

# The Phantom Yacht.

Written by Charles McIntyre.

An August day in the year 1796. In a cove a few miles from the mouth of the Ste. Jean River is an Indian village, consisting of a dozen or more wigwams scattered irregularly over a sloping hillside. In the door of the largest wigwam stands its owner, dressed in the warpaint of his kind, shading his eyes with his hand and looking away down river.

Boom! A cannon shot sounds o'er the quiet waters and reverberates among the hills, frightening the birds from their nests and the foxes from their lairs. A crowd of Indians tumble hastily from their dwellings and form in little knots, discussing in their guttural dialect the spectacle before them. Up the river come two vessels. One, the smaller, schooner rigged, is evidently being chased, as she comes flying on with every stitch of canvas set and barely half a mile between her and her pursuer. At her masthead flies the white flag of France, while at that of her pursuer a black flag floats, threatening and sullen.

Nearer and nearer comes the pirate, till at last her broadside sweeps the schooner's deck. The mainmast totters, swerves wildly then falls with a terrible crash. The wheel is evidently rendered useless, as she seems to be unmanageable and drifts to leeward entirely at the mercy of the foe. On comes the pirate till close aboard the schooner when she is hove to and a boat lowered, filled with a crew of swarthy looking men, who pull quickly toward the schooner. They are met by a volley of musketry from the score of men who compose the schooner's crew. A man or two is seen to drop from his seat but the rest still press on and swarm up the bow chains. Here the crew have gathered and armed with cutlasses and pistols seem determined to sell their lives dearly. Again and again a pirate gains a footing on the deck only to fall by the sword or a shot from one of its brave defenders. One by one the pirates fall with wildly staring eyes and hands madly clutching the air, into the water below, or cling disabled to the chains. But Alas! It is all in vain, the deck of the pirate swarms with scores more of these murderers, and others seeing the first boatloads discomfited, are already rowing quickly toward the stern; over the sides, from all quarters they come, and one by one the noble handful, fighting in despair till the last, are surrounded, and with a few long drawn death cries of rage and agony, all is over.

Night is fast falling and already the stars are beginning to appear, when the pirates after hastily looting the vessel, sail away back whence they came. In the gathering darkness a group of Indians sit stoically watching the ill fated schooner and the fast disappearing pirate, and when the latter is safely out of sight launch their canoes to paddle off to the scene of tragedy, when suddenly a loud explosion rends the air, an angry red flash and a cloud of thick black smoke rolls up from the schooner. The remaining mast falls, and she settles slowly, bow first, beneath the waves, leaving the waters of the river rippling over the spot as peaceably as before.

A century has passed. Again the same river but how changed the surroundings. White men now tread where the Indian once hunted the red deer to its leafy lair, and the spot where the Indian village had stood, is now occupied by prosperous looking cottages. On the exact spot where the Indian had stood on that eventful night a century ago, a man clad in a white duck yachting suit now stands hailing his yacht, which is one of a score or more of trim little yachts rising and falling gently at their buoys a few hundred yards from the shore. O! some of them their crews are busy preparing the evening meal while on shore the snug little club house is gay with bunting and white suits. Tomorrow is the club anniversary, the gala day of the season and among other things the final race in a cup series will be sailed. All day the yachtsmen have been busy getting their respective yachts in racing trim and many a jest is exchanged by the rival crews as they rest after the days work.

But a sudden interest is manifested in the appearance of a sail away down river. The yachtsmen scan her closely as she comes flying toward them. 'A big boat that!' says Murray the owner of the 'Mavourneen.' Then suddenly Winston leaned forward and touched him on the shoulder. Murray looked at him in

amazement, as he gazed at the ocoming sail with white face and protruding eyes. 'What is it Win, old man, are you ill?' he said, putting his hand on Winston's shoulder. 'No,' said the other, in a changed hollow voice, 'she's sailing fair in the winds eye.'

She was. The wind blew as it had blown all day, a good breeze down river. She sailed straight up as if she had half a gale behind her. The other yachtsmen had by this time noticed the miracle as could easily be seen by their excited looks and gestures. On came the strange sail till at last she was in plain view. A long rakish looking craft painted pure white, schooner rigged and of a last century model. Then suddenly there is the roar of a single cannon shot, then the crash of a broadside, the mainmast totters and falls with a crash and the schooner drifts an unmanageable wreck. The spectators almost hold their breath, as after the interval of a few seemingly neverending minutes there is a volley then a scattered fire of musketry and pistols. Then the crew rush forward, but horror of horrors, where their faces should, have been only the bleached bones showed, glistening and horrible. Then follows the clashing of arms. The crew scatter and fight invisible enemies in different parts of the schooner. Then one by one they fall, and with a few blood curdling yells all is still. Then a flash of red fire, a cloud of thick black smoke followed by a loud explosion, the remaining spar falls, and the vessel settles slowly, bow first, beneath the waves. Each yachtsman looks at his neighbor his face pale with terror. 'A phantom' muttered some. 'The flying Dutchman' whispered others, and then a silence more eloquent than any words could have been, settled throughout the little fleet. From time to time someone would get up from where he sat, look all around in a dazed fashion as if awaking from a terrible dream, press his hand to his forehead as if doubtful of his sanity, then sit down again with

a look of dumb dread in his eyes.

Night was fast settling down, and with it came the strains of the orchestra from the club house, now brilliantly illuminated. 'They couldn't have seen it,' was the general remark. And quickly the word was passed along the yachts. 'Say nothing of the phantom,' then all went slowly ashore to the reception arranged for the evening at the club house to dance all evening and far into the night with heavy hearts and forebodings of evil.

The morning broke sultry and calm, but before the hour of starting a fresh breeze had sprung up and when the signal gun rang out ten yachts crossed the line very close together, shaking out their spinnakers in great white clouds as they flew. The water gurgled and hissed at their bows, their smooth white sides glistened in the sun as they flew over the sunlit waves, and in the excitement of the moment their crews forgot the ghastly occurrence of the night before. Slowly the yachts strung out with the 'Mavourneen' in the lead drawing away from the others, until within a half mile of the turning buoy the wind suddenly died out leaving the yachts bobbing up and down on the glassy swell with their crews lying idly on the deck gazing hopelessly in every direction for the long black line which tells a rising breeze. The turning point was marked by a white flag placed a few hundred yards from the shore where a cliff towers straight up for a distance of five hundred feet, casting a black shadow on the water. The yachts had already entered this shadow, when without a moments warning a terrific squall came tearing over the mountain roughing the water as it came, and striking the yachts with tremendous force. But quick as was the squall still quicker were the yachtsmen and before the squall reached them their sheets were eased and spinnakers taken. Away they flew before the gale with their light sails already torn to ribbons, their masts bending like bows, and every strand of rigging strained to its utmost. 'Lower away the mainsail' was the general order, but the wind baffled in every direction and it was impossible to execute the order. Most of the yachts had lowered their sails but being unable to get them on deck they were quickly tearing to pieces.

The 'Mavourneens' crew had evidently got their balyards tangled as their sails were still at full hoist, until when flying at race horse speed over the spot where the

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phantom had disappeared the night before another and heavier squall broke over the yachts with terrible fury. The 'Mavourneens' mast already bending like a fishing rod, cracked then fell bringing a cloud of canvas with it and completely covering the three men comprising her crew. The mast held by the rigging, the yacht plunged forward like a wounded deer driving the mast through her starboard bow and tearing a hole through which the water rushed like a cataract. The little yacht filled rapidly. Murray, the steersman, rushed forward trying frantically to disentangle his comrades from the pile of canvas. The wind lifted one end of the mainsail, flung it over Murray, who was stooping on the deck, and he too was caught in its death dealing meshes, and in this way these four, who had weathered so many squalls, had sailed so oft together through numberless storms and calms, went down together in the yacht they loved to a watery grave, while from the shore those they watched them go to their doom unable to do anything but gaze in speechless horror. Meanwhile the other yachts, unable to help save by throwing life belts, sped away ashore making straight for the beach as their only salvation as all knew it would be useless to try to anchor in the teeth of that terrible gale. One by one they struck, driving their keels far into the mud, and rolling over on their sides. Quickly the crews waded ashore to find the party so gay but an hour before stupefied at the enormity of the terrible calamity which had befallen them. Here and there a sister or mother, sweetheart or wife, wrung her hands and moaned in her grief. Some of the more hopeful ones launched a boat and rowed as quickly as possible against the heavy sea and the furious gale, to the scene of the accident, thinking to rescue any who might still be afloat, but long before that time the hearts of their comrades on board the little 'Mavourneen' had ceased to beat.

Then followed an hour of weary waiting and at the end of that time the wind having abated, the grappling party rowed

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silently forth on their gloomy errand. One by one the boats rowed back each bearing its ghastly burden. In the stern of the last boat lay Murray, who had stood only a short hour ago steering his boat to victory. Silent and still he lay now, his white suit dripping and muddy, his eyes staring and wild and his hair hanging bedraggled over his face. And by his side lay a grim memento of the awful death which had overtaken the 'Mavourneen' and her crew. A section of a vessel's stern, rotten and covered with sea weed, which had been brought up by one of the grapples, and which is still fastened to the wall of the club house hung with black crepe and surmounted with the 'Mavourneens' pennant.

On this section is carved in deep mud encrusted letters, 'Bon Ami Boulogne.'



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