

Ernest, but nevertheless, he flung his arm round her neck, for this sister who was just one year his senior was very dear to him, and they had never been parted before. Constance stopped with one foot on the stairs and gave him a warm hug. "I've lots to tell you, Con, lots; but I'm hungry."

"Of course you are."

"Come, Ernest, my boy; I haven't seen you yet," said his father, taking him by his shoulders and drawing him to the window as he entered the dining-room. "Hold up your head, lad, and let me have a good look at you."

Ernest did as he was desired, and his truthful eyes were raised to meet his father's keen searching gaze.

"Have you come back, my own straight-forward, true-hearted boy?"

"Yes, papa."

"As fond of home as when you left it?"

"I believe you."