

formed a mound six or seven feet high, on the top of which I stood, contemplating the awful scene around me, and feeling as if I no longer had the least connection with the world, or retained any thing human or earthly in my composition.

The wind, which was pretty strong, drove the ice down the lake very fast. My alarms and anxieties had gradually become less intense, and I was several times overcome by a sort of stupor; during the continuance of which, imagination and reality combined their distracting influence. At one time I fancied that the snow still drifted as violently as ever, and that I distinguished, through its hazy medium, a band of Indian chiefs walking past me upon the surface of the lake. Their steps were noiseless, and they went along with wan and dejected looks and downcast eyes, and paid no attention to my exclamations and entreaties for relief. At another, I thought I was floating in the middle of the ocean, and that a blazing sun flamed in the cloudless sky, and made the ice which supported me melt so fast, that I heard streams of water pouring from its sides, and felt myself every moment descending towards the surface of the billows. I was usually awakened from such dreams by some noise or violent concussion, but always relapsed into them whenever the cause of disturbance ceased to operate.

The longest and last of these slumbers was broken by a terrible shock, which my ice island received, and which threw me from my seat, and nearly precipitated me into the lake. On regaining my former position, and looking round, I perceived to my joy and astonishment, that I was in a river. The water between me and the shore was still frozen over, and was about thirty yards wide, consequently the fragment of ice on which I stood could not approach any nearer than this. After a moment of irresolution, I leaped upon the frozen surface, and began to run towards the bank of the river. My feet seemed scarcely to touch the ice, so great was my terror lest it should give way beneath me; but I reached the shore in safety, and dropped down completely exhausted by fatigue and agitation.

It was now broad day-light, but I neither saw animals nor human beings,
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nor any vestiges of them. Thick forests covered the banks of the river, and extended back as far as my eye could reach. I feared to penetrate them, lest I should get bewildered in their recesses, and accordingly walked along the edge of the stream. It was not long before I discovered a column of smoke rising among the trees. I immediately directed my steps towards the spot, and, on reaching it, found a party seated round a fire.

They received me with an air of indifference and unconcern, not very agreeable or encouraging to one in my destitute condition. However, I placed myself in their circle, and tried to discover to what tribe they belonged, by addressing them in the different Indian languages with which I was acquainted. I soon made myself intelligible, and related the circumstances that had brought me so unexpectedly among them. At the conclusion of my narrative, the men pulled their tomahawk pipes from their mouths, and looked at each other with incredulous smiles. I did not make any attempt to convince them of the truth of what I said, knowing it would be vain to do so, but asked for something to eat. After some deliberation, they gave me a small quantity of pemican, but with an unwillingness that did not evince such a spirit of hospitality as I had usually met with among Indians.

The party consisted of three men, two women, and a couple of children, all of whom sat or lay near the fire in absolute idleness; and their minds seemed to be as unoccupied as their bodies, for nothing resembling conversation ever passed between them. The weather was dreary and comfortless. A thick small rain, such as usually falls in North America during a thaw, filled the air, and the wigwam under which we sat afforded but an imperfect shelter from it. I passed the time in the most gloomy and desponding reflections. I saw no means by which I could return to the trading post, and the behaviour of the Indians made me doubt if they would be inclined to grant me that support and protection without which I could not long exist. One man gazed upon me so constantly and steadily, that his scrutiny annoyed me, and attracted my particular attention. He appeared to be the