

Whilst Nastasia was giving these rapid instructions to her brother, the howling had not ceased to draw near. The horse, whose mane stood on end, continued his course with a disordered quickness; everything appeared to fly around the sleigh. But soon the enemy appeared. It was an *avant garde* of six wolves; the leader was of monstrous size.

"Sister, do you not see him? Fire now," murmured Paul, in a trembling voice.

"Not yet, brother, it is not time."

After waiting a little, Nastasia drew, and the wolf who lead the *avant garde* fell, with a hideous howl, and fell to rise no more. The two wolves who followed, advanced a few steps, and twice the revolver did its work, and the two animals lay extended on the snow. Three more shots were heard, one wolf was killed, another wounded; and the third fled without being hit from the field of battle.

"Behold them gone," cried Paul with a sigh of relief.

"Gone to return," replied Nastasia in a low voice.

"Paul, do not lose a moment; give me a loaded pistol and reload this as quickly as you can." The young girl had hardly time to say these words before a howling stronger than the first was heard. In arriving at the place where the killed and wounded wolves lay, this band of carnivori stopped a moment. They devoured the still beating carcasses; it detained them but four minutes, but in circumstances such as the travellers found themselves in, minutes are worth ages. The revolver was reloaded; Nastasia, who by a ray from the moon had seen two wolves detach themselves from the band, to cut off the road from the horse, which would have been the certain loss of both brother and sister, knocked them over with two balls, sent with as true an aim, as with *sang froid*. She fired the four shots which remained among the body of the assailants which continued to advance, and three of their number fell dead.

The second revolver replaced the first in the hand of the valiant girl, and she fired successively its six shots. The horse, over excited by these rapid discharges and the howling of the wolves, no longer galloped, he flew; foam whitened his mouth and sweat streamed from his body. A few steps further and the brother and sister were safe, for the château came nearer and nearer. But the horse, exhausted by fatigue, and broken by fear, would he do those few steps? Nastasia, who began to doubt it, multiplied her shots; in hopes that they would be heard at the château. The cloud of powder which thickened around the sleigh prevented her from seeing that a wolf gained on the horse's swiftness, and suddenly was heard a fearful cry, a cry of suffering, of distress, of agony, and the horse fell expiring. Nastasia had only time to make one more shot in the