

willing and very strong, a most useful adherent, and yet Rose did not want to offend Ursula.

"If Amy leaves Mimi alone, you must do the same, Ursula. We can't have you sentimentalising with Mimi, and making her think herself a victim, when she's only a spoiled, stuck-up doll."

Ursula cast a wistful look at the gap, but she was no match in strength for Amy, and she followed Rose.

At seventeen girls are a hard-hearted race, and now, though I was longing to comfort Mimi, I said to myself that it was too hot to stay indoors.

"I can read 'Sintram' just as well in the summer-house."

But the summer-house was empty. I went on reading "Sintram," but I was listening instead of trying to understand it. Presently I heard a sob; one of those deep-drawn quivering sounds that thrills through you, and takes pain along with it.

Just outside, between the summer-house and a huge pollard-oak under which it stood, was Mimi. Her arms clasped the rough bark, and her face was pressed against it.

"Maman! Maman!" that was all her little cry, and then the deep-drawn quivering sob.

"Mimi." I touched her hand. She looked round quickly, and showed me her great dark eyes brimming with tears, and her poor little face puckered up with sorrow; only just a glance—she buried her face again and kept in her sobs.

"What is it, Mimi?" I spoke in French. "Amy only means to be kind to you. Don't you like to be kissed?"

Mimi did not answer, but she sobbed again.

"The little English girls like to be kissed, and poor Amy thought she was being kind to you. She kissed you as if you were her little sister."

Mimi let go the tree; she turned round and faced me with great reproachful eyes. "No, Mees, she kiss me like a doll—like a plaything."

I was puzzled, so I waited, for Mimi's face was full of indignation.

"I do not want to be a little English girl. Papa said I was to become a little English girl at Mrs. Smith's, and I will not. I will go back. English girls are so unpolite—so harsh; English people do not love each other. No," she stamped her little foot, "I will go back."

I began to understand.

"But, Mimi, why do you say we are impolite? The school-girls are perhaps, but

surely Mrs. Smith, and the governesses, and I have not been rude."

Mimi flushed up to the forehead.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, but it is you I think of in this moment."

My ears tingled; I began to think Rose's estimate had been near the truth: Mimi must, indeed, be stuck-up if she ventured to call me rude.

"What was I rude about, pray?" I said stiffly.

Mimi smiled.

"Ah, Mademoiselle is angry, but I must tell the truth if she asks it. Well, then, Mademoiselle, I said to you, 'Good morning, Mees;' if I say this in France, a French young lady of your age takes me in her arms and embraces me, and says to me so many tender words; and you, Mademoiselle, you make to me a little cold shake hands."

I got red now.

"Why, Mimi, I wanted to kiss you, and I saw you push Amy away; I thought you would push me away too."

Mimi laughed merrily; the tears were not dry on her cheeks, but she looked as blithe as a butterfly. She came close to me, and looked searchingly into my face.

"Mademoiselle should have been more wise. It is possible I never could like that Amy should kiss me; she is greedy and ugly, and she has such—oh, so untidy hands, with cuts, and scratches, and long nails! Ah!" Mimi shrugged her little shoulders with disgust. "But," she put her head on one side reflectively, "if she had kissed me for love, *bon!* I would still have let her do it, but it is quite different for amusement."

"But, Mimi," I argued, "how can you know whether people kiss you for love or not?"

"But—yes—yes—yes, Mademoiselle, it is not possible to mistake. Mademoiselle herself is not very tall, and how would she like that a big fat woman should take her up and carry her like a doll, and kiss her hard at pleasure? I cannot—I will not," she said impetuously; "I will tell to Mrs. Smith that I go home to-morrow."

"You dear little thing." I stooped down and kissed the hot flushed cheek, and Mimi nestled herself into my arms at once, and let me hug her like a baby. "You don't understand English girls, darling," I said; "they are full of love and affection, but they are rough in showing it. Let them love you in their own way, Mimi, and you will soon be happy."

"No—no." Mimi gave another quivering sob, and nestled still closer in my arms.