

put out at his ill luck, and was inclined to blame everybody and everything but his own want of skill.

A large bird flew across the field. Lionel raised the gun to his shoulder. "What do you bet I don't bring him down, Jem?"

There was no answer. Before the trigger could be pulled the muzzle of the gun was struck upwards. The charge flew harmlessly into the air, and the bird soared proudly away into the distant sky. Lionel turned round to James, his cheek flushed, his eye glittering with rage.

"What do you mean by that, you meddling fool?" was all that James heard as a sharp blow struck him to the ground, where he lay for a while motionless and senseless.

When he awoke to consciousness Lionel was bending over him tenderly with a world of remorse on his handsome face.

"Oh! Jem, I'm so sorry. Are you very bad? Indeed I didn't mean it, only I was so mad with you for spoiling my shot."

As he said this he tore his pocket-handkerchief in strips and tried to staunch the blood which flowed from a wound in the poor boy's forehead.

James raised himself with a great effort. "I'm very sorry I vexed you, sir, but I saw, what you didn't, little Tom Baker and his brother, just behind the hedge you were aiming at. If you had fired as you aimed, you *must* have hit them."

"Never mind why it was," said Lionel, thoroughly ashamed of himself, "only tell me whether you think you can manage to get home. Does your head hurt you much?"

"No, sir, it don't so very much." But the pale face belied the words, and it was with a slow step that the boy, leaning on his young master's arm, began his homeward walk.

Now with all Sir John's easy-going, don't-care nature, there was one point on which he was especially firm and determined, and that was putting down any assumption of authority and tyranny towards an inferior. The only time he had ever shewn himself really angry with his son was when Lionel had been guilty of rudeness to one of the servants.

The remembrance of that day caused Master Lionel many uncomfortable feelings in the thought of his father's just displeasure when he should hear of James's accident and its cause.

"I say, Jem," he said, "I was a brute, I know I was; and I'm sure I'm precious sorry about it. But you won't peach, will you, there's a good fellow."

James had not time to answer, for at a sudden bend of the road they met nurse Hudson returning from an errand in the village. She started at the sight of her boy's swelled and bleeding face, and immediately began enquiring how it was the accident had happened.

James did not know what to answer, but Lionel muttered something about his having tripped and fallen against a tree in running after a wounded rabbit. And he went on to make such a desperate fuss about getting poor James home as quickly as possible that nurse Hudson, alarmed at her son's appearance, was only too glad to give him an arm, and ask no further questions. Between them they managed to get him to the Manor at last, and upstairs to his little attic. His mother washed and bound up his wounded head, and put him into bed at once. She did not leave him, but sat with her work in her hand