

house, dressed in her best, where she not unfrequently made conquests of a certain sort,—that is, the men followed her about, appearing to enjoy with great relish her often caustic wit, if not directed against their own failings. Still, although considerably admired, Meg did not apparently come up to the domestic requirements of her masculine friends, for, having reached her twenty-fifth year, she was still unmarried, while most of the other girls had long been transferred from the houses of their fathers to homes of their own.

Surely there never had been a more exquisite morning. The beautiful words of Heber's hymn :

"All thy works do praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea,"

could scarcely fail to recur to any lover of Nature, for each and all were so beautiful. Summer was still in its infancy, but an unusually early season had already developed the beauty of the trees, which stood out on the land side against a sky of vivid blue, half covered with ripples of white like the sand behind the retreating tide ; while on the other the waters of the inland sea danced joyously in the beams of the morning sun, as if the shore for miles did not bear pitiful evidence of the fury of last night's storm. But Meg Brough was in no sentimental mood this morning, though sometimes she noticed effects of cloud and water with a singularly critical eye. She was in a "mighty hurry," as she would have said, having left undone some of her morning's work to row to the village that she might hear all the gossip about an entertainment of a more than usually hilarious nature, which had taken place there the night before, and to which she had been unable to go in consequence of the storm. Along the beach to right and left of her lay boats of various build, mostly with their oars inside. But of these Meg took no heed. She was scanning with some impatience the movements of a boat which danced up and down upon the waves a short distance out, entirely at the mercy of the fresh morning breeze. Upon the stern of this boat was painted in large white letters *Mern No. 2*, and its sole occupant, a man in a blue shirt, was indolently leaning to one side gazing into the water.

"Wonder who he is," said Meg to herself, with some impatience, "Ah ! must be th' English chap, I reckon ! Good

lack ! he ain't in want o' cheek, any how !"

For a minute or so longer she waited, as if the contemplation of his indolent figure afforded her some unwilling pleasure, then placing her hands trumpet-wise before her mouth, she sent a clear, strong "Hullo" across the water. A wave or two crept up upon the sand, a great white gull swept past, and then the stranger straightened his back, threw a glance about the horizon as if to see for whom the hail was intended, suddenly realized the situation, and turned his face towards the shore.

"Hullo," called Meg again, this time beckoning energetically with her hand, "you there—I want that boat ! Bring her in !"

For answer he took up the sculls, till then idly drifting alongside, and began to make for the shore. The last pull sent the boat's keel grating up against the sand, whereupon her occupant got up, stepped over the side, and taking the chain cable in his hand, faced the girl. For a moment they looked at one another, and during that time Meg somehow took in the fact that he was a gentleman,—she had not seen many in her life,—that his face was bronzed with exposure to the sun, his moustache fair and drooping, his eyes,—she did not know their colour until afterwards,—frank and manly, then he took off his hat, and said with a certain grave courtesy Meg had never seen before,

"I beg your pardon, I did not know this was your boat, or—"

"Neither it is," she interrupted, somewhat flippantly, "it belongs to the light-house out there,—and so do I !"

"Ah," he said, and his voice had the slightest suspicion of a drawl in it, "then I have the pleasure of speaking to Miss Brough ?"

"Commonly called Meg, or Brough's Daughter—yes !"

"Then, Miss Brough, will you allow me to say that I am glad to have met you at last," he went on, taking off his hat again. "I have heard a good deal about you !"

"About me ? Lord ! Who from ?"

"Mol—Oh !—Miss Finch I think her name is !"

"Then you didn't hear over-much good of me, I reckon," returned Meg, tilting her chin.

"Didn't I !" chaffingly, "How do you know ?"

She reddened, and looked defiantly