

The Haunted Church.

By JAMES MURPHY.

Author of "Fortunes of a Miserable O'Donnell," "Caveat No. 25," "House on the Rath," "The Forge of O'Donnell," "The Cross of Glencore," "The Shan Van Vocht," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

EXTRACTING INFORMATION.

That night the restless man was sitting in the long apartment of the prison in which he was confined. He had been asleep where he sat—dreaming of heaven knows what.

The dim light of a moonlight night came in through the bare windows of the room—very vaguely indeed—and seemed but to make the darkness visible; the rays in their cell, white gleams making the spots where they fell slightly indistinctly—bright.

The earliest man threw his eyes shudderingly around the apartment until they rested upon one particular spot where those gleams of light fell. And as he gazed wonderingly caught the place, they suddenly became fixed and riveted to it.

For, sitting on the narrow wooden ledge, which, with the stone floor, was the form of Sweeney's Bill, Yee, Sweeney's Bill, exactly as he looked in the flesh—at now, as his form stood upright, advancing towards him, the wooden leg making strange echoes on the floor, looking menacing and terrible.

The apparition being quite in accord with the terrible character of his dream, the prisoner was for a moment paralyzed.

But the next moment, with a cry that, full of terror and alarm, seemed to pierce the barred windows, he flung himself face downwards on the bed in a fit.

When he recovered himself the cell was full of people whom his convulsive screams had brought thither.

"What is amiss—what is the matter?" asked a warder harshly.

"Is he gone? Oh, save me—take me out of this! Is he gone?"

Hipwell has charge of her. And with a glance, attentive nurse to attend her—Do you know what, Charley?"

"What?"

"I mean, do you what I have been thinking of?"

"Of this handsome city we are walking through?"

"No, I have been here before you know."

"Of the long journey we have had."

"No, not that either. Give it up! Well, I'll tell you. I have been thinking that I have been a fortunate fellow to have missed the peers and the estates."

"How does that come?"

"Well, if I did not, it is possible I should never have seen Gracia—that dear, delightful girl."

"It's absurd, Mark; you must have dreamt it."

"I wish I could sleep to dream or live, yer honor, but I can't. I could no more sleep wild than sound in my ears, and the darkness around me, than I could climb the cold tower fast forward."

"Is it never heard in the daytime?"

"I dunno. I suppose it is. I haven't heard it. It's the only time I can take a wink of sleep, and even then only when there's people around me."

"It is very strange!" said the Major perplexedly. "Has anyone else heard it but you?"

"I dunno. They may or they may not. Maybe they haven't as sharp hearing as I have. Ever since that night I saw the drowned man walkin' about I think I'd hear a pin fall in the church, my brain 'an' my thoughts are so straitened toward it."

"And how do the sounds manifest themselves?"

"Whenever the wind blows I can hear the bell ring—ringin' as plain as I hear you speak now."

"But, you know, Mark, that couldn't be; no wind that ever blew could stir those mighty bells."

"Sure I know it couldn't," broke in the late sexton, with a tremor and terror in his voice that was dreadful to hear, so unlike usual fear it was; "there's where I'm frightened! What would I care if you could show me that anything living could do it? But it couldn't. An' it's always in my ears—always. In the dark night, when there's not a sound stirrin' but the wind moanin' down the chimney, I can hear it. It's callin' to me like as if it said: 'Mark! come to me! Mark! come to me! It's awful! That's what it is—awful!'"

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