

looking very important, and punctually left the house somewhat later, having, as it appeared, done little or nothing.

Still, this very emptiness gave the place a charm to the children, who roamed about and considered every corner their own, naming them after their own fancies, or after places in the book they had last read. The Halliwells' own quarters were some rather dull little side rooms, looking on to a large paved yard. The children had their gardens in that yard, and it was a Paradise to them. Jonas had a little room of his own where he kept his naval treasures—his cabin, the children called it. Here he rather laboriously made entries in account-books, on rare occasions consulting a dictionary or a ready-reckoner, and coming out of it with his cap pushed well back and an air of relief. Sitting still was never Jonas's fancy, and he had very little of it. His duties chiefly concerned the great empty rooms. It was his duty to go all over the house once at least between midnight and day-dawn, and the earliest recollection of his children was hearing his steady tramp, tramp, through their dreams; and once, having accidentally left the door open on a cold night, Hope saw the dear face with the scarred cheek look in with a murmured 'Bless you, my girls!' the door being then softly closed so as not to wake the sleepers.

Hope put her head under the clothes and cried after that. She loved her father dearly always. They were a loving family, indeed, but this unsought revelation of his love touched her in a strange way, and opened a floodgate of feeling.

She was a sensible girl, and could have scolded herself for her silliness in 'crying for nothing.' She only hoped Faith was not awake, and she was not, so Hope dried her eyes and slept again too.

Jonas kept his girls as much at home as possible. They went to school of course, and sometimes were allowed to bring a little friend in to tea: but there was no running about the streets alone for these little maids. They lived as quietly and retiredly as if their big house had been a solitary dwelling in the country.

Father was altogether in the streets—a good deal of messenger work being connected with his employment, and dearly he loved the stir and bustle he found there. Hope enjoyed nothing more than going about with him, and learning to thread all the queer passages and cross-cuts with which the City abounds.

One day, as a little girl, she remarked, on learning a new short cut, 'Father, when you grow old I shall do you messages for you;' and, young child that she was, she noticed the fall of his countenance, and the tone in which he said, 'I hope I shall never be too old to do my work, my girl.' She never made that speech again, but she thought a good deal about the matter.

Father old! How could it be? He had grey hair, truly, but he was so strong, so active. He loved the sun so, tramping always the sunny side the street if he could; he, surely, could never be old, and feeble, and creepy, like the poor man at the crossing. She put the thought away; she did not even speak of it to Faith.

Faith was Hope's very dear sister and friend, but they had not any thought in common; and, strange to say, Hope's plans for the future were seldom linked with Faith, but always with her father.

'Hope is her father's girl,' the mother would often say; and Faith would look admiringly at her strong, bright sister starting for a walk with father, while she was more than content to stay at home and help her mother.

Into this circle little Charity came, as we have said. Born in the late autumn, she struggled on till the spring, and then the doctor suggested country air as the only hope for the fading babe.

'Aunt Miriam,' was the comment immediately made on this suggestion.

Now Aunt Miriam was Mrs. Halliwell's nearest and only relation, her mother's sister, living in a Welsh coast village, and keeping the shop of the place—the 'English shop,' as it was called, marking the owner's nationality. She let lodgings, too, in a quiet fashion, pretty nearly the same people