

company with his new friend the corn merchant, to attempt the passage in a canoe.

'Now, sir,' said the latter gentleman, while they waited on the bank, muffled to their eyes in furs, 'you will have some experience of what a complete barrier the frozen St. Lawrence is to Canadian commerce, or the commonest intercourse, and how much the Victoria Bridge is needed.'

'Au large! au large!' called the boatmen—sturdy, muscular fellows, accustomed to river perils; and, laying themselves at the bottom of the canoe as directed, shoulders resting against the thwarts, the passengers began their 'traject.' Sometimes they had open water in lanes and patches; sometimes a field of jagged ice, whereupon the merry-hearted voyageurs jumped out and dragged the canoe across to water again, singing some French song the while. What perilous collisions of floes they dexterously avoided! What intricate navigation of narrow channels they wound through within half a boat's length of crushing destruction! Notwithstanding all their ability, the passengers were thankful to touch land again some miles below the usual crossing place, and some hours after embarkation.

Here the banks were deeply excoriated with the pressure of the ice against them; for the edges of the vast field set in motion the previous day had ploughed into the earth, and piled itself in immense angular 'jambes.' On the quay of Montreal it lay in block heaps also, crushed up even into the public thoroughfare; and men were at work to help the break in the harbour with pickaxes and crowbars on the grey plain.