

Cedric's face turned red to the roots of his hair ; it turned red with relief and pleasure. He put both his hands deep into his pockets and looked squarely into his noble relative's eyes.

"Do you?" he said. "Well, then, I don't care about the earl part at all. I don't care whether I'm an earl or not. I thought—you see, I thought the one that was going to be the Earl would have to be your boy, too, and—and I couldn't be. That was what made me feel so queer."

The Earl put his hand on his shoulder and drew him nearer.

"They shall take nothing from you that I can hold for you," he said, drawing his breath hard. "I won't believe yet that they can take anything from you. You were made for the place, and—well, you may fill it still. But whatever comes, you shall have all that I can give you—all!"

It scarcely seemed as if he were speaking to a child, there was such determination in his face and voice ; it was more as if he were making a promise to himself—and perhaps he was.

He had never before known how deep a hold upon him his fondness for the boy and his pride in him had taken. He had never seen his strength and good qualities and beauty as he seemed to see them now. To his obstinate nature it seemed impossible—more than impossible—to give up what he had so set his heart upon. And he had determined that he would not give it up without a fierce struggle.

Within a few days after she had seen Mr. Havisham, the woman who claimed to be Lady Fauntleroy presented herself at the Castle, and brought her child with her. She was sent away. The Earl would not see her, she was told by the footman at the door ; his lawyer would attend to her case. It was Thomas who gave the message, and who expressed his opinion of her freely afterward, in the servants' hall. He "hoped," he said, "as he had wore liverv in 'igh famblies long enough to know a lady when he see one, an' if that was a lady he was no judge o' females."

"The one at the Lodge," added Thomas loftily, "'Merican or no 'Merican, she's one of o' the right sort, as any gentlman 'u'd reckonize with 'half a heye. I remarked it myself to Henry when fust we called there."

The woman drove away ; the look on her handsome, common face half frightened, half fierce. Mr. Havisham had noticed, during his interviews with her, that though she had a passionate temper, and a coarse, insolent manner, she was neither so clever nor so bold as she meant to be ; she seemed sometimes to