

It was late in the afternoon when the carriage containing little Lord Fauntleroy and Mr. Havisham drove up the long avenue which led to the castle. The Earl had given orders that his grandson should arrive in time to dine with him; and for some reason best known to himself, he had also ordered that the child should be sent alone into the room in which he intended to receive him. As the carriage rolled up the avenue, Lord Fauntleroy sat leaning comfortably against the luxurious cushions, and regarded the prospect with great interest. He was, in fact, interested in everything he saw. He had been interested in the carriage, with its large, splendid horses and their glittering harness; he had been interested in the tall coachman and footman, with their resplendent livery; and he had been especially interested in the coronet on the panels, and had struck up an acquaintance with the footman for the purpose of inquiring what it meant.

When the carriage reached the great gates of the park, he looked out of the window to get a good view of the huge stone lions ornamenting the entrance. The gates were opened by a motherly, rosy-looking woman, who came out of a pretty, ivy-covered lodge. Two children ran out of the door of the house and stood looking with round, wide-open eyes at the little boy in the carriage, who looked at them also. Their mother stood courtesying and smiling, and the children, on receiving a sign from her, made bobbing little courtesies too.

"Does she know me?" asked Lord Fauntleroy. "I think she must think she knows me." And he took off his black velvet cap to her and smiled.

"How do you do?" he said brightly. "Good-afternoon!"

The woman seemed pleased, he thought. The smile broadened on her rosy face and a kind look came into her blue eyes.

"God bless your lordship!" she said. "God bless your pretty face! Good luck and happiness to your lordship! Welcome to you!"

Lord Fauntleroy waved his cap and nodded to her again as the carriage rolled by her.

"I like that woman," he said. "She looks as if she liked boys. I should like to come here and play with her children. I wonder if she has enough to make up a company?"

Mr. Havisham did not tell him that he would scarcely be allowed to make playmates of the gate-keeper's children. The lawyer thought there was time enough for giving him that information.

The carriage rolled on and on between the great, beautiful trees which grew on each side of the avenue and stretched their broad, swaying branches in an arch across it. Cedric had never seen such trees,--they were so grand and stately, and their branches grew so low down on their

huge trunks. He did not then know that Dorincourt Castle was one of the most beautiful in all England; that its park was one of the broadest and finest, and its trees and avenue almost without rivals. But he did know that it was all very beautiful. He liked the big, broad-branched trees, with the late afternoon sunlight striking golden lances through them. He liked the perfect stillness which rested on everything. He felt a great, strange pleasure in the beauty of which he caught glimpses under and between the sweeping boughs--the great, beautiful spaces of the park, with still other trees standing sometimes stately and alone, and sometimes in groups. Now and then they passed places where tall ferns grew in masses, and again and again the ground was azure with the bluebells swaying in the soft breeze. Several times he started up with a laugh of delight as a rabbit leaped up from under the greenery and scudded away with a twinkle of short white tail behind it. Once a covey of partridges rose with a sudden whir and flew away, and then he shouted and clapped his hands.

"It's a beautiful place, isn't it?" he said to Mr. Havisham. "I never saw such a beautiful place. It's prettier even than Central Park."

He was rather puzzled by the length of time they were on their way.

"How far is it," he said, at length, "from the gate to the front door?"

"It is between three and four miles," answered the lawyer.

"That's a long way for a person to live from his gate," remarked his lordship.

Every few minutes he saw something new to wonder at and admire. When he

caught sight of the deer, some couched in the grass, some standing with their pretty antlered heads turned with a half-startled air toward the avenue as the carriage wheels disturbed them, he was enchanted.

"Has there been a circus?" he cried; "or do they live here always? Whose are they?"

"They live here," Mr. Havisham told him. "They belong to the Earl, your grandfather."

It was not long after this that they saw the castle. It rose up before them stately and beautiful and gray, the last rays of the sun casting dazzling lights on its many windows. It had turrets and battlements and towers; a great deal of ivy grew upon its walls; all the broad, open space about it was laid out in terraces and lawns and beds of brilliant flowers.

"It's the most beautiful place I ever saw!" said Cedric, his round face flushing with pleasure. "It reminds any one of a king's palace. I saw a picture of one once in a fairy-book."

He saw the great entrance-door thrown open and many servants standing in two lines looking at him. He wondered why they were standing there, and admired their liveries very much. He did not know that they were there to do honor to the little boy to whom all this splendor would one day belong,--the beautiful castle like the fairy king's palace, the magnificent park, the grand old trees, the dells full of ferns and bluebells where the hares and rabbits played, the dappled, large-eyed deer couching in the deep grass. It was only a couple of weeks since he had sat with Mr. Hobbs among the potatoes and canned peaches, with his legs dangling from the high stool; it would not have been possible for him to realize that he had very much to do with all this grandeur. At the head of the line of servants there stood an elderly woman in a rich, plain black silk gown; she had gray hair and wore a cap. As he entered the hall she stood nearer than the rest, and the child thought from the look in her eyes that she was going to speak to him. Mr. Havisham, who held his hand, paused a moment.

"This is Lord Fauntleroy, Mrs. Mellon," he said. "Lord Fauntleroy, this is Mrs. Mellon, who is the housekeeper."

Cedric gave her his hand, his eyes lighting up.

"Was it you who sent the cat?" he said. "I'm much obliged to you, ma'am."

Mrs. Mellon's handsome old face looked as pleased as the face of the

lodge-keeper's wife had done.

"I should know his lordship anywhere," she said to Mr. Havisham. "He has the Captain's face and way. It's a great day, this, sir."

Cedric wondered why it was a great day. He looked at Mrs. Mellon curiously. It seemed to him for a moment as if there were tears in her eyes, and yet it was evident she was not unhappy. She smiled down on him.

"The cat left two beautiful kittens here," she said; "they shall be sent up to your lordship's nursery."

Mr. Havisham said a few words to her in a low voice.

"In the library, sir," Mrs. Mellon replied. "His lordship is to be taken there alone."

A few minutes later, the very tall footman in livery, who had escorted Cedric to the library door, opened it and announced: "Lord Fauntleroy, my lord," in quite a majestic tone. If he was only a footman, he felt it was rather a grand occasion when the heir came home to his own land and possessions, and was ushered into the presence of the old Earl, whose place and title he was to take.

Cedric crossed the threshold into the room. It was a very large and splendid room, with massive carved furniture in it, and shelves upon shelves of books; the furniture was so dark, and the draperies so heavy, the diamond-paned windows were so deep, and it seemed such a distance from one end of it to the other, that, since the sun had gone down, the effect of it all was rather gloomy. For a moment Cedric thought there was nobody in the room, but soon he saw that by the fire burning on the wide hearth there was a large easy-chair and that in that chair some one was sitting--some one who did not at first turn to look at him.

But he had attracted attention in one quarter at least. On the floor, by the arm-chair, lay a dog, a huge tawny mastiff, with body and limbs almost as big as a lion's; and this great creature rose majestically and slowly, and marched toward the little fellow with a heavy step.

Then the person in the chair spoke. "Dougal," he called, "come back, sir."

But there was no more fear in little Lord Fauntleroy's heart than there was unkindness--he had been a brave little fellow all his life. He put his hand on the big dog's collar in the most natural way in the world, and they strayed forward together, Dougal sniffing as he went.

And then the Earl looked up. What Cedric saw was a large old man with shaggy white hair and eyebrows, and a nose like an eagle's beak between his deep, fierce eyes. What the Earl saw was a graceful, childish figure

in a black velvet suit, with a lace collar, and with love-locks waving about the handsome, manly little face, whose eyes met his with a look of innocent good-fellowship. If the Castle was like the palace in a fairy story, it must be owned that little Lord Fauntleroy was himself rather like a small copy of the fairy prince, though he was not at all aware of the fact, and perhaps was rather a sturdy young model of a fairy. But there was a sudden glow of triumph and exultation in the fiery old Earl's heart as he saw what a strong, beautiful boy this grandson was, and how unhesitatingly he looked up as he stood with his hand on the big dog's neck. It pleased the grim old nobleman that the child should show no shyness or fear, either of the dog or of himself.

Cedric looked at him just as he had looked at the woman at the lodge and at the housekeeper, and came quite close to him.

"Are you the Earl?" he said. "I'm your grandson, you know, that Mr. Havisham brought. I'm Lord Fauntleroy."

He held out his hand because he thought it must be the polite and proper thing to do even with earls. "I hope you are very well," he continued, with the utmost friendliness. "I'm very glad to see you."

The Earl shook hands with him, with a curious gleam in his eyes; just at first, he was so astonished that he scarcely knew what to say. He stared at the picturesque little apparition from under his shaggy brows, and took it all in from head to foot.



"Glad to see me, are you?" he said.

"Yes," answered Lord Fauntleroy, "very."

There was a chair near him, and he sat down on it; it was a high-backed, rather tall chair, and his feet did not touch the floor when he had settled himself in it, but he seemed to be quite comfortable as he sat there, and regarded his august relative intently but modestly.

"I've kept wondering what you would look like," he remarked. "I used to lie in my berth in the ship and wonder if you would be anything like my father."

"Am I?" asked the Earl.

"Well," Cedric replied, "I was very young when he died, and I may not remember exactly how he looked, but I don't think you are like him."

"You are disappointed, I suppose?" suggested his grandfather.

"Oh, no," responded Cedric politely. "Of course you would like any one to look like your father; but of course you would enjoy the way your grandfather looked, even if he wasn't like your father. You know how it is yourself about admiring your relations."

The Earl leaned back in his chair and stared. He could not be said to know how it was about admiring his relations. He had employed most of his noble leisure in quarreling violently with them, in turning them out of his house, and applying abusive epithets to them; and they all hated him cordially.

"Any boy would love his grandfather," continued Lord Fauntleroy, "especially one that had been as kind to him as you have been."

Another queer gleam came into the old nobleman's eyes.

"Oh!" he said, "I have been kind to you, have I?"

"Yes," answered Lord Fauntleroy brightly; "I'm ever so much obliged to you about Bridget, and the apple-woman, and Dick."

"Bridget!" exclaimed the Earl. "Dick! The apple-woman!"

"Yes!" explained Cedric; "the ones you gave me all that money for--the money you told Mr. Havisham to give me if I wanted it."

"Ha!" ejaculated his lordship. "That's it, is it? The money you were to spend as you liked. What did you buy with it? I should like to hear something about that."

He drew his shaggy eyebrows together and looked at the child sharply. He

was secretly curious to know in what way the lad had indulged himself.

"Oh!" said Lord Fauntleroy, "perhaps you didn't know about Dick and the apple-woman and Bridget. I forgot you lived such a long way off from them. They were particular friends of mine. And you see Michael had the fever----"

"Who's Michael?" asked the Earl.

"Michael is Bridget's husband, and they were in great trouble. When a man is sick and can't work and has twelve children, you know how it is. And Michael has always been a sober man. And Bridget used to come to our house and cry. And the evening Mr. Havisham was there, she was in the kitchen crying, because they had almost nothing to eat and couldn't pay the rent; and I went in to see her, and Mr. Havisham sent for me and he said you had given him some money for me. And I ran as fast as I could into the kitchen and gave it to Bridget; and that made it all right; and Bridget could scarcely believe her eyes. That's why I'm so obliged to you."

"Oh!" said the Earl in his deep voice, "that was one of the things you did for yourself, was it? What else?"

Dougal had been sitting by the tall chair; the great dog had taken its place there when Cedric sat down. Several times it had turned and looked up at the boy as if interested in the conversation. Dougal was a

solemn dog, who seemed to feel altogether too big to take life's responsibilities lightly. The old Earl, who knew the dog well, had watched it with secret interest. Dougal was not a dog whose habit it was to make acquaintances rashly, and the Earl wondered somewhat to see how quietly the brute sat under the touch of the childish hand. And, just at this moment, the big dog gave little Lord Fauntleroy one more look of dignified scrutiny, and deliberately laid its huge, lion-like head on the boy's black-velvet knee.

The small hand went on stroking this new friend as Cedric answered:

"Well, there was Dick," he said. "You'd like Dick, he's so square."

This was an Americanism the Earl was not prepared for.

"What does that mean?" he inquired.

Lord Fauntleroy paused a moment to reflect. He was not very sure himself what it meant. He had taken it for granted as meaning something very creditable because Dick had been fond of using it.

"I think it means that he wouldn't cheat any one," he exclaimed; "or hit a boy who was under his size, and that he blacks people's boots very well and makes them shine as much as he can. He's a professional bootblack."

"And he's one of your acquaintances, is he?" said the Earl.

"He is an old friend of mine," replied his grandson. "Not quite as old as Mr. Hobbs, but quite old. He gave me a present just before the ship sailed."

He put his hand into his pocket and drew forth a neatly folded red object and opened it with an air of affectionate pride. It was the red silk handkerchief with the large purple horse-shoes and heads on it.

"He gave me this," said his young lordship. "I shall keep it always. You can wear it round your neck or keep it in your pocket. He bought it with the first money he earned after I bought Jake out and gave him the new brushes. It's a keepsake. I put some poetry in Mr. Hobbs's watch. It was, 'When this you see, remember me.' When this I see, I shall always remember Dick."

The sensations of the Right Honorable the Earl of Dorincourt could scarcely be described. He was not an old nobleman who was very easily bewildered, because he had seen a great deal of the world; but here was something he found so novel that it almost took his lordly breath away, and caused him some singular emotions. He had never cared for children; he had been so occupied with his own pleasures that he had never had time to care for them. His own sons had not interested him when they were very young--though sometimes he remembered having thought Cedric's father a handsome and strong little fellow. He had been so selfish

himself that he had missed the pleasure of seeing unselfishness in others, and he had not known how tender and faithful and affectionate a kind-hearted little child can be, and how innocent and unconscious are its simple, generous impulses. A boy had always seemed to him a most objectionable little animal, selfish and greedy and boisterous when not under strict restraint; his own two eldest sons had given their tutors constant trouble and annoyance, and of the younger one he fancied he had heard few complaints because the boy was of no particular importance. It had never once occurred to him that he should like his grandson; he had sent for the little Cedric because his pride impelled him to do so. If the boy was to take his place in the future, he did not wish his name to be made ridiculous by descending to an uneducated boor. He had been convinced the boy would be a clownish fellow if he were brought up in America. He had no feeling of affection for the lad; his only hope was that he should find him decently well-featured, and with a respectable share of sense; he had been so disappointed in his other sons, and had been made so furious by Captain Errol's American marriage, that he had never once thought that anything creditable could come of it. When the footman had announced Lord Fauntleroy, he had almost dreaded to look at the boy lest he should find him all that he had feared. It was because of this feeling that he had ordered that the child should be sent to him alone. His pride could not endure that others should see his disappointment if he was to be disappointed. His proud, stubborn old heart therefore had leaped within him when the boy came forward with his graceful, easy carriage, his fearless hand on the big dog's neck. Even in the moments when he had hoped the most, the Earl had never hoped that

his grandson would look like that. It seemed almost too good to be true that this should be the boy he had dreaded to see--the child of the woman he so disliked--this little fellow with so much beauty and such a brave, childish grace! The Earl's stern composure was quite shaken by this startling surprise.

And then their talk began; and he was still more curiously moved, and more and more puzzled. In the first place, he was so used to seeing people rather afraid and embarrassed before him, that he had expected nothing else but that his grandson would be timid or shy. But Cedric was no more afraid of the Earl than he had been of Dougal. He was not bold; he was only innocently friendly, and he was not conscious that there could be any reason why he should be awkward or afraid. The Earl could not help seeing that the little boy took him for a friend and treated him as one, without having any doubt of him at all. It was quite plain as the little fellow sat there in his tall chair and talked in his friendly way that it had never occurred to him that this large, fierce-looking old man could be anything but kind to him, and rather pleased to see him there. And it was plain, too, that, in his childish way, he wished to please and interest his grandfather. Cross, and hard-hearted, and worldly as the old Earl was, he could not help feeling a secret and novel pleasure in this very confidence. After all, it was not disagreeable to meet some one who did not distrust him or shrink from him, or seem to detect the ugly part of his nature; some one who looked at him with clear, unsuspecting eyes,--if it was only a little boy in a black velvet suit.

So the old man leaned back in his chair, and led his young companion on to telling him still more of himself, and with that odd gleam in his eyes watched the little fellow as he talked. Lord Fauntleroy was quite willing to answer all his questions and chatted on in his genial little way quite composedly. He told him all about Dick and Jake, and the apple-woman, and Mr. Hobbs; he described the Republican Rally in all the glory of its banners and transparencies, torches and rockets. In the course of the conversation, he reached the Fourth of July and the Revolution, and was just becoming enthusiastic, when he suddenly recollected something and stopped very abruptly.

"What is the matter?" demanded his grandfather. "Why don't you go on?"

Lord Fauntleroy moved rather uneasily in his chair. It was evident to the Earl that he was embarrassed by the thought which had just occurred to him.

"I was just thinking that perhaps you mightn't like it," he replied.

"Perhaps some one belonging to you might have been there. I forgot you were an Englishman."

"You can go on," said my lord. "No one belonging to me was there. You forgot you were an Englishman, too."

"Oh! no," said Cedric quickly. "I'm an American!"



"You are an Englishman," said the Earl grimly. "Your father was an Englishman."

It amused him a little to say this, but it did not amuse Cedric. The lad had never thought of such a development as this. He felt himself grow quite hot up to the roots of his hair.

"I was born in America," he protested. "You have to be an American if you are born in America. I beg your pardon," with serious politeness and delicacy, "for contradicting you. Mr. Hobbs told me, if there were another war, you know, I should have to--to be an American."

The Earl gave a grim half laugh--it was short and grim, but it was a laugh.

"You would, would you?" he said.

He hated America and Americans, but it amused him to see how serious and interested this small patriot was. He thought that so good an American might make a rather good Englishman when he was a man.

They had not time to go very deep into the Revolution again--and indeed Lord Fauntleroy felt some delicacy about returning to the subject--before dinner was announced.

Cedric left his chair and went to his noble kinsman. He looked down at his gouty foot.

"Would you like me to help you?" he said politely. "You could lean on me, you know. Once when Mr. Hobbs hurt his foot with a potato-barrel rolling on it, he used to lean on me."

The big footman almost periled his reputation and his situation by smiling. He was an aristocratic footman who had always lived in the best of noble families, and he had never smiled; indeed, he would have felt himself a disgraced and vulgar footman if he had allowed himself to be led by any circumstance whatever into such an indiscretion as a smile. But he had a very narrow escape. He only just saved himself by staring straight over the Earl's head at a very ugly picture.

The Earl looked his valiant young relative over from head to foot.

"Do you think you could do it?" he asked gruffly.

"I THINK I could," said Cedric. "I'm strong. I'm seven, you know. You could lean on your stick on one side, and on me on the other. Dick says I've a good deal of muscle for a boy that's only seven."

He shut his hand and moved it upward to his shoulder, so that the Earl might see the muscle Dick had kindly approved of, and his face was so grave and earnest that the footman found it necessary to look very hard

indeed at the ugly picture.

"Well," said the Earl, "you may try."

Cedric gave him his stick and began to assist him to rise. Usually, the footman did this, and was violently sworn at when his lordship had an extra twinge of gout. The Earl was not a very polite person as a rule, and many a time the huge footmen about him quaked inside their imposing liveries.

But this evening he did not swear, though his gouty foot gave him more twinges than one. He chose to try an experiment. He got up slowly and put his hand on the small shoulder presented to him with so much courage. Little Lord Fauntleroy made a careful step forward, looking down at the gouty foot.

"Just lean on me," he said, with encouraging good cheer. "I'll walk very slowly."

If the Earl had been supported by the footman he would have rested less on his stick and more on his assistant's arm. And yet it was part of his experiment to let his grandson feel his burden as no light weight.

It was quite a heavy weight indeed, and after a few steps his young lordship's face grew quite hot, and his heart beat rather fast, but he braced himself sturdily, remembering his muscle and Dick's approval of it.

"Don't be afraid of leaning on me," he panted. "I'm all right--if--if it isn't a very long way."

It was not really very far to the dining-room, but it seemed rather a long way to Cedric, before they reached the chair at the head of the table. The hand on his shoulder seemed to grow heavier at every step, and his face grew redder and hotter, and his breath shorter, but he never thought of giving up; he stiffened his childish muscles, held his head erect, and encouraged the Earl as he limped along.

"Does your foot hurt you very much when you stand on it?" he asked. "Did you ever put it in hot water and mustard? Mr. Hobbs used to put his in hot water. Arnica is a very nice thing, they tell me."

The big dog stalked slowly beside them, and the big footman followed; several times he looked very queer as he watched the little figure making the very most of all its strength, and bearing its burden with such good-will. The Earl, too, looked rather queer, once, as he glanced sidewise down at the flushed little face. When they entered the room where they were to dine, Cedric saw it was a very large and imposing one, and that the footman who stood behind the chair at the head of the table stared very hard as they came in.

But they reached the chair at last. The hand was removed from his shoulder, and the Earl was fairly seated.

Cedric took out Dick's handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"It's a warm night, isn't it?" he said. "Perhaps you need a fire because--because of your foot, but it seems just a little warm to me."

His delicate consideration for his noble relative's feelings was such that he did not wish to seem to intimate that any of his surroundings were unnecessary.

"You have been doing some rather hard work," said the Earl.

"Oh, no!" said Lord Fauntleroy, "it wasn't exactly hard, but I got a little warm. A person will get warm in summer time."

And he rubbed his damp curls rather vigorously with the gorgeous handkerchief. His own chair was placed at the other end of the table, opposite his grandfather's. It was a chair with arms, and intended for a much larger individual than himself; indeed, everything he had seen so far,--the great rooms, with their high ceilings, the massive furniture, the big footman, the big dog, the Earl himself,--were all of proportions calculated to make this little lad feel that he was very small, indeed. But that did not trouble him; he had never thought himself very large or important, and he was quite willing to accommodate himself even to circumstances which rather overpowered him.

Perhaps he had never looked so little a fellow as when seated now in his great chair, at the end of the table. Notwithstanding his solitary existence, the Earl chose to live in some state. He was fond of his dinner, and he dined in a formal style. Cedric looked at him across a glitter of splendid glass and plate, which to his unaccustomed eyes seemed quite dazzling. A stranger looking on might well have smiled at the picture,--the great stately room, the big liveried servants, the bright lights, the glittering silver and glass, the fierce-looking old nobleman at the head of the table and the very small boy at the foot. Dinner was usually a very serious matter with the Earl--and it was a very serious matter with the cook, if his lordship was not pleased or had an indifferent appetite. To-day, however, his appetite seemed a trifle better than usual, perhaps because he had something to think of beside the flavor of the entrees and the management of the gravies. His grandson gave him something to think of. He kept looking at him across the table. He did not say very much himself, but he managed to make the boy talk. He had never imagined that he could be entertained by hearing a child talk, but Lord Fauntleroy at once puzzled and amused him, and he kept remembering how he had let the childish shoulder feel his weight just for the sake of trying how far the boy's courage and endurance would go, and it pleased him to know that his grandson had not quailed and had not seemed to think even for a moment of giving up what he had undertaken to do.

"You don't wear your coronet all the time?" remarked Lord Fauntleroy respectfully.

"No," replied the Earl, with his grim smile; "it is not becoming to me."

"Mr. Hobbs said you always wore it," said Cedric; "but after he thought it over, he said he supposed you must sometimes take it off to put your hat on."

"Yes," said the Earl, "I take it off occasionally."

And one of the footmen suddenly turned aside and gave a singular little cough behind his hand.

Cedric finished his dinner first, and then he leaned back in his chair and took a survey of the room.

"You must be very proud of your house," he said, "it's such a beautiful house. I never saw anything so beautiful; but, of course, as I'm only seven, I haven't seen much."

"And you think I must be proud of it, do you?" said the Earl.

"I should think any one would be proud of it," replied Lord Fauntleroy.

"I should be proud of it if it were my house. Everything about it is beautiful. And the park, and those trees,--how beautiful they are, and how the leaves rustle!"

Then he paused an instant and looked across the table rather wistfully.

"It's a very big house for just two people to live in, isn't it?" he said.

"It is quite large enough for two," answered the Earl. "Do you find it too large?"

His little lordship hesitated a moment.

"I was only thinking," he said, "that if two people lived in it who were not very good companions, they might feel lonely sometimes."

"Do you think I shall make a good companion?" inquired the Earl.

"Yes," replied Cedric, "I think you will. Mr. Hobbs and I were great friends. He was the best friend I had except Dearest."

The Earl made a quick movement of his bushy eyebrows.

"Who is Dearest?"

"She is my mother," said Lord Fauntleroy, in a rather low, quiet little voice.

Perhaps he was a trifle tired, as his bed-time was nearing, and perhaps



after the excitement of the last few days it was natural he should be tired, so perhaps, too, the feeling of weariness brought to him a vague sense of loneliness in the remembrance that to-night he was not to sleep at home, watched over by the loving eyes of that "best friend" of his. They had always been "best friends," this boy and his young mother. He could not help thinking of her, and the more he thought of her the less was he inclined to talk, and by the time the dinner was at an end the Earl saw that there was a faint shadow on his face. But Cedric bore himself with excellent courage, and when they went back to the library, though the tall footman walked on one side of his master, the Earl's hand rested on his grandson's shoulder, though not so heavily as before.

When the footman left them alone, Cedric sat down upon the hearth-rug near Dougal. For a few minutes he stroked the dog's ears in silence and looked at the fire.

The Earl watched him. The boy's eyes looked wistful and thoughtful, and once or twice he gave a little sigh. The Earl sat still, and kept his eyes fixed on his grandson.

"Fauntleroy," he said at last, "what are you thinking of?"

Fauntleroy looked up with a manful effort at a smile.

"I was thinking about Dearest," he said; "and--and I think I'd better get up and walk up and down the room."

He rose up, and put his hands in his small pockets, and began to walk to and fro. His eyes were very bright, and his lips were pressed together, but he kept his head up and walked firmly. Dougal moved lazily and looked at him, and then stood up. He walked over to the child, and began to follow him uneasily. Fauntleroy drew one hand from his pocket and laid it on the dog's head.

"He's a very nice dog," he said. "He's my friend. He knows how I feel."

"How do you feel?" asked the Earl.

It disturbed him to see the struggle the little fellow was having with his first feeling of homesickness, but it pleased him to see that he was making so brave an effort to bear it well. He liked this childish courage.

"Come here," he said.

Fauntleroy went to him.

"I never was away from my own house before," said the boy, with a troubled look in his brown eyes. "It makes a person feel a strange feeling when he has to stay all night in another person's castle instead of in his own house. But Dearest is not very far away from me. She told me to remember that--and--and I'm seven--and I can look at the picture

she gave me."

He put his hand in his pocket, and brought out a small violet velvet-covered case.

"This is it," he said. "You see, you press this spring and it opens, and she is in there!"

He had come close to the Earl's chair, and, as he drew forth the little case, he leaned against the arm of it, and against the old man's arm, too, as confidently as if children had always leaned there.

"There she is," he said, as the case opened; and he looked up with a smile.

The Earl knitted his brows; he did not wish to see the picture, but he looked at it in spite of himself; and there looked up at him from it such a pretty young face--a face so like the child's at his side--that it quite startled him.

"I suppose you think you are very fond of her," he said.

"Yes," answered Lord Fauntleroy, in a gentle tone, and with simple directness; "I do think so, and I think it's true. You see, Mr. Hobbs was my friend, and Dick and Bridget and Mary and Michael, they were my friends, too; but Dearest--well, she is my CLOSE friend, and we always

tell each other everything. My father left her to me to take care of, and when I am a man I am going to work and earn money for her."

"What do you think of doing?" inquired his grandfather.

His young lordship slipped down upon the hearth-rug, and sat there with the picture still in his hand. He seemed to be reflecting seriously, before he answered.

"I did think perhaps I might go into business with Mr. Hobbs," he said; "but I should LIKE to be a President."

"We'll send you to the House of Lords instead," said his grandfather.

"Well," remarked Lord Fauntleroy, "if I COULDN'T be a President, and if that is a good business, I shouldn't mind. The grocery business is dull sometimes."

Perhaps he was weighing the matter in his mind, for he sat very quiet after this, and looked at the fire for some time.

The Earl did not speak again. He leaned back in his chair and watched him. A great many strange new thoughts passed through the old nobleman's mind. Dougal had stretched himself out and gone to sleep with his head on his huge paws. There was a long silence.

In about half an hour's time Mr. Havisham was ushered in. The great room was very still when he entered. The Earl was still leaning back in his chair. He moved as Mr. Havisham approached, and held up his hand in a gesture of warning--it seemed as if he had scarcely intended to make the gesture--as if it were almost involuntary. Dougal was still asleep, and close beside the great dog, sleeping also, with his curly head upon his arm, lay little Lord Fauntleroy.