AN ARCTIC EXPLORATION,

The North Pole Reached by a Norwegian Explorer.

He Tells a Marvellous Story of His Experiences—How the Aurora Borealis is Produced—Life around the Pole.

A despatch from Hoke's Point, to the Boston Globe says: One of the strangest stories that ever fell from mortal lips is that of a pitiable, yet enviable, specimen of humanity who was seen in this seaport town a few days ago—pitiable, because physical affliction has made life for him but a mere existence; enviable, because he has passed through experiences so wonderful so exceptional, and so fruitful of discovery, that they seem more like the wild imagining of a romancer than the actual events in the career of an ordinary human being. The central personage of this narrative says he has been to the north pole. He also asserts that he has discovered the secret of the northern lights. A Norwegian sailor, yet the possessor of a fortune; a brave adventurer, yet a man of rank; a forsaker of the comforts of civilization for the rigors of Arctic exploration; an enthusiast in science and a martyr to the restless spirit of discovery—such is Olof Prail. His hands and feet have been frozen until they are useless. His ears are shrivelled shreds of flesh. His nose but a relic. He speaks with difficulty. Even his mind is not clear at all times. Olof Prail's statement was delivered through the medium of an interpreter. It was made solely in the interest of public information, the narrator believing it to be his duty

TO LET THE WORLD KNOW

of the remarkable things, "all of which he saw and part of which he was." In early life, like many boys, he became filled with a desire to go to sea. He had all the comforts and many of the luxuries of a home, but the desire for the sea was more than a mere fancy with Olof; it was a passion, ardent and uncontrollable. Not, however, until he reached legal manhood was he able to gratify it. On coming into his fortune he announced his determination to organize an expedition and go in search of the north pole. The entreaties of his family and friends were without effect, and at the age of 24 he had organized a small band of companion spirits, consisting mostly of hardy sailors, and had procured the building of a staunch ship, not of large size, but constructed with special reference to strength, endurance and storage room. "The details of the sea passage," said Olof Prail, "are not of special interest. To tell of the storms; the intense cold, the fields and mountains of ice, the narrow escapes from being crushed by bergs, the desolation and the struggles for life, would be to repeat a familiar tale that has been told by former explorers of the Arctic region. It was about six months after leaving Norway that we found ourselves at a point which I think was

CONSIDERABLY FARTHER NORTH

than had been reached y any preceding expedition. I did not recognize the locality from any book of travel that I had read, and to this day I am unable to give it a geographical designation. The weather became severe and tempestuous, and we decided that it would be best to suspend the journey for a few weeks. Accordingly, we landed and put up a small portable house, which had been built in sections and placed on board the ship. It was here that I put into execution a plan which was certainly bold, and which some of my companions did not hesitate to pronounce reckless. I had purchased a large balloon before leaving home, together with materials requisite for manufacturing hydrogen gas. The basket, or car, was equipped with heating apparatus and provision; sufficient to last several days. One morning I called my companions together and laid before them the purpose which I had secretly cherished. It was in brief, to inflate the ballon, wait for a strong northerly wind, and sail by air to the north pole. Passing by the warnings, the entreaties and even the threats of my comrades, I will only say that I was master, and that nothing could change my plans. The balloon was filled with gas, I stepped into the basket, and the word to cut loose was given. Suddenly the earth and sea seemed to drop far below me. In less time than it takes to tell it I was

A THOUSAND FEET IN THE AIR.

I looked back. The ship looked like a toy, the encampment was a mere spot in the vast panorama, and all was soon lost to sight and hearing. Nothing but a vast expanse of blue and white greeted the vision. There was not a sign of anything that looked like a human habitation. I was comfortable, for the heating apparatus fulfilled all promises. I will here say that it included an arrangement for regulating the temperature of the gas so that it would not contract and lose its buoyancy. Directly ahead were immense mountains of ice and snow, and I approached them with satisfactory speed. I calculated that it would be three or four days at least, before my destination was reached. It was in fact, a week. On the fifth day I began to be depressed by the loneliness of my situation. On the sixth day the solitude became almost unbearable. Every arrangement for my bodily comfort worked admirably, but the utter silence and the absence of human companionship drove me into such a state of mind that I was more than once tempted to cast myself from the balloon into the field of snow or on the ice crags beneath. The one relief to the terrible monotony was the display of northern lights, more wonderful and brilliant than anything that had ever been pictured in my imagination. On this spectacle I frequently gazed with profound admiration. On the seventh day

A LOFTY MOUNTAIN OF ICE

loomed up before me. To avoid being dashed against it I threw out twenty pounds of ballast. Up shot the balloon, and as soon as it ascended above the level of the mountain-top a wonderful scene burst into view. An expanse of blue water stretched into the distance. Not an iceberg marred the fairness of its surface. Was it the open polar sea? A thrill shook my whole being as I asked myself this question. I was no longer lonely or despondent, but was filled with a strange exhilaration. My attention was next attracted by another strange sight. Far to the north an enormous pillar of fire arose from the horizon to the heavens. It illuminated the sky and shot tongues of flame into space. Here, no doubt, was the source of the aurora borealis. Such was my first thought. After the balloon passed over the summit of the ice mountain the air grew perceptibly warmer. Proceeding further northward, the temperature ascended above the freezing point. After several miles were traversed the air was balmy and agreeable. I threw aside my fur wrappings and soon entered a region of positive warmth. The breeze still carried me along at a fair rate of speed, and it was not long before I discerned a line of coast in the distance. Columbus was not filled with more intense ecstacy than I was at that moment. The coast gradually grew more distinct. Mountains, forests and plains glided into view. Settlements, villages and cities appeared in the panorama. The pillar of fire stood in the background, and it was

A CONSPICUOUS AND IMPOSING FEATURE

of the scene. It seemed to have its source at some point on or under the surface of the earth. It puzzled me greatly at the time. My balloon was soon directly over the land and I resolved to descend. I pulled open the valve and the air-ship approached the ground rapidly. A fertile field lay beneath me, and a throng of men, women and children were rushing toward the spot and shouting in great excitement. In five minutes more I stood on solid ground and my balloon was secured to a tree by a stout rope. The people had fair complexions and intelligent faces. They talked rapidly and eagerly in a language which I did not understand. I was soon conducted to a house which was evidently the residence of a person of some distinction. Beyond remarking that I was treated hospitably, I must pass rapidly over this portion of my narrative. The country which I discovered was called Shunfik by its inhabitants. It was in a high state of civilization. Its population was about, 4,000,000. It had numerous flourishing cities and towns. The people were intelligent and highly cultured and wonderfully skilled in various mechanic arts. They knew nothing whatever of the great world outside of their icebound polar dwelling place. One of their best scholars was appointed to teach me the Shunfik language and in three months I was able to tell him so much about Europe, Asia, Africa and America that he made a fortune by

SPREADING THIS INFORMATION

among the people by means of lectures and contributions to the newspapers of his country. Meanwhile I became a celebrity, and every facility for studying the institutions of Shunfik was extended to me. A volume might be written of the things which I saw, but I must pass at once to the subjects which enlisted my most earnest attention. Here was the situation: A small continent and a warm climate at the north pole; the land surrounded by a sea of a temperature that made it comfortable for bathing; the sea practically surrounded by an ice-bound region of intense cold. What caused the warmth within a circle of 200 miles in diameter, the centre of which was the polar point? This question was easily answered. The heat proceeded from the column of fire which I have already mentioned. This tremendous pillar of flame shot probably a thousand feet in space. It burned with intense fury and shone with dazzling brilliancy. At its topmost point the flames swayed in many varying directions, making a fantastic pyrotechnic display. This was the source of heat, and this also furnished the true explanation of the northern lights. When we in America or Europe see the auroral steamers projecting themselves into the heavens, waving, flashing, darting hither and thither, growing faint and bright by turns, now arising, now sinking, and enchanting us by their capricious movements, we may know that they proceed from

THIS PRODIGIOUS TONGUE OF FIRE

which is discharged from the bowels of the northern apex of the globe on which we live. That the aurora borealis is visible some nights and not others is due to different conditions of the atmosphere, and to another cause, which I will explain presently. But the column of flame—you wish also to know the origin and nature of that wonderful phenomenon. The explanation is simplicity itself. The tongue of fire is nothing more or less than burning natural gas. Do not look incredulous, I know whereof I speak. At the point where the northern end of the axis of the earth is supposed to exist, is an enormous hole, at least 300 feet in diameter. From this hole a stream of natural gas pours forth. The supply is inexhaustible, and the time when it was not flowing and burning is unknown. The people of Shunfik have an extensive literature, and their recorded history goes back thousands of years, but history, tradition and legend treat the column of fire as a fact older than humanity itself. An enormous quantity of heat is radiated, as you may well imagine, but it is under control. The aperture through which the gas spurts is in solid rock, the top of which is as smooth as if it were made of polished steel. There is also a slab of stone at least 400 feet square and 50 feet thick, which is so fixed that it can be

SLID OVER THE HOLE.

either partially or entirely. The slab is moved back and forth by means of engines of prodigious power. Thus the gas can be shut off or turned on, and the heat and light regulated at pleasure. The apparatus is an ancient invention, and is constantly improved by the ingenuity of the Shunfiks. Of course the flow of gas is never entirely shut off, but its volume is so diminished at times that the heat and light yielded are comparatively insignificant. This is one of the causes of the intermittent character of the northern lights as they appear to us. The inhabitants procure changes in the seasons by this purely artificial means, and their successions of cold and warm weather are based on the scientific knowledge of the requirements of human health and vegetable vigor. I will not speak in detail of my many experiences in Shunfik. You naturally desire to know how I came to return from that strange land, and what made me the physical wreck that I am. I became acquainted with a beautiful maiden of high rank, and fell in love with her. She returned my passion. Her friends were indignant, and resolved to get rid of me. This was easily accomplished. I was seized one night, placed in my own balloon, and sent adrift on another aerial journey. Everything was done gently, but relentlessly. The equipments of the balloon, including.

AN ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF GAS,

were put in perfect order. A night was chosen when a lofty current of air, as indicated by the high point of the tower of flame, blew to the southward. Resistance was useless, and I was soon in the heights of the Arctic sky. My flight was away from the pole. For two weeks I managed to exist with physical comfort, but with a mind torn by agony. Then portions of the apparatus with which the car of the balloon was fitted got out of order, and my suffering began. I will not horrify you by relating them in detail, but will only state that at the end of four weeks I descended, more dead than alive. The natives cared for me, and helped me along on my journey to the best of their ability. Finally, after three month, of slow progress and incredible hardships I obtained passage in a fishing vessel bound for a point in Melville bay. Thence I succeeded in reaching cape Chudleigh, from there I managed to get to Newfoundland, and after that there was no difficulty in finding a ship bound for the United States. I shall sail for my home in Norway in a few days, and from there despatch an expedition in search of my forsaken companions, unless they have in the meantime turned up." Olof Prail's interpreter is an intelligent Norwegian named Loof Lirpa, whom he first met in Newfoundland on his return journey. The explorer and his companion are stopping at the Sledwin House, a cosy little hotel kept by a Worthy German named R. O. Mantz, who is doing everything possible for the comfort and happiness of his distinguished guest.

[The narrator of the above story is probably an imitator of Jules Verne, whose marvellous fictions are familiar to people in general.—EDITOR.]

Where is the Largest Shop in the World?

There appears to be a wide difference of opinion as to which is the largest shop in the world, honours being divided between Whiteley's, of London; Wannamaker's, of Philadelphia; and the Bon Marche, Paris. Judging from the number of employes, however, the first named would seem to be the most extensive business. William Whiteley started twenty-six years ago with a couple of assistants; a few years later there were 16 hands; to-day Whiteley has over 5,000 employes, his manager during his early struggles, Mr. James Keith, still superintending some 62 departments, which cover more than 15 acres of ground. The system by which the business of the "universal provider" is conducted is decidedly novel, yet thoroughly practical. The head of each department keeps a shop, is responsible for the turnover to the chief, buys the goods, prices them—indeed, does everything as if it were his own concern, for Whiteley seldom buys, except it be a $100,000 or $150,000 line, or anything above the limit of purchase allowed to the "shopkeeper." Out of the 5,000 employes 1,000 are exclusively employed in the building; there are 400 clerks, and 1,650 assistants sit down to dinner every day. To feed this little army of shop assistants for one day the amount of food required is enormous, 20 carvers whose profession it is to wield the knife being called in to keep plate after plate replenished. But this small battalion has to be comfortably lodged and slept, and for this purpose a whole street is rented. There are 25 houses in the street, each presided over by a housekeeper, who looks to the comfort of those who occupy her twelve to eighteen rooms, as the case may be. For delivery of parcels and whatnot, 350 horses have stabling accommodation; there are 250 vans and carts, while 30 large vans are required for removals, and carrying packages down to the docks for Australia, New Zealand and China. So much trade is done with India that it has its own special department. Three million parcels and two million letters leave the Westbourne-grove establishment every year. The largest shop in the United States is owned by John Wannamaker, of Philadelphia, and is a wholesale and retail clothing house. The ground area is, in round figures, 250 feet by 500 feet, and the floor space covers about 14 acres. The number of employes is about 4,000. Engines of over 500-horse power are required to drive the machinery for the ordinary convenience of the establishment; electric dynamos, pneumatic cash system; ventilators and pumps for the hydraulic power by which lifts run. 104 horses are required for the delivery system. Prices are for prompt cash, the shop opening for business at 7.45 a.m., and closing at 6 p. m. It is fitted with long and short distance telephones and telegraph offices. The business began in a small shop, dealing in men's and boy's clothing, under the name of Wannamaker and Brown, on the 15th of April, 1861 and has increased until it is now by far the largest business establishment of the kind in the States. The Bon Marche (cheap market) is one of the sights of Paris. The colossal business was started more than half a century ago by a some-time village pedlar and his peasant wife. They first bought a small shop at the corner of the Rue du Bax and Rue du Sevres. This was the humble and commencement of the now world-renowned Bon Marche. Slowly but surely, the Bon Marche engulfed the neighbouring shops, until it had spread over the whole block and rose to the height of five stories. At the top of the Bon Marche are the kitchens and dining-rooms, in which the whole staff of assistants have their meals free of expense. There is also a private hospital for the use and comfort of employees, and a doctor who comes each day to investigate cases of illness. Besides these, there are teachers of music and foreign languages, gymnasium and fencing-room, games-room, reading-room, &c.

Years of experience in her specialty doesn't make it certain that a hen will "set" well on the stomach.

"Bilkins is dead." "Ah! anything left?" "Yes, his creditors."

Sir William Vernon Harcourt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced the budget for the coming financial year in the Imperial House of Commons on Monday. The Chancellor estimated the expenditure for the current financial year at £91,464,000 and the revenue at £89,890,000, leaving a deficit of £1,574,000, due in part to a slight expected decrease of the revenue, but chiefly to the vast growth of expenditures, not created by the Government, but though the demands of the country upon Parliament. The Chancellor said that the Government would not propose to cover the deficit by enroaching upon the sinking fund devoted to the reduction of the national debt. He preferred to meet the deficit by the straightforward way of increased taxation. They had, therefore, resorted to the income tax, which it was proposed to increase by a penny in the pound, which ought to add £1,750,000 to the revenue.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN.

An Interesting Piece of Legislation Before the Ontario Legislature.

An important piece of legislation is receiving the attention of the Ontario Legislature at the present sitting. It is a bill to provide for the prevention of cruelty to and better protection of children. The act provides for the infliction of a heavy fine or imprisonment or both on any person over 16 years of age who having charge of a boy under 14 years of age or a girl under 16, wilfully ill-treats, neglects, abandons, or causes suffering to such child. As long a sentence as nine months' imprisonment can be inflicted at the option of the magistrate. Persons causing children under the ages named to beg, whether by pretending to sing, perform, or by offering anything for sale, or to sing or play in taverns between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., or to perform in public places when under 10 years of age, are subjected to similar severe penalties. The municipal authorities may, however, change the hours, and may grant license to children over 7 years of age to perform in circus and other entertainments, and the municipal officers are empowered to see that the provisions of the license are observed. Where a person is convicted of ill-treating a child, or of causing a child to contravene the law, anyone can bring the child before a judge, who, if satisfied that it is so expedient, may order the child to be taken out of the custody of the offender and placed in the hands of a relative until, if a boy, he attains the age of 14, and if a girl the age of 16, provided that a parent of the child is privy to the offence charged. Any person or society to whom the child is committed shall practically have parental control over the child, and any judge can order the parent of the child to contribute to its support. That there may be no injustice done to anyone, the Lieutenant-Governor in council is empowered at any time to discharge a child from custody, or to alter or revoke the regulations relating to these children.

A most important new departure is the provision for the appointment of a superintendent of neglected and dependent children, whose salary shall be voted by the Legislature. His duty will be to encourage and assist the organization of children's aid societies for the protection of children from cruelty, and for the due care of neglected and dependent children in temporary homes or shelters and the placing of such children in properly selected homes. This officer will also visit and inspect industrial schools and temporary homes or shelters, and when so directed the place of abode of any child boarded out under this act. He will see that a record is kept of all committals under the act and of full particulars in each case and shall prepare an annual report of the matters dealt with. Provision is further made for the establishment of shelters for young children, who are proved to be neglected, in every city and town having a population of over 10,000 inhabitants. Existing orphan asylums may be used for such asylums, with the consent of the trustees of these institutions, or the children may be placed in desirable private familes, but in no instance is the home or shelter to be under the same management as a poor house of refuge or any penal establishment. When a children's aid society is established in any municipality it will have the management or these children, and the corporation will pay the necessary expenses. In each electoral district a citizens' visiting committee will be appointed, and it is most satisfactory to note that the Provincial Secretary has taken cognizance of woman's interest in the great work by providing that three out of the six members must be women. This committee will co-operate with the children's aid societies, and shall be what their name applies. If properly selected, the careful supervision of the children will be insured. This committee is to be appointed by the county judge, the sheriff and the M.P.P. for the district, and will hold office for three years. The committee, in selecting homes, will endeavor to secure places of abode for the children, where they may be cared for without remuneration, and they will aim at promoting a philanthropic sentiment on behalf of neglected, abandoned or destitute children.

Towards the necessary expenses of supporting these children—boys until they are 12 years of age and girls until 14—the municipality to which they belong, by virtue of a year's residence, must pay $1 a week. The placing of a child with the lowest bidder is absolutely prohibited. Officers of children's aid societies are given wide powers to take charge of and bring before a magistrate for disposal all children either neglected or found in the custody of persons incapable of properly rearing them. It is provided that Protestant children must not be committed to Roman Catholic homes and vice versa. This will prevent any bickerings as to religious training of waifs and strays. All ministers of religion, M. Ps. and M. P. Ps., judges and justices of the peace may visit children placed in homes and shelters, and may enter in a book any observations he may desire on the subject of his visit, to be subsequently considered by the inspectors.

When children are charged with crime, the magistrate may hand them over to the children's aid societies, who in turn may apprentice them to any suitable trade or calling. No child under sixteen will in future be allowed to be locked up or to consort with an adult prisoner while awaiting trial. Children apparently under the age of twelve awaiting trial may be kept in custody by the children's aid society, and any judge may hold a preliminary trial under a charge of cruelty against a parent in the residence of such parent. No one but counsel, witnesses, law officers, friends of the family or members of the children's aid society shall be allowed to be present while a child under sixteen or an accusation of cruelty against a parent is being tried. Another important enactment is that enabling municipal councils in cities, towns and villages to pass by-laws to prevent boys and girls from remaining on the streets, without proper guardianship, after a certain hour. The council may cause a bell to be rung as a warning, to be called the "curfew bell," after which every unattended child shall be at home. Constables finding children on streets shall warn them, and if they are afterwards found loitering a constable shall take them home. Parents or guardians may be summoned and fined for permitting a child to habitually break this section. Such are the main provisions in this proposed new law. They are said to embrace the best portions of all recent laws regarding neglected children passed by other civilized nations. It is apparent that the Minister has devoted much study to the subject, and we doubt not that the fruits of his labor will be indorsed by the Legislature and by all citizens who take an interest in this most inportant subject. It is certainly better to devote public money to properly rear our own neglected population than to devote taxes to augment our waif and stray population.

The Welsh Suspensory Bill.

The interest which Anglican Churchmen are taking in Mr. Gladstone's "Welsh Suspensory bill" is due not so much to the intrinsic importance of that bill as to the belief that it portends an attempt to disestablish the English Church in the not distant future. Taken by itself, the justice of Welsh disestablishment would be conceded by all Churchmen not blinded by partisan prejudice, for the Anglican Church in Wales is an exotic; it is not the Church of the great mass of the people, and even though the establishment is no more than a Parliamentary figment, imposing no pecuniary burden on the people, candid Churchmen must admit the injustice of thus declaring an alien Church to be "the Church" of the country. The establishment of the Church by the State assumes the obligation of every one to become a member of the Church so established. And though nowadays such an assumption is nothing more than an empty fiction even in England, it is every year becoming more intolerable to the Dissenters, who claim to outnumber the Church, and who do largely outnumber it in Wales. But in spite of that fact English Churchmen are bitterly opposing Mr. Gladstone's mild bill, which does not call for Welsh disestablishment, but only for the suspension of all appointments to dignities and benefices in Wales. Eminent clergymen and laymen are making most inflammatory appeals to religious prejudice. Mr. Gladstone is denounced in much the same way as he was when he brought in the bill for the disestablishment of the Irish Church a few years ago. At that time he was assailed as a robber of the Irish Church, and one fiery clergyman wrote a pamphlet in which he proved that Mr. Gladstone was the beast described in the Apocalypse, though to obtain the number of the beast there given he was obliged to prefix the feminine form of the definite article before the states man's name translated into Greek. So at the present moment the Prime Minister is held up to public execration as a sacrilegious wretch, who "is selling the Church in Wales for thirty votes, just as its great Master was sold for thirty pieces of silver.' Nor is the opposition confining itself to words. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have decided to hold a joint meeting of the Houses of Laymen of both provinces, in London at Whitsuntide. At this meeting each of the eighty-nine archdeaconries of the Church will be presented by the Church wardens. This great gathering, which will be the first of the kind since 1562, when the Thirty-nine Articles were promulgated, will be called together, not to consider the question of Welsh disestablishment on its merits, but to condemn any disestablishment at all as a spoliation of the Church. This circumstance is significant for it shows the dignitaries of the English Church to be so held by their prejudices and prepossessions that they are unable or unwilling to weigh candidly the arguments in favor of disestablishment even when, as in the case of Wales they are unanswerable. The meeting will doubtless be most respectable; but as an answer to the desire to repair the injustice involved in an established Church in Wales, it will not be entitled to any more consideration than are the wild shrieks of rage which are now being uttered against Mr. Gladstone. No amount of noise and fury on the part of the Church's highly paid dignitaries can do more than delay disestablishment, not only in Wales, but in England and Scotland also. A State Church is opposed to the spirit of the age. It is calculated to work a serious injustice to large numbers of people; and as many Churchmen will admit, it does more harm than good to the Church established. The English people are slow to overthrow an old institution; but their sense of justice is strong, and it will not permit them to tolerate for many more years the anomaly of an Established Church which fully half the people repudiated.

Mr. Geo. W. Turner

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