AS GOOD AS GOLD.

CHAPTER XXXI.—(Continued.)

Henchard was more affected by this than he cared to let them perceive, and he turned aside to the window again. A general murmur of agreement followed the Commissioner's words; and the meeting dispersed. When they were gone Henchard regarded the watch they had returned to him. "'Tis n't mine by rights," he said to himself. "Why the devil didn't they take it? —I don't want what don't belong to me." Moved by a recollection, he took the watch to the maker's just opposite, sold it there and then for what the tradesman offered, and went with the proceeds to one among the smaller of his creditors, a cottager of Dummerford, in straitened circumstances, to whom he handed the money.

When everything was ticketed that Henchard had owned, and the auction were in progress, there was quite a sympathetic reaction in the town, which till then for some time past had done nothing but condemn him. Now that Henchard's whole career was pictured distinctly to his neighbors, and they could see how admirably he had used his one talent of energy to create a position of affluence out of absolutely nothing—which was really all he could show when he came to the town as a journeyman haytrusser, with his wimble and knife in his basket—they wondered, and regretted his fall.

Try as she might, Elizabeth could never meet with him. She believed in him still, though nobody else did; and she wanted to be allowed to forgive him for his roughness to her, and to help him in his trouble.

She wrote to him; he did not reply. She then went to his house—the great house she had lived in so happily for a time—with its front of dun brick, vertified here and there, and its heavy sash-bars—but Henchard was to be found there no more. The ex-Mayor had left the home of his prosperity, and gone into Jopp's cottage by the Priory Mill —the sad purlieu to which he had wandered on the night of his discovery that she was not his daughter. Thither she went.

Elizabeth thought it odd that he had fixed on this spot to retire to, but assumed that necessity had no choice. Trees which seemed old enough to have been planted by the friars still stood around, and the back hatch of the original mill yet formed a cascade which had raised its terrific roar for centuries. The cottage itself was built of old stones from the long-dismantled Priory, scraps of tracery, moulded window-jambs, and arch-labels, being mixed in with the rubble of the walls.

In this cottage he occupied a couple of rooms, Jopp, whom Henchard had employed, abused, cajoled, and dismissed by turns, being the householder. But even here her stepfather could not be seen.

"Not by his daughter?" pleaded Elizabeth.

"By nobody—at present: that's his order," she was informed.

Afterwards she was passing by the corn-stores and hay-barns which had been the headquarters of his business. She knew that he ruled there no longer; but it was with amazement that she regarded the familiar gateway. A amear of decisive lead-colored paint had been laid on to obliterate Henchard's name, though its letters dimly loomed through like ships in a fog. Over these, in fresh white, spread the name of Farfrae.

Abel Whittle was edging his skeleton in at the wicket, and she said, "Mr. Farfrae is master here?"

"Yaas, Miss Henchet," he said, "Mr. Farfrae have bought the concern and all of we work-folk with it; and 'tis better for us than 'twas—though I shouldn't say that to you as a daughter-law. We work harder, but we bain't made afeard now. It was fear made my few poor hairs so thin. No busting out, no slamming of doors, no meddling with yer eternal soul and all that; and though 'tis a shilling a week less, I'm the richer man; for what's all the world if yer mind is always in a larry, Miss Henchet?"

The intelligence was in a general sense true; and Henchard's store, which had remained in a paralysed condition during the settlement of his bankruptcy, were stirred into activity again when the new tenant had possession. Thenceforward the full sacks, looped with the shining chain, went scurrying up and down under the cathead, hairy arms were thrust out from the different doorways, and the grain was hauled in; trusses of hay were tossed anew in and out of the barns, and the wimbles creaked; while the scales and steelyards began to be busy where guesswork had formerly been the rule.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Two bridges stood near the lower part of Casterbridge town.

The first, of weather-stained brick, was immediately at the end of High Street, where a diverging branch of that thoroughfare ran round to the low-lying Dummerford lanes; so that the precincts of the bridge formed the merging point of respectability and indigence. The second bridge, of stone, was farther out on the highway—in fact, fairly in the meadows, though still within the town boundary.

For to this pair of bridges gravitated all the failures of the town; those who had failed in business in love, in sobriety, in crime. Why the unhappy hereabout usually chose the bridges for their meditations in preference to a railing, a gate, or a stile, was not so clear.

There was a marked difference of quality between the personages who haunted the near bridge of brick, and the personages who haunted the far one of stone. Those of lowest character preferred the former, adjoining the town; they did not mind the glare of the public eye. They had been of comparatively no account during their successes; and, though they might feel dispirited, they had no particular sense of shame in their ruin. Their hands were mostly kept in their pockets; they wore a leather strap round their waists, and boots that required a great deal of lacing, but seemed never to get any. Instead of sighing at their adversities they spat, and instead of saying the iron had entered into their souls they said they were down on their luck. Jopp in his times of distress had often stood here; so had Mother Cuxsom, Christopher Coney, and poor Abel Whittle.

The miserables who stood on the remoter bridge were of a politer stamp. They included bankrupts, hypochondriacs, persons who were what is called "out of a situation," from fault or lucklessness, the inefficient of the professi onal class—shabby-genteel men, who did not know how to get rid of the weary time between breakfast and dinner, and the yet more weary time between dinner and dark. The eyes of this group were mostly directed over the parapet upon the running water below. A man seen there looking thus fixedly into the river was pretty sure to be one whom the world did not treat kindly for some reason or other. While those in straits on the townward bridge did not mind who saw them so, and kept their backs to the parapet to survey the passers-by, those in straits on this never faced the road, never turned their heads at coming footsteps, but, sensitive to their condition, watched the current whenever a stranger approached, as if some strange fish interested them, though every finned thing had been poached out of the river years before.

To this bridge came Henchard as the other unfortunates had come before him, his way thither being by the riverside path on the chilly edge of the town. Here he was standing one windy afternoon when Dummerford church clock struck five. While the gusts were bringing the notes to his ears across the damp intervening flat a man passed behind him, and greeted Henchard by name. Henchard turned slightly, and saw the comer was Jopp, his old foreman, now employed elsewhere, to whom, though he hated him, he had gone for lodgings, because Jopp was the one man in Casterbridge whose observation and opinion the fallen corn-merchant despised to the point of indifference.

Henchard returned him a scarcely perceptible nod, and Jopp stopped.

"He and she are gone into their new house to-day," said Jopp.

"Oh," said Henchard absently. "Which house is that?"

"Your old one."

"Gone into my house?" And, starting up, Henchard added, "My house of all others in the town!"

"Well, as somebody was sure to live there, and you couldn't, it can do ye no harm that he's the man."

It was quite true; he felt that it was doing him no harm. Farfrae, who had already taken the yards and stores, had acquired possession of the house for the obvious convenience of its contiguity. And yet this act of his taking up residence within those roomy chambers while he, their former tenant, lived in a cottage, galled him indescribably.

Jopp continued: "And you heard of that fellow who bought all the best furniture at your sale? He was bidding for no other than Farfrae all the while. It has never been moved out of the house, as he'd already got the lease."

"My furniture too! Surely he'll buy my body and soul likewise."

"There's no saying he won't, if you be willing to sell." And having planted these wounds in the heart of his once imperious master, Jopp went on his way; while Henchard stared and stared into the racing river till the bridge seemed moving backward with him.

The low land grew blacker, and the sky a deeper gray. When the landscape looked like a picture blotted in with ink, another traveller approached the great stone bridge. He was driving a gig, his direction being also townwards. On the round of the middle of the arch the gig stopped. "Mr. Henchard?" came from it in the voice of Farfrae. Henchard turned his face.

Finding that he had guessed rightly, Farfrae told the man who accompanied him to drive home while he alighted, and went up to his former friend.

"I have heard that you think of emigrating, Mr. Henchard" he said. "Is it true? I have a real reason for asking."

Henchard withheld his answer for several instants, and then said, "Yes; it is true. I am going where you were going to a few years ago, when I prevented you and got you to bide here. 'Tis turn and turn about, isn't it? Do you mind how we stood like this on the bridge when I persuaded ye to stay? You then stood without a chattel to your name, and I was the master of the house in Corn Street. But now I stand without a stick or a rag, and the master of that house is you."

"Yes, yes; it is so. Such is the course of things," said Farfrae.

"Ha, ha, true!" cried Henchard, throwing himself into a mood of jocularity. "Up and down! I'm used to it. What's the odds after all!"

"Now listen to me, if it's no taking up your time," said Farfrea, "just as I listened to you. Don't go. Stay at home."

"But I can do nothing else, man," said Henchard scornfully. "The money I have will just keep body and soul together for a few weeks, and no more. I have not felt inclined to go back to journey-work yet but I can't stay doing nothing, and my best chance is elsewhere."

"No; but what I propose is this—if ye will listen. Come and live in your old house. We can spare some rooms very well—I am sure my wife would not mind it at all—until there's an opening for ye."

Henchard started. Probably the picture drawn by the unsuspecting Donald of himself under the same roof with Lucetta was too striking to be received with equanimity. "No, no," he said gruffly; "we should quarrel."

"You should hae a part to yourself," said Farfrae; "and nobody would interrupt you. It will be healtheir than down there by the river where you live now."

Still Henchard refused. "You don't know what you ask," he said. "However, I can do no less than thank ye."

They walked into the town together side by side, as they had done when Henchard persuaded the young Scotchman to remain. "Will you come in and have some supper?" said Farfrae, when they reached the middle of the town where their paths diverged right and left.

"No, no."

"By the by, I had nearly forgot. I bought a good deal of your furniture."

"So I have heard."

"Well, it was no that I wanted it so very much for myself; but I wish ye to pick out all that you care to have —such things as may be endeared to ye by associations, or particularly suited to your use. And take them to your own house—it will not be depriving me; we can do with less very well, and I will have plenty of opportunities of getting more."

"What—give it to me for nothing?" said Henchard. "But you paid the creditors for it."

"Ah, yes; but maybe it's worth more to you than it is to me."

Henchard was a little moved. "I—sometimes think I've wronged ye!" he said, in tones which showed the disquietude that the night shades hid in his face. He shook Farfrae abruptly by his hand, and hastened away as if unwilling to betray himself farther. Farfrae saw him turn through the thoroughfare into Bull Stake and vanish down towards the Priory Mill.

Meanwhile Elizabeth-Jane, in an upper room, no larger than the Prophet's chamber, and with the silk attire of her palmy days packed away in a box, was netting with great industry between the hours which she devoted to studying such books as she could get hold of.

Her lodgings being nearly opposite her stepfather's former residence, now Farfrae's, she could see Donald and Lucetta speeding in and out of their door with all the bounding enthusiasm of their situation. She avoided looking that way as much as possible, but it was hardly in human nature to keep the eyes averted when the door slammed.

While living on thus quietly she heard the news that Henchard had caught cold and was confined to his room—possibly a result of standing about the meads in damp weather. She went off to his house at once. This time she was determined not to be denied admittance, and made her way upstairs. He was sitting up in bed with a great-coat round him, and at first resented her intrusion. "Go away —go away," he said. "I don't like to see ye!

"But, father——"

"I don't like to see ye," he repeated.

However, the ice was broken, and she remained. She made the room more comfortable, gave directions to the people below, and by the time she went away had reconciled her stepfather to her visiting him.

The effect, either of her ministrations or of her mere presence, was a rapid recovery. He soon was well enough to go out; and now things seemed to wear a new color in his eyes. He no longer thought of emigration, and thought more of Elizabeth. The having nothing to do made him more dreary than any other circumstance; and one day, with better views of Farfrae than he had held for some time, and a sense that honest work was not a thing to be ashamed of, he stoically went down to Farfrae's yard and asked to be taken on as a journeyman hay-trusser. He was engaged at once.

This hiring of Henchard was done through a foreman, Farfrae feeling that it was undesirable to come personally in contact with the ex-corn-factor more than was absolutely necessary. While anxious to help him he was well aware by this time of his uncertain temper, and thought reserved relations best. For the same reason, his orders to Henchard to proceed to this and that country farm trussing in the usual way were always given through a third person.

For a time these arrangements worked well, it being the custom to truss in the respective stack-yards, before bringing it away, the hay bought at the different farms about the neighborhood; so that Henchard was often absent at such places the whole week long. When this was all done, and Henchard had become in a measure broken in, he came to work daily on the home premises like the rest. And thus the once flourishing merchant and Mayor and what not stood as a day-laborer in the barns and granaries he formerly had owned.

"I have worked as a journeyman before now, ha'n't I?" he would say in his defiant way; "and why shouldn't I do it again?" But he looked a far different journeyman from the one he had been in his earlier days. Then he had worn clean, suitable clothes, light and cheerful in hue; leggings yellow as marigolds, corduroys immaculate as new flax, and a neckerchief like a flower-garden. Now he wore the remains of an old blue cloth suit of his gentlemanly times, a rusty silk hat, and a once black satin stock, soiled and shabby. Clad thus, he went to and fro, still comparatively an active man—for he was not much over forty—and saw with the other men in the yard Donald Farfrae going in and out the green door that led to the garden, and the big house, and Lucetta.

At the beginning of the winter it was rumored about Casterbridge that Mr. Farfrae, already in the Town Council, was to be proposed for Mayor in a year or two.

"Yes; she was wise, she was wise in her generation!" said Henchard to himself when he heard of this one day on his way to Farfrae's hay-barn. He thought it over as he wimbled his bonds, and the piece of news acted as a reviviscent breath to that old view of his—of Donald Farfrae as his triumphant rival who rode rough-shod over him.

"A fellow of his age going to be Mayor, indeed!" he murmured with a corner-drawn smile on his mouth. "But 'tis her money that floats en upward. Ha-ha how cust odd it is! Here be I, his former master, working for him as man, and he the man standing as master, with my house and my furniture and my intended wife all his own."

He accordingly lapsed into moodiness, and at every allusion to the possilibity of Farfrae's near election to the municipal chair his former hatred of the Scotchman returned. Concurrently with this he underwent a moral change. It resulted in his significantly saying every now and then, in tones of recklessness, "Only a fortnight more!"—"Only a dozen days!" and so forth, lessening his figures day by day.

"Why d'ye say only a dozen days?" asked Solomon Longways as he worked beside Henchard in the granary weighing oats.

"Because in twelve days I shall be released from my oath."

"What oath?"

"The oath to drink no spirituous liquid. In twelve days it will be twenty years since I swore it, and then I mean to enjoy myself, please God."

Elizabeth-Jane sat at her window one Sunday, and while there she heard in the street below a conversation which introduced Henchard's name. She was wondering what was the matter, when a third person who was passing by asked the question in her mind.

"Michael Henchard have busted out drinking after taking nothing for twenty years."

Elizabeth-Jane jumped up, put on her things, and went out.

(To be continued.)

CLOSE CALL FOR JACK TAR.

Just as the Shark Was About to Grab Him a Swordfish Got the Shark.

"Speaking of wonderful adventures," said the retired sea Captain," I doubt if anything ever was more wonderful than the one I'm going to tell you. It happened a good many years ago, but that doesn't alter its excellence nor interfere with its truth. I was first mate on the Lovely Lou of Bangor, and we had been on our way to South America for about four weeks. The wind had left the ship during the last day of this period, and we were dipping our peak to a lolling swell that seemed to come from nowhere and return to the same place without making a ripple on the blue surface of the ocean. The sails were all set and their shadows fell clear upon the glassy surface, but where the sun fell the water was as clear as crystal. We were well within the tropics then, and several big sharks had been seen playing about the vessel. Suddenly there came a splash and the cook ran to where I was standing on the poop deck, crying that one of the sailors had tumbled overboard. The Lou had no way, and I laughed at the idea of him drowning, telling the cook to throw him a rope, walking to the rail as I did so. The sailor was swimming about the quarter enjoying his bath when I suddenly saw an ominous black fin make its appearance a hundred yards or so from the ship. I yelled for the rope, and as I yelled I saw the fin move toward the sailor, cutting the water like a knife. I knew that unless the man was taken out quickly he would be devoured, and rushed to the cabin grating to get a line. Seizing a piece of rope I hastened to the rail just in time to see the form of an immense shark turn on its side to seize the sailor. As he did so there was an instant's glimpse of a long brown body, and then the water was slashed into a sea of yeasty foam, the shark seemingly being in trouble. I threw the line, and in a moment the sailor was aboard, scared out of his wits, but safe and sound; The threshing in the water still continuing, we proceeded to investigate, and directly we were able to see that the shark had been pinned by a large swordfish, the sword running through the jaws of the shark in such a manner as to prevent the fish from opening them. Whether the shark's antagonist had deliberately attacked the shark we know not, but its timely and unexpected appearance saved the sailor's life beyond a doubt, as another instant would have sent the teeth of the shark into the body of the man. We managed to release the sword from the shark and killed the latter, letting the other go free. It was a narrow squeak, I tell you."

AN EXPLOSIVE BEAN.

It Bursts With a Loud Report When it Touches Water.

A very curious fruit has recently been discovered growing wild in Batavia and a sample has been sent to a French professor of botany at Paris to whom we are indebted for a description.

It is entirely devoid of flavor, and is hardly likely ever to find a welcome at the dining table. It appears to be a species of bean, resembling a cigar both in form and color, though only about an inch in length.

But it has a peculiar characteristic which renders it a very unique and interesting object, and this is the exceedingly energetic manner in which it scatters its seed.

If one of these little fruits be thrown into a basin of water it will rest quietly on the surface for from two to five minutes, then it will explode with violence, hurling most of its contents into the air with a noise and splash for all the world like a small torpedo.

It is hardly necessary to say that this phenomenon is caused by the pressure the elastic substance of its interior overcoming the resistance of its hard outer shell. The fruit usually splits open lengthwise. If plucked before maturity and allowed to ripen in a warm spot, it opens gradually from apex to base, making as it were a pair of diverging horns starting from the same point. If it be left to ripen on the plant, since the process is quicker and the internal moisture greater, the opening is sudden and accompanied with a slight noise, though this is much less than that which takes place when it has been placed in water.

In this case the dry but porous tissue of the surface of the fruit quickly absorbs the liquid, especially at the grooves caused by the junction of the two valves or outer shells of the fruit. The internal tissue being very elastic exerts upon the latter a tension which soon results in the violent bursting already described.

This curious property of explosion is given the little plant for the dissemination of its seeds, which otherwise would stand a poor chance of propagating its species.

QUEER DANISH LAW.

In Denmark it is the law that all drunken persons shall be taken to their homes in carriages at the expense of the publican who sold them the last glass.

LATEST IN TELEGRAPHY

MESSAGES MAY NOW BE TRANSMITTED WITHOUT WIRES.

Marvellous Invention by a Young Italian —British Post Office Officials Experimenting With the Apparatus—Great Value to Shipping.

An invention which promises to be of the greatest practical value in the world of telegraphy has received its first public announcement at the hands of Mr. W. H. Preece, the telegraphic expert of the London post office. During the course of a lecture on "Telegraphy Without Wires," recently delivered in London, Mr. Preece introduced to the audience a young Italian a Mr. Marconi, who, he said, had recently come to him with a system of telegraphy without wires "which depended not on electro-magnetic but on electro-static effects, that is to say, on electric waves of a much higher rate of vibration, not less than 250,000,000 a second; that is, Hertzian waves." These vibrations were projected through space in straight lines and, like light, were capable of reflection and refraction, and, indeed, they exhibited all the phenomena which characterized light.

Telegraphing without wires was, of course no new idea. Mr. Preece stated that in 1884 operators in the telephone exchange, London, were able from sounds heard to read messages that were in transit from

LONDON TO BRADFORD

by the telegraph wires. The post office wires were underground and the telephone wires above ground, and careful experiment showed that this fact accounted for the telegraphic messages to Bradford being read by the telephone company. In 1893 telegrams were transmitted a distance of three miles across the Bristol Channel by induction, and during a break in the cable connecting the island of Mull with the mainland communication was esablished by means of parallel wires as follows: On the mainland an insulated wire was laid along the ground, earthed in a running stream at one end, the other end being in the sea. Skirting the coast of the island was an overhead wire suited to the purpose. In the course of four days one hundred and fifty-six messages were dispatched.

The invention of young Marconi solved the problem on entirely different principles. The post office officials had used it successfully on the roof of the general post office, and then made a successful test on Salisbury Plain at a distance of three-quarters of a mile. The great difference between the Marconi and inductive methods of wireless telegraphy was that the former did away entirely with the wires at each end. Vibrations were set up by one apparatus and received by the other.

The apparatus shown at the lecture consisted of

TWO PLAIN BOXES

which were placed at opposite ends of the hall. The current was set in motion in one box, and immediately a bell was rung in the other. Mr. Preece said that the British post office authorities has decided to spare no expense in experimenting with the apparatus and one of the first trials would be from Penarth to an island in the English Channel.

If the experiments were successful, it would be of inestimable value to shipping, for it would provide another easy way of communicating with lightships and lighthouses. To take an instance: Since last year they had had a cable with the Fastnet Light (the first light seen by Atlantic voyagers), but in the early part of this year it broke down, and they had never been able yet to land on the rock in order to repair it. But there was a possibility beyond this of enabling ships as they came near dangerous rocks and shallows to receive an intimation of the fact by means of these electric waves. Neither day nor night made any difference, fog or rain or snow would not interfere with them, and if the invention was what he believed it to be, our mariners would have been given a new sense and a new friend which would make navigation infinitely easier and safer than it now was.

BENEFITS OF VACCINATION.

Advantages Claimed For it by the Royal Commission.

An English royal commission, detailed to report as to the effect of vaccination in reducing the prevalence of and mortality from smallpox, has concluded: (1) That it diminishes the liability to be attacked by the disease; (2) that it modifies the character of the disease, and renders it (a) less fatal, and (b) of a milder or less severe type; (3) that the protection it affords against attacks of the disease is greatest during the years immediately succeeding the operation of vaccination. It is impossible to fix with precision the length of this period of highest protection, but nine or ten years may be taken as a general average. After this period the protective efficacy of the vaccination rapidly diminishes, though it probably never altogether ceases. Revaccination restores the protection, which in due lapse of time again diminishes; so that it is well to have the operation repeated, say every ten years. The beneficial effects of vaccination are the most marked in cases where it has been most thorough. Where the vaccine matter is inserted in three or four places it is more effectual than when introduced into one or two places only; and if the vaccination marks are of an area of half a square inch they indicate a better state of protection than if their area be less.