

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.

CHAPTEK 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