

always shake down best when they are left to themselves?"

Mrs. Smith smiled; she often smiled at me when I argued.

"Not always," she said, and she went away.

I wrote on, and forgot all about the little French girl.

I was the only parlour-boarder then, and I lunched at the school-girls' dinner.

I noticed to-day that the girls did not rush off to croquet as they usually did when they left the dining-room. They stood gathered in a little crowd on the lawn, in eager discussion.

"Some nonsense or other," I thought. I had forgotten the expected arrival of the French child, and I rather looked down on school-girls, and considered myself a woman beside them, and I had put "The Magic Ring" in my pocket, and was thirsting to be alone in a snug summer-house, behind the shrubbery. I am quite sure anybody who is reading "The Magic Ring" for the first time at seventeen will know how I felt, and how very trifling and ridiculous the ideas of the little crowd of school-girls seemed to me.

I sat down, and found my place, and then such a buzz of excitement reached me that my indifference was stirred.

"Perhaps some one is hurt," thought I, and I went to a gap in the shrubbery which shut off the summer-house from the lawn. The buzz had suddenly hushed, the girls stood still, looking towards the house and at Mrs. Smith, who came from it leading a little girl by the hand.

A little girl! a little monkey I thought her in that first glance. I could not make out her face, but she looked exactly like one of the children one sees in a fashion-book—from her fanciful hat to her high tasselled black morocco boots.

"And Mrs. Smith wants me to act show-man to a little conceited puppet like that! No, really that sort of thing is quite out of my line."

Mrs. Smith and her charge went back to the house again, and just as the girls were rushing off to croquet they spied me out.

"Oh! Miss Tyrrel, did you ever?"

"Isn't she a little stuck-up thing?"

"I tell you what"—Rose Watson was head-girl this half, and was as much inclined to plume herself on her new position as some others are on their new clothes—"she's nothing but a doll; she has no more feeling in her than dolls have. Why, a new girl is always shy, but that mite of a creature held up her head and looked at us all round: I believe

she knows exactly how we are each of us dressed; I felt her look me all over—such insolence in the little monkey!"

Rose was tall and very awkward; her face flushed while she spoke; in her heart she envied the French child's easy self-possession.

I smiled. "What is the child's name?"

"Emilie de Champ-Louis, but she is to be called Mimi. Isn't it a silly name?" said Ursula Swayne—the clever girl of the school, though she was only a younger one.

"I think Mimi is a pretty name," I said; "and it is easy for you all to pronounce;"—here I saw a universal smile of derision—"but Rose, when you have lived abroad a little you will notice at once the marked distinction between French children and English ones: they are never shy—at least they never seem so—because they have no false shame."

I thought myself very kind in thus enlightening Rose. She only burst out laughing.

"Oh, Miss Tyrrel, you are quite wrong, quite; the French are false altogether, they have no sincerity. I wish you joy of your French doll.—Come along, girls."

The girls as a matter of course echoed Rose's laughter, and followed her to the croquet-ground.

I forgot all about "The Magic Ring."

"Poor little Mimi! I'm afraid she won't be happy. How prejudiced these children are. I shall go in to school-room tea this evening, and see how they treat her."

By fits and starts I was popular in the school-room, and occasionally I condescended to drink a cup of tea with the girls before dinner.

I suppose Mrs. Smith had accepted my rebuff as final. She did not try again to interest me in little Mimi.

"How very quiet they are," thought I, at the door of a pleasant bow-windowed room looking on the garden. This was a sort of indoor play-place, a room where consultations were held about charades and croquet-matches, where the chief amusements were hatched and planned, and here the girls always assembled before the bell summoned them to tea.

I opened the door and stood still, looking at the group in the middle of the room.

Rose Watson leaned against the wall with half-closed eyes in disgusted silence; Ursula Swayne held back with a half-amused smile on her clever flexible mouth, but the rest clustered closely round the little French girl.

She looked simple enough now, so far as dress went, in her little foulard frock and