

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 hearing of the noise and laughter. "Let us shut it out!" 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—she's me—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 vain; 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 unhelped-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."

"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 nearest fellow making a noise—skimming-ton 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 of it, 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 assistants 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. "Sirely," said Stubberd to one of the men, "I saw you by now in Corn Street—Mr. Grower spoke to 'ee?" The man, who was Char, shook his head absently. "I've been here this last hour, ha'n'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."

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 river-side path. Unable to rest there he went to his stepdaughter's lodging, and was told that Elizabeth-Jane had gone to Mrs. Farfrae's 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 unspcakably grieved. "Not Budmouth way at all."

"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."

DEATHS. MOORE—In Normandy, March 19th, after a long illness, Wm. Moore, aged 81 years. GUNN—At Rosemont, after a long illness, Mr. J. D. Gunn, House, aged 78 years. MIDDAGH—In Prime morning, March 14th, Middagh, aged 55 years. McLEOD—At Pricetown, 9th, Rev. Donald McLeod, minister, aged 55 years.

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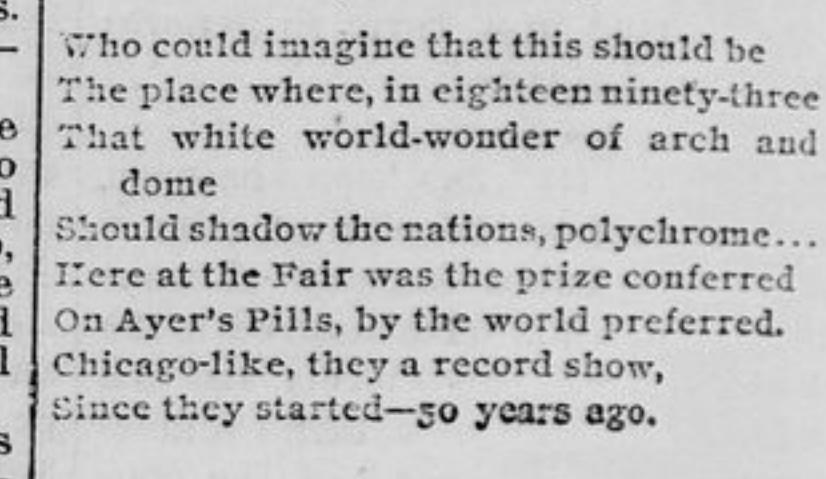
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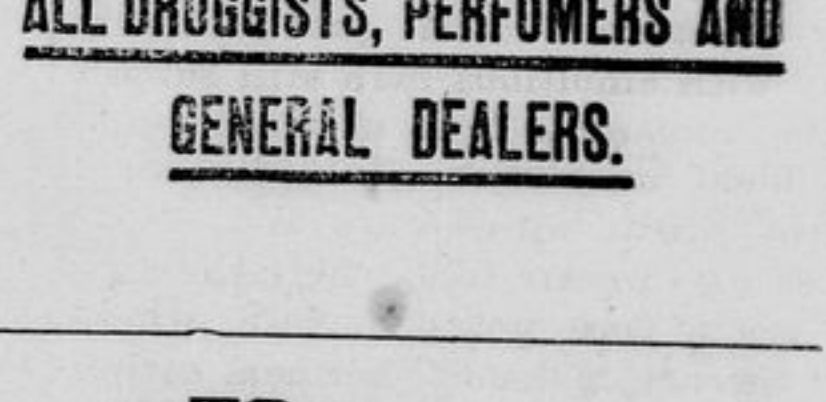
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WORDS OF WISDOM. Poverty is no disgrace, but poverty brought about by laziness is a disgrace, and a black disgrace, at that. That person who is too lazy to work for the necessities of life, should not be recognized as being a member of the human family.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

SIGNAL SERVICE. We won't have any more cold weather. How do you know? The woman at our boarding house have begun to quarrel about how deep to plant sweet peas.

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 messenger; and when at length Farfrae did come back he was in a state bordering on distraction at his misconception of Henchard's man.

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The Chronicle is the most widely read newspaper published in the County of Grey.