

"Who on earth's 'ma?'" repeated Mr. Jones, unable to take his eyes of the child.

"My ma. Down stairs.

"Do you live here?"

"Yes," said she, drawing herself up. "I am Miss May."

"Oh, indeed!" returned the young man. "Was not that a piano tinkling? It was the sound of that startled me up, and sent the stool off its legs. The first time I ever heard of a piano in a lawyer's office."

"It's mine, sir. Father bought it for me."

"Yours! Where do you keep it?"

"In the kitchen," answered the little girl. "We moved the dresser out into the back place, where the copper is, to make room for it. It's opposite the windows, and I practise at night when I come home from school."

"Why don't you give us a serenade in the daytime?" demanded young Mr. Jones, delighted at the amusement which appeared to be striking up. "We might get up a waltz when the governors are out."

Miss May shook her head.

"Father says it must *never* be opened till everybody's gone; the gentlemen would not like it. So ma keeps dishes and things atop of it all day, for fear I should forget and unlock it, when I'm at home from school at twelve o'clock."

"Well, this is a rum go!" muttered Mr. Jones to himself.

"How many brothers and sisters have you, child?"

"I have not got any of either. And that's why ma says she can afford to spend more upon me. I'm to be a lady when I grow up."

"Thank you, my little girl, for the information. You look like one. I should say you might be taken for an Arabian-Nights princess; only you are too smart."

The child took the mocking compliment to be meant in earnest. She bridled her head; her unoccupied hand stole up to twirl round the ends of her pretty ringlets. In the endowment of vanity Nature has been prodigal to many of us, but she had been remarkably so to Sophia May.

"Sophiar!" called out a voice, timid and panting, from the lower regions. "Sophiar! What is it?"

"Who is that?" quickly asked Mr. Jones.