

ing more liberal and profound in knowledge, and charitable in their expressions of censure and approval, concerning all those great questions which affect the hopes and destiny of our race. It would be, no doubt, a pleasing task to take a retrospect of the year that is now departing, and sketch the works that have been done in the various departments of intellectual culture, but this is not the essayist's duty in this instance to perform. Our thoughts have been too rambling, and like the visitor, to some antiquated castle or cathedral, we love to wander here and there—now stopping to admire this columned aisle or marble tablet cornice,

and pause perhaps to speculate on its history and the associations connected with it. We have said that this is a working age, when the race is more and more terribly in earnest, in triumphing over material forms than during any previous era; and in this assertion, we think we are sustained by what has been done in the present generation. But work and play enter both into the lives of each individual, and there is nothing so much we regret—that these holidays of the year and seasons of happy reunion—sacred to the memories of childhood—youth and old age—should be sacrificed to the god of labour and of Mammon.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY W. ST. JOHN.

It was Christmas Eve—a cold crisp Christmas Eve,—moonlight too—the sky was cloudless, and the mellow rays of the Queen of Night falling on the silvery snow made it almost bright as day. The merry jingle of the sleigh-bells as they dashed rapidly to and fro, lent life to the scene, and made everything without *appear* gay, whether it really *was* so or not.

But everybody was *not* happy, nor even gay—for gaiety is very often only an assumption of happiness—on that Christmas Eve. No, within the precincts of the city there was misery—poverty, sickness, want, and hardship—perhaps not so much as usually falls to the share of every large city; but yet a great deal,—and the most of which could have been alleviated, if those who had the means and the power, and only had the *will* as well.

There were some, too, who were not sick; and by no means in want, and yet they were far from being happy. Such a one was Mr. F. C. Sterne, as he stood at his chamber window looking out at the moonlight scene we have attempted to describe. He tried hard to make himself believe he felt happy, but the more he tried, the more he became convinced that he was really miserable. He turned away from the window, and sat down by the cheerful coal-fire which threw a flickering, ruddy glow, on the rich curtains, soft carpets, elegant furniture, and rare pictures of his drawing room. He placed his feet on the fender, gazed intently into the fire, and in spite of himself became busy thinking, and his thoughts, like a kaleidoscope, changed very quickly from one scene to another. He thought how a little more than twelve years before this particular Christmas Eve, he arrived in the city with his wife and child, a very young man—for he was now only thirty-three; how he had gone into business; how he had striven for the first three years, and how with all his striving he could barely keep his little family comfortable. Then when he

was just beginning to be able to do so, how his wife had sickened and died. How, though he had felt the blow severely, yet for the sake of his only child—her mother's image, and the darling of his own heart—he had borne manfully up against it, until nine years after her mother's death, she, too, in the beauty and bloom of innocent childhood, after three days illness, fell a victim to diphtheria, and her dust was borne and deposited with her mother's in the lone churchyard. And then, for a few weeks, how—almost mechanically—he had gone about more like a man under the influence of a half-drowsy sleep, superinduced by the habitual use of some narcotic stimulant—than a man^h having an aim to live, much less one who was beginning to acquire the character of a shrewd and successful business man. How he awoke to a full sense of his situation, and to change it, and banish his melancholy, he absorbed himself wholly and solely in business; how everything he projected prospered, and every undertaking he planned was crowned with success, until in the cares of business he had forgotten everything!—Yes, even wife and child,—but that was because he did not think; would not allow himself to think; except of ships, cargos, freights, and markets; and of these no man thought more, and certainly no man was better posted. But now on this particular Christmas Eve, there seemed to have come a re-action and he *did* think, and he wondered too, what his neighbors thought of him.

What did they think of him?—Why they *knew* he owned and occupied the most comfortable mansion, with a pretty little garden and trees in front of it, and a larger garden and yard in its rear, that there was in the fashionable street in which it was situated. They *knew* too that he had ships at sea, and that his check was good for many thousands of dollars; but they *thought* that the man and his name were extremely well suited to each other, “Sterne by