

## "LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY" AS A PLAY, IN LONDON.

BY CECIL W. FRANKLYN.



ALL the children who have read Mrs. Burnett's pretty story, "Little Lord Fauntleroy," will, I feel sure, like to hear how it was made into a play and acted in London. It happened that a gentleman was of the opinion that the tale would make a good play, and so he had one, written by himself, acted in a London theater, and he called it "Little Lord Fauntleroy." Now, Mrs. Burnett could not legally use the same title for another version, so she called her play the "Real Little Lord Fauntleroy." However, before hers was produced, the first play was withdrawn, because the English law said that it was not legal to act it; and every one was pleased that Mrs. Burnett should be able to play her own piece, made out of her own book, without any rival in the way.

Mrs. Burnett was very fortunate in getting Mrs. Kendal—a clever English actress, with children of her own—to see to the play being properly prepared, and to teach the part of the little lord to the child who was to act it. This was a nice little girl named Vera Beringer, who had once played successfully a small part in her own mother's play, called "Tares." The part of "Lord Fauntleroy" was a very long one, and Vera was only a very little girl; but she must have taken great pains to learn it, and Mrs. Kendal must have taken great pains to teach her how to act it.

At last, the parts were all learned, the actors had rehearsed till they were quite perfect, and so the day for the first performance came. It took place in Terry's Theater,—a pretty little theater, said to be the smallest in London, but holding a great many people, nevertheless. At night, ladies and gentlemen wear evening-dress in the stalls, dress-circle, and private boxes, which gives a very bright and cheerful appearance to the theater. "Little Lord Fauntleroy" made his first bow at a *matinée* performance, however, so ladies kept on their bonnets: and, to tell the truth, at times only little Vera's head was visible above certain high hats in the audience.

When the orchestra struck up, every one settled down to gaze and listen, and soon the curtain

rose, and we saw "Mrs. Errol's" modest little room. Such a pretty, winsome Mamma she was, too! dressed all in black, though, and in great grief because she had just heard that nearly all her money had been lost, and she would not be able to provide properly for her dear child. *He* did not feel sad, for he knew nothing about it, and was outside, in a field, running a race with some other boys. Mrs. Errol's servant, "Mary," wishing to divert her mistress, persuaded her to go to the window, and there they stood watching the race. When it was over, Mary gave a shout, for "Cedric" had won it triumphantly! Then he came running in—a dear little fellow in a white suit, with pale-blue sailor-collar, and big blue silk sash, and black stockings and shoes. He had a round, bright face, with intelligent eyes, and long dark-brown hair. Of course he was delighted over his success, and he had brought with him his two great friends, "Mr. Hobbs" and "Dick." Dick was played by an elder sister of Vera's, called Esmé. She tried to talk like an American boy, but did not succeed very well.

Well, Mrs. Errol and Mary went out of the room, and Cedric talked away to Mr. Hobbs and Dick as you can imagine; showed them the picture of the Tower of London, and learned that Mr. Hobbs had a very low opinion of the English nobility in general, and of earls in particular. So he was not sorry to retire with his guests for refreshment. Then "Mr. Havisham" was announced. He had come to tell Mrs. Errol that the "Earl of Dorincourt's" sons were all dead, that only one of them had left a child, and that the child was Cedric, who was now "Lord Fauntleroy!" On hearing this Mrs. Errol was at first happy to think that her little boy would be provided for, but, when she was told that she would have to give up Cedric, and never live with him any more, she wept so much that many of the audience wept too! She had to think very sadly and seriously before she could make up her mind that, since she could not educate him properly, it was right to part with him; but at last she consented, and, trying hard to hide her grief, she called in Cedric, and told him what had happened.

The first thing the little fellow could think of was, what *would* Mr. Hobbs say!



How delighted Mr. Havisham was with the bright, gentle boy! Here was a real little lord indeed;—and he heard about Cedric’s poor friends, and gave him money from his grandfather, of which Cedric quickly made good use, as you will remember.

When Mr. Havisham had gone, Cedric had much to tell Mr. Hobbs, and Mr. Hobbs said: “Well, I’m jiggered!” In fact, he was completely overcome on hearing that his little friend was to be an earl some day. I believe from that moment he began to think better of earls. Poor Mrs. Errol came in again, and Mr. Hobbs took his leave. Then the mother talked to her boy, explained that they would have to live apart, and tried to make light of it, but Cedric would scarcely be satisfied. Mrs. Errol told him, too, that every night and morning she would pray for him, saying, “God keep you all the night; God bless you all the day,” and she clasped him tenderly in her arms. The day had been so exciting, he said, that he felt quite sleepy. So his mother soothed and caressed him, and as he fell asleep, he murmured, “God keep you all the night; God bless you all the day!” And as the weeping mother bent over the sleeping boy, the curtain came slowly down.

When it rose again, we found the cross old Earl scolding his servant, and making things very uncomfortable. Mrs. Errol begged him to be kind to Cedric, whom she had just brought to the Castle; but the Earl would scarcely listen to her, and she went away in great distress. Then Cedric was sent for, and came sauntering in, gazing with delight at the pictures which adorned the walls, at the soft carpets, and quaint old oak furniture, and so up to the big arm-chair, in which his grandfather sat beside the fire.

The Earl was at once pleased with the appearance of the little fellow in dark-blue velvet knickerbockers, blue silk stockings, and cerise silk sash. He let the boy care for his poor gouty foot, and tell him about the dog. “I am not afraid of him,” said Cedric. “Are you?” And then the Earl had to hear about Mr. Hobbs, and you would have laughed at the way in which Vera imitated the exclamation, “Well! I’m jiggered!” So much was the Earl won by the boy, that he allowed him to write to the bailiff to say that “Higgins” was not to be turned out, and Cedric’s enthusiastic admiration for Lord Dorincourt’s generosity and goodness made the old man begin to wish he were what Cedric believed him to be. Dinner being announced, Cedric bravely assisted his grandfather, mopping his damp brow, and begging the Earl not to mind leaning on him, and explaining that any one would be warm in such hot weather! So they went out together.

Then “Minna” walked in, and when little

Cedric returned from the dining-room, she soon learned from him what had happened. But how the poor old Earl despaired and reproached himself on learning that Minna was his elder son’s wife, and that *her* child was therefore entitled to be Lord Fauntleroy! How sorry he was that Cedric was not the heir, and that this loud, vulgar woman was his daughter-in-law! He had to tell Cedric, of course, and Cedric said brightly that he did not care at all about being an earl, but was he not to be his grandfather’s boy any more? “Yes! always, always my boy,” said the Earl, laying his hand tenderly on the brown curls. And then down went the curtain once more, just when we saw that the hard, proud old man had been melted into love by the winning trustfulness and affection of a little child.

When the last act began, Cedric was dressed in a white riding-suit, and was talking to the groom about the “new boy,” and about Dick and Mr. Hobbs, who were expected every day. Just at



that moment they arrived, and Cedric’s mother, too, and the Earl was delighted to see her; and all were quite happy until the hateful Minna came in again, for she said she had brought “Lord Fauntleroy” with her. You may imagine every one’s delight when Dick recognized her, and proved that Cedric



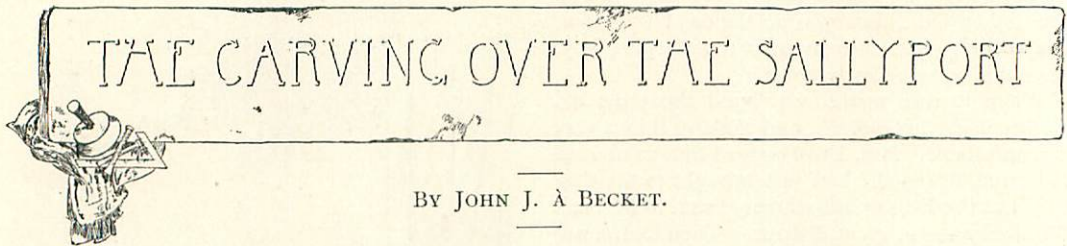
was Little Lord Fauntleroy after all! Minna was soon sent away, and the Earl begged "Dearest" to come and live with him and her boy—which she, being gentle and forgiving, gladly promised to do.

This was the end of the play, and the audience applauded till Mrs. Burnett bowed to them, and then they called for Mrs. Kendal, who appeared on the stage with Mrs. Burnett, and the two children.

All the actors played so well that it is difficult to praise one more than another, but you will like best to hear about Véra. She made no mistakes,

but said her words perfectly, and played so naturally that we all were charmed. So bright, so affectionate, so courteous, and so generous was her Cedric that we did not wonder that every one loved him. The children who were present were delighted: they wagged their little heads, laughed cheerily, and clapped heartily whenever they saw an opportunity!

So the play was very successful, and again, as in the beautiful story, Little Lord Fauntleroy won all hearts.



IN the beginning of the century it lay there, just as comfortable a bit of green cropping out from the gray water as it is now. That is, Governor's Island was as cool and pleasant a spot, so far as natural features go, as it is to-day. But there are many things about it at this present which it did not have then. The garrison quarters, and the neat houses fronting on the lawns, wherein the officers enjoy so much sweet peacefulness after training themselves for the terrible turmoil of war, are more numerous and more home-like than they were in those days.

The island has had many vicissitudes. One of them was the building of Fort Columbus. There was a fort there before,—Fort Jay; but the good people of New York thought this was not stout enough for a defense if the mother country, or France, were to send men-of-war sailing grimly up the harbor against the men of war who were stationed behind the stone walls of the island fortification.

Mayor De Witt Clinton, and then Mayor Marinus Willett, desired to do whatever was thought needful for the well-being of the city they governed, and they felt that the pretty island must be made useful

as a sentry over the town. The *New York Gazette* and the *Evening Post* (for there was the *Evening Post*, even then) could write such dreadful stories about the unprotected town, and would describe what the foe might do if the foe only wished to; and it was very blood-curdling, I assure you.

Finally, our good fathers and grandfathers became so worried about it, that what did they do but go down to the island themselves, strip off their coats, and help to build Fort Columbus. It was a sight to see!—those goodly old gentlemen puffing over their patriotic toil.

Even the learned professors of Columbia College laid aside caps and gowns and went to help rear the stout walls which were to shield the city's defenders. And the boys—the young fellows! It was a jolly time for them. Not sorry were they to quit thumbing their Homers and Ciceros in order to become patriots. They liked it. It was fun. Of course, to have those heavy blocks of stone to carry all the time, to dig and wheel and hammer every day, would n't have been so enjoyable. But it was only for a time that they must put their shoulders to the wheel and help the country; and they did it with exuberant, boyish enthusiasm.