

said. I tell you he is a tall, cadaverous fellow, with a stoop in his back, and a white beard."

"Black! black! You said black last time," cried Norah in triumph. "You are making it up, and I could imagine what he is like as well as you, if I liked, but I won't, because it is so horribly uncomfortable when you really meet. I tried that trick with Lettice once, when a friend of Miss Briggs came to visit us. She was a very nice old lady, and awfully kind (she made me a sweet little pin-cushion for my room) but she was ugly! She looked just like a fat, good-natured frog, with light eyes very far apart, big, big freckles spotted over her face, and such a great, wide mouth. Well, I saw her first, and then I went upstairs and Lettice met me, and asked me what she was like. I felt mischievous, so I said that she was dark, and tall, and stately, with a long, thin face, and beautiful, melancholy eyes. Lettice went rushing downstairs, and when she saw her she stopped quite short, and began to choke and gurgle as if she were going to have a fit. She pretended that she was laughing at something Raymond was doing in the garden; but it was horribly awkward, and I vowed I'd never do it again. I should hate people to laugh at me, and it's unkind to do things that you wouldn't like other people to do to you—I mean—you know what I mean!"

"I know," said Rex, gravely. He looked quite serious and impressed, and Norah cast inquiring glances at his face, wondering what he could be thinking of, to make him so solemn all of a sudden.

At last. "Look here," he said, "talking of meeting strangers, don't stare at poor little Edna when you meet. There is something about her eyes, and she is very sensitive about it. Try and look as if you don't notice it, you know."

"Oh, I will!" cried Norah gushingly. She knitted her brows together, trying to think what the "something" could be. Something wrong with her lungs, and something wrong with her eyes—poor Edna; she was indeed to be pitied. "I am glad he told me, for I wouldn't hurt her feelings for the world," she said to herself, and many times over, during the course of the next hour, did her thoughts wander sympathetically towards her new companion.

It was a long, cold drive, but Norah could have found it in her heart to wish it were longer, as the dog-cart turned in at the gate of the Manor House, and drew up before the grey stone porch. Mrs. Freer came into the hall to welcome her guest, with a grey woollen shawl wrapped round her shoulders, and her little face pinched with cold.

"How do you do, dear? I am afraid you are quite starved. Come away to the fire and get thawed before you go upstairs," she said, cordially, and Norah followed, conscious that a girl's head had peeped out of the door to examine her, and then been cautiously withdrawn. When they entered the room, however, Miss Edna was seated demurely behind a screen, and came forward in the most proper way to shake

hands with the new-comer. Norah was only conscious that she was tall, with narrow shoulders, and brown hair hanging in a long plait down her back, for the fear of seeming to stare at the "something" in her eyes about which she was so sensitive, kept her from giving more than the most casual of glances. Conversation languished under these circumstances, and presently Mrs. Freer took Norah upstairs to her room to get ready for lunch. Before that meal was served, however, there was another painful ten minutes to go through downstairs, when the mistress of the house was out of the room, and Rex came in to take her place. Edna was reported to be shy, but in this instance it was Norah who was tongue-tied, and the other who made the advances. It is so extremely difficult to speak to a person at whom one is forbidden to look. Norah fixed her eyes on Edna's brooch, and said, "Yes, oh yes, she was fond of skating." Questioned a little further, she gave a rapid glance so far upward as to include a mouth and chin, and was so much abashed by her own temerity that she contradicted herself hopelessly, and stammered out a ridiculous statement to the effect that she never used a bicycle, that is to say always—when it was fine. Edna sat silent, dismayed at the reality of the sprightly girl of whom she had heard so much, and it did not add to Norah's comfort to hear unmistakable sounds of chuckling from the background. She darted an angry glance at Rex, scented mischief in his twitching smile, and turned at bay to stare fixedly into Edna's face. A broad forehead, thin cheeks, a delicate pink and white complexion, the dark grey eyes, wide open with curiosity, but as free from any disfigurement about which their owner could be "sensitive" as those of the visitor herself.

"Oh—h!" gasped Norah. Rex burst into a roar of laughter, and Edna pleaded eagerly to be told of the reason of their excitement.

"He told me I was not to look at you. He told me—there was something—wrong—with your eyes; that you didn't like people to stare at you. I—I was afraid to move!" panted Norah in indignation.

"Something wrong with my eyes! But there isn't, is there? They are all right?" cried Edna in alarm, opening the maligned eyes to about twice their usual size, and staring at Norah in beseeching fashion. "How could he say anything so untrue!"

"I never said there was anything 'wrong.' I was very particular how I put it. I said there was 'something' about your eyes, and that you were sensitive about meeting strangers, and did not like to be stared at. All quite true, isn't it? It's not my fault if Norah chose to think you squinted," declared Rex, getting the best of the argument as usual, and nodding his head at Norah with the air of triumph which she found so exasperating.

Edna looked from one to the other in startled fashion, as though she were afraid that such flashing looks must be the commencement of a quarrel, and

drew a sigh of relief when Norah's dignity gave way to giggles of uncontrollable amusement.

The Squire made his appearance at the luncheon table, an irascible-looking old gentleman, with red, weather-beaten face, grey hair, and fierce white whiskers sticking out on either side. The ribbons on his wife's cap trembled every time he spoke to her, and she said, "Yes, love, yes!" and "No, love, no!" to everything he said, as if she were afraid to differ from him on any subject. Norah jumped on her seat the first time he spoke to her, for his voice sounded so loud and angry. He said, "I am afraid you have had a cold drive." In much the same tone as that in which the villain on the stage would cry—"Base villain, die a thousand deaths!" and when he called for the mustard, the very rafters seemed to ring. "What on earth must he be like when he is really angry, if he is like this when he is not displeased?" asked Norah of herself; but there was something in the Squire's keen, blue eyes, which took her fancy, despite his fierceness, and she noticed that when he spoke to his little daughter his face softened, while each time that she coughed, he knitted his brows and stared at her with undisguised anxiety. Edna was evidently his darling, and her delicate health the cause of much anxiety.

At two o'clock the two girls ensconced themselves behind the window curtains and exchanged confidences while watching for the first appearance of the Professor from Lancaster. Edna told Norah all about the school which she left; how grieved she had been to say good-bye to her friends, and how sadly she missed their bright society, and Norah comforted her in warm-hearted fashion. "Never mind, I am coming every fortnight, and when the bright days are here you will be able to drive over and see us. I hope you will like me, for I think I shall like you very much indeed, in spite of your eyes." Then they pinched each other, and crouched together with "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" of excitement, as a small, wiry figure came hurrying towards the house. It was Mr. Morris, of course, but the collar of his coat was turned up and his hat pulled over his face, so that it was impossible to tell what he was really like. Only one thing was certain, he had neither a white nor a black beard, as Mr. Rex had predicted.

"Let me have the first lesson. He won't think I am so bad if he hears me first," pleaded Edna; and at the end of an hour she came out of the drawing-room to announce that Mr. Morris was rather terrible, but that she was sure he was a good teacher, and that she had not been so frightened as she expected. Then it was Norah's turn. She played her favourite pieces, one after the other, while Mr. Morris sat at the edge of the table, watching and listening. Never a word of praise or blame did he say until she had finished the third selection. Then he looked at her fixedly with his light, grey eyes (they were rather goggle, after all) and said quietly, "Well, and what do you mean to do?"