

WEEKLY MISCELLANY.

Devoted to the Intellectual and Moral Improvement of the Young.

Vol. I. Halifax, N. S. Thursday, December 24, 1863. No. 26.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, AT \$1 PER YEAR
IN ADVANCE, BY

W. Cunnabell, 155 Upper Water Street.

Subscriptions received by the Agents, and at the
office of publication.

HALIFAX, N. S. DECEMBER 24, 1863.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S DAY.

At no period of the year are the best feelings of our nature more actively awakened, or more practically illustrated, than during the last week in December, and the first in January. In this joyous season the young are enabled, during the "Christmas Holidays," to indulge more freely in skating, coasting, and other favorite amusements—while those in more advanced stages of life participate with greater zeal in the enjoyments of social gatherings, and in the gratification of bestowing and receiving mementos of mutual friendship.

This hallowed season, however, is peculiarly adapted to impart present happiness to all classes—high and low, rich and poor, old and young; and to impress the memory with pleasing recollections long after it has passed away. But one of its most commendable features is the Christian spirit which induces the practice of those divine but ordinarily too often neglected precepts, inculcating the remembrance of the poor—for which it is hoped the present Anniversary may be marked, by increased benevolence.

Although our mode of celebrating Christmas may be deficient of some of the observances in the mother country, yet the custom of presentations, and mutual expressions of good will, has been entirely derived from that source; and while each community here adapts itself to existing circumstances, in observing Christmas and New Year's Day, the celebration of the former anniversary in Great Britain appears to be based on ancient customs; as our readers will learn from the subjoined extracts from an article on that subject in the London Family Herald:—

"Christmas Day—the Nativity of the Saviour—is a great festival all over Chris-

tenom, one of the most hallowed in the calendar of human destiny. This period of the year for countless centuries had been devoted to feasting, even before the advent of the Romans into Britain, when the Giant worship of the ancient Druids prevailed, or before St. Augustine converted the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. The only relic of the ancient Druidical worship is the mistletoe, and, in some remote districts of the country, the burning of the yule log carries us back to the days when the truculent Anglo-Saxons almost destroyed all traces of Christianity in Britain, except in the mountain fastnesses of the west, and the sea board of the south.

"We know that Christianity is not a religion of gloom, but one of cheerfulness, hope, and faith in the future, and we do not, as a rule, abuse the knowledge. Therefore, while indulging in merriment, and those exuberances of joy which spring from the heart, we do not forget the day is one of solemnity as well as rejoicing, and inaugurate it by religious service. However, as the heart loveth to be glad, we indulge in the reflection that, as 'Christmas comes but once a year,' we ought all of us to celebrate it in the best way our means will permit. So that, from the monarch on the throne, to the humblest agricultural labourer in his cottage, Christmas Day is the best prized one in the year. Right royal, consequently, are the preparations. The cattle shows take precedence. Then the shops are gaily decorated, huge oxen and plump sheep surround us on every side, and the palate is tempted by fruits from every country under the sun; the windows are profusely adorned with mistletoe boughs and holly. Toys are exhibited in bewildering variety and abundance;—Christmas trees cause countless young hearts to thrill with prospective delight; the streets may be dreary and dark, the Winter's fog and icicles may hang on every house, but there is within—

A little world of clear and cloudless day, and with beaming smiles, quickly throbbing hearts, and millions of wishes of 'A merry Christmas,' the festival subsides into the family character, and Christmas Eve beholds our English households in all their glory, because they are then appalled in the noblest and best of human affections, and garlanded with those sentiments which spring from love of home and duty, and a due reverence for all things sacred.

"With a kindly feeling for all without whether poor or rich—how could it be

otherwise on such an occasion?—the family gather round the domestic altar, and throughout the length and breadth of the land the cry is—

Here, boy, another cheering fire,
A waste of fuel—heap it higher!
Though storm with storm, in ceaseless jar,
Without wage everlasting war,
Within we have song and peace.

"The home circle is completed. As the heads of the family glance round it, perchance they miss the faces of some: but with a sigh for the absent and a tear for the departed, they bid all present enjoy themselves, while they retire into the depths of an old arm-chair, to look upon a scene which conjures up many a pleasant reminiscence of a well-spent past; or, with aged relatives and old friends around them, gather in a corner to discuss philosophy or politics; while the youthful brothers, the sisters, the invited of both sexes, the gay old bachelor uncle and the brisk spinster aunt, devote themselves to more lively amusements.

"On the morrow the happy family circle is again formed at dinner; and out of doors too English hospitality and benevolence are dispensed in all directions. One of the finest characteristics of Christmas Day in England is that no person need starve, and few are without friends at whose tables they would be gladly welcomed.

"At Christmas every hand is open; the unfortunate inmates of our gaols and workhouses are bountifully regaled, nay, allowed what to them in their state of freedom would be luxuries, and everywhere we behold the national sympathy for distress and misfortune exemplified in the most pleasing and least offensive form. Whether it be a criminal, a pauper, or an honest labourer out of work, at this time the universal feeling is that 'a man's a man for a' that,' and that his errors and his poverty alike appeal to our Christian consideration.

"But the salient feature of an English Christmas is its domesticity. The others are merely, although necessarily, auxiliary. It is at home that the Englishman is always seen to the best advantage, and never more so than at Christmas tide. Surrounded by sons from college or school, by daughters trained to become good wives and mothers in whatever station of life their lot may be placed, having by his side the wife of his bosom and the mother of his children, one whom he has cherished, and who has been his loving partner through many long years, and with old friends before him he feels 'happy—deceply, quietly, but exquisitely