

# TO THE BITTER END.

A TALE OF TWO LIVES.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. SMITH IS WARNED.

Mrs. Doore was never quite sure afterward how she accomplished her journey that night, but accomplish it she did, and in less than an hour she stood underneath the huge castle walls. The rest of her task was easy. An ordinary farmyard, gate led over what had once been a moat into the inner courtyard, upon which the windows of the inhabited portion of the building looked. Here she paused a minute, and taking up a pebble, threw it sharply against a window directly opposite. There was a brief interval of suspense; then a light appeared, the window was opened, and a woman's head slowly appeared.

"Is there any one there?" she called out softly. "Who is it?"

Mrs. Doore drew a little nearer to the window.

"It is I—Annie!" she cried. "Let me in, mother!"

"Annie! Annie! At this time of night! What has happened? What do you want?" "Let me in and I will tell you mother!" she cried. "Quick!"

The head was withdrawn, and soon there was the sound of heavy bolts slipping back from the great oaken door, and the clanking of a chain. Then it was opened a little and Mrs. Doore slipped inside with a sigh of relief.

Her mother took up the lamp, which she had placed upon the floor, and held it high over her head while she looked anxiously into her daughter's face. Both women were as pale as death, but of the two Mrs. Smith's appearance was the more ghastly. Her gray hair was streaming down her back, and her thin, sharpened face was all tremulous with fear, while the long, bony fingers which held the lamp shook so that it seemed more than once about to slip from her grasp. She stood there with her eyes eagerly scanning her daughter's terror-stricken face and bedraggled appearance, but it was some time before she could frame a question.

"What is it, child?" she asked at length, in a low, shaking whisper. "Danger?"

"Ay, mother, I fear so, or I should not be here at this time of the night. Lord Alceston—"

"He is not coming here?" cried her mother.

"He is here—at our cottage."

"My God!"

There was a moment's silence. At first Mrs. Smith had tottered, and had seemed about to faint. Her daughter moved quickly to her side, and, supporting her with her arm, led her to a chair.

"What does he want? What has he come for?" she asked hoarsely. "Does he know?"

Her daughter shook her head.

"I cannot tell; I think not. They told him about the light, and I watched him all the time. He showed no sign."

"Perhaps he has only come to see the place," Mrs. Smith said slowly. "He has never been here."

"It may be so; but he has seen the light. He will want to go into that room. You must go and warn him at once, and get everything ready."

The old woman began to tremble again.

"What shall I do if he stays long?" she exclaimed wringing her hands. "Oh, I shall go mad; I know I shall."

"Nonsense, mother; you mustn't talk like that. Nothing will happen if you are careful. You must not let him stir from his room while Lord Clanavon is here, not for one moment."

"Come stop with me, Annie—do!"

"I will, mother, I promise you, if he stays. But I must get back now at once."

"How came he to your cottage?"

"He had lost his way on the cliffs, and Jim and the lads found him, and brought him down. It was a fortunate chance. Now, mother, I must go. Remember when he comes to-morrow you know nothing about his being close at hand."

"I shall remember. But, my child, you are wet through to the skin. Have a little brandy—or shall I make Tom light the fire and get some tea?"

"Neither, mother. I must go this minute. Look, morning is breaking already."

Far away over the restless gray sea faint streaks of light were breaking through the dark clouds, and were casting a lurid, ghastly coloring upon the waste of waters. Side by side mother and daughter stood for a minute, watching the struggling morning dawn upon the storm-tossed waves. Directly the faint gleams of light had triumphed Mrs. Doore wrapped her shawl around her and turned to go.

"Remember, mother," she said, "it is for his sake. Be careful! Send for me as soon as you like after he is come. Good-bye now."

Mrs. Smith drew herself up.

"Have no fear, Annie. Now that I am prepared the danger is less. I must go to him now and prepare him."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHAMBER IN THE TOWER: A DISCOVERY.

It was nearly mid-day when Lord Clanavon, breathless with his climb, stood before the heap of ruins which centuries before had been the ancestral home of his family. Before making any attempt to discover the inhabited portion of it he clambered up on to the outside wall and looked around him.

It was not a cheerful prospect, by any means, that he looked upon. The iron-bound cliffs, against which the gray sea came thundering in, looked cold and forbidding and lacked any form of vegetation to soften their threatening aspect. The country inland, as far as the eye could see, looked barren and uncultivated—a succession of dreary, houseless wastes. The castle itself, or rather its remains, were in complete accord with the surroundings. There was none of the picturesque of most ruins about its crumbled walls and bastions. All the sadness of decay was there without the softening hand of beauty to gloss it over. Not a sprig of ivy or even lichen had grown upon the bare stonework. The fierce sea winds had done their work, and had added desolation to destruction.

He clambered down to terra-firma, and, making his way toward the inhabited portion of the building, he saw for the first

time a tall, rather fine-looking old lady in a straight black silk dress standing in the oaken doorway. As he approached she made him a respectful inclination of the head, and looked inquiringly at him.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Smith," he said. "I suppose you are Mrs. Smith?"

"That is my name, sir," she said quietly.

"Ah, I thought so. I think we have never met before, but you have heard of me. I am Lord Clanavon."

She looked at him and sighed.

"This is easy to see that, my lord," she said. "I'm very glad and proud to see you; but it's a poor, miserable place to come to. Will your lordship come in?"

He followed her into the hall, looking curiously around him. She opened the doors of the two rooms opening out from it, and showed him them.

"These are the only habitable rooms, except the one in the south tower, my lord," she said.

He looked around him, and felt woefully disappointed. Everything was dreary and common-place, and in the last stage of decay.

"I should like to go the room in the south tower," he said. "Isn't that the part of the building which my father used to inhabit when he came here?"

"Yes, my lord. There was no other part fit for him."

"It seems strange to me that he should have come here at all," Lord Alceston remarked, strolling to the window. "I had no idea that the place was such a complete ruin."

"I think his lordship used to come here now and then when he had work to do which needed complete quiet," she said.

"There were no interruptions to be feared here—no gentlemen to call in and see him, and take up his time. The place is healthy, too, my lord, and the fishing is very good."

"So I suppose," he answered. "Fishing is not a favorite sport of mine, though, especially sea-fishing. I never have any luck. By the bye, Mrs. Smith, your face reminds me very much of somebody I've seen lately. Who is it, I wonder?"

If he had been watching her closely he could scarce have avoided noticing the quick start and the sudden movement of her hand to her side. But he had strolled to one of the other windows, and his back was turned to her. Besides, he was very little interested in the matter.

"I don't know, my lord, I'm sure," she answered slowly, "unless it may have been Mrs. Doore."

"Of course. Mrs. Doore it was," he assented. "A most respectable woman she is, too. What relation is she?"

"My daughter."

"Indeed! Ah! I can see the likeness quite plainly now," he said, turning round. "Fortunate for you, you have relations here. It must be very dull. And now suppose we have a look at the south tower."

"Certainly, my lord; there is the key," pointing to where it hung, covered with cobwebs and dust, on a rusty nail. "It has not been used since his lordship was here."

He followed her down a long passage which smelt very mouldy, across a vast room—once a banqueting hall, now partly open to the skies—up some steps, and along another corridor, in the walls of which were great clefts, through which he could see the gray sea rolling beneath. At its extremity they came to a great oaken door studded with nails.

"This is the door of the room, my lord," she said, clutching the handle, for the strong salt wind was roaring through great fissures in the roof and walls, blowing her stiff skirts around her and carrying her voice far away.

Lord Alceston looked downward, and almost at their feet saw the little cluster of fishermen's cottages where he had passed the night, looking like dolls' houses some six hundred feet below. The sight reminded him of something. He drew in his head and looked curiously at the solid door before him.

"Is there any other key to this door, Mrs. Smith?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Certainly not, my lord; you have the only one."

"Then this door has not been opened since my father was here last?"

"It has not, my lord."

He took off his hat, and held it in his hand, while the wind played havoc with his fair hair, which he kept less closely cut than most Englishmen.

"I suppose you've heard about the mysterious light which is supposed to shine from this room at nights?" he said.

"I have heard that there is some story of the sort about among the fishermen, my lord," she answered. "They are a superstitious race."

"So I suppose. But there certainly was a light burning last night which appeared to come from this tower," he said. "How do you account for it?"

She pointed to the flagstaff a little to their right.

"In very stormy weather, my lord, I have sometimes hung a lantern there as a sort of signal. I have a relation who owns coal ships at Mewton, and I promised him that I would do so."

"Was the lantern there last night?"

"It was, my lord."

He looked puzzled for a minute; then he shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"I might have known it was something of this sort," he said. "Now for this room."

He turned the key which he had already fitted into the lock, and slowly, with much effort, the door opened. The first thing he noticed was that their entrance had disturbed several cobwebs which had hung about the door and in the keyhole, and that a thick layer of dust upon the floor was pushed away by the movement of the door.

"That settles it still more conclusively," he remarked. "Proof positive, you see, that this door has not been opened for months."

He stood on the threshold and looked about him curiously, even eagerly. The room was quite a small one, hexagonal in shape, and lit by windows at each side. The furniture was much more modern than any which he had seen about the place, and there was plenty of it. A Turkish carpet covered the floor and several old prints and

one or two oil paintings hung upon the walls above the oak panels. There was nothing in the least degree extraordinary about the room, except its incongruity with the rest of the place.

"Shall you be making any stay here, my lord?" Mrs. Smith asked.

"Not I," he answered. "I am in search of some papers which belonged to my father, and which I thought might be here—that is why I came."

"The desk and bureau are just as he left them, my lord," she said softly. "I hope that you may find them. I will send you some luncheon here—such as we can get, about one o'clock. And about a bed, my lord?"

"Bed! Oh, I'm not going to sleep here, thanks," he said. "I've sent one of the men from down below there to Mewton for a fly. I expect it will be here about five."

She turned her face away that he might not see her relief. Then she left him, closing the door after her.

Lord Clanavon listened to her retreating footsteps until they died away in the distance.

"There's something very queer about that old lady," he said to himself, thoughtfully. "She wasn't in the least surprised to see me. She trembled when I spoke of that mysterious light, and yet pretended to despise it; and she couldn't conceal her delight when I told her that I wasn't going to stop. And now she reminds me of some one, too, besides Mrs. Doore. Can't think who the mischief it is, though."

He stood for a few minutes buried in silent thought. Then he moved towards the writing-table, which stood facing one of the windows, and sank into the chair directly in front of it.

There were loose papers lying about, many of them covered with memoranda in his father's handwriting. He took one of them up reverently. It consisted of notes for an article in a review. He tried another. It was a criticism of a recent remarkable novel. These were all interesting and must certainly be preserved; but they were not what he had come to look for. He put them on one side and commenced turning out the drawers.

The Earl of Harrowdean, admirable public servant though he had been, had not been by any means a methodical or orderly man in private affairs. Lord Alceston recognized the fact to his sorrow directly he commenced his search. Bills, receipts in invitations, begging letters, letters of congratulation, and political letters from the chief of his colleagues, were all bundled together in an incongruous heap. At first he had intended to sort them as he went on, but he soon desisted from the attempt and contented himself with merely glancing through each bundle of papers and then throwing them on one side.

At last he had examined every drawer but one, and that one none of the keys which he had brought with him would open.

As soon as he had assured himself of this, he looked about him for means of forcing it open, and, finding no other, he took up the poker, and with one blow fractured the woodwork of the drawer. Through the opening thus made he drew out a little bundle of letters and a photograph. Directly his fingers closed upon them he felt that his efforts were about to be rewarded.

He laid them before him without undoing the broad, black ribbon which bound them together. Was it not, after all, almost like sacrilege to look at them? It seemed to him that they were somehow sacred—sacred to the dead. If his father were living would he have them opened? And yet, on the other hand, it was no curiosity which was prompting him. He had no wish—he rather felt a shrinking from any attempt—to bring into the light of day a past which his father had left buried. But there were other things to be thought of. There was guilt to be punished and a hideous crime had gone unpunished. There was more, too; there was a vague suspicion floating in the mind of one person at least to horrible to be breathed, too horrible for him to accept ever for a single second. But a time might come when it would be better that he could of his own knowledge turn upon it the ridicule which it merited. The time might come when, as well as avenger he might have to play the part of defender, and it would be well for him to be prepared. He hesitated no longer. It seemed to him that his duty lay plain before him.

And yet his fingers trembled a little as he untied the ribbon. It seemed to him so like desecration—so like doing a mean action for expediency's sake. But it must be done—it was done. The six or seven letters, yellow with age, and emitting a faint musky perfume, lay open before him, and the photograph was in his hands.

It had been taken out of doors—probably by an amateur—for there was no photographer's name at the back, and no address. But it had been very well taken. Many years old though it must have been, the figures were still distinct and un faded, and Lord Clanavon felt a strange sensation creeping over him as he gazed at them. It was his father—he knew that in a moment; but the woman! Who was she?

His hand trembled a little as he laid it down. His mind had been full of something of this sort when he commenced his search, but the discovery was a shock to him. He told himself that he had expected it, that if he had not found it he would have been disappointed. But none the less in his heart he knew that it was a great shock. He, himself, was no Puritan, but there were some sins, taken often as a matter of course by young men in his position, to which he had never stooped. He had no very high ideals of life, and it had been, perhaps, somewhat of a selfish one—at any rate, only negatively good. But he had a strong sense of right and wrong, and a strong will to back up his knowledge; and while his life was only negatively good, it had never been positively bad. And so this photograph and those letters breathing out a faint, delicate odor of some unknown perfume seemed very terrible to him.

He looked again into the face of the woman who was standing with her hand resting upon his father's shoulder. Yes, she was beautiful; there was no denying it. There was witchery in those large full eyes and in the delicate curve of the little mouth, witchery in the fair hair which floated around her oval face and in the tall, supple figure. Whether it was the face of a good woman or no it was the face of a beautiful one.

He took up one of the letters and opened it with less reverence than he would have done had he not seen the photograph. As he read his cheeks burned with a sort of shame that he should be reading what was so evidently only meant for the eyes of one—and that one his father! It was a passion-

ate love-letter, written in French, and signed simply, "Cecile."

Two others were in the same strain, and similarly devoid of anything which could help him in the least. Toward the close of the third, however, there was a passage which he read twice over:

"And you will be here the day after tomorrow. Ah! it seems too great happiness to think of it! How I long to see you, Bernard, and how weary the days have seemed when you have been so far away, and I have been shut up here alone with *mon pere* and with Marie! There have been so many things to worry and perplex me. One of these I must tell you dearest, and you will not be cross with your Cecile—I must ask you a favor. It is about Marie, Bernard. When you first came to see us I almost fancied sometimes that it was for her you cared. You talked to her so often—much oftener than to me, and, Bernard, I think that she fancied so, too. Her whole manner has changed to me, since—you know when. I fear that she is jealous; nay I know it. She seems to think that I have stolen your love away from her. Tell me, Bernard, dearest, is it so? Did you ever care for her?"

My father is much brighter, and says that his trouble has passed away; and, Bernard, he says that it is you who have made him so much happier. I fear that you have been sending him money, and, dearest, I wish that you would not; it all goes like water. It seems as though he were born to be in difficulties; and though it is very sweet to me in one way to think of you as being our preserver, still it makes me ashamed and unhappy. You give all, and what return can you have? Only my love, and that is yours forever and ever in any case.

There was another letter—the last of the packet—written in a different handwriting and very much shorter than the others. Its first sentence was a shock to him, greater by far than any which he had yet received. Unlike the others, it was dated and bore an address:

18 RUE DE ST. PIERRE, PARIS, May 5,—8

My sister Cecile died yesterday afternoon in my arms. It was her wish, a few hours before the end came, that I should send for you, but as it was impossible that you could arrive in time, I did not trouble you. The messages she left fell upon deaf ears as you may be sure that you will never receive them from me. Had she lived a little longer she would doubtless have lived to curse your memory, as I do.

P. S.—I enclose a copy of her death certificate.

But the greatest surprise of all was to come. There remained one more paper in the little bundle, and surely the most important was last. It was a copy of a marriage certificate between Bernard Clanavon, bachelor, and Cecile Maurice, spinster, at an English church in the suburbs of Paris, thirty years ago.

Lord Clanavon sat for more than an hour deep in thought. He had unearthed a secret which greatly disturbed him and which did not throw the faintest light upon his quest. This early marriage of his father's was a thing long since passed and buried. If there had been no marriage, and if she who signed herself Cecile had been living, there might have been a clue; but as it was the whole thing was like a story finished, a page turned over forever. After so long a lapse of years what could have survived from this apparently ill-fated marriage which could in any way have cast a shadow so far into the future? As he folded the little bundle of papers up and placed them in his pocket Lord Clanavon felt that he would have given much never to have found them.

There was nothing else to examine in the room. He strolled aimlessly around, looking at the pictures and out of the windows at the fine sea view. As he turned round he trod upon a newspaper, and with a very weak curiosity he stooped and picked it up. At the first glance he knitted his brows, perplexed, and turned it over rapidly. Then he gave a quick start of surprise and a sudden flash of excitement flashed into his eyes.

"By jove!" he muttered, "there's some mystery here, after all. Eight months, Mrs. Smith tells me, this room has been locked up, and on the floor here is last week's *Times*!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## British Politics.

The Week refers to the singular state of things at present prevailing in British politics. The country is on the eve of an election which bids fair to result in the return of a Parliamentary majority pledged to Home Rule for Ireland. Meanwhile the people of a large section in one of the Provinces of Ireland openly proclaim their determination to resist to the utmost the transference of autonomy in local affairs to the island to which they belong, and even go as far as to outline—at least some of them do so—the mode of resistance which they will adopt and to speculate upon their chances of success in a civil war. Stranger still their proposed armed resistance to the rule of the majority is not only not rebuked, but is openly approved and encouraged by the present Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Perhaps the most remarkable article which has yet appeared in regard to the matter is that in a recent number of the *Spectator*, in which that organ of the Unionists, after defending Lord Salisbury's much-discussed utterance, which it regards as a warning, not as a threat or an incitement to rebellion, proceeds calmly to discuss the question as to whether, under the new arrangement, the Imperial power could be rightfully used to compel the submission of the minority to the rule of the majority in Ireland. Under a system of Home Rule, the *Spectator* does not deny the right of the Irish majority to coerce the Irish minority, if it is able to do so, but doubts the right of the British Parliament to do so. The outcome of its reasonings seems to be that, in case of the long-fought-for local autonomy being conceded to Ireland, it will become the duty of the British Parliament to stand aloof and permit the two native factions to fight the question out to the bitter end. On this reasoning, which does not lack a degree of plausibility, the British Government must have done wrong in sending a British force to aid the Canadian Government in subduing the Riel insurrection, at the time of the transference of the Hudson Bay territories to Canadian jurisdiction.

## FROM BROAD TO STANDARD GAUGE.

The Great Western Railway the Last to Make the Change in England.

The broad-gauge railway ceased to exist in Great Britain last month when the Great Western Railway was changed to standard gauge. The peculiar construction of the track, which necessitated a change in the roadbed of more than two hundred miles of track in one day, the removal of broad-gauge vehicles out of the system forever, the complete stoppage of traffic during the progress of the change and the significance attached to the work, caused the event to be surrounded with many interesting and memorable circumstances.

The part of the system that was changed is in Devonshire and Cornwall. On other parts of the system a third rail was laid many years ago, and narrow gauge or broad gauge trains were run as desired; but on the lines that extend from Exeter to Penzance, at Land's End, only broad-gauge trains were or could be run. The rails are laid on longitudinal sleepers, or sills of lumber, instead of on cross ties, and are connected together and held in place by cross ties, called transoms, every six feet. That plan of track laying, or something on the same general principle, is used by most of the street car lines. On the Great Western's lines it has been a very steady and easy track, but exceedingly costly in maintenance. The gauge was seven feet. With that construction a third rail was not possible, and because of that and the fact that the line ran to the further end of England and was in the nature of a stub line, with no connections, the broad gauge was clung to.

Two days were required for the change—Saturday for the actual change and Sunday for tightening up and adjusting the track. The line was divided into three-mile sections, and about sixty men were allotted to each section in gangs of twenty. Five thousand or more men were encamped in white tents along the track side during the preparations. The traffic was arranged so that on the few days preceding May 21 all the broad-gauge freight cars were sent out of the Devon and Cornwall divisions, and the number of passenger cars was reduced to the lowest limit. By Friday night every train had to be sent out of the division. The express flyer "Cornishman," from London to Penzance, was to make a last round trip, rounding up all traffic, driving it before it out of the territory.

The "Cornishman" left Paddington station, London, at 10:15 a. m., May 20, on the final trip. The chief officials of the Great Western Railway were aboard the train and also a number of prominent persons, including peers of the realm, as invited guests. The platform of the station was crowded, and dozens of cameras were set up or held up to take pictures of the scene. All along the line were big crowds of people to salute the train, and hundreds of torpedoes placed on the track were exploded by the train in its passage.

The work on the change had begun. Every alternative cross piece or transom, had been disconnected and a piece sawn off to make it the proper length for the standard gauge, and the remaining transoms had been partly sawn through. As the train ran down through Cornwall, where the line was double track, it met many trains hurrying eastward to get out of the territory. Toward the close of the day the vacating trains formed a long procession. Soon after reaching Penzance, and after the assurance that not a single broad-gauge train was behind it, the "Cornishman" started for London on its last trip.

The workmen began changing the track at 3 a. m. Saturday. It was a close competition of section against section, each endeavoring to finish first. The transoms were taken out, and the longitudinal sills were pried with crowbars into position at the standard gauge, tight against the sawed transoms, to which they were bolted. There was considerable difficulty on the sharp curves, but the work was done nicely, and by nightfall Saturday the whole track had been converted. On Sunday standard-gauge engines were run over the changed track at slow speed, and by their aid inequalities were discovered and defects remedied. On Monday the full traffic was resumed.

During the stoppage of traffic the mails were sent along the coast by fast steamboats belonging to the Great Western Railway Company, touching at Truro, Falmouth, Fowey, Penzance, and at or near other points reached by the railway, and where the communication was not direct the mails were carried from the steamboats to their destination, by mail coaches with fast horses. The company had made preparations for the change by building the bodies of all new cars to standard gauge, and putting them on broad-gauge trucks and wheels where desired. Now most of the work of transferring cars will be to transfer the bodies from one set of wheels to another.

## Appalling Figures.

While the annual drink bill of Canada is appallingly large, it does not represent such a degree of addiction to intoxicants as the annual rum expenditure of other countries. Great Britain is far worse in this respect than ourselves. The population of the United Kingdom, by the census of 1891, was 37,888,153, the total sum spent for beer and spirits in the United Kingdom during the year 1891 being \$706,550,000—or about \$16 per head, including women and children. There was an increase during 1891 of about \$6,000,000 in the total amount spent for intoxicants; but the friends of Temperance over there find ground for hope in the fact that there has been a decided decrease in the amount of distilled liquors used, and an increase in the quantity of beer. They are hopeful, also, because they find a decrease in the extent of violent drunkenness. The total amount spent for beer alone last year was \$78,000,000—nearly \$390,000,000. In commenting upon this the *London Times* says:

"It must be confessed that those £78,000,000 for beer are a figure that it is hard to be proud of. It means that down the national throat there flows enough to provide the country with two navies and two armies, with the civil service thrown in—or very nearly so. It means that the beer drunk in one year would pay the interest on the national debt for three; or, if funded for nine years, it would pay the whole debt and leave us with no more interest or annuities to pay."

The most hopeful sign, however, of an amelioration of the drink evil in Great Britain is the fact that heavy drinking is becoming unfashionable in that country. This may seem a faint hope to some, but it is more than that. A century or so ago heavy drinking was common in the best society.