

Eustace, the Outcast.

CHAPTER XXII.

RALPH DUNSMORE SPRINGS THE MINE.

Mr. Grahame was closeted with his lawyer in the library at Bengarry, and Randolph and his mother sat together in the parlor holding a private and confidential conversation. The subject which occupied the attention of the two in the library was the construction of the marriage settlement—that which formed the topic of conversation between the pair in the parlor was the marriage itself and certain matters concerned therewith. Randolph was gloomy and ill at ease. His dark soul was haunted by its last and worst crime—the murder of Jessie—for he never dreamed but that she and her child had sunk with the boat in which he had set them adrift. The foul deed he had managed to do without being seen by human eyes, and had Jessie not been providentially rescued in the way we have narrated, the murder would have been utterly concealed. Randolph imagined that Jessie and her child lay at rest forever at the bottom of the sea, and he was fully convinced that the crime had been committed with perfect secrecy, and would never be detected. Yet was he troubled on account of it, for he had loved Jessie as well as a selfish nature like his could love, and he had murdered her not from choice but necessity—to save himself from bigamy. While Jessie lived he durst not marry Mary Maxwell, and not to marry her was to defeat those schemes of his mother and himself, to carry out which they had already done so wickedly. He had not hesitated to confide in his mother's disimulation to this marriage, and since Eustace was also deemed dead, he and she thought they might induce Mr. Grahame to waive it for the present. But at the first hint at such a thing he flew into a terrible rage, and swore to leave Bengarry to a charitable institution if his remaining son dared to thwart his darling project. So there was nothing for it but acquiescence, for of course every sacrifice must be made rather than the estate should be lost. Then it was that Randolph resolved to destroy Jessie and her child, and contract the marriage which was essential to his acquisition of Bengarry, and having, as he supposed, accomplished this, he had come to Bengarry to lead the bride selected for him to the altar.

His thought and feelings were anything but those befitting a bridegroom. He could not shake off the recollection of the awful deed he had done, nor get rid of the last look of the horrified despairing frame of Jessie, when the conviction of his intentions and her fate flashed upon him. He could not get rid of the recollection, and he chafed and fumed because he could not. It was not the enormity of the crime that disturbed him; it was not remorse for his cruelty or apprehension of his guilt that gnawed in his bosom—it was rather a savage, wrathful feeling at the thought that he had been compelled to do the thing against his inclination, and that he was, further, to marry a woman whom he would rather not have seen. From these reasons, therefore he was on this particular occasion in anything but an amiable manner.

Mrs. Grahame, on the contrary, was in the highest of spirits. She, of course, had never heard of Randolph's secret marriage, and was consequently ignorant of the crime he had committed. Her grand scheme had now come to a triumphant issue. Randolph would inherit Bengarry, and that was reaching the summit of her ambition. She was troubled by no unpropitious feelings at the thought of the means they had both taken to secure this desired end. The cruelty practised against Eustace did not for a moment mar the complacency of her satisfaction. Her vain, ambitious soul was filled with but one feeling—that of unqualified delight.

"Pshaw, Randolph," she went on, "why do you fret so much about the matter? People in your sphere always marry for convenience. You may not care much for Mary Maxwell, but then think of the estate you get with her. Doesn't that make up for all the rest—that and the honor of an alliance with such a great family."

"Honor," returned Randolph, with a sneer. "Oh yes, I ought to feel it a great honor, I, the grandson of a shoemaker, to—"

"Hush, Randolph," interrupted his mother; "for heaven's sake hush! Why allude to that when we can bury it in oblivion? The only one who could have revealed that circumstance has gone—never, I hope to return."

"Oh, I am certain he'll not return," said Randolph. "I took effective means to prevent it."

"Was he killed in action?" "No, he died of starvation!" "Oh, Randolph—where?" "On a desert island, where I left him for that very purpose."

"Good Heaven!" "Don't waste your pity on him. If I had not done so he would have been back long ere this, and cut out our scheme completely. But, as I say, I prevented that, and he is now food for fishes, or his bones are bleaching on the rocky island."

"Poor Ralph," sighed Mrs. Grahame. "He brought it all on himself. Do smooth your brow, Randolph, and look pleasant. Remember what depends on your ready acquiescence."

"Oh, I have made up my mind for it now and shall go through with it."

"That is right, my dear boy. It will be a proud day to me when I see you settled on the estate."

"Which won't be just yet," rejoined Randolph. "I cannot quit the revenue service the moment I have entered it. Besides, I want to hunt down those confounded smugglers, especially that fellow Donaldson, who balked me so completely the other week. He will land on the coast soon with another cargo, and I mean to capture him. Halloo! who is that my father is talking to in the hall?"

"To John, the gardener, I dare say—about the flowers next week."

"Confound it, that is Dunsmore's voice," said Randolph, who had been intently listening. "What brings him here?" "He presumes on his relationship to the first Mrs. Grahame," returned his mother. "But I am sure he must see that we don't want him."

"Curse him, I hate him," hissed Randolph with a vindictive scowl. "He balked me at the very moment of my triumph, and was the witness of my mortification."

"Never mind," returned his mother, soothingly. "You can afford to bear his enmity now. He will not see you mortified a second time."

Randolph was about to rejoin when the door opened, and Mr. Grahame entered, followed by Captain Dunsmore. The greeting between the latter and Randolph was of the coolest kind—almost insulting on the part of Randolph, and undisguisedly disdainful on the part of Dunsmore. Mrs. Grahame received him with a very haughty bend of the head, which he as haughtily returned, and not a word passed betwixt them.

"Dunsmore has come to say that he can't be present at the marriage," observed Mr. Grahame. "He is called away to join his new ship."

"Indeed—that is a disappointment," said Mrs. Grahame, with freezing politeness. "Of course it is," added her husband, in a tone of sincerity. "We shall have so few of our family relations present that I counted much on Dunsmore being there. You couldn't delay your departure for a few days I suppose?"

"Impossible," answered Dunsmore. "My presence in Portsmouth is indispensable."

"Well, well, if it can't be helped it can't be helped—that is if the call of duty is really absolute."

"Oh, pray, don't plead for Captain Dunsmore's presence," said Randolph snappishly. "I have no doubt if his inclinations led him to do this, he could find a way of making his duty give way to it. Had it been his joinee, Eustace, we should have heard nothing of his being called away."

"Whatever might be said as to the questionable taste of your remark, I shall not controvert it," rejoined Dunsmore, coldly. "Those whom I admire, honor and love, I generally do my utmost to befriend."

"Ah, and of course you neither admire honor, nor love me," sneered Randolph. "Fortunately I can exist perfectly without your favor, and can afford to despise your hospitality."

"Well, there; don't nag in that way," exclaimed Mr. Grahame. "I know well enough Dunsmore, that you take the part of Eustace. But you cannot deny that Randolph has proved himself much more obedient. Heaven knows I would not have cut Eustace off but for his own self-willed madness. If Randolph had done the same thing he would have met the same fate. But he knew what was due to my authority and the honor of the family. This you cannot but admit."

"Mr. Grahame," returned Dunsmore, his brow flushing with the warmth of his feeling, "if it could serve any useful purpose, I would freely express my opinion of the character and conduct of your two sons; but, inasmuch as Eustace, alas! is no more, it would be idle to recall the past. I cannot, however, allow even you to cast an imputation on his memory. While retaining, therefore, the utterance of my thoughts of your treatment of him and of the monstrous wrongs so intemperately inflicted on him by one not far off, I must tell you that I think in the matter of his marriage he acted a faithful and honorable part. He was true to himself, and to the claims of truth and love."

"But he disobeyed me," rejoined his listener angrily. "Yes, Mr. Grahame, but you will have to consider if your law and God's law were in harmony on the point before you utterly condemn Eustace."

"Now, I won't hear you. I won't hear you," cried Mr. Grahame petulantly, and with the air of a man who dreaded the stings of a guilty conscience. "As you say the poor boy's death makes such a discussion useless. We had better change the subject."

"No," said Dunsmore. "I had better take my leave. I have only one other matter to speak about, and it is connected with this painful matter. I have been making endeavors to discover the girl whom Eustace married, but have not succeeded. She has left the neighborhood, and nobody seems to know where she has gone. Now, the poor thing must be in great poverty and distress, and for the sake of my poor dear friend, I am anxious to assist her. Can you give me no information as to her whereabouts?"

"Me?" cried Mr. Grahame, loftily. "Certainly not."

"Ridiculous," said Mrs. Grahame, with a magnificent toss of the head. "Do you know anything of her?" asked Dunsmore, addressing Randolph, with indignant sternness. "I never answer impertinent questions," replied Randolph, in a tone and with an air of vulgar insolence. "You refuse to reply?" "Yes, I flatly refuse."

"Then look you. I am thoroughly in earnest regarding this, and am determined to sift the matter to the bottom. You, I know, are capable of anything, and you may have found it to your interest to remove her. But if you have—she has suffered the smallest wrong of your hand, I will leave no stone unturned to bring you to justice."

"Why, what on earth would he remove the girl for?" exclaimed Mr. Grahame. "There may be a very cogent reason indeed," said Dunsmore, significantly. "Suppose the girl is to become a mother, and suppose the child should be a son—that son is the heir of Bengarry."

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Mr. Grahame. "I have made a settlement which effectually prevents that and secures the estate to Randolph. Your suspicions, Dunsmore, are groundless. He had no reason whatever to remove the girl."

"He does not disclaim the charge," said the captain. "But he will, adding Mr. Grahame. 'You don't know anything of that person, Randolph?'"

"No, he doesn't!" said a strange voice. "He gazel round with one simultaneous start, and beheld Ralph, the gamekeeper, quietly standing within the room, in front of a large folding screen which stood near the door."

On Randolph and his mother the apparition produced all the effect of an electric shock. Terror and dismay paralyzed both of them, and while Mrs. Grahame could only grasp the sides of her chair and gaze at Ralph in speechless consternation, Randolph's countenance turned ghastly pale with the extremity of horror. This continued but for a moment; for immediately the conviction flashed across his mind that this was no ghost, but Ralph himself in veritable flesh and blood—that he had been rescued from the desert island, and had come to reveal to his father the secret which he possessed. Little did he suspect all he had come to reveal.

As Ralph was dressed in clothes similar to those he was in the habit of wearing at Bengarry, Mr. Grahame knew him at once, and the first moment of his astonishment over, approached him with a gesture of indignant anger. "So, you drunken, dissipated vagabond, you have dared to come here again after deserting my service. Perhaps you have had the audacity to come to seek your wages. Be off this instant or I will have you lodged in jail!"

"No you won't," rejoined Ralph, with the utmost nonchalance, while with his kindling eyes he flashed glances alternately toward Mr. Grahame and Randolph. Here Captain Dunsmore stepped up to Ralph with a curious scrutinizing glance. "Surely I should know your face," he observed.

"I should think you should, Captain," answered Ralph. "You have seen me on board the Falcon."

"Exactly, you were one of the crew." "No I wasn't—asking your pardon for contradicting you. I was betrayed into the hands of the press gang by that viper there, and sent to the vessel, but I didn't ever come to look on myself as one of the crew."

"How dare you stand in my presence and tell a parcel of lies?" cried Mr. Grahame, in violent indignation. "You ran away from my service."

"Now, you just stop a bit," interrupted Ralph coolly. "Don't get into a passion, for that won't do no good. I ran away, you say. I no more ran away than Mr. Eustace did, for the same band that entrapped him, entrapped me, and they were got to do it by the same traitor—"

There he stands. Just look at his white gills. Oh, don't he know what I've come here for—to take the sting out of him and mar all his scoundrel plans."

They did look at Randolph, and were amazed at the picture represented of hopeless dismay, mingled with baffled wrath and rage. He looked just as he looked in the state-room of the Hector when his villainy was exposed before Captain Brentwood.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Grahame, struck beyond measure by Randolph's appearance. "I suspect it means some further rascality," observed Dunsmore. "This man has come here to reveal more of his infamous character."

"Right you are, Captain Dunsmore," said Ralph. "I've come to bring to light the blackest heart that ever beat below a row of ribs, and tumble down the prettiest plans that ever hellish nature hatched. But, first and foremost, I've got to greet this sister of mine that I haven't seen for some time."

And with a sardonic grin the remorseless Ralph approached Mrs. Grahame, who still sat paralyzed with consternation and dismay. "Well, Nell, how goes it old lass?" he went on, his grey eyes emitting flashes of triumph and malignant satisfaction at every word. "Hope you've been enjoying yourself all the time I was away, thinking what a nice, pleasant fate you consigned me to?"

"What does all this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Grahame, utterly bewildered. "Mrs. Grahame, I look to you for explanation. Why does this man, who was my gamekeeper, address you so familiarly; and why are you so embarrassed and even terrified by his presence? Why don't you speak?"

"Yes, you don't you speak, Nell!" added Ralph, with another malicious grin. "Fact is," added the gamekeeper, "you'll wait a long time afore she answers your questions; and as I have a good deal to do, and can't afford to wait, I'll answer them for her. First and foremost, that is my sister."

"Your sister?" echoed Mr. Grahame, as he involuntarily went back a pace or two. "My bonny feeble sister, as you thought was come of a genteel family, but is only the daughter of a drunken shoemaker, who died in the workhouse. She gave us all the alip for some time, and managed to hoodwink you into marrying her, but I found her out by chance, and in course she had to do something for me, more particularly as she was afraid I would blab."

RS! OIL

Tailor, Tailor

CIGARS. DOMESTIC

RAILWAY CO. LATIONS.

SECTION

MANUFACTURER OF FIRST CLASS CARRIAES

WALL PAPER.

Latest Designs

UTLER'S

AYER'S Hair Vigor

DR. G. A. BAYNES, Editor

Wheeler's Tissue Phosphates

Strong Adjectives

The Ten Commandments

Husband and Wife

Meteorological Report—Month of July, 1884.

GODERICH BOILER WORKS

Wanted to be Known