

The children loved each other in the inconsequent, happy-go-lucky style of healthy children. They were glad to meet, on the whole, and sorry to part, on the whole; and there would never have been any battle, and nothing very serious would have occurred, had it not been for the presence of Nina.

But I must begin the story right away; and, first, I shall have to describe the Freres and the Carlingfords, as without that description what I have to say might not be intelligible.

Dr Frere had a large house just at the corner of Priory Square. Priory Square was situated in a midland town in England, which, for the purposes of this narrative, I will call Warrencliffe. It was a large town, numbering some thousands of inhabitants; but it was not too large for the children in Priory Square to walk to the country when they pleased; and it was not too crowded to admit of shady, comfortable, and luxurious gardens—gardens with high walls, well stocked with fruit-trees, and with gay parterres full of flowers of every sort and description, with tennis-courts and hockey-courts. All the houses in Priory Square were large and substantial and handsome-looking. There was a sense of space about them; and, although the square was in the midst of a large town, it had