

Alas, alas! this so happy past to the poor traveller was now but a dream, and there was only a shuddering hope in the wakening. The storm was blowing more fiercely than ever, and the cold seemed to have become more intense. When the sad, brief reverie had ended, he shivered violently as he began to walk slowly and aimlessly on through the deepening snow.

Then he noticed that the early dusk of a winter evening was already coming on. A sudden energy seized him—an energy of desperation. If his life could yet be saved it was only during daylight. When night had once set in the last hope would be gone. He knew not what direction he should take, but he knew that his only chance was to go on. He was quite calm and determined now. Peering through the dusk and the blinding snow he saw to the right the dark shade of the woods on the main shore. Suddenly he remembered an old road that ran up from the lake somewhere here, through the woods and far on to an outlying settler's house. He turned in the direction in which he thought this road lay, half running in the eagerness which the new fluttering hope had inspired. If only he could once more get home to his wife and children! Ah, how the thought of it stirred him unutterably!

But it was almost dark when he reached the shore. He felt himself growing weak now. His feet began to drag more and more with cold and bewilderment. It was so hard, plunging, staggering through the deep snow. Soon he stopped for a moment and leaned up against a tree to rest. Then his knees began to tremble and he felt himself sinking, sinking. But he drew himself up with a jerk and struggled on. He had only taken a few steps when he tripped on a dead branch, stumbled and fell forward in the snow. Ah, it was not so cold after all! He would rest just a minute here before going on. . . . How pleasant it was only to lie still for a while! The snow was warm and soft and comfortable, and he was very weary. . . . No, he could not give up yet. . . . He would go back home now, it surely was not far and Mary and the children were waiting for him. . . . He would rise soon, and try once more to find the way. Yes, it was cold again, so cold! and the tree-tops clashed and rattled and groaned with the wind. . . .

Towards morning the storm gradually died away, the clouds dispersed, and the sun rose clear on a world of snow. There was snow everywhere. It lay dazzling white on the vast ice plains of the channel, here and there piled up in heaps and banks by the swirling blizzard. It had blown and drifted into the clefts and chasms of the great granite hills that stretched far along the North Shore, smoothening and softening their rugged outlines.

There were no drifts in the pine woods through which the lost traveller had wandered, but the snow had filled them deep, deep everywhere. Little remained on the dark green branches—the wind had swayed them too violently for that.

And now that the strife and fury of the storm had quite passed a great stillness had settled down upon the woods, pervading all its sombre depths. It seemed the silence of finality, of completion. At first the influence of the place was not positively melancholy, only subduing and quieting. And yet one drearily wondered if the world had ever been any different, or would ever be any different from what it was then. There seemed to be no place for change, no hope for spring, no memory of summer. It was as if the solemn voice of Nature had cried "Hush!" ages ago, and not even a twig had fallen since to break the awful stillness.

At times one is conscious of a companionship in trees, even a friendship and consolation. But the possibility of sympathy and communion had gone out of this forest forever. Human life with all its vicissitudes, its tenderness and its tears, was a thing outside of it all, unrelated, utterly remote. The great trunks of the towering pines oppressed the spirit, overwhelmed it with the sublimity of their indifference; their dark gloomy branches might have been funeral palls.

Into the solemn stillness of that afternoon there came a party of men on snowshoes, searching the woods for some trace of the missing traveller. Their pallid solemn faces showed how serious was their errand. Hardy fellows most of them were, long familiar with dangers on water and on land. They had been on such expeditions before, and their experience made them realize more terribly the pity of it all. Lost in the snow! The words are a prayer for the dead with the people of that region.

Slowly they move on over the yielding snow. There! that surely was a signal shout from one of the party. All the others hurried to him. Tracks in the snow! Holes rather, once deep down but now half filled and obliterated. What a struggle there must have been here in the darkness and the storm! For the snow was nearly three feet deep all through the woods. And in a hollow a little farther on they saw where the poor wanderer had sunk deeper, plunging up to his arm-pits in the cruel snow. The men looked at each other for a moment and then hurried forward. They said but little, and their voices were softened and tremulous with a great fear. For a time the tracks led nearly straight ahead. Then they swerved here and there, wandering soon in a sad irregular zigzag among the dreary trees. A terrible expectation was upon the searchers. They knew how it must end.

And so at last they found him, half-covered by the drift where he had fallen. No tears wet their cheeks for him, but one of them said quietly, "Poor fellow!" and a tender pity filled all their eyes. Sorrowfully and reverently they carried the body to the nearest settler's house, and from there it was taken soon afterwards to the lonely home.

The tragic story spread far and fast through the district, and on the funeral day the settlers came from many miles to give their silent sympathy to the stricken wife.

And now to her forever the solemn grandeur of the pine woods is a bitter mockery, a shuddering remembrance; cruelly the winter storm shrieks like a pitiless destroyer, and the white snow seems but a frozen shroud.

A. STEVENSON.

THE CUSTOMS BOOK IMPOST.

ALL who recognize the service which public libraries render to literature and culture will, I doubt not, be interested in the movement which has again been put on foot to secure the abolition of the Book Duties.

The other day advantage was taken of the visit of Sir John Macdonald to the Toronto Public Library to urge, if not the entire removal of the impost on books, at least that public libraries, colleges, and educational and scientific institutions should be exempt from taxation on books imported for their use. The Premier was good enough to say that he would favourably consider the matter with the Minister of Customs, if those interested in the removal of the tax would in petitioning the Government forward to Ottawa the facts and figures relating to the subject, with an indication of the practice of other Governments in the matter of admitting free to public institutions books and other equipments of an educational and scientific character. This, interested parties will no doubt see to, but in addition I would like to say a few words in *THE WEEK* with a view to creating some measure of public sentiment on the matter that may be helpful to the cause many of us have at heart.

To place a tax on books is tantamount, as has been often admitted, to placing a tax on knowledge. Practically this was long admitted in Canada, where for many years the customs impost on books did not exceed the nominal duty of five per cent. Nor would the principle, I believe, have been departed from when the N.P. came into force had not certain publishers urged the advance of the tariff to fifteen per cent., as a measure of protection to native publishing industries, which it was affirmed would be stimulated by the imposition of the higher duty. In this, I cannot refrain from thinking, there was a measure of self-deception, if not something worse; for, if we except the reprinting of a few novels, which English authors consented to have reprinted in Canada, and the exclusion of unauthorized American editions, there was no field here for the profitable republication of British books which any increase of the tariff was likely to foster. The advance of the duty from five to fifteen per cent. was therefore of little or no advantage to native industries, while the tax made a serious addition to the cost of the intellectual nutriment of the people. Nor as a source of revenue (the total yield of the book-tax being comparatively insignificant) was there much to be said in justification of the increased impost. The tax from every point of view was not only a mistake, it was a blunder. How injurious was the impost, and how great a detriment it was to all classes of people, I need hardly waste words to show. It bore heavily on the student and the artisan, and on all the professional classes, none of whose text-books would it pay to reproduce in this country, and whose members had thus to submit to a burdensome tax which they could ill afford on the works needed in their studies, or as material aids in their profession. The evil was intensified by their having to pay not only the fifteen per cent. duty but also the importer's and often the retailer's profit on the duty, which in most cases brought up the total impost to twenty and not infrequently to twenty-five per cent. The increased tax bore heavily on public libraries, colleges, and learned institutions, whose appropriations as a rule are limited, and whose expenditure on current additions to their several book collections was thus necessarily contracted by the excess of the obnoxious duty. In the case of sets of books for the reference departments of these public libraries or of books of a technical character, which from their high price were only to be met with in public institutions, the increased tax was a serious disadvantage, as in many instances it put it quite out of the power of the libraries to import them. I could cite from my own experience in connection with the Toronto Public Library a number of expensive works on arts and manufactures which would have been desirable additions to the library, but which the management was precluded from purchasing abroad in consequence of the increased customs impost. Doubtless other libraries, public and private, have suffered loss from a like cause.

Another grievance in connection with this matter unhappily occurs in the recent cancellation by the Government of the privilege of importing books which have been seven years published free of duty. This boon, which it seems was withdrawn in consequence of some irregularities on the part of an importing house in the book trade, but which surely could have been otherwise provided against, was a very helpful one to colleges and public libraries as well as to the general literary student. The fact of granting it is itself an indication on the part of the Government not only of the value of libraries as aids to the country's intellectual life, but of the appreciation of the fact that books were not a desirable commodity to tax. This is virtually conceded in the almost universal practice of other nations in either placing no duty on book importations, or a very nominal duty as well as in the privilege where a duty is imposed of relieving from impost importations of books which have been a few years published.

I trust that the Government may see its way again to make this concession, if it does not at once revert to the five per cent. tariff on books, or better still, to place them on the free list. In taking such a step I am sure that it will meet with general approval, and give material aid in developing the intellectual life of Canada.

JNO. HALLAM.

WE have heretofore been led to believe that ice purified itself. Now we are told that in good marketable ice, taken from where the water is polluted with the sewage of cities, there exists an almost infinite number of living disease germs, and they appear to thrive under the condition of being frozen for an indefinite period. As this information is likely to be—as it should—widely spread, it is safe to predict that next summer will be a lively season for those who sell water-coolers in which the ice is used to cool the water without mixing with it.