

Narrative Pieces.

A MARVELLOUS ESCAPE.

Nearly eighty years ago two Moravian missionaries, who were stationed in Labrador, at a place called Nain, set out on a journey in a sledge, over the ice, to one of their settlements situated further north. They started early in the morning. The weather was all that could be wished for to favor their journey. In those northern regions the air is clear and biting, to an extent never known in more temperate climates. The members of their party were each wrapped up warmly, and anticipated a pleasant drive. Their sledge was drawn by dogs, and driven by an Esquimaux Indian. Another sledge followed, in which were other natives who were friends of the missionaries, among them were a woman and her child.

The whole party were in high spirits. They had one hundred and fifty miles to go, which they expected to accomplish in about two days, as most of the way was over the frozen sea, and the sledges ran with ease, and the dogs were fresh and in full vigour. After they had journeyed some hours, and were a long distance from the shore, upon the clear glistening ice that covered the ocean, they met a sledge containing some strange Esquimaux Indians. These natives were hastening for the land as rapidly as possible. They barely stopped a moment, and advised the missionaries to return at once to the shore. They gave no reasons for their advice, and as the missionaries could see no cause for returning, it was not heeded by them. The weather was fair. Hardly a cloud was to be seen in the sky. The frozen ocean, as far as the eye could reach, was as motionless as though the treacherous wave beneath were chained forever. Not many moments passed, however, before their driver thought he perceived what is called a ground swell under the ice. He jumped from his sledge. Lying down, he placed his ear upon the frozen surface. He then distinctly heard a hollow grating and roaring noise that seemed as if ascending from the abyss beneath.

The travellers now quickened the pace of their dogs. Soon the motion of the sea under the ice was more perceptible. The driver turned for the shore, and urged the dogs to their utmost speed. The wind soon began to blow, and dark clouds seemed to rise up almost as if by magic from the horizon. The ice began to break. It opened here and there, in cracks and fissures one or two feet wide. These were rapidly crossed by the frightened company, and still they urged forward their dogs on their perilous way.

But now the warning signs increased. As the sun descended toward the west, the wind rose to a storm. The snow, upon the rocks and mountainous ledges of the coast, was violently driven up by occasional gusts, and filled the atmosphere. The ground swell increased so much, that the vast body of ice, upreared by a troubled ocean beneath, heaved fearfully in many places, and rose slowly like gathering waves. The sledges no longer moved swiftly and smoothly along, but could, with difficulty, be preserved from over turning. Loud noises, too, were heard in the distance, resembling discharges of cannon, occasioned by the breaking up of the ice. The Esquimaux eagerly strove to reach the shore; but it soon appeared evident that the ice would burst midway between them and the land. As they neared the coast, the prospect before them was truly terrific. The ice was grinding and breaking into a thousand pieces against the precipices, with a tremendous noise, which, added to the raging of the wind, and the snow storms driving about through the air, utterly prevented their hearing or seeing anything distinctly. It was with the utmost difficulty the terrified dogs could be urged onward, amid the rising and falling of the icy sea. The drivers paused a few seconds, in a sort of mute despair. Then, seizing the critical moment when the trembling mass dashed wildly to the level of the coast, they drove their sledges furiously along it, and succeeded in their hazardous attempt. They had hardly time to look around them after gaining the land, when that part of the ice from