

"Yes," said Laura; "but it was a sad tale, after all. He died in the first flush of his success."

"But he had lived!" said Maud, enthusiastically. "He had been recognized!—he was no longer an unknown eld!"

Laura smiled again at her young sister's enthusiasm.

"And you won't be an 'unknown eld' (as you call us poor, commonplace people) some day, Maud. Some day, when I'm an ugly old woman, I'll boast of my clever sister," said Laura.

The poor girl lying on the sofa gave a restless sigh.

"When will it be, I wonder?" she murmured,—"when will my dreams come true?"

CHAPTER IV

DEBT.

When Laura Keane awoke the next morning she could hear the waves breaking on the sandy beach of Seaton-by-the-Sea.

The soft monotony of the sound, and the otherwise perfect stillness which reigned in the house, would, in all probability, have helped to lull most happy young girls to sleep again, but Laura could not sleep.

An unpleasant memory came to disturb her in the stillness of the winter dawn. Mr. Bingley's familiar looks of admiration, his strange questions and manner about the notes which had come so oddly into her possession, and, finally, his mysterious warning.

"On no account," was she to change the other two notes which she still held, he had told her; and yet the miserable poverty of her mother's household sorely tempted her to do this. Poor Maud, who ought to have wine and soup, and everything strengthening, was absolutely wasting away for want of what those notes would purchase!

And yet she dare not change them! Laura Keane thought of this on that first dim winter morning when she awoke and found herself in her mother's house; but she always came to the same conclusion—she dare not change her notes, and must try even to forget that she had them in her possession.

But this was very hard to do. Mrs. Keane had not more than one hundred a year to live on, and drank the last part of that away.

Laura Keane had left her mother's house six months before, in great bitterness of spirit. She had been well educated, and, after her father's death, had remained with the excellent and accomplished lady at whose school he had placed her. She had remained as governess to the younger pupils, and from seventeen to nineteen had occupied this position.

But this good woman died suddenly.

The school was broken up, and the pupils scattered. The young governess, Laura Keane, had returned to her late father's house at Seaton-by-the-Sea, to find a miserable home—a degraded mother.

At last a lady in the village, compassionate of Laura's position, recommended her as governess to Mr. Glynford's family at Farnham.

Thus Laura Keane went to live at Bridgenorth House, and found that all ladies did not treat their governesses in the kindly fashion which her late schoolmistress had done.

A person without money was in Mrs. Glynford's estimation, a contemptible being. The tradesman's daughter judged everything and every one by the rules of the narrow school in which she had been reared. Laura Keane was poor, and therefore Mrs. Glynford despised her; Laura Keane was good-looking, and Mrs. Glynford did not like her better for being so.

But as we have seen, the girl had not been without some pleasure. Mr. Glynford was always kind to her, and Mr. William Glynford had brightened her life somehow by his words and looks. She had indeed left Farnham with regret, and her dismal home seemed sadder than ever to her, on her return to it for the Christmas holidays.

It had become worse since she had left it. Her mother was poorer and more deeply in debt even than before.

A ring at the door-bell created an unhappy feeling in the hearts of the inmates of the gray stone house at Seaton-by-the-Sea. They knew what it usually meant—a bill, a dun. They came day after day, but there was no money to be got. Mrs. Keane had none, and the young sensitive cripple—the girl genius—had her dreams and her fancies constantly rudely broken and disturbed by wrangling creditors at the door.

Could anything be more melancholy? Laura's spirits sank lower and lower. She felt such intense pity for Maud, such shame and anger for her mother. Here was a delicate young creature absolutely perishing for want of proper support, and her mother saw this, and knew it, and yet would, or could, not restrain her fatal craving.

The second day of Laura's return home all the change which Mr. Bingley had given her out of her three five pound notes was gone. It went on absolute necessities. It was Christmas Eve, and there was nothing in the house. So Laura bought a few articles of food, and a little wine for Maud.

Then she went down to the sands, and walked by the sea. The white frost had stiffened and fringed each blade of grass on the banks, and the salt tide that had lingered too long on its journey back to the great waters had been caught and frozen as it fled.

Above, the sky was all mist and haze. A gray sky and a gray sea, and not a living soul to be

seen as the girl paced thoughtfully along the shore.

She had her hand clasped to her throat. Ah, beneath that little hand lay William Glynford's gift, and it seemed pleasant to her to hold it there, and to believe that even at that moment he might be thinking of her.

If he really loved her, and would ask her to be his wife! This thought came also to the girl's mind, and deepened her soft colour.

If he really loved her! But, on the other hand, would his love be strong enough to overcome the cruel humiliations of her life? Her mother! Ah, that so sweet a name should ever be so degraded and abused as it was at this moment in this young girl's heart!

For she now perceived her mother unsteadily approaching her.

"Sissy," said Mrs. Keane, beginning to shed manifold tears, "my dear child, I have come to seek you. What do you think has happened? On Christmas Eve, too! Oh, dear—oh, dear, isn't it shocking?"

"What is the matter, mother?" asked Laura.

"The bailiffs!" wept Mrs. Keane. "Would you believe it, that bad man, Johnson, the grocer, has put in the bailiffs! He has often threatened; but on Christmas Eve—Oh, dear—Oh, dear!" and then the same sad refrain as before.

"How much is his bill?" said Laura, who was faint and trembling.

"Twenty pounds," answered Mrs. Keane; "but he says he'll take ten for the present. Oh, Laura, couldn't you write to the lady you're with, Mrs. —I forget her name—but couldn't you write to her, and ask her to advance this little sum? Do! Don't quite break your poor mother's heart—on Christmas Eve, too! Do—do ask her, Sissy! I'll go down on my knees to you if you will!"

"I can't write to Mrs. Glynford," said Laura. "She wouldn't send me the money if I did. She's hard and cold, and said all sorts of cruel things to me when I asked her to advance my salary before, and told me then that she would never do such a thing again."

"And you have none—none?" said Mrs. Keane, rocking herself to and fro. "Oh, why was I born! Oh, why—why am I not dead?"

"Oh, mamma," said Laura, "do try to compose yourself! You cannot go through the village as you are now."

"What do I care for the village?" said Mrs. Keane. "The village has turned its back upon me because I am poor. I care nothing for the village—nothing for anything in the world!"

And then came another hysterical wail.

"Hush, mother!" cried Laura. "I'll try—I'll try to get this money if you'll be quiet."

At sight of her mother's frightful condition, the thought had darted into poor Laura's mind that she had two five-pound notes in her possession.

True, she had resolved that nothing should induce her to change them; that she had remembered Mr. Bingley's warning. But then she looked at her mother.

"Will you try? Oh, Sissy, do try!" said Mrs. Keane, catching hope from her daughter's words. "If you could only lend me ten pounds, or get me ten pounds anywhere, just for a week, to get these men out of the house at Christmas-time, I'll promise—do you hear, dear!—faithfully promise to pay it back again. Mr. Bray, your poor father's executor, will send me twenty-five pounds on the ninth of February, and you shall have it then."

"But why not ask Mr. Bray for it now, mother?" said Laura.

"I have asked him, my dear—I've begged of him—all in vain. It's no use writing to him. He's harder than stone. It would only waste a stamp."

Laura sighed deeply. She did not know what to do; could not consult her mother—nor even tell her the truth about those mysterious notes.

"I will try to get some money, mamma," she said, soothingly, "if you will come quietly home." And, at the girl's entreaty, Mrs. Keane took Laura's arm, and together they retraced their steps to the village.

Laura could see their few neighbours looking at them, half-pityingly, half-contemptuously, as they proceeded home. Oh, how bitterly the girl felt the disgrace!

At last they reached the old gray stone house where Doctor Keane and his father before him had lived and died. And they had been very much respected. But what can a country doctor earn in a scantily-populated district beyond a bare living?

Laura's father had been able to save very little. He had died, poor man, in the prime of life, his last hours embittered by the knowledge and the spectacle of his wife's besetting sin.

As the girl and her mother went into the passage, she saw the two men sitting in the dining-room. They had their pipes in their mouths, and winked at each other when they perceived Mrs. Keane. But when they saw the pale, distressed look of her young daughter, they laid their pipes down, and rose from their chairs, as Laura entered the room.

"Sorry to be here, miss," said one of them; "but Mr. Johnson says he must have his account squared up. Perhaps you'll be able to help the missus a bit."

"Will one of you go for Mr. Johnson?" asked Laura, pale and trembling.

"I'll do that now, gladly enough," said the man who had spoken. And, after exchanging a few words with his mate, he went away, and Laura contrived to get her mother up-stairs.

Then she went to seek for Maud.

This sensitive, nervous, passionate girl was in a fearful state when Laura found her. She was kneeling by the couch in the (so-called) drawing-room, where she usually wrote, with her hands pressed over her ears, to shut out the hateful sounds below, and with shame and despair imprinted on her mobile and expressive countenance.

"Maud, dear Maud!" said Laura; and put her arms round the poor girl's form.

"Do you know?" whispered the poor thing; and her head fell on her sister's neck.

"Yes, yes," said Laura, kindly. "Darling, don't tremble so—they will go away presently. I have sent for Mr. Johnson, and have some money that I will give him."

"Oh, send them away—send them away!" cried Maud. "Oh, Laura, it will kill me—it will kill me if they do not go!"

This poor, clever, over-wrought girl did not mean to be selfish when she said these words. It was her temperament. The gifted brain, the highly strung nerves, were half maddened in this hour of excitement and distress. She forgot that Laura also must be suffering; forgot, in fact, everything except her own overwhelming emotion and distress.

Laura was very tender to her. She kissed the pale, throbbing brow, and made the poor child drink some of the wine that had been bought in the morning for her, and promised again that she would try to get "the men" down-stairs to go away, if Maud would only endeavour to compose herself.

But when suddenly a ring sounded at the outer door-bell of the house, both the girls started alike. They knew, or guessed, who the applicant would be.

Mr. Johnson, the grocer, had indeed returned with his bailiff, and presently the one little disorderly handmaiden kept by the Keanes rapped at the room door, and said, "Please, Miss Laura, Mr. Johnson wants to speak to you."

Laura rose from her kneeling position by her sister's side, with that assumed calmness with which we often endeavour to conceal the bitterest emotions of our hearts.

And Laura Keane's emotions at this moment were very bitter. She was going to meet this man—this importunate creditor—and what was she about to offer him?

She remembered Mr. Bingley's looks, and Mr. Bingley's words.

"On no account," he had told her, was she to endeavour to pass those notes; and now she was about, actually, to do so.

Yet she turned to say a whispered word of kindness and hope to the trembling young invalid on the couch.

"Don't be afraid," she said. "I'll soon be back."

And went down-stairs to meet Mr. Johnson.

A foxy-looking man, with red, scanty hair and a thin visage, was the grocer of Seaton-by-the-Sea.

He knew all about the Keanes, and knew, therefore, that Miss Laura had just returned from her situation in the north, and supposed that she would still have her half-year's salary in her pocket, and this supposition had induced him to put the bailiffs into Mrs. Keane's house.

"It was a chance," he said, with his foxy smile; and he, therefore, had hurried to the house with the greatest alacrity when he had received Miss Laura's message.

He took off his hat when the young girl appeared.

"Very sorry, Miss Laura, about this," he said, "but it's absolute necessity compels me. The times are so bad, and your 'ma has owed this account so long, that I'm driven to do what's very unpleasant to my feelings."

"How much is it?" said Laura. "For how much will you take these men away?"

"Well, Miss Laura," said Mr. Johnson, turning his hat in his hand, and smoothing the felt, as if considerably, "how much—in fact, how much could you spare me? The bill is over twenty pounds."

"I have ten," said Laura. "Will you take that?"

Again Mr. Johnson turned his hat, and again almost tenderly smoothed its felt.

He was wondering if he could get more, and was doing a little mental arithmetic as to the probable amount of the young girl's salary, and how much she was likely to have left of it, after deducting travelling expenses, &c.

"Ten is very little," he said, presently.

"It is all I have," answered Laura, desperately; "so I can give you no more."

"Well, Miss Laura," said the grocer, still gazing contemptuously at his hat. "I'll tell you what I'll do, to end any unpleasantness, especially at this time of the year. I'll take the ten pounds, if you'll give me a written and signed agreement that you'll pay the other ten during the course of the next six months. That's a fair offer, I think; and if you agree to it, I'll at once withdraw the parties in the next room."

For a moment Laura hesitated, and then, remembering Maud's distress, agreed to the man's terms.

"Very well," she said. "I'll get the ten pounds, if you will draw out the agreement."

This was soon done. When Laura returned with the two notes in her hand, Mr. Johnson had his agreement drawn out ready for her to sign, and had not even forgotten to put a stamp on it.

He then gave Laura a receipt for the ten pounds, and proceeded to put down the numbers of the two notes which she presented to him, in his pocket-book.

"I always take the number of any notes which I receive," he said, with a self-satisfied air, and Laura's heart sank as she heard these words.

"And I must again express my regret, Miss Laura," he said, "that this has occurred. But we must live, you see, and business must be attended to."

"Yes," said Laura; and she bowed, and moved away; and, a few minutes later, Mr. Johnson and his bailiffs were gone.

(To be continued.)

THE RED MEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

Our treatment of savage races forms one of the most unpleasant chapters in the history of civilized human nature. These remarks especially apply to the savages of North America, who have been poisoned with adulterated alcohol, cozened out of their lands and only made use of when we wanted their help in maiming and killing our white brethren. Of late years, however, the Canadian Government has been fairly successful in its dealings with the Indians, and has in this respect shown a good example to its Republican neighbours across the border. We have already on former occasions shown why the Canadians manage better than the Americans in this matter. First of all, a monarchical Government is better able than a democratic Government to restrain with a strong hand the restless spirits of its outlying settlements; and secondly, the parts chiefly inhabited by the Indians in the British Dominions have till lately possessed little attraction for the gold-seeker or the emigrant. The reverse of this obtains in the United States, where, moreover, the pioneers of civilization are often desperadoes and scoundrels, and where too frequently the Indian Agents have been more intent upon filling their own pockets than in benefitting the savages. We are glad to note that the American Government is now showing a sense of greater responsibility towards these poor creatures, of whom there are still some 250,000 within the limits of the Republic, and that genuine efforts are being made to educate children and to teach them industrial pursuits. All the Indian tribes are not alike in this respect, some are much more capable of civilization than others; but, even if civilization is in some cases impossible, the scandal of these perpetually recurring Indian wars might be terminated. Unbiased American testimony informs us that the first provocation to strife usually comes from white men. For this there is an efficient remedy in the hands of the Government. The inadequate and over-worked little American army should be increased in numbers, and the Indian Agents, as well as the public generally, should, in all matters concerning the Indians, be under the control of the military commanders.—Graphic.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

MME. RISTORI, who is now playing in Germany, has had an immense success in "Marie Stuart" at Hanover.

MISS KELLOGG has had a notable success upon the operatic stage in Vienna, and says that it is her intention to stay two years longer in Europe.

IN Paris the great event has been the production of M. Sardou's much-talked-of comedy, *Discretions*, at the Palais Royal. In this M. Sardou reconciles a married couple, who are only waiting for the passing of a Bill authorizing divorce to separate on the simple plea of incompatibility of temper, by the old trick of making the wife jealous of her husband.

MADAME PATTI, it is said, has taken a strange liking for Richard Wagner's weird strains, forming such a marked contrast to the melodious airs of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, which she has so long excelled in. She is especially fond of the part of *Elza* in "Lohengrin," which she has been carefully studying in order to appear in it next season in London.

SCIENTIFIC.

THE Astronomer Royal of England announces the discovery of a bright comet in 1h. 5m. right ascension, six degrees north declination.

DR. EBERS, the well-known Egyptologist, has obtained at Thebes an ancient Egyptian papyrus roll containing a treatise on medicine. Considerable space is devoted to the disease of the eye, in the treatment of which the Egyptians were very skilful.

AN Indian scientist, who had a collection of frogs, recently found the dead body of one of them behind a register in his office, evidently having died from starvation. On dissecting the body he found the lungs clogged with thousands of black crystals which looked like coarse gunpowder. Under the microscope these crystals presented regular facets with smooth surfaces, presenting the same angle of crystallization as the diamond. On burning they gave off carbonic acid gas, and they are pure crystals of carbon as the diamond is. The investigator thereupon propounds the theory that in the ages gone by the huge reptiles of the antediluvian period, dying under circumstances similar to those under which the frog died, may have formed large crystals of carbon in their lungs which were afterwards transformed into the hard and lustrous diamond.

TRUTH AND SOBERNESS.

What is the best family medicine in the world to regulate the bowels, purify the blood, remove costiveness and biliousness, aid digestion and stimulate the whole system?

Truth and soberness compels us to answer, Hop Bitters, being pure, perfect and harmless. See "Truths" in another column.

FOR STYLISH and well-fitting Gentlemen's Clothing, made after the London and American fashions, go to L. Robinson, the practical London tailor, 31 Beaver Hall Terrace.