

## 14 Daughters of the Dominion

back, so you'll just have to wait till I come home again, then I'll get out my tools and prise the lid open."

Doss Umpey quickened his pace then, as if anxious not to be recalled, and was soon out of sight, hidden from view by the trees.

Nell heaved an impatient sigh, but busied herself with the dog; then, when she had made the poor creature as comfortable as she could, she went back to her secret avocations in the loft.

This loft was her refuge, the one place where she was secure from interruption. The roof was open to the shingles, so above, below, and at the sides it was all bare brown wood, without any attempt at adornment of any kind. Window proper there was none, but a hinged shutter in the western gable let in sunshine and fresh air, and, weather permitting, this stood open night and day.

There were no small prettinesses such as may be found in many a chamber belonging to girls who are poor. But, all the same, it did not lack individuality. It was scrupulously clean and well kept, while on a packing-case, standing near the open shutter, were arranged a small pile of books, a bigger heap of newspapers, a bottle of ink, a pen, and a few stumps of pencils.

Here every day Nell did her best to carry on her education, reading everything she could get hold of, and writing extracts from her scanty library on the margins of the newspapers, because she had no writing-paper or exercise books.

She had been hard at work here when her grandfather called her down to attend to the dog, and she went back to her occupation when he had gone away,