

far from human help. My first thought was for Aninia; I already saw her fine and delicate form torn by these devouring monsters. I had often been told of the tenacity and velocity with which the wolves pursued their prey. If our horses did not give in, we were saved, but I said to myself with a sort of certainty that their strength would be exhausted by the perseverance of the wolves, and that we should become the victims of these ferocious animals.

I had a hunting knife, a gun and two pistols; unfortunately my provision of powder and lead was so small that it would suffice to bring down but a few of our enemies.

Old Kosko pressed the horses on—useless labour; he had no need to excite them; the natural instinct of these poor animals made them better know the danger than we ourselves.

I was continually occupied in looking far behind us and listening in the silence of the night for the least noise which would give me the horrible certainty of our fate. Kosko had seen it and heard more surely than I; said he to me:

"They come, they come, do you not hear their cries and their gallop? Do you see that obscure point down there? There are more than a hundred."

At the same instant, I recognized what the piercing sight of Kosko had discovered before mine.

A dark mass was moving on in a singular manner and approached nearer and nearer. They appeared to fly over the snow-covered plain; you could give no account of their steps and yet the troupe advanced in such a way that they threatened soon to pass our horses, whose strength began to weaken.

Terrible and savage sounds pierced the shades of night. They sometimes resembled growling, sometimes the dull and painful groanings of a man in danger whose cries they wish to stifle by violence.

Aninia doubted nothing yet; she was entirely occupied with her inquietudes and reveries. I could not, however, leave her any longer in ignorance of the danger which threatened us. Already I distinguished separate groups among these devouring monsters. Already several of them stepped out of the great body and approached us like a formidable *avant-garde* at the distance of a gun shot from our sleigh. I shouldered my gun and sighted the first of these monsters. "Lower you head" I cried, addressing Aninia, who appeared to arouse from a profound sleep.

She looked at me as if to question me, but it was easy to see from my figure that it was no time for explanation, so that she lowered her head mechanically.