

THE ROAD TO EMINENCE.

Let readers transport themselves to Canterbury in 1776, and let them enter a barber's shop, hard by Canterbury Cathedral. It is a primitive shop, with the red and white pole over the door, and a modest display of wigs and puff-boxes in the window. A small shop, but, notwithstanding its smallness, the best shop of its kind in Canterbury, and its lean, stiff, exceedingly respectable master is a man of good repute in the cathedral town. His hands have, ere now, powdered the Archishop's wig, and he is specially retained by the chief clergy of the city and neighborhood to keep their false hair in order, and trim the natural tresses of their children. Not only have the dignitaries of the Cathedral taken the worthy barber under their special protection, but they have extended their care to his little boy Charles, a dour, prim lad, who is at the present time a pupil in the King's School, to which academy clerical interest gained him admission. The lad is in his fourteenth year; and Dr. Osmund Beauvoir, the master of the school, gives him so good a character for industry and dutiful demeanor, that some of the ecclesiastics have resolved to make the little fellow's fortune—by placing him in the office of a chorister. There is a vacant place in the cathedral choir, and the boy who is lucky enough to receive the appointment will be provided for. He will forthwith have a maintenance, and in course of time his salary will be £70 per annum.

During the last fortnight the barber has been in great and constant excitement—hoping that his little boy will obtain this valuable piece of preferment; persuading himself that the lad's thickness of voice, concerning which the choir-master speaks with aggravating persistence, is a matter of no real importance; fearing that the friends of another contemporary boy, who is said by the choir-master to have an exceedingly mellifluous voice, may defeat his paternal aspirations. The momentous question agitates many humble homes in Canterbury; and whilst Mr. Abbot, the barber is encouraged to hope the best for his son, the relatives and friends of the contemporary boy are urging him not to despair. Party spirit prevails on either side,—Mr. Abbot's family associates maintaining that the contemporary boy's higher notes resemble those of a penny whistle; whilst the contemporary boy's father, with much satire and some justice, murmurs that "old Abbot, who is the gossipmonger of the parsons, wants to push his son into a place for which there is a better candidate."

To-day is the eventful day when the election will be made. Even now, whilst Abbot, the barber, is trimming a wig at his shop window, and listening to the hopeful talk of an intimate neighbor, his son Charley is chanting the Old Hundredth before the whole chapter. When Charley has been put through his vocal paces, the contemporary boy is requested to sing. Whereupon the clear-throated competitor, sustained by justifiable self-confidence and a new-laid egg which he had sucked scarcely a minute before he made his bow to their reverences, sings out with such richness and compass that all the auditors recognize his superiority. Ere ten minutes more have passed, Charley Abbot knows that he has lost the election; and he hastens from the Cathedral with quick steps. Running into the shop he gives his father one look that tells the whole story of failure, and then the little fellow, unable to command his grief sits down upon the floor, and sobs convulsively. Failure is often the first step to eminence. Had the boy gained the chorister's place, he would have been a cathedral servant all his lifetime. Having failed to get it, he returned to the King's School, went as a poor scholar to Oxford, and sought his way to honor. He became Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and a peer of the realm. Towards the close of his honorable career Lord Tentenden attended service in the Cathedral of Canterbury, accompanied by Mr. Justice Richardson. When the ceremonial was at an end the Chief Justice said to his friend—"do you see that old man there amongst the choristers? In him, brother Richardson, behold the only man I ever envied; when at school in this town we were candidates together for a chorister's place; he obtained it; and if I had gained my wish he might have been accompanying you as Chief Justice, and pointing me out as his old school-fellow, the singing man."

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d26:2w

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d27:4f

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