

But the English girl, all her listlessness gone, sat upright in the canoe, her brown eyes fixed in eager intentness on the pointing muskets.

Again the reports rang out, but though a bullet ripped through the side of the canoe above the waterline, no other harm was done, and ere the marksman could reload a second time, Michel was far out of range.

There seemed no pursuit, but he plied his paddle hard till darkness came, shooting a foaming rapid in the perilous uncertainty of the short twilight, and landing at last, miles from the place of the attack, on a small islet thickly covered with trees.

Although the night had fallen there was a bright moon sparkling in silvery radiance over the broad river.

On the extremity of the island where they had landed, looking down stream, Michel carefully hid the canoe amid some low bushes and took out some food which was stored in her.

The Countess of Vane, a slim, ethereal figure in the moonbeams, stood watching him with a rising dread in her heart. On that little islet in mid-river they two were utterly alone.

"Come," said Michel, presently, turning to her with an odd smile on his thin lips, "give me your hand, my betrothed, lest you stumble in the shadows."

For a moment his hand, hot and damp from his long paddle, closed on hers. But the girl drew quickly back, trembling, and felt herself flush hot and cold by turns. His tone, rather than his words, appalled her. Never, since he had had her in his power, had he addressed her with such insolent pride of possession.

"Whither am I to come?" she asked him, in a voice she struggled to keep steady.

"To the western point of the island," he answered, "that I may watch the river above us as we sup together."

West or east, it was all one. "I will follow you," she said.