

CHRISTMAS.

THIS is Christmas Day, and once more we find ourselves in the midst of the festive season. The labours and troubles, joys and sorrows, of another year are nearly gone, and the step is lighter and the heart gayer, as we again welcome Old Christmas, with its sweet and sad recollections. In ancient times, Christmas was welcomed in with the chiming of bells and the most joyous scenes of gaiety and mirth. Thus sang old Horrick during those jolly old times:—

"Come, bring with a noise
My merry, merry boys,
The Christmas log to the burning;
While my good dame she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your hearts' desiring."

Those good old days are past and gone and although the lord and the peasant of past ages are almost forgotten amidst the civilization of the nineteenth century, still Christmas does not cease to be welcomed as the commencement of the festive season. 'Tis true, we do not indulge in the extravagant hospitality, or the rude and rough modes of enjoyment peculiar to the past, but still the season is anxiously looked forward to as one of happiness and gaiety, and for the time being, at least, business and its cares are lost sight of amid the general festivity to be met with on every hand.

The feelings of joyousness which pervade the community at Christmas are, however, not unmingled with sadness. Who can look back upon the time which has passed since the last 25th of December, and not feel what wonderful changes these few short months have effected? How many of the youngest, the best, the most beloved amongst us, have since then gone to—

"That bourne whence no traveller returns."

How many families have been robbed of their choicest flowers since they last met and the glowing fireside, or took their places at the paternal board, groaning under its load of luxuries? Alas! the changes which ever-fleeting Time has effected, are too painful to dwell upon: we pass them by, for it is folly to repine at any time, much more the present. Rather let us look on the sunny side of the picture, and endeavour to catch something of the joyous spirit of the season.

Eliza Cook, the charming English Poetess, has thus beautifully expressed the Christmas gatherings and social merry-makings of this period of the year:—

"This is the time when the gay old man
Leaps back to the days of youth;
When brows and eyes bear no disguise,
But flush and gleam with truth.

O! this is the time when the soul exults,
And seems 'twixt heaven-ward turning;
When we love and bless the hand we press,
While the Christmas log is burning."

These beautiful lines can be appreciated by all classes. The poor as well as the rich enjoy Christmas, and there are but few—even among the staid men of commerce—who cannot emphatically call it a "happy time." The year fast drawing to a close has been a prosperous one. Many of the readers of the Review have been successful—many of all classes of the community are now surrounded with means of enjoyment not previously within their reach, and we have no doubt that to-day the fires burn as brightly on many a hearth-stone, and the tables groan with as much "good cheer," as they have ever done at any former period of our country's history.

We conclude by reminding our readers that no better expression could be given of their gratitude for the year's blessings than in remembering the poor, and by wishing them, one and all, the compliments of the season. A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

OUR WASTE LANDS.

WEST of the enterprising town of Chatham, in the Western part of Ontario, are a series of extensive marshes. The river Thames and Baptiste Creek runs through them, and they comprise many thousands of acres of land. Up till quite recently, the locality has been a favourite resort of sportsmen during the fall of the year, wild fowl being found there in the greatest abundance. The Great Western Railway passes through these flats, and for miles the traveller can see little but tall reeds and wild rice. The intense heat of the past summer had a great effect upon the marshes, almost completely drying them up. From personal observation we are able to affirm that a person could walk across them last month, by the exercise of a little care, without wetting his feet,

two or three years ago it would have been impossible to go one hundred yards without getting into a foot or two of water and mud. The belief in the locality is, that the marshes are drying up, and as the soil is of the very richest description, several projects have at very different times been mooted, to drain them and reclaim the land. It would seem that the attention of the Ontario Government has been called to this desirable improvement, and a short time previous to the opening of Parliament they sent up engineers to examine the locality and report whether the project was a practical one or not. It is understood the report was favourable and we observe in the estimates recently submitted by Mr. Treasurer Wood, there is an item of \$15,000 under the head of drainage. This amount will no doubt be used in paying for preliminary expenses, but it is believed that Parliament will be asked for a sufficient sum next session to drain the entire region around Baptiste Creek. Mr. Wood, in his explanations, said there were also marshes in Bruce, Perth, and other counties, which the Government officials would examine and see if the land could be reclaimed. Much of the land referred to will be worth \$16 or \$20 per acre, if this experiment succeeds, and it is contemplated to call upon the owners to pay a small tax for the improvement, which they will doubtless be glad to do, for their at present worthless lands will immediately become valuable and saleable. There can be little doubt that, if the Baptiste Creek marshes can be thoroughly drained, the necessary expenditure will be well-spent money. But we are glad to notice this important step on the part of the Ontario Government, on another account, and that is this. It will call public attention in a pointed manner to the large tracts of waste land in many of the old settled counties, and to the great advantages which would arise from the commencement of a thorough system of drainage in all sections of the Province. There are flats and marshes in almost every municipality which it would pay to drain. And if the Local Government makes an experiment successfully on a large scale, it will induce municipalities, and in many cases private individuals, to follow the example set them. Notwithstanding the progress made by Ontario during the past ten years, and the large quantity of agricultural produce she annually grows, when her waste and broken lands come to be utilised, her annual production will probably be doubled. Any move by the Government, therefore, which directs capital and labour in this direction, is a laudable one, and will do good not only in reclaiming the particular piece of land first selected as a test, but by encouraging the people generally to go and do likewise.

BRIGHTENING UP!

ADVICES received by us from Ontario, inform us that they have now had good sleighing for nearly three weeks. The winter has set in somewhat earlier than usual, and the weather has been quite cold for the season. We are glad to learn that business has brightened considerably, which is only natural considering the great improvement which the snow makes for travelling. The transition period between the fall and the winter is always marked by bad roads, during which time trade is apt to become stagnant, the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells has often a magical effect upon trade, and this stimulating influence is now being felt all over the country. A great deal of produce which has been locked up in the farmer's granaries since August, is beginning to move to market. This is not the case simply in those sections where the roads are poor, and the farmers seldom dispose of anything till they can use the sleigh, in many of the long-settled Townships the farmers have been manifestly holding up their wheat in anticipation of higher prices, but are now being tempted by the good roads, and possibly by the need of money, to bring it in for sale. Pork is being offered quite freely. Prices are good, and we incline to the opinion, from what our correspondents say, that Ontario has an abundant "crop" of hogs this season. The quality, too, shows improvement, for which there was undoubtedly very considerable room. As Christmas approached, the grocers and all others who supply "good cheer" for the holidays, were beginning to increase their sales. These circumstances bear out what we predicted a few weeks ago, that there is an active winter's business before the country. The farmers are particularly well pleased that the growing wheat has been so well covered and protected from the frost so early in the season. Before the cold weather came on, there was

a fine show of fall wheat, the fall weather having been of a favourable character. Fortunately the snow came on early to protect it from injury, and thus increases the chances of a plentiful crop next year.

EXPORTATION OF SILVER.

THE effort which Mr. W. Weir, broker, of this city is making to carry out his plan for the exportation of so much—two million dollars—of the surplus silver in the country as shall very materially reduce the current discount on the remainder, bids fair to be successful; but he has not received such actual support as yet from those most interested as to give him the guarantee against loss in his operations which he must have to secure him. We publish elsewhere a letter from him in catechetical form, in which he answers questions regarding his plans and objections which have been raised, in what appears to be a plain, intelligible way. Looking at Mr. Weir's scheme from the point of view of those who suffer loss from the discount they have to pay on silver, we see no possible objection to it, nor can we see how it can fail, if all are willing to bear a small apparent immediate loss which they at once save on all the silver which they require to sell, by reduction in discount.

The tenth of January next is the day fixed by Mr. Weir for beginning his shipments of silver, and as that day is now so close at hand, it will be necessary for all those willing to aid him in this matter, to lose no time in making the necessary contracts with him. We know enough of him and of his plans to say, without any reservation, that if he gets the required support, he will fulfil his share of the agreement and carry the matter to a successful issue. Silver is now 4½ per cent discount here, and abundant; a Mr. Weir predicted it would be in a circular issued last September. He says in this— "It is the opinion of many well-informed parties (an opinion in which I fully concur) that the removal of the above amount of silver from the country, would leave very little more than would be required for small change, reducing the discount permanently to between one and two per cent, and causing the volume of business to be transacted in gold and bank notes. In the absence of a further exportation of silver coin, we cannot anticipate any such results. It is true the prohibitory duty, and the shipments of last spring, will tell favourably on the price during the continuance of the fall trade, but the shipments were not of sufficient magnitude to relieve the country during the dull season, and unless the present movement succeeds, the country must submit to the usual discount of from four and one-half to five per cent, during the coming winter."

If Mr. Weir is enabled to ship \$50,000 per week, we shall soon see the discount down one per cent, or even more, below the present rate, and that, too, permanently.

We would, in this connection, beg leave to suggest to Mr. Weir, as he appears to be somewhat philanthropically disposed at present, to take some steps to abate the "copper" nuisance.

The money account of this country is, by law, decimal, yet we find, as was to have been anticipated, that the less enlightened portion of our people adhere practically to the old currency of pounds, shillings and pence. We cannot suggest any way to overcome this disinclination to adopt the better and logical currency of dollars and cents than by calling in all the numerous penny and half-penny tokens, or else making them of the same current value as the Canadian coin, calling the penny two cents, and the half-penny one cent. As things are at present, the poor man who receives a portion of his wages in cents is unable to obtain for them their full value. Five cents are legally equivalent to three pence, but practically, the majority of retailers demand six of our cent pieces to pay for five cents worth of anything. Even the City Passenger Railway Company of this city requires the poor man who may be ignorant of his rights in this regard to pay his fare of 50 with six cents. Now this is paying a discount of 20 per cent, and although on small amounts, the loss is a real and not an apparent one and is frequently to those of small means a very serious affair.

We suppose our Government will not undertake to treat the question of the metallic currency of the Dominion in a comprehensive and final manner, until some decision has been arrived at between the principal European powers on the subject of a universal currency, but they might easily follow our suggestion,