

mind which encouraged me wonderfully—for I naturally thought more of her danger than of my own—and which I never expected in one placed in a position of such imminent peril. We could hear a faint shout more than once; but it was vain for us to answer while the wind was blowing as it was. If there had been any *habitants* anywhere in the vicinity they would have heard us; but, as I have before stated, we were opposite a most desolate, lonely part of the river. In the daytime we could have been rescued with little difficulty; but on such a windy, dark night, our prospects were very gloomy.

“Our only hope now, in my opinion, rested on the probability of the floe being swept ashore by the wind, which continued to blow furiously, and even toss the frail raft on which we were floating. The absence of the moon added to the terrors of our situation, during the first four or five hours, for we were not able to see where we were going, and seize any chance that might occur for escaping to some point of land near which we might be providentially tossed by a furious blast. The cold was increasing in intensity, and it was absolutely necessary that we should keep moving to prevent our limbs becoming numb and powerless; but we could only move with the greatest caution, within a small circle, for fear of skating beyond the limits of our raft, on which we could hear the waves dash as we neared the brink.

Our greater peril during that night of terror arose from the ice behind us, which might at any moment be hurled upon our floe by the tempest. We could hear the crunching of the ice, as the wind bore down the fragments upon us, and I shivered at the prospect of being swamped by the overwhelming mass behind. Fortunately for us, the floe kept free of all obstacles; but then we knew—at least, I did—that we could not say how long we should remain safe, for there was a risk every moment of the accumulating mass, which we could see looming like an iceberg, bearing down upon us with irresistible force. Happily, its progress had been stopped—probably it had grounded on some intervening shoal; and therein lay our safety.

“Never shall I forget the agonies of that fearful night; but the worst has yet to be told. I took off my overcoat, in the early part of the evening, and wrapped it around Abbie, despite her protestations that she could do without it. I had no fears for myself, whilst I could keep my limbs in motion; but I trembled whenever I thought of the effect of the cold and fatigue upon that tender girl. In the first part of the night she spoke hopefully enough, but as the darkness grew more dense and the wind howled around us, her courage began to fail, and her steps to waver. We saw some lights on the shore as we moved slowly down, and I had little doubt that they proceeded from persons sent out to help us; but it was perfectly useless to attempt to make them hear, for I shouted till I was hoarse, but the only response was the shrieking of the storm, or the monotonous rushing of the water around us. Midnight came, and Abbie's step became fainter and she no longer spoke, even in answer to my efforts to keep up her courage; and now the terrible thought flashed across my mind that she might die ere morning dawned. What would I not then have given for a flask of wine or cordial to revive her strength, which was apparently ebbing away!

“The moon rose at last over the hills, and then to my great joy the clouds commenced to disperse, and the wind to subside. I called Abbie's attention to these encouraging signs, but she looked absently into my face, and hardly seemed to understand me. She was clearly overcome by terror and exhaustion, so I took her in my arms like a babe, and kept moving up and down the ice, and trying to comfort her with reassuring words. The moon rose higher, but still no sign of succor. Clouds still floated over the heavens, but now and then I could catch a glimpse of our position. I saw that we were on a floe of considerable size, and that we were well in the middle of the river, with what appeared to be an island some distance to the right of us. It was just possible, I thought, that we might be driven by the wind upon the island. At all events, our prospects were better, for the storm was over and daylight must soon come.