

the door of the little parlour, to get safe out of the children's hearing before risking speech, with that suffocation in her throat. Then when the door was closed, it came.

"We c-c-couldn't do it, Mo, we c-c-couldn't do it." Her sobs became a suppressed wail of despair, which seemed to give relief. Susan Burr had no other tale to tell, and was inarticulate to the same effect. They *could* not break through the panoply of the children's ignorance of Death, there in the very home of the departed, in the face of every harbinger of her return.

"Poor old M'riar! You shan't have the telling of 'em." Uncle Mo's pitying tones were husky in the darkened room; not quite dark, as the fog was lifting, and the Court's one gaslamp was perceptible again through its remains. "Poor old M'riar! You shan't tell 'em—nor yet Susan Burr. I'll tell 'em, myself." But his heart sank at the prospect of his task, and he was fain to get a little respite—of only a few hours. "Look ye here, M'riar, I don't see no harm to come of standing of 'em over till we know. Maybe, as like as not, we'll have a letter in the morning."

But Uncle Mo was not to have the telling of the children.

Once it was clearly understood that the news was to be kept hack, it became easier to exist, provisionally. Grief, demanding expression, gnaws less when silence becomes a duty. It was almost a relief to Susan Burr to have to be dry-eyed, on compulsion; far, far easier than to have to explain her tears to the young people. She went upstairs to them, mustering, as she went, a demesneur that would not be hypocritical, yet would safeguard her from suspicion of a hidden secret. She had been a long way, and was feeling her foot. That covered the position. Further, the children might stop upstairs a bit longer, if good. Dave was not to go out. Uncle Mo had said so. If Uncle Mo did go round to The Sun to-day, it would be after little boys and girls were abed and asleep. Mrs. Burr made her attitude easier to herself by affecting a Draconic demeanour. It was due to her foot, Dave and Dolly decided.

The unconscious children accepted the fog as all-sufficient to account for the household's gloom, and never knew how heavily the hours went by for its older members. Bedtime came, and the fog did not go, or, at least, went no further than to leave the gaslamp as Dave had seen it, just visible across the Court, or discernible from the archway at a favourable fluctuation. Susan Burr stepped round to Mrs. Ragstroar's, alleging anxiety