

Our Contributors.

HOLIDAYS AND WORKING DAYS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

We once heard a young lady say that Christmas is the dullest day in the year. Had she been a soured, disappointed young woman, we would have thought nothing of the remark, but she was exactly the reverse. Bright and happy, surrounded by friends and blest with admirers enough to satisfy any reasonable young woman, she had come to the deliberate conclusion that the day most people talk about as a day of rare enjoyment is the dullest of the year.

That young woman was not far wrong. The exact facts probably are that to some people, a large number by the way, Christmas is rather a dull day.

Who are these people? For the most part they are middle-aged, hard-working people who don't enjoy Christmas mainly because they have nothing to do. Old people can dream over the past and amuse themselves with their grandchildren. Young people can enjoy themselves in various ways, but the middle-aged citizen, suddenly thrown out of harness, finds some difficulty in convincing himself that Christmas is a very enjoyable sort of day. The difficulty is greatly increased if there is a dull sky above, a drizzling rain around you and slush beneath your feet at every step you take while exercising for dinner.

Now what is there for a man to do on Christmas—we mean a busy, middle-aged man who has slipped his neck out of the collar for just one day? You have bought your Christmas presents and sent away your Christmas cards, and distributed your charity, and visited the sick and needy. You have done all you can in the way of helping others to enjoy themselves, and now you have nothing to do but enjoy yourself. If you are a minister you probably have given up your regular course of reading until after the holidays. Now what is to be done on Christmas forenoon? The female part of the family are getting up the Christmas dinner, and of course you must not interfere with them in the prosecution of that industry. You cannot drive on a day like last Christmas, for there is no sleighing. You cannot go out and see a man for there are no men out to see. You should not "keep your spirits up by pouring spirits down," for that is wrong. If not wrong in the abstract it is inexpedient and highly dangerous. You might take care of the baby while its mother looks after the dinner, but perhaps you have no baby. Of course you should look back and feel grateful for all the mercies enjoyed since last Christmas, but if you are a passably good man you engaged in that exercise the first thing in the morning. You should feel grateful for your home comforts, but one should do that every day. A man who never thinks about home comforts all the year round and then puts on a spurt of gratitude on Christmas or New Year's Day may possibly be a Christian, but he doesn't do much at it.

Some good people who live in large cities spend one part of Christmas Day very profitably in brightening the lives of the unfortunates in charitable or other institutions. In a small town the most you can do in that way is call upon the sick people you know, and that can generally be done in an hour if you know just how long a visitor should stay in a sick room.

Having done all you can reasonably be expected to do for the enjoyment of others, what can you do in the forenoon for yourself? Not unfrequently the principal thing is to wait laboriously for the daily papers. Then comes dinner, and of course the dinner is good. Roast turkey and plum pudding is a good enough dinner for anybody. After dinner you sit down to your papers. You glance over the news, but there isn't anything in particular. As you have no regular work to do, perhaps you conclude it might not be a bad thing to study the Hon. David Mills on the Quebec Constitutional Question. Mr. Mills has a fine turn for going to the roots of things. If you read what he and Sir John Thompson say on any difficult constitutional problem, you need not read much more. Well, you begin to read what Mr. Mills says in the *Globe* on the relative powers of Lieut.-Governors and Legislatures, and you have not gone far until you find the argument requires some close thought and a slight brushing up of your English history. Historical research and hard thinking don't go kindly on a dull day after a Christmas dinner, so you lay Mr. Mills aside until you can study him under a clearer sky, and after a dinner that did not suggest Christmas to any great extent? What next? Well, probably you took a snooze. When you woke up Christmas Day was about over. You can easily think of a hundred days on which you enjoyed yourself a hundred times as much without trying to enjoy yourself at all. The fact is, days laid out for enjoyment are often a dismal failure. You can't force enjoyment any more than you can lift yourself over a fence by pulling on your boot straps. Of course there are people who are always happy when idle and well fed. Christmas is a good day for them because there is nothing to do and the board is sumptuous. People who are fortunate enough to like work seldom enjoy idleness, and that is the principal reason why to them Christmas is often a dull day.

Now that the holiday season is over it may be well for us to reflect on the fact that, after all, working days are much better than holidays. Happy is the man who loves his work. Blessed is the woman who enjoys taking care of her home and family. We have always had grave doubts about the cor-

rectness of the theory that work is part of the penalty of sin. It is much nearer the truth to say that laziness is one of the results of original sin. Anyway it is an actual transgression in so far as laziness can be called active. Happy, thrice happy is the mortal that enjoys work.

A young lawyer, who had resumed hard work in an Ontario city after a short tour on the Continent, was asked by a friend if he had enjoyed his trip. Yes, was the reply, I enjoyed it well enough, but I enjoy myself much better now. That young man is very likely to get on the upper rungs of the legal ladder some day.

Not long ago we asked a young lady teacher resuming work if she had enjoyed her vacation. Yes, said she, but I am quite glad to get to work again. It is needless to say she is a highly successful teacher.

Happy New Year to our readers, but it is needless to wish any of them happiness if they have a chronic dislike to work.

SERMON REVERIES.

NO. VI.

This system of conning over bygone memories while the sermon is in course of delivery is fraught with dangers of which you, dear reader, know nothing. You will the more readily understand what I mean if I illustrate by means of my own case. My pastor is a splendid man, works hard from Monday a.m. until Saturday p.m. on his sermons, and while he freely admits that many times he is not quite so interesting as he would wish, he says, and justly too, that it is too bad that I will wander so in my thoughts. Nor did I tell him that I was myself, nor did he tell me the above in so many words. These pastors have a wonderful trait of intuition, which somehow never fails to grasp when necessary, and I almost am sure that the oracle has worked in my case.

However this may be, it did not keep me "to the furrow" last Sabbath a.m., which, appropriately enough, was a thorough Christmas service. The text was from Luke vii. 10, and the tale of joy to mankind, and its many influences, vividly pictured, in spite of a huskiness which presaged a heavy cold. To the slave everywhere this tale of freedom in Christ must have been a very welcome piece of news. True equality before the law is a main cardinal principle of the religion of Jesus Christ, and in every country on God's fair earth it is not too much to say that its belief in this religion may safely be gauged by the relative freedom and social equality of its inhabitants. Our pastor is very well informed in Greek and Roman antiquity, law and history, and the relief afforded by the introduction of this religion, to the down-trodden masses of these two empires, was very ably pictured, and the inferences fairly drawn. The millions of slaves can scarcely be doubted to have questioned this Gospel's reality. The wives and daughters of ancient Greece were the merest nonentities, and yet they were princelings to their compeers of Rome, when that once mighty nation started on the decline in power, morality and standard of life. Nor was the Gospel any more seemingly impossible to the hordes of restless Goths in far-off Germany. Yet to-day we find that it has done more for Germany than possibly for any other portion of similarly situated land. So the preacher went on, making a grand panegyric on Christ, His work, mission and self-sacrifice. My mind reverted to what this Gospel will enable men to perform, nor did I forget the noble army of our own missionaries who have so nobly borne the cross in many trials in many lands; when I thought of those good Jesuit priests—Breboeuf and L'Allemant—martyred by the Iroquois in 1649. It just happened that I had been reading of these remarkable men the week previous in my researches for some other information. I remember how the wrong-doings of the Jesuits have been, and always have been portrayed by the "trooly loil;" yet when I think of all this order has done in its peculiar manner of course, I readily forgive many of their shortcomings in the face of their undoubted sacrifices, heroisms and dauntless courage of early Canadian days. Whatever the order has come short in, it certainly has not failed in enterprise, and that too of an extra hazardous nature. Nothing can exceed the downright "daredangerism" with which these two fathers and others pushed away into the unknown lands of the Hurons for the purpose of first, preaching the Gospel; and second, taking possession of the land in the name of their beloved France. They were desperately patriotic these Frenchmen; so are they all, and many Canadians need a little French conceit of themselves, as Canadians, we might remark just here.

There was a striking contrast between these two Jesuits—Breboeuf and L'Allemant. The former was a man of great size and strength, while the latter was of small size and apparently little vim. When they came to the torture the relative value of size and strength versus smallness and little power, was manifested in an adverse way, by Breboeuf lasting but four hours, while L'Allemant stood out twenty-one, and then was killed from sheer desperation from a tomahawk blow. Of the actual torture surely it were bad taste to speak much in this day of gentle treatment; but there is something horribly fascinating about these things. Pick up a newspaper, and a tale of woe and suffering holds the prominent place, and if it be extra harrowing nothing but the heaviest headlines will suffice to allure the anxious reader to his favourite locality. This then was the morbid feeling which led me to read all through the narrative of the lay brother who carefully kept out of harm's way until all was quiet;

and who as carefully treasures the charred remains until he can get them to Quebec, where they undergo the treatment accorded to such by the Roman Catholic Church, and become an object of veneration of the actual torture, nails torn out, being beaten severely over the naked body, the mock baptism with boiling water, the necklace of red-hot axes, the burning of pitch about their bodies, and the cutting out of their hearts; surely these are nothing in the face of the happy demeanour of the victims. We are told that they did not cease to speak of God and encourage all the Christians who were captives like themselves to suffer well in order that they might die well. His—Breboeuf's—zeal was so great that he continually exhorted his tormentors to conversion. And all this after twenty-two years' faithful mission work among the Hurons. Well might these Hurons give up the fearful struggle with the Iroquois. They fled to places of security; such as they thought to be such at all events, leaving the French settlements at Montreal, Quebec, Three Rivers, etc., exposed to the attack of the Iroquois. These friends, for they were such, notwithstanding the fact that they fought on the British side, were not slow to take advantage, and many a wail from an anxious mother and a cry from trembling children floated down the valleys and through the forests of old Canada in those bloody days. There had been negotiations between New France and New England prior to this (in 1647) for a treaty of peace and commerce; but these ceased on the death of the elder Governor Winthrop, a name well known to lovers of early New England literature. Eventually these were resumed, the initiative being taken by the Governor and Council of Quebec. The scope of this treaty was to include not only trade and commerce, but a league offensive and defensive against the Iroquois. These proposals were favourably received at first, but were finally rejected by a council representing the four British colonies. Only one result could follow, and that we know. For upwards of one hundred years these rival races warred continually and with ever-increased bitterness.

What would have been the result had this treaty of peace been made effective? Who knows but that we might have been French instead of English, and that much behind in consequence. For, of all the records of incompetency, mismanagement and gross abuse of opportunity, commend me to the French administration of their Canadian colonies from Jacques Cartier onwards. CURLY TOPP.

ANOTHER ATTACK ON THE HONAN MISSION.

Through the courtesy of Mr. Hamilton Cassels, Convener of the Foreign Mission Committee, the following correspondence has been forwarded for publication. The first note is dated Tien Tsin, November 13, and the letter, containing the details of the attack, bears date Hsin Chen, October 31:—

The enclosed statement was prepared at Hsin Chen and mailed from there; but as the local authorities showed a disposition to trifle with us, the brethren thought it better for me to proceed to Tien Tsin without delay and interview the British Consul here. Owing to favouring circumstances I have got out ahead of my letter to you, and now open the envelope to say that to-day the Consul, Mr. Brennan, saw the Viceroy, Li Hung Chang, about our affair, and as a result that powerful statesman has promised to instruct the Governor of Honan sternly to protect us. The general situation in China, I was relieved to be informed by the Consul, is now such as ought not to cause further alarm.

But we dare not lean on the arm of flesh; underneath us are the everlasting arms. Yours again in haste,
J. H. MACVICAR.

So much attention has of late been attracted to the Province of Hunan in connection with the series of alarming outbreaks in the Yangtze Valley, that the deep-rooted enmity against foreigners in our own province has been almost overlooked. For some time it has been known that the poisonous literature from the south has been freely circulating here, and in the nature of things outbreaks were only to be expected. The Church will not have forgotten the looting at Ch'u-wang a year ago; and now we are sorry to inform you of an outbreak at our new station in Hsin Chen. On Thursday afternoon, October 29, an organized attempt was made to levy blackmail and drive us out, and repeated attacks with knives were made upon our persons although not resulting in injury. A band of professional beggars was employed who burst open the outer and inner gates of the compound, whereupon crowds from the streets came in until the compound was filled. One of the beggars threw himself down to be trampled upon, and lay for the rest of the afternoon feigning death; the others, after an interval, rushed riotously forward with blood streaming down their faces, after the approved fashion of Chinese beggars. In effecting their entrance they also took pains to smear the door posts with their own blood, another device for exciting sympathy commonly adopted by this thoroughly-organized and recognized class of mendicants. A demand was made for 200 taels of cash (about \$80), and this demand enforced by three distinct assaults upon us, in all of which knives were freely brandished but never used. The crowds from the streets filled all the houses and courts in the compound, stamping noisily on the wooden floors by way of calling marked attention to the fact that they were hollow, and therefore in the popular imagination sure receptacles for the eyes and hearts of Chinese children. The Viceroy's proclamation, which had been obtained through