

leave them. Will you sit down?" and he nodded toward a stool.

The gentleman remained standing, and with a pair of remarkably small eyes listlessly surveyed the roomy, bright pigeon loft, the birds at the open windows, and the wiry, athletic young figure of Titus himself.

There was a weary sneer on his face. Titus saw it, but unconcernedly went on with his work.

"What is the good of all these?" said the stranger at last, and he withdrew one of his hands from his pocket and waved it at the birds.

"O, I like to hear them laugh and talk and fight, just the way we do," said Titus, calmly.

"Laugh and talk," repeated the elderly man, and he straightened himself and looked like one trying to force himself to take an interest in something.

"Yes, sir, they have their language just as we have ours. Look at that young one there. He is crying because his stepfather is beating him. Here, stepfather, come away."

The man's head sank on his breast. He seemed to be thinking deeply, but Titus shrewdly guessed that his mind was not on the relations of birds to each other.

"Looks as if he'd had some trouble," thought the boy to himself, then he said aloud, "Come in here, pigeons," and he gently guided the two prisoners he had released from their traveling box into a large cage.

"I always put strangers in this cage for a few days," he remarked, in a cheerful, explanatory way,