

The Lost Prince and Little Lord Fauntleroy

SUNSHINE SERIES

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

The Lost Prince
and
Little Lord Fauntleroy

Frances Hodgson Burnett

Libraries of Hope

The Lost Prince
and Little Lord Fauntleroy

Sunshine Series

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Libraries of Hope, Inc.
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Email: librariesofhope@gmail.com

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THE LOST PRINCE

By Frances Hodgson Burnett
Illustrated by Maurice L. Bower





“You must salute, too,” he said to The Rat.

CHAPTER I
The New Lodgers at No. 7 Philibert Place

There are many dreary and dingy rows of ugly houses in certain parts of London, but there certainly could not be any row more ugly or dingier than Philibert Place. There were stories that it had once been more attractive, but that had been so long ago that no one remembered the time. It stood back in its gloomy, narrow strips of uncared for, smoky gardens, whose broken iron railings were supposed to protect it from the surging traffic of a road which was always roaring with the rattle of busses, cabs, drays, and vans, and the passing of people who were shabbily dressed and looked as if they were either going to hard work or coming from it, or hurrying to see if they could find some of it to do to keep themselves from going hungry. The brick fronts of the houses were blackened with smoke, their windows were nearly all dirty and hung with dingy curtains, or had no curtains at all; the strips of ground, which had once been intended to grow flowers in, had been trodden down into bare earth in which even weeds had forgotten to grow. One of them was used as a stonecutter's yard, and cheap monuments, crosses, and slates were set out for sale, bearing inscriptions beginning with "Sacred to the Memory of." Another had piles of old lumber in it, another exhibited secondhand furniture, chairs with unsteady legs, sofas with horsehair stuffing bulging out of holes in their covering, mirrors with blotches or cracks in them. The insides of the houses were as gloomy as the outside. They were all exactly alike. In each a dark entrance passage led to narrow stairs going up to bedrooms, and to narrow steps going down to a basement kitchen. The back bedroom looked out on

small, sooty, flagged yards, where thin cats quarreled, or sat on the coping of the brick walls hoping that sometime they might feel the sun; the front rooms looked over the noisy road, and through their windows came the roar and rattle of it. It was shabby and cheerless on the brightest days, and on foggy or rainy ones it was the most forlorn place in London.

At least that was what one boy thought as he stood near the iron railings watching the passersby on the morning on which this story begins, which was also the morning after he had been brought by his father to live as a lodger in the back sitting room of the house No. 7.

He was a boy about twelve years old, his name was Marco Loristan, and he was the kind of boy people look at a second time when they have looked at him once. In the first place, he was a very big boy—tall for his years, and with a particularly strong frame. His shoulders were broad and his arms and legs were long and powerful. He was quite used to hearing people say, as they glanced at him, "What a fine, big lad!" And then they always looked again at his face. It was not an English face or an American one, and was very dark in coloring. His features were strong, his black hair grew on his head like a mat, his eyes were large and deep set, and looked out between thick, straight, black lashes. He was as un-English a boy as one could imagine, and an observing person would have been struck at once by a sort of *silent* look expressed by his whole face, a look which suggested that he was not a boy who talked much.

This look was specially noticeable this morning as he stood before the iron railings. The things he was thinking of were of a kind likely to bring to the face of a twelve-year-old boy an unboyish expression.

He was thinking of the long, hurried journey he and his father and their old soldier servant, Lazarus, had made during the last few days—the journey from Russia. Cramped in a close third-class railway carriage, they had dashed across the



He stood near the iron railings watching passers-by

Continent as if something important or terrible were driving them, and here they were, settled in London as if they were going to live forever at No. 7 Philibert Place. He knew, however, that though they might stay a year, it was just as probable that, in the middle of some night, his father or Lazarus might waken him from his sleep and say, "Get up—dress yourself quickly. We must go at once." A few days later, he might be in St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, or Budapest, huddled away in some poor little house as shabby and comfortless as No. 7 Philibert Place.

He passed his hand over his forehead as he thought of it and watched the busses. His strange life and his close association with his father had made him much older than his years, but he was only a boy, after all, and the mystery of things sometimes weighed heavily upon him, and set him to deep wondering.

In not one of the many countries he knew had he ever met a boy whose life was in the least like his own. Other boys had homes in which they spent year after year; they went to school regularly, and played with other boys, and talked openly of the things which happened to them, and the journeys they made. When he remained in a place long enough to make a few boyfriends, he knew he must never forget that his whole existence was a sort of secret whose safety depended upon his own silence and discretion.

This was because of the promises he had made to his father, and they had been the first thing he remembered. Not that he had ever regretted anything connected with his father. He threw his black head up as he thought of that. None of the other boys had such a father, not one of them. His father was his idol and his chief. He had scarcely ever seen him when his clothes had not been poor and shabby, but he had also never seen him when, despite his worn coat and frayed linen, he had not stood out among all others as more distinguished than the most noticeable of them. When he

walked down a street, people turned to look at him even oftener than they turned to look at Marco, and the boy felt as if it was not merely because he was a big man with a handsome, dark face, but because he looked, somehow, as if he had been born to command armies, and as if no one would think of disobeying him. Yet Marco had never seen him command anyone, and they had always been poor, and shabbily dressed, and often enough ill fed. But whether they were in one country or another, and whatsoever dark place they seemed to be hiding in, the few people they saw treated him with a sort of deference, and nearly always stood when they were in his presence, unless he bade them sit down.

"It is because they know he is a patriot, and patriots are respected," the boy had told himself.

He himself wished to be a patriot, though he had never seen his own country of Samavia. He knew it well, however. His father had talked to him about it ever since that day when he had made the promises. He had taught him to know it by helping him to study curious detailed maps of it—maps of its cities, maps of its mountains, maps of its roads. He had told him stories of the wrongs done its people, of their sufferings and struggles for liberty, and, above all, of their unconquerable courage. When they talked together of its history, Marco's boy blood burned and leaped in his veins, and he always knew, by the look in his father's eyes, that his blood burned also. His countrymen had been killed, they had been robbed, they had died by thousands of cruelties and starvation, but their souls had never been conquered, and, through all the years during which more powerful nations crushed and enslaved them, they never ceased to struggle to free themselves and stand unfettered as Samavians had stood centuries before.

"Why do we not live there," Marco had cried on the day the promises were made. "Why do we not go back and fight? When I am a man, I will be a soldier and die for Samavia."

"We are of those who must *live* for Samavia—working day and night," his father had answered; "denying ourselves, training our bodies and souls, using our brains, learning the things which are best to be done for our people and our country. Even exiles may be Samavian soldiers—I am one, you must be one."

"Are we exiles?" asked Marco.

"Yes," was the answer. "But even if we never set foot on Samavian soil, we must give our lives to it. I have given mine since I was sixteen. I shall give it until I die."

"Have you never lived there?" said Marco.

A strange look shot across his father's face.

"No," he answered, and said no more. Marco watching him, knew he must not ask the question again.

The next words his father said were about the promises. Marco was quite a little fellow at the time, but he understood the solemnity of them, and felt that he was being honored as if he were a man.

"When you are a man, you shall know all you wish to know," Loristan said. "Now you are a child, and your mind must not be burdened. But you must do your part. A child sometimes forgets that words may be dangerous. You must promise never to forget this. Wheresoever you are; if you have playmates, you must remember to be silent about many things. You must not speak of what I do, or of the people who come to see me. You must not mention the things in your life which make it different from the lives of other boys. You must keep in your mind that a secret exists which a chance foolish word might betray. You are a Samavian, and there have been Samavians who have died a thousand deaths rather than betray a secret. You must learn to obey without question, as if you were a soldier. Now you must take your oath of allegiance."

He rose from his seat and went to a corner of the room. He knelt down, turned back the carpet, lifted a plank, and

took something from beneath it. It was a sword, and, as he came back to Marco, he drew it out from its sheath. The child's strong, little body stiffened and drew itself up, his large, deep eyes flashed. He was to take his oath of allegiance upon a sword as if he were a man. He did not know that his small hand opened and shut with a fierce understanding grip because those of his blood had for long centuries past carried swords and fought with them.

Loristan gave him the big bared weapon, and stood erect before him.

"Repeat these words after me sentence by sentence!" he commanded.

And as he spoke them Marco echoed each one loudly and clearly.

"The sword in my hand—for Samavia!

"The heart in my breast—for Samavia!

"The swiftness of my sight, the thought of my brain, the life of my life—for Samavia.

"Here grows a man for Samavia.

"God be thanked!"

Then Loristan put his hand on the child's shoulder, and his dark face looked almost fiercely proud.

"From this hour," he said, "you and I are comrades at arms."

And from that day to the one on which he stood beside the broken iron railings of No. 7 Philibert Place, Marco had not forgotten for one hour.

CHAPTER II
A Young Citizen of the World

He had been in London more than once before, but not to the lodgings in Philibert Place. When he was brought a second or third time to a town or city, he always knew that the house he was taken to would be in a quarter new to him, and he should not see again the people he had seen before. Such slight links of acquaintance as sometimes formed themselves between him and other children as shabby and poor as himself were easily broken. His father, however, had never forbidden him to make chance acquaintances. He had, in fact, told him that he had reasons for not wishing him to hold himself aloof from other boys. The only barrier which must exist between them must be the barrier of silence concerning his wanderings from country to country. Other boys as poor as he was did not make constant journeys, therefore they would miss nothing from his boyish talk when he omitted all mention of his. When he was in Russia, he must speak only of Russian places and Russian people and customs. When he was in France, Germany, Austria, or England, he must do the same thing. When he had learned English, French, German, Italian, and Russian he did not know. He had seemed to grow up in the midst of changing tongues which all seemed familiar to him, as languages are familiar to children who have lived with them until one scarcely seems less familiar than another. He did remember, however, that his father had always been unswerving in his attention to his pronunciation and method of speaking the language of any country they chanced to be living in.

"You must not seem a foreigner in any country," he had

said to him. "It is necessary that you should not. But when you are in England, you must not know French, or German, or anything but English."

Once, when he was seven or eight years old, a boy had asked him what his father's work was.

"His own father is a carpenter, and he asked me if my father was one," Marco brought the story to Loristan. "I said you were not. Then he asked if you were a shoemaker, and another one said you might be a bricklayer or a tailor—and I didn't know what to tell them." He had been out playing in a London street, and he put a grubby little hand on his father's arm, and clutched and almost fiercely shook it. "I wanted to say that you were not like their fathers, not at all. I knew you were not, though you were quite as poor. You are not a bricklayer or a shoemaker, but a patriot—you could not be only a bricklayer—you!" He said it grandly and with a queer indignation, his black head held up and his eyes angry.

Loristan laid his hand against his mouth.

"Hush! hush!" he said. "Is it an insult to a man to think he may be a carpenter or make a good suit of clothes? If I could make our clothes, we should go better dressed. If I were a shoemaker, your toes would not be making their way into the world as they are now." He was smiling, but Marco saw his head held itself high, too, and his eyes were glowing as he touched his shoulder. "I know you did not tell them I was a patriot," he ended. "What was it you said to them?"

"I remembered that you were nearly always writing and drawing maps, and I said you were a writer, but I did not know what you wrote—and that you said it was a poor trade. I heard you say that once to Lazarus. Was that a right thing to tell them?"

"Yes. You may always say it if you are asked. There are poor fellows enough who write a thousand different things which bring them little money. There is nothing strange in my being a writer."

So Loristan answered him, and from that time if, by any chance, his father's means of livelihood were inquired into, it was simple enough and true enough to say that he wrote to earn his bread.

In the first days of strangeness to a new place, Marco often walked a great deal. He was strong and untiring, and it amused him to wander through unknown streets, and look at shops, and houses, and people. He did not confine himself to the great thoroughfares, but liked to branch off into the side streets and odd, deserted looking squares, and even courts and alleyways. He often stopped to watch workmen and talk to them if they were friendly. In this way he made stray acquaintances in his strollings, and learned a good many things. He had a fondness for wandering musicians, and, from an old Italian who had in his youth been a singer in opera, he had learned to sing a number of songs in his strong, musical boy voice. He knew well many of the songs of the people in several countries.

It was very dull this first morning, and he wished that he had something to do or someone to speak to. To do nothing whatever is a depressing thing at all times, but perhaps it is more especially so when one is a big, healthy boy twelve years old. London as he saw it in the Marylebone Road seemed to him a hideous place. It was murky and shabby looking, and full of dreary-faced people. It was not the first time he had seen the same things, and they always made him feel that he wished he had something to do.

Suddenly he turned away from the gate and went into the house to speak to Lazarus. He found him in his dingy closet of a room on the fourth floor at the back of the house.

"I am going for a walk," he announced to him. "Please tell my father if he asks for me. He is busy, and I must not disturb him."

Lazarus was patching an old coat as he often patched things—even shoes sometimes. When Marco spoke, he stood

up at once to answer him. He was very obstinate and particular about certain forms of manner. Nothing would have obliged him to remain seated when Loristan or Marco was near him. Marco thought it was because he had been so strictly trained as a soldier. He knew that his father had had great trouble to make him lay aside his habit of saluting when they spoke to him.

"Perhaps," Marco had heard Loristan say to him almost severely, once when he had forgotten himself and had stood at salute while his master passed through a broken-down iron gate before an equally broken-down looking lodging house—"perhaps you can force yourself to remember when I tell you that it is not safe—*it is not safe!* You put us in danger!"

It was evident that this helped the good fellow to control himself. Marco remembered that at the time he had actually turned pale, and had struck his forehead and poured forth a torrent of Samavian dialect in penitence and terror. But, though he no longer saluted them in public, he omitted no other form of reverence and ceremony, and the boy had become accustomed to being treated as if he were anything but the shabby lad whose very coat was patched by the old soldier who stood "at attention" before him.

"Yes, sir," Lazarus answered. "Where was it your wish to go?"

Marco knitted his black brows a little in trying to recall distinct memories of the last time he had been in London.

"I have been to so many places, and have seen so many things since I was here before, that I must begin to learn again about the streets and buildings I do not quite remember."

"Yes, sir," said Lazarus. "There *have* been so many. I also forget. You were but eight years old when you were last here."

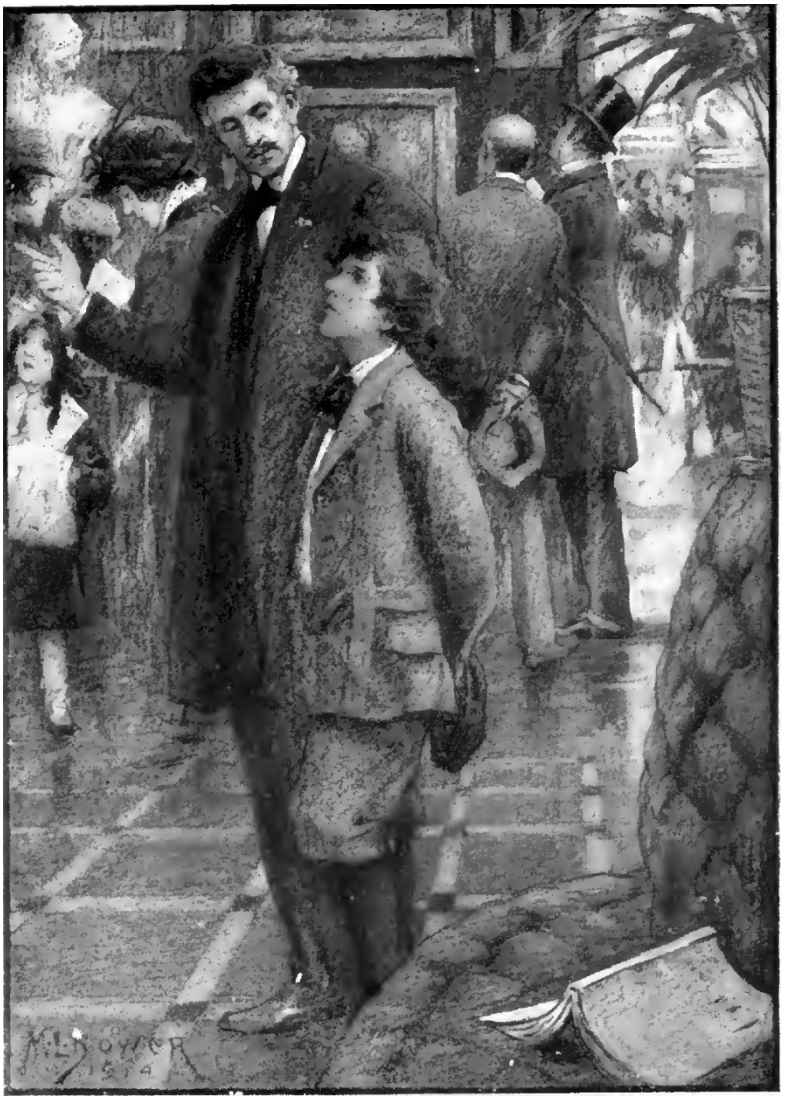
"I think I will go and find the royal palace, and then I will walk about and learn the names of the streets," Marco said.

"Yes, sir," answered Lazarus, and this time he made his military salute.

Marco lifted his right hand in recognition, as if he had been a young officer. Most boys might have looked awkward or theatrical in making the gesture, but he made it with naturalness and ease, because he had been familiar with the form since his babyhood. He had seen officers returning the salutes of their men when they encountered each other by chance in the streets, he had seen princes passing sentries on their way to their carriages, more august personages raising the quiet, recognizing hand to their helmets as they rode through applauding crowds. He had seen many royal persons and many royal pageants, but always only as an ill-clad boy standing on the edge of the crowd of common people. An energetic lad, however poor, cannot spend his days in going from one country to another without, by mere everyday chance, becoming familiar with the outer life of royalties and courts. Marco had stood in continental thoroughfares when visiting emperors rode by with glittering soldiery before and behind them, and a populace shouting courteous welcomes. He knew where in various great capitals the sentries stood before kingly or princely palaces. He had seen certain royal faces often enough to know them well, and to be ready to make his salute when particular quiet and unattended carriages passed him by.

"It is well to know them. It is well to observe everything and to train one's self to remember faces and circumstances," his father had said. "If you were a young prince or a young man training for a diplomatic career, you would be taught to notice and remember people and things as you would be taught to speak your own language with elegance. Such observation would be your most practical accomplishment and greatest power. It is as practical for one man as another—for a poor lad in a patched coat as for one whose place is to be in courts. As you cannot be educated in the ordinary way, you must learn from travel and the world. You must lose nothing—forget nothing."

It was his father who had taught him everything, and he had learned a great deal. Loristan had the power of making all things interesting to fascination. To Marco it seemed that he knew everything in the world. They were not rich enough to buy many books, but Loristan knew the treasures of all great cities, the resources of the smallest towns. Together he and his boy walked through the endless galleries filled with the wonders of the world, the pictures before which through centuries an unbroken procession of almost worshiping eyes had passed uplifted. Because his father made the pictures seem the glowing, burning work of still-living men whom the centuries could not turn to dust, because he could tell the stories of their living and laboring to triumph, stories of what they felt and suffered and were, the boy became as familiar with the old masters—Italian, German, French, Dutch, English, Spanish—as he was with most of the countries they had lived in. They were not merely old masters to him, but men who were great, men who seemed to him to have wielded beautiful swords and held high, splendid lights. His father could not go often with him, but he always took him for the first time to the galleries, museums, libraries, and historical places which were richest in treasures of art, beauty, or story. Then, having seen them once through his eyes, Marco went again and again alone, and so grew intimate with the wonders of the world. He knew that he was gratifying a wish of his father's when he tried to train himself to observe all things and forget nothing. These palaces of marvels were his schoolrooms, and his strange but rich education was the most interesting part of his life. In time, he knew exactly the places where the great Rembrandts, Vandykes, Rubens, Raphaels, Tintorettos, or Frans Hals hung; he knew whether this masterpiece or that was in Vienna, in Paris, in Venice, or Munich, or Rome. He knew stories of splendid crown jewels, of old armor, of ancient crafts, and of Roman relics dug up from beneath the foundations of old German cities. Any boy



His father made the pictures seem the glowing, burning work of still-living men

wandering to amuse himself through museums and palaces on "free days" could see what he saw, but boys living fuller and less lonely lives would have been less likely to concentrate their entire minds on what they looked at, and also less likely to store away facts with the determination to be able to recall at any moment the mental shelf on which they were laid. Having no playmates and nothing to play with, he began when he was a very little fellow to make a sort of game out of his rambles through picture galleries, and the places which, whether they called themselves museums or not, were storehouses or relics of antiquity. There were always the blessed "free days," when he could climb any marble steps, and enter any great portal without paying an entrance fee. Once inside, there were plenty of plainly and poorly dressed people to be seen, but there were not often boys as young as himself who were not attended by older companions. Quiet and orderly as he was, he often found himself stared at. The game he had created for himself was as simple as it was absorbing. It was to try how much he could remember and clearly describe to his father when they sat together at night and talked of what he had seen. These night talks filled his happiest hours. He never felt lonely then, and when his father sat and watched him with a certain curious and deep attention in his dark, reflective eyes, the boy was utterly comforted and content. Sometimes he brought back rough and crude sketches of objects he wished to ask questions about, and Loristan could always relate to him the full, rich story of the thing he wanted to know. They were stories made so splendid and full of color in the telling that Marco could not forget them.

CHAPTER III
The Legend of the Lost Prince

As he walked through the streets, he was thinking of one of these stories. It was one he had heard first when he was very young, and it had so seized upon his imagination that he had asked often for it. It was, indeed, a part of the long past history of Samavia, and he had loved it for that reason. Lazarus had often told it to him, sometimes adding much detail, but he had always liked best his father's version, which seemed a thrilling and living thing. On their journey from Russia, during an hour when they had been forced to wait in a cold wayside station and had found the time long, Loristan had discussed it with him. He always found some such way of making hard and comfortless hours easier to live through.

"Fine, big lad—for a foreigner," Marco heard a man say to his companion as he passed them this morning. "Looks like a Pole or a Russian."

It was this which had led his thoughts back to the story of the Lost Prince. He knew that most of the people who looked at him and called him a "foreigner" had not even heard of Samavia. Those who chanced to recall its existence knew of it only as a small fierce country, so placed upon the map that the larger countries which were its neighbors felt they must control and keep it in order, and therefore made incursions into it, and fought its people and each other for possession. But it had not been always so. It was an old, old country, and hundreds of years ago it had been as celebrated for its peaceful happiness and wealth as for its beauty. It was often said that it was one of the most beautiful places in the world. A favorite Samavian legend was that it had been the site of the Garden

of Eden. In those past centuries, its people had been of such great stature, physical beauty, and strength, that they had been like a race of noble giants. They were in those days a pastoral people, whose rich crops and splendid flocks and herds were the envy of less fertile countries. Among the shepherds and herdsmen there were poets who sang their own songs when they piped among their sheep upon the mountain sides and in the flower-thick valleys. Their songs had been about patriotism and bravery, and faithfulness to their chieftains and their country. The simple courtesy of the poorest peasant was as stately as the manner of a noble. But that, as Loristan had said with a tired smile, had been before they had had time to outlive and forget the Garden of Eden. Five hundred years ago, there had succeeded to the throne a king who was bad and weak. His father had lived to be ninety years old, and his son had grown tired of waiting in Samavia for his crown. He had gone out into the world, and visited other countries and their courts. When he returned and became king, he lived as no Samavian king had lived before. He was an extravagant, vicious man of furious temper and bitter jealousies. He was jealous of the larger courts and countries he had seen, and tried to introduce their customs and their ambitions. He ended by introducing their worst faults and vices. There arose political quarrels and savage new factions. Money was squandered until poverty began for the first time to stare the country in the face. The big Samavians, after their first stupefaction, broke forth into furious rage. There were mobs and riots, then bloody battles. Since it was the king who had worked this wrong, they would have none of him. They would depose him and make his son king in his place. It was at this part of the story that Marco was always most deeply interested. The young prince was totally unlike his father. He was a true royal Samavian. He was bigger and stronger for his age than any man in the country, and he was as handsome as a young Viking god. More than this, he had a

lion's heart, and before he was sixteen, the shepherds and herdsmen had already begun to make songs about his young valor, and his kingly courtesy, and generous kindness. Not only the shepherds and herdsmen sang them, but the people in the streets. The king, his father, had always been jealous of him, even when he was only a beautiful, stately child whom the people roared with joy to see as he rode through the streets. When he returned from his journeyings and found him a splendid youth, he detested him. When the people began to clamor and demand that he himself should abdicate, he became insane with rage, and committed such cruelties that the people ran mad themselves. One day they stormed the palace, killed and overpowered the guards, and, rushing into the royal apartments, burst in upon the king as he shuddered green with terror and fury in his private room. He was king no more, and must leave the country, they vowed, as they closed round him with bared weapons and shook them in his face. Where was the prince? They must see him and tell him their ultimatum. It was he whom they wanted for a king. They trusted him and would obey him. They began to shout aloud his name, calling him in a sort of chant in unison, "Prince Ivor—Prince Ivor—Prince Ivor!" But no answer came. The people of the palace had hidden themselves, and the place was utterly silent.

The king, despite his terror, could not help but sneer.

"Call him again," he said. "He is afraid to come out of his hole!"

A savage fellow from the mountain fastnesses struck him on the mouth.

"He afraid!" he shouted. "If he does not come, it is because thou hast killed him—and thou art a dead man!"

This set them aflame with hotter burning. They broke away, leaving three on guard, and ran about the empty palace rooms shouting the prince's name. But there was no answer. They sought him in a frenzy, bursting open doors and flinging

down every obstacle in their way. A page, found hidden in a closet, owned that he had seen His Royal Highness pass through a corridor early in the morning. He had been softly singing to himself one of the shepherd's songs.

And in this strange way out of the history of Samavia, five hundred years before Marco's day, the young prince had walked—singing softly to himself the old song of Samavia's beauty and happiness. For he was never seen again.

In every nook and cranny, high and low, they sought for him, believing that the king himself had made him prisoner in some secret place, or had privately had him killed. The fury of the people grew to frenzy. There were new risings, and every few days the palace was attacked and searched again. But no trace of the prince was found. He had vanished as a star vanishes when it drops from its place in the sky. During a riot in the palace, when a last fruitless search was made, the king himself was killed. A powerful noble who headed one of the uprisings made himself king in his place. From that time, the once splendid little kingdom was like a bone fought for by dogs. Its pastoral peace was forgotten. It was torn and worried and shaken by stronger countries. It tore and worried itself with internal fights. It assassinated kings and created new ones. No man was sure in his youth what ruler his maturity would live under, or whether his children would die in useless fights, or through stress of poverty and cruel, useless laws. There were no more shepherds and herdsmen who were poets, but on the mountainsides and in the valleys sometimes some of the old songs were sung. Those most beloved were songs about a Lost Prince whose name had been Ivor. If he had been king, he would have saved Samavia, the verses said, and all brave hearts believed that he would still return. In the modern cities, one of the jocular cynical sayings was, "Yes, that will happen when Prince Ivor comes again."

In his more childish days, Marco had been bitterly troubled by the unsolved mystery. Where had he gone—the

Lost Prince? Had he been killed, or had he been hidden away in a dungeon? But he was so big and brave, he would have broken out of any dungeon. The boy had invented for himself a dozen endings to the story.

"Did no one ever find his sword or his cap—or hear anything or guess anything about him ever—ever—ever?" he would say restlessly again and again.

One winter's night, as they sat together before a small fire in a cold room in a cold city in Austria, he had been so eager and asked so many searching questions, that his father gave him an answer he had never given him before, and which was a sort of ending to the story, though not a satisfying one:

"Everybody guessed as you are guessing. A few very old shepherds in the mountains who like to believe ancient histories relate a story which most people consider a kind of legend. It is that almost a hundred years after the prince was lost, an old shepherd told a story his long-dead father had confided to him in secret just before he died. The father had said that, going out in the early morning on the mountainside, he had found in the forest what he at first thought to be the dead body of a beautiful, boyish, young huntsman. Some enemy had plainly attacked him from behind and believed he had killed him. He was, however, not quite dead, and the shepherd dragged him into a cave where he himself often took refuge from storms with his flocks. Since there was such riot and disorder in the city, he was afraid to speak of what he had found; and, by the time he discovered that he was harboring the prince, the king had already been killed, and an even worse man had taken possession of his throne, and ruled Samavia with a bloodstained, iron hand. To the terrified and simple peasant the safest thing seemed to get the wounded youth out of the country before there was any chance of his being discovered and murdered outright, as he would surely be. The cave in which he was hidden was not far from the frontier, and while he was still so weak that he was hardly

conscious of what befell him, he was smuggled across it in a cart loaded with sheepskins, and left with some kind monks who did not know his rank or name. The shepherd went back to his flocks and his mountains, and lived and died among them, always in terror of the changing rulers and their savage battles with each other. The mountaineers said among themselves, as the generations succeeded each other, that the Lost Prince must have died young, because otherwise he would have come back to his country and tried to restore its good, bygone days."

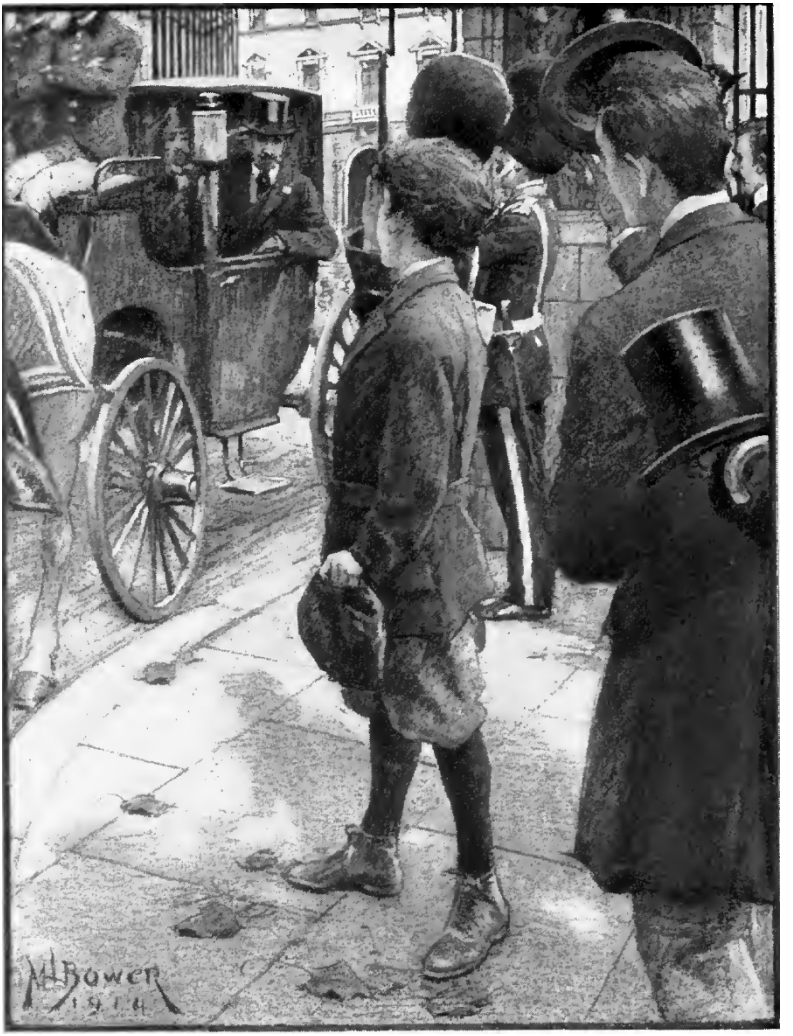
"Yes, he would have come," Marco said.

"He would have come if he had seen that he could help his people," Loristan answered, as if he were not reflecting on a story which was probably only a kind of legend. "But he was very young, and Samavia was in the hands of the new dynasty, and filled with his enemies. He could not have crossed the frontier without an army. Still, I think he died young."

It was of this story that Marco was thinking as he walked, and perhaps the thoughts that filled his mind expressed themselves in his face in some way which attracted attention. As he was nearing Buckingham Palace, a distinguished looking well-dressed man with clever eyes caught sight of him, and, after looking at him keenly, slackened his pace as he approached him from the opposite direction. An observer might have thought he saw something which puzzled and surprised him. Marco didn't see him at all, and still moved forward, thinking of the shepherds and the prince. The well-dressed man began to walk still more slowly. When he was quite close to Marco, he stopped and spoke to him—in the Samavian language.

"What is your name?" he asked.

Marco's training from his earliest childhood had been an extraordinary thing. His love for his father had made it simple and natural to him, and he had never questioned the reason for it. As he had been taught to keep silence, he had been



He was the man who had spoken to him in Samavian.

taught to control the expression of his face and the sound of his voice, and, above all, never to allow himself to look startled. But for this he might have started at the extraordinary sound of the Samavian words suddenly uttered in a London street by an English gentleman. He might even have answered the question in Samavian himself. But he did not. He courteously lifted his cap and replied in English:

"Excuse me?"

The gentleman's clever eyes scrutinized him keenly. Then he also spoke in English.

"Perhaps you do not understand? I asked your name because you are very like a Samavian I know," he said.

"I am Marco Loristan," the boy answered him.

The man looked straight into his eyes and smiled.

"That is not the name," he said. "I beg your pardon, my boy."

He was about to go on, and had indeed taken a couple of steps away, when he paused and turned to him again.

"You may tell your father that you are a very well-trained lad. I wanted to find out for myself." And he went on.

Marco felt that his heart beat a little quickly. This was one of several incidents which had happened during the last three years, and made him feel that he was living among things so mysterious that their very mystery hinted at danger. But he himself had never before seemed involved in them. Why should it matter that he was well-behaved? Then he remembered something. The man had not said "well-behaved," he had said "well-*trained*." Well-trained in what way? He felt his forehead prickle slightly as he thought of the smiling, keen look which set itself so straight upon him. Had he spoken to him in Samavian for an experiment, to see if he would be startled into forgetting that he had been trained to seem to know only the language of the country he was temporarily living in? But he had not forgotten. He had remembered well, and was thankful that he had betrayed nothing. "Even exiles

may be Samavian soldiers. I am one. You must be one," his father had said on that day long ago when he had made him take his oath. Perhaps remembering his training was being a soldier. Never had Samavia needed help as she needed it today. Two years before, a rival claimant to the throne had assassinated the then reigning king and his sons, and since then, bloody war and tumult had raged. The new king was a powerful man, and had a great following of the worst and most self-seeking of the people. Neighboring countries had interfered for their own welfare's sake, and the newspapers had been full of stories of savage fighting and atrocities, and of starving peasants.

Marco had late one evening entered their lodgings to find Loristan walking to and fro like a lion in a cage, a paper crushed and torn in his hands, and his eyes blazing. He had been reading of cruelties wrought upon innocent peasants and women and children. Lazarus was standing staring at him with huge tears running down his cheeks. When Marco opened the door, the old soldier strode over to him, turned him about, and led him out of the room.

"Pardon, sir, pardon!" he sobbed. "No one must see him, not even you. He suffers so horribly."

He stood by a chair in Marco's own small bedroom, where he half pushed, half led him. He bent his grizzled head, and wept like a beaten child.

"Dear God of those who are in pain, assuredly it is now the time to give back to us our Lost Prince!" he said, and Marco knew the words were a prayer, and wondered at the frenzied intensity of it, because it seemed so wild a thing to pray for the return of a youth who had died five hundred years before.

When he reached the palace, he was still thinking of the man who had spoken to him. He was thinking of him even as he looked at the majestic gray stone building and counted the number of its stories and windows. He walked round it that

he might make a note in his memory of its size and form and its entrances, and guess at the size of its gardens. This he did because it was part of his game, and part of his strange training.

When he came back to the front, he saw that in the great entrance court within the high iron railings an elegant but quiet-looking closed carriage was drawing up before the doorway. Marco stood and watched with interest to see who would come out and enter it. He knew that kings and emperors who were not on parade looked merely like well-dressed private gentlemen, and often chose to go out as simply and quietly as other men. So he thought that, perhaps, if he waited, he might see one of those well-known faces which represent the highest rank and power in a monarchical country, and which in times gone by had also represented the power over human life and death and liberty.

"I should like to be able to tell my father that I have seen the King and know his face, as I know the faces of the czar and the two emperors."

There was a little movement among the tall menservants in the royal scarlet liveries, and an elderly man descended the steps attended by another who walked behind him. He entered the carriage, the other man followed him, the door was closed, and the carriage drove through the entrance gates, where the sentries saluted.

Marco was near enough to see distinctly. The two men were talking as if interested. The face of the one farthest from him was the face he had often seen in shop windows and newspapers. The boy made his quick, formal salute. It was the King; and, as he smiled and acknowledged his greeting, he spoke to his companion.

"That fine lad salutes as if he belonged to the army," was what he said, though Marco could not hear him.

His companion leaned forward to look through the window. When he caught sight of Marco, a singular

expression crossed his face.

"He does belong to an army, sir," he answered, "though he does not know it. His name is Marco Loristan."

Then Marco saw him plainly for the first time. He was the man with the keen eyes who had spoken to him in Samavian.

CHAPTER IV
The Rat

Marco would have wondered very much if he had heard the words, but, as he did not hear them, he turned toward home wondering at something else. A man who was in intimate attendance on a king must be a person of importance. He no doubt knew many things not only of his own ruler's country, but of the countries of other kings. But so few had really known anything of poor little Samavia until the newspapers had begun to tell them of the horrors of its war—and who but a Samavian could speak its language? It would be an interesting thing to tell his father—that a man who knew the King had spoken to him in Samavian, and had sent that curious message.

Later he found himself passing a side street and looked up it. It was so narrow, and on either side of it were such old, tall, and sloping-walled houses that it attracted his attention. It looked as if a bit of old London had been left to stand while newer places grew up and hid it from view. This was the kind of street he liked to pass through for curiosity's sake. He knew many of them in the old quarters of many cities. He had lived in some of them. He could find his way home from the other end of it. Another thing than its queerness attracted him. He heard a clamor of boys' voices, and he wanted to see what they were doing. Sometimes, when he had reached a new place and had had that lonely feeling, he had followed some boyish clamor of play or wrangling, and had found a temporary friend or so.

Halfway to the street's end there was an arched brick passage. The sound of the voices came from there—one of

them high, and thinner and shriller than the rest. Marco tramped up to the arch and looked down through the passage. It opened on to a gray flagged space, shut in by the railings of a black, deserted, and ancient graveyard behind a venerable church which turned its face toward some other street. The boys were not playing, but listening to one of their number who was reading to them from a newspaper.

Marco walked down the passage and listened also, standing in the dark arched outlet at its end and watching the boy who read. He was a strange little creature with a big forehead, and deep eyes which were curiously sharp. But this was not all. He had a hunch back, his legs seemed small and crooked. He sat with them crossed before him on a rough wooden platform set on low wheels, on which he evidently pushed himself about. Near him were a number of sticks stacked together as if they were rifles. One of the first things that Marco noticed was that he had a savage little face marked with lines as if he had been angry all his life.

"Hold your tongues, you fools!" he shrilled out to some boys who interrupted him. "Don't you want to know anything, you ignorant swine?"

He was as ill-dressed as the rest of them, but he did not speak in the Cockney dialect. If he was of the riffraff of the streets, as his companions were, he was somehow different.

Then he, by chance, saw Marco, who was standing in the arched end of the passage.

"What are you doing there listening?" he shouted, and at once stooped to pick up a stone and threw it at him. The stone hit Marco's shoulder, but it did not hurt him much. What he did not like was that another lad should want to throw something at him before they had even exchanged boy-signs. He also did not like the fact that two other boys promptly took the matter up by bending down to pick up stones also.

He walked forward straight into the group and stopped

close to the hunchback.

"What did you do that for?" he asked, in his rather deep young voice.

He was big and strong looking enough to suggest that he was not a boy it would be easy to dispose of, but it was not that which made the group stand still a moment to stare at him. It was something in himself—half of it a kind of impartial lack of anything like irritation at the stone throwing. It was as if it had not mattered to him in the least. It had not made him feel angry or insulted. He was only rather curious about it. Because he was clean, and his hair and his shabby clothes were brushed, the first impression given by his appearance as he stood in the archway was that he was a young "toff" poking his nose where it was not wanted; but, as he drew near, they saw that the well-brushed clothes were worn, and there were patches on his shoes.

"What did you do that for?" he asked, and he asked it merely as if he wanted to find out the reason.

"I'm not going to have you swells dropping in to my club as if it was your own," said the hunchback.

"I'm not a swell, and I didn't know it was a club," Marco answered. "I heard boys, and I thought I'd come and look. When I heard you reading about Samavia, I wanted to hear."

He looked at the reader with his silent expressioned eyes.

"You needn't have thrown a stone," he added. "They don't do it at men's clubs. I'll go away."

He turned about as if he were going, but, before he had taken three steps, the hunchback hailed him unceremoniously.

"Hi!" he called out. "Hi, you!"

"What do you want?" said Marco.

"I bet you don't know where Samavia is, or what they're fighting about." The hunchback threw the words at him.

"Yes, I do. It's north of Beltrazo and east of Jiardasia, and they are fighting because one party has assassinated King

Maran, and the other will not let them crown Nicola Iarovitch. And why should they? He's a brigand, and hasn't a drop of royal blood in him."

"Oh!" reluctantly admitted the hunchback. "You do know that much, do you? Come back here."

Marco turned back, while the boys still stared. It was as if two leaders or generals were meeting for the first time, and the rabble, looking on, wondered what would come of their encounter.

"The Samavians of the Iarovitch party are a bad lot and want only bad things," said Marco, speaking first. "They care nothing for Samavia. They only care for money and the power to make laws which will serve them and crush everybody else. They know Nicola is a weak man, and that, if they can crown him king, they can make him do what they like."

The fact that he spoke first, and that, though he spoke in a steady boyish voice without swagger, he somehow seemed to take it for granted that they would listen, made his place for him at once. Boys are impressionable creatures, and they know a leader when they see him. The hunchback fixed glittering eyes on him. The rabble began to murmur.

"Rat! Rat!" several voices cried at once in good strong Cockney. "Arst 'im some more, Rat!"

"Is that what they call you?" Marco asked the hunchback.

"It's what I called myself," he answered resentfully. "'The Rat.' Look at me! Crawling round on the ground like this! Look at me!"

He made a gesture ordering his followers to move aside, and began to push himself rapidly, with queer darts this side and that round the enclosure. He bent his head and body, and twisted his face, and made strange animal-like movements. He even uttered sharp squeaks as he rushed here and there—as a rat might have done when it was being hunted. He did it as if he were displaying an accomplishment, and his followers' laughter was applause.

"Wasn't I like a rat?" he demanded, when he suddenly stopped.

"You made yourself like one on purpose," Marco answered. "You do it for fun."

"Not so much fun," said The Rat. "I feel like one. Everyone's my enemy. I'm vermin. I can't fight or defend myself unless I bite. I can bite, though." And he showed two rows of fierce, strong, white teeth, sharper at the points than human teeth usually are. "I bite my father when he gets drunk and beats me. I've bitten him till he's learned to remember." He laughed a shrill, squeaking laugh. "He hasn't tried it for three months—even when he was drunk—and he's always drunk." Then he laughed again still more shrilly. "He's a gentleman," he said. "I'm a gentleman's son. He was a Master at a big school until he was kicked out—that was when I was four and my mother died. I'm thirteen now. How old are you?"

"I'm twelve," answered Marco.

The Rat twisted his face enviously.

"I wish I was your size! Are you a gentleman's son? You look as if you were."

"I'm a very poor man's son," was Marco's answer. "My father is a writer."

"Then, ten to one, he's a sort of gentleman," said The Rat. Then quite suddenly he threw another question at him. "What's the name of the other Samavian party?"

"The Maranovitch. The Maranovitch and the Iarovitch have been fighting with each other for five hundred years. First one dynasty rules, and then the other gets in when it has killed somebody as it killed King Maran," Marco answered without hesitation.

"What was the name of the dynasty that ruled before they began fighting? The first Maranovitch assassinated the last of them," The Rat asked him.

"The Fedorovitch," said Marco. "The last one was a bad king."

"His son was the one they never found again," said The Rat. "The one they call the Lost Prince."

Marco would have started but for his long training in exterior self-control. It was so strange to hear his dream hero spoken of in this back alley in a slum, and just after he had been thinking of him.

"What do you know about him?" he asked, and, as he did so, he saw the group of vagabond lads draw nearer.

"Not much. I only read something about him in a torn magazine I found in the street," The Rat answered. "The man that wrote about him said he was only part of a legend, and he laughed at people for believing in him. He said it was about time that he should turn up again if he intended to. I've invented things about him because these chaps like to hear me tell them. They're only stories."

"We likes 'im," a voice called out, "becos 'e wos the right sort; 'e'd fight, 'e would, if 'e was in Samavia now."

Marco rapidly asked himself how much he might say. He decided and spoke to them all.

"He is not part of a legend. He's part of Samavian history," he said. "I know something about him too."

"How did you find it out?" asked The Rat.

"Because my father's a writer, he's obliged to have books and papers, and he knows things. I like to read, and I go into the free libraries. You can always get books and papers there. Then I ask my father questions. All the newspapers are full of things about Samavia just now." Marco felt that this was an explanation which betrayed nothing. It was true that no one could open a newspaper at this period without seeing news and stories of Samavia.

The Rat saw possible vistas of information opening up before him.

"Sit down here," he said, "and tell us what you know about him. Sit down, you fellows."

There was nothing to sit on but the broken flagged

pavement, but that was a small matter. Marco himself had sat on flags or bare ground often enough before, and so had the rest of the lads. He took his place near The Rat, and the others made a semicircle in front of them. The two leaders had joined forces, so to speak, and the followers fell into line at "attention."

Then the newcomer began to talk. It was a good story, that of the Lost Prince, and Marco told it in a way which gave it reality. How could he help it? He knew, as they could not, that it was real. He who had pored over maps of little Samavia since his seventh year, who had studied them with his father, knew it as a country he could have found his way to any part of if he had been dropped in any forest or any mountain of it. He knew every highway and byway, and in the capital city of Melzarr could almost have made his way blindfolded. He knew the palaces and the forts, the churches, the poor streets and the rich ones. His father had once shown him a plan of the royal palace which they had studied together until the boy knew each apartment and corridor in it by heart. But this he did not speak of. He knew it was one of the things to be silent about. But of the mountains and the emerald velvet meadows climbing their sides and only ending where huge bare crags and peaks began, he could speak. He could make pictures of the wide fertile plains where herds of wild horses fed, or raced and sniffed the air; he could describe the fertile valleys where clear rivers ran and flocks of sheep pastured on deep sweet grass. He could speak of them because he could offer a good enough reason for his knowledge of them. It was not the only reason he had for his knowledge, but it was one which would serve well enough.

"That torn magazine you found had more than one article about Samavia in it," he said to The Rat. "The same man wrote four. I read them all in a free library. He had been to Samavia, and knew a great deal about it. He said it was one of the most beautiful countries he had ever traveled in—and

the most fertile. That's what they all say of it."

The group before him knew nothing of fertility or open country. They only knew London back streets and courts. Most of them had never traveled as far as the public parks, and in fact scarcely believed in their existence. They were a rough lot, and as they had stared at Marco at first sight of him, so they continued to stare at him as he talked. When he told of the tall Samavians who had been like giants centuries ago, and who had hunted the wild horses and captured and trained them to obedience by a sort of strong and gentle magic, their mouths fell open. This was the sort of thing to allure any boy's imagination.

"Blimme, if I wouldn't 'ave liked ketchin' one o' them 'orses," broke in one of the audience, and his exclamation was followed by a dozen of like nature from the others. Who wouldn't have liked "ketchin' one"?

When he told of the deep endless seeming forests, and of the herdsmen and shepherds who played on their pipes and made songs about high deeds and bravery, they grinned with pleasure without knowing they were grinning. They did not really know that in this neglected, broken-flagged enclosure, shut in on one side by smoke-blackened, poverty-stricken houses, and on the other by a deserted and forgotten sunken graveyard, they heard the rustle of green forest boughs where birds nested close, the swish of the summer wind in the river reeds, and the tinkle and laughter and rush of brooks running.

They heard more or less of it all through the Lost Prince story, because Prince Ivor had loved lowland woods and mountain forests and all out-of-door life. When Marco pictured him tall and strong-limbed and young, winning all the people when he rode smiling among them, the boys grinned again with unconscious pleasure.

"Wisht 'e 'adn't got lost!" someone cried out.

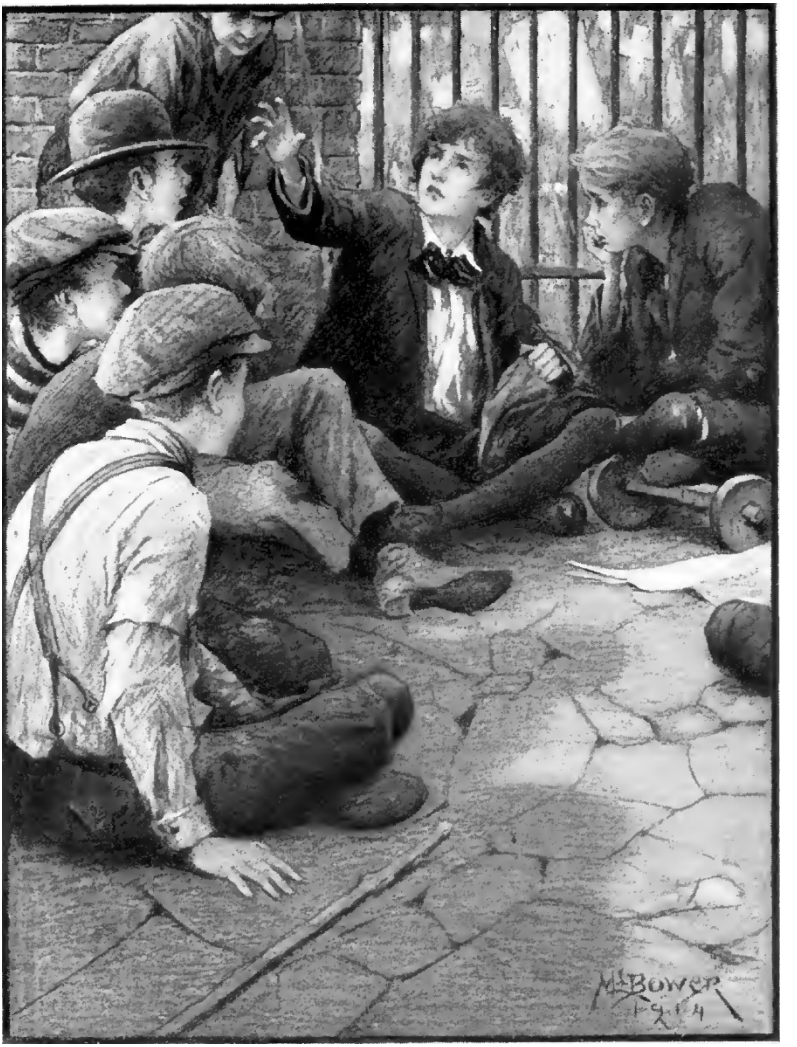
When they heard of the unrest and dissatisfaction of the Samavians, they began to get restless themselves. When

Marco reached the part of the story in which the mob rushed into the palace and demanded their prince from the king, they ejaculated scraps of bad language. "The old geezer had got him hidden somewhere in some dungeon, or he'd killed him out an' out—that's what he'd been up to!" they clamored. "Wisht the lot of us had been there then—wisht we 'ad. We'd 'ave give' 'im wot for, anyway!"

"An' 'im walkin' out o' the place so early in the mornin' just singin' like that! 'E 'ad 'im follered an' done for!" they decided with various exclamations of boyish wrath. Somehow, the fact that the handsome royal lad had strolled into the morning sunshine singing made them more savage. Their language was extremely bad at this point.

But if it was bad here, it became worse when the old shepherd found the young huntsman's half-dead body in the forest. He *had* "bin 'done for' *in the back*! 'E'd bin give' no charnst. G-r-r-r!" they groaned in chorus. "Wisht *they'd* bin there when 'e'd bin 'it! They'd 'ave done fur somebody" themselves. It was a story which had a queer effect on them. It made them think they saw things; it fired their blood; it set them wanting to fight for ideals they knew nothing about—adventurous things, for instance, and high and noble young princes who were full of the possibility of great and good deeds. Sitting upon the broken flagstones of the bit of ground behind the deserted graveyard, they were suddenly dragged into the world of romance, and noble young princes and great and good deeds became as real as the sunken gravestones, and far more interesting.

And then the smuggling across the frontier of the unconscious prince in the bullock cart loaded with sheepskins! They held their breaths. Would the old shepherd get him past the line! Marco, who was lost in the recital himself, told it as if he had been present. He felt as if he had, and as this was the first time he had ever told it to thrilled listeners, his imagination got him in its grip, and his heart jumped in his breast as he



They were suddenly dragged into the world of romance.

was sure the old man's must have done when the guard stopped his cart and asked him what he was carrying out of the country. He knew he must have had to call up all his strength to force his voice into steadiness.

And then the good monks! He had to stop to explain what a monk was, and when he described the solitude of the ancient monastery, and its walled gardens full of flowers and old simples to be used for healing, and the wise monks walking in the silence and the sun, the boys stared a little helplessly, but still as if they were vaguely pleased by the picture.

And then there was no more to tell—no more. There it broke off, and something like a low howl of dismay broke from the semicircle.

"Aw!" they protested, "it 'adn't ought to stop there! Ain't there no more? Is that all there is?"

"It's all that was ever known really. And that last part might only be a sort of story made up by somebody. But I believe it myself."

The Rat had listened with burning eyes. He had sat biting his fingernails, as was a trick of his when he was excited or angry.

"Tell you what!" he exclaimed suddenly. "This was what happened. It was some of the Maranovitch fellows that tried to kill him. They meant to kill his father and make their own man king, and they knew the people wouldn't stand it if young Ivor was alive. They just stabbed him in the back, the fiends! I dare say they heard the old shepherd coming, and left him for dead and ran."

"Right, oh! That was it!" the lads agreed. "Yer right there, Rat!"

"When he got well," The Rat went on feverishly, still biting his nails, "he couldn't go back. He was only a boy. The other fellow had been crowned, and his followers felt strong because they'd just conquered the country. He could have done nothing without an army, and he was too young to raise

one. Perhaps he thought he'd wait till he was old enough to know what to do. I dare say he went away and had to work for his living as if he'd never been a prince at all. Then perhaps sometime he married somebody and had a son, and told him as a secret who he was and all about Samavia." The Rat began to look vengeful. "If I'd bin him I'd have told him not to forget what the Maranovitch had done to me. I'd have told him that if I couldn't get back the throne, he must see what he could do when he grew to be a man. And I'd have made him swear, if he got it back, to take it out of them or their children or their children's children in torture and killing. I'd have made him swear not to leave a Maranovitch alive. And I'd have told him that, if he couldn't do it in his life, he must pass the oath on to his son and his son's son, as long as there was a Fedorovitch on earth. Wouldn't you?" he demanded hotly of Marco.

Marco's blood was also hot, but it was a different kind of blood, and he had talked too much to a very sane man.

"No," he said slowly. "What would have been the use? It wouldn't have done Samavia any good, and it wouldn't have done him any good to torture and kill people. Better keep them alive and make them do things for the country. If you're a patriot, you think of the country." He wanted to add "That's what my father says," but he did not.

"Torture 'em first and then attend to the country," snapped The Rat. "What would you have told your son if you'd been Ivor?"

"I'd have told him to learn everything about Samavia—and all the things kings have to know—and study things about laws and other countries—and about keeping silent—and about governing himself as if he were a general commanding soldiers in battle—so that he would never do anything he did not mean to do or could be ashamed of doing after it was over. And I'd have asked him to tell his son's sons to tell their sons to learn the same things. So, you see,

however long the time was, there would always be a king getting ready for Samavia—when Samavia really wanted him. And he would be a real king."

He stopped himself suddenly and looked at the staring semicircle.

"I didn't make that up myself," he said. "I have heard a man who reads and knows things say it. I believe the Lost Prince would have had the same thoughts. If he had, and told them to his son, there has been a line of kings in training for Samavia for five hundred years, and perhaps one is walking about the streets of Vienna, or Budapest, or Paris, or London now, and he'd be ready if the people found out about him and called him."

"Wisht they would!" someone yelled.

"It would be a queer secret to know all the time when no one else knew it," The Rat communed with himself as it were, "that you were a king and you ought to be on a throne wearing a crown. I wonder if it would make a chap look different?"

He laughed his squeaky laugh, and then turned in his sudden way to Marco:

"But he'd be a fool to give up the vengeance. What is your name?"

"Marco Loristan. What's yours? It isn't The Rat really."

"It's Jem *Rat*cliffe. That's pretty near. Where do you live?"

"No. 7 Philibert Place."

"This club is a soldiers' club," said The Rat. "It's called the Squad. I'm the captain. 'Tention, you fellows! Let's show him."

The semicircle sprang to its feet. There were about twelve lads altogether, and, when they stood upright, Marco saw at once that for some reason they were accustomed to obeying the word of command with military precision.

"Form in line!" ordered The Rat.

They did it at once, and held their backs and legs straight and their heads up amazingly well. Each had seized one of the

sticks which had been stacked together like guns.

The Rat himself sat up straight on his platform. There was actually something military in the bearing of his lean body. His voice lost its squeak and its sharpness became commanding.

He put the dozen lads through the drill as if he had been a smart young officer. And the drill itself was prompt and smart enough to have done credit to practiced soldiers in barracks. It made Marco involuntarily stand very straight himself, and watch with surprised interest.

"That's good!" he exclaimed when it was at an end. "How did you learn that?"

The Rat made a savage gesture.

"If I'd had legs to stand on, I'd have been a soldier!" he said. "I'd have enlisted in any regiment that would take me. I don't care for anything else."

Suddenly his face changed, and he shouted a command to his followers.

"Turn your backs!" he ordered.

And they did turn their backs and looked through the railings of the old churchyard. Marco saw that they were obeying an order which was not new to them. The Rat had thrown his arm up over his eyes and covered them. He held it there for several moments, as if he did not want to be seen. Marco turned his back as the rest had done. All at once he understood that, though The Rat was not crying, yet he was feeling something which another boy would possibly have broken down under.

"All right!" he shouted presently, and dropped his ragged-sleeved arm and sat up straight again.

"I want to go to war!" he said hoarsely. "I want to fight! I want to lead a lot of men into battle! And I haven't got any legs. Sometimes it takes the pluck out of me."

"You've not grown up yet!" said Marco. "You might get strong. No one knows what is going to happen. How did you

learn to drill the club?"

"I hang about barracks. I watch and listen. I follow soldiers. If I could get books, I'd read about wars. I can't go to libraries as you can. I can do nothing but scuffle about like a rat."

"I can take you to some libraries," said Marco. "There are places where boys can get in. And I can get some papers from my father."

"Can you?" said The Rat. "Do you want to join the club?"

"Yes!" Marco answered. "I'll speak to my father about it."

He said it because the hungry longing for companionship in his own mind had found a sort of response in the queer hungry look in The Rat's eyes. He wanted to see him again. Strange creature as he was, there was attraction in him. Scuffling about on his low wheeled platform, he had drawn this group of rough lads to him and made himself their commander. They obeyed him; they listened to his stories and harangues about war and soldiering; they let him drill them and give them orders. Marco knew that, when he told his father about him, he would be interested. The boy wanted to hear what Loristan would say.

"I'm going home now," he said. "If you're going to be here tomorrow, I will try to come."

"We shall be here," The Rat answered. "It's our barracks."

Marco drew himself up smartly and made his salute as if to a superior officer. Then he wheeled about and marched through the brick archway, and the sound of his boyish tread was as regular and decided as if he had been a man keeping time with his regiment.

"He's been drilled himself," said The Rat. "He knows as much as I do."

And he sat up and stared down the passage with new interest.

CHAPTER V
"Silence Is Still the Order"

They were even poorer than usual just now, and the supper Marco and his father sat down to was scant enough. Lazarus stood upright behind his master's chair and served him with strictest ceremony. Their poor lodgings were always kept with a soldierly cleanliness and order. When an object could be polished it was forced to shine, no grain of dust was allowed to lie undisturbed, and this perfection was not attained through the ministrations of a lodging house slavery. Lazarus made himself extremely popular by taking the work of caring for his master's rooms entirely out of the hands of the overburdened maids of all work. He had learned to do many things in his young days in barracks. He carried about with him coarse bits of tablecloths and towels, which he laundered as if they had been the finest linen. He mended, he patched, he darned, and in the hardest fight the poor must face—the fight with dirt and dinginess—he always held his own. They had nothing but dry bread and coffee this evening, but Lazarus had made the coffee and the bread was good.

As Marco ate, he told his father the story of The Rat and his followers. Loristan listened, as the boy had known he would, with the far off, intently thinking smile in his dark eyes. It was a look which always fascinated Marco because it meant that he was thinking so many things. Perhaps he would tell some of them and perhaps he would not. His spell over the boy lay in the fact that to him he seemed like a wonderful book of which one had only glimpses. It was full of pictures and adventures which were true, and one could not help continually making guesses about them. Yes, the feeling that

Marco had was that his father's attraction for him was a sort of spell, and that others felt the same thing. When he stood and talked to commoner people, he held his tall body with singular quiet grace which was like power. He never stirred or moved himself as if he were nervous or uncertain. He could hold his hands (he had beautiful slender and strong hands) quite still; he could stand on his fine arched feet without shuffling them. He could sit without any ungrace or restlessness. His mind knew what his body should do, and gave it orders without speaking, and his fine limbs and muscles and nerves obeyed. So he could stand still and at ease and look at the people he was talking to, and they always looked at him and listened to what he said, and somehow, courteous and uncondescending as his manner unfailingly was, it used always to seem to Marco as if he were "giving an audience" as kings gave them.

He had often seen people bow very low when they went away from him, and more than once it had happened that some humble person had stepped out of his presence backward, as people do when retiring before a sovereign. And yet his bearing was the quietest and least assuming in the world.

"And they were talking about Samavia? And he knew the story of the Lost Prince?" he said ponderingly. "Even in that place!"

"He wants to hear about wars—he wants to talk about them," Marco answered. "If he could stand and were old enough, he would go and fight for Samavia himself."

"It is a blood-drenched and sad place now!" said Loristan. "The people are mad when they are not heartbroken and terrified."

Suddenly Marco struck the table with a sounding slap of his boy's hand. He did it before he realized any intention in his own mind.

"Why should either one of the Iarovitch or one of the Maranovitch be king!" he cried. "They were only savage

peasants when they first fought for the crown hundreds of years ago. The most savage one got it, and they have been fighting ever since. Only the Fedorovitch were born kings. There is only one man in the world who has the right to the throne—and I don't know whether he is in the world or not. But I believe he is! I do!"

Loristan looked at his hot twelve-year-old face with a reflective curiousness. He saw that the flame which had leaped up in him had leaped without warning—just as a fierce heartbeat might have shaken him.

"You mean—?" he suggested softly.

"Ivor Fedorovitch. King Ivor he ought to be. And the people would obey him, and the good days would come again."

"It is five hundred years since Ivor Fedorovitch left the good monks." Loristan still spoke softly.

"But, Father," Marco protested, "even The Rat said what you said—that he was too young to be able to come back while the Maranovitch were in power. And he would have to work and have a home, and perhaps he is as poor as we are. But when he had a son he would call him Ivor and *tell* him—and his son would call *his* son Ivor and tell *him*—and it would go on and on. They could never call their eldest sons anything but Ivor. And what you said about the training would be true. There would always be a king being trained for Samavia, and ready to be called." In the fire of his feelings he sprang from his chair and stood upright. "Why! There may be a king of Samavia in some city now who knows he is king, and, when he reads about the fighting among his people, his blood gets red-hot. They're his own people—his very own! He ought to go to them—he ought to go and tell them who he is! Don't you think he ought, Father?"

"It would not be as easy as it seems to a boy," Loristan answered. "There are many countries which would have something to say—Russia would have her word, and Austria,

and Germany; and England never is silent. But, if he were a strong man and knew how to make strong friends in silence, he might sometime be able to declare himself openly."

"But if he is anywhere, someone—some Samavian—ought to go and look for him. It ought to be a Samavian who is very clever and a patriot—" He stopped at a flash of recognition. "Father!" he cried out. "Father! You—you are the one who could find him if anyone in the world could. But perhaps—" and he stopped a moment again because new thoughts rushed through his mind. "Have *you* ever looked for him?" he asked hesitating.

Perhaps he had asked a stupid question—perhaps his father had always been looking for him, perhaps that was his secret and his work.

But Loristan did not look as if he thought him stupid. Quite the contrary. He kept his handsome eyes fixed on him still in that curious way, as if he were studying him—as if he were much more than twelve years old, and he were deciding to tell him something.

"Comrade at arms," he said, with the smile which always gladdened Marco's heart, "you have kept your oath of allegiance like a man. You were not seven years old when you took it. You are growing older. Silence is still the order, but you are man enough to be told more." He paused and looked down, and then looked up again, speaking in a low tone. "I have not looked for him," he said, "because—I believe I know where he is."

Marco caught his breath.

"Father!" He said only that word. He could say no more. He knew he must not ask questions. "Silence is still the order." But as they faced each other in their dingy room at the back of the shabby house on the side of the roaring common road—as Lazarus stood stock-still behind his father's chair and kept his eyes fixed on the empty coffee cups and the dry bread plate, and everything looked as poor as things

always did—there was a king of Samavia—an Ivor Fedorovitch with the blood of the Lost Prince in his veins—alive in some town or city this moment! And Marco's own father knew where he was!

He glanced at Lazarus, but, though the old soldier's face looked as expressionless as if it were cut out of wood, Marco realized that he knew this thing and had always known it. He had been a comrade at arms all his life. He continued to stare at the bread plate.

Loristan spoke again and in an even lower voice. "The Samavians who are patriots and thinkers," he said, "formed themselves into a secret party about eighty years ago. They formed it when they had no reason for hope, but they formed it because one of them discovered that an Ivor Fedorovitch was living. He was head forester on a great estate in the Austrian Alps. The nobleman he served had always thought him a mystery because he had the bearing and speech of a man who had not been born a servant, and his methods in caring for the forests and game were those of a man who was educated and had studied his subject. But he never was familiar or assuming, and never professed superiority over any of his fellows. He was a man of great stature, and was extraordinarily brave and silent. The nobleman who was his master made a sort of companion of him when they hunted together. Once he took him with him when he traveled to Samavia to hunt wild horses. He found that he knew the country strangely well, and that he was familiar with Samavian hunting and customs. Before he returned to Austria, the man obtained permission to go to the mountains alone. He went among the shepherds and made friends among them, asking many questions.

"One night around a forest fire he heard the songs about the Lost Prince which had not been forgotten even after nearly five hundred years had passed. The shepherds and herdsmen talked about Prince Ivor, and told old stories about

him, and related the prophecy that he would come back and bring again Samavia's good days. He might come only in the body of one of his descendants, but it would be his spirit which came, because his spirit would never cease to love Samavia. One very old shepherd tottered to his feet and lifted his face to the myriad stars bestrewn like jewels in the blue sky above the forest trees, and he wept and prayed aloud that the great God would send their king to them. And the stranger huntsman stood upright also and lifted his face to the stars. And, though he said no word, the herdsman nearest to him saw tears on his cheeks—great, heavy tears. The next day, the stranger went to the monastery where the order of good monks lived who had taken care of the Lost Prince. When he had left Samavia, the secret society was formed, and the members of it knew that an Ivor Fedorovitch had passed through his ancestors' country as the servant of another man. But the secret society was only a small one, and, though it has been growing ever since and it has done good deeds and good work in secret, the huntsman died an old man before it was strong enough even to dare to tell Samavia what it knew."

"Had he a son?" cried Marco. "Had he a son?"

"Yes. He had a son. His name was Ivor. And he was trained as I told you. That part I knew to be true, though I should have believed it was true even if I had not known. There has *always* been a king ready for Samavia—even when he has labored with his hands and served others. Each one took the oath of allegiance."

"As I did?" said Marco, breathless with excitement. When one is twelve years old, to be so near a Lost Prince who might end wars is a thrilling thing.

"The same," answered Loristan.

Marco threw up his hand in salute.

"'Here grows a man for Samavia! God be thanked!'" he quoted. "And *he* is somewhere? And you know?"

Loristan bent his head in acquiescence.

"For years much secret work has been done, and the Fedorovitch party has grown until it is much greater and more powerful than the other parties dream. The larger countries are tired of the constant war and disorder in Samavia. Their interests are disturbed by them, and they are deciding that they must have peace and laws which can be counted on. There have been Samavian patriots who have spent their lives in trying to bring this about by making friends in the most powerful capitals, and working secretly for the future good of their own land. Because Samavia is so small and uninfluential, it has taken a long time but when King Maran and his family were assassinated and the war broke out, there were great powers which began to say that if some king of good blood and reliable characteristics were given the crown, he should be upheld."

"*His* blood,"—Marco's intensity made his voice drop almost to a whisper—"*his* blood has been trained for five hundred years, Father! If it comes true—" though he laughed a little, he was obliged to wink his eyes hard because suddenly he felt tears rush into them, which no boy likes—"the shepherds will have to make a new song—it will have to be a shouting one about a prince going away and a king coming back!"

"They are a devout people and observe many an ancient rite and ceremony. They will chant prayers and burn altar fires on their mountain sides," Loristan said. "But the end is not yet—the end is not yet. Sometimes it seems that perhaps it is near—but God knows!"

Then there leaped back upon Marco the story he had to tell, but which he had held back for the last—the story of the man who spoke Samavian and drove in the carriage with the King. He knew now that it might mean some important thing which he could not have before suspected.

"There is something I must tell you," he said.

He had learned to relate incidents in few but clear words

when he related them to his father. It had been part of his training. Loristan had said that he might sometime have a story to tell when he had but few moments to tell it in—some story which meant life or death to someone. He told this one quickly and well. He made Loristan see the well-dressed man with the deliberate manner and the keen eyes, and he made him hear his voice when he said, "Tell your father that you are a very well-trained lad."

"I am glad he said that. He is a man who knows what training is," said Loristan. "He is a person who knows what all Europe is doing, and almost all that it will do. He is an ambassador from a powerful and great country. If he saw that you are a well-trained and fine lad, it might—it might even be good for Samavia."

"Would it matter that I was well-trained? *Could* it matter to Samavia?" Marco cried out.

Loristan paused for a moment—watching him gravely—looking him over—his big, well-built boy's frame, his shabby clothes, and his eagerly burning eyes.

He smiled one of his slow wonderful smiles.

"Yes. It might even matter to Samavia!" he answered.

CHAPTER VI
The Drill and the Secret Party

Loristan did not forbid Marco to pursue his acquaintance with The Rat and his followers.

"You will find out for yourself whether they are friends for you or not," he said. "You will know in a few days, and then you can make your own decision. You have known lads in various countries, and you are a good judge of them, I think. You will soon see whether they are going to be MEN or mere rabble. The Rat now—how does he strike you?"

And the handsome eyes held their keen look of questioning.

"He'd be a brave soldier if he could stand," said Marco, thinking him over. "But he might be cruel."

"A lad who might make a brave soldier cannot be disdained, but a man who is cruel is a fool. Tell him that from me," Loristan answered. "He wastes force—his own and the force of the one he treats cruelly. Only a fool wastes force."

"May I speak of you sometimes?" asked Marco.

"Yes. You will know how. You will remember the things about which silence is the order."

"I never forget them," said Marco. "I have been trying not to, for such a long time."

"You have succeeded well, Comrade!" returned Loristan, from his writing table, to which he had gone and where he was turning over papers.

A strong impulse overpowered the boy. He marched over to the table and stood very straight, making his soldierly young salute, his whole body glowing.

"Father!" he said, "you don't know how I love you! I wish

you were a general and I might die in battle for you. When I look at you, I long and long to do something for you a boy could not do. I would die of a thousand wounds rather than disobey you—or Samavia!"

He seized Loristan's hand, and knelt on one knee and kissed it. An English or American boy could not have done such a thing from unaffected natural impulse. But he was of warm Southern blood.

"I took my oath of allegiance to you, Father, when I took it to Samavia. It seems as if you were Samavia, too," he said, and kissed his hand again.

Loristan had turned toward him with one of the movements which were full of dignity and grace. Marco, looking up at him, felt that there was always a certain remote stateliness in him which made it seem quite natural that any one should bend the knee and kiss his hand.

A sudden great tenderness glowed in his father's face as he raised the boy and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Comrade," he said, "you don't know how much I love you—and what reason there is that we should love each other! You don't know how I have been watching you, and thanking God each year that here grew a man for Samavia. That I know you are—a *man*, though you have lived but twelve years. Twelve years may grow a man—or prove that a man will never grow, though a human thing he may remain for ninety years. This year may be full of strange things for both of us. We cannot know *what* I may have to ask you to do for me—and for Samavia. Perhaps such a thing as no twelve-year-old boy has ever done before."

"Every night and every morning," said Marco, "I shall pray that I may be called to do it, and that I may do it well."

"You will do it well, Comrade, if you are called. That I could make oath," Loristan answered him.

The Squad had collected in the enclosure behind the church when Marco appeared at the arched end of the

passage. The boys were drawn up with their rifles, but they all wore a rather dogged and sullen look. The explanation which darted into Marco's mind was that this was because The Rat was in a bad humor. He sat crouched together on his platform biting his nails fiercely, his elbows on his updrawn knees, his face twisted into a hideous scowl. He did not look around, or even look up from the cracked flagstone of the pavement on which his eyes were fixed.

Marco went forward with military step and stopped opposite to him with prompt salute.

"Sorry to be late, sir," he said, as if he had been a private speaking to his colonel.

"It's 'im, Rat! 'E's come, Rat!" the Squad shouted. "Look at 'im!"

But The Rat would not look, and did not even move.

"What's the matter?" said Marco, with less ceremony than a private would have shown. "There's no use in my coming here if you don't want me."

"'E's got a grouch on 'cos you're late!" called out the head of the line. "No doin' nothin' when 'e's got a grouch on."

"I sha'n't try to do anything," said Marco, his boy face setting itself into good stubborn lines. "That's not what I came here for. I came to drill. I've been with my father. He comes first. I can't join the Squad if he doesn't come first. We're not on active service, and we're not in barracks."

Then The Rat moved sharply and turned to look at him.

"I thought you weren't coming at all!" he snapped and growled at once. "My father said you wouldn't. He said you were a young swell for all your patched clothes. He said your father would think he was a swell, even if he was only a penny-a-liner on newspapers, and he wouldn't let you have anything to do with a vagabond and a nuisance. Nobody begged you to join. Your father can go to blazes!"

"Don't you speak in that way about my father," said Marco, quite quietly, "because I can't knock you down."

"I'll get up and let you!" began The Rat, immediately white and raging. "I can stand up with two sticks. I'll get up and let you!"

"No, you won't," said Marco. "If you want to know what my father said, I can tell you. He said I could come as often as I liked—till I found out whether we should be friends or not. He says I shall find that out for myself."

It was a strange thing The Rat did. It must always be remembered of him that his wretched father, who had each year sunk lower and lower in the underworld, had been a gentleman once, a man who had been familiar with good manners and had been educated in the customs of good breeding. Sometimes when he was drunk, and sometimes when he was partly sober, he talked to The Rat of many things the boy would otherwise never have heard of. That was why the lad was different from the other vagabonds. This, also, was why he suddenly altered the whole situation by doing this strange and unexpected thing. He utterly changed his expression and voice, fixing his sharp eyes shrewdly on Marco's. It was almost as if he were asking him a conundrum. He knew it would have been one to most boys of the class he appeared outwardly to belong to. He would either know the answer or he wouldn't.

"I beg your pardon," The Rat said.

That was the conundrum. It was what a gentleman and an officer would have said, if he felt he had been mistaken or rude. He had heard that from his drunken father.

"I beg yours—for being late," said Marco.

That was the right answer. It was the one another officer and gentleman would have made. It settled the matter at once, and it settled more than was apparent at the moment. It decided that Marco was one of those who knew the things The Rat's father had once known—the things gentlemen do and say and think. Not another word was said. It was all right. Marco slipped into line with the Squad, and The Rat sat erect

with his military bearing and began his drill:

"Squad!

"'Tention!

"Number!

"Slope arms!

"Form fours!

"Right!

"Quick march!

"Halt!

"Left turn!

"Order arms!

"Stand at ease!

"Stand easy!"

They did it so well that it was quite wonderful when one considered the limited space at their disposal. They had evidently done it often, and The Rat had been not only a smart, but a severe, officer. This morning they repeated the exercise a number of times, and even varied it with Review Drill, with which they seemed just as familiar.

"Where did you learn it?" The Rat asked, when the arms were stacked again and Marco was sitting by him as he had sat the previous day.

"From an old soldier. And I like to watch it, as you do."

"If you were a young swell in the Guards, you couldn't be smarter at it," The Rat said. "The way you hold yourself! The way you stand! You've got it! Wish I was you! It comes natural to you."

"I've always liked to watch it and try to do it myself. I did when I was a little fellow," answered Marco.

"I've been trying to kick it into these chaps for more than a year," said The Rat. "A nice job I had of it! It nearly made me sick at first."

The semicircle in front of him only giggled or laughed outright. The members of it seemed to take very little offense at his cavalier treatment of them. He had evidently

something to give them which was entertaining enough to make up for his tyranny and indifference. He thrust his hand into one of the pockets of his ragged coat, and drew out a piece of newspaper.

"My father brought home this, wrapped round a loaf of bread," he said. "See what it says there!"

He handed it to Marco, pointing to some words printed in large letters at the head of a column. Marco looked at it and sat very still.

The words he read were: "The Lost Prince."

"Silence is still the order," was the first thought which flashed through his mind. "Silence is still the order."

"What does it mean?" he said aloud.

"There isn't much of it. I wish there was more," The Rat said fretfully. "Read and see. Of course they say it mayn't be true—but I believe it is. They say that people think someone knows where he is—at least where one of his descendants is. It'd be the same thing. He'd be the real king. If he'd just show himself, it might stop all the fighting. Just read."

Marco read, and his skin prickled as the blood went racing through his body. But his face did not change. There was a sketch of the story of the Lost Prince to begin with. It had been regarded by most people, the article said, as a sort of legend. Now there was a definite rumor that it was not a legend at all, but a part of the long past history of Samavia. It was said that through the centuries there had always been a party secretly loyal to the memory of this worshiped and lost Fedorovitch. It was even said that from father to son, generation after generation after generation, had descended the oath of fealty to him and his descendants. The people had made a god of him, and now, romantic as it seemed, it was beginning to be an open secret that some persons believed that a descendant had been found—a Fedorovitch worthy of his young ancestor—and that a certain Secret Party also held that, if he were called back to the throne of Samavia, the

interminable wars and bloodshed would reach an end.

The Rat had begun to bite his nails fast.

"Do you believe he's found?" he asked feverishly. "*Don't you?* I do!"

"I wonder where he is, if it's true? I wonder! Where?" exclaimed Marco. He could say that, and he might seem as eager as he felt.

The Squad all began to jabber at once. "Yus, where wos'e? There is no knowin'. It'd be likely to be in some o' these furrin places. England'd be too far from Samavia. 'Ow far off wos Samavia? Wos it in Roosha, or where the Frenchies were, or the Germans? But wherever 'e wos, 'e'd be the right sort, an' 'e'd be the sort a chap'd turn and look at in the street."

The Rat continued to bite his nails.

"He might be anywhere," he said, his small fierce face glowing.

"That's what I like to think about. He might be passing in the street outside there; he might be up in one of those houses," jerking his head over his shoulder toward the backs of the inclosing dwellings. "Perhaps he knows he's a king, and perhaps he doesn't. He'd know if what you said yesterday was true—about the king always being made ready for Samavia."

"Yes, he'd know," put in Marco.

"Well, it'd be finer if he did," went on The Rat. "However poor and shabby he was, he'd know the secret all the time. And if people sneered at him, he'd sneer at them and laugh to himself. I dare say he'd walk tremendously straight and hold his head up. If I was him, I'd like to make people suspect a bit that I wasn't like the common lot o' them." He put out his hand and pushed Marco excitedly. "Let's work out plots for him!" he said. "That'd be a splendid game! Let's pretend we're the Secret Party!"

He was tremendously excited. Out of the ragged pocket he fished a piece of chalk. Then he leaned forward and began to draw something quickly on the flagstones closest to his

platform. The Squad leaned forward also, quite breathlessly, and Marco leaned forward. The chalk was sketching a roughly outlined map, and he knew what map it was, before The Rat spoke.

"That's a map of Samavia," he said. "It was in that piece of magazine I told you about—the one where I read about Prince Ivor. I studied it until it fell to pieces. But I could draw it myself by that time, so it didn't matter. I could draw it with my eyes shut. That's the capital city," pointing to a spot. "It's called Melzarr. The palace is there. It's the place where the first of the Maranovitch killed the last of the Fedorovitch—the bad chap that was Ivor's father. It's the palace Ivor wandered out of singing the shepherds' song that early morning. It's where the throne is that his descendant would sit upon to be crowned—that he's *going* to sit upon. I believe he is! Let's swear he shall!" He flung down his piece of chalk and sat up. "Give me two sticks. Help me to get up."

Two of the Squad sprang to their feet and came to him. Each snatched one of the sticks from the stacked rifles, evidently knowing what he wanted. Marco rose too, and watched with sudden, keen curiosity. He had thought that The Rat could not stand up, but it seemed that he could, in a fashion of his own, and he was going to do it. The boys lifted him by his arms, set him against the stone coping of the iron railings of the churchyard, and put a stick in each of his hands. They stood at his side, but he supported himself.

"'E could get about if 'e 'ad the money to buy crutches!" said one whose name was Cad, and he said it quite proudly. The queer thing that Marco had noticed was that the ragamuffins were proud of The Rat, and regarded him as their lord and master. "—'E could get about an' stand as well as anyone," added the other, and he said it in the tone of one who boasts. His name was Ben.

"I'm going to stand now, and so are the rest of you," said The Rat. "Squad! 'Tention! You at the head of the line," to

Marco. They were in line in a moment—straight, shoulders back, chins up. And Marco stood at the head.

"We're going to take an oath," said The Rat. "It's an oath of allegiance. Allegiance means faithfulness to a thing—a king or a country. Ours means allegiance to the King of Samavia. We don't know where he is, but we swear to be faithful to him, to fight for him, to plot for him, to *die* for him, and to bring him back to his throne!" The way in which he flung up his head when he said the word "die" was very fine indeed. "We are the Secret Party. We will work in the dark and find out things—and run risks—and collect an army no one will know anything about until it is strong enough to suddenly rise at a secret signal, and overwhelm the Maranovitch and Iarovitch, and seize their forts and citadels. No one even knows we are alive. We are a silent, secret thing that never speaks aloud!"

Silent and secret as they were, however, they spoke aloud at this juncture. It was such a grand idea for a game, and so full of possible larks, that the Squad broke into a howl of an exultant cheer.

"Hooray!" they yelled. "Hooray for the oath of 'legiance! 'Ray! 'ray! 'ray!"

"Shut up, you swine!" shouted The Rat. "Is that the way you keep yourself secret? You'll call the police in, you fools! Look at *him!*" pointing to Marco. "He's got some sense."

Marco, in fact, had not made any sound.

"Come here, you Cad and Ben, and put me back on my wheels," raged the Squad's commander. "I'll not make up the game at all. It's no use with a lot of fathead, raw recruits like you."

The line broke and surrounded him in a moment, pleading and urging.

"Aw, Rat! We forgot. It's the primest game you've ever thought out! Rat! Rat! Don't get a grouch on! We'll keep still, Rat! Primest lark of all 'll be the sneakin' about an' keepin'

quiet. Aw, Rat! Keep it up!"

"Keep it up yourselves!" snarled The Rat.

"Not another cove of us could do it but you! Not one! There's no other cove could think it out. You're the only chap that can think out things. You thought out the Squad! That's why you're captain!"

This was true. He was the one who could invent entertainment for them, these street lads who had nothing. Out of that nothing he could create what excited them, and give them something to fill empty, useless, often cold or wet or foggy, hours. That made him their captain and their pride.

The Rat began to yield, though grudgingly. He pointed again to Marco, who had not moved, but stood still at attention.

"Look at *him!*" he said. "He knows enough to stand where he's put until he's ordered to break line. He's a soldier, he is—not a raw recruit that don't know the goose-step. He's been in barracks before."

But after this outburst, he deigned to go on.

"Here's the oath," he said. "We swear to stand any torture and submit in silence to any death rather than betray our secret and our king. We will obey in silence and in secret. We will swim through seas of blood and fight our way through lakes of fire, if we are ordered. Nothing shall bar our way. All we do and say and think is for our country and our king. If any of you have anything to say, speak out before you take the oath."

He saw Marco move a little, and he made a sign to him.

"You," he said. "Have you something to say?"

Marco turned to him and saluted.

"Here stand ten men for Samavia. God be thanked!" he said. He dared say that much, and he felt as if his father himself would have told him that they were the right words.

The Rat thought they were. Somehow he felt that they struck home. He reddened with a sudden emotion.

"Squad!" he said. "I'll let you give three cheers on that. It's for the last time. We'll begin to be quiet afterward."

And to the Squad's exultant relief he led the cheer, and they were allowed to make as much uproar as they liked. They liked to make a great deal, and when it was at an end, it had done them good and made them ready for business.

The Rat opened the drama at once. Never surely had there ever before been heard a conspirator's whisper as hollow as his.

"Secret Ones," he said, "it is midnight. We meet in the depths of darkness. We dare not meet by day. When we meet in the daytime, we pretend not to know each other. We are meeting now in a Samavian city where there is a fortress. We shall have to take it when the secret sign is given and we make our rising. We are getting everything ready, so that, when we find the king, the secret sign can be given."

"What is the name of the city we are in?" whispered Cad.

"It is called Larrina. It is an important seaport. We must take it as soon as we rise. The next time we meet I will bring a dark lantern and draw a map and show it to you."

It would have been a great advantage to the game if Marco could have drawn for them the map he could have made, a map which would have shown every fortress—every stronghold and every weak place. Being a boy, he knew what excitement would have thrilled each breast, how they would lean forward and pile question on question, pointing to this place and to that. He had learned to draw the map before he was ten, and he had drawn it again and again because there had been times when his father had told him that changes had taken place. Oh, yes! he could have drawn a map which would have moved them to a frenzy of joy. But he sat silent and listened, only speaking when he asked a question, as if he knew nothing more about Samavia than The Rat did. What a Secret Party they were! They drew themselves together in the closest of circles; they spoke in unearthly whispers.

"A sentinel ought to be posted at the end of the passage," Marco whispered.

"Ben, take your gun!" commanded The Rat.

Ben rose stealthily, and, shouldering his weapon, crept on tiptoe to the opening. There he stood on guard.

"My father says there's been a Secret Party in Samavia for a hundred years," The Rat whispered.

"Who told him?" asked Marco.

"A man who has been in Samavia," answered The Rat. "He said it was the most wonderful Secret Party in the world, because it has worked and waited so long, and never given up, though it has had no reason for hoping. It began among some shepherds and charcoal burners who bound themselves by an oath to find the Lost Prince and bring him back to the throne. There were too few of them to do anything against the Maranovitch, and when the first lot found they were growing old, they made their sons take the same oath. It has been passed on from generation to generation, and in each generation the band has grown. No one really knows how large it is now, but they say that there are people in nearly all the countries in Europe who belong to it in dead secret, and are sworn to help it when they are called. They are only waiting. Some are rich people who will give money, and some are poor ones who will slip across the frontier to fight or to help to smuggle in arms. They even say that for all these years there have been arms made in caves in the mountains, and hidden there year after year. There are men who are called Forgers of the Sword, and they, and their fathers, and grandfathers, and great-grandfathers have always made swords and stored them in caverns no one knows of, hidden caverns underground."

Marco spoke aloud the thought which had come into his mind as he listened, a thought which brought fear to him. "If the people in the streets talk about it, they won't be hidden long."

"It isn't common talk, my father says. Only very few have guessed, and most of them think it is part of the Lost Prince legend," said The Rat. "The Maranovitch and Iarovitch laugh at it. They have always been great fools. They're too full of their own swagger to think anything can interfere with them."

"Do you talk much to your father?" Marco asked him.

The Rat showed his sharp white teeth in a grin.

"I know what you're thinking of," he said. "You're remembering that I said he was always drunk. So he is, except when he's only *half* drunk. And when he's *half* drunk, he's the most splendid talker in London. He remembers everything he has ever learned or read or heard since he was born. I get him going and listen. He wants to talk and I want to hear. I found out almost everything I know in that way. He didn't know he was teaching me, but he was. He goes back into being a gentleman when he's half drunk."

"If—if you care about the Samavians, you'd better ask him not to tell people about the Secret Party and the Forgers of the Sword," suggested Marco.

The Rat started a little.

"That's true!" he said. "You're sharper than I am. It oughtn't to be blabbed about, or the Maranovitch might hear enough to make them stop and listen. I'll get him to promise. There's one queer thing about him," he added very slowly, as if he were thinking it over, "I suppose it's part of the gentleman that's left in him. If he makes a promise, he never breaks it, drunk or sober."

"Ask him to make one," said Marco. The next moment he changed the subject because it seemed the best thing to do. "Go on and tell us what our own Secret Party is to do. We're forgetting," he whispered.

The Rat took up his game with renewed keenness. It was a game which attracted him immensely because it called upon his imagination and held his audience spellbound, besides plunging him into war and strategy.

"We're preparing for the rising," he said. "It must come soon. We've waited so long. The caverns are stacked with arms. The Maranovitch and the Iarovitch are fighting and using all their soldiers, and now is our time." He stopped and thought, his elbows on his knees. He began to bite his nails again.

"The Secret Signal must be given," he said. Then he stopped again, and the Squad held its breath and pressed nearer with a softly shuffling sound. "Two of the Secret Ones must be chosen by lot and sent forth," he went on; and the Squad almost brought ruin and disgrace upon itself by wanting to cheer again, and only just stopping itself in time. "Must be chosen *by lot,"* The Rat repeated, looking from one face to another. "Each one will take his life in his hand when he goes forth. He may have to die a thousand deaths, but he must go. He must steal in silence and disguise from one country to another. Wherever there is one of the Secret Party, whether he is in a hovel or on a throne, the messengers must go to him in darkness and stealth and give him the sign. It will mean, 'The hour has come. God save Samavia!'"

"God save Samavia!" whispered the Squad, excitedly. And, because they saw Marco raise his hand to his forehead, every one of them saluted.

They all began to whisper at once.

"Let's draw lots now. Let's draw lots, Rat. Don't let's 'ave no waitin'."

The Rat began to look about him with dread anxiety. He seemed to be examining the sky.

"The darkness is not as thick as it was," he whispered. "Midnight has passed. The dawn of day will be upon us. If anyone has a piece of paper or a string, we will draw the lots before we part."

Cad had a piece of string, and Marco had a knife which could be used to cut it into lengths. This The Rat did himself. Then, after shutting his eyes and mixing them, he held them

in his hand ready for the drawing.

"The Secret One who draws the longest lot is chosen. The Secret One who draws the shortest is chosen," he said solemnly.

The drawing was as solemn as his tone. Each boy wanted to draw either the shortest lot or the longest one. The heart of each thumped somewhat as he drew his piece of string.

When the drawing was at an end, each showed his lot. The Rat had drawn the shortest piece of string, and Marco had drawn the longest one.

"Comrade!" said The Rat, taking his hand. "We will face death and danger together!"

"God save Samavia!" answered Marco.

And the game was at an end for the day. The primest thing, the Squad said, The Rat had ever made up for them. "'E wos a wonder, he wos!"

CHAPTER VII
"The Lamp Is Lighted!"

On his way home, Marco thought of nothing but the story he must tell his father, the story the stranger who had been to Samavia had told The Rat's father. He felt that it must be a true story and not merely an invention. The Forgers of the Sword must be real men, and the hidden subterranean caverns stacked through the centuries with arms must be real, too. And if they were real, surely his father was one of those who knew the secret. His thoughts ran very fast. The Rat's boyish invention of the rising was only part of a game, but how natural it would be that sometime—perhaps before long—there would be a real rising! Surely there would be one if the Secret Party had grown so strong, and if many weapons and secret friends in other countries were ready and waiting. During all these years, hidden work and preparation would have been going on continually, even though it was preparation for an unknown day. A party which had lasted so long—which passed its oath on from generation to generation—must be of a deadly determination.

What might it not have made ready in its caverns and secret meeting places! He longed to reach home and tell his father, at once, all he had heard. He recalled to mind, word for word, all that The Rat had been told, and even all he had added in his game, because—well, because that seemed so real too, so real that it actually might be useful.

But when he reached No. 7 Philibert Place, he found Loristan and Lazarus very much absorbed in work. The door of the back sitting room was locked when he first knocked on it, and locked again as soon as he had entered. There were

many papers on the table, and they were evidently studying them. Several of them were maps. Some were road maps, some maps of towns and cities, and some of fortifications; but they were all maps of places in Samavia. They were usually kept in a strong box, and when they were taken out to be studied, the door was always kept locked.

Before they had their evening meal, these were all returned to the strong box, which was pushed into a corner and had newspapers piled upon it.

"When he arrives," Marco heard Loristan say to Lazarus, "we can show him clearly what has been planned. He can see for himself."

His father spoke scarcely at all during the meal, and, though it was not the habit of Lazarus to speak at such times unless spoken to, this evening it seemed to Marco that he *looked* more silent than he had ever seen him look before. They were plainly both thinking anxiously of deeply serious things. The story of the stranger who had been to Samavia must not be told yet. But it was one which would keep.

Loristan did not say anything until Lazarus had removed the things from the table and made the room as neat as possible. While that was being done, he sat with his forehead resting on his hand, as if absorbed in thought. Then he made a gesture to Marco.

"Come here, Comrade," he said.

Marco went to him.

"Tonight someone may come to talk with me about grave things," he said. "I think he will come, but I cannot be quite sure. It is important that he should know that, when he comes, he will find me quite alone. He will come at a late hour, and Lazarus will open the door quietly that no one may hear. It is important that no one should see him. Someone must go and walk on the opposite side of the street until he appears. Then the one who goes to give warning must cross the pavement before him and say in a low voice, 'The Lamp

is lighted!' and at once turn quietly away."

What boy's heart would not have leaped with joy at the mystery of it! Even a common and dull boy who knew nothing of Samavia would have felt jerky. Marco's voice almost shook with the thrill of his feeling.

"How shall I know him?" he said at once. Without asking at all, he knew he was the "someone" who was to go.

"You have seen him before," Loristan answered. "He is the man who drove in the carriage with the King."

"I shall know him," said Marco. "When shall I go?"

"Not until it is half-past one o'clock. Go to bed and sleep until Lazarus calls you." Then he added, "Look well at his face before you speak. He will probably not be dressed as well as he was when you saw him first."

Marco went upstairs to his room and went to bed as he was told, but it was hard to go to sleep. The rattle and roaring of the road did not usually keep him awake, because he had lived in the poorer quarter of too many big capital cities not to be accustomed to noise. But tonight it seemed to him that, as he lay and looked out at the lamplight, he heard every bus and cab which went past. He could not help thinking of the people who were in them, and on top of them, and of the people who were hurrying along on the pavement outside the broken iron railings. He was wondering what they would think if they knew that things connected with the battles they read of in the daily papers were going on in one of the shabby houses they scarcely gave a glance to as they went by them. It must be something connected with the war, if a man who was a great diplomat and the companion of kings came in secret to talk alone with a patriot who was a Samavian. Whatever his father was doing was for the good of Samavia, and perhaps the Secret Party knew he was doing it. His heart almost beat aloud under his shirt as he lay on the lumpy mattress thinking it over. He must indeed look well at the stranger before he even moved toward him. He must be sure he was the right

man. The game he had amused himself with so long—the game of trying to remember pictures and people and places clearly and in detail—had been a wonderful training. If he could draw, he knew he could have made a sketch of the keen-eyed, clever, aquiline face with the well-cut and delicately close mouth, which looked as if it had been shut upon secrets always—always. If he could draw, he found himself saying again. He *could* draw, though perhaps only roughly. He had often amused himself by making sketches of things he wanted to ask questions about. He had even drawn people's faces in his untrained way, and his father had said that he had a crude gift for catching a likeness. Perhaps he could make a sketch of this face which would show his father that he knew and would recognize it.

He jumped out of bed and went to a table near the window. There was paper and a pencil lying on it. A street lamp exactly opposite threw into the room quite light enough for him to see by. He half knelt by the table and began to draw. He worked for about twenty minutes steadily, and he tore up two or three unsatisfactory sketches. The poor drawing would not matter if he could catch that subtle look which was not slyness but something more dignified and important. It was not difficult to get the marked, aristocratic outline of the features. A common-looking man with less pronounced profile would have been less easy to draw in one sense. He gave his mind wholly to the recalling of every detail which had photographed itself on his memory through its trained habit. Gradually he saw that the likeness was becoming clearer. It was not long before it was clear enough to be a striking one. Anyone who knew the man would recognize it. He got up, drawing a long and joyful breath.

He did not put on his shoes, but crossed his room as noiselessly as possible, and as noiselessly opened the door. He made no ghost of a sound when he went down the stairs. The woman who kept the lodging house had gone to bed, and so

had the other lodgers and the maid of all work. All the lights were out except the one he saw a glimmer of under the door of his father's room. When he had been a mere baby, he had been taught to make a special sign on the door when he wished to speak to Loristan. He stood still outside the back sitting room and made it now. It was a low scratching sound—two scratches and a soft tap. Lazarus opened the door and looked troubled.

"It is not yet time, sir," he said very low.

"I know," Marco answered. "But I must show something to my father." Lazarus let him in, and Loristan turned round from his writing table questioningly.

Marco went forward and laid the sketch down before him.

"Look at it," he said. "I remember him well enough to draw that. I thought of it all at once—that I could make a sort of picture. Do you think it is like him?" Loristan examined it closely.

"It is very like him," he answered. "You have made me feel entirely safe. Thanks, Comrade. It was a good idea."

There was relief in the grip he gave the boy's hand, and Marco turned away with an exultant feeling. Just as he reached the door, Loristan said to him:

"Make the most of this gift. It is a gift. And it is true your mind has had good training. The more you draw, the better. Draw everything you can."

Neither the street lamps, nor the noises, nor his thoughts kept Marco awake when he went back to bed. But before he settled himself upon his pillow he gave himself certain orders. He had both read, and heard Loristan say, that the mind can control the body when people once find out that it can do so. He had tried experiments himself, and had found out some curious things. One was that if he told himself to remember a certain thing at a certain time, he usually found that he *did* remember it. Something in his brain seemed to remind him. He had often tried the experiment of telling himself to

awaken at a particular hour, and had awakened almost exactly at the moment by the clock.

"I will sleep until one o'clock," he said as he shut his eyes. "Then I will awaken and feel quite fresh. I shall not be sleepy at all."

He slept as soundly as a boy can sleep. And at one o'clock exactly he awakened, and found the street lamp still throwing its light through the window. He knew it was one o'clock, because there was a cheap little round clock on the table, and he could see the time. He was quite fresh and not at all sleepy. His experiment had succeeded again.

He got up and dressed. Then he went downstairs as noiselessly as before. He carried his shoes in his hands, as he meant to put them on only when he reached the street. He made his sign at his father's door, and it was Loristan who opened it.

"Shall I go now?" Marco asked.

"Yes. Walk slowly to the other side of the street. Look in every direction. We do not know where he will come from. After you have given him the sign, then come in and go to bed again."

Marco saluted as a soldier would have done on receiving an order.

Then, without a second's delay, he passed noiselessly out of the house.

Loristan turned back into the room and stood silently in the center of it. The long lines of his handsome body looked particularly erect and stately, and his eyes were glowing as if something deeply moved him.

"There grows a man for Samavia," he said to Lazarus, who watched him. "God be thanked!"

Lazarus's voice was low and hoarse, and he saluted quite reverently.

"Your—sir!" he said. "God save the Prince!"

"Yes," Loristan answered, after a moment's hesitation,

"when he is found." And he went back to his table smiling his beautiful smile.

The wonder of silence in the deserted streets of a great city, after midnight has hushed all the roar and tumult to rest, is an almost unbelievable thing. The stillness in the depths of a forest or on a mountaintop is not so strange. A few hours ago, the tumult was rushing past; in a few hours more, it will be rushing past again.

But now the street is a naked thing; a distant policeman's tramp on the bare pavement has a hollow and almost fearsome sound. It seemed especially so to Marco as he crossed the road. Had it ever been so empty and deadly silent before? Was it so every night? Perhaps it was, when he was fast asleep on his lumpy mattress with the light from a street lamp streaming into the room. He listened for the step of the policeman on night watch, because he did not wish to be seen. There was a jutting wall where he could stand in the shadow while the man passed. A policeman would stop to look questioningly at a boy who walked up and down the pavement at half-past one in the morning. Marco could wait until he had gone by, and then come out into the light and look up and down the road and the cross streets.

He heard his approaching footsteps in a few minutes, and was safely in the shadows before he could be seen. When the policeman passed, he came out and walked slowly down the road, looking on each side, and now and then looking back. At first no one was in sight. Then a late hansom cab came tinkling along. But the people in it were returning from some festivity, and were laughing and talking, and noticed nothing but their own joking. Then there was silence again, and for a long time, as it seemed to Marco, no one was to be seen. It was not really so long as it appeared, because he was anxious. Then a very early vegetable wagon on the way from the country to Covent Garden Market came slowly lumbering by with its driver almost asleep on his piles of potatoes and

cabbages. After it had passed, there was stillness and emptiness once more, until the policeman showed himself again on his beat, and Marco slipped into the shadow of the wall as he had done before.

When he came out into the light, he had begun to hope that the time would not seem long to his father. It had not really been long, he told himself, it had only seemed so. But his father's anxiousness would be greater than his own could be. Loristan knew all that depended on the coming of this great man who sat side by side with a king in his carriage and talked to him as if he knew him well.

"It might be something which all Samavia is waiting to know—at least all the Secret Party," Marco thought. "The Secret Party is Samavia,"—he started at the sound of footsteps. "Someone is coming!" he said. "It is a man."

It was a man who was walking up the road on the same side of the pavement as his own. Marco began to walk toward him quietly but rather rapidly. He thought it might be best to appear as if he were some boy sent on a midnight errand—perhaps to call a doctor. Then, if it was a stranger he passed, no suspicion would be aroused. Was this man as tall as the one who had driven with the King? Yes, he was about the same height, but he was too far away to be recognizable otherwise. He drew nearer, and Marco noticed that he also seemed slightly to hasten his footsteps. Marco went on. A little nearer, and he would be able to make sure. Yes, now he was near enough. Yes, this man was the same height and not unlike in figure, but he was much younger. He was not the one who had been in the carriage with His Majesty. He was not more than thirty years old. He began swinging his cane and whistling a music hall song softly as Marco passed him without changing his pace.

It was after the policeman had walked round his beat and disappeared for the third time, that Marco heard footsteps echoing at some distance down a cross street. After listening



It was the man who had driven with the king!

to make sure that they were approaching instead of receding in another direction, he placed himself at a point where he could watch the length of the thoroughfare. Yes, someone was coming. It was a man's figure again. He was able to place himself rather in the shadow so that the person approaching would not see that he was being watched. The solitary walker reached a recognizable distance in about two minutes' time. He was dressed in an ordinary shop-made suit of clothes which was rather shabby and quite unnoticeable in its appearance. His common hat was worn so that it rather shaded his face. But even before he had crossed to Marco's

side of the road, the boy had clearly recognized him. It was the man who had driven with the King!

Chance was with Marco. The man crossed at exactly the place which made it easy for the boy to step lightly from behind him, walk a few paces by his side, and then pass directly before him across the pavement, glancing quietly up into his face as he said in a low voice but distinctly, the words "The Lamp is lighted," and without pausing a second walk on his way down the road. He did not slacken his pace or look back until he was some distance away. Then he glanced over his shoulder, and saw that the figure had crossed the street and was inside the railings. It was all right. His father would not be disappointed. The great man had come.

He walked for about ten minutes, and then went home and to bed. But he was obliged to tell himself to go to sleep several times before his eyes closed for the rest of the night.

CHAPTER VIII
An Exciting Game

Loristan referred only once during the next day to what had happened.

"You did your errand well. You were not hurried or nervous," he said. "The Prince was pleased with your calmness."

No more was said. Marco knew that the quiet mention of the stranger's title had been made merely as a designation. If it was necessary to mention him again in the future, he could be referred to as "the Prince." In various Continental countries there were many princes who were not royal or even serene highnesses—who were merely princes as other nobles were dukes or barons. Nothing special was revealed when a man was spoken of as a prince. But though nothing was said on the subject of the incident, it was plain that much work was being done by Loristan and Lazarus. The sitting room door was locked, and the maps and documents, usually kept in the iron box, were being used.

Marco went to the Tower of London and spent part of the day in living again the stories which, centuries past, had been enclosed within its massive and ancient stone walls. In this way, he had throughout boyhood become intimate with people who to most boys seemed only the unreal creatures who professed to be alive in schoolbooks of history. He had learned to know them as men and women because he had stood in the palaces they had been born in and had played in as children, had died in at the end. He had seen the dungeons they had been imprisoned in, the blocks on which they had laid their heads, the battlements on which they had fought to

defend their fortressed towers, the thrones they had sat upon, the crowns they had worn, and the jeweled scepters they had held. He had stood before their portraits and had gazed curiously at their "Robes of Investiture," sewn with tens of thousands of seed pearls. To look at a man's face and feel his pictured eyes follow you as you move away from him, to see the strangely splendid garments he once warmed with his living flesh, is to realize that history is not a mere lesson in a schoolbook, but is a relation of the life stories of men and women who saw strange and splendid days, and sometimes suffered strange and terrible things.

There were only a few people who were being led about sightseeing. The man in the ancient Beefeaters' costume, who was their guide, was good-natured, and evidently fond of talking. He was a big and stout man, with a large face and a small, merry eye. He was rather like pictures of Henry the Eighth, himself, which Marco remembered having seen. He was specially talkative when he stood by the tablet that marks the spot where stood the block on which Lady Jane Grey had laid her young head. One of the sightseers who knew little of English history had asked some questions about the reasons for her execution.

"If her father-in-law, the Duke of Northumberland, had left that young couple alone—her and her husband, Lord Guildford Dudley—they'd have kept their heads on. He was bound to make her a queen, and Mary Tudor was bound to be queen herself. The duke wasn't clever enough to manage a conspiracy and work up the people. These Samavians we're reading about in the papers would have done it better. And they're half-savages."

"They had a big battle outside Melzarr yesterday," the sightseer standing next to Marco said to the young woman who was his companion. "Thousands of 'em killed. I saw it in big letters on the boards as I rode on the top of the bus. They're just slaughtering each other, that's what they're

doing."

The talkative Beefeater heard him.

"They can't even bury their dead fast enough," he said. "There'll be some sort of plague breaking out and sweeping into the countries nearest them. It'll end by spreading all over Europe as it did in the Middle Ages. What the civilized countries have got to do is to make them choose a decent king and begin to behave themselves."

"I'll tell my father that too," Marco thought. "It shows that everybody is thinking and talking of Samavia, and that even the common people know it must have a real king. This must be *the time!*" And what he meant was that this must be the time for which the Secret Party had waited and worked so long—the time for the Rising. But his father was out when he went back to Philibert Place, and Lazarus looked more silent than ever as he stood behind his chair and waited on him through his insignificant meal. However plain and scant the food they had to eat, it was always served with as much care and ceremony as if it had been a banquet.

"A man can eat dry bread and drink cold water as if he were a gentleman," his father had said long ago. "And it is easy to form careless habits. Even if one is hungry enough to feel ravenous, a man who has been well bred will not allow himself to look so. A dog may, a man may not. Just as a dog may howl when he is angry or in pain and a man may not."

It was only one of the small parts of the training which had quietly made the boy, even as a child, self-controlled and courteous, had taught him ease and grace of boyish carriage, the habit of holding his body well and his head erect, and had given him a certain look of young distinction which, though it assumed nothing, set him apart from boys of carelessly awkward bearing.

"Is there a newspaper here which tells of the battle, Lazarus?" he asked, after he had left the table.

"Yes, sir," was the answer. "Your father said that you

might read it. It is a black tale!" he added, as he handed him the paper.

It was a black tale. As he read, Marco felt as if he could scarcely bear it. It was as if Samavia swam in blood, and as if the other countries must stand aghast before such furious cruelties.

"Lazarus," he said, springing to his feet at last, his eyes burning, "something must stop it! There must be something strong enough. The time has come. The time has come." And he walked up and down the room because he was too excited to stand still.

How Lazarus watched him! What a strong and glowing feeling there was in his own restrained face!

"Yes, sir. Surely the time has come," he answered. But that was all he said, and he turned and went out of the shabby back sitting room at once. It was as if he felt it were wiser to go before he lost power over himself and said more.

Marco made his way to the meeting place of the Squad, to which The Rat had in the past given the name of the Barracks. The Rat was sitting among his followers, and he had been reading the morning paper to them, the one which contained the account of the battle of Melzarr. The Squad had become the Secret Party, and each member of it was thrilled with the spirit of dark plot and adventure. They all whispered when they spoke.

"This is not the Barracks now," The Rat said. "It is a subterranean cavern. Under the floor of it thousands of swords and guns are buried, and it is piled to the roof with them. There is only a small place left for us to sit and plot in. We crawl in through a hole, and the hole is hidden by bushes."

To the rest of the boys this was only an exciting game, but Marco knew that to The Rat it was more. Though The Rat knew none of the things he knew, he saw that the whole story seemed to him a real thing. The struggles of Samavia, as he

had heard and read of them in the newspapers, had taken possession of him. His passion for soldiering and warfare and his curiously mature brain had led him into following every detail he could lay hold of. He had listened to all he had heard with remarkable results. He remembered things older people forgot after they had mentioned them. He forgot nothing. He had drawn on the flagstones a map of Samavia which Marco saw was actually correct, and he had made a rough sketch of Melzarr and the battle which had had such disastrous results.

"The Maranovitch had possession of Melzarr," he explained with feverish eagerness. "And the Iarovitch attacked them from here," pointing with his finger. "That was a mistake. I should have attacked them from a place where they would not have been expecting it. They expected attack on their fortifications, and they were ready to defend them. I believe the enemy could have stolen up in the night and rushed in here," pointing again. Marco thought he was right. The Rat had argued it all out, and had studied Melzarr as he might have studied a puzzle or an arithmetical problem. He was very clever, and as sharp as his queer face looked.

"I believe you would make a good general if you were grown up," said Marco. "I'd like to show your maps to my father and ask him if he doesn't think your stratagem would have been a good one."

"Does he know much about Samavia?" asked The Rat.

"He has to read the newspapers because he writes things," Marco answered. "And everyone is thinking about the war. No one can help it."

The Rat drew a dingy, folded paper out of his pocket and looked it over with an air of reflection.

"I'll make a clean one," he said. "I'd like a grown-up man to look at it and see if it's all right. My father was more than half drunk when I was drawing this, so I couldn't ask him questions. He'll kill himself before long. He had a sort of fit last night."

"Tell us, Rat, wot you an' Marco'll 'ave ter do. Let's 'ear wot you've made up," suggested Cad. He drew closer, and so did the rest of the circle, hugging their knees with their arms.

"This is what we shall have to do," began The Rat, in the hollow whisper of a Secret Party. "*The hour has come.* To all the Secret Ones in Samavia, and to the friends of the Secret Party in every country, the sign must be carried. It must be carried by someone who could not be suspected. Who would suspect two boys—and one of them a cripple? The best thing of all for us is that I am a cripple. Who would suspect a cripple? When my father is drunk and beats me, he does it because I won't go out and beg in the streets and bring him the money I get. He says that people will nearly always give money to a cripple. I won't be a beggar for him—the swine—but I will be one for Samavia and the Lost Prince. Marco shall pretend to be my brother and take care of me. I say," speaking to Marco with a sudden change of voice, "can you sing anything? It doesn't matter how you do it."

"Yes, I can sing," Marco replied.

"Then Marco will pretend he is singing to make people give him money. I'll get a pair of crutches somewhere, and part of the time I will go on crutches and part of the time on my platform. We'll live like beggars and go wherever we want to. I can whiz past a man and give the sign and no one will know. Sometimes Marco can give it when people are dropping money into his cap. We can pass from one country to another and rouse everybody who is of the Secret Party. We'll work our way into Samavia, and we'll be only two boys—and one a cripple—and nobody will think we could be doing anything. We'll beg in great cities and on the highroad."

"Where'll you get the money to travel?" said Cad.

"The Secret Party will give it to us, and we sha'n't need much. We could beg enough, for that matter. We'll sleep under the stars, or under bridges, or archways, or in dark corners of streets. I've done it myself many a time when my father

drove me out of doors. If it's cold weather, it's bad enough but if it's fine weather, it's better than sleeping in the kind of place I'm used to. Comrade," to Marco, "are you ready?"

He said "Comrade" as Loristan did, and somehow Marco did not resent it, because he was ready to labor for Samavia. It was only a game, but it made them comrades—and was it really only a game, after all? His excited voice and his strange, lined face made it singularly unlike one.

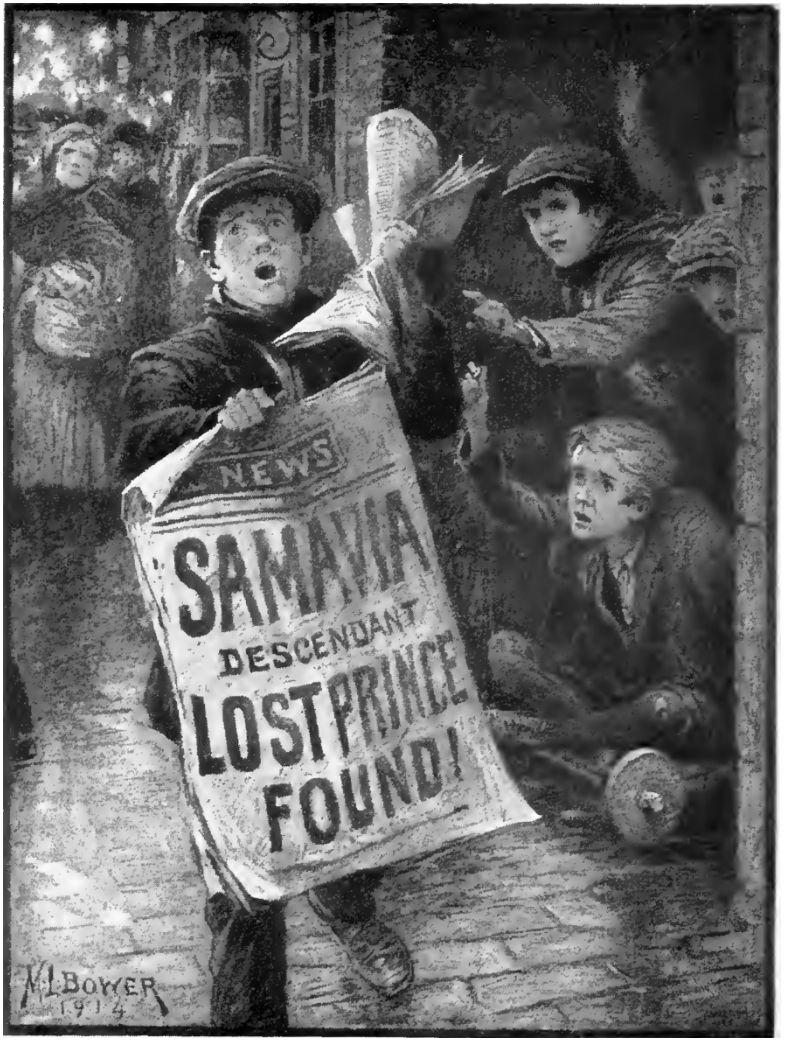
"Yes, Comrade, I am ready," Marco answered him.

"We shall be in Samavia when the fighting for the Lost Prince begins." The Rat carried on his story with fire. "We may see a battle. We might do something to help. We might carry messages under a rain of bullets—a rain of bullets!" The thought so elated him that he forgot his whisper and his voice rang out fiercely. "Boys have been in battles before. We might find the Lost King—no, the Found King—and ask him to let us be his servants. He could send us where he couldn't send bigger people. I could say to him, 'Your Majesty, I am called "The Rat," because I can creep through holes and into corners and dart about. Order me into any danger and I will obey you. Let me die like a soldier if I can't live like one.'"

Suddenly he threw his ragged coat sleeve up across his eyes. He had wrought himself up tremendously with the picture of the rain of bullets. And he felt as if he saw the King who had at last been found. The next moment he uncovered his face.

"That's what we've got to do," he said. "Just that, if you want to know. And a lot more. There's no end to it!"

Marco's thoughts were in a whirl. It ought not to be nothing but a game. He grew quite hot all over. If the Secret Party wanted to send messengers no one would think of suspecting, who could be more harmless looking than two vagabond boys wandering about picking up their living as best they could, not seeming to belong to anyone? And one a cripple. It was true—yes, it was true, as The Rat said, that his



The Rat whizzed down the passage while the squad followed him.

being a cripple made him look safer than anyone else. Marco actually put his forehead in his hands and pressed his temples.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed The Rat. "What are you thinking about?"

"I'm thinking what a general you would make. I'm thinking that it might all be real—every word of it. It mightn't be a game at all," said Marco.

"No, it mightn't," The Rat answered. "If I knew where the Secret Party was, I'd like to go and tell them about it. What's that!" he said, suddenly turning his head toward the street. "What are they calling out?"

Some newsboy with a particularly shrill voice was shouting out something at the topmost of his lungs.

Tense and excited, no member of the circle stirred or spoke for a few seconds. The Rat listened, Marco listened, the whole Squad listened, pricking up their ears.

"Startling news from Samavia," the newsboy was shrilling out. "Amazing story! Descendant of the Lost Prince found! Descendant of the Lost Prince found!"

"Any chap got a penny?" snapped The Rat, beginning to shuffle toward the arched passage.

"I have!" answered Marco, following him.

"Come on!" The Rat yelled. "Let's go and get a paper!" And he whizzed down the passage with his swiftest rat-like dart, while the Squad followed him, shouting and tumbling over each other.

CHAPTER IX
"It Is Not a Game"

Loristan walked slowly up and down the back sitting room and listened to Marco, who sat by the small fire and talked.

"Go on," he said, whenever the boy stopped. "I want to hear it all. He's a strange lad, and it's a splendid game."

Marco was telling him the story of his second and third visits to the enclosure behind the deserted churchyard. He had begun at the beginning, and his father had listened with a deep interest.

A year later, Marco recalled this evening as a thrilling memory, and as one which would never pass away from him throughout his life. He would always be able to call it all back. The small and dingy back room, the dimness of the one poor gas burner, which was all they could afford to light, the iron box pushed into the corner with its maps and plans locked safely in it, the erect bearing and actual beauty of the tall form, which the shabbiness of worn and mended clothes could not hide or dim. Not even rags and tatters could have made Loristan seem insignificant or undistinguished. He was always the same. His eyes seemed darker and more wonderful than ever in their remote thoughtfulness and interest as he spoke.

"Go on," he said. "It is a splendid game. And it is curious. He has thought it out well. The lad is a born soldier."

"It is not a game to him," Marco said. "And it is not a game to me. The Squad is only playing, but with him it's quite different. He knows he'll never really get what he wants, but he feels as if this was something near it. He said I might show you the map he made. Father, look at it."

He gave Loristan the clean copy of The Rat's map of Samavia. The city of Melzarr was marked with certain signs. They were to show at what points The Rat—if he had been a Samavian general—would have attacked the capital. As Marco pointed them out, he explained The Rat's reasons for his planning.

Loristan held the paper for some minutes. He fixed his eyes on it curiously, and his black brows drew themselves together.

"This is very wonderful!" he said at last. "He is quite right. They might have got in there, and for the very reasons he hit on. How did he learn all this?"

"He thinks of nothing else now," answered Marco. "He has always thought of wars and made plans for battles. He's not like the rest of the Squad. His father is nearly always drunk, but he is very well educated, and, when he is only half drunk, he likes to talk."

The Rat asks him questions then, and leads him on until he finds out a great deal. Then he begs old newspapers, and he hides himself in corners and listens to what people are saying. He says he lies awake at night thinking it out, and he thinks about it all the day. That was why he got up the Squad.

Loristan had continued examining the paper.

"Tell him," he said, when he refolded and handed it back, "that I studied his map, and he may be proud of it. You may also tell him—" and he smiled quietly as he spoke—"that in my opinion he is right. The Iarovitch would have held Melzarr today if he had led them."

Marco was full of exultation.

"I thought you would say he was right. I felt sure you would. That is what makes me want to tell you the rest," he hurried on.

"If you think he is right about the rest too—" He stopped awkwardly because of a sudden wild thought which rushed upon him. "I don't know what you will think," he stammered.

"Perhaps it will seem to you as if the game—as if that part of it could—could only be a game."

He was so fervent in spite of his hesitation that Loristan began to watch him with sympathetic respect, as he always did when the boy was trying to express something he was not sure of. One of the great bonds between them was that Loristan was always interested in his boyish mental processes—in the way in which his thoughts led him to any conclusion.

"Go on," he said again. "I am like The Rat and I am like you. It has not seemed quite like a game to me, so far."

He sat down at the writing table and Marco, in his eagerness, drew nearer and leaned against it, resting on his arms and lowering his voice, though it was always their habit to speak at such a pitch that no one outside the room they were in could distinguish what they said.

"It is The Rat's plan for giving the signal for a Rising," he said.

Loristan made a slight movement.

"Does he think there will be a Rising?" he asked.

"He says that must be what the Secret Party has been preparing for all these years. And it must come soon. The other nations see that the fighting must be put an end to even if they have to stop it themselves. And if the real King is found—but when The Rat bought the newspaper there was nothing in it about where he was. It was only a sort of rumor. Nobody seemed to know anything." He stopped a few seconds, but he did not utter the words which were in his mind. He did not say: "But *you* know."

"And The Rat has a plan for giving the signal?" Loristan said.

Marco forgot his first feeling of hesitation. He began to see the plan again as he had seen it when The Rat talked. He began to speak as The Rat had spoken, forgetting that it was a game. He made even a clearer picture than The Rat had

made of the two vagabond boys—one of them a cripple—making their way from one place to another, quite free to carry messages or warnings where they chose, because they were so insignificant and poor-looking that no one could think of them as anything but waifs and strays, belonging to nobody and blown about by the wind of poverty and chance. He felt as if he wanted to convince his father that the plan was a possible one. He did not quite know why he felt so anxious to win his approval of the scheme—as if it were real—as if it could actually be done. But this feeling was what inspired him to enter into new details and suggest possibilities.

"A boy who was a cripple and one who was only a street singer and a sort of beggar could get almost anywhere," he said. "Soldiers would listen to a singer if he sang good songs—and they might not be afraid to talk before him. A strolling singer and a cripple would perhaps hear a great many things it might be useful for the Secret Party to know. They might even hear important things. Don't you think so?"

Before he had gone far with his story, the faraway look had fallen upon Loristan's face—the look Marco had known so well all his life. He sat turned a little sidewise from the boy, his elbow resting on the table and his forehead on his hand. He looked down at the worn carpet at his feet, and so he looked as he listened to the end. It was as if some new thought were slowly growing in his mind as Marco went on talking and enlarging on The Rat's plan. He did not even look up or change his position as he answered, "Yes. I think so."

But, because of the deep and growing thought in his face, Marco's courage increased. His first fear that this part of the planning might seem so bold and reckless that it would only appear to belong to a boyish game, gradually faded away for some strange reason. His father had said that the first part of The Rat's imaginings had not seemed quite like a game to him, and now—even now—he was not listening as if he were listening to the details of mere exaggerated fancies. It was as

if the thing he was hearing was not wildly impossible. Marco's knowledge of Continental countries and of methods of journeying helped him to enter into much detail and give realism to his plans.

"Sometimes we could pretend we knew nothing but English," he said. "Then, though The Rat could not understand, I could. I should always understand in each country. I know the cities and the places we should want to go to. I know how boys like us live, and so we should not do anything which would make the police angry or make people notice us. If anyone asked questions, I would let them believe that I had met The Rat by chance, and we had made up our minds to travel together because people gave more money to a boy who sang if he was with a cripple. There was a boy who used to play the guitar in the streets of Rome, and he always had a lame girl with him, and everyone knew it was for that reason. When he played, people looked at the girl and were sorry for her and gave her soldi. You remember."

"Yes, I remember. And what you say is true," Loristan answered.

Marco leaned forward across the table so that he came closer to him. The tone in which the words were said made his courage leap like a flame. To be allowed to go on with this boldness was to feel that he was being treated almost as if he were a man. If his father had wished to stop him, he could have done it with one quiet glance, without uttering a word. For some wonderful reason he did not wish him to cease talking. He was willing to hear what he had to say—he was even interested.

"You are growing older," he had said the night he had revealed the marvelous secret. "Silence is still the order, but you are man enough to be told more."

Was he man enough to be thought worthy to help Samavia in any small way—even with boyish fancies which might contain a germ of some thought which older and wiser

minds might make useful? Was he being listened to because the plan, made as part of a game, was not an impossible one—if two boys who could be trusted could be found? He caught a deep breath as he went on, drawing still nearer and speaking so low that his tone was almost a whisper.

"If the men of the Secret Party have been working and thinking for so many years—they have prepared everything. They know by this time exactly what must be done by the messengers who are to give the signal. They can tell them where to go and how to know the secret friends who must be warned. If the orders could be written and given to—to someone who has—who has learned to remember things!" He had begun to breathe so quickly that he stopped for a moment.

Loristan looked up. He looked directly into his eyes.

"Someone who has been *trained* to remember things?" he said.

"Someone who has been trained," Marco went on, catching his breath again. "Someone who does not forget—who would never forget—never! That one, even if he were only twelve—even if he were only ten—could go and do as he was told."

Loristan put his hand on his shoulder.

"Comrade," he said, "you are speaking as if you were ready to go yourself."

Marco's eyes looked bravely straight into his, but he said not one word.

"Do you know what it would mean, Comrade?" his father went on. "You are right. It is not a game. And you are not thinking of it as one. But have you thought how it would be if something betrayed you—and you were set up against a wall to be *shot?*"

Marco stood up quite straight. He tried to believe he felt the wall against his back.

"If I were shot, I should be shot for Samavia," he said.

"And for *you*, Father."

Even as he was speaking, the front doorbell rang and Lazarus evidently opened it. He spoke to someone, and then they heard his footsteps approaching the back sitting room.

"Open the door," said Loristan, and Marco opened it.

"There is a boy who is a cripple here, sir," the old soldier said. "He asked to see Master Marco."

"If it is The Rat," said Loristan, "bring him in here. I wish to see him."

Marco went down the passage to the front door. The Rat was there, but he was not upon his platform. He was leaning upon an old pair of crutches, and Marco thought he looked wild and strange. He was white, and somehow the lines of his face seemed twisted in a new way. Marco wondered if something had frightened him, or if he felt ill.

"Rat," he began, "my father—"

"I've come to tell you about MY father," The Rat broke in without waiting to hear the rest, and his voice was as strange as his pale face. "I don't know why I've come, but I—I just wanted to. He's dead!"

"Your father?" Marco stammered. "He's—"

"He's dead," The Rat answered shakily. "I told you he'd kill himself. He had another fit and he died in it. I knew he would, one of these days. I told him so. He knew he would himself. I stayed with him till he was dead—and then I got a bursting headache and I felt sick—and I thought about you."

Marco made a jump at him because he saw he was suddenly shaking as if he were going to fall. He was just in time, and Lazarus, who had been looking on from the back of the passage, came forward. Together they held him up.

"I'm not going to faint," he said weakly, "but I felt as if I was. It was a bad fit, and I had to try and hold him. I was all by myself. The people in the other attic thought he was only drunk, and they wouldn't come in. He's lying on the floor there, dead."

"Come and see my father," Marco said. "He'll tell us what to do. Lazarus, help him."

"I can get on by myself," said The Rat. "Do you see my crutches? I did something for a pawnbroker last night, and he gave them to me for pay."

But though he tried to speak carelessly, he had plainly been horribly shaken and overwrought. His queer face was yellowish white still, and he was trembling a little.

Marco led the way into the back sitting room. In the midst of its shabby gloom and under the dim light Loristan was standing in one of his still, attentive attitudes. He was waiting for them.

"Father, this is The Rat," the boy began. The Rat stopped short and rested on his crutches, staring at the tall, reposeful figure with widened eyes.

"Is that your father?" he said to Marco. And then added, with a jerky half-laugh, "He's not much like mine, is he?"

CHAPTER X
The Rat—and Samavia

What The Rat thought when Loristan began to speak to him, Marco wondered. Suddenly he stood in an unknown world, and it was Loristan who made it so because its poverty and shabbiness had no power to touch him. He looked at the boy with calm and clear eyes, he asked him practical questions gently, and it was plain that he understood many things without asking questions at all. Marco thought that perhaps he had, at some time, seen drunken men die, in his life in strange places. He seemed to know the terribleness of the night through which The Rat had passed. He made him sit down, and he ordered Lazarus to bring him some hot coffee and simple food.

"Haven't had a bite since yesterday," The Rat said, still staring at him. "How did you know I hadn't?"

"You have not had time," Loristan answered.

Afterward he made him lie down on the sofa.

"Look at my clothes," said The Rat.

"Lie down and sleep," Loristan replied, putting his hand on his shoulder and gently forcing him toward the sofa. "You will sleep a long time. You must tell me how to find the place where your father died, and I will see that the proper authorities are notified."

"What are you doing it for?" The Rat asked, and then he added, "sir."

"Because I am a man and you are a boy. And this is a terrible thing," Loristan answered him.

He went away without saying more, and The Rat lay on the sofa staring at the wall and thinking about it until he fell asleep. But, before this happened, Marco had quietly left him

alone. So, as Loristan had told him he would, he slept deeply and long; in fact, he slept through all the night.

When he awakened it was morning, and Lazarus was standing by the side of the sofa looking down at him.

"You will want to make yourself clean," he said. "It must be done."

"Clean!" said The Rat, with his squeaky laugh. "I couldn't keep clean when I had a room to live in, and now where am I to wash myself?" He sat up and looked about him.

"Give me my crutches," he said. "I've got to go. They've let me sleep here all night. They didn't turn me into the street. I don't know why they didn't. Marco's father—he's the right sort. He looks like a swell."

"The Master," said Lazarus, with a rigid manner, "the Master is a great gentleman. He would turn no tired creature into the street. He and his son are poor, but they are of those who give. He desires to see and talk to you again. You are to have bread and coffee with him and the young Master. But it is I who tell you that you cannot sit at table with them until you are clean. Come with me," and he handed him his crutches. His manner was authoritative, but it was the manner of a soldier; his somewhat stiff and erect movements were those of a soldier, also, and The Rat liked them because they made him feel as if he were in barracks. He did not know what was going to happen, but he got up and followed him on his crutches.

Lazarus took him to a closet under the stairs where a battered tin bath was already full of hot water, which the old soldier himself had brought in pails. There were soap and coarse, clean towels on a wooden chair, and also there was a much worn but clean suit of clothes.

"Put these on when you have bathed," Lazarus ordered, pointing to them. "They belong to the young Master and will be large for you, but they will be better than your own." And then he went out of the closet and shut the door.

It was a new experience for The Rat. So long as he remembered, he had washed his face and hands—when he had washed them at all—at an iron tap set in the wall of a back street or court in some slum. His father and himself had long ago sunk into the world where to wash one's self is not a part of everyday life. They had lived amid dirt and foulness, and when his father had been in a maudlin state, he had sometimes cried and talked of the long-past days when he had shaved every morning and put on a clean shirt.

To stand even in the most battered of tin baths full of clean hot water and to splash and scrub with a big piece of flannel and plenty of soap was a marvelous thing. The Rat's tired body responded to the novelty with a curious feeling of freshness and comfort.

"I dare say swells do this every day," he muttered. "I'd do it myself if I was a swell. Soldiers have to keep themselves so clean they shine."

When, after making the most of his soap and water, he came out of the closet under the stairs, he was as fresh as Marco himself; and, though his clothes had been built for a more stalwart body, his recognition of their cleanliness filled him with pleasure. He wondered if by any effort he could keep himself clean when he went out into the world again and had to sleep in any hole the police did not order him out of.

He wanted to see Marco again, but he wanted more to see the tall man with the soft dark eyes and that queer look of being a swell in spite of his shabby clothes and the dingy place he lived in. There was something about him which made you keep on looking at him, and wanting to know what he was thinking of, and why you felt as if you'd take orders from him as you'd take orders from your general, if you were a soldier. He looked, somehow, like a soldier, but as if he were something more—as if people had taken orders from him all his life, and always would take orders from him. And yet he had that quiet voice and those fine, easy movements, and he

was not a soldier at all, but only a poor man who wrote things for papers which did not pay him well enough to give him and his son a comfortable living. Through all the time of his seclusion with the battered bath and the soap and water, The Rat thought of him, and longed to have another look at him and hear him speak again. He did not see any reason why he should have let him sleep on his sofa or why he should give him a breakfast before he turned him out to face the world. It was first-rate of him to do it. The Rat felt that when he was turned out, after he had had the coffee, he should want to hang about the neighborhood just on the chance of seeing him pass by sometimes. He did not know what he was going to do. The parish officials would by this time have taken his dead father, and he would not see him again. He did not want to see him again. He had never seemed like a father. They had never cared anything for each other. He had only been a wretched outcast whose best hours had been when he had drunk too much to be violent and brutal. Perhaps, The Rat thought, he would be driven to going about on his platform on the pavements and begging, as his father had tried to force him to do. Could he sell newspapers? What could a crippled lad do unless he begged or sold papers?

Lazarus was waiting for him in the passage. The Rat held back a little.

"Perhaps they'd rather not eat their breakfast with me," he hesitated. "I'm not—I'm not the kind they are. I could swallow the coffee out here and carry the bread away with me. And you could thank him for me. I'd want him to know I thanked him."

Lazarus also had a steady eye. The Rat realized that he was looking him over as if he were summing him up.

"You may not be the kind they are, but you may be of a kind the Master sees good in. If he did not see something, he would not ask you to sit at his table. You are to come with me."

The Squad had seen good in The Rat, but no one else had. Policemen had moved him on whenever they set eyes on him, the wretched women of the slums had regarded him as they regarded his darting, thieving namesake; loafing or busy men had seen in him a young nuisance to be kicked or pushed out of the way. The Squad had not called "good" what they saw in him. They would have yelled with laughter if they had heard anyone else call it so. "Goodness" was not considered an attraction in their world.

The Rat grinned a little and wondered what was meant, as he followed Lazarus into the back sitting room.

It was as dingy and gloomy as it had looked the night before, but by the daylight The Rat saw how rigidly neat it was, how well swept and free from any speck of dust, how the poor windows had been cleaned and polished, and how everything was set in order. The coarse linen cloth on the table was fresh and spotless, so was the cheap crockery, the spoons shone with brightness.

Loristan was standing on the hearth and Marco was near him. They were waiting for their vagabond guest as if he had been a gentleman.

The Rat hesitated and shuffled at the door for a moment, and then it suddenly occurred to him to stand as straight as he could and salute. When he found himself in the presence of Loristan, he felt as if he ought to do something, but he did not know what.

Loristan's recognition of his gesture and his expression as he moved forward lifted from The Rat's shoulders a load which he himself had not known lay there. Somehow he felt as if something new had happened to him, as if he were not mere "vermin," after all, as if he need not be on the defensive—even as if he need not feel so much in the dark, and like a thing there was no place in the world for. The mere straight and farseeing look of this man's eyes seemed to make a place somewhere for what he looked at. And yet what he

said was quite simple.

"This is well," he said. "You have rested. We will have some food, and then we will talk together." He made a slight gesture in the direction of the chair at the right hand of his own place.

The Rat hesitated again. What a swell he was! With that wave of the hand he made you feel as if you were a fellow like himself, and he was doing you some honor.

"I'm not—" The Rat broke off and jerked his head toward Marco. "He knows—" he ended, "I've never sat at a table like this before."

"There is not much on it." Loristan made the slight gesture toward the right hand seat again and smiled. "Let us sit down."

The Rat obeyed him and the meal began. There were only bread and coffee and a little butter before them. But Lazarus presented the cups and plates on a small japanned tray as if it were a golden salver. When he was not serving, he stood upright behind his master's chair, as though he wore royal livery of scarlet and gold. To the boy who had gnawed a bone or munched a crust wheresoever he found them, and with no thought but of the appeasing of his own wolfish hunger, to watch the two with whom he sat eat their simple food was a new thing. He knew nothing of the everyday decencies of civilized people. The Rat liked to look at them, and he found himself trying to hold his cup as Loristan did, and to sit and move as Marco was sitting and moving—taking his bread or butter, when it was held at his side by Lazarus, as if it were a simple thing to be waited upon. Marco had had things handed to him all his life, and it did not make him feel awkward. The Rat knew that his own father had once lived like this. He himself would have been at ease if chance had treated him fairly. It made him scowl to think of it. But in a few minutes Loristan began to talk about the copy of the map of Samavia. Then The Rat forgot everything else and was ill at ease no

more. He did not know that Loristan was leading him on to explain his theories about the country and the people and the war. He found himself telling all that he had read, or overheard, or *thought* as he lay awake in his garret. He had thought out a great many things in a way not at all like a boy's. His strangely concentrated and over-mature mind had been full of military schemes which Loristan listened to with curiosity and also with amazement. He had become extraordinarily clever in one direction because he had fixed all his mental powers on one thing. It seemed scarcely natural that an untaught vagabond lad should know so much and reason so clearly. It was at least extraordinarily interesting. There had been no skirmish, no attack, no battle which he had not led and fought in his own imagination, and he had made scores of rough queer plans of all that had been or should have been done. Lazarus listened as attentively as his master, and once Marco saw him exchange a startled, rapid glance with Loristan. It was at a moment when The Rat was sketching with his finger on the cloth an attack which *ought* to have been made but was not. And Marco knew at once that the quickly exchanged look meant "He is right! If it had been done, there would have been victory instead of disaster!"

It was a wonderful meal, though it was only of bread and coffee. The Rat knew he should never be able to forget it.

Afterward, Loristan told him of what he had done the night before. He had seen the parish authorities and all had been done which a city government provides in the case of a pauper's death.

His father would be buried in the usual manner. "We will follow him," Loristan said in the end. "You and I and Marco and Lazarus."

The Rat's mouth fell open.

"You—and Marco—and Lazarus!" he exclaimed, staring. "And me! Why should any of us go? I don't want to. He wouldn't have followed me if I'd been the one."

Loristan remained silent for a few moments.

"When a life has counted for nothing, the end of it is a lonely thing," he said at last. "If it has forgotten all respect for itself, pity is all that one has left to give. One would like to give *something* to anything so lonely." He said the last brief sentence after a pause.

"Let us go," Marco said suddenly; and he caught The Rat's hand.

The Rat's own movement was sudden. He slipped from his crutches to a chair, and sat and gazed at the worn carpet as if he were not looking at it at all, but at something a long way off. After a while he looked up at Loristan.

"Do you know what I thought of, all at once?" he said in a shaky voice. "I thought of that 'Lost Prince' one. He only lived once. Perhaps he didn't live a long time. Nobody knows. But it's five hundred years ago, and, just because he was the kind he was, everyone that remembers him thinks of something fine. It's queer, but it does you good just to hear his name. And if he has been training kings for Samavia all these centuries—they may have been poor and nobody may have known about them, but they've been *kings*. That's what *he* did—just by being alive a few years. When I think of him and then think of—the other—there's such an awful difference that—yes—I'm sorry. For the first time. I'm his son and I can't care about him; but he's too lonely—I want to go."

So it was that when the forlorn derelict was carried to the graveyard where nameless burdens on the city were given to the earth, a curious funeral procession followed him. There were two tall and soldierly looking men and two boys, one of whom walked on crutches, and behind them were ten other boys who walked two by two. These ten were a queer, ragged lot; but they had respectfully sober faces, held their heads and their shoulders well, and walked with a remarkably regular marching step.

It was the Squad; but they had left their "rifles" at home.

CHAPTER XI
"Come with Me"

When they came back from the graveyard, The Rat was silent all the way. He was thinking of what had happened and of what lay before him. He was, in fact, thinking chiefly that nothing lay before him—nothing. The certainty of that gave his sharp, lined face new lines and sharpness which made it look pinched and hard.

He had nothing before but a corner in a bare garret in which he could find little more than a leaking roof over his head—when he was not turned out into the street. But, if policemen asked him where he lived, he could say he lived in Bone Court with his father. Now he couldn't say it.

He got along very well on his crutches, but he was rather tired when they reached the turn in the street which led in the direction of his old haunts. At any rate, they were haunts he knew, and he belonged to them more than he belonged elsewhere. The Squad stopped at this particular corner because it led to such homes as they possessed. They stopped in a body and looked at The Rat, and The Rat stopped also. He swung himself to Loristan's side, touching his hand to his forehead.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "Line and salute, you chaps!" And the Squad stood in line and raised their hands also. "Thank you, sir. Thank you, Marco. Goodbye."

"Where are you going?" Loristan asked.

"I don't know yet," The Rat answered, biting his lips.

He and Loristan looked at each other a few moments in silence. Both of them were thinking very hard. In The Rat's eyes there was a kind of desperate adoration. He did not know

what he should do when this man turned and walked away from him. It would be as if the sun itself had dropped out of the heavens—and The Rat had not thought of what the sun meant before.

But Loristan did not turn and walk away. He looked deep into the lad's eyes as if he were searching to find some certainty. Then he said in a low voice, "You know how poor I am."

"I—I don't care!" said The Rat. "You—you're like a king to me. I'd stand up and be shot to bits if you told me to do it."

"I am so poor that I am not sure I can give you enough dry bread to eat—always. Marco and Lazarus and I are often hungry. Sometimes you might have nothing to sleep on but the floor. But I can find a *place* for you if I take you with me," said Loristan. "Do you know what I mean by a *place?*"

"Yes, I do," answered The Rat. "It's what I've never had before—sir."

What he knew was that it meant some bit of space, out of all the world, where he would have a sort of right to stand, howsoever poor and bare it might be.

"I'm not used to beds or to food enough," he said. But he did not dare to insist too much on that "place." It seemed too great a thing to be true.

Loristan took his arm.

"Come with me," he said. "We won't part. I believe you are to be trusted."

The Rat turned quite white in a sort of anguish of joy. He had never cared for anyone in his life. He had been a sort of young Cain, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. And during the last twelve hours he had plunged into a tumultuous ocean of boyish hero-worship. This man seemed like a sort of god to him. What he had said and done the day before, in what had been really The Rat's hours of extremity, after that appalling night—the way he had looked into his face and understood it all, the talk at the table

when he had listened to him seriously, comprehending and actually respecting his plans and rough maps; his silent companionship as they followed the pauper hearse together—these things were enough to make the lad longingly ready to be any sort of servant or slave to him if he might see and be spoken to by him even once or twice a day.

The Squad wore a look of dismay for a moment, and Loristan saw it.

"I am going to take your captain with me," he said. "But he will come back to Barracks. So will Marco."

"Will yer go on with the game?" asked Cad, as eager spokesman. "We want to go on being the 'Secret Party.'"

"Yes, I'll go on," The Rat answered. "I won't give it up. There's a lot in the papers today."

So they were pacified and went on their way, and Loristan and Lazarus and Marco and The Rat went on theirs also.

"Queer thing is," The Rat thought as they walked together, "I'm a bit afraid to speak to him unless he speaks to me first. Never felt that way before with anyone."

He had jeered at policemen and had impudently chaffed "swells," but he felt a sort of secret awe of this man, and actually liked the feeling.

"It's as if I was a private and he was commander-in-chief," he thought. "That's it."

Loristan talked to him as they went. He was simple enough in his statements of the situation. There was an old sofa in Marco's bedroom. It was narrow and hard, as Marco's bed itself was, but The Rat could sleep upon it. They would share what food they had. There were newspapers and magazines to be read. There were papers and pencils to draw new maps and plans of battles. There was even an old map of Samavia of Marco's which the two boys could study together as an aid to their game. The Rat's eyes began to have points of fire in them.

"If I could see the papers every morning, I could fight the

battles on paper by night," he said, quite panting at the incredible vision of splendor. Were all the kingdoms of the earth going to be given to him? Was he going to sleep without a drunken father near him?

Was he going to have a chance to wash himself and to sit at a table and hear people say "Thank you," and "I beg pardon," as if they were using the most ordinary fashion of speech? His own father, before he had sunk into the depths, had lived and spoken in this way.

"When I have time, we will see who can draw up the best plans," Loristan said.

"Do you mean that you'll look at mine then—when you have time?" asked The Rat, hesitatingly. "I wasn't expecting that."

"Yes," answered Loristan, "I'll look at them, and we'll talk them over."

As they went on, he told him that he and Marco could do many things together. They could go to museums and galleries, and Marco could show him what he himself was familiar with.

"My father said you wouldn't let him come back to Barracks when you found out about it," The Rat said, hesitating again and growing hot because he remembered so many ugly past days. "But—but I swear I won't do him any harm, sir. I won't!"

"When I said I believed you could be trusted, I meant several things," Loristan answered him. "That was one of them. You're a new recruit. You and Marco are both under a commanding officer." He said the words because he knew they would elate him and stir his blood.

CHAPTER XII
"Only Two Boys"

The words did elate him, and his blood was stirred by them every time they returned to his mind. He remembered them through the days and nights that followed. He sometimes, indeed, awakened from his deep sleep on the hard and narrow sofa in Marco's room, and found that he was saying them half aloud to himself. The hardness of the sofa did not prevent his resting as he had never rested before in his life. By contrast with the past he had known, this poor existence was comfort which verged on luxury. He got into the battered tin bath every morning, he sat at the clean table, and could look at Loristan and speak to him and hear his voice. His chief trouble was that he could hardly keep his eyes off him, and he was a little afraid he might be annoyed. But he could not bear to lose a look or a movement.

At the end of the second day, he found his way, at some trouble, to Lazarus's small back room at the top of the house.

"Will you let me come in and talk a bit?" he said.

When he went in, he was obliged to sit on the top of Lazarus's wooden box because there was nothing else for him.

"I want to ask you," he plunged into his talk at once, "do you think he minds me looking at him so much? I can't help it—but if he hates it—well—I'll try and keep my eyes on the table."

"The Master is used to being looked at," Lazarus made answer. "But it would be well to ask himself. He likes open speech."

"I want to find out everything he likes and everything he doesn't like," The Rat said. "I want—isn't there anything—

anything you'd let me do for him? It wouldn't matter what it was. And he needn't know you are not doing it. I know you wouldn't be willing to give up anything particular. But you wait on him night and day. Couldn't you give up something to me?"

Lazarus pierced him with keen eyes. He did not answer for several seconds.

"Now and then," he said gruffly at last, "I'll let you brush his boots. But not every day—perhaps once a week."

"When will you let me have my first turn?" The Rat asked.

Lazarus reflected. His shaggy eyebrows drew themselves down over his eyes as if this were a question of state.

"Next Saturday," he conceded. "Not before. I'll tell him when you brush them."

"You needn't," said The Rat. "It's not that I want him to know. I want to know myself that I'm doing something for him. I'll find out things that I can do without interfering with you. I'll think them out."

"Anything anyone else did for him would be interfering with me," said Lazarus.

It was The Rat's turn to reflect now, and his face twisted itself into new lines and wrinkles.

"I'll tell you before I do anything," he said, after he had thought it over. "You served him first."

"I have served him ever since he was born," said Lazarus.

"He's—he's yours," said The Rat, still thinking deeply.

"I am his," was Lazarus's stern answer. "I am his—and the young Master's."

"That's it," The Rat said. Then a squeak of a half-laugh broke from him. "I've never been anybody's," he added.

His sharp eyes caught a passing look on Lazarus's face. Such a queer, disturbed, sudden look. Could he be rather sorry for him?

Perhaps the look meant something like that.

"If you stay near him long enough—and it needn't be

long—you will be his too. Everybody is."

The Rat sat up as straight as he could. "When it comes to that," he blurted out, "I'm his now, in my way. I was his two minutes after he looked at me with his queer, handsome eyes. They're queer because they get you, and you want to follow him. I'm going to follow."

That night Lazarus recounted to his master the story of the scene. He simply repeated word for word what had been said, and Loristan listened gravely.

"We have not had time to learn much of him yet," he commented. "But that is a faithful soul, I think."

A few days later, Marco missed The Rat soon after their breakfast hour. He had gone out without saying anything to the household. He did not return for several hours, and when he came back he looked tired. In the afternoon he fell asleep on his sofa in Marco's room and slept heavily. No one asked him any questions as he volunteered no explanation. The next day he went out again in the same mysterious manner, and the next and the next. For an entire week he went out and returned with the tired look; but he did not explain until one morning, as he lay on his sofa before getting up, he said to Marco:

"I'm practicing walking with my crutches. I don't want to go about like a rat any more. I mean to be as near like other people as I can. I walk farther every morning. I began with two miles. If I practice every day, my crutches will be like legs."

"Shall I walk with you?" asked Marco.

"Wouldn't you mind walking with a cripple?"

"Don't call yourself that," said Marco. "We can talk together, and try to remember everything we see as we go along."

"I want to learn to remember things. I'd like to train myself in that way too," The Rat answered. "I'd give anything to know some of the things your father taught you. I've got a

good memory. I remember a lot of things I don't want to remember. Will you go this morning?"

That morning they went, and Loristan was told the reason for their walk. But though he knew one reason, he did not know all about it. When The Rat was allowed his "turn" of the boot brushing, he told more to Lazarus.

"What I want to do," he said, "is not only walk as fast as other people do, but faster. Acrobats train themselves to do anything. It's training that does it. There might come a time when he might need someone to go on an errand quickly, and I'm going to be ready. I'm going to train myself until he needn't think of me as if I were only a cripple who can't do things and has to be taken care of. I want him to know that I'm really as strong as Marco, and where Marco can go I can go."

"He" was what he always said, and Lazarus always understood without explanation.

"'The Master' is your name for him," he had explained at the beginning. "And I can't call him just 'Mister' Loristan. It sounds like cheek. If he was called 'General' or 'Colonel' I could stand it—though it wouldn't be quite right. Someday I shall find a name. When I speak to him, I say 'Sir.'"

The walks were taken every day, and each day were longer. Marco found himself silently watching The Rat with amazement at his determination and endurance. He knew that he must not speak of what he could not fail to see as they walked. He must not tell him that he looked tired and pale and sometimes desperately fatigued. He had inherited from his father the tact which sees what people do not wish to be reminded of. He knew that for some reason of his own The Rat had determined to do this thing at any cost to himself. Sometimes his face grew white and worn and he breathed hard, but he never rested more than a few minutes, and never turned back or shortened a walk they had planned.

"Tell me something about Samavia, something to

remember," he would say, when he looked his worst. "When I begin to try to remember, I forget—other things."

So, as they went on their way, they talked, and The Rat committed things to memory. He was quick at it, and grew quicker every day. They invented a game of remembering faces they passed. Both would learn them by heart, and on their return home Marco would draw them. They went to the museums and galleries and learned things there, making from memory lists and descriptions which at night they showed to Loristan, when he was not too busy to talk to them.

As the days passed, Marco saw that The Rat was gaining strength. This exhilarated him greatly. They often went to Hampstead Heath and walked in the wind and sun. There The Rat would go through curious exercises which he believed would develop his muscles. He began to look less tired during and after his journey. There were even fewer wrinkles on his face, and his sharp eyes looked less fierce. The talks between the two boys were long and curious. Marco soon realized that The Rat wanted to learn—learn—learn.

"Your father can talk to you almost as if you were twenty years old," he said once. "He knows you can understand what he's saying. If he were to talk to me, he'd always have to remember that I was only a rat that had lived in gutters and seen nothing else."

They were talking in their room, as they nearly always did after they went to bed and the street lamp shone in and lighted their bare little room. They often sat up clasping their knees, Marco on his poor bed, The Rat on his hard sofa, but neither of them conscious either of the poorness or hardness, because to each one the long unknown sense of companionship was such a satisfying thing. Neither of them had ever talked intimately to another boy, and now they were together day and night. They revealed their thoughts to each other; they told each other things it had never before occurred to either to think of telling anyone. In fact, they found out about

themselves, as they talked, things they had not quite known before. Marco had gradually discovered that the admiration The Rat had for his father was an impassioned and curious feeling which possessed him entirely. It seemed to Marco that it was beginning to be like a sort of religion. He evidently thought of him every moment. So when he spoke of Loristan's knowing him to be only a rat of the gutter, Marco felt he himself was fortunate in remembering something he could say.

"My father said yesterday that you had a big brain and a strong will," he answered from his bed. "He said that you had a wonderful memory which only needed exercising. He said it after he looked over the list you made of the things you had seen in the Tower."

The Rat shuffled on his sofa and clasped his knees tighter.

"Did he? Did he?" he said.

He rested his chin upon his knees for a few minutes and stared straight before him. Then he turned to the bed.

"Marco," he said, in a rather hoarse voice, a queer voice; "are you jealous?"

"Jealous," said Marco; "why?"

"I mean, have you ever been jealous? Do you know what it is like?"

"I don't think I do," answered Marco, staring a little.

"Are you ever jealous of Lazarus because he's always with your father—because he's with him oftener than you are—and knows about his work—and can do things for him you can't? I mean, are you jealous of—your father?"

Marco loosed his arms from his knees and lay down flat on his pillow.

"No, I'm not. The more people love and serve him, the better," he said. "The only thing I care for is—is him. I just care for *him*. Lazarus does too. Don't you?"

The Rat was greatly excited internally. He had been thinking of this thing a great deal. The thought had

sometimes terrified him. He might as well have it out now if he could. If he could get at the truth, everything would be easier. But would Marco really tell him?

"Don't you mind?" he said, still hoarse and eager—"don't you mind how much I care for him? Could it ever make you feel savage? Could it ever set you thinking I was nothing but—what I am—and that it was cheek of me to push myself in and fasten on to a gentleman who only took me up for charity? Here's the living truth," he ended in an outburst; "if I were you and you were me, that's what I should be thinking. I know it is. I couldn't help it. I should see every low thing there was in you, in your manners and your voice and your looks. I should see nothing but the contrast between you and me and between you and him. I should be so jealous that I should just rage. I should *hate* you—and I should *despise* you!"

He had wrought himself up to such a passion of feeling that he set Marco thinking that what he was hearing meant strange and strong emotions such as he himself had never experienced. The Rat had been thinking over all this in secret for some time, it was evident. Marco lay still a few minutes and thought it over. Then he found something to say, just as he had found something before.

"You might, if you were with other people who thought in the same way," he said, "and if you hadn't found out that it is such a mistake to think in that way, that it's even stupid. But, you see, if you were I, you would have lived with my father, and he'd have told you what he knows—what he's been finding out all his life."

"What's he found out?"

"Oh!" Marco answered, quite casually, "just that you can't set savage thoughts loose in the world, any more than you can let loose savage beasts with hydrophobia. They spread a sort of rabies, and they always tear and worry you first of all."

"What do you mean?" The Rat gasped out.

"It's like this," said Marco, lying flat and cool on his hard pillow and looking at the reflection of the street lamp on the ceiling. "That day I turned into your Barracks, without knowing that you'd think I was spying, it made you feel savage, and you threw the stone at me. If it had made me feel savage and I'd rushed in and fought, what would have happened to all of us?"

The Rat's spirit of generalship gave the answer.

"I should have called on the Squad to charge with fixed bayonets. They'd have half killed you. You're a strong chap, and you'd have hurt a lot of them."

A note of terror broke into his voice. "What a fool I should have been!" he cried out. "I should never have come here! I should never have known *him!*" Even by the light of the street lamp Marco could see him begin to look almost ghastly.

"The Squad could easily have half killed me," Marco added. "They could have quite killed me, if they had wanted to do it. And who would have got any good out of it? It would only have been a street-lads' row—with the police and prison at the end of it."

"But because you'd lived with him," The Rat pondered, "you walked in as if you didn't mind, and just asked why we did it, and looked like a stronger chap than any of us—and different—different. I wondered what was the matter with you, you were so cool and steady. I know now. It was because you were like him. He'd taught you. He's like a wizard."

"He knows things that wizards think they know, but he knows them better," Marco said. "He says they're not queer and unnatural. They're just simple laws of nature. You have to be either on one side or the other, like an army. You choose your side. You either build up or tear down. You either keep in the light where you can see, or you stand in the dark and fight everything that comes near you, because you can't see and you think it's an enemy. No, you wouldn't have been

jealous if you'd been I and I'd been you."

"And you're *not?*" The Rat's sharp voice was almost hollow. "You'll swear you're not?"

"I'm not," said Marco.

The Rat's excitement even increased a shade as he poured forth his confession.

"I was afraid," he said. "I've been afraid every day since I came here. I'll tell you straight out. It seemed just natural that you and Lazarus wouldn't stand me, just as I wouldn't have stood you. It seemed just natural that you'd work together to throw me out. I knew how I should have worked myself. Marco—I said I'd tell you straight out—I'm jealous of you. I'm jealous of Lazarus. It makes me wild when I see you both knowing all about him, and fit and ready to do anything he wants done. I'm not ready and I'm not fit."

"You'd do anything he wanted done, whether you were fit and ready or not," said Marco. "He knows that."

"Does he? Do you think he does?" cried The Rat. "I wish he'd try me. I wish he would."

Marco turned over on his bed and rose up on his elbow so that he faced The Rat on his sofa.

"Let us *wait,*" he said in a whisper. "Let us *wait.*"

There was a pause, and then The Rat whispered also.

"For what?"

"For him to find out that we're fit to be tried. Don't you see what fools we should be if we spent our time in being jealous, either of us. We're only two boys. Suppose he saw we were only two silly fools. When you are jealous of me or of Lazarus, just go and sit down in a still place and think of *him.* Don't think about yourself or about us. He's so quiet that to think about him makes you quiet yourself. When things go wrong or when I'm lonely, he's taught me to sit down and make myself think of things I like—pictures, books, monuments, splendid places. It pushes the other things out and sets your mind going properly. He doesn't know I nearly

always think of him. He's the best thought himself. You try it. You're not really jealous. You only *think* you are. You'll find that out if you always stop yourself in time. Anyone can be such a fool if he lets himself. And he can always stop it if he makes up his mind. I'm not jealous. You must let that thought alone. You're not jealous yourself. Kick that thought into the street."

The Rat caught his breath and threw his arms up over his eyes. "Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!" he said; "if I'd lived near him always as you have. If I just had."

"We're both living near him now," said Marco. "And here's something to think of," leaning more forward on his elbow. "The kings who were being made ready for Samavia have waited all these years; WE can make ourselves ready and wait so that, if just two boys are wanted to do something—just two boys—we can step out of the ranks when the call comes and say 'Here!' Now let's lie down and think of it until we go to sleep."

CHAPTER XIII
Loristan Attends a Drill of the Squad, and Marco Meets a Samavian

The Squad was not forgotten. It found that Loristan himself would have regarded neglect as a breach of military duty.

"You must remember your men," he said, two or three days after The Rat became a member of his household. "You must keep up their drill. Marco tells me it was very smart. Don't let them get slack."

"His men!" The Rat felt what he could not have put into words.

He knew he had worked, and that the Squad had worked, in their hidden holes and corners. Only hidden holes and corners had been possible for them because they had existed in spite of the protest of their world and the vigilance of its policemen. They had tried many refuges before they found the Barracks. No one but resented the existence of a troop of noisy vagabonds. But somehow this man knew that there had evolved from it something more than mere noisy play, that he, The Rat, had *meant* order and discipline.

"His men!" It made him feel as if he had had the Victoria Cross fastened on his coat. He had brain enough to see many things, and he knew that it was in this way that Loristan was finding him his "place." He knew how.

When they went to the Barracks, the Squad greeted them with a tumultuous welcome which expressed a great sense of relief. Privately the members had been filled with fears which they had talked over together in deep gloom. Marco's father, they decided, was too big a swell to let the two come back after he had seen the sort the Squad was made up of. He

might be poor just now, toffs sometimes lost their money for a bit, but you could see what he was, and fathers like him weren't going to let their sons make friends with "such as us." He'd stop the drill and the "Secret Society" game. That's what he'd do!

But The Rat came swinging in on his secondhand crutches looking as if he had been made a general, and Marco came with him; and the drill the Squad was put through was stricter and finer than any drill they had ever known.

"I wish my father could have seen that," Marco said to The Rat.

The Rat turned red and white and then red again, but he said not a single word. The mere thought was like a flash of fire passing through him. But no fellow could hope for a thing as big as that. The Secret Party, in its subterranean cavern, surrounded by its piled arms, sat down to read the morning paper.

The war news was bad to read. The Maranovitch held the day for the moment, and while they suffered and wrought cruelties in the capital city, the Iarovitch suffered and wrought cruelties in the country outside. So fierce and dark was the record that Europe stood aghast.

The Rat folded his paper when he had finished, and sat biting his nails. Having done this for a few minutes, he began to speak in his dramatic and hollow Secret Party whisper.

"The hour has come," he said to his followers. "The messengers must go forth. They know nothing of what they go for; they only know that they must obey. If they were caught and tortured, they could betray nothing because they know nothing but that, at certain places, they must utter a certain word. They carry no papers. All commands they must learn by heart. When the sign is given, the Secret Party will know what to do—where to meet and where to attack."

He drew plans of the battle on the flagstones, and he sketched an imaginary route which the two messengers were

to follow. But his knowledge of the map of Europe was not worth much, and he turned to Marco.

"You know more about geography that I do. You know more about everything," he said. "I only know Italy is at the bottom and Russia is at one side and England's at the other. How would the Secret Messengers go to Samavia? Can you draw the countries they'd have to pass through?"

Because any schoolboy who knew the map could have done the same thing, Marco drew them. He also knew the stations the Secret Two would arrive at and leave by when they entered a city, the streets they would walk through and the very uniforms they would see; but of these things he said nothing. The reality his knowledge gave to the game was, however, a thrilling thing. He wished he could have been free to explain to The Rat the things he knew. Together they could have worked out so many details of travel and possible adventure that it would have been almost as if they had set out on their journey in fact.

As it was, the mere sketching of the route fired The Rat's imagination. He forged ahead with the story of adventure, and filled it with such mysterious purport and design that the Squad at times gasped for breath. In his glowing version the Secret Two entered cities by midnight and sang and begged at palace gates where kings driving outward paused to listen and were given the Sign.

"Though it would not always be kings," he said. "Sometimes it would be the poorest people. Sometimes they might seem to be beggars like ourselves, when they were only Secret Ones disguised. A great lord might wear poor clothes and pretend to be a workman, and we should only know him by the signs we had learned by heart. When we were sent to Samavia, we should be obliged to creep in through some back part of the country where no fighting was being done and where no one would attack. Their generals are not clever enough to protect the parts which are joined to friendly

countries, and they have not forces enough. Two boys could find a way in if they thought it out."

He became possessed by the idea of thinking it out on the spot. He drew his rough map of Samavia on the flagstones with his chalk.

"Look here," he said to Marco, who, with the elated and thrilled Squad, bent over it in a close circle of heads. "Beltrazo is here and Carnolitz is here—and here is Jiardasia. Beltrazo and Jiardasia are friendly, though they don't take sides. All the fighting is going on in the country about Melzarr. There is no reason why they should prevent single travelers from coming in across the frontiers of friendly neighbors. They're not fighting with the countries outside, they are fighting with themselves." He paused a moment and thought.

"The article in that magazine said something about a huge forest on the eastern frontier. That's here. We could wander into a forest and stay there until we'd planned all we wanted to do. Even the people who had seen us would forget about us. What we have to do is to make people feel as if we were nothing—nothing."

They were in the very midst of it, crowded together, leaning over, stretching necks and breathing quickly with excitement, when Marco lifted his head. Some mysterious impulse made him do it in spite of himself.

"There's my father!" he said.

The chalk dropped, everything dropped, even Samavia. The Rat was up and on his crutches as if some magic force had swung him there. How he gave the command, or if he gave it at all, not even he himself knew. But the Squad stood at salute.

Loristan was standing at the opening of the archway as Marco had stood that first day. He raised his right hand in return salute and came forward.

"I was passing the end of the street and remembered the Barracks was here," he explained. "I thought I should like to

look at your men, Captain."

He smiled, but it was not a smile which made his words really a joke. He looked down at the chalk map drawn on the flagstones.

"You know that map well," he said. "Even I can see that it is Samavia. What is the Secret Party doing?"

"The messengers are trying to find a way in," answered Marco.

"We can get in there," said The Rat, pointing with a crutch. "There's a forest where we could hide and find out things."

"Reconnoiter," said Loristan, looking down. "Yes. Two stray boys could be very safe in a forest. It's a good game."

That he should be there! That he should, in his own wonderful way, have given them such a thing as this. That he should have cared enough even to look up the Barracks, was what The Rat was thinking. A batch of ragamuffins they were and nothing else, and he standing looking at them with his fine smile. There was something about him which made him seem even splendid. The Rat's heart thumped with startled joy.

"Father," said Marco, "will you watch The Rat drill us? I want you to see how well it is done."

"Captain, will you do me that honor?" Loristan said to The Rat, and to even these words he gave the right tone, neither jesting nor too serious. Because it was so right a tone, The Rat's pulses beat only with exultation. This god of his had looked at his maps, he had talked of his plans, he had come to see the soldiers who were his work! The Rat began his drill as if he had been reviewing an army.

What Loristan saw done was wonderful in its mechanical exactness.

The Squad moved like the perfect parts of a perfect machine. That they could so do it in such space, and that they should have accomplished such precision, was an

extraordinary testimonial to the military efficiency and curious qualities of this one hunchbacked, vagabond officer.

"That is magnificent!" the spectator said, when it was over. "It could not be better done. Allow me to congratulate you."

He shook The Rat's hand as if it had been a man's, and, after he had shaken it, he put his own hand lightly on the boy's shoulder and let it rest there as he talked a few minutes to them all.

He kept his talk within the game, and his clear comprehension of it added a flavor which even the dullest member of the Squad was elated by. Sometimes you couldn't understand toffs when they made a shy at being friendly, but you could understand him, and he stirred up your spirits. He didn't make jokes with you, either, as if a chap had to be kept grinning. After the few minutes were over, he went away. Then they sat down again in their circle and talked about him, because they could talk and think about nothing else. They stared at Marco furtively, feeling as if he were a creature of another world because he had lived with this man. They stared at The Rat in a new way also. The wonderful looking hand had rested on his shoulder, and he had been told that what he had done was magnificent.

"When you said you wished your father could have seen the drill," said The Rat, "you took my breath away. I'd never have had the cheek to think of it myself—and I'd never have dared to let you ask him, even if you wanted to do it. And he came himself! It struck me dumb."

"If he came," said Marco, "it was because he wanted to see it."

When they had finished talking, it was time for Marco and The Rat to go on their way. Loristan had given The Rat an errand. At a certain hour he was to present himself at a certain shop and receive a package.

"Let him do it alone," Loristan said to Marco. "He will be

better pleased. His desire is to feel that he is trusted to do things alone."

So they parted at a street corner, Marco to walk back to No. 7 Philibert Place, The Rat to execute his commission. Marco turned into one of the better streets, through which he often passed on his way home. It was not a fashionable quarter, but it contained some respectable houses in whose windows here and there were to be seen neat cards bearing the word "Apartments," which meant that the owner of the house would let to lodgers his drawing room or sitting room suite.

As Marco walked up the street, he saw someone come out of the door of one of the houses and walk quickly and lightly down the pavement. It was a young woman wearing an elegant though quiet dress, and a hat which looked as if it had been bought in Paris or Vienna. She had, in fact, a slightly foreign air, and it was this, indeed, which made Marco look at her long enough to see that she was also a graceful and lovely person. He wondered what her nationality was. Even at some yards' distance he could see that she had long dark eyes and a curved mouth which seemed to be smiling to itself. He thought she might be Spanish or Italian.

He was trying to decide which of the two countries she belonged to, as she drew near to him, but quite suddenly the curved mouth ceased smiling as her foot seemed to catch in a break in the pavement, and she so lost her balance that she would have fallen if he had not leaped forward and caught her.

She was light and slender, and he was a strong lad and managed to steady her. An expression of sharp momentary anguish crossed her face.

"I hope you are not hurt," Marco said.

She bit her lip and clutched his shoulder very hard with her slim hand.

"I have twisted my ankle," she answered. "I am afraid I

have twisted it badly. Thank you for saving me. I should have had a bad fall."

Her long, dark eyes were very sweet and grateful. She tried to smile, but there was such distress under the effort that Marco was afraid she must have hurt herself very much.

"Can you stand on your foot at all?" he asked.

"I can stand a little now," she said, "but I might not be able to stand in a few minutes. I must get back to the house while I can bear to touch the ground with it. I am so sorry. I am afraid I shall have to ask you to go with me. Fortunately it is only a few yards away."

"Yes," Marco answered. "I saw you come out of the house. If you will lean on my shoulder, I can soon help you back. I am glad to do it. Shall we try now?"

She had a gentle and soft manner which would have appealed to any boy. Her voice was musical and her enunciation exquisite.

Whether she was Spanish or Italian, it was easy to imagine her a person who did not always live in London lodgings, even of the better class.

"If you please," she answered him. "It is very kind of you. You are very strong, I see. But I am glad to have only a few steps to go."

She rested on his shoulder as well as on her umbrella, but it was plain that every movement gave her intense pain. She caught her lip with her teeth, and Marco thought she turned white. He could not help liking her. She was so lovely and gracious and brave. He could not bear to see the suffering in her face.

"I am so sorry!" he said, as he helped her, and his boy's voice had something of the wonderful sympathetic tone of Loristan's. The beautiful lady herself remarked it, and thought how unlike it was to the ordinary boy voice.

"I have a latchkey," she said, when they stood on the low step.

She found the latchkey in her purse and opened the door. Marco helped her into the entrance hall. She sat down at once in a chair near the hat stand. The place was quite plain and old-fashioned inside.

"Shall I ring the front door bell to call someone?" Marco inquired.

"I am afraid that the servants are out," she answered. "They had a holiday. Will you kindly close the door? I shall be obliged to ask you to help me into the sitting room at the end of the hall. I shall find all I want there—if you will kindly hand me a few things. Someone may come in presently—perhaps one of the other lodgers—and, even if I am alone for an hour or so, it will not really matter."

"Perhaps I can find the landlady," Marco suggested. The beautiful person smiled.

"She has gone to her sister's wedding. That is why I was going out to spend the day myself. I arranged the plan to accommodate her. How good you are! I shall be quite comfortable directly, really. I can get to my easy chair in the sitting room now I have rested a little."

Marco helped her to her feet, and her sharp, involuntary exclamation of pain made him wince internally. Perhaps it was a worse sprain than she knew.

The house was of the early-Victorian London order. A "front lobby" with a dining room on the right hand, and a "back lobby," after the foot of the stairs was passed, out of which opened the basement kitchen staircase and a sitting room looking out on a gloomy flagged backyard enclosed by high walls. The sitting room was rather gloomy itself, but there were a few luxurious things among the ordinary furnishings. There was an easy chair with a small table near it, and on the table were a silver lamp and some rather elegant trifles. Marco helped his charge to the easy chair and put a cushion from the sofa under her foot. He did it very gently, and, as he rose after doing it, he saw that the long, soft dark

eyes were looking at him in a curious way.

"I must go away now," he said, "but I do not like to leave you. May I go for a doctor?"

"How dear you are!" she exclaimed. "But I do not want one, thank you. I know exactly what to do for a sprained ankle. And perhaps mine is not really a sprain. I am going to take off my shoe and see."

"May I help you?" Marco asked, and he kneeled down again and carefully unfastened her shoe and withdrew it from her foot. It was a slender and delicate foot in a silk stocking, and she bent and gently touched and rubbed it.

"No," she said, when she raised herself, "I do not think it is a sprain. Now that the shoe is off and the foot rests on the cushion, it is much more comfortable, much more. Thank you, thank you. If you had not been passing I might have had a dangerous fall."

"I am very glad to have been able to help you," Marco answered, with an air of relief. "Now I must go, if you think you will be all right."

"Don't go yet," she said, holding out her hand. "I should like to know you a little better, if I may. I am so grateful. I should like to talk to you. You have such beautiful manners for a boy," she ended, with a pretty, kind laugh, "and I believe I know where you got them from."

"You are very kind to me," Marco answered, wondering if he did not redden a little. "But I must go because my father will—"

"Your father would let you stay and talk to me," she said, with even a prettier kindliness than before. "It is from him you have inherited your beautiful manner. He was once a friend of mine. I hope he is my friend still, though perhaps he has forgotten me."

All that Marco had ever learned and all that he had ever trained himself to remember, quickly rushed back upon him now, because he had a clear and rapidly working brain, and



"Now that the shoe is off, it is much more comfortable, much more."

had not lived the ordinary boy's life. Here was a beautiful lady of whom he knew nothing at all but that she had twisted her foot in the street and he had helped her back into her house. If silence was still the order, it was not for him to know things or ask questions or answer them. She might be the loveliest lady in the world and his father her dearest friend, but, even if this were so, he could best serve them both by obeying her friend's commands with all courtesy, and forgetting no instruction he had given.

"I do not think my father ever forgets anyone," he answered.

"No, I am sure he does not," she said softly. "Has he been to Samavia during the last three years?"

Marco paused a moment.

"Perhaps I am not the boy you think I am," he said. "My father has never been to Samavia."

"He has not? But—you are Marco Loristan?"

"Yes. That is my name."

Suddenly she leaned forward and her long lovely eyes

filled with fire.

"Then you are a Samavian, and you know of the disasters overwhelming us. You know all the hideousness and barbarity of what is being done. Your father's son must know it all!"

"Everyone knows it," said Marco.

"But it is your country—your own! Your blood must burn in your veins!"

Marco stood quite still and looked at her. His eyes told whether his blood burned or not, but he did not speak. His look was answer enough, since he did not wish to say anything.

"What does your father think? I am a Samavian myself, and I think night and day. What does he think of the rumor about the descendant of the Lost Prince? Does he believe it?"

Marco was thinking very rapidly. Her beautiful face was glowing with emotion, her beautiful voice trembled. That she should be a Samavian, and love Samavia, and pour her feeling forth even to a boy, was deeply moving to him. But howsoever one was moved, one must remember that silence was still the order. When one was very young, one must remember orders first of all.

"It might be only a newspaper story," he said. "He says one cannot trust such things. If you know him, you know he is very calm."

"Has he taught you to be calm too?" she said pathetically. "You are only a boy. Boys are not calm. Neither are women when their hearts are wrung. Oh, my Samavia! Oh, my poor little country! My brave, tortured country!" and with a sudden sob she covered her face with her hands.

A great lump mounted to Marco's throat. Boys could not cry, but he knew what she meant when he said her heart was wrung.

When she lifted her head, the tears in her eyes made them softer than ever.

"If I were a million Samavians instead of one woman, I

should know what to do!" she cried. "If your father were a million Samavians, he would know, too. He would find Ivor's descendant, if he is on the earth, and he would end all this horror!"

"Who would not end it if they could?" cried Marco, quite fiercely.

"But men like your father, men who are Samavians, must think night and day about it as I do," she impetuously insisted. "You see, I cannot help pouring my thoughts out even to a boy—because he is a Samavian. Only Samavians care. Samavia seems so little and unimportant to other people. They don't even seem to know that the blood she is pouring forth pours from human veins and beating human hearts. Men like your father must think, and plan, and feel that they must—must find a way. Even a woman feels it. Even a boy must. Stefan Loristan cannot be sitting quietly at home, knowing that Samavian hearts are being shot through and Samavian blood poured forth. He cannot think and say *nothing!*"

Marco started in spite of himself. He felt as if his father had been struck in the face. How dare she say such words! Big as he was, suddenly he looked bigger, and the beautiful lady saw that he did.

"He is my father," he said slowly.

She was a clever, beautiful person, and saw that she had made a great mistake.

"You must forgive me," she exclaimed. "I used the wrong words because I was excited. That is the way with women. You must see that I meant that I knew he was giving his heart and strength, his whole being, to Samavia, even though he must stay in London."

She started and turned her head to listen to the sound of someone using the latchkey and opening the front door. The someone came in with the heavy step of a man.

"It is one of the lodgers," she said. "I think it is the one

who lives in the third floor sitting room."

"Then you won't be alone when I go," said Marco. "I am glad someone has come. I will say good morning. May I tell my father your name?"

"Tell me that you are not angry with me for expressing myself so awkwardly," she said.

"You couldn't have meant it. I know that," Marco answered boyishly. "You couldn't."

"No, I couldn't," she repeated, with the same emphasis on the words.

She took a card from a silver case on the table and gave it to him.

"Your father will remember my name," she said. "I hope he will let me see him and tell him how you took care of me."

She shook his hand warmly and let him go. But just as he reached the door she spoke again.

"Oh, may I ask you to do one thing more before you leave me?" she said suddenly. "I hope you won't mind. Will you run upstairs into the drawing room and bring me the purple book from the small table? I shall not mind being alone if I have something to read."

"A purple book? On a small table?" said Marco.

"Between the two long windows," she smiled back at him.

The drawing room of such houses as these is always to be reached by one short flight of stairs.

Marco ran up lightly.

CHAPTER XIV
Marco Does Not Answer

By the time he turned the corner of the stairs, the beautiful lady had risen from her seat in the back room and walked into the dining room at the front. A heavily-built, dark-bearded man was standing inside the door as if waiting for her.

"I could do nothing with him," she said at once, in her soft voice, speaking quite prettily and gently, as if what she said was the most natural thing in the world. "I managed the little trick of the sprained foot really well, and got him into the house. He is an amiable boy with perfect manners, and I thought it might be easy to surprise him into saying more than he knew he was saying. You can generally do that with children and young things. But he either knows nothing or has been trained to hold his tongue. He's not stupid, and he's of a high spirit. I made a pathetic little scene about Samavia, because I saw he could be worked up. It did work him up. I tried him with the Lost Prince rumor; but, if there is truth in it, he does not or will not know. I tried to make him lose his temper and betray something in defending his father, whom he thinks a god, by the way. But I made a mistake. I saw that. It's a pity. Boys can sometimes be made to tell anything." She spoke very quickly under her breath. The man spoke quickly too.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"I sent him up to the drawing room to look for a book. He will look for a few minutes. Listen. He's an innocent boy. He sees me only as a gentle angel. Nothing will *shake* him so much as to hear me tell him the truth suddenly. It will be such a

shock to him that perhaps you can do something with him then. He may lose his hold on himself. He's only a boy."

"You're right," said the bearded man. "And when he finds out he is not free to go, it may alarm him and we may get something worthwhile."

"If we could find out what is true, or what Loristan thinks is true, we should have a clue to work from," she said.

"We have not much time," the man whispered. "We are ordered to Bosnia at once. Before midnight we must be on the way."

"Let us go into the other room. He is coming."

When Marco entered the room, the heavily built man with the pointed dark beard was standing by the easy chair.

"I am sorry I could not find the book," he apologized. "I looked on all the tables."

"I shall be obliged to go and search for it myself," said the Lovely Person.

She rose from her chair and stood up smiling. And at her first movement Marco saw that she was not disabled in the least.

"Your foot!" he exclaimed. "It's better?"

"It wasn't hurt," she answered, in her softly pretty voice and with her softly pretty smile. "I only made you think so."

It was part of her plan to spare him nothing of shock in her sudden transformation. Marco felt his breath leave him for a moment.

"I made you believe I was hurt because I wanted you to come into the house with me," she added. "I wished to find out certain things I am sure you know."

"They were things about Samavia," said the man. "Your father knows them, and you must know something of them at least. It is necessary that we should hear what you can tell us. We shall not allow you to leave the house until you have answered certain questions I shall ask you."

Then Marco began to understand. He had heard his

father speak of political spies, men and women who were paid to trace the people that certain governments or political parties desired to have followed and observed. He knew it was their work to search out secrets, to disguise themselves and live among innocent people as if they were merely ordinary neighbors.

They must be spies who were paid to follow his father because he was a Samavian and a patriot. He did not know that they had taken the house two months before, and had accomplished several things during their apparently innocent stay in it. They had discovered Loristan and had learned to know his outgoings and incomings, and also the outgoings and incomings of Lazarus, Marco, and The Rat. But they meant, if possible, to learn other things. If the boy could be startled and terrified into unconscious revelations, it might prove well worth their while to have played this bit of melodrama before they locked the front door behind them and hastily crossed the Channel, leaving their landlord to discover for himself that the house had been vacated.

In Marco's mind strange things were happening. They were spies! But that was not all. The Lovely Person had been right when she said that he would receive a shock. His strong young chest swelled. In all his life, he had never come face to face with black treachery before. He could not grasp it. This gentle and friendly being with the grateful soft voice and grateful soft eyes had betrayed—*betrayed* him! It seemed impossible to believe it, and yet the smile on her curved mouth told him that it was true. When he had sprung to help her, she had been playing a trick! When he had been sorry for her pain and had winced at the sound of her low exclamation, she had been deliberately laying a trap to harm him. For a few seconds he was stunned—perhaps, if he had not been his father's son, he might have been stunned only. But he was more. When the first seconds had passed, there arose slowly within him a sense of something like high, remote disdain. It

grew in his deep boy's eyes as he gazed directly into the pupils of the long soft dark ones. His body felt as if it were growing taller.

"You are very clever," he said slowly. Then, after a second's pause, he added, "I was too young to know that there was anyone so—clever—in the world."

The Lovely Person laughed, but she did not laugh easily. She spoke to her companion.

"A *grand seigneur!*" she said. "As one looks at him, one half believes it is true."

The man with the beard was looking very angry. His eyes were savage and his dark skin reddened. Marco thought that he looked at him as if he hated him, and was made fierce by the mere sight of him, for some mysterious reason.

"Two days before you left Moscow," he said, "three men came to see your father. They looked like peasants. They talked to him for more than an hour. They brought with them a roll of parchment. Is that not true?"

"I know nothing," said Marco.

"Before you went to Moscow, you were in Budapest. You went there from Vienna. You were there for three months, and your father saw many people. Some of them came in the middle of the night."

"I know nothing," said Marco.

"You have spent your life in traveling from one country to another," persisted the man. "You know the European languages as if you were a courier, or the *portier* in a Viennese hotel. Do you not?"

Marco did not answer.

The Lovely Person began to speak to the man rapidly in Russian.

"A spy and an adventurer Stefan Loristan has always been and always will be," she said. "We know what he is. The police in every capital in Europe know him as a sharper and a vagabond, as well as a spy. And yet, with all his cleverness, he

does not seem to have money. What did he do with the bribe the Maranovitch gave him for betraying what he knew of the old fortress? The boy doesn't even suspect him. Perhaps it's true that he knows nothing. Or perhaps it is true that he has been so ill-treated and flogged from his babyhood that he dare not speak. There is a cowed look in his eyes in spite of his childish swagger. He's been both starved and beaten."

The outburst was well done. She did not look at Marco as she poured forth her words. She spoke with the abruptness and impetuosity of a person whose feelings had got the better of her. If Marco was sensitive about his father, she felt sure that his youth would make his face reveal something if his tongue did not—if he understood Russian, which was one of the things it would be useful to find out, because it was a fact which would verify many other things.

Marco's face disappointed her. No change took place in it, and the blood did not rise to the surface of his skin. He listened with an uninterested air, blank and cold and polite. Let them say what they chose.

The man twisted his pointed beard and shrugged his shoulders.

"We have a good little wine cellar downstairs," he said. "You are going down into it, and you will probably stay there for some time if you do not make up your mind to answer my questions. You think that nothing can happen to you in a house in a London street where policemen walk up and down. But you are mistaken. If you yelled now, even if anyone chanced to hear you, they would only think you were a lad getting a thrashing he deserved. You can yell as much as you like in the black little wine cellar, and no one will hear at all. We only took this house for three months, and we shall leave it tonight without mentioning the fact to anyone. If we choose to leave you in the wine cellar, you will wait there until somebody begins to notice that no one goes in and out, and chances to mention it to the landlord—which few people

would take the trouble to do. Did you come here from Moscow?"

"I know nothing," said Marco.

"You might remain in the good little black cellar an unpleasantly long time before you were found," the man went on, quite coolly. "Do you remember the peasants who came to see your father two nights before you left?"

"I know nothing," said Marco.

"By the time it was discovered that the house was empty and people came in to make sure, you might be too weak to call out and attract their attention. Did you go to Budapest from Vienna, and were you there for three months?" asked the inquisitor.

"I know nothing," said Marco.

"You are too good for the little black cellar," put in the Lovely Person. "I like you. Don't go into it!"

"I know nothing," Marco answered, but the eyes which were like Loristan's gave her just such a look as Loristan would have given her, and she felt it. It made her uncomfortable.

"I don't believe you were ever ill-treated or beaten," she said. "I tell you, the little black cellar will be a hard thing. Don't go there!"

And this time Marco said nothing, but looked at her still as if he were some great young noble who was very proud.

He knew that every word the bearded man had spoken was true. To cry out would be of no use. If they went away and left him behind them, there was no knowing how many days would pass before the people of the neighborhood would begin to suspect that the place had been deserted, or how long it would be before it occurred to someone to give warning to the owner. And in the meantime, neither his father nor Lazarus nor The Rat would have the faintest reason for guessing where he was. And he would be sitting alone in the dark in the wine cellar. He did not know in the least what to

do about this thing. He only knew that silence was still the order.

"It is a jet-black little hole," the man said. "You might crack your throat in it, and no one would hear. Did men come to talk with your father in the middle of the night when you were in Vienna?"

"I know nothing," said Marco.

"He won't tell," said the Lovely Person. "I am sorry for this boy."

"He may tell after he has sat in the good little black wine cellar for a few hours," said the man with the pointed beard. "Come with me!"

He put his powerful hand on Marco's shoulder and pushed him before him. Marco made no struggle. He remembered what his father had said about the game not being a game. It wasn't a game now, but somehow he had a strong haughty feeling of not being afraid.

He was taken through the hallway, toward the rear, and down the commonplace flagged steps which led to the basement. Then he was marched through a narrow, ill-lighted, flagged passage to a door in the wall. The door was not locked and stood a trifle ajar. His companion pushed it farther open and showed part of a wine cellar which was so dark that it was only the shelves nearest the door that Marco could faintly see. His captor pushed him in and shut the door. It was as black a hole as he had described. Marco stood still in the midst of darkness like black velvet. His guard turned the key.

"The peasants who came to your father in Moscow spoke Samavian and were big men. Do you remember them?" he asked from outside.

"I know nothing," answered Marco.

"You are a young fool," the voice replied. "And I believe you know even more than we thought. Your father will be greatly troubled when you do not come home. I will come back to see you in a few hours, if it is possible. I will tell you,

however, that I have had disturbing news which might make it necessary for us to leave the house in a hurry. I might not have time to come down here again before leaving."

Marco stood with his back against a bit of wall and remained silent.

There was stillness for a few minutes, and then there was to be heard the sound of footsteps marching away.

When the last distant echo died all was quite silent, and Marco drew a long breath. Unbelievable as it may appear, it was in one sense almost a breath of relief. In the rush of strange feeling which had swept over him when he found himself facing the astounding situation upstairs, it had not been easy to realize what his thoughts really were; there were so many of them and they came so fast. How could he quite believe the evidence of his eyes and ears? A few minutes, only a few minutes, had changed his prettily grateful and kindly acquaintance into a subtle and cunning creature whose love for Samavia had been part of a plot to harm it and to harm his father.

What did she and her companion want to do—what could they do if they knew the things they were trying to force him to tell?

Marco braced his back against the wall stoutly.

"What will it be best to think about first?"

This he said because one of the most absorbingly fascinating things he and his father talked about together was the power of the thoughts which human beings allow to pass through their minds—the strange strength of them. When they talked of this, Marco felt as if he were listening to some marvelous Eastern story of magic which was true. In Loristan's travels, he had visited the far Oriental countries, and he had seen and learned many things which seemed marvels, and they had taught him deep thinking. He had known, and reasoned through days with men who believed that when they desired a thing, clear and exalted thought would bring it to

them. He had discovered why they believed this, and had learned to understand their profound arguments.

What he himself believed, he had taught Marco quite simply from his childhood. It was this: he himself—Marco, with the strong boy body, the thick mat of black hair, and the patched clothes—was the magician. He held and waved his wand himself—and his wand was his own Thought. When special privation or anxiety beset them, it was their rule to say, "What will it be best to think about first?" which was Marco's reason for saying it to himself now as he stood in the darkness which was like black velvet.

He waited a few minutes for the right thing to come to him.

"I will think of the very old hermit who lived on the ledge of the mountains in India and who let my father talk to him through all one night," he said at last. This had been a wonderful story and one of his favorites. Loristan had traveled far to see this ancient Buddhist, and what he had seen and heard during that one night had made changes in his life. The part of the story which came back to Marco now was these words:

"Let pass through thy mind, my son, only the image thou wouldst desire to see a truth. Meditate only upon the wish of thy heart, seeing first that it can injure no man and is not ignoble. Then will it take earthly form and draw near to thee. This is the law of That which creates."

"I am not afraid," Marco said aloud. "I shall not be afraid. In some way I shall get out."

This was the image he wanted most to keep steadily in his mind—that nothing could make him afraid, and that in some way he would get out of the wine cellar.

He thought of this for some minutes, and said the words over several times. He felt more like himself when he had done it.

"When my eyes are accustomed to the darkness, I shall see if there is any little glimmer of light anywhere," he said next.

He waited with patience, and it seemed for some time that he saw no glimmer at all. He put out his hands on either side of him, and found that, on the side of the wall against which he stood, there seemed to be no shelves. Perhaps the cellar had been used for other purposes than the storing of wine, and, if that was true, there might be somewhere some opening for ventilation. The air was not bad, but then the door had not been shut tightly when the man opened it.

"I am not afraid," he repeated. "I shall not be afraid. In some way I shall get out."

He would not allow himself to stop and think about his father waiting for his return. He knew that would only rouse his emotions and weaken his courage. He began to feel his way carefully along the wall. It reached farther than he had thought it would.

The cellar was not so very small. He crept round it gradually, and, when he had crept round it, he made his way across it, keeping his hands extended before him and setting down each foot cautiously. Then he sat down on the stone floor and thought again, and what he thought was of the things the old Buddhist had told his father, and that there was a way out of this place for him, and he should somehow find it, and, before too long a time had passed, be walking in the street again.

It was while he was thinking in this way that he felt a startling thing. It seemed almost as if something touched him. It made him jump, though the touch was so light and soft that it was scarcely a touch at all, in fact he could not be sure that he had not imagined it. He stood up and leaned against the wall again. Perhaps the suddenness of his movement placed him at some angle he had not reached before, or perhaps his eyes had become more completely accustomed to the darkness, for, as he turned his head to listen, he made a

discovery: above the door there was a place where the velvet blackness was not so dense. There was something like a slit in the wall, though, as it did not open upon daylight but upon the dark passage, it was not light it admitted so much as a lesser shade of darkness. But even that was better than nothing, and Marco drew another long breath.

"That is only the beginning. I shall find a way out," he said. "I *shall*."

He remembered reading a story of a man who, being shut by accident in a safety vault, passed through such terrors before his release that he believed he had spent two days and nights in the place when he had been there only a few hours.

"His thoughts did that. I must remember. I will sit down again and begin thinking of all the pictures in the cabinet rooms of the Art History Museum in Vienna. It will take some time, and then there are the others," he said.

It was a good plan. While he could keep his mind upon the game which had helped him to pass so many dull hours, he could think of nothing else, as it required close attention—and perhaps, as the day went on, his captors would begin to feel that it was not safe to run the risk of doing a thing as desperate as this would be. They might think better of it before they left the house at least. In any case, he had learned enough from Loristan to realize that only harm could come from letting one's mind run wild.

"A mind is either an engine with broken and flying gear, or a giant power under control," was the thing they knew.

He had walked in imagination through three of the cabinet rooms and was turning mentally into a fourth, when he found himself starting again quite violently. This time it was not at a touch but at a sound. Surely it was a sound. And it was in the cellar with him. But it was the tiniest possible noise, a ghost of a squeak and a suggestion of a movement. It came from the opposite side of the cellar, the side where the shelves were. He looked across in the darkness, and in the

darkness saw a light which there could be no mistake about. It WAS a light, two lights indeed, two round phosphorescent greenish balls. They were two eyes staring at him. And then he heard another sound. Not a squeak this time, but something so homely and comfortable that he actually burst out laughing. It was a cat purring, a nice warm cat! And she was curled up on one of the lower shelves purring to some newborn kittens. He knew there were kittens because it was plain now what the tiny squeak had been, and it was made plainer by the fact that he heard another much more distinct one and then another. They had all been asleep when he had come into the cellar. If the mother had been awake, she had probably been very much afraid. Afterward she had perhaps come down from her shelf to investigate, and had passed close to him. The feeling of relief which came upon him at this queer and simple discovery was wonderful. It was so natural and comfortable an everyday thing that it seemed to make spies and criminals unreal, and only natural things possible. With a mother cat purring away among her kittens, even a dark wine cellar was not so black. He got up and kneeled by the shelf. The greenish eyes did not shine in an unfriendly way. He could feel that the owner of them was a nice big cat, and he counted four round little balls of kittens. It was a curious delight to stroke the soft fur and talk to the mother cat. She answered with purring, as if she liked the sense of friendly human nearness. Marco laughed to himself.

"It's queer what a difference it makes!" he said. "It is almost like finding a window."

The mere presence of these harmless living things was companionship. He sat down close to the low shelf and listened to the motherly purring, now and then speaking and putting out his hand to touch the warm fur. The phosphorescent light in the green eyes was a comfort in itself.

"We shall get out of this—both of us," he said. "We shall not be here very long, Puss-cat."

He was not troubled by the fear of being really hungry for some time. He was so used to eating scantily from necessity, and to passing long hours without food during his journeys, that he had proved to himself that fasting is not, after all, such a desperate ordeal as most people imagine. If you begin by expecting to feel famished and by counting the hours between your meals, you will begin to be ravenous. But he knew better.

The time passed slowly; but he had known it would pass slowly, and he had made up his mind not to watch it nor ask himself questions about it. He was not a restless boy, but, like his father, could stand or sit or lie still. Now and then he could hear distant rumblings of carts and vans passing in the street. There was a certain degree of companionship in these also. He kept his place near the cat and his hand where he could occasionally touch her. He could lift his eyes now and then to the place where the dim glimmer of something like light showed itself.

Perhaps the stillness, perhaps the darkness, perhaps the purring of the mother cat, probably all three, caused his thoughts to begin to travel through his mind slowly and more slowly. At last they ceased and he fell asleep. The mother cat purred for some time, and then fell asleep herself.

CHAPTER XV
A Sound in a Dream

Marco slept peacefully for several hours. There was nothing to awaken him during that time. But at the end of it, his sleep was penetrated by a definite sound. He had dreamed of hearing a voice at a distance, and, as he tried in his dream to hear what it said, a brief metallic ringing sound awakened him outright. It was over by the time he was fully conscious, and at once he realized that the voice of his dream had been a real one, and was speaking still. It was the Lovely Person's voice, and she was speaking rapidly, as if she were in the greatest haste. She was speaking through the door.

"You will have to search for it," was all he heard. "I have not a moment!" And, as he listened to her hurriedly departing feet, there came to him with their hastening echoes the words, "You are too good for the cellar. I like you!"

He sprang to the door and tried it, but it was still locked. The feet ran up the cellar steps and through the upper hall, and the front door closed with a bang. The two people had gone away, as they had threatened. The voice had been excited as well as hurried. Something had happened to frighten them, and they had left the house in great haste.

Marco turned and stood with his back against the door. The cat had awakened and she was gazing at him with her green eyes. She began to purr encouragingly. She really helped Marco to think. He was thinking with all his might and trying to remember.

"What did she come for? She came for something," he said to himself. "What did she say? I only heard part of it, because I was asleep. The voice in the dream was part of it.

The part I heard was, 'You will have to search for it. I have not a moment.' And as she ran down the passage, she called back, 'You are too good for the cellar. I like you.'" He said the words over and over again and tried to recall exactly how they had sounded, and also to recall the voice which had seemed to be part of a dream but had been a real thing. Then he began to try his favorite experiment. As he often tried the experiment of commanding his mind to go to sleep, so he frequently experimented on commanding it to work for him—to help him to remember, to understand, and to argue about things clearly.

"Reason this out for me," he said to it now, quite naturally and calmly. "Show me what it means."

What did she come for? It was certain that she was in too great a hurry to be able, without a reason, to spare the time to come. What was the reason? She had said she liked him. Then she came because she liked him. If she liked him, she came to do something which was not unfriendly. The only good thing she could do for him was something which would help him to get out of the cellar. She had said twice that he was too good for the cellar. If he had been awake, he would have heard all she said and have understood what she wanted him to do or meant to do for him. He must not stop even to think of that. The first words he had heard—what had they been? They had been less clear to him than her last because he had heard them only as he was awakening. But he thought he was sure that they had been, "You will have to search for it." Search for it. For what? He thought and thought. What must he search for?

He sat down on the floor of the cellar and held his head in his hands, pressing his eyes so hard that curious lights floated before them.

"Tell me! Tell me!" he said to that part of his being which the Buddhist anchorite had said held all knowledge and could tell a man everything if he called upon it in the right spirit.

And in a few minutes, he recalled something which seemed so much a part of his sleep that he had not been sure that he had not dreamed it. The ringing sound! He sprang up on his feet with a little gasping shout. The ringing sound! It had been the ring of metal, striking as it fell. Anything made of metal might have sounded like that. She had thrown something made of metal into the cellar. She had thrown it through the slit in the bricks near the door. She liked him, and said he was too good for his prison. She had thrown to him the only thing which could set him free. She had thrown him the KEY of the cellar!

For a few minutes the feelings which surged through him were so full of strong excitement that they set his brain in a whirl. He knew what his father would say—that would not do. If he was to think, he must hold himself still and not let even joy overcome him. The key was in the black little cellar, and he must find it in the dark. Even the woman who liked him enough to give him a chance of freedom knew that she must not open the door and let him out. There must be a delay. He would have to find the key himself, and it would be sure to take time. The chances were that they would be at a safe enough distance before he could get out.

"I will kneel down and crawl on my hands and knees," he said.

"I will crawl back and forth and go over every inch of the floor with my hands until I find it. If I go over every inch, I shall find it."

So he kneeled down and began to crawl, and the cat watched him and purred.

"We shall get out, Puss-cat," he said to her. "I told you we should."

He crawled from the door to the wall at the side of the shelves, and then he crawled back again. The key might be quite a small one, and it was necessary that he should pass his hands over every inch, as he had said. The difficulty was to be

sure, in the darkness, that he did not miss an inch. Sometimes he was not sure enough, and then he went over the ground again. He crawled backward and forward, and he crawled forward and backward. He crawled crosswise and lengthwise, he crawled diagonally, and he crawled round and round. But he did not find the key. If he had had only a little light, but he had none. He was so absorbed in his search that he did not know he had been engaged in it for several hours, and that it was the middle of the night. But at last he realized that he must stop for a rest, because his knees were beginning to feel bruised, and the skin of his hands was sore as a result of the rubbing on the flags. The cat and her kittens had gone to sleep and awakened again two or three times.

"But it is somewhere!" he said obstinately. "It is inside the cellar. I heard something fall which was made of metal. That was the ringing sound which awakened me."

When he stood up, he found his body ached and he was very tired. He stretched himself and exercised his arms and legs.

"I wonder how long I have been crawling about," he thought. "But the key is in the cellar. It is in the cellar."

He sat down near the cat and her family, and, laying his arm on the shelf above her, rested his head on it. He began to think of another experiment.

"I am so tired, I believe I shall go to sleep again. 'Thought which Knows All'"—he was quoting something the hermit had said to Loristan in their midnight talk—"Thought which Knows All! Show me this little thing. Lead me to it when I awake."

And he did fall asleep, sound and fast.

He did not know that he slept all the rest of the night. But he did. When he awakened, it was daylight in the streets, and the milk carts were beginning to jingle about, and the early postmen were knocking big double knocks at front doors. The cat may have heard the milk carts, but the actual fact was that

she herself was hungry and wanted to go in search of food. Just as Marco lifted his head from his arm and sat up, she jumped down from her shelf and went to the door. She had expected to find it ajar as it had been before. When she found it shut, she scratched at it and was disturbed to find this of no use. Because she knew Marco was in the cellar, she felt she had a friend who would assist her, and she meowed appealingly.

This reminded Marco of the key.

"I will when I have found it," he said. "It is inside the cellar."

The cat meowed again, this time very anxiously indeed. The kittens heard her and began to squirm and squeak piteously.

"Lead me to this little thing," said Marco, as if speaking to Something in the darkness about him, and he got up.

He put his hand out toward the kittens, and it touched something lying not far from them. It must have been lying near his elbow all night while he slept.

It was the key! It had fallen upon the shelf, and not on the floor at all.

Marco picked it up and then stood still a moment. He made the sign of the cross.

Then he found his way to the door and fumbled until he found the keyhole and got the key into it. Then he turned it and pushed the door open—and the cat ran out into the passage before him.

CHAPTER XVI
The Rat to the Rescue

Marco walked through the passage and into the kitchen part of the basement. The doors were all locked, and they were solid doors. He ran up the flagged steps and found the door at the top shut and bolted also, and that too was a solid door. His jailers had plainly made sure that it should take time enough for him to make his way into the world, even after he got out of the wine cellar.

The cat had run away to some part of the place where mice were plentiful. Marco was by this time rather gnawingly hungry himself. If he could get into the kitchen, he might find some fragments of food left in a cupboard; but there was no moving the locked door. He tried the outlet into the area, but that was immovable. Then he saw near it a smaller door. It was evidently the entrance to the coal cellar under the pavement. This was proved by the fact that trodden coal dust marked the flagstones, and near it stood a scuttle with coal in it.

This coal scuttle was the thing which might help him! Above the area door was a small window which was supposed to light the entry. He could not reach it, and, if he reached it, he could not open it. He could throw pieces of coal at the glass and break it, and then he could shout for help when people passed by. They might not notice or understand where the shouts came from at first, but, if he kept them up, someone's attention would be attracted in the end.

He picked a large-sized solid piece of coal out of the heap in the scuttle, and threw it with all his force against the grimy glass. It smashed through and left a big hole. He threw

another, and the entire pane was splintered and fell outside into the area. Then he saw it was broad daylight, and guessed that he had been shut up a good many hours. There was plenty of coal in the scuttle, and he had a strong arm and a good aim. He smashed pane after pane, until only the framework remained. When he shouted, there would be nothing between his voice and the street. No one could see him, but if he could do something which would make people slacken their pace to listen, then he could call out that he was in the basement of the house with the broken window.

"Hallo!" he shouted. "Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"

But vehicles were passing in the street, and the passersby were absorbed in their own business. If they heard a sound, they did not stop to inquire into it.

"Hallo! Hallo! I am locked in!" yelled Marco, at the topmost power of his lungs. "Hallo! Hallo!"

After half an hour's shouting, he began to think that he was wasting his strength.

"They only think it is a boy shouting," he said. "Someone will notice in time. At night, when the streets are quiet, I might make a policeman hear. But my father does not know where I am. He will be trying to find me—so will Lazarus—so will The Rat. One of them might pass through this very street, as I did. What can I do!"

A new idea flashed light upon him.

"I will begin to sing a Samavian song, and I will sing it very loud. People nearly always stop a moment to listen to music and find out where it comes from. And if any of my own people came near, they would stop at once—and now and then I will shout for help."

Once when they had stopped to rest on Hampstead Heath, he had sung a valiant Samavian song for The Rat. The Rat had wanted to hear how he would sing when they went on their secret journey. He wanted him to sing for the Squad someday, to make the thing seem real. The Rat had been

greatly excited, and had begged for the song often. It was a stirring martial thing with a sort of trumpet call of a chorus. Thousands of Samavians had sung it together on their way to the battlefield, hundreds of years ago.

He drew back a step or so, and, putting his hands on his hips, began to sing, throwing his voice upward that it might pass through the broken window. He had a splendid and vibrant young voice, though he knew nothing of its fine quality. Just now he wanted only to make it loud.

In the street outside very few people were passing. An irritable old gentleman who was taking an invalid walk quite jumped with annoyance when the song suddenly trumpeted forth. Boys had no right to yell in that manner. He hurried his step to get away from the sound. Two or three other people glanced over their shoulders, but had not time to loiter. A few others listened with pleasure as they drew near and passed on.

"There's a boy with a fine voice," said one.

"What's he singing?" said his companion. "It sounds foreign."

"Don't know," was the reply as they went by. But at last a young man who was a music teacher, going to give a lesson, hesitated and looked about him. The song was very loud and spirited just at this moment. The music teacher could not understand where it came from, and paused to find out. The fact that he stopped attracted the attention of the next comer, who also paused.

"Who's singing?" he asked. "Where is he singing?"

"I can't make out," the music teacher laughed. "Sounds as if it came out of the ground."

And, because it was queer that a song should seem to be coming out of the ground, a costermonger stopped, and then a little boy, and then a workingwoman, and then a lady.

There was quite a little group when another person turned the corner of the street. He was a shabby boy on crutches, and he had a frantic look on his face.



The Rat swung himself into the group. "Where is he!"
"Where is he!" he cried.

And Marco actually heard, as he drew near to the group, the tap-tap-tap of crutches.

"It might be," he thought. "It might be!"

And he sang the trumpet call of the chorus as if it were meant to reach the skies, and he sang it again and again. And at the end of it shouted, "Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"

The Rat swung himself into the group and looked as if he

had gone crazy. He hurled himself against the people.

"Where is he! Where is he!" he cried, and he poured out some breathless words; it was almost as if he sobbed them out.

"We've been looking for him all night!" he shouted. "Where is he! Marco! Marco! No one else sings it but him. Marco! Marco!" And out of the area, as it seemed, came a shout of answer.

"Rat! Rat! I'm here in the cellar—locked in. I'm here!" and a big piece of coal came hurtling through the broken window and fell crashing on the area flags. The Rat got down the steps into the area as if he had not been on crutches but on legs, and banged on the door, shouting back:

"Marco! Marco! Here I am! Who locked you in? How can I get the door open?"

Marco was close against the door inside. It was The Rat! It was The Rat! And he would be in the street again in a few minutes. "Call a policeman!" he shouted through the keyhole. "The people locked me in on purpose and took away the keys."

Then the group of lookers-on began to get excited and press against the area railings and ask questions. They could not understand what had happened to cause the boy with the crutches to look as if he were crazy with terror and relief at the same time.

And the little boy ran delightedly to fetch a policeman, and found one in the next street, and, with some difficulty, persuaded him that it was his business to come and get a door open in an empty house where a boy who was a street singer had got locked up in a cellar.

CHAPTER XVII
"It Is a Very Bad Sign"

The policeman was not so much excited as out of temper. He did not know what Marco knew or what The Rat knew. Some common lad had got himself locked up in a house, and someone would have to go to the landlord and get a key from him. He had no intention of laying himself open to the law by breaking into a private house with his truncheon, as The Rat expected him to do.

"He got himself in through some of his larks, and he'll have to wait till he's got out without smashing locks," he growled, shaking the area door. "How did you get in there?" he shouted.

It was not easy for Marco to explain through a keyhole that he had come in to help a lady who had met with an accident. The policeman thought this mere boy's talk. As to the rest of the story, Marco knew that it could not be related at all without saying things which could not be explained to anyone but his father. He quickly made up his mind that he must let it be believed that he had been locked in by some queer accident. It must be supposed that the people had not remembered, in their haste, that he had not yet left the house.

When the young clerk from the house agency came with the keys, he was much disturbed and bewildered after he got inside.

"They've made a bolt of it," he said. "That happens now and then, but there's something queer about this. What did they lock these doors in the basement for, and the one on the stairs? What did they say to you?" he asked Marco, staring at him suspiciously.

"They said they were obliged to go suddenly," Marco answered.

"What were you doing in the basement?"

"The man took me down."

"And left you there and bolted? He must have been in a hurry."

"The lady said they had not a moment's time."

"Her ankle must have got well in short order," said the young man.

"I knew nothing about them," answered Marco. "I had never seen them before."

"The police were after them," the young man said. "That's what I should say. They paid three months' rent in advance, and they have only been here two. Some of these foreign spies lurking about London; that's what they were."

The Rat had not waited until the keys arrived. He had swung himself at his swiftest pace back through the streets to No. 7 Philibert Place. People turned and stared at his wild pale face as he almost shot past them.

He had left himself barely breath enough to speak with when he reached the house and banged on the door with his crutch to save time.

Both Loristan and Lazarus came to answer.

The Rat leaned against the door gasping.

"He's found! He's all right!" he panted. "Someone had locked him in a house and left him. They've sent for the keys. I'm going back. Brandon Terrace, No. 10."

Loristan and Lazarus exchanged glances. Both of them were at the moment as pale as The Rat.

"Help him into the house," said Loristan to Lazarus. "He must stay here and rest. We will go." The Rat knew it was an order.

He did not like it, but he obeyed.

"This is a bad sign, Master," said Lazarus, as they went out together.

"It is a very bad one," answered Loristan.

"God of the Right, defend us!" Lazarus groaned.

"Amen!" said Loristan. "Amen!"

The group had become a small crowd by the time they reached Brandon Terrace. Marco had not found it easy to leave the place because he was being questioned. Neither the policeman nor the agent's clerk seemed willing to relinquish the idea that he could give them some information about the absconding pair.

The entrance of Loristan produced its usual effect. The agent's clerk lifted his hat, and the policeman stood straight and made salute. Neither of them realized that the tall man's clothes were worn and threadbare. They felt only that a personage was before them, and that it was not possible to question his air of absolute and serene authority. He laid his hand on Marco's shoulder and held it there as he spoke. When Marco looked up at him and felt the closeness of his touch, it seemed as if it were an embrace—as if he had caught him to his breast.

"My boy knew nothing of these people," he said. "That I can guarantee. He had seen neither of them before. His entering the house was the result of no boyish trick. He has been shut up in this place for nearly twenty-four hours and has had no food. I must take him home. This is my address." He handed the young man a card.

Then they went home together, and all the way to Philibert Place Loristan's firm hand held closely to his boy's shoulder as if he could not endure to let him go. But on the way they said very little.

"Father," Marco said, rather hoarsely, when they first got away from the house in the terrace, "I can't talk well in the street. For one thing, I am so glad to be with you again. It seemed as if—it might turn out badly."

"Beloved one," Loristan said the words in their own Samavian, "until you are fed and at rest, you shall not talk at

all."

Afterward, when he was himself again and was allowed to tell his strange story, Marco found that both his father and Lazarus had at once had suspicions when he had not returned. They knew no ordinary event could have kept him. They were sure that he must have been detained against his will, and they were also sure that, if he had been so detained, it could only have been for reasons they could guess at.

"This was the card that she gave me," Marco said, and he handed it to Loristan. "She said you would remember the name." Loristan looked at the lettering with an ironic half-smile.

"I never heard it before," he replied. "She would not send me a name I knew. Probably I have never seen either of them. But I know the work they do. They are spies of the Maranovitch, and suspect that I know something of the Lost Prince. They believed they could terrify you into saying things which would be a clue. Men and women of their class will use desperate means to gain their end."

"Might they—have left me as they threatened?" Marco asked him.

"They would scarcely have dared, I think. Too great a hue and cry would have been raised by the discovery of such a crime. Too many detectives would have been set at work to track them."

But the look in his father's eyes as he spoke, and the pressure of the hand he stretched out to touch him, made Marco's heart thrill. He had won a new love and trust from his father. When they sat together and talked that night, they were closer to each other's souls than they had ever been before.

They sat in the firelight, Marco upon the worn hearth rug, and they talked about Samavia—about the war and its heartrending struggles, and about how they might end.

"Do you think that some time we might be exiles no

longer?" the boy said wistfully. "Do you think we might go there together—and see it—you and I, Father?"

There was a silence for a while. Loristan looked into the sinking bed of red coal.

"For years—for years I have made for my soul that image," he said slowly. "When I think of my friend on the side of the Himalayan Mountains, I say, 'The Thought which Thought the World may give us that also!'"

CHAPTER XVIII
"Cities and Faces"

The hours of Marco's unexplained absence had been terrible to Loristan and to Lazarus. They had reason for fears which it was not possible for them to express. As the night drew on, the fears took stronger form. They forgot the existence of The Rat, who sat biting his nails in the bedroom, afraid to go out lest he might lose the chance of being given some errand to do but also afraid to show himself lest he should seem in the way.

"I'll stay upstairs," he had said to Lazarus. "If you just whistle, I'll come."

The anguish he passed through as the day went by and Lazarus went out and came in and he himself received no orders, could not have been expressed in any ordinary words. He writhed in his chair, he bit his nails to the quick, he wrought himself into a frenzy of misery and terror by recalling one by one all the crimes his knowledge of London police-courts supplied him with. He was doing nothing, yet he dare not leave his post. It was his post after all, though they had not given it to him. He must do something.

In the middle of the night Loristan opened the door of the back sitting room, because he knew he must at least go upstairs and throw himself upon his bed even if he could not sleep.

He started back as the door opened. The Rat was sitting huddled on the floor near it with his back against the wall. He had a piece of paper in his hand and his twisted face was a weird thing to see.

"Why are you here?" Loristan asked.

"I've been here three hours, sir. I knew you'd have to come out sometime and I thought you'd let me speak to you. Will you—will you?"

"Come into the room," said Loristan. "I will listen to anything you want to say. What have you been drawing on that paper?" as The Rat got up in the wonderful way he had taught himself. The paper was covered with lines which showed it to be another of his plans.

"Please look at it," he begged. "I daren't go out lest you might want to send me somewhere. I daren't sit doing nothing. I began remembering and thinking things out. I put down all the streets and squares he *might* have walked through on his way home. I've not missed one. If you'll let me start out and walk through every one of them and talk to the policemen on the beat and look at the houses—and think out things and work at them—I'll not miss an inch—I'll not miss a brick or a flagstone—I'll—" His voice had a hard sound but it shook, and he himself shook.

Loristan touched his arm gently.

"You are a good comrade," he said. "It is well for us that you are here. You have thought of a good thing."

"May I go now?" said The Rat.

"This moment, if you are ready," was the answer. The Rat swung himself to the door.

Loristan said to him a thing which was like the sudden lighting of a great light in the very center of his being.

"You are one of us. Now that I know you are doing this I may even sleep. You are one of us." And it was because he was following this plan that The Rat had turned into Brandon Terrace and heard the Samavian song ringing out from the locked basement of Number 10.

"Yes, he is one of us," Loristan said, when he told this part of the story to Marco as they sat by the fire. "I had not been sure before. I wanted to be very sure. Last night I saw into the depths of him and *knew*. He may be trusted."

From that day The Rat held a new place. Lazarus himself, strangely enough, did not resent his holding it. The boy was allowed to be near Loristan as he had never dared to hope to be near. It was not merely that he was allowed to serve him in many ways, but he was taken into the intimacy which had before enclosed only the three. Loristan talked to him as he talked to Marco, drawing him within the circle which held so much that was comprehended without speech. The Rat knew that he was being trained and observed and he realized it with exaltation. His idol had said that he was "one of them" and he was watching and putting him to tests so that he might find out how much he was one of them. And he was doing it for some grave reason of his own. This thought possessed The Rat's whole mind. Perhaps he was wondering if he should find out that he was to be trusted, as a rock is to be trusted. That he should even think that perhaps he might find that he was like a rock, was inspiration enough.

"Sir," he said one night when they were alone together, because The Rat had been copying a roadmap. His voice was very low—"do you think that—sometime—you could trust me as you trust Marco? Could it ever be like that—ever?"

"The time has come," and Loristan's voice was almost as low as his own, though strong and deep feeling underlay its quiet—"the time has come when I can trust you with Marco—to be his companion—to care for him, to stand by his side at any moment. And Marco is—Marco is my son." That was enough to uplift The Rat to the skies. But there was more to follow.

"It may not be long before it may be his part to do work in which he will need a comrade who can be trusted—as a rock can be trusted."

He had said the very words The Rat's own mind had given to him.

"A Rock! A Rock!" the boy broke out. "Let me show you, sir. Send me with him for a servant. The crutches are nothing.

You've seen that they're as good as legs, haven't you? I've trained myself."

"I know, I know, dear lad." Marco had told him all of it. He gave him a gracious smile which seemed as if it held a sort of fine secret. "You shall go as his aide-de-camp. It shall be part of the game."

He had always encouraged "the game," and during the last weeks had even found time to help them in their plannings for the mysterious journey of the Secret Two. He had been so interested that once or twice he had called on Lazarus as an old soldier and Samavian to give his opinions of certain routes—and of the customs and habits of people in towns and villages by the way. Here they would find simple pastoral folk who danced, sang after their day's work, and who would tell all they knew; here they would find those who served or feared the Maranovitch and who would not talk at all. In one place they would meet with hospitality, in another with unfriendly suspicion of all strangers. Through talk and stories The Rat began to know the country almost as Marco knew it. That was part of the game too—because it was always "the game," they called it. Another part was The Rat's training of his memory, and bringing home his proofs of advance at night when he returned from his walk and could describe, or recite, or roughly sketch all he had seen in his passage from one place to another. Marco's part was to recall and sketch faces. Loristan one night gave him a number of photographs of people to commit to memory. Under each face was written the name of a place.

"Learn these faces," he said, "until you would know each one of them at once wheresoever you met it. Fix them upon your mind, so that it will be impossible for you to forget them. You must be able to sketch any one of them and recall the city or town or neighborhood connected with it."

Even this was still called "the game," but Marco began to know in his secret heart that it was so much more, that his

hand sometimes trembled with excitement as he made his sketches over and over again. To make each one many times was the best way to imbed it in his memory. The Rat knew, too, though he had no reason for knowing, but mere instinct. He used to lie awake in the night and think it over and remember what Loristan had said of the time coming when Marco might need a comrade in his work. What was his work to be? It was to be something like "the game." And they were being prepared for it. And though Marco often lay awake on his bed when The Rat lay awake on his sofa, neither boy spoke to the other of the thing his mind dwelt on. And Marco worked as he had never worked before. The game was very exciting when he could prove his prowess. The four gathered together at night in the back sitting room. Lazarus was obliged to be with them because a second judge was needed. Loristan would mention the name of a place, perhaps a street in Paris or a hotel in Vienna, and Marco would at once make a rapid sketch of the face under whose photograph the name of the locality had been written. It was not long before he could begin his sketch without more than a moment's hesitation. And yet even when this had become the case, they still played the game night after night. There was a great hotel near the Place de la Concorde in Paris, of which Marco felt he should never hear the name during all his life without there starting up before his mental vision a tall woman with fierce black eyes and a delicate high-bridged nose across which the strong eyebrows almost met. In Vienna there was a palace which would always bring back at once a pale cold-faced man with a heavy blonde lock which fell over his forehead. A certain street in Munich meant a stout genial old aristocrat with a sly smile; a village in Bavaria, a peasant with a vacant and simple countenance. A curled and smoothed man who looked like a hairdresser brought up a place in an Austrian mountain town. He knew them all as he knew his own face and No. 7 Philibert Place.

But still night after night the game was played.

Then came a night when, out of a deep sleep, he was awakened by Lazarus touching him. He had so long been secretly ready to answer any call that he sat up straight in bed at the first touch.

"Dress quickly and come downstairs," Lazarus said. "The Prince is here and wishes to speak with you."

Marco made no answer but got out of bed and began to slip on his clothes.

Lazarus touched The Rat.

The Rat was as ready as Marco and sat upright as he had done.

"Come down with the young Master," he commanded. "It is necessary that you should be seen and spoken to." And having given the order he went away.

No one heard the shoeless feet of the two boys as they stole down the stairs.

An elderly man in ordinary clothes, but with an unmistakable face, was sitting quietly talking to Loristan who with a gesture called both forward.

"The Prince has been much interested in what I have told him of your game," he said in his lowest voice. "He wishes to see you make your sketches, Marco."

Marco looked very straight into the Prince's eyes which were fixed intently on him as he made his bow.

"His Highness does me honor," he said, as his father might have said it. He went to the table at once and took from a drawer his pencils and pieces of cardboard.

"I should know he was your son and a Samavian," the Prince remarked.

Then his keen and deep-set eyes turned themselves on the boy with the crutches.

"This," said Loristan, "is the one who calls himself The Rat. He is one of us."

The Rat saluted.

"Please tell him, sir," he whispered, "that the crutches don't matter."

"He has trained himself to an extraordinary activity," Loristan said. "He can do anything."

The keen eyes were still taking The Rat in.

"They are an advantage," said the Prince at last.

Lazarus had nailed together a light, rough easel which Marco used in making his sketches when the game was played. Lazarus was standing in state at the door, and he came forward, brought the easel from its corner, and arranged the necessary drawing materials upon it.

Marco stood near it and waited the pleasure of his father and his visitor. They were speaking together in low tones and he waited several minutes. What The Rat noticed was what he had noticed before—that the big boy could stand still in perfect ease and silence. It was not necessary for him to say things or to ask questions—to look at people as if he felt restless if they did not speak to or notice him. He did not seem to require notice, and The Rat felt vaguely that, young as he was, this very freedom from any anxiety to be looked at or addressed made him somehow look like a great gentleman.

Loristan and the Prince advanced to where he stood.

"L'Hotel de Marigny," Loristan said.

Marco began to sketch rapidly. He began the portrait of the handsome woman with the delicate high-bridged nose and the black brows which almost met. As he did it, the Prince drew nearer and watched the work over his shoulder. It did not take very long and, when it was finished, the inspector turned, and after giving Loristan a long and strange look, nodded twice.

"It is a remarkable thing," he said. "In that rough sketch she is not to be mistaken."

Loristan bent his head.

Then he mentioned the name of another street in another place—and Marco sketched again. This time it was the

peasant with the simple face. The Prince bowed again. Then Loristan gave another name, and after that another and another; and Marco did his work until it was at an end, and Lazarus stood near with a handful of sketches which he had silently taken charge of as each was laid aside.

"You would know these faces wheresoever you saw them?" said the Prince. "If you passed one in Bond Street or in the Marylebone Road, you would recognize it at once?"

"As I know yours, sir," Marco answered.

Then followed a number of questions. Loristan asked them as he had often asked them before. They were questions as to the height and build of the originals of the pictures, of the color of their hair and eyes, and the order of their complexions. Marco answered them all. He knew all but the names of these people, and it was plainly not necessary that he should know them, as his father had never uttered them.

After this questioning was at an end the Prince pointed to The Rat who had leaned on his crutches against the wall, his eyes fiercely eager like a ferret's.

"And he?" the Prince said. "What can he do?"

"Let me try," said The Rat. "Marco knows."

Marco looked at his father.

"May I help him to show you?" he asked.

"Yes," Loristan answered, and then, as he turned to the Prince, he said again in his low voice: *"He is one of us."*

Then Marco began a new form of the game. He held up one of the pictured faces before The Rat, and The Rat named at once the city and place connected with it, he detailed the color of eyes and hair, the height, the build, all the personal details as Marco himself had detailed them. To these he added descriptions of the cities, and points concerning the police system, the palaces, the people. His face twisted itself, his eyes burned, his voice shook, but he was amazing in his readiness of reply and his exactness of memory.

"I can't draw," he said at the end. "But I can remember. I

didn't want anyone to be bothered with thinking I was trying to learn it. So only Marco knew."

This he said to Loristan with appeal in his voice.

"It was he who invented 'the game,'" said Loristan. "I showed you his strange maps and plans."

"It is a good game," the Prince answered in the manner of a man extraordinarily interested and impressed. "They know it well. They can be trusted."

"No such thing has ever been done before," Loristan said. "It is as new as it is daring and simple."

"Therein lies its safety," the Prince answered.

"Perhaps only boyhood," said Loristan, "could have dared to imagine it."

"The Prince thanks you," he said after a few more words spoken aside to his visitor. "We both thank you. You may go back to your beds."

And the boys went.

CHAPTER XIX
"That Is One!"

A week had not passed before Marco brought to The Rat in their bedroom an envelope containing a number of slips of paper on each of which was written something.

"This is another part of the game," he said gravely. "Let us sit down together by the table and study it."

They sat down and examined what was written on the slips. At the head of each was the name of one of the places with which Marco had connected a face he had sketched. Below were clear and concise directions as to how it was to be reached and the words to be said when each individual was encountered.

"This person is to be found at his stall in the market," was written of the vacant-faced peasant. "You will first attract his attention by asking the price of something. When he is looking at you, touch your left thumb lightly with the forefinger of your right hand. Then utter in a low distinct tone the words 'The Lamp is lighted.' That is all you are to do."

Sometimes the directions were not quite so simple, but they were all instructions of the same order. The originals of the sketches were to be sought out—always with precaution which should conceal that they were being sought at all, and always in such a manner as would cause an encounter to appear to be mere chance. Then certain words were to be uttered, but always without attracting the attention of any bystander or passerby.

The boys worked at their task through the entire day. They concentrated all their powers upon it. They wrote and re-wrote—they repeated to each other what they committed

to memory as if it were a lesson. Marco worked with the greater ease and more rapidly, because exercise of this order had been his practice and entertainment from his babyhood. The Rat, however, almost kept pace with him, as he had been born with a phenomenal memory and his eagerness and desire were a fury.

But throughout the entire day neither of them once referred to what they were doing as anything but "the game."

At night, it is true, each found himself lying awake and thinking. It was The Rat who broke the silence from his sofa.

"It is what the messengers of the Secret Party would be ordered to do when they were sent out to give the Sign for the Rising," he said. "I made that up the first day I invented the party, didn't I?"

"Yes," answered Marco.

After a third day's concentration they knew by heart everything given to them to learn. That night Loristan put them through an examination.

"Can you write these things?" he asked, after each had repeated them and emerged safely from all cross-questioning.

Each boy wrote them correctly from memory.

"Write yours in French—in German—in Russian—in Samavian," Loristan said to Marco.

"All you have told me to do and to learn is part of myself, Father," Marco said in the end. "It is part of me, as if it were my hand or my eyes—or my heart."

"I believe that is true," answered Loristan.

He was pale that night and there was a shadow on his face. His eyes held a great longing as they rested on Marco. It was a yearning which had a sort of dread in it.

Lazarus also did not seem quite himself. He was red instead of pale, and his movements were uncertain and restless. He cleared his throat nervously at intervals and more than once left his chair as if to look for something.

It was almost midnight when Loristan, standing near

Marco, put his arm round his shoulders.

"The Game"—he began, and then was silent a few moments while Marco felt his arm tighten its hold. Both Marco and The Rat felt a hard quick beat in their breasts, and, because of this and because the pause seemed long, Marco spoke.

"The Game—yes, Father?" he said.

"The Game is about to give you work to do—both of you," Loristan answered.

Lazarus cleared his throat and walked to the easel in the corner of the room. But he only changed the position of a piece of drawing paper on it and then came back.

"In two days you are to go to Paris—as you," to The Rat, "planned in the game."

"As I planned?" The Rat barely breathed the words.

"Yes," answered Loristan. "The instructions you have learned you will carry out. There is no more to be done than to manage to approach certain persons closely enough to be able to utter certain words to them."

"Only two young strollers whom no man could suspect," put in Lazarus in an astonishingly rough and shaky voice. "They could pass near the Emperor himself without danger. The young Master—" his voice became so hoarse that he was obligated to clear it loudly—"the young Master must carry himself less finely. It would be well to shuffle a little and slouch as if he were of the common people."

"Yes," said The Rat hastily. "He must do that. I can teach him. He holds his head and his shoulders like a gentleman. He must look like a street lad."

"I will look like one," said Marco, with determination.

"I will trust you to remind him," Loristan said to The Rat, and he said it with gravity. "That will be your charge."

As he lay upon his pillow that night, it seemed to Marco as if a load had lifted itself from his heart. It was the load of uncertainty and longing. He had so long borne the pain of

feeling that he was too young to be allowed to serve in any way. His dreams had never been wild ones—they had in fact always been boyish and modest, howsoever romantic. But now no dream which could have passed through his brain would have seemed so wonderful as this—that the hour had come—the hour had come—and that he, Marco, was to be its messenger. He was to do no dramatic deed and be announced by no flourish of heralds. No one would know what he did. What he achieved could only be attained if he remained obscure and unknown and seemed to everyone only a common ordinary boy who knew nothing whatever of important things. But his father had given to him a gift so splendid that he trembled with awe and joy as he thought of it. The Game had become real. He and The Rat were to carry with them The Sign, and it would be like carrying a tiny lamp to set aflame lights which would blaze from one mountaintop to another until half the world seemed on fire.

As he had awakened out of his sleep when Lazarus touched him, so he awakened in the middle of the night again. But he was not aroused by a touch. When he opened his eyes he knew it was a look which had penetrated his sleep—a look in the eyes of his father who was standing by his side. In the road outside there was the utter silence he had noticed the night of the Prince's first visit—the only light was that of the lamp in the street, but he could see Loristan's face clearly enough to know that the mere intensity of his gaze had awakened him. The Rat was sleeping profoundly. Loristan spoke in Samavian and under his breath.

"Beloved one," he said. "You are very young. Because I am your father—just at this hour I can feel nothing else. I have trained you for this through all the years of your life. I am proud of your young maturity and strength but—Beloved—you are a child! Can I do this thing!"

For the moment, his face and his voice were scarcely like his own.

He kneeled by the bedside, and, as he did it, Marco half sitting up caught his hand and held it hard against his breast.

"Father, I know!" he cried under his breath also. "It is true. I am a child but am I not a man also? You yourself said it. I always knew that you were teaching me to be one—for some reason. It was my secret that I knew it. I learned well because I never forgot it. And I learned. Did I not?"

He was so eager that he looked more like a boy than ever. But his young strength and courage were splendid to see. Loristan knew him through and through and read every boyish thought of his.

"Yes," he answered slowly. "You did your part—and now if I—drew back—you would feel that *I had failed you—failed you.*"

"You!" Marco breathed it proudly. "You could not fail even the weakest thing in the world."

There was a moment's silence in which the two pairs of eyes dwelt on each other with the deepest meaning, and then Loristan rose to his feet.

"The end will be all that our hearts most wish," he said. "Tomorrow you may begin the new part of 'the Game.' You may go to Paris."

When the train which was to meet the boat that crossed from Dover to Calais steamed out of the noisy Charing Cross Station, it carried in a third-class carriage two shabby boys. One of them would have been a handsome lad if he had not carried himself slouchingly and walked with a street lad's careless shuffling gait. The other was a cripple who moved slowly, and apparently with difficulty, on crutches. There was nothing remarkable or picturesque enough about them to attract attention. They sat in the corner of the carriage and neither talked much nor seemed to be particularly interested in the journey or each other. When they went on board the steamer, they were soon lost among the commoner passengers and in fact found for themselves a secluded place which was

not advantageous enough to be wanted by anyone else.

"What can such a poor-looking pair of lads be going to Paris for?" someone asked his companion.

"Not for pleasure, certainly; perhaps to get work," was the casual answer.

In the evening they reached Paris, and Marco led the way to a small cafe in a side street where they got some cheap food. In the same side street they found a bed they could share for the night in a tiny room over a baker's shop.

The Rat was too much excited to be ready to go to bed early. He begged Marco to guide him about the brilliant streets. They went slowly along the broad Avenue des Champs Elysees under the lights glittering among the horse-chestnut trees. The Rat's sharp eyes took it all in—the light of the cafes among the embowering trees, the many carriages rolling by, the people who loitered and laughed or sat at little tables drinking wine and listening to music, the broad stream of life which flowed on to the Arc de Triomphe and back again.

"It's brighter and clearer than London," he said to Marco. "The people look as if they were having more fun than they do in England."

The Place de la Concorde spreading its stately spaces—a world of illumination, movement, and majestic beauty—held him as though by a fascination. He wanted to stand and stare at it, first from one point of view and then from another. It was bigger and more wonderful than he had been able to picture it when Marco had described it to him and told him of the part it had played in the days of the French Revolution when the guillotine had stood in it and the tumbrils had emptied themselves at the foot of its steps.

He stood near the Obelisk a long time without speaking.

"I can see it all happening," he said at last, and he pulled Marco away.

Before they returned home, they found their way to a

large house which stood in a courtyard. In the iron work of the handsome gates which shut it in was wrought a gilded coronet. The gates were closed and the house was not brightly lighted.

They walked past it and round it without speaking, but, when they neared the entrance for the second time, The Rat said in a low tone:

"She is five feet seven, has black hair, a nose with a high bridge, her eyebrows are black and almost meet across it, she has a pale olive skin and holds her head proudly."

"That is the one," Marco answered.

They were a week in Paris and each day passed this big house. There were certain hours when great ladies were more likely to go out and come in than they were at others. Marco knew this, and they managed to be within sight of the house or to pass it at these hours. For two days they saw no sign of the person they wished to see, but one morning the gates were thrown open and they saw flowers and palms being taken in.

"She has been away and is coming back," said Marco. The next day they passed three times—once at the hour when fashionable women drive out to do their shopping, once at the time when afternoon visiting is most likely to begin, and once when the streets were brilliant with lights and the carriages had begun to roll by to dinner parties and theaters.

Then, as they stood at a little distance from the iron gates, a carriage drove through them and stopped before the big open door which was thrown open by two tall footmen in splendid livery.

"She is coming out," said The Rat.

They would be able to see her plainly when she came, because the lights over the entrance were so bright.

Marco slipped from under his coat sleeve a carefully made sketch.

He looked at it and The Rat looked at it.

A footman stood erect on each side of the open door. The

footman who sat with the coachman had got down and was waiting by the carriage. Marco and The Rat glanced again with furtive haste at the sketch. A handsome woman appeared upon the threshold. She paused and gave some order to the footman who stood on the right. Then she came out in the full light and got into the carriage which drove out of the courtyard and quite near the place where the two boys waited.

When it was gone, Marco drew a long breath as he tore the sketch into very small pieces indeed. He did not throw them away but put them into his pocket.

The Rat drew a long breath also.

"Yes," he said positively.

"Yes," said Marco.

When they were safely shut up in their room over the baker's shop, they discussed the chances of their being able to pass her in such a way as would seem accidental. Two common boys could not enter the courtyard. There was a back entrance for tradespeople and messengers. When she drove, she would always enter her carriage from the same place. Unless she sometimes walked, they could not approach her. What should be done? The thing was difficult. After they had talked some time, The Rat sat and gnawed his nails.

"Tomorrow afternoon," he broke out at last, "we'll watch and see if her carriage drives in for her—then, when she comes to the door, I'll go in and begin to beg. The servant will think I'm a foreigner and don't know what I'm doing. You can come after me to tell me to come away, because you know better than I do that I shall be ordered out. She may be a good-natured woman and listen to us—and you might get near her."

"We might try it," Marco answered. "It might work. We will try it."

The Rat never failed to treat him as his leader. He had begged Loristan to let him come with Marco as his servant, and his servant he had been more than willing to be. When

Loristan had said he should be his aide-de-camp, he had felt his trust lifted to a military dignity which uplifted him with it. As his aide-de-camp he must serve him, watch him, obey his lightest wish, make everything easy for him. Sometimes, Marco was troubled by the way in which he insisted on serving him, this queer, once dictatorial and cantankerous lad who had begun by throwing stones at him.

"You must not wait on me," he said to him. "I must wait upon myself."

The Rat rather flushed.

"He told me that he would let me come with you as your aide-de-camp," he said. "It—it's part of the game. It makes things easier if we keep up the game."

It would have attracted attention if they had spent too much time in the vicinity of the big house. So it happened that the next afternoon the great lady evidently drove out at an hour when they were not watching for her. They were on their way to try if they could carry out their plan, when, as they walked together along the Rue Royale, The Rat suddenly touched Marco's elbow.

"The carriage stands before the shop with lace in the windows," he whispered hurriedly.

Marco saw and recognized it at once. The owner had evidently gone into the shop to buy something. This was a better chance than they had hoped for, and, when they approached the carriage itself, they saw that there was another point in their favor. Inside were no less than three beautiful little Pekingese spaniels that looked exactly alike. They were all trying to look out of the window and were pushing against each other. They were so perfect and so pretty that few people passed by without looking at them. What better excuse could two boys have for lingering about a place?

They stopped and, standing a little distance away, began to look at and discuss them and laugh at their excited little antics. Through the shop window Marco caught a glimpse of

the great lady.

"She does not look much interested. She won't stay long," he whispered, and added aloud, "that little one is the master. See how he pushes the others aside! He is stronger than the other two, though he is so small."

"He can snap, too," said The Rat.

"She is coming now," warned Marco, and then laughed aloud as if at the Pekingese, which, catching sight of their mistress at the shop door, began to leap and yelp for joy.

Their mistress herself smiled, and was smiling as Marco drew near her.

"May we look at them, Madame?" he said in French, and, as she made an amiable gesture of acquiescence and moved toward the carriage with him, he spoke a few words, very low but very distinctly, in Russian.

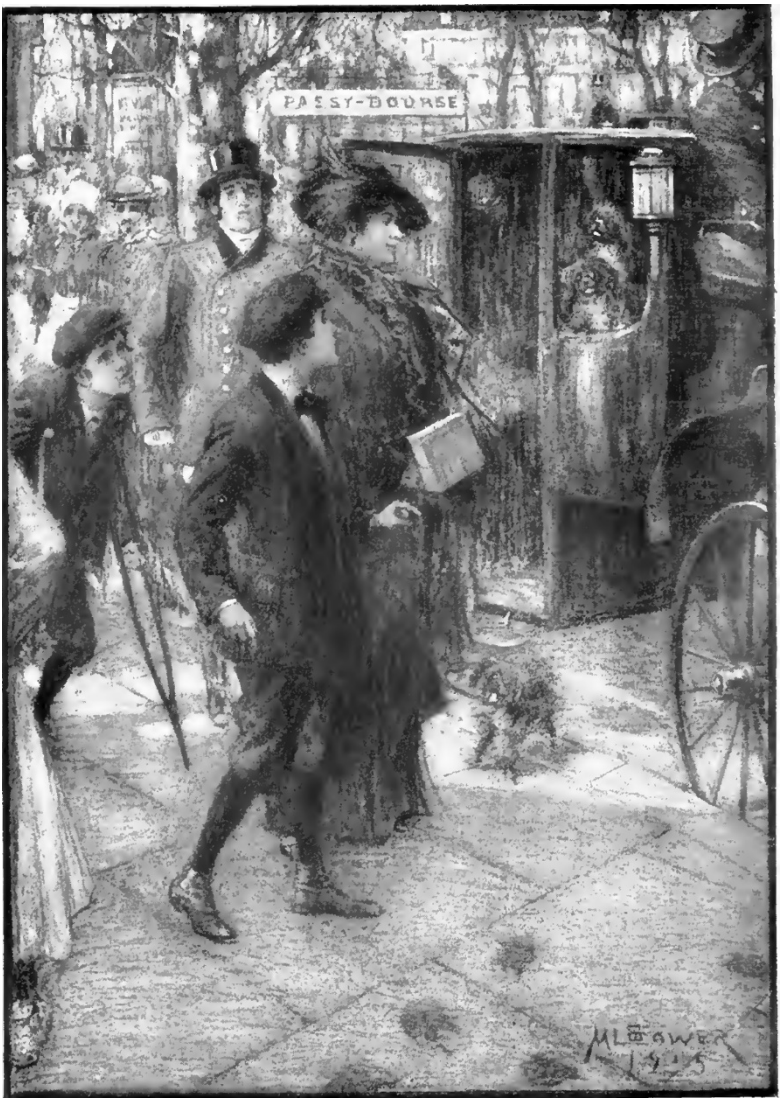
"The Lamp is lighted," he said.

The Rat was looking at her keenly, but he did not see her face change at all. What he noticed most throughout their journey was that each person to whom they gave the Sign had complete control over his or her countenance, if there were bystanders, and never betrayed by any change of expression that the words meant anything unusual.

The great lady merely went on smiling, and spoke only of the dogs, allowing Marco and himself to look at them through the window of the carriage as the footman opened the door for her to enter.

"They are beautiful little creatures," Marco said, lifting his cap, and, as the footman turned away, he uttered his few Russian words once more and moved off without even glancing at the lady again.

"That is *one!*" he said to The Rat that night before they went to sleep, and with a match he burned the scraps of the sketch he had torn and put into his pocket.



As she moved toward the carriage with him, he spoke a few words in Russian.

CHAPTER XX
Marco Goes to the Opera

Their next journey was to Munich, but the night before they left Paris an unexpected thing happened.

To reach the narrow staircase which led to their bedroom it was necessary to pass through the baker's shop itself.

The baker's wife was a friendly woman who liked the two boy lodgers who were so quiet and gave no trouble. More than once she had given them a hot roll or so or a freshly baked little tartlet with fruit in the center. When Marco came in this evening, she greeted him with a nod and handed him a small parcel as he passed through.

"This was left for you this afternoon," she said. "I see you are making purchases for your journey. My man and I are very sorry you are going."

"Thank you, Madame. We also are sorry," Marco answered, taking the parcel. "They are not large purchases, you see."

But neither he nor The Rat had bought anything at all, though the ordinary-looking little package was plainly addressed to him and bore the name of one of the big cheap shops. It felt as if it contained something soft.

When he reached their bedroom, The Rat was gazing out of the window watching every living thing which passed in the street below. He who had never seen anything but London was absorbed by the spell of Paris and was learning it by heart.

"Something has been sent to us. Look at this," said Marco.

The Rat was at his side at once. "What is it? Where did it come from?"

They opened the package and at first sight saw only several pairs of quite common woolen socks. As Marco took up the sock in the middle of the parcel, he felt that there was something inside it—something laid flat and carefully. He put his hand in and drew out a number of five-franc notes—not new ones, because new ones would have betrayed themselves by crackling. These were old enough to be soft. But there were enough of them to amount to a substantial sum.

"It is in small notes because poor boys would have only small ones. No one will be surprised when we change these," The Rat said.

Each of them believed the package had been sent by the great lady, but it had been done so carefully that not the slightest clue was furnished.

To The Rat, part of the deep excitement of "the Game" was the working out of the plans and methods of each person concerned. He could not have slept without working out some scheme which might have been used in this case. It thrilled him to contemplate the difficulties the great lady might have found herself obliged to overcome.

"Perhaps," he said, after thinking it over for some time, "she went to a big common shop dressed as if she were an ordinary woman and bought the socks and pretended she was going to carry them home herself. She would do that so that she could take them into some corner and slip the money in. Then, as she wanted to have them sent from the shop, perhaps she bought some other things and asked the people to deliver the packages to different places. The socks were sent to us and the other things to someone else. She would go to a shop where no one knew her and no one would expect to see her and she would wear clothes which looked neither rich nor too poor."

He created the whole episode with all its details and explained them to Marco. It fascinated him for the entire evening and he felt relieved after it and slept well.

Even before they had left London, certain newspapers had swept out of existence the story of the descendant of the Lost Prince. This had been done by derision and light handling—by treating it as a romantic legend.

At first, The Rat had resented this bitterly, but one day at a meal, when he had been producing arguments to prove that the story must be a true one, Loristan somehow checked him by his own silence.

"If there is such a man," he said after a pause, "it is well for him that his existence should not be believed in—for some time at least."

The Rat came to a dead stop. He felt hot for a moment and then felt cold. He saw a new idea all at once. He had been making a mistake in tactics.

No more was said but, when they were alone afterwards, he poured himself forth to Marco.

"I was a fool!" he cried out. "Why couldn't I see it for myself! Shall I tell you what I believe has been done? There is someone who has influence in England and who is a friend to Samavia. They've got the newspapers to make fun of the story so that it won't be believed. If it was believed, both the Iarovitch and the Maranovitch would be on the lookout, and the Secret Party would lose their chances. What a fool I was not to think of it! There's someone watching and working here who is a friend to Samavia."

"But there is someone in Samavia who has begun to suspect that it might be true," Marco answered. "If there were not, I should not have been shut in the cellar. Someone thought my father knew something. The spies had orders to find out what it was."

"Yes. Yes. That's true, too!" The Rat answered anxiously. "We shall have to be very careful."

In the lining of the sleeve of Marco's coat there was a slit into which he could slip any small thing he wished to conceal and also wished to be able to reach without trouble. In this he

had carried the sketch of the lady which he had torn up in Paris. When they walked in the streets of Munich, the morning after their arrival, he carried still another sketch. It was the one picturing the genial-looking old aristocrat with the sly smile.

One of the things they had learned about this one was that his chief characteristic was his passion for music. He was a patron of musicians and he spent much time in Munich because he loved its musical atmosphere and the earnestness of its opera goers.

"The military band plays in the Feldherrn-halle at midday. When something very good is being played, sometimes people stop their carriages so that they can listen. We will go there," said Marco.

"It's a chance," said The Rat. "We mustn't lose anything like a chance."

The day was brilliant and sunny, the people passing through the streets looked comfortable and homely, the mixture of old streets and modern ones, of ancient corners and shops and houses of the day was picturesque and cheerful. The Rat swinging through the crowd on his crutches was full of interest and exhilaration. He had begun to grow, and the change in his face and expression which had begun in London had become more noticeable. He had been given his "place," and a work to do which entitled him to hold it.

No one could have suspected them of carrying a strange and vital secret with them as they strolled along together. They seemed only two ordinary boys who looked in at shop windows and talked over their contents, and who loitered with upturned faces in the Marien-Platz before the ornate Gothic Rathaus to hear the eleven o'clock chimes play and see the painted figures of the King and Queen watch from their balcony the passing before them of the automatic tournament procession with its trumpeters and tilting knights. When the show was over and the automatic cock

broke forth into his lusty farewell crow, they laughed just as any other boys would have laughed. Sometimes it would have been easy for The Rat to forget that there was anything graver in the world than the new places and new wonders he was seeing, as if he were a wandering minstrel in a story.

But in Samavia bloody battles were being fought, and bloody plans were being wrought out, and in anguished anxiety the Secret Party and the Forgers of the Sword waited breathlessly for the Sign for which they had waited so long. And inside the lining of Marco's coat was hidden the sketched face, as the two unnoticed lads made their way to the Feldherrn-halle to hear the band play and see who might chance to be among the audience.

Because the day was sunny, and also because the band was playing a specially fine programme, the crowd in the square was larger than usual. Several vehicles had stopped, and among them were one or two which were not merely hired cabs but were the carriages of private persons.

One of them had evidently arrived early, as it was drawn up in a good position when the boys reached the corner. It was a big open carriage and a grand one, luxuriously upholstered in green. The footman and coachman wore green and silver liveries and seemed to know that people were looking at them and their master.

He was a stout, genial-looking old aristocrat with a sly smile, though, as he listened to the music, it almost forgot to be sly. In the carriage with him were a young officer and a little boy, and they also listened attentively. Standing near the carriage door were several people who were plainly friends or acquaintances, as they occasionally spoke to him. Marco touched The Rat's coat sleeve as the two boys approached.

"It would not be easy to get near him," he said. "Let us go and stand as close to the carriage as we can get without pushing. Perhaps we may hear someone say something about where he is going after the music is over."

Yes, there was no mistaking him. He was the right man. Each of them knew by heart the creases on his stout face and the sweep of his gray moustache. But there was nothing noticeable in a boy looking for a moment at a piece of paper, and Marco sauntered a few steps to a bit of space left bare by the crowd and took a last glance at his sketch. His rule was to make sure at the final moment. The music was very good and the group about the carriage was evidently enthusiastic. There was talk and praise and comment, and the old aristocrat nodded his head repeatedly in applause.

"The Chancellor is music mad," a looker-on near the boys said to another. "At the opera every night unless serious affairs keep him away! There you may see him nodding his old head and bursting his gloves with applauding when a good thing is done. He ought to have led an orchestra or played a cello. He is too big for first violin."

There was a group about the carriage to the last, when the music came to an end and it drove away. There had been no possible opportunity of passing close to it even had the presence of the young officer and the boy not presented an insurmountable obstacle.

Marco and The Rat went on their way and passed by the Hof-Theater and read the bills. "Tristan and Isolde" was to be presented at night and a great singer would sing *Isolde*.

"He will go to hear that," both boys said at once. "He will be sure to go."

It was decided between them that Marco should go on his quest alone when night came. One boy who hung around the entrance of the Opera would be observed less than two.

"People notice crutches more than they notice legs," The Rat said. "I'd better keep out of the way unless you need me. My time hasn't come yet. Even if it doesn't come at all I've—I've been on duty. I've gone with you and I've been ready—that's what an aide-de-camp does."

He stayed at home and read such English papers as he

could lay hands on and he drew plans and re-fought battles on paper.

Marco went to the opera. Even if he had not known his way to the square near the place where the Hof-Theater stood, he could easily have found it by following the groups of people in the streets who all seemed walking in one direction. There were students in their odd caps walking three or four abreast, there were young couples and older ones, and here and there whole families; there were soldiers of all ages, officers and privates; and, when talk was to be heard in passing, it was always talk about music.

For some time Marco waited in the square and watched the carriages roll up and pass under the huge pillared portico to deposit their contents at the entrance and at once drive away in orderly sequence. He must make sure that the grand carriage with the green and silver liveries rolled up with the rest. If it came, he would buy a cheap ticket and go inside.

It was rather late when it arrived. People in Munich are not late for the opera if it can be helped, and the coachman drove up hurriedly. The green and silver footman leaped to the ground and opened the carriage door almost before it stopped. The Chancellor got out looking less genial than usual because he was afraid that he might lose some of the overture. A rosy-cheeked girl in a white frock was with him and she was evidently trying to soothe him.

"I do not think we are really late, Father," she said. "Don't feel cross, dear. It will spoil the music for you."

This was not a time in which a man's attention could be attracted quietly. Marco ran to get the ticket which would give him a place among the rows of young soldiers, artists, male and female students, and musicians who were willing to stand four or five deep throughout the performance of even the longest opera. He knew that, unless they were in one of the few boxes which belonged only to the court, the Chancellor and his rosy-cheeked daughter would be in the

best seats in the front curve of the balcony which were the most desirable of the house. He soon saw them. They had secured the central places directly below the large royal box where two quiet princesses and their attendants were already seated.

When he found he was not too late to hear the overture, the Chancellor's face become more genial than ever. He settled himself down to an evening of enjoyment and evidently forgot everything else in the world. Marco did not lose sight of him. When the audience went out between acts to promenade in the corridors, he might go also and there might be a chance to pass near to him in the crowd. He watched him closely. Sometimes his fine old face saddened at the beautiful woe of the music, sometimes it looked enraptured, and it was always evident that every note reached his soul.

The pretty daughter who sat beside him was attentive but not so enthralled. After the first act two glittering young officers appeared and made elegant and low bows, drawing their heels together as they kissed her hand. They looked sorry when they were obliged to return to their seats again.

After the second act the Chancellor sat for a few minutes as if he were in a dream. The people in the seats near him began to rise from their seats and file out into the corridors. The young officers were to be seen rising also. The rosy daughter leaned forward and touched her father's arm gently.

"She wants him to take her out," Marco thought. "He will take her because he is good-natured."

He saw him recall himself from his dream with a smile and then he rose and, after helping to arrange a silvery blue scarf round the girl's shoulders, gave her his arm just as Marco skipped out of his fourth row standing place.

It was a rather warm night and the corridors were full. By the time Marco had reached the balcony floor, the pair had issued from the little door and were temporarily lost in the



A moment later, a hand lightly touched him.

moving numbers.

Marco quietly made his way among the crowd trying to look as if he belonged to somebody. Once or twice his strong body and his dense black eyes and lashes made people glance at him, but he was not the only boy who had been brought to the opera so he felt safe enough to stop at the foot of the stairs and watch those who went up and those who passed by. Such a miscellaneous crowd as it was made up of—good unfashionable music lovers mixed here and there with grand people of the court and the gay world.

Suddenly he heard a low laugh and a moment later a hand lightly touched him.

"You *did* get out, then?" a soft voice said.

When he turned he felt his muscles stiffen. He ceased to slouch and did not smile as he looked at the speaker. What

he felt was a wave of fierce and haughty anger. It swept over him before he had time to control it.

A lovely person who seemed swathed in several shades of soft violet drapery was smiling at him with long, lovely eyes.

It was the woman who had trapped him into No. 10 Brandon Terrace.

CHAPTER XXI
"Help!"

"Did it take you so long to find it?" asked the Lovely Person with the smile. "Of course I knew you would find it in the end. But we had to give ourselves time. How long did it take?"

Marco removed himself from beneath the touch of her hand. It was quietly done, but there was a disdain in his young face which made her wince though she pretended to shrug her shoulders amusedly.

"You refuse to answer?" she laughed.

"I refuse."

At that very moment he saw at the curve of the corridor the Chancellor and his daughter approaching slowly. The two young officers were talking gaily to the girl. They were on their way back to their box. Was he going to lose them? Was he?

The delicate hand was laid on his shoulder again, but this time he felt that it grasped him firmly.

"Naughty boy!" the soft voice said. "I am going to take you home with me. If you struggle I shall tell these people that you are my bad boy who is here without permission. What will you answer? My escort is coming down the staircase and will help me. Do you see?" And in fact there appeared in the crowd at the head of the staircase the figure of the man he remembered.

He did see. A dampness broke out on the palms of his hands. If she did this bold thing, what could he say to those she told her lie to? How could he bring proof or explain who he was—and what story dare he tell? His protestations and

struggles would merely amuse the lookers-on, who would see in them only the impotent rage of an insubordinate youngster.

There swept over him a wave of remembrance which brought back, as if he were living through it again, the moment when he had stood in the darkness of the wine cellar with his back against the door and heard the man walk away and leave him alone. He felt again as he had done then—but now he was in another land and far away from his father. He could do nothing to help himself unless Something showed him a way.

He made no sound, and the woman who held him saw only a flame leap under his dense black lashes.

But something within him called out. It was as if he heard it. It was that strong self—the self that was Marco, and it called—it called as if it shouted.

"Help!" it called—to that Unknown Stranger Thing which had made worlds and which he and his father so often talked of and in whose power they so believed. "Help!"

The Chancellor was drawing nearer. Perhaps! Should he—?

"You are too proud to kick and shout," the voice went on. "And people would only laugh. Do you see?"

The stairs were crowded and the man who was at the head of them could only move slowly. But he had seen the boy.

Marco turned so that he could face his captor squarely as if he were going to say something in answer to her. But he was not.

Even as he made the movement of turning, the help he had called for came and he knew what he should do. And he could do two things at once—save himself and give his Sign—because, the Sign once given, the Chancellor would understand.

"He will be here in a moment. He has recognized you," the woman said.

As he glanced up the stairs, the delicate grip of her hand

unconsciously slackened.

Marco whirled away from her. The bell rang which was to warn the audience that they must return to their seats and he saw the Chancellor hasten his pace.

A moment later, the old aristocrat found himself amazedly looking down at the pale face of a breathless lad who spoke to him in German and in such a manner that he could not but pause and listen.

"Sir," he was saying, "the woman in violet at the foot of the stairs is a spy. She trapped me once and she threatens to do it again. Sir, may I beg you to protect me?"

He said it low and fast. No one else could hear his words.

"What! What!" the Chancellor exclaimed.

And then, drawing a step nearer and quite as low and rapidly but with perfect distinctness, Marco uttered four words:

"The Lamp is lighted."

The Help cry had been answered instantly. Marco saw it at once in the old man's eyes, notwithstanding that he turned to look at the woman at the foot of the staircase as if she only concerned him.

"What! What!" he said again, and made a movement toward her, pulling his large moustache with a fierce hand.

Then Marco recognized that a curious thing happened. The Lovely Person saw the movement and the gray moustache, and that instant her smile died away and she turned quite white—so white, that under the brilliant electric light she was almost green and scarcely looked lovely at all. She made a sign to the man on the staircase and slipped through the crowd like an eel. She was a slim flexible creature and never was a disappearance more wonderful in its rapidity. Between stout matrons and their thin or stout escorts and families she made her way and lost herself—but always making toward the exit. In two minutes there was no sight of her violet draperies to be seen. She was gone and so,

evidently, was her male companion.

It was plain to Marco that to follow the profession of a spy was not by any means a safe thing. The Chancellor had recognized her—she had recognized the Chancellor who turned looking ferociously angry and spoke to one of the young officers.

"She and the man with her are two of the most dangerous spies in Europe. She is a Rumanian and he is a Russian. What they wanted of this innocent lad I don't pretend to know. What did she threaten?" to Marco.

Marco was feeling rather cold and sick and had lost his healthy color for the moment.

"She said she meant to take me home with her and would pretend I was her son who had come here without permission," he answered. "She believes I know something I do not." He made a hesitating but grateful bow. "The third act, sir—I must not keep you. Thank you! Thank you!"

The Chancellor moved toward the entrance door of the balcony seats, but he did it with his hand on Marco's shoulder.

"See that he gets home safely," he said to the younger of the two officers. "Send a messenger with him. He's young to be attacked by creatures of that kind."

Polite young officers naturally obey the commands of Chancellors and such dignitaries. This one found without trouble a young private who marched with Marco through the deserted streets to his lodgings. He was a stolid young Bavarian peasant and seemed to have no curiosity or even any interest in the reason for the command given him. He was in fact thinking of his sweetheart who lived near Konigsee and who had skated with him on the frozen lake last winter. He scarcely gave a glance to the schoolboy he was to escort, he neither knew nor wondered why.

The Rat had fallen asleep over his papers and lay with his head on his folded arms on the table. But he was awakened by Marco's coming into the room and sat up blinking his eyes

in the effort to get them open.

"Did you see him? Did you get near enough?" he drowsed.

"Yes," Marco answered. "I got near enough."

The Rat sat upright suddenly.

"It's not been easy," he exclaimed. "I'm sure something happened—something went wrong."

"Something nearly went wrong—*very* nearly," answered Marco. But as he spoke he took the sketch of the Chancellor out of the slit in his sleeve and tore it and burned it with a match. "But I did get near enough. And that's *two*."

They talked long, before they went to sleep that night. The Rat grew pale as he listened to the story of the woman in violet.

"I ought to have gone with you!" he said. "I see now. An aide-de-camp must always be in attendance. It would have been harder for her to manage two than one. I must always be near to watch, even if I am not close by you. If you had not come back—if you had not come back!" He struck his clenched hands together fiercely. "What should I have done!"

When Marco turned toward him from the table near which he was standing, he looked like his father.

"You would have gone on with the Game just as far as you could," he said. "You could not leave it. You remember the places, and the faces, and the Sign. There is some money; and when it was all gone, you could have begged, as we used to pretend we should. We have not had to do it yet; and it was best to save it for country places and villages. But you could have done it if you were obliged to. The Game would have to go on."

The Rat caught at his thin chest as if he had been struck breathless.

"Without you?" he gasped. "Without you?"

"Yes," said Marco. "And we must think of it, and plan in case anything like that should happen."

He stopped himself quite suddenly, and sat down, looking

straight before him, as if at some far away thing he saw.

"Nothing will happen," he said. "Nothing can."

"What are you thinking of?" The Rat gulped, because his breath had not quite come back. "Why will nothing happen?"

"Because—" the boy spoke in an almost matter-of-fact tone—in quite an unexalted tone at all events, "you see I can always make a strong call, as I did tonight."

"Did you shout?" The Rat asked. "I didn't know you shouted."

"I didn't. I said nothing aloud. But I—the myself that is in me," Marco touched himself on the breast, "called out, 'Help! Help!' with all its strength. And help came."

The Rat regarded him dubiously.

"What did it call to?" he asked.

"To the Power—to the Strength-place—to the Thought that does things. The Buddhist hermit, who told my father about it, called it 'The Thought that thought the World.'"

A reluctant suspicion betrayed itself in The Rat's eyes.

"Do you mean you prayed?" he inquired, with a slight touch of disfavor.

Marco's eyes remained fixed upon him in vague thoughtfulness for a moment or so of pause.

"I don't know," he said at last. "Perhaps it's the same thing—when you need something so much that you cry out loud for it. But it's not words, it's a strong thing without a name. I called like that when I was shut in the wine cellar. I remembered some of the things the old Buddhist told my father."

The Rat moved restlessly.

"The help came that time," he admitted. "How did it come tonight?"

"In that thought which flashed into my mind almost the next second. It came like lightning. All at once I knew if I ran to the Chancellor and said the woman was a spy, it would startle him into listening to me; and that then I could give

him the Sign; and that when I gave him the Sign, he would know I was speaking the truth and would protect me."

"It was a splendid thought!" The Rat said. "And it was quick. But it was you who thought of it."

"All thinking is part of the Big Thought," said Marco slowly. "It *knows*—It *knows*. And the outside part of us somehow broke the chain that linked us to It. And we are always trying to mend the chain, without knowing it. That is what our thinking is—trying to mend the chain. But we shall find out how to do it sometime. The old Buddhist told my father so—just as the sun was rising from behind a high peak of the Himalayas." Then he added hastily, "I am only telling you what my father told me, and he only told me what the old hermit told him."

"Does your father believe what he told him?" The Rat's bewilderment had become an eager and restless thing.

"Yes, he believes it. He always thought something like it, himself. That is why he is so calm and knows so well how to wait."

"Is *that* it!" breathed The Rat. "Is that why? Has—has he mended the chain?" And there was awe in his voice, because of this one man to whom he felt any achievement was possible.

"I believe he has," said Marco. "Don't you think so yourself?"

"He has done something," The Rat said.

He seemed to be thinking things over before he spoke again—and then even more slowly than Marco.

"If he could mend the chain," he said almost in a whisper, "he could find out where the descendant of the Lost Prince is. He would know what to do for Samavia!"

He ended the words with a start, and his whole face glowed with a new, amazed light.

"Perhaps he does know!" he cried. "If the help comes like thoughts—as yours did—perhaps his thought of letting us

give the Sign was part of it. We—just we two everyday boys—are part of it!"

"The old Buddhist said—" began Marco.

"Look here!" broke in The Rat. "Tell me the whole story. I want to hear it."

It was because Loristan had heard it, and listened and believed, that The Rat had taken fire. His imagination seized upon the idea, as it would have seized on some theory of necromancy proved true and workable.

With his elbows on the table and his hands in his hair, he leaned forward, twisting a lock with restless fingers. His breath quickened.

"Tell it," he said, "I want to hear it all!"

"I shall have to tell it in my own words," Marco said. "And it won't be as wonderful as it was when my father told it to me. This is what I remember:

"My father had gone through much pain and trouble. A great load was upon him, and he had been told he was going to die before his work was done. He had gone to India, because a man he was obliged to speak to had gone there to hunt, and no one knew when he would return. My father followed him for months from one wild place to another, and, when he found him, the man would not hear or believe what he had come so far to say. Then he had jungle fever and almost died. Once the natives left him for dead in a bungalow in the forest, and he heard the jackals howling round him all the night. Through all the hours he was only alive enough to be conscious of two things—all the rest of him seemed gone from his body: his thought knew that his work was unfinished—and his body heard the jackals howl!"

"Was the work for Samavia?" The Rat put in quickly. "If he had died that night, the descendant of the Lost Prince never would have been found—never!" The Rat bit his lip so hard that a drop of blood started from it.

"When he was slowly coming alive again, a native, who

had gone back and stayed to wait upon him, told him that near the summit of a mountain, about fifty miles away, there was a ledge which jutted out into space and hung over the valley, which was thousands of feet below. On the ledge there was a hut in which there lived an ancient Buddhist, who was a holy man, as they called him, and who had been there during time which had not been measured. They said that their grandparents and great-grandparents had known of him, though very few persons had ever seen him. It was told that the most savage beast was tame before him. They said that a man-eating tiger would stop to salute him, and that a thirsty lioness would bring her whelps to drink at the spring near his hut."

"That was a lie," said The Rat promptly.

Marco neither laughed nor frowned.

"How do we *know?*" he said. "It was a native's story, and it might be anything. My father neither said it was true nor false. He listened to all that was told him by natives. They said that the holy man was the brother of the stars. He knew all things past and to come, and could heal the sick. But most people, especially those who had sinful thoughts, were afraid to go near him."

"I'd like to have seen—" The Rat pondered aloud, but he did not finish.

"Before my father was well, he had made up his mind to travel to the ledge if he could. He felt as if he must go. He thought that if he were going to die, the hermit might tell him some wise thing to do for Samavia."

"He might have given him a message to leave to the Secret Ones," said The Rat.

"He was so weak when he set out on his journey that he wondered if he would reach the end of it. Part of the way he traveled by bullock cart, and part, he was carried by natives. But at last the bearers came to a place more than halfway up the mountain, and would go no further. Then they went back

and left him to climb the rest of the way himself. They had traveled slowly and he had got more strength, but he was weak yet. The forest was more wonderful than anything he had ever seen. There were tropical trees with foliage like lace, and some with huge leaves, and some of them seemed to reach the sky. Sometimes he could barely see gleams of blue through them. And vines swung down from their high branches, and caught each other, and matted together; and there were hot scents, and strange flowers, and dazzling birds darting about, and thick moss, and little cascades bursting out. The path grew narrower and steeper, and the flower scents and the sultriness made it like walking in a hothouse. He heard rustlings in the undergrowth, which might have been made by any kind of wild animal; once he stepped across a deadly snake without seeing it. But it was asleep and did not hurt him. He knew the natives had been convinced that he would not reach the ledge; but for some strange reason he believed he should. He stopped and rested many times, and he drank some milk he had brought in a canteen. The higher he climbed, the more wonderful everything was, and a strange feeling began to fill him. He said his body stopped being tired and began to feel very light. And his load lifted itself from his heart, as if it were not his load anymore but belonged to something stronger. Even Samavia seemed to be safe. As he went higher and higher, and looked down the abyss at the world below, it appeared as if it were not real but only a dream he had wakened from—only a dream."

The Rat moved restlessly.

"Perhaps he was light-headed with the fever," he suggested.

"The fever had left him, and the weakness had left him," Marco answered. "It seemed as if he had never really been ill at all—as if no one could be ill, because things like that were only dreams, just as the world was."

"I wish I'd been with him! Perhaps I could have thrown

these away—down into the abyss!" And The Rat shook his crutches which rested against the table. "I feel as if I was climbing, too. Go on."

Marco had become more absorbed than The Rat. He had lost himself in the memory of the story.

"I felt that *I* was climbing, when he told me," he said. "I felt as if I were breathing in the hot flower scents and pushing aside the big leaves and giant ferns. There had been a rain, and they were wet and shining with big drops, like jewels, that showered over him as he thrust his way through and under them. And the stillness and the height—the stillness and the height! I can't make it real to you as he made it to me! I can't! I was there. He took me. And it was so high—and so still—and so beautiful that I could scarcely bear it."

But the truth was, that with some vivid boy-touch he had carried his hearer far. The Rat was deadly quiet. Even his eyes had not moved. He spoke almost as if he were in a sort of trance. "It's real," he said. "I'm there now. As high as you—go on—go on. I want to climb higher."

And Marco, understanding, went on.

"The day was over and the stars were out when he reached the place where the ledge was. He said he thought that during the last part of the climb he never looked on the earth at all. The stars were so immense that he could not look away from them. They seemed to be drawing him up. And all overhead was like violet velvet, and they hung there like great lamps of radiance. Can you see them? You must see them. My father saw them all night long. They were part of the wonder."

"I see them," The Rat answered, still in his trance-like voice and without stirring, and Marco knew he did.

"And there, with the huge stars watching it, was the hut on the ledge. And there was no one there. The door was open. And outside it was a low bench and table of stone. And on the table was a meal of dates and rice, waiting. Not far from the hut was a deep spring, which ran away in a clear brook.

My father drank and bathed his face there. Then he went out on the ledge, and sat down and waited, with his face turned up to the stars. He did not lie down, and he thought he saw the stars all the time he waited. He was sure he did not sleep. He did not know how long he sat there alone. But at last he drew his eyes from the stars, as if he had been commanded to do it. And he was not alone anymore. A yard or so away from him sat the holy man. He knew it was the hermit because his eyes were different from any human eyes he had ever beheld. They were as still as the night was, and as deep as the shadows covering the world thousands of feet below, and they had a far, far look, and a strange light was in them."

"What did he say?" asked The Rat hoarsely.

"He only said, 'Rise, my son. I awaited thee. Go and eat the food I prepared for thee, and then we will speak together.' He didn't move or speak again until my father had eaten the meal. He only sat on the moss and let his eyes rest on the shadows over the abyss. When my father went back, he made a gesture which meant that he should sit near him.

"Then he sat still for several minutes, and let his eyes rest on my father, until he felt as if the light in them were set in the midst of his own body and his soul. Then he said, 'I cannot tell thee all thou wouldst know. That I may not do.' He had a wonderful gentle voice, like a deep soft bell. 'But the work will be done. Thy life and thy son's life will set it on its way.'

"They sat through the whole night together. And the stars hung quite near, as if they listened. And there were sounds in the bushes of stealthy, padding feet which wandered about as if the owners of them listened too. And the wonderful, low, peaceful voice of the holy man went on and on, telling of wonders which seemed like miracles but which were to him only the 'working of the Law.'"

"What is the Law?" The Rat broke in.

"There were two my father wrote down, and I learned them. The first was the law of The One. I'll try to say that,"

and he covered his eyes and waited through a moment of silence.

It seemed to The Rat as if the room held an extraordinary stillness.

"Listen!" came next. "This is it:

"'*There are a myriad worlds. There is but One Thought out of which they grew. Its Law is Order which cannot swerve. Its creatures are free to choose. Only they can create Disorder, which in itself is Pain and Woe and Hate and Fear. These they alone can bring forth. The Great One is a Golden Light. It is not remote but near. Hold thyself within its glow and thou wilt behold all things clearly. First, with all thy breathing being, know one thing! That thine own thought—when so thou standest—is one with That which thought the Worlds!*'"

"What?" gasped The Rat. "My thought—the things *I* think!"

"Your thoughts—boys' thoughts—anybody's thoughts."

"You're giving me the jim-jams!"

"He said it," answered Marco. "And it was then he spoke about the broken Link—and about the greatest books in the world—that in all their different ways, they were only saying over and over again one thing thousands of times. Just this thing—'Hate not, Fear not, Love.' And he said that was Order. And when it was disturbed, suffering came—poverty and misery and catastrophe and wars."

"Wars!" The Rat said sharply. "The World couldn't do without war—and armies and defences! What about Samavia?"

"My father asked him that. And this is what he answered. I learned that too. Let me think again," and he waited as he had waited before. Then he lifted his head. "Listen! This is it:

"'*Out of the blackness of Disorder and its outpouring of human misery, there will arise the Order which is Peace. When Man learns that he is one with the Thought which itself creates all beauty, all power, all splendor, and all repose, he will not fear that*

his brother can rob him of his heart's desire. He will stand in the Light and draw to himself his own.'"

"Draw to himself?" The Rat said. "Draw what he wants? I don't believe it!"

"Nobody does," said Marco. "We don't know. He said we stood in the dark of the night—without stars—and did not know that the broken chain swung just above us."

"I don't believe it!" said The Rat. "It's too big!"

Marco did not say whether he believed it or not. He only went on speaking.

"My father listened until he felt as if he had stopped breathing. Just at the stillest of the stillness the Buddhist stopped speaking. And there was a rustling of the undergrowth a few yards away, as if something big was pushing its way through—and there was the soft pad of feet. The Buddhist turned his head and my father heard him say softly: 'Come forth, Sister.'

"And a huge leopardess with two cubs walked out on to the ledge and came to him and threw herself down with a heavy lunge near his feet."

"Your father saw that!" cried out The Rat. "You mean the old fellow knew something that made wild beasts afraid to touch him or anyone near him?"

"Not afraid. They knew he was their brother, and that he was one with the Law. He had lived so long with the Great Thought that all darkness and fear had left him forever. He had mended the Chain."

The Rat had reached deep waters. He leaned forward—his hands burrowing in his hair, his face scowling and twisted, his eyes boring into space. He had climbed to the ledge at the mountaintop; he had seen the luminous immensity of the stars, and he had looked down into the shadows filling the world thousands of feet below. Was there some remote deep in him from whose darkness a slow light was rising? All that Loristan had said he knew must be true. But the rest of it—?

Marco got up and came over to him. He looked like his father again.

"If the descendant of the Lost Prince is brought back to rule Samavia, he will teach his people the Law of the One. It was for that the holy man taught my father until the dawn came."

"Who will—who will teach the Lost Prince—the new King—when he is found?" The Rat cried. "Who will teach him?"

"The hermit said my father would. He said he would also teach his son—and that son would teach his son—and he would teach his. And through such as they were, the whole world would come to know the Order and the Law."

Never had The Rat looked so strange and fierce a thing. A whole world at peace! No tactics—no battles—no slaughtered heroes—no clash of arms, and fame! It made him feel sick. And yet—something set his chest heaving.

"And your father would teach him that—when he was found! So that he could teach his sons. Your father *believes* in it?"

"Yes," Marco answered. He said nothing but "Yes." The Rat threw himself forward on the table, face downward.

"Then," he said, "he must make me believe it. He must teach me—if he can."

They heard a clumping step upon the staircase, and, when it reached the landing, it stopped at their door. Then there was a solid knock.

When Marco opened the door, the young soldier who had escorted him from the Hof-Theater was standing outside. He looked as uninterested and stolid as before, as he handed in a small flat package.

"You must have dropped it near your seat at the Opera," he said. "I was to give it into your own hands. It is your purse."

After he had clumped down the staircase again, Marco and The Rat drew a quick breath at one and the same time.

"I had no seat and I had no purse," Marco said. "Let us open it."

There was a flat limp leather note-holder inside. In it was a paper, at the head of which were photographs of the Lovely Person and her companion. Beneath were a few lines which stated that they were the well-known spies, Eugenia Karovna and Paul Varel, and that the bearer must be protected against them. It was signed by the Chief of the Police. On a separate sheet was written the command: "Carry this with you as protection."

"That is help," The Rat said. "It would protect us, even in another country. The Chancellor sent it—but you made the strong call—and it's here!"

There was no street lamp to shine into their windows when they went at last to bed. When the blind was drawn up, they were nearer the sky than they had been in the Marylebone Road. The last thing each of them saw, as he went to sleep, was the stars—and in their dreams, they saw them grow larger and larger, and hang like lamps of radiance against the violet-velvet sky above a ledge of a Himalayan Mountain, where they listened to the sound of a low voice going on and on and on.

CHAPTER XXII
A Night Vigil

On a hill in the midst of a great Austrian plain, around which high Alps wait watching through the ages, stands a venerable fortress, almost more beautiful than anything one has ever seen. Perhaps, if it were not for the great plain flowering broadly about it with its widespread beauties of meadowland, and wood, and dim toned buildings gathered about farms, and its dream of a small ancient city at its feet, it might—though it is to be doubted—seem something less a marvel of medieval picturesqueness. But out of the plain rises the low hill, and surrounding it at a stately distance stands guard the giant majesty of Alps, with shoulders in the clouds and god-like heads above them, looking on—always looking on—sometimes themselves ethereal clouds of snow whiteness, sometimes monster bare crags which pierce the blue, and whose unchanging silence seems to know the secret of the everlasting. And on the hill which this august circle holds in its embrace, as though it enclosed a treasure, stands the old, old, towered fortress built as a citadel for the Prince Archbishops, who were kings in their domain in the long past centuries when the splendor and power of ecclesiastical princes was among the greatest upon earth.

And as you approach the town—and as you leave it—and as you walk through its streets, the broad calm empty looking ones, or the narrow thoroughfares whose houses seem so near to each other, whether you climb or descend—or cross bridges, or gaze at churches, or step out on your balcony at night to look at the mountains and the moon—always it seems that from some point you can see it gazing down at

you—the citadel of Hohen-Salzburg.

It was to Salzburg they went next, because at Salzburg was to be found the man who looked like a hairdresser and who worked in a barber's shop. Strange as it might seem, to him also must be carried the Sign.

"There may be people who come to him to be shaved—soldiers, or men who know things," The Rat worked it out, "and he can speak to them when he is standing close to them. It will be easy to get near him. You can go and have your hair cut."

The journey from Munich was not a long one, and during the latter part of it they had the wooden seated third-class carriage to themselves. Even the drowsy old peasant who nodded and slept in one corner got out with his bundles at last. To Marco the mountains were long known wonders which could never grow old. They had always and always been so old! Surely they had been the first of the world! Surely they had been standing there waiting when it was said "Let there be Light." The Light had known it would find them there. They were so silent, and yet it seemed as if they said some amazing thing—something which would take your breath from you if you could hear it. And they never changed. The clouds changed, they wreathed them, and hid them, and trailed down them, and poured out storm torrents on them, and thundered against them, and darted forked lightnings round them. But the mountains stood there afterwards as if such things had not been and were not in the world. Winds roared and tore at them, centuries passed over them—centuries of millions of lives, of changing of kingdoms and empires, of battles and worldwide fame which grew and died and passed away; and temples crumbled, and kings' tombs were forgotten, and cities were buried and others built over them after hundreds of years—and perhaps a few stones fell from a mountainside, or a fissure was worn, which the people below could not even see. And that was all. There they stood,

and perhaps their secret was that they had been there forever and ever. That was what the mountains said to Marco, which was why he did not want to talk much, but sat and gazed out of the carriage window.

The Rat had been very silent all the morning. He had been silent when they got up, and he had scarcely spoken when they made their way to the station at Munich and sat waiting for their train. It seemed to Marco that he was thinking so hard that he was like a person who was far away from the place he stood in. His brows were drawn together and his eyes did not seem to see the people who passed by. Usually he saw everything and made shrewd remarks on almost all he saw. But today he was somehow otherwise absorbed. He sat in the train with his forehead against the window and stared out. He moved and gasped when he found himself staring at the Alps, but afterwards he was even strangely still. It was not until after the sleepy old peasant had gathered his bundles and got out at a station that he spoke, and he did it without turning his head.

"You only told me one of the two laws," he said. "What was the other one?"

Marco brought himself back from his dream of reaching the highest mountaintop and seeing clouds float beneath his feet in the sun. He had to come back a long way.

"Are you thinking of that? I wondered what you had been thinking of all the morning," he said.

"I couldn't stop thinking of it. What was the second one?" said The Rat, but he did not turn his head.

"It was called the Law of Earthly Living. It was for every day," said Marco. "It was for the ordering of common things—the small things we think don't matter, as well as the big ones. I always remember that one without any trouble. This was it:

"'*Let pass through thy mind, my son, only the image thou wouldst desire to see become a truth. Meditate only upon the wish of thy heart—seeing first that it is such as can wrong no man and*

is not ignoble. Then will it take earthly form and draw near to thee.

"'This is the Law of That which Creates.'"

Then The Rat turned round. He had a shrewdly reasoning mind.

"That sounds as if you could get anything you wanted, if you think about it long enough and in the right way," he said. "But perhaps it only means that, if you do it, you'll be happy after you're dead. My father used to shout with laughing when he was drunk and talked about things like that and looked at his rags."

He hugged his knees for a few minutes. He was remembering the rags, and the fog-darkened room in the slums, and the loud, hideous laughter.

"What if you want something that will harm somebody else?" he said next. "What if you hate someone and wish you could kill him?"

"That was one of the questions my father asked that night on the ledge. The holy man said people always asked it," Marco answered. "This was the answer:

"'Let him who stretcheth forth his hand to draw the lightning to his brother recall that through his own soul and body will pass the bolt.'"

"Wonder if there's anything in it?" The Rat pondered. "It'd make a chap careful if he believed it! Revenging yourself on a man would be like holding him against a live wire to kill him and getting all the volts through yourself."

A sudden anxiety revealed itself in his face.

"Does your father believe it?" he asked. "Does he?"

"He knows it is true," Marco said.

"I'll own up," The Rat decided after further reflection—"I'll own up I'm glad that there isn't anyone left that I've a grudge against. There isn't anyone—now."

Then he fell again into silence and did not speak until their journey was at an end. As they arrived early in the day, they had plenty of time to wander about the marvelous little

old city. But through the wide streets and through the narrow ones, under the archways into the market gardens, across the bridge and into the square where the "glockenspiel" played its old tinkling tune, everywhere the Citadel looked down and always The Rat walked on in his dream.

They found the hairdresser's shop in one of the narrow streets. There were no grand shops there, and this particular shop was a modest one. They walked past it once, and then went back. It was a shop so humble that there was nothing remarkable in two common boys going into it to have their hair cut. An old man came forward to receive them. He was evidently glad of their modest patronage. He undertook to attend to The Rat himself, but, having arranged him in a chair, he turned about and called to someone in the back room.

"Heinrich," he said.

In the slit in Marco's sleeve was the sketch of the man with smooth curled hair, who looked like a hairdresser. They had found a corner in which to take their final look at it before they turned back to come in. Heinrich, who came forth from the small back room, had smooth curled hair. He looked extremely like a hairdresser. He had features like those in the sketch—his nose and mouth and chin and figure were like what Marco had drawn and committed to memory. But—

He gave Marco a chair and tied the professional white covering around his neck. Marco leaned back and closed his eyes a moment.

"That is *not* the man!" he was saying to himself. "He is *not* the man."

How he knew he was not, he could not have explained, but he felt sure. It was a strong conviction. But for the sudden feeling, nothing would have been easier than to give the Sign. And if he could not give it now, where was the one to whom it must be spoken, and what would be the result if that one could not be found? And if there were two who were so much

alike, how could he be sure?

Each owner of each of the pictured faces was a link in a powerful secret chain; and if a link were missed, the chain would be broken. Each time Heinrich came within the line of his vision, he recorded every feature afresh and compared it with the remembered sketch. Each time the resemblance became more close, but each time some persistent inner conviction repeated, "No; the Sign is not for him!"

It was disturbing, also, to find that The Rat was all at once as restless as he had previously been silent and preoccupied. He moved in his chair, to the great discomfort of the old hairdresser. He kept turning his head to talk. He asked Marco to translate divers questions he wished him to ask the two men. They were questions about the Citadel—about the Monchsberg—the Residenz—the Glockenspiel—the mountains. He added one query to another and could not sit still.

"The young gentleman will get an ear snipped," said the old man to Marco. "And it will not be my fault."

"What shall I do?" Marco was thinking. "He is not the man."

He did not give the Sign. He must go away and think it out, though where his thoughts would lead him he did not know. This was a more difficult problem than he had ever dreamed of facing. There was no one to ask advice of. Only himself and The Rat, who was nervously wriggling and twisting in his chair.

"You must sit still," he said to him. "The hairdresser is afraid you will make him cut you by accident."

"But I want to know who lives at the Residenz?" said The Rat. "These men can tell us things if you ask them."

"It is done now," said the old hairdresser with a relieved air. "Perhaps the cutting of his hair makes the young gentleman nervous. It is sometimes so."

The Rat stood close to Marco's chair and asked questions until Heinrich also had done his work. Marco could not

understand his companion's change of mood. He realized that, if he had wished to give the Sign, he had been allowed no opportunity. He could not have given it. The restless questioning had so directed the older man's attention to his son and Marco that nothing could have been said to Heinrich without his observing it.

"I could not have spoken if he had been the man," Marco said to himself.

Their very exit from the shop seemed a little hurried. When they were fairly in the street, The Rat made a clutch at Marco's arm.

"You didn't give it?" he whispered breathlessly. "I kept talking and talking to prevent you."

Marco tried not to feel breathless, and he tried to speak in a low and level voice with no hint of exclamation in it.

"Why did you say that?" he asked.

The Rat drew closer to him.

"That was not the man!" he whispered. "It doesn't matter how much he looks like him, he isn't the right one."

He was pale and swinging along swiftly as if he were in a hurry.

"Let's get into a quiet place," he said. "Those queer things you've been telling me have got hold of me. How did I know? How could I know—unless it's because I've been trying to work that second law? I've been saying to myself that we should be told the right things to do—for the Game and for your father—and so that I could be the right sort of aide-de-camp. I've been working at it, and, when he came out, I knew he was not the man in spite of his looks. And I couldn't be sure you knew, and I thought, if I kept on talking and interrupting you with silly questions, you could be prevented from speaking."

"There's a place not far away where we can get a look at the mountains. Let's go there and sit down," said Marco. "I knew it was not the right one, too. It's the Help over again."

"Yes, it's the Help—it's the Help—it must be," muttered The Rat, walking fast and with a pale, set face. "It could not be anything else."

They got away from the streets and the people and reached the quiet place where they could see the mountains. There they sat down by the wayside. The Rat took off his cap and wiped his forehead, but it was not only the quick walking which had made it damp.

"The queerness of it gave me a kind of fright," he said. "When he came out and he was near enough for me to see him, a sudden strong feeling came over me. It seemed as if I knew he wasn't the man. Then I said to myself—'but he looks like him'—and I began to get nervous. And then I was sure again—and then I wanted to try to stop you from giving him the Sign. And then it all seemed foolishness—and the next second all the things you had told me rushed back to me at once—and I remembered what I had been thinking ever since—and I said—'Perhaps it's the Law beginning to work,' and the palms of my hands got moist."

Marco was very quiet. He was looking at the farthest and highest peaks and wondering about many things.

"It was the expression of his face that was different," he said. "And his eyes. They are rather smaller than the right man's are. The light in the shop was poor, and it was not until the last time he bent over me that I found out what I had not seen before. His eyes are gray—the other ones are brown."

"Did you see that!" The Rat exclaimed. "Then we're sure! We're safe!"

"We're not safe till we've found the right man," Marco said. "Where is he? Where is he? Where is he?"

He said the words dreamily and quietly, as if he were lost in thought—but also rather as if he expected an answer. And he still looked at the far-off peaks. The Rat, after watching him a moment or so, began to look at them also. They were like a loadstone to him too. There was something stilling

about them, and when your eyes had rested upon them a few moments they did not want to move away.

"There must be a ledge up there somewhere," he said at last.

"Let's go up and look for it and sit there and think and think—about finding the right man."

There seemed nothing fantastic in this to Marco. To go into some quiet place and sit and think about the thing he wanted to remember or to find out was an old way of his. To be quiet was always the best thing, his father had taught him. It was like listening to something which could speak without words.

"There is a little train which goes up the Gaisberg," he said. "When you are at the top, a world of mountains spreads around you. Lazarus went once and told me. And we can lie out on the grass all night. Let us go, Aide-de-camp."

So they went, each one thinking the same thought, and each boy-mind holding its own vision. Marco was the calmer of the two, because his belief that there was always help to be found was an accustomed one and had ceased to seem to partake of the supernatural. He believed quite simply that it was the working of a law, not the breaking of one, which gave answer and led him in his quests. The Rat, who had known nothing of laws other than those administered by police courts, was at once awed and fascinated by the suggestion of crossing some borderland of the Unknown. The law of the One had baffled and overthrown him, with its sweeping away of the enmities of passions which created wars and called for armies. But the Law of Earthly Living seemed to offer practical benefits if you could hold on to yourself enough to work it.

"You wouldn't get everything for nothing, as far as I can make out," he had said to Marco. "You'd have to sweep all the rubbish out of your mind—sweep it as if you did it with a broom—and then keep on thinking straight and believing you

were going to get things—and working for them—and they'd come."

Then he had laughed a short ugly laugh because he recalled something.

"There was something in the Bible that my father used to jeer about—something about a man getting what he prayed for if he believed it," he said.

"Oh, yes, it's there," said Marco. "That if a man pray believing he shall receive what he asks it shall be given him. All the books say something like it. It's been said so often it makes you believe it."

"He didn't believe it, and I didn't," said The Rat.

"Nobody does—really," answered Marco, as he had done once before. "It's because we don't know."

They went up the Gaisberg in the little train, which pushed and dragged and panted slowly upward with them. It took them with it stubbornly and gradually higher and higher until it had left Salzburg and the Citadel below and had reached the world of mountains which rose and spread and lifted great heads behind each other and beside each other and beyond each other until there seemed no other land on earth but that on mountainsides and backs and shoulders and crowns. And also one felt the absurdity of living upon flat ground, where life must be an insignificant thing.

There were only a few sightseers in the small carriages, and they were going to look at the view from the summit. They were not in search of a ledge.

The Rat and Marco were. When the little train stopped at the top, they got out with the rest. They wandered about with them over the short grass on the treeless summit and looked out from this viewpoint and the other. The Rat grew more and more silent, and his silence was not merely a matter of speechlessness but of expression. He *looked* silent and as if he were no longer aware of the earth. They left the sightseers at last and wandered away by themselves. They found a ledge

where they could sit or lie and where even the world of mountains seemed below them. They had brought some simple food with them, and they laid it behind a jutting bit of rock. When the sightseers boarded the laboring little train again and were dragged back down the mountain, their night of vigil would begin.

That was what it was to be. A night of stillness on the heights, where they could wait and watch and hold themselves ready to hear any thought which spoke to them.

The Rat was so thrilled that he would not have been surprised if he had heard a voice from the place of the stars. But Marco only believed that in this great stillness and beauty, if he held his boy-soul quiet enough, he should find himself at last thinking of something that would lead him to the place which held what it was best that he should find. The people returned to the train and it set out upon its way down the steepness.

They heard it laboring on its way, as though it was forced to make as much effort to hold itself back as it had made to drag itself upward.

Then they were alone, and it was a loneness such as an eagle might feel when it held itself poised high in the curve of blue. And they sat and watched. They saw the sun go down and, shade by shade, deepen and make radiant and then draw away with it the last touches of color—rose-gold, rose-purple, and rose-gray.

One mountaintop after another held its blush a few moments and lost it. It took long to gather them all but at length they were gone and the marvel of night fell.

The breath of the forests below was sweet about them, and soundlessness enclosed them which was of unearthly peace. The stars began to show themselves, and presently the two who waited found their faces turned upward to the sky and they both were speaking in whispers.

"The stars look large here," The Rat said.

"Yes," answered Marco. "We are not as high as the Buddhist was, but it seems like the top of the world."

"There is a light on the side of the mountain yonder which is not a star," The Rat whispered.

"It is a light in a hut where the guides take the climbers to rest and to spend the night," answered Marco.

"It is so still," The Rat whispered again after a silence, and Marco whispered back:

"It is so still."

They had eaten their meal of black bread and cheese after the setting of the sun, and now they lay down on their backs and looked up until the first few stars had multiplied themselves into myriads. They began a little low talk, but the soundlessness was stronger than themselves.

"How am I going to hold on to that second law?" The Rat said restlessly. "'Let pass through thy mind only the image thou wouldst see become a truth.' The things that are passing through my mind are not the things I want to come true. What if we don't find him—don't find the right one, I mean!"

"Lie still—still—and look up at the stars," whispered Marco. "They give you a *sure* feeling."

There was something in the curious serenity of him which calmed even his aide-de-camp. The Rat lay still and looked—and looked—and thought. And what he thought of was the desire of his heart. The soundlessness enwrapped him and there was no world left. That there was a spark of light in the mountain-climbers' rest hut was a thing forgotten.

They were only two boys, and they had begun their journey on the earliest train and had been walking about all day and thinking of great and anxious things.

"It is so still," The Rat whispered again at last.

"It is so still," whispered Marco.

And the mountains rising behind each other and beside each other and beyond each other in the night, and also the myriads of stars which had so multiplied themselves, looking

down knew that they were asleep—as sleep the human things which do not watch forever.

"Someone is smoking," Marco found himself saying in a dream. After which he awakened and found that the smoke was not part of a dream at all. It came from the pipe of a young man who had an alpenstock and who looked as if he had climbed to see the sunrise. He wore the clothes of a climber and a green hat with a tuft at the back. He looked down at the two boys, surprised.

"Good day," he said. "Did you sleep here so that you could see the sun get up?"

"Yes," answered Marco.

"Were you cold?"

"We slept too soundly to know. And we brought our thick coats."

"I slept halfway down the mountains," said the smoker. "I am a guide in these days, but I have not been one long enough to miss a sunrise it is no work to reach. My father and brother think I am mad about such things. They would rather stay in their beds. Oh! he is awake, is he?" turning toward The Rat, who had risen on one elbow and was staring at him. "What is the matter? You look as if you were afraid of me."

Marco did not wait for The Rat to recover his breath and speak.

"I know why he looks at you so," he answered for him. "He is startled. Yesterday we went to a hairdresser's shop down below there, and we saw a man who was almost exactly like you—only—" he added, looking up, "his eyes were gray and yours are brown."

"He was my twin brother," said the guide, puffing at his pipe cheerfully. "My father thought he could make hairdressers of us both, and I tried it for four years. But I always wanted to be climbing the mountains and there were not holidays enough. So I cut my hair, and washed the pomade out of it, and broke away. I don't look like a hairdresser now,

do I?"

He did not. Not at all. But Marco knew him. He was the man. There was no one on the mountaintop but themselves, and the sun was just showing a rim of gold above the farthest and highest giant's shoulders. One need not be afraid to do anything, since there was no one to see or hear. Marco slipped the sketch out of the slit in his sleeve. He looked at it and he looked at the guide, and then he showed it to him.

"That is not your brother. It is you!" he said.

The man's face changed a little—more than any other face had changed when its owner had been spoken to. On a mountaintop as the sun rises one is not afraid.

"The Lamp is lighted," said Marco. "The Lamp is lighted."

"God be thanked!" burst forth the man. And he took off his hat and bared his head. Then the rim behind the mountain's shoulder leaped forth into a golden torrent of splendor.

And The Rat stood up, resting his weight on his crutches in utter silence, and stared and stared.

"That is three!" said Marco.

CHAPTER XXIII
The Silver Horn

During the next week, which they spent in journeying towards Vienna, they gave the Sign to three different persons at places which were on the way. In a village across the frontier in Bavaria they found a giant of an old man sitting on a bench under a tree before his mountain "Gasthaus" or inn; and when the four words were uttered, he stood up and bared his head as the guide had done. When Marco gave the Sign in some quiet place to a man who was alone, he noticed that they all did this and said their "God be thanked" devoutly, as if it were part of some religious ceremony. In a small town a few miles away he had to search some hours before he found a stalwart young shoemaker with bright red hair and a horse-shoe shaped scar on his forehead. He was not in his workshop when the boys first passed it, because, as they found out later, he had been climbing a mountain the day before, and had been detained in the descent because his companion had hurt himself.

When Marco went in and asked him to measure him for a pair of shoes, he was quite friendly and told them all about it.

"There are some good fellows who should not climb," he said. "When they find themselves standing on a bit of rock jutting out over emptiness, their heads begin to whirl round—and then, if they don't turn head over heels a few thousand feet, it is because some comrade is near enough to drag them back. There can be no ceremony then and they sometimes get hurt—as my friend did yesterday."

"Did you never get hurt yourself?" The Rat asked.

"When I was eight years old I did that," said the young shoemaker, touching the scar on his forehead. "But it was not much. My father was a guide and took me with him. He wanted me to begin early. There is nothing like it—climbing. I shall be at it again. This won't do for me. I tried shoemaking because I was in love with a girl who wanted me to stay at home. She married another man. I am glad of it. Once a guide, always a guide." He knelt down to measure Marco's foot, and Marco bent a little forward.

"The Lamp is lighted," he said.

There was no one in the shop, but the door was open and people were passing in the narrow street; so the shoemaker did not lift his red head. He went on measuring.

"God be thanked!" he said, in a low voice. "Do you want these shoes really, or did you only want me to take your measure?"

"I cannot wait until they are made," Marco answered. "I must go on."

"Yes, you must go on," answered the shoemaker. "But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll make them and keep them. Some great day might come when I shall show them to people and swagger about them." He glanced round cautiously, and then ended, still bending over his measuring. "They will be called the shoes of the Bearer of the Sign. And I shall say, 'He was only a lad. This was the size of his foot.'" Then he stood up with a great smile.

"There'll be climbing enough to be done now," he said, "and I look to see you again somewhere."

When the boys went away, they talked it over.

"The hairdresser didn't want to be a hairdresser, and the shoemaker didn't want to make shoes," said The Rat. "They both wanted to be mountain climbers. There are mountains in Samavia and mountains on the way to it. You showed them to me on the map.

"Yes; and secret messengers who can climb anywhere, and

cross dangerous places, and reconnoiter from points no one else can reach, can find out things and give signals other men cannot," said Marco.

"That's what I thought out," The Rat answered. "That was what he meant when he said, 'There will be climbing enough to be done now.'"

Strange were the places they went to and curiously unlike each other were the people to whom they carried their message. The most singular of all was an old woman who lived in so remote a place that the road which wound round and round the mountain, wound round it for miles and miles. It was not a bad road and it was an amazing one to travel, dragged in a small cart by a mule, when one could be dragged, and clambering slowly with rests between when one could not: the tree-covered precipices one looked down, the tossing whiteness of waterfalls, or the green foaming of rushing streams, and the immensity of farm- and village-scattered plains spreading themselves to the feet of other mountains shutting them in were breathtaking beauties to look down on, as the road mounted and wound round and round and higher and higher.

"How can anyone live higher than this?" said The Rat as they sat on the thick moss by the wayside after the mule and cart had left them. "Look at the bare crags looming up above there. Let us look at her again. Her picture looked as if she were a hundred years old."

Marco took out his hidden sketch. It seemed surely one of the strangest things in the world that a creature as old as this one seemed could reach such a place, or, having reached it, could ever descend to the world again to give aid to any person or thing.

Her old face was crossed and re-crossed with a thousand wrinkles. Her profile was splendid yet and she had been a beauty in her day. Her eyes were like an eagle's—and not an old eagle's. And she had a long neck which held her old head

high.

"How could she get here?" exclaimed The Rat.

"Those who sent us know, though we don't," said Marco. "Will you sit here and rest while I go on further?"

"No!" The Rat answered stubbornly. "I didn't train myself to stay behind. But we shall come to bare rock climbing soon and then I shall be obliged to stop," and he said the last bitterly. He knew that, if Marco had come alone, he would have ridden in no cart but would have trudged upward and onward sturdily to the end of his journey.

But they did not reach the crags, as they had thought must be inevitable. Suddenly halfway to the sky, as it seemed, they came to a bend in the road and found themselves mounting into a new green world—an astonishing marvel of a world, with green velvet slopes and soft meadows and thick woodland, and cows feeding in velvet pastures, and—as if it had been snowed down from the huge bare mountain crags which still soared above into heaven—a mysterious, ancient, huddled village which, being thus snowed down, might have caught among the rocks and rested there through all time.

There it stood. There it huddled itself. And the monsters in the blue above it themselves looked down upon it as if it were an incredible thing—this ancient, steep-roofed, hanging-balconied, crumbling cluster of human nests, which seemed a thousand miles from the world. Marco and The Rat stood and stared at it. Then they sat down and stared at it.

"How did it get here?" The Rat cried.

Marco shook his head. He certainly could see no explanation of its being there. Perhaps some of the oldest villagers could tell stories of how its first chalets had gathered themselves together.

An old peasant driving a cow came down a steep path. He looked with a dull curiosity at The Rat and his crutches; but when Marco advanced and spoke to him in German, he did not seem to understand, but shook his head saying something

in a sort of dialect Marco did not know.

"If they all speak like that, we shall have to make signs when we want to ask anything," The Rat said. "What will she speak?"

"She will know the German for the Sign or we should not have been sent here," answered Marco. "Come on."

They made their way to the village, which huddled itself together evidently with the object of keeping itself warm when through the winter months the snows strove to bury it and the winds roared down from the huge mountain crags and tried to tear it from among its rocks. The doors and windows were few and small, and glimpses of the inside of the houses showed earthen floors and dark rooms. It was plain that it was counted a more comfortable thing to live without light than to let in the cold.

It was easy enough to reconnoiter. The few people they saw were evidently not surprised that strangers who discovered their unexpected existence should be curious and want to look at them and their houses.

The boys wandered about as if they were casual explorers, who having reached the place by chance were interested in all they saw. They went into the little Gasthaus and got some black bread and sausage and some milk. The mountaineer owner was a brawny fellow who understood some German. He told them that few strangers knew of the village but that bold hunters and climbers came for sport. In the forests on the mountainsides were bears and, in the high places, chamois. Now and again, some great gentlemen came with parties of the daring kind—very great gentlemen indeed, he said, shaking his head with pride. There was one who had castles in other mountains, but he liked best to come here. Marco began to wonder if several strange things might not be true if great gentlemen sometimes climbed to the mysterious place. But he had not been sent to give the Sign to a great gentleman. He had been sent to give it to an old woman with

eyes like an eagle which was young.

He had a sketch in his sleeve, with that of her face, of her steep-roofed, black-beamed, balconied house. If they walked about a little, they would be sure to come upon it in this tiny place. Then he could go in and ask her for a drink of water.

They roamed about for an hour after they left the Gasthaus. They went into the little church and looked at the graveyard and wondered if it was not buried out of all sight in the winter. After they had done this, they sauntered out and walked through the huddled clusters of houses, examining each one as they drew near it and passed.

"I see it!" The Rat exclaimed at last. "It is that very old looking one standing a little way from the rest. It is not as tumbled down as most of them. And there are some red flowers on the balcony."

"Yes! That's it!" said Marco.

They walked up to the low black door and, as he stopped on the threshold, Marco took off his cap. He did this because, sitting in the doorway on a low wooden chair, the old, old woman with the eagle eyes was sitting knitting.

There was no one else in the room and no one anywhere within sight. When the old, old woman looked up at him with her young eagle's eyes, holding her head high on her long neck, Marco knew he need not ask for water or for anything else.

"The Lamp is lighted," he said, in his low but strong and clear young voice.

She dropped her knitting upon her knees and gazed at him a moment in silence. She knew German it was clear, for it was in German she answered him.

"God be thanked!" she said. "Come in, young Bearer of the Sign, and bring your friend in with you. I live alone and not a soul is within hearing."

She was a wonderful old woman. Neither Marco nor The Rat would live long enough to forget the hours they spent in

her strange dark house. She kept them and made them spend the night with her.

"It is quite safe," she said. "I live alone since my man fell into the crevasse and was killed because his rope broke when he was trying to save his comrade. So I have two rooms to spare and sometimes climbers are glad to sleep in them. Mine is a good warm house and I am well known in the village. You are very young," she added shaking her head. "You are very young. You must have good blood in your veins to be trusted with this."

"I have my father's blood," answered Marco.

"You are like someone I once saw," the old woman said, and her eagle eyes set themselves hard upon him. "Tell me your name."

There was no reason why he should not tell it to her.

"It is Marco Loristan," he said.

"What! It is that!" she cried out, not loud but low.

To Marco's amazement she got up from her chair and stood before him, showing what a tall old woman she really was. There was a startled, even an agitated, look in her face. And suddenly she actually made a sort of curtsey to him—bending her knee as peasants do when they pass a shrine.

"It is that!" she said again. "And yet they dare let you go on a journey like this! That speaks for your courage and for theirs."

But Marco did not know what she meant. Her strange obeisance made him feel awkward. He stood up because his training had told him that when a woman stands a man also rises.

"The name speaks for the courage," he said, "because it is my father's."

She watched him almost anxiously.

"You do not even know!" she breathed—and it was an exclamation and not a question.

"I know what I have been told to do," he answered. "I do

not ask anything else."

"Who is that?" she asked, pointing to The Rat.

"He is the friend my father sent with me," said Marco smiling. "He called him my aide-de-camp. It was a sort of joke because we had played soldiers together."

It seemed as if she were obliged to collect her thoughts. She stood with her hand at her mouth, looking down at the earth floor.

"God guard you!" she said at last. "You are very—very young!"

"But all his years," The Rat broke in, "he has been in training for just this thing. He did not know it was training, but it was. A soldier who had been trained for thirteen years would know his work."

He was so eager that he forgot she could not understand English. Marco translated what he said into German and added: "What he says is true."

She nodded her head, still with questioning and anxious eyes.

"Yes. Yes," she muttered. "But you are very young." Then she asked in a hesitating way:

"Will you not sit down until I do?"

"No," answered Marco. "I would not sit while my mother or grandmother stood."

"Then I must sit—and forget," she said.

She passed her hand over her face as though she were sweeping away the sudden puzzled trouble in her expression. Then she sat down, as if she had obliged herself to become again the old peasant she had been when they entered.

"All the way up the mountain you wondered why an old woman should be given the Sign," she said. "You asked each other how she could be of use."

Neither Marco nor The Rat said anything.

"When I was young and fresh," she went on. "I went to a castle over the frontier to be foster mother to a child who was

born a great noble—one who was near the throne. He loved me and I loved him. He was a strong child and he grew up a great hunter and climber. When he was not ten years old, my man taught him to climb. He always loved these mountains better than his own. He comes to see me as if he were only a young mountaineer. He sleeps in the room there," with a gesture over her shoulder into the darkness. "He has great power and, if he chooses to do a thing, he will do it—just as he will attack the biggest bear or climb the most dangerous peak. He is one who can bring things about. It is very safe to talk in this room."

Then all was quite clear. Marco and The Rat understood.

No more was said about the Sign. It had been given and that was enough. The old woman told them that they must sleep in one of her bedrooms. The next morning one of her neighbors was going down to the valley with a cart and he would help them on their way. The Rat knew that she was thinking of his crutches and he became restless.

"Tell her," he said to Marco, "how I have trained myself until I can do what anyone else can. And tell her I am growing stronger every day. Tell her I'll show her what I can do. Your father wouldn't have let me come as your aide if I hadn't proved to him that I wasn't a cripple. Tell her. She thinks I'm no use."

Marco explained and the old woman listened attentively. When The Rat got up and swung himself about up and down the steep path near her house she seemed relieved. His extraordinary dexterity and firm swiftness evidently amazed her and gave her a confidence she had not felt at first.

"If he has taught himself to be like that just for love of your father, he will go to the end," she said. "It is more than one could believe, that a pair of crutches could do such things."

The Rat was pacified and could afterwards give himself up to watching her as closely as he wished to. He was soon

"working out" certain things in his mind. What he watched was her way of watching Marco. It was as if she were fascinated and could not keep her eyes from him. She told them stories about the mountains and the strangers who came to climb with guides or to hunt. She told them about the storms, which sometimes seemed about to put an end to the little world among the crags. She described the winter when the snow buried them and the strong ones were forced to dig out the weak and some lived for days under the masses of soft whiteness, glad to keep their cows or goats in their rooms that they might share the warmth of their bodies. The villages were forced to be good neighbors to each other, for the man who was not ready to dig out a hidden chimney or buried door today might be left to freeze and starve in his snow tomb next week. Through the worst part of the winter no creature from the world below could make way to them to find out whether they were all dead or alive.

While she talked, she watched Marco as if she were always asking herself some question about him. The Rat was sure that she liked him and greatly admired his strong body and good looks. It was not necessary for him to carry himself slouchingly in her presence and he looked glowing and noble. There was a sort of reverence in her manner when she spoke to him. She reminded him of Lazarus more than once. When she gave them their evening meal, she insisted on waiting on him with a certain respectful ceremony. She would not sit at table with him, and The Rat began to realize that she felt that he himself should be standing to serve him.

"She thinks I ought to stand behind your chair as Lazarus stands behind your father's," he said to Marco. "Perhaps an aide ought to do it. Shall I? I believe it would please her."

"A Bearer of the Sign is not a royal person," answered Marco. "My father would not like it—and I should not. We are only two boys."

It was very wonderful when, after their supper was over,

they all three sat together before the fire.

The red glow of the bed of wood-coal and the orange yellow of the flame from the big logs filled the room with warm light, which made a mellow background for the figure of the old woman as she sat in her low chair and told them more and more enthralling stories.

Her eagle eyes glowed and her long neck held her head splendidly high as she described great feats of courage and endurance or almost superhuman daring in aiding those in awesome peril, and, when she glowed most in the telling, they always knew that the hero of the adventure had been her foster child who was the baby born a great noble and near the throne. To her, he was the most splendid and adorable of human beings. Almost an emperor, but so warm and tender of heart that he never forgot the long past days when she had held him on her knee and told him tales of chamois and bear hunting, and of the mountaintops in mid-winter. He was her sun-god.

"Yes! Yes!" she said. "'Good Mother,' he calls me. And I bake him a cake on the hearth, as I did when he was ten years old and my man was teaching him to climb. And when he chooses that a thing shall be done—done it is! He is a great lord."

The flames had died down and only the big bed of red coal made the room glow, and they were thinking of going to bed when the old woman started very suddenly, turning her head as if to listen.

Marco and The Rat heard nothing, but they saw that she did and they sat so still that each held his breath. So there was utter stillness for a few moments. Utter stillness.

Then they did hear something—a clear silver sound, piercing the pure mountain air.

The old woman sprang upright with the fire of delight in her eyes.

"It is his silver horn!" she cried out striking her hands

together. "It is his own call to me when he is coming. He has been hunting somewhere and wants to sleep in his good bed here. Help me to put on more faggots," to The Rat, "so that he will see the flame of them through the open door as he comes."

"Shall we be in the way?" said Marco. "We can go at once."

She was going towards the door to open it and she stopped a moment and turned.

"No, no!" she said. "He must see your face. He will want to see it. I want him to see—how young you are."

She threw the door wide open and they heard the silver horn send out its gay call again. The brushwood and faggots The Rat had thrown on the coals crackled and sparkled and roared into fine flames, which cast their light into the road and threw out in fine relief the old figure which stood on the threshold and looked so tall.

And in but a few minutes her great lord came to her. And in his green hunting suit with its green hat and eagle's feather he was as splendid as she had said he was. He was big and royal looking and laughing and he bent and kissed her as if he had been her own son.

"Yes, good Mother," they heard him say. "I want my warm bed and one of your good suppers. I sent the others to the Gasthaus."

He came into the redly glowing room and his head almost touched the blackened rafters. Then he saw the two boys.

"Who are these, good Mother?" he asked.

She lifted his hand and kissed it.

"They are the Bearers of the Sign," she said rather softly. "'The Lamp is lighted.'"

Then his whole look changed. His laughing face became quite grave and for a moment looked even anxious. Marco knew it was because he was startled to find them only boys. He made a step forward to look at them more closely.

"The Lamp is lighted! And you two bear the Sign!" he exclaimed. Marco stood out in the fire glow that he might see him well. He saluted with respect.

"My name is Marco Loristan, Highness," he said. "And my father sent me."

The change which came upon his face then was even greater than at first. For a second, Marco even felt that there was a flash of alarm in it. But almost at once that passed.

"Loristan is a great man and a great patriot," he said. "If he sent you, it is because he knows you are the one safe messenger. He has worked too long for Samavia not to know what he does."

Marco saluted again. He knew what it was right to say next.

"If we have your Highness's permission to retire," he said, "we will leave you and go to bed. We go down the mountain at sunrise."

"Where next?" asked the hunter, looking at him with curious intentness.

"To Vienna, Highness," Marco answered.

His questioner held out his hand, still with the intent interest in his eyes.

"Goodnight, fine lad," he said. "Samavia has need to vaunt itself on its Sign-bearer. God go with you."

He stood and watched him as he went toward the room in which he and his aide-de-camp were to sleep. The Rat followed him closely. At the little back door the old, old woman stood, having opened it for them. As Marco passed and bade her goodnight, he saw that she again made the strange obeisance, bending the knee as he went by.

CHAPTER XXIV
"How Shall We Find Him?"

In Vienna they came upon a pageant. In celebration of a century past victory the Emperor drove in state and ceremony to attend at the great cathedral and to do honor to the ancient banners and laurel-wreathed statue of a long dead soldier-prince. The broad pavements of the huge chief thoroughfare were crowded with a cheering populace watching the martial pomp and splendor as it passed by with marching feet, prancing horses, and glitter of scabbard and chain, which all seemed somehow part of music in triumphant bursts.

The Rat was enormously thrilled by the magnificence of the imperial place. Its immense spaces, the squares and gardens, reigned over by statues of emperors, and warriors, and queens made him feel that all things on earth were possible. The palaces and stately piles of architecture, whose surmounting equestrian bronzes ramped high in the air clear cut and beautiful against the sky, seemed to sweep out of his world all atmosphere but that of splendid cities down whose broad avenues emperors rode with waving banners, tramping, jangling soldiery before and behind, and golden trumpets blaring forth. It seemed as if it must always be like this—that lances and cavalry and emperors would never cease to ride by. "I should like to stay here a long time," he said almost as if he were in a dream. "I should like to see it all."

He leaned on his crutches in the crowd and watched the glitter of the passing pageant. Now and then he glanced at Marco, who watched also with a steady eye which, The Rat saw, nothing would escape: How absorbed he always was in the Game! How impossible it was for him to forget it or to

remember it only as a boy would! Often it seemed that he was not a boy at all. And the Game, The Rat knew in these days, was a game no more but a thing of deep and deadly earnest—a thing which touched kings and thrones, and concerned the ruling and swaying of great countries. And they—two lads pushed about by the crowd as they stood and stared at the soldiers—carried with them that which was even now lighting the Lamp. The blood in The Rat's veins ran quickly and made him feel hot as he remembered certain thoughts which had forced themselves into his mind during the past weeks. As his brain had the trick of "working things out," it had, during the last fortnight at least, been following a wonderful even if rather fantastic and feverish fancy. A mere trifle had set it at work, but, its labor once begun, things which might have once seemed to be trifles appeared so no longer. When Marco was asleep, The Rat lay awake through thrilled and sometimes almost breathless midnight hours, looking backward and recalling every detail of their lives since they had known each other. Sometimes it seemed to him that almost everything he remembered—the Game from first to last above all—had pointed to but one thing. And then again he would all at once feel that he was a fool and had better keep his head steady. Marco, he knew, had no wild fancies. He had learned too much and his mind was too well balanced. He did not try to "work out things." He only thought of what he was under orders to do.

"But," said The Rat more than once in these midnight hours, "if it ever comes to a draw whether he is to be saved or I am, he is the one that must come to no harm. Killing can't take long—and his father sent me with him."

This thought passed through his mind as the tramping feet went by. As a sudden splendid burst of approaching music broke upon his ear, a queer look twisted his face. He realized the contrast between this day and that first morning behind the churchyard, when he had sat on his platform among the

Squad and looked up and saw Marco in the arch at the end of the passage. And because he had been good-looking and had held himself so well, he had thrown a stone at him. Yes—blind gutter-bred fool that he'd been—his first greeting to Marco had been a stone, just because he was what he was. As they stood here in the crowd in this far-off foreign city, it did not seem as if it could be true that it was he who had done it.

He managed to work himself closer to Marco's side. "Isn't it splendid?" he said, "I wish I was an emperor myself. I'd have these fellows out like this every day." He said it only because he wanted to say something, to speak, as a reason for getting closer to him. He wanted to be near enough to touch him and feel that they were really together and that the whole thing was not a sort of magnificent dream from which he might awaken to find himself lying on his heap of rags in his corner of the room in Bone Court.

The crowd swayed forward in its eagerness to see the principal feature of the pageant—the Emperor in his carriage. The Rat swayed forward with the rest to look as it passed.

A handsome white haired and mustached personage in splendid uniform decorated with jeweled orders and with a cascade of emerald-green plumes nodding in his military hat gravely saluted the shouting people on either side. By him sat a man uniformed, decorated, and emerald plumed also, but many years younger.

Marco's arm touched The Rat's almost at the same moment that his own touched Marco. Under the nodding plumes each saw the rather tired and cynical pale face, a sketch of which was hidden in the slit in Marco's sleeve.

"Is the one who sits with the Emperor an Archduke?" Marco asked the man nearest to him in the crowd. The man answered amiably enough. No, he was not, but he was a certain Prince, a descendant of the one who was the hero of the day. He was a great favorite of the Emperor's and was also a great personage, whose palace contained pictures celebrated



Under the nodding plumes each saw the face, a sketch of which was hidden in the slit in Marco's sleeve.

throughout Europe.

"He pretends it is only pictures he cares for," he went on, shrugging his shoulders and speaking to his wife, who had begun to listen, "but he is a clever one, who amuses himself with things he professes not to concern himself about—big things. It's his way to look bored, and interested in nothing, but it's said he's a wizard for knowing dangerous secrets."

"Does he live at the Hofburg with the Emperor?" asked the woman, craning her neck to look after the imperial carriage.

"No, but he's often there. The Emperor is lonely and bored too, no doubt, and this one has ways of making him forget his troubles. It's been told me that now and then the two dress themselves roughly, like common men, and go out into the city to see what it's like to rub shoulders with the rest of the world. I daresay it's true. I should like to try it myself

once in a while, if I had to sit on a throne and wear a crown."

The two boys followed the celebration to its end. They managed to get near enough to see the entrance to the church where the service was held and to get a view of the ceremonies at the banner-draped and laurel-wreathed statue. They saw the man with the pale face several times, but he was always so enclosed that it was not possible to get within yards of him. It happened once, however, that he looked through a temporary break in the crowding people and saw a dark strong-featured and remarkably intent boy's face, whose vivid scrutiny of him caught his eye. There was something in the fixedness of its attention which caused him to look at it curiously for a few seconds, and Marco met his gaze squarely.

"Look at me! Look at me!" the boy was saying to him mentally. "I have a message for you. A message!"

The tired eyes in the pale face rested on him with a certain growing light of interest and curiosity, but the crowding people moved and the temporary break closed up, so that the two could see each other no more. Marco and The Rat were pushed backward by those taller and stronger than themselves until they were on the outskirts of the crowd.

"Let us go to the Hofburg," said Marco. "They will come back there, and we shall see him again even if we can't get near."

To the Hofburg they made their way through the less crowded streets, and there they waited as near to the great palace as they could get. They were there when, the ceremonies at an end, the imperial carriages returned, but, though they saw their man again, they were at some distance from him and he did not see them.

Then followed four singular days. They were singular days because they were full of tantalizing incidents. Nothing seemed easier than to hear talk of, and see the Emperor's favorite, but nothing was more impossible than to get near to him. He seemed rather a favorite with the populace, and the

common people of the shopkeeping or laboring classes were given to talking freely of him—of where he was going and what he was doing. Tonight he would be sure to be at this great house or that, at this ball or that banquet. There was no difficulty in discovering that he would be sure to go to the opera, or the theatre, or to drive to Schonbrunn with his imperial master. Marco and The Rat heard casual speech of him again and again, and from one part of the city to the other they followed and waited for him. But it was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. He was evidently too brilliant and important a person to be allowed to move about alone. There were always people with him who seemed absorbed in his languid cynical talk. Marco thought that he never seemed to care much for his companions, though they on their part always seemed highly entertained by what he was saying. It was noticeable that they laughed a great deal, though he himself scarcely even smiled.

"He's one of those chaps with the trick of saying witty things as if he didn't see the fun in them himself," The Rat summed him up. "Chaps like that are always cleverer than the other kind."

"He's too high in favor and too rich not to be followed about," they heard a man in a shop say one day, "but he gets tired of it. Sometimes, when he's too bored to stand it any longer, he gives it out that he's gone into the mountains somewhere, and all the time he's shut up alone with his pictures in his own palace."

That very night The Rat came in to their attic looking pale and disappointed. He had been out to buy some food after a long and arduous day in which they had covered much ground, had seen their man three times, and each time under circumstances which made him more inaccessible than ever. They had come back to their poor quarters both tired and ravenously hungry.

The Rat threw his purchase on to the table and himself

into a chair.

"He's gone to Budapest," he said. "*Now* how shall we find him?"

Marco was rather pale also, and for a moment he looked paler. The day had been a hard one, and in their haste to reach places at a long distance from each other they had forgotten their need of food.

They sat silent for a few moments because there seemed to be nothing to say. "We are too tired and hungry to be able to think well," Marco said at last. "Let us eat our supper and then go to sleep. Until we've had a rest, we must 'let go.'"

"Yes. There's no good in talking when you're tired," The Rat answered a trifle gloomily. "You don't reason straight. We must 'let go.'"

Their meal was simple but they ate well and without words.

Even when they had finished and undressed for the night, they said very little.

"Where do our thoughts go when we are asleep?" The Rat inquired casually after he was stretched out in the darkness. "They must go somewhere. Let's send them to find out what to do next."

"It's not as still as it was on the Gaisberg. You can hear the city roaring," said Marco drowsily from his dark corner. "We must make a ledge—for ourselves."

Sleep made it for them—deep, restful, healthy sleep. If they had been more resentful of their ill luck and lost labor, it would have come less easily and have been less natural. In their talks of strange things they had learned that one great secret of strength and unflagging courage is to know how to "let go"—to cease thinking over an anxiety until the right moment comes. It was their habit to "let go" for hours sometimes, and wander about looking at places and things—galleries, museums, palaces, giving themselves up with boyish pleasure and eagerness to all they saw. Marco was too

intimate with the things worth seeing, and The Rat too curious and feverishly wide awake to allow of their missing much.

The Rat's image of the world had grown until it seemed to know no boundaries which could hold its wealth of wonders. He wanted to go on and on and see them all.

When Marco opened his eyes in the morning, he found The Rat lying looking at him. Then they both sat up in bed at the same time.

"I believe we are both thinking the same thing," Marco said.

They frequently discovered that they were thinking the same things.

"So do I," answered The Rat. "It shows how tired we were that we didn't think of it last night."

"Yes, we are thinking the same thing," said Marco. "We have both remembered what we heard about his shutting himself up alone with his pictures and making people believe he had gone away."

"He's in his palace now," The Rat announced.

"Do you feel sure of that, too?" asked Marco. "Did you wake up and feel sure of it the first thing?"

"Yes," answered The Rat. "As sure as if I'd heard him say it himself."

"So did I," said Marco.

"That's what our thoughts brought back to us," said The Rat, "when we 'let go' and sent them off last night." He sat up hugging his knees and looking straight before him for some time after this, and Marco did not interrupt his meditations.

The day was a brilliant one, and, though their attic had only one window, the sun shone in through it as they ate their breakfast. After it, they leaned on the window's ledge and talked about the Prince's garden. They talked about it because it was a place open to the public and they had walked round it more than once. The palace, which was not a large

one, stood in the midst of it. The Prince was good-natured enough to allow quiet and well-behaved people to saunter through. It was not a fashionable promenade but a pleasant retreat for people who sometimes took their work or books and sat on the seats placed here and there among the shrubs and flowers.

"When we were there the first time, I noticed two things," Marco said. "There is a stone balcony which juts out from the side of the palace which looks on the Fountain Garden. That day there were chairs on it as if the Prince and his visitors sometimes sat there. Near it, there was a very large evergreen shrub and I saw that there was a hollow place inside it. If someone wanted to stay in the gardens all night to watch the windows when they were lighted and see if anyone came out alone upon the balcony, he could hide himself in the hollow place and stay there until the morning."

"Is there room for two inside the shrub?" The Rat asked.

"No. I must go alone," said Marco.

CHAPTER XXV
A Voice in the Night

Late that afternoon there wandered about the gardens two quiet, inconspicuous, rather poorly dressed boys. They looked at the palace, the shrubs, and the flowerbeds, as strangers usually did, and they sat on the seats and talked as people were accustomed to seeing boys talk together. It was a sunny day and exceptionally warm, and there were more saunterers and sitters than usual, which was perhaps the reason why the *portier* at the entrance gates gave such slight notice to the pair that he did not observe that, though two boys came in, only one went out. He did not, in fact, remember, when he saw The Rat swing by on his crutches at closing time, that he had entered in company with a dark-haired lad who walked without any aid. It happened that, when The Rat passed out, the *portier* at the entrance was much interested in the aspect of the sky, which was curiously threatening. There had been heavy clouds hanging about all day and now and then blotting out the sunshine entirely, but the sun had refused to retire altogether. Just now, however, the clouds had piled themselves in thunderous, purplish mountains, and the sun had been forced to set behind them.

"It's been a sort of battle since morning," the *portier* said. "There will be some crashes and cataracts tonight." That was what The Rat had thought when they had sat in the Fountain Garden on a seat which gave them a good view of the balcony and the big evergreen shrub, which they knew had the hollow in the middle, though its circumference was so imposing. "If there should be a big storm, the evergreen will not save you much, though it may keep off the worst," The Rat said. "I wish

there was room for two."

He would have wished there was room for two if he had seen Marco marching to the stake. As the gardens emptied, the boys rose and walked round once more, as if on their way out. By the time they had sauntered toward the big evergreen, nobody was in the Fountain Garden, and the last loiterers were moving toward the arched stone entrance to the streets.

When they drew near one side of the evergreen, the two were together. When The Rat swung out on the other side of it, he was alone! No one noticed that anything had happened; no one looked back. So The Rat swung down the walks and round the flowerbeds and passed into the street. And the *portier* looked at the sky and made his remark about the "crashes" and "cataracts."

As the darkness came on, the hollow in the shrub seemed a very safe place. It was not in the least likely that anyone would enter the closed gardens; and if by rare chance some servant passed through, he would not be in search of people who wished to watch all night in the middle of an evergreen instead of going to bed and to sleep. The hollow was well enclosed with greenery, and there was room to sit down when one was tired of standing.

Marco stood for a long time because, by doing so, he could see plainly the windows opening on the balcony if he gently pushed aside some flexible young boughs. He had managed to discover in his first visit to the gardens that the windows overlooking the Fountain Garden were those which belonged to the Prince's own suite of rooms. Those which opened on to the balcony lighted his favorite apartment, which contained his best loved books and pictures and in which he spent most of his secluded leisure hours.

Marco watched these windows anxiously. If the Prince had not gone to Budapest—if he were really only in retreat, and hiding from his gay world among his treasures—he would be living in his favorite rooms and lights would show

themselves. And if there were lights, he might pass before a window because, since he was enclosed in his garden, he need not fear being seen. The twilight deepened into darkness and, because of the heavy clouds, it was very dense. Faint gleams showed themselves in the lower part of the palace, but none was lighted in the windows Marco watched. He waited so long that it became evident that none was to be lighted at all. At last he loosed his hold on the young boughs and, after standing a few moments in thought, sat down upon the earth in the midst of his embowered tent. The Prince was not in his retreat; he was probably not in Vienna, and the rumor of his journey to Budapest had no doubt been true. So much time lost through making a mistake—but it was best to have made the venture. Not to have made it would have been to lose a chance. The entrance was closed for the night and there was no getting out of the gardens until they were opened for the next day. He must stay in his hiding place until the time when people began to come and bring their books and knitting and sit on the seats. Then he could stroll out without attracting attention. But he had the night before him to spend as best he could. That would not matter at all. He could tuck his cap under his head and go to sleep on the ground. He could command himself to waken once every half-hour and look for the lights. He would not go to sleep until it was long past midnight—so long past that there would not be one chance in a hundred that anything could happen. But the clouds which made the night so dark were giving forth low rumbling growls. At intervals a threatening gleam of light shot across them and a sudden swish of wind rushed through the trees in the garden. This happened several times, and then Marco began to hear the patter of raindrops. They were heavy and big drops, but few at first, and then there was a new and more powerful rush of wind, a jagged dart of light in the sky, and a tremendous crash. After that the clouds tore themselves open and poured forth their contents in floods. After the

protracted struggle of the day it all seemed to happen at once, as if a horde of huge lions had at one moment been let loose: flame after flame of lightning, roar and crash and sharp reports of thunder, shrieks of hurricane wind, torrents of rain, as if some tidal wave of the skies had gathered and rushed and burst upon the earth. It was such a storm as people remember for a lifetime and which in few lifetimes is seen at all.

Marco stood still in the midst of the rage and flooding, blinding roar of it. After the first few minutes he knew he could do nothing to shield himself. Down the garden paths he heard cataracts rushing. He held his cap pressed against his eyes because he seemed to stand in the midst of darting flames. The crashes, cannon reports and thunderings, and the jagged streams of light came so close to one another that he seemed deafened as well as blinded. He wondered if he should ever be able to hear human voices again when it was over. That he was drenched to the skin and that the water poured from his clothes as if he were himself a cataract was so small a detail that he was scarcely aware of it. He stood still, bracing his body, and waited. If he had been a Samavian soldier in the trenches and such a storm had broken upon him and his comrades, they could only have braced themselves and waited. This was what he found himself thinking when the tumult and downpour were at their worst. There were men who had waited in the midst of a rain of bullets.

It was not long after this thought had come to him that there occurred the first temporary lull in the storm. Its fury perhaps reached its height and broke at that moment. A yellow flame had torn its jagged way across the heavens, and an earth-rending crash had thundered itself into rumblings which actually died away before breaking forth again. Marco took his cap from his eyes and drew a long breath. He drew two long breaths. It was as he began drawing a third and realizing the strange feeling of the almost stillness about him that he heard a new kind of sound at the side of the garden

nearest his hiding place. It sounded like the creak of a door opening somewhere in the wall behind the laurel hedge. Someone was coming into the garden by a private entrance. He pushed aside the young boughs again and tried to see, but the darkness was too dense. Yet he could hear if the thunder would not break again. There was the sound of feet on the wet gravel, the footsteps of more than one person coming toward where he stood, but not as if afraid of being heard; merely as if they were at liberty to come in by what entrance they chose. Marco remained very still. A sudden hope gave him a shock of joy. If the man with the tired face chose to hide himself from his acquaintances, he might choose to go in and out by a private entrance. The footsteps drew near, crushing the wet gravel, passed by, and seemed to pause somewhere near the balcony; and then flame lit up the sky again and the thunder burst forth once more.

But this was its last great peal. The storm was at an end. Only fainter and fainter rumblings and mutterings and paler and paler darts followed. Even they were soon over, and the cataracts in the paths had rushed themselves silent. But the darkness was still deep.

It was deep to blackness in the hollow of the evergreen. Marco stood in it, streaming with rain, but feeling nothing because he was full of thought. He pushed aside his greenery and kept his eyes on the place in the blackness where the windows must be, though he could not see them. It seemed that he waited a long time, but he knew it only seemed so really. He began to breathe quickly because he was waiting for something.

Suddenly he saw exactly where the windows were—because they were all lighted!

His feeling of relief was great, but it did not last very long. It was true that something had been gained in the certainty that his man had not left Vienna. But what next? It would not be so easy to follow him if he chose only to go out secretly

at night. What next? To spend the rest of the night watching a lighted window was not enough. Tomorrow night it might not be lighted. But he kept his gaze fixed upon it. He tried to fix all his will and thought power on the person inside the room. Perhaps he could reach him and make him listen, even though he would not know that anyone was speaking to him. He knew that thoughts were strong things. If angry thoughts in one man's mind will create anger in the mind of another, why should not sane messages cross the line?

"I must speak to you. I must speak to you!" he found himself saying in a low intense voice. "I am outside here waiting. Listen! I must speak to you!"

He said it many times and kept his eyes fixed upon the window which opened on to the balcony. Once he saw a man's figure cross the room, but he could not be sure who it was. The last distant rumblings of thunder had died away and the clouds were breaking. It was not long before the dark mountainous billows broke apart, and a brilliant full moon showed herself sailing in the rift, suddenly flooding everything with light. Parts of the garden were silver white, and the tree shadows were like black velvet. A silvery lance pierced even into the hollow of Marco's evergreen and struck across his face.

Perhaps it was this sudden change which attracted the attention of those inside the balconied room. A man's figure appeared at the long windows. Marco saw now that it was the Prince. He opened the windows and stepped out on to the balcony.

"It is all over," he said quietly. And he stood with his face lifted, looking at the great white sailing moon.

He stood very still and seemed for the moment to forget the world and himself. It was a wonderful, triumphant queen of a moon. But something brought him back to earth. A low, but strong and clear, boy-voice came up to him from the garden path below.

"The Lamp is lighted. The Lamp is lighted," it said, and the words sounded almost as if someone were uttering a prayer. They seemed to call to him, to arrest him, to draw him.

He stood still a few seconds in dead silence. Then he bent over the balustrade. The moonlight had not broken the darkness below.

"That is a boy's voice," he said in a low tone, "but I cannot see who is speaking."

"Yes, it is a boy's voice," it answered, in a way which somehow moved him, because it was so ardent. "It is the son of Stefan Loristan. The Lamp is lighted."

"Wait. I am coming down to you," the Prince said.

In a few minutes Marco heard a door open gently not far from where he stood. Then the man he had been following so many days appeared at his side.

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"Before the gates closed. I hid myself in the hollow of the big shrub there, Highness," Marco answered.

"Then you were out in the storm?"

"Yes, Highness."

The Prince put his hand on the boy's shoulder. "I cannot see you—but it is best to stand in the shadow. You are drenched to the skin."

"I have been able to give your Highness—the Sign," Marco whispered. "A storm is nothing."

There was a silence. Marco knew that his companion was pausing to turn something over in his mind.

"So-o?" he said slowly, at length. "The Lamp is lighted, And *you* are sent to bear the Sign." Something in his voice made Marco feel that he was smiling.

"What a race you are! What a race—you Samavian Loristans!"

He paused as if to think the thing over again.

"I want to see your face," he said next. "Here is a tree with a shaft of moonlight striking through the branches. Let us step



“It is the son of Stefan Loristan. The Lamp is lighted.”

aside and stand under it."

Marco did as he was told. The shaft of moonlight fell upon his uplifted face and showed its young strength and darkness, quite splendid for the moment in a triumphant glow of joy in obstacles overcome. Raindrops hung on his hair, but he did not look draggled, only very wet and picturesque. He had reached his man. He had given the Sign.

The Prince looked him over with interested curiosity.

"Yes," he said in his cool, rather dragging voice. "You are the son of Stefan Loristan. Also you must be taken care of. You must come with me. I have trained my household to remain in its own quarters until I require its service. I have attached to my own apartments a good safe little room where I sometimes keep people. You can dry your clothes and sleep there. When the gardens are opened again, the rest will be easy."

But though he stepped out from under the trees and began to move towards the palace in the shadow, Marco noticed that he moved hesitatingly, as if he had not quite decided what he should do. He stopped rather suddenly and turned again to Marco, who was following him.

"There is someone in the room I just now left," he said, "an old man—whom it might interest to see you. It might also be a good thing for him to feel interest in you. I choose that he shall see you—as you are."

"I am at your command, Highness," Marco answered. He knew his companion was smiling again.

"You have been in training for more centuries than you know," he said; "and your father has prepared you to encounter the unexpected without surprise."

They passed under the balcony and paused at a low stone doorway hidden behind shrubs. The door was a beautiful one, Marco saw when it was opened, and the corridor disclosed was beautiful also, though it had an air of quiet and aloofness which was not so much secret as private. A perfect though

narrow staircase mounted from it to the next floor. After ascending it, the Prince led the way through a short corridor and stopped at the door at the end of it. "We are going in here," he said.

It was a wonderful room—the one which opened on to the balcony. Each piece of furniture in it, the hangings, the tapestries, and pictures on the wall were all such as might well have found themselves adorning a museum. Marco remembered the common report of his escort's favorite amusement of collecting wonders and furnishing his house with the things others exhibited only as marvels of art and handicraft. The place was rich and mellow with exquisitely chosen beauties.

In a massive chair upon the hearth sat a figure with bent head. It was a tall old man with white hair and moustache. His elbows rested upon the arm of his chair and he leaned his forehead on his hand as if he were weary.

Marco's companion crossed the room and stood beside him, speaking in a lowered voice. Marco could not at first hear what he said. He himself stood quite still, waiting. The white-haired man lifted his head and listened. It seemed as though almost at once he was singularly interested. The lowered voice was slightly raised at last and Marco heard the last two sentences:

"The only son of Stefan Loristan. Look at him."

The old man in the chair turned slowly and looked, steadily, and with questioning curiosity touched with grave surprise. He had keen and clear blue eyes.

Then Marco, still erect and silent, waited again. The Prince had merely said to him, "an old man whom it might interest to see you." He had plainly intended that, whatsoever happened, he must make no outward sign of seeing more than he had been told he would see—"an old man." It was for him to show no astonishment or recognition. He had been brought here not to see but to be seen. The power of remaining still under scrutiny, which The Rat had often envied him,

stood now in good stead because he had seen the white head and tall form not many days before, surmounted by brilliant emerald plumes, hung with jeweled decorations, in the royal carriage, escorted by banners, and helmets, and following troops whose tramping feet kept time to bursts of military music while the populace bared their heads and cheered.

"He is like his father," this personage said to the Prince. "But if anyone but Loristan had sent him—His looks please me." Then suddenly to Marco, "You were waiting outside while the storm was going on?"

"Yes, sir," Marco answered.

Then the two exchanged some words still in the lowered voice.

"You read the news as you made your journey?" he was asked. "You know how Samavia stands?"

"She does not stand," said Marco. "The Iarovitch and the Maranovitch have fought as hyenas fight, until each has torn the other into fragments—and neither has blood or strength left."

The two glanced at each other.

"A good simile," said the older person. "You are right. If a strong party rose—and a greater power chose not to interfere—the country might see better days." He looked at him a few moments longer and then waved his hand kindly.

"You are a fine Samavian," he said. "I am glad of that. You may go. Goodnight."

Marco bowed respectfully and the man with the tired face led him out of the room.

It was just before he left him in the small quiet chamber in which he was to sleep that the Prince gave him a final curious glance. "I remember now," he said. "In the room, when you answered the question about Samavia, I was sure that I had seen you before. It was the day of the celebration. There was a break in the crowd and I saw a boy looking at me. It was you."

"Yes," said Marco, "I have followed you each time you have gone out since then, but I could never get near enough to speak. Tonight seemed only one chance in a thousand."

"You are doing your work more like a man than a boy," was the next speech, and it was made reflectively. "No man could have behaved more perfectly than you did just now, when discretion and composure were necessary." Then, after a moment's pause, "He was deeply interested and deeply pleased. Goodnight."

When the gardens had been thrown open the next morning and people were passing in and out again, Marco passed out also. He was obliged to tell himself two or three times that he had not wakened from an amazing dream. He quickened his pace after he had crossed the street, because he wanted to get home to the attic and talk to The Rat. There was a narrow side street it was necessary for him to pass through if he wished to make a short cut. As he turned into it, he saw a curious figure leaning on crutches against a wall. It looked damp and forlorn, and he wondered if it could be a beggar. It was not. It was The Rat, who suddenly saw who was approaching and swung forward. His face was pale and haggard and he looked worn and frightened. He dragged off his cap and spoke in a voice which was hoarse as a crow's.

"God be thanked!" he said. "God be thanked!" as people always said it when they received the Sign, alone. But there was a kind of anguish in his voice as well as relief.

"Aide-de-camp!" Marco cried out—The Rat had begged him to call him so. "What have you been doing? How long have you been here?"

"Ever since I left you last night," said The Rat clutching tremblingly at his arm as if to make sure he was real. "If there was not room for two in the hollow, there was room for one in the street. Was it my place to go off duty and leave you alone—was it?"

"You were out in the storm?"

"Weren't you?" said The Rat fiercely. "I huddled against the wall as well as I could. What did I care? Crutches don't prevent a fellow waiting. I wouldn't have left you if you'd given me orders. And that would have been mutiny. When you did not come out as soon as the gates opened, I felt as if my head got on fire. How could I know what had happened? I've not the nerve and backbone you have. I go half mad." For a second or so Marco did not answer. But when he put his hand on the damp sleeve, The Rat actually started, because it seemed as though he were looking into the eyes of Stefan Loristan.

"You look just like your father!" he exclaimed, in spite of himself. "How tall you are!"

"When you are near me," Marco said, in Loristan's own voice, "when you are near me, I feel—I feel as if I were a royal prince attended by an army. You *are* my army." And he pulled off his cap with quick boyishness and added, "God be thanked!"

The sun was warm in the attic window when they reached their lodging, and the two leaned on the rough sill as Marco told his story. It took some time to relate; and when he ended, he took an envelope from his pocket and showed it to The Rat. It contained a flat package of money.

"He gave it to me just before he opened the private door," Marco explained. "And he said to me, 'It will not be long now. After Samavia, go back to London as quickly as you can—*as quickly as you can!*'"

"I wonder—what he meant?" The Rat said, slowly. A tremendous thought had shot through his mind. But it was not a thought he could speak of to Marco.

"I cannot tell. I thought that it was for some reason he did not expect me to know," Marco said. "We will do as he told us. As quickly as we can." They looked over the newspapers, as they did every day. All that could be gathered from any of them was that the opposing armies of Samavia seemed each

to have reached the culmination of disaster and exhaustion. Which party had the power left to take any final step which could call itself a victory, it was impossible to say. Never had a country been in a more desperate case.

"It is the time!" said The Rat, glowering over his map. "If the Secret Party rises suddenly now, it can take Melzarr almost without a blow. It can sweep through the country and disarm both armies. They're weakened—they're half starved—they're bleeding to death; they *want* to be disarmed. Only the Iarovitch and the Maranovitch keep on with the struggle because each is fighting for the power to tax the people and make slaves of them. If the Secret Party does not rise, the people will, and they'll rush on the palaces and kill every Maranovitch and Iarovitch they find. And serve them right!"

"Let us spend the rest of the day in studying the road map again," said Marco. "Tonight we must be on the way to Samavia!"

CHAPTER XXVI
Across the Frontier

That one day, a week later, two tired and travel-worn boy-mendicants should drag themselves with slow and weary feet across the frontier line between Jiardasia and Samavia, was not an incident to awaken suspicion or even to attract attention. War and hunger and anguish had left the country stunned and broken. Since the worst had happened, no one was curious as to what would befall them next. If Jiardasia herself had become a foe, instead of a friendly neighbor, and had sent across the border galloping hordes of soldiery, there would only have been more shrieks, and home burnings, and slaughter which no one dare resist. But, so far, Jiardasia had remained peaceful. The two boys—one of them on crutches—had evidently traveled far on foot. Their poor clothes were dusty and travel stained, and they stopped and asked for water at the first hut across the line. The one who walked without crutches had some coarse bread in a bag slung over his shoulder, and they sat on the roadside and ate it as if they were hungry. The old grandmother who lived alone in the hut sat and stared at them without any curiosity. She may have vaguely wondered why anyone crossed into Samavia in these days. But she did not care to know their reason. Her big son had lived in a village which belonged to the Maranovitch and he had been called out to fight for his lords. He had not wanted to fight and had not known what the quarrel was about, but he was forced to obey. He had kissed his handsome wife and four sturdy children, blubbering aloud when he left them. His village and his good crops and his house must be left behind. Then the Iarovitch swept through the pretty little

cluster of homesteads which belonged to their enemy. They were mad with rage because they had met with great losses in a battle not far away, and, as they swooped through, they burned and killed, and trampled down fields and vineyards. The old woman's son never saw either the burned walls of his house or the bodies of his wife and children, because he had been killed himself in the battle for which the Iarovitch were revenging themselves. Only the old grandmother who lived in the hut near the frontier line and stared vacantly at the passersby remained alive. She wearily gazed at people and wondered why she did not hear news from her son and her grandchildren. But that was all.

When the boys were over the frontier and well on their way along the roads, it was not difficult to keep out of sight if it seemed necessary. The country was mountainous and there were deep and thick forests by the way—forests so far reaching and with such thick undergrowth that full-grown men could easily have hidden themselves. It was because of this, perhaps, that this part of the country had seen little fighting. There was too great opportunity for secure ambush for a foe. As the two travelers went on, they heard of burned villages and towns destroyed, but they were towns and villages nearer Melzarr and other fortress-defended cities, or they were in the country surrounding the castles and estates of powerful nobles and leaders. It was true, as Marco had said to the white-haired personage, that the Maranovitch and Iarovitch had fought with the savageness of hyenas until at last the forces of each side lay torn and bleeding, their strength, their resources, their supplies exhausted.

Each day left them weaker and more desperate. Europe looked on with small interest in either party but with growing desire that the disorder should end and cease to interfere with commerce. All this and much more Marco and The Rat knew, but, as they made their cautious way through byways of the maimed and tortured little country, they learned other

things. They learned that the stories of its beauty and fertility were not romances. Its heaven-reaching mountains, its immense plains of rich verdure on which flocks and herds might have fed by thousands, its splendor of deep forest and broad clear rushing rivers had a primeval majesty such as the first human creatures might have found on earth in the days of the Garden of Eden. The two boys traveled through forest and woodland when it was possible to leave the road. It was safe to thread a way among huge trees and tall ferns and young saplings. It was not always easy but it was safe. Sometimes they saw a charcoal burner's hut or a shelter where a shepherd was hiding with the few sheep left to him. Each man they met wore the same look of stony suffering in his face; but, when the boys begged for bread and water, as was their habit, no one refused to share the little he had. It soon became plain to them that they were thought to be two young fugitives whose homes had probably been destroyed and who were wandering about with no thought but that of finding safety until the worst was over. That one of them traveled on crutches added to their apparent helplessness, and that he could not speak the language of the country made him more an object of pity. The peasants did not know what language he spoke. Sometimes a foreigner came to find work in this small town or that. The poor lad might have come to the country with his father and mother and then have been caught in the whirlpool of war and tossed out on the world parentless. But no one asked questions. Even in their desolation they were silent and noble people who were too courteous for curiosity.

"In the old days they were simple and stately and kind. All doors were open to travelers. The master of the poorest hut uttered a blessing and a welcome when a stranger crossed his threshold. It was the custom of the country," Marco said. "I read about it in a book of my father's. About most of the doors the welcome was carved in stone. It was this—'The Blessing

of the Son of God, and Rest within these Walls.'"

"They are big and strong," said The Rat. "And they have good faces. They carry themselves as if they had been drilled—both men and women."

It was not through the blood-drenched part of the unhappy land their way led them, but they saw hunger and dread in the villages they passed. Crops which should have fed the people had been taken from them for the use of the army; flocks and herds had been driven away, and faces were gaunt and gray. Those who had as yet only lost crops and herds knew that homes and lives might be torn from them at any moment. Only old men and women and children were left to wait for any fate which the chances of war might deal out to them.

When they were given food from some poor store, Marco would offer a little money in return. He dare not excite suspicion by offering much. He was obliged to let it be imagined that in his flight from his ruined home he had been able to snatch at and secrete some poor hoard which might save him from starvation. Often the women would not take what he offered. Their journey was a hard and hungry one. They must make it all on foot and there was little food to be found. But each of them knew how to live on scant fare. They traveled mostly by night and slept among the ferns and undergrowth through the day. They drank from running brooks and bathed in them. Moss and ferns made soft and sweet-smelling beds, and trees roofed them. Sometimes they lay long and talked while they rested. And at length a day came when they knew they were nearing their journey's end.

"It is nearly over now," Marco said, after they had thrown themselves down in the forest in the early hours of one dewy morning. "He said 'After Samavia, go back to London as quickly as you can—*as quickly as you can.*' He said it twice. As if—something were going to happen."

"Perhaps it will happen more suddenly than we think—

the thing he meant," answered The Rat.

Suddenly he sat up on his elbow and leaned towards Marco.

"We are in Samavia!" he said "We two are in Samavia! And we are near the end!"

Marco rose on his elbow also. He was very thin as a result of hard travel and scant feeding. His thinness made his eyes look immense and black as pits. But they burned and were beautiful with their own fire.

"Yes," he said, breathing quickly. "And though we do not know what the end will be, we have obeyed orders. The Prince was next to the last one. There is only one more. The old priest."

"I have wanted to see him more than I have wanted to see any of the others," The Rat said.

"So have I," Marco answered. "His church is built on the side of this mountain. I wonder what he will say to us."

Both had the same reason for wanting to see him. In his youth he had served in the monastery over the frontier—the one which, till it was destroyed in a revolt, had treasured the five-hundred-year-old story of the beautiful royal lad brought to be hidden among the brotherhood by the ancient shepherd. In the monastery the memory of the Lost Prince was as the memory of a saint. It had been told that one of the early brothers, who was a decorator and a painter, had made a picture of him with a faint halo shining about his head. The young acolyte who had served there must have heard wonderful legends. But the monastery had been burned, and the young acolyte had in later years crossed the frontier and become the priest of a few mountaineers whose little church clung to the mountainside. He had worked hard and faithfully and was worshipped by his people. Only the secret Forgers of the Sword knew that his most ardent worshippers were those with whom he prayed and to whom he gave blessings in dark caverns under the earth, where arms piled themselves and

men with dark strong faces sat together in the dim light and laid plans and wrought schemes.

This Marco and The Rat did not know as they talked of their desire to see him.

"He may not choose to tell us anything," said Marco. "When we have given him the Sign, he may turn away and say nothing as some of the others did. He may have nothing to say which we should hear. Silence may be the order for him, too."

It would not be a long or dangerous climb to the little church on the rock. They could sleep or rest all day and begin it at twilight. So after they had talked of the old priest and had eaten their black bread, they settled themselves to sleep under cover of the thick tall ferns.

It was a long and deep sleep which nothing disturbed. So few human beings ever climbed the hill, except by the narrow rough path leading to the church, that the little wild creatures had not learned to be afraid of them. Once, during the afternoon, a hare hopping along under the ferns to make a visit stopped by Marco's head, and, after looking at him a few seconds with his lustrous eyes, began to nibble the ends of his hair. He only did it from curiosity and because he wondered if it might be a new kind of grass, but he did not like it and stopped nibbling almost at once, after which he looked at it again, moving the soft sensitive end of his nose rapidly for a second or so, and then hopped away to attend to his own affairs. A very large and handsome green stag beetle crawled from one end of The Rat's crutches to the other, but, having done it, he went away also. Two or three times a bird, searching for his dinner under the ferns, was surprised to find the two sleeping figures, but, as they lay so quietly, there seemed nothing to be frightened about. A beautiful little field mouse running past discovered that there were crumbs lying about and ate all she could find on the moss. After that she crept into Marco's pocket and found some excellent ones and

had quite a feast. But she disturbed nobody and the boys slept on.

It was a bird's evening song which awakened them both. The bird alighted on the branch of a tree near them and her trill was rippling clear and sweet. The evening air had freshened and was fragrant with hillside scents. When Marco first rolled over and opened his eyes, he thought the most delicious thing on earth was to waken from sleep on a hillside at evening and hear a bird singing. It seemed to make exquisitely real to him the fact that he was in Samavia—that the Lamp was lighted and his work was nearly done. The Rat awakened when he did, and for a few minutes both lay on their backs without speaking. At last Marco said, "The stars are coming out. We can begin to climb, Aide-de-camp."

Then they both got up and looked at each other.

"The last one!" The Rat said. "Tomorrow we shall be on our way back to London—Number 7 Philibert Place. After all the places we've been to—what will it look like?"

"It will be like wakening out of a dream," said Marco. "It's not beautiful—Philibert Place. But HE will be there," And it was as if a light lighted itself in his face and shone through the very darkness of it.

And The Rat's face lighted in almost exactly the same way. And he pulled off his cap and stood bare headed. "We've obeyed orders," he said. "We've not forgotten one. No one has noticed us, no one has thought of us. We've blown through the countries as if we had been grains of dust."

Marco's head was bared, too, and his face was still shining. "God be thanked!" he said. "Let us begin to climb."

They pushed their way through the ferns and wandered in and out through trees until they found the little path. The hill was thickly clothed with forest and the little path was sometimes dark and steep; but they knew that, if they followed it, they would at last come out to a place where there were scarcely any trees at all, and on a crag they would find

the tiny church waiting for them. The priest might not be there. They might have to wait for him, but he would be sure to come back for morning Mass and for vespers, wheresoever he wandered between times.

There were many stars in the sky when at last a turn of the path showed them the church above them. It was little and built of rough stone. It looked as if the priest himself and his scattered flock might have broken and carried or rolled bits of the hill to put it together. It had the small, round, mosque like summit the Turks had brought into Europe in centuries past. It was so tiny that it would hold but a very small congregation—and close to it was a shed like house, which was of course the priest's.

The two boys stopped on the path to look at it.

"There is a candle burning in one of the little windows," said Marco.

"There is a well near the door—and someone is beginning to draw water," said The Rat, next. "It is too dark to see who it is. Listen!"

They listened and heard the bucket descend on the chains, and splash in the water. Then it was drawn up, and it seemed someone drank long. Then they saw a dim figure move forward and stand still. Then they heard a voice begin to pray aloud, as if the owner, being accustomed to utter solitude, did not think of earthly hearers.

"Come," Marco said. And they went forward.

Because the stars were so many and the air so clear, the priest heard their feet on the path, and saw them almost as soon as he heard them. He ended his prayer and watched them coming. A lad on crutches, who moved as lightly and easily as a bird—and a lad who, even yards away, was noticeable for a bearing of his body which was neither haughty nor proud but set him somehow aloof from every other lad one had ever seen. A magnificent lad—though, as he drew near, the starlight showed his face thin and his eyes

hollow as if with fatigue or hunger.

"And who is this one?" the old priest murmured to himself. *"Who?"*

Marco drew up before him and made a respectful reverence. Then he lifted his black head, squared his shoulders and uttered his message for the last time.

"The Lamp is lighted, Father," he said. "The Lamp is lighted."

The old priest stood quite still and gazed into his face. The next moment he bent his head so that he could look at him closely. It seemed almost as if he were frightened and wanted to make sure of something. At the moment it flashed through The Rat's mind that the old, old woman on the mountaintop had looked frightened in something the same way.

"I am an old man," he said. "My eyes are not good. If I had a light"—and he glanced towards the house.

It was The Rat who, with one whirl, swung through the door and seized the candle. He guessed what he wanted. He held it himself so that the flare fell on Marco's face.

The old priest drew nearer and nearer. He gasped for breath. "You are the son of Stefan Loristan!" he cried. "It is *his son* who brings the Sign."

He fell upon his knees and hid his face in his hands. Both the boys heard him sobbing and praying—praying and sobbing at once.

They glanced at each other. The Rat was bursting with excitement, but he felt a little awkward also and wondered what Marco would do. An old fellow on his knees, crying, made a chap feel as if he didn't know what to say. Must you comfort him or must you let him go on?

Marco only stood quite still and looked at him with understanding and gravity.

"Yes, Father," he said. "I am the son of Stefan Loristan, and I have given the Sign to all. You are the last one. The Lamp is lighted. I could weep for gladness, too."

The priest's tears and prayers ended. He rose to his feet—a rugged-faced old man with long and thick white hair which fell on his shoulders—and smiled at Marco while his eyes were still wet.

"You have passed from one country to another with the message?" he said. "You were under orders to say those four words?"

"Yes, Father," answered Marco.

"That was all? You were to say no more?"

"I know no more. Silence has been the order since I took my oath of allegiance when I was a child. I was not old enough to fight, or serve, or reason about great things. All I could do was to be silent, and to train myself to remember, and be ready when I was called. When my father saw I was ready, he trusted me to go out and give the Sign. He told me the four words. Nothing else."

The old man watched him with a wondering face.

"If Stefan Loristan does not know best," he said, "who does?"

"He always knows," answered Marco proudly. "Always." He waved his hand like a young king toward The Rat. He wanted each man they met to understand the value of The Rat. "He chose for me this companion," he added. "I have done nothing alone."

"He let me call myself his aide-de-camp!" burst forth The Rat. "I would be cut into inch long strips for him."

Marco translated.

Then the priest looked at The Rat and slowly nodded his head. "Yes," he said. "He knew best. He always knows best. That I see."

"How did you know I was my father's son?" asked Marco. "You have seen him?"

"No," was the answer; "but I have seen a picture which is said to be his image—and you are the picture's self. It is, indeed, a strange thing that two of God's creatures should be

so alike. There is a purpose in it." He led them into his bare small house and made them rest, and drink goat's milk, and eat food. As he moved about the hut-like place, there was a mysterious and exalted look on his face.

"You must be refreshed before we leave here," he said at last. "I am going to take you to a place hidden in the mountains where there are men whose hearts will leap at the sight of you. To see you will give them new power and courage and new resolve. Tonight they meet as they or their ancestors have met for centuries, but now they are nearing the end of their waiting. And I shall bring them the son of Stefan Loristan, who is the Bearer of the Sign!"

They ate the bread and cheese and drank the goat's milk he gave them, but Marco explained that they did not need rest as they had slept all day. They were prepared to follow him when he was ready.

The last faint hint of twilight had died into night and the stars were at their thickest when they set out together. The white-haired old man took a thick knotted staff in his hand and led the way. He knew it well, though it was a rugged and steep one with no track to mark it. Sometimes they seemed to be walking around the mountain, sometimes they were climbing, sometimes they dragged themselves over rocks or fallen trees, or struggled through almost impassable thickets; more than once they descended into ravines and, almost at the risk of their lives, clambered and drew themselves with the aid of the undergrowth up the other side. The Rat was called upon to use all his prowess, and sometimes Marco and the priest helped him across obstacles with the aid of his crutch.

"Haven't I shown tonight whether I'm a cripple or not?" he said once to Marco. "You can tell *him* about this, can't you? And that the crutches helped instead of being in the way?"

They had been out nearly two hours when they came to a place where the undergrowth was thick and a huge tree had

fallen crashing down among it in some storm. Not far from the tree was an outcropping rock. Only the top of it was to be seen above the heavy tangle.

They had pushed their way through the jungle of bushes and young saplings, led by their companion. They did not know where they would be led next and were supposed to push forward further when the priest stopped by the outcropping rock. He stood silent a few minutes—quite motionless—as if he were listening to the forest and the night. But there was utter stillness. There was not even a breeze to stir a leaf, or a half-wakened bird to sleepily chirp.

He struck the rock with his staff—twice, and then twice again.

Marco and The Rat stood with bated breath.

They did not wait long. Presently each of them found himself leaning forward, staring with almost unbelieving eyes, not at the priest or his staff, but at *the rock itself!*

It was moving! Yes, it moved. The priest stepped aside and it slowly turned, as if worked by a lever. As it turned, it gradually revealed a chasm of darkness dimly lighted, and the priest spoke to Marco. "There are hiding places like this all through Samavia," he said. "Patience and misery have waited long in them. They are the caverns of the Forgers of the Sword. Come!"

CHAPTER XXVII
"It Is the Lost Prince! It Is Ivor!"

Many times since their journey had begun the boys had found their hearts beating with the thrill and excitement of things. The story of which their lives had been a part was a pulse quickening experience. But as they carefully made their way down the steep steps leading seemingly into the bowels of the earth, both Marco and The Rat felt as though the old priest must hear the thudding in their young sides.

"'The Forgers of the Sword.' Remember every word they say," The Rat whispered, "so that you can tell it to me afterwards. Don't forget anything! I wish I knew Samavian."

At the foot of the steps stood the man who was evidently the sentinel who worked the lever that turned the rock. He was a big burly peasant with a good watchful face, and the priest gave him a greeting and a blessing as he took from him the lantern he held out.

They went through a narrow and dark passage, and down some more steps, and turned a corner into another corridor cut out of rock and earth. It was a wider corridor, but still dark, so that Marco and The Rat had walked some yards before their eyes became sufficiently accustomed to the dim light to see that the walls themselves seemed made of arms stacked closely together.

"The Forgers of the Sword!" The Rat was unconsciously mumbling to himself, "The Forgers of the Sword!"

It must have taken years to cut out the rounding passage they threaded their way through, and longer years to forge the solid, bristling walls. But The Rat remembered the story the stranger had told his drunken father, of the few mountain

herdsmen who, in their savage grief and wrath over the loss of their prince, had banded themselves together with a solemn oath which had been handed down from generation to generation. The Samavians were a long-memoried people, and the fact that their passion must be smothered had made it burn all the more fiercely. Five hundred years ago they had first sworn their oath; and kings had come and gone, had died or been murdered, and dynasties had changed, but the Forgers of the Sword had not changed or forgotten their oath or wavered in their belief that some time—some time, even after the long dark years—the soul of their Lost Prince would be among them once more, and that they would kneel at the feet and kiss the hands of him for whose body that soul had been reborn. And for the last hundred years their number and power and their hiding places had so increased that Samavia was at last honeycombed with them. And they only waited, breathless—for the Lighting of the Lamp.

The old priest knew how breathlessly, and he knew what he was bringing them. Marco and The Rat, in spite of their fond boy-imaginings, were not quite old enough to know how fierce and full of flaming eagerness the breathless waiting of savage full-grown men could be. But there was a tense strung thrill in knowing that they who were being led to them were the Bearers of the Sign. The Rat went hot and cold; he gnawed his fingers as he went. He could almost have shrieked aloud, in the intensity of his excitement, when the old priest stopped before a big black door!

Marco made no sound. Excitement or danger always made him look tall and quite pale. He looked both now.

The priest touched the door, and it opened.

They were looking into an immense cavern. Its walls and roof were lined with arms—guns, swords, bayonets, javelins, daggers, pistols, every weapon a desperate man might use. The place was full of men, who turned towards the door when it opened. They all made obeisance to the priest, but Marco

realized almost at the same instant that they started on seeing that he was not alone.

They were a strange and picturesque crowd as they stood under their canopy of weapons in the lurid torchlight. Marco saw at once that they were men of all classes, though all were alike roughly dressed. They were huge mountaineers, and plainsmen young and mature in years. Some of the biggest were men with white hair but with bodies of giants, and with determination in their strong jaws. There were many of these, Marco saw, and in each man's eyes, whether he were young or old, glowed a steady unconquered flame. They had been beaten so often, they had been oppressed and robbed, but in the eyes of each one was this unconquered flame which, throughout all the long tragedy of years had been handed down from father to son. It was this which had gone on through centuries, keeping its oath and forging its swords in the caverns of the earth, and which today was—waiting.

The old priest laid his hand on Marco's shoulder, and gently pushed him before him through the crowd which parted to make way for them. He did not stop until the two stood in the very midst of the circle, which fell back gazing wonderingly. Marco looked up at the old man because for several seconds he did not speak. It was plain that he did not speak because he also was excited, and could not. He opened his lips and his voice seemed to fail him. Then he tried again and spoke so that all could hear—even the men at the back of the gazing circle.

"My children," he said, "this is the son of Stefan Loristan, and he comes to bear the Sign. My son," to Marco, "speak!"

Then Marco understood what he wished, and also what he felt. He felt it himself, that magnificent uplifting gladness, as he spoke, holding his black head high and lifting his right hand.

"The Lamp is Lighted, brothers!" he cried. "The Lamp is Lighted!"

Then The Rat, who stood apart, watching, thought that the strange world within the cavern had gone mad! Wild smothered cries broke forth, men caught each other in passionate embrace, they fell upon their knees, they clutched one another sobbing, they wrung each other's hands, they leaped into the air. It was as if they could not bear the joy of hearing that the end of their waiting had come at last. They rushed upon Marco, and fell at his feet. The Rat saw big peasants kissing his shoes, his hands, every scrap of his clothing they could seize. The wild circle swayed and closed upon him until The Rat was afraid. He did not know that, overpowered by this frenzy of emotion, his own excitement was making him shake from head to foot like a leaf, and that tears were streaming down his cheeks. The swaying crowd hid Marco from him, and he began to fight his way towards him because his excitement increased with fear. The ecstasy frenzied crowd of men seemed for the moment to have almost ceased to be sane. Marco was only a boy. They did not know how fiercely they were pressing upon him and keeping away the very air.

"Don't kill him! Don't kill him!" yelled The Rat, struggling forward. "Stand back, you fools! I'm his aide-de-camp! Let me pass!"

And though no one understood his English, one or two suddenly remembered they had seen him enter with the priest and so gave way. But just then the old priest lifted his hand above the crowd, and spoke in a voice of stern command.

"Stand back, my children!" he cried. "Madness is not the homage you must bring to the son of Stefan Loristan. Obey! Obey!" His voice had a power in it that penetrated even the wildest herdsmen. The frenzied mass swayed back and left space about Marco, whose face The Rat could at last see. It was very white with emotion, and in his eyes there was a look which was like awe.

The Rat pushed forward until he stood beside him. He did

not know that he almost sobbed as he spoke.

"I'm your aide-de-camp," he said. "I'm going to stand here! Your father sent me! I'm under orders! I thought they'd crush you to death."

He glared at the circle about them as if, instead of worshippers distraught with adoration, they had been enemies. The old priest seeing him, touched Marco's arm.

"Tell him he need not fear," he said. "It was only for the first few moments. The passion of their souls drove them wild. They are your slaves."

"Those at the back might have pushed the front ones on until they trampled you under foot in spite of themselves!" The Rat persisted.

"No," said Marco. "They would have stopped if I had spoken."

"Why didn't you speak then?" snapped The Rat.

"All they felt was for Samavia, and for my father," Marco said, "and for the Sign. I felt as they did."

The Rat was somewhat softened. It was true, after all. How could he have tried to quell the outbursts of their worship of Loristan—of the country he was saving for them—of the Sign which called them to freedom? He could not.

Then followed a strange and picturesque ceremonial. The priest went about among the encircling crowd and spoke to one man after another—sometimes to a group. A larger circle was formed. As the pale old man moved about, The Rat felt as if some religious ceremony were going to be performed. Watching it from first to last, he was thrilled to the core.

At the end of the cavern a block of stone had been cut out to look like an altar. It was covered with white, and against the wall above it hung a large picture veiled by a curtain. From the roof there swung before it an ancient lamp of metal suspended by chains. In front of the altar was a sort of stone dais. There the priest asked Marco to stand, with his aide-de-camp on the lower level in attendance. A knot of the



The Ceremony in the Cavern

biggest herdsmen went out and returned. Each carried a huge sword which had perhaps been of the earliest made in the dark days gone by. The bearers formed themselves into a line on either side of Marco. They raised their swords and formed a pointed arch above his head and a passage twelve men long. When the points first clashed together The Rat struck himself hard upon his breast. His exultation was too keen to endure. He gazed at Marco standing still—in that curiously splendid way in which both he and his father *could* stand still—and wondered how he could do it. He looked as if he were prepared for any strange thing which could happen to him—because he was "under orders." The Rat knew that he was doing whatsoever he did merely for his father's sake. It was as if he felt that he was representing his father, though he was a mere boy; and that because of this, boy as he was, he must bear himself nobly and remain outwardly undisturbed.

At the end of the arch of swords, the old priest stood and

gave a sign to one man after another. When the sign was given to a man he walked under the arch to the dais, and there knelt and, lifting Marco's hand to his lips, kissed it with passionate fervor. Then he returned to the place he had left. One after another passed up the aisle of swords, one after another knelt, one after the other kissed the brown young hand, rose and went away. Sometimes The Rat heard a few words which sounded almost like a murmured prayer, sometimes he heard a sob as a shaggy head bent, again and again he saw eyes wet with tears. Once or twice Marco spoke a few Samavian words, and the face of the man spoken to flamed with joy. The Rat had time to see, as Marco had seen, that many of the faces were not those of peasants. Some of them were clear cut and subtle and of the type of scholars or nobles. It took a long time for them all to kneel and kiss the lad's hand, but no man omitted the ceremony; and when at last it was at an end, a strange silence filled the cavern. They stood and gazed at each other with burning eyes.

The priest moved to Marco's side, and stood near the altar. He leaned forward and took in his hand a cord which hung from the veiled picture—he drew it and the curtain fell apart. There seemed to stand gazing at them from between its folds a tall kingly youth with deep eyes in which the stars of God were stilly shining, and with a smile wonderful to behold. Around the heavy locks of his black hair the long dead painter of missals had set a faint glow of light like a halo.

"Son of Stefan Loristan," the old priest said, in a shaken voice, "it is the Lost Prince! It is Ivor!"

Then every man in the room fell on his knees. Even the men who had upheld the archway of swords dropped their weapons with a crash and knelt also. He was their saint—this boy! Dead for five hundred years, he was their saint still.

"Ivor! Ivor!" the voices broke into a heavy murmur. "Ivor! Ivor!" as if they chanted a litany.

Marco started forward, staring at the picture, his breath

caught in his throat, his lips apart.

"But—but—" he stammered, "but if my father were as young as he is—he would be *like* him!"

"When you are as old as he is, *you* will be like him—*you!*" said the priest. And he let the curtain fall.

The Rat stood staring with wide eyes from Marco to the picture and from the picture to Marco. And he breathed faster and faster and gnawed his finger ends. But he did not utter a word. He could not have done it, if he tried.

Then Marco stepped down from the dais as if he were in a dream, and the old man followed him. The men with swords sprang to their feet and made their archway again with a new clash of steel. The old man and the boy passed under it together. Now every man's eyes were fixed on Marco. At the heavy door by which he had entered, he stopped and turned to meet their glances. He looked very young and thin and pale, but suddenly his father's smile was lighted in his face. He said a few words in Samavian clearly and gravely, saluted, and passed out.

"What did you say to them?" gasped The Rat, stumbling after him as the door closed behind them and shut in the murmur of impassioned sound.

"There was only one thing to say," was the answer. "They are men—I am only a boy. I thanked them for my father, and told them he would never—never forget."

CHAPTER XXVIII
"Extra! Extra! Extra!"

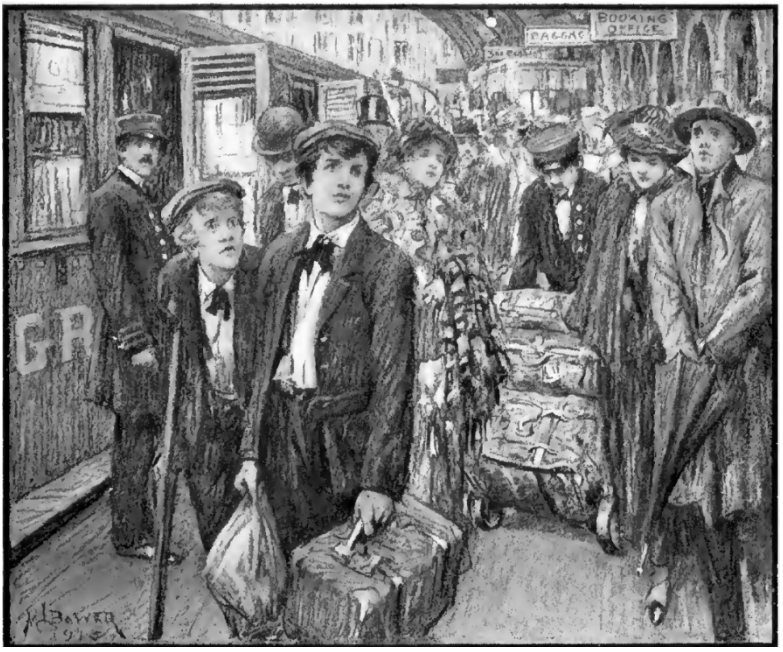
It was raining in London—pouring. It had been raining for two weeks, more or less, generally more. When the train from Dover drew in at Charing Cross, the weather seemed suddenly to have considered that it had so far been too lenient and must express itself much more vigorously. So it had gathered together its resources and poured them forth in a deluge which surprised even Londoners.

The rain so beat against and streamed down the windows of the third-class carriage in which Marco and The Rat sat that they could not see through them.

They had made their homeward journey much more rapidly than they had made the one on which they had been outward bound. It had of course taken them some time to tramp back to the frontier, but there had been no reason for stopping anywhere after they had once reached the railroads. They had been tired sometimes, but they had slept heavily on the wooden seats of the railway carriages. Their one desire was to get home. No. 7 Philibert Place rose before them in its noisy dinginess as the one desirable spot on earth. To Marco it held his father. And it was Loristan alone that The Rat saw when he thought of it. Loristan as he would look when he saw him come into the room with Marco, and stand up and salute, and say: "I have brought him back, sir. He has carried out every single order you gave him—every single one. So have I." So he had. He had been sent as his companion and attendant, and he had been faithful in every thought. If Marco would have allowed him, he would have waited upon him like a servant, and have been proud of the service. But

Marco would never let him forget that they were only two boys and that one was of no more importance than the other. He had secretly even felt this attitude to be a sort of grievance. It would have been more like a game if one of them had been the mere servitor of the other, and if that other had blustered a little, and issued commands, and demanded sacrifices. If the faithful vassal could have been wounded or cast into a dungeon for his young commander's sake, the adventure would have been more complete. But though their journey had been full of wonders and rich with beauties, though the memory of it hung in The Rat's mind like a background of tapestry embroidered in all the hues of the earth with all the splendors of it, there had been no dungeons and no wounds. After the adventure in Munich their unimportant boyishness had not even been observed by such perils as might have threatened them. As The Rat had said, they had "blown like grains of dust" through Europe and had been as nothing. And this was what Loristan had planned, this was what his grave thought had wrought out. If they had been men, they would not have been so safe.

From the time they had left the old priest on the hillside to begin their journey back to the frontier, they both had been given to long silences as they tramped side by side or lay on the moss in the forests. Now that their work was done, a sort of reaction had set in. There were no more plans to be made and no more uncertainties to contemplate. They were on their way back to No. 7 Philibert Place—Marco to his father, The Rat to the man he worshipped. Each of them was thinking of many things. Marco was full of longing to see his father's face and hear his voice again. He wanted to feel the pressure of his hand on his shoulder—to be sure that he was real and not a dream. This last was because during this homeward journey everything that had happened often seemed to be a dream. It had all been so wonderful—the climber standing looking down at them the morning they



Back in London

awakened on the Gaisburg; the mountaineer shoemaker measuring his foot in the small shop; the old, old woman and her noble lord; the Prince with his face turned upward as he stood on the balcony looking at the moon; the old priest kneeling and weeping for joy; the great cavern with the yellow light upon the crowd of passionate faces; the curtain which fell apart and showed the still eyes and the black hair with the halo about it! Now that they were left behind, they all seemed like things he had dreamed. But he had not dreamed them; he was going back to tell his father about them. And how *good* it would be to feel his hand on his shoulder!

The Rat gnawed his finger ends a great deal. His thoughts were more wild and feverish than Marco's. They leaped forward in spite of him. It was no use to pull himself up and tell himself that he was a fool. Now that all was over, he had time to be as great a fool as he was inclined to be. But how he

longed to reach London and stand face to face with Loristan! The sign was given. The Lamp was lighted. What would happen next? His crutches were under his arms before the train drew up.

"We're there! We're there!" he cried restlessly to Marco. They had no luggage to delay them. They took their bags and followed the crowd along the platform. The rain was rattling like bullets against the high glassed roof. People turned to look at Marco, seeing the glow of exultant eagerness in his face. They thought he must be some boy coming home for the holidays and going to make a visit at a place he delighted in. The rain was dancing on the pavements when they reached the entrance.

"A cab won't cost much," Marco said, "and it will take us quickly."

They called one and got into it. Each of them had flushed cheeks, and Marco's eyes looked as if he were gazing at something a long way off—gazing at it, and wondering.

"We've come back!" said The Rat, in an unsteady voice. "We've been—and we've come back!" Then suddenly turning to look at Marco, "Does it ever seem to you as if, perhaps, it—it wasn't true?"

"Yes," Marco answered, "but it was true. And it's done." Then he added after a second or so of silence, just what The Rat had said to himself, "What next?" He said it very low.

The way to Philibert Place was not long. When they turned into the roaring, untidy road, where the busses and drays and carts struggled past each other with their loads, and the tired-faced people hurried in crowds along the pavement, they looked at them all feeling that they had left their dream far behind indeed. But they were at home.

It was a good thing to see Lazarus open the door and stand waiting before they had time to get out of the cab. Cabs stopped so seldom before houses in Philibert Place that the inmates were always prompt to open their doors. When

Lazarus had seen this one stop at the broken iron gate, he had known whom it brought. He had kept an eye on the windows faithfully for many a day—even when he knew that it was too soon, even if all was well, for any travelers to return.

He bore himself with an air more than usually military and his salute when Marco crossed the threshold was formal stateliness itself. But his greeting burst from his heart.

"God be thanked!" he said in his deep growl of joy. "God be thanked!"

When Marco put forth his hand, he bent his grizzled head and kissed it devoutly.

"God be thanked!" he said again.

"My father?" Marco began, "my father is out?" If he had been in the house, he knew he would not have stayed in the back sitting room.

"Sir," said Lazarus, "will you come with me into his room? You, too, sir," to The Rat. He had never said "sir" to him before.

He opened the door of the familiar room, and the boys entered. The room was empty.

Marco did not speak; neither did The Rat. They both stood still in the middle of the shabby carpet and looked up at the old soldier. Both had suddenly the same feeling that the earth had dropped from beneath their feet. Lazarus saw it and spoke fast and with tremor. He was almost as agitated as they were.

"He left me at your service—at your command"—he began.

"Left you?" said Marco.

"He left us, all three, under orders—to *wait,*" said Lazarus. "The Master has gone."

The Rat felt something hot rush into his eyes. He brushed it away that he might look at Marco's face. The shock had changed it very much. Its glowing eager joy had died out, it had turned paler and his brows were drawn together. For a

few seconds he did not speak at all, and, when he did speak, The Rat knew that his voice was steady only because he willed that it should be so.

"If he has gone," he said, "it is because he had a strong reason. It was because he also was under orders."

"He said that you would know that," Lazarus answered. "He was called in such haste that he had not a moment in which to do more than write a few words. He left them for you on his desk there."

Marco walked over to the desk and opened the envelope which was lying there. There were only a few lines on the sheet of paper inside and they had evidently been written in the greatest haste. They were these:

"The Life of my life—for Samavia."

"He was called—to Samavia," Marco said, and the thought sent his blood rushing through his veins. "He has gone to Samavia!"

Lazarus drew his hand roughly across his eyes and his voice shook and sounded hoarse.

"There has been great disaffection in the camps of the Maranovitch," he said. "The remnant of the army has gone mad. Sir, silence is still the order, but who knows—who knows? God alone."

He had not finished speaking before he turned his head as if listening to sounds in the road. They were the kind of sounds which had broken up The Squad, and sent it rushing down the passage into the street to seize on a newspaper. There was to be heard a commotion of newsboys shouting riotously some startling piece of news which had called out an "Extra."

The Rat heard it first and dashed to the front door. As he opened it a newsboy running by shouted at the topmost power of his lungs the news he had to sell: "Assassination of King Michael Maranovitch by his own soldiers! Assassination of the Maranovitch! Extra! Extra! Extra!"

When The Rat returned with a newspaper, Lazarus interposed between him and Marco with great and respectful ceremony. "Sir," he said to Marco, "I am at your command, but the Master left me with an order which I was to repeat to you. He requested you *not* to read the newspapers until he himself could see you again."

Both boys fell back.

"Not read the papers!" they exclaimed together.

Lazarus had never before been quite so reverential and ceremonious.

"Your pardon, sir," he said. "I may read them at your orders, and report such things as it is well that you should know. There have been dark tales told and there may be darker ones. He asked that you would not read for yourself. If you meet again—when you meet again"—he corrected himself hastily—"when you meet again, he says you will understand. I am your servant. I will read and answer all such questions as I can."

The Rat handed him the paper and they returned to the back room together.

"You shall tell us what he would wish us to hear," Marco said.

The news was soon told. The story was not a long one as exact details had not yet reached London. It was briefly that the head of the Maranovitch party had been put to death by infuriated soldiers of his own army. It was an army drawn chiefly from a peasantry which did not love its leaders, or wish to fight, and suffering and brutal treatment had at last roused it to furious revolt.

"What next?" said Marco.

"If I were a Samavian—" began The Rat and then he stopped.

Lazarus stood biting his lips, but staring stonily at the carpet. Not The Rat alone but Marco also noted a grim change in him. It was grim because it suggested that he was

holding himself under an iron control. It was as if while tortured by anxiety he had sworn not to allow himself to look anxious and the resolve set his jaw hard and carved new lines in his rugged face. Each boy thought this in secret, but did not wish to put it into words. If he was anxious, he could only be so for one reason, and each realized what the reason must be. Loristan had gone to Samavia—to the torn and bleeding country filled with riot and danger. If he had gone, it could only have been because its danger called him and he went to face it at its worst. Lazarus had been left behind to watch over them. Silence was still the order, and what he knew he could not tell them, and perhaps he knew little more than that a great life might be lost.

Because his master was absent, the old soldier seemed to feel that he must comfort himself with a greater ceremonial reverence than he had ever shown before. He held himself within call, and at Marco's orders, as it had been his custom to hold himself with regard to Loristan. The ceremonious service even extended itself to The Rat, who appeared to have taken a new place in his mind. He also seemed now to be a person to be waited upon and replied to with dignity and formal respect.

When the evening meal was served, Lazarus drew out Loristan's chair at the head of the table and stood behind it with a majestic air.

"Sir," he said to Marco, "the Master requested that you take his seat at the table until—while he is not with you."

Marco took the seat in silence.

At two o'clock in the morning, when the roaring road was still, the light from the street lamp, shining into the small bedroom, fell on two pale boy faces. The Rat sat up on his sofa bed in the old way with his hands clasped round his knees. Marco lay flat on his hard pillow. Neither of them had been to sleep and yet they had not talked a great deal. Each had secretly guessed a good deal of what the other did not say.

"There is one thing we must remember," Marco had said, early in the night. "We must not be afraid."

"No," answered The Rat, almost fiercely, "we must not be afraid."

"We are tired; we came back expecting to be able to tell it all to him. We have always been looking forward to that. We never thought once that he might be gone. And he WAS gone. Did you feel as if—" he turned towards the sofa, "as if something had struck you on the chest?"

"Yes," The Rat answered heavily. "Yes."

"We weren't ready," said Marco. "He had never gone before; but we ought to have known he might someday be—called. He went because he was called. He told us to wait. We don't know what we are waiting for, but we know that we must not be afraid. To let ourselves be *afraid* would be breaking the Law."

"The Law!" groaned The Rat, dropping his head on his hands, "I'd forgotten about it."

"Let us remember it," said Marco. "This is the time. 'Hate not. *Fear* not!'" He repeated the last words again and again. "Fear not! Fear not," he said. "*Nothing* can harm him."

The Rat lifted his head, and looked at the bed sideways.

"Did you think—" he said slowly—"did you *ever* think that perhaps *he* knew where the descendant of the Lost Prince was?"

Marco answered even more slowly.

"If anyone knew—surely he might. He has known so much," he said.

"Listen to this!" broke forth The Rat. "I believe he has gone to *tell* the people. If he does—if he could show them—all the country would run mad with joy. It wouldn't be only the Secret Party. All Samavia would rise and follow any flag he chose to raise. They've prayed for the Lost Prince for five hundred years, and if they believed they'd got him once more, they'd fight like madmen for him. But there would not be any

one to fight. They'd *all* want the same thing! If they could see the man with Ivor's blood in his veins, they'd feel he had come back to them—risen from the dead. They'd believe it!"

He beat his fists together in his frenzy of excitement. "It's the time! It's the time!" he cried. "No man could let such a chance go by! He *must* tell them—he *must.* That *must* be what he's gone for. He knows—he knows—he's always known!" And he threw himself back on his sofa and flung his arms over his face, lying there panting.

"If it is the time," said Marco in a low, strained voice— "if it is, and he knows—he will tell them." And he threw his arms up over his own face and lay quite still.

Neither of them said another word, and the street lamp shone in on them as if it were waiting for something to happen. But nothing happened. In time they were asleep.

CHAPTER XXIX
'Twixt Night and Morning

After this, they waited. They did not know what they waited for, nor could they guess even vaguely how the waiting would end. All that Lazarus could tell them he told. He would have been willing to stand respectfully for hours relating to Marco the story of how the period of their absence had passed for his Master and himself. He told how Loristan had spoken each day of his son, how he had often been pale with anxiousness, how in the evenings he had walked to and fro in his room, deep in thought, as he looked down unseeingly at the carpet.

"He permitted me to talk of you, sir," Lazarus said. "I saw that he wished to hear your name often. I reminded him of the times when you had been so young that most children of your age would have been in the hands of nurses, and yet you were strong and silent and sturdy and traveled with us as if you were not a child at all—never crying when you were tired and were not properly fed. As if you understood—as if you understood," he added, proudly. "If, through the power of God a creature can be a man at six years old, you were that one. Many a dark day I have looked into your solemn, watching eyes, and have been half afraid; because that a child should answer one's gaze so gravely seemed almost an unearthly thing."

"The chief thing I remember of those days," said Marco, "is that he was with me, and that whenever I was hungry or tired, I knew he must be, too."

The feeling that they were "waiting" was so intense that it filled the days with strangeness. When the postman's knock

was heard at the door, each of them endeavored not to start. A letter might someday come which would tell them—they did not know what. But no letters came. When they went out into the streets, they found themselves hurrying on their way back in spite of themselves. Something might have happened. Lazarus read the papers faithfully, and in the evening told Marco and The Rat all the news it was "well that they should hear." But the disorders of Samavia had ceased to occupy much space. They had become an old story, and after the excitement of the assassination of Michael Maranovitch had died out, there seemed to be a lull in events. Michael's son had not dared to try to take his father's place, and there were rumors that he also had been killed. The head of the Iarovitch had declared himself king but had not been crowned because of disorders in his own party. The country seemed existing in a nightmare of suffering, famine and suspense.

"Samavia is 'waiting' too," The Rat broke forth one night as they talked together, "but it won't wait long—it can't. If I were a Samavian and in Samavia—"

"My father is a Samavian and he is in Samavia," Marco's grave young voice interposed.

The Rat flushed red as he realized what he had said. "What a fool I am!" he groaned. "I—I beg your pardon—sir." He stood up when he said the last words and added the "sir" as if he suddenly realized that there was a distance between them which was something akin to the distance between youth and maturity—but yet was not the same.

"You are a good Samavian but—you forget," was Marco's answer.

Lazarus' intense grimness increased with each day that passed. The ceremonious respectfulness of his manner toward Marco increased also. It seemed as if the more anxious he felt the more formal and stately his bearing became. It was as though he braced his own courage by doing the smallest things life in the back sitting room required as if they were of

the dignity of services performed in a much larger place and under much more imposing circumstances. The Rat found himself feeling almost as if he were an equerry in a court, and that dignity and ceremony were necessary on his own part. He began to experience a sense of being somehow a person of rank, for whom doors were opened grandly and who had vassals at his command. The watchful obedience of fifty vassals embodied itself in the manner of Lazarus.

"I am glad," The Rat said once, reflectively, "that, after all my father was once—different. It makes it easier to learn things perhaps. If he had not talked to me about people who—well, who had never seen places like Bone Court—this might have been harder for me to understand."

When at last they managed to call The Squad together, and went to spend a morning at the Barracks behind the churchyard, that body of armed men stared at their commander in great and amazed uncertainty. They felt that something had happened to him. They did not know what had happened, but it was some experience which had made him mysteriously different. He did not look like Marco, but in some extraordinary way he seemed more akin to him. They only knew that some necessity in Loristan's affairs had taken the two away from London and the Game. Now they had come back, and they seemed older.

At first, The Squad felt awkward and shuffled its feet uncomfortably. After the first greetings it did not know exactly what to say. It was Marco who saved the situation.

"Drill us first," he said to The Rat, "then we can talk about the Game."

"'Tention!" shouted The Rat, magnificently. And then they forgot everything else and sprang into line. After the drill was ended, and they sat in a circle on the broken flags, the Game became more resplendent than it had ever been.

"I've had time to read and work out new things," The Rat said. "Reading is like traveling."

Marco himself sat and listened, enthralled by the adroitness of the imagination he displayed. Without revealing a single dangerous fact he built up, of their journeyings and experiences, a totally new structure of adventures which would have fired the whole being of any group of lads. It was safe to describe places and people, and he so described them that The Squad squirmed in its delight at feeling itself marching in a procession attending the Emperor in Vienna; standing in line before palaces; climbing, with knapsacks strapped tight, up precipitous mountain roads; defending mountain fortresses; and storming Samavian castles.

The Squad glowed and exulted. The Rat glowed and exulted himself. Marco watched his sharp-featured, burning-eyed face with wonder and admiration. This strange power of making things alive was, he knew, what his father would call "genius."

"Let's take the oath of 'legiance again," shouted Cad, when the Game was over for the morning.

"The papers never said nothin' more about the Lost Prince, but we are all for him yet! Let's take it!" So they stood in line again, Marco at the head, and renewed their oath.

"The sword in my hand—for Samavia!

"The heart in my breast—for Samavia!

"The swiftness of my sight, the thought of my brain, the life of my life—for Samavia.

"Here grow twelve men—for Samavia.

"God be thanked!"

It was more solemn than it had been the first time. The Squad felt it tremendously. Both Cad and Ben were conscious that thrills ran down their spines into their boots. When Marco and The Rat left them, they first stood at salute and then broke out into a ringing cheer.

On their way home, The Rat asked Marco a question.

"Did you see Mrs. Beedle standing at the top of the basement steps and looking after us when we went out this

morning?"

Mrs. Beedle was the landlady of the lodgings at No. 7 Philibert Place. She was a mysterious and dusty female, who lived in the "cellar kitchen" part of the house and was seldom seen by her lodgers.

"Yes," answered Marco, "I have seen her two or three times lately, and I do not think I ever saw her before. My father has never seen her, though Lazarus says she used to watch him round corners. Why is she suddenly so curious about us?"

"I'd like to know," said The Rat. "I've been trying to work it out. Ever since we came back, she's been peeping round the door of the kitchen stairs, or over balustrades, or through the cellar kitchen windows. I believe she wants to speak to you, and knows Lazarus won't let her if he catches her at it. When Lazarus is about, she always darts back."

"What does she want to say?" said Marco.

"I'd like to know," said The Rat again.

When they reached No. 7 Philibert Place, they found out, because when the door opened they saw at the top of cellar kitchen stairs at the end of the passage, the mysterious Mrs. Beedle, in her dusty black dress and with a dusty black cap on, evidently having that minute mounted from her subterranean hiding place. She had come up the steps so quickly that Lazarus had not yet seen her.

"Young Master Loristan!" she called out authoritatively. Lazarus wheeled about fiercely.

"Silence!" he commanded. "How dare you address the young Master?"

She snapped her fingers at him, and marched forward folding her arms tightly. "You mind your own business," she said. "It's young Master Loristan I'm speaking to, not his servant. It's time he was talked to about this."

"Silence, woman!" shouted Lazarus.

"Let her speak," said Marco. "I want to hear. What is it

you wish to say, Madam? My father is not here."

"That's just what I want to find out about," put in the woman. "When is he coming back?"

"I do not know," answered Marco.

"That's it," said Mrs. Beedle. "You're old enough to understand that two big lads and a big fellow like that can't have food and lodgin's for nothing. You may say you don't live high—and you don't—but lodgin's are lodgin's and rent is rent. If your father's coming back and you can tell me when, I mayn't be obliged to let the rooms over your heads; but I know too much about foreigners to let bills run when they are out of sight. Your father's out of sight. He," jerking her head towards Lazarus, "paid me for last week. How do I know he will pay me for this week!"

"The money is ready," roared Lazarus.

The Rat longed to burst forth. He knew what people in Bone Court said to a woman like that; he knew the exact words and phrases. But they were not words and phrases an aide-de-camp might deliver himself of in the presence of his superior officer; they were not words and phrases an equerry uses at court. He dare not *allow* himself to burst forth. He stood with flaming eyes and a flaming face, and bit his lips till they bled. He wanted to strike with his crutches. The son of Stefan Loristan! The Bearer of the Sign! There sprang up before his furious eyes the picture of the luridly lighted cavern and the frenzied crowd of men kneeling at this same boy's feet, kissing them, kissing his hands, his garments, the very earth he stood upon, worshipping him, while above the altar the kingly young face looked on with the nimbus of light like a halo above it. If he dared speak his mind now, he felt he could have endured it better. But being an aide-de-camp he could not.

"Do you want the money now?" asked Marco. "It is only the beginning of the week and we do not owe it to you until the week is over. Is it that you want to have it now?"

Lazarus had become deadly pale. He looked huge in his fury, and he looked dangerous.

"Young Master," he said slowly, in a voice as deadly as his pallor, and he actually spoke low, "this woman—"

Mrs. Beedle drew back towards the cellar kitchen steps.

"There's police outside," she shrilled. "Young Master Loristan, order him to stand back."

"No one will hurt you," said Marco. "If you have the money here, Lazarus, please give it to me."

Lazarus literally ground his teeth. But he drew himself up and saluted with ceremony. He put his hand in his breast pocket and produced an old leather wallet. There were but a few coins in it. He pointed to a gold one.

"I obey you, sir—since I must—" he said, breathing hard. "That one will pay her for the week."

Marco took out the sovereign and held it out to the woman.

"You hear what he says," he said. "At the end of this week if there is not enough to pay for the next, we will go."

Lazarus looked so like a hyena, only held back from springing by chains of steel, that the dusty Mrs. Beedle was afraid to take the money.

"If you say that I shall not lose it, I'll wait until the week's ended," she said. "You're nothing but a lad, but you're like your father. You've got a way that a body can trust. If he was here and said he hadn't the money but he'd have it in time, I'd wait if it was for a month. He'd pay it if he said he would. But he's gone; and two boys and a fellow like that one don't seem much to depend on. But I'll trust *you*."

"Be good enough to take it," said Marco. And he put the coin in her hand and turned into the back sitting room as if he did not see her.

The Rat and Lazarus followed him.

"Is there so little money left?" said Marco. "We have always had very little. When we had less than usual, we lived

in poorer places and were hungry if it was necessary. We know how to go hungry. One does not die of it."

The big eyes under Lazarus' beetling brows filled with tears.

"No, sir," he said, "one does not die of hunger. But the insult—the insult! That is not endurable."

"She would not have spoken if my father had been here," Marco said. "And it is true that boys like us have no money. Is there enough to pay for another week?"

"Yes, sir," answered Lazarus, swallowing hard as if he had a lump in his throat, "perhaps enough for two—if we eat but little. If—if the Master would accept money from those who would give it, he would alway have had enough. But how could such a one as he? How could he? When he went away, he thought—he thought that—" but there he stopped himself suddenly.

"Never mind," said Marco. "Never mind. We will go away the day we can pay no more."

"I can go out and sell newspapers," said The Rat's sharp voice.

"I've done it before. Crutches help you to sell them. The platform would sell 'em faster still. I'll go out on the platform."

"I can sell newspapers, too," said Marco.

Lazarus uttered an exclamation like a groan.

"Sir," he cried, "no, no! Am I not here to go out and look for work? I can carry loads. I can run errands."

"We will all three begin to see what we can do," Marco said.

Then—exactly as had happened on the day of their return from their journey—there arose in the road outside the sound of newsboys shouting. This time the outcry seemed even more excited than before. The boys were running and yelling and there seemed more of them than usual. And above all other words was heard "Samavia! Samavia!" But today The Rat did not rush to the door at the first cry. He stood still—for several

seconds they all three stood still—listening. Afterwards each one remembered and told the others that he had stood still because some strange, strong feeling held him *waiting* as if to hear some great thing.

It was Lazarus who went out of the room first and The Rat and Marco followed him.

One of the upstairs lodgers had run down in haste and opened the door to buy newspapers and ask questions. The newsboys were wild with excitement and danced about as they shouted. The piece of news they were yelling had evidently a popular quality.

The lodger bought two papers and was handing out coppers to a lad who was talking loud and fast.

"Here's a go!" he was saying. "A Secret Party's risen up and taken Samavia! 'Twixt night and mornin' they done it! That there Lost Prince descendant 'as turned up, an' they've *crowned* him—'twixt night and mornin' they done it! Clapt 'is crown on 'is 'ead, so's they'd lose no time." And off he bolted, shouting, "'Cendant of Lost Prince! 'Cendant of Lost Prince made King of Samavia!"

It was then that Lazarus, forgetting even ceremony, bolted also. He bolted back to the sitting room, rushed in, and the door fell to behind him.

Marco and The Rat found it shut when, having secured a newspaper, they went down the passage. At the closed door, Marco stopped. He did not turn the handle. From the inside of the room there came the sound of big convulsive sobs and passionate Samavian words of prayer and worshipping gratitude.

"Let us wait," Marco said, trembling a little. "He will not want anyone to see him. Let us wait."

His black pits of eyes looked immense, and he stood at his tallest, but he was trembling slightly from head to foot. The Rat had begun to shake, as if from an ague. His face was scarcely human in its fierce unboyish emotion.

"Marco! Marco!" his whisper was a cry. "That was what he went for—*because he knew!*"

"Yes," answered Marco, "that was what he went for." And his voice was unsteady, as his body was.

Presently the sobs inside the room choked themselves back suddenly. Lazarus had remembered. They had guessed he had been leaning against the wall during his outburst. Now it was evident that he stood upright, probably shocked at the forgetfulness of his frenzy.

So Marco turned the handle of the door and went into the room. He shut the door behind him, and they all three stood together.

When the Samavian gives way to his emotions, he is emotional indeed. Lazarus looked as if a storm had swept over him. He had choked back his sobs, but tears still swept down his cheeks.

"Sir," he said hoarsely, "your pardon! It was as if a convulsion seized me. I forgot everything—even my duty. Pardon, pardon!" And there on the worn carpet of the dingy back sitting room in the Marylebone Road, he actually went on one knee and kissed the boy's hand with adoration.

"You mustn't ask pardon," said Marco. "You have waited so long, good friend. You have given your life as my father has. You have known all the suffering a boy has not lived long enough to understand. Your big heart—your faithful heart," his voice broke and he stood and looked at him with an appeal which seemed to ask him to remember his boyhood and understand the rest.

"Don't kneel," he said next. "You mustn't kneel." And Lazarus, kissing his hand again, rose to his feet.

"Now—we shall *hear!*" said Marco. "Now the waiting will soon be over."

"Yes, sir. Now, we shall receive commands!" Lazarus answered.

The Rat held out the newspapers.

"May we read them yet?" he asked.

"Until further orders, sir," said Lazarus hurriedly and apologetically—"until further orders, it is still better that I should read them first."

CHAPTER XXX
The Game Is at an End

So long as the history of Europe is written and read, the unparalleled story of the Rising of the Secret Party in Samavia will stand out as one of its most startling and romantic records. Every detail connected with the astonishing episode, from beginning to end, was romantic even when it was most productive of realistic results. When it is related, it always begins with the story of the tall and kingly Samavian youth who walked out of the palace in the early morning sunshine singing the herdsmen's song of beauty of old days. Then comes the outbreak of the ruined and revolting populace; then the legend of the morning on the mountainside, and the old shepherd coming out of his cave and finding the apparently dead body of the beautiful young hunter. Then the secret nursing in the cavern; then the jolting cart piled with sheepskins crossing the frontier, and ending its journey at the barred entrance of the monastery and leaving its mysterious burden behind. And then the bitter hate and struggle of dynasties, and the handful of shepherds and herdsmen meeting in their cavern and binding themselves and their unborn sons and sons' sons by an oath never to be broken. Then the passing of generations and the slaughter of peoples and the changing of kings—and always that oath remembered, and the Forgers of the Sword, at their secret work, hidden in forests and caves. Then the strange story of the uncrowned kings who, wandering in other lands, lived and died in silence and seclusion, often laboring with their hands for their daily bread, but never forgetting that they must be kings, and ready—even though Samavia never

called. Perhaps the whole story would fill too many volumes to admit of it ever being told fully.

But history makes the growing of the Secret Party clear, though it seems almost to cease to be history, in spite of its efforts to be brief and speak only of dull facts, when it is forced to deal with the Bearing of the Sign by two mere boys, who, being blown as unremarked as any two grains of dust across Europe, lit the Lamp whose flame so flared up to the high heavens that as if from the earth itself there sprang forth Samavians by the thousands ready to feed it—Iarovitch and Maranovitch swept aside forever and only Samavians remaining to cry aloud in ardent praise and worship of the God who had brought back to them their Lost Prince. The battle cry of his name had ended every battle. Swords fell from hands because swords were not needed. The Iarovitch fled in terror and dismay; the Maranovitch were nowhere to be found. Between night and morning, as the newsboy had said, the standard of Ivor was raised and waved from palace and citadel alike. From mountain, forest and plain, from city, village and town, its followers flocked to swear allegiance; broken and wounded legions staggered along the roads to join and kneel to it; women and children followed, weeping with joy and chanting songs of praise. The Powers held out their scepters to the lately prostrate and ignored country. Train loads of food and supplies of all things needed began to cross the frontier; the aid of nations was bestowed. Samavia, at peace to till its land, to raise its flocks, to mine its ores, would be able to pay all back. Samavia in past centuries had been rich enough to make great loans, and had stored such harvests as warring countries had been glad to call upon. The story of the crowning of the King had been the wildest of all—the multitude of ecstatic people, famished, in rags, and many of them weak with wounds, kneeling at his feet, praying, as their one salvation and security, that he would go attended by them to their bombarded and broken cathedral, and at its

high altar let the crown be placed upon his head, so that even those who perhaps must die of their past sufferings would at least have paid their poor homage to the King Ivor who would rule their children and bring back to Samavia her honor and her peace.

"Ivor! Ivor!" they chanted like a prayer, "Ivor! Ivor!" in their houses, by the roadside, in the streets.

"The story of the Coronation in the shattered Cathedral, whose roof had been torn to fragments by bombs," said an important London paper, "reads like a legend of the Middle Ages. But, upon the whole, there is in Samavia's national character, something of the mediaeval, still."

Lazarus, having bought and read in his top floor room every newspaper recording the details which had reached London, returned to report almost verbatim, standing erect before Marco, the eyes under his shaggy brows sometimes flaming with exultation, sometimes filled with a rush of tears. He could not be made to sit down. His whole big body seemed to have become rigid with magnificence. Meeting Mrs. Beedle in the passage, he strode by her with an air so thunderous that she turned and scuttled back to her cellar kitchen, almost falling down the stone steps in her nervous terror. In such a mood, he was not a person to face without something like awe.

In the middle of the night, The Rat suddenly spoke to Marco as if he knew that he was awake and would hear him.

"He has given all his life to Samavia!" he said. "When you traveled from country to country, and lived in holes and corners, it was because by doing it he could escape spies, and see the people who must be made to understand. No one else could have made them listen. An emperor would have begun to listen when he had seen his face and heard his voice. And he could be silent, and wait for the right time to speak. He could keep still when other men could not. He could keep his face still—and his hands—and his eyes. Now all Samavia

knows what he has done, and that he has been the greatest patriot in the world. We both saw what Samavians were like that night in the cavern. They will go mad with joy when they see his face!"

"They have seen it now," said Marco, in a low voice from his bed.

Then there was a long silence, though it was not quite silence because The Rat's breathing was so quick and hard.

"He—must have been at that coronation!" he said at last. "The King—what will the King do to—repay him?"

Marco did not answer. His breathing could be heard also. His mind was picturing that same coronation—the shattered, roofless cathedral, the ruins of the ancient and magnificent high altar, the multitude of kneeling, famine-scourged people, the battle worn, wounded and bandaged soldiery! And the King! And his father! Where had his father stood when the King was crowned? Surely, he had stood at the King's right hand, and the people had adored and acclaimed them equally!

"King Ivor!" he murmured as if he were in a dream. "King Ivor!"

The Rat started up on his elbow.

"You will see him," he cried out. "He's not a dream any longer. The Game is not a game now—and it is ended—it is won! It was real—*he* was real! Marco, I don't believe you hear."

"Yes, I do," answered Marco, "but it is almost more a dream than when it was one."

"The greatest patriot in the world is like a king himself!" raved The Rat. "If there is no bigger honor to give him, he will be made a prince—and Commander-in-Chief—and Prime Minister! Can't you hear those Samavians shouting, and singing, and praying? You'll see it all! Do you remember the mountain climber who was going to save the shoes he made for the Bearer of the Sign? He said a great day might

come when one could show them to the people. It's come! He'll show them! I know how they'll take it!" His voice suddenly dropped—as if it dropped into a pit. "You'll see it all. But I shall not."

Then Marco awoke from his dream and lifted his head. "Why not?" he demanded. It sounded like a demand.

"Because I know better than to expect it!" The Rat groaned. "You've taken me a long way, but you can't take me to the palace of a king. I'm not such a fool as to think that, even if your father—"

He broke off because Marco did more than lift his head. He sat upright.

"You bore the Sign as much as I did," he said. "We bore it together."

"Who would have listened to *me?*" cried The Rat. "*You* were the son of Stefan Loristan."

"You were the friend of his son," answered Marco. "You went at the command of Stefan Loristan. You were the *army* of the son of Stefan Loristan. That I have told you. Where I go, you will go. We will say no more of this—not one word."

And he lay down again in the silence of a prince of the blood. And The Rat knew that he meant what he said, and that Stefan Loristan also would mean it. And because he was a boy, he began to wonder what Mrs. Beedle would do when she heard what had happened—what had been happening all the time a tall, shabby "foreigner" had lived in her dingy back sitting room, and been closely watched lest he should go away without paying his rent, as shabby foreigners sometimes did. The Rat saw himself managing to poise himself very erect on his crutches while he told her that the shabby foreigner was—well, was at least the friend of a King, and had given him his crown—and would be made a prince and a Commander-in-Chief—and a Prime Minister—because there was no higher rank or honor to give him. And his son—whom she had insulted—was Samavia's idol because he had borne the Sign.

And also that if she were in Samavia, and Marco chose to do it he could batter her wretched lodging house to the ground and put her in a prison—"and serve her jolly well right!"

The next day passed, and the next; and then there came a letter. It was from Loristan, and Marco turned pale when Lazarus handed it to him. Lazarus and The Rat went out of the room at once, and left him to read it alone. It was evidently not a long letter, because it was not many minutes before Marco called them again into the room.

"In a few days, messengers—friends of my father's—will come to take us to Samavia. You and I and Lazarus are to go," he said to The Rat.

"God be thanked!" said Lazarus. "God be thanked!"

Before the messengers came, it was the end of the week. Lazarus had packed their few belongings, and on Saturday Mrs. Beedle was to be seen hovering at the top of the cellar steps, when Marco and The Rat left the back sitting room to go out.

"You needn't glare at me!" she said to Lazarus, who stood glowering at the door which he had opened for them. "Young Master Loristan, I want to know if you've heard when your father is coming back?"

"He will not come back," said Marco.

"He won't, won't he? Well, how about next week's rent?" said Mrs. Beedle. "Your man's been packing up, I notice. He's not got much to carry away, but it won't pass through that front door until I've got what's owing me. People that can pack easy think they can get away easy, and they'll bear watching. The week's up today."

Lazarus wheeled and faced her with a furious gesture. "Get back to your cellar, woman," he commanded. "Get back under ground and stay there. Look at what is stopping before your miserable gate."

A carriage was stopping—a very perfect carriage of dark brown. The coachman and footman wore dark brown and

gold liveries, and the footman had leaped down and opened the door with respectful alacrity. "They are friends of the Master's come to pay their respects to his son," said Lazarus. "Are their eyes to be offended by the sight of you?"

"Your money is safe," said Marco. "You had better leave us."

Mrs. Beedle gave a sharp glance at the two gentlemen who had entered the broken gate. They were of an order which did not belong to Philibert Place. They looked as if the carriage and the dark brown and gold liveries were everyday affairs to them.

"At all events, they're two grown men, and not two boys without a penny," she said. "If they're your father's friends, they'll tell me whether my rent's safe or not."

The two visitors were upon the threshold. They were both men of a certain self-contained dignity of type; and when Lazarus opened wide the door, they stepped into the shabby entrance hall as if they did not see it. They looked past its dinginess, and past Lazarus, and The Rat, and Mrs. Beedle—*through* them, as it were—at Marco.

He advanced towards them at once.

"You come from my father!" he said, and gave his hand first to the elder man, then to the younger.

"Yes, we come from your father. I am Baron Rastka—and this is the Count Vorversk," said the elder man, bowing.

"If they're barons and counts, and friends of your father's, they are well-to-do enough to be responsible for you," said Mrs. Beedle, rather fiercely, because she was somewhat overawed and resented the fact. "It's a matter of next week's rent, gentlemen. I want to know where it's coming from."

The elder man looked at her with a swift cold glance. He did not speak to her, but to Lazarus. "What is she doing here?" he demanded.

Marco answered him. "She is afraid we cannot pay our rent," he said. "It is of great importance to her that she should

be sure."

"Take her away," said the gentleman to Lazarus. He did not even glance at her. He drew something from his coat pocket and handed it to the old soldier. "Take her away," he repeated. And because it seemed as if she were not any longer a person at all, Mrs. Beedle actually shuffled down the passage to the cellar kitchen steps. Lazarus did not leave her until he, too, had descended into the cellar kitchen, where he stood and towered above her like an infuriated giant.

"Tomorrow he will be on his way to Samavia, miserable woman!" he said. "Before he goes, it would be well for you to implore his pardon."

But Mrs. Beedle's point of view was not his. She had recovered some of her breath.

"I don't know where Samavia is," she raged, as she struggled to set her dusty, black cap straight. "I'll warrant it's one of these little foreign countries you can scarcely see on the map—and not a decent English town in it! He can go as soon as he likes, so long as he pays his rent before he does it. Samavia, indeed! You talk as if he was Buckingham Palace!"

CHAPTER XXXI
"The Son of Stefan Loristan"

When a party composed of two boys attended by a big soldierly man-servant and accompanied by two distinguished looking, elderly men, of a marked foreign type, appeared on the platform of Charing Cross Station they attracted a good deal of attention. In fact, the good looks and strong, well-carried body of the handsome lad with the thick black hair would have caused eyes to turn towards him even if he had not seemed to be regarded as so special a charge by those who were with him. But in a country where people are accustomed to seeing a certain manner and certain forms observed in the case of persons—however young—who are set apart by the fortune of rank and distinction, and where the populace also rather enjoys the sight of such demeanor, it was inevitable that more than one quick-sighted looker-on should comment on the fact that this was not an ordinary group of individuals.

"See that fine, big lad over there!" said a workman, whose head, with a pipe in its mouth, stuck out of a third-class smoking carriage window. "He's some sort of a young swell, I'll lay a shillin'! Take a look at him," to his mate inside.

The mate took a look. The pair were of the decent, polytechnic-educated type, and were shrewd at observation.

"Yes, he's some sort of young swell," he summed him up. "But he's not English by a long chalk. He must be a young Turk, or Russian, sent over to be educated. His suite looks like it. All but the ferret-faced chap on crutches. Wonder what he is!"

A good-natured looking guard was passing, and the first man hailed him.

"Have we got any swells traveling with us this morning?" he asked, jerking his head towards the group. "That looks like it. Anyone leaving Windsor or Sandringham to cross from Dover today?"

The man looked at the group curiously for a moment and then shook his head.

"They do look like something or other," he answered, "but no one knows anything about them. Everybody's safe in Buckingham Palace and Marlborough House this week. No one either going or coming."

No observer, it is true, could have mistaken Lazarus for an ordinary attendant escorting an ordinary charge. If silence had not still been strictly the order, he could not have restrained himself. As it was, he bore himself like a grenadier, and stood by Marco as if across his dead body alone could anyone approach the lad.

"Until we reach Melzarr," he had said with passion to the two gentlemen, "until I can stand before my Master and behold him embrace his son—*behold* him—I implore that I may not lose sight of him night or day. On my knees, I implore that I may travel, armed, at his side. I am but his servant, and have no right to occupy a place in the same carriage. But put me anywhere. I will be deaf, dumb, blind to all but himself. Only permit me to be near enough to give my life if it is needed. Let me say to my Master, 'I never left him.'"

"We will find a place for you," the elder man said, "and if you are so anxious, you may sleep across his threshold when we spend the night at a hotel."

"I will not sleep!" said Lazarus. "I will watch. Suppose there should be demons of Maranovitch loose and infuriated in Europe? Who knows!"

"The Maranovitch and Iarovitch who have not already sworn allegiance to King Ivor are dead on battlefields. The remainder are now Fedorovitch and praising God for their King," was the answer Baron Rastka made him.

But Lazarus kept his guard unbroken. When he occupied the next compartment to the one in which Marco traveled, he stood in the corridor throughout the journey. When they descended at any point to change trains, he followed close at the boy's heels, his fierce eyes on every side at once and his hand on the weapon hidden in his broad leather belt. When they stopped to rest in some city, he planted himself in a chair by the bedroom door of his charge, and if he slept he was not aware that nature had betrayed him into doing so.

If the journey made by the young Bearers of the Sign had been a strange one, this was strange by its very contrast. Throughout that pilgrimage, two uncared for waifs in worn clothes had traveled from one place to another, sometimes in third- or fourth-class continental railroad carriages, sometimes in jolting diligences, sometimes in peasants' carts, sometimes on foot by side roads and mountain paths, and forest ways. Now, two well-dressed boys in the charge of two men of the class whose orders are obeyed, journeyed in compartments reserved for them, their traveling appurtenances supplying every comfort that luxury could provide.

The Rat had not known that there were people who traveled in such a manner; that wants could be so perfectly foreseen; that railroad officials, porters at stations, the staff of restaurants, could be by magic transformed into active and eager servants. To lean against the upholstered back of a railway carriage and in luxurious ease look through the window at passing beauties, and then to find books at your elbow and excellent meals appearing at regular hours, these unknown perfections made it necessary for him at times to pull himself together and give all his energies to believing that he was quite awake. Awake he was, and with much on his mind "to work out,"—so much, indeed, that on the first day of the journey he had decided to give up the struggle, and wait until fate made clear to him such things as he was to be allowed to understand of the mystery of Stefan Loristan.

What he realized most clearly was that the fact that the son of Stefan Loristan was being escorted in private state to the country his father had given his life's work to, was never for a moment forgotten. The Baron Rastka and Count Vorversk were of the dignity and courteous reserve which marks men of distinction. Marco was not a mere boy to them, he was the son of Stefan Loristan; and they were Samavians. They watched over him, not as Lazarus did, but with a gravity and forethought which somehow seemed to encircle him with a rampart. Without any air of subservience, they constituted themselves his attendants. His comfort, his pleasure, even his entertainment, were their private care. The Rat felt sure they intended that, if possible, he should enjoy his journey, and that he should not be fatigued by it. They conversed with him as The Rat had not known that men ever conversed with boys—until he had met Loristan. It was plain that they knew what he would be most interested in, and that they were aware he was as familiar with the history of Samavia as they were themselves. When he showed a disposition to hear of events which had occurred, they were as prompt to follow his lead as they would have been to follow the lead of a man. That, The Rat argued with himself, was because Marco had lived so intimately with his father that his life had been more like a man's than a boy's and had trained him in mature thinking. He was very quiet during the journey, and The Rat knew he was thinking all the time.

The night before they reached Melzarr, they slept at a town some hours distant from the capital. They arrived at midnight and went to a quiet hotel.

"Tomorrow," said Marco, when The Rat had left him for the night, "tomorrow, we shall see him! God be thanked!"

"God be thanked!" said The Rat, also. And each saluted the other before they parted.

In the morning, Lazarus came into the bedroom with an air so solemn that it seemed as if the garments he carried in

his hands were part of some religious ceremony.

"I am at your command, sir," he said. "And I bring you your uniform."

He carried, in fact, a richly decorated Samavian uniform, and the first thing Marco had seen when he entered was that Lazarus himself was in uniform also. His was the uniform of an officer of the King's Body Guard.

"The Master," he said, "asks that you wear this on your entrance to Melzarr. I have a uniform, also, for your aide-de-camp."

When Rastka and Vorversk appeared, they were in uniforms also. It was a uniform which had a touch of the Orient in its picturesque splendor. A short fur-bordered mantle hung by a jeweled chain from the shoulders, and there was much magnificent embroidery of color and gold.

"Sir, we must drive quickly to the station," Baron Rastka said to Marco. "These people are excitable and patriotic, and His Majesty wishes us to remain incognito, and avoid all chance of public demonstration until we reach the capital." They passed rather hurriedly through the hotel to the carriage which awaited them. The Rat saw that something unusual was happening in the place. Servants were scurrying round corners, and guests were coming out of their rooms and even hanging over the balustrades.

As Marco got into his carriage, he caught sight of a boy about his own age who was peeping from behind a bush. Suddenly he darted away, and they all saw him tearing down the street towards the station as fast as his legs would carry him.

But the horses were faster than he was. The party reached the station, and was escorted quickly to its place in a special saloon carriage which awaited it. As the train made its way out of the station, Marco saw the boy who had run before them rush on to the platform, waving his arms and shouting something with wild delight. The people who were standing

about turned to look at him, and the next instant they had all torn off their caps and thrown them up in the air and were shouting also. But it was not possible to hear what they said.

"We were only just in time," said Vorversk, and Baron Rastka nodded.

The train went swiftly, and stopped only once before they reached Melzarr. This was at a small station, on the platform of which stood peasants with big baskets of garlanded flowers and evergreens. They put them on the train, and soon both Marco and The Rat saw that something unusual was taking place. At one time, a man standing on the narrow outside platform of the carriage was plainly seen to be securing garlands and handing up flags to men who worked on the roof.

"They are doing something with Samavian flags and a lot of flowers and green things!" cried The Rat, in excitement.

"Sir, they are decorating the outside of the carriage," Vorversk said. "The villagers on the line obtained permission from His Majesty. The son of Stefan Loristan could not be allowed to pass their homes without their doing homage."

"I understand," said Marco, his heart thumping hard against his uniform. "It is for my father's sake."

At last, embowered, garlanded, and hung with waving banners, the train drew in at the chief station at Melzarr.

"Sir," said Rastka, as they were entering, "will you stand up that the people may see you? Those on the outskirts of the crowd will have the merest glimpse, but they will never forget."

Marco stood up. The others grouped themselves behind him. There arose a roar of voices, which ended almost in a shriek of joy which was like the shriek of a tempest. Then there burst forth the blare of brazen instruments playing the National Hymn of Samavia, and mad voices joined in it.

If Marco had not been a strong boy, and long trained in self-control, what he saw and heard might have been almost too much to be borne. When the train had come to a full stop,

and the door was thrown open, even Rastka's dignified voice was unsteady as he said, "Sir, lead the way. It is for us to follow."

And Marco, erect in the doorway, stood for a moment, looking out upon the roaring, acclaiming, weeping, singing and swaying multitude—and saluted just as he had saluted The Squad, looking just as much a boy, just as much a man, just as much a thrilling young human being.

Then, at the sight of him standing so, it seemed as if the crowd went mad—as the Forgers of the Sword had seemed to go mad on the night in the cavern. The tumult rose and rose, the crowd rocked, and leapt, and, in its frenzy of emotion, threatened to crush itself to death. But for the lines of soldiers, there would have seemed no chance for anyone to pass through it alive.

"I am the son of Stefan Loristan," Marco said to himself, in order to hold himself steady. "I am on my way to my father."

Afterward, he was moving through the line of guarding soldiers to the entrance, where two great state carriages stood; and there, outside, waited even a huger and more frenzied crowd than that left behind. He saluted there again, and again, and again, on all sides. It was what they had seen the Emperor do in Vienna. He was not an Emperor, but he was the son of Stefan Loristan who had brought back the King.

"You must salute, too," he said to The Rat, when they got into the state carriage. "Perhaps my father has told them. It seems as if they knew you."

The Rat had been placed beside him on the carriage seat. He was inwardly shuddering with a rapture of exultation which was almost anguish. The people were looking at him—shouting at him—surely it seemed like it when he looked at the faces nearest in the crowd. Perhaps Loristan—

"Listen!" said Marco suddenly, as the carriage rolled on its way. "They are shouting to us in Samavian, 'The Bearers of the Sign!' That is what they are saying now. 'The Bearers

of the Sign.'"

They were being taken to the Palace. That Baron Rastka and Count Vorversk had explained in the train. His Majesty wished to receive them. Stefan Loristan was there also.

The city had once been noble and majestic. It was somewhat Oriental, as its uniforms and national costumes were. There were domed and pillared structures of white stone and marble, there were great arches, and city gates, and churches. But many of them were half in ruins through war, and neglect, and decay. They passed the half-unroofed cathedral, standing in the sunshine in its great square, still in all its disaster one of the most beautiful structures in Europe. In the exultant crowd were still to be seen haggard faces, men with bandaged limbs and heads or hobbling on sticks and crutches. The richly colored native costumes were most of them worn to rags. But their wearers had the faces of creatures plucked from despair to be lifted to heaven.

"Ivor! Ivor!" they cried; "Ivor! Ivor!" and sobbed with rapture.

The Palace was as wonderful in its way as the white cathedral. The immensely wide steps of marble were guarded by soldiers. The huge square in which it stood was filled with people whom the soldiers held in check.

"I am his son," Marco said to himself, as he descended from the state carriage and began to walk up the steps which seemed so enormously wide that they appeared almost like a street. Up he mounted, step by step, The Rat following him. And as he turned from side to side, to salute those who made deep obeisance as he passed, he began to realize that he had seen their faces before.

"These who are guarding the steps," he said, quickly under his breath to The Rat, "are the Forgers of the Sword!"

There were rich uniforms everywhere when he entered the palace, and people who bowed almost to the ground as he passed. He was very young to be confronted with such an

adoring adulation and royal ceremony; but he hoped it would not last too long, and that after he had knelt to the King and kissed his hand, he would see his father and hear his voice. Just to hear his voice again, and feel his hand on his shoulder!

Through the vaulted corridors, to the wide-opened doors of a magnificent room he was led at last. The end of it seemed a long way off as he entered. There were many richly dressed people who stood in line as he passed up toward the canopied dais. He felt that he had grown pale with the strain of excitement, and he had begun to feel that he must be walking in a dream, as on each side people bowed low and curtsied to the ground.

He realized vaguely that the King himself was standing, awaiting his approach. But as he advanced, each step bearing him nearer to the throne, the light and color about him, the strangeness and magnificence, the wildly joyous acclamation of the populace outside the palace, made him feel rather dazzled, and he did not clearly see any one single face or thing.

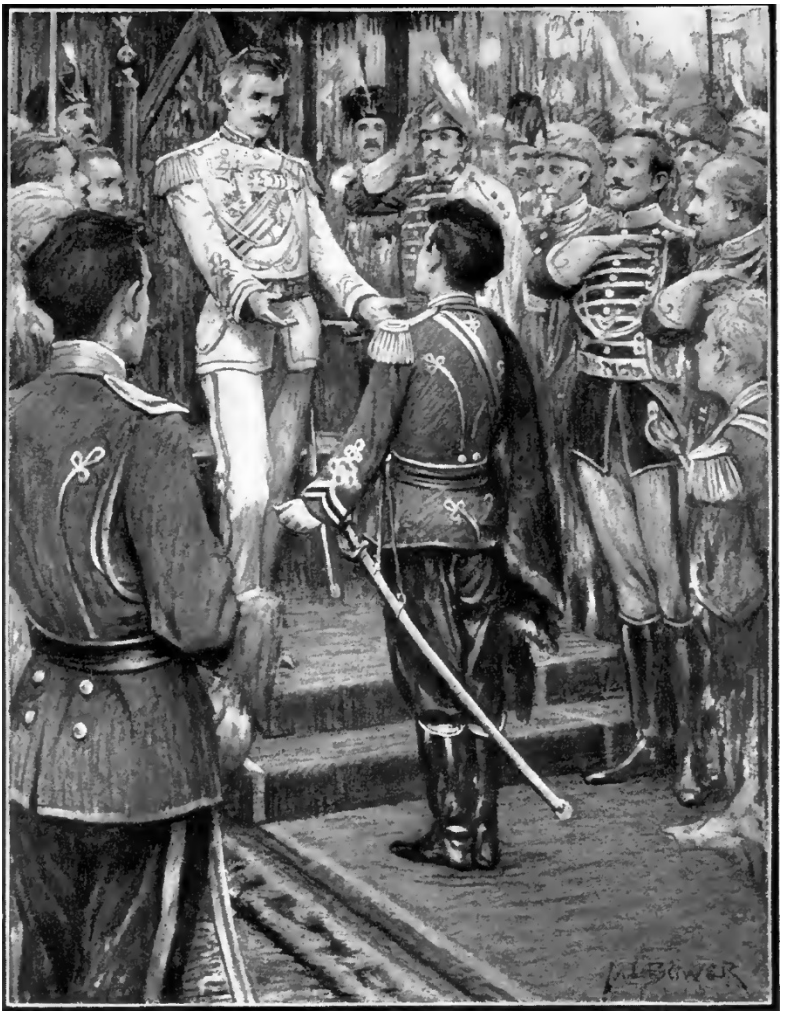
"His Majesty awaits you," said a voice behind him which seemed to be Baron Rastka's. "Are you faint, sir? You look pale."

He drew himself together, and lifted his eyes. For one full moment, after he had so lifted them, he stood quite still and straight, looking into the deep beauty of the royal face. Then he knelt and kissed the hands held out to him—kissed them both with a passion of boy love and worship.

The King had the eyes he had longed to see—the King's hands were those he had longed to feel again upon his shoulder—the King was his father! the "Stefan Loristan" who had been the last of those who had waited and labored for Samavia through five hundred years, and who had lived and died kings, though none of them till now had worn a crown!

His father was the King!

It was not that night, nor the next, nor for many nights that the telling of the story was completed. The people knew



The King had the eyes he had longed to see.

that their King and his son were rarely separated from each other; that the Prince's suite of apartments were connected by a private passage with his father's. The two were bound together by an affection of singular strength and meaning, and their love for their people added to their feeling for each other. In the history of what their past had been, there was a romance which swelled the emotional Samavian heart near to bursting. By mountain fires, in huts, under the stars, in fields and in forests, all that was known of their story was told and retold a thousand times, with sobs of joy and prayer breaking in upon the tale.

But none knew it as it was told in a certain quiet but stately room in the palace, where the man once known only as "Stefan Loristan," but whom history would call the first King Ivor of Samavia, told his share of it to the boy whom Samavians had a strange and superstitious worship for, because he seemed so surely their Lost Prince restored in body and soul—almost the kingly lad in the ancient portrait—some of them half believed when he stood in the sunshine, with the halo about his head.

It was a wonderful and intense story, that of the long wanderings and the close hiding of the dangerous secret. Among all those who had known that a man who was an impassioned patriot was laboring for Samavia, and using all the power of a great mind and the delicate ingenuity of a great genius to gain friends and favor for his unhappy country, there had been but one who had known that Stefan Loristan had a claim to the Samavian throne. He had made no claim, he had sought—not a crown—but the final freedom of the nation for which his love had been a religion.

"Not the crown!" he said to the two young Bearers of the Sign as they sat at his feet like schoolboys—"not a throne. 'The Life of my life—for Samavia.' That was what I worked for—what we have all worked for. If there had risen a wiser man in Samavia's time of need, it would not have been for me

to remind them of their Lost Prince. I could have stood aside. But no man arose. The crucial moment came—and the one man who knew the secret, revealed it. Then—Samavia called, and I answered."

He put his hand on the thick, black hair of his boy's head.

"There was a thing we never spoke of together," he said. "I believed always that your mother died of her bitter fears for me and the unending strain of them. She was very young and loving, and knew that there was no day when we parted that we were sure of seeing each other alive again. When she died, she begged me to promise that your boyhood and youth should not be burdened by the knowledge she had found it so terrible to bear. I should have kept the secret from you, even if she had not so implored me. I had never meant that you should know the truth until you were a man. If I had died, a certain document would have been sent to you which would have left my task in your hands and made my plans clear. You would have known then that you also were a Prince Ivor, who must take up his country's burden and be ready when Samavia called. I tried to help you to train yourself for any task. You never failed me."

"Your Majesty," said The Rat, "I began to work it out, and think it must be true that night when we were with the old woman on the top of the mountain. It was the way she looked at—at His Highness."

"Say 'Marco,'" threw in Prince Ivor. "It's easier. He was my army, Father."

Stefan Loristan's grave eyes melted.

"Say 'Marco,'" he said. "You were his army—and more—when we both needed one. It was you who invented the Game!"

"Thanks, Your Majesty," said The Rat, reddening scarlet. "You do me great honor! But he would never let me wait on him when we were traveling. He said we were nothing but two boys. I suppose that's why it's hard to remember, at first.

But my mind went on working until sometimes I was afraid I might let something out at the wrong time. When we went down into the cavern, and I saw the Forgers of the Sword go mad over him—I *knew* it must be true. But I didn't dare to speak. I knew you meant us to wait; so I waited."

"You are a faithful friend," said the King, "and you have always obeyed orders!"

A great moon was sailing in the sky that night—just such a moon as had sailed among the torn rifts of storm clouds when the Prince at Vienna had come out upon the balcony and the boyish voice had startled him from the darkness of the garden below. The clearer light of this night's splendor drew them out on a balcony also—a broad balcony of white marble which looked like snow. The pure radiance fell upon all they saw spread before them—the lovely but half-ruined city, the great palace square with its broken statues and arches, the splendid ghost of the unroofed cathedral whose High Altar was bare to the sky.

They stood and looked at it. There was a stillness in which all the world might have ceased breathing.

"What next?" said Prince Ivor, at last speaking quietly and low. "What next, Father?"

"Great things which will come, one by one," said the King, "if we hold ourselves ready."

Prince Ivor turned his face from the lovely, white, broken city, and put his brown hand on his father's arm.

"Upon the ledge that night—" he said, "Father, you remember?" The King was looking far away, but he bent his head:

"Yes. That will come, too," he said. "Can you repeat it?"

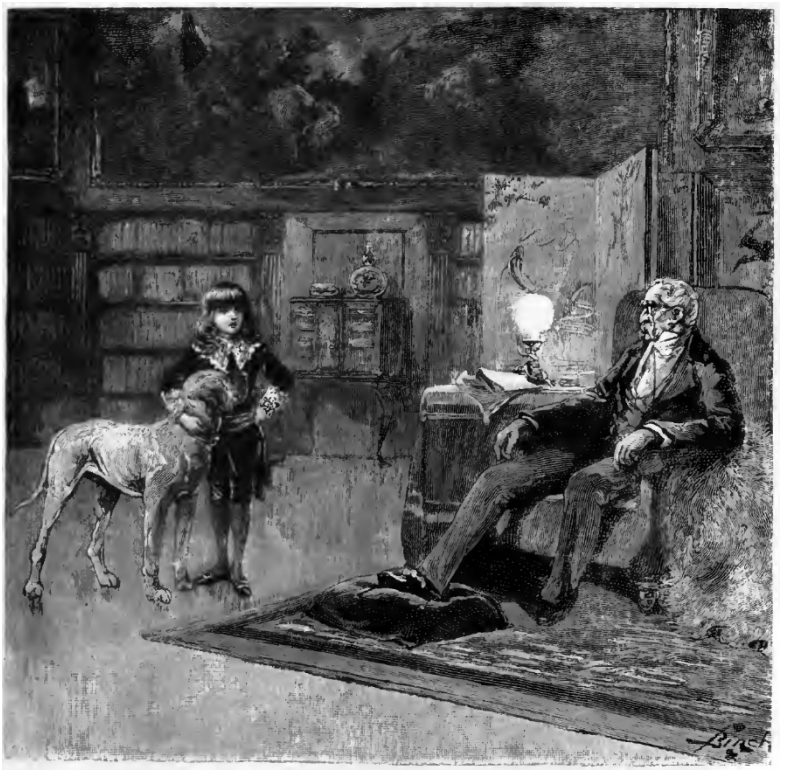
"Yes," said Ivor, "and so can the aide-de-camp. We've said it a hundred times. We believe it's true. 'If the descendant of the Lost Prince is brought back to rule in Samavia, he will teach his people the Law of the One, from his throne. He will teach his son, and that son will teach his son, and he will

teach his. And through such as these, the whole world will learn the Order and the Law.'

LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY

By Frances Hodgson Burnett





"Are you the Earl?" said Cedric. "I'm your grandson. I'm Lord Fauntleroy."

Chapter I

Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him. He knew that his papa had been an Englishman, because his mamma had told him so; but then his papa had died when he was so little a boy that he could not remember very much about him, except that he was big, and had blue eyes and a long mustache, and that it was a splendid thing to be carried around the room on his shoulder. Since his papa's death, Cedric had found out that it was best not to talk to his mamma about him. When his father was ill, Cedric had been sent away, and when he had returned, everything was over; and his mother, who had been very ill, too, was only just beginning to sit in her chair by the window. She was pale and thin, and all the dimples had gone from her pretty face, and her eyes looked large and mournful, and she was dressed in black.

"Dearest," said Cedric (his papa had called her that always, and so the little boy had learned to say it), "dearest, is my papa better?"

He felt her arms tremble, and so he turned his curly head and looked in her face. There was something in it that made him feel that he was going to cry.

"Dearest," he said, "is he well?"

Then suddenly his loving little heart told him that he'd better put both his arms around her neck and kiss her again and again, and keep his soft cheek close to hers; and he did so, and she laid her face on his shoulder and cried bitterly, holding him as if she could never let him go again.

"Yes, he is well," she sobbed; "he is quite, quite well, but we—we have no one left but each other. No one at all."

Then, little as he was, he understood that his big, handsome young papa would not come back anymore; that he was dead, as he had heard of other people being, although he could not comprehend exactly what strange thing had brought all this sadness about. It was because his mamma always cried when he spoke of his papa that he secretly made up his mind it was better not to speak of him very often to her, and he found out, too, that it was better not to let her sit still and look into the fire or out of the window without moving or talking. He and his mamma knew very few people, and lived what might have been thought very lonely lives, although Cedric did not know it was lonely until he grew older and heard why it was they had no visitors. Then he was told that his mamma was an orphan, and quite alone in the world when his papa had married her. She was very pretty, and had been living as companion to a rich old lady who was not kind to her, and one day Captain Cedric Errol, who was calling at the house, saw her run up the stairs with tears on her eyelashes; and she looked so sweet and innocent and sorrowful that the Captain could not forget her. And after many strange things had happened, they knew each other well and loved each other dearly, and were married, although their marriage brought them the ill will of several persons. The one who was most angry of all, however, was the Captain's father, who lived in England, and was a very rich and important old nobleman, with a very bad temper and a very violent dislike to America and Americans. He had two sons older than Captain Cedric; and it was the law that the elder of these sons should inherit the family title and estates, which were very rich and splendid; if the eldest son died, the next one would be heir; so, though he was a member of such a great family, there was little chance that Captain Cedric would be very rich himself.

But it so happened that Nature had given to the youngest son gifts which she had not bestowed upon his elder brothers.

He had a beautiful face and a fine, strong, graceful figure; he had a bright smile and a sweet, gay voice; he was brave and generous, and had the kindest heart in the world, and seemed to have the power to make everyone love him. And it was not so with his elder brothers; neither of them was handsome, or very kind, or clever. When they were boys at Eton, they were not popular; when they were at college, they cared nothing for study, and wasted both time and money, and made few real friends. The old Earl, their father, was constantly disappointed and humiliated by them; his heir was no honor to his noble name, and did not promise to end in being anything but a selfish, wasteful, insignificant man, with no manly or noble qualities. It was very bitter, the old Earl thought, that the son who was only third, and would have only a very small fortune, should be the one who had all the gifts, and all the charms, and all the strength and beauty. Sometimes he almost hated the handsome young man because he seemed to have the good things which should have gone with the stately title and the magnificent estates; and yet, in the depths of his proud, stubborn old heart, he could not help caring very much for his youngest son. It was in one of his fits of petulance that he sent him off to travel in America; he thought he would send him away for a while, so that he should not be made angry by constantly contrasting him with his brothers, who were at that time giving him a great deal of trouble by their wild ways.

But, after about six months, he began to feel lonely, and longed in secret to see his son again, so he wrote to Captain Cedric and ordered him home. The letter he wrote crossed on its way a letter the Captain had just written to his father, telling of his love for the pretty American girl, and of his intended marriage; and when the Earl received that letter he was furiously angry. Bad as his temper was, he had never given way to it in his life as he gave way to it when he read the Captain's letter. His valet, who was in the room when it came, thought his lordship would have a fit of apoplexy, he was so

wild with anger. For an hour he raged like a tiger, and then he sat down and wrote to his son, and ordered him never to come near his old home, nor to write to his father or brothers again. He told him he might live as he pleased, and die where he pleased, that he should be cut off from his family forever, and that he need never expect help from his father as long as he lived.

The Captain was very sad when he read the letter; he was very fond of England, and he dearly loved the beautiful home where he had been born; he had even loved his ill-tempered old father, and had sympathized with him in his disappointments; but he knew he need expect no kindness from him in the future. At first he scarcely knew what to do; he had not been brought up to work, and had no business experience, but he had courage and plenty of determination. So he sold his commission in the English army, and after some trouble found a situation in New York, and married. The change from his old life in England was very great, but he was young and happy, and he hoped that hard work would do great things for him in the future. He had a small house on a quiet street, and his little boy was born there, and everything was so gay and cheerful, in a simple way, that he was never sorry for a moment that he had married the rich old lady's pretty companion just because she was so sweet and he loved her and she loved him. She was very sweet, indeed, and her little boy was like both her and his father. Though he was born in so quiet and cheap a little home, it seemed as if there never had been a more fortunate baby. In the first place, he was always well, and so he never gave anyone trouble; in the second place, he had so sweet a temper and ways so charming that he was a pleasure to everyone; and in the third place, he was so beautiful to look at that he was quite a picture. Instead of being a bald headed baby, he started in life with a quantity of soft, fine, gold colored hair, which curled up at the ends, and went into loose rings by the time he was six months old;

he had big brown eyes and long eyelashes and a darling little face; he had so strong a back and such splendid sturdy legs, that at nine months he learned suddenly to walk; his manners were so good, for a baby, that it was delightful to make his acquaintance. He seemed to feel that everyone was his friend, and when anyone spoke to him, when he was in his carriage in the street, he would give the stranger one sweet, serious look with the brown eyes, and then follow it with a lovely, friendly smile; and the consequence was, that there was not a person in the neighborhood of the quiet street where he lived—even to the groceryman at the corner, who was considered the crossest creature alive—who was not pleased to see him and speak to him. And every month of his life he grew handsomer and more interesting.

When he was old enough to walk out with his nurse, dragging a small wagon and wearing a short white kilt skirt, and a big white hat set back on his curly yellow hair, he was so handsome and strong and rosy that he attracted everyone's attention, and his nurse would come home and tell his mamma stories of the ladies who had stopped their carriages to look at and speak to him, and of how pleased they were when he talked to them in his cheerful little way, as if he had known them always. His greatest charm was this cheerful, fearless, quaint little way of making friends with people. I think it arose from his having a very confiding nature, and a kind little heart that sympathized with everyone, and wished to make everyone as comfortable as he liked to be himself. It made him very quick to understand the feelings of those about him. Perhaps this had grown on him, too, because he had lived so much with his father and mother, who were always loving and considerate and tender and well-bred. He had never heard an unkind or uncourteous word spoken at home; he had always been loved and caressed and treated tenderly, and so his childish soul was full of kindness and innocent warm feeling. He had always heard his mamma

called by pretty, loving names, and so he used them himself when he spoke to her; he had always seen that his papa watched over her and took great care of her, and so he learned, too, to be careful of her.

So when he knew his papa would come back no more, and saw how very sad his mamma was, there gradually came into his kind little heart the thought that he must do what he could to make her happy. He was not much more than a baby, but that thought was in his mind whenever he climbed upon her knee and kissed her and put his curly head on her neck, and when he brought his toys and picture books to show her, and when he curled up quietly by her side as she used to lie on the sofa. He was not old enough to know of anything else to do, so he did what he could, and was more of a comfort to her than he could have understood.

"Oh, Mary!" he heard her say once to her old servant; "I am sure he is trying to help me in his innocent way—I know he is. He looks at me sometimes with a loving, wondering little look, as if he were sorry for me, and then he will come and pet me or show me something. He is such a little man, I really think he knows."

As he grew older, he had a great many quaint little ways which amused and interested people greatly. He was so much of a companion for his mother that she scarcely cared for any other. They used to walk together and talk together and play together. When he was quite a little fellow, he learned to read; and after that he used to lie on the hearth rug, in the evening, and read aloud—sometimes stories, and sometimes big books such as older people read, and sometimes even the newspaper; and often at such times Mary, in the kitchen, would hear Mrs. Errol laughing with delight at the quaint things he said.

"And, indade," said Mary to the groceryman, "nobody cud help laughin' at the quare little ways of him—and his ould-fashioned sayin's! Didn't he come into my kitchen the noight

the new Prisident was nominated and shtand afore the fire, lookin' loike a pictur', wid his hands in his shmall pockets, an' his innocent bit of a face as sayrious as a jedge? An' sez he to me: 'Mary,' sez he, 'I'm very much int'rusted in the 'lection,' sez he. 'I'm a 'publican, an' so is Dearest. Are you a 'publican, Mary?' 'Sorra a bit,' sez I; 'I'm the bist o' dimmycrats!' An' he looks up at me wid a look that ud go to yer heart, an' sez he: 'Mary,' sez he, 'the country will go to ruin.' An' nivver a day since thin has he let go by widout argyin' wid me to change me polytics."

Mary was very fond of him, and very proud of him, too. She had been with his mother ever since he was born; and, after his father's death, had been cook and housemaid and nurse and everything else. She was proud of his graceful, strong little body and his pretty manners, and especially proud of the bright curly hair which waved over his forehead and fell in charming love locks on his shoulders. She was willing to work early and late to help his mamma make his small suits and keep them in order.

"'Ristycratic, is it?" she would say. "Faith, an' I'd loike to see the choild on Fifth Avey-*noo* as looks loike him an' shteps out as handsome as himself. An' ivvery man, woman, and choild lookin' afther him in his bit of a black velvet skirt made out of the misthress's ould gownd; an' his little head up, an' his curly hair flyin' an' shinin'. It's loike a young lord he looks."

Cedric did not know that he looked like a young lord; he did not know what a lord was. His greatest friend was the groceryman at the corner—the cross groceryman, who was never cross to him. His name was Mr. Hobbs, and Cedric admired and respected him very much. He thought him a very rich and powerful person, he had so many things in his store—prunes and figs and oranges and biscuits—and he had a horse and wagon. Cedric was fond of the milkman and the baker and the apple woman, but he liked Mr. Hobbs best of all, and

was on terms of such intimacy with him that he went to see him every day, and often sat with him quite a long time, discussing the topics of the hour. It was quite surprising how many things they found to talk about—the Fourth of July, for instance. When they began to talk about the Fourth of July there really seemed no end to it. Mr. Hobbs had a very bad opinion of "the British," and he told the whole story of the Revolution, relating very wonderful and patriotic stories about the villainy of the enemy and the bravery of the Revolutionary heroes, and he even generously repeated part of the Declaration of Independence.

Cedric was so excited that his eyes shone and his cheeks were red and his curls were all rubbed and tumbled into a yellow mop. He could hardly wait to eat his dinner after he went home, he was so anxious to tell his mamma. It was, perhaps, Mr. Hobbs who gave him his first interest in politics. Mr. Hobbs was fond of reading the newspapers, and so Cedric heard a great deal about what was going on in Washington; and Mr. Hobbs would tell him whether the President was doing his duty or not. And once, when there was an election, he found it all quite grand, and probably but for Mr. Hobbs and Cedric the country might have been wrecked.

Mr. Hobbs took him to see a great torchlight procession, and many of the men who carried torches remembered afterward a stout man who stood near a lamp post and held on his shoulder a handsome little shouting boy, who waved his cap in the air.

It was not long after this election, when Cedric was between seven and eight years old, that the very strange thing happened which made so wonderful a change in his life. It was quite curious, too, that the day it happened he had been talking to Mr. Hobbs about England and the Queen, and Mr. Hobbs had said some very severe things about the aristocracy, being specially indignant against earls and marquises. It had been a hot morning; and after playing soldiers with some

friends of his, Cedric had gone into the store to rest, and had found Mr. Hobbs looking very fierce over a piece of the Illustrated London News, which contained a picture of some court ceremony.

"Ah," he said, "that's the way they go on now; but they'll get enough of it someday, when those they've trod on rise and blow 'em up sky-high—earls and marquises and all! It's coming, and they may look out for it!"

Cedric had perched himself as usual on the high stool and pushed his hat back, and put his hands in his pockets in delicate compliment to Mr. Hobbs.

"Did you ever know many marquises, Mr. Hobbs?" Cedric inquired, "or earls?"

"No," answered Mr. Hobbs, with indignation; "I guess not. I'd like to catch one of 'em inside here; that's all! I'll have no grasping tyrants sittin' 'round on my cracker-barrels!"

And he was so proud of the sentiment that he looked around proudly and mopped his forehead.

"Perhaps they wouldn't be earls if they knew any better," said Cedric, feeling some vague sympathy for their unhappy condition.

"Wouldn't they!" said Mr. Hobbs. "They just glory in it! It's in 'em. They're a bad lot."

They were in the midst of their conversation, when Mary appeared.

Cedric thought she had come to buy some sugar, perhaps, but she had not. She looked almost pale and as if she were excited about something.

"Come home, darlint," she said; "the misthress is wantin' yez."

Cedric slipped down from his stool.

"Does she want me to go out with her, Mary?" he asked. "Good morning, Mr. Hobbs. I'll see you again."

He was surprised to see Mary staring at him in a dumfounded fashion, and he wondered why she kept shaking her

head.

"What's the matter, Mary?" he said. "Is it the hot weather?"

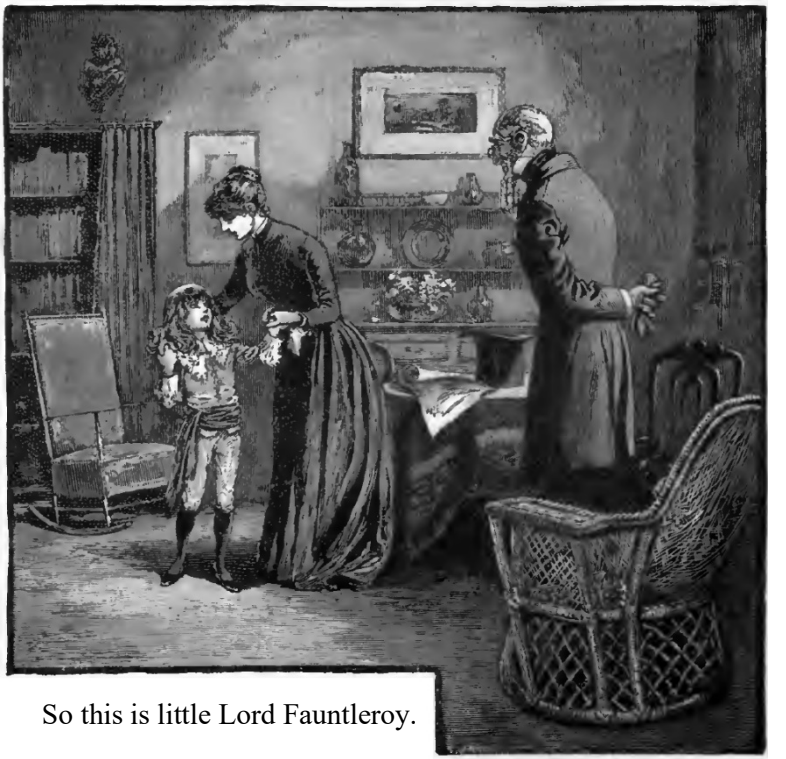
"No," said Mary; "but there's strange things happenin' to us."

"Has the sun given Dearest a headache?" he inquired anxiously.

But it was not that. When he reached his own house there was a coupe standing before the door and someone was in the little parlor talking to his mamma. Mary hurried him upstairs and put on his best summer suit of cream colored flannel, with the red scarf around his waist, and combed out his curly locks.

"Lords, is it?" he heard her say. "An' the nobility an' gintry. Och! bad cess to them! Lords, indade—worse luck."

It was really very puzzling, but he felt sure his mamma



So this is little Lord Fauntleroy.

would tell him what all the excitement meant, so he allowed Mary to bemoan herself without asking many questions. When he was dressed, he ran downstairs and went into the parlor. A tall, thin old gentleman with a sharp face was sitting in an arm chair. His mother was standing nearby with a pale face, and he saw that there were tears in her eyes.

"Oh! Ceddie!" she cried out, and ran to her little boy and caught him in her arms and kissed him in a frightened, troubled way. "Oh! Ceddie, darling!"

The tall old gentleman rose from his chair and looked at Cedric with his sharp eyes. He rubbed his thin chin with his bony hand as he looked.

He seemed not at all displeased.

"And so," he said at last, slowly, "and so this is little Lord Fauntleroy."

Chapter II

There was never a more amazed little boy than Cedric during the week that followed; there was never so strange or so unreal a week. In the first place, the story his mamma told him was a very curious one. He was obliged to hear it two or three times before he could understand it. He could not imagine what Mr. Hobbs would think of it. It began with earls: his grandpapa, whom he had never seen, was an earl; and his eldest uncle, if he had not been killed by a fall from his horse, would have been an earl, too, in time; and after his death, his other uncle would have been an earl, if he had not died suddenly, in Rome, of a fever. After that, his own papa, if he had lived, would have been an earl, but, since they all had died and only Cedric was left, it appeared that *he* was to be an earl after his grandpapa's death—and for the present he was Lord Fauntleroy.

He turned quite pale when he was first told of it.

"Oh! Dearest!" he said, "I should rather not be an earl. None of the boys are earls. Can't I *not* be one?"

But it seemed to be unavoidable. And when, that evening, they sat together by the open window looking out into the shabby street, he and his mother had a long talk about it. Cedric sat on his footstool, clasping one knee in his favorite attitude and wearing a bewildered little face rather red from the exertion of thinking. His grandfather had sent for him to come to England, and his mamma thought he must go.

"Because," she said, looking out of the window with sorrowful eyes, "I know your papa would wish it to be so, Ceddie. He loved his home very much; and there are many things to be thought of that a little boy can't quite understand. I should be a selfish little mother if I did not send you. When you are

a man, you will see why."

Ceddie shook his head mournfully.

"I shall be very sorry to leave Mr. Hobbs," he said. "I'm afraid he'll miss me, and I shall miss him. And I shall miss them all."

When Mr. Havisham—who was the family lawyer of the Earl of Dorincourt, and who had been sent by him to bring Lord Fauntleroy to England—came the next day, Cedric heard many things. But, somehow, it did not console him to hear that he was to be a very rich man when he grew up, and that he would have castles here and castles there, and great parks and deep mines and grand estates and tenantry. He was troubled about his friend, Mr. Hobbs, and he went to see him at the store soon after breakfast, in great anxiety of mind.

He found him reading the morning paper, and he approached him with a grave demeanor. He really felt it would be a great shock to Mr. Hobbs to hear what had befallen him, and on his way to the store he had been thinking how it would be best to break the news.

"Hello!" said Mr. Hobbs. "Mornin'!"

"Good morning," said Cedric.

He did not climb up on the high stool as usual, but sat down on a cracker box and clasped his knee, and was so silent for a few moments that Mr. Hobbs finally looked up inquiringly over the top of his newspaper.

"Hello!" he said again.

Cedric gathered all his strength of mind together.

"Mr. Hobbs," he said, "do you remember what we were talking about yesterday morning?"

"Well," replied Mr. Hobbs, "seems to me it was England."

"Yes," said Cedric; "but just when Mary came for me, you know?"

Mr. Hobbs rubbed the back of his head.

"We *was* mentioning Queen Victoria and the aristocracy."

"Yes," said Cedric, rather hesitatingly, "and—and earls; don't you know?"

"Why, yes," returned Mr. Hobbs; "we *did* touch 'em up a little; that's so!"

Cedric flushed up to the curly bang on his forehead. Nothing so embarrassing as this had ever happened to him in his life. He was a little afraid that it might be a trifle embarrassing to Mr. Hobbs, too.

"You said," he proceeded, "that you wouldn't have them sitting 'round on your cracker barrels."

"So I did!" returned Mr. Hobbs, stoutly. "And I meant it. Let 'em try it—that's all!"

"Mr. Hobbs," said Cedric, "one is sitting on this box now!"

Mr. Hobbs almost jumped out of his chair.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," Cedric announced, with due modesty; "*I* am one—or I am going to be. I won't deceive you."

Mr. Hobbs looked agitated. He rose up suddenly and went to look at the thermometer.

"The mercury's got into your head!" he exclaimed, turning back to examine his young friend's countenance. "It *is* a hot day! How do you feel? Got any pain? When did you begin to feel that way?"

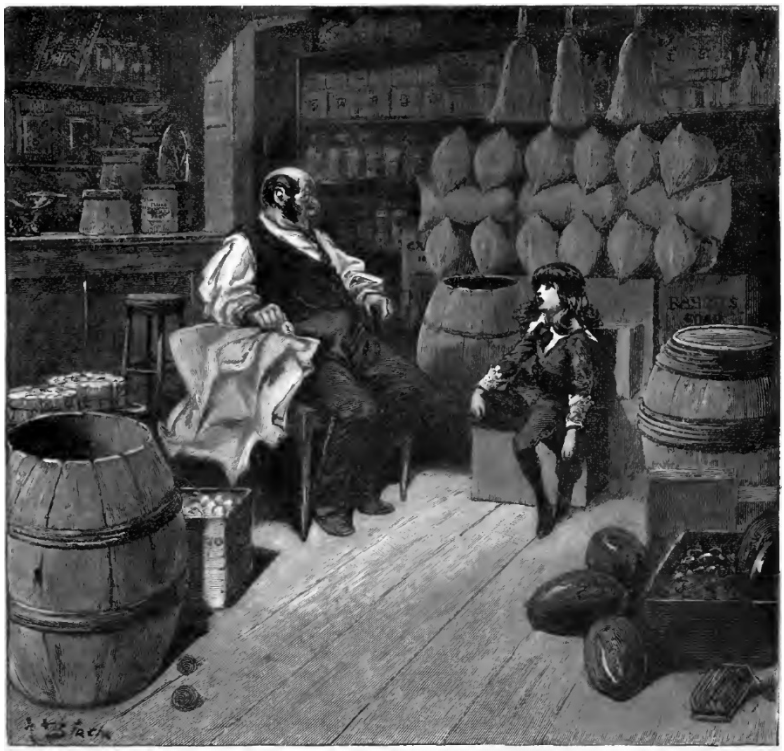
He put his big hand on the little boy's hair. This was more embarrassing than ever.

"Thank you," said Ceddie; "I'm all right. There is nothing the matter with my head. I'm sorry to say it's true, Mr. Hobbs. That was what Mary came to take me home for. Mr. Havisham was telling my mamma, and he is a lawyer."

Mr. Hobbs sank into his chair and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"*One* of us has got a sunstroke!" he exclaimed.

"No," returned Cedric, "we haven't. We shall have to make the best of it, Mr. Hobbs. Mr. Havisham came all the way from England to tell us about it. My grandpapa sent him."



"Mr. Hobbs," said Cedric. "An Earl is sitting on this box now!"

Mr. Hobbs stared wildly at the innocent, serious little face before him.

"Who is your grandfather?" he asked.

Cedric put his hand in his pocket and carefully drew out a piece of paper, on which something was written in his own round, irregular hand.

"I couldn't easily remember it, so I wrote it down on this," he said. And he read aloud slowly: "'John Arthur Molyneux Errol, Earl of Dorincourt.' That is his name, and he lives in a castle—in two or three castles, I think. And my papa, who died, was his youngest son; and I shouldn't have been a lord or an earl if my papa hadn't died; and my papa wouldn't have been an earl if his two brothers hadn't died. But they all died,

and there is no one but me, no boy, and so I have to be one; and my grandpapa has sent for me to come to England."

Mr. Hobbs seemed to grow hotter and hotter. He mopped his forehead and his bald spot and breathed hard. He began to see that something very remarkable had happened; but when he looked at the little boy sitting on the cracker box, with the innocent, anxious expression in his childish eyes, and saw that he was not changed at all, but was simply as he had been the day before, just a handsome, cheerful, brave little fellow in a blue suit and red neck ribbon, all this information about the nobility bewildered him. He was all the more bewildered because Cedric gave it with such ingenuous simplicity, and plainly without realizing himself how stupendous it was.

"Wha—what did you say your name was?" Mr. Hobbs inquired.

"It's Cedric Errol, Lord Fauntleroy," answered Cedric. "That was what Mr. Havisham called me. He said when I went into the room: 'And so this is little Lord Fauntleroy!'"

"Well," said Mr. Hobbs, "I'll be—jiggered!"

This was an exclamation he always used when he was very much astonished or excited. He could think of nothing else to say just at that puzzling moment.

Cedric felt it to be quite a proper and suitable ejaculation. His respect and affection for Mr. Hobbs were so great that he admired and approved of all his remarks. He had not seen enough of society as yet to make him realize that sometimes Mr. Hobbs was not quite conventional. He knew, of course, that he was different from his mamma, but, then, his mamma was a lady, and he had an idea that ladies were always different from gentlemen.

He looked at Mr. Hobbs wistfully.

"England is a long way off, isn't it?" he asked.

"It's across the Atlantic Ocean," Mr. Hobbs answered.

"That's the worst of it," said Cedric. "Perhaps I shall not

see you again for a long time. I don't like to think of that, Mr. Hobbs."

"The best of friends must part," said Mr. Hobbs.

"Well," said Cedric, "we have been friends for a great many years, haven't we?"

"Ever since you was born," Mr. Hobbs answered. "You was about six weeks old when you was first walked out on this street."

"Ah," remarked Cedric, with a sigh, "I never thought I should have to be an earl then!"

"You think," said Mr. Hobbs, "there's no getting out of it?"

"I'm afraid not," answered Cedric. "My mamma says that my papa would wish me to do it. But if I have to be an earl, there's one thing I can do: I can try to be a good one. I'm not going to be a tyrant. And if there is ever to be another war with America, I shall try to stop it."

His conversation with Mr. Hobbs was a long and serious one. Once having got over the first shock, Mr. Hobbs was not so rancorous as might have been expected; he endeavored to resign himself to the situation, and before the interview was at an end he had asked a great many questions. As Cedric could answer but few of them, he endeavored to answer them himself, and, being fairly launched on the subject of earls and marquises and lordly estates, explained many things in a way which would probably have astonished Mr. Havisham, could that gentleman have heard it.

But then there were many things which astonished Mr. Havisham. He had spent all his life in England, and was not accustomed to American people and American habits. He had been connected professionally with the family of the Earl of Dorincourt for nearly forty years, and he knew all about its grand estates and its great wealth and importance; and, in a cold, businesslike way, he felt an interest in this little boy, who, in the future, was to be the master and owner of them

all—the future Earl of Dorincourt. He had known all about the old Earl's disappointment in his elder sons and all about his fierce rage at Captain Cedric's American marriage, and he knew how he still hated the gentle little widow and would not speak of her except with bitter and cruel words. He insisted that she was only a common American girl, who had entrapped his son into marrying her because she knew he was an earl's son. The old lawyer himself had more than half believed this was all true. He had seen a great many selfish, mercenary people in his life, and he had not a good opinion of Americans. When he had been driven into the cheap street, and his coupe had stopped before the cheap, small house, he had felt actually shocked. It seemed really quite dreadful to think that the future owner of Dorincourt Castle and Wyndham Towers and Chorlworth, and all the other stately splendors, should have been born and brought up in an insignificant house in a street with a sort of green grocery at the corner. He wondered what kind of a child he would be, and what kind of a mother he had. He rather shrank from seeing them both. He had a sort of pride in the noble family whose legal affairs he had conducted so long, and it would have annoyed him very much to have found himself obliged to manage a woman who would seem to him a vulgar, money loving person, with no respect for her dead husband's country and the dignity of his name. It was a very old name and a very splendid one, and Mr. Havisham had a great respect for it himself, though he was only a cold, keen, businesslike old lawyer.

When Mary handed him into the small parlor, he looked around it critically. It was plainly furnished, but it had a home-like look; there were no cheap, common ornaments, and no cheap, gaudy pictures; the few adornments on the walls were in good taste and about the room were many pretty things which a woman's hand might have made.

"Not at all bad so far," he had said to himself; "but perhaps

the Captain's taste predominated." But when Mrs. Errol came into the room, he began to think she herself might have had something to do with it. If he had not been quite a self-contained and stiff old gentleman, he would probably have started when he saw her. She looked, in the simple black dress, fitting closely to her slender figure, more like a young girl than the mother of a boy of seven. She had a pretty, sorrowful, young face, and a very tender, innocent look in her large brown eyes—the sorrowful look that had never quite left her face since her husband had died. Cedric was used to seeing it there; the only times he had ever seen it fade out had been when he was playing with her or talking to her, and had said some old-fashioned thing, or used some long word he had picked up out of the newspapers or in his conversations with Mr. Hobbs. He was fond of using long words, and he was always pleased when they made her laugh, though he could not understand why they were laughable; they were quite serious matters with him. The lawyer's experience taught him to read people's characters very shrewdly, and as soon as he saw Cedric's mother he knew that the old Earl had made a great mistake in thinking her a vulgar, mercenary woman. Mr. Havisham had never been married, he had never even been in love, but he divined that this pretty young creature with the sweet voice and sad eyes had married Captain Errol only because she loved him with all her affectionate heart, and that she had never once thought it an advantage that he was an earl's son. And he saw he should have no trouble with her, and he began to feel that perhaps little Lord Fauntleroy might not be such a trial to his noble family, after all. The Captain had been a handsome fellow, and the young mother was very pretty, and perhaps the boy might be well enough to look at.

When he first told Mrs. Errol what he had come for, she turned very pale.

"Oh!" she said; "will he have to be taken away from me? We love each other so much! He is such a happiness to me!

He is all I have. I have tried to be a good mother to him." And her sweet young voice trembled, and the tears rushed into her eyes. "You do not know what he has been to me!" she said.

The lawyer cleared his throat.

"I am obliged to tell you," he said, "that the Earl of Dorincourt is not—is not very friendly toward you. He is an old man, and his prejudices are very strong. He has always especially disliked America and Americans, and was very much enraged by his son's marriage. I am sorry to be the bearer of so unpleasant a communication, but he is very fixed in his determination not to see you. His plan is that Lord Fauntleroy shall be educated under his own supervision; that he shall live with him. The Earl is attached to Dorincourt Castle, and spends a great deal of time there. He is a victim to inflammatory gout, and is not fond of London. Lord Fauntleroy will, therefore, be likely to live chiefly at Dorincourt. The Earl offers you as a home Court Lodge, which is situated pleasantly, and is not very far from the castle. He also offers you a suitable income. Lord Fauntleroy will be permitted to visit you; the only stipulation is, that you shall not visit him or enter the park gates. You see you will not be really separated from your son, and I assure you, madam, the terms are not so harsh as—as they might have been. The advantage of such surroundings and education as Lord Fauntleroy will have, I am sure you must see, will be very great."

He felt a little uneasy lest she should begin to cry or make a scene, as he knew some women would have done. It embarrassed and annoyed him to see women cry.

But she did not. She went to the window and stood with her face turned away for a few moments, and he saw she was trying to steady herself.

"Captain Errol was very fond of Dorincourt," she said at last. "He loved England, and everything English. It was always a grief to him that he was parted from his home. He was proud

of his home, and of his name. He would wish—I know he would wish that his son should know the beautiful old places, and be brought up in such a way as would be suitable to his future position."

Then she came back to the table and stood looking up at Mr. Havisham very gently.

"My husband would wish it," she said. "It will be best for my little boy. I know—I am sure the Earl would not be so unkind as to try to teach him not to love me; and I know—even if he tried—that my little boy is too much like his father to be harmed. He has a warm, faithful nature, and a true heart. He would love me even if he did not see me; and so long as we may see each other, I ought not to suffer very much."

"She thinks very little of herself," the lawyer thought. "She does not make any terms for herself."

"Madam," he said aloud, "I respect your consideration for your son. He will thank you for it when he is a man. I assure you Lord Fauntleroy will be most carefully guarded, and every effort will be used to insure his happiness. The Earl of Dorincourt will be as anxious for his comfort and well-being as you yourself could be."

"I hope," said the tender little mother, in a rather broken voice, "that his grandfather will love Ceddie. The little boy has a very affectionate nature; and he has always been loved."

Mr. Havisham cleared his throat again. He could not quite imagine the gouty, fiery-tempered old Earl loving anyone very much; but he knew it would be to his interest to be kind, in his irritable way, to the child who was to be his heir. He knew, too, that if Ceddie were at all a credit to his name, his grandfather would be proud of him.

"Lord Fauntleroy will be comfortable, I am sure," he replied. "It was with a view to his happiness that the Earl desired that you should be near enough to him to see him frequently."

He did not think it would be discreet to repeat the exact words the Earl had used, which were in fact neither polite nor amiable.

Mr. Havisham preferred to express his noble patron's offer in smoother and more courteous language.

He had another slight shock when Mrs. Errol asked Mary to find her little boy and bring him to her, and Mary told her where he was.

"Sure I'll foind him aisy enough, ma'am," she said; "for it's wid Mr. Hobbs he is this minnit, settin' on his high shtool by the counther an' talkin' pollytics, most loikely, or enj'yin' hisself among the soap an' candles an' pertaties, as sinsible an' shwate as ye plase."

"Mr. Hobbs has known him all his life," Mrs. Errol said to the lawyer. "He is very kind to Ceddie, and there is a great friendship between them."

Remembering the glimpse he had caught of the store as he passed it, and having a recollection of the barrels of potatoes and apples and the various odds and ends, Mr. Havisham felt his doubts arise again. In England, gentlemen's sons did not make friends of grocerymen, and it seemed to him a rather singular proceeding. It would be very awkward if the child had bad manners and a disposition to like low company. One of the bitterest humiliations of the old Earl's life had been that his two elder sons had been fond of low company. Could it be, he thought, that this boy shared their bad qualities instead of his father's good qualities?

He was thinking uneasily about this as he talked to Mrs. Errol until the child came into the room. When the door opened, he actually hesitated a moment before looking at Cedric. It would, perhaps, have seemed very queer to a great many people who knew him, if they could have known the curious sensations that passed through Mr. Havisham when he looked down at the boy, who ran into his mother's arms. He experienced a revulsion of feeling which was quite

exciting. He recognized in an instant that here was one of the finest and handsomest little fellows he had ever seen.

His beauty was something unusual. He had a strong, lithe, graceful little body and a manly little face; he held his childish head up, and carried himself with a brave air; he was so like his father that it was really startling; he had his father's golden hair and his mother's brown eyes, but there was nothing sorrowful or timid in them. They were innocently fearless eyes; he looked as if he had never feared or doubted anything in his life.

"He is the best-bred-looking and handsomest little fellow I ever saw," was what Mr. Havisham thought. What he said aloud was simply, "And so this is little Lord Fauntleroy."

And, after this, the more he saw of little Lord Fauntleroy, the more of a surprise he found him. He knew very little about children, though he had seen plenty of them in England—fine, handsome, rosy girls and boys, who were strictly taken care of by their tutors and governesses, and who were sometimes shy, and sometimes a trifle boisterous, but never very interesting to a ceremonious, rigid old lawyer. Perhaps his personal interest in little Lord Fauntleroy's fortunes made him notice Ceddie more than he had noticed other children; but, however that was, he certainly found himself noticing him a great deal.

Cedric did not know he was being observed, and he only behaved himself in his ordinary manner. He shook hands with Mr. Havisham in his friendly way when they were introduced to each other, and he answered all his questions with the unhesitating readiness with which he answered Mr. Hobbs. He was neither shy nor bold, and when Mr. Havisham was talking to his mother, the lawyer noticed that he listened to the conversation with as much interest as if he had been quite grown up.

"He seems to be a very mature little fellow," Mr. Havisham said to the mother.

"I think he is, in some things," she answered. "He has always been very quick to learn, and he has lived a great deal with grown-up people. He has a funny little habit of using long words and expressions he has read in books, or has heard others use, but he is very fond of childish play. I think he is rather clever, but he is a very boyish little boy, sometimes."

The next time Mr. Havisham met him, he saw that this last was quite true. As his coupe turned the corner, he caught sight of a group of small boys, who were evidently much excited. Two of them were about to run a race, and one of them was his young lordship, and he was shouting and making as much noise as the noisiest of his companions. He stood side by side with another boy, one little red leg advanced a step.

"One, to make ready!" yelled the starter. "Two, to be steady. Three—and away!"

Mr. Havisham found himself leaning out of the window of his coupe with a curious feeling of interest. He really never remembered having seen anything quite like the way in which his lordship's lordly little red legs flew up behind his knickerbockers and tore over the ground as he shot out in the race at the signal word. He shut his small hands and set his face against the wind; his bright hair streamed out behind.

"Hooray, Ced Errol!" all the boys shouted, dancing and shrieking with excitement. "Hooray, Billy Williams! Hooray, Ceddie! Hooray, Billy! Hooray! 'Ray! 'Ray!"

"I really believe he is going to win," said Mr. Havisham. The way in which the red legs flew and flashed up and down, the shrieks of the boys, the wild efforts of Billy Williams, whose brown legs were not to be despised, as they followed closely in the rear of the red legs, made him feel some excitement. "I really—I really can't help hoping he will win!" he said, with an apologetic sort of cough. At that moment, the wildest yell of all went up from the dancing, hopping boys. With one last frantic leap the future Earl of Dorincourt had reached the lamp post at the end of the block and touched it,

just two seconds before Billy Williams flung himself at it, panting.

"Three cheers for Ceddie Errol!" yelled the little boys. "Hooray for Ceddie Errol!"

Mr. Havisham drew his head in at the window of his coupe and leaned back with a dry smile.

"Bravo, Lord Fauntleroy!" he said.


The race.

As his carriage stopped before the door of Mrs. Errol's house, the victor and the vanquished were coming toward it, attended by the clamoring crew. Cedric walked by Billy Williams and was speaking to him. His elated little face was very red, his curls clung to his hot, moist forehead, his hands were in his pockets.

"You see," he was saying, evidently with the intention of making defeat easy for his unsuccessful rival, "I guess I won because my legs are a little longer than yours. I guess that was it. You see, I'm three days older than you, and that gives me a 'vantage. I'm three days older."

And this view of the case seemed to cheer Billy Williams so much that he began to smile on the world again, and felt able to swagger a little, almost as if he had won the race instead of losing it. Somehow, Ceddie Errol had a way of making people feel comfortable. Even in the first flush of his triumphs, he remembered that the person who was beaten might not feel so gay as he did, and might like to think that he *might* have been the winner under different circumstances.

That morning Mr. Havisham had quite a long conversation with the winner of the race—a conversation which made him smile his dry smile, and rub his chin with his bony

hand several times.

Mrs. Errol had been called out of the parlor, and the lawyer and Cedric were left together. At first Mr. Havisham wondered what he should say to his small companion. He had an idea that perhaps it would be best to say several things which might prepare Cedric for meeting his grandfather, and, perhaps, for the great change that was to come to him. He could see that Cedric had not the least idea of the sort of thing he was to see when he reached England, or of the sort of home that waited for him there. He did not even know yet that his mother was not to live in the same house with him. They had thought it best to let him get over the first shock before telling him.

Mr. Havisham sat in an arm chair on one side of the open window; on the other side was another still larger chair, and Cedric sat in that and looked at Mr. Havisham. He sat well back in the depths of his big seat, his curly head against the cushioned back, his legs crossed, and his hands thrust deep into his pockets, in a quite Mr. Hobbs-like way. He had been watching Mr. Havisham very steadily when his mamma had been in the room, and after she was gone he still looked at him in respectful thoughtfulness. There was a short silence after Mrs. Errol went out, and Cedric seemed to be studying Mr. Havisham, and Mr. Havisham was certainly studying Cedric. He could not make up his mind as to what an elderly gentleman should say to a little boy who won races, and wore short knickerbockers and red stockings on legs which were not long enough to hang over a big chair when he sat well back in it.

But Cedric relieved him by suddenly beginning the conversation himself.

"Do you know," he said, "I don't know what an earl is?"

"Don't you?" said Mr. Havisham.

"No," replied Ceddie. "And I think when a boy is going to be one, he ought to know. Don't you?"

"Well—yes," answered Mr. Havisham.

"Would you mind," said Ceddie respectfully—"would you mind 'splaining it to me?" (Sometimes when he used his long words he did not pronounce them quite correctly.) "What made him an earl?"

"A king or queen, in the first place," said Mr. Havisham. "Generally, he is made an earl because he has done some service to his sovereign, or some great deed."

"Oh!" said Cedric; "that's like the President."

"Is it?" said Mr. Havisham. "Is that why your presidents are elected?"

"Yes," answered Ceddie cheerfully. "When a man is very good and knows a great deal, he is elected president. They have torchlight processions and bands, and everybody makes speeches. I used to think I might perhaps be a president, but I never thought of being an earl. I didn't know about earls," he said, rather hastily, lest Mr. Havisham might feel it impolite in him not to have wished to be one, "if I'd known about them, I dare say I should have thought I should like to be one."

"It is rather different from being a president," said Mr. Havisham.

"Is it?" asked Cedric. "How? Are there no torchlight processions?"

Mr. Havisham crossed his own legs and put the tips of his fingers carefully together. He thought perhaps the time had come to explain matters rather more clearly.

"An earl is—is a very important person," he began.

"So is a president!" put in Ceddie. "The torchlight processions are five miles long, and they shoot up rockets, and the band plays! Mr. Hobbs took me to see them."

"An earl," Mr. Havisham went on, feeling rather uncertain of his ground, "is frequently of very ancient lineage—"

"What's that?" asked Ceddie.

"Of very old family—extremely old."



"I used to think I might perhaps be a president, but I never thought of being an Earl," said Ceddie.

"Ah!" said Cedric, thrusting his hands deeper into his pockets. "I suppose that is the way with the apple woman near the park. I dare say she is of ancient lin-lenage. She is so old it would surprise you how she can stand up. She's a hundred, I should think, and yet she is out there when it rains, even. I'm sorry for her, and so are the other boys. Billy Williams once had nearly a dollar, and I asked him to buy five cents' worth of apples from her every day until he had spent it all. That made twenty days, and he grew tired of apples after a week; but then—it was quite fortunate—a gentleman gave me fifty cents and I bought apples from her instead. You feel sorry for anyone that's so poor and has such ancient lin-

lenage. She says hers has gone into her bones and the rain makes it worse."

Mr. Havisham felt rather at a loss as he looked at his companion's innocent, serious little face.

"I am afraid you did not quite understand me," he explained. "When I said 'ancient lineage' I did not mean old age; I meant that the name of such a family has been known in the world a long time; perhaps for hundreds of years persons bearing that name have been known and spoken of in the history of their country."

"Like George Washington," said Ceddie. "I've heard of him ever since I was born, and he was known about, long before that. Mr. Hobbs says he will never be forgotten. That's because of the Declaration of Independence, you know, and the Fourth of July. You see, he was a very brave man."

"The first Earl of Dorincourt," said Mr. Havisham solemnly, "was created an earl four hundred years ago."

"Well, well!" said Ceddie. "That was a long time ago! Did you tell Dearest that? It would int'rust her very much. We'll tell her when she comes in. She always likes to hear cur'us things. What else does an earl do besides being created?"

"A great many of them have helped to govern England. Some of them have been brave men and have fought in great battles in the old days."

"I should like to do that myself," said Cedric. "My papa was a soldier, and he was a very brave man—as brave as George Washington. Perhaps that was because he would have been an earl if he hadn't died. I am glad earls are brave. That's a great 'vantage—to be a brave man. Once I used to be rather afraid of things—in the dark, you know; but when I thought about the soldiers in the Revolution and George Washington—it cured me."

"There is another advantage in being an earl, sometimes," said Mr. Havisham slowly, and he fixed his shrewd eyes on the little boy with a rather curious expression. "Some earls

have a great deal of money."

He was curious because he wondered if his young friend knew what the power of money was.

"That's a good thing to have," said Ceddie innocently. "I wish I had a great deal of money."

"Do you?" said Mr. Havisham. "And why?"

"Well," explained Cedric, "there are so many things a person can do with money. You see, there's the apple woman. If I were very rich I should buy her a little tent to put her stall in, and a little stove, and then I should give her a dollar every morning it rained, so that she could afford to stay at home. And then—oh! I'd give her a shawl. And, you see, her bones wouldn't feel so badly. Her bones are not like our bones; they hurt her when she moves. It's very painful when your bones hurt you. If I were rich enough to do all those things for her, I guess her bones would be all right."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Havisham. "And what else would you do if you were rich?"

"Oh! I'd do a great many things. Of course I should buy Dearest all sorts of beautiful things, needle-books and fans and gold thimbles and rings, and an encyclopedia, and a carriage, so that she needn't have to wait for the streetcars. If she liked pink silk dresses, I should buy her some, but she likes black best. But I'd, take her to the big stores, and tell her to look 'round and choose for herself. And then Dick—"

"Who is Dick?" asked Mr. Havisham.

"Dick is a boot-black," said his young lordship, quite warming up in his interest in plans so exciting. "He is one of the nicest boot-blacks you ever knew. He stands at the corner of a street downtown. I've known him for years. Once when I was very little, I was walking out with Dearest, and she bought me a beautiful ball that bounced, and I was carrying it and it bounced into the middle of the street where the carriages and horses were, and I was so disappointed, I began to cry—I was very little. I had kilts on. And Dick was blacking a man's

shoes, and he said 'Hello!' and he ran in between the horses and caught the ball for me and wiped it off with his coat and gave it to me and said, 'It's all right, young un.' So Dearest admired him very much, and so did I, and ever since then, when we go downtown, we talk to him. He says 'Hello!' and I say 'Hello!' and then we talk a little, and he tells me how trade is. It's been bad lately."

"And what would you like to do for him?" inquired the lawyer, rubbing his chin and smiling a queer smile.

"Well," said Lord Fauntleroy, settling himself in his chair with a business air, "I'd buy Jake out."

"And who is Jake?" Mr. Havisham asked.

"He's Dick's partner, and he is the worst partner a fellow could have! Dick says so. He isn't a credit to the business, and he isn't square. He cheats, and that makes Dick mad. It would make you mad, you know, if you were blacking boots as hard as you could, and being square all the time, and your partner wasn't square at all. People like Dick, but they don't like Jake, and so sometimes they don't come twice. So if I were rich, I'd buy Jake out and get Dick a 'boss' sign—he says a 'boss' sign goes a long way; and I'd get him some new clothes and new brushes, and start him out fair. He says all he wants is to start out fair."

There could have been nothing more confiding and innocent than the way in which his small lordship told his little story, quoting his friend Dick's bits of slang in the most candid good faith. He seemed to feel not a shade of a doubt that his elderly companion would be just as interested as he was himself. And in truth Mr. Havisham was beginning to be greatly interested; but perhaps not quite so much in Dick and the apple woman as in this kind little lordling, whose curly head was so busy, under its yellow thatch, with good-natured plans for his friends, and who seemed somehow to have forgotten himself altogether.

"Is there anything—" he began. "What would you get for

yourself, if you were rich?"

"Lots of things!" answered Lord Fauntleroy briskly; "but first I'd give Mary some money for Bridget—that's her sister, with twelve children, and a husband out of work. She comes here and cries, and Dearest gives her things in a basket, and then she cries again, and says: 'Blessin's be on yez, for a beautiful lady.' And I think Mr. Hobbs would like a gold watch and chain to remember me by, and a meerschaum pipe. And then I'd like to get up a company."

"A company!" exclaimed Mr. Havisham.

"Like a Republican rally," explained Cedric, becoming quite excited. "I'd have torches and uniforms and things for all the boys and myself, too. And we'd march, you know, and drill. That's what I should like for myself, if I were rich."

The door opened and Mrs. Errol came in.

"I am sorry to have been obliged to leave you so long," she said to Mr. Havisham; "but a poor woman, who is in great trouble, came to see me."

"This young gentleman," said Mr. Havisham, "has been telling me about some of his friends, and what he would do for them if he were rich."

"Bridget is one of his friends," said Mrs. Errol; "and it is Bridget to whom I have been talking in the kitchen. She is in great trouble now because her husband has rheumatic fever."

Cedric slipped down out of his big chair.

"I think I'll go and see her," he said, "and ask her how he is. He's a nice man when he is well. I'm obliged to him because he once made me a sword out of wood. He's a very talented man."

He ran out of the room, and Mr. Havisham rose from his chair. He seemed to have something in his mind which he wished to speak of.

He hesitated a moment, and then said, looking down at Mrs. Errol:

"Before I left Dorincourt Castle, I had an interview with

the Earl, in which he gave me some instructions. He is desirous that his grandson should look forward with some pleasure to his future life in England, and also to his acquaintance with himself. He said that I must let his lordship know that the change in his life would bring him money and the pleasures children enjoy; if he expressed any wishes, I was to gratify them, and to tell him that his grandfather had given him what he wished. I am aware that the Earl did not expect anything quite like this; but if it would give Lord Fauntleroy pleasure to assist this poor woman, I should feel that the Earl would be displeased if he were not gratified."

For the second time, he did not repeat the Earl's exact words. His lordship had, indeed, said:

"Make the lad understand that I can give him anything he wants. Let him know what it is to be the grandson of the Earl of Dorincourt. Buy him everything he takes a fancy to; let him have money in his pockets, and tell him his grandfather put it there."

His motives were far from being good, and if he had been dealing with a nature less affectionate and warm-hearted than little Lord Fauntleroy's, great harm might have been done. And Cedric's mother was too gentle to suspect any harm. She thought that perhaps this meant that a lonely, unhappy old man, whose children were dead, wished to be kind to her little boy, and win his love and confidence. And it pleased her very much to think that Ceddie would be able to help Bridget. It made her happier to know that the very first result of the strange fortune which had befallen her little boy was that he could do kind things for those who needed kindness. Quite a warm color bloomed on her pretty young face.

"Oh!" she said, "that was very kind of the Earl; Cedric will be so glad! He has always been fond of Bridget and Michael. They are quite deserving. I have often wished I had been able to help them more. Michael is a hard-working man when he is well, but he has been ill a long time and needs expensive

medicines and warm clothing and nourishing food. He and Bridget will not be wasteful of what is given them."

Mr. Havisham put his thin hand in his breast pocket and drew forth a large pocketbook. There was a queer look in his keen face. The truth was, he was wondering what the Earl of Dorincourt would say when he was told what was the first wish of his grandson that had been granted. He wondered what the cross, worldly, selfish old nobleman would think of it.

"I do not know that you have realized," he said, "that the Earl of Dorincourt is an exceedingly rich man. He can afford to gratify any caprice. I think it would please him to know that Lord Fauntleroy had been indulged in any fancy. If you will call him back and allow me, I shall give him five pounds for these people."

"That would be twenty-five dollars!" exclaimed Mrs. Errol. "It will seem like wealth to them. I can scarcely believe that it is true."

"It is quite true," said Mr. Havisham, with his dry smile. "A great change has taken place in your son's life, a great deal of power will lie in his hands."

"Oh!" cried his mother. "And he is such a little boy—a very little boy. How can I teach him to use it well? It makes me half afraid. My pretty little Ceddie!"

The lawyer slightly cleared his throat. It touched his worldly, hard old heart to see the tender, timid look in her brown eyes.

"I think, madam," he said, "that if I may judge from my interview with Lord Fauntleroy this morning, the next Earl of Dorincourt will think for others as well as for his noble self. He is only a child yet, but I think he may be trusted."

Then his mother went for Cedric and brought him back into the parlor. Mr. Havisham heard him talking before he entered the room.

"It's infam-natory rheumatism," he was saying, "and that's

a kind of rheumatism that's dreadful. And he thinks about the rent not being paid, and Bridget says that makes the inf'ammation worse. And Pat could get a place in a store if he had some clothes."

His little face looked quite anxious when he came in. He was very sorry for Bridget.

"Dearest said you wanted me," he said to Mr. Havisham. "I've been talking to Bridget."

Mr. Havisham looked down at him a moment. He felt a little awkward and undecided. As Cedric's mother had said, he was a very little boy.

"The Earl of Dorincourt—" he began, and then he glanced involuntarily at Mrs. Errol.

Little Lord Fauntleroy's mother suddenly kneeled down by him and put both her tender arms around his childish body.

"Ceddie," she said, "the Earl is your grandpapa, your own papa's father. He is very, very kind, and he loves you and wishes you to love him, because the sons who were his little boys are dead. He wishes you to be happy and to make other people happy. He is very rich, and he wishes you to have everything you would like to have. He told Mr. Havisham so, and gave him a great deal of money for you. You can give some to Bridget now; enough to pay her rent and buy Michael everything. Isn't that fine, Ceddie? Isn't he good?" And she kissed the child on his round cheek, where the bright color suddenly flashed up in his excited amazement.

He looked from his mother to Mr. Havisham.

"Can I have it now?" he cried. "Can I give it to her this minute? She's just going."

Mr. Havisham handed him the money. It was in fresh, clean greenbacks and made a neat roll.

Ceddie flew out of the room with it.

"Bridget!" they heard him shout, as he tore into the kitchen. "Bridget, wait a minute! Here's some money. It's for you, and you can pay the rent. My grandpapa gave it to me.

It's for you and Michael!"

"Oh, Master Ceddie!" cried Bridget, in an awe-stricken voice. "It's twinty-foive dollars is here. Where be's the misthress?"

"I think I shall have to go and explain it to her," Mrs. Errol said.

So she, too, went out of the room and Mr. Havisham was left alone for a while. He went to the window and stood looking out into the street reflectively. He was thinking of the old Earl of Dorincourt, sitting in his great, splendid, gloomy library at the castle, gouty and lonely, surrounded by grandeur and luxury, but not really loved by any one, because in all his long life he had never really loved anyone but himself; he had been selfish and self-indulgent and arrogant and passionate; he had cared so much for the Earl of Dorincourt and his pleasures that there had been no time for him to think of other people; all his wealth and power, all the benefits from his noble name and high rank, had seemed to him to be things only to be used to amuse and give pleasure to the Earl of Dorincourt; and now that he was an old man, all this excitement and self-indulgence had only brought him ill health and irritability and a dislike of the world, which certainly disliked him. In spite of all his splendor, there was never a more unpopular old nobleman than the Earl of Dorincourt, and there could scarcely have been a more lonely one. He could fill his castle with guests if he chose. He could give great dinners and splendid hunting parties; but he knew that in secret the people who would accept his invitations were afraid of his frowning old face and sarcastic, biting speeches. He had a cruel tongue and a bitter nature, and he took pleasure in sneering at people and making them feel uncomfortable, when he had the power to do so, because they were sensitive or proud or timid.

Mr. Havisham knew his hard, fierce ways by heart, and he was thinking of him as he looked out of the window into the

narrow, quiet street. And there rose in his mind, in sharp contrast, the picture of the cheery, handsome little fellow sitting in the big chair and telling his story of his friends, Dick and the apple woman, in his generous, innocent, honest way. And he thought of the immense income, the beautiful, majestic estates, the wealth, and power for good or evil, which in the course of time would lie in the small, chubby hands little Lord Fauntleroy thrust so deep into his pockets.

"It will make a great difference," he said to himself. "It will make a great difference."

Cedric and his mother came back soon after. Cedric was in high spirits. He sat down in his own chair, between his mother and the lawyer, and fell into one of his quaint attitudes, with his hands on his knees. He was glowing with enjoyment of Bridget's relief and rapture.

"She cried!" he said. "She said she was crying for joy! I never saw anyone cry for joy before. My grandpapa must be a very good man. I didn't know he was so good a man. It's more—more agreeabler to be an earl than I thought it was. I'm almost glad—I'm almost *quite* glad I'm going to be one."

Chapter III

Cedric's good opinion of the advantages of being an earl increased greatly during the next week. It seemed almost impossible for him to realize that there was scarcely anything he might wish to do which he could not do easily; in fact, I think it may be said that he did not fully realize it at all. But at least he understood, after a few conversations with Mr. Havisham, that he could gratify all his nearest wishes, and he proceeded to gratify them with a simplicity and delight which caused Mr. Havisham much diversion. In the week before they sailed for England he did many curious things. The lawyer long after remembered the morning they went down-town together to pay a visit to Dick, and the afternoon they so amazed the apple woman of ancient lineage by stopping before her stall and telling her she was to have a tent, and a stove, and a shawl, and a sum of money which seemed to her quite wonderful.

"For I have to go to England and be a lord," explained Cedric, sweet-temperedly. "And I shouldn't like to have your bones on my mind every time it rained. My own bones never hurt, so I think I don't know how painful a person's bones can be, but I've sympathized with you a great deal, and I hope you'll be better."

"She's a very good apple woman," he said to Mr. Havisham, as they walked away, leaving the proprietress of the stall almost gasping for breath, and not at all believing in her great fortune. "Once, when I fell down and cut my knee, she gave me an apple for nothing. I've always remembered her for it. You know you always remember people who are kind to you."

It had never occurred to his honest, simple little mind that there were people who could forget kindnesses.

The interview with Dick was quite exciting. Dick had just been having a great deal of trouble with Jake, and was in low spirits when they saw him. His amazement when Cedric calmly announced that they had come to give him what seemed a very great thing to him, and would set all his troubles right, almost struck him dumb. Lord Fauntleroy's manner of announcing the object of his visit was very simple and unceremonious. Mr. Havisham was much impressed by its directness as he stood by and listened. The statement that his old friend had become a lord, and was in danger of being an earl if he lived long enough, caused Dick to so open his eyes and mouth, and start, that his cap fell off. When he picked it up, he uttered a rather singular exclamation. Mr. Havisham thought it singular, but Cedric had heard it before.



"I have to go to England and be a lord."

"I soy!" he said, "what're yer givin' us?" This plainly embarrassed his lordship a little, but he bore himself bravely.

"Everybody thinks it not true at first," he said. "Mr. Hobbs thought I'd had a sunstroke. I didn't think I was going to like it myself, but I like it better now I'm used to it. The one who

is the Earl now, he's my grandpapa; and he wants me to do anything I like. He's very kind, if he IS an earl; and he sent me a lot of money by Mr. Havisham, and I've brought some to you to buy Jake out."

And the end of the matter was that Dick actually bought Jake out, and found himself the possessor of the business and some new brushes and a most astonishing sign and outfit. He could not believe in his good luck any more easily than the apple woman of ancient lineage could believe in hers; he walked about like a boot-black in a dream; he stared at his young benefactor and felt as if he might wake up at any moment. He scarcely seemed to realize anything until Cedric put out his hand to shake hands with him before going away.

"Well, goodbye," he said; and though he tried to speak steadily, there was a little tremble in his voice and he winked his big brown eyes. "And I hope trade'll be good. I'm sorry I'm going away to leave you, but perhaps I shall come back again when I'm an earl. And I wish you'd write to me, because we were always good friends. And if you write to me, here's where you must send your letter." And he gave him a slip of paper. "And my name isn't Cedric Errol anymore; it's Lord Fauntleroy and—and goodbye, Dick."

Dick winked his eyes also, and yet they looked rather moist about the lashes. He was not an educated boot-black, and he would have found it difficult to tell what he felt just then if he had tried; perhaps that was why he didn't try, and only winked his eyes and swallowed a lump in his throat.

"I wish ye wasn't goin' away," he said in a husky voice. Then he winked his eyes again. Then he looked at Mr. Havisham, and touched his cap. "Thanky, sir, fur bringin' him down here an' fur wot ye've done, He's—he's a queer little feller," he added. "I've allers thort a heap of him. He's such a game little feller, an'—an' such a queer little un."

And when they turned away he stood and looked after them in a dazed kind of way, and there was still a mist in his

eyes, and a lump in his throat, as he watched the gallant little figure marching gayly along by the side of its tall, rigid escort.

Until the day of his departure, his lordship spent as much time as possible with Mr. Hobbs in the store. Gloom had settled upon Mr. Hobbs; he was much depressed in spirits. When his young friend brought to him in triumph the parting gift of a gold watch and chain, Mr. Hobbs found it difficult to acknowledge it properly. He laid the case on his stout knee, and blew his nose violently several times.

"There's something written on it," said Cedric, "inside the case. I told the man myself what to say. 'From his oldest friend, Lord Fauntleroy, to Mr. Hobbs. When this you see, remember me.' I don't want you to forget me."

Mr. Hobbs blew his nose very loudly again.

"I sha'n't forget you," he said, speaking a trifle huskily, as Dick had spoken; "nor don't you go and forget me when you get among the British arrystocracy."

"I shouldn't forget you, whoever I was among," answered his lordship. "I've spent my happiest hours with you; at least, some of my happiest hours. I hope you'll come to see me sometime. I'm sure my grandpapa would be very much pleased. Perhaps he'll write and ask you, when I tell him about you. You—you wouldn't mind his being an earl, would you, I mean you wouldn't stay away just because he was one, if he invited you to come?"

"I'd come to see you," replied Mr. Hobbs, graciously.

So it seemed to be agreed that if he received a pressing invitation from the Earl to come and spend a few months at Dorincourt Castle, he was to lay aside his republican prejudices and pack his valise at once.

At last all the preparations were complete; the day came when the trunks were taken to the steamer, and the hour arrived when the carriage stood at the door. Then a curious feeling of loneliness came upon the little boy. His mamma had been shut up in her room for some time; when she came down

the stairs, her eyes looked large and wet, and her sweet mouth was trembling. Cedric went to her, and she bent down to him, and he put his arms around her, and they kissed each other. He knew something made them both sorry, though he scarcely knew what it was; but one tender little thought rose to his lips.

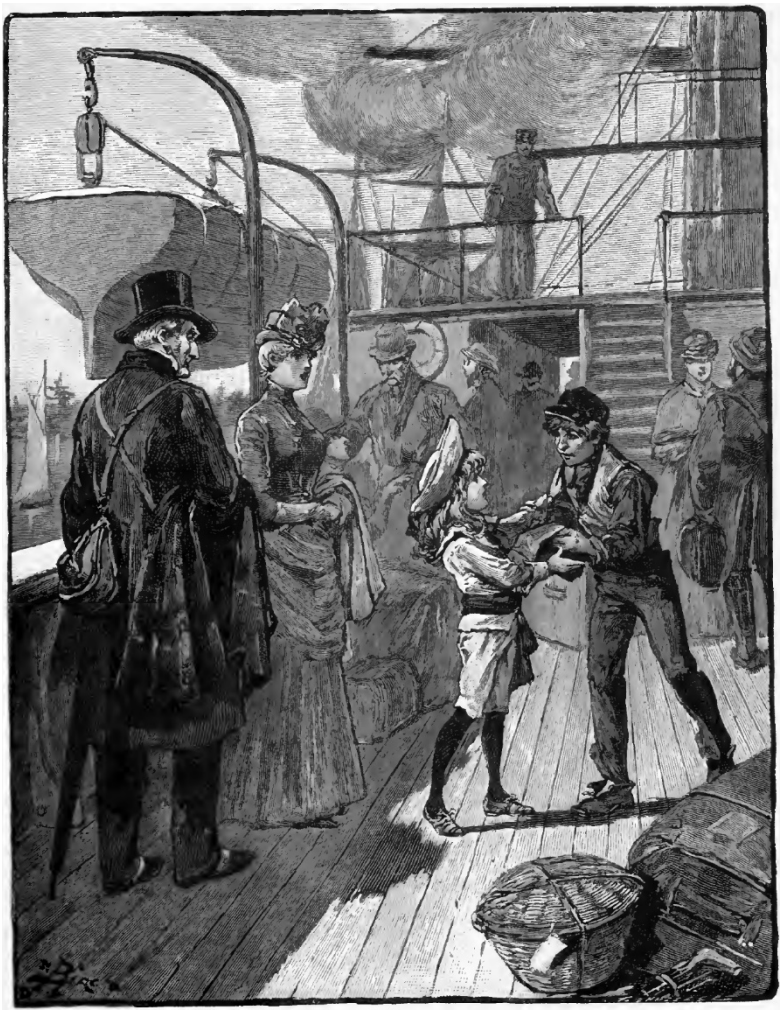
"We liked this little house, Dearest, didn't we?" he said. "We always will like it, won't we?"

"Yes—yes," she answered, in a low, sweet voice. "Yes, darling."

And then they went into the carriage and Cedric sat very close to her, and as she looked back out of the window, he looked at her and stroked her hand and held it close.

And then, it seemed almost directly, they were on the steamer in the midst of the wildest bustle and confusion; carriages were driving down and leaving passengers; passengers were getting into a state of excitement about baggage which had not arrived and threatened to be too late; big trunks and cases were being bumped down and dragged about; sailors were uncoiling ropes and hurrying to and fro; officers were giving orders; ladies and gentlemen and children and nurses were coming on board—some were laughing and looked gay, some were silent and sad, here and there two or three were crying and touching their eyes with their handkerchiefs. Cedric found something to interest him on every side; he looked at the piles of rope, at the furled sails, at the tall, tall masts which seemed almost to touch the hot blue sky; he began to make plans for conversing with the sailors and gaining some information on the subject of pirates.

It was just at the very last, when he was standing leaning on the railing of the upper deck and watching the final preparations, enjoying the excitement and the shouts of the sailors and wharfmen, that his attention was called to a slight bustle in one of the groups not far from him. Someone was hurriedly forcing his way through this group and coming



Dick board the steamer to bid goodbye to Lord Fauntleroy

toward him. It was a boy, with something red in his hand. It was Dick. He came up to Cedric quite breathless.

"I've run all the way," he said. "I've come down to see ye off. Trade's been prime! I bought this for ye out o' what I made yesterday. Ye kin wear it when ye get among the swells. I lost the paper when I was tryin' to get through them fellers downstairs. They didn't want to let me up. It's a hankercher."

He poured it all forth as if in one sentence. A bell rang, and he made a leap away before Cedric had time to speak.

"Goodbye!" he panted. "Wear it when ye get among the swells." And he darted off and was gone.

A few seconds later they saw him struggle through the crowd on the lower deck, and rush on shore just before the gangplank was drawn in. He stood on the wharf and waved his cap.

Cedric held the handkerchief in his hand. It was of bright red silk ornamented with purple horseshoes and horses' heads.

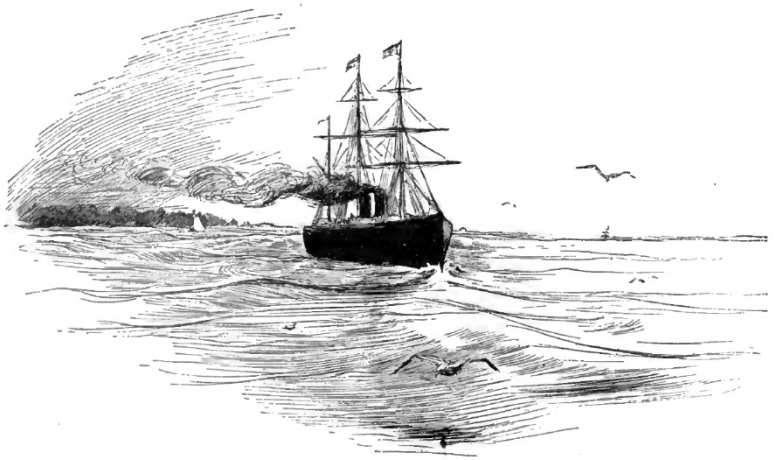
There was a great straining and creaking and confusion. The people on the wharf began to shout to their friends, and the people on the steamer shouted back:

"Goodbye! Goodbye! Goodbye, old fellow!" Everyone seemed to be saying, "Don't forget us. Write when you get to Liverpool. Goodbye! Goodbye!"

Little Lord Fauntleroy leaned forward and waved the red handkerchief.

"Goodbye, Dick!" he shouted, lustily. "Thank you! Goodbye, Dick!"

And the big steamer moved away, and the people cheered again, and Cedric's mother drew the veil over her eyes, and on the shore there was left great confusion; but Dick saw nothing save that bright, childish face and the bright hair that the sun shone on and the breeze lifted, and he heard nothing but the hearty childish voice calling "Goodbye, Dick!" as little Lord Fauntleroy steamed slowly away from the home of his birth to the unknown land of his ancestors.



Chapter IV

It was during the voyage that Cedric's mother told him that his home was not to be hers; and when he first understood it, his grief was so great that Mr. Havisham saw that the Earl had been wise in making the arrangements that his mother should be quite near him, and see him often; for it was very plain he could not have borne the separation otherwise. But his mother managed the little fellow so sweetly and lovingly, and made him feel that she would be so near him, that, after a while, he ceased to be oppressed by the fear of any real parting.

"My house is not far from the Castle, Ceddie," she repeated each time the subject was referred to—"a very little way from yours, and you can always run in and see me every day, and you will have so many things to tell me! and we shall be so happy together! It is a beautiful place. Your papa has often told me about it. He loved it very much; and you will love it too."

"I should love it better if you were there," his small lordship said, with a heavy little sigh.

He could not but feel puzzled by so strange a state of

affairs, which could put his "Dearest" in one house and himself in another.

The fact was that Mrs. Errol had thought it better not to tell him why this plan had been made.

"I should prefer he should not be told," she said to Mr. Havisham. "He would not really understand; he would only be shocked and hurt; and I feel sure that his feeling for the Earl will be a more natural and affectionate one if he does not know that his grandfather dislikes me so bitterly. He has never seen hatred or hardness, and it would be a great blow to him to find out that anyone could hate me. He is so loving himself, and I am so dear to him! It is better for him that he should not be told until he is much older, and it is far better for the Earl. It would make a barrier between them, even though Ceddie is such a child."

So Cedric only knew that there was some mysterious reason for the arrangement, some reason which he was not old enough to understand, but which would be explained when he was older. He was puzzled; but, after all, it was not the reason he cared about so much; and after many talks with his mother, in which she comforted him and placed before him the bright side of the picture, the dark side of it gradually began to fade out, though now and then Mr. Havisham saw him sitting in some queer little old-fashioned attitude, watching the sea, with a very grave face, and more than once he heard an unchildish sigh rise to his lips.

"I don't like it," he said once as he was having one of his almost venerable talks with the lawyer. "You don't know how much I don't like it; but there are a great many troubles in this world, and you have to bear them. Mary says so, and I've heard Mr. Hobbs say it too. And Dearest wants me to like to live with my grandpapa, because, you see, all his children are dead, and that's very mournful. It makes you sorry for a man, when all his children have died—and one was killed suddenly."

CHAPTER FOUR

One of the things which always delighted the people who made the acquaintance of his young lordship was the sage little air he wore at times when he gave himself up to conversation; combined with his occasionally elderly remarks and the extreme innocence and seriousness of his round childish face, it was irresistible. He was such a handsome, blooming, curly-headed little fellow, that, when he sat down and nursed his knee with his chubby hands, and conversed with much gravity, he was a source of great entertainment to his hearers. Gradually Mr. Havisham had begun to derive a great deal of private pleasure and amusement from his society.

"And so you are going to try to like the Earl," he said.

"Yes," answered his lordship. "He's my relation, and of course you have to like your relations; and besides, he's been very kind to me. When a person does so many things for you, and wants you to have everything you wish for, of course you'd like him if he wasn't your relation; but when he's your relation and does that, why, you're very fond of him."

"Do you think," suggested Mr. Havisham, "that he will be fond of you?"

"Well," said Cedric, "I think he will, because, you see, I'm his relation, too, and I'm his boy's little boy besides, and, well, don't you see—of course he must be fond of me now, or he wouldn't want me to have everything that I like, and he wouldn't have sent you for me."

"Oh!" remarked the lawyer, "that's it, is it?"

"Yes," said Cedric, "that's it. Don't you think that's it, too? Of course a man would be fond of his grandson."

The people who had been seasick had no sooner recovered from their seasickness, and come on deck to recline in their steamer-chairs and enjoy themselves, than everyone seemed to know the romantic story of little Lord Fauntleroy, and everyone took an interest in the little fellow, who ran about the ship or walked with his mother or the tall, thin old lawyer, or talked to the sailors. Everyone liked him; he made

friends everywhere. He was ever ready to make friends. When the gentlemen walked up and down the deck, and let him walk with them, he stepped out with a manly, sturdy little tramp, and answered all their jokes with much gay enjoyment; when the ladies talked to him, there was always laughter in the group of which he was the center; when he played with the children, there was always magnificent fun on hand. Among the sailors he had the heartiest friends; he heard miraculous stories about pirates and shipwrecks and desert islands; he learned to splice ropes and rig toy ships, and gained an amount of information concerning "tops'ls" and "mains'ls," quite surprising. His conversation had, indeed, quite a nautical flavor at times, and on one occasion he raised a shout of laughter in a group of ladies and gentlemen who were sitting on deck, wrapped in shawls and overcoats, by saying sweetly, and with a very engaging expression:

"Shiver my timbers, but it's a cold day!"

It surprised him when they laughed. He had picked up this seafaring remark from an "elderly naval man" of the name of Jerry, who told him stories in which it occurred frequently. To judge from his stories of his own adventures, Jerry had made some two or three thousand voyages, and had been invariably shipwrecked on each occasion on an island densely populated with bloodthirsty cannibals. Judging, also, by these same exciting adventures, he had been partially roasted and eaten frequently and had been scalped some fifteen or twenty times.

"That is why he is so bald," explained Lord Fauntleroy to his mamma. "After you have been scalped several times the hair never grows again. Jerry's never grew again after that last time, when the King of the Parromachaweekins did it with the knife made out of the skull of the Chief of the Wopslemumpkies. He says it was one of the most serious times he ever had. He was so frightened that his hair stood right straight up when the king flourished his knife, and it never would lie down, and the king wears it that way now,

and it looks something like a hairbrush. I never heard anything like the asperiences Jerry has had! I should so like to tell Mr. Hobbs about them!"

Sometimes, when the weather was very disagreeable and people were kept below decks in the saloon, a party of his grown-up friends would persuade him to tell them some of these "asperiences" of Jerry's, and as he sat relating them with great delight and fervor, there was certainly no more popular voyager on any ocean steamer crossing the Atlantic than little Lord Fauntleroy. He was always innocently and good-naturedly ready to do his small best to add to the general entertainment, and there was a charm in the very unconsciousness of his own childish importance.



Jerry narrates some of his adventures.

"Jerry's stories int'rust them very much," he said to his mamma. "For my part—you must excuse me, Dearest—but sometimes I should have thought they couldn't be all quite true, if they hadn't happened to Jerry himself; but as they all happened to Jerry—well, it's very strange, you know, and perhaps sometimes he may forget and be a little mistaken, as he's been scalped so often. Being scalped a great many times might make a person forgetful."

It was eleven days after he had said goodbye to his friend Dick before he reached Liverpool; and it was on the night of the twelfth day that the carriage in which he and his mother and Mr. Havisham had driven from the station stopped before the gates of Court Lodge. They could not see much of the house in the darkness. Cedric only saw that there was a driveway under great arching trees, and after the carriage had rolled down this driveway a short distance, he saw an open door and a stream of bright light coming through it.

Mary had come with them to attend her mistress, and she had reached the house before them. When Cedric jumped out of the carriage he saw one or two servants standing in the wide, bright hall, and Mary stood in the doorway.

Lord Fauntleroy sprang at her with a gay little shout.

"Did you get here, Mary?" he said. "Here's Mary, Dearest," and he kissed the maid on her rough red cheek.

"I am glad you are here, Mary," Mrs. Errol said to her in a low voice. "It is such a comfort to me to see you. It takes the strangeness away." And she held out her little hand, which Mary squeezed encouragingly. She knew how this first "strangeness" must feel to this little mother who had left her own land and was about to give up her child.

The English servants looked with curiosity at both the boy and his mother. They had heard all sorts of rumors about them both; they knew how angry the old Earl had been, and why Mrs. Errol was to live at the lodge and her little boy at the castle; they knew all about the great fortune he was to inherit, and about the savage old grandfather and his gout and his tempers.

"He'll have no easy time of it, poor little chap," they had said among themselves.

But they did not know what sort of a little lord had come among them; they did not quite understand the character of the next Earl of Dorincourt.

He pulled off his overcoat quite as if he were used to doing

things for himself, and began to look about him. He looked about the broad hall, at the pictures and stags' antlers and curious things that ornamented it. They seemed curious to him because he had never seen such things before in a private house.

"Dearest," he said, "this is a very pretty house, isn't it? I am glad you are going to live here. It's quite a large house."

It was quite a large house compared to the one in the shabby New York street, and it was very pretty and cheerful. Mary led them upstairs to a bright chintz-hung bedroom where a fire was burning, and a large snow white Persian cat was sleeping luxuriously on the white fur hearth rug.

"It was the house-kaper up at the Castle, ma'am, sint her to yez," explained Mary. "It's herself is a kind-hearted lady an' has had iverything done to prepar' fur yez. I seen her meself a few minnits, an' she was fond av the Capt'in, ma'am, an' graivs fur him; and she said to say the big cat slapin' on the rug moight make the room same homeloike to yez. She knowed Capt'in Errol whin he was a bye—an' a foine handsum' bye she ses he was, an' a foine young man wid a plisint word fur everyone, great an' shmall. An' ses I to her, ses I: 'He's lift a bye that's loike him, ma'am, fur a foiner little felly niver sthipped in shoe-leather.'"

When they were ready, they went downstairs into another big bright room; its ceiling was low, and the furniture was heavy and beautifully carved, the chairs were deep and had high massive backs, and there were queer shelves and cabinets with strange, pretty ornaments on them. There was a great tiger skin before the fire, and an armchair on each side of it. The stately white cat had responded to Lord Fauntleroy's stroking and followed him downstairs, and when he threw himself down upon the rug, she curled herself up grandly beside him as if she intended to make friends. Cedric was so pleased that he put his head down by hers, and lay stroking her, not noticing what his mother and Mr. Havisham

were saying.

They were, indeed, speaking in a rather low tone. Mrs. Errol looked a little pale and agitated.

"He need not go tonight?" she said. "He will stay with me tonight?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Havisham in the same low tone; "it will not be necessary for him to go tonight. I myself will go to the Castle as soon as we have dined, and inform the Earl of our arrival."

Mrs. Errol glanced down at Cedric. He was lying in a graceful, careless attitude upon the black-and-yellow skin; the fire shone on his handsome, flushed little face, and on the tumbled, curly hair spread out on the rug; the big cat was purring in drowsy content—she liked the caressing touch of the kind little hand on her fur.

Mrs. Errol smiled faintly.

"His lordship does not know all that he is taking from me," she said rather sadly. Then she looked at the lawyer. "Will you tell him, if you please," she said, "that I should rather not have the money?"

"The money!" Mr. Havisham exclaimed. "You cannot mean the income he proposed to settle upon you!"

"Yes," she answered, quite simply; "I think I should rather not have it. I am obliged to accept the house, and I thank him for it, because it makes it possible for me to be near my child; but I have a little money of my own—enough to live simply upon—and I should rather not take the other. As he dislikes me so much, I should feel a little as if I were selling Cedric to him. I am giving him up only because I love him enough to forget myself for his good, and because his father would wish it to be so."

Mr. Havisham rubbed his chin.

"This is very strange," he said. "He will be very angry. He won't understand it."

"I think he will understand it after he thinks it over," she



The big cat was purring in drowsy content; she liked the caressing touch of the kind little hand.

said. "I do not really need the money, and why should I accept luxuries from the man who hates me so much that he takes my little boy from me—his son's child?"

Mr. Havisham looked reflective for a few moments.

"I will deliver your message," he said afterward.

And then the dinner was brought in and they sat down together, the big cat taking a seat on a chair near Cedric's and purring majestically throughout the meal.

When, later in the evening, Mr. Havisham presented himself at the Castle, he was taken at once to the Earl. He found him sitting by the fire in a luxurious easy chair, his foot on a gout-stool. He looked at the lawyer sharply from under his shaggy eyebrows, but Mr. Havisham could see that, in spite of his pretense at calmness, he was nervous and secretly excited.

"Well," he said; "well, Havisham, come back, have you? What's the news?"

"Lord Fauntleroy and his mother are at Court Lodge," replied Mr. Havisham. "They bore the voyage very well and are in excellent health."

The Earl made a half-impatient sound and moved his hand restlessly.

"Glad to hear it," he said brusquely. "So far, so good. Make yourself comfortable. Have a glass of wine and settle down. What else?"

"His lordship remains with his mother tonight. Tomorrow I will bring him to the Castle."

The Earl's elbow was resting on the arm of his chair; he put his hand up and shielded his eyes with it.

"Well," he said; "go on. You know I told you not to write to me about the matter, and I know nothing whatever about it. What kind of a lad is he? I don't care about the mother; what sort of a lad is he?"

Mr. Havisham drank a little of the glass of port he had poured out for himself, and sat holding it in his hand.

"It is rather difficult to judge of the character of a child of seven," he said cautiously.

The Earl's prejudices were very intense. He looked up quickly and uttered a rough word.

"A fool, is he?" he exclaimed. "Or a clumsy cub? His American blood tells, does it?"

"I do not think it has injured him, my lord," replied the lawyer in his dry, deliberate fashion. "I don't know much about children, but I thought him rather a fine lad."

His manner of speech was always deliberate and unenthusiastic, but he made it a trifle more so than usual. He had a shrewd fancy that it would be better that the Earl should judge for himself, and be quite unprepared for his first interview with his grandson.

"Healthy and well-grown?" asked my lord.

"Apparently very healthy, and quite well-grown," replied the lawyer.

"Straight-limbed and well enough to look at?" demanded the Earl.

A very slight smile touched Mr. Havisham's thin lips. There rose up before his mind's eye the picture he had left at Court Lodge—the beautiful, graceful child's body lying upon the tiger-skin in careless comfort—the bright, tumbled hair spread on the rug—the bright, rosy boy's face.

"Rather a handsome boy, I think, my lord, as boys go," he said, "though I am scarcely a judge, perhaps. But you will find him somewhat different from most English children, I dare say."

"I haven't a doubt of that," snarled the Earl, a twinge of gout seizing him. "A lot of impudent little beggars, those American children; I've heard that often enough."

"It is not exactly impudence in his case," said Mr. Havisham. "I can scarcely describe what the difference is. He has lived more with older people than with children, and the difference seems to be a mixture of maturity and childishness."

"American impudence!" protested the Earl. "I've heard of it before. They call it precocity and freedom. Beastly, impudent bad manners; that's what it is!"

Mr. Havisham drank some more port. He seldom argued with his lordly patron, never when his lordly patron's noble leg was inflamed by gout. At such times it was always better to leave him alone. So there was a silence of a few moments. It was Mr. Havisham who broke it.

"I have a message to deliver from Mrs. Errol," he remarked.

"I don't want any of her messages!" growled his lordship; "the less I hear of her the better."

"This is a rather important one," explained the lawyer. "She prefers not to accept the income you proposed to settle on her."

The Earl started visibly.

"What's that?" he cried out. "What's that?"

Mr. Havisham repeated his words.

"She says it is not necessary, and that as the relations between you are not friendly—"

"Not friendly!" ejaculated my lord savagely; "I should say they were not friendly! I hate to think of her! A mercenary, sharp-voiced American! I don't wish to see her."

"My lord," said Mr. Havisham, "you can scarcely call her mercenary. She has asked for nothing. She does not accept the money you offer her."

"All done for effect!" snapped his noble lordship. "She wants to wheedle me into seeing her. She thinks I shall admire her spirit. I don't admire it! It's only American independence! I won't have her living like a beggar at my park gates. As she's the boy's mother, she has a position to keep up, and she shall keep it up. She shall have the money, whether she likes it or not!"

"She won't spend it," said Mr. Havisham.

"I don't care whether she spends it or not!" blustered my lord. "She shall have it sent to her. She sha'n't tell people that she has to live like a pauper because I have done nothing for her! She wants to give the boy a bad opinion of me! I suppose she has poisoned his mind against me already!"

"No," said Mr. Havisham. "I have another message, which will prove to you that she has not done that."

"I don't want to hear it!" panted the Earl, out of breath with anger and excitement and gout.

But Mr. Havisham delivered it.

"She asks you not to let Lord Fauntleroy hear anything which would lead him to understand that you separate him from her because of your prejudice against her. He is very fond of her, and she is convinced that it would cause a barrier to exist between you. She says he would not comprehend it, and it might make him fear you in some measure, or at least cause him to feel less affection for you. She has told him that he is

too young to understand the reason, but shall hear it when he is older. She wishes that there should be no shadow on your first meeting."

The Earl sank back into his chair. His deep-set fierce old eyes gleamed under his beetling brows.

"Come, now!" he said, still breathlessly. "Come, now! You don't mean the mother hasn't told him?"

"Not one word, my lord," replied the lawyer coolly. "That I can assure you. The child is prepared to believe you the most amiable and affectionate of grandparents. Nothing—absolutely nothing has been said to him to give him the slightest doubt of your perfection. And as I carried out your commands in every detail, while in New York, he certainly regards you as a wonder of generosity."

"He does, eh?" said the Earl.

"I give you my word of honor," said Mr. Havisham, "that Lord Fauntleroy's impressions of you will depend entirely upon yourself. And if you will pardon the liberty I take in making the suggestion, I think you will succeed better with him if you take the precaution not to speak slightingly of his mother."

"Pooh, pooh!" said the Earl. "The youngster is only seven years old!"

"He has spent those seven years at his mother's side," returned Mr. Havisham; "and she has all his affection."

Chapter V

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 gates were opened by a woman and two children who came out of a pretty ivy covered lodge.

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 carven 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 someone was sitting—someone 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 armchair, 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 anyone 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 anyone," 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 perfessional boot-black."

"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 horseshoes 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 keep-sake. 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 someone who did not distrust him or shrink from him, or seem to detect the ugly part of his nature; someone 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 someone 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.

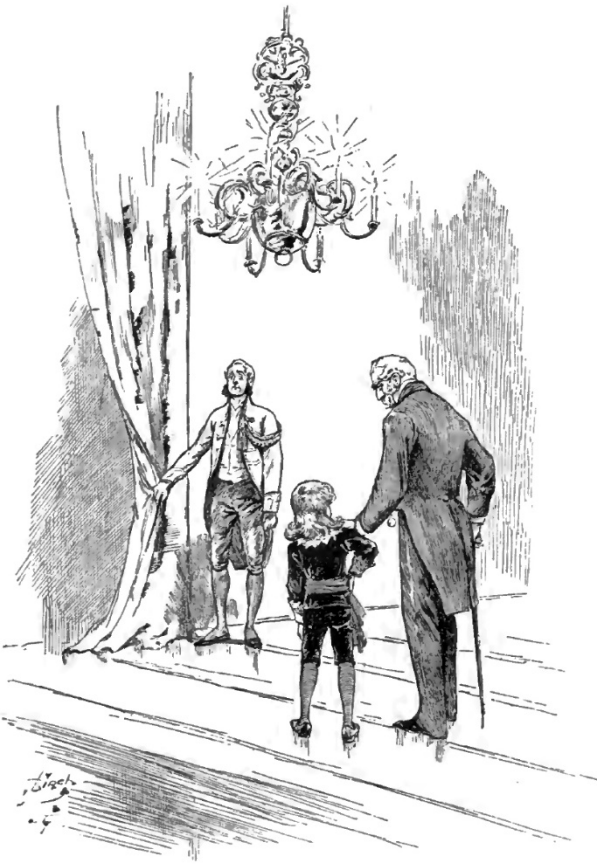
But this evening he did not swear, though his gouty foot gave him more twinges than one. He chose to try an experiment. He got up slowly and put his hand on the small shoulder presented to him with so much courage. Little Lord Fauntleroy made a careful step forward, looking down at the gouty foot.

"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



"Just lean on me," said little Lord Fauntleroy,
"I'll walk very slowly."

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 goodwill. 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. Today, 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 anyone 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 bedtime 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 tonight 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 confidingly 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.

Chapter 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 someone 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 anyone," 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, anyone 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 anyone a kindness, or, under any circumstances whatever, show that he thought of anyone but himself.

He had called today 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 farmhouses 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 farmhouses, 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 anyone 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 anyone 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 Capting'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 someone 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 kindliness 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 behind-hand 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 cannot 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 cannot 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 anyone 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?"

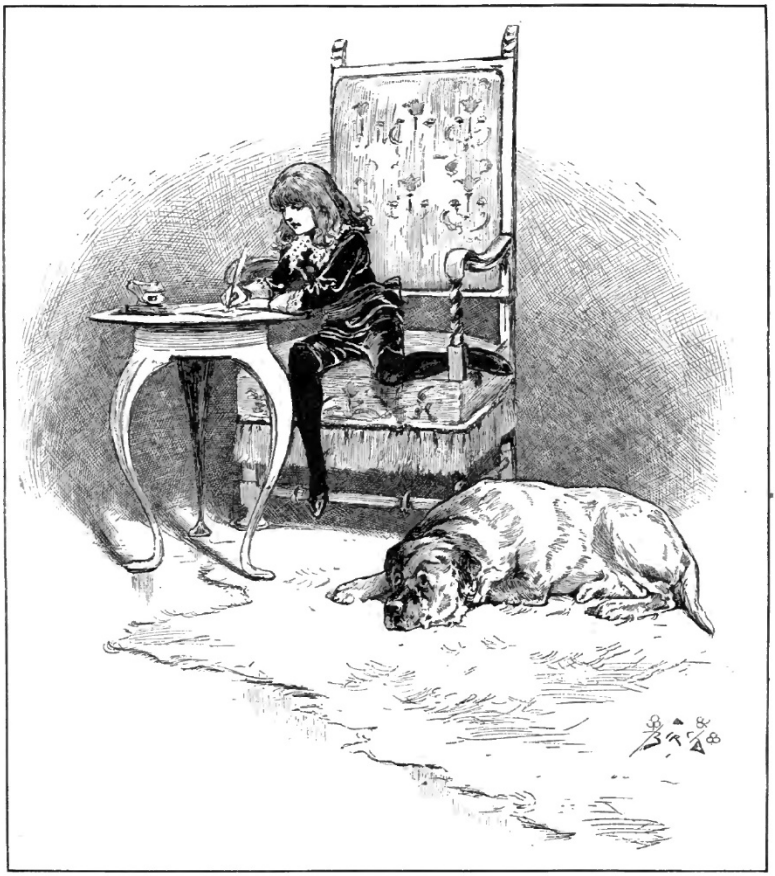
"You may say, 'Higgins is not to be interfered with, for the present,' and sign it, 'Fauntleroy,'" said the Earl.

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



Lord Fauntleroy writes a letter.

satisfactory." And he handed it to Mr. Mordaunt.

What Mr. Mordaunt found written was this:

"Dear mr. Newik if you pleas mr. higins is not to be inturfeared 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 tomorrow. 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 *every*-thing, 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.

Chapter VII

On the following Sunday morning, Mr. Mordaunt had a large congregation. Indeed, he could scarcely remember any Sunday on which the church had been so crowded. People appeared upon the scene who seldom did him the honor of coming to hear his sermons.

There were even people from Hazelton, which was the next parish. There were hearty, sunburned farmers, stout, comfortable, apple-cheeked wives in their best bonnets and most gorgeous shawls, and half a dozen children or so to each family. The doctor's wife was there, with her four daughters. Mrs. Kimsey and Mr. Kimsey, who kept the druggist's shop, and made pills, and did up powders for everybody within ten miles, sat in their pew; Mrs. Dibble in hers; Miss Smiff, the village dressmaker, and her friend Miss Perkins, the milliner, sat in theirs; the doctor's young man was present, and the druggist's apprentice; in fact, almost every family on the county side was represented, in one way or another.

In the course of the preceding week, many wonderful stories had been told of little Lord Fauntleroy. Mrs. Dibble had been kept so busy attending to customers who came in to buy a pennyworth of needles or a ha'porth of tape and to hear what she had to relate, that the little shop bell over the door had nearly tinkled itself to death over the coming and going. Mrs. Dibble knew exactly how his small lordship's rooms had been furnished for him, what expensive toys had been bought, how there was a beautiful brown pony awaiting him, and a small groom to attend it, and a little dogcart, with silver-mounted harness. And she could tell, too, what all the servants had said when they had caught glimpses of the child

on the night of his arrival; and how every female below stairs had said it was a shame, so it was, to part the poor pretty dear from his mother; and had all declared their hearts came into their mouths when he went alone into the library to see his grandfather, for "there was no knowing how he'd be treated, and his lordship's temper was enough to fluster them with old heads on their shoulders, let alone a child."

"But if you'll believe me, Mrs. Jennifer, mum," Mrs. Dibble had said, "fear that child does not know—so Mr. Thomas hisself says; an' set an' smile he did, an' talked to his lordship as if they'd been friends ever since his first hour. An' the Earl so took aback, Mr. Thomas says, that he couldn't do nothing but listen and stare from under his eyebrows. An' it's Mr. Thomas's opinion, Mrs. Bates, mum, that bad as he is, he was pleased in his secret soul, an' proud, too; for a handsomer little fellow, or with better manners, though so old-fashioned, Mr. Thomas says he'd never wish to see."

And then there had come the story of Higgins. The Reverend Mr. Mordaunt had told it at his own dinner table, and the servants who had heard it had told it in the kitchen, and from there it had spread like wildfire.

And on market-day, when Higgins had appeared in town, he had been questioned on every side, and Newick had been questioned too, and in response had shown to two or three people the note signed "Fauntleroy."

And so the farmers' wives had found plenty to talk of over their tea and their shopping, and they had done the subject full justice and made the most of it. And on Sunday they had either walked to church or had been driven in their gigs by their husbands, who were perhaps a trifle curious themselves about the new little lord who was to be in time the owner of the soil.

It was by no means the Earl's habit to attend church, but he chose to appear on this first Sunday—it was his whim to present himself in the huge family pew, with Fauntleroy at his

side.

There were many loiterers in the churchyard, and many lingerers in the lane that morning. There were groups at the gates and in the porch, and there had been much discussion as to whether my lord would really appear or not. When this discussion was at its height, one good woman suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"Eh," she said, "that must be the mother, pretty young thing." All who heard turned and looked at the slender figure in black coming up the path. The veil was thrown back from her face and they could see how fair and sweet it was, and how the bright hair curled as softly as a child's under the little widow's cap.

She was not thinking of the people about; she was thinking of Cedric, and of his visits to her, and his joy over his new pony, on which he had actually ridden to her door the day before, sitting very straight and looking very proud and happy. But soon she could not help being attracted by the fact that she was being looked at and that her arrival had created some sort of sensation. She first noticed it because an old woman in a red cloak made a bobbing courtesy to her, and then another did the same thing and said, "God bless you, my lady!" and one man after another took off his hat as she passed. For a moment she did not understand, and then she realized that it was because she was little Lord Fauntleroy's mother that they did so, and she flushed rather shyly and smiled and bowed too, and said, "Thank you," in a gentle voice to the old woman who had blessed her. To a person who had always lived in a bustling, crowded American city this simple deference was very novel, and at first just a little embarrassing; but after all, she could not help liking and being touched by the friendly warm-heartedness of which it seemed to speak. She had scarcely passed through the stone porch into the church before the great event of the day happened. The carriage from the Castle, with its handsome horses and

tall liveried servants, bowled around the corner and down the green lane.

"Here they come!" went from one looker-on to another.

And then the carriage drew up, and Thomas stepped down and opened the door, and a little boy, dressed in black velvet, and with a splendid mop of bright waving hair, jumped out.

Every man, woman, and child looked curiously upon him.

"He's the Captain over again!" said those of the on-lookers who remembered his father. "He's the Captain's self, to the life!"

He stood there in the sunlight looking up at the Earl, as Thomas helped that nobleman out, with the most affect-tionate interest that could be imagined. The instant he could help, he put out his hand and offered his shoulder as if he had been seven feet high. It was plain enough to everyone that however it might be with other people, the Earl of Dorincourt struck no terror into the breast of his grandson.

"Just lean on me," they heard him say. "How glad the people are to see you, and how well they all seem to know you!"

"Take off your cap, Fauntleroy," said the Earl. "They are bowing to you."

"To me!" cried Fauntleroy, whipping off his cap in a moment, baring his bright head to the crowd and turning shining, puzzled eyes on them as he tried to bow to everyone at once.

"God bless your lordship!" said the courtesying, red-cloaked old woman who had spoken to his mother; "long life to you!"

"Thank you, ma'am," said Fauntleroy. And then they went into the church, and were looked at there, on their way up the aisle to the square, red-cushioned and curtained pew. When Fauntleroy was fairly seated, he made two discoveries which pleased him: the first that, across the church where he

could look at her, his mother sat and smiled at him; the second, that at one end of the pew, against the wall, knelt two quaint figures carven in stone, facing each other as they kneeled on either side of a pillar supporting two stone missals, their pointed hands folded as if in prayer, their dress very antique and strange. On the tablet by them was written something of which he could only read the curious words:

"Here lyeth ye bodye of Gregorye Arthure Fyrst Earle of Dorincourt Allsoe of Alisone Hildegarde hys wyfe."

"May I whisper?" inquired his lordship, devoured by curiosity.

"What is it?" said his grandfather.

"Who are they?"

"Some of your ancestors," answered the Earl, "who lived a few hundred years ago."

"Perhaps," said Lord Fauntleroy, regarding them with respect, "perhaps I got my spelling from them." And then he proceeded to find his place in the church service. When the music began, he stood up and looked across at his mother, smiling. He was very fond of music, and his mother and he often sang together, so he joined in with the rest, his pure, sweet, high voice rising as clear as the song of a bird. He quite forgot himself in his pleasure in it. The Earl forgot himself a little too, as he sat in his curtain-shielded corner of the pew and watched the boy. Cedric stood with the big psalter open in his hands, singing with all his childish might, his face a little uplifted, happily; and as he sang, a long ray of sunshine crept in and, slanting through a golden pane of a stained glass



window, brightened the falling hair about his young head. His mother, as she looked at him across the church, felt a thrill pass through her heart, and a prayer rose in it too—a prayer that the pure, simple happiness of his childish soul might last, and that the strange, great fortune which had fallen to him might bring no wrong or evil with it. There were many soft, anxious thoughts in her tender heart in those new days.

"Oh, Ceddie!" she had said to him the evening before, as she hung over him in saying goodnight, before he went away; "oh, Ceddie, dear, I wish for your sake I was very clever and could say a great many wise things! But only be good, dear, only be brave, only be kind and true always, and then you will never hurt anyone, so long as you live, and you may help many, and the big world may be better because my little child was born. And that is best of all, Ceddie—it is better than everything else, that the world should be a little better because a man has lived—even ever so little better, dearest."

And on his return to the Castle, Fauntleroy had repeated her words to his grandfather.

"And I thought about you when she said that," he ended; "and I told her that was the way the world was because you had lived, and I was going to try if I could be like you."

"And what did she say to that?" asked his lordship, a trifle uneasily.

"She said that was right, and we must always look for good in people and try to be like it."

Perhaps it was this the old man remembered as he glanced through the divided folds of the red curtain of his pew. Many times he looked over the people's heads to where his son's wife sat alone, and he saw the fair face the unforgiven dead had loved, and the eyes which were so like those of the child at his side; but what his thoughts were, and whether they were hard and bitter, or softened a little, it would have been hard to discover.

As they came out of church, many of those who had



"I've a great deal to thank your lordship for," said Higgins.

attended the service stood waiting to see them pass. As they neared the gate, a man who stood with his hat in his hand made a step forward and then hesitated. He was a middle-aged farmer, with a careworn face.

"Well, Higgins," said the Earl.

Fauntleroy turned quickly to look at him.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "is it Mr. Higgins?"

"Yes," answered the Earl dryly; "and I suppose he came to take a look at his new landlord."

"Yes, my lord," said the man, his sunburned face reddening. "Mr. Newick told me his young lordship was kind enough to speak for me, and I thought I'd like to say a word of thanks, if I might be allowed."

Perhaps he felt some wonder when he saw what a little fellow it was who had innocently done so much for him, and who stood there looking up just as one of his own less

fortunate children might have done—apparently not realizing his own importance in the least.

"I've a great deal to thank your lordship for," he said; "a great deal. I—"

"Oh," said Fauntleroy; "I only wrote the letter. It was my grandfather who did it. But you know how he is about always being good to everybody. Is Mrs. Higgins well now?"

Higgins looked a trifle taken aback. He also was somewhat startled at hearing his noble landlord presented in the character of a benevolent being, full of engaging qualities.

"I—well, yes, your lordship," he stammered, "the missus is better since the trouble was took off her mind. It was worrying broke her down."

"I'm glad of that," said Fauntleroy. "My grandfather was very sorry about your children having the scarlet fever, and so was I. He has had children himself. I'm his son's little boy, you know."

Higgins was on the verge of being panic-stricken. He felt it would be the safer and more discreet plan not to look at the Earl, as it had been well known that his fatherly affection for his sons had been such that he had seen them about twice a year, and that when they had been ill, he had promptly departed for London, because he would not be bored with doctors and nurses. It was a little trying, therefore, to his lordship's nerves to be told, while he looked on, his eyes gleaming from under his shaggy eyebrows, that he felt an interest in scarlet fever.

"You see, Higgins," broke in the Earl with a fine grim smile, "you people have been mistaken in me. Lord Fauntleroy understands me. When you want reliable information on the subject of my character, apply to him. Get into the carriage, Fauntleroy."

And Fauntleroy jumped in, and the carriage rolled away down the green lane, and even when it turned the corner into the high road, the Earl was still grimly smiling.

Chapter VIII

Lord Dorincourt had occasion to wear his grim smile many a time as the days passed by. Indeed, as his acquaintance with his grandson progressed, he wore the smile so often that there were moments when it almost lost its grimness. There is no denying that before Lord Fauntleroy had appeared on the scene, the old man had been growing very tired of his loneliness and his gout and his seventy years. After so long a life of excitement and amusement, it was not agreeable to sit alone even in the most splendid room, with one foot on a gout-stool, and with no other diversion than flying into a rage, and shouting at a frightened footman who hated the sight of him. The old Earl was too clever a man not to know perfectly well that his servants detested him, and that even if he had visitors, they did not come for love of him—though some found a sort of amusement in his sharp, sarcastic talk, which spared no one. So long as he had been strong and well, he had gone from one place to another, pretending to amuse himself, though he had not really enjoyed it; and when his health began to fail, he felt tired of everything and shut himself up at Dorincourt, with his gout and his newspapers and his books. But he could not read all the time, and he became more and more "bored," as he called it. He hated the long nights and days, and he grew more and more savage and irritable. And then Fauntleroy came; and when the Earl saw him, fortunately for the little fellow, the secret pride of the grandfather was gratified at the outset. If Cedric had been a less handsome little fellow, the old man might have taken so strong a dislike to him that he would not have given himself the chance to see his grandson's finer qualities. But he chose

to think that Cedric's beauty and fearless spirit were the results of the Dorincourt blood and a credit to the Dorincourt rank. And then when he heard the lad talk, and saw what a well-bred little fellow he was, notwithstanding his boyish ignorance of all that his new position meant, the old Earl liked his grandson more, and actually began to find himself rather entertained. It had amused him to give into those childish hands the power to bestow a benefit on poor Higgins. My lord cared nothing for poor Higgins, but it pleased him a little to think that his grandson would be talked about by the country people and would begin to be popular with the tenantry, even in his childhood. Then it had gratified him to drive to church with Cedric and to see the excitement and interest caused by the arrival. He knew how the people would speak of the beauty of the little lad; of his fine, strong, straight body; of his erect bearing, his handsome face, and his bright hair, and how they would say (as the Earl had heard one woman exclaim to another) that the boy was "every inch a lord." My lord of Dorincourt was an arrogant old man, proud of his name, proud of his rank, and therefore proud to show the world that at last the House of Dorincourt had an heir who was worthy of the position he was to fill.

The morning the new pony had been tried, the Earl had been so pleased that he had almost forgotten his gout. When the groom had brought out the pretty creature, which arched its brown, glossy neck and tossed its fine head in the sun, the Earl had sat at the open window of the library and had looked on while Fauntleroy took his first riding lesson. He wondered if the boy would show signs of timidity. It was not a very small pony, and he had often seen children lose courage in making their first essay at riding.

Fauntleroy mounted in great delight. He had never been on a pony before, and he was in the highest spirits. Wilkins, the groom, led the animal by the bridle up and down before the library window.

"He's a well plucked un, he is," Wilkins remarked in the stable afterward with many grins. "It weren't no trouble to put *him* up. An' a old un wouldn't ha' sat any straighter when he *were* up. He ses—ses he to me, 'Wilkins,' he ses, 'am I sitting up straight? They sit up straight at the circus,' ses he. An' I ses, 'As straight as a arrer, your lordship!'—an' he laughs, as pleased as could be, an' he ses, 'That's right,' he ses, 'you tell me if I don't sit up straight, Wilkins!'"

But sitting up straight and being led at a walk were not altogether and completely satisfactory. After a few minutes, Fauntleroy spoke to his grandfather—watching him from the window:

"Can't I go by myself?" he asked; "and can't I go faster? The boy on Fifth Avenue used to trot and canter!"

"Do you think you could trot and canter?" said the Earl.

"I should like to try," answered Fauntleroy.

His lordship made a sign to Wilkins, who at the signal brought up his own horse and mounted it and took Fauntleroy's pony by the leading-rein.

"Now," said the Earl, "let him trot."

The next few minutes were rather exciting to the small equestrian. He found that trotting was not so easy as walking, and the faster the pony trotted, the less easy it was.

"It j-jolts a g-goo-good deal—do-doesn't it?" he said to Wilkins. "D-does it j-jolt y-you?"

"No, my lord," answered Wilkins. "You'll get used to it in time. Rise in your stirrups."

"I'm ri-rising all the t-time," said Fauntleroy.

He was both rising and falling rather uncomfortably and with many shakes and bounces. He was out of breath and his face grew red, but he held on with all his might, and sat as straight as he could. The Earl could see that from his window. When the riders came back within speaking distance, after they had been hidden by the trees a few minutes, Fauntleroy's hat was off, his cheeks were like poppies, and his lips were set,

but he was still trotting manfully.

"Stop a minute!" said his grandfather. "Where's your hat?"

Wilkins touched his. "It fell off, your lordship," he said, with evident enjoyment. "Wouldn't let me stop to pick it up, my lord."

"Not much afraid, is he?" asked the Earl dryly.

"Him, your lordship!" exclaimed Wilkins. "I shouldn't say as he knowed what it meant. I've taught young gen'lemen to ride afore, an' I never see one stick on more determinder."

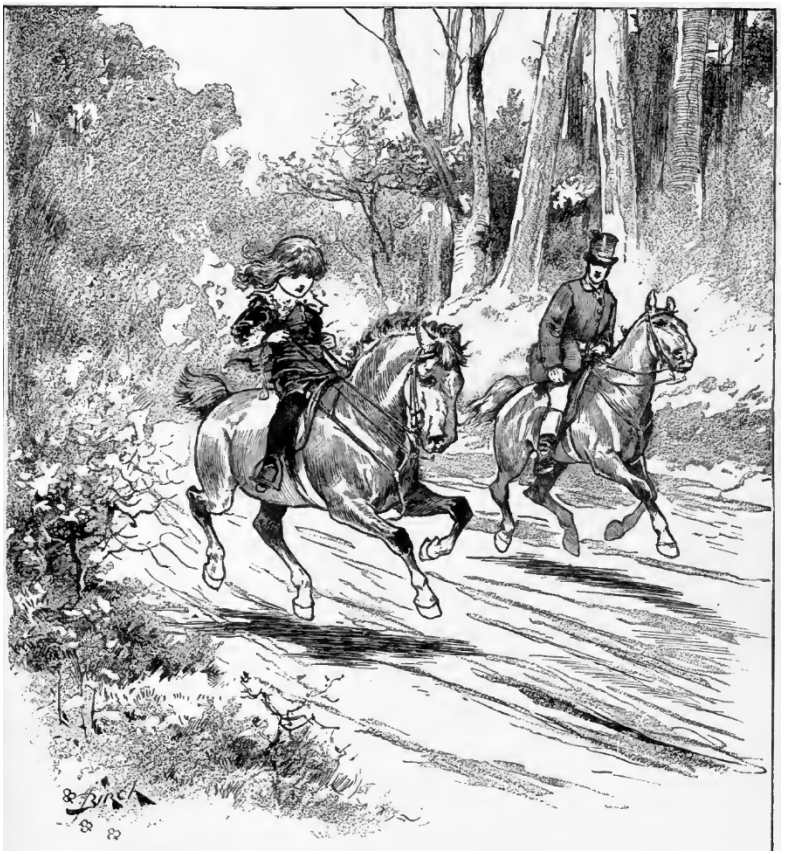
"Tired?" said the Earl to Fauntleroy. "Want to get off?"

"It jolts you more than you think it will," admitted his young lordship frankly. "And it tires you a little, too; but I don't want to get off. I want to learn how. As soon as I've got my breath I want to go back for the hat."

The cleverest person in the world, if he had undertaken to teach Fauntleroy how to please the old man who watched him, could not have taught him anything which would have succeeded better. As the pony trotted off again toward the avenue, a faint color crept up in the fierce old face, and the eyes, under the shaggy brows, gleamed with a pleasure such as his lordship had scarcely expected to know again. And he sat and watched quite eagerly until the sound of the horses' hoofs returned. When they did come, which was after some time, they came at a faster pace. Fauntleroy's hat was still off; Wilkins was carrying it for him; his cheeks were redder than before, and his hair was flying about his ears, but he came at quite a brisk canter.

"There!" he panted, as they drew up, "I c-cantered. I didn't do it as well as the boy on Fifth Avenue, but I did it, and I stayed on!"

He and Wilkins and the pony were close friends after that. Scarcely a day passed in which the country people did not see them out together, cantering gayly on the highroad or through the green lanes. The children in the cottages would



Wilkins was carrying his hat for him, and his hair was flying, but he came back at a brisk canter.

run to the door to look at the proud little brown pony with the gallant little figure sitting so straight in the saddle, and the young lord would snatch off his cap and swing it at them, and shout, "Hullo! Good morning!" in a very unlordly manner, though with great heartiness. Sometimes he would stop and talk with the children, and once Wilkins came back to the castle with a story of how Fauntleroy had insisted on dismounting near the village school, so that a boy who was lame and tired might ride home on his pony.

"An' I'm blessed," said Wilkins, in telling the story at the

stables—"I'm blessed if he'd hear of anything else! He wouldn't let me get down, because he said the boy mightn't feel comfortable on a big horse. An' ses he, 'Wilkins,' ses he, 'that boy's lame and I'm not, and I want to talk to him, too.' And up the lad has to get, and my lord trudges alongside of him with his hands in his pockets, and his cap on the back of his head, a-whistling and talking as easy as you please! And when we come to the cottage, an' the boy's mother come out all in a taking to see what's up, he whips off his cap an' ses he, 'I've brought your son home, ma'am,' ses he, 'because his leg hurt him, and I don't think that stick is enough for him to lean on; and I'm going to ask my grandfather to have a pair of crutches made for him.' An' I'm blessed if the woman wasn't struck all of a heap, as well she might be! I thought I should 'a' hex-plodid, myself!"

When the Earl heard the story he was not angry, as Wilkins had been half afraid that he would be; on the contrary, he laughed outright, and called Fauntleroy up to him, and made him tell all about the matter from beginning to end, and then he laughed again. And actually, a few days later, the Dorincourt carriage stopped in the green lane before the cottage where the lame boy lived, and Fauntleroy jumped out and walked up to the door, carrying a pair of strong, light, new crutches shouldered like a gun, and presented them to Mrs. Hartle (the lame boy's name was Hartle) with these words: "My grandfather's compliments, and if you please, these are for your boy, and we hope he will get better."

"I said your compliments," he explained to the Earl when he returned to the carriage. "You didn't tell me to, but I thought perhaps you forgot. That was right, wasn't it?"

And the Earl laughed again, and did not say it was not. In fact, the two were becoming more intimate every day, and every day Fauntleroy's faith in his lordship's benevolence and virtue increased. He had no doubt whatever that his grandfather was the most amiable and generous of elderly

gentlemen. Certainly, he himself found his wishes gratified almost before they were uttered; and such gifts and pleasures were lavished upon him, that he was sometimes almost bewildered by his own possessions. Apparently, he was to have everything he wanted, and to do everything he wished to do. And though this would certainly not have been a very wise plan to pursue with all small boys, his young lordship bore it amazingly well. Perhaps, notwithstanding his sweet nature, he might have been somewhat spoiled by it, if it had not been



"Up the lad has to get, and my lord trudges alongside of him with his hands in his pockets."

for the hours he spent with his mother at Court Lodge. That "best friend" of his watched over him ever closely and tenderly. The two had many long talks together, and he never went back to the Castle with her kisses on his cheeks without carrying in his heart some simple, pure words worth remembering.

There was one thing, it is true, which puzzled the little fellow very much. He thought over the mystery of it much oftener than anyone supposed; even his mother did not know how often he pondered on it; the Earl for a long time never suspected that he did so at all. But, being quick to observe, the little boy could not help wondering why it was that his mother and grandfather never seemed to meet. He had noticed that they never did meet. When the Dorincourt carriage stopped at Court Lodge, the Earl never alighted, and on the rare occasions of his lordship's going to church, Fauntleroy was always left to speak to his mother in the porch alone, or perhaps to go home with her. And yet, every day, fruit and flowers were sent to Court Lodge from the hothouses at the Castle. But the one virtuous action of the Earl's which had set him upon the pinnacle of perfection in Cedric's eyes, was what he had done soon after that first Sunday when Mrs. Errol had walked home from church unattended. About a week later, when Cedric was going one day to visit his mother, he found at the door, instead of the large carriage and prancing pair, a pretty little brougham and a handsome bay horse.

"That is a present from you to your mother," the Earl said abruptly. "She cannot go walking about the country. She needs a carriage. The man who drives will take charge of it. It is a present from *you*."

Fauntleroy's delight could but feebly express itself. He could scarcely contain himself until he reached the lodge. His mother was gathering roses in the garden. He flung himself out of the little brougham and flew to her.

"Dearest!" he cried, "could you believe it? This is yours! He says it is a present from me. It is your own carriage to drive everywhere in!"

He was so happy that she did not know what to say. She could not have borne to spoil his pleasure by refusing to accept the gift even though it came from the man who chose to consider himself her enemy. She was obliged to step into the carriage, roses and all, and let herself be taken to drive, while Fauntleroy told her stories of his grandfather's goodness and amiability. They were such innocent stories that sometimes she could not help laughing a little, and then she would draw her little boy closer to her side and kiss him, feeling glad that he could see only good in the old man, who had so few friends.

The very next day after that, Fauntleroy wrote to Mr. Hobbs. He wrote quite a long letter, and after the first copy was written, he brought it to his grandfather to be inspected.

"Because," he said, "it's so uncertain about the spelling. And if you'll tell me the mistakes, I'll write it out again."

This was what he had written:

"My dear mr hobbs i want to tell you about my granfarther he is the best earl you ever new it is a mistake about earls being tirents he is not a tirent at all i wish you new him you would be good friends i am sure you would he has the gout in his foot and is a grate sufrer but he is so pashent i love him more every day becaus no one could help loving an earl like that who is kind to everyone in this world i wish you could talk to him he knows everything in the world you can ask him any question but he has never plaid base ball he has given me a pony and a cart and my mamma a bewtifle cariage and I have three rooms and toys of all kinds it would serprise you you would like the castle and the park it is such a large castle you could lose yourself wilkins tells me wilkins is my groom he says there is a dungon under the castle it is so pretty everything in the park would serprise you there are such big trees and there are deers and rabbits and games flying about in the cover my granfarther is very rich but

he is not proud and orty as you thought earls always were i like to be with him the people are so polite and kind they take of their hats to you and the women make curtsies and sometimes say god bless you i can ride now but at first it shook me when i troted my granfarther let a poor man stay on his farm when he could not pay his rent and mrs mellon went to take wine and things to his sick children i should like to see you and i wish dearest could live at the castle but i am very happy when i dont miss her too much and i love my granfarther everyone does plees write soon

"your afechshnet old frend

"Cedric Errol

"p s no one is in the dungon my granfarfher never had anyone langwishin in there.

"p s he is such a good earl he reminds me of you he is a unerversle favrit"

"Do you miss your mother very much?" asked the Earl when he had finished reading this.

"Yes," said Fauntleroy, "I miss her all the time."

He went and stood before the Earl and put his hand on his knee, looking up at him.

"*You* don't miss her, do you?" he said.

"I don't know her," answered his lordship rather crustily.

"I know that," said Fauntleroy, "and that's what makes me wonder. She told me not to ask you any questions, and—and I won't, but sometimes I can't help thinking, you know, and it makes me all puzzled. But I'm not going to ask any questions. And when I miss her very much, I go and look out of my window to where I see her light shine for me every night through an open place in the trees. It is a long way off, but she puts it in her window as soon as it is dark, and I can see it twinkle far away, and I know what it says."

"What does it say?" asked my lord.

"It says, 'Goodnight, God keep you all the night!'—just what she used to say when we were together. Every night she used to say that to me, and every morning she said, 'God bless

you all the day!' So you see I am quite safe all the time—"

"Quite, I have no doubt," said his lordship dryly. And he drew down his beetling eyebrows and looked at the little boy so fixedly and so long that Fauntleroy wondered what he could be thinking of.

Chapter IX

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 someday 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 anyone had so many things always, one might sometimes forget that everyone 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 anyone 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 tomorrow. 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.

Chapter X

The truth was that Mrs. Errol had found a great many sad things in the course of her work among the poor of the little village that appeared so picturesque when it was seen from the moor sides. Everything was not as picturesque, when seen nearby, as it looked from a distance. She had found idleness and poverty and ignorance where there should have been comfort and industry. And she had discovered, after a while, that Erleboro was considered to be the worst village in that part of the country. Mr. Mordaunt had told her a great many of his difficulties and discouragements, and she had found out a great deal by herself. The agents who had managed the property had always been chosen to please the Earl, and had cared nothing for the degradation and wretchedness of the poor tenants. Many things, therefore, had been neglected which should have been attended to, and matters had gone from bad to worse.

As to Earl's Court, it was a disgrace, with its dilapidated houses and miserable, careless, sickly people. When first Mrs. Errol went to the place, it made her shudder. Such ugliness and slovenliness and want seemed worse in a country place than in a city. It seemed as if there it might be helped. And as she looked at the squalid, uncared for children growing up in the midst of vice and brutal indifference, she thought of her own little boy spending his days in the great, splendid castle, guarded and served like a young prince, having no wish ungratified, and knowing nothing but luxury and ease and beauty. And a bold thought came in her wise little mother-heart. Gradually she had begun to see, as had others, that it had been her boy's good fortune to please the Earl very much,

and that he would scarcely be likely to be denied anything for which he expressed a desire.

"The Earl would give him anything," she said to Mr. Mordaunt. "He would indulge his every whim. Why should not that indulgence be used for the good of others? It is for me to see that this shall come to pass."

She knew she could trust the kind, childish heart; so she told the little fellow the story of Earl's Court, feeling sure that he would speak of it to his grandfather, and hoping that some good results would follow.

And strange as it appeared to everyone, good results did follow.

The fact was that the strongest power to influence the Earl was his grandson's perfect confidence in him—the fact that Cedric always believed that his grandfather was going to do what was right and generous. He could not quite make up his mind to let him discover that he had no inclination to be generous at all, and that he wanted his own way on all occasions, whether it was right or wrong. It was such a novelty to be regarded with admiration as a benefactor of the entire human race, and the soul of nobility, that he did not enjoy the idea of looking into the affectionate brown eyes, and saying: "I am a violent, selfish old rascal; I never did a generous thing in my life, and I don't care about Earl's Court or the poor people"—or something which would amount to the same thing. He actually had learned to be fond enough of that small boy with the mop of yellow love-locks, to feel that he himself would prefer to be guilty of an amiable action now and then. And so—though he laughed at himself—after some reflection, he sent for Newick, and had quite a long interview with him on the subject of the Court, and it was decided that the wretched hovels should be pulled down and new houses should be built.

"It is Lord Fauntleroy who insists on it," he said dryly; "he thinks it will improve the property. You can tell the tenants

that it's his idea." And he looked down at his small lordship, who was lying on the hearth rug playing with Dougal. The great dog was the lad's constant companion, and followed him about everywhere, stalking solemnly after him when he walked, and trotting majestically behind when he rode or drove.

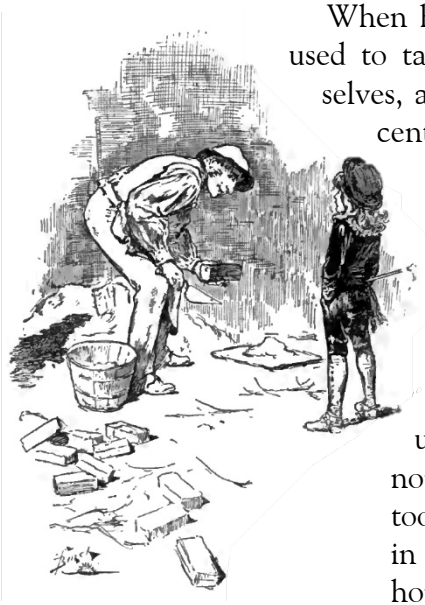
Of course, both the country people and the town people heard of the proposed improvement. At first, many of them would not believe it; but when a small army of workmen arrived and commenced pulling down the crazy, squalid cottages, people began to understand that little Lord Fauntleroy had done them a good turn again, and that through his innocent interference the scandal of Earl's Court had at last been removed. If he had only known how they talked about him and praised him everywhere, and prophesied great things for him when he grew up, how astonished he would have been! But he never suspected it. He lived his simple, happy, child life—frolicking about in the park; chasing the rabbits to their burrows; lying under the trees on the grass, or on the rug in the library, reading wonderful books and talking to the Earl about them, and then telling the stories again to his mother; writing long letters to Dick and Mr. Hobbs, who responded in characteristic fashion; riding out at his grandfather's side, or with Wilkins as escort. As they rode through the market town, he used to see the people turn and look, and he noticed that as they lifted their hats their faces often brightened very much; but he thought it was all because his grandfather was with him.

"They are so fond of you," he once said, looking up at his lordship with a bright smile. "Do you see how glad they are when they see you? I hope they will someday be as fond of me. It must be nice to have *every*body like you." And he felt quite proud to be the grandson of so greatly admired and beloved an individual.

When the cottages were being built, the lad and his

grandfather used to ride over to Earl's Court together to look at them, and Fauntleroy was full of interest. He would dismount from his pony and go and make acquaintance with the workmen, asking them questions about building and bricklaying, and telling them things about America. After two or three such conversations, he was able to enlighten the Earl on the subject of brick making, as they rode home.

"I always like to know about things like those," he said, "because you never know what you are coming to."



The workmen liked to see him stand among them, talking away, with his hands in his pockets

When he left them, the workmen used to talk him over among themselves, and laugh at his odd, innocent speeches; but they liked him, and liked to see him stand among them, talking away, with his hands in his pockets, his hat pushed back on his curls, and his small face full of eagerness. "He's a rare un," they used to say. "An' a noice little outspoken chap, too. Not much o' th' bad stock in him." And they would go home and tell their wives about him, and the women would tell each other, and so it came about that almost every one talked of, or knew some story of, little Lord Fauntleroy; and gradually almost everyone knew that the "wicked Earl" had found something he cared for at last—something which had touched and even warmed his hard, bitter old heart.

But no one knew quite how much it had been warmed, and how day by day the old man found himself caring more

and more for the child, who was the only creature that had ever trusted him. He found himself looking forward to the time when Cedric would be a young man, strong and beautiful, with life all before him, but having still that kind heart and the power to make friends everywhere, and the Earl wondered what the lad would do, and how he would use his gifts. Often as he watched the little fellow lying upon the hearth, conning some big book, the light shining on the bright young head, his old eyes would gleam and his cheek would flush.

"The boy can do anything," he would say to himself, "anything!"

He never spoke to anyone else of his feeling for Cedric; when he spoke of him to others it was always with the same grim smile. But Fauntleroy soon knew that his grandfather loved him and always liked him to be near—near to his chair if they were in the library, opposite to him at table, or by his side when he rode or drove or took his evening walk on the broad terrace.

"Do you remember," Cedric said once, looking up from his book as he lay on the rug, "do you remember what I said to you that first night about our being good companions? I don't think any people could be better companions than we are, do you?"

"We are pretty good companions, I should say," replied his lordship. "Come here."

Fauntleroy scrambled up and went to him.

"Is there anything you want," the Earl asked; "anything you have not?"

The little fellow's brown eyes fixed themselves on his grandfather with a rather wistful look.

"Only one thing," he answered.

"What is that?" inquired the Earl.

Fauntleroy was silent a second. He had not thought matters over to himself so long for nothing.

"What is it?" my lord repeated.

Fauntleroy answered.

"It is Dearest," he said.

The old Earl winced a little.

"But you see her almost every day," he said. "Is not that enough?"

"I used to see her all the time," said Fauntleroy. "She used to kiss me when I went to sleep at night, and in the morning she was always there, and we could tell each other things without waiting."

The old eyes and the young ones looked into each other through a moment of silence. Then the Earl knitted his brows.

"Do you *never* forget about your mother?" he said.

"No," answered Fauntleroy, "never; and she never forgets about me. I shouldn't forget about YOU, you know, if I didn't live with you. I should think about you all the more."

"Upon my word," said the Earl, after looking at him a moment longer, "I believe you would!"

The jealous pang that came when the boy spoke so of his mother seemed even stronger than it had been before; it was stronger because of this old man's increasing affection for the boy.

But it was not long before he had other pangs, so much harder to face that he almost forgot, for the time, he had ever hated his son's wife at all. And in a strange and startling way it happened. One evening, just before the Earl's Court cottages were completed, there was a grand dinner party at Dorincourt. There had not been such a party at the Castle for a long time. A few days before it took place, Sir Harry Lorridaile and Lady Lorridaile, who was the Earl's only sister, actually came for a visit—a thing which caused the greatest excitement in the village and set Mrs. Dibble's shop bell tinkling madly again, because it was well known that Lady Lorridaile had only been to Dorincourt once since her marriage, thirty-five years before. She was a handsome old

lady with white curls and dimpled, peachy cheeks, and she was as good as gold, but she had never approved of her brother any more than did the rest of the world, and having a strong will of her own and not being at all afraid to speak her mind frankly, she had, after several lively quarrels with his lordship, seen very little of him since her young days.

She had heard a great deal of him that was not pleasant through the years in which they had been separated. She had heard about his neglect of his wife, and of the poor lady's death; and of his indifference to his children; and of the two weak, vicious, unprepossessing elder boys who had been no credit to him or to anyone else. Those two elder sons, Bevis and Maurice, she had never seen; but once there had come to Lorridaile Park a tall, stalwart, beautiful young fellow about eighteen years old, who had told her that he was her nephew Cedric Errol, and that he had come to see her because he was passing near the place and wished to look at his Aunt Constantia of whom he had heard his mother speak. Lady Lorridaile's kind heart had warmed through and through at the sight of the young man, and she had made him stay with her a week, and petted him, and made much of him and admired him immensely. He was so sweet-tempered, light-hearted, spirited a lad, that when he went away, she had hoped to see him often again; but she never did, because the Earl had been in a bad humor when he went back to Dorincourt, and had forbidden him ever to go to Lorridaile Park again. But Lady Lorridaile had always remembered him tenderly, and though she feared he had made a rash marriage in America, she had been very angry when she heard how he had been cast off by his father and that no one really knew where or how he lived. At last there came a rumor of his death, and then Bevis had been thrown from his horse and killed, and Maurice had died in Rome of the fever; and soon after came the story of the American child who was to be found and brought home as Lord Fauntleroy.

"Probably to be ruined as the others were," she said to her husband, "unless his mother is good enough and has a will of her own to help her to take care of him."

But when she heard that Cedric's mother had been parted from him she was almost too indignant for words.

"It is disgraceful, Harry!" she said. "Fancy a child of that age being taken from his mother, and made the companion of a man like my brother! He will either be brutal to the boy or indulge him until he is a little monster. If I thought it would do any good to write—"

"It wouldn't, Constantia," said Sir Harry.

"I know it wouldn't," she answered. "I know his lordship the Earl of Dorincourt too well; but it is outrageous."

Not only the poor people and farmers heard about little Lord Fauntleroy; others knew him. He was talked about so much and there were so many stories of him—of his beauty, his sweet temper, his popularity, and his growing influence over the Earl, his grandfather—that rumors of him reached the gentry at their country places and he was heard of in more than one county of England. People talked about him at the dinner tables, ladies pitied his young mother, and wondered if the boy were as handsome as he was said to be, and men who knew the Earl and his habits laughed heartily at the stories of the little fellow's belief in his lordship's amiability. Sir Thomas Asshe of Asshawe Hall, being in Erleboro one day, met the Earl and his grandson riding together, and stopped to shake hands with my lord and congratulate him on his change of looks and on his recovery from the gout. "And, d' ye know," he said, when he spoke of the incident afterward, "the old man looked as proud as a turkey-cock; and upon my word I don't wonder, for a handsomer, finer lad than his grandson I never saw! As straight as a dart, and sat his pony like a young trooper!"

And so by degrees Lady Lorridaile, too, heard of the child; she heard about Higgins and the lame boy, and the cottages

at Earl's Court, and a score of other things—and she began to wish to see the little fellow. And just as she was wondering how it might be brought about, to her utter astonishment, she received a letter from her brother inviting her to come with her husband to Dorincourt.

"It seems incredible!" she exclaimed. "I have heard it said that the child has worked miracles, and I begin to believe it. They say my brother adores the boy and can scarcely endure to have him out of sight. And he is so proud of him! Actually, I believe he wants to show him to us." And she accepted the invitation at once.

When she reached Dorincourt Castle with Sir Harry, it was late in the afternoon, and she went to her room at once before seeing her brother. Having dressed for dinner, she entered the drawing room. The Earl was there standing near the fire and looking very tall and imposing; and at his side stood a little boy in black velvet, and a large Vandyke collar of rich lace—a little fellow whose round bright face was so handsome, and who turned upon her such beautiful, candid brown eyes, that she almost uttered an exclamation of pleasure and surprise at the sight.

As she shook hands with the Earl, she called him by the name she had not used since her girlhood.

"What, Molyneux!" she said, "is this the child?"

"Yes, Constantia," answered the Earl, "this is the boy. Fauntleroy, this is your grand-aunt, Lady Lorridaile."

"How do you do, Grand-Aunt?" said Fauntleroy.

Lady Lorridaile put her hand on his shoulders, and after looking down into his upraised face a few seconds, kissed him warmly.

"I am your Aunt Constantia," she said, "and I loved your poor papa, and you are very like him."

"It makes me glad when I am told I am like him," answered Fauntleroy, "because it seems as if everyone liked him, just like Dearest, eszackly, Aunt Constantia" (adding

the two words after a second's pause).

Lady Lorridaile was delighted. She bent and kissed him again, and from that moment they were warm friends.

"Well, Molyneux," she said aside to the Earl afterward, "it could not possibly be better than this!"

"I think not," answered his lordship dryly. "He is a fine little fellow. We are great friends. He believes me to be the most charming and sweet-tempered of philanthropists. I will confess to you, Constantia—as you would find it out if I did not—that I am in some slight danger of becoming rather an old fool about him."

"What does his mother think of you?" asked Lady Lorridaile, with her usual straightforwardness.

"I have not asked her," answered the Earl, slightly scowling.

"Well," said Lady Lorridaile, "I will be frank with you at the outset, Molyneux, and tell you I don't approve of your course, and that it is my intention to call on Mrs. Errol as soon as possible; so if you wish to quarrel with me, you had better mention it at once. What I hear of the young creature makes me quite sure that her child owes her everything. We were told even at Lorridaile Park that your poorer tenants adore her already."

"They adore *him,*" said the Earl, nodding toward Fauntleroy. "As to Mrs. Errol, you'll find her a pretty little woman. I'm rather in debt to her for giving some of her beauty to the boy, and you can go to see her if you like. All I ask is that she will remain at Court Lodge and that you will not ask me to go and see her," and he scowled a little again.

"But he doesn't hate her as much as he used to, that is plain enough to me," her ladyship said to Sir Harry afterward. "And he is a changed man in a measure, and, incredible as it may seem, Harry, it is my opinion that he is being made into a human being, through nothing more nor less than his affection for that innocent, affectionate little fellow. Why, the

child actually loves him—leans on his chair and against his knee. His own children would as soon have thought of nestling up to a tiger."

The very next day she went to call upon Mrs. Errol. When she returned, she said to her brother:

"Molyneux, she is the loveliest little woman I ever saw! She has a voice like a silver bell, and you may thank her for making the boy what he is. She has given him more than her beauty, and you make a great mistake in not persuading her to come and take charge of you. I shall invite her to Lorridaile."

"She'll not leave the boy," replied the Earl.

"I must have the boy too," said Lady Lorridaile, laughing.

But she knew Fauntleroy would not be given up to her, and each day she saw more clearly how closely those two had grown to each other, and how all the proud, grim old man's ambition and hope and love centered themselves in the child, and how the warm, innocent nature returned his affection with most perfect trust and good faith.

She knew, too, that the prime reason for the great dinner party was the Earl's secret desire to show the world his grandson and heir, and to let people see that the boy who had been so much spoken of and described was even a finer little specimen of boyhood than rumor had made him.

"Bevis and Maurice were such a bitter humiliation to him," she said to her husband. "Everyone knew it. He actually hated them. His pride has full sway here." Perhaps there was not one person who accepted the invitation without feeling some curiosity about little Lord Fauntleroy, and wondering if he would be on view.

And when the time came he was on view.

"The lad has good manners," said the Earl. "He will be in no one's way. Children are usually idiots or bores—mine were both—but he can actually answer when he's spoken to, and be silent when he is not. He is never offensive."

But he was not allowed to be silent very long. Everyone had something to say to him. The fact was they wished to make him talk. The ladies petted him and asked him questions, and the men asked him questions too, and joked with him, as the men on the steamer had done when he crossed the Atlantic. Fauntleroy did not quite understand why they laughed so sometimes when he answered them, but he was so used to seeing people amused when he was quite serious, that he did not mind. He thought the whole evening delightful. The magnificent rooms were so brilliant with lights, there were so many flowers, the gentlemen seemed so gay, and the ladies wore such beautiful, wonderful dresses, and such sparkling ornaments in their hair and on their necks. There was one young lady who, he heard them say, had just come down from London, where she had spent the "season"; and she was so charming that he could not keep his eyes from her. She was a rather tall young lady with a proud little head, and very soft dark hair, and large eyes the color of purple pansies, and the color on her cheeks and lips was like that of a rose. She was dressed in a beautiful white dress, and had pearls around her throat. There was one strange thing about this young lady. So many gentlemen stood near her, and seemed anxious to please her, that Fauntleroy thought she must be something like a princess. He was so much interested in her that without knowing it he drew nearer and nearer to her, and at last she turned and spoke to him.

"Come here, Lord Fauntleroy," she said, smiling; "and tell me why you look at me so."

"I was thinking how beautiful you are," his young lordship replied.

Then all the gentlemen laughed outright, and the young lady laughed a little too, and the rose color in her cheeks brightened.

"Ah, Fauntleroy," said one of the gentlemen who had laughed most heartily, "make the most of your time! When



"I was thinking how beautiful you are," said Lord Fauntleroy.

you are older you will not have the courage to say that."

"But nobody could help saying it," said Fauntleroy sweetly. "Could you help it? Don't *you* think she is pretty, too?"

"We are not allowed to say what we think," said the gentleman, while the rest laughed more than ever.

But the beautiful young lady—her name was Miss Vivian

Herbert—put out her hand and drew Cedric to her side, looking prettier than before, if possible.

"Lord Fauntleroy shall say what he thinks," she said; "and I am much obliged to him. I am sure he thinks what he says." And she kissed him on his cheek.

"I think you are prettier than anyone I ever saw," said Fauntleroy, looking at her with innocent, admiring eyes, "except Dearest. Of course, I couldn't think anyone *quite* as pretty as Dearest. I think she is the prettiest person in the world."

"I am sure she is," said Miss Vivian Herbert. And she laughed and kissed his cheek again.

She kept him by her side a great part of the evening, and the group of which they were the center was very gay. He did not know how it happened, but before long he was telling them all about America, and the Republican Rally, and Mr. Hobbs and Dick, and in the end he proudly produced from his pocket Dick's parting gift, the red silk handkerchief.

"I put it in my pocket tonight because it was a party," he said. "I thought Dick would like me to wear it at a party."

And queer as the big, flaming, spotted thing was, there was a serious, affectionate look in his eyes, which prevented his audience from laughing very much.

"You see, I like it," he said, "because Dick is my friend."

But though he was talked to so much, as the Earl had said, he was in no one's way. He could be quiet and listen when others talked, and so no one found him tiresome. A slight smile crossed more than one face when several times he went and stood near his grandfather's chair, or sat on a stool close to him, watching him and absorbing every word he uttered with the most charmed interest. Once he stood so near the chair's arm that his cheek touched the Earl's shoulder, and his lordship, detecting the general smile, smiled a little himself. He knew what the lookers-on were thinking, and he felt some secret amusement in their seeing what good friends he

was with this youngster, who might have been expected to share the popular opinion of him.

Mr. Havisham had been expected to arrive in the afternoon, but, strange to say, he was late. Such a thing had really never been known to happen before during all the years in which he had been a visitor at Dorincourt Castle. He was so late that the guests were on the point of rising to go in to dinner when he arrived. When he approached his host, the Earl regarded him with amazement. He looked as if he had been hurried or agitated; his dry, keen old face was actually pale.

"I was detained," he said, in a low voice to the Earl, "by—an extraordinary event."

It was as unlike the methodic old lawyer to be agitated by anything as it was to be late, but it was evident that he had been disturbed. At dinner he ate scarcely anything, and two or three times, when he was spoken to, he started as if his thoughts were far away. At dessert, when Fauntleroy came in, he looked at him more than once, nervously and uneasily. Fauntleroy noted the look and wondered at it. He and Mr. Havisham were on friendly terms, and they usually exchanged smiles. The lawyer seemed to have forgotten to smile that evening.

The fact was, he forgot everything but the strange and painful news he knew he must tell the Earl before the night was over—the strange news which he knew would be so terrible a shock, and which would change the face of everything. As he looked about at the splendid rooms and the brilliant company, at the people gathered together, he knew, more that they might see the bright-haired little fellow near the Earl's chair than for any other reason—as he looked at the proud old man and at little Lord Fauntleroy smiling at his side, he really felt quite shaken, notwithstanding that he was a hardened old lawyer. What a blow it was that he must deal them!

He did not exactly know how the long, superb dinner ended. He sat through it as if he were in a dream, and several times he saw the Earl glance at him in surprise.

But it was over at last, and the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing room. They found Fauntleroy sitting on the sofa with Miss Vivian Herbert—the great beauty of the last London season; they had been looking at some pictures, and he was thanking his companion as the door opened.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you for being so kind to me!" he was saying; "I never was at a party before, and I've enjoyed myself so much!"

He had enjoyed himself so much that when the gentlemen gathered about Miss Herbert again and began to talk to her, as he listened and tried to understand their laughing speeches, his eyelids began to droop. They drooped until they covered his eyes two or three times, and then the sound of Miss Herbert's low, pretty laugh would bring him back, and he would open them again for about two seconds. He was quite sure he was not going to sleep, but there was a large, yellow satin cushion behind him and his head sank against it, and after a while his eyelids drooped for the last time. They did not even quite open when, as it seemed a long time after, someone kissed him lightly on the cheek. It was Miss Vivian Herbert, who was going away, and she spoke to him softly.

"Goodnight, little Lord Fauntleroy," she said. "Sleep well."

And in the morning he did not know that he had tried to open his eyes and had murmured sleepily, "Goodnight—I'm so—glad—I saw you—you are so—pretty—"

He only had a very faint recollection of hearing the gentlemen laugh again and of wondering why they did it.

No sooner had the last guest left the room, than Mr. Havisham turned from his place by the fire, and stepped nearer the sofa, where he stood looking down at the sleeping occupant. Little Lord Fauntleroy was taking his ease

luxuriously. One leg crossed the other and swung over the edge of the sofa; one arm was flung easily above his head; the warm flush of healthful, happy, childish sleep was on his quiet face; his waving tangle of bright hair strayed over the yellow satin cushion. He made a picture well worth looking at.

As Mr. Havisham looked at it, he put his hand up and rubbed his shaven chin, with a harassed countenance.

"Well, Havisham," said the Earl's harsh voice behind him. "What is it? It is evident something has happened. What was the extraordinary event, if I may ask?"

Mr. Havisham turned from the sofa, still rubbing his chin.

"It was bad news," he answered, "distressing news, my lord—the worst of news. I am sorry to be the bearer of it."

The Earl had been uneasy for some time during the evening, as he glanced at Mr. Havisham, and when he was uneasy he was always ill-tempered.

"Why do you look so at the boy!" he exclaimed irritably. "You have been looking at him all the evening as if—See here now, why should you look at the boy, Havisham, and hang over him like some bird of ill-omen! What has your news to do with Lord Fauntleroy?"

"My lord," said Mr. Havisham, "I will waste no words. My news has everything to do with Lord Fauntleroy. And if we are to believe it—it is not Lord Fauntleroy who lies sleeping before us, but only the son of Captain Errol. And the present Lord Fauntleroy is the son of your son Bevis, and is at this moment in a lodging house in London."

The Earl clutched the arms of his chair with both his hands until the veins stood out upon them; the veins stood out on his forehead too; his fierce old face was almost livid.

"What do you mean!" he cried out. "You are mad! Whose lie is this?"

"If it is a lie," answered Mr. Havisham, "it is painfully like the truth. A woman came to my chambers this morning. She said your son Bevis married her six years ago in London. She

showed me her marriage certificate. They quarrelled a year after the marriage, and he paid her to keep away from him. She has a son five years old. She is an American of the lower classes, an ignorant person, and until lately she did not fully understand what her son could claim. She consulted a lawyer and found out that the boy was really Lord Fauntleroy and the heir to the earldom of Dorincourt; and she, of course, insists on his claims being acknowledged."

There was a movement of the curly head on the yellow satin cushion. A soft, long, sleepy sigh came from the parted lips, and the little boy stirred in his sleep, but not at all restlessly or uneasily. Not at all as if his slumber were disturbed by the fact that he was being proved a small impostor and that he was not Lord Fauntleroy at all and never would be the Earl of Dorincourt. He only turned his rosy face more on its side, as if to enable the old man who stared at it so solemnly to see it better.

The handsome, grim old face was ghastly. A bitter smile fixed itself upon it.

"I should refuse to believe a word of it," he said, "if it were not such a low, scoundrelly piece of business that it becomes quite possible in connection with the name of my son Bevis. It is quite like Bevis. He was always a disgrace to us. Always a weak, untruthful, vicious young brute with low tastes—my son and heir, Bevis, Lord Fauntleroy. The woman is an ignorant, vulgar person, you say?"

"I am obliged to admit that she can scarcely spell her own name," answered the lawyer. "She is absolutely uneducated and openly mercenary. She cares for nothing but the money. She is very handsome in a coarse way, but—"

The fastidious old lawyer ceased speaking and gave a sort of shudder.

The veins on the old Earl's forehead stood out like purple cords.

Something else stood out upon it too—cold drops of

moisture. He took out his handkerchief and swept them away. His smile grew even more bitter.

"And I," he said, "I objected to—to the other woman, the mother of this child" (pointing to the sleeping form on the sofa); "I refused to recognize her. And yet she could spell her own name. I suppose this is retribution."

Suddenly he sprang up from his chair and began to walk up and down the room. Fierce and terrible words poured forth from his lips. His rage and hatred and cruel disappointment shook him as a storm shakes a tree. His violence was something dreadful to see, and yet Mr. Havisham noticed that at the very worst of his wrath he never seemed to forget the little sleeping figure on the yellow satin cushion, and that he never once spoke loud enough to awaken it.

"I might have known it," he said. "They were a disgrace to me from their first hour! I hated them both; and they hated me! Bevis was the worse of the two. I will not believe this yet, though! I will contend against it to the last. But it is like Bevis—it is like him!"

And then he raged again and asked questions about the woman, about her proofs, and pacing the room, turned first white and then purple in his repressed fury.

When at last he had learned all there was to be told, and knew the worst, Mr. Havisham looked at him with a feeling of anxiety. He looked broken and haggard and changed. His rages had always been bad for him, but this one had been worse than the rest because there had been something more than rage in it.

He came slowly back to the sofa, at last, and stood near it.

"If anyone had told me I could be fond of a child," he said, his harsh voice low and unsteady, "I should not have believed them. I always detested children—my own more than the rest. I am fond of this one; he is fond of me" (with a bitter smile). "I am not popular; I never was. But he is fond of me.

He never was afraid of me—he always trusted me. He would have filled my place better than I have filled it. I know that. He would have been an honor to the name."

He bent down and stood a minute or so looking at the happy, sleeping face. His shaggy eyebrows were knitted fiercely, and yet somehow he did not seem fierce at all. He put up his hand, pushed the bright hair back from the forehead, and then turned away and rang the bell.

When the largest footman appeared, he pointed to the sofa.

"Take"—he said, and then his voice changed a little—"take Lord Fauntleroy to his room."

Chapter XI

When Mr. Hobbs's young friend left him to go to Dorincourt Castle and become Lord Fauntleroy, and the grocery man had time to realize that the Atlantic Ocean lay between himself and the small companion who had spent so many agreeable hours in his society, he really began to feel very lonely indeed. The fact was, Mr. Hobbs was not a clever man nor even a bright one; he was, indeed, rather a slow and heavy person, and he had never made many acquaintances. He was not mentally energetic enough to know how to amuse himself, and in truth he never did anything of an entertaining nature but read the newspapers and add up his accounts. It was not very easy for him to add up his accounts, and sometimes it took him a long time to bring them out right; and in the old days, little Lord Fauntleroy, who had learned how to add up quite nicely with his fingers and a slate and pencil, had sometimes even gone to the length of trying to help him; and, then too, he had been so good a listener and had taken such an interest in what the newspaper said, and he and Mr. Hobbs had held such long conversations about the Revolution and the British and the elections and the Republican party, that it was no wonder his going left a blank in the grocery store. At first it seemed to Mr. Hobbs that Cedric was not really far away, and would come back again; that someday he would look up from his paper and see the little lad standing in the doorway, in his white suit and red stockings, and with his straw hat on the back of his head, and would hear him say in his cheerful little voice: "Hello, Mr. Hobbs! This is a hot day—isn't it?" But as the days passed on and this did not happen, Mr. Hobbs felt very dull and uneasy. He did not even

enjoy his newspaper as much as he used to. He would put the paper down on his knee after reading it, and sit and stare at the high stool for a long time. There were some marks on the long legs which made him feel quite dejected and melancholy. They were marks made by the heels of the next Earl of Dorincourt, when he kicked and talked at the same time. It seems that even youthful earls kick the legs of things they sit on; noble blood and lofty lineage do not prevent it. After looking at those marks, Mr. Hobbs would take out his gold watch and open it and stare at the inscription: "From his oldest friend, Lord Fauntleroy, to Mr. Hobbs. When this you see, remember me." And after staring at it awhile, he would shut it up with a loud snap, and sigh and get up and go and stand in the doorway—between the box of potatoes and the barrel of apples—and look up the street. At night, when the store was closed, he would light his pipe and walk slowly along the pavement until he reached the house where Cedric had lived, on which there was a sign that read, "This House to Let"; and he would stop near it and look up and shake his head, and puff at his pipe very hard, and after a while walk mournfully back again.

This went on for two or three weeks before any new idea came to him. Being slow and ponderous, it always took him a long time to reach a new idea. As a rule, he did not like new ideas, but preferred old ones. After two or three weeks, however, during which, instead of getting better, matters really grew worse, a novel plan slowly and deliberately dawned upon him. He would go to see Dick. He smoked a great many pipes before he arrived at the conclusion, but finally he did arrive at it. He would go to see Dick. He knew all about Dick. Cedric had told him, and his idea was that perhaps Dick might be some comfort to him in the way of talking things over.

So one day when Dick was very hard at work blacking a customer's boots, a short, stout man with a heavy face and a bald head stopped on the pavement and stared for two or

three minutes at the bootblack's sign, which read:

"PROFESSOR DICK TIPTON
CAN'T BE BEAT."

He stared at it so long that Dick began to take a lively interest in him, and when he had put the finishing touch to his customer's boots, he said:

"Want a shine, sir?"

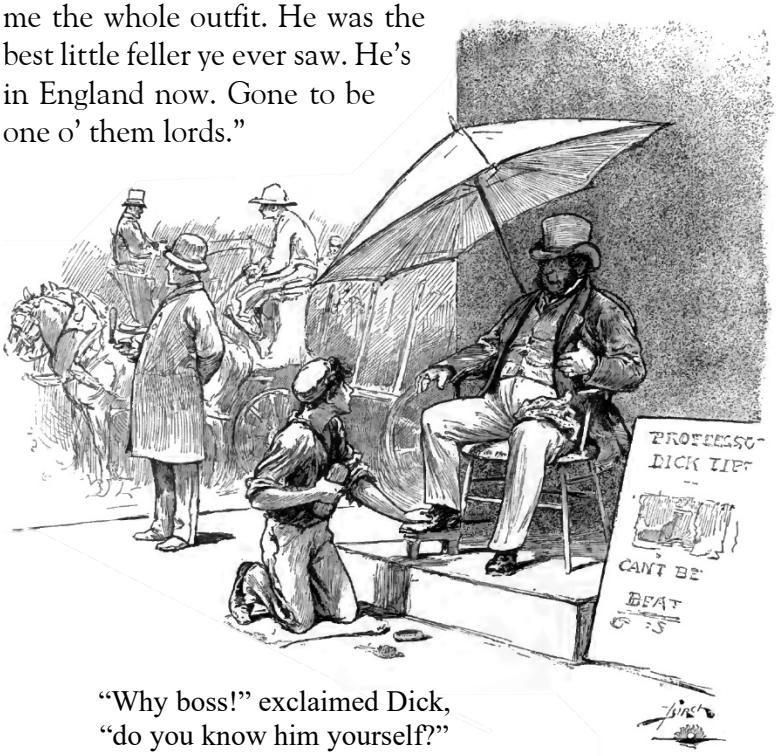
The stout man came forward deliberately and put his foot on the rest.

"Yes," he said.

Then when Dick fell to work, the stout man looked from Dick to the sign and from the sign to Dick.

"Where did you get that?" he asked.

"From a friend o' mine," said Dick, "a little feller. He guv' me the whole outfit. He was the best little feller ye ever saw. He's in England now. Gone to be one o' them lords."



"Why boss!" exclaimed Dick, "do you know him yourself?"

"Lord—Lord—" asked Mr. Hobbs, with ponderous slowness, "Lord Fauntleroy—Goin' to be Earl of Dorincourt?"

Dick almost dropped his brush.

"Why, boss!" he exclaimed, "d' ye know him yerself?"

"I've known him," answered Mr. Hobbs, wiping his warm forehead, "ever since he was born. We was lifetime acquaintances—that's what *we* was."

It really made him feel quite agitated to speak of it. He pulled the splendid gold watch out of his pocket and opened it, and showed the inside of the case to Dick.

"'When this you see, remember me,'" he read. "That was his parting keepsake to me. 'I don't want you to forget me'—those was his words—I'd ha' remembered him," he went on, shaking his head, "if he hadn't given me a thing an' I hadn't seen hide nor hair on him again. He was a companion as *any* man would remember."

"He was the nicest little feller I ever see," said Dick. "An' as to sand—I never seen so much sand to a little feller. I thought a heap o' him, I did—an' we was friends, too—we was sort o' chums from the fust, that little young un an' me. I grabbed his ball from under a stage fur him, an' he never forgot it; an' he'd come down here, he would, with his mother or his nuss and he'd holler: 'Hello, Dick!' at me, as friendly as if he was six feet high, when he warn't knee high to a grasshopper, and was dressed in gal's clo'es. He was a gay little chap, and when you was down on your luck, it did you good to talk to him."

"That's so," said Mr. Hobbs. "It was a pity to make a earl out of *him*. He would have *shone* in the grocery business—or dry goods either; he would have *shone!*" And he shook his head with deeper regret than ever.

It proved that they had so much to say to each other that it was not possible to say it all at one time, and so it was agreed that the next night Dick should make a visit to the store and keep Mr. Hobbs company. The plan pleased Dick well

enough. He had been a street waif nearly all his life, but he had never been a bad boy, and he had always had a private yearning for a more respectable kind of existence. Since he had been in business for himself, he had made enough money to enable him to sleep under a roof instead of out in the streets, and he had begun to hope he might reach even a higher plane, in time. So, to be invited to call on a stout, respectable man who owned a corner store, and even had a horse and wagon, seemed to him quite an event.

"Do you know anything about earls and castles?" Mr. Hobbs inquired. "I'd like to know more of the particklars."

"There's a story about some on 'em in the *Penny Story Gazette*," said Dick. "It's called the 'Crime of a Coronet; or, The Revenge of the Countess May.' It's a boss thing, too. Some of us boys 're takin' it to read."

"Bring it up when you come," said Mr. Hobbs, "an' I'll pay for it. Bring all you can find that have any earls in 'em. If there aren't earls, markises'll do, or dooks—though HE never made mention of any dooks or markises. We did go over coronets a little, but I never happened to see any. I guess they don't keep 'em 'round here."

"Tiffany'd have 'em if anybody did," said Dick, "but I don't know as I'd know one if I saw it."

Mr. Hobbs did not explain that he would not have known one if he saw it. He merely shook his head ponderously.

"I s'pose there is very little call for 'em," he said, and that ended the matter.

This was the beginning of quite a substantial friendship. When Dick went up to the store, Mr. Hobbs received him with great hospitality. He gave him a chair tilted against the door, near a barrel of apples, and after his young visitor was seated, he made a jerk at them with the hand in which he held his pipe, saying:

"Help yerself."

Then he looked at the story papers, and after that they

read and discussed the British aristocracy; and Mr. Hobbs smoked his pipe very hard and shook his head a great deal. He shook it most when he pointed out the high stool with the marks on its legs.

"There's his very kicks," he said impressively; "his very kicks. I sit and look at 'em by the hour. This is a world of ups an' it's a world of downs. Why, he'd set there, an' eat crackers out of a box, an' apples out of a barrel, an' pitch his cores into the street; an' now he's a lord a-livin' in a castle. Them's a lord's kicks; they'll be a earl's kicks someday. Sometimes I says to myself, says I, 'Well, I'll be jiggered!'"

He seemed to derive a great deal of comfort from his reflections and Dick's visit. Before Dick went home, they had a supper in the small back room; they had crackers and cheese and sardines, and other canned things out of the store, and Mr. Hobbs solemnly opened two bottles of ginger ale, and pouring out two glasses, proposed a toast.

"Here's to *him!*" he said, lifting his glass, "an' may he teach 'em a lesson—earls an' markises an' dooks an' all!"

After that night, the two saw each other often, and Mr. Hobbs was much more comfortable and less desolate. They read the *Penny Story Gazette,* and many other interesting things, and gained a knowledge of the habits of the nobility and gentry which would have surprised those despised classes if they had realized it. One day Mr. Hobbs made a pilgrimage to a bookstore down town, for the express purpose of adding to their library. He went to the clerk and leaned over the counter to speak to him.

"I want," he said, "a book about earls."

"What!" exclaimed the clerk.

"A book," repeated the grocery man, "about earls."

"I'm afraid," said the clerk, looking rather queer, "that we haven't what you want."

"Haven't?" said Mr. Hobbs, anxiously. "Well, say markises then—or dooks."

"I know of no such book," answered the clerk.

Mr. Hobbs was much disturbed. He looked down on the floor, then he looked up.

"None about female earls?" he inquired.

"I'm afraid not," said the clerk with a smile.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Hobbs, "I'll be jiggered!"

He was just going out of the store, when the clerk called him back and asked him if a story in which the nobility were chief characters would do. Mr. Hobbs said it would—if he could not get an entire volume devoted to earls. So the clerk sold him a book called "The Tower of London," written by Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, and he carried it home.

When Dick came they began to read it. It was a very wonderful and exciting book, and the scene was laid in the reign of the famous English queen who is called by some people Bloody Mary. And as Mr. Hobbs heard of Queen Mary's deeds and the habit she had of chopping people's heads off, putting them to the torture, and burning them alive, he became very much excited. He took his pipe out of his mouth and stared at Dick, and at last he was obliged to mop the perspiration from his brow with his red pocket handkerchief.

"Why, he ain't safe!" he said. "He ain't safe! If the women folks can sit up on their thrones an' give the word for things like that to be done, who's to know what's happening to him this very minute? He's no more safe than nothing! Just let a woman like that get mad, an' no one's safe!"

"Well," said Dick, though he looked rather anxious himself; "ye see this 'ere un isn't the one that's bossin' things now. I know her name's Victory, an' this un here in the book, her name's Mary."

"So it is," said Mr. Hobbs, still mopping his forehead; "so it is. An' the newspapers are not sayin' anything about any racks, thumb-screws, or stake-burnin's—but still it doesn't seem as if 't was safe for him over there with those queer folks.

Why, they tell me they don't keep the Fourth o' July!"

He was privately uneasy for several days; and it was not until he received Fauntleroy's letter and had read it several times, both to himself and to Dick, and had also read the letter Dick got about the same time, that he became composed again.

But they both found great pleasure in their letters. They read and re-read them, and talked them over and enjoyed every word of them. And they spent days over the answers they sent and read them over almost as often as the letters they had received.

It was rather a labor for Dick to write his. All his knowledge of reading and writing he had gained during a few months, when he had lived with his elder brother, and had gone to a night-school; but, being a sharp boy, he had made the most of that brief education, and had spelled out things in newspapers since then, and practiced writing with bits of chalk on pavements or walls or fences. He told Mr. Hobbs all about his life and about his elder brother, who had been rather good to him after their mother died, when Dick was quite a little fellow. Their father had died some time before. The brother's name was Ben, and he had taken care of Dick as well as he could, until the boy was old enough to sell newspapers and run errands. They had lived together, and as he grew older Ben had managed to get along until he had quite a decent place in a store.

"And then," exclaimed Dick with disgust, "blest if he didn't go an' marry a gal! Just went and got spoony an' hadn't any more sense left! Married her, an' set up housekeepin' in two back rooms. An' a hefty un she was, a regular tiger-cat. She'd tear things to pieces when she got mad—and she was mad *all* the time. Had a baby just like her—yell day 'n' night! An' if I didn't have to 'tend it! an' when it screamed, she'd fire things at me. She fired a plate at me one day, an' hit the baby—cut its chin. Doctor said he'd carry the mark till he

died. A nice mother she was! Crackey! but didn't we have a time—Ben 'n' mehself 'n' the young un. She was mad at Ben because he didn't make money faster; 'n' at last he went out West with a man to set up a cattle ranch. An' hadn't been gone a week 'fore one night, I got home from sellin' my papers, 'n' the rooms wus locked up 'n' empty, 'n' the woman o' the house, she told me Minna 'd gone—shown a clean pair o' heels. Some un else said she'd gone across the water to be nuss to a lady as had a little baby, too. Never heard a word of her since—nuther has Ben. If I'd ha' bin him, I wouldn't ha' fretted a bit—'n' I guess he didn't. But he thought a heap o' her at the start. Tell you, he was spoons on her. She was a daisy-lookin' gal, too, when she was dressed up 'n' not mad. She'd big black eyes 'n' black hair down to her knees; she'd make it into a rope as big as your arm, and twist it 'round 'n' 'round her head; 'n' I tell you her eyes 'd snap! Folks used to say she was part Itali-un—said her mother or father 'd come from there, 'n' it made her queer. I tell ye, she was one of 'em—she was!"

He often told Mr. Hobbs stories of her and of his brother Ben, who, since his going out West, had written once or twice to Dick.

Ben's luck had not been good, and he had wandered from place to place; but at last he had settled on a ranch in California, where he was at work at the time when Dick became acquainted with Mr. Hobbs.

"That gal," said Dick one day, "she took all the grit out o' him. I couldn't help feelin' sorry for him sometimes."

They were sitting in the store doorway together, and Mr. Hobbs was filling his pipe.

"He oughtn't to 've married," he said solemnly, as he rose to get a match. "Women—I never could see any use in 'em myself."

As he took the match from its box, he stopped and looked down on the counter.

"Why!" he said, "if here isn't a letter! I didn't see it before. The postman must have laid it down when I wasn't noticin', or the newspaper slipped over it."

He picked it up and looked at it carefully.

"It's from *him!*" he exclaimed. "That's the very one it's from!"

He forgot his pipe altogether. He went back to his chair quite excited and took his pocket-knife and opened the envelope.

"I wonder what news there is this time," he said.

And then he unfolded the letter and read as follows:

"DORINCOURT CASTLE

"My dear Mr. Hobbs

"I write this in a great hury becaus i have something curous to tell you i know you will be very mutch suprised my dear frend when i tel you. It is all a mistake and i am not a lord and i shall not have to be an earl there is a lady whitch was marid to my uncle bevis who is dead and she has a little boy and he is lord fauntleroy becaus that is the way it is in England the earls eldest sons little boy is the earl if everybody else is dead i mean if his farther and grandfarther are dead my grandfarther is not dead but my uncle bevis is and so his boy is lord Fauntleroy and i am not becaus my papa was the youngest son and my name is Cedric Errol like it was when i was in New York and all the things will belong to the other boy i thought at first i should have to give him my pony and cart but my grandfarther says i need not my grandfarther is very sorry and i think he does not like the lady but preaps he thinks dearest and i are sorry because i shall not be an earl i would like to be an earl now better than i thout i would at first becaus this is a beautifle castle and i like everybody so and when you are rich you can do so many things i am not rich now becaus when your papa is only the youngest son he is not very rich i am going to learn to work so that i can take care of dearest i have been asking Wilkins about grooming horses preaps i might be a groom or a coachman. The lady brought her little boy to the castle and my grandfarther and Mr. Havisham talked to her i think she was angry she talked loud

and my grandfarther was angry too i never saw him angry before i wish it did not make them all mad i thort i would tell you and Dick right away becaus you would be intrusted so no more at present with love from

"your old frend CEDRIC ERROL (Not lord Fauntleroy)."

Mr. Hobbs fell back in his chair, the letter dropped on his knee, his pen-knife slipped to the floor, and so did the envelope.

"Well!" he ejaculated, "I am jiggered!"

He was so dumfounded that he actually changed his exclamation. It had always been his habit to say, "I *will* be jiggered," but this time he said, "I *am* jiggered." Perhaps he really *was* jiggered. There is no knowing.

"Well," said Dick, "the whole thing's bust up, hasn't it?"

"Bust!" said Mr. Hobbs. "It's my opinion it's a put-up job o' the British ristycrats to rob him of his rights because he's an American. They've had a spite agin us ever since the Revolution, an' they're takin' it out on him. I told you he wasn't safe, an' see what's happened! Like as not, the whole gover'ment's got together to rob him of his lawful ownin's."

He was very much agitated. He had not approved of the change in his young friend's circumstances at first, but lately he had become more reconciled to it, and after the receipt of Cedric's letter he had perhaps even felt some secret pride in his young friend's magnificence. He might not have a good opinion of earls, but he knew that even in America money was considered rather an agreeable thing, and if all the wealth and grandeur were to go with the title, it must be rather hard to lose it.

"They're trying to rob him!" he said, "that's what they're doing, and folks that have money ought to look after him."

And he kept Dick with him until quite a late hour to talk it over, and when that young man left, he went with him to the corner of the street; and on his way back he stopped

opposite the empty house for some time, staring at the "To Let," and smoking his pipe, in much disturbance of mind.

Chapter XII

A very few days after the dinner party at the Castle, almost everybody in England who read the newspapers at all knew the romantic story of what had happened at Dorincourt. It made a very interesting story when it was told with all the details. There was the little American boy who had been brought to England to be Lord Fauntleroy, and who was said to be so fine and handsome a little fellow, and to have already made people fond of him; there was the old Earl, his grandfather, who was so proud of his heir; there was the pretty young mother who had never been forgiven for marrying Captain Errol; and there was the strange marriage of Bevis, the dead Lord Fauntleroy, and the strange wife, of whom no one knew anything, suddenly appearing with her son, and saying that he was the real Lord Fauntleroy and must have his rights. All these things were talked about and written about, and caused a tremendous sensation. And then there came the rumor that the Earl of Dorincourt was not satisfied with the turn affairs had taken, and would perhaps contest the claim by law, and the matter might end with a wonderful trial.

There never had been such excitement before in the county in which Erleboro was situated. On market days, people stood in groups and talked and wondered what would be done; the farmers' wives invited one another to tea that they might tell one another all they had heard and all they thought and all they thought other people thought. They related wonderful anecdotes about the Earl's rage and his determination not to acknowledge the new Lord Fauntleroy, and his hatred of the woman who was the claimant's mother.

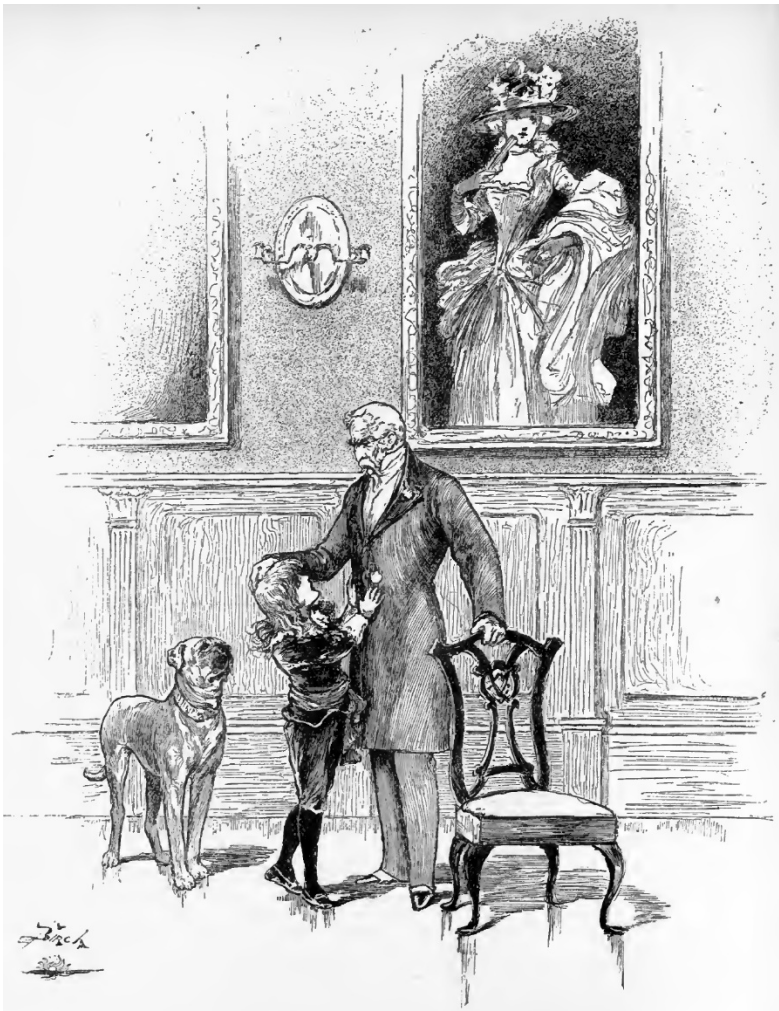
But, of course, it was Mrs. Dibble who could tell the most, and who was more in demand than ever.

"An' a bad lookout it is," she said. "An' if you were to ask me, ma'am, I should say as it was a judgment on him for the way he's treated that sweet young cre'tur' as he parted from her child—for he's got that fond of him an' that set on him an' that proud of him as he's a'most drove mad by what's happened. An' what's more, this new one's no lady, as his little lordship's ma is. She's a bold-faced, black-eyed thing, as Mr. Thomas says no gentleman in livery 'u'd bemean hisself to be gave orders by; and let her come into the house, he says, an' he goes out of it. An' the boy don't no more compare with the other one than nothin' you could mention. An' mercy knows what's goin' to come of it all, an' where it's to end, an' you might have knocked me down with a feather when Jane brought the news."

In fact there was excitement everywhere at the Castle: in the library, where the Earl and Mr. Havisham sat and talked; in the servants' hall, where Mr. Thomas and the butler and the other men and women servants gossiped and exclaimed at all times of the day; and in the stables, where Wilkins went about his work in a quite depressed state of mind, and groomed the brown pony more beautifully than ever, and said mournfully to the coachman that he "never taught a young gen'leman to ride as took to it more nat'ral, or was a better-plucked one than he was. He was a one as it were some pleasure to ride behind."

But in the midst of all the disturbance there was one person who was quite calm and untroubled. That person was the little Lord Fauntleroy who was said not to be Lord Fauntleroy at all. When first the state of affairs had been explained to him, he had felt some little anxiousness and perplexity, it is true, but its foundation was not in baffled ambition.

While the Earl told him what had happened, he had sat



"Shall I be your boy, even if I'm not going to be an earl?" said Cedric.

on a stool holding on to his knee, as he so often did when he was listening to anything interesting; and by the time the story was finished he looked quite sober.

"It makes me feel very queer," he said; "it makes me feel—queer!"

The Earl looked at the boy in silence. It made him feel

queer, too—queerer than he had ever felt in his whole life. And he felt more queer still when he saw that there was a troubled expression on the small face which was usually so happy.

"Will they take Dearest's house from her—and her carriage?" Cedric asked in a rather unsteady, anxious little voice.

"No!" said the Earl decidedly—in quite a loud voice, in fact. "They can take nothing from her."

"Ah!" said Cedric, with evident relief. "Can't they?"

Then he looked up at his grandfather, and there was a wistful shade in his eyes, and they looked very big and soft.

"That other boy," he said rather tremulously—"he will have to—to be your boy now—as I was—won't he?"

"No!" answered the Earl—and he said it so fiercely and loudly that Cedric quite jumped.

"No?" he exclaimed, in wonderment. "Won't he? I thought—"

He stood up from his stool quite suddenly.

"Shall I be your boy, even if I'm not going to be an earl?" he said. "Shall I be your boy, just as I was before?" And his flushed little face was all alight with eagerness.

How the old Earl did look at him from head to foot, to be sure! How his great shaggy brows did draw themselves together, and how queerly his deep eyes shone under them—how very queerly!

"My boy!" he said—and, if you'll believe it, his very voice was queer, almost shaky and a little broken and hoarse, not at all what you would expect an Earl's voice to be, though he spoke more decidedly and peremptorily even than before,—"Yes, you'll be my boy as long as I live; and, by George, sometimes I feel as if you were the only boy I had ever had."

Cedric's face turned red to the roots of his hair; it turned red with relief and pleasure. He put both his hands deep into his pockets and looked squarely into his noble relative's eyes.

"Do you?" he said. "Well, then, I don't care about the earl part at all. I don't care whether I'm an earl or not. I thought—you see, I thought the one that was going to be the Earl would have to be your boy, too, and—and I couldn't be. That was what made me feel so queer."

The Earl put his hand on his shoulder and drew him nearer.

"They shall take nothing from you that I can hold for you," he said, drawing his breath hard. "I won't believe yet that they can take anything from you. You were made for the place, and—well, you may fill it still. But whatever comes, you shall have all that I can give you—all!"

It scarcely seemed as if he were speaking to a child, there was such determination in his face and voice; it was more as if he were making a promise to himself—and perhaps he was.

He had never before known how deep a hold upon him his fondness for the boy and his pride in him had taken. He had never seen his strength and good qualities and beauty as he seemed to see them now. To his obstinate nature it seemed impossible—more than impossible—to give up what he had so set his heart upon. And he had determined that he would not give it up without a fierce struggle.

Within a few days after she had seen Mr. Havisham, the woman who claimed to be Lady Fauntleroy presented herself at the Castle, and brought her child with her. She was sent away. The Earl would not see her, she was told by the footman at the door; his lawyer would attend to her case. It was Thomas who gave the message, and who expressed his opinion of her freely afterward, in the servants' hall. He "hoped," he said, "as he had wore livery in 'igh famblies long enough to know a lady when he see one, an' if that was a lady he was no judge o' females."

"The one at the Lodge," added Thomas loftily, "'Merican or no 'Merican, she's one o' the right sort, as any gentleman 'u'd reckinize with all a heye. I remarked it myself to Henery



She was told by the footman at the door that the Earl would not see her.

when fust we called there."

The woman drove away; the look on her handsome, common face half frightened, half fierce. Mr. Havisham had noticed, during his interviews with her, that though she had a passionate temper, and a coarse, insolent manner, she was neither so clever nor so bold as she meant to be; she seemed sometimes to be almost overwhelmed by the position in which she had placed herself. It was as if she had not expected to meet with such opposition.

"She is evidently," the lawyer said to Mrs. Errol, "a person from the lower walks of life. She is uneducated and untrained in everything, and quite unused to meeting people like ourselves on any terms of equality. She does not know what to do. Her visit to the Castle quite cowed her. She was infuriated, but she was cowed. The Earl would not receive her, but I advised him to go with me to the Dorincourt Arms, where she is staying. When she saw him enter the room, she turned white, though she flew into a rage at once, and threatened and demanded in one breath."

The fact was that the Earl had stalked into the room and stood, looking like a venerable aristocratic giant, staring at the woman from under his beetling brows, and not condescending a word. He simply stared at her, taking her in from

head to foot as if she were some repulsive curiosity. He let her talk and demand until she was tired, without himself uttering a word, and then he said:

"You say you are my eldest son's wife. If that is true, and if the proof you offer is too much for us, the law is on your side. In that case, your boy is Lord Fauntleroy. The matter will be sifted to the bottom, you may rest assured. If your claims are proved, you will be provided for. I want to see nothing of either you or the child so long as I live. The place will unfortunately have enough of you after my death. You are exactly the kind of person I should have expected my son Bevis to choose."

And then he turned his back upon her and stalked out of the room as he had stalked into it.

Not many days after that, a visitor was announced to Mrs. Errol, who was writing in her little morning room. The maid, who brought the message, looked rather excited; her eyes were quite round with amazement, in fact, and being young and inexperienced, she regarded her mistress with nervous sympathy.

"It's the Earl hisself, ma'am!" she said in tremulous awe.

When Mrs. Errol entered the drawing room, a very tall, majestic-looking old man was standing on the tiger-skin rug. He had a handsome, grim old face, with an aquiline profile, a long white mustache, and an obstinate look.

"Mrs. Errol, I believe?" he said.

"Mrs. Errol," she answered.

"I am the Earl of Dorincourt," he said.

He paused a moment, almost unconsciously, to look into her uplifted eyes. They were so like the big, affectionate, childish eyes he had seen uplifted to his own so often every day during the last few months, that they gave him a quite curious sensation.

"The boy is very like you," he said abruptly.

"It has been often said so, my lord," she replied, "but I

have been glad to think him like his father also."

As Lady Lorridaile had told him, her voice was very sweet, and her manner was very simple and dignified. She did not seem in the least troubled by his sudden coming.

"Yes," said the Earl, "he is like—my son—too." He put his hand up to his big white mustache and pulled it fiercely. "Do you know," he said, "why I have come here?"

"I have seen Mr. Havisham," Mrs. Errol began, "and he has told me of the claims which have been made—"

"I have come to tell you," said the Earl, "that they will be investigated and contested, if a contest can be made. I have come to tell you that the boy shall be defended with all the power of the law. His rights—"

The soft voice interrupted him.

"He must have nothing that is *not* his by right, even if the law can give it to him," she said.

"Unfortunately the law cannot," said the Earl. "If it could, it should. This outrageous woman and her child—"

"Perhaps she cares for him as much as I care for Cedric, my lord," said little Mrs. Errol. "And if she was your eldest son's wife, her son is Lord Fauntleroy, and mine is not."

She was no more afraid of him than Cedric had been, and she looked at him just as Cedric would have looked, and he, having been an old tyrant all his life, was privately pleased by it. People so seldom dared to differ from him that there was an entertaining novelty in it.

"I suppose," he said, scowling slightly, "that you would much prefer that he should not be the Earl of Dorincourt."

Her fair young face flushed.

"It is a very magnificent thing to be the Earl of Dorincourt, my lord," she said. "I know that, but I care most that he should be what his father was—brave and just and true always."

"In striking contrast to what his grandfather was, eh?" said his lordship sardonically.

"I have not had the pleasure of knowing his grandfather," replied Mrs. Errol, "but I know my little boy believes—" She stopped short a moment, looking quietly into his face, and then she added, "I know that Cedric loves you."

"Would he have loved me," said the Earl dryly, "if you had told him why I did not receive you at the Castle?"

"No," answered Mrs. Errol, "I think not. That was why I did not wish him to know."

"Well," said my lord brusquely, "there are few women who would not have told him."

He suddenly began to walk up and down the room, pulling his great mustache more violently than ever.

"Yes, he is fond of me," he said, "and I am fond of him. I can't say I ever was fond of anything before. I am fond of him. He pleased me from the first. I am an old man, and was tired of my life. He has given me something to live for. I am proud of him. I was satisfied to think of his taking his place someday as the head of the family."

He came back and stood before Mrs. Errol.

"I am miserable," he said. "Miserable!"

He looked as if he was. Even his pride could not keep his voice steady or his hands from shaking. For a moment it almost seemed as if his deep, fierce eyes had tears in them. "Perhaps it is because I am miserable that I have come to you," he said, quite glaring down at her. "I used to hate you; I have been jealous of you. This wretched, disgraceful business has changed that. After seeing that repulsive woman who calls herself the wife of my son Bevis, I actually felt it would be a relief to look at you. I have been an obstinate old fool, and I suppose I have treated you badly. You are like the boy, and the boy is the first object in my life. I am miserable, and I came to you merely because you are like the boy, and he cares for you, and I care for him. Treat me as well as you can, for the boy's sake."

He said it all in his harsh voice, and almost roughly, but

somehow he seemed so broken down for the time that Mrs. Errol was touched to the heart. She got up and moved an armchair a little forward.

"I wish you would sit down," she said in a soft, pretty, sympathetic way. "You have been so much troubled that you are very tired, and you need all your strength."

It was just as new to him to be spoken to and cared for in that gentle, simple way as it was to be contradicted. He was reminded of "the boy" again, and he actually did as she asked him. Perhaps his disappointment and wretchedness were good discipline for him; if he had not been wretched he might have continued to hate her, but just at present he found her a little soothing. Almost anything would have seemed pleasant by contrast with Lady Fauntleroy; and this one had so sweet a face and voice, and a pretty dignity when she spoke or moved. Very soon, through the quiet magic of these influences, he began to feel less gloomy, and then he talked still more.

"Whatever happens," he said, "the boy shall be provided for. He shall be taken care of, now and in the future."

Before he went away, he glanced around the room.

"Do you like the house?" he demanded.

"Very much," she answered.

"This is a cheerful room," he said. "May I come here again and talk this matter over?"

"As often as you wish, my lord," she replied.

And then he went out to his carriage and drove away, Thomas and Henry almost stricken dumb upon the box at the turn affairs had taken.

Chapter XIII

Of course, as soon as the story of Lord Fauntleroy and the difficulties of the Earl of Dorincourt were discussed in the English newspapers, they were discussed in the American newspapers. The story was too interesting to be passed over lightly, and it was talked of a great deal. There were so many versions of it that it would have been an edifying thing to buy all the papers and compare them. Mr. Hobbs read so much about it that he became quite bewildered. One paper described his young friend Cedric as an infant in arms—another as a young man at Oxford, winning all the honors, and distinguishing himself by writing Greek poems; one said he was engaged to a young lady of great beauty, who was the daughter of a duke; another said he had just been married; the only thing, in fact, which was NOT said was that he was a little boy between seven and eight, with handsome legs and curly hair. One said he was no relation to the Earl of Dorincourt at all, but was a small impostor who had sold newspapers and slept in the streets of New York before his mother imposed upon the family lawyer, who came to America to look for the Earl's heir. Then came the descriptions of the new Lord Fauntleroy and his mother. Sometimes she was a gypsy, sometimes an actress, sometimes a beautiful Spaniard; but it was always agreed that the Earl of Dorincourt was her deadly enemy, and would not acknowledge her son as his heir if he could help it, and as there seemed to be some slight flaw in the papers she had produced, it was expected that there would be a long trial, which would be far more interesting than anything ever carried into court before. Mr. Hobbs used to read the papers until his head was

in a whirl, and in the evening he and Dick would talk it all over. They found out what an important personage an Earl of Dorincourt was, and what a magnificent income he possessed, and how many estates he owned, and how stately and beautiful was the Castle in which he lived; and the more they learned, the more excited they became.

"Seems like somethin' orter be done," said Mr. Hobbs. "Things like them orter be held on to—earls or no earls."

But there really was nothing they could do but each write a letter to Cedric, containing assurances of their friendship and sympathy. They wrote those letters as soon as they could after receiving the news; and after having written them, they handed them over to each other to be read.

This is what Mr. Hobbs read in Dick's letter:

"DERE FREND: i got ure letter an Mr. Hobbs got his an we are sory u are down on ure luck an we say hold on as longs u kin an dont let no one git ahed of u. There is a lot of ole theves wil make al they kin of u ef u dont kepe ure i skined. But this is mosly to say that ive not forgot wot u did fur me an if there aint no better way cum over here an go in pardners with me. Biznes is fine an ile see no harm cums to u Enny big feler that trise to cum it over u wil hafter setle it fust with Perfessor Dick Tipton. So no more at present DICK."

And this was what Dick read in Mr. Hobbs's letter:

"DEAR SIR: Yrs received and wd say things looks bad. I believe its a put up job and them thats done it ought to be looked after sharp. And what I write to say is two things. Im going to look this thing up. Keep quiet and Ill see a lawyer and do all I can And if the worst happens and them earls is too many for us theres a partnership in the grocery business ready for you when yure old enough and a home and a friend in

"Yrs truly, SILAS HOBBS."

"Well," said Mr. Hobbs, "he's pervided for between us, if

he aint a earl."

"So he is," said Dick. "I'd ha' stood by him. Blest if I didn't like that little feller fust-rate."

The very next morning, one of Dick's customers was rather surprised. He was a young lawyer just beginning practice—as poor as a very young lawyer can possibly be, but a bright, energetic young fellow, with sharp wit and a good temper. He had a shabby office near Dick's stand, and every morning Dick blacked his boots for him, and quite often they were not exactly water-tight, but he always had a friendly word or a joke for Dick.

That particular morning, when he put his foot on the rest, he had an illustrated paper in his hand—an enterprising paper, with pictures in it of conspicuous people and things. He had just finished looking it over, and when the last boot was polished, he handed it over to the boy.

"Here's a paper for you, Dick," he said; "you can look it over when you drop in at Delmonico's for your breakfast. Picture of an English castle in it, and an English earl's daughter-in-law. Fine young woman, too—lots of hair—though she seems to be raising rather a row. You ought to become familiar with the nobility and gentry, Dick. Begin on the Right Honorable the Earl of Dorincourt and Lady Fauntleroy. Hello! I say, what's the matter?"

The pictures he spoke of were on the front page, and Dick was staring at one of them with his eyes and mouth open, and his sharp face almost pale with excitement.

"What's to pay, Dick?" said the young man. "What has paralyzed you?"

Dick really did look as if something tremendous had happened. He pointed to the picture, under which was written:

"Mother of Claimant (Lady Fauntleroy)."

It was the picture of a handsome woman, with large eyes and heavy braids of black hair wound around her head.

"Her!" said Dick. "My, I know her better 'n I know you!"

The young man began to laugh.

"Where did you meet her, Dick?" he said. "At Newport? Or when you ran over to Paris the last time?"

Dick actually forgot to grin. He began to gather his brushes and things together, as if he had something to do which would put an end to his business for the present.

"Never mind," he said. "I know her! An I've struck work for this mornin'."

And in less than five minutes from that time he was tearing through the streets on his way to Mr. Hobbs and the corner store.

Mr. Hobbs could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses when he looked across the counter and saw Dick rush in with the paper in his hand. The boy was out of breath with running; so much out of breath, in fact, that he could scarcely speak as he threw the paper down on the counter.

"Hello!" exclaimed Mr. Hobbs. "Hello! What you got there?"

"Look at it!" panted Dick. "Look at that woman in the picture! That's what you look at! *She* aint no 'ristocrat, *she* aint!" with withering scorn. "She's no lord's wife. You may eat me, if it aint Minna—*Minna!* I'd know her anywheres, an' so 'd Ben. Jest ax him."

Mr. Hobbs dropped into his seat.

"I knowed it was a put-up job," he said. "I knowed it; and they done it on account o' him bein' a 'Merican!"

"Done it!" cried Dick, with disgust. "*She* done it, that's who done it. She was allers up to her tricks; an' I'll tell yer wot come to me, the minnit I saw her pictur. There was one o' them papers we saw had a letter in it that said somethin' 'bout her boy, an' it said he had a scar on his chin. Put them two together—her 'n' that there scar! Why, that there boy o' hers aint no more a lord than I am! It's *Ben's* boy—the little chap she hit when she let fly that plate at me."

Professor Dick Tipton had always been a sharp boy, and earning his living in the streets of a big city had made him still sharper. He had learned to keep his eyes open and his wits about him, and it must be confessed he enjoyed immensely the excitement and impatience of that moment. If little Lord Fauntleroy could only have looked into the store that morning, he would certainly have been interested, even if all the discussion and plans had been intended to decide the fate of some other boy than himself.

Mr. Hobbs was almost overwhelmed by his sense of responsibility, and Dick was all alive and full of energy. He began to write a letter to Ben, and he cut out the picture and enclosed it to him, and Mr. Hobbs wrote a letter to Cedric and one to the Earl. They were in the midst of this letter writing when a new idea came to Dick.

"Say," he said, "the feller that give me the paper, he's a lawyer. Let's ax him what we'd better do. Lawyers knows it all."

Mr. Hobbs was immensely impressed by this suggestion and Dick's business capacity.

"That's so!" he replied. "This here calls for lawyers."

And leaving the store in the care of a substitute, he struggled into his coat and marched downtown with Dick, and the two presented themselves with their romantic story in Mr. Harrison's office, much to that young man's astonishment.

If he had not been a very young lawyer, with a very enterprising mind and a great deal of spare time on his hands, he might not have been so readily interested in what they had to say, for it all certainly sounded very wild and queer; but he chanced to want something to do very much, and he chanced to know Dick, and Dick chanced to say his say in a very sharp, telling sort of way.

"And," said Mr. Hobbs, "say what your time's worth a' hour and look into this thing thorough, and *I'll* pay the

damage—Silas Hobbs, corner of Blank street, Vegetables and Fancy Groceries."

"Well," said Mr. Harrison, "it will be a big thing if it turns out all right, and it will be almost as big a thing for me as for Lord Fauntleroy; and, at any rate, no harm can be done by investigating. It appears there has been some dubiousness about the child. The woman contradicted herself in some of her statements about his age, and aroused suspicion. The first persons to be written to are Dick's brother and the Earl of Dorincourt's family lawyer."

And actually, before the sun went down, two letters had been written and sent in two different directions—one speeding out of New York harbor on a mail steamer on its way to England, and the other on a train carrying letters and passengers bound for California. And the first was addressed to T. Havisham, Esq., and the second to Benjamin Tipton.

And after the store was closed that evening, Mr. Hobbs and Dick sat in the back room and talked together until midnight.

Chapter XIV

It is astonishing how short a time it takes for very wonderful things to happen. It had taken only a few minutes, apparently, to change all the fortunes of the little boy dangling his red legs from the high stool in Mr. Hobbs's store, and to transform him from a small boy, living the simplest life in a quiet street, into an English nobleman, the heir to an earldom and magnificent wealth. It had taken only a few minutes, apparently, to change him from an English nobleman into a penniless little impostor, with no right to any of the splendors he had been enjoying. And, surprising as it may appear, it did not take nearly so long a time as one might have expected, to alter the face of everything again and to give back to him all that he had been in danger of losing.

It took the less time because, after all, the woman who had called herself Lady Fauntleroy was not nearly so clever as she was wicked; and when she had been closely pressed by Mr. Havisham's questions about her marriage and her boy, she had made one or two blunders which had caused suspicion to be awakened; and then she had lost her presence of mind and her temper, and in her excitement and anger had betrayed herself still further. All the mistakes she made were about her child. There seemed no doubt that she had been married to Bevis, Lord Fauntleroy, and had quarreled with him and had been paid to keep away from him; but Mr. Havisham found out that her story of the boy's being born in a certain part of London was false; and just when they all were in the midst of the commotion caused by this discovery, there came the letter from the young lawyer in New York, and Mr. Hobbs's letters also.

What an evening it was when those letters arrived, and when Mr. Havisham and the Earl sat and talked their plans over in the library!

"After my first three meetings with her," said Mr. Havisham, "I began to suspect her strongly. It appeared to me that the child was older than she said he was, and she made a slip in speaking of the date of his birth and then tried to patch the matter up. The story these letters bring fits in with several of my suspicions. Our best plan will be to cable at once for these two Tiptons—say nothing about them to her—and suddenly confront her with them when she is not expecting it. She is only a very clumsy plotter, after all. My opinion is that she will be frightened out of her wits, and will betray herself on the spot."

And that was what actually happened. She was told nothing, and Mr. Havisham kept her from suspecting anything by continuing to have interviews with her, in which he assured her he was investigating her statements; and she really began to feel so secure that her spirits rose immensely and she began to be as insolent as might have been expected.

But one fine morning, as she sat in her sitting room at the inn called "The Dorincourt Arms," making some very fine plans for herself, Mr. Havisham was announced; and when he entered, he was followed by no less than three persons—one was a sharp-faced boy and one was a big young man and the third was the Earl of Dorincourt.

She sprang to her feet and actually uttered a cry of terror. It broke from her before she had time to check it. She had thought of these newcomers as being thousands of miles away, when she had ever thought of them at all, which she had scarcely done for years. She had never expected to see them again. It must be confessed that Dick grinned a little when he saw her.

"Hello, Minna!" he said.

The big young man—who was Ben—stood still a minute

and looked at her.

"Do you know her?" Mr. Havisham asked, glancing from one to the other.

"Yes," said Ben. "I know her and she knows me." And he turned his back on her and went and stood looking out of the window, as if the sight of her was hateful to him, as indeed it was. Then the woman, seeing herself so baffled and exposed, lost all control over herself and flew into such a rage as Ben and Dick had often seen her in before. Dick grinned a trifle more as he watched her and heard the names she called them all and the violent threats she made, but Ben did not turn to look at her.

"I can swear to her in any court," he said to Mr. Havisham, "and I can bring a dozen others who will. Her father is a respectable sort of man, though he's low down in the world. Her mother was just like herself. She's dead, but he's alive, and he's honest enough to be ashamed of her. He'll tell you who she is, and whether she married me or not."

Then he clenched his hand suddenly and turned on her.

"Where's the child?" he demanded. "He's going with me! He is done with you, and so am I!"

And just as he finished saying the words, the door leading into the bedroom opened a little, and the boy, probably attracted by the sound of the loud voices, looked in. He was not a handsome boy, but he had rather a nice face, and he was quite like Ben, his father, as anyone could see, and there was the three-cornered scar on his chin.

Ben walked up to him and took his hand, and his own was trembling.

"Yes," he said, "I could swear to him, too. Tom," he said to the little fellow, "I'm your father; I've come to take you away. Where's your hat?"

The boy pointed to where it lay on a chair. It evidently rather pleased him to hear that he was going away. He had been so accustomed to queer experiences that it did not

surprise him to be told by a stranger that he was his father. He objected so much to the woman who had come a few months before to the place where he had lived since his babyhood, and who had suddenly announced that she was his mother, that he was quite ready for a change. Ben took up the hat and marched to the door.

"If you want me again," he said to Mr. Havisham, "you know where to find me."

He walked out of the room, holding the child's hand and not looking at the woman once. She was fairly raving with fury, and the Earl was calmly gazing at her through his eyeglasses, which he had quietly placed upon his aristocratic, eagle nose.

"Come, come, my young woman," said Mr. Havisham. "This won't do at all. If you don't want to be locked up, you really must behave yourself."

And there was something so very businesslike in his tones that, probably feeling that the safest thing she could do would be to get out of the way, she gave him one savage look and dashed past him into the next room and slammed the door.

"We shall have no more trouble with her," said Mr. Havisham.

And he was right; for that very night she left the Dorincourt Arms and took the train to London, and was seen no more.

* * * * * * * *

When the Earl left the room after the interview, he went at once to his carriage.

"To Court Lodge," he said to Thomas.

"To Court Lodge," said Thomas to the coachman as he mounted the box; "an' you may depend on it, things are taking a uniggspected turn."

When the carriage stopped at Court Lodge, Cedric was in the drawing room with his mother.

The Earl came in without being announced. He looked

an inch or so taller, and a great many years younger. His deep eyes flashed.

"Where," he said, "is Lord Fauntleroy?"

Mrs. Errol came forward, a flush rising to her cheek.

"Is it Lord Fauntleroy?" she asked. "Is it, indeed!"

The Earl put out his hand and grasped hers.

"Yes," he answered, "it is."

Then he put his other hand on Cedric's shoulder.

"Fauntleroy," he said in his unceremonious, authoritative way, "ask your mother when she will come to us at the Castle."

Fauntleroy flung his arms around his mother's neck.

"To live with us!" he cried. "To live with us always!"

The Earl looked at Mrs. Errol, and Mrs. Errol looked at the Earl.



"Are you quite sure you want me?" said Mrs. Errol.

His lordship was entirely in earnest. He had made up his mind to waste no time in arranging this matter. He had begun to think it would suit him to make friends with his heir's mother.

"Are you quite sure you want me?" said Mrs. Errol, with her soft, pretty smile.

"Quite sure," he said bluntly. "We have always wanted you, but we were not exactly aware of it. We hope you will come."

Chapter XV

Ben took his boy and went back to his cattle ranch in California, and he returned under very comfortable circumstances. Just before his going, Mr. Havisham had an interview with him in which the lawyer told him that the Earl of Dorincourt wished to do something for the boy who might have turned out to be Lord Fauntleroy, and so he had decided that it would be a good plan to invest in a cattle ranch of his own, and put Ben in charge of it on terms which would make it pay him very well, and which would lay a foundation for his son's future. And so when Ben went away, he went as the prospective master of a ranch which would be almost as good as his own, and might easily become his own in time, as indeed it did in the course of a few years; and Tom, the boy, grew up on it into a fine young man and was devotedly fond of his father; and they were so successful and happy that Ben used to say that Tom made up to him for all the troubles he had ever had.

But Dick and Mr. Hobbs—who had actually come over with the others to see that things were properly looked after—did not return for some time. It had been decided at the outset that the Earl would provide for Dick, and would see that he received a solid education; and Mr. Hobbs had decided that as he himself had left a reliable substitute in charge of his store, he could afford to wait to see the festivities which were to celebrate Lord Fauntleroy's eighth birthday. All the tenantry were invited, and there were to be feasting and dancing and games in the park, and bonfires and fireworks in the evening.

"Just like the Fourth of July!" said Lord Fauntleroy. "It

seems a pity my birthday wasn't on the Fourth, doesn't it? For then we could keep them both together."

It must be confessed that at first the Earl and Mr. Hobbs were not as intimate as it might have been hoped they would become, in the interests of the British aristocracy. The fact was that the Earl had known very few grocery men, and Mr. Hobbs had not had many very close acquaintances who were earls; and so in their rare interviews conversation did not flourish. It must also be owned that Mr. Hobbs had been rather overwhelmed by the splendors Fauntleroy felt it his duty to show him.

The entrance gate and the stone lions and the avenue impressed Mr. Hobbs somewhat at the beginning, and when he saw the Castle, and the flower gardens, and the hot houses, and the terraces, and the peacocks, and the dungeon, and the armor, and the great staircase, and the stables, and the liveried servants, he really was quite bewildered. But it was the picture gallery which seemed to be the finishing stroke.

"Somethin' in the manner of a museum?" he said to Fauntleroy, when he was led into the great, beautiful room.

"N—no—!" said Fauntleroy, rather doubtfully. "I don't *think* it's a museum. My grandfather says these are my ancestors."

"Your aunt's sisters!" ejaculated Mr. Hobbs. "*All* of 'em? Your great-uncle, he *must* have had a family! Did he raise 'em all?"

And he sank into a seat and looked around him with quite an agitated countenance, until with the greatest difficulty Lord Fauntleroy managed to explain that the walls were not lined entirely with the portraits of the progeny of his great-uncle.

He found it necessary, in fact, to call in the assistance of Mrs. Mellon, who knew all about the pictures, and could tell who painted them and when, and who added romantic stories of the lords and ladies who were the originals. When Mr.

Hobbs once understood, and had heard some of these stories, he was very much fascinated and liked the picture gallery almost better than anything else; and he would often walk over from the village, where he stayed at the Dorincourt Arms, and would spend half an hour or so wandering about the gallery, staring at the painted ladies and gentlemen, who also stared at him, and shaking his head nearly all the time.



"My father says these are my ancestors," said Fauntleroy.

"And they was all earls!" he would say, "er pretty nigh it! An' *he's* goin' to be one of 'em, an' own it all!"

Privately he was not nearly so much disgusted with earls and their mode of life as he had expected to be, and it is to be doubted whether his strictly republican principles were not shaken a little by a closer acquaintance with castles and ancestors and all the rest of it. At any rate, one day he uttered a very remarkable and unexpected sentiment:

"I wouldn't have minded bein' one of 'em myself!" he said—which was really a great concession.

What a grand day it was when little Lord Fauntleroy's birthday arrived, and how his young lordship enjoyed it! How beautiful the park looked, filled with the thronging people dressed in their gayest and best, and with the flags flying from

the tents and the top of the Castle! Nobody had stayed away who could possibly come, because everybody was really glad that little Lord Fauntleroy was to be little Lord Fauntleroy still, and someday was to be the master of everything. Everyone wanted to have a look at him, and at his pretty, kind mother, who had made so many friends. And positively everyone liked the Earl rather better, and felt more amiably toward him because the little boy loved and trusted him so, and because, also, he had now made friends with and behaved respectfully to his heir's mother. It was said that he was even beginning to be fond of her, too, and that between his young lordship and his young lordship's mother, the Earl might be changed in time into quite a well-behaved old nobleman, and everybody might be happier and better off.

What scores and scores of people there were under the trees, and in the tents, and on the lawns! Farmers and farmers' wives in their Sunday suits and bonnets and shawls; girls and their sweethearts; children frolicking and chasing about; and old dames in red cloaks gossiping together. At the Castle, there were ladies and gentlemen who had come to see the fun, and to congratulate the Earl, and to meet Mrs. Errol. Lady Lorredaile and Sir Harry were there, and Sir Thomas Asshe and his daughters, and Mr. Havisham, of course, and then beautiful Miss Vivian Herbert, with the loveliest white gown and lace parasol, and a circle of gentlemen to take care of her—though she evidently liked Fauntleroy better than all of them put together. And when he saw her and ran to her and put his arm around her neck, she put her arms around him, too, and kissed him as warmly as if he had been her own favorite little brother, and she said:

"Dear little Lord Fauntleroy! dear little boy! I am so glad! I am so glad!"

And afterward she walked about the grounds with him, and let him show her everything. And when he took her to where Mr. Hobbs and Dick were, and said to her, "This is my

old, old friend Mr. Hobbs, Miss Herbert, and this is my other old friend Dick. I told them how pretty you were, and I told them they should see you if you came to my birthday," she shook hands with them both, and stood and talked to them in her prettiest way, asking them about America and their voyage and their life since they had been in England; while Fauntleroy stood by, looking up at her with adoring eyes, and his cheeks quite flushed with delight because he saw that Mr. Hobbs and Dick liked her so much.

"Well," said Dick solemnly, afterward, "she's the daisiest gal I ever saw! She's—well, she's just a daisy, that's what she is, 'n' no mistake!"

Everybody looked after her as she passed, and everyone looked after little Lord Fauntleroy. And the sun shone and the flags fluttered and the games were played and the dances danced, and as the gayeties went on and the joyous afternoon passed, his little lordship was simply radiantly happy.

The whole world seemed beautiful to him.

There was someone else who was happy, too—an old man, who, though he had been rich and noble all his life, had not often been very honestly happy. Perhaps, indeed, I shall tell you that I think it was because he was rather better than he had been that he was rather happier. He had not, indeed, suddenly become as good as Fauntleroy thought him; but, at least, he had begun to love something, and he had several times found a sort of pleasure in doing the kind things which the innocent, kind little heart of a child had suggested—and that was a beginning. And every day he had been more pleased with his son's wife. It was true, as the people said, that he was beginning to like her too. He liked to hear her sweet voice and to see her sweet face; and as he sat in his armchair, he used to watch her and listen as she talked to her boy; and he heard loving, gentle words which were new to him, and he began to see why the little fellow who had lived in a New York side street and known grocery men and made friends with

boot-blacks, was still so well-bred and manly a little fellow that he made no one ashamed of him, even when fortune changed him into the heir to an English earldom, living in an English castle.

It was really a very simple thing, after all—it was only that he had lived near a kind and gentle heart, and had been taught to think kind thoughts always and to care for others. It is a very little thing, perhaps, but it is the best thing of all. He knew nothing of earls and castles; he was quite ignorant of all grand and splendid things; but he was always lovable because he was simple and loving. To be so is like being born a king.

As the old Earl of Dorincourt looked at him that day, moving about the park among the people, talking to those he knew and making his ready little bow when any one greeted him, entertaining his friends Dick and Mr. Hobbs, or standing near his mother or Miss Herbert listening to their conversation, the old nobleman was very well satisfied with him. And he had never been better satisfied than he was when they went down to the biggest tent, where the more important tenants of the Dorincourt estate were sitting down to the grand collation of the day.

They were drinking toasts; and, after they had drunk the health of the Earl, with much more enthusiasm than his name had ever been greeted with before, they proposed the health of "Little Lord Fauntleroy." And if there had ever been any doubt at all as to whether his lordship was popular or not, it would have been settled that instant. Such a clamor of voices, and such a rattle of glasses and applause! They had begun to like him so much, those warm-hearted people, that they forgot to feel any restraint before the ladies and gentlemen from the castle, who had come to see them. They made quite a decent uproar, and one or two motherly women looked tenderly at the little fellow where he stood, with his mother on one side and the Earl on the other, and grew quite moist

about the eyes, and said to one another:

"God bless him, the pretty little dear!"

Little Lord Fauntleroy was delighted. He stood and smiled, and made bows, and flushed rosy red with pleasure up to the roots of his bright hair.

"Is it because they like me, Dearest?" he said to his mother. "Is it, Dearest? I'm so glad!"

And then the Earl put his hand on the child's shoulder and said to him:

"Fauntleroy, say to them that you thank them for their kindness."

Fauntleroy gave a glance up at him and then at his mother.



Lord Fauntleroy makes a speech to the tenants.

"Must I?" he asked just a trifle shyly, and she smiled, and so did Miss Herbert, and they both nodded. And so he made a little step forward, and everybody looked at him—such a beautiful, innocent little fellow he was, too, with his brave, trustful face!—and he spoke as loudly as he could, his childish voice ringing out quite clear and strong.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you!" he said, "and—I hope you'll enjoy my birthday—because I've enjoyed it so much—and—I'm very glad I'm going to be an earl; I didn't think at first I should like it, but now I do—and I love this place so, and I think it is beautiful—and—and—and when I am an earl, I am going to try to be as good as my grandfather."

And amid the shouts and clamor of applause, he stepped back with a little sigh of relief, and put his hand into the Earl's and stood close to him, smiling and leaning against his side.

And that would be the very end of my story; but I must add one curious piece of information, which is that Mr. Hobbs became so fascinated with high life and was so reluctant to leave his young friend that he actually sold his corner store in New York, and settled in the English village of Erlesboro, where he opened a shop which was patronized by the Castle and consequently was a great success. And though he and the Earl never became very intimate, if you will believe me, that man Hobbs became in time more aristocratic than his lordship himself, and he read the Court news every morning, and followed all the doings of the House of Lords! And about ten years after, when Dick, who had finished his education and was going to visit his brother in California, asked the good grocer if he did not wish to return to America, he shook his head seriously.

"Not to live there," he said. "Not to live there; I want to be near *him*, an' sort o' look after him. It's a good enough country for them that's young an' stirrin'—but there's faults in it. There's not an aunt-sister among 'em—nor an earl!"