

"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 methodical 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