



Christmas has come and gone, and here we are on the threshold of another year, with untried paths before us—new joys, new sorrows, new difficulties. Now, too, comes the grocer with his lengthy bill, and a feeling of melancholy is upon us which cannot be dispelled.

Life in these Canadian woods, where we find our delights in Nature, and look no further than to the extent of our own acres for our happiness, is so quietly our own that a crime such as those which have occurred lately in our vicinity, rouses in our minds not only a feeling of disgust and dismay, but also one of personal resentment. It is as though we said to ourselves: "Let the inhabitants of the great cities, Chicago, New York, Montreal, have their murders and their suicides, these are their daily food; they drink them in with their coffee at breakfast, and, in a certain manner, enjoy them." The papers, without such tragic and blood-curdling accounts (all the more interesting because so near and so true), would be tame and unreadable to them. But here, with the sounds of the pines and the firs in our ears—here, where the white snow lies in calm beauty over the land, where the organ-man is a novelty and an electric light station an innovation that suggests the millennium—here, there is no place for tragedies, no room for crimes. Think of that man, Marshall Dillon, and his wife, lying for hours in the woods at Hubbard's Cove slowly dying from the effects of laudanum poisoning and the winter rigour. Could any situation be imagined more full of wretched pathos. After a youth of profligacy and dissipation ending in fraud and felony. Flying from justice and tracked to his hiding place, he eludes this world's punishment and enters the world unseen by an act which is the culminating point in a disgraceful career. There is no man, however degraded or debased, but seems to have some woman who clings to him, some loving soul who would face any danger with or for him. This fact has puzzled many thinkers; it has been put down to a certain dog-like fidelity which is a characteristic of some women, or to the result merely of propinquity. I have often thought over it, and I think I have accounted for it in a better way. It is the *mother feeling*, that which is so strong in every true woman, the yearning that you often see displayed by a mother to a mis-shapen or sickly child. Such a woman loves a man (and what a real woman's love is, in its usefulness and devotion, only he knows who has experienced it), and she sees his faults and mourns over them, as she might over a physical deformity, and loves all the more because of them. He gets into trouble. Is this a time to leave him, when he needs more her comforting, her influence, her love? No, indeed, says the poor creature, and she follows him even to death, if need be, as did this unfortunate woman who poisoned herself with Dillon in the woods. And the poor little soul who threw herself into the icy river because she feared punishment for some girlish fault, were her sixteen years so full of trouble that this seemed a happy alternative? Were it not for my Browning I should have long ago become a pessimist of the deepest dye. I read:

"Fool! All that is, at all
Lasts ever, past escape
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure;
What entered into thee
That was, is and shall be,
Time's wheel runs back or stops, potter and clay endure."

And
Therefore, I summon age
To grant life's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term,
Thence shall I pass, approved,
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ."

And I get a tonic that braces me up, and dispels gloom.
Or I devour such lines as these:

"In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh, heart! blood that freezes, blood that turns!
Earth's returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in
With their triumphs, and their glories, and the rest!
Love is best."

And I live, and love, and am content.

The governors and professors of King's College intend holding an "At Home" in the Church of England Institute building in Halifax on the 8th inst. The year opens brightly for King's, inasmuch as there are twice as many students as this time last year, and the finances are in a better condition than has been the case of late. If we are honoured with an invitation to the soirée I have no doubt that we shall enjoy ourselves. How we always enjoy the Eucœina festivities in Windsor! There is a peculiar pleasure about this week—the last week in June each year. With the exception of the actual Eucœina proceedings, there is very little formality about it all, every one does pretty much as he or she pleases, and the beautiful grounds, the conversazione music, and the meeting of old friends, are all appreciated to the full.

I was somewhat surprised to hear that a short time ago the governors and those in authority at King's College had called a special convocation to confer the degree of D.C.L. upon a man of whom they proved by their action they knew but little. It seems to me that the College is always in somewhat too much of a hurry to confer degrees, it rather detracts from the appreciation that would accompany such an honour to have the same bestowed in so wholesale a manner. But to confer a degree in regular course, and at the usual time, is an entirely different thing to calling a special convocation for the purpose. Surely a man who could call for this distinction should be a man of peculiar gifts, special nobleness of character, acknowledged worth. Unfortunately, it is but too well known to a few in the Dominion, as to many in the neighbouring Republic, that the object of this honour, so lately bestowed, possessed any but the qualities that should be necessary, any gifts but those that should properly be required. I do not know to whose influence the College's action in this case is due, but surely some one among the friends of the College, or one, at least, of the Board of Governors should have seen that this was not done. It is such hasty and unjustifiable actions as these that injure King's College in the eyes of her contemporaries, and vex the friends who would give her every assistance in their power.

Next time I want to speak a few words to my sisters in the Upper Provinces of our great Dominion. I am a Canadian to the core, and there is one matter about which I wish to speak to my sister Canadians, which I think will prove of interest to both. To the lady readers of our DOMINION ILLUSTRATED, therefore, will come, next time, a voice from the Maritime Provinces.

POINTS.

BY ACUS.

To point a moral and adorn a tale.

—Johnson: *Vanity of Human Wishes.*

A literary gentleman of Montreal evinced a little inclination some time ago to venture upon a brochure to bear some such title as "The Origin of Superstitions"; but it has not been forthcoming, and remains, therefore, among those unwritten works which, we are assured, are always superior to anything extant. Here and there in the newspapers one sees an occasional fugitive paragraph treating of some superstition, but many remain still unexplained. Why, for example, should one make a wish when passing beneath a ladder? Presumably one does wish—that nothing may drop on him! Why should breaking a looking-glass bring bad luck? Bad luck of one kind it is certainly likely to bring in the shape of an angry house-keeper. The proverbial horse-shoe when found seems quite as likely to bring bad luck as good, especially if found very suddenly while still on the horse's hoof. Getting out of bed on the left foot does probably give rise to ill-temper, when there is a tack on the floor. The present of a jack-knife (supposing the blades to be very, very dull) might possibly create a coolness. And thirteen at table might in time prove fatal to one of the number, if the table were always set for only twelve. Little superstitions continue to be transmitted through the medium of a kind of folk-lore, of which there exists more than one might imagine.

* * *

Originally the term "Christmas-box" signified a small

gift, usually of money, to persons of an inferior condition on the day after Christmas, which was popularly and ambiguously called "Boxing-day." In the year 1836 the English Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs despatched a circular to the different embassies, requesting a discontinuance of the custom of giving Christmas-boxes to messengers and other Government servants. And London tradesmen about the same time stuck notices in their windows that no Christmas-boxes would be given, as had formerly been the habit, to the male and female servants of their customers. In short, the Christmas-box system had become more of a burden than the scriptural grass-hopper. The customers, on the other hand, had been expected to make some trifling present to the tradesman's apprentice, who, as an old poem puts it:

"Throughout the town his devious route pursued;
And, of his master's customers implored
The yearly mite."

So far as the custom prevails in Canada, it has not been found onerous; although, the same, perhaps, may not be the universal opinion concerning Christmas cards. It may, of course, like all good things, be carried to excess to-day as of yore. It would, however, require more than a "circular from the Secretary of State" to put a stop to it, I fancy.

* * *

When a shantyman was recently asked why, upon coming to town, instead of getting drunk and squandering his cash, he did not keep sober, see something and save his money, the brief but expressive reply was: "Well, I really *haven't time*." He meant, of course, that if he could have a spree first and improve his mind after, he would have no objection to improving his mind; but as it was he only had time for the spree. A spree on coming to town is with the shantyman an "institution." He would lose caste with his associates if, on returning to the shanty, he could not tell of some window he had smashed or some other rash act committed in the exuberance of his spirits. Possessed usually of considerable ready money, and with but little knowledge of prices, he forms, as might be imagined, a ready prey for unscrupulous tradesmen and others. A list I once saw of the different sums expended on articles purchased by a shantyman during a "time" in town contained, I remember, among other items, one of \$10 for a tin-type. Common articles of clothing had been purchased at equally exorbitant prices. As there is a law to protect credulous sailors from the wiles of the wicked, the principle might be extended with propriety to others whose lot is cast outside the busy haunts of men.

* * *

A fever of prize competitions seems to be sweeping the country. Toronto and Montreal have the majority, but by no means the monopoly of them. Literally, the rival journals are waging a "war of words," word competitions, biblical and otherwise, being advertised on every hand. The young man who is matrimonially inclined is offered a house and everything, indeed, except a wife; trips round this mundane sphere (and back again, if you like), are common every-day offers, and a paltry thousand or so in gold is thought nothing of. And still, in each case, the wonder grows that one small journal should be able to fulfil such magniloquent promises. Such munificent rivalry reminds one of the old days in Toronto when the steamers *Rothsay* and *Chicora* were pushing one another pretty hard for the Niagara traffic. Rates were cut to such an extent that at last the captain, I think of the *Rothsay*, vowed he would carry passengers to Niagara free and give them a square meal into the bargain before he would be outdone. If all steamers were run on equally generous principles, the journals could offer free trips without hurting themselves very much.

... ..

LARGEST TREE IN THE WORLD.—The largest tree in the world has been discovered in Fresno County, beating by all odds the wonder of Calaveras. Frank Loomis, an old mountaineer, with a party, was hunting bears in the Sierras east of Centerville, and wounded a big fellow in the most rugged portion of the range. In pursuing him they were forced to use axes and knives through the underbrush, and they unexpectedly came upon the king of the forests. In spanning it a rope 143 feet 5 inches long was required, and its diameter was found to be 43 feet. The great tree has been christened "Los Orejano."—*English Mechanic*.