

# A Remarkable Oriental Experience.

A THRILLING STORY OF CHINESE TREACHERY.

## CHAPTER V.

The immediate result of Norris's attempt to escape was that all the cold Chinese streets of his foes seemed in those feelings of insatiable cruelty which few but the northern Chinese know.

Well was it for Norris that he lay on one dead for hours to come, insensible, immovable, and ignorant of that death which, but for his unconsciousness, had assuredly been his. And yet not well; for death indeed would have been preferable to the life in store.

The discovery of the body which lay in the thimble court seemed to throw a shuddering touch upon everything within the temple, for the man who had committed the deed still lived!

To Norris his captors had been Chinamen. Strange as it may seem, he had never in his solitary confinement cast a thought upon their priest-like attributes. To his own mind he had called them Chinamen, no more, as a priestly brotherhood; and though he had known that they were sanctified, he had not for a moment looked upon them as different in that respect from others of their race, nor in his plans of escape had he taken account of the awful results which might follow the desecration of the temple by the murder of one of its priests.

Had Norris been in possession of his senses, been in fact as a living man when the body of the priest was found, it is more than a probability that in the impulse of the moment his life at the hands of those who had recaptured him might have been taken as an atonement for his deed, for the frenzy which spread over one and all within the temple walls almost cried aloud in wild thirst for blood and revenge upon the man who had done this thing. But the momentary impulse had passed, and now a more hideous fate was in reserve. Blood alone cannot atone for blood, life is not repaid by life, when the frenzied souls of Chinese priests beheld the corpse of a brother who has been killed, and look upon a temple whose holy light is suddenly obscured.

Death for death!—not so. Life for death!—a long never-ending life, a life whose hell is worse than death—this alone is recompense for such a deed.

The injury sustained by Norris, when he fell forward upon his face, was of a nature most serious, and, after many hours of unconsciousness, he recovered only to intermittent state, resembling brain fever, and during this time the priests waited like wild beasts who would play with their prey before striking it to the earth.

A torture is not a torture if it kill, for then of what use is it? If a man is weak and ill, so that he may go mad, and so that he do not feel to the full the horror through which he passes, because death lies in front, it is no use to torture—it is better to wait. For the truest and deepest agony of mind which can be inflicted upon man is that which drives him so far, no further—near to death, so that he may almost clutch it, and yet removed from it so that he clutch in vain—near to madness—ay, on the very brink of the precipice, and yet saved, as the brain totters, so that it may continue to totter and yet never fall.

Many days passed, and the Chinese still waited; and Norris, who had now been tossing through the ravings of weary hours upon a rough skin or two, which was all his bed, began at last by a miracle to recover his strength; and it may be that as the priests fed him during this time, so they also prayed that he might live, for gradually the crisis passed, and he returned to life to find that he lay under constant watch within one of the smaller temple buildings, away from the terrible heat of the midday sun.

As he grew stronger, an awful thirst took possession of him—a thirst that seemed unquenchable, and he would seize and drink every drop of water which was brought to him, as soon as it was placed upon the ground.

It was now that the first of that series of tortures to which the man was destined to be subjected was inflicted upon him. Because he thirsted, it was decreed that he should continue to thirst; and the water given to him was only the more decreased in quantity, the more he endeavored to signal to his attendant that water was precious to him now.

Then at length came the hour when he understood, when there was no more water given to him, and the revelation of the truth threw him back again upon the illness from which he was but commencing to recover.

And thus it came that weeks intervened between Norris's attempt to escape and the day upon which truly commenced that system of fiendish cruelty by which his captors sought to wipe away the blot of desecration and to satisfy the lust for cruelty which is innate to the Chinese.

In the mean time winter was approaching, and Norris in his convalescent state looked forward with a leaden heart to the long months to come, for he seemed to lose hope of freedom with the commencement of the winter. Summer he might never see again.

The closing of the port of Tientsin for the winter months, as he heard it was closed with ice, must mean the closing of the door of hope—a door which will stand open in face of many terrible storms. Tientsin closed, Norris felt, he scarcely knew why; that his last chance was gone. Had the swallows borne his messages to any purpose; or had one and all of these been given to the air in vain?

The birds were all that he had to trust to now; the ten swallows, liberated with his messages securely bound, where were they? If, indeed one of the ten came into some friendly hand far away, it might be too late, for who would travel from Shanghai to Peking in the cold winter months? Who would face the perishing cold, and the journey, at such a time?

Then he would wonder for what reason he had been spared—he who had killed a Chinaman; and, again, for what reason was he allowed now to gain strength as he lay chained by his ankles to the ground?

He feared the most when he cast his thoughts upon the apparent clemency of his foes. Why had the want of water now ceased? Why was he again treated as in the days before, save only that his ankle was firmly bound? He set himself to the endeavor of fathoming the motives for the life he was allowed to lead.

What interest was it to the Chinese that he should live, unless his money were at issue? What had saved him from a cruel death long ere now? He could guess little until he remembered suddenly that the swallow—the eleventh of the birds—had been left beneath his coat on the morning of his attempted escape.

And there fancied might lie the truth. This man, whoever he was, beyond the temple walls, who had promised him his liberty, and by that sought to extort a large sum, had been informed of all that had oc-

curred. No doubt the swallow had been taken to him, or at least the paper which had been wrapped to its leg. And this paper, bearing the words "eleventh swallow," would have been sufficient to convey to him the knowledge that there was a chance, however dim, that the English nation beyond the seas might hear of the captivity of William Norris and send to save him from his foes.

If this was so, and if this man still commanded Norris's life to be spared, it seemed partly probable that he might do so because he was a great man, and that it would not suit him to be the possible and remote means of a disagreement which might result in a little thing swell gradually into a war between the English and the Chinese.

For were Norris to be cruelly killed in the temple of Confucius, there was the possibility that some other coming to his rescue might meet with similar treatment, and the first death might grow into a massacre in the after time.

Such was the conjecture slowly formed by Norris—a conjecture which, wild though it was in many respects, yet had a grain of truth; for although it was difficult at this time to fathom the full motives which actuated his enemies, it is true that besides that cruelty of which Norris was still now unaware, and which had in store for him a life of hideousness, there was another underlying design—something which came to the priests from a higher hand still, according with their wishes in this command:

"Torture, but do not kill!"

Norris felt to wondering vaguely upon his captivity one morning, subsequent to his almost complete restoration to health and indeed, feeling as he now did that he was daily regaining his strength, he once more cast about in his thoughts for some means by which he might still escape.

This had become a much more difficult question than formerly, for his ankle was, as has been said, encircled by a chain, which confined his motions to a limited circuit, and at times became the source of extreme irritation and mental pain. In addition to this, he was now at no time alone, for a guard was constantly in his presence—not always the same man, it is true, but nevertheless, a preventive of the faintest motion which might create the suspicion of a renewed attempt at freedom. Upon the morning in question, his dreams resulted in little save in an ultimate wandering into a land of fancy, in which he lived his youth again beneath the blessed English skies in the dear old home-land, free to wander where he might please.

His musings were interrupted by the entry of three of the priests, accompanied by a man of filthy garb, whom Norris regarded with some curiosity, wondering wherefore this man had been brought.

The Chinamen approached him, and bound him with ropes. He could make no resistance, or, rather, he knew that it was useless to do so, and submitted quietly. They had already bound his feet, when he faced across him that man, indeed, he faced the terrors which he had had painted in a ghastly dream.

For the first moment of awe he yielded, thinking only that to be further bound could matter little; but now, as he thought upon his helplessness in this bound, he struggled with all his strength, crying out aloud whilst the men forced him down and held him to the ground by the force of numbers against one. Then, all this strength, recalled for a moment only, left him, and he lay gasping, and would have been unable to move even without his bonds.

The man whom he noticed had now come forward, knife in hand. Norris shut his eyes, believing that his last hour had come, and waiting for the first touch of the blade.

A few seconds passed, and then he knew the truth—that the man had not come to torture him, but to deprive him of his hair, and, unable to protest, he lay still, whilst, commencing at the forehead and working slowly back, the Chinese barber cut away his hair, bit by bit, shaving each portion of his head closely, whilst the priests stood by to watch.

In China there is a custom—an ordeal which has to be borne by those who elect to join certain priesthoods; it is an ordeal of brutal barbarism—an ordeal which makes one shudder even to name. It consists in the pouring of a drop or two of molten lead upon the brow or scalp of the priest.

But one might wonder what connection had this with William Norris, or with the barber who was at work upon his head?

Only this—the priests of the Temple of Confucius knew of the unspeakable nature of the agony of the molten lead; and, knowing of no torture more intense than this, they had decided to make the Englishman conform to the priestly rule, and suffer upon his shaven head, during moments of a wanton cruelty which might well waken the dead from their graves, the molten metal that should fall and eat into his human flesh.

As yet Norris was totally ignorant of the significance of that to which he was compelled to submit. His first feeling, when he recognized that the shaving of his head was the present object of his captors, was naturally a combination of fear and hatred, and then gradually a cold callousness, parking of the nature of utter despair, came over him. But, indeed, the sensations which filled him became, as it were, dimmed, and deprived of all acuteness for the time being, owing to an excess of fatigue, which had prostrated his energies—an immediate relapse upon that full possession of his manhood's strength, which had come to him for a little time whilst he had struggled vainly with those who sought to bind him to the ground.

The Chinese barber is not gifted with singular rapidity in his work; rather he devotes his attention to the complete removal of every appearance of a hair upon a single spot, and to an extreme exactitude as he proceeds, which, whilst rendering his work at once minute and complete, adds a singular degree of tediousness to his operations.

After watching his progress for a considerable time, the three priests retired, leaving the barber to complete his work at his leisure; and this he continued to do apparently to his own thorough satisfaction for a very protracted period.

At the expiration of that time Norris was perfectly bald, not a hair left upon his head; for not even that part where the pigtail is allowed to grow had been left untouched; only his mustache and his eyebrows and a rough, unkempt growth which had come upon his cheeks during his confinement, remained to testify to the fact that his baldness was not nature's freak.

The barber bound a cloth tightly round his skull, and then left him, still bound, and now recovered so far from his fatigue as to be able to reflect upon what the deprivation of his hair must mean to him, and to be fully conscious of his aching thoughts.

Shortly his captors returned and undid his bonds, and for the rest of the day he was,

as he had been for many an hour past, free to move within a little space—free to eat and drink, but kept beyond this by the chain which bound his ankle to the ground.

To Norris thought itself had become of that gnawing kind which seems to eat away the soul; but he took his meals, and, as usual, at night he slept as he had learned to sleep—a strange half-waking sleep, of constant visions and dreams that bring no rest.

Another day came, and Norris, whose energies returned ever to the loss which he had sustained, and who looked upon it as a form of mental torture only, and as imposed with that intent and nothing beyond, was sitting filled with bitterness and thoughts made evil by the cruelty of fate, when the three Chinamen reappeared.

Binding his hands upon his back, and then rendering him powerless, whilst he offered no resistance, knowing how futile was such waste of strength, they then released the chain about his ankle, and conveyed to him by signs that he must follow them where they led. He did so, wondering inwardly as to what the meaning of such proceedings could be; and thus, whilst these men he re-entered the first time, the court where he had formerly been confined, and where were now congregated a great number of priests around a small fire, which had been lit upon the ground. Upon this fire had been placed an iron vessel, not far from which was an upright post, which had been fixed in the earth deeply and firmly, and around which the Chinamen stood.

To this post Norris was secured, and he recognized, as the bands were drawn tight, that the pot upon the fire contained something of the nature of metal, which was melted therein. That some awful event was about to occur he realized, and, looking round upon the faces crowding near to him, he seemed to read something of his doom, and his senses seemed to forsake him for a few seconds, whilst the consciousness of the unknown to come descended upon his soul.

The cloth which had bound his head had been removed, and the feeling of cold immediately resulting from the exposure of his hairless skin recalled him to himself, and from that moment every action was intensified to such a degree that the realism of every detail of what succeeded was written in fire upon his brain.

He watched one of the throng stir the molten mixture with a long and thin piece of metal, and then another raise the pot from the fire and approach with it till he stood within a foot from him.

A cry of terrible agony burst from him in a voice surely not his own:

"Great God in heaven, have mercy upon me, God!"

And his voice rose to the blue heavens, and perhaps the cry was heard far away!

But the world did not change because of the agony of a single man, and the Chinamen, whose hand was raised so that the heat of the hideous pot smote upon Norris's face, only spoke two words in answer to the man who stood by his side—the command to proceed with the completion of what was decreed to be done.

In obedience, the other reached out and took the end of that which the metal had been stirred—a long spoon—a spoon so small as to contain only a single drop of the molten liquid.

This Norris saw whilst his blood-shot eyes started from his sockets, and then the drop fell upon his head, and the air was filled with an awful noise; and a second time the spoon filled his function and again a third; and the world blackened, and he seemed to stretch out its arms to receive him, and Norris knew no more.

For weeks succeeding the man with the shaven head was little else than mad. They had set him free again in the court yard, where the deer swallows had used to be. It was winter now, and the swallows had gone away; and the man who had called to them to aid him in his sore distress was in a worse state now, for the torture had, for the time being, unhinged his mind.

He fed as nature called him to feed, eating as though without knowledge that he did so; and the rest of the day he spent, sometimes crawling about the court, and sometimes wildly clawing with his nails in a vain attempt to scale the walls, whimpering all the time like a human being, but rather like a poor wounded dog.

Was the debt discharged now? Was the blot of desecration washed from the temple walls? There was no one to ask that question; and, if there had been, the answer might have been, "No."

By night he crept into a species of wooden hut or kennel which he had put up for him, and where he had warm furs; and his clothing, too, was thicker now, for they had dressed him in Chinese garb, heavy and warm, and suited to the chill of the severity of a winter in Peking.

And it was this severity, this cold, which the man did not seem to feel, which proved his salvation. In the midsummer heat, body and soul might indeed have borne what had been, but more probably would have succumbed in the condition of semi-weakness in which the man had been; but now he was saved from fever, and perhaps from worse than fever, by the clear air and invigorating cold.

Thus it was with William Norris in the Temple of Confucius, during the winter of his captivity—a winter in which a settled look, as of the hunted creature, gradually replaced the furs of pain and the light as of madness upon his face; whilst a strange crop of new white hair grew in bristles upon his shaven head, and on his death in 1810 he was found, on post-mortem examination, to be a man.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Russian Sentinel.

The sternest ideal of military duty is full filled by the Russian soldier. An illustration is given by the author of "A Journey to Mount Ararat." On leaving an Armenian village, the writer passed a beautiful green valley watered by a river that flowed between strong embankments.

His Armenian servant told him that in April, 1888, after a great storm, the river rose in such a flood that the persons living near the bank fled for their lives.

There was a powder-magazine near the river. The sentinel who was guarding it prepared to retreat, but the officers who were watching the scene from a mountain fort below, seeing that the powder-magazine was in danger, ordered the sentinel to hold his ground, and he held it until the water rose to his chin, and when he was literally within an inch of death the flood ceased. He was decorated by the government with the ribbon of some honorary order in recognition of his heroic obedience.

Sixteen thousand cases of butter, weighing in all 500 tons, were shipped from Melbourne for London last week.

## A FEW CURIOUS WAGERS.

### Romance of the Betting Book.

One of the wildest and most audacious bets ever offered was that of a physician, named Asotepiades, who wagered that he would never be ill in his whole life. Absurd as it may seem he gained his bet, though of course he was unable to enjoy it. He lived to an advanced age, and met his death suddenly in consequence of a fall downstairs.

In the year 1634 the Parliament of Dole in France was called upon to decide an extraordinary wager between two inhabitants of Pasmes. One of the two had agreed that if the other would pay him 24 francs in hand he would furnish him with a certain number of grains of millet in proportion to the number of children who should be born within a certain term of country, and he had bound himself to furnish one grain, two for the second, four for the third, and so on, always doubling the number of grains for each successive birth. The number of children born was 66, and the proportion of grains to be supplied was so enormous that the party bound by the bet demanded the cancelling of the contract as being founded upon the impracticable condition. The court decided after having made the necessary calculation, that the wager was naturally impossible to be fulfilled, and it consequently decreed that the party who had received the 24 francs on condition of an event which he declared himself unable to meet, should return that sum to his opponent and should pay an additional sum of 24 francs, which was the only change of loss incurred to the winner if the millet had been furnished.

The Count de Saillant made a bet with the Prince de Conde that he would ride twice from the gate of St. Denis to Chantilly at full gallop and return to his starting place in the space of six hours, the distance between the two points being thirty miles. The stake was 10,000 crowns, and the bets on both sides exceeded a million of francs. The Count equipped himself with a tight belt round his waist, and his body was swathed with strips of flannel, while he carried a leaden bullet in his mouth. Relays of horses were stationed on the road; everything that could, in the slightest manner, obstruct the course was carefully removed; and a clock was fixed to the gate of St. Denis to mark the precise instant of starting and return. The Count accomplished his feat in eight minutes and a spare, in which time he offered to ride to Versailles, a further distance of eleven miles.

The year 1725 was extremely wet, and a banker named Bulliot, noticing that it rained on St. Gervais' day, the French St. Swinith's Day, offered to support the popular superstition by a bet that it would be wet for forty consecutive days. Several persons took him up, and a wager was reduced to writing in these terms—"If, during St. Gervais' Day, it rains more or less during forty days successively, Bulliot will be considered to have gained; if it cease to rain for only one day during that time Bulliot has lost." On these terms Bulliot betted against all comers, and on that day he deposited a very large sum of money, for besides what had lodged in the hands of the umpire, he took gold-laden cases, snuff-boxes, and jewellery of every kind whose value was appraised, and against which he staked money. The affair caused great excitement at the time, and as the chances were decidedly against Bulliot many people were eager to get on the good thing. At last the banker, having deposited his cash, was forced to give the stakeholder notes and bills of exchange, and as his credit was well established, he was enabled to issue paper to the amount of fifty thousand crowns. It will readily be conceived that the hero of this wager became quite fashionable. Wherever he appeared he attracted attention. But, unfortunately, Saint Gervais was not true to his reputation, and it ceased raining before the expiration of the allotted time. Bulliot was ruined, and so completely that he could not honour the notes and bills of exchange which he had given. The holders tried to enforce payment, and as the existing law did not recognize debts of this character, they endeavored to pass themselves off as bona fide creditors who had taken Bulliot's notes for other considerations, but they failed.

Another famous case was that of the Chevalier d'Eon, the point at issue being whether the Chevalier, who, though a military officer, was of effeminate appearance, was a man or a woman. The case was heard before Lord Mansfield, and the verdict given that he was a woman. Although the verdict was afterwards set aside on legal grounds, it was allowed to settle many other bets laid on the same question. According to a contemporary authority, this decision was instrumental in retaining in this country no less a sum than £75,000, which would otherwise have been transmitted to Paris.

The Chevalier, after declaring that she would have no interest whatever in the bet, upon the question of sex, left England for France, and assuming female attire, enjoyed a pension from the French Government, for having been long a spy of Louis XV., till the breaking out of the Revolution in 1790. He then went to England, and being in great distress lived with a lady of reputation as her companion, but on his death in 1810 he was found, on post-mortem examination, to be a man.

Some fifty years ago, John Sloman, the actor, who was then manager of the five theatres comprised in what was called the Kent circuit, made a bet of a hundred pounds that he would act the part of Tom in the interlude of Iniquity, and sing a comic song at three of his theatres on the same night between six hours of seven and eleven. The theatres selected were those of Canterbury, Rochester, and Maidstone, between which places there was at that time no railway communication. On the appointed evening the curtain rose at the Canterbury house exactly at seven; Sloman went through his part and sang a comic song, then jumped into a postchaise, and made for Rochester as fast as four good horses could take him, covering the distance—twenty-six miles—in an hour and forty minutes, changing horses at Sittingbourne. Part of the company had been sent on in advance, and they were ready to commence directly the manager arrived. The interlude was played, the song sung, and Sloman posted to Maidstone, a distance of eight miles in forty-four minutes. Here he was welcomed by a house crammed from pit to gallery and accomplished his task with fifteen minutes to spare.

The silver wedding of the King and Queen of Italy will be celebrated April 22.

## A WONDROUS SEA STORY.

### One Billow Sweeps a Sailor From His Ship, Another Brings Him Back.

After a terrific combat with winds and waves the British steamship British Prince came into New York the other day with the story of a rescue more startling than anything Clark Russell ever dared to write. The British Prince came from Mediterranean ports. As soon as she got outside the Straits of Gibraltar she encountered the fierce gales which have recently been making such havoc on the North Atlantic. She is not a large steamer, and though staunch and well found, she had a hard time of it, the waves breaking over her decks and pounding her back as she struggled to advance. Still, inch by inch she struggled on, until her coal began to give out and she ran into St. Michael's, in the Azores, for a fresh supply. After leaving St. Michael's she met the same kind of weather as before, and had it up to Sandy Hook. When 400 miles east by south of Sandy Hook the steamer sighted what Captain Innis, who commands the British Prince, thought was a pilot boat. A heavy south-west gale was blowing, and a tremendous sea was running. The supposed pilot boat was headed south and had not a stitch of canvas up. She was apparently deserted. The pilot commissioners say there is no pilot boat in that region from New York, and none at sea for which any fear is felt. Still Captain Innis thinks it was a pilot boat.

It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon when the supposed pilot boat was sighted. Three hours later, as the captain was eating his supper, and doing so with considerable difficulty on account of the pounding and the rolling of the ship, and these officers were on the bridge, a great wave, which the first officer says was "like a cliff," came over the bows, carrying away everything before it. The Swedish boatswain of the ship, Charles Lastadius, was on what is called the "fly bridge," a structure extending out in front of the real bridge. He saw the cliff of water falling on him and grasped a stanchion. Stanchion and man were swept away like leaves before a hurricane.

The second officer saw the boatswain rise on the top of a wave close on the starboard hand. It was bright starlight, so the struggling man could be seen as he was swept along on the great surging billows, and he was shouting for help.

Thomas Jones was the second officer's name and Mr. Jones made one of the greatest casts of any kind ever made in the seafaring tales. He grabbed a life-buoy which was hanging handy on the bridge, and threw it out into the waves with such precision that it settled down over the boatswain's head, just as the people at Coney Island throw rings over cheap canes in the booths of the "fakirs" in summer time. The man pulled it down under his arms, and though the water was so intensely cold that it numbed him, he struggled bravely for life. The captain, hearing the cry of "man overboard," ran on deck and ordered the ship backed down toward where the boatswain could be seen, rising on the top of the giant waves in the starlight, and driving to the northeast. The steamer backed down past the man, trying to get near him, and then a great wave swept him around the bows to the front side of the ship. Then he was swept away into the night and Captain Innis lost sight of him.

But the captain heard a loud cry from him, and noting a star in the direction from which the cry came he steered by that star and soon saw him again bobbing like a cork on the foaming crest of the starlit waves. The steamer ran toward the struggling man and then close to him, until he was just abreast close aboard. A great wave reared itself with the boatswain on its crest and dashed him against the vessel's rail. He grasped it as a drowning man would, and the wave, receding, left him there. The man was dazed, as well as he might be, and clung so tightly to the rail that it took five of his shipmates to loosen his hold and carry him below. Hot water, hot whisky and hot cloths soon brought him about all right, and when the British Prince arrived here yesterday he was none the worse for his remarkable adventure.

## ENGLAND'S REPLY TO FRANCE.

An Explanation of the Course She Intends to Pursue in Egypt.

A Paris despatch says:—The French press continues to display deep indignation regarding the attitude assumed by England in Egypt. The *Debat* says that the action of England in Egypt is a direct provocation to France, and that Great Britain must explain her intentions. The *Figaro* says that France ought to retaliate for England's course by occupying Tangiers.

The Marquis of Dufferin, British Ambassador, has delivered to the French Government a note as to the increase of the British garrison in Egypt. He assures the Government that the increase does not imply any modification of previous assurances in regard to the conditions of the British occupation, or any change in the policy heretofore pursued by Great Britain.

M. Waddington, French Ambassador in London, has been instructed to ask the Earl of Rosebery, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to specify the incidents in Egypt which have caused Great Britain to take the recent extraordinary steps.

A London despatch to the Exchange Telegraph Company says that France has asked the British Government for an explanation as to the increase of the British army of occupation in Egypt.

In answer to an inquiry by cable about the present political troubles in Egypt, E. Paladino & Co. received this morning the following cable answer from their correspondent in Alexandria:

"No serious apprehension felt here; unified Egyptian bonds over 98, and cotton market firm and unchanged."

## RAILROADING ON THE ICE.

Tracks Laid Every Winter Across the Frozen St. Lawrence.

The communications between the two shores of the St. Lawrence River at Montreal are made, as is known, by the means of the Victoria Tubular Bridge, constructed some thirty-five years ago, which is the longest in the world, the metallic span being 6,500 feet long.

But from this point to the Atlantic, for a distance of 1,000 miles, there is no other bridge and all the railroads established on both sides the St. Lawrence have necessarily to cross it. The company of the Grand Trunk railroad, which built it, levies a right of way toll of \$10 per car and eight cents per passenger.

To avoid payment of these monies the S. E. railroad company had the idea, some ten years ago, of constructing in winter a communication between the two shores by means of a railroad established on the ice. Every winter the work is done over again, and it amply pays for the outlay. The length of this ice road is about two miles, between Hochelaga and Longueuil.

The roadway is easily built. The track leaves the main track parallel to the shore, then curves gradually in such a manner as to be perpendicular to it, and, then, again, before it strikes the other shore, it curves anew so as to become nearly parallel to the opposite side, and then it is connected with the main track on this shore.

## CANADA'S FERTILE PLAINS.

A Glowing Account From the North-West.

A Clergyman of Brandon Reports on the Condition of the Country—They Had Good Crops Last Year—The Cities and Towns Are Growing and Everywhere Are Most Gratiifying Signs of Prosperity.

Ever since the opening up of the fertile plains of Manitoba and the Northwest territories by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway the progress of the settlers in the west has been watched with the deepest interest by the remainder of the Dominion. All recognized the great part which the Prairie Province and the great Lone land were to play in the development and growth of Canada, and all accordingly followed eagerly the struggles and disappointments of the earlier settlers, due largely to inexperience, and rejoiced as each succeeding year proved that when scientifically farmed the country was one of the finest agricultural districts in the world. The other day a Toronto Reporter met Rev. James Woodworth of Brandon superintendent of Methodist missions in Manitoba and the North-west who is at present engaged in lecturing on mission work in the districts of Ontario. Mr. Woodworth in the course of his duties as superintendent, travels continually all over Manitoba and the North-west from Port Arthur to the Rocky mountains, and has, consequently, a grand opportunity of observing the condition of the country and its people. He gives an eminently satisfactory

ACCOUNT OF THE PROGRESS MADE during the past year. When asked about the general condition of Manitoba, Mr. Woodworth said that the country was without doubt progressing not only steadily, but rapidly. Last year had been a good one, the wheat crop having been large and the samples fair. The low prices of wheat had, of course, militated to a considerable extent against the farmers, but still they could not complain, as they had done fairly well. The immigration, too, had been considerable, and the prospects for the coming year were better still. The Manitoba Government were giving every attention to the immigration question, and it was probable that there would be a large influx of settlers from the United States, as well as from other places. Everywhere there were signs of steady improvement, not only in the condition of the farmer, but also in the growth of the cities and towns. Winnipeg, he said, was improving fast, and had completely recovered from the depression which so long hung over it. There were no more strikes, and no movement in real estate. Brandon also had grown considerably during the last year, not only in population, but in the number and character of its buildings. Over \$500,000 was expended in the construction of these. The hospital which was erected by the city of Brandon, with the assistance of private enterprise, cost over \$200,000 and was a magnificent brick building. Besides this there were numbers of fine business blocks and scores of private residences erected. He inquired what was called the Syndicate block a three-story brick building, with 130 feet frontage.

IN THE NEPAWA DISTRICT, along the Manitoba and North-western line of railway, the year had been one of marked prosperity. The country was beautifully situated, frost being almost unknown, and the soil most fertile. The town of Neepawa was growing rapidly and the country around it improving every day. Further up the line the conditions for grain growing were not so good, but those who had turned their attention to stock-raising were finding it profitable.

Mr. Woodworth spoke most enthusiastically of a large number of settlements from the terminus of the line of railroad called Yorkton. This, he said, was a large and prosperous settlement, composed principally

of emigrants from DAKOTA, the majority of whom were Canadians, who, emigrating from Ontario to Dakota years ago, were only too thankful to be back on Canadian soil again. They were settled on a beautiful section of country, and were highly elated with their prospects, though, of course, they had returned much poorer than when first they went to the States. Southern Manitoba, or the Glenboro district was also doing well, and though there were no very large towns, the small ones were growing steadily. The Canadian Pacific railway could not be praised too highly, continued Mr. Woodworth, for the part they had played in the development of the country. The branch lines had done more than anything else to open up the splendid districts lying away from the main track. The Souris line, which runs from Brandon south-west through the Souris coal fields, had been completed last year as far as Estevan, the centre of the mining district, and there had been considerable settlement along the line as far as it went. Estevan would, moreover, be a divisional part of the Soo line, and the prospects of immediate settlement in the neighboring districts were exceedingly bright. During the year 50 miles of the Great North-west Central railway, which runs from Brandon in a north-westerly direction, had been built and were now in operation. Another extension which had been the greatest benefit to the southern portions of Manitoba, was the junction of the southern branches of the Canadian Pacific railway, which terminate at Glenboro and Deloraine, with the Brandon and Souris branch.

THE GREAT NORTH-WEST. Turning to the territories, Mr. Woodworth said, that on the whole they had had a fairly prosperous year. The population, of course, was not so large as in Manitoba, but there was every indication that the country would settle up rapidly. Emigrants were fast filling up the tracts of land at the foot of the Rocky mountains and in the Saskatchewan valley, especially in the Alberta and Edmonton districts. Calgary, he said, was growing steadily, though not very rapidly, while Edmonton was growing rapidly ahead. Regina also was improving and the farmers around there had done very well in the last two years. The Canadian Pacific railway had filled a long felt want by the construction of a branch line from Calgary to Fort Macleod.

In conclusion Mr. Woodworth said that he thought that all had the utmost confidence in the future of the country.

Several large cargoes of raw cotton grown in Russian Central Asia were recently shipped at Odessa to German ports. The Russians are sanguine that there will be a vigorous development of the cotton-growing industry there in the near future. The quality of the cotton so far, however, has been inferior.