AS GOOD AS GOLD.

CHAPTER XIX.

Henchard and Elizabeth sat conversing by the fire. It was three weeks after Mrs. Henchard's funeral; the candles were not lighted, and a flexuous acrobatic flame, poised on a coal, called from the shady walls the smiles of all shapes that could respond—the old pier-glass, with gilt columns and huge entablature, the picture-frames, sundry knobs and handles, and the brass rosette at the bottom of each riband bell-pull on either side of the chimney-piece.

"Elizabeth, do you think much of old times?" said Henchard.

"Yes, sir; often," said she.

"Who do you put in your pictures of 'em?"

"Mother and father— Nobody else hardly."

Henchard always looked like one bent on resisting pain when Elizabeth-Jane spoke of Richard Newson as "father." "Ah! I am out of all that, am I not?" he said. . . "Was Newson a kind father?"

"Yes, sir; very."

Henchard's face settled into an expression of stolid loneliness which gradually modulated into something softer. "Suppose I had been your real father?" he said. "Would you have cared for me as much as you cared for Richard Newson?"

"I can't think it," she said quickly. "I can think of no other as my father except my father."

Henchard's wife was dissevered from him by death; his friend and helper Farfrae by estrangement; Elizabeth-Jane by ignorance. It seemed to him that only one of them could possibly be recalled, and that was the girl. His mind began vibrating between the wish to reveal himself to her, and the policy of leaving well alone, till he could no longer sit still. He walked up and down, and then he stood behind a chair, looking down upon the top of her head. He could no longer restrain his impulse. "What did your mother tell you about me—my history?" he asked.

"That you were related by marriage."

"She should have told more—before you knew me. Then my task would not have been such a hard one. . . Elizabeth, it is I who am your father, and not Richard Newson. Shame alone prevented your wretched parents from owning this to you while both of 'em were alive."

The back of Elizabeth's head remained still, and her shoulders did not denote even the movements of breathing. Henchard went on: "I'd rather have your scorn, your fear, anything, than your ignorance; 'tis that I hate. Your mother and I were man and wife when we were young. What you saw was our second marriage. Your mother was too honest. We had thought each other dead—and—Newson became her husband."

This was the nearest approach Henchard could make to the full truth. As far as he personally was concerned he would have screened nothing; but he showed a respect for the young girl's sex and years worthy of a better man.

When he had gone on to give details which a whole series of slight and unregarded incidents in her past life strangely corroborated; when, in short, she believed his story to be true, she became greatly agitated, and, turning round to the table, flung her face upon it weeping.

"Don't cry—don't cry," said Henchard with vehement pathos, "I can't bear it, I am your father; why should you cry? Am I so dreadful, so hateful to 'ee? Don't take against me, Elizabeth-Jane!" he cried, grasping her wet hand. "Don't take against me—though I was a drinking man once, and used your mother roughly—I'll be kinder to you than he was! I'll do anything, if you will only look upon me as your father!"

She tried to stand up and confront him trustfully; but she could not; she was troubled at his presence, like the brethren at the avowal of Joseph.

"I don't want you to come to me all of a sudden," said Henchard, in jerks, and moving like a great tree in a wind. "No, Elizabeth, I don't. I'll go away and not see you till to-morrow, or when you like; and then I'll show 'ee papers to prove my words. There, I am gone and won't disturb you any more. . . 'Twas I that chose your name, my daughter; your mother wanted it Susan. There, don't forget 'twas I gave you your name." He went out at the door and shut her softly in, and she heard him go away into the garden. But he had not done. Before she had moved, or in any way recovered from the effect of his disclosure, he reappeared.

"One word more, Elizabeth," he said. "You'll take my surname now—hey? Your mother was against it; but it will be much more pleasant to me. 'Tis legally yours, you know. But nobody need know that. You shall take it as if by choice. I'll talk to my lawyer—I don't know the law of it exactly; but will you do this—let me put a few lines into the newspaper that such is to be your name?"

"If it is my name I must have it, mustn't I?" she asked.

"Well, well; usage is everything in these matters."

"I wonder why mother didn't wish it?"

"Oh, some whim of the poor soul's. Now get a bit of paper and draw up a paragraph as I shall tell you. But let's have a light."

"I can see by the firelight," she answered. "Yes—I'd rather."

"Very well."

She got a piece of paper, and bending over the fender, wrote at his dictation words which he had evidently got by heart from some advertisement or other words to the effect that she, the writer, hitherto known as Elizabeth-Jane Newson, was going to call herself Elizabeth-Jane Henchard forthwith. It was done, and fastened up, and directed to the office of the Casterbridge Chronicle.

"Now," said Henchard, with the blaze of satisfaction that he emitted when he had carried his point—though tenderness softened it this time—"I'll go upstairs and hunt for some documents that will prove it all to-morrow. Good-night, my Elizabeth-Jane."

He was gone before the bewildered girl could realize what it all meant, or adjust her filial sense to the new centre of gravity. She was thankful that he had left her to herself for the evening, and sat down over the fire. Here she remained in silence, and wept—not for her mother now, but for the genial sailor, Richard Newson, to whom she seemed doing a wrong.

Henchard, in the meantime, had one upstairs. Papers of a domestic nature he kept in a drawer in his bedroom, and this he unlocked. Before turning them over he leant back and indulged in reposeful thought. Elizabeth was his at last, and she was a girl of such good sense and kind heart that she would be sure to like him. He was the kind of man to whom some human object for pouring out his heart upon—were it effective or were it choleric—was almost a necessity. The craving of his heart for the re-establishment of this tenderest human tie had been great during his wife's lifetime, and now he had submitted to its mastery without reluctance and without fear. He bent over the drawer again, and proceeded in his search.

Among the other papers had been placed the contents of his wife's little desk, the keys of which had been handed to him at her request. Here was the letter addressed to him with the restriction, "Not to be opened till Elizabeth-Jane's wedding-day."

Mrs. Henchard, though better educated than her husband, had been no practical hand at anything. In sealing up the sheet, which was folded and tucked in without an envelope, in the old-fashioned way, she had overlaid the junction with a large mass of wax without the exquisite under-touch of the same. The seal had cracked, and the letter was open. Henchard had no reason to suppose the restriction one of serious weight, and his feeling for his late wife had not been of the nature of deep respect, "Some trifling fancy or other of poor Susan's, I suppose," he said; and without curiosity he allowed his eyes to scan the letter:—

"My dear Michael—For the good of all three of us, I have kept one thing a secret from you till now. I hope you will understand why; I think you will; though perhaps you may not forgive me. But, dear Michael, I have done for the best. I shall be in my grave when you read this, and Elizabeth-Jane will have a home. Don't curse me, Mike—think of how I was situated. I can hardly write it, but here it is. Elizabeth-Jane is not your Elizabeth-Jane—the child who was in my arms when you sold me. No; she died three months after that, and this living one is my other husband's. I christened her by the same name we had given to the first, and she filled up the ache I felt at the other's loss. Michael, I am dying, and I might have held my tongue; but I could not. Tell her husband of this or not, as you may judge; and forgive, if you can, a woman you once deeply wronged, as she forgives you.

"Susan Henchard."

Her husband regarded the paper as if it were a window-pane through which he saw for miles. His lip twitched, and he seemed to compress his frame, as if to bear better. His usual habit was not to consider whether destiny were hard upon him or not—the shape of his ideas in cases of affliction being simply a moody "I am to suffer, I perceive." "So much scourging as this then, is it for me?" But now through his passionate head there stormed this thought—that the blasting disclosure was what he had deserved.

His wife's extreme reluctance to have the girl's name altered from Newson to Henchard was now accounted for fully. It furnished another illustration of that honesty in dishonesty which had characterised her in other things.

He remained unnerved and purposeless for near a couple of hours; till he suddenly said, "Ah—I wonder if it is true!"

He jumped up in an impulse, kicked off his slippers, and went with a candle to the door of Elizabeth-Jane's room, where he put his ear to the keyhole and listened. She was breathing profoundly. Henchard softly turned the handle, entered, and shading the light, approached the bedside. Gradually bringing the light from behind a screening curtain he held it in such a manner that it fell slantwise on her face without shining on her eyes. He steadfastly regarded her features.

They were fair; his were dark. But this was an unimportant preliminary. In sleep there come to the surface buried genealogical facts, ancestral curves, dead men's traits, which the nobility of daytime animation screens and overwhelms. In the present statuesque repose of the young girl's countenance Richard Newson's was unmistakably reflected. He could not endure the sight of her, and hastened away.

Misery taught him nothing more than defiant endurance of it. His wife was dead, and the first impulse for revenge died with the thought that she was beyond him. He looked out at the night as a fiend. Henchard, like all his kind, was superstitious, and he could not help thinking that the concatenation of events this evening had produced was the scheme of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him. Yet they had developed naturally. If he had not revealed his past history to Elizabeth he would not have searched the drawer for papers, and so on. The mockery was, that he should have no sooner taught a girl to claim the shelter of his paternity than he discovered her to have no kinship with him.

This ironical sequence of things angered him like an impish trick from a fellow-creature. Like Prester John's, his table had been spread, and infernal harpies had snatched up the food. He went out of the house, and moved sullenly onward down the pavement till he came to the bridge at the bottom of the High street. Here he turned in upon a bypath on the river bank, skirting the northeastern limits of the town.

These precincts embodied the mournful phases of Casterbridge life, as the south avenues embodied its cheerful moods. The whole way along here was sunless, even in summer time; in spring white frosts lingered here when other places were steaming with warmth; while in winter it was the seed-field of all the aches, rheumatisms, and torturing cramps of the year. The Casterbridge doctors must have pined away for want of sufficient nourishment, but for the configuration of the landscape on the northeastern side.

The river—slow, noiseless, and dark—the Schwarzwasser of Casterbridge—ran beneath a low cliff, the two together forming a defence which had rendered walls and artificial earthworks on this side unnecessary. Here were ruins of a Franciscan priory, and a mill attached to the same, the water of which roared down a back-hatch like the voice of desolation. Above the cliff, and behind the river, rose a pile of buildings, and in the front of the pile a square mass cut into the sky. It was like a pedestal lacking its statue. This missing feature, without which the design remained incomplete, was, in truth, the corpse of a man; for the square mass formed the base of the gallows, the extensive buildings at the back being the county gaol. In the meadow where Henchard now walked the mob were wont to gather whenever an execution took place, and there to the tune of the roaring weir they stood and watched the spectacle.

The exaggeration which darkness imparted to the glooms of this region impressed Henchard more than he had expected. The lugubrious harmony of the spot with his domestic situation was too perfect for him, impatient of effects, scenes, and adumbrations. It reduced his heart-burning to melancholy, and he exclaimed, "Why the deuce did I come here!" He went on past the cottage in which the old local hangman had lived and died, in times before that calling was monopolised by a single gentleman; and climbed up by a steep back lane into the town.

For the sufferings of that night, engendered by his bitter disappointment, he might well have been pitied. He was like one who had half-fainted, and could neither recover nor complete the swoon. In words he could blame his wife, but not in his heart; and had he obeyed the wise directions outside her letter this pain would have been spared him for long—possibly for ever, Elizabeth-Jane seeming to show no ambition to quit her safe and secluded maiden courses for the speculative path of matrimony.

The morning came after this night of unrest, and with it the necessity for a plan. He was far too self-willed to recede from a position, especially as it would involve humiliation. His daughter he had asserted her to be, and his daughter she would always think herself, no matter what hypocrisy it involved.

But he was ill prepared for the first step in this new situation. The mo step in this new situation. The moment he came into the breakfast-room Elizabeth advanced with open confidence to him and took him by the arm.

"I have thought and thought all night of it," she said frankly. "And I see that everything must be as you say. And I am going to look upon you as the father that you are, and not to call you Mr. Henchard any more. It is so plain to me now. Indeed, father, it is. For, of course, you would not have done half the things you have done for me, and let me have my own way so entirely, and bought me presents, if I had only been your stepdaughter. He—Mr. Newson—whom my poor mother married by such a strange mistake," (Henchard was glad that he had disguised matters here) "was very kind—oh, so kind!" (she spoke with tears in her eyes) "but that is not the same thing as being one's real father after all. Now, father, breakfast is ready," said she cheerfully.

Henchard bent and kissed her cheek. The moment and the act he had contemplated for weeks with a thrill of pleasure; yet it was no less than a miserable insipidity to him now that it had come. His reinstation of her mother had been chiefly for the girl's sake, and the fruition of the whole scheme was such dust and ashes as this.

CHAPTER XX.

Of all the enigmas which ever confronted a girl there can have been seldom one like that which followed Henchard's announcement of himself to Elizabeth as her father. He had done it in an ardour and an agitation which had half carried the point of affection with her; yet, behold, from the next morning onwards his manner was constrained as she had never seen it before.

The coldness soon broke out into open chiding. One grievous failing of Elizabeth's was her occasional pretty and picturesque use of dialect words—those terrible marks of the beast to the truly genteel.

It was dinner time—they never met except at meals—and she happened to say when he was rising from table, wishing to show him something, "If you'll bide where you be a minute, father, I'll get it."

"Bide where you be," he echoed sharply. "Good G—, are you only fit to carry wash to a pig-trough, that ye use such words as those?"

She reddened with shame and sadness.

"I meant 'stay where you are,' father," she said, in a low, humble voice. "I ought to have been more careful."

He made no reply, and went out of the room.

The sharp reprimand was not lost upon her, and in time it came to pass that for "fay" she said "succeed;" that she no longer spoke of "dumbledores" but of "humble bees;" no longer said of young men and women that they "walked together," but that they were "engaged;" that she grew to talk of "greggles" as "wild hyacinths;" that when she had not slept she did not quaintly tell the servants next morning that she had been "hagrid," but that she had "suffered from indigestion."

These improvements, however, are somewhat in advance of the story. Henchard, being uncultivated himself, was the bitterest critic the fair girl could possibly have had of her own lapses—really slight now, for she read omnivorously. A gratuitous ordeal was in store for her in the matter of her handwriting. She was passing the dining-room door one evening, and had occasion to go in for something. It was not till she had opened the door that she knew the Mayor was there in the company of a man with whom he transacted business.

"Here, Elizabeth-Jane," he said, looking round at her, "just write down what I tell you—a few words of an agreement for me and this gentleman to sign, I am a poor tool with a pen."

"Be jowned, and so be I," said the gentleman.

She brought forward blotting-book, paper, and ink, and sat down.

"Now then—"An agreement entered into this sixteenth day of October"—write that first."

She started the pen in an elephantine march across the sheet. It was a splendid round, bold hand of her own conception, a style that would have stamped a woman as Minerva's own in more recent days. But other ideas reigned then; Henchard's creed was that proper young girls wrote ladies' hand—nay, he believed that bristling characters were as innate and inseparable a part of refined womanhood as sex itself. Hence when, instead of scribbling, like the Princess Ida,—

"In such a hand as when a field of corn
Bows all its ears before the roaring East."

Elizabeth-Jane produced a line of chain-shot and sand-bags, he reddened in angry shame for her, and, peremptorily saying, "Never mind—I'll finish it," dismissed her there and then.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTMAS CUSHIONS.

The charm of the divan pillow as a Christmas gift is that whether you buy it, or make it yourself, whether it is costly or simple, it is sure to find a warm welcome and a hungry nook where its presence will be always gratefully remembered.

Women who plan to make pillows for holiday distribution should know in time that, no matter how many ticks the feather stuffing is inclosed in, and no matter how close woven is the outer covering, down from barnyard fowls or eider ducks will eventually work through unless the proper precautions are taken.

An expert pillow maker says that in the factories they hold the feathers in check by ironing out, what will be the inside of the twilled cotton tick, with beeswax. On a hot flatiron the wax is rubbed and this spreads a thin coating, unpenetrable by feathers, all over the goods. A thin white cotton slip is invariably put over the coarse ticking and then the pillow is ready for as elegant or as simple dressing as one can afford.

A great many of the novelty holiday pillows are cut three-cornered, covered with inexpensive pale yellow chamois skins, the very kind used by housekeepers for window and mirror polishing. In heavy crochet silk the three initials of the prospective owner's name are embroidered in the three corners, and instead of cording the edges they are carefully whipped over with the heaviest sewing silk twist to be had, and huge pompons of satin ribbon set on as a finish at the three points.

A charming new pillow for a woman's divan is covered with heavy white Irish linen, frilled with Limerick lace and powdered with blue embroidered stars about tall white gothic initial letters. A beautiful brown satin pillow is brocaded with big red poppies, while across one corner runs the legend quoted from Eugene Field's poem, "And each hath a dream that is tiny and fleet."

The quotation pillow rather usurps the chair nooks and divan ends, and now pretty things from Shelley, Shakspeare, Coleridge, Keats and other poets will be met with in every sofa corner after the holidays. A very economical and attractive way of doing an effective pillow case is to buy and cover the cushion with some showy satin brocaded in large figures of a contrasting color. Then outline every tendril and flower in the brocading with Japanese gold thread. This comes at twenty-five cents per skein and is easily put on. With a little fine brocading bullion thread dash a few glints of silver in the center of every flower and the effect alone, as one woman concluded rightly, is worth $50.

Of course you can actually lay out $50 on a divan pillow if you like and the handsomest and most costly of them are covered with embroidered slips done by Armenian women. As needle women these persecuted creatures are only outdone by the Russian nuns, and their work in gold and silver embossing on satin is equal to the best Japanese or Chinese embroidery. It is an odd fact that since the massacres have been so frequent and terrible these humble women have plied their needles as usual, spreading rich veins and flower sprays over silk and satin, but always secretly working amid the delicate leaves, blossoms and tendrils, signs and letters, that when put together and spelled out are prayers for deliverance, exclamations of grief and despair, words of consolation and proverbs counseling resignation.

But the newest pillow of them all, be it square, three cornered or round, is made of rubber, covered as elegantly or simply as you please and blown up with air. It is considered a wise provision to distribute three or four of these in every well cushioned sofa corner and their covers are usually made of striped brocaded Louis XVI. satin with queer little gilt dingle dangles at every corner.

TO TREAT LIGHTNING STROKE.

Prof. Oliver Lodge writes to warn the public against the notion that a lightning stroke is necessarily fatal. It stops the vital organs, he tells us, but it rarely destroys them. If respiration can be artificially maintained for a sufficient time there is a fair chance that the heart will resume its suspended action, and that the stricken man will recover. The practical outcome of this is never to pronounce a lightning struck person dead until the well known method of resuscitation, from drowning has been practised upon the apparent corpse for two or three horse. Experience has justified this teaching both in America and France, where it has been strenuously urged and practiced by Dr. d'Arsonval.

STANLEY IN AFRICA.

A German physician says that Stanley owes the fact that he has survived the most dangerous of his African trips to his having submitted five times to a transfusion of African blood into his veins, which is believed in Africa to be a great aid to acclimatization.

INDIA'S PARCHED FIELDS

A MISSIONARY TELLS OF THE TERRIBLE SITUATION.

For Lack of Rain the First Crops Did Not Ripen and the Second Cannot be Sown—People Breaking Into the Granaries—Rain Brings Some Relief to Deccan.

The American Board of Foreign Missions has received a letter from the Rev. R. A. Hume, D.D., in which he says:

"The Indian Weather Bureau foretold an inadequate rainy season this year. The result is as foretold. From the Himalayas to Cape Comoria the rainy season has been inadequate. In this Ahmednagar district the early rain in June and July was good, but since July there has been no rain, and now the prospect is that for eight months more no rain will fall.

"In consequence the first crops have not properly ripened, and for want of later rain the second crops cannot be even sowed in most places unless there are wells to be depended on. Even the water supply is now low. What will it be a few months hence?

"I have been through one famine in India, and the recollection of it is most sad, but that was not a general, so much as a comparatively local famine.

THE COMING FAMINE

seems likely to be very general for nearly the whole population with its 300,000,000 people.

"Already grain riots are common. Grain merchants will not sell grain largely because they know the price will greatly increase, though even now prices are 300 per cent. above normal. So people break open grain shops and granaries, and threaten to kill the merchants if they interfere. They say, 'We have soon to die without grain. If you interfere with our getting your grain and we kill you in the struggle, we will be all the same.' Similarly these people say to the police and courts, 'Arrest us for stealing and support us in jail. Then we shall not die from starvation.'

"When quiet, orderly people are aroused to such acts and words, you can imagine their present condition. But this is only the beginning of our troubles. No seed can be sown for eight and a half months, and no grain can be ripened for over ten months. What fearful suffering seems to be in store!

"Already in some places parents are deserting their children. In some places cattle are being sold for the value of their hides. In many places farmers forcibly drive their cattle into forest reserves, and say to forest officers, 'You may put these cattle into pounds—then they will at least get fed—but we shall not regard forest regulations.'

"The other morning, near the gate of Ahmednagar, a cart with grain was stopped by hungry men, who held the driver till some of them had carried off the grain. For two days my servants tried in vain to buy 50 cents' worth of grain for use. If they do this thing in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? The early part of October is theoretically a part of the rainy season. In ordinary years our water supply is most abundant now and the crops are at their best."

To the misery that besets the depleted granary of the East the dreadful plague is added. The Rev. Edward Hume writes from Bombay:

"You have doubtless heard through the papers that Bombay is suffering from the plague. Reports show that during the past week there have been nearly 800 deaths, or 50 per cent. above the normal number for this time of the year. This excess is due to the presence of the plague, which the doctors technically call bubonic fever. The symptoms are swellings on the neck, in the armpits and groins, accompanied by fever and vomiting, and the patient presents a very noticeable sad and demented appearance. In one case which has been reported death took place after an illness of twenty-two hours, but in most cases the patients linger for two or three days. The authorities assure us that 60 per cent. of the cases are fatal. Even experts cannot tell us whence the disease came nor what the cause is.

"Of course there is great excitement through the city, and the poor, ignorant Hindus are resorting to all manner of devices for averting the calamity. They are making special offerings to the deities, are marching in procession through the city, and thronging their temples. The women are breaking off their bangles and making other sacrifices."

HERE AT LAST.

An Invention to Keep One's Hat From Blowing Off in a Gale.

At last inventive genius has solved the problem of how to keep your hat on in a gale of wind without holding on to it. The man who has to go down street during a heavy blow will forever hold this particular inventor in grateful remembrance.

The invention is simple enough in principle. A plate or clip of a suitably curved shape to correspond with the head of the wearer is pivoted to the edge of the hat brim so as to project outside the hat and come in contact and grip the head lower down than where the hat covers.

It is made of a loop on the back, which engages with a wire or affastener, to which it is pivoted and by which it is attached to the hat. The fastener is stamped out of sheet steel or other metal, with projecting prongs, which are inserted in the material of the hat to secure it firmly in position, and with a loop which passes through the loop of the clip and forms a pivot therefor. The loop in the back of the clip is so placed and the clip so pivoted that when not in wear the clip or plate lies in the same plane as the brim, but when in service the upper end is brought up inside the hat between the hat body and hat leather and the head, and the other end is pressed downward below the level of the hat brim to grasp the head of the wearer.

The wires which form the pivot may be passed through the material and secured there in a convenient manner.