

tanco. On these precautionary measures being adopted, we all moved off in the direction of the river; and, still guided by the lightning, reached the precise point at which the boats were expected to land; where we sheltered ourselves, as best we could, beneath the underwood which here sloped down gently a few feet to the edge of the water. After remaining in this situation for some short time, I perceived a light moving, as I fancied, on the American shore a little to the right of us; but from the haze that surrounded it, I was unable to make it out clearly, although there was not a drop of rain falling at the period. Ringwood, however, whose cold, grey eye could absolutely pierce the most impenetrable glance; for no sooner had he discovered it, than he exclaimed rapturously:

"There they are, sir: there they are; and I'll bet my life on it, they will be here in less than an hour, for the light is just at the very point from which they always set out!"

"Perhaps so," said I endeavouring to make myself intelligible above the roaring of the waters of the storm, "but the river is convulsed so dreadfully, I am inclined to believe that they will not attempt to cross to-night, for fear of being swamped."

"No fear of that, sir; no fear of that," continued the old oxhound. "They are sure to have a light somewhere in Chippewa to guide them; and after keeping up well in that direction, until they nearly touch shore, they will then drop down nicely here, where there is a good landing and comparative shelter, as well as a sufficient number of teams, no doubt waiting within pistol-snap of them, to carry away the goods."

I hated the fellow, he understood his business so perfectly; but without making any further reply, I kept my attention fixed steadily on the light, and found that it was quite stationary, instead of wandering, as I at first supposed it to be.

About midnight, I became weary with expectation; and was on the point of expressing my full determination to give up the whole affair, when the wind in the most extraordinary manner conceivable, chopped suddenly round, and, to my utmost surprise, came thundering down over Grand Island with an impetuosity as irresistible as if the whole of its strength had been accumulating in that quarter for days. This unaccountable right-about-face in the storm was noticed the moment it occurred, by my two companions, who informed me, simultaneously, that if the boats were now on the river, as was highly probable, they were lost beyond all hope, as they would be totally unable to keep clear of the rapids, against the combined forces of the current and the hurricane.

In this momentous juncture I lost all sight of the intended seizure, and became seriously alarmed for the safety of the unfortunate men, who, as I feared, were, perhaps, at that moment struggling vainly against the merciless elements that were hurrying them on to the verge of the awful abyss scarcely two miles below us. Convinced that all human efforts were unavailing, if the boats were any great distance from either shore, I brought my glass to bear, as well as I could judge, upon every point of the river, where they might be expected to pass, and sought, with trembling curiosity and anxiety, to penetrate the gloom, and realize within its fearful depths the objects of my solicitude; but so profound was the darkness, and so uncertain and confused was everything that was revealed by the lightning at long intervals, it was all to no purpose. The light on the opposite shore, however, happening to get into the field of my glass, and increase, apparently, in brilliancy, owing, as I presumed, to the haze having been dissipated by some new current of air, I began to examine it with more minuteness, and found that it proceeded from a large lantern attached to a high post at the corner of what seemed to be a rough wharf or landing place. Not a solitary human being was to be observed in its vicinity; for I could perceive, with great distinctness, the locality for several yards around it, and, in addition, noticed particularly that there were two large boats drawn up, high and dry, on shore directly beneath it. Lest I should be mistaken in any degree, I handed the glass to Ringwood, requesting,

at the same time, that he would examine the object and everything about it closely, and then inform me if he had discovered anything that might tend to alter his opinions as to the anticipated danger of the smugglers, or the prospect of a seizure on that occasion. The cunning old vagabond read everything at a glance, for no sooner was the glass to his eye, than he exclaimed, with a yell that was perfectly demoniacal—

"Sold! sold! we are all sold! They are Tarpaulin's boats! I have been discovered on the cars by the cursed old scoundrel, who, suspecting that I might give you a hint that would induce you to pay a visit to this place to-night, has hung up that infernal lantern there, for the purpose of deceiving us and keeping us waiting here, until every dollar's worth of the goods is carried away by his teams, and ferried across by some of his accomplices, perhaps miles from where we are now standing."

To me there was some degree of pleasure in this intelligence, as it tended to put the safety of half a dozen, at least, of my fellow-creatures beyond all doubt; but to Ringwood it was gall—it was death. He had made up his mind to a glorious haul; and now that he was outwitted, after so much trouble and fatigue, the worst points of his character were developed strikingly. He became silent and sullen, save when some horrid imprecation escaped his lips, regarding the bold smuggler and his sons; and on one occasion, in the face of a sharp rebuke, he expressed his unfeigned regret that the whole crew were not out on the edge of the rapids, when the wind chopped round so suddenly. In short, so hideous did he appear to me at that moment, that I secretly resolved to keep my eye on him, and discontinue all intercourse with him except where it was unavoidable.

We now retraced our steps to the church, and resuming our seats, we quickly found ourselves in the vicinity of Drummondville once more. Not a light was to be seen in the village, as we passed through it instead of crossing the Common as before. So we kept struggling along towards our respective habitations, until we reached the turn leading down from the main road, to the Clifton which stood in the hollow, a very short distance to the right. Here Tom stopped the waggon, and proposed that we should strike off, and take the side of the river for it, as the lightning did not appear to affect the horses, and as the road was much harder and better than the one we had taken in the first instance, and which lay straight before us. To this I assented readily. And down the hill we started at a safe pace, anxious to get under shelter as soon as possible, and lose all recollections of our "wild goose chase"—as Tom appeared to have correctly designated it—in the soft embrace of the drowsy god. When directly in front of the Clifton, however, the lynx-eyed Ringwood, who had been anything but communicative for the last half hour, observed a light at the bottom of the ferry staircase, on the American side; and instantly directed my attention to it, as being extraordinary and suspicious at such a time and place. This deduction I thought reasonable enough; and immediately leaped out of the waggon, to ascertain, on a nearer approach to the edge of the rocks, what could possibly be the occasion of this new feature in the comedy, when we considered the performance closed for the evening. Through the aid of my glass, I now discovered with the greatest clearness clearness—taking the spray of the Falls into consideration—not only the light in question, but a man standing at the Ferry on our own side of the river, and evidently guiding, with a colored lantern which he held in his hand, a boat that was preparing to put off from the opposite shore. Just beside him, and on the very brink of the water, which was now rising rapidly, owing to the change in the wind, were piled a lot of barrels, tea-chests, and small boxes; in short, all the goods described by Ringwood, as discharged at Schlosser, in the fore part of the evening.

"We have got them at last," said I to Tom and his companion, who had just joined me, on tying up the horses at the guard wall. "All the merchandize of which we have been in search is at this very moment lying below

at the ferry. So let us proceed down at once, and make the seizure, for I apprehend we will not have much difficulty, as there is apparently no great force to encounter."

I got a glimpse of old Ringwood's face in a solitary ray that gleamed from one of the windows of the Clifton. He was in ecstasies. He rubbed his hand with excessive joy, and chuckled audibly over his sharp-sightedness and its anticipated results. I could have pitched the wretch over the cliffs; for well I knew what was on within him. His soul was literally corroded with the love of gain. It mattered not to him whether the goods belonged to the wealthiest man in the land, or were the sole fortune of a fatherless child or a widow. A portion of them was likely to become his prey; and that was all that concerned him—all that made his eyes glitter. I had never given the subject a thought previously, although he was always repulsive to me; but now the truth seemed to flash upon me at once; he had not a single redeeming trait in his character; his heart, I felt assured, was impregnable to the most agonizing prayer; he was a villain of the deepest die.

On our way downwards, we encountered a covered carriage standing close under the shelter of the rocks; and were in the act of passing it, when a dark lantern was flashed into our faces, by two men who were seated in the inside, smoking their cigars; but who, on perceiving our features, apologized immediately, informing us, at the same time, that an extensive robbery had been just committed at Toronto, and was expected to attempt an escape by the Bridge or the Ferry that night, and that their object was to arrest him if possible. I did not like the appearance of either of these persons, nor was I quite satisfied of the truth of their story, as, from their dress and the jewellery with which they were bedizened, they evidently belonged to no police force in the Province. Consequently, without making any very lengthened remarks in return, we continued our course to the water's edge, which we just reached as the boat was about touching the shore.

From the single barrel and small quantity of packages contained in the craft, it was now apparent that we were in the very nick of time; as well as from what I at a glance conjectured to be the two owners of the goods, sitting quietly muffled up in the stern after having shipped the last article from the other side. So, with the determination of making a sweeping affair of it, I resolved to pounce upon the boat first, and secure it while it was being unloaded, and cut off the two persons in the stern—who were likely to remain in their position, until some of the parcels were removed forward—from lending any assistance to their comrades should a scuffle ensue, which, without this precaution, I thought more than probable, as there were five against three of us! although the two boatmen appeared to be mere striplings, and no such sterling stuff as old Tarpaulin and his sons.

It was now the dead hour of the night, when from behind a large pile of rock, some distance below the foot of Grand Horse Shoe Fall, we all with quickened pulses, perceived the boat run up on the long narrow slide, within twenty paces of us; and which was, at the period, almost buried in the waves that dashed in foaming eddies out of the current that flashed past one of its extremities, and then shot out to join the great body of the waters that, for upwards of two miles, swept with savage impetuosity the shore on which we stood. My object being to ascertain, if possible, whether any of the party was armed, before I attempted to secure the boat, or make any disposition of the articles that had been already landed, I waited anxiously, until I saw the man with the lantern, assisting the two boatmen to get the barrel ashore; but on not being able to discover any weapon whatever, the moment I found them engaged in removing the other parcels, so as to make way for the parties in the stern, I stepped out into the blaze of the lamp, and with a pistol shining in my hand, was on board, amongst them, in a twinkling. Tom and Ringwood were on the beach, at my elbow, in an instant, but their proximity was discovered by the man with the lantern

only, as his companions had just stooped down with their backs to the light, to lay hold of a package and hand it to him as he stood on a portion of the slide beside them.

On discovering my sudden apparition, the two boatmen threw out the parcel towards their comrade and leaped hurriedly after it; but, unfortunately, as they both bounded, together, from the gunnel of the boat, the great force of their feet drove us off the slide, where we were lying uneasily, and with the loss of an oar, sent us far out into the midst of these headlong waters, that yelled and shook themselves into foam as they swooped down the rocky gorge that shut them in!—Good God!—This was terrible! In a moment we lost sight of the light! and there we were—three human beings—wrapt in Egyptian gloom, and borne on by the thundering flood towards the fatal Whirlpool, that never mortal crossed and lived, or to destruction as equally certain and horrible—the Charybdis, directly beneath the Suspension Bridge, but a single mile from us!—Oh! how indescribably powerful is darkness, when, through its eyeless depths a vague and unseen depth hovers around us!—when we feel as if we were shut out from light, before our time, and dragged on, towards the verge of eternity, by some mighty and irresistible arm! And yet, how difficult to extinguish the last spark of hope in the human breast, and leave the altar on which it burns in utter desolation! It was so with me, even at that dreadful moment. I knew the river thoroughly. I was sensible that all the great waters of the West, were here struggling to free themselves from a narrow pass, where they were walled in by towering cliffs that were lost in the clouds: but at the same time, I was aware that there were eddies, and one recognized landing place on the American shore, which might, through some miraculous cast of the die, be gained ere our doom was sealed. Consequently, the instant, I found myself adrift on a flood so terrific, with but a single oar to guide me, and in the midst of a merciless storm, I pulled with almost superhuman might towards the opposite rocks. To attempt a landing on the Canadian side would result in our immediate destruction, as the whole force of the current broke furiously over the immense wedges of fallen cliff with which it is studded. Fortunately, it was the left hand oar that fell overboard at the time of the disaster, otherwise I should have been unable to keep the boat quartering off the course of the waters, or impel it angling forward, as we were swept along—although I was not alone in my exertions to reach some point of safety; for, scarcely had I grasped the full danger of my situation when a flash of lightning revealed one of my companions, paddling vigorously, in the proper direction, with a piece of plank which he, providentially, found beneath some small cases, after having, with strange promptness and agility, pitched nearly overboard, in search of something of the kind. However doubtful, at the period, I considered his character as a smuggler, yet, he appeared, evidently, a man who required no stimulant to act when the time came; and feeling that I had a fellow mortal beside me, with every muscle bent in unison with my own, I caught additional strength from the conviction, and made the oar whistle through the waves with increased velocity; until, at last, I found we were whirled into an eddy, where we came into sharp contact with what appeared to be some large floating body. I knew it!—I could not be mistaken!—I clung to it, and grasped a huge chain that happened to touch my arm!—We are safe!—It was the "Maid of the Mist," at her powerful moorings on the American shore, in the immediate vicinity of the Bridge and the deafening surges that fought round the Cave of the Waters. I groped along her guards for her low forward deck which was on a level with our boat, and surrounded merely by an open railing. I found it, and shouted to my companions, while fastening our own stout craft to one of the uprights of the gangway. The next instant we all three stood on board, safe and sound, offering up—though invisible and almost inaudible to each other—a fervent thanksgiving for our wonderful and unprecedented preservation.

The boat being secured, as just observed,