

"Well!" he ejaculated, "I am jiggered!"

He was so dumbfounded that he actually changed his exclamation. It had always been his habit to say, "*I will be jiggered*," but this time he said, "*I am jiggered*." Perhaps he really was jiggered. There is no knowing.

"Well," said Dick, "the whole thing's bust up, hasn't it?"

"Bust!" said Mr. Hobbs. "It's my opinion it's a put-up job o' the British 'ristycrats to rob him of his rights because he's an American. They've had a spite agin us ever since the Revolution, an' they're takin' it out on him. I told you he wasn't safe, and see what's happened! Like as not, the whole government's got together to rob him of his lawful ownin's."

He was very much agitated. He had not approved of the change in his young friend's circumstances at first, but lately he had become more reconciled to it, and after the receipt of Cedric's letter he had perhaps even felt some secret pride in his young friend's magnificence. He might not have a good opinion of earls, but he knew that even in America money was considered rather an agreeable thing, and if all the wealth and grandeur were to go with the title, it must be rather hard to lose it.

"They're trying to rob him!" he said, "that's what they're doing, and folks that have money ought to look after him."

And he kept Dick with him until quite a late hour to talk it over, and when that young man left, he went with him to the corner of the street; and on his way back he stopped opposite the empty house for some time, staring at the "To Let," and smoking his pipe, in much disturbance of mind.

CHAPTER XII.

A VERY few days after the dinner party at the Castle, almost everybody in England who read the newspapers at all knew the romantic story of what had happened at Dorincourt. It made a very interesting story when it was told with all the details. There was the little American boy who had been brought to England to be Lord Fauntleroy, and who was said to be so fine and handsome a little fellow, and to have already made people fond of him; there was the old Earl, his grandfather, who was so proud of his heir; there was the pretty young mother who had never been forgiven for marrying