

[For the Torch.]
OUR BOSTON LETTER.

The holiday season has closed, according to the Church, Calendar, and the immediate festivities of Christmas are at an end. Boston, however, has not entirely recovered from its effects. There was a time when, in this staid old city of the Puritans, Christmas was not very generally observed—the great day was the Governor's Thanksgiving, as it was called, and then the boys came home,—and the girls, too,—and brought all the little boys and girls with them, and all were boys and girls together once more: and the fatted calf was killed, or more likely, the fatted pig, and there was rejoicing over the tables, loaded down with the fruits of the season, and all went merry as a marriage bell. But though the Thanksgiving Day is not by any means obsolete, it has lost its prestige among the holidays, and now comes in for only a small share of its former glory. The waning of the old Puritanical theology has allowed a more radical and catholic element to take its place, and the church days of Old England are recognized by all Denominations to a greater or less degree. There is even a movement (and quite a strong one, too,) in favor of making Good Friday the Annual Fast Day of the Church, and we think the time is not far distant when it will be so with Christmas. It is now one of the greatest of our holidays. It is perhaps more generally observed throughout the country at large than any other, and has become the real Thanksgiving Day of the people. The pleasant associations have made it the day most eagerly looked for and the most happily remembered of all our great days. This year Boston has not kept up its usual reputation for Christmas benevolence, though much has been done that is pleasant to record. The various charitable institutions have all been remembered, and we are glad to be able to say that they have received, in most cases, as much as in years of greater commercial prosperity. Economy after all, seldom makes people selfish. Sometimes even, the close acquaintance with necessity will open hearts that have been sealed before to the appeals of charity.

In a commercial point of view the holidays have not been greatly enjoyed. The inevitable New Year's bills have come round, in too many cases only to find the matter of payment harder than ever. Business, in fact, is in a state of uncertainty, and the whole commercial fabric must be remodelled before any real benefit can be felt. The fictitious position in which all business was left at the close of the war has been as yet only partially revealed, and the operations of ignorant legislators have tended to increase rather than decrease the danger. But if only the busy-bodies will let things take a natural and reasonable course, the whole thing would in time adjust itself. We have, however, too much legislation, and as long as men are so constituted as to believe that the chief end of man is to get money, so long will selfish interests influence the minds of those who make laws and set up standards of values. But the holidays are given us for rest and recreation, and so we will drop moralizing for the present.

When one cannot buy one's can, at least, sit on the fence and see others go by—and so, though we are unable to enjoy the pleasure of purchasing the nice things that fill the windows we can look on, and let our eyes feast upon the beautiful articles which the demand for holiday presents has called out. Every trade furnishes something especially for the season, and for a time, all are busy and "business good." We are not sure that anything in the line of undertakers' wares has been offered, but perhaps this is the only exception.

Among the most enjoyable things are the beautiful books that are brought out at this time. Such marvels of the typographical art, and so elegantly bound, that one can hardly realize that they are produced at such a coun-

paratively low price. Among the beauties of this class, are a large number of art studies, works on household taste, and illustrated masters. The art of heliotyping which is comparatively modern, has given us the privilege of enjoying what otherwise would be entirely out of our reach. Last year there were published several volumes of the best engravings and etchings of Rembrandt, Landseer, Hogarth, and others, all reproduced by this method. Books are illustrated by it, and several publications are entirely dependent upon it for their plates.

Among the art works offered us this winter, "The House Beautiful," is one of the best yet published in the list of art educators.

It is the gathering together of a series of articles which appeared first in the *Scribner's Magazine* with such additions as have since suggested themselves to the author, Clarence Cook. Another interesting volume is "New England Interiors," also illustrated by heliotype and which gives exact views of many notable old houses, and is valuable as showing the direction taken by the best of our household artists in the new country.

At the Theatres the usual number of holiday pieces have been presented. The Museum gave "The Cricket on the Hearth," and a musical extravaganza of English extraction, "Beauty and the Beast," the music of which is borrowed largely from old English songs and melodies.

At the Globe, an *Opera Bouffe* called Pippins was given, but though some of its points were ingenious, and some of its music good, it suffers by comparison with the first production of the author, J. Cheever Goodwin and E. E. Rice. Their "Evangeline" was an event in the history of American *Opera Bouffe*, and was everywhere enthusiastically received. "Pippins" was an imitation of it, but only partially successful. In the musical line we have, indeed, been most favorably treated. The Handel and Haydn Society gave a series of excellent oratorical concerts, closing on Christmas day with the "Messiah." Then follows Max Strakosch with his Kellogg-Cary Opera Troupe, offering a repertoire which even Boston has not had the pleasure of opening in many a day.

The Fashions, like everything else, feel the influence of the generous season, and never were seen on the streets of Boston such an elegant and tasteful display of native handiwork.

But here we must stop. We have too much respect for the sex to begin a description of the fashions. We are confident that among the depths of mystery that surround the subject we should be lost. We once tried to write a Fashion article, but the editor mildly suggested that, while it might be suitable for the "Sioux Indian Fashion Gazetteer," it was not of any particular value to him. So, if you want to know about Boston fashions, "go there yourself."

HARRY FLETCHER.

[For the Torch.]

TORCH—A most expressive appellation, but so abrupt, why not put the article before it, (THE TORCH) but tastes differ, as the Widow McKilligan said, when she spliced number two—a long, lean, lathy specimen, smelling of tobacco and bad whiskey from head to foot, in preference to the Rev. Nicodemus Honeycomb, a full fledged ornate gothic pattern expounder of the gospel. But a truce to the Widow McKilligan, of whom more hereafter.

To return to the Torch: a torch gives light whereby we may see and avoid the snares and pitfalls lurking in our path. May this torch ever prove a torch of Truth, whose light shall penetrate the recesses of sin, error and darkness. Let its full blaze shine on the path, into the heart and conscience of the poor pitiful slave of rum, let it show him the wrecks and ruins that so thickly bestrew his way—the

wrecks of what once was noble manhood—faithful, confiding womanhood, and innocent prattling childhood—there they lie in slaughtered heaps, bedewed with tears of blood, wrung from bleeding, broken hearts, and let its light shine further and further, till it rests on the word of God; hold it closely so that the poor blood-shot, inflamed eyes may see the cheering blessed words: "He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out;"—go no more with palsied, staggering steps, wear the ticking of glasses fall upon his dull ear, or where shine the false lights hung out to lure him on the sharp, black rocks of sin and death.

In some countries it's the custom when a great man goes abroad at night, for slaves to run before his equipage with lighted torches, crying: "Clear the way, clear the way, his highness, Prince Sling Slang, jum-taloo is coming." So let the TORCH cry out to all sorts of error, fraud and chicanery, fly, fly, from before my light, I will surely expose you; and oh, TORCH, be not afraid of these great luminaries, the New York Weekly, or the Ledger, etc., etc., which flash athwart the gloom of our horizon weekly, but determine with the immortal McKenzie—to hold the fort—and keep the lower lights a burning, and huzza for home-made literature.

A torch gives heat, heat is life, cold is death. The heat of the sun warms the earth's cold breast, and causes it to bring forth all sweet and beautiful things.

So let the TORCH diffuse a genial warmth an I glow wherever it appears, and may the flowers of Faith, Hope and Charity spring up and blossom in its onward march.

The old Romans placed a torch reversed on their funeral urns, let us hope it will be long before this "Torch, our New Dominion Torch," is thus snuffed out. I'm sometimes like the mill that said to the grist: "Now I've got going I'll never be able to stop," especially when I mount Pegasus as now.

Room, room for the Torch—speed away, speed away,
Darkness and error before its broad ray,
May its beams pierce the gloom of many a soul
Enslaved by fierce passions that brook no control.

Room, room for the Torch—bid the new light God-speed,
May its radiance reveal each dastardly deed,
When villainy hides a clever disguise in
May the Torch pierce each fold, and show us the poison

Room, room for the Torch, and long may it shine
Broader and brighter, and round it entwine
All sentiments tender, all principles pure,
Ever guide us aright, and to virtue allure.

GLOW-WORM.

WAIT.

Wait a moment, young man, before you throw that money down on the counter and demand a glass of brandy and water. Ask yourself if twenty-five cents cannot be better invested in something else. Put it back into your pocket and give it to the cripple on the corner, or take our word for it, you will be sorry.

Wait, madam—think twice before you decide on that two hundred dollar dress! Two hundred dollars is a great deal of money! One dollar is a great deal, when people once consider the amount of good it will accomplish—in careful hands. Your husband's business is uncertain; there is a financial crisis close at hand. Who knows what that two hundred dollars may be to you yet?

A GREAT SKATING FEAT.—Messrs. C.W. Beckwith and E. H. Allan, of Frederickton, skated from that city for St. John, (or rather Rothesay) on Friday, the 4th inst., making the distance in 10 hours and 20 minutes. Great skating feet!