

astonishment and terror. The silence was as profound as that of the tomb, and the frail skiff was whirled with fearful velocity towards the yelling dam. Then a boisterous exclamation of joy broke from Montain:

"Fallonsby, there is a chance for us. Down yonder where you see that rock just above water, the depth is not more than four feet all the way across the river. By stripping off coats and vests, and holding firmly to each other, we can gain the shore by wading."

"And would you abandon these helpless girls to destruction without an effort to save them?" indignantly asked Darwin.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature," replied Montain, dashing his coat, hat and vest into the bottom of the skiff.

"We can only save ourselves," cried Fallonsby. And down went his coat and Panama, along with Montain's.

"Go, then, cowardly wretches that you are!" exclaimed Darwin, contemptuously. "It is some relief to know that our last breath will not be drawn from an atmosphere tainted by the presence of such poltroons."

The boat reached the upper edge of the belt of shallow water, and without reply to Darwin's taunt, Montain and Fallonsby simultaneously leaped overboard and grasping each other firmly, began fighting their way laboriously towards the shore. But an escape by fording was a far more difficult feat to accomplish than they had imagined; and by the time they had reached the rock alluded to by Montain, and which lay at about one third the distance from where they leaped from the boat to the shore, they were both so entirely exhausted that it was with considerable difficulty they managed to drag themselves out of the water upon the flat surface, affording scarcely sufficient sitting room for two persons, and in no place a foot above the water.

"In the mean time Darwin had not effortlessly resigned himself and us to impending fate. You would think that under the circumstances there was nothing that human agency could achieve to avert our doom. It was thus that Mary and I argued at the time; but Darwin thought our lives worth a desperate effort, and he made it."

"A moment after Montain and Fallonsby left us, he was overboard also, striving like a very Hercules for our salvation. First he endeavored to sustain the boat against the current by setting his shoulder against the downstream side, and seeking to force it gradually endwise towards the rock, against the upper side of which, if he could but gain it, he quietly informed us he could securely lodge the skiff until some of the other boats should come to our rescue. Finding himself baffled in this attempt by the force of the current, he dexterously whirled the bow of the skiff up stream, and planting his feet firmly against the projections of the ledgy bottom, he sought first to force the boat diagonally across the stream towards the shore. In this he for a little time made some progress; but the strength of the current was too powerful for human endurance, and our brave champion was fast becoming exhausted. While we—poor helpless things—all we could do was to sit there and pray God to spare so generous and brave a hero, even were we ourselves doomed to perish."

"Darwin glanced towards the two men cowering there on the rock, and exclaimed in a tone eloquent in its very bitterness:

"O, if those wretches had but remained and coupled their strength with mine, how easily we might have sustained the boat and saved you?"

"Then finding that he could no longer force the skiff another atom against the surging current, he resolutely set himself against the lower gunwale, and said very quietly:

"Louise and Mary, I will battle against our fate while my strength lasts. Perhaps relief may reach us before I am quite conquered."

"At that moment a clear, ringing shout reached our ears from the water a little distance above us, and looking in the direction whence the shout came, we discovered a man fighting his way towards us with superhuman efforts, in part supported by a branch of some light wood. As he drew near, we recognized Charley Cheever, who, as we subsequently learned, had been quietly rambling alone about the foot of the island, and observing the accident of the boat breaking at the moment it occurred, had instantly cast aside his boots, coat and hat, and plunged into the stream, hoping to overtake us before we reached the dam, and aid us as he might by his superior knowledge of water craft."

"On reaching us, Charley was quite as much exhausted as Darwin himself, and his first word was a declaration that it was sheer folly for them to attempt to sustain the boat there until they became utterly helpless, and finally be forced over the dam like an old sawlog."

"Give me a hand here—both of you girls. Now—a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together." And by the united efforts of Mary, myself and Charley, that young gentleman was in the skiff directly, and not many seconds later he had Darwin in also, and the boat was drifting swiftly onward again towards the dam."

"Charley Cheever was a discarded suitor of Mary's, while Fallonsby, who had so basely abandoned her in the moments of extreme peril, rumor said was her accepted lover."

"Queer arrangement, wasn't it, girls? There we were, two foolish girls, drifting to destruction with our rejected suitors, while our accepted ones were perched on a rock away up there in the middle of the river, like sea-lions, only there was very little of any sort of *lien* about them."

"Now then, Denton, *mon brave*," said Charley, gaily but earnestly, "let us to work and wrock this craft a trifle more, that we may have something to save her with. Wrench out that thwart on which you are sitting, while I help myself to this one. So—we are supplied with tolerable paddles—now you take the bow, and I'll go aft; keep one eye on my motions and assist my navigation with all the might that is in you. I've been three times over that dam, with more water rolling over than there is this evening. Help me all you can, Denton; and you girls keep quiet, and if I don't pilot you down that channel without ruffling a feather, I'll agree to swim up stream over the dam."

"I can never describe to you that fearful plunge, for every sense was merged in that of concentrated vision, and that fixed upon the stern, resolute features of the two heroes who were so generously perilling their lives for our salvation."