

Eustace, the Outcast.

CHAPTER XVI—(Continued.)

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Willy drew his handkerchief from his neck and waved it, as answer to the signals of the solitary occupant of that lonely island. No further communication could be made, for the broad reef lay between them, and at that distance they could not make out anything further than the form they saw was that of a man. Of what country or color he was they could not determine, but the presence of even one human being there was an indication that food of some kind was to be obtained on the island. This made it all the more desirable that they should gain a landing. It was doubly bitter to their hearts to find that in spite of every effort they made their boat was being swept slowly out to sea.

'No use, no use,' groaned Eustace. 'That cruel current dooms us to perish. See, we have passed the island now and are running to the south.'

Jack and Willy looked round, and, seeing that this was so, ceased their useless exertions, and sat down panting in despair.

Oh, it was bitter, bitter to be thus at the very point of rescue and cast back again into the boundless deep. To the south, where they were going, the limitless sea stretched on and on for hundreds of miles, and death was inevitable there. In wistful sadness they looked back to the island they were thus leaving, and the sinking sun shone brightly forth, crowning the rugged heights of the island with glory. The man had quitted the eminence on which he had stood, and was running along the crest of the height towards the round southern point which was nearest them. They could now see his figure clearly defined against the golden sky, and to their amazement perceived that he wore the dress of a British sailor.

He approached to the very edge of the reef and made signs to them to continue their efforts. The water at this point was not so broken nor the sound of the breakers so loud, and they heard his voice, borne to them across the foam, uttering the joyful words—

'The tide is turning!'

'By Harry, and so it is!' exclaimed Jack, jumping up. 'See, Mr. Grahame, the current is beginning to set the other way.'

This was indeed the case, and now, instead of being carried away from the island, they were floated back to it, and would soon be among the white and broken water.

'Thank God,' said Eustace, leaving a long, grateful sigh.

'Ay, ay, sir,' exclaimed Jack, cheerily, 'we'll go ashore yet, if the bottom of our little craft don't be stove in by some of these ugly bits of rock.'

Such a catastrophe as this was by no means unlikely, for on all sides of them the black points of sharp ledges showed themselves amid the foam, and a bump on one of these might knock in the timbers. The keen eye of Eustace was exercised in the effort to avoid such a contingency, and though a momentary craze, accompanied by a sharp grating, occasionally took place, the boat kept a steady course for the shore, on the furthest outlying ledge of which stood the sailor awaiting their landing, though all three in the boat were at the moment too much engaged to notice him particularly. Close under the ledge on which he stood was a space of smooth water and Eustace was doing his best to guide the boat to it, as to a good berth. In this he succeeded, and she at length ran into the little haven and was brought to rest.

'My eye, but here's a go,' exclaimed a voice (right above them, and looking up they beheld the seaman hanging over the shelf staring at them with amazement.

'The moment Willy caught sight of him his eyes likewise opened very wide, and he could only stand in motionless astonishment and return the stare. The surprise of Eustace in beholding him was also excessive.

'Dear me! Ralph, is it you?' he ejaculated.

'The very identical,' responded Ralph. 'Ain't this a queer place for us to meet in?'

'How have you come here? Is the Falcon wrecked?'

'Not so far as I know, and as for being here I have your precious half brother to thank for that—hang him.'

'Randolph left you in this desolate place?'

'Ay, to starve. He knew it wouldn't be for his good if I got to England, and so took this method of getting rid of me. But this ain't the time to overhaul our logs, as the sailors say. You seem to have had hard times yourselves and look both tired and hungry.'

'We are, indeed. We have had a dreadful two days of it—hard work, intense anxiety, and neither sleep nor food. Can we have anything to eat in this desolate place?'

'Precious little,' answered Ralph. 'It is three days since I was put ashore here, and in that time I have come to know

the boat and the worst of it. A few shell fish scattered over the rocks about the edge of the water and some roots in a hollow about the middle of the island is about the whole that can be had in the way of grub. There was no water when I first landed, but the thunderstorm has filled the holes. Come in and I'll help you to find your first meal.'

Gladly the three adventurers got out of the boat, and having securely fastened it, they followed Ralph over the rocks. They had gone but a few yards, however, when all three sank fairly prostrated. The incessant toil they had endured and the want of food and sleep had utterly exhausted them, and no sooner had they begun to climb over the rough and ragged masses of rock than they at once succumbed.

Ralph looked on them for a moment lying helpless before him, and his novice tender nature was moved by the condition.

'Look, you,' he said 'you can't lie there to sleep. The hollow where the roots are is the place for a snooze. I'll bring you a few shell fish and a drop of water in my milkin cup, and after you take that you must try to crawl to the place.'

They were too powerless to make any reply to the gamekeeper's suggestion, and he walked away on his friendly errand. He was gone away half an hour, and when he returned they had all sunk into a state of drowsy stupor, from which, in a rough fashion, but with real kindness, he awoke them and made partake of such food as he had brought. They ate ravenously, and greedily drank the water from his cup, and having so eaten and drunk, they were sufficiently revived to proceed, slowly and painfully, over the rocks to the centre of the island. This they reached at last, and found the spot Ralph had told them of to be a large hollow basin about an acre in extent. Here sand had lodged to the depth of several feet, and in this sand a species of gorse or bent had grown, sending down long thick roots into the soft bed. These roots were sweet tasted and served along with the shell fish to mitigate their hunger.

The long grassy gorse, with the sand beach, also formed a soft couch to lie on, and as they were here sheltered from the freshening breeze of night, they laid themselves out in a delicious repose of restfulness, and in a few moments all three of them had sunk into a deep and dreamless state of slumber.

Out of this sleep Eustace was the first to come, and that not till noon of the following day. The sun shone brightly in the soft blue sky, the air was warm and pleasant, and innumerable grasshoppers jumped and chirruped among the coarse grass. Eustace rose up perfectly refreshed. The long unbroken slumber had fully recruited his youthful, vigorous frame, and the calm, cheery brightness of the day sent a sort of elasticity into his spirits. Willy and Joe lay fast asleep still, but Ralph loured upon his elbow a little distance off, listlessly chewing a root which he had just pulled out of the sand. Eustace walked forward and joined him.

'Good morning, Ralph,' he remarked. 'We had not strength last night to thank you for your invaluable services. But for you we would have come badly on.'

'You'd have been sleeping your last sleep by this time,' was Ralph's blunt rejoinder. 'But I'm glad you've got up afore the other two, for I've got something to say to you, Mr. Eustace.'

'All right, my friend—say on.'

'It's a thousand chances,' returned Ralph, 'if we should be picked off this here island. It lies a long way out of the track of ships, and ne'er a one comes near it unless driven by a storm. This may not happen for months, or may be years, and by that time our bones may be bleaching on the black rocks. Howsomer, live or die, I've something to tell you that I don't want the other chaps to know. Look ye here.'

And as he spoke Ralph whipt off his jacket and shirt and exhibited to Eustace his back marked all across by black and blue stripes.

'Good God, what does that mean?' ejaculated the youth in horror. 'Were you—'

'Oh, out with it!' said Ralph, with bitter ferocity. 'This back of mine tells the tale well enough. Yes, I was flogged—lashed like a dog—by his orders.'

'Monstrous!' exclaimed Eustace. 'How did the crew allow such awful cruelty?'

'He was cunning enough fer that,' growled Ralph. 'I found a bottle of brandy lying in my way, and, curse him, I think he put it there to get a hold of me, for he knows my weakness. Well, I got drunk, and for doing so he had me flogged, as you see. The moment I was tugged off the gun I sprang on him and would have crushed his life out if the men hadn't pulled me off. For that I was set ashore here and left to die—sure way as he thought, to get rid of me and my power to ruin him. Things do look running in his favor all of a heap, for here you are, too, and if we both perish he gets everything he has schemed for. Curse him again, say I. But we ain't dead yet, and we may get off this here island and back to Scotland. If I do, I'll murder him.'

'I tell you,' replied Ralph, as he resumed his garments, 'his mother took

your father in a pretty way. Bless you, he had no notion of what kind of a family she had come of. I am her brother!'

'My stepmother's brother!' exclaimed Eustace. 'Impossible!'

'Fact; our father was a shoemaker, fond o' drink like me, and he died a pauper in the poor house. Nell thought she had given all her friends the slip when she became mistress of Bengarry, but I happened to find her own, and now you know why she and her precious son wanted me out of the way—lest I should blab, in which case they know your father would never settle the estate on Randolph—the grandson of a shoemaker.'

'This is indeed news to me,' said Eustace. 'They have both been playing a deep game—and to all appearance they have won it.'

'Perhaps not,' replied Ralph. 'You knew the old proverb, Mr. Eustace—'There's many a slip between the cup and the lip, and for all the bad luck in which we are at present we may—Eh! what? Hurrah—a sail!'

Ralph leapt to his feet and wildly waved his arm toward the sea. Eustace eagerly turned his gaze in the same direction, and with a thrill of joy saw a vessel in the distance bearing towards the island with all her sails set. In his frantic joy Ralph shouted like a madman and the noise awoke Willy and Joe who were made glad likewise with the welcome intelligence that the hope of deliverance was at hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESCUE—ON BOARD A SMUGGLER—A CRITICAL POSITION AT ST. ABB'S HEAD.

In silent and almost unbearable suspense Eustace and his companions stood watching the issue.

'She don't see us,' said Ralph in a savage tone.

'I fear it is so,' said Eustace, with a sigh.

'She does see us,' called out Joe a moment after. 'She's wearing, measmates, she's wearing.'

'Joe was right, for the vessel had now turned in her course and was sailing directly towards the island. On seeing this, and being made certain that they would now be rescued, Ralph, Joe and Willy burst out in wild shouts of joy, but Eustace turned away, and seeing the shelter of a rock burst into tears. His great strong nature, silent in its despair, was overcome with emotion under the hope of again returning to Lillias, and his emotion was too sacred to be witnessed even by his solitary companions. When he came forth again the vessel was lying to about a quarter of a mile off, and a boat was being lowered over the side.

The ship proved to be a Dutch merchant vessel bound for Amsterdam, and the captain received the outcasts very kindly, giving them food and clothing, and ministering in every way to their comfort. He was even glad to render this service to British subjects, and give them a passage in his vessel, for the Dutch being, as well as the French, at war with Britain, he was in hourly dread of being captured by a British cruiser. Should this contingency now occur, he could confidently hope that the service he was rendering to Eustace and his companions would purchase his immunity. Thus actuated alike by inclination and interest, he did all in his power to promote the comfort of the rescued ones.

Favored now by fair winds, the vessel sped rapidly on her homeward voyage, and, as luck would have it, no British ship came across them till they made the port of Amsterdam. Here Eustace and his companions were in a hostile country and liable to be kept as prisoners, but the captain stood their friend, gave them dresses by which they might pass as a portion of his crew, and promised to do his utmost to have them shipped across the channel.

The vessel made its way across the canal right into the heart of the city and came to anchor under the dark shadows of a huge pile of warehouses. It was evening, and as soon as the ship was properly moored all work was suspended until the following morning, when the cargo would be transferred to the building overhead. At this juncture the captain disappeared, and, after being absent for nearly half an hour, returned in company with a tall, strong man, muffled up in a huge pea-jacket, with his head and ears covered by a sealskin cap. Eustace was gazing at the romantic sight of a city whose streets were water courses but he turned round when the captain with the stranger approached him.

'Mein Got! dia is the very man for you,' he remarked in his broken English, and at the same time the stranger said in a low voice—

'My friend Van Brackan has told me how he picked you up in a deserted island, and that you want a passage to Scotland.'

'We do sir. Can you help us in the matter?' asked Eustace.

'We can mutually serve each other. I am the captain of the lugger you see yonder. I have got my cargo, and would have sailed a week ago, but an short of hands. If you and your companions will give me help in working the ship

across I will gladly give you a passage. Most willingly,' answered the youth. 'Stay a moment,' returned the stranger, 'I am a frank, straightforward man, and wouldn't like to draw you into a scrape—I am what is called a free-trader—in other words, a smuggler. You take it?'

'Perfectly; and I am not less your man on that account,' cried Eustace, with animation. 'I am no friend of the government, I assure you. I have had only too much cause to hate it. Nothing will give me greater pleasure than to help you land your cargo.'

'Say you so,' exclaimed the other, in a highly satisfied tone, and then he immediately added, 'but what about the others? Are they to be trusted?'

'Every man of them,' answered Eustace, emphatically. 'They have as good reason to hate the Government as I have, and will glory in helping to make our venture successful.'

'The captain held out his hand, and Eustace, responding to the action, felt his hand grasped with great intensity. 'Then it's a bargain. My name is Dick Donaldson.'

'And mine is Eustace Grahame.' 'I like you, Mr. Grahame—I like you very much, and I have never yet been deceived in my liking and disliking to strangers. If your companions are as sterling as yourself let me make St. Abb's and land our stuff at Lowden Shore in spite of this new cutter that I heard had just been seen upon the coast.'

Before midnight Eustace and his companions were on board the Delight, a smart, clean-looking craft of lugger rig which had laid at her berth a day or two ready to sail, but could not be got out owing to a deficiency in the crew. In coming across a week or two before the Delight had been boarded by a King's vessel and nearly half her men pressed away into the naval service, leaving Capt. Donaldson to shift as he best might; and but for the fortunate arrival of Eustace and the others, he might have remained where he was for an indefinite period. Their coming, however, and their ready agreement with him, enabled him to weigh anchor at once and depart for the Scottish coast, at a certain point of which his arrival was anxiously looked for.

'You think me a queer fish, don't you now, Mr. Grahame?' exclaimed the Captain, with a laugh. 'I haven't the look of your ideal smuggler, have I? There's nothing of that drunken, ferocious savage about me, and you cannot understand why a fellow of my inches should be leading this kind of life.'

'You have guessed my thoughts exactly,' replied Eustace. 'I confess I was at the moment puzzling myself to reconcile your appearance, and all that it indicates, with the work in which you are engaged.'

The smuggler became grave, and a stern expression passed like a shadow over his face.

'Some men,' he said, 'become the sport of circumstance, and that was the case with me. I am what I am not from choice, nor perhaps from necessity either. I had always a roving disposition and a love for adventure. Nevertheless I might have settled and become domestic enough, but sir, the woman I loved proved faithless, I was cut off, and a richer man preferred. I had some family claim upon the Government, and was promised a post which was ultimately given to my rival. These things roused all that was reckless within me, and the opportunity was thrown in my way of engaging in this work. It was exciting and adventurous, and just suited the humor into which circumstances had put me. It's very risk had a charm for me; and, besides it enabled me to do some injury to the Government that had treated me so scurvily. So I plunged into it and have been pretty successful.'

The heart of Eustace throbbed responsively to every word the other uttered. Here was one who like himself had been wronged, and had given way to the very feelings which he cherished. He sympathized with him fully, because he fully understood him, and admired rather than condemned the career he had adopted, and he hastened to tell Captain Donaldson so.

'Who knows but I may join you,' he impulsively exclaimed. 'I have been wrongfully treated likewise both by my friends and the Government, and if anything has befallen my wife I care not by what means I revenge myself on those who will have blighted my life. They have evoked the devil in my nature, and are liable for the consequences.'

The two men warmly shook hands after this exchange of confidence, and the closest feelings of friendship were established between them. The companions of Eustace were rejoicing greatly over the prospect of returning over to Scotland, but neither Willy nor Joe felt the savage joy which dwelt in the bosom of Ralph, the game-keeper. The stripes on his back were now nearly healed, but the passion of his soul which the flogging had produced would never cool down, and his firm determination was to have a terrible revenge on Randolph Grahame. To ruin him by depriving him of all chance of succeeding to Bengarry was to do little to slake the thirst of revenge in his heart—he must torture, if not mur-

der him, and every hour was now bringing him nearer the possibility of inflicting his stroke of retribution. Ralph would sit for hours together in moody silence on the deck of the lugger, cherishing his revengeful purpose, and laying plans for its accomplishment.

'The round top of St. Abb's will rise on us presently,' observed the captain, 'and then we must see without making a signal. There it is, I can make it out now.'

'Where?' asked Eustace, as he strained his eyes to no purpose.

'Right ahead; run your eye from the zenith downwards and you will catch it.'

The youth did this several times in vain. At last a dark broad line shaped itself slowly through the gloom, and fixing his gaze steadily on this, he made out ere long the lofty and rugged sea-wall rising in solitary grandeur above the deep.

As they neared it and the general outline the heights became discernible, the captain left him to attend to the signals now to be made, and as he did so Willy came silently forward to the side of Eustace.

'Dae ye mind the last time we saw these rocks,' whispered Willy.

'I was just thinking of it,' responded Eustace, in a low voice. 'We were prisoners then—we are free now; we were leaving them then—we are approaching them now. Oh, Willy, we shall soon know the best or the worst about our darling. In a day or two, I trust, we shall reach Woodhaven, and I tremble before that which I have so ardently longed for.'

'Heaven grant that we may find the pair lassie weel,' said Willy, fervently.

'Amen!' answered Eustace, but my heart is heavy with fearful foreboding.'

Just then the captain came hastily to where they stood. 'There is danger at hand,' he said. 'Our signal has been answered, and we are warned not to land the cargo at Lowden shore. But strange enough the warning-off signal has not been given us, nor the signal from the Headland Cove, and I'm at a loss what to do.'

'I am quite unable to give an opinion,' said Eustace. 'Being perfectly ignorant of your practical arrangements, I am at a loss to understand what you mean by the signals. I did not even notice you make or receive any.'

'Oh, yes, we made the signal by showing lights below, and we were answered from Lowden Cliff. We have two principal landing-places here—one at Lowden shore, where the stuff is either stowed away in a perforated rock called Hollow Craig, or carried up the heights at once to other concealments; and another in a cave right under the Headland. Now, as I told you we are warned not to land at Lowden shore, but at the same time we are not advised of the coast altogether. Neither are we instructed to make for the Headland Cove, and I am uttering at a loss how to—Ha, there is a signal from a boat in the water.'

As the captain spoke the latter words, Eustace observed a light waver to and fro for a few moments in a peculiar manner, and then disappear. It seemed to be a very short distance from the lugger, and the captain dived below to answer it.

He returned in less than a minute, and took his station at the side, with his head bent over the bulwarks. Perfect silence now reigned on board, and in the night stillness the dip of oars could plainly be heard, and every instant nearer as if a boat was approaching. In a little it could be seen, and was by this time almost under the side. Three men were in it—two at the oars and one at the helm.

'If that you, Dickson?' asked the captain in a whisper.

'Yes, it's me,' was the answer, in the same low tone. 'Ye mauna rin the cargo enoo—the Greyhound is about—that's the new cutter that been put on syne ye gaed awn.'

'Where is she?' inquired Donaldson.

'She passed this afternoon gaun Berwick way, and they say is to be up the night again. The maister thinks they has got word that ye are expected in the coast, and the Greyhound has come on an errand to wetch ye.'

'The deuce she has. Who has the command of her?'

'It's a young chap, fresh frae a man-of-war. Lieutenant Grahame they ca' him, a fair bloodhound. They say he swears taunt down every lugger that comes near St. Abb's.'

'Does he? He will find that harder work than he thinks. But what's to be done? Could we not run the stuff into Headland Cove before he comes up?'

'There's nae chance,' answered Dickson. The maister thinks ye sud come close to the rocks, as the night is so calm, and lie there wi' every rag down till he passes. Then rin down the Eyemouth and put the stuff intae Jessop's.'

'A sail!' exclaimed the look-out, in suppressed but startling tone.

'What's she like?' asked the captain springing into the rigging.

'A cutter,' was the answer.

'It's the Greyhound,' exclaimed the commander of the smuggler. 'She's coming round Eyemouth Point now, and will be here in a jiffy. We might run for it, but he would intercept us, so I'll

try the dodge you mention and skulk under the cliffs. If he sees us there will be a fight, for curse me if I am going to give the cargo. Mr. Grahame will you stand by me now—you and your friends—Grahame? How curious, that's the name of the fellow who commands the cutter.'

'It is my brother,' exclaimed Eustace, greatly excited.

'Your brother. Then you won't—'

'Yes, we will support you to the very death. Brother though he is, he is my bitterest foe, and I am his. Every one of us will stick by you with all the more determination because he is your opponent.'

'Say you so? Then well show a stiff fight. But we'll jink him if we can.'

'By this time the lugger was driving in as fast as was prudent towards the cliffs whose black shadows threw the base into the deepest gloom, and the revenue cutter was already crossing Coldingham Bay.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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