AS GOOD AS GOLD.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The next morning Henchard went to the Town Hall opposite Lucetta's house, to attend Petty Session, being still a magistrate for the year by virtue of his late position as Mayor. In passing he looked up at her windows, but nothing of her was to be seen.

Henchard, as a Justice of the Peace, may at first seem to be an even greater incongruity than Shallow and Silence themselves. But his rough and ready perceptions, his sledge-hammer directness, had often served him better than nice legal knowledge in despatching such simple business as fell to his hands in this Court. To-day, Dr. Chalkfield, the Mayor for the year, being absent, the corn-merchant took the big chair, his eyes still abstractedly stretching out of the window to the window to the ashlar front of High Street Hall.

There was one case only, and the offender stood before him. She was an old woman of mottled countenance, attired in a shawl of that nameless tertiary hue which comes, but cannot be made—a hue neither tawny, russet, hazel, nor ash; a sticky black bonnet that seemed to have been worn in the country of the Psalmist where the clouds drop fatness; and an apron that had been white in times so comparatively recent as still to contrast visibly with the rest of her clothes. The steeped aspect of the woman as a whole showed her to be no native of the country-side, or even of a country town.

She looked cursorily at Henchard and the second magistrate, and Henchard looked at her, with a momentary pause, as if she reminded him indistinctly of somebody or something which passed from his mind as quickly as it had come. "Well, and what has she been doing?" he said, looking down at the charge-sheet.

"She is charged, sir, with the offence of disorderly female and vagabond," whispered Stubberd.

"Where did she do that?" said the other magistrate.

"By the church, sir, of all the wrong places in the world for shouts and rolling. I caught her in the act, your worship."

"Stand back then," said Henchard, "and let's hear what you've got to say."

Stubberd was sworn, the magistrate's clerk dipped his pen, Henchard being no notetaker himself, and the constable began:

"Hearing an illegal noise I went down the street at twenty-five minutes past eleven p. m., on the night of the fifth instinct, Hannah Dominy. When I had——"

"Don't go on so fast, Stubberd, said the clerk.

The constable waited, with his eyes on the clerk's pen, till the latter stopped scratching, and said "yes." Stubberd continued: "When I had proceeded to the spot, I saw defendant at another spot, namely, the gutter." He paused, watching the point of the clerk's pen again.

"Gutter, yes, Stubberd."

"Spot measuring twelve feet nine inches or thereabouts, from where I——" Still careful not to outrun the clerk's penmanship, Stubberd pulled up again; for having got his evidence by heart, it was immaterial to him whereabouts he broke off.

"I object to that," spoke up the old woman, "'spot measuring twelve feet nine or thereabouts from where I,' is not good evidence."

The magistrate consulted, and the second one said that the Bench was of opinion that twelve feet nine inches from a man on his oath was admissible evidence. Stubberd, with a suppressed gaze of victorious rectitude at the old woman, continued: "Was standing myself. She was wambling about quite dangerous to the thoroughfare, and when I approached to draw near, she insulted me."

"'Insulted me' . . . Yes, what did she say?"

"She said, 'Put away that dee lantern,' says she."

"Yes."

"Says she, 'Dost hear, old turmit-head? Put away that dee lantern. I have floored fellows a dee sight finer-looking than thee, dee me if I haint,' she says."

"I object to that conversation!" interposed the old woman. "I was not capable enough to hear what I said, and what's said out of my hearing is not evidence."

There was another stoppage for consultation, a book was referred to, and finally Stubberd was allowed to go on again. The truth was that the old woman had appeared in court so many more times than the magistrates themselves, that they were obliged to keep a sharp look out upon their procedure. However, when Stubberd had rambled on a little farther, Henchard broke out impatiently, "Come—we don't want to hear any more of them cust d's! Say the word out like a man, and don't be so modest, Stubberd; or else leave it alone!" Turning to the woman, "Now then, have you any questions to ask him, or anything to say?"

"Yes," she replied with a twinkle in her eye; and the clerk dipped his pen.

"'Twenty years ago I was selling of furmity in a tent at Weydon Fair——"

"'Twenty years ago'—well, that's beginning at the beginning—suppose you go back to the Creation?" said the clerk, not without satire.

But Henchard stared, and quite forgot what was evidence and what was not.

"A man and a woman with a little child came into my tent," the woman continued. "They sat down and had a basin apiece. Ah, Lord's my life! I was of a more respectable station in life then than I am now, being a land smuggler in a large way of business; and I used to season my furmity with rum for them who asked for't. I did it for the man; and then he had more and more, till at last he quarrelled with his wife, and offered to sell her to the highest bidder. A sailor came in and bid five guineas, and paid the money, and led her away. And the man who sold his wife in that fashion is the man sitting there in the great big chair." The speaker concluded by nodding her head at Henchard, and folding her arms.

Everybody looked at Henchard. His face seemed strange, and in tint as if it had been powdered over with ashes. "We don't want to hear your life and adventures," said the second magistrate sharply, filling the pause which followed. "You've been asked if you've anything to say bearing on the case."

"That bears on the case. It proves that he's no better than I, and has no right to sit there in judgment upon me."

"'Tis a concocted story," said the clerk. "So hold your tongue."

"No—'tis true." The words came from Henchard. "'Tis as true as the light," he said slowly. "And upon my soul it does prove that I'm no better than she! And to keep out of any temptation to treat her hard for her revenge I'll leave her to you."

The sensation in the Court was indescribably great. Henchard left the chair, and came out, passing through a group of people on the steps and outside that was much larger than usual; for it seemed that the old furmity dealer had mysteriously hinted to the denizens of the lane in which she had been lodging since her arrival, that she knew a queer thing or two about their great local man Mr. Henchard, if she chose to tell it. This had brought them hither.

"Why are there so many idlers round the Town Hall to-day?" said Lucetta to her servant when the case was over. She had risen late, and had just looked out of the window.

"Oh, please ma'am, 'tis this larry about Mr. Henchard. A woman has proved that before he became a gentleman he sold his wife for five guineas in a booth at a fair."

In all the accounts which Henchard had given her of the separation from his wife Susan for so many years, of his belief in her death, and so on, he had never clearly explained the actual and immediate cause of that separation. The story she now heard for the first time.

A gradual misery overspread Lucetta's face as she dwelt upon the promise wrung from her the night before. At bottom, then, Henchard was this. How terrible a contingency for a woman who should commit herself to his care.

During the day she went out to the Ring, and to other places, not coming in till nearly dusk. As soon as she saw Elizabeth-Jane after her return indoors she told her that she had resolved to go away from home to the seaside for a few days—to Port-Breedy, Casterbridge was so gloomy.

Elizabeth saw her friend depart for Port-Breedy, and took charge of High Street Hall till her return. After two or three days of solitude and incessant rain Hemchard called at the house. He seemed disappointed to hear of Lucetta's absence, and though he nodded with outward indifference, he went away handling his beard with a nettled mien.

The next day he called again. "Is she come now?" he asked.

"Yes. She returned this morning," replied his step-daughter. "But she is not indoors. She has gone for a walk along the turnpike-road to Port-Breedy. She will be home by dusk."

After a few words which only served to reveal his restless impatience he left the house again.

CHAPTER XXIX.

At this hour Lucetta was bounding along the road to Port-Breedy just as Elizabeth had announced. That she had chosen for her afternoon walk the road along which she had returned to Casterbridge three hours earlier in a carriage was curious—if anything should be called curious in concatenations of phenomena wherein each is known to have its accounting cause. It was the day of the chief market—Saturday—and Farfrae for once had been missed from his corn-stand in the dealers' room. Nevertheless it was known that he would be home that night—"for Sunday," as Casterbridge expressed it.

Lucetta, in continuing her walk, had at length reached the end of the ranked trees which bordered the highway in this and other directions out of the town. This end marked a mile; and here she stopped.

The spot was a vale between two gentle acclivities, and the road, still adhering to its Roman foundation, stretched onward straight as a surveyor's line till lost to sight on the most distant ridge. There was neither hedge nor tree in the prospect now, the road clinging to the stubby expanse of cornland like a stripe to an undulating garment. Near her was a barn—the single building of any kind within her horizon.

She strained her eyes up the lessening road, but nothing appeared thereon—not so much as a speck. She sighed one word—"Donald!" and turned her face to the town for retreat.

Here the case was different. A single figure was approaching her—Elizabeth-Jane's.

Lucetta, in spite of her loneliness, seemed a little vexed. Elizabeth came on, her face, as soon as she recognized her friend, shaping itself into affectionate lines, while yet beyond speaking distance. "I suddenly thought I would come and meet you," she said smiling.

Lucetta's reply was taken from her lips by an unexpected diversion. A byroad on her right hand descended from the fields into the highway at the point where she stood, and down the track a bull was rambling uncertainly towards her and Elizabeth, who, facing the other way, did not observe him.

Lucetta and Elizabeth regarded the animal in doubt, he meanwhile drawing vaguely towards them. It was a large specimen of the breed, in colour rich dun, though disfigured at present by splotches of mud about his seamy sides. His horns were thick and tipped with brass; his two nostrils like the Thames Tunnel, as seen in the perspective toys of yore. Between them, through the gristle of his nose, was a stout copper ring, welded on, and irremovable as Gurth's collar of brass. To the ring was attached an ash staff about a yard long, which the bull with the motion of his head flung about like a flail.

They looked round for some shelter or hiding-place, and thought of the barn hard by. As long as they had kept their eyes on the bull he had shown some deference in his manner of approach; but no sooner did they turn their backs to seek the barn than he tossed his head, and decided to thoroughly terrify them. This caused the two helpless girls to run wildly, whereupon the bull advanced in a deliberate charge.

The barn stood behind a green slimy pond, and it was closed with the exception of one of the usual pair of doors facing them, which had been propped open by a hurdle-stake, and for this opening they made. The interior had been cleared by a recent bout of threshing, except at one end, where there was a stack of dry clover. Elizabeth-Jane took in the situation. "We must climb up here," she said.

But before they had even approached it they hear the bull sacmpering through the pond without, and in a second he dashed into the barn, knocking down the hurdle-stake in passing; the heavy door slammed behind him: and all three were imprisoned in the barn together. The mistaken creature saw them, and stalked towards the end of the barn into which they had fled. The girls doubled, so adroitly, that their pursuer was against the wall when the fugitives were already half-way to the other end. By the time that this length would allow him to turn and follow them thither they had crossed over; thus the pursuit went on, the hot air from his nostrils blowing over them like a sirocco, and not a moment being obtainable by Elizabeth or Lucetta in which to open the door. What might have happened had their situation continued cannot be said; but in a few moments a rattling of the door distracted their adversary's attention, and a man appeared. He ran forward towards the leading-staff, seized it, and wrenched the animal's head as if he would snap it off. The wrench was in reality so violent that the thick neck seemed to have lost its stiffness and to become half-paralysed, whilst the nose dropped blood. The premeditated human contrivance of the nose-ring was too cunning for impulsive brute force, and the creature flinched.

The man was seen in the partial gloom to be large-framed, and unhesitating. He led the bull to the door, and the light revealed Henchard. He made the bull fast without, and re-entered to the succour of Lucetta; for he had not perceived Elizabeth, who had climbed on to the clover-heap. Lucetta was hysterical, and Henchard took her in his arms and carried her to the door.

"You—have saved me!" she cried, as soon as she could speak.

"I have returned your kindness," he responded tenderly. "You once saved me."

"How—comes it to be you—you?" she asked, not heeding his reply.

"I came out here to look for you. I have been wanting to tell you something these two or three days; but you have been away, and I could not. Perhaps you cannot talk now?"

"Oh—no. Where is Elizabeth?"

"Here am I!" cried the missing one cheerfully; and without waiting for the ladder to be placed she slid down the face of the clover-stack to the floor.

Henchard supporting Lucetta on one side and Elizabeth-Jane on the other, they went slowly along the rising road. They had reached the top and were descending again when Lucetta, now much recovered, recollected that she had left her muff in the barn.

"I don't mind it at all, as I am not tired as you are." She thereupon hastened down again to the barn, the others pursuing their way.

Elizabeth soon found the muff, such an article being by no means small at that time. She turned to hasten onward after her contemplation, when she saw a green-and-black gig approaching from the contrary direction, the vehicle being driven by Farfrae.

His presence here seemed to explain Lucetta's walk that way. Donald saw her, drew up, and was hastily made acquainted with what had occurred. At Elizabeth-Jane mentioning how greatly Lucetta had been jeopardised he exhibited an agitation different in kind no less than in intensity from any she had seen in him before. He became so absorbed in the circumstances that he scarcely had sufficient knowledge of what he was doing to think of helping her up beside him.

"She has gone on with Mr. Henchard, you say?" he inquired at last.

"Yes. He is taking her home. They are almost there by this time."

"And are you sure she can get home?"

Elizabeth-Jane was quite sure.

"Your stepfather saved her?"

"Entirely."

Farfrae checked his horse's pace; she guessed why. He was thinking that it would be best not to intrude on the other two just now. Henchard had saved Lucetta, and to provoke a possible exhibition of her deeper affection for himself was as ungenerous as it was unwise.

The immediate subject of their talk being exhausted, she felt more embarrassed at sitting thus beside her past lover; but soon the two figures of the others were visible at the entrance to the town. The face of the woman was frequently turned back, but Farfrae did not whip on the horse. When these reached the town walls Henchard and his companion had disappeared down the street; Farfrae set down Elizabeth-Jane, on her expressing a particular wish to alight there, and drove round to the stables at the back of his lodgings.

On this account he entered the house through his garden, and going up to his apartments found them in a particularly disturbed state, his boxes being hauled out upon the landing, and his bookcase standing in three pieces. These phenomena, however, seemed to cause him not the least surprise. "When will everything be sent up?" he said to the mistress of the house, who was superintending.

"I am afraid not before eight, sir," said she. "You see we wasn't aware till this morning that you were going to move, or we could have been forwarder."

"A—well, never mind, never mind!" said Farfrae cheerily. "Eight o'clock will do well enough if it be not later. Now, don't ye be standing there talking, or it will be twelve I doubt." Thus speaking he went out by the front door and up the street.

During this interval Henchard and Lucetta had had experiences of a different kind. After Elizabeth's departure for the muff, the corn-merchant opened himself frankly, holding her hand within his arm, though she would fain have withdrawn it. "Dear Lucetta, I have been very anxious to see you these two or three days," he said; "ever since I saw you last. I have thought over the way I got your promise that night. You said to me, 'If I were a man I should not insist.' That cut me deep. I felt that there was some truth in it. I don't want to make you wretched, and to marry me just now would do that as nothing else could—it is but too plain. Therefore I agree to an indefinite engagement—to put off all thought of marriage for a year or two."

"But—but—can I do nothing of a different kind?" said Lucetta. "I am full of gratitude to you—you have saved my life. And your care of me is like coals of fire on my head. I am rich. Surely I can do something in return for your goodness—something practical?"

Henchard remained in thought. He had evidently not expected this. "There is one thing you might do, Lucetta," he said. "But not exactly of that kind."

"Then of what kind is it?" she asked, with renewed misgiving.

"I must tell you a secret to ask it—. You may have heard that I have been unlucky this year. I did what I have never done before—speculated rashly; and I lost. That's just put me in a strait."

"And you would wish me to advance some money?"

"No, no!" said Henchard, almost in anger. "I'm not the man to sponge on a woman, even though she may be so nearly my own as you. No, Lucetta; what you can do is this; and it would save me. My great creditor is Grower, and it is at hs hands I shall suffer if at anybody's; while a fortnight's forbearance on his part would be enough to allow me to pull through. This may be got out of him in one way—that you would let it be known to him that you are my intended—that we are to be quietly married in the next fortnight—. No wstop, you haven't heard all! Let him have this story, without of course any prejudice to the fact that the actual engagement between us is to be a long one. Nobody else need know; you could go with me to Mr. Grower, and just let me speak to ye before him as if we were on such terms. We'll ask him to keep it secret. He will willingly wait then. At the fortnight's end I shall be able to face him; and I can coolly tell him all is postponed between us for a year or two. Not a soul in the town need know how you've helped me. Since you wish to be of use, there's your way."

(To be continued.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

A Few Paragraphs Which May be Found Worth Reading.

Lapländers often skate in one day a distance of 150 miles.

The Buddhist nuns in Burmah have their heads completely shaved.

Kid gloves with hand-painted flowers on the back, are the latest fad in Paris.

Over one-half of the arable land of Japan is devoted to the cultivation of rice.

Among the supplies sent to foreign missionaries, the bicysle takes a prominent place.

The flesh of the alligator is eaten by the inhabitants of India. Boiled, it tastes like veal.

The first man to apply steam to house warming was James Watt, the Scottish inventor in 1784.

The new magazine rifle adopted by the British Army throws a ball to a distance of four thousand yards.

Louis A. Pettier, of Allen County, Ind., has been an undertaker for sixty years. He has buried over 13,000 human beings.

The policemen of Bridgeport, Conn., are becoming so rotund that they are required to exercise in gymnasiums to reduce their weight.

The second wife of a man in Bangor, Maine, paid a bill for the burial of her predecessor by washiung clothes for the undertaker's family.

Macaulay's memory was so retentive that, after reading a book once, he could give all the salient points of it, and recite many long passages of it verbatim.

Something squeezed the ankle of a woman in Coffeyville, Kan., as she was shaking a mat on the piazza of her residence. She discovered that the squeezer was a snake.

Before drinking beer it is a wise habit to eat a small piece of bread. So says Professor Gaffky, of Germany, who has followed this habit from youth and is the personification of health.

In the deserts of Arizona there is a species of woodpecker which pecks the telegraph poles to pieces. The birds hears the humming sound and imagines that insects are beneath the surface.

Mrs. Bush, of Clayton, N.Y., saw her sons, Fred and John, aged respectively nine and ten years old, fall through the ice while skating. She plunged in after them, but they sank before she could rescue them.

In London the mail deliveries from ten in the morning until ten at night are hourly. It is not unusual for the writer of a letter in that city to get an answer from a resident within three or four hours.

When a suspicious-looking person approaches one of the tellers in the Bank of France a private signal is given to a concealed photographer, and in a few seconds the suspected individual is secretly photographed.

To prevent the hair from falling out, soak fine pine shavings in a pint of alcohol for two weeks, strain, add forty drops of glycerine, and moisten the hair with this liquid morning and night, rubbing it well into the scalp.

A New Haven paper lately contained two advertisements, side by side, one exhibiting a preparation for removing superfluous hair and the other recommending a fluid that is certain to produce a growth of hair on bald heads.

Nettie Hinkle, aged thirteen, of Quakake Valley, Pennsylvania, was attacked by a huge eagle, which threw her to the earth and was endeavoring to carry her off, when a companion, Jennie McDowell, drove a hatpin through the eagle's heart and killed it.

A teacher at Ypsilanti, Mich., under examination for appointment to a school, was asked to explain the purpose of the Electoral College. He promptly described it as "an institution having for its object the furthering of the study of electricity."

A VERY NARROW ESCAPE

HOW THE LATE ADMIRAL MILNE MIGHT HAVE BEEN DROWNED.

He Nearly Went Down With H. M. S. Captain—Description of One of Great Britain's Worst Naval Disasters.

The recent death of the late Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Alexander Milne, K. C. B., recalls to the memory of many people a time when Great Britain had nearly been prematurely deprived of the services of that distinguished commander through a tragedy similar to that by which the lives of Vice-Admiral Sir Harry Tryon and the officers and men of H.M.S. "Victoria" were lost a few years ago.

It will be twenty-seven years by September next, since England was shocked to hear of the sudden loss of H.M.S. "Captain" on the night of Sept. 6. She foundered off the coast of Spain together with almost all her complement of officers and men, to the number of close upon five hundred. The first despatch announced that all hands had perished, but later intelligence was received to the effect that Master-gunner May and seventeen seamen had escaped the disaster and had landed at Corcubicon in Spain.

Not even the stirring events that were at that time transpiring in France (for the downfall of the Emperor Napoleon III., at Sedan, had occurred but four days previous to the foundering of the "Captain,") caused more excitement or painful interest among all classes of the British public than did the loss of the noble ship, for noble she assuredly was, if only in respect to the valuable freight in lives that she carried, albeit she was really nothing more than a terribly

DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT,

the end of which was fraught with total disaster to those immediately concerned. It was not until the first feelings of surprise and dismay had passed off that it was seen how narrowly Admiral Sir Alexander Milne and his staff had escaped being involved in the catastrophe. The following are the facts of the case.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, Sept. 6, 1870, the combined Channel and Mediterranean squadrons, under the supreme command of Admiral Milne, were cruising off the coast of Spain. The flagship of the fleet was the "Lord Warden," but the Admiral, with his staff, had that afternoon gone on board the "Captain" to witness a sailing match in which she was to take part with the "Monarch" the "Inconstant" and the "Bristol." The weather had been fine throughout the day, but the wind blew in spiteful gusts towards the evening, and at sunset the clouds in the westward looked as though some nasty weather was coming on. The sailing trial took some time, and a heavy sea was running when the Admiral left the "Captain" for the flagship about seven o'clock in the evening. So rough was the sea that the admiral's galley was

ALL BUT SWAMPED

in coming alongside, and it was with some difficulty that the transhipment was effected. Seeing the threatening state of the weather Capt. Hugh Burgoyne, (a son of Field-Marshal Sir John Burgoyne, then Constable of the Tower of London) who commanded the "Captain" pressed the admiral and his staff to stay to dinner, remain the night and return to their own ship the next morning. Happily for himself and for his staff, Admiral Milne declined, and, on reaching the "Lord Warden" one of the officers of his staff was heard to exclaim "Thank God, I'm on board my own ship again."

Fears of the stability of the "Captain" had for a long time been openly entertained, especially by those who preferred the build of the "Monarch." These fears were now to be realized at their worst. The gale which had threatened from the south-west, blew strongly up to 1,30 a. m.; the fleet was at that hour in open order, the "Captain" being immediately behind the "Lord Warden" but the wind shifting a moment later, a terrific white squall came up with thick and heavy rain, and the ill-fated vessel was no longer visible from the deck of the flagship. At daybreak on the morning of Sept. 7, the "Captain" was

NOT IN SIGHT

and search being made, various debris was soon discovered, which had formed part of her interior fittings, also the bodies of some drowned seamen, signs which told only too plainly what had occurred.

And so the "Captain" was lost, and with her the inventor of her class of vessels, Captain Cowper Coles, R.N., who had faith in the realization of his ideas, which i deas he had persistently forced on the Admiralty officials for ten years. With a freeboard of but four feet, a heavy spar deck, and high masts with heavy yards and sails, it is strange that the "Captain" had not found it hard work to keepafloat at all when anything like a sea was on, and it was plain that all this top-hamper acted merely as a lever for the wind to force the ship down with should a gale prove strong enough, and such proved-eventually to be the case. The Parliamentary enquiry revealed that "a grave departure from her original design" had been made by the constructors and that the convenient "nobody" was to blame. Perhaps th econstructors who were not all in accord with the views of Capt. Coles had made alterations to satisfy their consciences. However, one good result came out of the enquiry, namely, that since that date no more vessels of the same type have been built for the British navy. It may be mentioned that the "Monarch" a turret vessel like the "Captain," but built on different lines, was, in respect to her stability, sixteen to one as compared with the lost man-of-war.

EARLY USE OF ARTIFICIAL LIMBS.

Artificial arms and legs were used in Egypt as early as 700 B. C. They were made by the priests, who were the physicians at those times.