

In a corner, apart from all this bustle, stood a little group that seemed to have thought only for itself, and to be quite oblivious of the turmoil around. It was composed of three persons—a slight, sweet-faced lady, dressed in black, whose pale cheeks showed signs of much weeping, a stout, grizzled, honest-mugged man-servant, holding tightly to a bag that looked as if it might contain a goodly store of traveler's comforts, and finally, a boy of about fourteen years of age, who, as befits the hero of our story, must have a more minute description.

There was not very much of him to begin with. He stood not more than four feet ten in his stockings, and his weight could not have greatly exceeded one hundred pounds, all told. Yet one did not need to look at him twice in order to feel convinced that light and small as he seemed, he might prove himself an antagonist by no means to be despised in a fair fight. His frame was well knit and symmetrical; his breast full and deep, so much so, indeed, that at school he bore the nickname of "Dickey-bird," in allusion to his swelling chest; his features were regular and clear-cut; his naturally fair complexion was tanned to a light olive by constant exposure to the sun; his blonde hair curled crisply back from a broad forehead; and there was stamped upon his countenance, and expressed in every movement of his body, energy, resolution, and sanguine courage, to a degree that gave good augury for his future career.

He now, poor little chap, found himself to be in a sore strait betwixt contending emotions. He felt as keenly as