

He then proceeded to look about, stooped down and punched the big leather-covered chair, uttered a grunt, took the taper, lit his pipe, and began to smoke.

"Now then, squire," he said, "suppose you and I have a look round."

There was such a calm at-homeness about him that the thought struck me that he must somehow belong to the place now; and I gazed at him with a feeling akin to awe.

He was a little man in a loose coat, and his face put me greatly in mind of the cover of a new spelling-book. He was dressed in black, and his tail-coat had an enormously high collar, which seemed to act as a screen to the back of his half-bald head when he sat down, as he did frequently, to try the different chairs or sofas. It never struck me that the coat might have been made for another man, but that he had had it shaped to come down to the tips of his fingers, and so keep him warm. When he had taken off his hat I had noticed that his hair lay in streaks across the top of his head, and the idea occurred to me that his name might be Jacob, because he was in other respects so smooth.

I followed Mr. Rowle as he proceeded to have what he called "a look round," and this consisted in going from room to room, in every one of which he kept his hat on, and stood smoking as he gradually turned his eyes on everything it contained, ending with a grunt as of satisfaction at what he saw.

Every room was taken in turn, even to the kitchen, where our entry caused a sudden cessation of the conversation round the tea-table, and the servants turned away their heads with a look of contempt.

"That'll do," said Mr. Rowle quietly; then, "Mary, my dear, you can bring me my tea in the study."

No one answered, and as we went back I remember thinking that if Mr. Rowle was to be the new master at Cedar Hill he would soon send our old servants away. He walked back, smoking all the time, and seated himself in my father's chair, staring hard at me the while.

"Shut the door, young un," he said at last, and when I had obeyed, "sit down, and make your miserable life happy."

My face began to work, and I had to battle hard to keep back the tears, as for a few minutes I could not speak, but sat there feeling sure Mr. Rowle must think me sulky and strange; and it troubled me, for the old man seemed disposed to be kind.

"Poor boy!" he said all at once, and his voice seemed to me to come out of a cloud of smoke; "so you've lost both your father and your mother?"

"Yes, sir!" I said piteously.

"Hah! so have I," said Mr. Rowle, and he went on smoking.

I was thinking as I tried to stare at him through the smoke,