AS GOOD AS GOLD.

CHAPTER XV.

At first Miss Newson's budding beauty was not regarded with much interest by anybody in Casterbridge. Donald Farfrae's gaze, it is true, was now attracted by the Mayor's so-called stepdaughter, but he was only one. The truth is that she was but a poor illustrative instance of the prophet Baruch's sly definition: "The virgin that loveth to go gay." This particular virgin was just a shade too far the other way; and she paid the penalty. Sober and discreet, she was yet so hearty, that her homespun simplicity afforded none of those piquant problems which are afforded by the simplicity that is carefully constructed by art. When she walked abroad she seemed to be occupied with an inner chamber of ideas, and to have slight need for visible objects. In short, it was obvious to real philosophers that Casterbridge young-manhood of the deep-seeing sort ought to have had a solicitous regard for her. So they took no notice of her at all.

If the news got abroad that she was unwell, Henchard's door was not haunted by young fellows with cigars, making some excuse for inquiring indirectly about her. But, to set against this, at inn gatherings of the rollicking sort, where discussions of the female world were apt to take a turn irreverent to the sex, the criticism was stopped when it came to Elizabeth with, "I say, now, we'll leave her alone."

Perhaps the young men were penetrating enough to see that she was too honest to be a woman of correct education. This view of her was helped by the curious resolvec that she had formed on checking gay fancies in the matter of clothes, because it was inconsistent with her past life to blossom gaudily the moment she had become possessed of money. But nothing is more insidious than the evolution of wishes from mere fancies, and of wants from mere wishes. Henchard gave Elizabeth-Jane a box of delicately tinted gloves one spring day. She wanted to wear them to show her appreciation of his kindness, but she had no bonnet that would harmonise. As an artistic indulgence she thought she would have such a bonnet. When she had a bonnet that would go with the gloves, she had no dress that would go with the oonnet. It was now absolutely necessary to finish; she ordered the requisite article, and found that she had no sunshade to go with the dress. In for a penny in for a pound; she bought the sunshade, and the whole structure was at last complete.

Everybody was attracted, and some said that her bygone simplicity was the art that conceals art, the "delicate imposition" of Rochefoucauld; she had produced an effect, a contrast, and it had been done on purpose. As a matter of fact this was not true, but it had its result; for as soon as young Casterbridge thought her artful it thought her worth notice. "It is the first time in my life that I have been so much admired," she said to herself; "though perhaps it is by those whose admiration is not worth having."

But Donald Farfrae admired her too; and altogether the time was an exciting one; sex had never before asserted itself in her so strongly, for in former days she had perhaps been too impersonally human to be distinctively feminine. After an unprecedented success one day she came indoors, went upstairs, and leant upon her bed face downwards, quite forgetting the possible creasing and damage. "Good Heaven," she whispered, "can it be? Here am I setting up as the town beauty!"

When she had thought it over, her usual fear of exaggerating appearances engendered a deep sadness. "There is something wrong in all this," she mused. "If they only knew what an unfinished girl I am—that I can't talk Italian, or use globes, or show any of the accomplishments they learn at boarding-schools, how they would despise me! Better sell all this finery and buy myself grammer-books, and dictionaries, and a history of all the philosophies!"

She looked from the window, and saw Henchard and Farfrae in the hay-yard talking, with that impetuous cordiality on the Mayor's part, and genial modesty on the younger man's, that was now so generally observable in their intercourse. Friendship between man and man; what a rugged strength there was in it, as evinced by these two. And yet the seed that was to lift the foundation of this friendship was at that moment taking root in a chink of its structure.

It was about six o'clock; the men were dropping off homeward one by one. The last to leave was a round-shouldered, blinking young man of nineteen or twenty, whose mouth fell ajar on the slightest provocation, seemingly because there was no chin to support it. Henchard called aloud to him as he went out of the gate. "Here—Abel Whittle!"

Whittle turned, and ran back a few steps. "Yes, sir," he said, in breathless deprecation, as if he knew what was coming next.

"Once more—be in time to-morrow morning. You see what's to be done, and you hear what I say, and you know I'm not going to be trifled with any longer."

"Yes, sir." Then Abel Whittle left, and Henchard and Farfrae; and Elizabeth saw no more of them.

Now there was good reason for this on Henchard's part. Poor Abel, as he was called, had an inveterate habit of over-sleeping himself and coming late to his work. His anxious will was to be among the earliest; but if his comrades omitted to pull the string that he always tied round his great toe and left hanging out of the window for that purpose, his will was as wind. He did not arrive in time.

As he was often second hand at the hay-weighing, or at the crane which lifted the sacks, or was one of those who had to accompany the waggons into the country to fetch away stacks that had been purchased, this affliction of Abel's was productive of much inconvenience. For two mornings in the present week he had kept the others waiting nearly an hour; hence Henchard's threat. It now remained to be seen what would happen to-morrow.

Six o'clock struck, and there was no Whittle. At half-past six Henchard entered the yard; the wagon was horsed that Abel was to accompany; and the other man had been waiting twenty minutes. Then Henchard swore, and Whittle coming up breathless at that instant, the cornfactor turned to him, and declared with an oath that this was the last time; that if he were behind once more, by G—— he would come and drag him out o' bed.

"There is sommit wrong in my make, your worship!" said Abel, "especially in the inside, whereas my poor dumb brain gets as dead as a clot afore I've said my few scrags of prayers. Yes—it came on as a stripling, just afore I'd got man's wages, whereas I never enjoy my bed at all, for no sooner do I lie down than I be asleep, and afore I be awake I be up. I've fretted my gizzard green about it, maister, but what can I do? Now last night, afore I went to bed, I only had a scantling o' cheese and ——"

"I don't want to hear it!" roared Henchard. "To-morrow the wagons must start at four, and if you're not here, stand clear, I'll mortify thy flesh for thee!"

"But let me clear up my points, your worshipful——"

Henchard turned away.

"He asked me and he questioned me, and then a' wouldn't hear my points!" said Abel, to the yard in general. "Now I shall twitch like a moment-hand all night to-night for fear o' him!"

The journey to be taken by the wagons next day was a long one, into White Hart Vale, and at four o'clock lanterns were moving about the yard. But Abel was missing. Before either of the other men could run to Abel's and warn him, Henchard appeared in the garden doorway. "Where's Abel Whittle? Not come after all I've said? Now, I'll carry out my word, by my blessed fathers—nothing else will do him any good! I'm going up that way."

Henchard went off, entered Abel's house, a little cottage in Back Street the door of which was never locked, because the inmates had nothing to lose. Reaching Whittle's bedside, the cornfactor shouted a bass note so vigorously that Abel started up instantly, and beholding Henchard standing over him, was galvanised into spasmodic movements which had not much relation to getting on his clothes.

"Out of bed, sir, and off to the granary, or you leave my employ to-day! 'Tis to teach ye a lesson. March on; never mind your breeches!"

The unhappy Whittle threw on his sleeve waistcoat, and managed to get into his boots at the bottom of the stairs, while Henchard thrust his hat over his head. Whittle then trotted on down Back Street, Henchard walking sternly behind.

Just at this time Farfrae, who had been to Henchard's house to look for him, came out of the back gate, and saw something white flittering in the morning gloom, which he soon perceived to be the part of Abel's shirt that showed below his waistcoat.

"For mercy's sake, what object's this?" said Farfrae, following Abel into the yard, Henchard being some way in the rear by this time.

"Ye see, Mr. Farfrae," gibbered Abel with a resigned smile, "he said he'd mortify my flesh if so be I didn't get up sooner, and now he's a doing on't! Ye see it can't be helped, Mr. Farfrae; things do happen queer sometimes. Yes—I'll go to White Hart Vale half naked as I be, since he do command; but I shall kill myself afterwards; I can't outlive the disgrace; for the women-folk will be looking out of their winders at my mortification all the way along, and laughing me to scorn. You know how I feel such things, Maister Farfrae, and how forlorn thoughts get hold upon me. Yes—I shall do myself harm—I feel it coming on!"

"Get back home, and slip on your breeches, and come to work like a man! If ye go not, you'll hae your death standing there."

"I'm afeard I mustn't! Mr. Henchard said ——"

"I don't care what Mr. Henchard said nor anybody else! 'Tis simple foolishness to do this. Go and dress yourself instantly, Whittle."

"Hullo, hullo!" said Henchard, coming up behind. "Who's sending him back?"

All the men looked towards Farfrae.

"I am," said Donald. "I say this joke has been carried far enough."

"And I say it hasn't. Get up in the wagon, Whittle."

"Not if I am manager," said Farfrae. "He either goes home, or I march out of this yard for good."

Henchard looked at him with a face stern and red. But he paused for a moment, and their eyes met. Donald went up to him, for he saw in Henchard's look that he began to regret this.

"Come," said Donald quietly, "you know better than all this, sir. It is tyrannical and unworthy of you."

"'Tis not tyrannical!" murmured Henchard, like a sullen boy. "It is to make him remember!" He presently added, in a tone of one bitterly hurt. "Why did you speak to me before them like that, Farfrae? You might have stopped till we were alone. Ah—I know why! I've told ye the secret o' my life—fool that I was to do't—and you take advantage of me!"

"I had forgot it," said Farfrae simply.

Henchard looked on the ground, said nothing more, and turned away. During the day Farfrae learnt from the men that Henchard had kept Abel's old mother in coals and snuff all the previous winter, which made him less antagonistic to the corn-factor. But Henchard continued moody and silent, and when one of the men inquired of him if some oats should be hoisted to an upper floor or not, he said shortly, "Ask Mr. Farfrae. He's master here!"

Morally he was there could be no doubt of it. Henchard, who had hitherto been the most admired man in his circle, was the most admired no longer. One day the daughters of a deceased farmer in Dummerford wanted an opinion on the value of their hay-stack, and sent a message to ask Mr. Farfrae to oblige them with one. The messenger, who was a child, met in the yard not Farfrae, but Henchard.

"Very well," he said. "I'll come."

"But please, will Mr. Farfrae come?" said the child.

"I am going that way. . . Why Mr. Farfrae?" said Henchard, with a fixed look of thought. "Why do people always want Mr. Farfrae?"

"I suppose because they like him so that's what they say."

"Oh—I see—that's what they say—hey? They like him because he's cleverer than Mr. Henchard, and because he knows more; and, in short, Mr. Henchard can't hold a candle to him—hey?"

"Yes—that's just it, sir—some of it."

"Oh, there's more. Of course there's more. What besides? Come, here's sixpence for a fairing."

"'And he's better tempered, and Henchard's a fool to him," they say. And when some of the women were a walking home they said, "He's a diment—he's a chap o' wax—he's the best—he's the horse for my money," says they. And they said, "He's the most understanding man o' them two by long chalks. I wish he was the master instead of Henchard,"' they said.

"They'll talk any nonsense," Henchard replied, with covered gloom. "Well, you can go now. And I am coming to value the hay, d'ye hear?—I." The boy departed, and Henchard murmured, "Wish he were master here, do they?"

He went towards Dummerford. On his way he overtook Farfrae. They walked on together, Henchard looking mostly on the ground.

"And are ye not right to-day?" Donald inquired.

"Yes, I am very well," said Henchard.

"But ye are down—surely ye are down? Why, there's nothing to be angry about. 'Tis splendid stuff that we've got from White Hart Vale. By the bye, the people in Dummerford want their hay valued."

"Yes. I am going there."

"I'll go with ye."

As Henchard did not reply, Donald practised a piece of music sotto voice, till, getting near the bereaved people's door he stopped himself with—

"Ah, as their father is dead, I won't go on with such as that. How could I forget?"

"Do you care so very much about hurting folks' feelings?" observed Henchard, with a half sneer. "You do, I know—especially mine."

"I am sorry if I have hurt yours, sir," replied Donald, standing still, with a second expression of the same sentiment in the regretfulness of his face. "Why should you say it—think it?"

The cloud lifted from Henchard's brow, and as Donald finished the corn-merchant turned to him, regarding his breast rather than his face.

"I have been hearing things that vexed me," he said. "'Twas that made me short in my manner—made me overlook what you really are. Now, I don't want to go in here about this hay—arfrae, you can do it better than I. They sent for ye, too. I have to attend a meeting of the Town Council at eleven, and "tis drawing on for't."

They parted thus in renewed friendship, Donald forbearing to ask Henchard for meanings that were very plain to him. On Henchard's part there was now again repose; and yet, whenever he thought of Farfrae, it was with a dim dread; and he often regretted that he had told the young man his whole heart, and confided to him the secrets of his life.

CHAPTER XVI.

On this account Henchard's manner towards Farfrae insensibly became more reserved. He was courteous—too courteous—and Farfrae was quite surprised at the good breeding which now for the first time showed itself among the qualities of a man who had hitherto thought undisciplined, if warm and sincere. The corn-factor seldom or never again put his arm upon the young man's shoulder so as to nearly weigh him down with the pressure of mechanised friendship. He left off coming to Donald's lodgings and shouting into the passage, "Hoy, Farfrae, boy, come and have some dinner with us! Don't sit here in solitary confinement!" But in the daily routine of their business their was little change.

Thus their lives rolled on till a day of public rejoicing was suggested to the country at large in celebration of a national event that had recently taken place.

For some time Casterbridge, by nature slow, made no response. Then one day Donald Farfrae broached the subject to Henchard by asking if he would have any subjection to lend some rick-cloths to himself and a few others, who contemplated getting up an entertainment of some sort on the day named, and required a shelter for the same, to which they might charge admission at the rate of so much a head.

"Have as many cloths as you like," Henchard replied.

When his manager had gone about the business Henchard was fired with emulation. It certainly had been very remiss of him, as Mayor, he thought, to call no meeting ere this, to discuss what should be dome on this holiday. But Farfrae had been so cursed quick in his movements as to give old-fashioned people in authority no chance of the initiative. However, it was not too late; and on second thought he determined to take upon his own shoulders the responsibility of organising some amusements, if the other councilmen would leave the matter in his hands. To this they quite agreed, the majority being fine old crusted characters who had a decided taste for living without worry.

So Henchard set about his preparations for a really brilliant thing—such as should be worthy of the venerable town. As for Farfrae's little affair, Henchard nearly forgot it; except once now and then when, on it coming into his mind, he said to himself, "Charge admission at so much a head just like him!—who is going to pay anything a head!" The diversions which the Mayor intended to provide were to be entirely free.

He had grown so dependent upon Donald that he could scarcely resist calling him in to consult. But by sheer self-coercion he refrained. No, he thought, Farfrae would be suggesting such improvements in his d—d luminous way, that in spite of himself he, Henchard, would sink to the position of second fiddle, and only scrape harmonics to his manager's talents.

Everybody applauded the Mayor's proposed entertainment, especially when it became known that he meant to pay for it all himself.

Close to the town was an elevated green spot surrounded by an ancient square earthwork—earthworks square, and not square, were as common as blackberries hereabout—a spot whereon the Casterbridge people usually held any kind of merry-making, meeting, or sheep-fair that required more space than the streets would afford. On one side it sloped to a river, and from any point a view was obtained of the country round for many miles. This pleasant upland was to be the scene of Henchard's exploit.

He advertised about the town, in long posters of a pink colour, that games of all sorts would take place here; and set to work a little battalion of men under his own eye. They erected greasy-poles for climbing, with smoked hams and local cheeses at the top. They placed hurdles in rows for jumping over; across the river they laid a slippery pole, with a live pig of the neighborhood tied at the other end, to become the property of the man who could walk over and get it. There were also provided wheelbarrows for racing, donkeys for the same, a stage for boxing, wrestling, and drawing blood generally; sacks for jumping it. Moreover, not forgetting his principles, Henchard provided a mammoth tea, of which everybody who lived in a burough was invited to partake without payment. The tables were laid parallel with the inner slope of the rampart, and awnings were stretched overhead.

(To be Continued.)

FALL FUN.

"That hair-restorer I bought of you I found very efficacious," remarked Cawker to his barber. "So?" replied the knight of the razor. "I must try it myself."

Athwart these melancholy days
It casts a gleam of cheer
To find you've half a ton of coal
Left over from last year.

"Yes," said one of the tramps to the farmer, "Dusty an' me just came in on our wheels." "What kind of wheels do you use?" "Car wheels."

She—"I see they have now a 'Woman's Dictionary.' Do you suppose that differs from any other?" He—"Probably has more words in it."

He—"I would be willing to die a hundred deaths for your sake." She—"So would anybody else. The trouble is that one death is all that we can get."

Bingo—"How is the new cook doing?" Mrs. Bingo—"Splendidly. Why, she has only been here three days, and she can already ride my wheel quite nicely."

A—"My wife has given me a birthday present of a keyring." B—"Well, if I were you, on my next birthday I'd see to it that she gave me the house key!"

Things never evenly befall,
'Mongst men though we are brothers.
Thanksgiving was designed for all,
But some have more than others.

Late—"What! Have all your daughters become engaged this summer? I wished to ask for the hand of Fraulein Marie myself!" "Oh, she is the most engaged of all!"

Smith—"I wish I had studied boxing when I was a boy. You see, I need it so much in my profession." Jones (surprised)—"What! as a lawyer?" Smith "No. As a father."

"Why do you beg?" asked the kind-hearted woman. "I can't help it, ma'am," said the beggar. "My wife's a widder, with five children, and they looks to me for support."

Somebody has invented a tablet to facilitate writing on railroad trains. Things are getting so that a traveling man won't have any excuse left for not writing letters to his wife.

The approached—"Why don't you go to work?" The tramp—"I'm trying to work, sir." The approached—"At what?" The tramp—"At present, sir, I'm trying to work you."

Mrs.—"Am I still 'the star of your life,' as I was when you used to write love letters to me?" Mr.—"Of course, dear." Mrs.—"I don't seem to be drawing a star salary, though."

"So you feel ill, my little lad?" asked the kind minister. "You should go and tell your mother. She will give you sage advice." "That's jest it," said the boy. "I'm doggone sick o' sage."

The Clergyman—"I had no idea profanity was so prevalent till I began to ride a wheel." His Wife—"Do you hear much of it on the road?" The Clergyman—"Why, nearly everyone I run into swears frightfully!"

"Harry, before we were married, you begged me to go hand in hand with you down life's pathway." "So I did." "And now you get mad when I ask you where you go without me five nights in the week."

Watts—"Let's walk along till a car overtakes us." Potts—"No. Let's walk the other way until a car meets us. We will catch it sooner; we will go down-town just as quick, and we will get more ride for our money."

An easy living—"Where are you working now, Mary?" "Ain't workin' nowheres. I am in business for myself. I got a couple dozen ladies that pays me a quarter a week to come around and ask 'em for a place, and it makes the hired girl they got mad and she won't leave."

WHEN THE HEART RESTS.

Nature takes the time when one is lying down to give the heart rest, and that organ consequently makes 10 strokes less a minute than when one is in an upright posture. Multiply that by 60 minutes, and it is 600 strokes. Therefore, in eight hours spent in lying down the heart is saved nearly 5,000 strokes, and, as the heart pumps six ounces of blood with each stroke, it lifts 30,000 ounces less of blood in a night of eight hours spent in bed than when one is in an upright position. As the blood flows so much more slowly through the veins when one is lying down, one must supply with extra covering the warmth unusually furnished by circulation.

A WONDERFUL FLOWER.

The Flor del Espiritu Santo, or Holy Ghost flower, found in the region of the Isthmus of Panama, has within its petals the perfect image of a dove. The leaves are very pale green in color, as though in harmony with the delicate purity of the blossom, which is of alabaster whiteness. In the center of the blossom, nestling in its very heart, is the perfect image of a dove. Right in the cup of the blossom, with the snow-white canopy about it, rests this wondrous image, its delicately molded wings drooping, half extended at its side, its gold-tinted head bent slightly forward, and its tiny, crimson-tipped bill almost touching its snowy breast.

CONDITION OF RUSSIA'S ARMY.

Two Million Fighting Men, Armed With Modern Rifles Ready for Action.

As the military forces of Russia on a war footing contains upward of three million combatants, it would appear that something more than "coercion that does not of itself mean war" would be required to enable any nation of western Europe to settle the Eastern Question without first consulting the Czar. The vast army is raised throughout the Russian empire, liability to service being almost universal. As a rule service with the colors last for five years and in the event of a mobalization of the forces, the field troops would be brought up to war strength by calling in reservists who had served five years in the ranks. The field troops and field reserve troops, together numbering two millions of men, would be formed into field armies, which would each comprise a number of army corps, rifle brigades, and reserve divisions. The remainder of the forces consist of fortress and depot troops and imperial militia.

The "three-line rifle, pattern 1891," has been introduced in place of the single-loading Berdan rifle. The new rifle carries five rounds in the magazine, is of small calibre, 3 inch, and has a smokeless ammunition. On service the bayonet scabbards are left at home, and the quadrangular bayonet is carried fixed. The barrel of the rifle is uncased and screwed into the body, an arrangement which helps to lessen the weight and, in fact, the rifle, with bayonet fixed, weighs only 9 1-2 pounds, or about 1 pound less than the Lee-Metford rifle and bayonet used in the British service. The regulations recognize four kinds of infantry, viz., volley fire, which may be used at all ranges; individual fire, which is employed up to 500 or 600 paces; individual concentrated fire (the fire of all the men of a section or squad at a common object), up to 1,200 paces; a mass fire at greater distances than 1,200 paces. When within 200 or 300 paces of the enemy fire attains its maximum intensity by the employment of magazine fire. After a successful bayonet charge the shooting line must continue its advance to the far side of the captured position, and press the enemy by a rapid fire. A frontal attack must be supported by one on the flank. When acting on the defensive, infantry must put forth every effort to shake the enemy by fire, and then attack him with the bayonet.

Throughout the Russian cavalry the men are armed with a curved sword, 34 1-2 inches long, and rifle and bayonet. In the Cossacks the front rank carry a lance. In artillery the Russians are particularly strong, and their armament and projectiles are of the latest and most approved patterns. The active army and field reserve troops alone contain upward of five hundred batteries, manning over four thousand guns. General staff officers form a closed corps, and are recruited from those who pass the General Staff Academy. The duties of the general staff, broadly speaking, include the movements and operations of the army, intelligence of the enemy, and reconnoissance of the theatre of war.

It is laid down that on marches, when at a distance from the enemy, it is of the first importance to study the comfort and convenience of the troops by separating arms, and sending on billeting parties and bakers to provide for the wants of the troops beforehand. When, near the enemy, however, and on a march that may lead to an encounter, the troops advance closed up as much as possible, in columns, and aim mainly at swiftness and secrecy.

ROYALTY'S MARRYING AGE.

Royalties, as a rule, marry early. The Emperor of Austria married, when he was 24, a bride of 16 years and 4 months; one of his two daughters married at the age of 16 years and 9 months, and his son's bride was only 17. The King of Belgium was a youth of 18 when he married a girl of 17, and his two daughters were married while mere school girls in age, 17 years. King Christian of Denmark, purdently waited till he was 24, and then took for a wife a Princess six months older than himself; but the Princess Alexandra, was married to the Prince of Wales at the age of 18. The German Emperor was 22, and his bride only three months younger. When the King of Greece married he was also 22; but his Russian wife had only just passed her 16th birthday. The King of Italy did not marry till he was 24, which is mature for the sunny South, his wife not being 16 1-2. The King of Portugal was 22 1-2, and his wife almost 21. The King of Roumania at 20 married a young girl rising 16. The Czar of Russia was 26 and his wife 22 when they married. The King of Sweden and Norway was 28, and his wife under 21. Queen Victoria was a few months under 21, and the Prince Consort three months younger when the royal wedding took place; the Prince of Wales was 21 years 4 months, the Duke of Edinburgh a few months short of 30, the Duke of Connaught very nearly 29, Prince Leopold just over 29, the Duchess of Fife a little over 22, Princess Alice 19, Princess Helena 22, Princess Louise 21, and Princess Beatrice 28 1-2 years. The Queen's father had reached the sensible age of 50 1-2 years when he took a bride aged 32.

JUST LIKE A WOMAN.

None has a better wife than I,
And every morn she seems more sweet
When at the door she says good-by
And sees me vanish down the street.

But though she trembles at my kiss
(A lonely day to her remains),
She has no other words than this—
"Turn up your trousers, if it rains."

Without her love I could not live,
I'd sooner die than give offense;
But why does not my sweet wife give
Me credit for a little sense?

If I were leaving her for years,
Though racked her breast with cruel pains
This same remark would greet my ears,
"Turn up your trousers when it rains."