

ice at the long weeds and cresses that nodded in the current beneath, and seemed with the waves to let them go; or I would follow on the track of some otter, and run my skate along the mark he had left with his dragging tail, until the trail would enter the woods. Sometimes these excursions were made by moonlight, and it was on one of those occasions that I had a *rencontre* which, even now, with kind faces around me, I cannot recall without a nervous feeling.

I had left my friend's house one evening just before dusk, with the intention of skating a short distance up the noble Kennebec, which glides directly before the door. The night was beautifully clear. A peerless moon rode through an occasionally fleecy cloud, and stars twinkled from the sky and from every frost-covered tree in millions. You wonder at the light that came glittering from the ice, and snow-wreathed and encrusted branches, as the eyes followed for miles the broad gleam of the Kennebec, that like a jewelled zone swept between the mighty forests on its banks. And yet all was still. The cold seemed to have frozen trees, and air, and water, and every thing moved. Even the ringing of my skates on the ice echoed back from the Moccasin Hill with a startling clearness, and the crackle of the ice as I passed over it in my course seemed to follow the tide of the river with lightning speed.

I had gone up the river nearly two miles, when, coming to a little stream which empties into the larger, I turned to explore its course. Fir and hemlock of a century's growth met overhead and formed an archway radiant with frost-work. All was dark within, but I was young and fearless, and as I peered into an unbroken forest that reared itself on the borders of the stream, I laughed with very joyousness; my wild hurrah rang through the silent woods, and I stood listening to the echo that reverberated again and again until all was