

Mrs. Gardiner at once gave him her confidence, and her heart felt easier than it had done since the idea of parting with Ralph was decided upon.

'You'll take good care of my boy, won't you?' she said, with a note of earnest appeal in her voice; 'and if he does give you a little trouble sometimes, don't be too hard upon him. He has a good heart, although he is perhaps too fond of mischief.'

Mr. Ferguson's smile expressed a thorough knowledge of boys, and of how to manage them.

'You need have no concern on that score, Mrs. Gardiner,' he said reassuringly. 'My aim is to be neither too severe nor too lax with my pupils, and I think I may, without undue pride, claim that my school has had its share of success.'

After a rather tearful parting with his parents, whom he would not see again for the space of a year, and who would during that time be separated from him by many thousands of miles, Ralph Gardiner pulled himself together, and began an exploration of his new home.

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