

cape of steam; while the inside of heated apartments is encrusted with a thick coating of rime, produced from the respiration of the inmates and the steam of their victuals. Instruments and other articles of metal cannot be touched with impunity by the naked hand out of doors; for the skin will stick to them on contact, and, precisely the same effect as burning one's fingers be produced. Similar punishment follows on incautiously drinking from tin panikins. The lips cleave to the metal, and painful excoriations are often caused in removing them. It is curious to witness the mobile mercury, when brought into the atmosphere from a higher temperature, yield to the potent cold, and reluctantly resign itself to rigidity. The quicksilver slowly contracts, a dull film overspreads it, and next a bright fluid appears at the surface, when its consistency is akin to that of dough. Then follows the final change to complete congelation. King Frost has the prey fairly in his gripe when the temperature of his finger ends in about 40°. The metal hardens, till the before restless, volatile, and dancing mercury is stiff as a corpse—an indurated solid.

Severe as is the season, it is not without its glory. There are gorgeous spectacles in the heavens which canopy the dreary landscape and solitary country. Parhelia by day, and paraselenæ by night, are frequent, or mock suns and moons, with circles, arcs of circles, inverted or in a natural position, and horizontal bands, caused by the inflection of light from minute angular crystals of ice floating in the atmosphere. Then the Aurora Borealis adds its splendor to the visual variety, with an effect never witnessed in our own geographical position, or gladly would our population troop out of doors at midnight, and brave the bitterest blast to enjoy the spectacle. No language can adequately describe or pencil picture the phenomenon; its ever-varying phases, its fickle hues, its radiance, and its grandeur, rendered all the more imposing by the perfect mysteriousness of the cause.

What fills with dazzling beams the illumined air?

What wakes the frames that light the firmament?

The lightnings flash—there is no thunder there,

And earth and heaven with fiery sheets are blent:

The winter night now gleams with brighter,  
lovelier ray  
Than ever yet adorn'd the golden summer's day.

Is there some vast, some hidden magazine,

Where the gross darkness flames of fire supplies?

Some phosphorous fabric which the mountains screen,

Whose clouds of light above those mountains rise?

The arrival of migratory birds from the south heralds the approach of a more genial season; with an increase of temperature the snow melts. Pools of water are then formed on the lake and river ice, till the compact mass is itself broken up, the currents are again in motion, huge blocks passing along with the streams, grinding and hollowing out their banks. When impeded in their progress, they collect in enormous piles and form temporary dams, causing the obstructed waters to flood the adjoining country, till the barrier is removed by its natural dissolution. Upon the surface soil appearing, the ground is a universal swamp, but is gradually dried by drainage, in situations favorable to it, and by the increase of temperature. Summer comes at length, and though a briefer interval than the winter, it is rendered quite as distinct by its heat as the other season by its cold. Where the thermometer has fallen below zero, it often registers 84° in the shade and 100° in the sun, and by concentrating the solar rays on a black ground, a temperature as high as 112° may be obtained. Where, too, exposed limbs would be certainly frost-bitten in winter, they as surely wince at the bites of musquitos and gad-flies in summer. The region is thus one of surprising extremes, as well as of sudden changes; for the seasonal transitions are effected with marvelous rapidity, and the weather is subject to the most capricious variations. Thick fogs prevail for weeks after splendid sunshine, rain is sometimes abundant with a serene sky, and the sun will occasionally burst forth in the midst of the heaviest showers.

Such are the physical characteristics of the territory. Its human occupiers consist of Esquimaux, thinly sprinkled along the shores of the Arctic Ocean; Indians, of various tribes, sparingly scattered through the interior; and the officers and servants of the Hudson's Bay Company. The latter are for the most

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