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The fact was, his lordship the Earl of Dorincourt thought in those days, of many things of which he had never thought before, and all his thoughts were in one way or another connected with his grandson. His pride was the strongest part of his nature, and the boy gratified it at every point. Through this pride he began to find a new interest in life. He began to take pleasure in showing his heir to the world. The world had known of his disappointment in his sons; so there was an agreeable touch of triumph in exhibiting this new Lord Fauntleroy, who could disappoint no one. He wished the child to appreciate his own power and to understand the splendor of his position; he wished that others should realize it too. He made plans for his future.

Sometimes in secret he actually found himself wishing that his own past life had been a better one, and that there had been less in it that this pure, childish heart would shrink from if it knew the truth. It was not agreeable to think how the beautiful, innocent face would look if its owner should be made by any chance to understand that his grandfather had been called for many a year "the wicked Earl of Dorincourt." The thought even made him feel a trifle nervous. He did not wish the boy to find it out. Sometimes in this new interest he forgot his gout, and after a while his doctor was surprised to find his noble patient's health growing better than he had expected it ever would be again. Perhaps the Earl grew better because the time did not pass so slowly for him, and he had something to think of beside his pains and infirmities.

One fine morning, people were amazed to see little Lord Fauntleroy riding his pony with another companion than Wilkins. This new companion rode a tall, powerful gray horse, and was no other than the Earl himself. It was, in fact, Fauntleroy who had suggested this plan. As he had been on the point of mounting his pony, he had said rather wistfully to his grandfather:

"I wish you were going with me. When I go away I feel lonely because you are left all by yourself in such a big castle. I wish you could ride too."

And the greatest excitement had been aroused in the stables a few minutes later by the arrival of an order that Selim was to be saddled for the Earl. After that, Selim was saddled almost every day; and the people became accustomed to the sight of the tall gray horse carrying the tall gray old man, with his handsome, fierce, eagle face, by the side of the brown pony which bore little Lord Fauntleroy. And in their rides together through the green lanes and pretty country roads, the two riders became more intimate than ever. And gradually the old man heard a great deal about "Dearest" and her life. As Fauntleroy trotted by the big horse he chatted gayly. There could not well have been a brighter little comrade, his nature was so happy. It was he who talked the most. The Earl often was silent, listening and watching the joyous, glowing face. Sometimes he would tell his young companion to set the pony off at a gallop, and when the little fellow dashed off, sitting so straight and

fearless, he would watch him with a gleam of pride and pleasure in his eyes; and when, after such a dash, Fauntleroy came back waving his cap with a laughing shout, he always felt that he and his grandfather were very good friends indeed.

One thing that the Earl discovered was that his son's wife did not lead an idle life. It was not long before he learned that the poor people knew her very well indeed. When there was sickness or sorrow or poverty in any house, the little brougham often stood before the door.

"Do you know," said Fauntleroy once, "they all say, 'God bless you!' when they see her, and the children are glad. There are some who go to her house to be taught to sew. She says she feels so rich now that she wants to help the poor ones."

It had not displeased the Earl to find that the mother of his heir had a beautiful young face and looked as much like a lady as if she had been a duchess; and in one way it did not displease him to know that she was popular and beloved by the poor. And yet he was often conscious of a hard, jealous pang when he saw how she filled her child's heart and how the boy clung to her as his best beloved. The old man would have desired to stand first himself and have no rival.

That same morning he drew up his horse on an elevated point of the moor over which they rode, and made a gesture with his whip, over the broad, beautiful landscape spread before them.

"Do you know that all that land belongs to me?" he said to Fauntleroy.

"Does it?" answered Fauntleroy. "How much it is to belong to one person, and how beautiful!"

"Do you know that some day it will all belong to you--that and a great deal more?"

"To me!" exclaimed Fauntleroy in rather an awe-stricken voice. "When?"

"When I am dead," his grandfather answered.

"Then I don't want it," said Fauntleroy; "I want you to live always."

"That's kind," answered the Earl in his dry way; "nevertheless, some day it will all be yours--some day you will be the Earl of Dorincourt."

Little Lord Fauntleroy sat very still in his saddle for a few moments. He looked over the broad moors, the green farms, the beautiful copses, the cottages in the lanes, the pretty village, and over the trees to where the turrets of the great castle rose, gray and stately. Then he gave a queer little sigh.

"What are you thinking of?" asked the Earl.

"I am thinking," replied Fauntleroy, "what a little boy I am! and of what Dearest said to me."

"What was it?" inquired the Earl.

"She said that perhaps it was not so easy to be very rich; that if any one had so many things always, one might sometimes forget that every one else was not so fortunate, and that one who is rich should always be careful and try to remember. I was talking to her about how good you were, and she said that was such a good thing, because an earl had so much power, and if he cared only about his own pleasure and never thought about the people who lived on his lands, they might have trouble that he could help--and there were so many people, and it would be such a hard thing. And I was just looking at all those houses, and thinking how I should have to find out about the people, when I was an earl. How did you find out about them?"

As his lordship's knowledge of his tenantry consisted in finding out which of them paid their rent promptly, and in turning out those who did not, this was rather a hard question. "Newick finds out for me," he said, and he pulled his great gray mustache, and looked at his small questioner rather uneasily. "We will go home now," he added; "and when you are an earl, see to it that you are a better earl than I have been!"

He was very silent as they rode home. He felt it to be almost incredible that he who had never really loved any one in his life, should find

himself growing so fond of this little fellow,--as without doubt he was. At first he had only been pleased and proud of Cedric's beauty and bravery, but there was something more than pride in his feeling now. He laughed a grim, dry laugh all to himself sometimes, when he thought how he liked to have the boy near him, how he liked to hear his voice, and how in secret he really wished to be liked and thought well of by his small grandson.

"I'm an old fellow in my dotage, and I have nothing else to think of," he would say to himself; and yet he knew it was not that altogether. And if he had allowed himself to admit the truth, he would perhaps have found himself obliged to own that the very things which attracted him, in spite of himself, were the qualities he had never possessed--the frank, true, kindly nature, the affectionate trustfulness which could never think evil.

It was only about a week after that ride when, after a visit to his mother, Fauntleroy came into the library with a troubled, thoughtful face. He sat down in that high-backed chair in which he had sat on the evening of his arrival, and for a while he looked at the embers on the hearth. The Earl watched him in silence, wondering what was coming. It was evident that Cedric had something on his mind. At last he looked up. "Does Newick know all about the people?" he asked.

"It is his business to know about them," said his lordship. "Been neglecting it--has he?"

Contradictory as it may seem, there was nothing which entertained and edified him more than the little fellow's interest in his tenantry. He had never taken any interest in them himself, but it pleased him well enough that, with all his childish habits of thought and in the midst of all his childish amusements and high spirits, there should be such a quaint seriousness working in the curly head.

"There is a place," said Fauntleroy, looking up at him with wide-open, horror-stricken eye--"Dearest has seen it; it is at the other end of the village. The houses are close together, and almost falling down; you can scarcely breathe; and the people are so poor, and everything is dreadful! Often they have fever, and the children die; and it makes them wicked to live like that, and be so poor and miserable! It is worse than Michael and Bridget! The rain comes in at the roof! Dearest went to see a poor woman who lived there. She would not let me come near her until she had changed all her things. The tears ran down her cheeks when she told me about it!"

The tears had come into his own eyes, but he smiled through them.

"I told her you didn't know, and I would tell you," he said. He jumped down and came and leaned against the Earl's chair. "You can make it all right," he said, "just as you made it all right for Higgins. You always make it all right for everybody. I told her you would, and that Newick must have forgotten to tell you."

The Earl looked down at the hand on his knee. Newick had not forgotten to tell him; in fact, Newick had spoken to him more than once of the desperate condition of the end of the village known as Earl's Court. He knew all about the tumble-down, miserable cottages, and the bad drainage, and the damp walls and broken windows and leaking roofs, and all about the poverty, the fever, and the misery. Mr. Mordaunt had painted it all to him in the strongest words he could use, and his lordship had used violent language in response; and, when his gout had been at the worst, he said that the sooner the people of Earl's Court died and were buried by the parish the better it would be,--and there was an end of the matter. And yet, as he looked at the small hand on his knee, and from the small hand to the honest, earnest, frank-eyed face, he was actually a little ashamed both of Earl's Court and himself.

"What!" he said; "you want to make a builder of model cottages of me, do you?" And he positively put his own hand upon the childish one and stroked it.

"Those must be pulled down," said Fauntleroy, with great eagerness.

"Dearest says so. Let us--let us go and have them pulled down to-morrow. The people will be so glad when they see you! They'll know you have come to help them!" And his eyes shone like stars in his glowing face.

The Earl rose from his chair and put his hand on the child's shoulder.

"Let us go out and take our walk on the terrace," he said, with a short

laugh; "and we can talk it over."

And though he laughed two or three times again, as they walked to and fro on the broad stone terrace, where they walked together almost every fine evening, he seemed to be thinking of something which did not displease him, and still he kept his hand on his small companion's shoulder.