

Methodist Magazine and Review.

JUNE, 1899.

"THE ROOF OF THE WORLD."*

BY WILLIAM T. STEAD.

It is a strange paradox of national character that the home-loving Scandinavian, with home-sickness running in his very blood, should be one of our greatest wanderers. Few races, if any, have won more distinction than his in the field of adventurous travel. The most recent records of exploration reveal the same restless daring as made the Norsemen of old famous. In 1897 the world rang with the exploits of a Norwegian who had mounted nearer than any human being before him to the summit of the Northern Icecap. In 1898 the printing press is rattling out the story of a Swede who has faced not less appalling dangers while clambering over the Eastern "roof of the world." On Dr. Nansen's book follows Dr. Sven Hedin's.

These twelve hundred pages form a notable addition to the history of travel. It is not often that a single work combines so wide a variety of scene, of society and incident. It mingles the charm of Arctic and of tropical adventure. From the Polar severities encountered on the heights of the Ice Mountains the writer passes to the furnace-heat and deadly thirst of the Gobi Desert; the avalanche, the crevasse and the hurricane of

snow give place in a few pages to the choking sand-storm and the blistering dunes. The spice of danger is rarely absent. The intrepid Swede went through perils almost as numerous and diverse as those of the Apostle Paul. His social experiences were not less varied. His course led him through a strange jumble of races and creeds and civilizations. He was continually moving between social extremes as wide apart as the extremes of temperature he had to undergo. A single day would take him from the primitive fare of the Kirghiz shepherd to the luxurious banquets of Russian and English officers, or to the elaborate hospitalities of a Chinese mandarin.

Steadily accumulating scientific data for the enlightenment of Western savants, he was at the same moment teaching the natives who had never seen a boat how to sail their lake in a craft fearfully and wonderfully made of horse-hide. At home with the children of the simple-hearted nomads, an eager explorer of ancient cities buried beneath the sand, he yet contrived to be on the spot when the Russo-Afghan frontier was finally settled, and to manifest his cosmopolitan sympathy with the latest international movements. One of the most attractive features of the book lies in the medley of life it shows us on the very top of the world's roof—a medley as interesting in its way as the intermingling of nations and manners

* "Through Asia." By Sven Hedin. With nearly three hundred illustrations from sketches and photographs by the author. New York: Harper Brothers. Toronto: William Briggs. In two vols. Pp. 1,278. Price, \$10.00.

Mr. Stead's admirable article is abridged from the *Review of Reviews*.