

"She'll not leave the boy," replied the Earl.

"I must have the boy too," said Lady Lorrindaile, laughing.

But she knew Fauntleroy would not be given up to her, and each day she saw more clearly how closely those two had grown to each other, and how all the proud, grim old man's ambition and hope and love centered themselves in the child, and how the warm, innocent nature returned his affection with most perfect trust and good faith.

She knew, too, that the prime reason for the great dinner party was the Earl's secret desire to show the world his grandson and heir, and to let people see that the boy who had been so much spoken of and described was even a finer little specimen of boyhood than rumor had made him.

"Bevis and Maurice were such a bitter humiliation to him," she said to her husband. "Everyone knew it. He actually hated them. His pride has full sway here." Perhaps there was not one person who accepted the invitation without feeling some curiosity about little Lord Fauntleroy, and wondering if he would be on view.

And when the time came he was on view.

"The lad has good manners," said the Earl. "He will be in no one's way. Children are usually idiots or bores,—mine were both,—but he can actually answer when he's spoken to, and be silent when he is not. He is never offensive."

But he was not allowed to be silent very long. Every one had something to say to him. The fact was they wished to make him talk. The ladies petted him and asked him questions, and the men asked him questions too, and joked with him, as the men on the steamer had done when he crossed the Atlantic. Fauntleroy did not quite understand why they laughed so sometimes when he answered them, but he was so used to seeing people amused when he was quite serious, that he did not mind. He thought the whole evening delightful. The magnificent rooms were so brilliant with lights, there were so many flowers, the gentlemen seemed so gay, and the ladies wore such beautiful, wonderful dresses, and such sparkling ornaments in their hair and on their necks. There was one young lady who, he heard them say, had just come down from London, where she had spent the "season"; and she was so charming that he could not keep his eyes from her. She was a rather tall young lady with a proud little head, and very soft dark hair, and large eyes the color of purple pansies, and the color on her cheeks and lips was like that of a rose. She was dressed in a beautiful white dress, and had pearls around her