



CHAPTER I

Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him. He knew that his papa had been an Englishman, because his mamma had told him so; but then his papa had died when he was so little a boy that he could not remember very much about him, except that he was big, and had blue eyes and a long mustache. When his father was ill, Cedric had been sent

away, and when he had returned, everything was over; and his mother was pale and thin, and all the dimples had gone from her pretty face, and her eyes looked large and mournful, and she was dressed in black.

“Dearest,” said Cedric (his papa had called her that always, and so the little boy had learned to say it), – “dearest, is my papa better?”

Then suddenly his loving little heart told him that he'd better put both his arms around her neck and kiss her again and again, and keep his soft cheek close to hers.

Later he was told that his mamma was an orphan, and quite alone in the world when his papa had married her. She was very pretty, and had been living as companion to a rich old lady who was not kind to her, and one-day Captain Cedric Errol, who was calling at the house, saw her run up the stairs with tears on her eyelashes; and she looked so sweet and innocent and sorrowful that the Captain could not forget her. And after many strange things had happened, they knew each other well and loved each other dearly, and were married, although their marriage brought them the ill-will of several people.

The one who was the angriest of all, however, was the Captain's father, who lived in England, and was a very rich and important old nobleman, with a very bad temper and a very violent dislike to America and Americans. He had two sons older than Captain Cedric.

But it so happened that Nature had given to the youngest son gifts which she had not bestowed upon his elder brothers. He was brave and generous, and had the kindest heart in the world, and seemed to have the power to make everyone love him.

And it was not so with his elder brothers; neither of them was handsome, or very kind, or clever. It was very bitter, the old Earl thought, that the son who was only third, and would have only a very small fortune, should be the one who had all the gifts, and all the charms, and all the strength and beauty. It was in one of his fits of petulance that he sent him off to travel in America.

But when the Earl received his son's letter about his marriage he was furiously angry and ordered him never to come near his old home, nor to write to his father or brothers again. He told him that he should be cut off from his family forever, and that he should

never expect help from his father as long as he lived.

The Captain was very sad when he read the letter. He sold his commission in the English army, and after some trouble found a position in New York, and married. And he was never sorry for a moment that he had married the rich old lady's pretty companion just because she was so sweet and he loved her and she loved him.

She was very sweet, indeed, and her little boy was like both her and his father. Instead of being a bald-headed baby, he started in life with a quantity of soft, fine, gold-coloured hair, which curled up at the ends, and went into loose rings by the time he was six months old; he had big brown eyes and long eyelashes and a darling little face; he had so strong a back and such splendid sturdy legs, that at nine months he learned suddenly to walk; his manners were so good, for a baby, that it was delightful to make his acquaintance. And every month of his life he grew handsomer and more interesting.

As he grew older, he had a great many quaint little ways which amused and interested people greatly. He was so much of a companion for his mother that she