AS GOOD AS GOLD.

CHAPTER VII (CONTINUED.)

"To America—well, well," said Henchard, in a tone of disappointment, so strong as to make itself felt like a damp atmosphere. "And yet I could have sworn you were the man!"

The Scotchman murmured another negative, and there was a silence, till Henchard resumed: "Then I am truly and sincerely obliged to you for the few words you wrote on that paper."

"It was nothing."

"Well, it has a great importance for me just now. This row about my grown wheat, which I declare to heaven I didn't know to be bad till the people came complaining, has put me to my wits' end. I've some hundreds of quarters of it on hand; and if your renovating process will make it wholesome, why you can see what a quag 'twould get me out of. I saw in a moment there might be truth in it. But I should like to have it proved; and of course you don't care to tell the steps of the process sufficiently for me to do that, without my paying ye well for't first."

The young man reflected a moment or two. "I don't know that I have any objection," he said. "I'm going to another country, and curing bad corn is not the line I'll take up there. Yes, I'll tell ye the whole of it—you'll make more of it here than I will in a foreign country. Just look here a minute, sir. I can show you by a sample in my carpet-bag."

The click of a lock followed, and there was a sifting and rustling; then a discussion about so many ounces to the bushel, and drying, and refrigerating, and so on.

"These few grains will be sufficient to show ye with," came in the young fellow's voice; and after a pause, during which some operation seemed to be intently watched by them both, he exclaimed, "There, now do you taste that."

"It's complete!—quite restored, or—well—nearly."

"Quite enough restored to make good seconds out of it," said the Scotchman. "To fetch it back entirely is impossible; Nature won't stand so much as that, but here you go a great way towards it. Well sir, that's the process; I don't value it, for it can be but of little use in countries where the weather is more settled than in ours; and I'll be only too glad if it's of service to you."

"But, hearken to me," pleaded Henchard. "My business, you know, is in corn and in hay, but I was brought up as a hay-trusser simply, and hay is what I understand best, though I now do more in corn than in the other. If you'll accept the situation, you shall manage the corn branch entirely, and receive a commission in addition to salary."

"It is liberal—very liberal; but no, no I cannet!" the young man still replied with some distress in his accents.

"So be it!" said Henchard conclusively. "Now—to change the subject—one good turn deserves another; don't stay to finish that miserable supper. Come to my house; I can find something better for ye than cold ham and ale."

Donald Farfrae was grateful—said he feared he must decline—that he wished to leave early next day.

"Very well," said Henchard quickly, "please yourself. But I tell you, young man, if this holds good for the bulk, as it has done for the sample, you have saved my credit, stranger though you be. What shall I pay you for this knowledge?"

"Nothing at all, nothing at all. It may not prove necessary to ye to use it often, and I don't value it at all. I thought I might just as well let ye know, as you were in a difficulty, and they were very harrd upon ye."

Henchard paused. "I sha'n't soon forget this," he said. "And from a stranger!. . .I couldn't believe you were not the man I had engaged! Says I to myself, 'He knows who I am, and recommends himself by this stroke.' And yet it turns out, after all, that you are not the man who answered my advertisement, but a stranger!"

"Ay, ay; 'tis so," said the young man.

Henchard again suspended his words, and then his voice came thoughtfully; "Your forehead, Farfrae, is something like my poor brother's—now dead and gone; and the nose, too, isn't unlike his. You must be what—five foot nine, I reckon? I am six foot one and a half out of my shoes. But what of that? In my business, 'tis true that strength and bustle build up a firm. But judgment and knowledge are what keep it established. Unluckily I am bad at science, Farfrae bad at figures—a rule o'thumb sort of man. You are just the reverse—I can see that. I have been looking for such as you these two year and yet you are not for me. Well, before I go, let me ask this: Though you are not the young man I thought you were, what's the difference? Can't ye stay just the same? Have you really made up your mind about this American notion? I won't mince matters. I feel you would be invaluable to me—that needn't be said—and if you will stay and be my manager I will make it worth your while."

"My plans are fixed," said the young man in negative tones; "I have formed a scheme, and there can be no more words about it. But will you not drink with me, sir? I find this Casterbridge ale warreming to the stomach—ay, as Presbyterian cream."

"No, no; I fain would, but I can't," said Henchard gravely, the scraping of his chair informing the listeners that he was rising to leave. "When I was a young man I went in for that sort of thing too strong—far too strong—and was well-nigh ruined by it! I did a deed on account of it which I shall be ashamed of to my dying day. It made such an impression on me that I swore, there and then, that I'd drink nothing stronger than tea for as many years as I was old that day. I have kept my oath; and though Farfrae, I am sometimes that dry in the dog days that I could drink a quarter-barrel to the pitching, I think o' my oath, and touch no strong drink at all."

"I won't press ye, sir—I won't press ye. I respect your vow."

"Well, I shall get a manager somewhere, no doubt," said Henchard, with strong feeling in his tones. "But it will be long before I see one that would suit me so well!"

The young man appeared much moved by Henchard's warm convictions of his value. He was silent till they reached the door. "I wish I could stay—sincerely wish it," he replied. "But no—it cannet be! it cannet! I want to see the warrld."

CHAPTER VIII.

Thus they parted; and Elizabeth-Jane and her mother remained each in her thoughts over their meal, the mother's face being strangely bright ever since Henchard's avowal of shame for a past action. The quivering of the partition to its core presently denoted that Donald Farfrae had again rung his bell, no doubt to have his supper removed; for humming a tune, and walking up and down, he seemed to be attracted by the lively bursts of conversation and melody from the general company below. He sauntered out upon the landing, and descended the staircase,

When Elizabeth-Jane had carried down his supper-tray, and also that used by her mother and herself, she found the bustle of serving to be at its height below, as it always was at this hour. The young woman shrank from having anything to do with the ground-floor serving, and crept silently about observing the scene—so new to her, fresh from the seclusion of a sea-side cottage. In the general parlor, which was large, she remarked the two or three dozen strong-backed chairs that stood round against the wall, each fitted with its genial occupant—the sanded floor—the black settle, which, projecting endwise from the wall within the door permitted Elizabeth to be a spectator of all that went on, without herself being particularly seen.

The young Scotchman had just joined the guests. These, in addition to the respectable master-tradesmen, occupying the seats of privilege in the bow-window and its neighborhood, included an inferior set as the unlighted end, whose seats were mere benches against the wall, and who drank from cups instead of from glasses. Among the latter she noticed some of those personages who had stood outside the windows of the Golden Crown.

Behind their backs was a small window, with a wheel ventilator in one of the panes, which would suddenly start off spinning with a jingling sound, as suddenly stop, and as suddenly start again.

While thus furtively making her survey, the opening words of a song greeted her ears from behind the settle, in a melody and accent of peculiar charm. There had been some singing before she came down; and now the Scotchman had made himself so soon at home that, at the request of some of the master-tradesmen, he too was favouring the room with a song.

Elizabeth-Jane was fond of music; she could not help pausing to listen; and the longer she listened, the more she was enraptured. She had never heard any singing like this; and it was evident that the majority of the audience had not heard such frequently, for they were attentive to a much greater degree than ordinary. They neither whispered, nor drank, nor dipped their pipe-stems in their ale to moisten them, nor pushed the mug to their neighbours. The singer himself grew emotional, till she could imagine a tear in his eye as the words went on:—

"It's hame and it's hame, hame fain
would I be,
O hame, hame, hame to my ain countree!
There's an eye that ever weeps and a
fair face will be fain,
As I pass through Annan Water with
my bonnie bands again;
When the flower is in the bud, and the
leaf upon the tree,
The lark shall sing me hame to my ain
countree!"

There was a burst of applause, and a deep silence which was even more eloquent than the applause. It was of such a kind that the snapping of a pipe-stem too long for him by old Solomon Longways, who was one of those gathered at the shady end of the room, seemed a harsh and irreverent act. Then the ventilator in the window-pane spasmodically started off for a new spin, and the pathos of Donald's song was temporarily effaced.

"'Twas not amiss—not at all amiss!" muttered Christopher Coney, who was also present. And removing his pipe a finger-breadth from his lips, he said aloud, "Draw on with the next verse young gentleman, please."

"Yes. Let's have it again, stranger," said the glazier, a stout, bucket-headed man, with a white apron rolled up round his waist. "Folks don't lift up their hearts like that in this part of the world." And turning aside he said in undertones, "Who is the young man?—Scotch, d'ye say?"

"Yes straight from the mountains of Scotland, I believe," replied Coney.

Young Farfrae repeated the last verse. It was plain that nothing so pathetic had been heard at the King of Prussia for a considerable time. The difference of accent, the excitability of the singer, the intense local feeling, and the seriousness with which he worked himself up to a climax, surprised this set of worthies, who were only too prone to shut up their emotions with caustic words.

"Danged if our country down here is worth singing about like that!" continued the glazier, as the Scotchman again melodised with a dying fall 'my ain countree!' "When you take away from among us the fools and the rogues and the lammigers, and the wanton hussies and the slatterns, and such like, there's cust few left to ornament a song with in Casterbridge, or the country round."

"True," said Buzzford, the dealer, looking at the grain of the table. "Casterbridge is a old, hoary place o' wickedness, by all account. 'Tis recorded in history that we rebelled against the King one or two hundred years ago, in the time of the Romans, and that lots of us wa shanged on Gallows Hill, and quartered, and our different jints sent about the country like butcher's meat; and for my part I can well believe it."

"What did you come away from yer own country for, young maister, if ye be so wownded about it?" inquired Christopher Coney, from the background with the tone of a man who preferred the original subject. "Faith, it wasn't worth your while on our account, for as Maister Billy Wills says, we be bruckle folk here—the best o' us hardly honest sometimes, what with hard winters, and so many mouths to fill, and Goda'mighty sending His little taties so terrible small to fill 'em with. We don't think about flowers and fair faces, not we—except in the shape o' cauliflowers and pigs' chaps."

"But no?" said Donald Farfrae, gazing round into their faces with earnest concern, "the best of ye hardly honest—not surely? None of ye has been stealing what didn't belong to him?

"No, no. God forbid!" said Solomon Longways. "That's only his random way o' speaking. 'A was always such a man of under-thoughts." (And reprovingly towards Christopher): "Don't ye be so over-familiar with a gentleman that ye know nothing of—and that's travelled a'most from the North Pole."

Christopher Coney was silenced and as he could get no public sympathy he mumbled his feelings to himself: "Be dazed, if I loved my country half as well as the young feller do, I'd live by claning my neighbour's pigsties afore I'd go away! For my part I've no more love for my country than I have for Botany Bay."

"Come," said Longways; "let the young man draw onward with his ballet, or we shall be here all night."

"That's all of it," said the singer apologetically.

"Soul of my body, then we'll have another!" said the general dealer.

"Can you turn a strain to the ladies, sir?" inquired a fat woman with a figured purple apron, the waist-string of which was overhung so far by her sides as to be invisible.

"Let him breathe—let him breathe, Mother Cuxsom. He hain't got his second wind yet," said the master glazier.

"Oh yes, but I have!" exclaimed the young man; and he at once rendered "Oh Nannie" with faultless modulations, and another or two of the like sentiment, winding up at their earnest request with "Auld Lang Syne."

By this time he had completely taken possession of the hearts of the King of Prussia's inmates, including even old Coney. Notwithstanding an occasional oddity which awoke their sense of the ludicrous for the moment, they began to view him through a golden haze which the tone of his mind seemed to raise around him. Casterbridge had sentiment—Casterbridge had romance; but this stranger's sentiment was of differing quality. Or rather, perhaps, the difference was mainly superficial; he was to them like the poet of a new school who takes his contemporaries by storm; who is not really new, but is the first to articulate what all his listeners have felt, though but dumbly till then.

The silent landlord came and leant over the settle while the young man sang; and even Mrs. Stannidge managed to unstick herself from the framework of her chair in the bar, and get as far as the door-post which movement she accomplished by rolling herself round as a cask is trundled on the chine by a drayman without losing the perpendicular.

"And are you going to bide in Casterbridge, sir?" she asked.

"Ah—no!" said the Scotchman, with melancholy fatality in his voice; "I'm—only passing thirrough. I am on my way to Bristol, and thence to foreign parts."

"We be truly sorry to hear it," said Solomon Longways. "We can ill afford to lose tuneful wynd-pipes like yours when they fall among us. And verily, to mak' acquaintance with a man a come from so far, from the land o' perpetual snow as we may say, where wolves and wild boars and other dangerous animalcules be as common as blackbirds hereabouts—why, 'tis a thing we can't do every day and there's good sound information for bide-at-homes like we when such a man opens his mouth."

"Nay, but ye mistake my country," said the young man, looking round upon them with tragic fixity; till his eye lighted up and his cheek kindled with a sudden enthusiasm to right their errors. "There are not perpetual snow and wolves at all in it!—except snow in winter, and—well—a little in summer just sometimes, and a "gaberlunzie" or two stalking about here and there, if ye may call them dangerous. Oh, but men, you should take a summer jerreny to Edinboro', and Arthur's Seat, and all around, and then go on to the Lochs, and all the Highland scenery—in May and June—and you would never say 'tis the land of wolves and perpetual snow!"

"Of course not—it stands to reason," said Buzzford. "'Tis barren ignorance that leads to such words. He's a simple home-spun man, that never was fit for good company—think nothing of him, sir."

"And do ye carry your flock bed, and your quilt, and your crock and your bit of chiney; or do ye go in barebones, as I may say?" inquired Christopher Coney.

"I've sent on my luggage—though it isn't much; for the voyage is long." Donald's eyes dropped into a remote gaze as he added: "But I said to myself, Never a one of the prizes of life will I come by unless I undertake it!' and I decided to go."

A general sense of regret, in which Elizabeth-Jane shared not least, made itself apparent in the company. As she looked at Farfrae from the back of the settle she decided that his statements showed him to be no less thoughtful than his fascinating melodies revealed him to be cordial and impassioned. She admired the serious light in which he looked at serious things. He had seen no jest in ambiguities and roguery, as the Casterbridge toss-pots had done; and rightly not—there was none. She disliked those wretched humours of Christopher Coney and his tribe; and he did not appreciate them. He seemed to feel exactly as she felt about life and its surroundings—that they were a tragical, rather than a comical, thing; that though one could be gay on occasion, moments of gaiety were interludes, and no part of the actual drama. It was extraordinary how similar their views were.

Though it was still early, the young Scotchman expressed his wish to retire, whereupon the landlady whispered to Elizabeth to run upstairs and turn down his bed. She took a candlestick and proceeded on her mission, which was the act of a few moments only. When, candle in hand, she reached the top of the stairs on her way down again, Mr. Farfrae was at the foot coming up. She could not very well retreat; they met and passed in the turn of the staircase.

She must have appeared interesting in some way—notwithstanding her plain dress—or rather, possibly, in consequence of it, for she was a girl characterised by earnestness and soberness of mien, with which simple drapery accorded well. Her face flushed, too, at the slight awkwardness of the meeting, and she passed him with her eyes bent on the candle-flame that she carried just below her nose. Thus it happened that when confronting her he smiled; and then with the manner of a temporarily light-hearted man, who has started himself on a flight of song whose momentum he cannot readily check, he softly tuned an old ditty that she seemed to suggest:

"As I came in by my bower door,
As day was waxin' wearie,
O wha came tripping down the stair
But bonnie Peg my dearie."

Elizabeth-Jane, rather disconcerted, hastened on; and the Scotchman's voice died away, humming more of the same within the closed door of his room.

Here the scene and sentiment ended for the present. When, soon after, the girl rejoined her mother, the latter was still in thought—on quite another matter than a young man's song.

"We've made a mistake," she whispered (that the Scotchman might not overhear). "On no account ought ye to have served here to-night. Not because of ourselves, but for the sake of him. If he should befriend us, and take us up, and then find out what you did when staying here, 'twould grieve and wound his natural pride as Mayor of the town."

Elizabeth, who would perhaps have been more alarmed at this than her mother had she known the real relationship, was not much disturbed about it as things stood. Her "he" was another man than her poor mother's. "For myself," she said, "I didn't at all mind waiting a little upon him. He's so respectable, and educated—far above the rest of 'em in the inn. They thought him very simple not to know their grim broad way of talking about themselves here. But of course he didn't know—he was too refined in his mind to know such things!" Thus she earnestly pleaded.

Meanwhile the "he" of her mother was not so far away as even they thought. After leaving the King of Prussia he had sauntered up and down the empty High Street, passing and repassing the inn in his promenade. When the Scotchman sang, his voice had reached Henchard's ears through the heart-shaped holes in the window-shutters, and had led him to pause outside then a long while.

"To be sure, to be sure, how that fellow does draw me!" he had said to himself. "I suppose 'tis because I'm so lonely. I'd have given him a third share to have stayed!"

(To be Continued.)

A PITIFUL ACCIDENT.

Two Children Rushed Almost to Death to Meet Their Father.

One of the saddest accidents which has ever occurred in the Windsor station of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Montreal, took place on Saturday evening. It caused intense excitement and roused such interest in the minds of the people generally that even next day hundreds visited the station to look at the scene of the trouble. Mrs. Barber, of 2015 Notre Dame street, arrived at the station on the 6.30 train from a three months' absence. With her were her two children, a boy of eight and a girl of ten. Her husband, Mr. G. Barber, a well-known local electrician, was there to meet his family. He was standing outside the grating which separates the train platform from the general waiting room. He was leaning against the fence which bars the general public from the baggage elevator and prevents them reaching the train platform across it.

He saw his little ones come rushing from the train searching for him. As they got near the grating he called them. They recognized the voice and instead of going through the gate turned to the right and ran across the baggage elevator which was in place and with the automatic gate open. That was all right, but the children and Mr. Barber both failed to notice a gap of eleven inches across which separated the edge of the baggage elevator from the fence against which their father was leaning. In their eagerness they sprang forward, just touched his hands and the next moment had disappeared to be dashed against the hard cement flooring fully thirty feet below. The anguish of the father and mother, the excitement of the passengers with which the station was crowded, and the wails of the injured children made a scene which Mr. Evans, the station agent, says he will never forget as long as he lives.

Willing hands picked up the little ones. The boy was unconscious and suffering from serious external and internal injuries. The little girl had apparently escaped without serious hurt, but that will not positively be known before many days. Her brother was taken to the Montreal General Hospital and she was thought to be able to be taken home and there she is now. At last accounts both the boy and girl are doing well and hopes are entertained of the recovery of both of them. The C.P.R. officials did all they could to assuage the grief of the parents and see to the comfort of the two little ones.

INDIAN'S OPINION OF CYCLING.

The Western Indians, although not fond of work, do not approve of indolent white men. The "heap good white man," in their estimation, is the white man who works hard, and to sit by him and watch him as he toils seems to afford them never-failing pleasure. Some young warriors of the Blackfoot tribe sat in the shade one day watching a group of laborers who were constructing a grade for a branch railroad in Montana. They were commenting upon the workmen and their work, when a bicyclist, the first that they had ever seen, came riding along the newly completed grade. He had got off the train at the last station, and was going to the fort a little further on. The Indians watched the wheelman without a word until he passed beyond a knoll, which hid him from view—then they expressed their sentiments concerning him.

"No good white man!" one remarked.

"No," answered another, with great scorn, "heap lazy white man—sits down to walk."

WHAT UNCLE SAM IS AT.

ITEMS OF INTEREST ABOUT THE BUSY YANKEE.

Neighborly Interest in His Doings—Matters of Moment and Mirth Gathered from His Daily Record.

In eight days a New York letter is delivered in Panama.

In three days a letter from Havana will reach New York.

Mail between New York and Auckland is 26 days in passage.

In twelve days a letter from Cadiz will be delivered in New York.

Ten days are required to carry a letter from New York to Berlin.

In the United States about 18 per cent. of married women are widows.

The Louisiana Legislature has passed a bill to license pool rooms at $1,000 a year.

Only eleven days are required to transport a letter from Florence to New York.

There is but one Garibaldi and one Shakespeare, Pennsylvania having the honour of owning the latter.

Delmar, Md., had a mad dog scare last week, and thirty-eight dogs were killed by the town authorities.

Lord Byron was once a great fad in America and his reward is 24 towns bearing his name, either by itself or as a prefix.

There were many more native born soldiers in the Union armies during the civil war than there were foreign born soldiers.

Mrs. Helen Cody Wetmore, the editor and publisher of the Duluth Press, a weekly paper, is said to be a sister of "Buffalo Bill."

Napoleon and Kossuth are outdistanced by Bismarck, for there are but ten Napoleons and one Napoleonville and seven Kossuths.

The great Climo ranch, in Southern California, composing 40,000 acres of land, is to be sold to a London syndicate for $2,000,000.

During 1895 nearly six hundred women made application for patents in the United Kingdom. In the United States the number is larger.

The oldest apple tree of Georgia is on the farm of John R. Wilson, of Wrightsville. It was planted long before Georgia was a state.

Dr. J. M. Toner, the Smithsonian writer and expert, who died recently was never married. He occupied a large house in Washington alone.

Old English names are frequent enough in Winthrop, Me., so that on three shores side by side appear Ingham, Oldham and Dillingham.

The Rev. William Cullan Hicks, a widely known revivalist of Kentucky can repeat from memory every word in the Bible except the Book of Psalms.

The favorite team of the Emperor of Germany, is a pair of chestnuts, one of which was raised in Susquehanna, Pa. The other came from Binghamton, N.Y.

Frederick Lockwood, of Bridgeport, Conn., has bequeathed $20,000 to a boys' club, providing a similar amount is raised from other sources within five years.

A great-grandfather, grandfather, father and son, all working together digging a cellar, was a rather unusual family gathering in Eastport, Me., one day last week.

At Muncie, Ind., a young woman committed suicide after quarrelling with her sister-in-law on the point whether green corn should be cooked on the cob or not.

The new friction wheels invented by W. J. Holman, which it is expected will increase the speed of locomotives to 1100 miles an hour, are being tested at Cape May, N.J.

The September crop bulletin of the State Board of Agriculture credits Doniphan County, Kas., with the highest average corn yield in the State—forty-eight bushels an acre.

Miss Rose Kellogg, for the past two years a resident of Spokane, Wash., has decided to become a lady travelling man and she is now on the road for one of New York's largest music stores.

Cy. Phipps, the giant of Penobscot county, is the strongest man in Maine to-day, and he is willing to prove his right to that title. He has lifted and moved a whole house one end at a time.

When Abram Hewitt's family go to Europe for the summer they sail on different steamers, meeting on the other side. If one steamer should go down part only of the Hewitt flock would be lost.

Charles Lester, 75 years old, who died the other day in Berea, Ky., was one of the founders of Berea College, the first institution established in the south for the co-education of the whites and blacks.

William J. Gilmore, who died in Columbus, O., the other day at the age of 73 years, was one of the most widely known lawyers in the State and was at one time a justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

The silver spade used by the Marquis of Normandy, then Governor of Queensland in turning the first sod of the Brisbane and Ipswich railway in 1873, was bought at a Bowery pawn shop in New York the other day.

Chairman Jones told New England free silver men who wanted an active campaign in their own States that the national free silver committee would not try to carry any State north of the Potomac or east of the Alleghanies.

Albert Cooper, the Newark, N. J. motorman who saved the life of a little child by jumping over the dashboard of his car as the child was rolling from the fender after being struck, received a cheque for $50 from the trolley company.

Unscrewing the cover from an old locked melodeon, that the instrument might aid the choir at the funeral of a childless New England widow who died recently, the descendant's relatives came upon $12,000 in United States bonds stowed away inside.

In the village of Pomfret, a few miles from Putnam, Conn., lives the only surviving great great granddaughter of General Israel Putnam. It is here that the celebrated wolf's den is located and the home of Mrs. Mary Putnam Sharpe, who is 84 years old. Her grandmother was General Putnam's favorite daughter.