AS GOOD AS GOLD.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—Continued.

The look of Elizabeth betrayed that the latter knew it already.

"Let us shut it out," coaxed Elizabeth-Jane; noting that the rigid wildness of Lucetta's features were growing yet more rigid and wild with the nearing of the noise and laughter. "Let us shut it out!"

"It is of no use!" she shrieked out. "He will see it, won't he? Donald will see it. He is just coming home—and it will break his heart—he will never love me any more—and oh, it will kill me—kill me!"

Elizabeth-Jane was frantic now. "Oh, can't something be done to stop it?" she cried. "Is there nobody to do it—not one?"

She relinquished Lucetta's hands, and ran to the door. Lucetta herself saying recklessly, "I will see it!" turned to the window, threw up the sash, and went out upon the balcony. Elizabeth immediately followed her, and put her arm round her to pull her in. Lucetta's eyes were straight upon the spectacle of the uncanny revel, now advancing rapidly. The numerous lights around the two effigies threw them up into lurid distinctness; it was impossible to mistake the pair for other than the intended victims.

"Come in, come in," implored Elizabeth; "and let me shut the window!"

"She's me—she's me—even to the parasol—my green parasol!" cried Lucetta with a wild laugh as she stepped in. She stood motionless for one second—then fell heavily to the floor.

Almost at the instant of her fall the rude music of the skimmington ceased. The roars of sarcastic laughter went off in ripples, and the tramping died out like the rustle of a spent wind. Elizabeth was only indirectly conscious of this; she had rung the bell, and was bending over Lucetta, who remained convulsed on the carpet in the paroxysms of an epileptic seizure. She rang again and again, in vein; the probability being that the servants had all run out of the house to see more of the Demoniac Sabbath than they could see within.

At last Farfrae's man, who had been agape on the door-step, came up; then the cook. The shutters, hastily pushed to by Elizabeth, were quite closed, a light was obtained, Lucetta carried to her room, and the man sent off for a doctor. While Elizabeth was undressing her she recovered consciousness; but as soon as she remembered what had passed the fit returned.

The doctor arrived with unhoped-for promptitude; he had been standing at his door, like others, wondering what the uproar meant. As soon as he saw the unhappy sufferer he said, in answer to Elizabeth's mute appeal, "This is serious."

"It is a fit," Elizabeth said.

"Yes. But a fit in the present state of her health means mischief. You must send at once for Mr. Farfrae. Where is he?"

"He has driven into the country, sir," said the parlour-maid; "to some place on the Budmouth Road. He's likely to be back soon."

"Never mind; he must be sent for in case he should not hurry." The doctor returned to the bedside again. The man was despatched, and they soon heard him clattering out of the yard at the back.

Meanwhile Mr. Benjamin Grower, that prominent burgess, had put on his hat and gone out to learn the cause. He came to the corner above Frafrae's, and soon guessed the nature of the proceedings; for being a native of the town he had witnessed such rough jests before. His first move was to search hither and thither for the constable; there were two in the town, shrivelled men whom he ultimately found in hiding up an alley.

"What can we two poor jammigers do against such a multitude!" expostulated Stubberd, in answer to Mr. Grower's chiding. "'Tis tempting 'em to commit felo de se upon us, and that would be the death of the perpetrator; and we wouldn't be the cause of a fellow-creature's death on no account, not we.'

"Get some help, then. Here, I'll come with you. We'll see what a few words of authority can do. Quick now; have ye got your staves?"

"We don't want the folk to notice us as law officers, being so short-handed, sir; so we pushed our Govern'ment staves up this water-pipe."

"Out with 'em, and come along, for heaven's sake! Ah, here's Mr. Blowbody, that's lucky." Blowbody was one of the magistrates.

"Well, what's the row? said Blowbody. "Got their names—hey?"

"No. Now," said Grower to one of the constables, "you go with Mr. Blowbody round by the Old Walk, and come up the street; and I'll go with Stubberd straight forward. By this plan we shall have 'em between us. Get their names only; no attack of interruption."

Thus they started. But as Stubberd with Mr. Grower advanced into Corn Street, whence the sounds had proceeded, they were surprised that no procession could be seen. They passed Farfrae's, and looked to the end of the street. The lamp flames waved, the Walk trees soughed, a few loungers stood about with their hands in their pockets. Everything was as usual.

"Have you seen a motley crowd, making a disturbance?" Grower said magisterially to one of these in a fustian jacket.

"Beg yer pardon, sir?" blandly said the person addressed, who was no other than Charl, of Saint Peter's Finger. Mr. Grower repeated the words.

Charl shook his head to the zero of childlike ignorance. "No; we haven't been anything; have we, Joe? And you were here before I."

Joseph was quite as blank as the other in his reply.

"H'm—that's odd," said Mr. Grower. "Ah—here's a respectable man coming that I know by sight. Have you," he inquired, addressing the nearing shape of Jopp, "have you seen any gang of fellows making a noise—skimmington riding or something of the sort?"

"Oh, no—nothing, sir," Jopp replied, as if receiving the most singular news. "But, I've not been far to-night, so perhaps——"

"Oh, 'twas here—just here," said the magistrate.

"Now I've noticed, come to think o't, that the wind in the Walk trees makes a peculiar poetical-like murmur to-night, sir; more than common; so perhaps 'twas that?" Jopp suggested, as he rearranged his hand in his great-coat pocket, where it ingeniously supported a pair of kitchen tongs and a cow's horn, thrust up under his waist-coat.

"No, no, no—d'ye think I'm a fool? Constable, come this way. They must have gone into the back street."

Neither in back street nor in front street, however, could the disturbers be perceived. Effigies, donkey, lanterns, band, all had disappeared like the crew of Comus.

"Now," said Mr. Grower, "there's only one thing more we can do. Get ye half a dozen helpers, and go in a body to Mixen Lane, and into Saint Peter's Finger. I'm much mistaken if you don't find a clue to the perpetrators there."

The rusty-jointed executors of the law mustered assistance as soon as they could, and the whole party marched off to the lane of notoriety. At last they entered the inn boldly, by the till then bolted front door, after a prolonged knocking of loudness commensurate with the importance of their standing.

The landlady looked mildly at the invaders, saying in honest accents, "Good evening, gentlemen; there's plenty of room. I hope there's nothing amiss?"

They looked round the room. "Surely," said Stubberd to one of the men, "I saw you by now in Corn Street—Mr. Grower spoke to 'ee?"

The man, who was Charl, shook his head absently. "I've been here this last hour, hain't I, Nance?" he said to the woman who meditatively sipped her ale near him.

"Faith, that you have. I came in for my quiet supper-time half-pint, and you were here then, as were all the rest."

The other constables was facing the clock case where he saw reflected in the glass a quick motion by the landlady. Turning sharply, he caught her closing the oven door.

"Something curious about that oven, ma'am?" he observed, advancing, opening it, and drawing out a tambourine.

"Oh,' she said apologetically, "that's what we keep here to use when there's a little quiet dancing. You see damp weather spoils it, so I put it there to keep it dry."

Nohow could anything be elicited from this mute and inoffensive assembly. In a few minutes the investigators went out, and joining those of their auxiliaries who had been left at the door, they pursued their way elsewhither.

CHAPTER XL.

Long before this time Henchard, weary of his ruminations on the bridge, had repaired towards the town. When he stood at the bottom of the street a procession burst upon his view, in the act of turning out of an alley just above him.

They crossed the way, entered another street, and disappeared. He turned back a few steps and was lost in grave reflection, finally wending his way homeward by the obscure riverside path. Unable to rest there he went to his stepdaughter's lodging, and was told that Elizabeth-Jane had gone to Mrs. Farfrae's. Like one acting in obedience to a charm, he followed in the same direction, in the hope of meeting her, the roysterers having vanished. Disappointed in this, he gave the gentlest of pulls to the door-bell, and then learnt particulars of what had occurred, together with the doctor's imperative orders that Farfrae should be brought home, and how they had set out to meet him on the Budmouth Road.

"But he has gone to Mellstock and Weatherbury!" exclaimed Henchard, now unspeakably grieved. "Not Budmouth way at all."

But, alas! for Henchard; he had lost his good name. They would not believe him, taking his words but as the frothy utterances of recklessness. Though Lucetta's life seemed at that moment to depend upon her husband's return, no messenger was despatched toward Weatherbury. Henchard, in a state of bitter anxiety and contrition, determined to seek Farfrae himself.

To this end he hastened down the town, ran along the eastern road over the moor, up the hill beyond, and thus onward in the moderate darkness of this spring night till he had reached a second and a third hill about three miles distant. In a cutting on the summit of the last he listened. Presently there came the sound of light wheels whetting their felloes against the newly stoned patches of road, accompanied by the distant glimmer of lights.

He knew it was Farfrae's gig, from an indescribable personality in its noise, the vehicle having been his own till bought by the Scotchman at the sale of his effects. Henchard thereupon descended the hill on its further side, meeting the gig as its driver slackened speed at the foot of the incline.

It was a point in the highway at which the road to Mellstock branched off from the homeward direction. By diverging to that village, as he had intended to do, Farfrae might probably delay his return by a couple of hours. It soon appeared that his intention was to do so still, the light swerving towards the by-road. Farfrae's off gig-lamp flashed in Henchard's face. At the same time, Farfrae discerned his late antagonist.

"Farfrae—Mr. Farfrae!" cried the breathless Henchard, holding up his hand.

Farfrae allowed the horse to turn several steps into the branch lane before he pulled up. He then drew rein, and said "Yes?" over his shoulder, as one would towards a pronounced enemy.

"Come back to Casterbridge at once!" Henchard said. "There's something wrong at your house—requiring your return. I've run all the way here on purpose to tell ye!"

Farfrae was silent, and at his silence Henchard's soul sank within him. He who, four hours earlier, had enticed Farfrae into a deadly wrestle, stood now in the darkness of late night-time on a lonely road, at a point where it plunged into a cutting through a wood; he invited the man, whom on the first occasion he had let off, to enter that wood, when his purposed way was across an open upland, where there was at least a better opportunity of guarding himself from attack. Henchard could almost feel this view of things in course of passage through Farfrae's mind.

"I have to go to Mellstock," said Farfrae coldly, as he loosened his rein to move on.

"But," implored Henchard, "the matter is more serious than your business at Mellstock. It is—your wife. She is ill. I can tell you particulars as we go along."

The very agitation and hesitancy of Henchard increased Farfrae's suspicion that this was a ruse to decoy him into the wood, where might be effectually compassed what, from policy or want of nerve, Henchard had failed to do earlier in the day. He started the horse.

"I know what you think," deprecated Henchard, running after him. "But I am not what you think!" he cried hoarsely. "Believe me, Farfrae; I have come entirely on your own and your wife's account. She is in danger. I know no more; and they want you to come. Your man has gone the other way in mistake. Oh, Farfrae, don't mistrust me—I am a wretched man; but my heart is true to you still!"

Farfrae, however, did distrust him utterly. He had left his wife not long ago in perfect health; and Henchard's treachery was more credible than his story. He quickened the horse's pace, and had soon risen into the open country lying between there and Mellstock. Henchard's spasmodic run after him lending yet more substance to his thought of evil purposes.

The gig and its driver lessened against the sky in Henchard's eyes; his exertions for Farfrae's good had been in vain. He cursed himself like a less scrupulous Job, as a vehement man will do when he loses self-respect, the last mental prop under poverty. Presently he began to walk back again along the way by which he had come. Farfrae should at all events have no reason for delay upon the road by seeing him there when he took his journey homeward later on.

Arriving at Casterbridge, Henchard went again to Farfrae's house to make inquiries. As soon as the door opened anxious faces confronted his from the staircase, hall and landing; and they all said in grievous disappointment, "Oh—it is not he!"

"But haven't you found him?" said the doctor.

"Yes . . . I cannot tell ye!" Henchard replied, as he sank down on a chair within the entrance. "He can't be home for two hours."

"H'm," said the physician, returning upstairs.

"How is she?" asked Henchard of Elizabeth.

"In great danger, father. Her anxiety to see her husband makes her fearfully restless. Poor woman—I fear they have killed her!"

Henchard regarded the sympathetic speaker for a few instants as if she struck him in a new light; then, without further remark, went out of the door and onward to his lonely cottage.

Jopp was just going to bed when Henchard got home. As the latter entered the door Jopp said, "This is rather bad about Mrs. Farfrae's illness."

"Yes," said Henchard shortly, though little dreaming of Jopp's complicity in the night's harlequinade.

"Somebody has called for you," continued Jopp, when Henchard was shutting himself into his own apartment. "A kind of traveller, or sea-captain of some sort."

"Oh!—who could he be?"

"He seemed a well-be-doing man—had gray hair and a broadish face; but he gave no name, and no message."

"Nor do I give him any attention." And, saying this, Henchard closed his door.

The divergence to Mellstock delayed Farfrae's return very nearly the two hours of Henchard's estimate. Among the other urgent reasons for his presence had been the need of his authority to send to Budmouth for a second physician; and when at length Farfrae did come back he was in a state bordering on distraction at his misconception of Henchard's motives.

A messenger was despatched to Budmouth, late as it had grown; the night wore on, and the other doctor came in the small hours. Lucetta had been much soothed by Donald's arrival; he seldom or never left her side; and when, immediately after his entry, she had tried to lisp out to him the secret which so oppressed her, he cheeked her feeble words, lest talking should be dangerous, assuring her there was plenty of time to tell him everything.

What, and how much, Farfrae's wife ultimately explained to him of her past entanglement with Henchard, when they were alone in the solitude of that sad night, cannot be told. That she informed him of the bare facts of her peculiar intimacy with the corn-merchant became plain from Farfrae's own statements. But in respect of her subsequent conduct—her motive in coming to Casterbridge to unite herself with Henchard—her assumed justification in abandoning him when she discovered reasons for fearing him—her method of reconciling to her conscience a marriage with the second when she was in a measure committed to the first: to what extent she spoke of these things remained Farfrae's secret alone.

Besides the watchman who called the hours and weather in Casterbridge that night, there walked a figure up and down Corn Street hardly less frequently. It was Henchard's, whose retiring to rest had proved itself a futility as soon as attempted; and he gave it up to go hither and thither and make inquiries about the patient every now and then. He called as much on Farfrae's account as on Lucetta's, and on Elizabeth-Jane's even more than on either's. To see her on each occasion of his inquiry at Lucetta's was a comfort to him.

The last of his calls was made about four o'clock in the morning, in the steely light of dawn. When within a few yards of Farfrae's he saw the door gently opened, and a servant rais her hand to the knocker, to untie the piece of cloth which had muffled it. He went across, the sparrows in his way scarcely flying up from the road-litter, so little did they believe in human aggression at so early a time.

"Why do you take off that? said Henchard.

She turned in some surprise at his presence, and did not answer for an instant or two. Recognizing him, she said, "Because they may knock as loud as they will; she will never hear it any more.

CHAPTER XLI.

Henchard went home. He had not sat there long when a gentle footstep approached the house and entered the passage, a finger tapping lightly at the door. Henchard's face brightened, for he knew the motions to be Elizabeth's. She came into his room, looking pale and sad.

"Have you heard?" she asked. "Mrs. Farfrae? She is—dead! Yes, indeed—about an hour ago."

"I know it," said Henchard. "I have but lately come in from there. It is so very good of ye, Elizabeth, to come and tell me. You must be so tired out, too, with sitting up. Now do you bide here with me this morning. You can go and rest in the other room; and I will call you when breakfast is ready."

To please him, and herself—for his recent kindliness was winning a surprised gratitude from the lonely girl—she did as he bade her, and lay down on a sort of couch which Henchard had rigged up out of a settle in the adjoining room. Presently she fell asleep.

Meanwhile her stepfather in the outer room had set the breakfast in readiness; but finding that she dozed he would not call her; he waited on, looking into the fire and keeping the kettle boiling with housewifely care, as if it were an honour to have her in his house.

He was disturbed by another knock at the door, and rose to open it, rather deprecating a call from anybody just then. A stoutly-built man stood on the doorstep. It was the man who had asked the way at Saint Peter's Finger. Henchard nodded and looked inquiry.

(To be Continued.)

"DO YOU KNOW WHY?"

Disquieting Were the Questions She Asked About Money Not His.

This particular family jar was labeled "Economy," and every one knows that that is the very worst kind.

It came when she asked for some money to buy a new gown. That is when they usually come, and the strange feature of it all is that a man who is most particular in all matters relating to the subject of modesty in women will roar like an angry bull at the mere suggestion of spending money for clothes. He seems to think that a woman can go out and find such things growing on trees as Eve did, forgetful of the fact that he would be the first to find fault with the costume. If you don't believe it, ask any woman who is married.

"I should think," he said in this instance, "that one gown a month ought to be enough for the wife of a man in my position."

"It would be too much," she replied coldly. "I haven't had one in nearly six months."

He was about to dispute her assertion, but, after a rapid mental calculation, he decided that, perhaps, it was not advisable.

"It costs a small fortune to run this house," he asserted, intent upon making it interesting for her, in some way.

"You pay the bills," she said, "and do most of the ordering."

He winced a little, but returned to the attack.

"The trouble is," he said, "that you don't know the value of money."

"Do you know why?" she asked, with a suddenness that startled him.

"Why—why—what——"

"Do you know why?" she demanded again.

"Now, Mrs. Marblehead," he said, recovering his self-possession, "I don't want any of your worn-out excuses."

"Do you know why?" she repeated, refusing to be turned from the original question.

"This foolishness must end," he exclaimed. "I——"

"Do you know why I don't know the value of money?" she persisted, at the same time opening her purse, and taking out a solitary quarter and toying with it suggestively.

In another minute she was alone. He had retired vanquished, and inside of 24 hours he had suggested that it would be better all round if he made her a regular allowance for household and personal expenses, which was what she had been trying to convince him for two or three years.

WORDS OF WISDOM.

Poverty is no disgrace, but poverty brought about by laziness is a disgrace, and a black disgrace, at that. That person who is too lazy to work for the necessities of life, should not be recognized as being a member of the human family.

No one who contentedly remains ignorant and thoughtless has any right to plume himself upon being a good and moral man, whatever or however be the virtuous actions which he performs.

A mother's life must of necessity be a concession in little things, a continual sacrifice. A happy family-life of many members cannot be maintained unless there are concession and sacrifice on the part of every member. And in a small way the family-life is an epitome of the life of the great world oustide.

Hope awakens courage. He who can implant courage in the human soul is the best physician.

Confidence and trust are the sweetest things we can give to a friend. Suspicion is always cold and cruel to a sensitive heart; and it were better to be often deceived by unworthy friends than to be guilty of causelessly wounding a noble soul by unjust suspicions, and, although they are rare, we should always be looking for noble souls elsewhere. We may find them when least expected.

SIGNAL SERVICE.

We won't have any more cold weather.

How do you know?

The women at our boarding house have began to quarrel about how deep to plant sweet peas.

AN EPIDEMIC OF HOLD-UPS

ALL CHICAGO MEN ARE HEAVILY ARMED THESE DAYS.

Footpads are Very Busy in the Windy City—Five Citizens Resisted, One is Dead, Others Will Recover.

The "hold-up" epidemic has reached such an acute stage in Chicago that men go to business and attend social functions armed to the teeth. The footpad is now operating in all portions of that city. The police cannot catch him and he invariably subdues his victims. There have been eighteen highway robberies in six days. Nearly all have taken place in the best resident streets.

Five men had the nerve to offer resistance. One is dead and four are convalescing. Henry Schomaker, a Wells street saloon-keeper was shot and killed in his barroom. He was alone in the place and was preparing to close up when a man entered. There was an exchange of shots. Clara Schomaker, the eighteen-year-old daughter, seized a revolver and ran down from the living apartments. Her father was leaning against the counter. In the door stood the intruder. She fired four shots at him but he escaped. Schomaker was shot four times and died soon afterwards.

MICHIGAN BOULEVARD

is a favorite haunt for the footpad. Dr. C. W. Friend learned this while passing the Hotel Metropole. Three men stopped him opposite the hotel entrance. Two pressed revolvers to his head, while the third began searching him. He struck the unarmed robber in the face. The other two fell upon him with their weapons. They struck him over the head cutting deep wounds in his scalp. He shouted for help and ran into the hotel.

Fifteen minutes later the same trio of highwaymen met Fred B. McMullen at Michigan Boulevard and Twenty-fifth street. They held him up in the entrance to the Reformed Episcopal Church and took his pocketbook containing $154.

A policeman came up before the thieves were out of sight. When within range he began shooting. One man fell, crying out as he lay on the sidewalk, "he has got me boys, Don't leave me." His companions levelled their weapons on the policeman and stood their ground. One assisted the wounded robber to his feet.

A cab was dashing up the boulevard. One of the robbers ran out in the street, pointed his revolver at the head of the cab driver and brought the vehicle to a halt. The wounded robber was assisted into the cab under the protection of his companions. The cab was driven off like the wind and all three escaped.

Martin Hanus, a banker, encountered two men and two guns at Eighteenth and May streets.

"Put down your revolvers and I'll give you all I've got. The footpads lowered their revolvers and Hanus started to run. Both fired at him, one bullet going through his hat. He was found lying on the sidewalk and carried home.

WEIGHING A LOCOMOTIVE.

A Test to Determine How Much It Loses by Wear.

A peculiar scientific experiment has been made with the famous engine No. 870 of the New York Central Railroad at the shops at West Albany. Some months ago this large engine, which in the opinion of many well-informed railroadmen excells even the famous No. 999, was taken into the shops and completely overhauled. It was taken apart completely, and every part of the engine from the massive driving wheels to the very smallest bolt and nut, was separately weighed. The heavy portions were weighed in the shops and the small parts were taken to a Watervliet avenue pharmacy, where they were weighed on the pharmacist's scales.

The greatest care was taken by the machinists under the direction of Master Mechanic Buchanan to see that the weighing was accurate. When every part of the engine had been weighed a force of the best skilled mechanics were put at work to reassemble the engine. When it was complete again it was put into active service.

A short time ago the engine was taken back to the shops and mechanics were put to work dissecting it again. Once more every part was weighed. The scales of the pharmicist was brought into service again. When every portion had been weighed the record was compared with the former one. Then Master Mechanic Buchanan knew just how much the engine had lost in weight through the wear of a known amount of work. The records of the weights of the separate parts also showed which parts were subjected to the most wear.

The test cost many hundreds of dollars, but the New York Central was willing to spend the money in order that it might be able to know what parts of an engine wear out most quickly and in what ratio the several parts wear out. The exact figures have not been made public. There is no doubt that they will be interesting to mechanics and scientists.

THIEVING BEADLE.

British institutions have received a severe shock by the conviction of a beadle of the Bank of England for larceny. He has been 13 years in the service of the bank, and was employed regularly at the banquets of the Lord Mayor and the city companies, where he filched plates undetected. Unfortunately he stooped to stealing from the army and navy stores, when he was caught and the treasure of plate he had collected during nine years from 16 companies was discovered.