TO THE BITTER END.

A TALE OF TWO LIVES.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER INQUEST AND ANOTHER VERDICT.

"Call the first witness!" ordered the coroner sharply.

The policeman threw open the door, and fixed his eyes upon a little knot of men and women who were whispering together in a corner of the passage.

"Mike Beaston," he called, "you're wanted! Come this way."

A tall, broad-shouldered man in the garb of a navvy detached himself from the group and came forward. The policeman solemnly beckoned him into the room, motioned him where to stand, and closed the door.

"You're name is Mike Beaston?" inquired the coroner.

"I should like ter see the man who said it warn't," was the somewhat pugnacious reply. The witness had been preparing himself for the unaccustomed ordeal through which he had to pass by frequent visits to the tap-room, with the result that without being drunk he was inclined to be quarrelsome. But a glance at the coroner sent all the Dutch courage oozing out of his heels. The latter was used to such witnesses and knew how to treat them. He had assumed an air of the severest displeasure, and the frowning gaze which he bent upon the unfortunate Mr. Beaston was particularly disconcerting to that gentleman.

"Answer simply yes or no," he remarked, sharply. "Your name is Mike Beaston?"

"Yessur," was the much-subdued answer.

"What are you by trade?"

"Shure I work at anything, I ain't 'ticular. I've been on a job at Egson's Wharves the last month sur."

"You lodge at 19 Bloomer's Place?" asked the coroner.

"For shure, yer honor," replied the witness.

"And your room was on the floor above the one occupied by the deceased?"

"Yes, sur."

"At what hour did you return home on Tuesday night the 17th?"

"'Bout arf 'our arter closing time."

The coroner looked up, mystified.

"Do you mean——"

"Beg pardon, sir. He means after the public-houses are closed," interrupted P. C. 198, significantly.

The coroner accepted the explanation, but promptly snubbed P. C. 198 for interfering, to the delight of the witness. P. C. 198 assumed a gloomy air of outraged dignity, and during the remainder of the examination did not open his lips.

"Did you go straight to bed when you got home?" the coroner went on.

"For sure I did; what else wur there for me to do in my bit o' a room? I just tumbled on the bed, and it's meself wur fast aslape in less than no time, yer honor."

"You heard no noise in the room below?"

"None, yer honor."

"Nor as you passed it on your way up?"

"No, sur."

"Not even voices?"

"Not even voices, sur. It was all as quiet as the grave."

"Until what time did you sleep?"

"It wur about half-past six when I woke up, and turned out straight away."

"Tell me what you saw on your way downstairs."

The witness, who was now quite at his ease, ran one hand slightly through his hair, and after a brief pause to collect his thoughts, commenced volubly, but disconnectedly, to explain the circumstances which led to his being connected with the case as witness. He was on his way downstairs, and was just passing the door of the room below his when he noticed a dark stain on the boards, which, when he put his foot on it, he perceived was wet. He struck a light, and stooping down, found to his horror that it was blood which was slowly trickling in a little stream from underneath the door of the room which he was passing.

"indeed, yer honor, I wur fair dazed, I wur, when I see'dit, and I didn't do nawthin' for a minute or two but look at it. Then I cum to meself, and I knocked at the door. 'Mrs. Ward,' sez I, 'Mrs. Ward, open the door, there's a good 'un;' but there warn't no answer, so I just put my foot against it, like, and open it went. I've seen some queer sights in my time," the witness continued, in an awed tone, "but that 'beer was a licker, and no gammon. I: wur awful, for shure. She wur a-lying flat on the floor with her head about a yard off the door and one of her hands clutched in the bed things, and there was a long, thin knife—a queer shape like—buried in her chest. The blood had flowed from where she wur stabbed right underneath the door. It made me feel rare and bad just to look at it. I sez, 'Missus, who's a-done it?' but, Lord, it warn't no [illegible] speaking to her. She wur dead as a d[illegible] and almost cold. Well, I just [illegible] sings out for Mrs. Judkin, [illegible] door-nail, [illegible] I beg your pardon, your h[illegible] left her, and wur a rare to do then. I [illegible] nd, be jabers— Judkin, here's rare goin[illegible] nor—but there [illegible] just sez, 'Mrs. [illegible] on,' and she peeped in [illegible] one of them there fainting fits. Then a lot of others they came in, and I off and fetched a doctor and a copper—this 'un here, [illegible] honor," the witness remarked, indicating Constable 198 by a supercilious [illegible]

asked her which was decidedly not prepossessing. Before she had been before him five minutes the coroner had decided, rightly or wrongly, that she was keeping something back. The idea naturally quickened his interest in the case.

"How long had the deceased been a lodger of yours?" he asked.

"Nearly two weeks, sir."

"What was her occupation during that time?"

"She did no work, sir, as I know on."

"She paid you regularly, then?"

"Pretty well."

"Did it never strike you that she was a different sort of person to your other lodgers, for instance?"

"Can't say as it did, particular. I didn't take much notice of her."

"She gave you the name of Mr. Ward when she came?"

"Yes."

"Had you any reason to suppose that this was not her real name?"

"No. I didn't bother my head about it. One name was as good as another to me."

"How did the deceased pass the time if she did no work?"

"I don't know. How should I? I've summut else to do besides watch my lodgers about."

"She went out occasionally, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; she went out sometimes."

"Did she ever go out at night?"

"I don't know as she did," the witness admitted. "She kept herself respectable, seemingly. She was mostways at home crying at nights."

"Did she ever have any visitors?"

"Never until the night she was murdered."

There was a slight sensation among the jurymen. M. de Feurget, too, leaned forward with nervously twitching lips and bloodshot eyes. He was evidently deeply interested.

"She had more than one visitor on that night, then?"

"She had two."

"Did they come together, or at different times?"

"At different times."

"Were they both men?"

"Yes."

"Now, tell me at what time the first one arrived."

"About half-past nine."

"Can you describe him?"

"No, I dunno as I can. He just knocked at the door o' my room; so I sez 'Come in,' but he didn't no more than just come halfway in like, and I wur a-sitting t' other end wi' a little oil lamp on the table by me, so he wur in the dark like. He just sez, 'Which is Mrs. Ward's rooms?' and I sez 'Second floor front!' and off he goes. He wur a little chap and thin—about the size of that there gent"—and she pointed to M. de Feurget, who frowned and seemed ill-pleased at the comparison.

"How long did he remain upstairs?"

"Not more than 'arf an hour, I shouldn't think."

"Did you hear their voices?"

"Yes, now and agen."

"Were they talking in a loud key? Did they seem to be disagreeing?"

"Summut of that sort. She wur a-sobbing and carrying on, and he wur terrible angry."

"You didn't overhear any part of the conversation?"

"No. I didn't listen."

"What happened after this first visitor had left?"

"Another gent came about ten minutes afterward."

"Did you see anything of him? Can you describe him?"

"No, that I can't. He wur tall and slim, and had a beautiful voice, but I couldn't see nothing of his face, he wur so muffled up. I know one thing about 'im though. He wur a gent, the proper sort, too."

"Did he ask you for Mrs. Ward?"

"Yes. I called out 'Fust door on fust landing,' and he says 'Thank'ee,' and off he goes."

"Mrs. Ward's room was the one just above yours then?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear them talking?"

"Never once; they were very quiet."

"You did not hear any quarrel or scream or the sound of any falling body?"

"Nothing."

"That seems very strange. Of the two visitors, it certainly seems as though the last must have been the murderer. And yet you say that you did not even hear an ordinary quarrel?"

"No."

The witness had suddenly become taciturn. She stood nervously drawing her shawl closer around her shoulders, and, notwithstanding the closely set lips, there was an air of irresolution about her which the coroner was quick to notice.

"[illegible] you see this visitor when he came [illegible]

"Did [illegible] downstairs?"

"No."

"Did you hear [illegible]

"No."

"Then you do[illegible] upstairs?"

"No."

"You are [illegible] are absolut[illegible]

witness remained sullenly silent, her long, bony fingers restlessly interlacing themselves with the fringe of her shawl. Her manner increased the supposition that she had something still to reveal.

"Did the woman Betsy Urane come in alone?"

"I dunno. I suppose not."

"You could hear anyone going upstairs from your room?"

"Yes."

"And you heard footsteps after the woman Urane had entered?"

"Yes."

"The footsteps of one person or of more than one?"

"There was a man and a woman."

"You will swear that you did not see the man?"

"I will."

"Did they enter the room which the woman Urane had engaged?"

"Yes."

"And did you hear either of them leave it?"

"Yes."

"Which?"

"The woman."

"When?"

"About five minutes after their arrival. I was going to bed, and I met her on the stairs, coming down."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Where was her companion?"

"She said that she had left him in the room while she went out to buy something."

"Did she return?'

"No."

"Have you seen her since?"

"No."

The proceedings were stayed while the coroner gave some whispered instructions to the constable, who immediately left the room.

"Was her companion found in the room this morning?"

"No."

"Did you hear him leave?"

"No."

"Thank you; that will do, Mr. Judkin."

Mrs. Judkin gave her shawl a final twitch and left the room with an unmistakable air of relief in her hard, expressionless face. The coroner finished making some notes, and then, laying down his pen, turned to the jury.

"I have sent for the woman Betsy Urane," he said. "I think you will all agree with me that she is likely to prove an important witness."

There was a murmur of assent which had scarcely subsided when P. C. 198 entered the room and made his way over to the coroner's chair.

"I have discovered the woman, sir," he announced, in a self-satisfied tone. "She is outside."

The coroner nodded approvingly.

"Very good," he said. "Send her in at once."

"Betsy Urane" was called and Betsy Urane appeared. She was a tall, stout woman, with a pile of yellow hair untidily arranged, coarse, unpleasant features, and a bold defiant expression. She was dressed in some cast-off finery, evidently purchased at a second-hand shop, and altogether her appearance could only be described as repulsive. The coroner drew a fresh supply of paper toward him and commenced his examination at once.

"Your name is Betsy Urane?"

"Yes, it is."

"You were at 19 Bloomer's Place, on last Tuesday night, with a man?"

"Well, and if I was?"

"Will you tell us who your companion was?"

"I would if I knowed, but I don't."

"How long had you known him before taking him there?"

"About an hour."

"Where did you meet him?"

"In the Crown and Thistle bar."

"You had never seen him before, then?"

"Never."

"Did he speak to you first, or you to him?"

The witness hesitated. The coroner was used to all types of witnesses, and made up his mind quickly how to treat this one.

"Betsy Urane," he said, sharply, "I don't know whether you have ever been a a witness at an inquest before. In case you haven't, I feel it my duty to urge upon you the necessity and wisdom of speaking the truth and of telling everything you know concerning the matter you are asked about. You are on your oath, you must remember, and you are liable to be prosecuted for perjury if you make a single false statement or attempt to evade the truth in any way. We are here to sift this matter to the bottom, and we know a good deal already," he added, significantly.

The witness was cowed, but put a bold front on it.

"There's no need for all that palavering," she said sullenly. "I should have told you all I knowed wi' out. It was like this 'ere. I was a-sitting in the Crown and Thistle, having a glass along wi' a lady friend o' mine, when a stranger chap came in, and I heard 'im ask at the bar whether they knowed where a Mrs. Judkin lived. Well, Mrs. Judkin and me being particular friends, I jumps up, and [illegible] to 'im. 'I know where [illegible] 'I has a room [illegible] round and [illegible] side. [illegible]

much good, for he had a false beard and false whiskers, and false 'air on; and I'm pretty sure he wasn't used to such clothes as 'e was wearing, which was rough 'uns. He wur rather stout, wi' a yellow beard and yellow 'air, rather a long thin face, wi' bright eyes, and 'e 'eld 'is 'ead as though he wur a gent, and 'e walked like one. He wur dressed rough enough, but 'is 'ands wur white and soft. I can't tell yer much more.

"If you could describe his clothes a little, it might help us," said the coroner suggestively.

"Well, he wore a long, dark blue overcoat, patched in a lot o' places, and wi' a hole or two in; a billycock 'at, broke at the top, and a dirty white 'andkerchief tied round 'is throat."

"You are quite sure that you have not seen him in the neighborhood before?"

"I'll take my oath I ain't."

"Very good. That will do, Mrs. Urane."

The witness, who had quite recovered her composure, nodded jauntily and swaggered out of the room. Several other witnesses, including the doctor, were examined without anything fresh coming to light. Then the weapon with which the murder had been committed was produced and handed round.

The interest in the case, which had flagged a little, was revived at once by its appearance. It was of strange, graceful shape, of the finest Damascus steel, and with an elaborately-carved handle. One by one the jurymen handled it, and each passed it on with a little murmur of admiration.

"This weapon should certainly furnish a clue," the coroner remarked, handing it back to the emissary of the police. "It must have been stolen from somewhere."

The man nodded, and thought that there was no doubt about that. Then there was a few minutes' consultation and the verdict was recorded.

"Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown."

A couple of hours later printed bills with all the description which had been obtained of the murderer hung on the doors of every police-station in London, with the ominous heading: "Wanted!" and by nightfall detectives with a copy of the bill in their pocket-books were watching every train which arrived at the great ports of the country, and every outward-bound vessel of every sort was placed under a rigid espionage. The whole machinery of Scotland Yard was set in motion to discover the man in the long blue overcoat.

CHAPTER IX.

A DESPERATE WOMAN.

It was midnight, and Lady Harrowdean sat alone in her room, leaning back in a low wicker chair and watching the fitful flames and dull embers of a slowly dying fire. She had dismissed her maid an hour ago, and since then she had been sitting there motionless and silent. At first the dancing firelight had played upon her pale, haggard cheeks, and around her black-robed form and had sparkled in her dry, lustreless eyes; but now the flames had burned themselves out, and she sat in the shadow, almost in darkness. It had been a terrible hour for her—it was so still. A task from which she shrank with a nameless horror lay before her—inevitable, yet hideous. For long she had sat there battling with herself, striving to crush her scruples, her fears, her overmastering dread—and she had not succeeded.

The great house was silent as the grave. From outside there came occasionally the noise of some passing vehicle, and at regular intervals the stillness of the night was broken by the deep, mellow booming of Westminster clock. But inside there was a tranquil silence. The servants had retired early; Lord Bernard earlier still. Lady Harrowdean alone kept watch of the night.

Midnight had come and passed. The quarters had struck three times, and the first hour of morning was nearly over. Then Lady Harrowdean stirred slightly, and woke from her apathy.

A lamp and a newspaper were on a small round table by her side. She turned the former up, adjusted the shade, and commenced to read. The paper was the Telegraph, the date the day after the inquest at the Rising Sun, and the paragraph which she was reading was—the account of that inquest.

She knew it almost by heart, but she read it over again slowly, and stopped at one place. Alway that one place! She had read it over before, and had stopped there each time. There seemed to be a sort of fascination for her in that brief disclosure by the coroner. But it was the fascination of terror!

She put the newspaper down and rose slowly to her feet. One o'clock struck while she stood there hesitating, and the sound of the hour seemed to give her courage. She crossed the room and opened an elaborately-carved massive wardrobe. After a few moments' inspection she took out a long loose dressing-gown of some dark material, and, hastily divesting herself of her gown, wrapped it around her. Then she exchanged her high-heeled shoes for soft bedroom slippers, which sank noiselessly into the heavy carpet, and, recrossing the room, took up the lamp. Something of desperation seemed to have stolen into her white, haggard face, as she made these preparations, but it was desperation mixed with a great, shrinking fear. There was something to be done which seemed to her more awful than any other task which could have been set before her—something which she would have given years of her life to have been able to have left undone. But there was no escape, no second course. It [illegible] be done before morning broke.

[illegible] knew it, and the knowledge gave her [illegible]. With swift, even footsteps she [illegible] the floor, holding the lamp over her [illegible] softly turning the handle of the [illegible] room.

(CONTINUED.)

[illegible] to make their [illegible]y. It would [illegible]mber of the [illegible] Legislature [illegible] what will [illegible]

ALASKA A SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE.

Islands Teaming with Game Birds—Streams Filled with Trout and Scenery Passing Beautiful.

Alaska is chiefly known to the general public as the home and dwelling place of the fur seal and a place where tourists go during the brief summer season to see some of the grandest scenery on this continent. To speak of Alaska is to suggest to the mind a picture of vast glaciers, rugged, snow-capped mountains and impenetrable forests—a land of desolation and silence.

How different from this mental picture is the reality can only be understood after a trip taken to this land of queer contrasts which will not only cover the ground usually traversed by tourists, but extend to the westward along the beautiful Aleutian archipelago, the numerous islands in Behring Sea and the ice-girdled shores of the Arctic Ocean. During six months of the year all this region actually teems with life. There is not an island nor rocky ledge in Behring Sea which will not hold the observer's attention for hours if he be a lover of nature, with the myriads of birds which find in the crevices of the cliffs just the place to rear their young. It is useless trying to describe the immensity of their numbers, as it is impossible to form any estimate in mere figures.

At St. George Island, one of the Pribyloy group, there is one particular place that never loses its fascination for the student of bird life. The northwest end of the island shows a perpendicular mural cliff nearly a thousand feet high, facing the sea. It is shattered and broken into millions of shelf-like projections, buttresses and pinnacles by the action of frost, and during the height of the breeding season every little crevice seems to contain a bird. There are murres and gulls, kittywakes, shags, puffins, and all the known members of the sea-bird families, screaming and chattering as if their very lives depended upon making a noise.

But if the sight of so many birds partially concealed by the rocks is inspiring, the exhibition of life and energy is overpowering when, as sometimes happens, they are disturbed. Then from the face of this great cliff, a thousand feet high and over a mile long, a cataract of whirring, screaming, shrieking birds pours down and toward the sea, filling the air with an indescribable, deafening roar, and then, rising again, they form long lines of flight, which seem like parti-colored ribbons girdling the island.

Leaving the Pribylov group and steering to the northwest some two hundred miles, the next land to be seen is St. Matthew's Island. Here, too, birds abound, and as the island is uninhabited by man, the birds are free from disturbance, except from their natural enemy, the fox, and an occasional Polar bear. Around the edges of the salt marshes found on the eastern end of St. Matthew's eider ducks are found in great numbers. The birds are but indifferent flyers, and it is one of the amusing experiences of the Arctic voyager to see the awkward efforts of the clumsy bird to get out of the way of an approaching steamer. They find it extremely difficult to rise from the water, especially if there be no wind, and an approaching vessel causes them to flap noisily along the surface for a distance, and then, as if animated by a single purpose, hundreds of them will dive, only to reappear a few moments later and struggle off again.

The lover of field sports would find a gunner's paradise along the shores of the Arctic Ocean in the summer season. Curlew, snipe, and ducks are so plentiful that one tires of shooting them. So far as known the canvas back duck, so much prized by gourmands, is not found north of the Arctic circle; but the delicious little blue and green winged teal and toothsome mallard are found everywhere along the coast and on the banks of the streams.

During the last of May, when the late Arctic spring first shows signs of opening, the natives begin to look anxiously southward for the coming of the emperor goose. This bird forms one of the principal articles of food supply to the natives, and during the moulting season the slaughter of the birds is enormous. Long nets are set across the marshes and the water fowl are driven into them by the natives. Thousands of young birds are killed in these drives by the wasteful savages, who excuse themselves by saying that they will thus prevent them being in the way the next drive.

One of the handsomest small birds found in Alaska, and one affording the best sport for shooting, is the red phalarope. It is abundant along the coast and on all the islands of Behring Sea, arriving about June 1, and is common until Oct. 20. The flight of the phalarope is very erratic, and the gunner fond of wing shooting has in this bird an excellent chance to test his skill.

Should the sportsman grow weary of tramping over the half-flooded flats and timber plains of the northern coast, which form the breeding places of the waders and snipe, and desire less monotonous gunning, let him land on any one of the Aleutian islands, and there, high up on the sides of the mountains, he will find the ptarmigan or rock grouse. This beautiful bird frequents the higher slopes along the snow line of the hills during the summer season, and to reach its haunts one must be a good climber, sound in wind and limb indeed, for the way is rough and there are no roads.

Up the steep grass-covered slopes the hunter's journey will lead him, over intercropping masses of volcanic rock and across brawling mountain streams, where the trout love to live in the deep pools, and so on until he reaches the snow. Here he may pause for a moment to gaze downward where the blue-tinged waters of the bay are softly lapping the shore. But his hunter's blood will not permit of long delay, and when the deep whirr-r-r of a passing grouse arouses him every nerve is strung, and amid some of the most beautiful scenery in America his sport begins.

But the list of Arctic birds is not limited to those which are of interest merely from a sportsman's point of view. There are others which must not be forgotten and which would be sadly missed by the true bird lover. All through the summer days the clear, sweet notes of the song sparrow are heard as it flits over the flower-strewn valleys of the Aleutian islands. The tiny and rare snow flake is found on the grassy slopes of Hall's Island and the red-throated [illegible] warblers, wrens, and robins are common visitants to this land of so-called ice and [illegible]now. Away up in the interior of Alaska [illegible]hin the Arctic circle the vicinity of our [illegible] was made home-like by the familiar [illegible] barn swallow skimming swiftly [illegible] tiny humming bird [illegible] over a cluster