

to go back to home life without the home centre.

Hope saw the sea for the first time this year, and loved it; its changes, its width, and space, and light chimed happily with her eager nature. Whenever she could be spared for a few minutes she would run down to the stony beach, at the foot of Aunt Miriam's bit of garden, and there stand looking out over the boundless sea field. The fishing-boats going out with the freshening tide, the sunlight glancing on their white sails, and the voices of the men sounding clear and pleasant across the rippling water, were perhaps what most stirred her heart. Everything bright, and fresh, and moving; all to be hoped for in the future, like the girl's own life.

Faith loved the sunset hour best, especially after their mother's death. It was all so peaceful, she told Hope; she could quite fancy mother hushing little Charity up there, and the calm blue eyes looked tenderly into the rosy depths of the distant clouds. But Hope's eyes were full of hot tears. She could not answer, so Faith went on to talk of heaven, and mother, resting after her long sickness, and looking out for them all. These thoughts comforted Faith, but to Hope's restless nature pain and patience were alike unbearable.

'I believe you'll go and die next,' she said to Faith in a sudden outburst. 'Oh, I wish it was always morning! There! That's father calling; we must go in!' And off she flew, leaving gentle Faith a little puzzled—a little shocked at her sister's abruptness. Hope generally kept her tongue better under control than this, and let few people guess the surgings of that girlish heart.

When Faith reached the house, Hope was chatting quite cheerfully with her father and Aunt Miriam—her cheeks bright, her eyes undimmed.

'I thought she was just going to cry, down on the beach,' reflected Faith, quite puzzled.

Hope did puzzle people occasionally, and no wonder, for she did not understand her own self yet.

Aunt Miriam was old—there was not a

doubt about that—nearer eighty than seventy, but an active, energetic person, body and soul. She and a strong, silent Welsh servant-woman had kept lodgings and shop going all these years, and made both flourish.

'But I'm failing now,' said the old woman to her visitors; 'it won't be long before I go to sleep up yonder.' She pointed vaguely in the direction of the mountain burial-ground.

Jonas and his girls were all in her little sitting-room after shop hours. She evidently had an intention in addressing them in this fashion.

Hope changed her place, to stand leaning close against her father's chair.

'You seem hale enough,' said Jonas, feeling an answer was called for.

'Hale and eighty! what does that mean?' said Aunt Miriam, sharply. 'Jonas Halliwell, you are a sensible man; you can't live for ever, and you have two girls dependent on you. What have you laid by for them?'

Jonas started. Hope looked fierce at the unexpected question. What right had Aunt Miriam to disturb her father so?

But he took her hand in his as if to demand silence, and he answered gently, 'I keep up the insurance on my life, but it isn't a large sum.'

'No; and here is Faith not fit for a rough life, and Hope brought up to no trade, nor sent to service as her mother was at her age; people choose to be so soft with the children now, and then they die and leave them in the cold. Two hundred pounds on your death won't be a living for these girls.'

Jonas was silent.

'Now my shop is a good business,' she went on, 'and might be better if I had six hands instead of only two, and country life would be good for you too, Jonas. Your poor wife used to fret about you getting up on the winter nights for your tramp, and she not there to lap you warm when you got back to your room. Yes, we used to talk about you, she and me. It can't go on for ever, she'd say, and the girls, good as they are, can't look after him like I do. Don't