

better to return whence we had come, and wait until the weather was warmer. "It is true," replied my host, "that we came near perishing; if the hole had been a little larger it would have been all over with us. But let us pursue our way, this little ice does not frighten me." Towards the third hour of the evening we saw before us a horrible bank of ice which blocked our way, extending across the great river for a distance of more than four leagues. We were a little frightened, but my people approached it nevertheless, as they had noticed a small opening in it; they glided into this, turning our little gondola first to one side and then to the other, in order to always make some headway. At last we found these masses of ice so firmly wedged together, that it was impossible either to advance or recede, for the movement of the water closed us in on all sides. In the midst of this ice, if a sharp wind had arisen, we would have been crushed and broken to pieces, [313] we and our canoe, like the grain of wheat between two millstones; for imagine these blocks of ice, larger and thicker than the millstone and hopper together. My Savages, seeing our predicament, leaped from one piece of ice to another, like squirrels from tree to tree; and, pushing it away with their paddles, made a passage for the canoe, in which I sat alone, nearer dying from water than from disease. We struggled along in this way until five o'clock in the evening, and then we landed. These barbarians are very skillful in such encounters. They asked me from time to time, in the greatest danger, if I were not afraid; truly nature is not fond of playing at such games, and their leaps from ice to ice seemed to me to be full of peril both for them and for me, espe-