

did one find its way, as we have already said, through the close trees, to be reproduced in image in the waveless river.

Suddenly the silence is disturbed by the faint dip of an oar or paddle, and, like a flitting shadow, scarcely distinguishable from the blackness of the water, a boat is seen ascending the creek. It contains two forms; whether white or black, young or old, male or female, is not distinguishable. One is placed in the bow, the other guides the boat. Its shape cannot be made out, nor whether it is light or laden. But from the celerity with which it steals along under the easy impulse of the paddle, it cannot be heavily burdened. The steadiness and certainty with which it moves, shows plainly enough that the person at the stern is not unfamiliar with the devious windings of the stream, for his course never falters.

The figure in the bow now moves towards the one seated at the stern, and speaks, but in a low, hushed tone.

"The place is as dark as Tophet, skipper! You must have a lynx eye, to steer in such a night. Are we near?"

"Hush, man," answered the one addressed, in a whisper, and holding up his paddle, as if listening. "If you speak again I'll put back!" he added, in a menacing, husky tone, and the voice was evidently that of a vulgar and coarse person.

"If you do, it is at your peril!" responded the first speaker in an authoritative tone; which, though but little raised above his breath, was that of a person of a far higher order of character and condition than he whom he addressed. As he spoke, a star-beam stealing between the leaves above him, glanced along a steel weapon which he moved in his hand.

"Then keep quiet," grumbled the other, in a surly tone, and the voice was evidently that of a young man.

The man with the weapon merely ejaculated a contemptuous "eh?" and folding his arms, stood silently watching the upward course of the boat, which continued its secret and mysterious way with the same certainty which had marked it from the first.