

Eustace, the Outcast.

CHAPTER XXVI.—Continued.

DOINGS AT LOWDEN.—CAPTAIN DONALDSON AND HIS LOGGER IN PERIL.

Knowing well though that the search would be fruitless, the farmer and his friend did not take the trouble of following them as they dispersed themselves over the stack-yard, and were in the act of returning to the house when a man approached from the latter and met them. This was the messenger returned at last, from Cockburnayath, and he communicated the welcome intelligence that the officer for whom he had been dispatched was on his way to the cliffs, and would, perhaps, have already reached Lowden Shore.

'Hush,' said Eustace, 'I hear a foot-step.' They made out a man's form at length hopping from boulder to boulder, and that only a few paces from them. At the same moment the gleaming lights of the lanterns showed themselves at the top of the cliff.

'Is that you, Bowie?' exclaimed Adamson, in a loud, eager tone.

'Yes,' was the prompt reply.

'Thank goodness,' ejaculated the farmer. 'Come on quick, if you would secure the prize.' The next moment the new comer, a little active man stood close beside them, and gazed at the lanterns flickering far up the height.

'Ah,' said the farmer, 'you see you lights?'

'I am just looking at them,' returned the officer.

'Well, if you don't do what is to be done before the party carrying the lights reach the beach you'll lose a pretty round sum.'

'Indeed—how so?' said the sharp officer, pricking up his ears. 'What party is it?'

'Duncan Dunbar and his men from Eyemouth. If you don't seize the stuff before they come they'll share with you.'

'By jingo, that won't do. Where is it?'

'Here,' answered Adamson, leading the way to a conical rock, which stood close at the foot of the cliff. There was no peculiarity in the appearance of the rock to distinguish it from the hundreds that lay near. It was narrow at the top and broad at the base. The top was not pointed, but flat, as if a portion had been broken off, and the steep sides were rough and rugged.

'Climb up after me,' said the farmer, making his way to the top with an agility surprising for one of his age.

The officer followed with the utmost alacrity.

'Ralph, you come, too. We'll want your help,' added the farmer.

'All right,' responded Ralph, and ran up the side of the rock in a twinkling. He had been there frequently before, and knew the position of all its footholding projections.

'By jove, there's a hole in the heart of this rock,' said the officer, in a tone of surprise.

'I should say there is,' rejoined the farmer, 'a good large hole, too. Ralph will rig the ladder for you, and strike a light in a twinkling.'

With Adamson's help, Ralph drew from the inside of the rock a strong wooden plank, and laid it across the cavity at the top. Then seizing a rope which dangled from the centre he dropped it and disappeared, making some little noise as he went down, which indicated that the cavern was of considerable depth. The officer leant forward and peered into the black abyss, but could of course see nothing till Ralph struck a light low, and set fire to a torch, which cast a red glaring illumination over the place, and revealed a mass of kegs piled on the cavern, for a cavern it was at the bottom, though the opening at the top was so narrow. The light also discovered to the officer the means of descent in a rope ladder which was fixed to the wooden plank.

'Now, then,' said Adamson, 'down you go and put the broad arrow on the kegs. Dunbar and his men will take some time to get down the road, and if they should get here before you, are quite done—then, we'll find means to keep them out till you have completed the seizure.'

Without an instant's hesitation the officer slid his legs into the cavity, seized the rope ladder, with his hands, and in a moment was at the bottom, and hard at work placing the government mark on the barrels of gin.

'Ralph,' said the farmer, speaking down. 'Come you up the ladder and keep sentry on the plank, and if any of these fellows should offer to climb up before Bowie is done, you just topple them over.'

Ralph grinned, ran up the ladder like

out a very good thing for both him and me.

Dunbar absolutely bellowed with rage, and, leaping from the rock, stamped upon the beach in the height of his fury—his associates being equally outraged and discomfited.

In the midst of the hubbub this produced, two armed boats glided unperceived through the narrow opening in the rocks, and landed on the beach, when a band of men armed with cutlasses leaped ashore and rushed toward the group.

'Back into the shadow, Willy,' whispered Eustace. 'There is Randolph.'

Willy and he had just time to glide behind a ledge of rock when the cutter's men were amongst them. Randolph was not a little mortified to find how matters stood. He had taken the flaring lanterns to indicate the smugglers were running the cargo of the lugger, and had come in with his boats in the hope of making a capture. His mortification was great, therefore, when, instead of smugglers, he came upon a group of excise officers.

Scarcely had the disappointment been received when an officer, who had been stationed on the top of the cliff, ran down and gave information that the lugger had arrived, and made the signal.

'Did you answer it as I told you?' shouted Dunbar.

'I did,' was the answer.

'Then Donaldson will come right into the trap.'

'Say you so?' exclaimed Randolph.

'Then I must be off to capture him. The cutter is lying beyond the western point, and before we reach it and bear down upon him he will be close in shore. Come lads, and if ever you made quick rowing, do it now.'

'Ay, ay, your honor,' responded the men with a cheer, and the party re-entering the boats, pushed off for the purpose of intercepting Donaldson and seizing his ship and cargo.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NIGHT CHASE.

'Donaldson is done for,' said the farmer, as the boats of the Greyhound passed out from between the rocks into the bay.

'Of course he is,' exclaimed the supervisor. 'He'll be trapped like a rat. You've sold me clean tonight, but your lugger and its cargo are safe for seizure. Bowie, I don't think it was a handsome thing of you to take our prize from between our teeth.'

'Your prize, Dunbar?' responded the officer, 'I didn't know that you were on the ground at all. I acted on information from Mr. Adamson.'

'Yes, cursa it; it was a clever trick to save himself from confiscation, and secure a share of the stuff besides. Never mind, hang it, never mind, you've made a good thing of it here, but we've done better at Eyemouth.'

While the officers were engaged in conversation, Eustace drew Adamson aside and cautiously asked:

'Can nothing be done to warn Donaldson? Can no signal be made?'

'Not from here,' was the answer. 'If I was on the cliff I might warn him off, but long before we got there the Greyhound will be upon him.'

'Is there no boat at hand?' inquired the youth.

'Tae be sure there's a boat,' answered Willy.

'Where?' asked Eustace eagerly.

'Close by, at the back o' the Kail Pat, answered Willy, pointing to a round rock, not unlike the domestic utensil named, which lay about fifty yards from where they stood.

'Then not a moment is to be lost. Where's Ralph?'

'Here!' shouted that personage, springing up from a ledge on which he was seated.

'Will you go with us?' asked Eustace.

'Of course I will,' replied Ralph, with a grin which denoted his eager readiness to perform any service having for its object the balking of Randolph.

'Quick, then. Every instant is precious.'

They went at a quick pace towards the spot where the boat lay.

'I fear your attempt will be fruitless,' remarked Adamson.

'Perhaps not. The boats must row to the Greyhound before the latter can bear down upon the lugger, and we may be in time to warn Donaldson.'

'If you can speak him tell him to throw every keg overboard rather than allow it to be seized.' Eustace nodded assent, and leaped into the boat, where Willy and Ralph already sat at the oars.

'Tell Lullias the errand on which we have gone, and don't let her be alarmed if we don't return immediately,' cried the youth, as the boat glided into the narrow passage, towards the open sea.

'Hello!' cried the Supervisor as he came running forward, 'where are you going?'

'Give way,' exclaimed Eustace.

'I'll be hanged if you leave this,' roared Dunbar, clutching at the boat, and holding it fast.

'Now then, sir,' said Eustace, in a stern tone, 'what business have you to hinder us from going out with this boat?'

'Because you are going to warn Donaldson.'

'Have a care, sir. I have no time to dally, nor have you the slightest right to interfere with our notions.' Quit your hold or take the consequences.'

'Confound you, sir, have you the insolence to threaten me?' foamed the Supervisor. 'You have taken it upon you to interfere with me a good deal tonight, but I'll teach you to respect my authority.'

'Will you quit your hold, sir,' said Eustace.

'No, I tell you I'll be d—'

'Doocket!' exclaimed Willy, as having quietly put the end of his oar over the stern, he gave it a vigorous push, which propelled the boat forward with a sudden motion. The supervisor lost his balance, and tumbled headlong into the water. He uttered a tremendous oath as he fell which was suddenly quenched as he disappeared beneath the surface. Had help not been at hand he would have had great difficulty in climbing up the slippery rock, but several hands were outstretched to assist him, and thus aided, he was dragged forth gasping for breath and choking as much with rage as sea water. For some moments he could do nothing but bellow like a bull, and shake himself like a drenched mastiff, belching forth oaths as he could gather power to do it, and acting altogether as if a paroxysm of madness had seized him.

Eustace and the others in the boat did not wait to see this exhibition, but by the time the Supervisor had been fished out of the sea they were through the narrow channel, and out into the open bay.

From his seat in the stern Eustace could dimly discern through the darkness the two boats belonging to the cutter making towards the western point, behind which the Greyhound was concealed. They had still a considerable distance to row before rounding the outlying ledge; and as they, on the other hand, were making direct for the point where the lugger might be expected to be approaching, the hope was entertained that they would reach the Delight in time to give the captain warning.

Ralph and Willy rowed with all the energy which an intense desire to succeed in their object could call up, and Eustace steered for the dark seaward point of St. Ab's, beyond which he conjectured the lugger to be.

Another quarter of an hour of silence ensued, during which they rowed with unabated vehemence. Then Ralph suddenly exclaimed:

'Yonder's the cutter!'

'And there is the lugger!' cried Eustace almost at the same moment. 'By jove, we'll catch her in time. Ten minutes more and you'll row us alongside.'

In less than the time named they were within hail of the Delight, and had the satisfaction of seeing Captain Donaldson bending over the side watching and waiting for them.

'Hush, Donaldson, not a word,' remarked Eustace in the same low voice.

'Ha! Eustace,' said the smuggler.

'The same. Heave over tackle for hoisting the boat. Quick. For God's sake; don't lose a moment.'

Donaldson asked no further explanation, but sent over the tackle, and the boat being run close in, she was securely fastened and drawn up the side with the three in her.

'What's up?' asked the Captain, as they sprang upon deck.

'Look,' said Eustace, grasping his arm, and starting forward. 'Yonder is the Greyhound.'

'The deuce!—where?' said the startled captain.

'Just emerging from the shadow of the cliffs.'

'By jove, and it is,' exclaimed Donaldson, and his eye lighted on the cutter.

And without uttering another word, he sprang aft and gave orders to turn. Then he returned to where Eustace stood.

'What's the meaning of this?' he asked.

'Why was I signalled to come on when the danger was ahead?'

'There's treachery afoot,' was the answer. 'The signal you refer to was made by an excise officer.'

'By all the fiends, I thought there was something awkward in it. But what's to be done? We can't dodge him. Shall we fight him or run for it?'

'We are here to stand by you in any course you take,' returned Eustace. 'All three of us are ready to oppose him to the last. Fight or fly, we are thoroughly at your service.'

Donaldson walked aft, and took a long, steady gaze at the cutter, which was now coming on under a crowd of sail. Then he looked at the position of his own ship and stood silent for several moments.

'Look you, Eustace,' he at length said, 'here is the state of the case. We can keep out of his clutches for an hour or two, but no longer, with our deep lading. If the Delight had a clean hold I would lead him a long stern chase; but low as she now lies in the water, we cannot hope to keep the head long.'

'Oh, by-the-bye,' exclaimed Eustace, suddenly recollecting himself, 'Mr. Adamson charged me to tell you to throw the cargo overboard rather than allow him to seize it.'

'Did he! That greatly relieves me. Well we have a few minutes for decision

yet, so give me the news. What treachery is afoot, and how far does it reach?'

'It reaches to everything,' replied Eustace. 'Jessop and Adamson are both betrayed, and by Donaldson.'

'By Donaldson?' shouted the Captain with a violent start. 'Has he turned traitor?'

Eustace answered by putting Donaldson in possession of all that had transpired during the last few days. The captain listened in perfect silence, but his gleaming eye and fast-coming breath attested his intense interest in the narrative.

Before he uttered a word he turned from Eustace again, and looked keenly at the enemy in their wake. Short as the interval had been from his last survey, the distance between the cutter and the lugger was perceptibly shorter.

'Now,' he said, 'do you suppose that Randolph knows of your presence here?'

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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