

said Hope. 'Don't do those things, they really are not right. Poor Ruth!'

'Poor me!' returned Harold, shrugging his shoulders. 'I've got a hard mistress. Scolded to-day for selling goods, and yesterday for not taking pains to dispose of them.' He looked up comically at Hope.

'You deserved both your scoldings,' said the mistress. 'It was sheer laziness of you, letting old Hannah go away without her yarn yesterday. You knew there was a large unsorted bundle in the attic, and you could easily have fetched it for her, or called Mari.'

'It spoils my voice to have to shout to Mari,' was the answer, 'and then I couldn't sing to you in the evenings, Hope. What should you say to that?'

'Always ready with an excuse,' smiled Hope.

From which conversation it will be seen that the two young shop-keepers at Abermawr were on excellent terms with each other, Hope taking the upper hand, and regarding Harold always as a boy to be cared for, petted, and sometimes reprov'd.

There was a sort of idea kept up still of Harold moving on some day, going out into the great world, and, in view of this, Hope made him some new shirts, and knitted stockings for him at odd moments. Choosing the colours he fancied most, she knitted a good deal of pleasure into those socks, forcing him to take an interest in their progress, to decide on stitches and ribbings—he might just as well have them exactly as he liked, she declared openly. And Harold enjoyed the notice and attention; he was quite accustomed to receive attention of all sorts from any one and every one. Some people do come in for this sort of thing quite apart from their own deservings.

Even poor Jonas's worn face would relax into a smile when the two wrangled over a shade of wool by candle light, and Harold aptly quoted the old fable of the chameleon. The lad could recite and sing very cleverly, beguiling some of the sick man's weary hours by his voice. Hope would have done much more than sew for him in return for

this service alone, for her heart was still wrung with anguish at times when she watched her father, suffering continually, poor man, both in mind and body.

Harold was very good to Jonas; he had caressing ways with all helpless things, children and the sick, and, as we know, he liked to please people at all costs. So he picked up scraps of news to interest Jonas, not always sticking to the exact truth if the story wanted embellishing; he helped him to the best bits at meals—naturally, Harold himself taking the next best, for Hope didn't care for such things; and if the poor man chanced to speak irritably to him in a fit of pain, why Harold never noticed it. Oh, how Hope blessed him in her heart for his forbearance and gentleness! He had a kind heart, she would say to herself. And on Sunday evenings, when the young fellow, at Jonas's request, sang some of the sick man's favourite hymns, the rich voice sounding like an angels', Hope thought she might be pardoned for putting him on a pedestal and thinking him very good, as well as beautiful and fascinating.

Sometimes, however, a little word or look of his would jar on her quite suddenly, and then she felt as a child does who gathers a smiling rose and is pricked by a hidden thorn, as when one night, after singing 'Abide with me' most sweetly to Jonas, Hope found the boy at bedtime outside the house sauntering up and down in a chilly mist.

'What are you doing? Come in; you will take cold,' she cried, in her character of sister-mother.

'Oh, let me be a bit; I want a freshener after all that hymn-singing!' was the reply.

Hope felt a pang then. The hymn had seemed to carry her into a very holy of holies, and to Harold it was just 'all that hymn-singing!' And she had quite thought he had felt the charm of the lovely words.

Well, he was but a boy—a young man. They do not feel like women. So she excused him to herself.

Jonas could not do without the lad now. The sick cling to their surroundings more firmly than the able-bodied, who can seek