

TO THE Bitter END.

AT A TALE OF TWO LIVES.

PROLOGUE

Side by side with his dignified, handsome wife, Lord Bernard Clanvow, Earl of Alceston, stood receiving his guests in the spacious, airy corridor which led into the ball-room. It was getting on toward midnight, but the stream of arrivals was scarcely yet lessened, and the broad marble staircase, lit with the banks of palms and sweet-scented flowers, was still thronged with guests in marvellous costumes of lace and brilliant jewelry, and tall, distinguished-looking women in some in gorgeous uniforms, with diamonds and orders glistening upon their breasts, a fustian in court dress, and fewer still in the ordinary evening garb of civilian life. Yet it was the first function of any social importance of a season which promised to be exceptionally brilliant one, and everybody who was anybody at all in the charmed circle of London society would have thought it a disgrace to be missing it. And as they trooped up the magnificent, carpeted stairs in innumerable groups of statesmen and peers, learned men and poets, the men of the world and men of letters, the former with the latter in not too honest company, their womenkind; and as they passed on into the ball-room, where the dancing some graceful little speck of wit, some from their courteous host or dramatic dancing beauties.

A politician, a diplomat, a statesman, and the heroine of a noble family, Lord Alceston was a well-known and popular leader of the world in which he lived. It would be hard to say, indeed, had he been so common as to be popular. Look at him as he stood in the plump little hand of the hostess, if you will, and welcome her with a smile, and each which in one sentence contains an expression of a compliment. His face, too, was a rare combination of an essentially aristocratic type of features and distinctive expression. There is nothing cold about it, and his eyes or his small, firm mouth, although the former are clear and piercing as eagles, and about the latter there is a smile, the slightest trace of that indefinable smile which often mars faces of that type. The stream of gray in his coat-black hair, and the slight stoop of his high shoulder, are the only signs of the horseman or the military officer, but the stoop of gaucherie—the party or the other, he otherwise, for, notwithstanding his still towers head and shoulders above the majority of the guests who are in the room, he looks what he is, and he is certainly an aristocrat and a man of perfect breeding; the very proper type of a British gentleman of high birth. So noble is his appearance—and enough for a man to be long trouble the pages of this story, for it is not necessary here to say more than that she looks his wife. She, too, is a noble woman, dignified, and aristocratic, and it is only by admiring and reverencing Lord Alceston that she is his wife.

At last the stream grew thin, and a little dinner-party, a great many had arrived at the hotel, and a ducal dinner-party, and the women had made their bow and passed through the certain archway to where the guests were playing the most delightful of all the waltzes, there comes a tall, dark, handsome man, closing her fan with a little smile, and looking down the empty staircase up toward her husband. He stifles the very faintest of yawns, and, smiling apologetically, excuses her arm with a courteous bow, but for his charm of manner, might have been a trifle elaborate.

"I think that we might have been a little more," he remarked suavely. "You are a little fatigued, I fear."

She shrugged her white shoulders, and laid her fingers upon his coat sleeve.

"A mere trifle. What do you mean, Neillson? I don't want here, I wonder?"

Lord Alceston paused, and then, looking toward her, faced a tall, grave-looking man, dressed in a suit of sober black, who was standing at the foot of the staircase. He carried a small envelope in his hand, upon which he was looking intently.

"Is that anything important, Neillson?" asked his master, frowning slightly.

"I believe so, my lord," he answered apologetically, "or I would not have taken the liberty of bringing it to you. The bearer declined to wait for a moment."

During the commencement of his speech Lord Alceston's eyes had been fixed upon the superscription of the envelope which lay before him. Before he could take any place in his manner. He made no movement, nor did he ask any question. He simply stood quite still, and then, with a suddenness, holding his breath, he read the superscription. He seemed to have been struck by lightning; he did not even put out his hand to take the envelope from the salver until Neillson had handed it to him again.

"Will your lordship be so kind as to read it?" he said in a low tone.

Lord Alceston stretched out his hand and took it after a momentary hesitation, which was very much like an involuntary shudder. Directly his fingers had closed upon it, it seemed himself again.

He looked swiftly around him, and saw no one had observed his peculiar expression, and was satisfied. The footman who had handed it to him were still absorbed, partly in their duties, partly in contemplation of their own affairs. His wife had been struggling with a nervous headache, which she had been vainly trying to relieve. Neillson alone had been looking at him with a notice anything unusual.

"You did quite right, Neillson. You would excuse me for one moment," he said, turning to the Countess. "This is a very important matter, and I must require my immediate attention."

She bowed her head, and he turned, looking down upon the envelope, and then, with a fanning herself. Lord Alceston took the envelope in his left hand, and with his right hand, which he had taken from the superscription in his left hand, he opened it. For a moment he looked at it, and seemed inclined to drop it, but he caught it, and the impulse, however, passed away, and, standing back behind some of the palms, which half-concealed him from his wife, he tore it nervously open.

Whatever the contents might have been they could have consisted of nothing but a few words, for he seemed to have been struck by lightning. But he did not notice anything, and he returned to his wife's side. He had, however, been

than a minute, with his back turned to her and the little troop of servants, and a very strange look in his face. One hand was pressed close to his forehead, as though to ease some pain there, and the fingers of the other were locked around the half-sheet of note paper which he had just received, crumpling it up into a scarcely recognizable mass. He had all the appearance of a man who has received a blow which the moment has withered up all his faculties. His features were still impassive, but his face had a cold, numb look, and all the light had died out of his eyes, leaving them glassy and dim. For a brief while he stood as motionless as a statue; then suddenly he shivered like a man awakened from a hideous nightmare, and moved his hand quickly from his forehead to his cold, damp forehead.

Lady Alceston, who could only see his back, and that imperfectly, began to wonder what was the matter. She rose and walked slowly over toward him. The sound of her rustling skirts trailing over the thick, soft carpet seemed to suddenly recall him from his abstracted state. He turned round slowly and faced her.

"It is necessary for me to write an answer to this note," he remarked quietly. "If you will be so good as to wait a few minutes, you will be able to make some excuse for me. The matter is really an important one."

She raised her eyebrows, but was too well bred to evince much surprise, or even curiosity.

"From Downing Street?" she inquired, nonchalantly. "I didn't notice the seal."

"Yes, from Downing Street," he answered. "It may take me some little time to answer, but you may rely upon my being as expeditious as possible."

She turned away with a slight inclination of her head, and, entering the ball-room, she moved forward and gravely held the curtain open for her, taking it from the hand of a servant who was stationed there; then he retraced his steps, and, leaving the ante-room by a private door, passed down a flight of stairs, through another door, and along a passage until he reached the apartment on the ground-floor which he called his study.

It was a great room, finely proportioned and handsomely furnished, lined with books from floor to ceiling—a worthy study even for Lord Alceston, scholar, author, and politician. He paced across the thick, dark carpet like a man in a dream, with fixed gaze and slow movements, and sank into a chair in front of a black ebony writing-table strewn with letters, and piles of correspondence, and blue-books. For a moment he sat bolt upright, gazing into vacancy, or rather at the thick crimson curtains which hung before him, then suddenly his head dropped upon his folded arms and remained buried there for nearly a quarter of an hour. When he looked up his face was scarred and lined, as though with some swift terrible trouble—as though he were passing through some fierce ordeal.

He poured himself a glass of water from a carafe which stood at his elbow and drank it slowly. Then he set the empty glass down, and, leaning forward in his chair, pressed the knob of an electric bell in the wall opposite to him.

Almost immediately there was a soft knock at the door, and his servant Neillson appeared.

Lord Alceston looked at him fixedly, as though seeking to discover something in the man's face. If he had hoped to do so, however, he was disappointed, for it remained absolutely impassive. The only expression discernible was one of respectful attention. His master withdrew his searching gaze with a slight movement of impatience, and gave his orders with his eyes fixed upon the table before him.

"Get my ulster from my room, Neillson, and fetch me a hansom—to the news door, of course."

"Very good, my lord."

Neillson was a perfectly trained servant, but he had not been able to conceal a slight start of surprise. Lord Alceston noticed it and frowned.

"Neillson," he said, "you will remember what I told you when you entered my service?"

"The man bowed. "I do, my lord. I was to be surprised at no orders which you might give me and never to repeat them."

Lord Alceston nodded. "Very good; remember to obey them in the present instance."

"I shall do so, my lord." The door closed and Lord Alceston was left alone for a moment. He looked carefully around, as though to assure himself of the fact, for the reading-lamp upon his desk was heavily shaded and was quite insufficient to dispel the gloom which hung about the vast room. Suddenly he rose and walked with swift silent footsteps to the furthest corner, in which stood a black oak chest with old-fashioned brassings. He paused to listen for a moment—there was no sign of Neillson's return. Then he drew a bunch of keys from his pocket, opened one of the lower drawers, and, pushing his hand back to the remote corner, felt about for a moment. Apparently he found what he wanted, for suddenly he withdrew his hand, transferred some object to his pocket and returned to his seat. Almost immediately Neillson reappeared, carrying the ulster under his arm.

"The hansom is at the news door, my lord," he said, holding up the coat.

Lord Alceston rose and suffered himself to be helped into it.

"Very good. You fetched it yourself, I hope?"

"Certainly, my lord. Is there anything else?"

His master buttoned his coat up to his ears, and drawing a sash cap from the pocket, pulled it over his forehead. Then he hesitated for a moment.

"No, there is nothing else at present, Neillson," he answered slowly. "I shall look this door, and if I am inquired for you can let it be understood that I am engaged upon an important despatch."

The man bowed and withdrew. Lord Alceston, drawing out his key from his pocket, followed him to the door and carefully locked it on the inside. Then, re-crossing the room, he drew aside a Japanese screen and unlocked a small green baize door, which closed after him with a spring.

He was then in a long dark passage, along which he passed rapidly until he emerged into a quiet sidestreet, at the corner of which

acab was waiting. Without waiting to speak to the man, he stepped quickly inside and pulled down the window. The driver opened his trap-door and looked down.

"Where to, sir?" he asked.

It was nearly half a minute before Lord Alceston answered. Then he gave the address with some hesitation, and in so low a tone that he had to repeat it. The man touched his hat, closed the trap-door, and drove off.

Two hours had passed since Lord Alceston had left his wife's side, and he was back among his guests again. Certainly he was amply atoning for his brief desertion of them, for every one was declaring that he was one of the most charming of hosts. He seemed to be in all places at all times, and to be incapable of fatigue. Now he was the life and soul of a little group of gossiping politicians, now among a bevy of dowagers, telling a story which was just sufficiently risqué to awaken their keen interest without making them feel bound to appear unnaturally prudish, and consequently putting them all into a delightful temper. Now he was acting as his own master of ceremonies, and introducing exactly the right people to one another, and now he is walking through the mazes of a square dance with an old-fashioned stately dignity which many of the younger men envied. Wherever he went he seemed to drive gloom before him and to breathe gayety into the dull of the dull. Even his wife watched him admiringly, and wished that he would always exert himself as he was doing then, for there were times, as she well knew, when he was but a nonchalant host. But to-night he was excelling himself; he was brilliant, dignified, and full of tact. She began to wonder, as she paced slowly through the rooms on the arm of a Grand Duke, and answered with sweet smiles but only partial attention his labored commonplaces, whether that note from Downing Street had brought any good news. Visions of her husband at the head of the Cabinet and entertaining for his party, began to float before her eyes, and she gave herself up to them until the growing coolness of her companion's manner warned her to abandon dreaming for the present and devote herself to her duties. But she made a mental note to inquire of her husband respecting that note at her earliest opportunity.

At last the spacious rooms began to thin. Royalty had come and gone; the perfume of exotics was growing fainter and fainter and the fairy lights were growing dimmer and dimmer. Faster than before all the plagues of Egypt do London beauties fly before the daylight after a night's dancing, and the guests were departing in shoals before the faint gleams of approaching morning. At last their hour of release had come, and Lord Alceston sought his wife.

"I have a letter to write for the morning post," he remarked. "With your permission I will come to your room for a cup of tea in half an hour."

Lady Alceston, seeing that save for the servants they were alone, indulged in the luxury of a yawn before she answered: "Do. I want to have a few minutes' talk. Don't be longer. Everything has gone off some fierce ordeal."

"Thanks to your admirable arrangements, yes, I think so," he answered courteously. And then, with the smile still lingering on his lips, he turned away and went to his library.

Apparently he soon forgot his wife's invitation, for the first thing he did was to order a cup of strong tea to be brought to him at once. Neillson laid it down by his side on the table, and was about to depart when his master called him back.

"Neillson, I've lost the key to the baize door somewhere this morning. Send down to Bellson's the lock-smith, as soon as you think that he will be up, and have another one made."

"Very good, my lord. Shall you require me again?"

Lord Alceston drew out his watch and looked at it. It was four o'clock. He hesitated with it still in his hand.

"If I do not ring for you in half an hour you can go to bed," he decided.

The door closed, and Lord Alceston was left alone. For a moment or two he sipped his tea leisurely. Then, drawing some paper toward him, he commenced to write.

He had covered two sheets of note paper and had commenced the third when he suddenly ceased writing and started violently. Leaning forward he pressed the knob of the electric bell, and then, half faintly, he turned slowly round and glanced across the room. Save for the heavily-shaded lamp which stood on his table it was still unilluminated, and the greater part of it was enveloped in shadow, for the closely-drawn curtains completely shut out the struggling daylight. Lord Alceston drew the shade from his lamp with fingers which trembled a little and held it high over his head while he looked searchingly around.

There was a soft knock at the door, and Neillson entered. Lord Alceston put down the lamp with an unmistakable gesture of relief.

"Neillson," he said, quietly, "there is some one in the room."

Neillson looked around and then back at his master incredulously.

"Some one in the room, my lord!" he repeated. "Impossible! I beg your lordship's pardon," he added confusedly, "I meant—"

"Never mind what you meant, Neillson," interrupted his master. "Look behind that screen."

Neillson approached the screen very gingerly and peered around it.

"There's no one there, my lord," he declared, with relief. Side by side they walked round the apartment, Lord Alceston holding the lamp above his head. They discovered nothing. Obviously, save themselves there was no one else in the room. Lord Alceston resumed his seat and set the lamp down.

"It's a very strange thing," he said, in a low tone. "I'm not a nervous man, and my hearing is remarkably good. I could have sworn that I heard a shuffling footstep. Neillson, fetch my revolver from my room and see that all the chambers are loaded."

Neillson withdrew, and during his brief absence Lord Alceston sat around in his chair with his eyes restlessly wandering about the interior of the apartment. Presently Neillson reappeared and silently laid a small shining revolver on the desk by his master's side.

"Anything further, your lordship?"

"No, you can go to bed now! I suppose it must have been fancy. Just see, though,

whether the baize door is securely locked." Neillson crossed the room and tried it. "It is locked, your lordship," he declared.

"Very good; you can go."

The door closed, and Lord Alceston, after one more furtive glance around, slowly finished his tea, drew the revolver close to his side and recommenced writing. He had barely finished another page, however, before his pen suddenly stopped upon the paper and his heart gave a great throb. Again he heard, this time without the possibility of any mistake, and close behind him, that low, stealthy sound. He dropped his pen and stretched out his shaking fingers for the revolver; but even when his hand had closed upon it he could not turn round. A cold horror seemed to have stolen over him, freezing his blood and numbing his limbs. All his sensations were those of a man in a hideous nightmare; but this was no nightmare.

Again came the stealthy sound of a cat-like tread close to his chair. A hot breath upon his neck, and then, as life flowed suddenly again into his veins, and he strove to cry out, a handkerchief was pressed into his open mouth and he felt his senses reel before the swift, deadly influence of the chloroform with which it was soaked. Still he struggled for a moment, half turned round in his chair, and caught a glimpse of a pair of burning eyes fixed upon his, and read murder in them.

"You!" he gasped. "You!"

One arm seized his, and held them from behind. A swift gleam of blue steel flashed before his eyes; a sudden pain. It was over in a moment.

There was a brisk sale for the evening papers on the following day. All down the Strand and around Trafalgar Square the eager newsboys were shouting out their terrible tidings, and for the lover of sensation there was very good value indeed in exchange for his penny. Placards leaned against the walls, were spread upon the pavement, and were almost thrust into the faces of the ever-hurrying throngs of passers-by, and this is what they announced:

AWFUL MURDER OF THE EARL OF ALCESTON! AND A LITTLE LOWER DOWN— ANOTHER TERRIBLE MURDER IN THE EAST END!

An immense sensation was created this morning in all circles by the rumor, which has unhappily proved too true that the Earl of Alceston had been found at an early hour this morning in his library with his throat cut and quite dead. On inquiry at Grosvenor Square this morning, our representative was put in possession of such facts as are already known. Briefly, they are as follows:

It seems that during the holding of a reception and ball last night Lord Alceston received a letter, the origin of which is at present a mystery, which compelled him to absent himself for some considerable period from his guests. Later on in the evening, however, he rejoined them, and it was universally remarked that this lordship had never appeared in better health or spirits. Nothing further happened, or has since happened, to connect the receipt of this letter with the fearful crime which we have to report. After the departure of his guests, his lordship went straight to his library, promising to join his wife and take tea with her in half an hour. All we have been able to gather of what subsequently occurred is, that about nine o'clock this morning as she had seen nothing of her husband, and had not heard him go to his room, Lady Alceston sent her maid to make enquiries. She went in company with a footman at once to the library, and, being unable to procure admission or to obtain any reply, summoned help, with the result that the door was forced open and the terrible spectacle disclosed of Lord Alceston leaning forward on the writing-table, with his clothes and face covered with blood and his throat cut completely round from side to side.

Although we are not at liberty, for obvious reasons, to state more at present, we understand that further startling disclosures have been made to the police by members of the household, but that at present there is no clue to the murderer.

3.30 P.M.—His late lordship's valet, Philip Neillson, is believed to have absconded, not having been seen or heard of this morning.

2 P.M.—A warrant has been issued for the man Neillson on suspicion of having been concerned in the murder of his master, the Earl of Alceston. The accused has not yet been found.

4 P.M.—It is now ascertained beyond doubt that Neillson has absconded. The police are making every effort to trace him, and are confident of success.

The deceased earl was the third son of the Lord Rupert Clanvow, Earl of Alceston, from whom he inherited the title and estates, and was the sixth peer. During his youth he held a commission in the Second Life Guards and served with distinction through the Crimean campaign. On the death of his two elder brothers however, his lordship left the army, and taking his seat in the House of Peers, devoted himself to politics. His lordship was created a K. C. B. in 18—, was a member of the Privy Council, and quite recently his name was mentioned as the probable successor to Lord H—in the Cabinet. The deceased peer was married in 18—to the Lady Margaret Agnes Montand, only daughter of the Earl of Montand and leaves an only son, Lord Bernard Clanvow, who succeeds to the title and entails estates.

Below, cast almost in insignificance by such a heinous crime as the murder of a peer of the realm, was a short paragraph headed:

ANOTHER TRAGEDY IN THE EAST END. MURDER OF A WOMAN IN A LODGING-HOUSE.

Just before going to press, information came to hand of another awful murder in Riddell Street, Bethnal Green Road. On being called according to custom, by the proprietress of the lodging-house, a woman who went by the name of Mary Ward was discovered lying across her bed quite dead, and stabbed to the heart by some sharp instrument. The deceased woman was known to have been visited by three men during the early part of the night, the latter of whom left hurriedly, but no struggles or cries of any sort were heard, and no suspicion was entertained of foul play. It is not known whether any of

the lodgers will be able to identify or give any description of either of the men alleged to have visited the deceased. Failing this, it seems highly probable that this crime will be another addition to the long catalogue of undiscovered murders in this locality. We are not at present in a position to state definitely whether there is anything to justify the supposition that this most recent crime is by the same hand and for the same purpose as others committed in this neighborhood, as the police are maintaining a strict reticence in the matter.

And so for one night, at least, Londoners had plenty of horrors to gorge themselves upon and to discuss eagerly in public-house and club, railway carriage and omnibus, restaurant and street corner. Two murders in one night, and both wrapped in mystery! What food for the sensation monger, what a fund of conversation for the general public-houses, society at their clubs and social functions. Pleasure seekers, dining and supping at their favorite restaurants, were ready with their solemn expressions of horror and their more or less absurd theories. A million tongues were busy with this one subject, backward and forward the name of the peer and the name of the woman. Truly there is fame in death!

In his stately bedchamber, on snowy sheets, pillowed with lace, and strewn with flowers, his fine face white and rigid with the calm of death, lay Bernard, Lord Alceston, Earl of Harrowdean; and on a coarse straw mattress, barely covered over by a ragged, none too clean coverlet, in Bethnal Green lodging-house, lay the woman who had called herself Mary Ward. For him there were mourners, at least in name, and loud in lament—for here there was none. But, after all, what did it matter? Around him, as around her, the great world of London revolved without change in its mighty cycles of vice and misery, pleasure-seeking and fortune-spending, and if more voices were lowered at his name than hers, more tears dropped over his damask sheets than over her ragged coverlet, what matter? Whose was the profit?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"Patriotism in Education."

A writer in the Educational Monthly on "Patriotism in Education," considers that in our schools, and more especially in those devoted to higher education, the teachers of history and of the subjects coming under the general head of English literature, have a vitally important task to perform, in imbuing scholars with sentiments of patriotism. The writer does not hesitate to say that, lying as Canada does between the surging tide of British civilization, traditions and greatness on the one hand, and the rushing stream of American progress on the other, lessons may be learned from a comparison of the two, which will be valuable beyond expression to the students in the course of their future careers. But Canada itself has a distinctive record and noble past. Edmund Burke once remarked that "he knew of no more absorbing and instructive occupation for the mind of a thoughtful man, than to trace, in all their peculiar grandeur, the bold and swiftly formed outlines in the history of a young and patriotic people." And Canadians have much to be proud of. Aside altogether from the cherished deeds of British sailors, soldiers and statesmen in ages gone by, possessed by us through an historic continuity which the American have so unfortunately lost, we have memories in this land of ours worthy of our ancestors and worthy of the great races which are commingling upon our soil. The war of 1812, with its gallant victories, can never be forgotten, and while warfare in itself is not an object of congratulation, the principle upon which it is based may, and upon that occasion did, voice the noblest sentiments of humanity. The writer quotes the Rochester Herald, which says "we have no sympathy with that sublimated sentiment which derides patriotism, clannish and provincial, and aims to throw down the walls of home and native and adopted land. We believe that men are better for having a country, a flag and an which these huge animals were slaughtered allegiance for which they are willing to do and dare and die." To this end, certainly the teaching of history can and should breathe such a spirit. Inference, conclusions, incidental references historical allusions, praises given to patriots and patriotic actions, comparisons casually and briefly instituted; in a hundred ways the point can be driven home and the lesson taught. Canadian history involves upon its every page some instructive reference to national development. In using the word "national" no distinction need be made between Canada and Britain. Our people, by their flag and institutions, are British now, and no reason exists why we should not expand into a powerful British nation upon Canadian soil. The writer thinks that much stress is laid upon the events of a very distant past. Why should a student of the day know all about Caesar and little or nothing about the Dominion of Canada. It is the constant inculcation of history from a patriotic standpoint which would remedy this defect. With this patriotism would necessarily go alone for the flag which waves over the land of our birth and adoption. It represents everything that our fathers cherished, and to the children it should be the embodiment of the country in which they live and the home in which they centre their affection.

The monster coal strike in England which began a week ago was brought to a close on Monday, the miners having decided that, the purpose for which the pits were stopped has been achieved. In all the history of labor there has never been a more senseless strike than this. The object of the men in stopping work, was to check the output of coal, to prevent the market from being glutted, and thereby to avert any possibility of a reduction of wages being made by the mine-owners. For this they have sacrificed a week's wages themselves, have thrown thousands of other workmen out of employment, and have disturbed trade, industry and traffic without any positive assurance of benefit to themselves, either in the present or the future. For they have been successful in their efforts to obtain a pledge, that there would be no reduction of wages from the mine-owners. The latter, indeed, appear to be the only people who have reason to be satisfied with the strike of the last week, since it sent up the cost of coal, and enabled them to clear off their surplus stock at abnormally high prices, at the same time relieving them from the necessity of paying the week's wage to their men.