

ON A QUEER CRAFT.

A Skating Thrilling Experience in Northumberland Straits.

I had been reading the Christmas holidays with friends in Prince Edward Island, and was crossing to the mainland on my way to Ottawa when our stout steam-er ran into a pack of ice just outside Pictou harbor, and seemed likely to be delayed there for hours. There was nothing to do but make the best of circumstances, so the passengers, all men, retired to the smoking room for warmth and talk.

"It's too bad to be stopped here. We might almost swim ashore," said a fat little man.

"You wouldn't find winter swimming pleasant," said a young doctor.

"Have you ever tried it?" asked the fat man.

"Had to once." The doctor's expression betokened recollection of a woful experience.

"Tell us all about it. Come, out with the story," and at the word there was a general shifting of chairs to face the doctor.

"Well, all right. It will help to pass the time," said he, "so here it is."

In the winter of 1885 I was going to school at Pictou Academy, and a cold winter it was. The harbor froze so early that several barges were shut in. The ice held, and before long it was so thick that the island steamer had to cut her way up to the wharf. Splendid skating and clear, steady weather we boys had, I tell you.

Going to school was a hard trial those days. With eyes on our books, we thought of nothing but skating. Why should dull learning enchain boys who wished to scud down the harbor to East River, and whiz along its crooked course? But you all know how we felt. After school we'd skate till late at night, illuminating the harbor with bonfires and torches.

One afternoon in January I skated up to New Glasgow to visit my sick friend, Bob Goodyear. He had been taken down with fever, and was dangerously ill. Bob was then boarding in New Glasgow, where he had few friends.

It took me about an hour to skate from Pictou to New Glasgow. I got there a little after nightfall, and found Bob so very ill that I decided to stay all night and help nurse him. The doctor came in soon, and gave me instructions for my night's watch.

About eleven o'clock my real task began, when the people of the house had gone to bed, and I was left to myself in the sick-room. I was somewhat tired after the day's exertion, the wind had made my eyelids heavy, and I soon caught myself nodding.

However, by frequent sips of strong coffee, I managed to keep my eyes open for several hours and do my duty, but gradually I felt myself growing nervous. I tried to read, but couldn't, and to keep myself under control I was obliged to pace the floor.

The room was very warm, and in the small hours I went out into the hall. There the cool air refreshed me considerably, and the bright light occurred to me that I might as well skate back to Pictou that night. My watch would be over at three o'clock, when I should be relieved by Bob's regular nurse.

In half an hour she came, and then I fully decided to go. So I started before she had time to wheeze out half the list of dangers to which, she assured me, I was exposing myself.

Outside a fine snow was falling, and the wind was northwest. I was on the ice and away in almost no time, it seemed. The cold night air was most exhilarating, and the very strong coffee I had last taken stimulated me. I seemed intoxicated with strength, and longed for more resistance than wind and ice would offer.

Digging my skates into the ice I dashed along against the brisk nor'wester with the speed of a race-horse. The distance to Pictou was not more than nine miles; but the storm and the increasing snow underfoot would lengthen the trip considerably. If I had passed to considerate I should at least have reserved my strength, instead of hurrying on at the pace I was going.

There was no real danger, I thought, but I made far too little of the risks of skating in such darkness. The river channel often remains open in places, even during the coldest weather. When I found myself frequently running ashore after passing the first bend, the thought of this danger should have occurred to me.

In fact, I had lost them already. How near I might be to the open water at the mouth of the harbor, I had no means of determining. My ice-way, which I had not thought to take account of, must have been considerable; so that, instead of being opposite Pictou, I had very probably sailed myself to be carried several points south. I congratulated myself on having discovered my error so soon. It was not too late to rectify my course so as to avoid the danger, and I had no doubt I could do that.

There was, though, one other ground for apprehension. Up the harbor for some distance a passage had been opened by the winter boat from Prince Edward Island. This, however, I judged to be on the opposite side of the harbor from where I then was, and might be avoided by keeping well to the north.

It was apparent, therefore, that I must shift my course farther north. The wind guided me in this. Pleased to think that I had been careful to note its direction before setting out, I started off once more, and took a course a couple of points north of the wind.

I soon realized that a good hour's work was out for me. The snow was so deep as to make progress a matter of difficulty, while the wind came in gusts that took my breath. There was nothing else to do, though, but to set my teeth and struggle on.

Tired out from the exertion of the afternoon, and still more by the time of the last hour and a half, I felt a great weariness stealing over me; and now and then I would stumble in the snow, which had drifted in heaps over the crevices of the ice.

I could not tell how far I had gone on in this condition when suddenly I felt a sensation as of the ice giving way under my feet. It was not imagination, but reality. In the same instant I was struggling in the cold water of the harbor, floating with my mittened hands a piece of floating ice which seemed to have been broken away at the moment when I went down.

Terror seized me. I knew that much swimming in that freezing water was impossible. Besides, where should I swim to?

Fortunately the block of ice to which I clung was pretty firm. To raise myself upon it was my immediate thought. My skates impeded me. Those were moments of anguish; but after a terrible struggle I succeeded in dragging myself out of the water upon the slab of ice.

There was no longer any doubt in my mind as to where I was. I had allowed myself to be carried out of my way into the open sea near the mouth of the harbor. My situation was horrible to think of. The fragment of ice upon which I found temporary safety was being carried away from the main body, and I was moving out with the tide into Northumberland Strait—so I supposed.

To shout loudly for help I could not, because I had lost them already.

My hair did not, as you may see, turn white, but my mind was in a state of confusion for a while; for face, hands and feet were badly frost-bitten. As I was young and vigorous the shock to my nerves from fright, cold and exhaustion lasted but a few days. But I didn't skate any more that winter. There is, by any means, a lost opportunity in the amusement. I have persuaded myself that I can get enough of it during the daytime; and I prefer making long journeys by rail or steamer, even at the risk of having to picnic a day or two in Gulf Ice.

Before the young doctor had concluded his story our boat had freed herself from the ice, and was making her way through open water up the Narrows.

Soon we were tearing through ice a foot thick in Pictou harbor, at the rate of eight knots an hour, and the doctor shivered as he glanced over the stern into the seething water.

"I couldn't count much on my keeping company with you down there," he drily remarked to the fat man. "It looks as cold as ever."—[David Soloman in Youths' Companion.]

The Prince in the Prussian Army.

The appointment of the Prince of Wales as a lieutenant in the Prussian army, and his subsequent promotion to the rank of colonel, has caused much comment. The Prince, it is said, is a man of great energy and ability, and his appointment to such a high position in the Prussian army is a mark of the high regard in which he is held by the Emperor.

During the late British General Election a man rode up to the polling-place in a donkey-cart, his animal being gaily attired in blue ribbons, amid loud cheers from the adherents of the Parliamentary candidate, whose colour was blue.

On coming from the polling-place a man shouted:

"Well done; you have done right to vote blue!"

The man laughed as he replied:

"I have not voted blue—I know better than that."

"Not voted blue?" cried the other "then why is your beast dressed up in blue—Mr. —'s colours?"

"Because, although he may be a donkey, I am not," was the answer, and the owner of the donkey whipped him up, feeling he had scored heavily there.

GREAT BRITAIN.

How the Vast Empire is Governed.

The Number of Colonies Has Increased During This Century.

A matter of deepest interest to civilization in general is the manner in which Great Britain governs so extensive and so diverse an empire, says a writer in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. Her statesmen reckon three classes of colonies, distinguished according to the type of government assigned to each. In the first class the home Government retains entire control of the legislation and administration of the colony; in the second class the colony has representative institutions, but the home Government retains a veto on legislation and control of all the public officers; in the third class, the colony has, as in the second, representative institutions, but the home Government, while still reserving the veto on legislation, has no control of any public officer except the Governor. Here, then, is a scale of progressive liberality in the manner of governing the colonies, based upon the special characters and conditions of the colonies themselves. Englishmen distinguish these several types of Colonial Government as Crown governments, representative governments and responsible governments; the first being a pretty close approximation to republican government, and the second being intermediate between these two with a tendency to grow into the third rather than to retrograde into the first form.

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STRONGHOLDS LIKE GIBRALTAR and Aden, naval stations and depots like Hong Kong and Ascension, groups of islands like the Mauritius and Falkland, and colonies like Basutoland, British Honduras and Ceylon, are very naturally placed in the first class and held under Crown government. Colonies, however, like the Bahamas, the Bermuda, British Guiana and Natal, where there are considerable but relatively small European elements of population, are placed in the second class and accorded representative governments, but with the powerful restraint arising from the veto and the control of all the public officers. But colonies like Canada, Newfoundland, Cape Colony, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, New Zealand and New South Wales, where there are strong and controlling European elements, are put in the third class, and accorded responsible governments, with only the restraint of the veto on legislation and the appointment of the chief executive officer by the Crown. India, the vast Empire of the East, with a population of 221,000,000, and a vast territory, is placed in the first class, and is not regarded as such by English statesmen. Out of all the millions of its vast population only about 33,000 are British. It is a conquered empire, acquired by force and held by military occupancy and menace. England has in India a British army of about 145,000, and a native or sepoy army of about 1,400,000, commanded and principally officered by Englishmen. These armies put together amount to about 219,000 men, and this is the force, side by side with a mere handful of British settlers and sojourners, that holds an empire of 221,000,000 people. But it is 200,000,000 Asiatics that are to be distinctly added that England, impelled by her native tendency to liberty wherever she sets down her foot, has granted, since 1884, local municipal government throughout India, subject, however, to the control of the imperial government and government of a second grade of partially free political life that has a chance to ripen into full political life in the future.

It is especially noteworthy that aside from India, only about 33,000 British troops are sent out to all the rest of the immense Empire. The British Empire is a vast and diverse one, and it is a matter of great interest to note the application which England has made of these several forms of government to her different colonies.

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MAPLE SUGAR MAKING.

The Indians Understood the Operation When Canada was Discovered—How the Article is Produced Now.



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THE GREATEST OF PENAL COLONIES.

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CANADIAN SUGAR CAMP.

LIGHTNING STRUCK TREES.

A Frenchman's Interesting Experiment With Electricity.

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