

The last year had developed her greatly. She was still hasty, quick to resent offence or to laugh at what seemed dull and awkward. But the woman's heart within her had woken up, and told her, that though distasteful and contemptible in her eyes, her father's step-son might have feelings that could be wounded—a soul that could suffer.

"Don't talk nonsense!" she exclaimed, starting up and coming over to him. "I don't despise you! Your being Mrs. Acland's son is certainly no recommendation; but I don't mean to be ill-natured. You shouldn't mind me. I can't help feeling wild at times. Still I do not think you heeded what I said, or—or I don't think—that is I *hope* I should not have been so disagreeable. I will be better in the future. At least, I'll try. Shake hands!"

Young Cranston turned to her with a searching look in his steady eyes, and took the hand she offered. "I am quite ready to be friends with you," he said, "but I don't expect you will be able to keep your tongue quiet, and you can't understand——" He stopped.

"I am not so stupid, though!" said Marjory with a saucy smile and a pretty bend of her head to one side.

"You are a good deal too sharp," cried George. "I do hope you will behave yourself properly in future, and as things are not generally too pleasant, let us try to be happy together."

"Very well; while we *are* together. But oh! George, I cannot bear to think of your going away as a common sailor! It is too, too cruel." She threw her arms around his neck and strove to suppress the angry tears that would well up.

"Come, come, Marjory, don't be foolish, I'll be all right. I'd far rather be a cabin-boy than be in the office."

Dreadfully ashamed of having betrayed emotion before the boys, Marjory struggled back to tolerable composure as Mrs. Cutler came in to remove the tea-things. Then, with the laudable intention of making herself amiable, Marjory asked Dick what book he had brought home under his arm.

He opened it, and drawing a chair between her and George, displayed his new treasure. It was an old volume on architecture, with illustrations exemplifying the process of building in various stages, with diagrams and measurements.

Over this work Dick grew animated and even eloquent. The boys were soon talking cheerfully, but Marjory was silent and preoccupied. Her colour faded and her lips were tremulous. "George was going to sea as an apprentice, going to unknown hardships and horrors"—this was the sentence which kept repeating itself in her heart, while fragmentary recollections of newspaper paragraphs describing the terrible cruelty of sea-captains came back to torment her.

It was a relief when cook looked in to say it was time to turn off the gas, and she could shut herself in her room to cry freely.