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New Routes for Trade. A quite noteworthy event of the past week was the arrival in Montreal en route for Avonmouth, England, of the Steamer Monkshaven, a vessel of the Algoma Central Steamship Company. The Monkshaven's port of departure was Cleveleysport on the American side of Lake Erie, and she is laden with steel rails from the Carnegie Iron works. The significance of the matter lies in the fact that it is the initial movement in what may be expected to develop into a great commerce, by way of the St. Lawrence route, between the lake region of the United States and Canada and Great Britain and other European countries. The Monkshaven, with three other ships of like class, was built in England, and passed through to the lakes by way of the St. Lawrence. During the summer season these steamers, with a number of tugs and barges, are employed in transporting mineral products from the Michipicoten region—more than a hundred miles north of Sault Ste. Marie—to ports in the United States. The Algoma Central Company is carrying on very extensive mining operations in the Michipicoten region and is also engaged in railroad building, partly with a view to facilitating these operations and also with an ulterior view to extending their road to Moose Factory on the shores of the Hudson Bay. It is expected to complete the road in three years, and the valuable timber and mineral lands which it will open up, the rich fisheries of Hudson's Bay, and the attractions of Moose Factory as a summer resort are relied upon to make the enterprise a financial success.

The Depths of Ocean. The feasibility of a trans-Pacific cable from the United States, and by way of its various insular possessions, to the coast of Asia, the New York Tribune declares, is now well assured. Tremendous "depths" had been discovered in the direct pathway of the proposed cable, and it was believed by many that on this account the scheme could not be realized. But further explorations, it is said, show that these depths of the ocean may be avoided, and that the cable can be laid, connecting with the United States all its possessions in the Pacific without touching upon those of any other nation. It is hard for the mind to form an idea of the depth of these great abysses of the ocean. Measure from the level of the sea to the cloud capped and snow-clad summits of the loftiest mountains of the world, and you have a perpendicular distance of some five and a half miles. Then measure from the sea level to the bottom of the deepest abyss discovered in the Pacific ocean and you have a distance of 5,269 fathoms—only 76 feet less than six miles, and nearly half a mile more than the height of the loftiest mountain peaks of the world. At that depth, it is said, "the temperature is only two or three degrees above freezing, while the stillness, the darkness and the pressure of the overlying miles of water are beyond appreciation. It is a world of chilly gloom, of absolute silence, of ooze and of red clay."

Cruelty to Horses. In setting her example and influence against the custom of docking the tails of horses, Queen Victoria has done that for which many long-suffering members of the equine race will have reason to feel grateful. A tail was given to the horse both as an ornament and as a necessary protection against insect tormentors, and in case of horses which are much exposed to the attacks of flies it is especially cruel to deprive them of this natural weapon of defence. There is another way, however, in which man's inhumanity to his noble servant finds expression, which seems to us still more senseless and inexcusable than the custom of docking. It is hardly necessary to say that we mean that diabolical invention—the overdraw check. There are of course some horses which do not suffer much from the overdraw, because as they naturally hold their heads high, it interferes comparatively little with their comfort. But with

horses which are not naturally high-headed the case is very different. A tightly drawn overdraw check forces them to keep their heads in an altogether unnatural position, straining the muscles of the neck and putting the poor animals in acute misery. It is a piteous thing to see a horse with his head drawn up with a check-rein, adjusted by someone too ignorant to know the effect of it, or too callous to have any feeling for the suffering it causes, in such a way that the poor animal is kept turning its head to this side and to that, trying vainly in every way to get relief from the agony which it is compelled to suffer. After all that has been said and written on the subject and all that has been done by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty, it is still far too common to see horses suffering thus. If our good Queen could so exert her gracious influence as to banish forever the overdraw check, all the horses, and all the men and women who have any compassion for the noble animal would have additional reason to rejoice.

Prison Reform. There are few subjects more worthy to call forth thought and philanthropic effort on the part of the people of this country than that of prison reform. The criminal population of Canada, as compared with other countries, is not large. At the same time the whole number of men and women incarcerated in the jails, prisons and penitentiaries of the Dominion is very considerable, and the question as to the conditions under which these prisoners are placed, and the purpose and result of the treatment which is meted out to them are of very serious import in reference both to the prisoners themselves and to the public which is responsible for the way in which the inmates of the prisons are being dealt with. Unfortunately it must be admitted that in the present state of this country and of the world generally, prisons are a necessity. But there is no reason why jails and prisons should be of the character that they too frequently are. The grand aim in dealing with prisoners should not be their punishment merely, but their reformation. When a man, because of vicious disposition, makes himself an enemy of society and it becomes necessary to deprive him of his liberty, he should be taken hold of by the forces of a Christian civilization wisely and persistently applied with a view to effecting his reform. All that wholesome surroundings, firm but kindly discipline, wise and patient instruction, with Christian sympathy, can do, should be done to emancipate him from vicious propensities and fit him to take his place again in the world as an honest and virtuous member of society. Admitting that there are some whose propensities to vice and crime are so strong as to render them incorrigible, yet doubtless there are a very large number of those who become inmates of our jails and prisons, who are not beyond the reach of such methods of reform as must be possible in this advanced day of Christian civilization. What are the actual conditions to be found in our jails and prisons too few of us care to enquire, and there is too little disposition to move in the direction of reform when the great and urgent need of it is shown.

The St. John Jail. The attention of the people of St. John has been somewhat forcibly called to the condition of the city jail by some statements contained in a sermon recently delivered by Rev. J. A. Richardson, Rector of Trinity church. Mr. Richardson has no doubt described things as they are, and the description is certainly one which should stir the people of the city and county of St. John to do away with a condition of things which is a reproach and a disgrace to any Christian community. It may be that conditions here are no worse than in some other Canadian cities, but if that is true so much the worse. According to Mr. Richardson's statement, which is supported by that of Judge Forbes in an address to the Grand Jury, the jail building is greatly overcrowded, so that it is sometimes necessary to place six or more prisoners in one cell of 12 by 14 feet in size. The bathing facilities are quite inadequate, there is no provision for change of clothing, the

prisoners are in a filthy condition, some by choice and some by necessity. The jail being used also as a prison for the confinement of persons whose sentence is under two years, there is not only overcrowding, but young persons, even before they have been convicted, are thrown into association with hardened criminals. Another result of the overcrowding is that there is not the complete separation of the sexes that should be, but men and women occupy cells on the same flat. The prisoners are kept in idleness, with all the evil influences that an idle life under such conditions involves. Some three or four of the men are detailed to do little odds and ends of work about the jail, but for the rest there is nothing to do—nothing for the help of either mind or body, and the time is spent principally in smoking and in filthy and blasphemous conversation. Certainly the last state of a man who serves out a sentence under such conditions is likely to be vastly worse than the first. And is such a disgraceful and degrading condition of things necessary? Is it not quite possible to make our jails such that, with the exception of a few of the more hardened, the influence upon its inmates, and especially in the case of youthful criminals, would be for good rather than for evil? The conditions should be made physically wholesome, and so far as possible intellectually and morally wholesome also. Over-crowding should be avoided, cleanliness enforced, wholesome literature and instruction provided, and everyone who can work should be compelled to work at something that would exercise his physical and mental faculties. All this would involve an overturn of the jail system as it now exists in St. John, and for the most part elsewhere. It would take time. But it does not seem to us chimerical to suppose that such a reform could be effected, and it is so important that no time should be lost in getting about it. Mr. Richardson has done well to call attention sharply to the great need of reform in this matter, and we hope that his motion will have many vigorous seconders.

—The continued illness of the Czar is causing much apprehension. The latest official bulletins indicate that the condition of the royal patient is somewhat more serious than it was a week ago. If however the trouble from which the Czar is suffering is, as it is said to be, typhoid fever, the rise in temperature reported need not be regarded as an alarming symptom. There are however persistent rumors that the Czar's illness is of a much more serious character than the official bulletins have indicated and the credence which these rumors obtain in generally well-informed quarters is to be taken into account. The apprehensions so generally felt as to the result of the Czar's illness are quite natural, considering the great influence of Russia in the political world and the general confidence that is felt in the pacific disposition of Nicholas. It seems to be quite true that the Czar's disposition and the foreign policy of Russia are two quite different things. Nicholas is indeed in name an absolute ruler, but the power which really governs seems to be quite as little dependent upon the will of the monarch in Russia as in Great Britain, though in the one case the power is embodied in a Parliament, in the other in a bureaucracy. But doubtless the Czar has an influence upon the politics of his nation and the world in proportion to the strength of his personality. And it therefore means much for the peace of the world if the occupant of the Russian throne is at heart a man of peace.

—According to late despatches from Peking the prospect is favorable for an agreement of the foreign powers upon the terms of a settlement with China. The representatives of the powers in Peking are indeed reported to have reached an agreement and it only remains to secure the approval of the respective governments before definite negotiations with the Chinese peace commissioners can be begun. The precise terms of settlement have not yet been made public; but it is believed, outside the diplomatic corps, that the main points are in substantial agreement with those contained in the French note to the powers, namely, punishment for the guilty, indemnity to governments and individuals, retention of strong legation guards and the occupation of certain places between Peking and Taku.