

At first the talk was confined to Analytics, and Muirkirk, thinking that after all they would prove no annoyance, went deep into his Psychology. He had been at work only a few moments when suddenly his eyes left the printed page and his concentrated thoughts fled to the four winds. For he had heard his own name mentioned by the two beyond the bookcase.

"Mr. Muirkirk has been very attentive of late, hasn't he?" remarked one, apropos of some subject they had been discussing beforehand.

"Attentive! Well, if being with her every spare moment of his time is attentive, then he has indeed been so," said the other.

Muirkirk was quick to comprehend, and he flushed angrily. Had the two been only a couple of the fellows, he would have made them pay dearly for that speech. But since they were girls, he did the only and the wisest thing—he kept his peace.

"I wonder whether their friendship is as purely Platonic as they would have everyone believe?"

"On his side, no, I should say," replied the second. "But then on hers it certainly is not more. Anyone with half an eye can see that she is quite as indifferent to him as any of them, but he doesn't seem to see it. However, we'll have an opportunity to judge after the ball game this afternoon. I confess it is amusing to see anyone so strong as Mr. Muirkirk so completely at the beck and call of a single girl."

"You wouldn't say that if you were that other girl," said her companion, tartly.

"Now you're coming to the improbable, which is entirely beyond our discussion. I admit that you are right, though," said the second.

At that moment the clatter of the electric gong in the corridor warned them that the hour was up, and gathering their books together with a final hasty glance at the half-prepared lessons, they quitted the room.

Muirkirk did not move. Even his eyes remained fixed on a point in the distant haze. "So that was what they were saying. He was entirely under her thumb, with no will of his own." He smiled grimly and he came to a sudden resolve. He would show them all that very day that no one held sway over him. And so it was that after the game that afternoon, while his friends crowded about him with shouts and hearty wringings of his hand, he