



*Shipwreck & dreadfull sufferings of the Captain & crew of an English Sloop in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.*



DREADFUL WRECK  
OF THE BRIG  
**ST. LAWRENCE,**

*From Quebec to New-York, 1780,*

WHICH STRUCK

ON AN ISLAND OF ICE,

*Near the Gulph of St. Lawrence ;*

INCLUDING

THE MELANCHOLY FATE OF SOME OF THE CREW,

Who were Frozen to Death ;

AND

THE PERILOUS SITUATION

AND

*EXTREME HARDSHIPS OF THE SURVIVORS,*

On an unknown and dreary Shore ;

PARTICULARLY OF

**WILLIAM PRENTIES, Esq.**

Ensign of the 84th Regiment of Foot,

By whose enterprising and active spirit, his own, and the  
Preservation of Three of his Companions, was  
effected in a crazy Boat.

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*DREADFUL WRECK*  
OF THE BRIG  
**S T . L A W R E N C E ,**  
ON HER PASSAGE

*From Quebec to New-York, 1780.*



**E**NSIGN William Prenties, of the 84th regiment, being charged with dispatches which he had received from General Haldimand, commander in chief in Canada, for General Clinton, embarked in the *St. Lawrence*, a small sloop, bound from Quebec to New-York, November 17, 1780.

They set sail in company with a brig destined for the same place, and carrying a duplicate of the dispatches. Having descended the *St. Lawrence* to the harbour called *St. Patrick's Hole*, they were detained in that port by a contrary wind, which continued six days. The winter began to set in, and ice, of considerable thickness, was soon formed on the banks of the river by the intenseness of the frost.

Before they reached the mouth of the river, it was discovered that the sloop had sprung a small leak. They had scarcely entered the gulph, when the ship began to make considerably more water, and though two pumps were kept constantly going, they still had two feet water in the hold. On the other hand, the severity of the frost had increased, and the ice collected about the ship so as to render them apprehensive of being entirely surrounded. They had on

## DREADFUL WRECK OF

board only nineteen persons, six of whom were passengers, and the others bad seamen. As to the captain, to whom it was natural to look up for assistance in this predicament, instead of attending to the preservation of the ship, he passed the time in getting drunk in his cabin, without bestowing a thought upon either her or her crew.

The wind continuing to blow with the same violence, and the water having risen in the hold to the height of four feet, cold and fatigue produced a general despondency among the crew. The seamen unanimously resolved to desist from their work. They abandoned the pumps, and shewed the utmost indifference to their fate, declaring they would rather go to the bottom with the ship, than exhaust themselves by useless labour in such a desperate situation. It must be acknowledged, that for several days they had undergone excessive fatigue, without any interval of relaxation. The inactivity of the captain had the effect of disheartening them still more. However, by encouragement and promises, and by the distribution of wine, which Ensign Prenties ordered very seasonably to refresh them, he at length overcame their reluctance. During the interruption of their labour the water had risen another foot in the hold; but their activity was so increased by the warmth of the liquor, which he gave them every half hour, and they stuck so closely to their work, that that the water was soon reduced to less than three feet.

It was now the 3d of December. The wind appeared every day to become more violent instead of abating. The cracks in the vessel continued to increase, while the ice attached to her sides augmented her weight and checked her progress. It was necessary to keep constantly breaking this crust of ice, which threatened to envelop the ship. The brig by which they were accompanied, so far from being able to lend them any assistance, was in a situation still more deplorable, having struck upon the rocks near the island of Coudres, through the ignorance of the pilot. A thick snow, which then began to fall, concealed her from them. The guns which they fired alternately every half hour formed the whole of their correspondence. They soon had the mortification to find that their signal was not answered. She perished, together with her crew of sixteen persons, while it was impossible for those of the St. Lawrence even to perceive their disaster, or to endeavour to pick them up.

The pity with which their melancholy fate inspired the crew of the St. Lawrence was soon diverted to themselves,

by the apprehension of new danger. The sea ran very high; the snow fell excessively thick, the cold was insupportable, and the whole crew a prey to dejection. Thus situated, the mate exclaimed, that they could not be far from the Magdalen Islands, a confused heap of rocks, some of which raise their heads above the sea, while others are concealed beneath the surface of the water, and have proved fatal to great numbers of vessels. In less than two hours, they heard the waves breaking with a great noise upon those rocks, and soon afterwards discovered the principal island called the Dead Man, which they with difficulty avoided. Their apprehensions of danger were not the less alarming, for amidst such a multitude of rocks, there was little probability of their escaping with the same good fortune; as the snow, which fell faster than ever, scarcely suffered them to see from one end of the ship to the other. It would be difficult to describe the consternation and horror with which they were seized during the whole of this passage. But when they had cleared it, a ray of hope dawned upon the hearts of the seamen, who, upon considering the danger they had just escaped, no longer doubted the interposition of Providence in their favour, and redoubled their efforts with new ardour.

The sea became more turbulent during the night, and at five o'clock the next morning a prodigious wave broke over the ship, staved in her ports, and filled the cabin. The impetuosity of the waves having driven in the sternmost, they endeavoured to stop the apertures with beef cut in slices; but this feeble expedient proved ineffectual, and the water continued to gain upon them more rapidly than ever. The affrighted crew had suspended, for a moment, the working of the pumps; when they were about to resume their labour they found them frozen so hard that it was impossible to work them afterwards.

From that moment they lost all hope of saving the ship; and all their wishes were confined to her keeping above water, at least till they reached St. John's, or some other island in the gulph, where they might be able to land with the aid of their boat.

Being left at the mercy of the wind, they durst not perform any manœuvre, for fear of giving some dangerous shock to the vessel. The weight of water, which was increasing every minute, retarded her progress, and the more rapid waves, whose course she checked, returned with fury and broke over the deck. The cabin, in which they had taken

refuge, afforded a feeble protection against the howling tempest, and scarcely sheltered them from the violence of the icy waves. The gulls and wild ducks which hovered around them, testified, it is true, that the land could not be far distant ; but the very approach to it became a new subject of terror. How were they to escape the breakers with which it might be surrounded, unable as it were to avoid, or even to perceive them through the cloud of snow in which they were enveloped ? Such, for a few hours, was their deplorable situation, when the weather having suddenly cleared, they at length perceived the land at the distance of three leagues.

The sentiment of joy, with which the first sight of it inspired them, was much abated upon a more distinct view of the enormous rocks which appeared to rise perpendicularly along the coast in order to repel them. The vessel, besides, shipped such heavy seas as would have sunk her, had she been more deeply laden. At each successive shock they were afraid of seeing the ship go to pieces. Their boat was too small to contain the whole of the crew, and the sea too rough to trust to such a frail support. It appeared as if they had made this fatal land only to render it a witness of their loss.

Meanwhile they continued to approach it. They were not above a mile distant, when they discovered, with transport, around the menacing rocks, a sandy beach, towards which their course was directed, while the water decreased so fast in depth as to prevent their approaching within fifty or sixty yards, when the ship struck. The fate of their lives was now about to be decided in a few minutes. She struck upon the sand with great violence. At the first shock the mainmast went by the board, and the tiller was unshipped with such force that the bar almost killed one of the seamen. The furious seas which dashed against the ship on every side staved in the stern, so that having no longer any shelter in the cabin, they were obliged to go upon deck, and to hold fast by the rigging, for fear of being washed overboard. In a few moments the vessel righted a little, but the keel was broken, and the body of the ship seemed ready to go to pieces. Thus all their hopes were reduced to the boat, which our hero had infinite trouble to get overboard, being so covered within and without with lumps of ice, of which it was necessary to clear her. Most of the crew having taken wine to endeavour to overcome the fright with which

they were seized, Captain Prenties gave a glass of brandy to those who were sober, and asked if they were willing to embark with him in the boat, for the purpose of getting on shore. The sea was so rough that it appeared impossible for their crazy bark to keep it a moment without being overwhelmed. Only the mate, two seamen, and a young passenger, resolved to risk themselves in a boat.

In the first moment of danger, our hero had put his dispatches in a handkerchief, which he tied round his waist. Regardless of the rest of his property, he seized a hatchet and a saw, and threw himself into the boat, followed by the mate and his servant, who, more thoughtful than himself, had saved out of his box a purse of one hundred and eighty guineas. The passenger, not springing far enough, fell into the sea, and their hands were so benumbed with cold as to be almost incapable of affording him the smallest assistance. When the two seamen had got into the boat, those who had most obstinately refused to try the same fortune, implored now to be taken in: but being apprehensive that the boat would founder with the weight of such a number, Captain Prenties ordered the boat to put off from the vessel. He soon had occasion to congratulate himself for having stifled a sentiment of commiseration which might have proved fatal to them. Though the shore was not above fifty yards distant, they were met half way by a prodigious wave, which half filled the boat, and would infallibly have upset her had she been more heavily laden. A second wave threw them with violence upon the shore.

The joy to find themselves at length secure from those dangers which had so long kept them in the most cruel alarms, caused them to forget, for a moment, that they had only escaped one kind of death, probably to endure another more terrible and painful. While they embraced each other, in their first transports, and congratulated themselves on their escape, they could not but be sensible of the distresses of their companions whom they had left on board, and whose lamentable cries they heard amidst the hoarse noise of the waves. What augmented the affliction into which they were plunged by this sentiment, was, their being unable to afford them any kind of assistance. Their boat thrown upon the sand by the angry waves, plainly testified the impossibility of her breaking their force and returning to the vessel.

Night was fast approaching, and they had not been long

upon this icy shore when they found themselves benumbed with cold. They were obliged to walk over the snow, which sunk under their feet, to the entrance of a little wood about two hundred yards from the shore, which sheltered them a little from the piercing north-west wind. They wanted a fire to warm their chilled limbs, and had no means of kindling one. The tinder-box, which they had taken the precaution to put into the boat, had got wet by the last wave that drove them on shore. Exercise alone could prevent their being frozen, by keeping their blood in circulation.

Captain Prenties being better acquainted than his companions with the nature of these severe climates, recommended to them to keep themselves in motion, in order to prevent being overpowered by sleep. But our young passenger, whose clothes were soaked in the sea water, and were frozen stiff upon his body, was unable to resist the drowsy sensation always produced by the excessive cold which he experienced. In vain our hero employed, by turns, persuasion and force to make him keep upon his legs. He was therefore obliged to leave him to his supineness. After walking about half an hour, Captain Prenties was himself seized with such a powerful inclination to sleep, that he felt himself ready to sink to the ground every moment in order to gratify it, till he returned to the place where the young man was laid. He put his hand to his face, and found it quite cold, when he desired the mate to feel it. They both conceived him to be dead. He replied, with a feeble voice, that he was not, but that he felt his end approaching, and intreated Capt. Prenties, if he survived, to write to his father at New York, and inform him of his fate. In ten minutes they saw him expire, without any pain, or at least without strong convulsions.

This dreadful lesson was incapable of inducing the others to resist the inclination to sleep by which they were attacked. Three of them lay down in spite of our hero's exhortations. Seeing that it was impossible to keep them on their legs, he went and cut two branches of trees, one of which he gave to the mate, and his whole employment, during the remainder of the night, was to keep his companions from sleeping, by striking them as soon as they closed their eyes. This exercise was of benefit to themselves, at the same time that it preserved the others from the danger of almost certain death.

Day-light, which they awaited with such impatience, at

length appeared. Our hero ran to the shore with the mate, to endeavour to discover some vestige of the ship, though they had very little hopes of finding any. What was their surprise and their satisfaction to see that she had held together, notwithstanding the violence of the wind, which seemed strong enough to dash her into a thousand pieces during the night! The first thing that Capt. Prenties did, was to contrive how to get the remainder of the crew on shore. The vessel, since they had quitted her, had been driven by the waves much nearer the shore, and the distance by which she was separated from it, he knew must be much less at low water. When it was come, he called out to the people in the ship to tie a rope to her side and let themselves down one after the other. They adopted this expedient. Watching attentively the motion of the sea, and seizing the opportunity of dropping at the moment when the waves retired, they all got on shore without danger, except the carpenter. He did not think proper to trust himself in that manner, or probably was unable to stir, having used his bottle rather too freely during the night. The general safety was attached to that of each individual, and our hero was doubly rejoiced to see around him such a number of his companions in misfortune, whom he imagined to be swallowed up by the waves but a few hours before.

The captain, before he left the ship, fortunately provided himself with all the materials necessary for lighting a fire. The company then proceeded towards the forest: some fell to work to cut wood, others to collect dry branches scattered on the ground, and soon a bright flame, rising from a large pile, produced a thousand acclamations of joy. Considering the extreme cold which they had so long endured, no enjoyment could equal that of a good fire. They crowded round it as closely as possible to revive their benumbed limbs. But this enjoyment was succeeded, in general, by excruciating pain, as soon as the heat of the fire penetrated into those parts of the body which had been bitten by the frost. The mate and our hero were the only exceptions, on account of the exercise they had taken during the night. All the others had been more or less attacked, both in the ship and on shore. The convulsive movements produced in their unfortunate companions, by the violence of the torments they endured, would be too horrible for description.

When they came to make a review of their company, Captain Green, a passenger, was missing. It seems, he had

fallen asleep in the ship, and had been frozen do death. Their anxiety was renewed on account of the carpenter, who was left behind. The sea continued to roll with unabated fury, so that it was impossible to send the boat to his relief, they were obliged to wait the return of low water; when they at length, persuaded him to come on shore in the same manner as the others; which he did with extreme difficulty, being reduced to a state of the utmost weakness, and frozen in almost every part of his body.

Night arrived, and they spent it rather more comfortably than the preceding. Yet, notwithstanding they were careful to keep up a large fire, they suffered considerably from the sharpness of the wind, against which they had no shelter. The trees were scarcely sufficient to protect them from the snow, which fell in immense flakes, as if to extinguish their fire. While it soaked through their clothes on the side exposed to the fire, on their backs it formed a heap which they were obliged to shake off before it froze into ice. The craving sensation of hunger, a new hardship that they had hitherto been unacquainted with, was now added to that of cold, which they had so much difficulty to endure.

Two days elapsed, every moment of which added to the painful recollection of their past misfortunes, the terror of a still more distressing futurity. At length the wind and the sea, which had combined to prevent them from approaching the vessel, redoubled their united efforts to destroy her. They were apprised of her fate by the noise of her breaking up. They ran towards the shore, and saw part of the cargo already floating, which the impetuosity of the waves washed through the openings of her sides. Fortunately the tide carried part of the wreck upon the beach. Providing themselves with long poles, and the oars of their boat, they proceeded along the sand, drawing on shore whatever was most useful within their reach. It was thus that they saved a few casks of salt beef, and a considerable quantity of onions, which the captain had taken on board to sell. Their attention was likewise directed to the planks that were detached from the vessel, and which might prove serviceable to them in constructing a hut. They collected a great number, which they dragged into the wood, to be immediately employed for the above mentioned purpose. This was no easy undertaking, as few of them were able to go to work upon it. Their success this day, however, inspired them with courage, and the food they had procured supporting their

strength, the work had advanced considerably by the close of the day. The light of their fire enabled them to continue it after dark, and by ten o'clock at night they had a hut twenty feet long, ten broad, and sufficiently solid, (thanks to the trees which supported it at certain distances) to withstand the force of the wind, but not close enough to shelter them entirely from the cold.

The two succeeding days were employed either in completing their edifice, collecting, during high water, what the tide brought from the ship, or in taking an account of their provisions, in order to establish the proportion in which they ought to be distributed. They had not been able to save any biscuit, which was thoroughly soaked with salt water. It was agreed, that each person, well or ill, should be confined to a quarter of a pound of beef, and four onions a day, as long as they lasted. This scanty pittance, scarcely sufficient to keep them alive, was all that they could allow themselves, uncertain what time they might be obliged to spend on this desert coast.

The 11th of December, the sixth day after their shipwreck, the wind abated, so as to allow them to get the boat afloat to go and seek what was left in the wreck. Great part of the day was lost in cutting away, with the hatchet, the thick ice which covered the deck and stopped up the hatchways. The next day they succeeded in getting out a small barrel, containing one hundred and twenty pounds of salt beef, two chests of onions, one of potatoes, three bottles of balsam of Canada, one of oil, which became exceedingly serviceable for the wounds of the seamen; another hatchet, a large iron pot, two stew-pans; and about a dozen pound of candles. This precious cargo enabled them the following day to add four onions to their daily allowance.

They returned again on board on the 14th, to look for the sails, part of which served to cover our hut, and to keep out the snow. The same day, the wounds of those who had suffered most from the frost, and had neglected to rub them with snow, began to mortify. The skin came off their legs, their hands, and the parts of their limbs affected by the frost, with excessive pain. The carpenter, who was the last that came on shore, lost the greatest part of his feet, and now became delirious, in which state he continued till the 5th, when death relieved him from his miserable existence. Three days afterwards, their second mate died in the same manner, having been delirious several hours before he ex-

pired ; and a seaman experienced the same fate the following day. They covered their bodies with snow and the branches of trees, having neither pick-axe nor spade to dig them a grave ; and if they had even been provided with them, the earth was frozen too hard, and too deep, to yield to those instruments. All those losses, which reduced their company to fourteen persons, gave them but little concern, for upon considering the dreadful situation of the survivors, death appeared rather a blessing than a misfortune ; and when a sentiment of nature revived within them the love of life, each individual regarded his companions as so many enemies armed by hunger to deprive him of his subsistence. In fact, if some had not paid the debt of nature, they would soon have been reduced to the horrible necessity of perishing of hunger, or of murdering and devouring each other. Without being brought to this dreadful alternative, their situation was so miserable, that it seemed impossible for any new calamity to be capable of augmenting its horrors. The continual sensation of excessive cold and pressing hunger, the pain of the frost wounds, irritated by the fire, the complaints of the sufferers, the neglect and filth which rendered them objects of disgust, both to themselves and others, all the images of despair collected around them, and the prospect of a slow and painful death, in the midst of a desolate region, far from the consolations of relatives and friends ; such is an imperfect representation of those pangs which their minds endured every moment of the tedious days and eternal nights.

Captain Prenties and the mate often went abroad to see if they could discover any vestiges of habitations in the country. Their excursions were not long, nor attended with any success. They resolved, one day, to penetrate farther into the country, keeping along the banks of a frozen river. They observed, from time to time, traces of elks and other animals, which caused them sincerely to regret being unprovided with arms and powder to shoot them. A ray of hope, for a moment, illumined their minds. Following the direction of some trees, cut on the side with a hatchet, they arrived at a place where some Indians must shortly before have resided, since their wigwam was still standing, and the bark employed for that purpose appeared quite fresh ; an elk's skin, which they found very near, suspended from a pole, confirmed their conjectures. They anxiously traversed all the adjacent country, but, alas ! without success. They

however, derived some satisfaction from reflecting that this place had had inhabitants or visitors, and that they might soon return. Struck with this idea, our hero cut a long pole, which he stuck upright on the bank of the river, fastening to it a piece of birch bark, after cutting it into the figure of a hand, with the fore-finger extended and turned towards their hut. He likewise took away the elk's skin, in order that the savages, at their return, might perceive that somebody had passed by the place since they had left it, and might, by the aid of the sign, discover the route they had taken. The approach of night obliged them to return to their habitation; and they doubled their pace to communicate this agreeable news to their companions. However feeble were the hopes they could reasonably allow themselves to entertain from this discovery, the narrative afforded considerable consolation; so strongly does the kind instinct of nature impel the unhappy to seize upon whatever is capable of alleviating the sensation of their misery.

Several days elapsed in the hope of seeing the Indians appear every moment before their hut. These sweet ideas gradually lost ground and soon vanished. Some of their sick, and among the rest the captain, had in this interval, begun to recover their strength, and their provisions were fast decreasing. Captain Prentiss mentioned the design he had formed of quitting the habitation, with all those who were capable of working the boat, to reconnoitre the coast. This plan received universal approbation; but when they came to think of the means of executing it, a new difficulty presented itself. This was, how to repair the boat, which had been dashed by the sea upon the sand with such fury, that all her joints had opened. They had plenty of tow for stopping the apertures, but unfortunately were in want of pitch to cover it. And how could they supply this deficiency? It fortunately occurred to our hero, all at once, that they might employ the balsam of Canada which they had saved. It was easy to try; he emptied a few bottles of it into their iron pot, and set it on a large fire, taking it off frequently to let it cool; he soon reduced the liquor to a proper consistence. During this time his companions had turned the boat and cleared her of sand and ice. He directed the crevices to be stopped with tow, caulked her with the balsam, and had the pleasure of seeing that it produced the effect to admiration.

This first success inspired them with new ardour to conti-

nue their preparations. A piece of cloth, fastened to a pole, in such a manner as to be raised or lowered at pleasure, promised them a sail strong enough to relieve, with a gentle and favourable wind, the labour of the rowers. Among the crew, few had sufficiently recovered to undergo the fatigues which they foresaw would attend this expedition. Our hero was chosen to conduct it, together with the captain, the mate, two seamen, and his servant. The remainder of the provisions was divided, according to the number of persons, into fourteen equal shares, without reserving, on account of the excessive labour they were about to undertake, a larger portion for themselves than was allotted to those who were to remain quietly in the hut. With this wretched allowance of a quarter of a pound of beef a day, for six weeks, with a crazy boat, covered with a matter on which they could not depend, which the least breath of wind might upset, and the smallest rock dash to pieces, it was, that they had to attempt an enterprize, the plan of which could have been inspired by blind despair alone. But they were at that point, that there was less temerity in braving every possible danger with the feeblest ray of hope, than in exposing themselves, by cowardly inactivity, to the almost inevitable danger of perishing, abandoned by all nature.

The year 1781 had just commenced : and it was their intention to set off the 2d of January, but a furious north-west wind detained them till the afternoon of the fourth. Its violence having then abated, they carried on board their provisions, together with a few pounds of candles, and all the little articles that might be of service to them, and took leave of their companions, in the cruel uncertainty whether this might not be their last farewell. They had not proceeded above eight miles, when the wind turning to the south-east, checked their progress, and obliged them to make, with their oars, towards a large bay which offered them a favourable asylum for the night.

Their first care was to land their provisions, and to remove the boat far enough upon the beach to prevent her being damaged by the sea. They were then obliged to kindle a fire, and to cut wood to keep it up till the next morning. The smallest pine-branches were employed in forming their bed, and the largest in hastily erecting a kind of wigwam, to secure themselves as well as possible from the severity of the weather. While taking their scanty repast, our hero observed on the shore several pieces of wood thrown upon it

by the tide, and which appeared to have been cut with a hatchet. He likewise saw some poles, formed long since by the hand of man, but they could not discover any other marks of inhabitants. At the distance of two miles was a hill bare of trees, with some appearance of its having been cleared. He prevailed upon two of his companions to accompany him thither before dark, that, from its summit, they might embrace a more extensive horizon. As they proceeded along the bay, they saw a Newfoundland fishing-boat, half burned, and the remaining part buried in the sand. This object afforded them fresh hopes, and they doubled their dispatch to climb up the hill. Having arrived at the summit, how great was their satisfaction to perceive some buildings on the other side of it, at the distance of a mile at farthest. Notwithstanding their fatigue, the interval which separated them from them was soon gone over. They arrived, palpitating with hope and joy, but those pleasing emotions were instantly dissipated. In vain they traversed all the buildings; they were deserted. They had been erected for the preparation of cod, and, according to all appearance, had been abandoned several years before. The sad termination of this excursion tended, however, to confirm them in the idea that they should find some habitations by continuing their course round the island.

The wind, which had again shifted to the north-west, detained them the next day, fearing to encounter the ice, which it drifted in great quantities. For three days it continued with the same fury. Having awaked in the night, our hero was astonished to hear its shrill whistling, not accompanied as usual by the hoarse noise of the waves. He called the mate, and informed him of this phenomenon. Being curious to ascertain the cause, they ran towards the shore, the moon's rays affording them light. As far as the eye could reach, their fatal lustre enabled them to perceive the surface of the water motionless beneath the chains of the ice, which was piled up in different places in heaps of prodigious height. It is impossible to describe the sensation of despondency which overwhelmed their minds at this sight. Unable to proceed farther on their expedition, or to return to their former habitation, which would have defended them from the redoubled severity of the cold!

Two days elapsed amidst these gloomy reflections. At length, on the 9th, the wind abated. It shifted the following day to the south-east, and blew with such violence, that

all the ice by which they were blocked up in the bay was broken to pieces with a great noise, and driven out into the open sea, so that by four o'clock in the afternoon there was none left, excepting along the shore. It was not till two days after that the wind abated. A light breeze blowing along the shore, their boat was launched and the sail hoisted. They were already proceeding with a favourable course when, several leagues off in the distance, they perceived an extremely elevated point of land. The coast to that place appeared to form such a continued chain of steep rocks, that it was impossible to attempt a landing before they had doubled the distant cape. It would, however, have been dangerous to risk so long a course. The boat had sprung a leak, and two men were constantly employed in bailing out the water, so that they could use but two oars; and the enfeebled state to which they were reduced, by disappointment and the want of food, scarcely allowed them to support that slight exertion. Fortunately the danger was no longer an object worthy of their consideration, and the wind seconded their perseverance so well, that they arrived at the cape about eleven o'clock at night. The place not being convenient for landing, they were obliged to coast along till two in the morning, when the wind becoming more violent, deprived them of the liberty of choosing a favourable spot; they were obliged to descend upon, or rather to climb, with the utmost difficulty, up a rocky shore, without its being possible for them to secure their boat from the waves, which threatened her with destruction. The place where they had landed was a bay of no great depth, surrounded on the land side by inaccessible heights, but exposed towards the sea to the north-west wind, from which nothing could protect them. The wind which arose on the 13th, threw their boat upon a ledge of the rocks, and damaged her in several places. This accident was but a trifling prelude to new sufferings. Surrounded by insurmountable rocks, which prevented them from seeking shelter in the woods; without any other covering than their sail, stiff with ice; buried for several days beneath a deluge of snow, which was heaped around them to the height of three feet; they had nothing to keep up their fire but the branches and the fragments of the trunks of trees thrown by accident upon the shore. This deplorable situation lasted till the 21st, when the weather grew milder, but they were not able to take advantage of it.

Though it was impossible to scale the wall of rocks which

surrounded them on every side, and they were under the necessity of renouncing the use of their boat, it came into their minds that they might at least proceed along the shore, by walking upon the ice, which had acquired sufficient strength to bear their weight. Captain Prenties and the mate resolved to make the experiment. They set off immediately, and proceeding a few miles, arrived at the mouth of a river, bordered by a sandy beach, where they might have preserved their boat, and lived much less uncomfortably, had their good fortune at first conducted them thither. This discovery, while it occasioned regret, did not tend to increase their hopes. After consulting together on the subject of their return, it was agreed, that they had no other resource than to carry on their backs the remainder of their provisions and useful effects, and to proceed along the coast, where it was most natural to expect to find the families of fishermen or savages. The weather still seemed inclined to frost, and the wind having swept into the sea the greatest part of the snow which covered the ice upon the coast, they flattered themselves that they should walk ten miles a day, even in the state of languor and debility into which they had fallen. They intended to set off on the morning of the 24th, but in the night which preceded it the wind suddenly shifted to the south east, accompanied with heavy rain; so that in a few hours, this crust of snow, which the day before appeared so solid, was entirely dissolved, and the ice detached from the shore. They had now no way of escaping from this disastrous shore on which they were confined. During these painful reflections, their eyes were sometimes directed towards the boat which they had frequently been tempted to break up, in order to supply their fire, as they could not expect to render her serviceable again. They had still tow sufficient to stop the crevices, but the balsam of Canada had been totally exhausted by their daily repairs, and they were unable to contrive any substitute for it. The frost, however, returned the next day. Captain Prenties now conceived the idea to pour water upon the tow with which the crevices were filled, and let it freeze like a coating, to a certain thickness. This simple method succeeded beyond his hopes; all the apertures were so well closed, that they were at length convinced that no water could penetrate through them, as long as the frost continued to be equally severe. They made a successful trial of it on the 27th. Though the boat had become heavy and difficult to be managed, by

the quantity of ice with which it was covered, yet, in the course of the day she proceeded twelve miles from the place of their departure. This new service rendered her more valuable in their eyes, and they took care to remove her on her oars to a place more favourable to her security. A thick forest, situated near the spot, afforded them two advantages, of which they had been deprived for so many nights, a slight shelter against the piercing wind, and abundance of wood to keep up a great fire, which warmed them while they slept. Their stock of tinder being almost consumed, our hero was obliged to renew it by burning a piece of his shirt, the same that he had worn ever since the loss of his effects. The following day, a deluge of rain unfortunately melted all the ice from their boat, and they had the mortification to lose the advantage of a fine day, which might probably have forwarded them several miles on their way. They resolved to wait the return of the frost, and what augmented their impatience and regret was, that their provisions were now reduced to two pounds and a half of beef for each man. The frost not returning till the afternoon of the 29th, the delay unavoidably occasioned by their preparations prevented them from proceeding above seven miles before night. About two o'clock in the afternoon they were in full view of an elevated cape, which they calculated to be only three leagues off. But its prodigious height deceived them with regard to its distance, for it was almost dark before they reached it. After doubling it, their course took a different direction from what it had done in the day, so that they were obliged to lower their sail and take to their oars. The wind then began to blow from the shore. Their efforts to make head against it were very feèble, and had it not been for a current from the north-east, which assisted them to make some opposition, they would have run the risk of being carried irrecoverably into the open sea. The coast being lined with rocks, was here too dangerous to attempt to land; they were obliged to row along the rocks, amidst a thousand dangers, in the dark, till five o'clock in the morning. Being then incapable, from their exhausted state, of any longer exertion, their eyes were shut to the dangers of landing, and heaven crowned their attempt with success, without any other accident than having their boat thrown, half full of water, upon the shore. The beginning of the wood was at no great distance, yet they had great difficulty to crawl to it and make a fire to thaw their limbs and dry their clothes.

Such was the drowsiness into which fatigue and watching had plunged them, that it was impossible to refrain from sleep when their fire began to light. They were obliged to rouse each other alternately, in order to keep it up, fearing lest it should go out while they were altogether, and they should be frozen to death in this lethargic state.

Though now convinced they were on an uninhabited island, yet their provisions being nearly exhausted, this prospect filled them with despair. Nothing but ideas of a speedy death, or the most horrible means of deferring it, presented themselves to their minds. When they cast their eyes upon one another, each seemed ready to point out the victim whom it was necessary to sacrifice to the hunger of his executioners. Some of them had already agreed to commit the selection of the object to the blind decision of the lot. Fortunately the execution of this dreadful design was deferred till the last extremity.

Reduced for their only nourishment to the dry fruits of sweet-brier, dug up from beneath the snow, and a few tallow candles, which they had reserved for a last resource; oppressed with fatigue at the least exertion; checked in their navigation by the ice, the rain, or the winds; sometimes animated with a faint hope, to be plunged soon afterwards into the abyss of despair; they landed for the last time on the 17th, when, completely exhausted, they resolved to perish on the spot, if heaven should not send them some unexpected relief. To place their boat in safety on the beach, would have been an undertaking too far beyond their power. She was abandoned to the fury of the waves, after they had sorrowfully taken out their implements and the sail, which served to cover them. Their last efforts were employed in clearing the snow from the spot they had fixed upon, to raise it all round in a sloping direction, for the purpose of fixing in it branches of trees, intended to form a shelter; and lastly, in cutting and piling as much wood as possible to keep up their fire, fearing lest they should soon be unable to use their instruments. A few handfuls of hips, boiled in snow water, were, during the first days, the sole support of their miserable lives. These began to fail them, and they thought themselves fortunate in being able to supply their place with the marine plants which grew along the shore.

They thus were compelled, for three days, to be contented with the hard tough plants, which made them reach every

mouthful they took. At the same time their legs began to swell, and their whole bodies became so bloated, that notwithstanding the little flesh they had left, their fingers, with the smallest pressure upon their skin, sunk to the depth of an inch, and the impression remained an hour afterwards. Their eyes appeared as if buried in deep cavities. Benumbed by the internal dissolution of their blood, and by the intense cold they endured, they had scarcely strength to crawl, by turns, and revive their almost extinguished fire, or to collect a few branches scattered upon the snow. They however discovered two Indians armed with muskets, who did not appear to have yet perceived them. This sudden appearance reviving their courage, gave them strength to rise, and advance towards them with all the dispatch they were able.

One of them, who spoke bad French, begged them, in that language, to inform them whence they came, and what accident had conducted them to that spot. Our hero hastened to give them as brief an account as possible of the misfortunes and sufferings they had experienced. As he seemed to be deeply affected, Captain Prenties asked him if he could furnish them with any provisions. He replied in the affirmative; but seeing that their fire was almost out, he rose abruptly and seized their hatchet, at which he looked for a moment smiling (as they imagined) at the bad condition in which it was. He threw it down with a look of disdain, and took that which was by his side. In a moment he had cut a great quantity of branches, which he threw upon their fire: he then took up his musquet, and without saying a word, went away with his companion.

In about three hours after, our desponding sufferers perceived them turning a projecting point of land, and rowing towards us in a canoe of bark. They soon came on shore, bringing a large piece of smoked venison, and a bladder filled with fish oil. They boiled the meat in their iron pot with snow water, and when it was dressed, they took care to distribute it among them in a very small quantity, with a little oil, to prevent the dangerous consequences which might have resulted from their voracity in the debilitated state to which their stomachs were reduced. This light repast being over, they made Capt. Prenties embark with two of his companions in their canoe, which was too small to take them all at once. They were received upon landing by three Indians and a dozen women and children, who were waiting for

## THE BRIG ST. LAWRENCE.

them on the shore. While those in the canoe returned to fetch the rest of their company, the others led him towards their huts or wigwams, three in number, constructed for the same number of families, at the entrance of the forest. They were treated by these good people with the kindest hospitality; they made them swallow a kind of broth, but would not permit them, notwithstanding their intreaties, to eat meat, or to take any other too substantial nourishment. To our hero's great joy, the caouee soon returned with his remaining companions.

After having satisfied the most pressing wants, their thoughts were turned towards the unfortunate comrades, whom they had left behind at the place of their shipwreck. Capt. Prenties endeavoured to describe to the savages, as well as he was able, the quarter of the island on which they had been cast, and enquired whether it was not possible to send thither some relief. They replied that they were perfectly well acquainted with the spot, and informed them, that it was about one hundred miles to it, by very difficult ways through the woods; and if they undertook the journey they must expect some compensation for their fatigues. Our hero then told them what it had not before come into his mind to mention, that he had money, and that if it was of any value in their eyes, he would employ part to pay them for their trouble. They seemed perfectly satisfied with his proposal, and asked to see his purse; he took it from his servant, and shewed them the guineas which it contained. At the sight of the gold he observed in their countenance sensations which he should never have expected to meet with among a savage people; the women in particular eyed it with extreme avidity; and when he had presented each of them with a guinea, they set up a loud laugh, that being the way in which the Indians express extraordinary emotions of joy.

They now concluded an agreement by which they engaged to depart the following day, and Capt. Prenties was to give them twenty-five guineas before they set off, and the same sum upon their return. They immediately fell to work to make shoes fit for walking upon the snow, both for themselves and the sufferers whom they were to bring back. Early the next morning they departed, after receiving the stipulated sum.

From the moment the savages saw gold in our hero's possession, his situation lost all the charms which it owed to

their hospitality. They became as rapacious as they had before been generous, requiring ten times the value of the smallest articles with which they furnished his companions and him. They were many days before they recovered their strength, or were capable of digesting any substantial food. The only nourishment the Indians could procure them was elk's flesh and seal-oil, upon which they live entirely during the hunting season.

After an absence of about a fortnight, the Indians returned with three of their people, being all that death had spared out of the eight persons who had been left behind at the hut. They had subsisted several days on the skin of the elk, which resource being at last exhausted, three died of hunger, and the others had been reduced to the horrible necessity of feeding on the dead bodies till the arrival of the Indians. One of the five who remained had given way with so much imprudence to his voracity, that he died in a few hours amidst inexpressible torments; and another had accidentally killed himself in handling the arms of one of the savages. Thus their company, consisting at first of nineteen persons, was reduced to nine, and, when we consider the calamities they endured, it is surprizing that a single individual escaped.

Their impaired strength kept them in this dismal place a fortnight longer, during which our hero was obliged, as before, to pay the most exorbitant price for their food and their smallest wants. At the end of that time, finding his health somewhat re-established, and his purse almost empty, he conceived himself obliged to sacrifice his personal comfort to his duty to the service, and resolved to proceed with his dispatches to General Clinton, with all possible expedition, though this, of all the seasons of the year, was the least proper for travelling. He therefore hired two Indians to take him to Halifax, for forty guineas, which he engaged to pay them upon his arrival there. He farther took upon himself to furnish them by the way with every kind of provisions, and snitable refreshments, in the inhabited parts through which they might pass. Some of the other Indians were to conduct the rest of our sufferers to a settlement on the Spanish river, where they were to remain till the spring to wait for an opportunity of proceeding to Halifax by sea.

Capt Prenties set off on the 2d of April, accompanied by two Indians, his servant, and Mr. Winslow, a young passenger in their ship, and one of the three survivors at the hut.

They each carried with them four pair of Indian shoes, a pair of snow-shoes, and provisions for a fortnight. They arrived that evening at a place, called by the English Broad Oar, where a snow storm detained them the whole of the following day. They set off again on the 4th, and after a march of about fifteen miles, arrived on the banks of a beautiful salt-water lake, called the Lake of St. Peter, one end of which communicates with the sea. Here they met with two Indian families that were going a hunting. Our hero purchased of them, for four guineas, a bark canoe, which his guides informed him would very often be necessary for crossing certain parts of the lake that are never frozen. As in other parts they should have to travel upon the ice, he was likewise obliged to buy two sledges to place the boat upon, and to draw it after them. Having enjoyed two days' repose, and procuring a fresh supply of provisions, they resumed their march on the 7th, proceeding several miles long the banks of the lake; but the ice being bad, they were obliged to quit that route and take another through the woods. The snow was there six feet deep; a thaw accompanied with rain, which came on the next day, rendered it so soft that it was no longer possible to walk upon its surface. They were, therefore, obliged to stop. A large fire, a commodious wigwam, and abundance of provisions, assisted them in some degree to endure this disagreeable delay, without entirely dissipating their inquietudes. The winter was too far advanced for them to hope to travel much longer upon the snow, without the accidental return of the frost; and should it not return again, the only thing they could do was to wait till the lake should be entirely cleared of the ice, and thus they might be detained a fortnight or three weeks longer. In this case their situation was likely to become as unfortunate as that to which they had been reduced by their shipwreck, excepting that the weather was less severe, that they were rather better supplied with provisions, and had at least arms to recruit their stock. The frost fortunately returned on the 12th, and they resolved to take advantage of it the next day. They that day, proceeded six leagues, sometimes on floating ice, and sometimes in the canoe. On the 14th their provisions being almost consumed, our hero proposed to go in pursuit of game, which appeared to abound in this district. He accordingly went into the woods with one of his guides, and they soon discovered the traces of an

elk, which the Indian killed after an hour's pursuit. He opened him with much dexterity, caught the blood in a bladder, and cut up the body into large quarters, part of which they carried on their shoulders to the canoe, sending the other Indian, his servant, and Mr. Winslow for the remainder. This expedition procured them a sufficient stock of provisions to remove any apprehension of want, even in case a sudden thaw prevented them from continuing their route on the lake, or in the woods.

They departed early in the morning of the 15th, and that day went six leagues, which so diminished their strength, already exhausted by long hardships, that it was impossible to proceed the next day. They were detained by fatigue till the 18th, when they resumed their journey in the same manner, that is, partly on the floating ice, and partly in the canoe, in those places where the lake was not frozen.

On the 20th they arrived at St. Peter's, a place where there is a settlement of a few English and French families. Here our hero was kindly received and accommodated with money by Mr. Cavanagh, an English merchant. On the 25th they arrived at Narrashoe, where they were received with the same hospitality as at St. Peter's. Having crossed the straits of Canceau, after a navigation of ten days along the coast, their canoe brought them in safety to the harbour of Halifax.

The Indians having received the sum they had agreed upon, and the presents with which our hero endeavoured to testify his gratitude towards those to whom he owed the preservation of his life, left them in a few days to return to their island. As Capt. Prenties was obliged to wait a considerable time longer for a vessel, he had during that interval, the satisfaction to be joined by his companions in misfortune, whom the other Indians had undertaken to conduct by the Spanish River. At last after waiting two months he embarked in the ship called the Royal Oak, and arrived at New York, where he delivered his dispatches to General Clinton in a very tattered condition. It is remarkable that the wreck of the St. Lawrence happened in a gulph of the same name.