



BY E. A. CAMPBELL,

Author of "Pierre Richards," "Miss Pris," "A Good Position," "John Harker's Bond,"  
"Her Soldier Laddie," etc., etc.

"Cast all your cares on God; that anchor holds."—EXECH ARDEN.

## CHAPTER I.

### AN EVENTFUL TRIP.

**G**OOD-HUMOUR ruled the day, and the crowd which filled the train to overflowing was a jubilant one, fairly effervescing with high spirits. Though the passengers were of varying grades, and of all sorts and conditions, the long third-class carriages were perfect abodes of pleasant good fellowship, for all were holiday bound, and as they rushed on through the flood of golden sunshine all nature seemed to rejoice with them.

And among all the cheerful throng none were happier than the sturdy blacksmith from Firs Cross, John Lewis, his wife, and boy; indeed, Martin never quite knew how the days had passed which intervened between the time he heard the joyful news, and the present happy morning, when he started to get his first glimpse of the sea. So fearful was he of not awakening early enough, that he had scarcely slept at all, and had it not been for his mother, breakfast would have been a name rather than a meal; but under her stern eye he was obliged to eat, if not heartily, at least as much as was necessary.

"Let the boy alone, wife. He's too excited to eat now; we'll get him a bun by the way," said the smith.

"Bun!" exclaimed the mother. "What's the good of buns to keep you going for the day? He'll just eat that bit of bacon, or he'll stay behind."

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By-and-by the meal was finished, the house locked up, the key given to Jim Tyler, and before the sun had got very far on his day's journey the three were seated in the train.

Into what beautiful enchanted country was this iron monster bearing them? The ordinary landscape through which they were passing, with its meadows and cornlands, its grassy hills and deep chalk cuttings, seemed to unroll before the boy in a perfect panorama of delight. His excitement increased as they neared Winchester, and his father pointed out to him the massive, low-towered cathedral, and the silvery Itchen winding through the green meadows; for a moment the boy's thoughts reverted to school, and to what he had heard of the time when the old Wessex city had been the capital of Saxon England, and the great Alfred had held court there, but this was but for a moment. On they swept by the watery meadows of Bishopstoke, on and on, till at last came a distant gleam of something quivering and sparkling in the bright light, and Martin knew that at length he had seen the sea.

The crowds of sight-seers who poured from the various trains when they reached the station would, at any other time, have amazed and interested the boy; but now they offered no attraction to him—his one