

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 round 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, some one kissed him lightly on the cheek. It was Miss Vivian Herbert who was going away, and she spoke to him softly.

" Good-night, little Lord Fauntleroy, " she said. " Sleep well. "

And in the morning he did not know that he had tried to open his eyes and murmured sleepily, " Good-night—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.