TO THE BITTER END.

A Tale of Two Lives.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOTHER AND SON.

The funeral of the Earl of Harrowdean had been a great function. Statesmen of the highest rank and reputation had followed the deceased peer to the grave. Deputations from all classes of society had begged for leave to attend, and the most exalted personage in the State had herself been represented by a near kinsman. England's most eloquent and learned prelate had pronounced a eulogy over his grave which had left scarcely a dry eye among the whole of that vast assemblage, and which had made the hearts even of strangers burn and throb with indignation against the cold-blooded assassin whose midnight crime had taken such a life. As a statesman, a philanthropist, a nobleman, and a Christian, the Earl of Harrowdean was held up as an example to his order and to all men. The names of those who pressed upon the bereaved widow and her only son their respectful, heartfelt sympathy included the names of all the noblest in the land, and the wreaths which poured in from Covent Garden, from the country, and even from foreign royalty, made the air of the great cathedral heavy with the perfume, and formed such a collection of floral offerings as had rarely before been seen.

When all was over and the mortal remains of the Earl of Harrowdean had been placed under the earth, the public mind began to turn from sympathetic grief to strong resentment. The murderer must be discovered, must be hunted down, or the prestige of the English police was gone forever. All speculations as to his personal identity were put a stop to by Neillson's flight and continued absence. It could bear but one construction—guilt. Neillson was the name in every one's mouth who talked about the murder at all. Neillson was clearly and undoubtedly the murderer. Neillson must be discovered.

At first Scotland Yard had been very confident about the matter. His apprehension, it gave out, was only the matter of a few hours. He had had too brief a start to make his escape. Every railway-station in London and every port in Great Britain was watched by tried detectives, and to have shown himself at any of them must have been instantly fatal, however good his disguise. A cordan of police was drawn around the little house in Holloway where a married sister of his was known to live. His description hung in every police station and had been flashed all over England along the telegraph wires. A photograph was discovered among his effects, and in an incredibly short space of time a thousand were issued and distributed. The number of the missing notes drawn by the Earl of Harrowdean from his bank on the morning of his murder were in every bank manager's hands, and were on the bills which announced him as "wanting." Scotland Yard laughed at the idea of failure. Its plans were perfect.

But a day passed, two days, three days, and as yet nothing had been done. The day of the funeral had come and gone; and on the day after—the day of Lord Alceston's visit to his friend Thornton—a fresh placard was circulated throughout the country and hung upon every wall and boarding in London. Lord Alceston had taken his friend's advice and followed his own inclination. He had offered one thousand pounds reward for the apprehension of Philip Neillson.

This had been done on the morning of his visit to the Bethnal Green Road; in the afternoon, after his return home, he was told that his mother wished to speak to im. He went straight to her room.

She rose to greet him, a tall stately figure in her deep crape dress and widow's garb. Even her son, who was preparing for the battle which he knew was coming, could not restrain a thrill of admiration as he looked at her. She was still a beautiful woman. At forty-five—she could scarcely be less—she could still hold her own against women may years her junior.

Lord Alceston admired his mother, admired her very much indeed. With what other feelings he regarded her, however, he scarcely himself knew. Their relations had always been the relations of a society mother to a society son. They had been on friendly terms always, but then there had never been either occasion or opportunity for difference. At that moment, as she rose to meet him and they stood face to face in the dusky twilight of the darkened room, he had almost forgotton that she was his mother. The one thought in his mind was that this woman had some dim, secret knowledge—perhaps not knowledge, but at any rate suspicion—which she was refusing to share with him. It never occurred to him to suspect her of the least complicity in his father's murder, of any actual knowledge of the guilty persons; but still she knew something which might, if properly used, afford him a clue. What her reasons for witholding it might be he could not imagine—he did not try to. Simply he felt that if she did not meet him frankly and tell him all she knew she was no mother of his.

There was no attempt at any ordinary greeting between them. He stood on one end of the hearth-rug, upright and frowning, with his eyes bent searchingly upon her white marble face, as though striving to penetrate the mask which he felt convinced was the result of her unnatural calm. She stood facing him for a moment, her dark eyes meeting his without a quiver and her thin lips pressed tightly together. Then drawing her skirts around her with a slow, graceful movement, she sank backward into the easy-chair from which she had risen at his entrance.

"You sent for me, mother," he said, shortly.

"I did. Thank you for coming so quickly."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You need not; I was as anxious to come as you could have been to see me. You have made up your mind to tell me."

"I have nothing to tell you. I sent for you for another reason."

"I am sorry to hear it. As to your having nothing to tell I don't agree with you. You could tell me a great deal. You could, if you chose, help me to clear up the mystery of my father's death, of your husband's murder."

"You are mistaken," she answered; "I know nothing."

"And if you did you would not tell me?"

"And if I did I should not tell you," she answered. "I am not revengeful. I am sorry to see that you are."

He had determined that he would keep his temper, and he kept it; but it was no easy matter.

"Revengeful is scarcely the word," he answered quietly; "I want justice. But you did not send for me to discuss this. I suppose there was something else?"

"Yes, there was. They tell me that a reward has been offered for—for——"

"For Neillson's arrest," he interrupted quietly. "Yes, I have offered a thousand pounds reward."

She took up a fan and half hid her face as though to screen it from the fire.

"You are doing a foolish thing," she said. "You know that Neillson could not have had anything to do with it."

"On the contrary," he answered, "it is very clear that he had something to do with it. I will not say he was the actual murderer; perhaps not. But one thing is very certain—he knows all about it."

"If you find him he will not tell you."

He smiled incredulously. "We shall see about that. The law will have a hold upon him."

There was a brief silence. Then, with a sudden, swift movement she rose from her chair, and before he had time to make up his mind what she was about to do she was on her knees before him, her dark eyes gleaming with tears and her features convulsed with a sudden storm of passion. Her hands clasped his knees—her whole attitude was one of wild abandonment. The change amazed him. He would have started backward but she would not let him go. He stood looking down at her dishevelled face, and listening to her passionate words, with a strange sense of unreality creeping over him. Surely this could not be his mother, this weeping, suppliant woman.

"Bernard," she cried, "for God's sake listen to me! I beseech you, I warn you for your own sake, as well as mine, let it all rest. Leave it to the detectives. Don't let them find out anything if you can help it. Don't help them. Withdraw that reward. Oh, you don't know what you're doing! You can't know! Have you thought anything about it at all? You cannot think that he was murdered for that miserable money! Oh, this will kill me, will kill me!" she cried, wringing her hands.

He tried to raise her, but she would not move. She grovelled at his feet, and her agony brought the tears into his eyes. Strong in his purpose though he was, he could not help being moved.

"Mother," he cried, trying in vain to lift her, "if he was not murdered for that money what was he murdered for? Can you tell me that?"

"Yes, yes?" she cried. "I could tell you, but God knows that I would sooner die at this moment, here at your feet, than that you should know."

"There is a history, then—a secret—and you know it?"

"I know nothing; but I can guess. Bernard, listen to me. Think of your father as the whole world thinks of him; think how every paper is full of his praises; remember that sermon yesterday. They hold him up as an example to his order and to all men—honest, virtuous, loyal, a Christian, all that a man should be, almost without a fault. What should you think of the man who taught them to think otherwise, who pointed to some dark spot in his life which none had known of and which made men retract all the good which they had spoken of him, and shake their heads at the very mention of his name? What should you think of such a one?"

"Think of him! I should curse him from the bottom of my heart!" cried Lord Alceston bitterly.

"Then, Bernard, be careful lest you should be that one. You seek to penetrate the mystery of his death. You may drag into the light fragments of a past which no lips save his could rightly explain, and which unexplained might damn forever his memory in men's thoughts. Oh, listen to me! Don't turn away! Let me warn you! You are the earthly trustee of his reputation. Blameless or sinful, there is a part of his life from which the curtain must never be lifted least of all by clumsy, unthinking fingers groping in the dark."

Her voice had gathered force, had risen from a nervous, tremulous whisper to an impassioned cry, which seemed to fill the darkened room and which rang and burned in his ears with strange thrilling effect. He moved a little away from her and looked into her wild beautiful face, on which the firelight was casting strange lurid gleams, half fascinated, half frightened. Resistance, anger, entreaties, he had steeled himself against. But this was something different. There was the ring of truth in her passionate words. What did it all mean? What could it mean?

"Mother, I cannot believe this!" he cried at last in a low, hoarse tone. "You—you must be dreaming. My father's—his life has been a public one before the eyes of all men. There could have been nothing behind it. Oh, it is horrible sacrilege to hint at such things! I can never believe it."

She rose slowly to her feet and moved away till her dark figure was almost lost in the shadows of the room. His eyes followed her wonderingly. When she returned she held in her right hand a small black book.

"You are hard, Bernard," she said, "very hard to convince. See, I swear that every word I have uttered is truth. If you go on with your search, and if you succeed, you will blacken forever your father's memory. I do not say that this will be justice. I do not say that ever in his life he committed knowingly one single sin. But if you discover anything at all, you will discover but a part. The other part could only be explained by lips which are silent forever. The sin, or what will seem like sin, you will publish to the world; the justification the world can never know. As I live this is so. I swear it. I am your mother, Bernard, and I swear it."

"Then if it be so," he answered, "I must know all. Then I will judge for myself. I must share your knowledge, mother, what ever it may be."

She threw herself back in her chair with a little hysterical cry and covered her face with her hands.

"I cannot tell you," she moaned. "I can never tell you."

"You must either tell me, or—or——"

"Or you will go on with your purpose?"

"I shall."

She made no reply. For several minutes there was a deep silence in the little apartment. Then, as though rousing himself from a deep fit of abstraction, he drew himself up and pushed away the high-backed oaken chair against which he had been leaning.

"Mother," he said, "you have nothing more to say to me? I am going."

She let him reach the door before she spoke. Then her voice, weak and shaking, barely reached him, and seemed like a whisper from a long distance. He turned around at once. She was standing on the hearth-rug, leaning heavily against the mantelpiece with a ghastly look in her white face.

"You have brought this upon yourself," she said, speaking hoarsely and as though with great difficulty. "Come here—closer, closer."

He moved to her side, and in obedience to the nervous clutch of her fingers upon his coat sleeve bowed his head until it was almost on a level with her lips. Even then she looked uneasily around the room before she spoke, her dark, unnaturally brilliant eyes travelling restlessly around it and lingering suspiciously in every dark corner.

"No one can possibly overhear you, mother," he said, a little impatiently, yet awed in spite of himself by her strange manner.

Her white quivering lips almost touched his ears. They moved, slowly, at first, then quickly, and the words streamed out in a hoarse agitated whisper. They ceased and she drew back, frightened and gasping to watch their effect. His face was suddenly white and haggard, and great beads of perspiration hung upon his forehead. But blank incredulity struggled to the front, and expressed itself in a frantic, passionate tumult of words, which seemed as though it must overwhelm all opposition. She listened, and the white pitiless lips moved again. Then there was silence, deep intense silence, broken only at times by her low, spasmodic sobbing. It was the sobbing of a broken heart. Nothing could be worse than this. He knew.

CHAPTER XV.

THE REWARD WITHDRAWN.

A few minutes before midnight Stephen Thornton rang the bell of the great house in Grosvenor Square and asked to see Lord Alceston. He was shown at once into a small study on the ground-floor and in a few minutes was joined by his friend.

Thornton was not a man of keen sympathies, nor was he naturally an observant man. But when he saw Lord Alceston enter the room he rose to his feet with a quick exclamation,

"My dear man," he said, in a pitying tone, "how ghastly bad you look! You ought to be in bed. I'm sorry I came so late; I ought to have put it off until to-morrow.

Lord Alceston sank into an easy chair shook his head.

"I'm glad you did not put it off. I have been expecting you. I shouldn't have gone to bed if you hadn't come. I am anxious to hear what happened after I left you."

"I'll tell you directly. May I have a brandy-and-seltzer first, though? I've come straight from Whitechapel."

"Of course."

Lord Alceston rang the bell and the brandy-and-seltzer was brought. Thornton helped himself and passed a tumblerful across the table.

"I'll not speak a word until you have drunk that down," he said. "Why, your lips are blue, and you are shaking all over. Is anything fresh the matter?"

"No; that is, nothing of consequence. I'm not very well."

He took up the tumbler and drained it. Thornton took out a cigar case and passed it to him.

"Try one of these. You'll find a smoke will do you good," he said. "There, that's right. You look more yourself now. Do you know you quite frightened me when you first came in. And now for my news, such news as it is. It's a wonder I'm here to tell it. They took me for a detective or a spy down at the Rising Sun and wanted to mob me. Only just got off."

"Ah!" Lord Alceston made no further remark and Thornton continued:

"I haven't been altogether unsuccessful. In the first place, I know the name of the man who had her buried and who attended her funeral. Here it is—Leopold de Feurget, Chandos Street," he said, throwing a piece of paper across the table.

Lord Alceston's fingers closed upon it and he nodded. To all appearance he might have been a quite uninterested listener to Thornton's recital. But Thornton was used to studying men's faces and he knew that it was otherwise.

"Of the three men who seemed to have visited the woman on the night of her murder I have found out nothing as yet of importance. Yet what I have heard is mysterious. This murder was no common one, Alceston. Nor were those visitors common men. I have made no inquiries in this direction yet. Scotland Yard will have done all that, I dare say."

He looked across at his friend as though fearing that he would appear disappointed. But Lord Alceston did not appear disappointed.

"I have been making inquiries in another direction," Thornton continued. "From the talk which went on in the tavern I learned that there was one person with whom the murdered woman had occasionally talked and who was supposed to be to a certain extent her confidante. I went to see that woman."

"Did she tell you anything?"

Not much. But she astonished me more than I was ever astonished in my life."

"How? What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you. I found her in an attic working at her trade. A tailoress she is. She absolutely refused to answer one of my questions. I offered her money—a good deal of money—but she still refused. Just as I was leaving her she called me back.

"'Who was the young gentleman with you in——Street to-day?' she asked. I saw no reason for concealment, so I told her your name. 'Tell him,' she said, 'that if he will come to me alone I will tell him all I know about the murdered woman.' I couldn't get another word out of her, nor any explanation; so I came away. Her name and address are on that piece of paper, too—Sall Greenwood, 4 Crane's Court, Fitchett Street, Whitechapel."

Lord Alceston's fingers closed over the piece of paper, and he transferred it to his waistcoat pocket. Then he resumed his former position, his face half shaded with his hand.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Important?"

"Very."

Lord Alceston changed his position uneasily.

"What is it?" he asked.

Thornton leaned across the table and looked very grave indeed.

"I discovered something—almost by accident—which seems as though it were, indeed, a link between the two murders."

"And the link is?"

"Neillson."

Lord Alceston drew a long breath and the color came back to his cheeks.

"Tell me about it," he said.

"That's very soon done. It seemed to me that the cross-examination of Mrs. Judkin, the landlady, at the inquest, was very weak, and as I passed the house on my way back I went in and saw her."

"Yes?"

"I frightened her."

"Yes?"

"And I made her acknowledge that she had secreted something which she had found in the dead woman's room."

"Yes? What was it?"

Thornton took a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and threw it across the table.

"A fifty-pound note," he said quietly, "and the number is 201,096."

Lord Alceston repeated the number as though not appreciating its significance.

"Don't you remember," Thornton said, "that is the number of one of the notes which your father, the Earl of Harrowdean, drew from Coutts' on the morning of his murder, and which Neillson evidently decamped with?"

Lord Alceston grasped the note tightly in his fingers and sat back in his chair. For a moment or two the room seemed to be swimming round him and there was a low buzzing in his ears. Then he felt a cool hand upon his forehead and some brandy streaming down his throat. With a great effort he pulled himself together and sat up.

"I'm all right, thanks," he said weakly. "I'll sit quite still for a minute or two."

There was a short silence. Then Lord Alceston got up.

"Thornton," he said, "I asked you to help me in this, and you've done so like a brick. I'm immensely obliged to you."

"That's all right," Thornton answered. "I'm glad we've been so fortunate. We've made a good start, at any rate."

"And the start must be the finish," Lord Alceston said slowly. "Thornton, I want to drop this, drop it altogether. I want what we have found out to remain a profound secret, buried between us two.

Thornton was a man whom it was not easy to surprise, but he started and looked at his friend incredulously.

"Do you mean this?" he asked slowly.

"I do."

"You mean to say that now the clew is in your hands you want to throw it up? You don't intend to follow it?"

"I do mean that. I have the strongest reasons."

"What are they?"

"I cannot tell you, Thornton. You must take my word."

"You may be mistaken. You may have got hold of some false idea."

"I am not mistaken."

"I'm not at all sure that we shouldn't be liable to be indicted for conspiracy."

"I will take the risk of that."

Thornton thought for a moment, and then shrugged his shoulders.

"Very good; you are the most interested in this matter, of course, and you shall have your own way. But I tell you frankly that I don't understand this and I don't like it. Good-night."

He left somewhat abruptly, for he was annoyed; and he was one of those men who never take the trouble to hide their annoyance. But Lord Alceston knew that he would keep his word and he let him go without further protest.

On the following morning the papers contained a somewhat strange announcement. The reward of one thousand pounds for the discovery of Philip Neillson had been withdrawn without any explanation. The inference was obvious. The authorities no longer believed in his guilt, and though Scotland Yard was not supposed to be affected by the offering of the reward at all the search for the missing man became weak and half-hearted. The one possible clew was swept away, and the murderers of the Earl of Harrowdean and of the unknown woman in the East End were still at large. The papers had plenty to say about it, and Scotland Yard very little. The chief inspector of the latter was worried almost out of his senses. But perhaps Stephen Thornton was of all men the most perplexed.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

STILL FIGHTING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Turkey as Yet Unable to Put Down the Rebellion in Yemen.

Cable despatches say that the rebellion in Yemen against the Turkish Government has not yet been suppressed, and there is no prospect that the Turks, with their present force, will be able to put down the big revolt. This rebellion has now been in progress for a year.

People who pass through the Red Sea are almost within sight of the scenes of bloodshed and disorder which for a year have been witnessed in Yemen. Most of the fights, however, have occurred among the mountains, which are separated from the sea by a low, sandy stretch of country. Yemen is the large province belonging to Turkey in the southwestern part of Arabia. The war began as a protest of the Arab inhabitants against the outrages inflicted by Turkish officials, who zealously engage in collecting money, not only for their royal master, but also for the benefit of their own pockets. The Arabs came bitterly to hate the Turks, and, finding that, in spite of their appeals to Constantinople, the situation grew worse and worse, they rose against their oppressors.

Nearly all the population of Yemen live among the mountains, whose sides are tilled far toward their tops by means of laboriously built terraces. Almost all the farms are scattered along the mountain sides. When the inhabitants of the mountain towns arose the Turkish garrisons had no warning, and a number of them were murdered or taken prisoners. The Turks found themselves last summer in possession only of Sanaa, the capital, and Amran, a town two days' journey to the north. Both of these towns, being walled and fortified, were able to withstand the fierce onslaught of the Arab bands, which, as a rule, were armed with the most pitiful of weapons. In two months six large towns fell into the hands of the rebels and were the scene of wholesale bloodshed and pillage. Reinforcements numbering 16,000 troops were at last sent from Turkey. This force had a terrible time last fall. Cholera raged among them, and the bad quality of their rations helped to make them an easy prey to disease. When Ahmed Fehzy Pasha was finally appointed commander of the army late in the fall, the situation of the Turkish troops improved. Their new commander instilled fresh courage into them, and dragging their field guns 8,000 feet up among the mountains, they at last reached Sanaa, where the Turkish garrison had been closely besieged by the rebels. The Arabs were now dislodged from their position with great slaughter. A series of victories restored to the Turks the cities they had lost.

How does it happen that we are receiving fresh news of the hostilities in Yemen? The fact is that while the Turks have regained much of their lost ground and are back again in the cities, they have been unable as yet to conquer the hill tribes, who acknowledge no allegiance except to their beloved Iman, Ahmed ed Din. These mountain tribes are still in a state of complete revolt. They constitute the larger part of the population of Yemen, and the recapturing of the cities was easy work compared with subjecting the Kabylas to Turkish rule. The plains near the sea have remained faithful, or at least they have maintained an attitude of indifference to the rebellion.

The Turkish Governor-General of Yemen said a few weeks ago that to conquer the hill tribes was impossible with the Turkish forces at present in the country. The result is that the Turks are acting entirely on the defensive, and are simply trying to repel the assaults of the rebels until more reinforcements are sent from Constantinople. Unless these reinforcements are forthcoming there is every prospect that the Turks will be driven entirely out of the country. The Arabs have at least been able to gain an abundant supply of arms from extraneous sources, and they themselves turn out a very excellent quality of gunpowder from materials found in their own land. The war has already cost Turkey an immense sum of money, and she is paying very dearly for the extortionate taxes which she has wrung from the bold mountaineers of this far-away province.

INTERESTING ITEMS.

There are 16,000,000 cows in the United States.

An entirely new race of Indians has been discovered in Labrador.

The Druids are stated to have burnt their human sacrifices in wicker cages.

By an Act just passed in South Australia, all hotels are to be altogether closed on Sundays.

Auctioneers' fees in this country and in the United States are paid by the seller. In France and Holland the purchaser pays them.

No married person in the Middle Ages could go a distant journey until it was publicly known that he did so with the consent of his wife.

From half-a-crown to five shillings a square foot is to be charged exhibitors for space in the English section of the "World's Fair" at Chicago.

In Argentine the drivers and conductors of street cars are by law responsible for any accident which may occur; so when one happens their first care is to escape.

More gold has been obtained from Spanish America than any other part of the world.

Twenty-three duels have been fought by Rochefort, the French editor and politician. In seven of them he was wounded.

General Sir Frederick Roberts has chosen as his title Baron Roberts of Candahar, in Afghanistan, and of the city of Waterford.

Madame Sarah Bernhardt has now added literature to her varied accomplishments. She has just published a ghost story in a San Francisco journal.

It is almost incredible that the average production of novels, tales, and other works of fiction during the past year was seventeen a week, or about four for every working day of the year.

Mrs. Stanley says the reason she desires her husband to be in the House of Commons is because she thinks it would be such an advantage to have someone there who really does know something about Africa!

Old-fashion Hunting Matches have been revived in Connecticut. Fifty men, sometimes twice that number, elect captains and hunt for a day and a night, the side bagging the most game winning a game supper at the expense of the defeated hunters.

When the effects of a man who died recently in Leadville were examined it was discovered that he was under engagements to marry twelve different girls in various parts of the country. He had a photograph of each, and on the backs had written the date fixed for the marriage.

Recent experiments in Queensland have shown that mother-of-pearl shells can be made to produce pearls artificially.

There are about 30,000 locomotives in the United States—being one to every five miles of railroad—and 1,109,000 cars of all kinds, of which 27,000 are passenger coaches.

The vicinity of Palermo, Italy, has yielded three remarkable human skeletons, one in 1410, one in 1516, and the last in 1550. The first was twenty-one, the second thirty, and the third thirty-four feet in height.

M. Paderewski, the pianist, whose portrait and biography appeared in No. 154 of Spare Moments, is receiving £200 a concert in the United States, and his entrepreneurs are understood to be earning a large profit by his recitals.

Under 120 of the wills reported during last year the bequests for religious, educational, and charitable purposes in England amounted to about £1,200,000. In each of the three preceding years the amount thus bequeathed was about £1,000,000.

The Empress of Germany is in the habit of writing for a few minutes daily in her diary. Nobody ever sees the contents of the diary, not even the Emperor. At the close of the year a new diary is opened, and the old one, which has a locked clasp, is consigned to the iron safe containing her Majesty's domestic jewelry.