

## VI

When Lord Fauntleroy wakened in the morning,--he had not wakened at all when he had been carried to bed the night before,--the first sounds he was conscious of were the crackling of a wood fire and the murmur of voices.

"You will be careful, Dawson, not to say anything about it," he heard some one say. "He does not know why she is not to be with him, and the reason is to be kept from him."

"If them's his lordship's orders, mem," another voice answered, "they'll have to be kep', I suppose. But, if you'll excuse the liberty, mem, as it's between ourselves, servant or no servant, all I have to say is, it's a cruel thing,--parting that poor, pretty, young widdered cre'tur' from her own flesh and blood, and him such a little beauty and a nobleman born. James and Thomas, mem, last night in the servants' hall, they both of 'em say as they never see anythink in their two lives--nor yet no other gentleman in livery--like that little fellow's ways, as innercent an' polite an' interested as if he'd been sitting there dining with his best friend,--and the temper of a' angel, instead of one (if you'll excuse me, mem), as it's well known, is enough to curdle your blood in your veins at times. And as to looks, mem, when we was rung for, James and me, to go into the library and bring him upstairs, and James lifted him up in his arms, what with his little innercent face all red and rosy, and his little head on James's shoulder and his hair

hanging down, all curly an' shinin', a prettier, takiner sight you'd never wish to see. An' it's my opinion, my lord wasn't blind to it neither, for he looked at him, and he says to James, 'See you don't wake him!' he says."

Cedric moved on his pillow, and turned over, opening his eyes.

There were two women in the room. Everything was bright and cheerful with gay-flowered chintz. There was a fire on the hearth, and the sunshine was streaming in through the ivy-entwined windows. Both women came toward him, and he saw that one of them was Mrs. Mellon, the housekeeper, and the other a comfortable, middle-aged woman, with a face as kind and good-humored as a face could be.

"Good-morning, my lord," said Mrs. Mellon. "Did you sleep well?"

His lordship rubbed his eyes and smiled.

"Good-morning," he said. "I didn't know I was here."

"You were carried upstairs when you were asleep," said the housekeeper.

"This is your bedroom, and this is Dawson, who is to take care of you."

Fauntleroy sat up in bed and held out his hand to Dawson, as he had held it out to the Earl.

"How do you do, ma'am?" he said. "I'm much obliged to you for coming to take care of me."

"You can call her Dawson, my lord," said the housekeeper with a smile.

"She is used to being called Dawson."

"MISS Dawson, or MRS. Dawson?" inquired his lordship.

"Just Dawson, my lord," said Dawson herself, beaming all over. "Neither Miss nor Missis, bless your little heart! Will you get up now, and let Dawson dress you, and then have your breakfast in the nursery?"

"I learned to dress myself many years ago, thank you," answered Fauntleroy. "Dearest taught me. 'Dearest' is my mamma. We had only Mary to do all the work,--washing and all,--and so of course it wouldn't do to give her so much trouble. I can take my bath, too, pretty well if you'll just be kind enough to 'zamine the corners after I'm done."

Dawson and the housekeeper exchanged glances.

"Dawson will do anything you ask her to," said Mrs. Mellon.

"That I will, bless him," said Dawson, in her comforting, good-humored voice. "He shall dress himself if he likes, and I'll stand by, ready to help him if he wants me."

"Thank you," responded Lord Fauntleroy; "it's a little hard sometimes about the buttons, you know, and then I have to ask somebody."

He thought Dawson a very kind woman, and before the bath and the dressing were finished they were excellent friends, and he had found out a great deal about her. He had discovered that her husband had been a soldier and had been killed in a real battle, and that her son was a sailor, and was away on a long cruise, and that he had seen pirates and cannibals and Chinese people and Turks, and that he brought home strange shells and pieces of coral which Dawson was ready to show at any moment, some of them being in her trunk. All this was very interesting. He also found out that she had taken care of little children all her life, and that she had just come from a great house in another part of England, where she had been taking care of a beautiful little girl whose name was Lady Gwyneth Vaughn.

"And she is a sort of relation of your lordship's," said Dawson. "And perhaps sometime you may see her."

"Do you think I shall?" said Fauntleroy. "I should like that. I never knew any little girls, but I always like to look at them."

When he went into the adjoining room to take his breakfast, and saw what a great room it was, and found there was another adjoining it which Dawson told him was his also, the feeling that he was very small indeed came over him again so strongly that he confided it to Dawson, as he sat

down to the table on which the pretty breakfast service was arranged.

"I am a very little boy," he said rather wistfully, "to live in such a large castle, and have so many big rooms,--don't you think so?"

"Oh! come!" said Dawson, "you feel just a little strange at first, that's all; but you'll get over that very soon, and then you'll like it here. It's such a beautiful place, you know."

"It's a very beautiful place, of course," said Fauntleroy, with a little sigh; "but I should like it better if I didn't miss Dearest so. I always had my breakfast with her in the morning, and put the sugar and cream in her tea for her, and handed her the toast. That made it very sociable, of course."

"Oh, well!" answered Dawson, comfortingly, "you know you can see her every day, and there's no knowing how much you'll have to tell her. Bless you! wait till you've walked about a bit and seen things,--the dogs, and the stables with all the horses in them. There's one of them I know you'll like to see----"

"Is there?" exclaimed Fauntleroy; "I'm very fond of horses. I was very fond of Jim. He was the horse that belonged to Mr. Hobbs' grocery wagon. He was a beautiful horse when he wasn't balky."

"Well," said Dawson, "you just wait till you've seen what's in the

stables. And, deary me, you haven't looked even into the very next room yet!"

"What is there?" asked Fauntleroy.

"Wait until you've had your breakfast, and then you shall see," said Dawson.

At this he naturally began to grow curious, and he applied himself assiduously to his breakfast. It seemed to him that there must be something worth looking at, in the next room; Dawson had such a consequential, mysterious air.

"Now, then," he said, slipping off his seat a few minutes later; "I've had enough. Can I go and look at it?"

Dawson nodded and led the way, looking more mysterious and important than ever. He began to be very much interested indeed.

When she opened the door of the room, he stood upon the threshold and looked about him in amazement. He did not speak; he only put his hands in his pockets and stood there flushing up to his forehead and looking in.

He flushed up because he was so surprised and, for the moment, excited. To see such a place was enough to surprise any ordinary boy.

The room was a large one, too, as all the rooms seemed to be, and it appeared to him more beautiful than the rest, only in a different way. The furniture was not so massive and antique as was that in the rooms he had seen downstairs; the draperies and rugs and walls were brighter; there were shelves full of books, and on the tables were numbers of toys,--beautiful, ingenious things,--such as he had looked at with wonder and delight through the shop windows in New York.

"It looks like a boy's room," he said at last, catching his breath a little. "Whom do they belong to?"

"Go and look at them," said Dawson. "They belong to you!"

"To me!" he cried; "to me? Why do they belong to me? Who gave them to me?" And he sprang forward with a gay little shout. It seemed almost too much to be believed. "It was Grandpapa!" he said, with his eyes as bright as stars. "I know it was Grandpapa!"

"Yes, it was his lordship," said Dawson; "and if you will be a nice little gentleman, and not fret about things, and will enjoy yourself, and be happy all the day, he will give you anything you ask for."

It was a tremendously exciting morning. There were so many things to be examined, so many experiments to be tried; each novelty was so absorbing that he could scarcely turn from it to look at the next. And it was so

curious to know that all this had been prepared for himself alone; that, even before he had left New York, people had come down from London to arrange the rooms he was to occupy, and had provided the books and playthings most likely to interest him.

"Did you ever know any one," he said to Dawson, "who had such a kind grandfather!"

Dawson's face wore an uncertain expression for a moment. She had not a very high opinion of his lordship the Earl. She had not been in the house many days, but she had been there long enough to hear the old nobleman's peculiarities discussed very freely in the servants' hall.

"An' of all the wicious, savage, hill-tempered hold fellows it was ever my hill-luck to wear livery hunder," the tallest footman had said, "he's the wiolentest and wust by a long shot."

And this particular footman, whose name was Thomas, had also repeated to his companions below stairs some of the Earl's remarks to Mr. Havisham, when they had been discussing these very preparations.

"Give him his own way, and fill his rooms with toys," my lord had said.

"Give him what will amuse him, and he'll forget about his mother quickly enough. Amuse him, and fill his mind with other things, and we shall have no trouble. That's boy nature."



So, perhaps, having had this truly amiable object in view, it did not please him so very much to find it did not seem to be exactly this particular boy's nature. The Earl had passed a bad night and had spent the morning in his room; but at noon, after he had lunched, he sent for his grandson.

Fauntleroy answered the summons at once. He came down the broad staircase with a bounding step; the Earl heard him run across the hall, and then the door opened and he came in with red cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"I was waiting for you to send for me," he said. "I was ready a long time ago. I'm EVER so much obliged to you for all those things! I'm EVER so much obliged to you! I have been playing with them all the morning."

"Oh!" said the Earl, "you like them, do you?"

"I like them so much--well, I couldn't tell you how much!" said Fauntleroy, his face glowing with delight. "There's one that's like baseball, only you play it on a board with black and white pegs, and you keep your score with some counters on a wire. I tried to teach Dawson, but she couldn't quite understand it just at first--you see, she never played baseball, being a lady; and I'm afraid I wasn't very good at explaining it to her. But you know all about it, don't you?"

"I'm afraid I don't," replied the Earl. "It's an American game, isn't

it? Is it something like cricket?"

"I never saw cricket," said Fauntleroy; "but Mr. Hobbs took me several times to see baseball. It's a splendid game. You get so excited! Would you like me to go and get my game and show it to you? Perhaps it would amuse you and make you forget about your foot. Does your foot hurt you very much this morning?"

"More than I enjoy," was the answer.

"Then perhaps you couldn't forget it," said the little fellow anxiously.

"Perhaps it would bother you to be told about the game. Do you think it would amuse you, or do you think it would bother you?"

"Go and get it," said the Earl.

It certainly was a novel entertainment this,--making a companion of a child who offered to teach him to play games,--but the very novelty of it amused him. There was a smile lurking about the Earl's mouth when Cedric came back with the box containing the game, in his arms, and an expression of the most eager interest on his face.

"May I pull that little table over here to your chair?" he asked.

"Ring for Thomas," said the Earl. "He will place it for you."

"Oh, I can do it myself," answered Fauntleroy. "It's not very heavy."

"Very well," replied his grandfather. The lurking smile deepened on the old man's face as he watched the little fellow's preparations; there was such an absorbed interest in them. The small table was dragged forward and placed by his chair, and the game taken from its box and arranged upon it.

"It's very interesting when you once begin," said Fauntleroy. "You see, the black pegs can be your side and the white ones mine. They're men, you know, and once round the field is a home run and counts one--and these are the outs--and here is the first base and that's the second and that's the third and that's the home base."

He entered into the details of explanation with the greatest animation. He showed all the attitudes of pitcher and catcher and batter in the real game, and gave a dramatic description of a wonderful "hot ball" he had seen caught on the glorious occasion on which he had witnessed a match in company with Mr. Hobbs. His vigorous, graceful little body, his eager gestures, his simple enjoyment of it all, were pleasant to behold.

When at last the explanations and illustrations were at an end and the game began in good earnest, the Earl still found himself entertained. His young companion was wholly absorbed; he played with all his childish heart; his gay little laughs when he made a good throw, his enthusiasm over a "home run," his impartial delight over his own good luck and his

opponent's, would have given a flavor to any game.

If, a week before, any one had told the Earl of Dorincourt that on that particular morning he would be forgetting his gout and his bad temper in a child's game, played with black and white wooden pegs, on a gayly painted board, with a curly-headed small boy for a companion, he would without doubt have made himself very unpleasant; and yet he certainly had forgotten himself when the door opened and Thomas announced a visitor.

The visitor in question, who was an elderly gentleman in black, and no less a person than the clergyman of the parish, was so startled by the amazing scene which met his eye, that he almost fell back a pace, and ran some risk of colliding with Thomas.

There was, in fact, no part of his duty that the Reverend Mr. Mordaunt found so decidedly unpleasant as that part which compelled him to call upon his noble patron at the Castle. His noble patron, indeed, usually made these visits as disagreeable as it lay in his lordly power to make them. He abhorred churches and charities, and flew into violent rages when any of his tenantry took the liberty of being poor and ill and needing assistance. When his gout was at its worst, he did not hesitate to announce that he would not be bored and irritated by being told stories of their miserable misfortunes; when his gout troubled him less and he was in a somewhat more humane frame of mind, he would perhaps give the rector some money, after having bullied him in the most

painful manner, and berated the whole parish for its shiftlessness and imbecility. But, whatsoever his mood, he never failed to make as many sarcastic and embarrassing speeches as possible, and to cause the Reverend Mr. Mordaunt to wish it were proper and Christian-like to throw something heavy at him. During all the years in which Mr. Mordaunt had been in charge of Dorincourt parish, the rector certainly did not remember having seen his lordship, of his own free will, do any one a kindness, or, under any circumstances whatever, show that he thought of any one but himself.

He had called to-day to speak to him of a specially pressing case, and as he had walked up the avenue, he had, for two reasons, dreaded his visit more than usual. In the first place, he knew that his lordship had for several days been suffering with the gout, and had been in so villainous a humor that rumors of it had even reached the village--carried there by one of the young women servants, to her sister, who kept a little shop and retailed darning-needles and cotton and peppermints and gossip, as a means of earning an honest living. What Mrs. Dibble did not know about the Castle and its inmates, and the farm-houses and their inmates, and the village and its population, was really not worth being talked about. And of course she knew everything about the Castle, because her sister, Jane Shorts, was one of the upper housemaids, and was very friendly and intimate with Thomas.

"And the way his lordship do go on!" said Mrs. Dibble, over the counter, "and the way he do use language, Mr. Thomas told Jane herself, no flesh

and blood as is in livery could stand--for throw a plate of toast at Mr. Thomas, hisself, he did, not more than two days since, and if it weren't for other things being agreeable and the society below stairs most genteel, warning would have been gave within a' hour!"

And the rector had heard all this, for somehow the Earl was a favorite black sheep in the cottages and farm-houses, and his bad behavior gave many a good woman something to talk about when she had company to tea.

And the second reason was even worse, because it was a new one and had been talked about with the most excited interest.

Who did not know of the old nobleman's fury when his handsome son the Captain had married the American lady? Who did not know how cruelly he had treated the Captain, and how the big, gay, sweet-smiling young man, who was the only member of the grand family any one liked, had died in a foreign land, poor and unforgiven? Who did not know how fiercely his lordship had hated the poor young creature who had been this son's wife, and how he had hated the thought of her child and never meant to see the boy--until his two sons died and left him without an heir? And then, who did not know that he had looked forward without any affection or pleasure to his grandson's coming, and that he had made up his mind that he should find the boy a vulgar, awkward, pert American lad, more likely to disgrace his noble name than to honor it?

The proud, angry old man thought he had kept all his thoughts secret. He

did not suppose any one had dared to guess at, much less talk over what he felt, and dreaded; but his servants watched him, and read his face and his ill-humors and fits of gloom, and discussed them in the servants' hall. And while he thought himself quite secure from the common herd, Thomas was telling Jane and the cook, and the butler, and the housemaids and the other footmen that it was his opinion that "the hold man was wuss than usual a-thinkin' hover the Captin's boy, an' hanticipatin' as he won't be no credit to the fambly. An' serve him right," added Thomas; "hit's 'is hown fault. Wot can he iggspect from a child brought up in pore circumstances in that there low Hamerica?"

And as the Reverend Mr. Mordaunt walked under the great trees, he remembered that this questionable little boy had arrived at the Castle only the evening before, and that there were nine chances to one that his lordship's worst fears were realized, and twenty-two chances to one that if the poor little fellow had disappointed him, the Earl was even now in a tearing rage, and ready to vent all his rancor on the first person who called--which it appeared probable would be his reverend self.

Judge then of his amazement when, as Thomas opened the library door, his ears were greeted by a delighted ring of childish laughter.

"That's two out!" shouted an excited, clear little voice. "You see it's two out!"

And there was the Earl's chair, and the gout-stool, and his foot on it; and by him a small table and a game on it; and quite close to him, actually leaning against his arm and his ungouty knee, was a little boy with face glowing, and eyes dancing with excitement. "It's two out!" the little stranger cried. "You hadn't any luck that time, had you?"--And then they both recognized at once that some one had come in.

The Earl glanced around, knitting his shaggy eyebrows as he had a trick of doing, and when he saw who it was, Mr. Mordaunt was still more surprised to see that he looked even less disagreeable than usual instead of more so. In fact, he looked almost as if he had forgotten for the moment how disagreeable he was, and how unpleasant he really could make himself when he tried.

"Ah!" he said, in his harsh voice, but giving his hand rather graciously. "Good-morning, Mordaunt. I've found a new employment, you see."

He put his other hand on Cedric's shoulder,--perhaps deep down in his heart there was a stir of gratified pride that it was such an heir he had to present; there was a spark of something like pleasure in his eyes as he moved the boy slightly forward.

"This is the new Lord Fauntleroy," he said. "Fauntleroy, this is Mr. Mordaunt, the rector of the parish."



Fauntleroy looked up at the gentleman in the clerical garments, and gave him his hand.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, sir," he said, remembering the words he had heard Mr. Hobbs use on one or two occasions when he had been greeting a new customer with ceremony.

Cedric felt quite sure that one ought to be more than usually polite to a minister.

Mr. Mordaunt held the small hand in his a moment as he looked down at the child's face, smiling involuntarily. He liked the little fellow from that instant--as in fact people always did like him. And it was not the boy's beauty and grace which most appealed to him; it was the simple, natural kindness in the little lad which made any words he uttered, however quaint and unexpected, sound pleasant and sincere. As the rector looked at Cedric, he forgot to think of the Earl at all. Nothing in the world is so strong as a kind heart, and somehow this kind little heart, though it was only the heart of a child, seemed to clear all the atmosphere of the big gloomy room and make it brighter.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Lord Fauntleroy," said the rector. "You made a long journey to come to us. A great many people will be glad to know you made it safely."

"It WAS a long way," answered Fauntleroy, "but Dearest, my mother, was with me and I wasn't lonely. Of course you are never lonely if your mother is with you; and the ship was beautiful."

"Take a chair, Mordaunt," said the Earl. Mr. Mordaunt sat down. He glanced from Fauntleroy to the Earl.

"Your lordship is greatly to be congratulated," he said warmly.

But the Earl plainly had no intention of showing his feelings on the subject.

"He is like his father," he said rather gruffly. "Let us hope he'll conduct himself more creditably." And then he added: "Well, what is it this morning, Mordaunt? Who is in trouble now?"

This was not as bad as Mr. Mordaunt had expected, but he hesitated a second before he began.

"It is Higgins," he said; "Higgins of Edge Farm. He has been very unfortunate. He was ill himself last autumn, and his children had scarlet fever. I can't say that he is a very good manager, but he has had ill-luck, and of course he is behindhand in many ways. He is in trouble about his rent now. Newick tells him if he doesn't pay it, he must leave the place; and of course that would be a very serious matter. His wife is ill, and he came to me yesterday to beg me to see about

it, and ask you for time. He thinks if you would give him time he could catch up again."

"They all think that," said the Earl, looking rather black.

Fauntleroy made a movement forward. He had been standing between his grandfather and the visitor, listening with all his might. He had begun to be interested in Higgins at once. He wondered how many children there were, and if the scarlet fever had hurt them very much. His eyes were wide open and were fixed upon Mr. Mordaunt with intent interest as that gentleman went on with the conversation.

"Higgins is a well-meaning man," said the rector, making an effort to strengthen his plea.

"He is a bad enough tenant," replied his lordship. "And he is always behindhand, Newick tells me."

"He is in great trouble now," said the rector.

"He is very fond of his wife and children, and if the farm is taken from him they may literally starve. He can not give them the nourishing things they need. Two of the children were left very low after the fever, and the doctor orders for them wine and luxuries that Higgins can not afford."

At this Fauntleroy moved a step nearer.

"That was the way with Michael," he said.

The Earl slightly started.

"I forgot YOU!" he said. "I forgot we had a philanthropist in the room. Who was Michael?" And the gleam of queer amusement came back into the old man's deep-set eyes.

"He was Bridget's husband, who had the fever," answered Fauntleroy; "and he couldn't pay the rent or buy wine and things. And you gave me that money to help him."

The Earl drew his brows together into a curious frown, which somehow was scarcely grim at all. He glanced across at Mr. Mordaunt.

"I don't know what sort of landed proprietor he will make," he said.

"I told Havisham the boy was to have what he wanted--anything he wanted--and what he wanted, it seems, was money to give to beggars."

"Oh! but they weren't beggars," said Fauntleroy eagerly. "Michael was a splendid bricklayer! They all worked."

"Oh!" said the Earl, "they were not beggars. They were splendid bricklayers, and bootblacks, and apple-women."

He bent his gaze on the boy for a few seconds in silence. The fact was that a new thought was coming to him, and though, perhaps, it was not prompted by the noblest emotions, it was not a bad thought. "Come here," he said, at last.

Fauntleroy went and stood as near to him as possible without encroaching on the gouty foot.

"What would YOU do in this case?" his lordship asked.

It must be confessed that Mr. Mordaunt experienced for the moment a curious sensation. Being a man of great thoughtfulness, and having spent so many years on the estate of Dorincourt, knowing the tenantry, rich and poor, the people of the village, honest and industrious, dishonest and lazy, he realized very strongly what power for good or evil would be given in the future to this one small boy standing there, his brown eyes wide open, his hands deep in his pockets; and the thought came to him also that a great deal of power might, perhaps, through the caprice of a proud, self-indulgent old man, be given to him now, and that if his young nature were not a simple and generous one, it might be the worst thing that could happen, not only for others, but for himself.

"And what would YOU do in such a case?" demanded the Earl.

Fauntleroy drew a little nearer, and laid one hand on his knee, with the

most confiding air of good comradeship.

"If I were very rich," he said, "and not only just a little boy, I should let him stay, and give him the things for his children; but then, I am only a boy." Then, after a second's pause, in which his face brightened visibly, "YOU can do anything, can't you?" he said.

"Humph!" said my lord, staring at him. "That's your opinion, is it?" And he was not displeased either.

"I mean you can give any one anything," said Fauntleroy. "Who's Newick?"

"He is my agent," answered the earl, "and some of my tenants are not over-fond of him."

"Are you going to write him a letter now?" inquired Fauntleroy. "Shall I bring you the pen and ink? I can take the game off this table."

It plainly had not for an instant occurred to him that Newick would be allowed to do his worst.

The Earl paused a moment, still looking at him. "Can you write?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Cedric, "but not very well."

"Move the things from the table," commanded my lord, "and bring the pen and ink, and a sheet of paper from my desk."

Mr. Mordaunt's interest began to increase. Fauntleroy did as he was told very deftly. In a few moments, the sheet of paper, the big inkstand, and the pen were ready.

"There!" he said gayly, "now you can write it."

"You are to write it," said the Earl.

"I!" exclaimed Fauntleroy, and a flush overspread his forehead. "Will it do if I write it? I don't always spell quite right when I haven't a dictionary, and nobody tells me."

"It will do," answered the Earl. "Higgins will not complain of the spelling. I'm not the philanthropist; you are. Dip your pen in the ink."

Fauntleroy took up the pen and dipped it in the ink-bottle, then he arranged himself in position, leaning on the table.

"Now," he inquired, "what must I say?"

"You may say, 'Higgins is not to be interfered with, for the present,' and sign it, 'Fauntleroy,'" said the Earl.

Fauntleroy dipped his pen in the ink again, and resting his arm, began to write. It was rather a slow and serious process, but he gave his whole soul to it. After a while, however, the manuscript was complete, and he handed it to his grandfather with a smile slightly tinged with anxiety.

"Do you think it will do?" he asked.

The Earl looked at it, and the corners of his mouth twitched a little.

"Yes," he answered; "Higgins will find it entirely satisfactory." And he handed it to Mr. Mordaunt.

What Mr. Mordaunt found written was this:

"Dear mr. Newik if you pleas mr. higgins is not to be intur feared with for the present and oblige. Yours rispecferly,

"FAUNTLEROY."

"Mr. Hobbs always signed his letters that way," said Fauntleroy; "and I thought I'd better say 'please.' Is that exactly the right way to spell 'interfered'?"



"It's not exactly the way it is spelled in the dictionary," answered the Earl.

"I was afraid of that," said Fauntleroy. "I ought to have asked. You see, that's the way with words of more than one syllable; you have to look in the dictionary. It's always safest. I'll write it over again."

And write it over again he did, making quite an imposing copy, and taking precautions in the matter of spelling by consulting the Earl himself.

"Spelling is a curious thing," he said. "It's so often different from what you expect it to be. I used to think 'please' was spelled p-l-e-e-s, but it isn't, you know; and you'd think 'dear' was spelled d-e-r-e, if you didn't inquire. Sometimes it almost discourages you."

When Mr. Mordaunt went away, he took the letter with him, and he took something else with him also--namely, a pleasanter feeling and a more hopeful one than he had ever carried home with him down that avenue on any previous visit he had made at Dorincourt Castle.

When he was gone, Fauntleroy, who had accompanied him to the door, went back to his grandfather.

"May I go to Dearest now?" he asked. "I think she will be waiting for me."

The Earl was silent a moment.

"There is something in the stable for you to see first," he said. "Ring the bell."

"If you please," said Fauntleroy, with his quick little flush. "I'm very much obliged; but I think I'd better see it to-morrow. She will be expecting me all the time."

"Very well," answered the Earl. "We will order the carriage." Then he added dryly, "It's a pony."

Fauntleroy drew a long breath.

"A pony!" he exclaimed. "Whose pony is it?"

"Yours," replied the Earl.

"Mine?" cried the little fellow. "Mine--like the things upstairs?"

"Yes," said his grandfather. "Would you like to see it? Shall I order it to be brought around?"

Fauntleroy's cheeks grew redder and redder.

"I never thought I should have a pony!" he said. "I never thought that! How glad Dearest will be. You give me EVERYthing, don't you?"

"Do you wish to see it?" inquired the Earl.

Fauntleroy drew a long breath. "I WANT to see it," he said. "I want to see it so much I can hardly wait. But I'm afraid there isn't time."

"You MUST go and see your mother this afternoon?" asked the Earl. "You think you can't put it off?"

"Why," said Fauntleroy, "she has been thinking about me all the morning, and I have been thinking about her!"

"Oh!" said the Earl. "You have, have you? Ring the bell."

As they drove down the avenue, under the arching trees, he was rather silent. But Fauntleroy was not. He talked about the pony. What color was it? How big was it? What was its name? What did it like to eat best? How old was it? How early in the morning might he get up and see it?

"Dearest will be so glad!" he kept saying. "She will be so much obliged to you for being so kind to me! She knows I always liked ponies so much, but we never thought I should have one. There was a little boy on Fifth Avenue who had one, and he used to ride out every morning and we used to take a walk past his house to see him."

He leaned back against the cushions and regarded the Earl with rapt interest for a few minutes and in entire silence.

"I think you must be the best person in the world," he burst forth at last. "You are always doing good, aren't you?--and thinking about other people. Dearest says that is the best kind of goodness; not to think about yourself, but to think about other people. That is just the way you are, isn't it?"

His lordship was so dumfounded to find himself presented in such agreeable colors, that he did not know exactly what to say. He felt that he needed time for reflection. To see each of his ugly, selfish motives changed into a good and generous one by the simplicity of a child was a singular experience.

Fauntleroy went on, still regarding him with admiring eyes--those great, clear, innocent eyes!

"You make so many people happy," he said. "There's Michael and Bridget and their ten children, and the apple-woman, and Dick, and Mr. Hobbs, and Mr. Higgins and Mrs. Higgins and their children, and Mr. Mordaunt,--because of course he was glad,--and Dearest and me, about the pony and all the other things. Do you know, I've counted it up on my fingers and in my mind, and it's twenty-seven people you've been kind to. That's a good many--twenty-seven!"

"And I was the person who was kind to them--was I?" said the Earl.

"Why, yes, you know," answered Fauntleroy. "You made them all happy. Do you know," with some delicate hesitation, "that people are sometimes mistaken about earls when they don't know them. Mr. Hobbs was. I am going to write him, and tell him about it."

"What was Mr. Hobbs's opinion of earls?" asked his lordship.

"Well, you see, the difficulty was," replied his young companion, "that he didn't know any, and he'd only read about them in books. He thought--you mustn't mind it--that they were gory tyrants; and he said he wouldn't have them hanging around his store. But if he'd known YOU, I'm sure he would have felt quite different. I shall tell him about you."

"What shall you tell him?"

"I shall tell him," said Fauntleroy, glowing with enthusiasm, "that you are the kindest man I ever heard of. And you are always thinking of other people, and making them happy and--and I hope when I grow up, I shall be just like you."

"Just like me!" repeated his lordship, looking at the little kindling face. And a dull red crept up under his withered skin, and he suddenly

turned his eyes away and looked out of the carriage window at the great beech-trees, with the sun shining on their glossy, red-brown leaves.

"JUST like you," said Fauntleroy, adding modestly, "if I can. Perhaps I'm not good enough, but I'm going to try."

The carriage rolled on down the stately avenue under the beautiful, broad-branched trees, through the spaces of green shade and lanes of golden sunlight. Fauntleroy saw again the lovely places where the ferns grew high and the bluebells swayed in the breeze; he saw the deer, standing or lying in the deep grass, turn their large, startled eyes as the carriage passed, and caught glimpses of the brown rabbits as they scurried away. He heard the whir of the partridges and the calls and songs of the birds, and it all seemed even more beautiful to him than before. All his heart was filled with pleasure and happiness in the beauty that was on every side. But the old Earl saw and heard very different things, though he was apparently looking out too. He saw a long life, in which there had been neither generous deeds nor kind thoughts; he saw years in which a man who had been young and strong and rich and powerful had used his youth and strength and wealth and power only to please himself and kill time as the days and years succeeded each other; he saw this man, when the time had been killed and old age had come, solitary and without real friends in the midst of all his splendid wealth; he saw people who disliked or feared him, and people who would flatter and cringe to him, but no one who really cared whether he lived or died, unless they had something to gain or lose by it. He

looked out on the broad acres which belonged to him, and he knew what Fauntleroy did not--how far they extended, what wealth they represented, and how many people had homes on their soil. And he knew, too,--another thing Fauntleroy did not,--that in all those homes, humble or well-to-do, there was probably not one person, however much he envied the wealth and stately name and power, and however willing he would have been to possess them, who would for an instant have thought of calling the noble owner "good," or wishing, as this simple-souled little boy had, to be like him.

And it was not exactly pleasant to reflect upon, even for a cynical, worldly old man, who had been sufficient unto himself for seventy years and who had never deigned to care what opinion the world held of him so long as it did not interfere with his comfort or entertainment. And the fact was, indeed, that he had never before condescended to reflect upon it at all; and he only did so now because a child had believed him better than he was, and by wishing to follow in his illustrious footsteps and imitate his example, had suggested to him the curious question whether he was exactly the person to take as a model.

Fauntleroy thought the Earl's foot must be hurting him, his brows knitted themselves together so, as he looked out at the park; and thinking this, the considerate little fellow tried not to disturb him, and enjoyed the trees and the ferns and the deer in silence.

But at last the carriage, having passed the gates and bowled through the

green lanes for a short distance, stopped. They had reached Court Lodge; and Fauntleroy was out upon the ground almost before the big footman had time to open the carriage door.

The Earl wakened from his reverie with a start.

"What!" he said. "Are we here?"

"Yes," said Fauntleroy. "Let me give you your stick. Just lean on me when you get out."

"I am not going to get out," replied his lordship brusquely.

"Not--not to see Dearest?" exclaimed Fauntleroy with astonished face.

"'Dearest' will excuse me," said the Earl dryly. "Go to her and tell her that not even a new pony would keep you away."

"She will be disappointed," said Fauntleroy. "She will want to see you very much."

"I am afraid not," was the answer. "The carriage will call for you as we come back.--Tell Jeffries to drive on, Thomas."

Thomas closed the carriage door; and, after a puzzled look, Fauntleroy ran up the drive. The Earl had the opportunity--as Mr. Havisham once



had--of seeing a pair of handsome, strong little legs flash over the ground with astonishing rapidity. Evidently their owner had no intention of losing any time. The carriage rolled slowly away, but his lordship did not at once lean back; he still looked out. Through a space in the trees he could see the house door; it was wide open. The little figure dashed up the steps; another figure--a little figure, too, slender and young, in its black gown--ran to meet it. It seemed as if they flew together, as Fauntleroy leaped into his mother's arms, hanging about her neck and covering her sweet young face with kisses.