

black silk bibbed apron, but her hair was stiffly strained back, and gave her an artificial appearance. She had a sweet little face, round and babyish, with large dark liquid eyes, and well-cut expressive lips. Just now they were pressed closely together with a troubled, puzzled look; the child seemed to be fumbling in her apron pockets. Amy Glossop, a good-tempered dunce, had thrown both arms round her, but Mimi kept her head turned another way.

Rose Watson looked round at me.

"Oh, you've come, have you, Miss Tyrrel, to see your doll?"

She spoke in a whisper, but she might just as well have spoken out loud.

A bright flush spread over Mimi's face, and she pushed Amy away.

"I say, Miss Mimi, we shall have to teach you manners," said rough good-natured Amy.

Just then the tea-bell rang, and as they all passed out I found myself close to little Mimi; involuntarily I slid my hand down and took hers in it.

She gave a quick observant glance from under her long lashes, and almost, like Rose Watson, I shrank from her scrutiny, it was so searching. However, I suppose she was satisfied; the little plump hand was not drawn away.

I sat by Mimi at tea-time. She evidently noticed everything, but she scarcely spoke, and she never once smiled,—still she sat erect, and there was no look of shyness on her face.

Amy sat on the other side of her, and when tea was over she bent down, and looked into the sweet little face beside her.

"You're such a nice little doll, ain't you, Mimi?" and she tried to kiss her.

Mimi looked so distressed that I feared she would burst out crying and offend Amy.

But Amy was not sensitive; she wanted to kiss Mimi, and she kissed her, hugging her as if the child really were the doll she called her.

"Leave me quiet," said the little one in French, and her face was red with vexation.

There was a half-suppressed buzz of displeasure. "Little stuck-up goose!" "Cold-hearted little puss!" "Doll indeed!" came in very audible whispers, and the girls broke up in twos and threes, holding counsel together on their way to the school-room.

I took Mimi's hand again.

Ursula and Rose went on before me, and I could hear all they said.

Rose spoke first.

"Well, what do you say now? I tell you she hasn't any feeling in her."

"I'm not sure," Ursula's voice had a tone of doubt in it. "I don't think the little creature is natural yet, she looks as if she could be full of fun; I'm not sure that I should like fat Amy's hugs either, she's so stupid."

"Stupid! As if a baby like that ought not to be grateful for any notice."

"Hush!" Ursula looked over her shoulder and saw how near Mimi was. "Miss Pearson says the child understands some English. I wish I knew whether one ought to like her."

I too felt puzzled, but I confess I was disappointed in Mimi. I did not stoop down and kiss her, though I longed to do it; she would probably repulse me too.

"So strange,—one would have thought that here all alone among strangers she would have been grateful for any affection; a little creature like that cannot discriminate; so long as she is loved it cannot signify who the person is."

I felt sorry for poor untidy, good-natured Amy.

"Mimi is a cold-hearted little puppet after all," I decided, as I let go her hand, and saw her pass into the school-room with the rest.

PART II.

WE all breakfasted together, and I found my eyes straying after Mimi. She sat next Mrs. Smith, looking a picture of daintiness this morning. It was difficult to say what it was that made the difference between her and her English schoolfellows, but there was a striking difference between them. Mimi had such a finished little manner; she looked so exquisitely neat, and yet so graceful, it seemed to me that she was like a little fairy yacht among a fleet of fishing-boats. She talked and laughed with Mrs. Smith, and looked about her easily and naturally.

I was sitting next Rose.

"Well, Miss Tyrrel," she said presently, "I hope you have looked long enough at your French doll."

I blushed; it certainly was very absurd to be so taken up by this one child.

"Stay here till I come back, Mimi," Mrs. Smith said, and I was left alone with her.

"Good morning, Mees," said Mimi, and she looked up at me with her large dark eyes. If I had not remembered her treatment of Amy, I must have kissed her, she looked so engaging, her manner was such a charming mixture of frankness and exquisite good-breeding; but I resolved not to expose myself to a repulse.

"Good morning, Mimi." I nodded, and shook hands, and then I fancied that a dis-