

to be candid I cannot give my mind to such a dry subject as business. I have tried; but who could think seriously whilst a party of pretty women were bustling to and fro, or peeping over shoulders to see what one is writing? Some men may be able to keep cool under such circumstances, but I cannot—and, what's more, I don't want to. Why, I should soon become a miserable misanthrope were it not for cheerful company, and the soothing influences exercised upon me by that excited little minx in the pale blue mob-cap—that piece of pert prettiness standing on tip-toe that she may properly stir that strange but savory mixture she is preparing for my Christmas dinner.

Chatter, chatter, chatter! Oh! how the ladies' tongues can wag. I can hear a confused jumble of orders and advices; but what it all means I know not. It might be a revival of some pre-historic tongue. Sure enough, it isn't French; it doesn't sound like Russian, German, Turkish, or any other modern language; and I'm sure it can't be what is called a "dead" language—it's far too lively for that to be possible.

"*That's English, anyway!*" exclaim I, as I hear them shout, in shrill unison, "Here they come!"

I jump up to find out what can be the matter, just in time to hear a host of "kiss-sounds," followed by a clatter of thick-shod feet up the steps. Goodness gracious! Why, here's the children coming home from school! Oh, well! I suppose I must put up with it; but, farewell work for a time. These young specials will soon disperse my every idea; and, if I don't look out, they will also make hash of all I have written—just as if I had not made hash enough of it already.

"Here they come!" As though I didn't know they were here, by their chatter and laughter! And what a din they make. Oh, lor! I know I shan't have any peace, now; so I may as well desist from my task, or very soon I shall not get a chance to talk of business or anything else, much less wish my readers—as I do, at this, the last opportunity I shall have this side of New Year's Day—a Merrie Xmas, with appetite to enjoy the Xmas fowl, and health to take advantage of the opportunities for good, I trust, will occur to them in what, if my will were law, should prove to them "A Hearty, Happy, Prosperous New Year."

Yours truly, FRED. J. PROUTING.

Notes from the "Old Dominion."

RICHMOND, Va., Jan. 11.

It has been some time since my pencil was last employed in your service. Other duties have so fully occupied my time that I have had but very little opportunity to indulge any *cacoethes scribendi* which may have possessed me. But now I have secured a few moments in which to drop you a few lines, to wish you a "Happy New Year," (if not too late,) and to give you an item or two of news from this section of the world.

The reports which we hear of encouraging revival in trade in nearly every section of the country, finds no echo in our neighborhood. While it is true, I believe, that more job work has been done in this city during the past six months than for the same period of several years past, yet there are so many small offices (amateur and professional) competing for the work, and it is taken at such ruinously low prices, that no one is benefited. To lookers-on, who have no direct interest in the matter, it has long been a source of surprise that the employing printers of the city did not unite in an effort to induce the Municipal Government to put a comparatively heavy license tax upon printing offices, and thereby break up all, or nearly all, the "one-horse" offices, which are now ruining a most profitable class of work. The "regular" offices could well afford to pay a tax of, say \$100, in order to secure this end. They would make more money, and would be far better able to keep up the standard of workmanship.

Little is being done in this city, this winter, in the way of book work. The State Legislature now having biennial sessions, and this being "off" year, but little State work is being done.

Among our newspapers, there have been but few changes recently. The *Southern Intelligencer* (weekly,) which has been rather weak from its birth, is dead. Two new monthlies have been started: *The Southern Pulpit*, edited by two ministers of this city, and the *Crusader*, a sixteen-page paper, devoted to the interests of a temperance reform, and edited by Dr. W. W. Bennett, President of Randolph Macon College.

The *Dispatch* printed their usual double number on the 1st inst., brimful of useful information and statistics of the city for the past year.