

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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A New Year's Hymn.

O year that lies before us,
What shall thy record be,
As thy short months roll o'er us
And swift thy moments see?
Now thou art fair and spotless
As childhood's opening hour,
Thy bud so pure and stainless,
Say! what shall be thy flower?

'Thou bring'st new hope to cheer us,
New visions fair and bright,
Of higher aims and conquests,
And purer, clearer light;
New strength for fresh endeavour,
New purpose firm and high,
New dreams of holy pleasures
Which wait us in the sky.

So, year by year in mercy,
To us it hath been given
To climb from our past failures
Up one step nearer heaven;
To strive, each year we journey
Upon our pilgrim way,
That each new fair to-morrow
Be better than to-day."

WINTER SPORTS IN CANADA.

The Montreal Ice Palace was the first ever tried in the New World. The building was made of blocks of ice, forty-two by twenty-four inches, each block weighing five hundred pounds, and the whole structure containing forty thousand cubic feet of ice. Its dimensions were about ninety by ninety feet, with rectangular towers at each corner, and a central square tower one hundred feet high. The blocks were "cemented" together by snow for mortar, and then water was pumped on from a hose, and the whole palace made into one solid piece, so that you couldn't separate one block from another without sawing them apart. "The Ice Palace," says the writer of this description, "was the most beautiful sight I ever saw in sunlight or moonlight. By the electric light it reminded me of what Charles the Fifth said of Antwerp Cathedral, that it was worthy of being placed under a glass shade. I went on top of the mountain, and looked down at the thousands of lights throughout the city, and at this glowing structure in the middle. It was like fairy-land."

Toboganing is the nearest thing to flying one can find. One couldn't live long if he kept going at such a speed. The tobogan is made of two pieces of thin bass wood, about six feet long and two feet wide, bent up in front like the dashboard of a sleigh. It has cross pieces of wood for strength, and long, round sticks at each side, and is all clasped together by cat-gut. The Indians make them, and use them to carry the game they shoot over the snow through the woods, and Canadians turn them into use for pastime in sliding down hills. The tobogan is so light that it doesn't sink in soft snow like a cutter, and is so smooth on the bottom that it goes down hill like a shot, especially when the hill is slippery.

"My first experience of toboganing," continues this writer, "was on the back part of Mount Royal. The toboganing slide here is partly an artificial one. It is a big structure of logs and planks made on an inclined plane, up one side of which there are steps, and down the side beside it a smooth, ice-covered slide. There is room on top like a little platform upon which you settle yourself on your tobogan. To tell the truth, there's no danger on proper hills. A man sits behind and steers with his foot.

"The sensation is exciting. You lose your breath as the snow dashes up into your face, and you have all the feeling of going on the road to a regular smashup, but before the smash comes, your sleigh eases off as gently as it started, and you get up and want to do it again. If you stand to one side of the slide, and see a tobogan whiz past you like a shot, and see the frightened faces of the strangers who are having their first try, you feel as if you were looking at a group who were going to destruction, but by-and-by

you see them coming up hill again laughing at their fears.

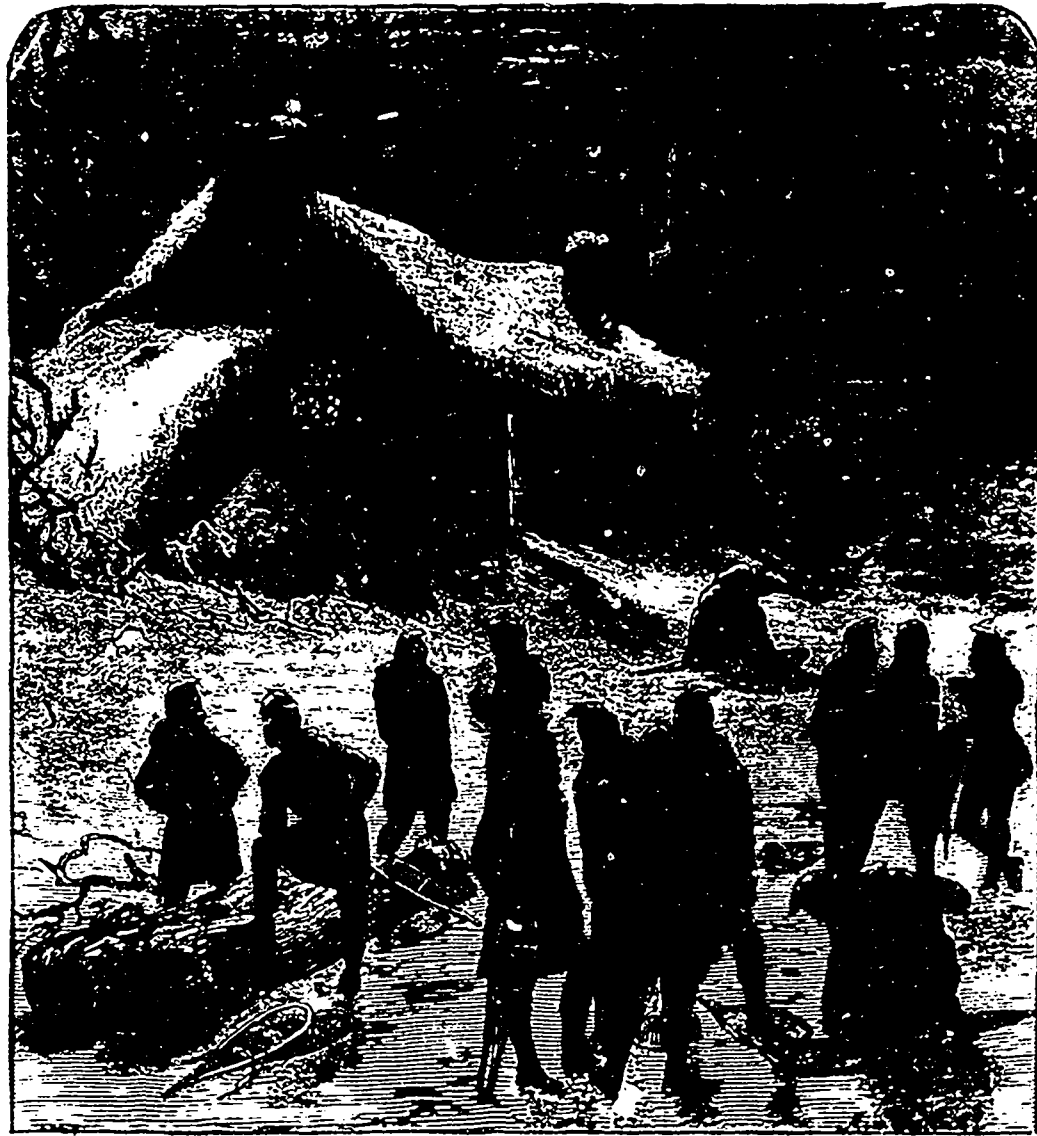
What a city Montreal is for sleighing! No sloppy roads one day and hard ones the next. No wheels to-day and runners to-morrow. A constant jingle of bells, and quick trot of horses, and all kinds of sleighs, rough and handsome, little and big. On the civic half-holiday, there were over two thousand sleighs in the procession, in which the hackmen joined. After the drive, we stopped at McGill College gate and saw the snowshoers start to run to the top of the mountain and back, a distance of about three miles cross country. They think nothing of running to the Back River, eight miles, and they go to Lachine and back, or some other place, every Saturday, about twenty miles, just for the sport of the thing. It was great fun to see some of the most eager fellows going headlong into the deep snow when they tried to pass those ahead. Snowshoes are of Indian origin, made of light ash,

lighted torch in one hand, and discharging Roman candles from the other. After going around the Palace, the procession headed for the mountain, went up the old snowshoe track, and returned down the zigzag road, singing as they swung along.

Tramp! tramp! on snow shoes tramp-
ing.

All the day we marching go,
Till at night by fires encamping
We find couches mid the snow!"

"From the city below the sight was picturesque. The long, serpentine trail was seen moving in and out, and twisting like a huge firesnake, while the Roman candles shot their balls of fire into the air. It was a grand and wild sight to see them coming back. A snow-storm had set in, and the flickering lights, the costumes, the sturdy, steady tramp of the fellows made one think of a midnight invasion by an army."



WINTER SPORTS.

bent to an oval, and the ends fastened together with cat-gut. The interior is then crossed with two pieces of flat wood to strengthen the frame, and the whole is woven with cat-gut, like a lawn tennis bat. An opening is left for the motion of the toes in raising the heel in stepping out. The netting sustains the weight of the body, and the shoe sinks only an inch or two, and when one foot is bearing the weight the other is lifted up, and over, and onwards. The shoes are fastened to the moccasined feet by thongs of deer-skin. In the evening of the inauguration of the Ice Palace, everybody came to Dominion Square, where there was every sort of light but sunlight. The Ice Palace looked like glass, and I never saw anything so beautiful as when they burned blue, green, crimson and purple fires inside. By-and-by the procession of fifteen hundred men appeared in club uniforms, each carrying a

SNOW AS A MAKER OF HISTORY.

Snow has played a very important part in the making of the world's history. Edward III. of England found it his chief opponent in one of his earlier campaigns in France, for his army was so weakened and distressed by the snows of 1339 that he was forced to conclude a peace which was of so unsubstantial a nature that it lasted but little longer than the snow itself. The snows of the winter of 1800 have been made ever memorable by Campbell's lines on the victory of Moreau over the Austrians. It was the "stained snows" of Linden that were responsible for the most dreadful and sickening page in the awful annals of war, wherein is recorded the story of the retreat of Napoleon's grand army. The historians of that dreadful event tell us that all over Europe there were tokens of an early winter when, on

October 19, 1822, Napoleon evacuated Moscow. It required three weeks to march from Moscow to Smolensk. The snow fell almost without intermission. Nothing was to be seen but this fateful winding sheet, save where dark, moving specks told of the presence of the Cossacks, ever on the watch to harass their dispirited foe. By hundreds and by thousands, men and horses fell by the way to rise no more, overwhelmed by the blinding, pitiless snowdrift. It was a miserable remnant of the French strength that reached Smolensk, only to find that they could have neither rest nor succour there, but must continue their terrible combat with the powers of nature and of man. In one respect did the cold favour them. It enabled Ney, with the remnants of his following, to cross the Dnieper on the ice. But when the troops came to the fatal Beresina the thaw, more merciless than the frost, had filled the channel of the river with floating, rolling ice blocks.

Twenty thousand perished there alone, and then the cold increased, and so at length a few wretched stragglers only returned to France. Four hundred thousand died in that campaign of war and terror. Who can guess how a map of the European nations would appear to-day had Napoleon and his army not been overcome by the snow?

PROMPT PEOPLE.

Don't live a single hour of your life without doing what is to be done in it, and going straight through it from beginning to end. Work, play, study whatever it is, take hold at once, and finish it up squarely, then to the next thing, without letting any moments drop between. It is wonderful to see how many hours these prompt people contrive to make of a day, it is as though they picked up the moments which the dawdlers lost.

And if ever you find yourself where you have so many things pressing upon you that you hardly know how to begin, let me tell you a secret. Take hold of the very first one that comes to hand, and you will find the rest all fall into file, and follow after, like a company of well drilled soldiers, and, though work may be hard to meet when it barges in a squad, it is easily vanquished if you can bring it into line. You may often have seen the anecdote of the man who was asked how he had accomplished so much in his life. "My father taught me," was the reply, "when I had anything to do to go and do it." There is the secret, the magic word now! Make sure, however, that what is to be done ought to be done. "Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day" is a good proverb, but don't do what you may regret. Merchant Seftinell.

Editor (to aspiring writer)—You should write so that the most ignorant can understand what you mean." Aspirant—"Well, what part of my paragraph don't you understand, sir?"

"Do you know," said the man who was going to have a tooth pulled, "I don't think 'dental parlour' is a good phrase."

"No."
"Drawing room would be much better."