

But, we are prepared for winter. Jacques Cartier was not, and very heavily its hand fell upon him, as it did subsequently on Champlain when he first wintered at Quebec. How heavily, we are in a position to estimate from reading the harrowing descriptions of the sufferings endured by the people of London in January 1881, in consequence of a snow-fall of some twelve inches. One periodical describes the scene under the title of "Moscow in London," and soberly asserts that "to have lived in London on Tuesday, the 18th January, 1881, and to have survived the experience, is something which any man is justified in remembering, and which ought to justify occasional boasting of the fact." Another declares that a few more such snow-storms would "render our life and civilization impossible;" that in such a case there could be only "an Esquimaux life, not an English life;" that "a transformation of the rain into these soft white crystals which at first sight seem so much less aggressive than rain is all that is needed to destroy the whole structure of our communications, whether in the way of railway, telegraph, or literature;" and sadly moralises over the fact that this is sure to come about in time from the precession of the equinoxes. Bathos such as this indicates fairly enough the wonderful ignorance of the facts and conditions of Canadian life that reigns supreme in educated English circles. Canadians fancy that their civilization is English. Those of us who are practically acquainted with the conditions of life in England are pretty well agreed that where there are points of difference the advantage is on our side. Not one man in a thousand in Canada wears a fur coat, or an overcoat of any kind heavier than he would have to wear in the mother country. We have ice-houses, but do not live in them. Society shows no signs of approximating to the Esquimaux type. We skim over the snow more rapidly than a four-in-hand can travel in England when the best highway is at its best. A simple contrivance called a snow-plough clears the railway track for the trains, tossing the snow to the right and left as triumphantly as a ship tosses the spray from its bows. We telegraph and telephone, use cabs and busses, and get our mails—from Halifax to Sarnia—with "proofs" and parcels about as regularly in winter as in summer. Incredible as all this must sound to those who have shivered under the power of one snow-storm and a few degrees of frost, there is a certain humiliation to a Canadian in describing what is so entirely a matter of course. He is kept from overmuch wonder by remembering that the people of Western Canada, in spite of practical acquaintance with snow-ploughs, opposed for years the construction of the Intercolonial Railway because they strenuously maintained that it would be blocked up all the winter with ice and snow.

We are accustomed to our environment. Cartier's men were not; and reference has been made to recent experiences in England to help us to understand what horrors those poor fellows from sunny France endured throughout an apparently endless winter, cooped up in the coldest spot in all Canada. "From the middle of November to the 18th of April the ice and snow shut us in," says their captain. Ice increased upon ice. Snow fell upon snow. The great river that no power known to man could fetter, was bound fast.