

made—some terrible deed of vengeance—under the wild promptings of insanity?

The thoughts came quick—for the whole series of conjectures did not occupy ten seconds of time—and with the last of them Frank Scott threw all his strength into a propulsive effort, and shot off like an arrow down the ice-bound river.

A bend was soon turned, beyond which appeared a stretch of clear ice extending for more than a mile. On this, and away at its farther end, two forms were dimly discernible; while upon the still frosty air could be heard the faint ringing of skates at quick intervals repeating their strokes.

Frank Scott had no doubt about one of the distant figures being that of Kate Mackenzie.

Nerved by the sight, he threw fresh vigour into his stroke, and went sweeping over the smooth surface like a bird upon the wing.

On, past rock, and tree, and hill, and farm-houses sleeping in silence; on in long nervous strides; his eyes flashing, but fixed upon the two forms—every moment becoming more discernible, as the distance lessened between.

And now he was near enough to see that one of them was Miss Mackenzie, the other St. Clair.

The latter, glancing back over his shoulder, recognized his pursuer: and taking a fresh hold on the wrist of his apparently unwilling partner, he carried her onward with increased velocity.

She had looked back, and saw who was coming after. The silver light of the moon, falling upon her face, showed an expression of sadness, and denly changing to hope; then raising her gloved hand in the air, she sent back a cry for help.

It was not needed. The wan countenance, seen under the soft moon in its appeal for protection, was enough to nerve Frank Scott to the utmost exertion of strength; and he kept on without speaking a word, his whole soul absorbed by the one great desire to overtake and rescue her.

From what? From the grasp of the destroyer—a maniac, as the behaviour of St. Clair proved him to be.

Merciful heaven! What is that sound heard ahead, and at no great distance?

Scott did not need to ask this question. He knew that it was the roar of water—he knew that a cataract was below, for, on sweeping round another curve of the river, the black smooth water could be seen shooting forth from under the field of ice, quick whitened into ice as it struck against some rocks that created the fall.

The pursued saw it first; but soon after the pursuer.

"My God!" gasped the latter, in a voice choking with agony. "Can the man mean to carry her on—over? Stop, madman!"

St. Clair heard the call, and looked back. The moonlight, falling full upon his face, revealed an expression horrible to behold. His eyes were no longer rolling, but fixed in a terrible stare of determination; while upon his features could be traced a smile of demoniac triumph. He spoke no word, but raising his unemployed arm, pointed to the cataract.

There could be no mistaking his gesture; but what followed made still clearer the dreaded design. Giving a loud shriek, that ended in a prolonged peal of laughter, he faced once more in the direction of the open water. Then, throwing all his mad energy into the effort, he shot straight towards it, dragging the young lady along with him.

The crisis had now come; a moment more, and Kate Mackenzie, struggling in the arms of a madman, would be carried over the edge of the ice—over the cataract, and down to certain destruction on the rocks below.

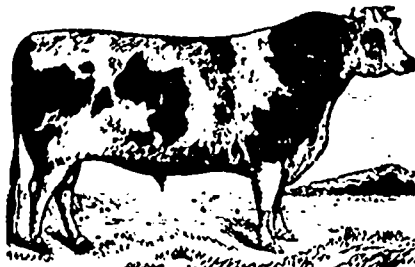
With heart hot, as if on fire, her lover saw her peril, now proximate, and apparently impossible of being averted. But his head was still cool, and at a glance he took in the situation.

By bearing direct down upon them he would only increase the momentum of their speed, and force both over the edge of the ice. His only hope lay in making one last vigorous effort to get between them and the open water. A grand sweep might do it; and, without waiting to reflect further, he threw his body forward in the curve of a parabola.

With hands and teeth both tightly clenched, with eyes fixed upon one point, and thoughts concentrated into one great purpose, he passed over the smooth surface like an electric flash. The effort ended in a shock, as his body came in contact with that of St. Clair. A blow from one arm, already raised, sent the latter staggering off along the ice, at the same time that it detached his hold from the waist of his intended victim. This was instantly grasped by her rescuer; who, continuing the sweep thus intercepted, succeeded in carrying her on to a place of safety.

In vain the madman tried to recover himself. The momentum he had obtained by his own previous speed, increased by the powerful blow he received from Scott's clenched fist, forced him on to the extreme edge of the ice; where, losing his equilibrium, he fell flat upon his face. Perhaps he might still have been saved, but for his own frenzied passion. But as the skaters, following along the curve already commenced, swept close to the spot where he was lying, the toe of the young lady almost touched him. Clutching rapidly out, he made an effort to seize hold of her ankle, still designing to drag her down along with him. In this fortunately he failed. But the movement was fatal to himself. The piece of ice on which he rested was broken. It gave way beneath his weight, breaking off with a hoarse crash; and the detached fragment, bearing his body along with it, in another instant went whirling over the fall—both to be shattered on the rocks below.

The lovers, now no longer in danger, stood hand in hand, silent, and listening. They heard the cauldron seething below, but nothing more. That one wild shriek that came from the maniac's lips—as for a moment his body balanced on the combing of the cataract—was his last utterance. It was succeeded by the hoarse monotone of the waters—to be continued on to Eternity!



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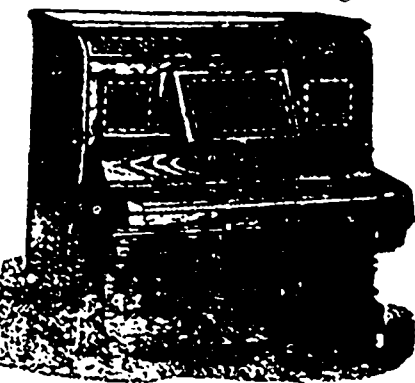
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