

for Aggie's amusement in a pool, a boy sauntered up. He was somewhat taller than James Walsham, and at least two years older. He was well dressed, and James knew him as the nephew and heir of the squire.

It was not often that Richard Horton came down into the village. He was accustomed to be treated with a good deal of deference at the Hall, and to order servants and grooms about pretty much as he chose, and the indifference with which the fisherboys regarded him offended him greatly. He was a spoilt boy. His uncle had a resident tutor for him, but the selection had been a bad one. The library was large and good, the tutor fond of reading, and he was content to let the boy learn as little as he chose, providing that he did not trouble him. As to any instruction beyond books, he never thought of giving it.

The squire never interfered. He was a silent and disappointed man. He attended to his duties as a magistrate and to the management of his estate, but seldom went beyond the lodge gates. He took his meals by himself, and often did not see his nephew for a week together, and had no idea but that he was pursuing his studies regularly with his tutor. Thus the character of Richard Horton formed itself unchecked. At the best it was a bad one, but under other circumstances it might have been improved.

Up to the age of ten he had lived in London with his father and mother, the latter a sister of the squire, who having married beneath her, to the indignation of Mr. Linthorne, he had never seen her afterward. Four years before the story begins she had received a letter from him saying that as her eldest son was now his heir, he wished him to come and live with him and be prepared to take his place. The Hortons, who had a numerous family, at once accepted the offer, and Richard, hearing that he was going to a grand house, and would no doubt have a pony and all sorts of nice things, left his father and mother without a tear.