

And then there was a shriek of delight from a tiny thing perched up at the window, and a rejoiced shout of 'Lalla! Lalla!' She had caught sight of Harold. That made Faith smile, and put an end to the conversation. A few days after, she went back to Carnarvon with her babies.

Of course, Hope thought a great deal of what Faith had said, and felt a little awkwardness creep into her manner at times when Harold was present.

'Is she coming the heiress over me,' thought Harold, then, 'to put me on my mettle?'

Again, at other times she faltered and blushed when he spoke to her or called her by her name, and Harold, who was not dull, took count of that. She looked soft and pretty when she blushed too. She would be pretty if she wore nice colours, not that dull black or everlasting grey homespun. Once she was straightening wool, and put a heavy skein of crimson round her neck to keep it distinct from the rest. 'Hope, you ought to wear a crimson handkerchief; that wool makes you look quite pretty,' said Harold.

Hope would have laughed and told him not to talk nonsense in the old time, but now she only blushed more deeply, and shut the crimson skein in a drawer. She had caught one glimpse of his admiring face.

Harold divined that Faith Morris was 'against him,' as he expressed it; he had taken a kind of dislike to her from the first, calling her in his heart priggish, methodistic, and so forth. It would be a fine idea to pay her out for trying to oust him from his comfortable quarters.

Someone had told him that Hope was now worth something like a thousand pounds; and, true or no, he knew that as master of the English shop he would be occupying a very comfortable position. 'I think she'd have me for the old man's sake,' meditated Harold. 'Shall I try?'

But he was chary about that matter. All the blue eyes and pink cheeks, and curly girlish heads he had ever seen or dreamed of seemed to rise in a vision before him, and warn him not to commit himself—not

to tie himself to a girl who, kind and nice as she was, wasn't *his sort*.

And then there was the risk of her refusing him, for she had been rather stand-off of late, and very particular about Mari bringing her work into the room in the evening—a custom begun in Jonas's illness—when he occupied the room above, and knocked with his stick on the floor when he wanted anyone. Mari's deaf ears could catch the vibration of that sound when she was immediately underneath it. So Hope always bade her sit there instead of in the kitchen, thus leaving her mistress free to attend to the shop if needed.

Harold never much cared for Mari, and didn't like the idea of her expressionless doll's eyes being fixed on him as he talked to Hope. 'Suppose I said a word to draw Hope on, and that dried old seaweed looked up, I know it would put me out,' he said to himself pettishly.

But Hope heeded none of his hints to banish Mari.

'Let her be,' she said. 'She is very harmless, and I like to fancy sometimes that we may hear the stick once more.'

How long this state of affairs would have lasted it is impossible to say, but an event occurred which hastened the crisis.

Harold caught cold during a week of intense heat, slight inflammation of the lungs came on, and the doctor ordered him to be well nursed and taken care of, or—A long list of evils to be apprehended followed.

A great deal of care and petting now did fall to his share. All poor Hope's tenderest feelings were called out by this resumption of invalid work. She could not but remember how Harold had tended her father. 'I ought to be good to him,' she said to herself. And she was good to him. The doctor said he would be delicate all next winter. She was talking to him of the necessity for care in the cold weather, when the invalid answered feebly that she needn't worry about the winter, probably Faith—Mrs. Morris—would have turned him out long before then.

'Why?' demanded Hope, sharply. Did