

Chapter III - The Playmates

Mr Home stayed two days. During his visit he could not be prevailed on to go out: he sat all day long by the fireside, sometimes silent, sometimes receiving and answering Mrs Bretton's chat, which was just of the proper sort for a man in his morbid mood - not over-sympathetic, yet not too uncongenial, sensible; and even with a touch of the motherly - she was sufficiently his senior to be permitted this touch.

As to Paulina, the child was at once happy and mute, busy and watchful. Her father frequently lifted her to his knee; she would sit there till she felt or fancied he grew restless; then it was - 'Papa, put me down; I shall tire you with my weight.'

And the mighty burden slid to the rug, and establishing itself on carpet or stool just at 'papa's' feet, the white work-box and the scarlet-speckled handkerchief came into play. This handkerchief, it seems, was intended as a keepsake for 'papa,' and must be finished before his departure; consequently the demand on the sempstress's industry (she accomplished about a score of stitches in half-an-hour) was stringent.

The evening, by restoring Graham to the maternal roof (his days were passed at school), brought us an accession of animation - a quality not diminished by the nature of the scenes pretty sure to be enacted between him and Miss Paulina.

A distant and haughty demeanour had been the result of the indignity put upon her the first evening of his arrival: her usual answer, when he addressed her, was - 'I can't attend to you; I have other things to think about.' Being implored to state *what* things:

'Business.'

Graham would endeavour to seduce her attention by opening his desk and displaying its multifarious contents: seals, bright sticks of wax, pen-knives, with a miscellany of engravings - some of them gaily coloured - which he had amassed from time to time. Nor was this powerful temptation wholly unavailing: her eyes, furtively raised from her work, cast many a peep towards the writing-table, rich in scattered pictures. An etching of a child playing with a Blenheim spaniel happened to flutter to the floor.

'Pretty little dog!' said she, delighted.

Graham prudently took no notice. Ere long, stealing from her corner, she approached to examine the treasure more closely. The dog's great eyes and long ears, and the child's hat and feathers, were irresistible.

'Nice picture!' was her favourable criticism.

'Well - you may have it,' said Graham.

She seemed to hesitate. The wish to possess was strong, but to accept would be a compromise of dignity. No. She put it down and turned away.

'You won't have it, then, Polly?'

'I would rather not, thank you.'

'Shall I tell you what I will do with the picture if you refuse it?'

She half turned to listen.

'Cut it into strips for lighting the taper.'

'No!'

'But I shall.'

'Please - don't.'

Graham waxed inexorable on hearing the pleading tone; he took the scissors from his mother's work-basket.

'Here goes!' said he, making a menacing flourish. 'Right through Fido's head, and splitting little Harry's nose.'

'No! No! NO!'

'Then come to me. Come quickly, or it is done.'

She hesitated, lingered, but complied.

'Now, will you have it?' he asked, as she stood before him.

'Please.'

'But I shall want payment.'

'How much?'

'A kiss.'

'Give the picture first into my hand.'

Polly, as she said this, looked rather faithless in her turn. Graham gave it. She absconded a debtor, darted to her father, and took refuge on his knee. Graham rose in mimic wrath and followed. She buried her face in Mr Home's waistcoat.

'Papa - papa - send him away!'

'I'll not be sent away,' said Graham.

With face still averted, she held out her hand to keep him off

'Then, I shall kiss the hand,' said he; but that moment it became a miniature fist, and dealt him payment in a small coin that was not kisses.

Graham - not failing in his way to be as wily as his little playmate - retreated apparently quite discomfited; he flung himself on a sofa, and resting his head against the cushion, lay like one in pain. Polly, finding him silent, presently peeped at him. His eyes and face were covered with his hands. She turned on her father's knee, and gazed at her foe anxiously and long. Graham groaned.

'Papa, what is the matter?' she whispered.

'You had better ask him, Polly.'

'Is he hurt?' (groan second.)

'He makes a noise as if he were,' said Mr Home.

'Mother,' suggested Graham, feebly, 'I think you had better send for the doctor. Oh my eye!' (renewed silence, broken only by sighs from Graham.) 'If I were to become blind - - ?' suggested this last.

His chastiser could not bear the suggestion. She was beside him directly.

'Let me see your eye: I did not mean to touch it, only your mouth; and I did not think I hit so *very* hard.'

Silence answered her. Her features worked, - 'I am sorry; I am sorry!'

Then succeeded emotion, faltering; weeping.

'Have done trying that child, Graham,' said Mrs Bretton.

'It is all nonsense, my pet,' cried Mr Home.

And Graham once more snatched her aloft, and she again punished him; and while she pulled his lion's locks, termed him - 'The naughtiest, rudest, worst, untruest person that ever was.'

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On the morning of Mr Home's departure, he and his daughter had some conversation in a window-recess by themselves; I heard part of it.

'Couldn't I pack my box and go with you, papa?' she whispered earnestly.

He shook his head.

'Should I be a trouble to you?'

'Yes, Polly.'

'Because I am little?'

'Because you are little and tender. It is only great, strong people that should travel. But don't look sad, my little girl; it breaks my heart. Papa, will soon come back to his Polly.'

'Indeed, indeed, I am not sad, scarcely at all.'

'Polly would be sorry to give papa pain; would she not?'

'Sorrer than sorry.'

'Then Polly must be cheerful: not cry at parting; not fret afterwards. She must look forward to meeting again, and try to be happy meanwhile. Can she do this?'

'She will try.'

'I see she will. Farewell, then. It is time to go.'

'*Now?* - just *now?*'

'Just now.'

She held up quivering lips. Her father sobbed, but she, I remarked, did not. Having put her down, he shook hands with the rest present, and departed.

When the street-door closed, she dropped on her knees at a chair with a cry - 'Papa!'

It was low and long; a sort of 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' During an ensuing space of some minutes, I perceived she endured agony. She went through, in that brief interval of her infant life, emotions such as some never feel; it was in her constitution: she would have more of such instants if she lived. Nobody spoke. Mrs Bretton, being a mother, shed a tear or two. Graham, who was writing, lifted up his eyes and gazed at her. I, Lucy Snowe, was calm.

The little creature, thus left unharassed, did for herself what none other could do - contended with an intolerable feeling; and, ere long, in some degree, repressed it. That day she would accept solace from none; nor the next day: she grew more passive afterwards.

On the third evening, as she sat on the floor, worn and quiet, Graham, coming in, took her up gently, without a word. She did not resist: she rather nestled in his arms, as if weary. When he sat down, she laid her head against him; in a few minutes she slept; he carried her upstairs to bed. I was not surprised that, the next morning, the first thing she demanded was, 'Where is Mr Graham?'

It happened that Graham was not coming to the breakfast-table; he had some exercises to write for that morning's class, and had requested his mother to send a cup of tea into the study. Polly volunteered to carry it: she must be busy about something, look after somebody. The cup was entrusted to her; for, if restless, she was also careful. As the study was opposite the breakfast-room, the doors facing across the passage, my eye followed her.

'What are you doing?' she asked, pausing on the threshold.

'Writing,' said Graham.

'Why don't you come to take breakfast with your mamma?'

'Too busy.'

'Do you want any breakfast?'

'Of course.'

'There, then.'

And she deposited the cup on the carpet, like a jailor putting a prisoner's pitcher of water through his cell-door, and retreated. Presently she returned.

'What will you have besides tea - what to eat?'

'Anything good. Bring me something particularly nice; that's a kind little woman.'

She came back to Mrs Bretton.

'Please, ma'am, send your boy something good.'

'You shall choose for him, Polly; what shall my boy have?'

She selected a portion of whatever was best on the table; and, ere long, came back with a whispered request for some marmalade, which was not there. Having got it, however, (for Mrs Bretton refused the pair nothing), Graham was shortly after heard lauding her to the skies; promising that, when he had a house of his own, she should be his housekeeper, and perhaps - if she showed any culinary genius - his cook; and, as she did not return, and I went to look after her, I found Graham and her breakfasting *tete-a-tete* - she standing at his elbow, and sharing his fare: excepting the marmalade, which she delicately refused to touch, lest, I suppose, it should appear that she had procured it as much on her own account as his. She constantly evinced these nice perceptions and delicate instincts.

The league of acquaintanceship thus struck up was not hastily dissolved; on the contrary, it appeared that time and circumstances served rather to cement than loosen it. Ill-assimilated as the two were in age, sex, pursuits, &c., they somehow found a great deal to say to each other. As to Paulina, I observed that her little character never properly came out, except with young Bretton. As she got settled, and accustomed to the house, she proved tractable enough with Mrs Bretton; but she would sit on a stool at that lady's feet all day long, learning her task, or sewing, or drawing figures with a pencil on a slate, and never kindling once to originality, or showing a single gleam of the peculiarities of her nature. I ceased to watch her under such circumstances: she was not interesting. But the moment Graham's knock sounded of an evening, a change occurred; she was instantly at the head of the staircase. Usually her welcome was a reprimand or a threat.

'You have not wiped your shoes properly on the mat. I shall tell your mamma.'

'Little busybody! Are you there?'

'Yes - and you can't reach me: I am higher up than you' (peeping between the rails of the banister; she could not look over them).

'Polly!'

'My dear boy!' (such was one of her terms for him, adopted in imitation of his mother.)

'I am fit to faint with fatigue,' declared Graham, leaning against the passage-wall in seeming exhaustion. 'Dr. Digby' (the headmaster) 'has quite knocked me up with overwork. Just come down and help me to carry up my books.'

'Ah! you're cunning!'

'Not at all, Polly - it is positive fact. I'm as weak as a rush. Come down.'

'Your eyes are quiet like the cat's, but you'll spring.'

'Spring? Nothing of the kind: it isn't in me. Come down.'

'Perhaps I may - if you'll promise not to touch - not to snatch me up, and not to whirl me round.'

'? I couldn't do it!' (sinking into a chair.)

'Then put the books down on the first step, and go three yards off'

This being done, she descended warily, and not taking her eyes from the feeble Graham. Of course her approach always galvanized him to new and spasmodic life: the game of romps was sure to be exacted. Sometimes she would be angry; sometimes the matter was allowed to pass smoothly, and we could hear her say as she led him up-stairs: 'Now, my dear boy, come and take your tea - I am sure you must want something.'

It was sufficiently comical to observe her as she sat beside Graham, while he took that meal. In his absence she was a still personage, but with him the most officious, fidgety little body possible. I often wished she would mind herself and be tranquil; but no - herself was forgotten in him: he could not be sufficiently well waited on, nor carefully enough looked after; he was more than the Grand Turk in her estimation. She would gradually assemble the various plates before him, and, when one would suppose all he could possibly desire was within his reach, she would find out something else: 'Ma'am,' she would whisper to Mrs Bretton, - 'perhaps your son would like a little cake - sweet cake, you know - there is some in there' (pointing to the sideboard cupboard). Mrs Bretton, as a rule, disapproved of sweet cake at tea, but still the request was urged, - 'One little piece - only for

him - as he goes to school: girls - such as me and Miss Snowe - don't need treats, but *he* would like it.'

Graham did like it very well, and almost always got it. To do him justice, he would have shared his prize with her to whom he owed it; but that was never allowed: to insist, was to ruffle her for the evening. To stand by his knee, and monopolize his talk and notice, was the reward she wanted - not a share of the cake.

With curious readiness did she adapt herself to such themes as interested him. One would have thought the child had no mind or life of her own, but must necessarily live, move, and have her being in another: now that her father was taken from her, she nestled to Graham, and seemed to feel by his feelings: to exist in his existence. She learned the names of all his schoolfellows in a trice: she got by heart their characters as given from his lips: a single description of an individual seemed to suffice. She never forgot, or confused identities: she would talk with him the whole evening about people she had never seen, and appear completely to realise their aspect, manners, and dispositions. Some she learned to mimic: an under-master, who was an aversion of young Bretton's, had, it seems, some peculiarities, which she caught up in a moment from Graham's representation, and rehearsed for his amusement; this, however, Mrs Bretton disapproved and forbade.

The pair seldom quarrelled; yet once a rupture occurred, in which her feelings received a severe shock.

One day Graham, on the occasion of his birthday, had some friends - lads of his own age - to dine with him. Paulina took much interest in the coming of these friends; she had frequently heard of them; they were amongst those of whom Graham oftenest spoke. After dinner, the young gentlemen were left by themselves in the dining-room, where they soon became very merry and made a good deal of noise. Chancing to pass through the hall, I found Paulina sitting alone on the lowest step of the staircase, her eyes fixed on the glossy panels of the dining-room door, where the reflection of the hall-lamp was shining; her little brow knit in anxious, meditation.

'What are you thinking about, Polly?'

'Nothing particular; only I wish that door was clear glass - that I might see through it. The boys seem very cheerful, and I want to go to them: I want to be with Graham, and watch his friends.'

'What hinders you from going?'

'I feel afraid: but may I try, do you think? May I knock at the door, and ask to be let in?'

I thought perhaps they might not object to have her as a playmate, and therefore encouraged the attempt.

She knocked - too faintly at first to be heard, but on a second essay the door unclosed; Graham's head appeared; he looked in high spirits, but impatient.

'What do you want, you little monkey?'

'To come to you.'

'Do you indeed? As if I would be troubled with you! Away to mamma and Mistress Snowe, and tell them to put you to bed.' The auburn head and bright flushed face vanished, - the door shut peremptorily. She was stunned.

'Why does he speak so? He never spoke so before,' she said in consternation. 'What have I done?' 'Nothing, Polly; but Graham is busy with his school-friends.'

'And he likes them better than me! He turns me away now they are here!'

I had some thoughts of consoling her, and of improving the occasion by inculcating some of those maxims of philosophy whereof I had ever a tolerable stock ready for application. She stopped me, however, by putting her fingers in her ears at the first words I uttered, and then lying down on the mat with her face against the flags; nor could either Warren or the cook root her from that position: she was allowed to lie, therefore, till she chose to rise of her own accord.

Graham forgot his impatience the same evening, and would have accosted her as usual when his friends were gone, but she wrenched herself from his hand; her eye quite flashed; she would not bid him good-night; she would not look in his face. The next day he treated her with indifference, and she grew like a bit of marble. The day after, he teased her to know what was the matter; her lips would not unclose. Of course he could not feel real anger on his side: the match was too unequal in every way; he tried soothing and coaxing. 'Why was she so angry? What had he done?' By-and-by tears answered him; he petted her, and they were friends. But she was one on whom such incidents were not lost: I remarked that never after this rebuff did she seek him, or follow him, or in any way solicit his notice. I told her once to carry a book or some other article to Graham when he was shut up in his study.

'I shall wait till he comes out,' said she, proudly; 'I don't choose to give him the trouble of rising to open the door.'

Young Bretton had a favourite pony on which he often rode out; from the window she always watched his departure and return. It was her ambition to be permitted to have a ride round the courtyard on this pony; but far be it from her to ask such a favour. One day she descended to the yard to watch him dismount; as she leaned against the gate, the longing wish for the indulgence of a ride glittered in her eye.

'Come, Polly, will you have a canter?' asked Graham, half carelessly.

I suppose she thought he was *too* careless.

'No, thank you,' said she, turning away with the utmost coolness.

'You'd better,' pursued he. 'You will like it, I am sure.'

'Don't think I should care a fig about it,' was the response.

'That is not true. You told Lucy Snowe you longed to have a ride.'

'Lucy Snowe is a *tatter*-box,' I heard her say (her imperfect articulation was the least precocious thing she had about her); and with this; she walked into the house.

Graham, coming in soon after, observed to his mother, - 'Mamma, I believe that creature is a changeling: she is a perfect cabinet of oddities; but I should be dull without her: she amuses me a great deal more than you or Lucy Snowe.'

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'Miss Snowe,' said Paulina to me (she had now got into the habit of occasionally chatting with me when we were alone in our room at night), 'do you know on what day in the week I like Graham best?'

'How can I possibly know anything so strange? Is there one day out of the seven when he is otherwise than on the other six?'

'To be sure! Can't you see? Don't you know? I find him the most excellent on a Sunday; then we have him the whole day, and he is quiet, and, in the evening, so kind.'

This observation was not altogether groundless: going to church, &c., kept Graham quiet on the Sunday, and the evening he generally dedicated to a serene, though rather indolent sort of enjoyment by the

parlour fireside. He would take possession of the couch, and then he would call Polly.

Graham was a boy not quite as other boys are; all his delight did not lie in action: he was capable of some intervals of contemplation; he could take a pleasure too in reading, nor was his selection of books wholly indiscriminate: there were glimmerings of characteristic preference, and even of instinctive taste in the choice. He rarely, it is true, remarked on what he read, but I have seen him sit and think of it.

Polly, being near him, kneeling on a little cushion or the carpet, a conversation would begin in murmurs, not inaudible, though subdued. I caught a snatch of their tenor now and then; and, in truth, some influence better and finer than that of every day, seemed to soothe Graham at such times into no ungentle mood.

‘Have you learned any hymns this week, Polly?’

‘I have learned a very pretty one, four verses long. Shall I say it?’
‘Speak nicely, then: don't be in a hurry.’

The hymn being rehearsed, or rather half-chanted, in a little singing voice, Graham would take exceptions at the manner, and proceed to give a lesson in recitation. She was quick in learning, apt in imitating; and, besides, her pleasure was to please Graham: she proved a ready scholar. To the hymn would succeed some reading - perhaps a chapter in the Bible; correction was seldom required here, for the child could read any simple narrative chapter very well; and, when the subject was such as she could understand and take an interest in, her expression and emphasis were something remarkable. Joseph cast into the pit; the calling of Samuel; Daniel in the lions' den; - these were favourite passages: of the first especially she seemed perfectly to feel the pathos.

‘Poor Jacob!’ she would sometimes say, with quivering lips. ‘How he loved his son Joseph! As much,’ she once added - ‘as much, Graham, as I love you: if you were to die’ (and she re-opened the book, sought the verse, and read), ‘I should refuse to be comforted, and go down into the grave to you mourning.’

With these words she gathered Graham in her little arms, drawing his long-tressed head towards her. The action, I remember, struck me as strangely rash; exciting the feeling one might experience on seeing an animal dangerous by nature, and but half-tamed by art, too heedlessly fondled. Not that I feared Graham would hurt, or very roughly check her; but I thought she ran risk of incurring such a careless, impatient repulse, as would be worse almost to her than a

blow. On: the whole, however, these demonstrations were borne passively: sometimes even a sort of complacent wonder at her earnest partiality would smile not unkindly in his eyes. Once he said: - 'You like me almost as well as if you were my little sister, Polly.'

'Oh! I *do* like you,' said she; 'I *do* like you very much.'

I was not long allowed the amusement of this study of character. She had scarcely been at Bretton two months, when a letter came from Mr Home, signifying that he was now settled amongst his maternal kinsfolk on the Continent; that, as England was become wholly distasteful to him, he had no thoughts of returning hither, perhaps, for years; and that he wished his little girl to join him immediately.

'I wonder how she will take this news?' said Mrs Bretton, when she had read the letter. *I* wondered, too, and I took upon myself to communicate it.

Repairing to the drawing-room - in which calm and decorated apartment she was fond of being alone, and where she could be implicitly trusted, for she fingered nothing, or rather soiled nothing she fingered - I found her seated, like a little Odalisque, on a couch, half shaded by the drooping draperies of the window near. She seemed happy; all her appliances for occupation were about her; the white wood workbox, a shred or two of muslin, an end or two of ribbon collected for conversion into doll-millinery. The doll, duly night-capped and night-gowned, lay in its cradle; she was rocking it to sleep, with an air of the most perfect faith in its possession of sentient and somnolent faculties; her eyes, at the same time, being engaged with a picture-book, which lay open on her lap.

'Miss Snowe,' said she in a whisper, 'this is a wonderful book. Candace' (the doll, christened by Graham; for, indeed, its begrimed complexion gave it much of an Ethiopian aspect) - 'Candace is asleep now, and I may tell you about it; only we must both speak low, lest she should waken. This book was given me by Graham; it tells about distant countries, a long, long way from England, which no traveller can reach without sailing thousands of miles over the sea. Wild men live in these countries, Miss Snowe, who wear clothes different from ours: indeed, some of them wear scarcely any clothes, for the sake of being cool, you know; for they have very hot weather. Here is a picture of thousands gathered in a desolate place - a plain, spread with sand - round a man in black, - a good, *good* Englishman - a missionary, who is preaching to them under a palm-tree.' (She showed a little coloured cut to that effect.) 'And here are pictures' (she went on) 'more stranger' (grammar was occasionally forgotten) 'than that. There is the wonderful Great Wall of China; here is a Chinese lady, with a foot littler than mine. There is a wild horse of Tartary; and here, most

strange of all - is a land of ice and snow, without green fields, woods, or gardens. In this land, they found some mammoth bones: there are no mammoths now. You don't know what it was; but I can tell you, because Graham told me. A mighty, goblin creature, as high as this room, and as long as the hall; but not a fierce, flesh-eating thing, Graham thinks. He believes, if I met one in a forest, it would not kill me, unless I came quite in its way; when it would trample me down amongst the bushes, as I might tread on a grasshopper in a hayfield without knowing it.'

Thus she rambled on.

'Polly,' I interrupted, 'should you like to travel?'

'Not just yet,' was the prudent answer; 'but perhaps in twenty years, when I am grown a woman, as tall as Mrs Bretton, I may travel with Graham. We intend going to Switzerland, and climbing Mount Blanck; and some day we shall sail over to South America, and walk to the top of Kim-kim-borazo.'

'But how would you like to travel now, if your papa was with you?'

Her reply - not given till after a pause - evinced one of those unexpected turns of temper peculiar to her.

'Where is the good of talking in that silly way?' said she. 'Why do you mention papa? What is papa to you? I was just beginning to be happy, and not think about him so much; and there it will be all to do over again!'

Her lip trembled. I hastened to disclose the fact of a letter having been received, and to mention the directions given that she and Harriet should immediately rejoin this dear papa. 'Now, Polly, are you not glad?' I added.

She made no answer. She dropped her book and ceased to rock her doll; she gazed at me with gravity and earnestness.

'Shall not you like to go to papa?'

'Of course,' she said at last in that trenchant manner she usually employed in speaking to me; and which was quite different from that she used with Mrs Bretton, and different again from the one dedicated to Graham. I wished to ascertain more of what she thought but no: she would converse no more. Hastening to Mrs Bretton, she questioned her, and received the confirmation of my news. The weight and importance of these tidings kept her perfectly serious the whole day. In the evening, at the moment Graham's entrance was heard

below, I found her at my side. She began to arrange a locket-ribbon about my neck, she displaced and replaced the comb in my hair; while thus busied, Graham entered.

‘Tell him by-and-by,’ she whispered; ‘tell him I am going.’

In the course of tea-time I made the desired communication. Graham, it chanced, was at that time greatly preoccupied about some school-prize, for which he was competing. The news had to be told twice before it took proper hold of his attention, and even then he dwelt on it but momentarily.

‘Polly going? What a pity! Dear little Mousie, I shall be sorry to lose her: she must come to us again, mamma.’

And hastily swallowing his tea, he took a candle and a small table to himself and his books, and was soon buried in study.

‘Little Mousie’ crept to his side, and lay down on the carpet at his feet, her face to the floor; mute and motionless she kept that post and position till bed-time. Once I saw Graham - wholly unconscious of her proximity - push her with his restless foot. She receded an inch or two. A minute after one little hand stole out from beneath her face, to which it had been pressed, and softly caressed the heedless foot. When summoned by her nurse she rose and departed very obediently, having bid us all a subdued good-night.

I will not say that I dreaded going to bed, an hour later; yet I certainly went with an unquiet anticipation that I should find that child in no peaceful sleep. The forewarning of my instinct was but fulfilled, when I discovered her, all cold and vigilant, perched like a white bird on the outside of the bed. I scarcely knew how to accost her; she was not to be managed like another child. She, however, accosted me. As I closed the door, and put the light on the dressing-table, she turned to me with these words: - ‘I cannot - *cannot* sleep; and in this way I cannot - *cannot* live!’

I asked what ailed her.

‘Dedful miz-er-y!’ said she, with her piteous lisp.

‘Shall I call Mrs Bretton?’

‘That is downright silly,’ was her impatient reply; and, indeed, I well knew that if she had heard Mrs Bretton's foot approach, she would have nestled quiet as a mouse under the bedclothes. Whilst lavishing her eccentricities regardlessly before me - for whom she professed scarcely the semblance of affection - she never showed my godmother

one glimpse of her inner self: for her, she was nothing but a docile, somewhat quaint little maiden. I examined her; her cheek was crimson; her dilated eye was both troubled and glowing, and painfully restless: in this state it was obvious she must not be left till morning. I guessed how the case stood.

‘Would you like to bid Graham good-night again?’ I asked. ‘He is not gone to his room yet.’

She at once stretched out her little arms to be lifted. Folding a shawl round her, I carried her back to the drawing-room. Graham was just coming out.

‘She cannot sleep without seeing and speaking to you once more,’ I said. ‘She does not like the thought of leaving you.’

‘I’ve spoilt her,’ said he, taking her from me with good humour, and kissing her little hot face and burning lips. ‘Polly, you care for me more than for papa, now - ’

‘I *do* care for you, but you care nothing for me,’ was her whisper.

She was assured to the contrary, again kissed, restored to me, and I carried her away; but, alas! not soothed.

When I thought she could listen to me, I said - ‘Paulina, you should not grieve that Graham does not care for you so much as you care for him. It must be so.’

Her lifted and questioning eyes asked why.

‘Because he is a boy and you are a girl; he is sixteen and you are only six; his nature is strong and gay, and yours is otherwise.’

‘But I love him so much; he *should* love me a little.’

‘He does. He is fond of you. You are his favourite.’

‘Am I Graham's favourite?’

‘Yes, more than any little child I know.’

The assurance soothed her; she smiled in her anguish.

‘But,’ I continued, ‘don't fret, and don't expect too much of him, or else he will feel you to be troublesome, and then it is all over.’

'All over!' she echoed softly; 'then I'll be good. I'll try to be good, Lucy Snowe.'

I put her to bed.

'Will he forgive me this one time?' she asked, as I undressed myself. I assured her that he would; that as yet he was by no means alienated; that she had only to be careful for the future.

'There is no future,' said she: 'I am going. Shall I ever - ever - see him again, after I leave England?'

I returned an encouraging response. The candle being extinguished, a still half-hour elapsed. I thought her asleep, when the little white shape once more lifted itself in the crib, and the small voice asked - 'Do you like Graham, Miss Snowe?'

'Like him! Yes, a little.'

'Only a little! Do you like him as I do?'

'I think not. No: not as you do.'

'Do you like him much?'

'I told you I liked him a little. Where is the use of caring for him so very much: he is full of faults.'

'Is he?'

'All boys are.'

'More than girls?'

'Very likely. Wise people say it is folly to think anybody perfect; and as to likes and dislikes, we should be friendly to all, and worship none.'

'Are you a wise person?'

'I mean to try to be so. Go to sleep.'

'I *cannot* go to sleep. Have you no pain just here' (laying her elfish hand on her elfish breast,) 'when you think *you* shall have to leave Graham; for *your* home is not here?'

'Surely, Polly,' said I, 'you should not feel so much pain when you are very soon going to rejoin your father. Have you forgotten him? Do you no longer wish to be his little companion?'

Dead silence succeeded this question.

‘Child, lie down and sleep,’ I urged.

‘My bed is cold,’ said she. ‘I can't warm it.’

I saw the little thing shiver. ‘Come to me,’ I said, wishing, yet scarcely hoping, that she would comply: for she was a most strange, capricious, little creature, and especially whimsical with me. She came, however, instantly, like a small ghost gliding over the carpet. I took her in. She was chill: I warmed her in my arms. She trembled nervously; I soothed her. Thus tranquillized and cherished she at last slumbered.

‘A very unique child,’ thought I, as I viewed her sleeping countenance by the fitful moonlight, and cautiously and softly wiped her glittering eyelids and her wet cheeks with my handkerchief. ‘How will she get through this world, or battle with this life? How will she bear the shocks and repulses, the humiliations and desolations, which books, and my own reason, tell me are prepared for all flesh?’

She departed the next day; trembling like a leaf when she took leave, but exercising self-command.