



*your little friend  
Elsie Leslie Lytle*

(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY SARONY.)



# ST. NICHOLAS.

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## “FAUNTLEROY” AND ELSIE LESLIE LYDE.

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I THINK it was during the year 1884 that the Editor of ST. NICHOLAS asked Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett to give her a serial story for young readers. Mrs. Burnett was already well known as one of the most popular writers of the day, but I believe that up to that time she had written no long story for children, or with a child for hero or heroine. It is always interesting to know how anything we care for and have come to think of almost as part of our own every-day life, began; so, I think, to all readers of ST. NICHOLAS, and, indeed, to every child who can read, the history of “Fauntleroy” must have its interest and charm. “Fauntleroy,” who began his dear little life, so useful in more ways than we can know, in the pages of ST. NICHOLAS, is now telling to hundreds of people daily what one sweet child can do; what message of peace and good-will one little life can bring to many who doubtless have battled more with the pride and evil and hard-heartedness of their own natures than they might care to admit, but who may absorb the lesson of Fauntleroy’s life, taught all unconsciously by him.

In due time there appeared in ST. NICHOLAS the story of “Little Lord Fauntleroy,” which has hardly a rival in the juvenile literature of our century. Mrs. Burnett had a model for the hero in her own boy Vivian, whose quaint sayings and doings suggested the character to her mind. Around them she wove the incidents of the story. In his ways and speech Vivian was just such a

boy as Fauntleroy might have been, and so she devised the pretty romance with this child as its center and moving impulse. It is by no means an improbable story. In England there is that — to us — unfamiliar law of entail. Titles and estates must descend in some instances to the nearest of male kin. For instance, Fauntleroy’s grandfather was an earl, which is an old title in England, introduced before the days of William the Conqueror, when Great Britain was under the rule of various nobles who were like sovereigns on their own territory. In those days such nobles had almost unlimited power, and their lands and castles were guarded and fortified so as to resist all attacks from neighboring nobles; the peasants and tenants — the dependents, — young men and maidens, squires and pages, — all who were within the castle gates and the domain of the earl or baron, were under his rule and his protection; they must swear loyalty to him; must defend his rights; and though bound to serve the king, their first idea of what was called fealty was to the earl or baron whom they served; in tournament, or in battle, they represented him. So of course he felt himself a great authority, and his title, and usually the estate, went to the eldest of his sons, and to the male heirs of this son. If the eldest son died without a male heir, then the second son succeeded, and so on. But an estate can for a time be tied up by its owner, so that it shall go with the title, and if this be done, a subsequent possessor can in no way prevent the



property from descending to the next holder of the title. Now, although the old days of fortified castles, of dispute and warfare between neighboring barons or earls, have passed away, the titles—the power of entail—and the great, splendid, often lonely, castles remain; and an earl, who, like Fauntleroy's grandfather, loses his eldest son, knows that wherever on the earth's surface the next heir may be found, be he rich or poor, high or low, he must one day, by law, come into the family name, estate, and power.

You can easily fancy how many complications, how much trouble, this might bring about. Fauntleroy's case is entirely possible. His father, young Captain Errol, was the third son of the Earl of Dorincourt. "Errol" was what they call the family name. An earl, like a duke, has a title; for instance, the Earl of Dorincourt. Many of these titles were given hundreds of years ago, either for some deed of valor or for property bestowed upon a noble, or perhaps seized by him, or granted as a matter of favor from the king. But he and all his children have a family name, by which the latter are addressed. The family name of the Earl of Dorincourt was Errol. The heir to an earldom has usually a title of his own which belongs to him until he becomes earl. In the Dorincourt family "Fauntleroy" had for generations been the title of the heir. Whoever was acknowledged to be the heir to the earldom was at once to be called Lord Fauntleroy. Had Cedric's father outlived his older brothers, he would have had this title, but when the earl's three sons were all dead, and there were no other children in the Dorincourt family, you see it turned out quite naturally, although very unexpectedly, that the little son of Captain Errol, born in America, and knowing next to nothing of his English relatives, and certainly having no expectation of succeeding to the title, became "Lord Fauntleroy," or, according to an English custom, "Fauntleroy." The Earl of Dorincourt, writing a letter, would sign himself simply "Dorincourt"; Cedric, after his inheritance, would be spoken of in the same way, and would sign his name "Fauntleroy."

The honors and powers which by tradition and English rule belong to the families and descendants of the nobles ought to make the English nobility very anxious to be worthy of their responsibilities and their names. You know Cedric felt this, when he found himself for the first time in the castle library with pictures of his ancestors on all sides and the old earl watching him so critically.

With this leading idea, Mrs. Burnett wrote a story which, I think, preaches its sermon as clearly as do the wild-flowers which God sends every spring-time to the woods and hillsides. There is this little

child, brought up by his American mother, never dreaming of honors and worldly distinctions, but believing that everything on earth must be fair, and good, and kindly, because he has never seen nor heard of anything else. I need not even outline the story of Lord Fauntleroy to readers of this magazine, in which it originally appeared. It was read widely during 1885 and 1886. Published in book form, it maintained its popularity; always, it taught its lesson. And it seems to me that lesson is best condensed in the text with which we are all familiar, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Thoroughly to appreciate Cedric's character is to understand the meaning of these words, spoken nearly nineteen hundred years ago.

Before "Little Lord Fauntleroy," Mrs. Burnett had written for ST. NICHOLAS a short story called "Editha's Burglar," the story of a little girl who tries to influence a burglar not to "burgle" loud enough to wake or frighten her mother.\* Mr. Augustus Thomas dramatized the story, making a charming little play which Mr. Frohman of the Lyceum Theater wished to bring out. The question was, who could act "Editha"? It must be a child, of course, and a child who would enter into the spirit of the part. So it came about that a little girl named Elsie Leslie Lyde was chosen; and all who saw her know how well she embodied the character. Her success as Editha led naturally to her playing the part of Fauntleroy; and now the little girl is inseparably associated with her perfect personation of the little lord.

Let me tell you something of her own life.

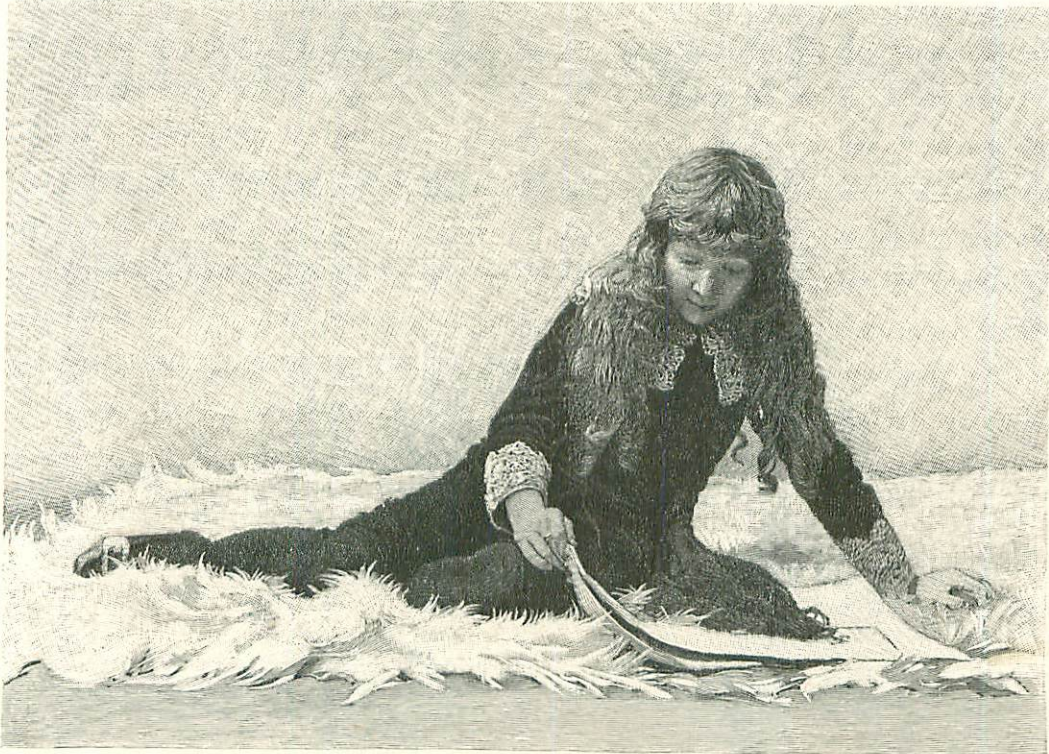
Elsie Leslie Lyde is not yet ten years old. She was born in New Jersey, not far from Newark, of mixed English and American ancestry. Her mother's family are English, but they have for some years been settled in America. On neither side have there been any actors, though there have been a few writers and more clergymen. Elsie's dramatic genius is a surprise to every one, and it is as great a surprise that she has preserved her entire unaffectedness, her simplicity and childish charm, when we consider that much of her life is passed before the footlights, and that applause is constantly ringing in her ears. But this only proves that she can act Fauntleroy because she is like him in heart, and spirit, and feeling. She had been playing for a time with Mr. Joseph Jefferson, in "Rip Van Winkle," before she undertook "Editha." As "Meenie" and "Hendrick" her ability was clearly shown, and when Fauntleroy was dramatized by Mrs. Burnett and brought out in England, Elsie was engaged to create the rôle in America. The child, in her home life, is admirably trained and very judiciously cared for. Un-

\* See ST. NICHOLAS for February, 1886.



doubtedly she possesses a genius, which, sooner or later, surely would have asserted itself. And she has her future to consider above all things. She is to be well educated, and I think her professional life at present tends toward that. No child's performance could be better than her "Fauntleroy." Through the pages of *ST. NICHOLAS* the story had spoken to thousands; and dramatizing it was only to extend its sweet influence. There had never before been a play all centered about a child; with

trations by Mr. Reginald B. Birch were so admirable that, in arranging what is called the "business" of the play, they were of great service. It is interesting to observe how closely these popular pictures are followed. The costume of the little heir, as shown in Mr. Birch's drawings, has been carefully imitated upon the stage. Children in the audience recognize with audible delight the Fauntleroy they know,—the dear little boy who has smiled upon them from the printed page,—who,



"CEDRIC ERROL, LORD FAUNTLEROY." (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF ELSIE LESLIE LYDE, BY G. C. COX.)

no love-story; very little side-plot; the moral lesson just what the child's life taught. Here, at last, was such a play, and I think of all children I have ever known, Elsie was best fitted to take the part of the hero.

I was asking her the other day whether she enjoyed it. Her face glowed. "Oh, yes; because Fauntleroy is so *beautiful!*" Elsie, you see, was one of the many children who read and loved the story, and it has come quite naturally to her to embody the part, because out of something in her own gentle and loving nature she understands that of Cedric, Lord Fauntleroy.

When Elsie came to play "Fauntleroy," it was necessary to remember the hold the story had upon the affections of the public. The well-known illus-

by the way, was first drawn from a portrait of Mrs. Burnett's son Vivian. They are equally pleased to see Hobbs, the round-faced and didactic grocer, and Dick, the "professional boot-black." They recognize also the dignified Mr. Havisham, with his carefully poised arms and hands, and, finally, gaze with respect at the Earl, his features clear cut and "high," as the English say, his gouty foot stretched out, his aristocratic profile turned toward the audience while he watches Fauntleroy writing his first lordly letter, in that charmingly familiar pose in the great chair. In the well-known scene, where the old Earl goes out to dinner leaning heavily upon Fauntleroy's sturdy shoulder, the reproduction of Mr. Birch's drawing is exact.



Elsie entered so thoroughly into the meaning of the play that she was able to make various suggestions, and to put in many amusing touches which have emphasized the childish charm of the character; but this belongs entirely and only to her stage life, of which she rarely speaks. She is interested in many other things,—her friends most of all,—and she is the most delightful guest, always pleased, readily amused, and unaffected in her enjoyment of what is done for her entertainment.

Once she called to see the Editor of ST. NICHOLAS when several friends were present. It was, I am

told, quite a memorable occasion to Elsie, for a neighbor who was one of the company sang a pretty song which delighted her very much. Then, to the little girl's surprise, the singer, handing her the manuscript sheet, told her that both the music and the words had been composed on that very afternoon, and that they were dedicated to Elsie Leslie. [This pretty song will be found on page 466, of the present number of ST. NICHOLAS.] Several of the guests congratulated Elsie, among them Mr. Birch; and whether he translated aright the wistful look in the child's eyes as he held the sheet of



Dec. 1888

Birch

"Lord Fauntleroy" to Elsie



music, or received a hint from one of Elsie's "trustable" friends, I do not know, but he at once laid the music upon the library table and took out his pencil. Then, while the guests stood watching, Elsie pressing closest and most interested of all, he rapidly drew on the back of the music-sheet a sketch of Lord Fauntleroy making his bow to Elsie. Only once was the silence broken. As Lord Fauntleroy's figure took shape upon the paper, under the artist's deft fingers, Elsie, with her sunny head nearly touching the table, exclaimed softly:

"Oh! Why! How long *are* his poor legs going to be?"

This sketch, a reduced copy of which you see here, of course enchanted the little girl. The souvenir is among her special treasures; and these are many—carefully, I may say sacredly, kept by this little maiden, who seems to value all such tributes just in proportion to her affection for the donor.

Among the chosen few very dear to Elsie's heart, is Mr. Gillette, the dramatist, author of "Held by the Enemy" and "The Professor." He corresponds with her charmingly, and her letters, with many points of character and action in the child's life, suggest to my mind dear "Pet Marjorie" (the little girl whom Sir Walter Scott so loved), whose story Dr. John Brown has so touchingly written.

Not very long ago Mr. Gillette took Elsie out in Central Park upon a tricycle, and, as her hands became very cold in spite of her little gloves, he lent her his large fur gauntlets, which she thought great fun. But she was surprised and delighted the next day when there arrived the dearest little pair of fur-lined gloves, with these verses prettily written for her in red ink and black by this loving friend:

*To my little love  
With the sunny hair  
In golden strands,  
I send a little glove  
For her little pair  
Of dainty hands.*

*Those precious hands so dear  
I could forever hold,—  
Little Loves,—  
I'd have them always near,  
I'd keep them from the cold,  
Without gloves.*

*But 't would be cruel to her  
To be before her face  
Without end;  
I'm sure she'd much prefer  
That now to take my place,  
Gloves I send.*

*When we are apart  
In far distant lands,—  
Which may be,—  
Will the little heart  
That owns the little hands  
Think of me?*

*If we have to part  
Will the Chain of Love  
Broken be?  
Will the little heart  
Referred to just above  
Care for me?*

"Ah," says Elsie, "Mr. Gillette is so *trustable!*"

And this pet word of hers is the key to much in her character. Deceit, or even exaggeration, is impossible to her, a fact the more commendable when we consider that she has a vivid imagination and revels in fancies and dreamland. But touch *reality* and Elsie is practical, downright, and to the point, while, like "Fauntleroy," she believes all the world to be kindly and expects nothing but what she herself has always given—love, and tenderness, and sympathy.

It was in Boston that one evening she went on the stage eager to see a certain person in a proscenium box, for she had just received the following letter, which, like the others in this sketch, is now printed with the consent of its writer:

BOSTON, Wednesday.

MY DEAR LITTLE GIRL: I found your pretty letter waiting for me when I arrived yesterday morning, and as soon as I had read it I felt quite sure we should be friends. Every one tells me what a dear little Fauntleroy you make, and I am looking forward with great pleasure to seeing you play to-morrow night. When you see in one of the boxes a little lady in a yellow brocade dress, who smiles at you and looks delighted, you will know who it is. Then after the play I shall try to see you for a few minutes, because of course I shall want to kiss you and tell you how pleased I am. I have no little girl of my own, but I have two boys, and one of them used to be just like Fauntleroy, and they both have always called me "Dearest." That was why I made Fauntleroy call his mother so. I know what a sweet little name it is. Mr. Gillette told me in New York how beautifully you play. I am sure he loves you as you say.

Your Affectionate Friend,  
FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

Mr. Edwin Booth is Elsie's ideal artist. Her interest in his performances is intense, appreciative, and among her treasures is a little note written just after the famous tragedian saw her play.

NEW YORK, Nov. 12, 1888.

DEAR LITTLE LADY: Mr. Barrett and I were delighted with your charming performance of Little Lord Fauntleroy, and we both wish you health and happiness.  
EDWIN BOOTH.



New York. Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>  
-88

Dear little lady  
Mr. Barrett and  
I were delighted with your charming  
performance of 'Little Lord Fauntleroy',  
and we both wish you health &  
happiness.

Miss  
Elsie Leslie

*Jessie Booth*

You can imagine, too, the delight with which she received the following letter from America's distinguished comedian, Mr. Joseph Jefferson. It was written, appropriately, on St. Valentine's Day.

ORANGE ISLAND, LA., Feb. 14th, 1889.

MY DEAR ELSIE: I write this to congratulate you on your recent great success.

You see your fame has reached me. And so now you are a bright little star illuminating thousands of happy mortals; I hear, too, that your good fortune has not spoiled you,—that is the best news of all.

I am glad to know that you began your career upon the stage with me,—though you owe me nothing, for you were so bright that teaching you would have marred rather than benefited you. I am going to see you act as soon as I get an opportunity.

Good-bye.—That you may always be happy and useful is the wish of your old friend,  
J. JEFFERSON.

"Editha" interested her greatly. It was such "fun," she says, to play it, and her faith in the power of "moral suasion" as therein shown was recently illustrated in a most amusing way. A queer sound was heard by the family at night; some one seemed to be trying to break into their apartment. Elsie was awake; she sat up in bed listening eagerly. Whoever or whatever it was, ceased; nothing more was heard, but afterward, Elsie, in telling a friend about the occurrence, said very gravely: "I had made up my mind that if it *had* been a burglar, I would have *done Editha to him!*"

To Mr. E. H. Sothern, who played the "Burglar," she wrote not long ago this quaint little note:

October 24, 1888.

DEAR MR. SOTHERN: It is just one year ago since we were playing the Burglar and now we are playing Lord parts. Do you like Lord Chumley as well as the Burg-

lar? I like Lord Fauntleroy better, it is longer you know. Love to all, especially Mr. A—; is Dora a good girl, and does she do her part well? I water-color-painted the little picture on the front page, but did not draw it. With love from your little friend,

ELSIE LESLIE.

And here is his answer:

MY DEAR OLD ELSIE: I received your very sweet letter to-night. It was delightful of you to think of me. I am so glad of your great success. I wish I could see you in your lord, but I fear I shall not have a chance to do so. I like my lord very much, but I still have some affection for the poor old burglar, although you took all the piece away from poor me, no matter how hard I cried nor how well I "burgled." Dora is a very good girl, and has done splendidly in her part. I think your water-color painting is lovely, and I think the little yellow girl is just like you. Mr. A— sends his love to you and so do all the others, and even your old burglar sends a lot of love too.

God bless you, dear!

Yours,

E. H. SOTHERN.

Many people in Elsie's audience—"grown-ups" as well as children—would like to know something of the home life and the surroundings of the dear little girl who is helping to make "Fauntleroy" a classic with us. Her hours at the theater are, of course, not easy ones. She has to be "on time"; for it is business as well as pleasure. She is earning money wherewith to educate herself, so she can not indulge in the thousand and one caprices which govern many small people of my acquaintance who think it a hardship to have "lessons" every day. No, Elsie has her work in life to do—and she does it cheerfully and, as we all know, *well*. The moment she is off the stage



home life begins. There is no affected, silly chatter about her theatrical triumphs. When the play is over, Lord Fauntleroy's suit and hat are laid aside and left at the theater, and little Elsie Leslie Lyde is popped into her dress and cloak and driven home, to be put to bed cosily and comfortably in her pretty room. This room, which she enjoys in the mornings before she takes her walk, or her ride on her pony, is very sunshiny. A flood of light streams in upon Elsie's own particular corner, which contains her special belongings. There is her desk—the one given to her by a member of the Progress Club—such a pretty little desk: exactly the right height for a little girl nine years old. Upon it she has her own pens, pencils, and stationery, and paper for her dolls, too! These dolls are very important people in Elsie's life. On the upper shelf of the desk is a row of books which have been given her, many containing inscriptions from the authors. For instance, when Mark Twain sent her "Huckleberry Finn," he wrote on the fly-leaf that it was "one of the stateliest poems of modern times."

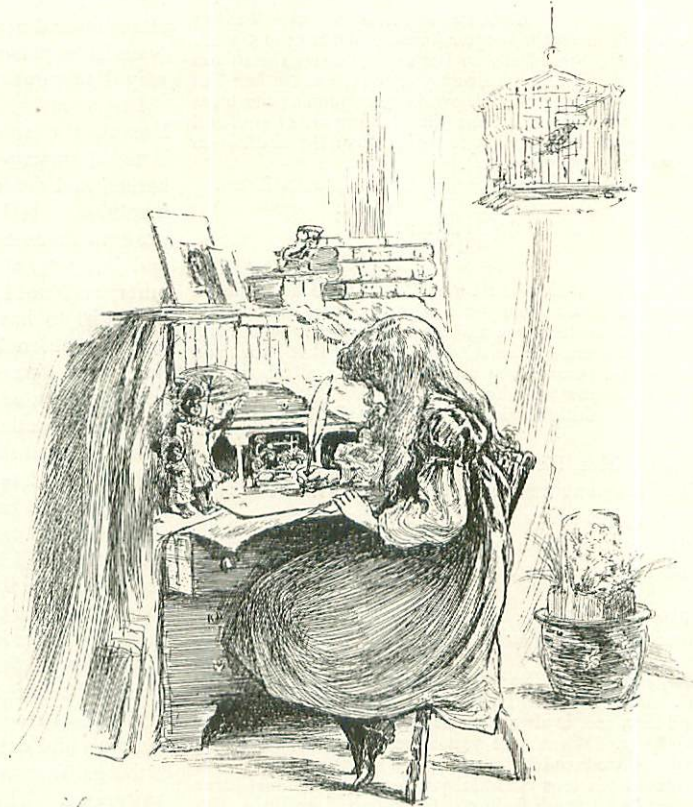
On this desk is her diary, which she tries to keep regularly; but it is hard work, as she has too

many interruptions and must attend punctually to her exercise, her rest, her meals. The dolls sit around the desk and are well cared for, and

whenever the busy little "mother" can spare an hour or has a congenial little visitor, she is glad enough to play with them. Not long ago one of the dolls—I suppose it must have been the favorite daughter—wrote a pretty letter to the Editor of ST. NICHOLAS.

To be sure, the dolly's mamma helped her to write it, but then the doll's letter sounded very like "the child," as Elsie calls her.

Here is Elsie's letter.



ELSIE AT HER LITTLE DESK. (DRAWN FROM LIFE BY R. B. BIRCH.)



SOME OF ELSIE'S DOLLS.



January 30th, 1889.

MY DEAR MRS. DODGE: You must not expect very much from my little daughter because she is only 5 years old, and she teased me so hard to let her write to you that I could not say no, and you must excuse her bad writing. I hope you will love her as much as she loves you, because she is all the time talking about you, and I hope you will get this letter because the child is so angsuch to have you get it.

Your little friend, ELSIE LESLIE LYDE.

And here is the doll's letter:

January 30th, 1889.

DEAR MRS. DODGE: I am Elsie's little dolly, and I thought I would write you a letter, because my mamma is going to write to you and I can put my letter in hers, and I just wanted to write to you and say that I love you very much, because my mamma told me all about you and I think you must be lovely.

Your faithful friend, ELSIE'S LITTLE GIRL.

Well, Mrs. Dodge's dog Fido answered it, and Mrs. Dodge wrote the following note with Fido's letter, which is given below. (The paper, you might like to know, has a pretty four-leaved clover in the corner for good luck.)

MY DEAR ELSIE: Your lovely letter and the very sweet note from your little daughter have pleased me ever so much. . . . I have a walking toy-dog named Fido, and he says he would like to write to your little girl. I hope you will not object to this, as he is a very good dog, and is always most polite to persons smaller than he is. When next you come to see me, I shall be glad to introduce him to you. He is not on wheels, but he moves his legs beautifully when he walks, and turns his head with much feeling. Good-bye, dear Elsie.

Your sincere friend, MARY MAPES DODGE.

And this is Fido's letter:

MY DEAR VERY LITTLEST MISS LYDE [that, of course, means Elsie's "daughter" doll]: Mrs. Dodge showed me the lovely letter you wrote her, and I am astonished that a little girl of five years can write so nicely. I am only Mrs. Dodge's little toy-dog Fido, and my paws are pretty stiff, so you must excuse my poor penmanship. Mrs. Dodge takes a great deal of pains in educating me, but as there is no Harvard Annex for dogs, I never can be very well educated. Still, a dog can be very agreeable without knowing Latin and Greek. I can nod my head and walk quite nicely. Can you? And do your eyes open and shut? Mine don't. I have a red collar with bells on it. . . . I wish you and I could go to the park together if your dear mamma is willing. Mrs. Dodge sends her love to you, and says she loves you because you are Elsie Lyde's little girl. Good-bye. I forgot to say I have to be wound up with a key. Do you? Good-bye again. Give my love to your mamma. Does she have to be wound up before she plays Lord Fauntleroy?

Your little friend, FIDO.

Perhaps I could do no better than to give my readers an account of an actual day in Elsie's life — a chance day I take as an example — one of many happy days I have spent with her; but it will let her young friends see something of the home life of

the child who is just now attracting an amount of attention and admiration that, were it bestowed on some little persons of my acquaintance, might be very dangerous and bewildering.

I have told you of Elsie's sunny room — there, late in the morning, she awakes. Meta, her French nursery-governess, appears, and Elsie is bathed and dressed and has a simple, wholesome breakfast. I think sometimes it must be hard work to dress her, for she is "on the hop, skip, and jump," wanting to take up this, that, or the other, and not liking a bit better than any other little girl to have the tangles combed out of her profuse golden hair. [And just here I may mention for the benefit of interested readers that Elsie never wears a wig. The shower of golden tresses which "Fauntleroy" tosses about are all natural, as she knows to her sorrow many a morning.]

As to her dress, she wears guimpes and Green-away gowns at home — simple, childish, and pretty, and she has a keen sense of color and tasteful adornment, though I have never detected any vanity in her. Naturally she likes to find something to make a train out of and to walk about "playing lady" — I should be sorry for her if it were not so!

After breakfast, she plays with her dolls or amuses herself at her desk. Meanwhile Elsie's mother has received the many letters which come for the child daily and which contain all manner of things, from requests for autographs to friendly invitations. The other day came a note which delighted Elsie. A lady wrote to say she had a new little girl — a baby just born — whom she had named "Elsie Leslie." Well, Elsie would like to answer everybody — to acknowledge every kindness — to show her real appreciation — but how can she? Writing is to her just what it was to darling Pet Marjorie: The "thoughts come but the pen won't always work"; and although Elsie has a loving, careful sister, like Marjorie's "Isabella," there is not time in the little life, nor would it be right, to allow her to undertake too much, especially as Elsie can do nothing carelessly. This sister, by the way, is so important a part of Elsie's life that no sketch of the little girl could be complete without tribute to her. Eda Lyde is all devotion to her little sister; proud of her, tender with her, but conscientious, and a capital monitress when needed. I am sure all of Elsie's friends will be interested to know that not many years ago, when Eda was a child herself, she showed such dramatic ability that her recitations became too popular among her mother's friends for the child's peace of mind. She *felt* too intensely what she recited. Her heart was nearly broken over the woes of the heroes or heroines of the poetry she learned and repeated, and so she was obliged to put it aside for a time, al-





*Little Lord Fauntleroy*

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF ELSIE LESLIE LYDE, BY G. C. COX.



though she since has been successful in dramatic work of another character.

Regular study just now is forbidden Elsie, as her mind is sufficiently exercised, but she is learning French with extraordinary rapidity and very little trouble to herself. So anxious was she to prove her progress to me that she wrote me a letter in French soon after the arrival of her governess, the ideas and writing all her own, but of course the French dictated. Indeed, I think I liked it best because of Elsie's saying in her conscientious fashion, "You know of *course* I did n't know the French words all myself. You see of *course* I did n't." In the letter she put in—"Elle [the governess] me dit comment écrire les mots."

Mid-day sees her in the park for a walk or at the riding-school for her ride, then home again bloom-



ELSIE IN THE RIDING-SCHOOL.

ing and gay. If there are visitors the little girl, approaching them, politely holds out her hand with her pretty "How do you do?" but she shows plainly how little any compliments affect her. She has her luncheon, more play,—and then comes the tug of war: the afternoon nap! Oh, I know all children will sympathize with her dislike of this! The other day visions of my own childhood arose as Elsie tried so hard to postpone the unwelcome hour! We had been having a good time, talking, and then came the order,

"Now, Elsie, time for your nap!"

Elsie is sitting on my lap. We have been discussing various things, and she remarks, "Oh—well—one moment—*what* were you saying about—'um—riding—"

"Elsie!" comes gently from her mother again, "You *must* go to bed now."

Elsie slides down reluctantly—reaches the door—goes down the hall—comes back.

"Well—see here—before you go—oh, I *know* what I wanted to say. Can you play any of the 'Pearl of Pekin'?"

I confess my incapacity for this performance, while Elsie hovers around the door.

"Well—I can—a little—just—oh, *please* let me do it!"

And a moment later she is at the piano, her head on one side and her left hand picking out one of the operatic airs.

"Now, Elsie, you *must* go."

"Well," very lugubriously, "I *sub-pose* so."

And the little girl disappears in Meta's direction, to awake two hours later, have a light dinner, and then drive to the theater, where, when she is not on the stage, she is occupied with some childish amusement in her large, comfortable dressing-room behind the scenes. But one great delight the child has, and she welcomes newly every time—the sight of children in the audience—the sound of their laughter—that delicious, happy ripple which, when I listen to it at "Fauntleroy," sounds in my ears like music—this pleases her exceedingly, for her sympathy with people of her own age is intense. Watch her at play with other children, and this may easily be seen. Talk to her own little friends about her, and you will find out whether it is the child or the actress they love most.

Everything she sees or hears interests her; but she likes to have *reasons*. She has them nearly always for what she does herself. She judges of people and things with quick intuition, and, like Fauntleroy, shrinks anxiously from hurting any one's feelings. Mrs. Burnett says that Elsie plays the part so well because of her natural resemblance to the character of the dear little lord; and just as he preaches his sermon of winning all hearts by love and faith—by gentleness and lack of guile—so does Elsie preach hers.

Certainly there are some children who come into the world with special *gifts* of character as marked as any talent. I am sure that Elsie's absolute simplicity, earnestness, and freedom from all affectation are the special endowment of nature; and because of this, we who love her and see her at home constantly, can hope much for her future. Her whole heart goes into everything done for and about others. No one can see her at her little desk writing a letter without realizing her anxiety to do *well* whatever is to be done at all; and her composition and fluency are extraordinary in spite of the funny spelling, which troubles her sorely and



therefore will soon be a conquered difficulty. A letter lying before me now reveals much of the sweetness of the child's nature, and I am glad to be allowed to include it in these pages just as she penned it.

"——: The ST. NICHOLAS, the Little Brownies, and Hans all came Monday afternoon," she writes, after receiving some books, "and they are just lovely and I thank you very *verry* much. I showed them all to Dearest she thought they were lovely. I am going to commence my letter to the SANT NICHOLAS. I do not have much time I take a long nap in the afternoon and that takes a little time pleas remember me to all of my new friends dose Mr. —— write poetry or storys I think he looks as if he might he makes me think of a verry verry dear friend that I love verry much he is the most trustable friend I have I write to him verry oftion and he never allows the bad spelling in my letters to interfere with his love for me and I hope it will not interfere with yours and that you will allways love your little friend,  
ELSIE LESLIE LYDE.

Watching her the other day at her diary it was not possible to avoid the comparison I have before suggested, between this careful, although joyous and gentle, little creature of our own day and the Pet Marjorie of long ago who wrote in *her* journal: "Isabella is teaching me to make *simme colings*, notes of interrigation, periods, commoes, etc., as this is Sunday I will meditate upon senciabile and religious subjects. 1st, I should be very thankful I am not a *begger!*"

Life so far has gone smoothly, gently, tenderly for Elsie Lyde — and yet — and yet! — As I watch her little flitting figure, her sweet, innocent face, as I hear her say over and again, "I am such a

*happy* little girl!" I cannot quite repress a dread of the shadows which must come into her life, the chance of some hard awakening from this exquisite faith in all things human and friendly, and Wordsworth's lines seem to fit her singularly well:

"Oh, blessed vision, happy child!

I thought of thee with many fears,  
Of what might be thy lot in future years.  
I thought of times when pain might be thy guest,  
Lord of thy house and hospitality;  
And grief, uneasy lover! ne'er at rest,  
But when she sat within the touch of thee —  
O, too industrious folly!  
O, vain and causeless melancholy!  
Nature will either end thee quite  
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,  
Preserve for thee, by individual right,  
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flock."

"*I long* to be an author," the child says eagerly, lifting her eyes from something she is writing. "Oh, I *wish* I could write!"

Who knows? Such a nature as hers has many possibilities. The future of this ardent, happy little life rests — mercifully — in other than the hands that give Elsie the world's applause. Who can foretell the developments of the active, clever little brain — of the almost pathetic instincts toward what is fine and high, generous and unworldly?

May those of heart and soul, as well as mind, be such that in the days to come, her mother, like Cedric's in the play, may thank God that the world is better because her little child was born.

Lucy C. Lillie.

