

should always like him, if summer was all the year round. But for everyday life, for winter hours, for home, in short, I'm sure I like Edward Leslie best—I'm sure I love Edward Leslie;' and Bab blushed and hesitated, though she was quite alone. Cary listened good naturedly to all Bab's descriptions of the happiness she had enjoyed; and Cary thought, from all Bab said, that Mr. Newton must be at least some great lord in disguise. She felt quite nervous at the idea of his coming to such an humble house as theirs, when he talked of parks, and four-in-hands, and baronial halls, as things with which he was familiar, and regarded as matters of course. Cary hoped that Charles and Edward Leslie would be present when Mr. Newton called, because they were fit to associate with royalty itself. Cary had a very humble opinion of herself—sweet, gentle soul! Charles often wished his dear sister Bab might closely resemble her. At length, Bell Combermere wrote to say, they were about returning to town; and Mr. Newton declared he could not remain behind. Bab's heart fluttered and palpitated at each sound the knocker gave; and she was thankful that Cary's cousin, Miss Ward, was staying with them, to call attention off from herself.

Miss Ward was an accomplished, charming woman of middle age, who for years had resided in the Earl of St. Elmer's family as governess—greatly valued for her many estimable qualities. Not being in robust health, she had absented herself for a short season from her onerous duties, and in her dear friend and cousin's house, sought and obtained quiet and renovation. Miss Ward often found difficulty in repressing a smile at Bab's superfluous graces and animated gestures; but it was a kindly smile, for the late conventionalities amongst which she usually existed, rendered these traits of less refined manners rather refreshing than otherwise. Miss Ward was out when Mrs. Combermere's equipage drove up to Mr. Norman's door: and that large lady, with her daughter Bell, accompanied by Mr. Newton, made their way up stairs to Mrs. Norman's drawing-room. Mrs. Combermere was always astoundingly grand and patronising when she honoured Cary with a call; Mrs. Combermere liked to call upon folks whom she denominated inferiors—to impress them with an overwhelming idea of her importance. But on the simple-minded literal Cary, this honour was lost, she received it with such composure and unconscious placidity; on Bab it produced, indeed, the desired effect; but whether it was Mrs. Combermere's loud talking and boasting, or Mr. Newton's easy negligence and patronising airs, that caused her to colour and hesitate, it is not possible to define. Bab was not herself; and she began to be ashamed of living in Pentonville, when Mr. Newton spoke of Belgravia. Miss Ward, who had returned from her shopping excursion, glided into the room unnoticed, in the middle of a description Mr. Newton was giving of a magnificent place, belonging to a dear friend, with whom he had been staying, ere he had the 'unspeakable felicity of meeting Mrs. Combermere.'

'Your description is a graphic one, John Bloomfield,' said Miss Ward in a low voice close to his ear; 'but how came you here—in this company?'

John Bloomfield, *a'ias* John Newton, started as if an adder had bitten him, and gazed frantically upon the intruder. 'Miss Ward, madam, he exclaimed involuntarily, 'don't say more, and I'll go this instant!'

'Then go,' continued Miss Ward, majestically, pointing to the door; 'and beware, John Bloomfield, how you dare to enter a gentleman's house unauthorised again.'

'What does this mean, ma'am' inquired Mrs. Combermere, very red in the face, and looking terribly frightened—'what does this all mean, ma'am?'

'Only,' replied Miss Ward, quietly, 'that this individual, who calls himself Mr. Newton, and whose conversation I overheard after entering the apartment, is in reality John Bloomfield, *ci-devant* valet to Lord Lilburne, the eldest son of the Earl of St. Elmer, in whose family I have the honour to be governess. His lordship shewed toleration and kindness unprecedented towards the ungrateful young man, on account of his respectable parentage, and the excellent abilities and aptitude for instruction he displayed. But I grieve to say, John Bloomfield was discharged from Lord Lilburne's service, under circumstances which left no doubt on our minds that he was guilty of dishonest practices—of pilfering, in short, to a considerable extent. We heard that he still continued his evil course; but though knowing him to possess both skill and effrontery, I was almost as much startled as the delinquent himself, to behold him thus playing the fine gentleman, and lounging on Cary's sofa.'

A faint groan escaped from Miss Combermere as she ejaculated: 'Oh, my pearl necklace!' and in a still deeper and more audible sigh from her mamma, as the words burst forth: 'Oh, my diamond *bandeau*!' which led to an explanation from the distressed and bewildered ladies, of how they had intrusted these precious jewels to Mr. Newton, who urged them on returning to town to have them reset, volunteering to take them himself to Lady Mary Mauvers's own jeweller, a 'first-rate fellow, who worked only for the aristocracy.' 'They must not be in a hurry,' Mr. Newton said, 'for the first-rate fellow was so torn to pieces by duchesses and countesses, that even weeks might elapse before their comparatively trifling order could be attended to.'

'I fear,' said Miss Ward, commiseratingly, 'that you will not see your valuables again. John Bloomfield is a clever rascal, and has good taste too,' continued Miss Ward, smiling, 'for he invariably selects pretty things. I hope, my dear'—turning to Bab, who sat silent and petrified—'your beautiful gold repeater set with brilliants is safe, and that it did not require repairs or alterations, to induce you to part with it into Mr. Newton's hands? I doubt not he had an eye to it eventually.'

Poor Bab—what a blow to her vanity? She could only murmur something about the watch being very dear to her, because it had belonged to her deceased mother, and that she always wore it round her neck.

Very shortly after this affair, Barbara had another short trip to the sea-side, and with a companion whose happiness equalled her own: it was the honeymoon excursion, and Edward