

watching by his bedside until he broke the silence. She was a singularly truthful and right-minded woman; always open herself she always went to the bottom of things, and she never failed to know the rights of everything in which James was concerned.

"Don't stay by me, mother," he said. "You will be wanted down stairs."

"I shan't be wanted yet, James. How do you feel now?"

"My head aches dreadfully."

"How did it happen? Did you trip up against a root?"

James made no reply, and the question was repeated.

"Did you trip up against a root?"

"No, mother."

"How came you to have fallen so heavily then?"

"I don't know mother. At least I mean I can't tell you. Please don't ask me any more," and the colour mounted higher in his fevered cheek.

"Very well my dear boy. I'm sure I don't want to tease you. Still I think you should tell your mother."

For a few minutes there was silence. James tossed about on his bed suffering in body, and sad in spirit. He was not used to keep anything from her. Presently she returned to the charge.

"Only this one question, James. Had Mr. Lionel anything to do with it?"

The opening of the door relieved James from his difficulty.

"I've just come to see how you are," said Lionel entering, looking it must be confessed, very gloomy and discontented.

"Thank you, sir, I'm better; I shall be all right after a night's rest." But as he spoke his mother noticed a strange light in his eye which she did not like.

"Mother dear, would you be so kind as to go into the next room for five minutes. I shan't see Mr. Lionel again, and I want to wish him good bye now, for he'll be starting early."

As soon as the door was shut James raised his head from the pillow and looked at his young master timidly.

"Please, sir, I hope you won't be angry, but I must tell mother how it was. She keeps on questioning me so, and I can't go sleep to-night with a lie upon my lips."

"A lie! You told no lie, nor did I for that matter, for you *did* fall against the tree, although I confess I pushed you. Come now, Jem, don't be a sneak."

"I'm not a sneak, sir. If it had been anywhere but on my forehead, my arm or my leg I would've said nothing about it. It aint the pain I mind but its mother's way to find out exactly how things happen. I never kept anything from her yet in all my life, and you know, sir, she would never tell."

By this time Lionel had worked himself into another of his passions. He did not vouchsafe another glance at the poor patient lad who was suffering from his violence, but walked angrily out of the room, telling James by way of farewell that he never thought he was such a sneak, and that next holidays he would find some one to wait upon him who had pluck enough to hold his tongue. He slammed the door as he went out, and as James heard his footsteps die away along the passage he hid his face in the pillow and sobbed.

His mother came in and tried to comfort him. He told her the whole truth,