

"Unhappy Monster!" put in Marjory with a comic look of compassion.

"Look here, Marjory, I wish you wouldn't call him Monster. Though he is always so quite and we used to think dull, I believe you hurt him with your scornful mocking ways. Really, girls are ever so much harder and crueller than boys! Dick Cranston isn't half a bad fellow, and not half such a monster as he was."

"Indeed!" said Marjory, opening her eyes. "Has he grown down then?"

"No, but he isn't such a bundle of legs and arms as he used to be; and he has been no end of a help to me in arithmetic and Euclid; he is ready to sit with me and help me every evening after the day's work at the office."

"Ah! yes, I can imagine arithmetic and dry stuff of that kind just suiting the Mon——Dick, I mean."

As she spoke, the object of her remarks came in—a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with a strong quiet face, fair-haired and blue-eyed. Thick, soft, downy moustaches, a shade lighter and more golden than his hair, already covered his upper lip and, added to his size and gravity, gave him the air of being two or three and twenty instead of nineteen. He was dressed in a suit of rough dark tweed, which had evidently been long worn and was covered with dust, and held under his arm a large, thin, shabby-looking book. He stood still for an instant, meeting Marjory's eyes with a frank smile, and colouring through his fair skin like a girl.

"Good evening, Dick," said Marjory civilly, holding out her hand without rising.

"How do you do?" he returned, laying down his book and advancing to take her hand. "When did you arrive?"

"Not quite an hour ago. What has happened to you? Have you been rolling on the road, or have you been getting yourself up as the dusty miller?"

"Oh! I didn't know I was in such a state. I stopped to watch the men dressing stones for that new church by Falkland Crescent. There was a lot of lime and stuff blowing about. I will go and brush it off;" and he left the room quickly.

"You are right, George," said Marjory with a nod and an air of superiority. "He is bigger, yet less monstrous, but nearly as shy and awkward as ever."

"Just you wait," returned her brother; "Dick isn't a bad fellow."

Dick soon returned, and drawing up his chair fell to on the cold beef.

"I met with a man I haven't seen for years," he said, after a silence of some minutes, "that's what kept me later than usual. He was very good to me when I was a little chap. I was always fond of seeing builders at work, and he used to let me try my hand at chipping the stones and laying the bricks."