she alternately dreaded and fired up against the workmen, who commented not on her dress, but on her looks, in the same open fearless manner.'

Here we're led to believe the girls are rough and forward- but this is Margaret's opinion. Likewise, the men commenting 'on her looks'- we're not given the exact manner of these 'comments'. From the workmens' POV they could just be trying to be friendly- this could be a class divide.

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