

there are one, two or three families outside of our own whom we can make happy by sending something, however insignificant, from our surplus. It is our pleasure each month to enter many homes where comfort and luxury abounds, and as we, by our words, sit with you this month at your fireside upon the threshold of the Church's festal day, may we be successful in more forcibly impressing upon you the beauty of Christmas charity.—*Selected.*

CHRISTMAS.

The good cheer of Christmas is proverbial. We can fancy how gladly the huntsmen approached their baronial homes on Christmas eve laden with the good things of the chase, the wild boar, it may be, caught in the woods, or the good fat deer, waylaid in its sylvan haunts. Visions of the boar's head and savory venison, to say nothing of the liquors, too often far too freely used, floated before their expectant vision. The hunt was over and now there would come many days of rest and feasting. This too often was about the sole idea of the ordinary person of the early day regarding Christmas.

There can be no doubt that many heathen customs became interwoven with the observance of Christmas day. The old Roman Saturnalia, the cutting of the mistletoe by the Druids, the burning of the Yule log to Odin and to Thor by the Saxons, became connected in various ways with the festivities of Christmas tide. In high circles the Lord of Misrule and the Abbot of Unreason and the Master of the Revels went forth sometimes with unrestrained license to make the Christmas night terrible to some if merry to others. In lower circles cakes and cider were offered to the oldest apple tree and lads were removed in reverence as the Yule log crackled by.

But the world has changed and much that was heathen has been dropped and an earnest endeavor has been made, not only to retain but to exalt that which is Christian. This also has been done in a sober and decorous manner, because many of the diversions which were certainly Christian in their character, so far as the representation was concerned, were not what would now be considered either devotional or edifying. As an instance of these the ceremony at one time regularly practiced in Milan may be cited. In great pomp and show rode the Three Kings to meet King Herod and his court, with a golden star carried on high before them. Having performed this duty at one of the churches the Three Kings, bearing vases of gold and myrrh, driving herds before them, accompanied by a gorgeous cavalcade of knights and ladies, proceeded on their way to another church representing Bethlehem and the manger scene of the nativity. This was generally the wind up at Twelfth Night of a fortnight's festivities and ended with a scene of mad revelry. What a strange mixture of the beautiful scenes of the first Christ-

mas time with the absurd and worldly license of badly trained humanity! No greater work of Christian reformation was ever done than the purifying of the Church's lawful festivals from the degrading customs of heathenism and the unrestrained practices of so called Christian revellers.

And the thought comes to us, What is Christmas to us? Many will think of it as they knew it in the old land where the children and choristers keep up the time honored carols of early historical periods.

"And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas day, on Christmas day,
And all the souls on earth shall sing
On Christmas day in the morning."

And many will think of it in connection with forms and faces of long ago, and others will hail it as a day of delight and merriment for the children. But the happiest thought of all is the pure scene and great power of the Nativity itself. No Christmas thought can equal the sublime words of St. John, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

LIFE AND WORK IN ATHABASCA.

By RT. REV. RICHARD YOUNG, D. D., BISHOP OF ATHABASCA.

MY diocese resembles most other of our northwestern dioceses, a large area but small and very scattered population. I spent last winter at St. Luke's Mission, Vermilion. The first missionary work for the year was a journey with our missionary in charge, the Rev. M. Scott, some sixty miles to baptize an Indian and his family. It was the second week in January and the thermometer down in the forties. We travelled in primitive style with snow shoes; a small flat hand sleigh carried our bedding and provisions, hauled by Mr. Scott while I wielded the pushing pole behind. Unfortunately my companion froze his foot rather seriously our first day, crippling him considerably. Two nights we got little sleep from the cold, our bedding not being abundant. However, we were rewarded by the result of our journey, the baptism of an Indian hunter, his wife and five daughters who had been carefully instructed by one of our Christian Indians from the St. Peter's Reserve. On our return to Vermilion we found a Cree hunter camped near the Fort with his wife. He is a man of about fifty years, a good hunter, and has been rather famous as a medicine man. He visited us frequently, and after about ten days of instruction expressed his desire for baptism. When told he must give up drumming and medicine and all his old heathen practices, he replied, "That is hard." We read to him the Saviour's words, "No man can serve two masters, etc." For some time he was silent and a struggle was evidently going on in his mind. At length he said, "I want to do what is right. I will do what you tell me." On the following Sunday at a deeply