

But in the midst of all the disturbance there was one person who was quite calm and untroubled. That person was the little Lord Fauntleroy who was said not to be Lord Fauntleroy at all. When first the state of affairs had been explained to him, he had felt some little anxiousness and perplexity, it is true, but its foundation was not in baffled ambition.

While the Earl told him what had happened, he had sat on a stool holding on to his knee, as he so often did when he was listening to anything interesting; and by the time the story was finished he looked quite sober.

"It makes me feel very queer," he said; "it makes me feel—queer!"

The Earl looked at the boy in silence. It made him feel queer, too—queerer than he had ever felt in his whole life. And he felt more queer still when he saw that there was a troubled expression on the small face which was usually so happy.

"Will they take Dearest's house from her—and her carriage?" Cedric asked in a rather unsteady, anxious little voice.

"No!" said the Earl decidedly—in quite a loud voice, in fact. "They can take nothing from her."

"Ah!" said Cedric, with evident relief. "Can't they?"

Then he looked up at his grandfather, and there was a wistful shade in his eyes, and they looked very big and soft.

"That other boy," he said rather tremulously—"he will have to—to be your boy now—as I was—won't he?"

"No!" answered the Earl—and he said it so fiercely and loudly that Cedric quite jumped.

"No?" he exclaimed, in wonderment. "Won't he? I thought——"

He stood up from his stool quite suddenly.

"Shall I be your boy, even if I'm not going to be an Earl?" he said. "Shall I be your boy just as I was before?" And his flushed little face was all alight with eagerness.

How the old Earl did look at him from head to foot, to be sure! How his great shaggy brows did draw themselves together, and how queerly his deep eyes shone under them—how very queerly!

"My boy!" he said—and, if you'll believe it, his very voice was queer, almost shaky and a little broken and hoarse, not at all what you would expect an Earl's voice to be, though he spoke more decidedly and peremptorily even than before,—
"Yes, you'll be my boy as long as I live; and, by George, sometimes I feel as if you were the only boy I had ever had."