

and Cary to look to; and Cary's office was not to rebuke any one, much less her dear little sister-in-law. So Barbara was spoiled and humoured; while the children were kept in high order—a proper discipline being exercised in the nursery, as became a well regulated and nicely-decorated house. Cary thought Bab a beauty, and so did Charles; the young lady herself was not at all backward in estimating her own charms; and it was a pity to see them so often obscured by affectation, for Bab had a kind heart and an affectionate disposition. One day when Charles returned home after business-hours were over, Bab flew towards him with an unusually animated countenance, holding an open letter in her hand, and exclaiming: 'Oh, dear Charles, read this! You'll let me go—won't you? I never was at the seaside in my life, you know; and it will do me such a deal of good.'

Charles smiled, took the letter, and tapping his sister's dimpled rosy cheek, he said fondly: 'I don't think, Bab, that you want "doing good to" so far as health is concerned. The sea-air cannot improve these roses.'

'Well, well, Charles, never mind the roses—there's a dear. They only ask me to go for a fortnight, and I should so like it; it will be so nice to be with one's schoolmates at the sea. Bell and Lucy Combermere are *such* bathers, they say; and as for me I shall drown myself for love of the sea! Oh, you must let me go—do!'

'Cary thinks it will be delightful for me,' added Barbara: 'she's always a good-natured darling.' And Bab felt sure of going, if Charles talked the matter over with Cary; so she flew off in an ecstasy of joy, dancing and singing, and forthwith commenced preparations, by pulling off the faded pink ribbons which adorned her bonnet, and substituting gay bright new streamers.

The invitation in question came from Mrs. Combermere, who, with her two unmarried daughters, were sojourning at a favorite watering-place, always crowded during the season—and where Mr. Combermere, a rich citizen, could join his family every week, and inhale a breath of pure air. Charles did not particularly like the Combermeres. Mrs. Combermere was a fussy woman, full of absurd pretension, and with a weakness for forming aristocratic acquaintance, which had more than once led her into extravagance, ending in disappointment and mortification. The Misses Combermere inherited their mamma's weakness; they were comely damsels, and expectant sharers of papa's wealth, who was 'very particular' on whom he bestowed his treasures. Bell and Lucy had been at school with Barbara Norman, and a strong friendship—a school friendship—had been struck up amongst the trio, whom the French dancing-master denominated 'the Graces.' And now Barbara had received an invitation to stay with them for a fortnight, a private postscript being inserted by Miss Bell, to the effect that 'Bab must be sure to come very smart, for there were more elegant people there, and *such* beaux!'

Bab found Mrs. Combermere and the girls in the full swing of sea-side dissipation—quite open-houses kept, free-and-easy manners which at home would not have been tolerated. But it came only once a-year, and they could afford it. Quite established as an intimate, was a tall young

gentleman, with delicate moustache. Who seemed to be on terms of friendly familiarity with half the aristocracy of the nation. Mrs. Combermere whispered to Bab, that Mr. Newton was a most 'patrician person,' of the 'highest connections; they had met with him on the sands, where he had been of signal use in assisting Mrs. Combermere over the shingles on a stormy day. He was so gentlemanly and agreeable, that they could not do otherwise than ask him in; he had remained to tea, and since then he had been a regular visitor.

Mr. Newton had been at first treated with great coolness by Mr. Combermere; the latter gentleman did not like strangers, and always looked on a moustache with suspicion. But Mr. Newton was so deferential, so unexceptionable in deportment, and prudent in his general sentiments, warmly advocating Mr. Combermere's political opinions, that he had at last won the good opinion even of the father of the family. Besides, he paid no particular attention to the Misses Combermere; there was no danger of his making up to them—that was clear; and Mrs. Combermere, mother-like, felt a little mortified and chagrined at such palpable indifference. But when pretty Bab Norman appeared the case was different; her brunette complexion and sparkling dark eyes elicited marked admiration from the patrician Mr. Newton; and he remarked in an off-hand way—*sotto voce*, as if to himself; 'By Jupiter! how like she is to dear Lady Mary Manvers.' Bab felt very much flattered by the comparison, and immediately began to like Mr. Newton immensely; he was so distinguished, so fascinating, so refined. Bab did not add, that he had singled her out as an especial object of attention, even when the fair-dashing Misses Combermere challenged competition.

The fortnight passed swiftly away—too swiftly! alas! thought little Barbara Norman; for at the expiration of the term, Mrs. Combermere did not ask her to prolong the visit, but suffered her to depart, again under the escort of Mr. Combermere, without a word of regret at parting. Cruel Mrs. Combermere! she wished to keep Mr. Newton's society all to herself and her daughters! However, the young gentleman asked Barbara for permission to pay his respects to her when he returned to the metropolis; this had been accorded by Barbara, who, on her return to Pentonville, for the first time found that comfortable home 'insufferably dull and stupid.' Edward Leslie, too—how dull and stupid even he was, after the chattering perfumed loungers of the elysium she had just quitted! Yet Edward was never considered either dull or stupid by competent judges; but, quite the contrary—a sensible, well-informed, gentlemanly personage. But, then, he had no great friends, no patrician weaknesses; he knew nothing about racing, or betting, or opera-dancers, or slang in general. In short, he seemed flat and insipid to Bab, who had been compared to the beautiful Lady Mary Manvers by the soft and persuasive tongue of Lady Mary Manvers's dear friend. Yet, in her secret heart of hearts, Bab drew comparisons by no means disadvantageous to Edward Leslie. 'Yes,' thought Bab, 'I like Mr. Newton best by the sea-side in summer-time, when harp-music floats on the balmy air; then I