

## THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY

hadn't been in a pretty tight place. It was like drawing teeth for him to let them go."

Paul flushed up, and again the iron grasp was on his heart. He hadn't, hitherto, actually disliked Mr. Moffatt, who was always in a good humour, and seemed less busy and absent-minded than his mother; but at that instant he felt a rage of hate for him. He turned away and hurst into tears.

"Why, hullo, old chap—why, what's up?" Mr. Moffatt was on his knees beside the hoy, and the arms emhracing him were firm and friendly. But Paul, for the life of him, couldn't answer: he could only soh and soh as the great surges of loneliness broke over him.

"Is it because your mother hadn't time for you? Well, she's like that, you know; and you and I have got to lump it," Mr. Moffatt continued, getting to his feet. He stood looking down at the boy with a queer smile. "If we two chaps stick together it won't be so bad—we can keep each other warm, don't you see? I like you first rate, you know; when you're big enough I mean to put you in my business. And it looks as if one of these days you'd be the richest hoy in America. . ."

The lamps were lit, the vases full of flowers, the footmen assemhled on the landing and in the vestibule below, when Undine descended to the drawing-room. As she passed the hallroom door she glanced in approvingly at the tapestries. They really looked better