

Mary's sister, a widow without children, was there most of the time, and was urgent to have Charlie left with her; but as Charlie was never so much inclined to be disobedient as when she was by, this was not very likely to happen.

Of the Morton family few were still in England. One brother was in India, another at sea; and of the sisters, one had married an Officer and was in Canada with him, and another a merchant who lived at Scutari. There only remained William, who was in an office in London; Fred, who came between Agnes and Sarah in age, and who had just been appointed to a regiment now in Australia; and Caroline, the married sister with whom Sarah and Grace had been staying. Her husband was a doctor in a large crowded town, a place which her sisters disliked very much, fond as they were of her, and her three babies.

All these 'remnants of the dispersed family,' as Caroline called them, met at the Rectory for a fortnight in August, and much was said about the future plans. Caroline was very much distressed at losing them all, but she could not offer a home to her sisters, as her husband's mother was coming to live with her, and there would be no room. William was very kind in undertaking to make their home, and talked over arrangements with the elder sisters, so that Sarah began to look forward with a kind of security to the house in the outskirts of London which he meant to take, and to Agnes's plans of making herself useful. The parting with Grace, with Colin, Mary, and the children, would be very, very dreadful; but Agnes was sister, mother, friend, above all others to Sarah, though only six years older; and with her Sarah felt as if she could bear to live even without the others. The one drop of comfort in the cruel bewilderment of change and separation, was Agnes's assurance that if either of her younger sisters remained in England, she must do so too.

Nearly the last day of August had come, and Caroline's visit was almost ended. She and Agnes were sitting together under the verandah, and quietly talking, while her two eldest little ones were rolling about upon the lawn under Sarah's keeping.

Agnes was asking if Caroline's husband could obtain leave for her to go sometimes and read to the patients in a hospital for blind people where he had once been a surgeon.

'Then you think your staying at home quite fixed?' said Caroline. 'I hardly dared to hope it!'

'I have made up my mind that so it will be,' said Agnes, the tears coming into her eyes; 'and I am thankful not to have the pang of leaving you and William.'

'But—ah! Agnes, you can't deny that your heart will be there; and I do not wonder, considering what a brother Colin is.'

'Don't let it seem unkind to you, Caroline. It is not only preference