AS GOOD AS GOLD.

CHAPTER X.—(Continued).

It was with a gentle delicacy of manner, surprising to Elizabeth, that he showed her out of the office, and through the outer room, where Donald Farfrae was overhauling bins and samples with the inquiring inspection of a beginner in charge. Henchard preceded her through the door in the wall to the suddenly changed scene of the garden and flowers, and onward into the house. The dining-room to which he introduced her still exhibited the remnants of the lavish breakfast laid for Farfrae. It was furnished to profusion with heavy mahogany furniture of the deepest red Spanish hues. Pembroke tables, with leaves hanging so low that they well-nigh touched the floor, stood against the walls on legs and feet shaped like those of an elephant, and on one lay three huge folio volumes—a family Bible, a "Josephus," and a 'Whole Duty of Man." In the chimney corner was a fire-grate with a fluted semicircular back, having urns and festoons cast in relief thereon; and the chairs were of the kind which, since that day, has cast lustre upon the names of Chippendale and Sheraton, though, in point of fact, their patterns may have been such as those illustrious carpenters never saw or heard of.

"Sit down—Elizabeth-Jane—sit down," he said, with a shake in his voice as he uttered her name; and sitting down himself he allowed his hands to hang between his knees, while he looked upon the carpet. "Your mother, then, is quite well?"

"She is rather worn out, sir, with travelling."

"A sailor's widow—when did he die?"

"Father was lost last spring."

Henchard winced at the word "father," thus applied. "Do you and she come from abroad—America or Australia?" he asked.

"No. We have been in England some years. I was twelve when we came here from Canada."

"Ah; exactly." By such conversation he discovered the circumstances which had enveloped his wife and her child in such total obscurity that he had long ago believed them to be in their graves. These things being clear, he returned to the present. "And where is your mother staying?"

"At the King o' Prussia."

"And you are her daughter Elizabeth-Jane," repeated Henchard. He arose, came close to her, and glanced in her face. "I think," he said, suddenly turning away with a wet eye, "you shall take a note from me to your mother. I should like to see her. . . . She is not left very well off by her late husband?" His eye fell on Elizabeth's clothes, which, though a respectable suit of black, and her very best, were decidedly old-fashioned, even to Casterbridge eyes.

"Not very well," she said, glad that he had divined this without her being obliged to express it.

He sat down at the table and wrote a few lines; next taking from his pocket-book a five-pound note, which he put in the envelope with the letter, adding to it, as by an after-thought, five-shillings. Sealing the whole up carefully, he directed it to "Mrs. Newson, King of Prussia Inn," and handed the packet to Elizabeth.

"Deliver it to her personally, please," said Henchard. "Well, I am glad to see you here, Elizabeth-Jane—very glad. We must have a long talk together—but not just now."

He took her hand at parting, and held it so warmly that she, who had known so little friendship, was much affected, and tears rose to her aerial-gray eyes. The instant that she was gone Henchard's state showed itself more distinctly; having shut the door, he sat in his dining-room stiffly erect, gazing at the opposite wall as if he read his history there.

"Begad!" he suddenly exclaimed, jumping up. "I didn't think of that. Perhaps these are impostors—and Susan and the child dead after all!"

However, a something in Elizabeth-Jane soon assured him that, as regarded her, at least, there could be little doubt. And a few hours would settle the question of her mother's identity; for he had arranged in his note to see her that evening.

"It never rains but it pours!" said Henchard. His keenly excited interest in his new friend the Scotchman was now eclipsed by this event; and Donald Farfrae saw so little of him during the rest of the day that he wondered at the suddenness of his employer's moods.

In the meantime Elizabeth had reached the inn. Her mother, instead of taking the note with the curiosity of a poor woman expecting assistance, was much moved at sight of it. She did not read it at once, asking Elizabeth to describe her reception, and the very words Mr. Henchard used. Elizabeth's back was turned when her mother opened the letter. It ran thus:—

"Meet me at eight o'clock this evening, if you can, at the Ring on the Budmouth road. The place is easy to find. I can say no more now. The news upsets me almost. The girl seems to be in ignorance. Keep her so till I have seen you. M. H."

He said nothing about the enclosure of five guineas. The amount was significant; it may tacitly have said to her that he bought her back again. She waited restlessly for the close of the day, telling Elizabeth-Jane that she was invited to see Mr. Henchard; that she would go alone. But she said nothing to show that the place of meeting was not at his house, nor did she hand the note to Elizabeth.

CHAPTER XI.

The Ring at Casterbridge was merely the local name of one of the finest Roman Amphitheatres, if not the very finest, remaining in Britain.

Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had lain there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years. He was mostly found lying on his side, in an oval scoop in the chalk, like a chicken in its shell; his knees drawn up to his chest; sometimes with the remains of his spear against his arm; a fibula or brooch of bronze on his breast or forehead; an urn at his knees, a jar at his breast, a bottle at his mouth; and mystified conjecture pouring down upon him from the eyes of Casterbridge street-boys and men, who had turned a moment to gaze at the familiar spectacle as they passed by.

Imaginative inhabitants, who would have felt an unpleasantness at the discovery of a comparatively modern skeleton in their gardens, were quite unmoved by these hoary shapes. They had lived so long ago, their time was so unlike the present, their hopes and motives were so widely removed from ours, that between them and the living there seemed to stretch a gulf too wide for even a spirit to pass.

The Amphitheatre was a huge circular enclosure, with a notch at opposite extremities of its diameter north and south. From its sloping internal form it might have been called the spittoon of the Jotuns. It was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude. The dusk of evening was the proper hour at which a true impression of this suggestive place could be received. Standing in the middle of the arena at that time there by degrees became apparent its real vastness, which a cursory view from the summit at noonday was apt to obscure. Melancholy, impressive, lonely, yet accessible from every part of the town, the historic circle was the frequent spot for appointments of a furtive kind. Intrigues were arranged there; tentative meetings were there experimented after divisions and feuds. But one kind of appointment—in itself the most common of any—seldom had place in the Amphitheatre—that of happy lovers.

Why, seeing that it was pre-eminently an airy, accessible and interesting spot for assignations, the cheerfullest form of those occurrences never took kindly to the soil of the ruin would be a curious inquiry. Perhaps it was because associations had about them something sinister. Its history proved that. Apart from the sanguinary nature of the games originally played therein, such incidents attached to its past as these: that for scores of years the town-gallows had stood at one corner; that in 1705 a woman who had murdered her husband was half-strangled and then burnt there in the presence of ten thousand spectators. Tradition reports that at a certain stage of the burning her heart burst and leapt out of her body to the terror of them all, and that not one of those ten thousand people ever cared particularly for hot roast after that. In addition to these old tragedies pugilistic encounters almost to the death had come off down to recent dates in that secluded arena, entirely invisible to the outside world, save by climbing to the top of the enclosure, which few townspeople in the daily round of their lives ever took the trouble to do. So that, though close to the turnpike-road, crimes might be perpetrated there unseen at mid-day.

Some boys had latterly tried to impart gaiety to the ruin by using the central arena as a cricket-ground. But the game usually languished, for the aforesaid reason—that of the dismal privacy which the earthen circle enforced, shutting out every appreciative passer's vision, every commendatory remark from outsiders—everything, except the sky; and to play at games in such circumstances was like acting to an empty house. Possibly, too, the boys were timid, for some old people said that at certain moments in the summer time, in broad daylight, persons sitting with a book, or dozing in the arena, had, on lifting their eyes, beheld the slopes lined with a gazing legion of Hadrian's soldiery, as if watching the gladiatorial combat; and had heard the roar of their excited voices; that the scene would remain but a moment, like a lightning flash, and then disappear.

It was related that there still remained under the south entrance arched cells for the reception of the wild animals and athletes who took part in the games. The arena was still smooth and circular, as if used for its original purpose not so very long ago. The sloping pathways by which spectators had ascended to their seats were pathways yet. But the whole was grown over with grass, which now, at the end of summer, was bearded with withered bents that formed waves under the brush of the wind, returning to the attentive ear Aeolian modulations, and detaining for moments the flying globes of thistledown.

Henchard had chosen this spot as being the safest from observation which he could thin kof for meeting his long-lost wife, and at the same time as one easily to be found by a stranger after nightfall. As Mayor of the town, with a reputation to keep up, he could not invite her to come to his house till some definite course had been decided on.

Just before eight he approached the deserted earthwork, and entered by the south path which descended over the debris of the former dens. In a few moments he could descern a female figure creeping in by the great north gap, or public gateway. They met in the middle of the arena. Neither spoke just at first—there was no necessity for speech—and the poor woman leant against Henchard, who supported her in his arms.

"I don't drink," he said in a low, halting, apologetic voice. "You hear, Susan?—I don't drink now—I haven't since that night." Those were his first words.

He felt her bow her head in acknowledgement that she understood. After a minute or two he again began:

"If I had known you were living, Susan! But there was every reason to suppose you and the child were dead and gone. I took every possible step to find you—travelled—advertised. My opinion at last was that you had started for some colony with that man, and had been drowned on your voyage out. Why did you keep silent like this?"

"Oh, Michael, because of him—what other reason could there be? I thought I owed him faithfulness to the end of one of our lives—foolishly I believed there was something solemn and binding in the bargain; I thought that even in honour I dared not desert him when he had paid so much for me in good faith. I meet you now only as his widow—I consider myself that, and that I have no claim upon you. Had he not died, I should never have come—never. Of that you may be sure."

"Tut-tut! How could you be so simple?"

"I don't know. Yet it would be very wicked—if I had not thought like that!" said Susan, almost crying.

"Yes—yes—so it would. It is only that which makes me feel ye an innocent woman. But to lead me into this!"

"What, Michael?" she asked, alarmed.

"Why, this difficulty about our living together again, and Elizabeth-Jane. She cannot be told all—she would so despise us both that—I could not bear it!"

"That was why she was brought up in ignorance of you. I could not bear it either."

"Well—we must talk of a plan for keeping her in her present belief, and getting matters straight in spite of it. You have heard I am in a large way of business here—that I am Mayor of the town, and churchwarden, and I don't know what all?"

"Yes," she murmured.

"These things as well as the dread of the girl discovering our disgrace, makes it necessary to act with extreme caution. So that I don't see how you two can return openly to my house as the wife and daughter I once treated badly, and banished from me; and there's the rub o't."

"We'll go away at once. I only came to see——"

"No, no, Susan; you are not to go—you mistake me!" he said with kindly severity. "I have thought of this plan: that you and Elizabeth take a cottage in the town as the widow Mrs. Newson and her daughter; that I meet you, court you, and marry you, Elizabeth-Jane coming to my house as my step-daughter. The thing is so natural and easy that it is half done in thinking o't. This would leave my shady, headstrong, disgraceful life as a young man absolutely unopened; the secret would be yours and mine only; and I should have the pleasure of seeing my own only child under my roof, as well as my wife."

"I am quite in your hands, Michael," she said, meekly. "I came here for the sake of Elizabeth; for myself, if you tell me to leave again to-morrow morning, and never come near you more; I am content to go."

"Now, now; we don't want to hear that," said Henchard gently. "Of course you won't leave again. Think over the plan I have proposed for a few hours; and if you can't hit upon a better one we'll adopt it. I have to be away for a day or two on business, unfortunately; but during that time you can get lodgings—the only ones in the town fit for you are those over the china-shop in High Street—and you can also look for a cottage."

"If the lodgings are in High Street they are dear, I suppose?"

"Never mind—you must start genteel if our plan is to be carried out. Look to me for money. Have you enough till I come back?"

"Quite," said she.

"And are you comfortable at the inn?"

"Oh, yes."

"And the girl is quite safe from learning the shame of her case and ours?—that's what makes me most anxious of all."

"You would be surprised to find how unlikely she is to dream of the truth. How could she ever suppose such a thing!"

"True!"

"I like the idea of repeating our marriage," said Mrs. Henchard, after a pause. "It seems the only right course, after all this. Now I think I must go back to Elizabeth-Jane, and tell her that our kinsman, Mr. Henchard, kindly wishes us to stay in the town."

"Very well—arrange that yourself. I'll go some way with you."

"No no. Don't run any risk," said his wife, anxiously. "I can find my way back—it is not late. Please let me go alone."

"Right," said Henchard. "But just one word. Do you forgive me, Susan?"

She murmured something; but seemed to find it difficult to frame her answer.

"Never mind—all in good time," said he. "Judge me by my future works—good-bye."

He retreated, and stood at the upper side of the Amphitheatre while his wife passed out through the lower way, and descended under the trees to the town. Then Henchard himself went homeward, going so fast, that by the time he reached his door he was almost upon the heels of the unconscious woman from whom he had just parted. He watched her up the street, and turned into his house.

(To Be Continued.)

BLENHEIM CASTLE.

Everything About It Is on a Large Scale—348 Feet Long.

The late Duke of Marlborough, in alluding to the size of Blenheim Palace used to say by way of joke, that it was the only residence in Europe which required $4,000 worth of putty a year to keep the window panes in order. Money went a good deal further in the last century than it does now; consequently when the House of Commons voted $1,500,000 to build the first Duke a residence there presently sprang up an edifice, 348 feet long, and with an interior so vast that, when a Government messenger once came post-haste there to the late Lord Randolph Churchill during one of his visits with a despatch it was over half an hour before his Lordship, who for exercise had been exploring the place, with its 15 staircases, was found. The last time it was repaired the late Duke was obliged to apply to Parliament for permission to sell the pictures and library to pay the bills, which amounted to more than a million and a half. It is therefore not surprising that, although the estate yielded $200,000 a year, the expenses of keeping up this preposterous residence kept the Duke a poor man. Altogether everything about Blenheim is grotesquely large. Some of the pictures are 70 feet square. The statue of the great Duke, near the big lake of 260 acres is 132 feet high and cost $150,000.

HE GETS IT.

She—I think your young friend is entitled to great credit for the way he is doing.

He—Yes, and the fellow gets it. He owes more than he can ever pay.

JOHN WATSON'S ALMANACK.

Curious Information About King George's Kingdom in 1764.

A curious little book is the "Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack" for the year of our Lord 1764, and the fourth year of the reign of King George III. It was printed by S. Powell in the city of Dublin.

The front fly leaf contains a list of stage coaches to various cities in Ireland, together with high-sounding names of comfortable inns along the route. The book itself gives the days of the year and month, the sun's rising and setting, the moon's age and changes, old style; tables of the marriages and deaths of the princes of Europe, and a list of the Lords and Commons of Parliament. There is an index to the courts, societies, hospitals, forts and garrisons, and fire engines and watermen. An exchange list of coins and values in the United Kingdom is followed by a table of values of foreign pistoles and moydores, with the grains and pennyweights contained in each. A dagger on the calendar marks the "nights of the greatest moonlight," and the table of the rising and setting of the moon makes special exception to some part of the summer "when there is no night, but all twilight."

A HAND ON THE CALENDAR

indicates the days on which the act against "cursing and profane swearing" may be read in churches and chapels. Penalties are one shilling for an oath, two shillings for two oaths, or to be set in the stocks. A child under 16 years, for swearing, is "to be whipt by the constable, or by the parent in the constable's presence." The table for finding the high tides gives many places that are not found on modern charts, or that have acquired new names. Two of them are the south coast of Bretagne and the banks of Flanders. There is a table to regulate the spinners, showing how the quantity of yarn ought to be adjusted to the price of flax, to prevent its being spun beyond its staple. Then there is a scale of interest at six per cent., and a calculation of the hire of a coach or chalse around the city of Dublin. A ring's end chaise for more than seven miles must be hired by agreement, and all complaints against drivers must be made to the Register's office within fourteen days from the time of dispute. The beginning of each reign since the Norman conquest is noted on a page with a margin. Within this margin is printed in large capitals, "Long Live the King." The names of persons who received premiums for the encouragement of husbandry and the useful arts cover three pages of the book. One Peter Winfield received a prize for showing two watches "of transparent enamel, not attempted here before." There were prizes also for growing barely off turnip ground, for painting mezzo-tints, for new designs on copper plates, and for making felt hats.

POSTAGE TO NEW YORK.

New England, east and west New Jersey, Maryland, and other English colonies on the North American continent was: Single letters, one shilling and six pence; double letters, three shillings. Of some letters there was no certainty, "there being no conveyance for letters, since the late peace, to any of his Majesty's islands in the West Indies, except by occasional ships." The penny post existed within the cities of London and Westminster, and the borough of Southwark and their suburbs. One penny was paid on the letter deposited at the Post Office, and another penny was collected on the delivery of the same letter. Letters direct from London to Holland, France, Flanders, and to the town of Geneva, through France, paid no foreign postage. But letters arriving from the same countries paid 10 pence at the port of London. The mail was sent from London every Tuesday and Friday to all parts of Europe, except the Lisbon mail, which started every Tuesday. No letters containing money or rings could be sent by post. The almanack was compiled by John Watson, and sold by him at his book store, at the Bible and Crown, near the Old Bridge and Bridge street.

SUFFERING ON THE BANKS.

Starving Fishermen Who Slaked Their Thirst With Chunks From Icebergs.

Some horrible experiences have lately occurred to American fishermen in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and upon the Banks of Newfoundland. Some of these stories have been brought to Quebec by Captains who have rescued the perishing men. The fishermen usually belong to New England ports, but some are from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Thomas Collins and Thomas Stanley of the Gloucester vessel Henry M. Stanley were out for six nights and seven days without food, having missed their vessel in a fog on Funk's Bank, near Newfoundland. They saw no sail during all this time, but finally landed at Cape Fogo Island, weak for want of food, and only able to crawl to the nearest habitation. All the provisions in their dory when they left the Stanley were two buns and half a gallon of water. By chopping chunks of ice from bergs they supplied themselves with fresh water, and this was all that kept them alive. Collins suffered much from swollen feet. One day, during a gale, he was washed into the sea, but managed to swim back to the boat. Stanley wanted to satisfy his hunger by eating raw fish, but Collins would not allow him to do so.

Gus Hibert and Andrew Ross of the schooner Norma were out for six days in a similar plight. They ate nothing but seaweed during this period and all the water they drank was one quart they took into the dory when leaving the schooner. They were finally picked up by a French fishing vessel and landed at Catalene. John Lott and Charles Olsen of the schooner Gladstone lost their vessel on Funk's Bank, and were not picked up until five days had elapsed. Their food supply consisted of two pieces of dry bread and half a gallon of water. After being without water for two days they renewed their supply by securing ice from large bergs and melting it in a bucket. They were picked up by the Norwegian brigantine Lizzie, which landed them on the Newfoundland coast.

Surprise is expressed that the American fishermen do not form themselves into an association for purposes of protection. At present they are obliged to leave their vessel in a small, frail dory for trawls, which may be situated five or six miles away from where their vessel anchored, without having supplies to sustain life in their dory in case of emergency. They are not provided with even a pocket compass to enable them to find their vessel. Shipping men say that the fishermen are themselves to blame, because they should refuse to leave their vessel unless a supply of water and food were given them for use in case of accident. They also express the opinion that the United States Government should enact a regulation compelling the proper victualling of dories before they leave United States schooners for trawling grounds, and that under a severe penalty. This course would doubtless save many lives and prevent much suffering.

STEEL TOWERS ON WAR-SHIPS.

A Post of Great Danger During a Fight at Sea.

In that coming naval battle between the steel fleets of the two first-class Powers to which nautical authorities have been looking forward ever since modern battleships became the mighty engines of problematical forces that they are, the military mast and fighting top will play a deadly part, and be the station of danger and heroism.

As everybody knows the old mast, the mast of yards and sails, has vanished from the modern ship of war. The place of that mast which was erected for sailing purposes is taken on the modern warships by a steel tower, which rises from the deck to support one, or maybe three or four circular galleries, where rapid-fire or machine guns are placed, which in time of action, pour their hail of bullets at the decks and ports of the hostile ship.

The object is to kill the gunners, for it is self-evident that the most powerful gun is powerless if its crew is dead. From a fighting top such a storm of lead could be driven upon these great guns as would make it impossible for men to work them. Therefore, it will be one of the first duties of a warship to shoot away with its heavy guns the military mast of its adversary.

As one well-directed shot will send the mast tumbling, it is not probable that any ship will come out of an engagement with its military mast standing. The shooting away of the mast will, of course, mean the death of every man in the fighting tops. Men sent there will know as they climb the dark ladder to their stations that they go to almost certain death, and will have only one duty before them, to kill as many of the enemy as they can before the crash comes.

Men who in turrets and sponsons below are handling the great guns have every hope of life and victory before them, but the men of the tops go to their duty with no such hopes and expectations. To man the fighting tops in action will be a kind of martydom especially hard to endure.

To perform deeds of valor in the face of contending armies or to suffer with fortitude in the gaze of admiring thousands is one thing; to climb up calmly inside a steel post and work away at such an unpoetical mechanical device as a rapid-fire or machine gun until such time as it may please the enemy to blow one into "kingdom come" is quite another thing.

Yet the modern man-of-warsman is enthusiastic over the advantage of the military mast, and would obey an order to man a gun in the fighting top as readily as he would the bugle call which summons him to his meals.

A RIGHT TO SPEAK.

"James, I have always been a faithful wife to you, haven't I?"

"Of course you have, Miranda. What are you—"

"And in all thirty-three years we have lived together I've always done my duty, haven't I?"

"Certainly, certainly. Who's denying that you—"

"You haven't ever found me making trouble or kicking up a fuss over little things, have you?"

"Of course not. I'd like to know what you're—"

"I've had my share of sorrow and stood it without murmuring or complaining?"

"Now, see here, Miranda, what's all this—"

"If things don't go to suit me I generally make the best of it and let it go at that, don't I?"

"To be sure. Is there anything that—"

"And you don't think I'd make a disturbance about anything unless I had a good cause, do you?"

"Surely not. What under the shining canopy are you driving at anyhow?"

"James, I wouldn't say a word about it if I could stand it any longer, but those slim little pipestem legs of yours look so distressing in your bicycle stockings and knickerbockers that I just can't keep still another minute. If you don't either wear long pants or pad your calves hereafter as sure as I'm a living woman I'll take the children and go to Aunt Rachel's and never come back!"

SHE WAS MISTAKEN.

She had given him a square meal, and as he was about to leave, she remarked:

A tramp's life must be very disagreeable."

I am no tramp, madam, he replied. I am just coming home from a summer resort.