

is that, during winter even, the moon often appears surrounded by rainbows of different colors, and all very bright. For my own part, I am convinced that these effects must be attributed in part to nitrous exhalations, which during the day have been attracted and inflamed by the sun.¹

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But would it be believed that on some of these enormous cakes of ice, some of which equal in extent some of the islands in Hudson's Bay, men are found who have embarked on them intentionally? Yet we are assured that Esquimaux have been more than once perceived on them; and it is certain that if on seeing them thus borne about at the sport of the waves and tides on these floating shoals, fears are entertained for them, greater and better founded are felt for those whom they see risking their lives amid this same ice on vessels: for as these savages carry their canoes everywhere with them on the ice, they are never at a loss, come what will, or change as the weather may. If the ice-cakes dash near each other, they spring from one to another without difficulty; if they leave open channels of considerable size, they embark and sail on as long as the ice permits. Should an iceberg approach which they cannot avoid, they leap on it, and the very iceberg which threaten'd them with destruction shields them from shipwreck. This is not so with those on a vessel. If the ship is caught between two icebergs, the only alternative is to escape to one of them, but then the difficulty is to live on it or leave it. It is easy to conclude that a sea so dangerous in its navigation is not yet well explored. Indeed, except some islands met by the French and English on their passage, and points on the coast where they have had settlements, all the rest has as yet been seen only at a distance.

Mode of
travelling
on the ice.

There is no doubt that among a great number of navi-

¹ De la Potherie, Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale, i., p. 71. His description of the aurora borealis is more accurate than that of Charlevoix. See, too, Voyages au Nord, iii., p. 289.