

The Earl was in a bad temper and his foot was painful. He did not give money and toys to his grandson because he had a kind heart. He gave these things because he wanted the boy to forget his mother. He opened his mouth to say, *No. I don't play children's games.* But he did not say it. He said, 'Very well. You can teach me.'

When the tall young servant came in with a visitor, Mr Dawson the vicar, they heard excited cries and laughing.

'That's two out! Bad luck, grandfather!'

Mr Dawson usually hated his visits to the old Earl, but today was different, and surprising.

'Good morning, Dawson,' the Earl said. 'My grandson is keeping me busy.' He put his hand on Cedric's head and nearly smiled. 'What is it today, Dawson?'

'It's Higgins of Edge Farm, my lord,' said Mr Dawson. 'He can't pay his rent. He needs more time.'

Every house in the village and every farm for miles around Dorincourt all belonged to the Earl. The villagers and the farmers paid their rent to the Earl's man, Mr Newick. And Mr Newick was a hard man. Mr Dawson came to the Earl many times a year, with the same question. 'Can this family or that family have more time to pay their rent?' And the answer was always 'no'.

'Higgins?' said the Earl. 'He's a bad farmer, and he's always late with his rent, Newick tells me.'

'His wife is ill, and two of his children,' Mr Dawson said. 'And Newick wants to put them all out of the house

into the street. Higgins came to me yesterday, to ask for help. Another month, he says, and he can find the rent.'

'Huh. They all say that,' said the Earl, looking angry.

Lord Fauntleroy listened to every word of this. He began to feel a great interest in Higgins and his family.

'It was the same for Bridget and her family,' he said.

The Earl jumped a little. 'I forgot *you!*' he said. 'I forgot we had a philanthropist in the room.' He stared at the boy for a minute. 'Come here,' he said.

Cedric went and stood next to him.

'What shall we do about Higgins, then?' said the Earl. 'Tell me.'



'What shall we do about Higgins, then?' said the Earl.