

"And when are you to go to sea, George?" asked Marjory, after some further talk, as she pushed away her plate.

"In about a month."

"But how has it been managed? You must pass an examination. At least, I know Mary Devonport, one of my schoolfellows, has a brother in the navy, and——"

"Ah, but I am not going into the navy. I am going as apprentice on one of Rennie & Co.'s ships."

"What!" with an indescribable quiver of indignation in her voice, "on board a trading-ship—you? Ah! I understand now why Mrs. Acland was so good-naturedly ready to forward your wishes. It will just suit *her* to have you at a distance and degraded to the position of a common sailor. Our obligations to your mother, Dick, increase every day," cried Marjory, her gipsy face lighting up with intense anger.

Young Cranston flushed a deep red, and he moved uneasily in his chair.

"For shame, Marjory," exclaimed George. "I don't mind. All I want is to go to sea. I can tell you the mercantile marine is not to be sneezed at. Besides, I can get out of it into the naval reserve, and become a R.N. officer. You needn't blaze away like that;" and he glanced at Dick.

"You are as weak as water, George," she cried contemptuously.

"I don't wonder at your being bitter," said Dick in a low tone; and, rising from his seat, he went over by the fireplace. "George ought to be in the navy; but I think your father has a right to part of the blame. Try to be just as well as indignant, Marjory! God knows if it could help I would turn out to-morrow and labour for my living with my hands. I'll do it yet! Sometimes I am stung beyond endurance by the contemptible position I hold, especially when *you* send your words like darts into my soul! If it were not that I have a liking for your father, and took the place he offered me in his office as the best way of lightening the burden to him, I'd not stay here. Do you think I have any satisfaction in stupefying myself over the old-world bosh I have to copy by the yard? Why, it is softening my brain. Or that I enjoy the food my mother begrudges me? Now that *you* have come back I despise myself more than ever. I feel an intruder more than ever. You have always shown the contempt you feel for me; but I don't complain. It is natural—it is almost justifiable, yet——" He stopped short and turned his face away.

Marjory was thunderstruck. Never before had the despised "Monster" spoken so many consecutive words to her. A rush of contrition flooded her impulsive heart. She suddenly remembered the curious unfriendliness of Mrs. Acland towards her first-born—the silent resignation with which he had endured the hard loneliness of his lot, and she felt ashamed of herself.