

each other, and William Glynford, therefore, nodded as he met Mr. Bingley, and would have passed on with Laura.

But, to his surprise, Bingley stopped, and familiarly held out his hand to the young governess.

"Well, Miss Keane," said Mr. Bingley, "and how are you? And so you are here, Mr. Glynford, are you?"

"For a day or so," answered Glynford, rather expressively.

And then he glanced at Laura Keane.

And what did he see? A girl apparently almost overwhelmed with agitation; a girl pale, trembling, and speechless, instead of the bright, soft, blushing maiden who had been by his side a few moments ago.

So changed, indeed, was Laura's whole expression and appearance, that William Glynford gazed at her in absolute astonishment. And then he looked at Mr. Bingley. There was an almost insolent expression on the man's countenance, he thought, which he had never seen there before. He glanced from one to the other.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he thought. "What can Miss Keane have to do with this Bingley?"

But Bingley soon put his doubts to rest on this subject, for the next minute the draper addressed Miss Keane in a manner which plainly showed that he had some business with her.

"I called at your house a quarter of an hour ago, Miss Keane," he said, "as I wished to see you about that little affair which occurred before you left Farnham, and they told me I would find you on the sands; though I didn't expect," he added, with a sort of laugh, "that I would find Mr. Glynford here as well."

Laura made no answer to this, and, in fact, appeared incapable of replying.

"If you have any business with Mr. Bingley, Miss Keane," said William Glynford, with unconscious coldness of tone, "perhaps I had better leave you?"

"If—if you please," said Laura, in trembling accents; and Mr. Glynford took off his hat and bowed, leaving Laura with Mr. Bingley, and feeling as he did so exceedingly disconcerted and annoyed.

No sooner was he gone than Bingley addressed Laura.

"I have come on a very unpleasant errand, Miss Keane," he said, "very unpleasant. You remember, of course, the transaction which took place between us just before Christmas, when you paid your account with certain notes?"

"Yes," faltered Laura.

"And you remember," continued Mr. Bingley, "that I received those notes under protest, and that I warned you not to attempt to pass any others coming from the same source? Yet I find that you have done this—in fact, you have brought down upon yourself the very danger I tried to warn you against!"

"Danger?" gasped Laura.

"A very serious danger," replied Mr. Bingley. "Now, young lady, you had better speak the truth. The notes you gave me at Farnham, and those you have since passed at Seaton-by-the-Sea, were all marked, and were stolen from myself more than two years ago."

"Stolen?" repeated Laura.

"Yes, stolen," said Mr. Bingley; "and now you will help me to find the thief? Where did you get those notes, and from whom?"

"From no one," half sobbed poor Laura. "Oh, Mr. Bingley," she continued, "I will tell you the truth—you shall know all—but will you promise not to inform your sister?"

"That depends upon circumstances," said Bingley. "It may be my duty. If you are connected with any gang—"

"No, no!" cried Laura; "I am connected with no one! It was by an accident alone that I got these notes; I—I found them in one of the pockets of a second-hand portmanteau that I had bought at a broker's at Farnham."

"A very extraordinary story," said Bingley. "Perhaps you will give me the particulars?"

Then Laura, tremblingly, and with white lips, told her tale; told how she had bought this portmanteau; how it had remained in Mrs. Glynford's box-room until the night when she was packing to leave Farnham for the Christmas holidays; and how, in one of the pockets, she had found the notes.

"And, Mr. Bingley," she continued, tearfully, "it—it was only under cruelly pressing circumstances that I made use of them! You do not know the miseries of my home! My mother had got all my salary when your bill came in, and I had no money to pay it with; no money at all, except just sufficient to pay my train fare, and so I thought—"

"But I warned you!" said Bingley, as Laura paused. "I took the notes you gave me for the bill, and said nothing. You are a nice-looking girl, and a pretty face goes a long way with a man like me. But I warned you not to try it on with any one else!"

"I—I know you did!" said Laura.

"And now you have got yourself into great trouble," went on Bingley, "by neglecting my advice. In fact, even if I were willing and ready to help you, I do not know how to do it now. To begin with, if this story of the portmanteau were true, you acted against the law in taking these notes."

"And—and what could they do to me?" gasped the poor girl.

"They could arrest you!" answered Bingley, coolly.

Laura gave a half cry.

"Oh, save me if you can, Mr. Bingley!" she said. "It is really true what I have told you! It was wrong—it was silly of me to take them! But—but I did not know what to do!"

"You had better have come to me, and told me you wanted money," said Bingley; "and I am not a man, as I said before, to be hard on a pretty girl. The case is this: You have passed stolen notes, and give only a lame account as to where you got them; and it is my duty—undoubtedly my duty—to give you in charge!"

As Bingley said this, again a cry broke from Laura's white lips, and she put out her hand and grasped Bingley's arm.

"Don't—don't, Mr. Bingley!" she cried. "It would destroy me—would ruin every one connected with me! I have a widowed mother—a poor, deformed sister; and if you do this, if—if you should even tell Mrs. Glynford—what would become of them? Have mercy—oh, pray be merciful!"

Sobs choked her utterance, and Bingley looked at her, and a sort of pity for her stirred in his heart.

"Come, don't cry, my dear!" he said, laying his big red hand on the little trembling one grasping his arm. "I don't want to be hard; but you've got yourself, and me, too, into a most confounded scrape! You've paid away two more of these notes, haven't you, to Johnson, a grocer here at Seaton-by-the-Sea?"

"Yes," answered Laura.

"Exactly," said Bingley; "and this Johnson is own brother to a man whom I employ, and who was in my service when these notes were stolen from my establishment."

"And you think—" began Laura.

"I think nothing," said Bingley. "I am stating facts. Johnson, the grocer, has paid into the bank two of my stopped notes. I have received private information of this, and Johnson, the grocer, is at any moment liable to arrest. 'Where did you get these notes?' he will be asked by the police-officer. The man, of course, will answer that he got them from you. Do you see now? However willing to help you, I do not know how to do it. Johnson, the grocer, is own brother to Johnson the man in my establishment, and the police will naturally suspect that Johnson in my establishment stole the notes. To clear himself Johnson, the grocer, will, of course, accuse you!"

"But—but if I tell the truth?" faltered Laura.

"It won't much better your position, even if you get a jury to believe you," answered Bingley; "and in the meantime you will have to go to gaol."

"Can nothing be done?" Laura asked, hoarsely.

"Nothing unless I am such a soft fool," said Bingley, with a sort of laugh, and again attempting to take Laura's hand, "that for the sake of your pretty looks—come, you needn't be so shy, if I'm such a fool—but the only thing I can see my way to do with the hope to keep you out of the clutches of the police is to try to bribe them—not many men would do that for you, young lady—try, to bribe them, indeed, and to pay this ten pounds, which, of course, Johnson, the grocer, thought was good money, into the bank myself."

"Oh, would you do this, Mr. Bingley?" said Laura, imploringly. "Oh, if you would, I will do anything—toil my fingers off to repay you! And perhaps," she added, with a gleam of hope, "some one I know—Mr. William Glynford, in fact—if he were told the whole story, would help to pay this money, too. He is very kind, and—"

"No, no, my young lady," interrupted Bingley; "that won't do. If I consent to do this—consent to do what is wrong, mind you—I'll have no one in the secret but ourselves. No Mr. William Glynford, if you please, for me. This is not Mr. Glynford's affair, but mine; and if I were to speak the word he could no more help you being arrested before the day is over than he could fly. Johnson, the grocer's evidence and mine would be sufficient for any magistrate in the land to grant a warrant on, and Mr. William Glynford would be quite unable to save you."

Laura's head fell low.

"Now let us understand each other, Miss Keane," continued Bingley. "I don't mean to be hard—I don't want to see a pretty girl like yourself dragged off to gaol between a couple of policemen, though she may have acted against the law, and made herself liable to penal servitude—no, I don't want to see it; and I shall have to pay heavily enough to hush this affair up, besides the ten pounds that Johnson placed in the bank; but I am ready and willing to do this under certain conditions, and one of these conditions is that neither William Glynford nor any of the Glynfords ever know anything about it."

Laura did not speak.

"What is this young man doing here?" went on Bingley. "He is nothing to you, is he?—not an admirer, eh?"

"No, Mr. Bingley, he is nothing to me," answered Laura, her heart full of great sorrow and bitterness.

What, indeed, she was thinking, could he be now—now, when she was in Bingley's power—when at any moment he could disgrace her! She could have no hope ever to become William Glynford's wife.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT BINGLEY GAVE UP.

Before this interview with Bingley ended, he had agreed to do what he had proposed—namely,

to endeavour to hush up the affair, by bribing his informant to keep it quiet.

"I am acting in a very friendly way to you, Miss Keane," he said, "and in return I shall expect you to treat me in a friendly manner when you go back to Farnham. Meanwhile I will stay here a couple of days or so, and endeavour to arrange this matter before I leave."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Bingley," said Laura, wearily.

She felt indeed exhausted a little in body and mind.

"You look tired," Bingley said. "Well, this has been a trying day for you, but I hope it will end well, after all. You can depend upon me; I'm a man of my word, and I'll get you out of this scrape if I can; and in helping you, I give up a chance of finding out who robbed me!"

"I—I scarcely understand!" said Laura.

"I'll tell you how it happened as we walk towards your home," continued Bingley, in a sort of patronizing, protecting tone, which made poor Laura wince. "You remember that little private office in the centre of my establishment at Farnham? Well, one day, just two years ago, I was suddenly called out of it by a message from the house, that my late wife was in a fit. In my haste I left my keys on my desk, in which was my cash-box. I was with her, poor thing, about half an hour, when I remembered this. I went back at once to the office, and found my cash-box stolen. There was over fifty pounds in gold in it at the time, and twenty-five in notes, and I had the numbers of those notes in my pocket-book. Do you see now? These very notes were the notes you found in the second-hand portmanteau. They were stopped at the bank, of course, and a detective employed; but they were never heard of, nor traced in any way, until you put them yourself into my hand. Do you follow me?"

"Yes; I think so," answered Laura, timidly.

"Because I want you to understand," proceeded Bingley, "what a chance I am giving up, in my desire to serve you, of finding out the man who robbed me! You say you bought this portmanteau of a broker. What broker was it?"

"They call the man Fearnly," said Laura; "but I have the bill and can show it to you."

"Well, to trace the case, of course, the first thing to do would be to go to Fearnly's," said Bingley, "and learn of whom he purchased the portmanteau. But to do this would be to bring your name before the public at once, and I do not care to do this."

Mr. Bingley said these last words slowly and with some emphasis, but Laura scarcely heeded him.

By this time they were in the village, were passing the village inn, and Laura was thinking of William Glynford, wondering if he were gone, if he would see her thus walking with Mr. Bingley.

And he did see her. After returning from the sands, where he had left Laura with Bingley, William Glynford had gone back to the inn in an exceedingly disturbed state of mind. He, in fact, could not comprehend what had taken place. "What could Bingley, the draper, have to say to this young girl?" he kept asking himself. Then he suddenly remembered the relationship of this man to his aunt by marriage, Mrs. Glynford, of Bridgenorth House. This made the acquaintance seem less extraordinary to William Glynford. Mr. Bingley might be the bearer of some message from his aunt to her governess, and with this idea Mr. Glynford tried to console himself, and stationed himself at the inn window, expecting every moment to see Bingley or Laura returning from the sands alone.

But when he did see them, they were still together. He saw Laura, looking pale, weary, distressed; and Bingley flushed and seemingly triumphant. The man's expression struck a cold chill into William Glynford's heart; and when, a few minutes later, Mr. Bingley himself entered the inn, and ordered lunch, William Glynford felt some difficulty in answering him coolly.

"It's funny that we should hit on each other in this out-of-the-way place, isn't it, Mr. Glynford?" said Bingley, approaching him.

"People are always coming up in odd places now-a-days," answered Glynford, coolly, taking up a two days' old newspaper.

"That's true," said Bingley. "Do you make any stay?"

"I think not," said William Glynford; and he turned away, and, taking his hat, went out into the village.

He walked twice past the old gray stone house where the Keanes lived before he had made up his mind as to what he would do. Then he remembered his promise to try to help Maud Keane, and made this his excuse to himself for calling as he rang the Keanes' door-bell.

He rang twice in vain; and as he stood, loud hysterical cries from within reached his ears.

"The wretched mother!" thought William Glynford. "Poor girls, I truly pity them!"

At this moment, the little maid of the house opened the door, with a very wild and scared look on her by no means clean countenance.

"Can I see Miss Keane—Miss Laura Keane?" asked William Glynford.

"Oh, no, sir!" answered the small hand-maiden; "she's comed in awful bad, and that's her screaming and crying at the top of her voice. I'm sure I'm all of a flutter!"

"I am very sorry to hear Miss Keane is ill," said Mr. Glynford.

"She's awful bad, sir!" said the little maiden.

"Mistress thinks something dreadful must have happened to her when she was out, for she was quite right afore she went, and now she's just like a crazy gal."

With these words ringing in his ears, William Glynford turned away, and an hour after had left Seaton-by-the-Sea. "What, indeed, could he do?" he asked himself. But he scarcely cared to acknowledge to himself in how miserable and disturbed a state of mind he returned to Farnham.

(To be continued.)

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

THERE is a proposal to light the Admiralty Pier at Dover with the electric light. The Corporation of Liverpool have decided on lighting all the principal thoroughfares by electricity, beginning on February 1st, next.

THE announcement that Mr. Longfellow is to sit to Mlle. Bernhardt for his portrait does not surprise us any more than the statement in the Paris *Figaro* to the effect that there was a meeting of the Cabinet at Washington to consider the subject of collecting the duty on her wardrobe.

SEVERAL of our leading painters are building palaces. Millais has a magnificent house, and Edward Long has also built a splendid place, like the Spanish mansions, with a courtyard inside the four wings of the house, only the courtyard, instead of being open as it is in Spain, to enable the inmates to pass their days in the open air, is covered in with glass as being more suitable to an English climate. John Pettie, too, is building a grand house. The successful painters have had fine times of it of late years.

THERE is now a proposal to build a large circus almost close to the Westminster Aquarium. It has for some time been said that the capital of the empire does not possess a circus worthy of so great a city, and if the proposed building should be after the style of the Hippodrome at Paris, another addition would be made to the handsome and colossal edifice now being raised in London, and something more than the usual "scenes in the arena" could be attempted and would doubtless prove a great success.

A LAZY, and consequently penniless, young nobleman with a played-out pedigree recently took a practical resolution and had the rare pluck to carry it out. He had been living on a starving allowance for a year or so, rather than work and sweat for his daily bread, as becomes a man who wishes to be styled a gentleman. And so he resolved upon committing suicide. But upon the threshold of eternity he determined to have what he thought a good substantial dinner before taking a leap. He went into a favourite restaurant, where he astonished guests and waiters with an unscrupulous appetite, for he literally went through the entire menu, and as soon as he had his "fill" he drew a revolver and blew his brains out.

ON Monday night week the *Times* night printers struck work, and most of them are now seeking new employment. Mr. Walter has determined that henceforth the *Times* shall be set by machinery. He has eleven machines in full work, and avers that though the cost is greater the work is more rapidly done. His machines, however, do not distribute the type; and he proposed to his night staff that they should spend five hours per night in preparing the cases for the machines. They objected. He granted them an interview, but would listen to nothing they had to say as to the cost of the new system. "That's my business," was his only remark. They therefore unanimously left his employ.

AMONGST the list of "originals" proposed for the characters in *Endymion* there has been no satisfactory solution of "Myra." To those at all acquainted with Lord Beaconsfield's earlier life there can be no doubt that under this cloak he intended to convey to the world at large some faint idea of the influence exercised over him by his own sister, Miss Louisa Disraeli. Even more than his wife, she was a believer in her brother's future greatness, and there is no doubt that he turned to her as much for consolation in his disappointments as for sympathy in his triumphs. Amongst her other warm friends Miss Disraeli counted Grace d'Aguilar, the novelist, who introduced her as her leading character into her most successful tale, *Home Influence*. Miss Disraeli died about twenty years ago, before her brother had reached the highest honours in store for him.

FIRST CLASS TAILORING.—A fine assortment of English, Scotch and French tweeds on hand, and made up to order on the premises, under my own personal supervision; at very reasonable rates, at L. Robinson's, 31 Beaver Hall Terrace.

A LADY'S WISH.

"Oh, how I do wish my skin was as clear and soft as yours," said a lady to her friend. "You can easily make it so," answered the friend. "How?" inquired the first lady. "By using Hop Bitters, that makes pure rich blood and blooming health. It did it for me, as you observe."