

From the Youth's Companion.

LOST IN PATAGONIA.

IN FOUR PARTS—PART IV.

THE Twelches had been watching their movements in silence for some time, but pretty soon another outcry was raised, from both sides of the strait; it continued at intervals for some minutes. Looking up the channel, the sailors saw four canoes.

There was but a single native in each of the four canoes. They paddled rapidly down past the rock where the three sailors had taken refuge, without making any hostile demonstration; but as soon as they reached the foot of the crags on each side of the narrow strait, four or five other Patagonians, with their lances and *bolas*, got aboard each one of them; these then paddled

slowly back toward the rock, evidently bent on an attack.

Rumy and Clum began hurling stones at their assailants, and with much better effect than might have been predicted, for the canoes were perilous crafts, and as soon as a stone fell aboard one of them, causing dodging and some confusion, the Indians were put to their wits to keep their balance. One skiff was immediately upset, and the whole flotilla fell back.

Several of the Indians now got on the nearest of the neighboring rocks, and cast stones with slings, but the sailors could avoid the far-thrown missiles.

Not long after noon, however, the natives were seen bringing logs together, and constructing a raft. This gave Rumy uneasiness. "If they build a big raft, they can all get on it, and then float her down against the rock here," he said. "They'll have better foothold, and can jump from the raft to the rock, and use their lances on us."

Frost thought the best mode of resistance would be to wait till the raft was within a few yards of the rock, then suddenly rise and pour the stones upon them as fast as they could throw them.

The Indians had great difficulty with their raft, however, not having the means at hand properly to bind the logs together. Several times they pushed off with it, but were compelled to put ashore again and get more logs. Night coming on, they abandoned the task, and kindled fires on both sides of the channel, both above and below where the fugitives had posted themselves. For a long time the boys expected that some attack would be made upon them. But the evening wore on; they were disturbed only by the constant shouting of the natives, calling back and forth to each other across the channel.

It began to rain after an hour or two, and to shelter themselves, they made a tent of the sail, stretching it over the barricade of logs. Frost complained bitterly of cold, for the storm wind was very chilling. No Indians showed themselves during the forenoon; sheeted gusts of rain were beating inclemently on the crags.

The position of the sailors became more and more uncomfortable, for as it drew afternoon, the storm increased in violence. Wet from the water that dripped through their coarse apology for a tent, the unfortunate New Englanders lay in great discomfort. The boys waited moodily for the day to drag by, having agreed to make an effort to escape as soon as darkness again fell. They got the two logs of the catamaran ready for launching again, and the strips of deck laid out for lashing on. Their plan was to try to run through the narrows ahead early in the night, and get as far as possible before another day dawned.

Despite the rain the savages again kindled a fire in the lee of the crags upon the west side of the channel. By the red blaze the Americans could see them fetching wood and throwing it over the cliff. The light from it shone out across the narrow gut of water there; nevertheless, Rumy (who seems gradually to have grown to be the leading spirit of the little party) determined to launch the raft again. In the midst of the drenching rain and wind, he and Clum put it together and got ready to embark.

After a time the natives got tired of fetching fuel in the rain; toward midnight the fire grew dim, and at length went out.

"Come, Pleem!" Rumy now said to Frost. "We're going to start."

But he made no reply.

"We'll help you down the rock," Clum said to him.

He remained silent, and they then went to him to assist him to his feet, when they found that he was unconscious, though breathing rather heavily. At first Clum thought that he was asleep, but they soon found that they could not awake him.



At length they drew him down the side of the rock, and put him on the raft. They took also their mast, sail, and what was left of their meal, and then put off in complete darkness, with the rain gusts surging about them. Rumy stood on one side of the raft, Clum on the other, each with a paddle in his hand, and with quiet strokes propelled it forward toward the place where could still be distinguished the last faint red glow of the Indians' fire.

Suddenly they came upon some resisting obstacle. Clum got down on his knees and felt along the nose of the raft with his hand. "It's a line of some sort," he whispered.

"Take your knife and cut it," said Rumy. Clum essayed to do so, but meantime the raft swung around, and came, with a thump, in collision with some object moored by the line. Instantly then they heard, rather than saw, a sudden scramble, and a native shouted wildly—as if just aroused from sleep—almost in Clum's face, he was so very near! In fact, it was a canoe moored there in the strait, with a native

