one but himself. Where could there be a man in all the world who had a more perfect right to play a trick with his own prospects? If he threw up his place and spent all his money, who could blame him? Nevertheless, he did tell himself that, when he should have thrown up his place and spent all his money, there would remain to him his own self to be disposed of in a manner that might be very awkward to him. A man owes it to his country, to his friends, even to his acquaintance, that he shall not be known to be going about wanting a dinner, with never a coin in his pocket. It is very well for a man to boast that he is lord of himself, and that having no ties he may do as he pleases with that possession. But it is a possession of which, unfortunately, he cannot rid himself when he finds that there is nothing advantageous to be done with it. Doubtless there is a way of riddance. There is the bare bodkin. Or a man may fall overboard between Holyhead and Kingston in the dark, and may do it in such a cunning fashion that his friends shall think that it was an accident. But against these modes of riddance there is a canon set, which some men still fear to disobey.

The thing that he was asked to do was perilous. Standing in his present niche of vantage he was at least safe. And added to his safety there were material comforts. He had more than enough for his wants. His work was light; he lived among men and women with whom he was popular. The very fact of his past parliamentary life had caused him to be regarded as a man of some note among the notables of the Irish capital. Lord Lieutenants were gracious to him, and the wives of judges smiled upon him at their tables. He was encouraged to talk of those wars of the gods at which he had been present, and was so treated as to make him feel that he was somebody in the world of Dublin. Now he was invited to give all this up; and for what?

He answered that question to himself with enthusiastic eloquence. The reward offered to him was the thing which in all the world he liked best. It was suggested to him that he should again have within his reach that parliamentary renown which had once been the very breath of his nostrils. We all know those arguments and quotations, antagonistic to prudence, with which a man fortifies himself in rashness. "None but the brave deserve the fair." "Where there's a will there's a way." "Nothing venture nothing have." "The sword is to him who can use it." "Fortune favours the bold." But on the other side there is just as much to be said. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." "Look before you leap." "Thrust not out your hand further than you can draw it back again." All which maxims of life Phineas Finn revolved within his own heart, if not carefully, at least frequently, as he walked up and down the long pier of Kingston Harbour.

But what matter such revolvings? A man placed as was our Phineas always does that which most pleases him at the moment, being but poor at argument if he cannot carry the weight to that side which best satisfies his own feelings. Had not his success been very great when he before made the attempt? Was he not well aware at every moment of his life that, after

having so thoroughly learned his lesson in London, he was throwing away his hours amidst his present pursuits in Dublin? Did he not owe himself to his country? And then, again, what might not London do for him? Men who had begun as he begun had lived to rule over Cabinets, and to sway the Empire. He had been happy for a short twelvemonth with his young bride,—for a short twelvemonth,—and then she had been taken from him. Had she been spared to him he would never have longed for more than Fate had given him. He would never have sighed again for the glories of Westminster had his Mary not gone from him. Now he was alone in the world; and, though he could look forward to possible and not improbable events which would make that future disposition of himself a most difficult question for him, still he would dare to try.

As the first result of Erle's letter Phineas was over in London early in August. If he went on with this matter, he must, of course, resign the office for holding which he was now paid a thousand a year. He could retain that as long as he chose to earn the money, but the earning of it would not be compatible with a seat in Parliament. He had a few thousand pounds with which he could pay for the contest at Tankerville, for the consequent petition which had been so generously suggested to him, and maintain himself in London for a session or two should he be so fortunate as to carry his election. Then he would be penniless, with the world before him as a closed oyster to be again opened, and he knew,—no one better,—that this oyster becomes harder and harder in the opening as the man who has to open it becomes older. It is an oyster that will close to again with a snap, after you have got your knife well into it, if you withdraw your point but for a moment. He had had a rough tussle with the oyster already, and had reached the fish within the shell. Nevertheless, the oyster which he had got was not the oyster which he wanted. So he told himself now, and here had come to him the chance of trying again.

Early in August he went over to England, saw Mr. Molescroft, and made his first visit to Tankerville. He did not like the look of Tankerville; but nevertheless he resigned his place before the month was over. That was the one great step, or rather the leap in the dark,—and that he took. Things had been so arranged that the election at Tankerville was to take place on the 20th of October. When the dissolution had been notified to all the world by Mr. Daubeny an earlier day was suggested; but Mr. Daubeny saw reasons for postponing it for a fortnight. Mr. Daubeny's enemies were again very ferocious. It was all a trick. Mr. Daubeny had no right to continue Prime Minister a day after the decided expression of opinion as to unfitness which had been pronounced by the House of Commons. Men were waxing very wrath. Nevertheless, so much power remained in Mr. Daubeny's hand, and the election was delayed. That for Tankerville would not be held till the 20th of October. The whole House could not be chosen till the end of the month,—hardly by that time—and yet there was to be an autumn Session. The Ratlers and Bonteens were at any rate clear about the autumn Session. It was absolutely impossible that Mr. Daubeny should be allowed to remain in power over Christmas, and up to February.

Mr. Molescroft, whom Phineas saw in London, was not a comfortable counsellor. "So you are going down to Tankerville?" he said.

"They seem to think I might as well try."

"Quite right;—quite right. Somebody ought to try it, no doubt. It would be a disgrace to the whole party if Browborough were allowed to walk over. There isn't a borough in England more sure to return a Liberal than Tankerville if left to itself. And yet that lump of a legislator has sat there as a Tory for the last dozen years by dint of money and brass."

"You think we can unseat him?"

"I don't say that. He hasn't come to the end of his money, and as to his brass that is positively without end."

"But surely he'll have some fear of consequences after what has been done?"

"None in the least. What has been done? Can you name a single Parliamentary aspirant who has been made to suffer?"

"They have suffered in character," said Phineas. "I should not like to have the things said of me that have been said of them."

"I don't know a man of them who stands in a worse position among his own friends than he occupied before. And men of that sort don't want a good position among their enemies. They know they're safe. When the seat is in dispute everybody is savage enough; but when it is merely a question of punishing a man, what is the use of being savage? Who knows whose turn it may be next?"

"He'll play the old game, then?"

"Of course he'll play the old game," said Mr. Molescroft. "He doesn't know any other game. All the purists in England wouldn't teach him to think that a poor man ought not to sell his vote, and that a rich man oughtn't to buy it. You mean to go in for purity?"

"Certainly I do."

"Browborough will think just as badly of you as you will of him. He'll hate you because he'll think you are trying to rob him of what he has honestly bought; but he'll hate you quite as much because you try to rob the borough. He'd tell you if you asked him that he doesn't want his seat for nothing, any more than he wants his house or his carriage-horses for

nothing. To him you'll be a mean, low interloper. But you won't care about that."

"Not in the least, if I can get the seat."

"But I'm afraid you won't. He will be elected. You'll petition. He'll lose his seat. There will be a commission. And then the borough will be disfranchised. It's a fine career, but expensive; and then there is no reward beyond the self-satisfaction arising from a good action. However, Ruddles will do the best he can for you, and it certainly is possible that you may creep through." This was very disheartening, but Barrington Erle assured our hero that such was Mr. Molescroft's usual way with candidates, and that it really meant little or nothing. At any rate, Phineas Finn was pledged to stand.

HARRINGTON HALL

Phineas, on his first arrival in London, found a few of his old friends, men who were still delayed by business though the Session was over. He arrived on the 10th of August, which may be considered as the great day of the annual exodus, and he remembered how he, too, in former times had gone to Scotland to shoot grouse, and what he had done there besides shooting. He had been a welcome guest at Loughlinter, the magnificent seat of Mr. Kennedy, and indeed there had been that between him and Mr. Kennedy which ought to make him a welcome guest there still. But of Mr. Kennedy he had heard nothing directly since he had left London. From Mr. Kennedy's wife, Lady Laura, who had been his great friend, he had heard occasionally; but she was separated from her husband, and was living abroad with her father, the Earl of Brentford. Has it not been written in a former book how this Lady Laura had been unhappy in her marriage, having wedded herself to a man whom she had never loved, because he was rich and powerful, and how this very Phineas had asked her to be his bride after she had accepted the rich man's hand? Thence had come great trouble, but nevertheless there had been that between Mr. Kennedy and our hero which made Phineas feel that he ought still to be welcomed as a guest should he show himself at the door of Loughlinter Castle. The idea came upon him simply because he found that almost every man for whom he inquired had just started, or was just starting, for the North; and he would have liked to go where others went. He asked a few questions as to Mr. Kennedy from Barrington Erle and others, who had known him, and was told that the man now lived quite alone. He still kept his seat in Parliament, but had hardly appeared during the last Session, and it was

thought that he would not come forward again. Of his life in the country nothing was known. "No one fishes his rivers, or shoots his moors, as far as I can learn," said Barrington Erle. "I suppose he looks after the sheep and says his prayers, and keeps his money together."

"And there has been no attempt at a reconciliation?" Phineas asked.

"She went abroad to escape his attempts, and remains there in order that she may be safe. Of all hatreds that the world produces, a wife's hatred for her husband, when she does hate him, is the strongest."

In September Finn was back in Ireland, and about the end of that month he made his first visit to Tankerville. He remained there for three or four days, and was terribly disgusted while staying at the "Yellow" inn, to find that the people of the town would treat him as though he were rolling in wealth. He was soon tired of Tankerville, and as he could do nothing further, on the spot, till the time for canvassing should come on, about ten days previous to the election, he returned to London, somewhat at a loss to know how to bestir himself. But in London he received a letter from another old friend, which decided him:—

"My dear Mr. Finn," said the letter,

of course you know that Oswald is now master of the Brake hounds. Upon my word, I think it is the place in the world for which he is most fit. He is a great martinet in the field, and works at it as though it were for his bread. We have been here looking after the kennels and getting up the horses since the beginning of August, and have been cub-hunting ever so long. Oswald wants to know whether you won't come down to him till the election begins in earnest.

We were so glad to hear that you were going to appear again. I have always known that it would be so. I have told Oswald scores of times that I was sure you would never be happy out of Parliament, and that your real home must be somewhere near the Treasury Chambers. You can't alter a man's nature. Oswald was born to be a master of hounds, and you were born to be a Secretary of State. He works the hardest and gets the least pay for it; but then, as he says, he does not run so great a risk of being turned out.

We haven't much of a house, but we have plenty of room for you. As for the house, it was a matter of course, whether good or bad. It goes with the kennels, and I should as little think of having a choice as though I were one of the horses. We have very good stables, and such a stud! I can't tell you how many there are. In October it seems as though their name were legion. In March there is never anything for any body to ride on. I generally find then that mine are taken for the whips. Do come and take advantage of the flush. I can't tell you how glad we shall be to see you. Oswald ought to have written himself, but he says—; I won't tell you what he says. We shall take no refusal. You can have nothing to do before you are wanted at Tankerville.

I was so sorry to hear of your great loss. I hardly know whether to mention it or to be silent in writing. If you were here of course I should speak of her. And I would rather renew your grief for a time than allow you to think that I am indifferent. Pray come to us.

Yours ever most sincerely,

Violet Chiltern.

Harrington Hall, Wednesday.

Phineas Finn at once made up his mind that he would go to Harrington Hall. There was the prospect in this of an immediate return to some of the most charming pleasures of the old life, which was very grateful to him. It pleased him much that he should have been so thought of by this lady,—that she should have sought him out at once, at the moment of his reappearance. That she would have remembered him, he was quite sure, and that her husband, Lord Chiltern, should remember him also, was beyond a doubt. There had been passages in their joint lives which people cannot forget. But it might so well have been the case that they should not have cared to renew their acquaintance with him. As it was, they must have made close inquiry, and had sought him at the first day of his reappearance. The letter had reached him through the hands of Barrington Erle, who was a cousin of Lord Chiltern, and was at once answered as follows:—

Fowler's Hotel, Jermyn Street,
October 1st.

My dear Lady Chiltern,

I cannot tell you how much pleasure the very sight of your handwriting gave me. Yes, here I am again, trying my hand at the old game. They say that you can never cure a gambler or a politician; and, though I had very much to make me happy till that great blow came upon me, I believe that it is so. I am uneasy till I can see once more the Speaker's wig, and hear bitter things said of this "right honourable gentleman," and of that noble friend. I want to be once more in the midst of it; and as I have been left singularly desolate in the world, without a tie by which I am bound to aught but an honourable mode of living, I have determined to run the risk, and have thrown up the place which I held under Government. I am to stand for

Tankerville, as you have heard, and I am told by those to whose tender mercies I have been confided by B. E. that I have not a chance of success.

Your invitation is so tempting that I cannot refuse it. As you say, I have nothing to do till the play begins. I have issued my address, and must leave my name and my fame to be discussed by the Tankervillians till I make my appearance among them on the 10th of this month. Of course, I had heard that Chiltern has the Brake, and I have heard also that he is doing it uncommonly well. Tell him that I have hardly seen a hound since the memorable day on which I pulled him out from under his horse in the brook at Wissindine. I don't know whether I can ride a yard now. I will get to you on the 4th, and will remain if you will keep me till the 9th. If Chiltern can put me up on anything a little quieter than Bonebreaker, I'll go out steadily, and see how he does his cubbing. I may, perhaps, be justified in opining that Bonebreaker has before this left the establishment. If so I may, perhaps, find myself up to a little very light work.

Remember me very kindly to him. Does he make a good nurse with the baby?

Yours, always faithfully,

Phineas Finn.

I cannot tell you with what pleasure I look forward to seeing you both again.

The next few days went very heavily with him. There had, indeed, been no real reason why he should not have gone to Harrington Hall at once, except that he did not wish to seem to be utterly homeless. And yet were he there, with his old friends, he would not scruple for a moment in owning that

such was the case. He had fixed his day, however, and did remain in London till the 4th. Barrington Erle and Mr. Ratler he saw occasionally, for they were kept in town on the affairs of the election. The one was generally full of hope; but the other was no better than a Job's comforter. "I wouldn't advise you to expect too much at Tankerville, you know," said Mr. Ratler.

"By no means," said Phineas, who had always disliked Ratler, and had known himself to be disliked in return. "I expect nothing."

"Browborough understands such a place as Tankerville so well! He has been at it all his life. Money is no object to him, and he doesn't care a straw what anybody says of him. I don't think it's possible to unseat him."

"We'll try at least," said Phineas, upon whom, however, such remarks as these cast a gloom which he could not succeed in shaking off, though he could summon vigour sufficient to save him from showing the gloom. He knew very well that comfortable words would be spoken to him at Harrington Hall, and that then the gloom would go. The comforting words of his friends would mean quite as little as the discourtesies of Mr. Ratler. He understood that thoroughly, and felt that he ought to hold a stronger control over his own impulses. He must take the thing as it would come, and neither the flatterings of friends nor the threatenings of enemies could alter it; but he knew his own weakness, and confessed to himself that another week of life by himself at Fowler's Hotel, refreshed by occasional interviews with Mr. Ratler, would make him altogether unfit for the coming contest at Tankerville.

He reached Harrington Hall in the afternoon about four, and found Lady Chiltern alone. As soon as he saw her he told himself that she was not in the least altered since he had last been with her, and yet during the period she had undergone that great change which turns a girl into a mother. She had the baby with her when he came into the room, and at once greeted

him as an old friend,—as a loved and loving friend who was to be made free at once to all the inmost privileges of real friendship, which are given to and are desired by so few. "Yes, here we are again," said Lady Chiltern, "settled, as far as I suppose we ever shall be settled, for ever so many years to come. The place belongs to old Lord Gunthorpe, I fancy, but really I hardly know. I do know that we should give it up at once if we gave up the hounds, and that we can't be turned out as long as we have them. Doesn't it seem odd to have to depend on a lot of yelping dogs?"

"Only that the yelping dogs depend on you."

"It's a kind of give and take, I suppose, like other things in the world. Of course, he's a beautiful baby. I had him in just that you might see him. I show Baby, and Oswald shows the hounds. We've nothing else to interest anybody. But nurse shall take him now. Come out and have a turn in the shrubbery before Oswald comes back. They're gone to-day as far as Trumpeton Wood, out of which no fox was ever known to break, and they won't be home till six."

"Who are 'they'?" asked Phineas, as he took his hat.

"The 'they' is only Adelaide Palliser. I don't think you ever knew her?"

"Never. Is she anything to the other Pallisers?"

"She is everything to them all; niece and grand-niece, and first cousin and grand-daughter. Her father was the fourth brother, and as she was one of six her share of the family wealth is small. Those Pallisers are very peculiar, and I doubt whether she ever saw the old duke. She has no father or mother, and lives when she is at home with a married sister, about seventy years older than herself, Mrs. Attenbury."

"I remember Mrs. Attenbury."

"Of course you do. Who does not? Adelaide was a child then, I suppose. Though I don't know why she should have been, as she calls herself one-and-twenty now. You'll think her pretty. I don't. But she is my great new friend, and I like her immensely. She rides to hounds, and talks Italian, and writes for the *Times*."

"Writes for the *Times*!"

"I won't swear that she does, but she could. There's only one other thing about her. She's engaged to be married."

"To whom?"

"I don't know that I shall answer that question, and indeed I'm not sure that she is engaged. But there's a man dying for her."

"You must know, if she's your friend."

"Of course I know; but there are ever so many ins and outs, and I ought not to have said a word about it. I shouldn't have done so to any one but you. And now we'll go in and have some tea, and go to bed."

"Go to bed!"

"We always go to bed here before dinner on hunting days. When the cubbing began Oswald used to be up at three."

"He doesn't get up at three now."

"Nevertheless we go to bed. You needn't if you don't like, and I'll stay with you if you choose till you dress for dinner. I did know so well that you'd come back to London, Mr. Finn. You are not a bit altered."

"I feel to be changed in everything."

"Why should you be altered? It's only two years. I am altered because of Baby. That does change a woman. Of course I'm thinking always of what he will do in the world; whether he'll be a master of hounds or a Cabinet Minister or a great farmer;—or perhaps a miserable spendthrift, who will let everything that his grandfathers and grandmothers have done for him go to the dogs."

"Why do you think of anything so wretched, Lady Chiltern?"

"Who can help thinking? Men do do so. It seems to me that that is the line of most young men who come to their property early. Why should I dare to think that my boy should be better than others? But I do; and I fancy that he will be a great statesman. After all, Mr. Finn, that is the best thing that a man can be, unless it is given him to be a saint and a martyr and all that kind of thing,—which is not just what a mother looks for."

"That would only be better than the spendthrift and gambler."

"Hardly better you'll say, perhaps. How odd that is! We all profess to believe when we're told that this world should be used merely as a preparation for the next; and yet there is something so cold and comfortless in the theory that we do not relish the prospect even for our children. I fancy your people have more real belief in it than ours."

Now Phineas Finn was a Roman Catholic. But the discussion was stopped by the noise of an arrival in the hall.

"There they are," said Lady Chiltern; "Oswald never comes in without a sound of trumpets to make him audible throughout the house." Then she

went to meet her husband, and Phineas followed her out of the drawing-room.

Lord Chiltern was as glad to see him as she had been, and in a very few minutes he found himself quite at home. In the hall he was introduced to Miss Palliser, but he was hardly able to see her as she stood there a moment in her hat and habit. There was ever so much said about the day's work. The earths had not been properly stopped, and Lord Chiltern had been very angry, and the owner of Trumpeton Wood, who was a great duke, had been much abused, and things had not gone altogether straight.

"Lord Chiltern was furious," said Miss Palliser, laughing, "and therefore, of course, I became furious too, and swore that it was an awful shame. Then they all swore that it was an awful shame, and everybody was furious. And you might hear one man saying to another all day long, 'By George, this is too bad.' But I never could quite make out what was amiss, and I'm sure the men didn't know."

"What was it, Oswald?"

"Never mind now. One doesn't go to Trumpeton Wood expecting to be happy there. I've half a mind to swear I'll never draw it again."

"I've been asking him what was the matter all the way home," said Miss Palliser, "but I don't think he knows himself."

"Come upstairs, Phineas, and I'll show you your room," said Lord Chiltern. "It's not quite as comfortable as the old 'Bull,' but we make it do."

Phineas, when he was alone, could not help standing for awhile with his back to the fire thinking of it all. He did already feel himself to be at home in that house, and his doing so was a contradiction to all the wisdom which

he had been endeavouring to teach himself for the last two years. He had told himself over and over again that that life which he had lived in London had been, if not a dream, at any rate not more significant than a parenthesis in his days, which, as of course it had no bearing on those which had gone before, so neither would it influence those which were to follow. The dear friends of that period of feverish success would for the future be to him as—nothing. That was the lesson of wisdom which he had endeavoured to teach himself, and the facts of the last two years had seemed to show that the lesson was a true lesson. He had disappeared from among his former companions, and had heard almost nothing from them. From neither Lord Chiltern or his wife had he received any tidings. He had expected to receive none,—had known that in the common course of things none was to be expected. There were many others with whom he had been intimate—Barrington Erle, Laurence Fitzgibbon, Mr. Monk, a politician who had been in the Cabinet, and in consequence of whose political teaching he, Phineas Finn, had banished himself from the political world;—from none of these had he received a line till there came that letter summoning him back to the battle. There had never been a time during his late life in Dublin at which he had complained to himself that on this account his former friends had forgotten him. If they had not written to him, neither had he written to them. But on his first arrival in England he had, in the sadness of his solitude, told himself that he was forgotten. There would be no return, so he feared, of those pleasant intimacies which he now remembered so well, and which, as he remembered them, were so much more replete with unalloyed delights than they had ever been in their existing realities. And yet here he was, a welcome guest in Lord Chiltern's house, a welcome guest in Lady Chiltern's drawing-room, and quite as much at home with them as ever he had been in the old days.

Who is there that can write letters to all his friends, or would not find it dreary work to do so even in regard to those whom he really loves? When