

"So," said the taller of the first party, in a whisper, "there is that d——d rascal Desborough setting out on one of his contraband excursions. He seems to have a long absence in view, if we may judge from the contents of his provision sack."

"Hist," rejoined his companion, "there is more here than meets the eye. In the first instance remove the pistols from the case, and be prepared to afford me assistance, should I require it."

"What the devil are you going to do, and what do you mean?" asked the first speaker, following however the hint that had been given him, and removing a pair of duelling pistols from their mahogany case.

While he was in the act of doing this, his companion had, without replying, quitted his side, and cautiously and noiselessly advanced to the hut. In the course of a few minutes he again appeared at the point whence he had started, grasping in either hand the rifles so recently deposited there.

"Well, what is the meaning of this feat? you do not intend, Yankee fashion, to exchange a long shot with poor Molineux, I hope—if so, my dear fellow, I cry off, for, upon my honour, I cannot engage in any thing of the sort that is not strictly orthodox.

He, thus addressed, could scarcely restrain a laugh at the serious tone in which his companion expressed himself, as if he verily believed he had that object in view.

"Would you not like," he asked, "to be in some degree instrumental in banishing wholly from the country, a man whom we all suspect of treason, but are compelled to tolerate from want of proof of his guilt—this same notorious Desborough?"

"Now that you no longer speak and act in parables, I can understand you. Of course I should, but what proof of his treason are we to discover in the mere fact of his departing on what he may choose to call a hunting excursion? even admitting he is speculating in the contraband, that cannot banish him; and if it could, we could never descend to become informers."

"Nothing of the kind is required of us—his treason will soon unfold itself, and that in a manner to demand, as an imperative duty, that we secure the traitor. For this have I removed weapons which may, in a moment of desperation, be turned at backwoodsman's odds against our pistols. Let us steal gently towards the beach, and then you shall satisfy yourself; but I had nearly forgotten—suppose the other party should arrive!"

"Then they must in their turn wait for us. They have already exceeded their time ten minutes."

"Look," exclaimed his companion, as he slightly grasped the shoulder on which his hand rested, "he is returning for the rifles."

Only one of the two men now retrod his steps from the beach towards the hut, but with a more hurried action than before. As he passed where the

friends still lingered, he gave a start of surprise, apparently produced by the absence of the rifles. A moment's reflection seeming to satisfy him it was possible his memory had failed him, and that they had been left within the building, he hurried forward to assure himself. After a few moments of apparently ineffectual search, he again made his appearance, making the circuit of the hut to discover his lost weapons, but in vain; when, in the fierceness of his anger, he cried aloud, with a bitterness that gave earnest of his sincerity.

"By Gosh, I wish I had the curst British rascal who played me this trick, on t'other shore—if I wouldn't tuck my knife into his b——y gizzard, then is my name not Jeremiah Desborough. What the h—l's to be done now."

Taking advantage of his entrance into the hut, the two individuals, first described, had stolen cautiously under cover of the forest, until they arrived at its termination within about twenty yards of the shore, where, however, there was no outward or visible sign of the individual who had been Desborough's companion. In the bows of the canoe were piled the blankets, and in the centre was deposited the provision bag that had formed a portion of their mutual load. The mast had not been hoisted, but lay extended along the hull, its sail loosened, and partially covering the before mentioned article of freightage. The bow half of the canoe pressed the beach, the other lay sunk in the water, apparently in the manner in which it had first approached the land.

Still uttering curses, but in a more subdued tone, against "the fellor who had stolen his small bores," the angry Desborough retraced his steps to the canoe. More than once he looked back to see if he could discover any traces of the purloiner, until at length his countenance seemed to assume an expression of deeper cause for concern, than even the loss of his weapons.

"Ha, I expect some d——d spy has been on the look out—if so, I must cut and run. I calculate purty soon."

This apprehension was expressed as he arrived opposite the point where the forest terminated. A slight rustling among the underwood reduced that apprehension to certainty. He grasped the handle of the huge knife that was thrust into the girdle around his loins, and, rivetting his sinister eye on the point whence the sound had proceeded, retreated in that attitude. Another and more distinct crush of underwood, and he stood still with surprise on finding himself face to face with two officers of the garrison.

"We have alarmed you, Desborough," said the younger, as they both advanced leisurely to the beach, "Do you apprehend danger from our presence?"