TO THE BITTER END.

A TALE OF TWO LIVES.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALONE WITH THE SEA-GULLS.

There was a dead silence between the two men after the recognition. Lord Alceston had stepped back a pace or two, and was leaning against a fragment of rock with a dazed look in his face. Neillson had risen slowly and with difficulty to his feet, and was standing quite still, breathing hard, and with his eyes fixed upon the wide expanse of sea. It was a strange meeting, not devoid of a certain dramatic interest. But the first sentence which passed between them was a common-place one.

"You have been ill," Lord Alceston said slowly.

The man laughed—a strange, hollow, little laugh, which, low though it was, was caught up and echoed back from the cliffs with grim effect.

"Ay, I have been ill," he answered, looking down at himself curiously.

His clothes, once black, now stained and soiled with sea water and wet sand, hung about him in loose, empty folds. There were hollows underneath his cheek bones and deep black lines under his restless, unnaturally bright eyes. A continual tremor seemed to have laid hold of his shrunken form, and his breathing came with great difficulty. His appearance was very much the appearance of a man who has risen from his death bed.

"Ay, I have been ill," he repeated, suddenly turning round and facing the other. "Why have you come here, Lord Alceston? Why could you not have let me die in peace?"

"I came, not in search of you," was the answer. "I came to go through some of my father's papers, and discovered that some one was living in secrecy in my own house. Had I not the right to know who it was? How came you here?"

"I came because it was a safe hiding-place."

"How was it that Mrs. Smith has sheltered you?"

"She is my mother. Mothers will do a great deal to save their sons from the gallows, you know. Besides, she had instructions from the countess."

Lord Clanavon shuddered.

"Your mother?" he repeated.

"Ay; she is my mother."

"But her name is Smith."

"So is mine. The earl always called me Neillson because it had been the name of his first servant and he couldn't get out of using it. That was many years ago. The name has become my own.

"Neillson," said Lord Alceston, slowly, "if I had known that it was you who were occupying that secret chamber I might have gone away and left you in peace. I say—I might; whether I should have done so or not I cannot tell. But now that we have met face to face and alone," he glanced round with a slight shudder, as though for the first time aware of the dreariness of the surroundings, "you shall tell me—about that night."

"May God seal my lips forever if I do!" cried Neillson, passionately. "Oh, be wise, Lord Clanavon! I have been a faithful servant—faithful to death," he added in a lower tone, "for I stand even now upon the threshold of death. I can say no more. You may believe me a murderer if you will. You may take me up and throw me into the sea if you will. I will not resist. I could not if I would. But I will tell you nothing."

"What if I have you arrested as my father's murderer? There is a warrant out against you."

"Then if I lived so long I should probably be hanged," he answered. "I am no scholar, my lord, but I remember two lines of Shakespeare, which struck me once:

"You may as well go stand upon the shore,
And bid the main Flood bate his usual height."

Lord Clanavon, you may as well go stand upon that rock and cry out to the waves to come no further as bid me tell you anything about that night!"

There was a force in his shaking voice which spoke of a resolution which no words could shake. Lord Alceston turned round without another word. "Let us go from this place," he said, with a shudder. "How came you to know of that passage?"

"From the earl. I never thought to be obliged to use it, though—to have to creep about the bowels of the earth like a hunted rat."

They stooped down and entered the cave. Then both started and a look of horror flashed into Neillson's white face.

"Listen!" he cried. "Listen!" His voice was well-nigh drowned in the wild roar of rushing water and its heavy splashing against the rock-hewn sides of the passage. While they stood there a torrent of green sea streaked with white came foaming out of the entrance to the secret way, and reached to their feet.

"My lord—Lord Bernard!" cried Neillson, wringing his hands. "I am a murderer now indeed. Fool, idiot, that I was to keep you here."

"What has happened—What does this mean?" he cried.

"The sea is around us. It floods the secret passage at every tide, and it has done so now. We cannot get back."

"And here—does the tide reach here?" cried Lord Alceston.

Neillson pointed to the dripping roof.

"The cave is submerged," he answered, bitterly.

Lord Alceston rushed outside. Already the long waves were rolling to within a few yards of the cave's mouth, and the salt spray was dashed in showers into his face as he stood there. He looked wildly around. The cliffs on either side stood far out into the sea, and nowhere on their smooth perpendicular sides, shining with wet, was there the least chance of ascending even a few feet. While he stood there gazing hopelessly around, a great wave came bounding out from the mouth of the cave behind and flowed around him almost to his knees. Dripping with wet and breathless, Neillson staggered out to his side, sobbing and crying.

"Oh, Lord Bernard! Lord Bernard," he cried, "I have brought you here to die. God forgive me!"

Lord Alceston was pale, and there was a sad, wistful look in his blue eyes. But there was no fear in his face. He was something of a philosopher, something of a Christian, and altogether a high-spirited young Englishman with all the noblesse of his order, and a profound contempt of fear in any shape. Death stared him in the face, but he was equal to it. Had there been hope, had it been a more doubtful manner—he might have been agitated. As it was, he was quite calm.

"It is nothing to do with you, Neillson," he said quietly. "It is a hard thing, but I'm not afraid to die. Say your prayers, man, if you know any."

A dull, lethargic composure seemed to creep over the two men. They stood knee-deep in the cruel green sea, which came curling about them, ever creeping upward, and they gazed with dull eyes over the blank sea. After a while Lord Clanavon roused himself as though with an effort.

"When the sea comes to my neck, Neillson," he said, quietly, "I am going to swim. The village is round the western promontory, I suppose?"

"Yes,' answered Neillson, in a choking voice, "but you cannot pass the breakers."

Lord Clanavon looked at the long line of foam streaked, seething waves, and sighed.

"I suppose not," he said. "But it is hard to die without making an effort. I shall try. Listen to me, Neillson. In a few hours we shall both be in another world. I do not blame you, mind, but you know that it is through you that we are in this position."

"I know it," Neillson groaned.

Lord Clanavon put his hand on his shoulder kindly. "I am not blaming you, Neillson. You fled here thoughtlessly, I know. I only mention this because I am going to ask you a favor."

"You want me to tell you——"

"Ay, I should die easier if I knew."

"Come outside, Lord Bernard. It will take some few minutes to tell you all, and if we climb that rock it will give us a little longer."

Lord Alceston, stronger by far than his companion, and a trained athlete, clambered easily to the summit of a slippery boulder. Then, stooping down, he dragged Neillson up to his side, and waited patiently while he recovered his breath.

There they stood in the dreary twilight, with the tall cliffs frowning around them, and the sea-gulls shrieking above their heads, while below the cruel, hungry sea was sweeping in, creeping higher and higher at every moment. Lord Alceston, finding his companion was shaking and trembling with the cold and agitation, passed his strong arm around him and held him up. Then he held his breath and stooped his head to hear from those white trembling lips the story of his father's murder.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DRAMA OF DEATH.

"Let me give you one more chance, Lord Bernard," said Neillson, speaking rapidly, but in a low tremulous tone. "Let me swear to you here, on the threshold of death, by every hope I have of another world, that it will be better for you if you let me carry my secret with me untold into the grave which awaits us. You will die a happier man—and so shall I."

"You have passed your word Neillson, and I claim it," was the firm, unhesitating answer. "Speak. I am waiting, the time is short."

He commenced at once. His voice was weak and broken with agitation, but in Lord Alceston's ears it drowned the wild, onward rush and backward motion of the angry waves and rang out above the screech of the dragged pebbles and the weird cries of the wheeling sea-gulls. He heard nothing but that faltering voice, pouring out an ill-told, disconnected story of which he fast gathered up the threads. It seemed in those few minutes, which he looked upon as his last on earth, almost as though his intelligence and perceptions were quickened and intensified—as though everything which he was told, every fact and incident, stood out in bolder colors, and his mind was gifted with added powers of reception and comprehension. And this is the story to which he listened:

"I was engaged by Mr. Brudnell to be your father's confidential servant just before he started for a brief Continental tour. He was then only twenty-one years old, but he was an orphan, as your lordship knows, and his own master.

"We travelled about for some time in a leisurely manner, staying longest in Paris and at a little village up among the Swiss mountains. Except for Paris, your father seemed to care very little for cities, and we spent most of our time in out of-the-way places. Chance led us to a small watering-place on the French coasts, within a short distance of Nice. My master liked the place, and we took up our quarters for some time at the hotel.

"It was here, at the casino, that your father met the Count d'Augeville. The count was of good family, and had very pleasant manners. A slight acquaintance, begun in the most casual way, grew into intimacy. Alas! Alas! Alas!

"Soon your father began to visit at the count's villa. It was a nice place, right away from the town, and finely situated close to the cliffs. The count was a widower, with two daughters. To sum him up at once, he was also a scoundrel and a gambler.

"The daughters were twins, both beautiful and wonderfully alike. From the moment of his introduction to them a change seemed to come over my master. During all the time I had been with him I had scarcely seen him speak to a woman, except when he had been obliged. Now he seemed completely bewitched. He was always there, either riding or walking on the cliffs or driving into the town with one of them.

"Cecile and Marie were their names. They were both in love with him, I am sure. Which he preferred I could not tell at that time. When he sent bouquets and presents he generally sent to both of them, and he was with one as often as the other. Of course there was a good deal of gossip about them in the town, but Miss Cecile's name was generally mentioned. Miss Marie had another admirer, to whom she was generally supposed to be engaged, and whom she afterward married.

"While this was going on in the daytime my master was losing large sums of money—being cheated out of them, in fact, every night by Count d'Augeville. Once I remember he had to go to England to raise the money for a debt owing to him. Then I ventured to remonstrate with him, and very nearly got dismissed.

"It was one night when we were at the Villa d'Augeville. The count and my master had been playing cards all the evening, and were sitting at a little round table close to the window, which was open. They had finished, when my master saw me strolling about the garden and called me in.

"'Neillson, he said, 'I wish you to listen to what I am going to say to the Count d'Augeville.'

"The count looked up, startled. My master went on quite calmly.

"'You hold me your debtor for to-night's play to the amount of twelve thousand francs, I believe?'

"'That is the amount,' the count said.

"'And you have won during the last month about one hundred and twenty thousand francs from me?'

"The count frowned. 'I don't remember the amount,' he said, haughtily. 'Gentlemen don't talk about such things afterward.

"'The hundred and twenty thousand francs I have paid," my master continued. This twelve thousand I shall not pay.'

"'And why the devil not!' cried the count, springing up.

"'Because the odds are scarcely fair. In return for the lesson which you have just given me, Count d'Augeville, permit me to give you one. Gentlemen do not play poker with marked cards.'

"As he spoke he snatched at the pack which was lying betweem them on the table and passed them to me.

"'Examine those cards, Neillson,' he said coolly. 'You observe where each one is marked at the right-hand corner?'

"I saw it at once, and told him so. Then he passed them on to the two other gentlemen, who had advanced from the other end of the room. They both looked at them and shrugged their shoulders. The fact that they were marked cards was undeniable.

"The count had been sitting quite still, pale and dazed. Even now he did not speak a word, and my master went on:

"'Under these circumstances, Count d'Augeville, I shall not remain under your roof. I have to inform you that your daughter Cecile was married to me last week at the Protestant church at Nice. I am sorry that I have not a copy of the certificate with me, but you will find the entry in the book if you care to go and look for it. I intend my wife to leave this house with me to-night.'

"Suddenly we heard the sound of trailing draperies behind, and Mlle. Marie swept up to the little group, her face white with passion, and her great eyes gleaming like fire in the moonlight."

"'It is false, *mon pere!*' she cried, falling on her knees before him. 'He is base, perfidious, a traitor. Cecile is not married to him. If she leaves this house with him to-night she will go to her ruin. You will not let her go, father, wicked man that he is. He put these cards on the table himself. I saw him do it.'

"His daughter's words seemed to give the count fresh courage. He sprang to his feet, shaking with anger.

"'You are a liar, Alceston!' he cried, passionately. 'You shall give me satisfaction for this, and at once.'

"My master stood up, quietly.

"'I shall not fight you,' he said, 'because, in the first place, you are my wife's father; and in the next, you are a common thief, unworthy to cross swords with an English nobleman.'

"How he did it I don't know, but somehow Count d'Augeville hurled a wine-glass which hit my master on the forehead. I saw the blood streaming down his forehead, but he scarcely seemed to notice it.

"'You rascal!' screamed the count. 'I am noble, too, and you shall fight me!'

"My master hesitated for a moment; then he touched his forehead lightly.

"'After this,' he said, 'I rescind my words. I am at your service when and where you please.'

"'Now; this moment!' cried the count. 'The moon is full, and it is as light as day. M. d'Armande will be your second. Victor, you will stand by me in this?' he said to the other man, whose name I have forgotten.

"My master lifted the curtain and looked outside. It was, as the count had said, as light as day.

"'As you will,' he said, carelessly. 'M. d'Armande, will you honor me?'

"M. Victor and Count d'Augeville whispered together for a moment or two; then the latter came to my master and M. d'Armande.

"'Monsieur the Count,' he said, 'has no duelling pistols at hand, but several rapiers. Has Lord Alceston any objection to fight with these weapons?'

"'Not the slightest,' my master answered. I saw a savage gleam of joy flash into Count d'Augeville's face. No doubt he thought that because my master was an Englishman he could not fence. But I knew better, and was glad of the choice. I knew that my master was the most brilliant swordsman I had ever seen. One never knows what may happen with pistols; but with swords I felt sure that my master must win.

They opened the windows and trooped down the broad, white steps on to the lawn. My master was the last to go, and as he was quitting the room Mlle. Marie laid hold of his arm and whispered something imploringly in his ear. He shook her off and turned away without a word. I shall never forget her face. If a look could have slain him he would have been a dead man.

"It was a strange scene on that little plot of grass—I don't think I ever saw a stranger one. The whole garden was heavy with the scent of flowers and creepers, mingled with the aromatic perfume from the plantation of pine trees which bordered the grounds and sloped downward to the sea. Everything was as light and clear as day, only there was the deep midnight stillness and the starlit sky. The figures on the lawn, with their drawn swords flashing coldly in the moonlight, seemed like a party of devils breaking into Paradise. The count's face was drawn and distorted with rage, and the other two seemed agitated too. Only my master stood there quite calm, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, leaning upon his sword, and with an odd smile upon his lips. I went to him and asked if he had anything to say to me. He only laughed.

"'If we fence till daylight,' he said, 'the count will never touch me. I never felt in better form.'

"I have seen one or two duels, but I never saw another one like that. The count went at my master like a fury, but he never seemed to get anywhere near him. My lord stood his ground quite carelessly, smiling all the time, as though he were a fencing-master, indulging a pupil with a little loose play and parrying every thrust with ridiculous ease. The count tried him every way—in carte, in tierce, in cercle, in octave, in seconde, but it was all the same. My lord was always his superior, and if he had chosen he could have run the count through time after time with the simplest repass; but he never once attempted it.

"They had been engaged nearly half an hour before the end came, and very unexpected it was to all of us. The count was fencing very loosely, and my lord, to vary a little, drew back, and with a powerful flangonet sent the count's sword a dozen yards into the air. The count somehow lost his balance and fell forward. My lord being used to the most correct fencing, had brought his sword into line again immediately he had concluded the flangonet and the count fell right upon it before he could draw back.

"We heard the sword enter his body, and almost at once it came out at his back dripping with blood. My lord drew it back and leaned over the count, who fell heavily backward without a single cry.

"'He has only himself to blame for this.' my lord said, wiping his sword on the grass, and for the first time turning pale. 'I would have spared him if I could.'

"I never saw any one die so quickly. He just drew himself up once, clutched at the air with his fingers, and then fell back dead. But the most awful part was to to come. While they were all gathered around him a tall, white figure glided down from the steps and across the grass toward them. Lord Bernard, death is close upon us, but even now the memory of that girl's face makes me shudder more than the thought of those hungry waves below. It was awful. She threw herself down on the grass by his side and wound her arms around him. But she knew directly that he was dead.

"They all fell back and stood silent. My lord for the first time appeared to be agitated, and, dropping his sword, covered his face with his hands. Suddenly she turned round upon him, the moonlight flooding down upon her beautiful golden hair and ivory-marble face.

"'You!' she cried. 'You! My God, was it you?'

"He moved out of the shade of the cypress tree under which he had been standing and stretched out his arms imploringly to her. But she waved him away.

"'Out of my sight!' she cried wildly. 'Away, away! Never come near me again. Never! Murderous coward, to kill an old man!'

"'Cecile,' he cried, 'It was his own fault! Ask them if it was not. You are my wife, remember.'

"She laughed; an awful laugh it was.

"'May God's curse rest forever upon me," she cried, 'if I smile into your face again, much more let you touch my fingers. Dare to come near me and I will kill you. Away! Out of my sight, monster! Wretch! If men will not punish you in this world may God do so in the next!' Then she fell on her knees again by her father's side, and my lord went away."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Pleasures Most People Miss.

At a time when Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans and other denominations are engaged in legislation for their own governance it is opportune for the census report, showing the state of religion in the country, to come to hand. Taking the figures as a whole, it is found that throughout the entire Dominion the Protestants have increased since 1881 by 319,296, while the Roman Catholics have grown by 198,583. The greatest advance among the Protestants has been made by the Methodists, and next to them stand the Presbyterians, with the Church of England closely following. But these three great churches retain their relative positions. That is to say, the proportion of their membership to the entire population is not less than it was ten years ago. The strength of the various bodies, however, has varied in the different provinces. Thus, while the Presbyterians and the Church of England have gained vastly in Ontario and the West, they have lost in the East. The Roman Catholics have increased by 12,351 in the Maritime Provinces, and the Methodists by 4,385; but the Anglicans have lost 654 and the Presbyterians 6,548. No doubt the explanation of the changes in the relative strength in the various provinces is that the Presbyterians and the Anglicans are moving west, while the Roman Catholics and the Methodists are stationary.

The most significant feature of the census calculation is that to be derived from the figures for Quebec. In this province in the year 1831 there were 140,417 Protestants and 412,714 Roman Catholics. One-fourth of the population was then Protestant. In 1851 the figures stood thus: Protestant, 143,407; Roman Catholics, 748,854. One-sixth of the population was then Protestant. In 1881 there were 180,309 Protestants and 1,170,718 Roman Catholics. Then one-seventh of the population was Protestant. In 1891 the Protestants number 196,966 and the Roman Catholics 1,291,969. Now only one-eight of the people is Protestant. In the eastern part of the provinces the Protestants are really disappearing. Take Quebec county as an example. There were 1,035 Anglicans there in 1881, but there are only 674 in the county now. In the city of Quebec the falling off is more marked. There, in 1861, there were 41,477 Roman Catholics and 9,632 Protestants. Now while the Roman Catholics have increased to 58,554, or by 17,000, the Protestants have decreased to 4,536, or by 5,100. The Church of England has lost 3,210 members in the thirty years, the Presbyterians 194, and the Methodists 595. Thus the city is gradually becoming exclusively French and Catholic. In the Eastern Townships, settled just a hundred years ago as a Protestant district, the same process is observable. Missisquoi had 7,455 Catholics in 1861 and 11,153 Protestants. Now the figures are reversed—there are 10,146 Catholics and 8,403 Protestants. The same story is told of Brome. The 2,540 Catholics of 1861 have grown to 4,988 in 1891, while the 10,192 Protestants have decreased to 9,721. It would take too many figures to go over all the counties included in the townships; but summarizing for eight counties, it appears that the 50,687 Catholics of 1861 have grown to 105,149 in 1891, while the 61,390 Protestants have increased only to 61,829, which means that they have lost.

A Russian Elixir of Life.

Every reader of Hawthorne is familiar with that weird, pathetic "twice-told" tale "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment." That curious old study, "festooned with cobwebs and besprinkled with antique dust," its skeleton in the closet, its wonderful mirror, its blackletter quartos and parchment-covered duodecimos, its portrait of a young lady in the faded magnificence of half a century ago, and the book of magic, which when once a chambermaid had lifted it "merely to brush away the dust, the skeleton had rattled in its closet the picture of the young lady had stepped upon the floor, and several ghostly faces had peeped forth from the mirror; while the brazen head of Hippocrates frowned, and said, 'Forbear!'" In such a study and with such a wonderful man as Dr. Heidegger all things are possible, and the reader finds himself following the Doctor's experiment on Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, Mr. Gascoigne, and the Widow Wycherly, with the vase of water from the famous Fountain of Youth that Ponce De Leon did not find, with an interest that despite incredulity approaches the pathetic in view of the history of medicine and elixirs of youth. It was reserved for our scientific, skeptical fin de siecle time to witness the strong hold upon the imagination this old idea of perpetual youth still has. Dr. Brown-Sequard's famous elixir of life did not lack believers in its efficacy, Kochine had its day as a cure for the dread disease consumption, and now the wonderful vitaline, the Russian elixir of youth, has followed in the long list of exploded wonders and panaceas from disease and age. The story of vitaline reads much as if it were a leaf out of the history of the Middle Ages instead of from a country only a short hour's distance from the seats of old world civilization in this age of progress and enlightenment.

As the story goes a civil engineer named Gatchkowsky went to Turkestan to work on the Transcaspian Railroad, and in the course of his travels on the border of Thibet he came upon a hitherto unknown country "where fragments of forgotten people dwelt," a people who never fell ill and never grew old. From them the Russian engineer learned the secret of the elixir, which, injected into their veins, kept them always young and impervious to disease. Returning to Russia Gatchkowsky began to manufacture this elixir, and as its ingredients were costly, and its preparation exceedingly difficult, of course those who wished to try its virtues were compelled to pay handsomely. Notwithstanding the high price of this elixir of youth, Gatchkowsky soon found his office thronged with patients, and "Grand Dukes and Ministers of State, generals of the army, millionaires, bankers, diplomats, cabmen, cooks, peasants and beggars" came to beseech the fortunate Gatchkowsky for an injection of youth into their veins. The Czar himself is said to have become a believer in its efficacy, but soon the wonderful "vitaline" failed to do all that was claimed for it. One of the patients, General Gresser, died, and another, General Baranoff, was reported as dying and the erstwhile popularity of "vitaline" suddenly dropped. Gatchkowsky was arrested and to save himself from the serious consequences of his hoax declared that his story about the immortal Asiatics was a pure invention and by chemical analysis the wonderful "vitaline" was found to be nothing more than borax and glycerine. Elixir of life, Kochine, vitaline, and possibly others might be added to the list of exploded short remedies to health and long life. Yet as long as disease and death remain in the world so long will there be remedies and specifics of the kind named, and the Dr. Heideggers will go on experimenting with those who are in search of panaceas for the inevitable and draughts from the Fountain of Youth. Truth has a deeper pathos often than fiction, and the imagination still refuses to be chained to necessity.

Sympathy for Mr. Blaine.

All America, Canada included, will sympathize with ex-Secretary Blaine in the great affliction which has fallen upon him in the death last week of his son, Emmons. This sudden bereavement, following closely the loss of his eldest son, Walker, and his daughter, Mrs. Coppinger, will be a terrible blow. Emmons Blaine was a young man of much promise. He had excellent natural abilities, and his business training had been thorough. Since the death of Walker Blaine, the second son had been more than ever the center of his father's hopes and pride, and his brilliant prospects of a useful and successful career were doubtless doubly gratifying to the statesman whose domestic life had been so heavily clouded by death and by the waywardness of his youngest boy. Circumstances make the fate of Emmons Blaine peculiarly trying to his father, inasmuch as the excitement and labors attending the Minneapolis convention, when the young man worked early and late from filial loyalty and affection, are believed to have had much to do with his untimely end. Henceforth all political striving and ambition will probably be repugnant, in a new sense, to the bereaved statesman for whose sake millions of Americans will feel the loss of Emmons Blaine as a personal sorrow.

An enterprising electrician in Indiana some time ago constructed an electrical tricycle, the description of which brought letters of inquiry from all parts of the world. The machine was worked by storage batteries carried under the seat, and which gave enough current for an eight hours' run. Whether the machine turned out to be impracticable in the form then adopted, or whether its inventor hesitated to undertake its commercial exploitation, is not recorded, but the public, at all events, has heard no more of the Indiana machine. Another inventor, however, is ambitious to be the first to claim the invention of a commercially practicable electric tricycle, and has patented a machine which relies for motive power also on the storage battery. The singular point in its construction, however, is that the storage batteries are carried around the circumference of the wheel, preferably close to the tire, and there can be any number of cells, according to the power required. It is claimed that in this way the weight of the storage batteries is more equally distributed, and in such a manner as to cause the minimum interference with the efficient running of the machine, while at the same time affording a simple and easy method of construction. The cells are connected by wires to insulated sleeves that carry the current to a motor in the axle of the wheel, which gives the motive power to the machine.