

"Was he a workman then?" asked Marjory.

"Yes, a mason; he is a master mason now. I am going to see him on Sunday."

"I believe, Dick, you would rather carry a hod than hold a pen," cried George.

Dick smiled, but did not reply.

"Mr. Acland and my mother out!" he asked after a pause.

George nodded. "They have gone to a big dinner."

There was another pause, during which Marjory played an imaginary tune on the table with her slender but, it must be confessed, red schoolgirl-like hands, and looked round the room with quick scornful glances.

"You haven't had many additions to your luxurious furniture since I left," she said.

The furniture consisted of strong, heavy deal chairs and a stout table. The floor was uncovered save by a square of oilcloth, from which all traces of pattern had long disappeared; a dislocated pair of tongs and an attenuated poker were lying within a fender too small for the hearth; a couple of shelves ran along the wall opposite the fireplace, which were crowded with books, writing materials, carpenter's tools, and a variety of miscellaneous treasures such as boys collect; under the curtainless window stood a long painted box, something like a seaman's chest. That was all.

"A little more tea, if you please," said Dick Cranston, handing in his cup. "I daresay it seems rather miserable to you? I suppose you had a very smart drawing-room at your school?" His voice was deep and rich, but still youthful.

"Smart! oh dear no; still it was fit for a lady to sit in. *This* is really too dreadful. I hope my father will allow me some comfort now I have come back."

"I suppose you are going to stay at home?" said Dick, stirring his tea.

"I am afraid so."

"Would you rather go back to school?" asked Dick, looking steadily at her as if trying to make her out.

"Do you think this house can be very delightful to return to?" asked Marjory with a quick grimace.

"No, I don't," said Dick heartily.

"Still, school was not paradise," she continued. "At least I shall read what I like and spend my time as I like down here. But you boys," with ineffable superiority, "must keep your things in better order now I am to share your barn or dungeon."

"Oh! you will be in the drawing-room, I suppose," said George.

"Not if I can help it."

"Don't give yourself airs, Marge," cried her brother; "I can't bear you when you are so conceited."

"It is an untidy hole," remarked Dick, casting a penitent glance at the confusion of the shelves.