

Master Manton Comes to Court

But he was not long left to himself; there were footsteps and talking on the stairs; a couple of the young Fellows came in, and were presently leaning against the wall, striding about, examining the salt-cellar, criticising his packing, asking a hundred questions; while a group of pensioners gathered continually at the door, eyeing awfully this man on whom had fallen the shadow of Royalty.

Guy glanced up at them once or twice, but did not see the man he wanted, and went on answering questions as he packed.

Yes; he would be off by nine o'clock, he said, and in London by the evening. He was to go straight to Whitehall. He would ride with the Queen's messenger, and Tom too was to go . . . He did not know whether he could keep the boy, but he hoped so; for he was to have half-a-dozen servants of his own. If not, Tom should be sent straight back at the first opportunity . . . Yes; he was at the tailor's now being fitted for a suit.

Master Sweetnam's face fell.

"We shall miss him in chapel," he said.

"We shall be the gainers at Court," observed Guy over his shoulder as he knelt at his trunk. "He sings better every day. He must enter her Grace's choir. Master Denison says that his voice will last a long while yet."

He was very cheerful and good-humoured this evening; and answered all their questions politely as he went to and fro in his shirt and hose, and struggled with his packing. He mourned over the quarto Terence that he could not get in, and presented it elaborately to Master Sweetnam with his loving regard; he did not brag once of the life that lay before him, or sneer at that which he left behind. Yet he sighed with contentment when the chapel-bell began to ring, and his friends trooped out.