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Thirty miles farther, the north branch, the largest tributary of the Big Salmon, flows from the north. Terraces one hundred and forty feet high rise on both sides of the valley of the stream. The valley is fully two miles wide where it joins the main river. Six miles above its mouth the north branch bifurcates; one branch is from the north-east and takes its rise on the western slope of the chain of mountains to which Last peak belongs. Half a mile above the confluence of the north branch with the Big Salmon river there is a rapid, which is frequented during the summer by Indians, who have established a salmon fishing station there. One mile and a half farther down there is another rapid in a sharp bend of the river. From this point to the mouth of the Big Salmon the river flows through a terraced country, where all the timber has been destroyed by fire.

The river is very shallow; below the north branch it increases considerably in width and contains numerous large islands.

The confluence of the north branch was reached on October 12, and as I had some work to do in this vicinity I pitched my camp. The next day, the weather remaining unsettled, I sent most of my men down the river with the heaviest part of the outfit, and with one man I waited for a change in the weather, which would allow me to complete my work. On the 14th, no change for the better being apparent, I concluded that it would be unsafe to remain any longer, we therefore prepared to start the following morning. During the night the crushing of the ice coming down from both the main stream and the north branch was so deafening that it was impossible to sleep. Long before daybreak we were up and getting ready to leave. A thick fog hung over the river and was so dense that we could barely distinguish the outlines of the opposite bank of the river. The trees were loaded down with thick ice, and everything had a decidedly wintry aspect.

The canvas of our boats must have been rendered very brittle by the frost, for our boat had hardly been in the water five minutes and only half loaded, when we noticed that it was fast filling with water. Upon pulling it ashore and unloading it an examination showed that its bottom had been rent by ice, which was now fully four inches thick. The damage was repaired in ten minutes, but to prevent a similar occurrence, an opening was cut for it in the fixed shore ice which extended twenty feet from the bank and the boat placed in it. The loading being completed we waited for a space of water free from ice, when the boat was hoveled out into the seething stream and all haste made to reach the middle. We had hardly left the shore when the boat stuck so fast in the slush and ice, that with all our endeavours it was impossible to steer it. To make matters worse a thick fog, caused by the low temperature, was continuously rising from the river. Thus enveloped in semi-darkness we drifted helplessly with the moving mass of ice which besieged us from every side.

One mile and a half below our camp we encountered the first rapid; owing to the condition of the river as just described, there was no breaking of the water to indicate the location of rocks and boulders; only the uneven undulating surface of the floating ice as it raced down the stream, with the sudden rearing up of occasional big cakes of ice as they came in contact with the largest boulders. It was a time full of anxiety. The canvas boat unavoidably struck several rocks, but it sustained the shocks without injury, though we could feel its bottom heaving up under our feet; it was owing to its elasticity that no holes were punched through it. As long as we were moving with the ice I knew that no mishap could occur, except from the ice blockades, and after we had successfully passed over the first rapid, we felt confident that we could safely reach the Lewes river. We, however, kept a sharp lookout, and no delay having occurred, we calculated that by noon we had drifted at least ten miles. By that time the sun had dispersed the fog, so that we could better judge what we might expect ahead, and our anxiety was consequently greatly relieved. From early morning until three o'clock in the afternoon we kept up the struggle, and although our position was far from being comfortable we had no thought of stopping. We had now come to a very tortuous section of country and therefore could not see ahead any great distance. The right bank of the river is here formed by high escarpments. We noticed too that the open channel of the river was getting considerably narrower, and before we had time to investigate fully we realized that we were being forcibly drawn by the current into a