







THE PRIEST.

A boat on the coast of his mother... A child at the base of his mother... A boy with a ruddy complexion...

THE ANGELUS HOUR.

Are Maria! blessed be the hour... The time, the time, the hour... Have felt two moments in its fullest power...

SHAN VAN VOCHT.

A STORY OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

BY JAMES MURPHY. CHAPTER XXIII.—[CONTINUED]

Of all things—with you, was her reply... It was so pleasant, and remind us of old times, he said, as they turned to walk back.

Returning to where his boat lay anchored under the mansion, they entered it, and fixing the sails, were soon on their way over the dancing water.

The sail was of her entrancing. It reminded her of many similar ones on a foreign sea. Hundreds of miles lay between the two scenes, but the hope of her heart experienced was the same.

Similarly entrancing was the walk over the high and grassy cliffs of the little island, when they reached it. How perfectly beautiful was the aspect of the sea as the golden sunset threw its flood of rays over it, reflecting in its breast the crimson sky overhead!

Watches—if there were any around the little islet—might have been startled as a cry, such as in its concentrated terror and agony seldom issued from human lips, suddenly burst on the silence around it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

With quick and nervous strokes the two men swept the boat over the reach of the sea that intervened between the islet and the shore.

They were not long in reaching the latter, but as they approached they were considerably startled to see lights moving over the water further inland.

'Shall we pull in?' 'Yes, I may say.' 'Lay to, then.' They bent to their oars in order to carry the boat swiftly and strongly through the surf and ground her on the sand safely.

Just as Eugene thought, the light was on sea but on shore; his skill headed for the latter—it advanced to meet them; and when, after a rapid run through the white surf, the boat grounded firmly on the strand, the light and its beaver stood out very little away from them in the darkness.

Eugene, stepping out on the strand addressed the beaver of the light: 'We are strangers here. We are in great need of assistance—in urgent need. Can you—'

'But to his sublime amazement the light was suddenly extinguished, and they were left in utter darkness. Redmond called to him: 'Steady the boat, Eugene, or it will turn on its side. Help me out with this poor girl first.'

'What shall we do now, Redmond? Where was that light? Was it not most strange that it was extinguished?' 'Very. It was more worthy of wreckers in Cornwall than of us Irish people. They do not usually act so to people in distress.'

'Why the first thing would be to shove the boat out, and let waves and tide bear her whither they will. If we leave her here; she will be a curse to us here.'

'Very true,' said Eugene, as he caught hold of the prow, and with a vigorous push sent her spinning, stern foremost, into the boiling sea. 'I had not thought of that. There she goes. She will have drifted miles away before daybreak.'

'And the next thing is to bear this poor thing to the shelter of that light we saw higher up. I trust it will be of more service to us than that which has so singularly disappeared.'

'Will you be able to bear her weight, for I must confess I am not able?' 'With the greatest ease; she is not the weight of a feather, poor girl.' Fortunately the ground sloped a little higher up, to the cliffs above; and after some searching and groping they saw, Eugene going first and carrying a ladder, they reached the top whence the light again became visible steadily burning as before.

'You are right, Redmond; it is a house that light is burning in. It is surely the house of someone ill. It is so small, and further assurance of sympathy and shelter.'

'Let us push on; this poor thing breathes heavily. She may die in our arms before we get there.' They hurried on and reached the house, the door of which, fronting them as they approached, stood open. Without delay they bore her inside—into a large ruined hall empty of all but darkness.

'Finding no one, Eugene stamped on the hall. 'There was no response. There was no answering stir to indicate that anyone had heard them. He stamped again with his heel. But the echoes of the stone floor in the empty hall alone gave response.

'Your—your what? Speak, for Heaven's sake,' said Eugene. 'Sister.' 'My sister! In that what you say? Redmond could scarcely nod at an affirmation.

'Alice LeFebvre—my sister! What can you mean?' asked Eugene, with a strange expression of surprise in his eyes, placing his hand on the other's shoulder and turning him around. 'It is she, Eugene. Merely the providence of God! What could have brought her here?'

'You must be dreaming, Redmond. Alice is in France,' said Eugene, with a cry of dismay and perplexity came to be here. I saw her lately. You have not seen her since childhood! It is she beyond all mistake.'

Eugene stood in a stupor—a stupor in which astonishment and doubt, and boundless perplexity, nearly paralyzed his every nerve. 'See Eugene! Stir yourself. She will die if we do not get her here. We have a few minutes to lose. In the room? Quick! get me some, if there is.'

Eugene walked mechanically over to the cupboard, and brought over a decanter of brandy and a tumbler. He poured a few drops slowly between her lips. A stronger breathing showed that the stimulant had helped to revive her. 'Take of her boots, Eugene, and fill that bottle with hot water, and place it to her feet. There! Wrap them up warmly. I wonder is there any want in the house? Stay here a few minutes whilst I see.'

'Redmond, if you are right—but you cannot be! It is impossible!—Indeed it was no wonder he concluded it impossible. The events of the night had been of themselves sufficiently strange, but this second so marvelous as to border on the region of incoherence and dreams, so that Eugene appeared to himself to be half dazed, and in truth quite unable to realize the statement of his companion.

'I am correct enough,' said Redmond, glancing again at the unconscious face. 'Whatever extraordinary occurrence brought her here, it is surely she. Heaven save her! Tossing off a tumbler of brandy to strengthen him after his exceeding fatigue and the extraordinary shocks of surprise he had received, Redmond went on a visit of exploration with a candle in his hand.

'In a few minutes he returned. 'There is only another room in the house furnished, and that is untenanted, too,' he said, when he returned. 'The place seems a ruin, inhabited only lately for some passing occasion. I wonder where the inmates are. It is very strange,' he added perplexedly.

'I had better close these shutters. This light may serve as a beacon in case our friends from the Thunderer may be searching for us,' Redmond said again, suiting the action to the word. 'It seems to me as if I am only dreaming, and that I am on board the Thunderer still,' said Eugene, when he had performed the offices for the patient desired by his friend. 'I would better close these shutters. This light may serve as a beacon in case our friends from the Thunderer may be searching for us,' Redmond said again, suiting the action to the word.

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'I have had a good many extraordinary adventures in my lifetime since I was carried away from school and placed as a midshipman on board the Thunderer, but they all pale before the events of this night. You cannot be mistaken here? nodding towards the bed where the patient—whose heavy breathing was louder than the wind's—lay.

'What could have brought the dear girl here? She could not have been coming across on board a vessel that was wrecked. 'I would be useless guessing at present. Our first business when the day comes will be to get her proper assistance, and see if her life can be preserved. The next thing will be to place ourselves in a place of safety for a flight, which will be made along the coast for it.'

He was about turning round to bear back the joyful news to his friend, when a rustling behind him caught on his ear. A hand was laid on his shoulder, and a girl's voice said behind him: 'Take care, Eugene, or you will be a wreck.'

'Who under heaven is this that knows me again?' said he, gazing with astonishment at the retreating figure. 'This will certainly lead to discovery—certain discovery,' he thought. 'I must see who it is. We cannot always have these mysteries surrounding us—confound them! I shall see who it is at any rate.'

The girl had disappeared through a broken doorway in one of the ruined walls, with a flying step that nothing but extreme terror could give rise to. There was no time to be lost, or if concealment were to be ensured, or if he were to elucidate this new mystery.

Whereupon, with as much rapidity as his voice would permit, he followed her, the ruined tomb, and through the broken arches; and came up with her just as she was about emerging from the ruined abey into the slope lying beyond it. 'I had not thought of that. There she goes. She will have drifted miles away before daybreak.'

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