

Our Contributors.

HOLIDAYS NOT ALL PLEASURE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Some years ago we spent our holidays at a well-known summer resort on the Lower St. Lawrence. One day things were decidedly blue. There had been a fog, a long, dreary, dismal, disheartening fog. The air was raw and it searched for the weak spots in the human constitution far more successfully than the Grits searched for a majority in the recent bye-elections. It took hold of the weak organs with a much tighter grasp than the Grand Old Man has of his majority. A small party of Ontario tourists were gathered in the house of a friend, putting in the time and trying to make themselves believe that they were having a good holiday. An estimable lady of the party had the courage to say:—

IT IS NOT ALL PLEASURE DOWN HERE.

That was exactly how we all felt, but of course we did not all like to say so. After you have spent a lot of money, and travelled a thousand miles for pleasure and have written home saying that you are having a grand time, you don't care to admit that your holiday is even a partial failure.

A clerical friend of ours made great preparations for a trip to the Old Country. He had a rough passage across the ferry, wet weather on the other side, saw no lions worth naming and came home in disgust some weeks before he was expected. Soon after his arrival we asked him how he enjoyed his trip. With an amount of earnestness that would have given power to the peroration of any sermon, he exclaimed:—

IT'S ALL HUMBUG.

We always did admire that man's candour, though we say nothing about his judgment.

Young people often spoil their holidays by anticipating unalloyed pleasure. People who have taken holidays often know better, and they start out fully expecting that go where and how you may there will always be some drawbacks. The most they aim at doing is reducing the drawbacks to a minimum. The inexperienced tourist starts with the idea that a tour is all pleasure, and the disappointments he is certain to meet sadly mar whatever pleasure comes his way.

People who cannot get away often give themselves a great amount of senseless misery by their exaggerated ideas of the pleasure of holiday trips. They imagine that their neighbours who "go some place" are all having a grand time and that the unfortunates who remain at home are being sorely punished. It is a huge fallacy. Holidays are not all pleasure, and home is a much more comfortable place than some summer hotels that we have taken hash in.

Let it be assumed that on general principles a holiday in summer is a good thing. Let it also be assumed that most men can do more and better work in a year by working eleven months and resting one than by plodding along for twelve. All this is true. A holiday is a good and useful thing, and just because it is a good and useful thing one should be careful not to spoil it by anticipating nothing but pleasure. Something else is sure to come before you are far from home, and you are sorely taken attack if you never made any sensible allowance for drawbacks.

It never occurred to you, probably, that you might have to stand in a hot railway car for the first ten miles of your trip. You of course expected a whole seat to yourself. Possibly, indeed, you wanted the seat in front of you for a footstool. But when you entered the car you found you had to stand up like a man and wait until some one went out. That was not the kind of thing you anticipated, and the disappointment and fatigue of standing worried you for the first part of the journey. You might have known that seats are often scarce at this time of the year.

You counted on a lower berth in the sleeper, but forgot or perhaps never knew that to make sure of a "lower" you should apply a day or two ahead. The coloured gentleman assigns you to an "upper." You climb the step ladder and turn in. Your mood is not devotional, though it should be, when you retire. You soon find that this is not your night for sleeping. You would like to indulge in an occasional roll, but you are haunted with the idea that if you indulge you might roll over the side and come down among the gripsacks in the aisle. You try all the plans you ever heard or read of for putting oneself asleep. You doze a little. The car gives a lurch just when you were going off. You try again. The man in the next berth snores. Next morning you climb down with your nerves all unstrung and your head in such a condition that you wonder if it ever can get level again. Several times during the night the thought stole gently over you that holidays are not all pleasure. Now you are quite sure about it.

When you got on board the steamboat you of course expected a good berth to yourself, but the official at the wicket told you with an air that made you wonder whether he might not be a chief justice that you could not have one. You must turn in with somebody else, and that somebody else may be—well he may be anything from a Doctor in Divinity to a burglar; of course you must do as directed or lie on the floor. When you are considering how and where you will dispose of yourself for the night it dawns upon your mind that holidays are not all pleasure.

Next morning the lake is decidedly choppy. Every now and then the boat gives a roll and a jerk that in some mys-

terious way affects the staying power of your breakfast. You make a bee line for the railing. You remember that Tennyson sang, "Britons hold your own," but you begin to fear there may be contingencies in which even a Briton cannot always hold his own. As you hold the railing with feeble grasp and give yourself away, you realize as you never realized before that holidays are not all pleasure.

The same truth sometimes dawns upon one's mind in a summer hotel. Many of these places are admirably managed, but you do occasionally strike one that makes you wish you had gone to another. Any long journey by rail convinces one that holidays are not all pleasure. No matter how comfortable the surroundings or how pleasant the scenery you do weary after the first few hundred miles.

Moral—Take a good holiday if you can afford to do so, but don't spoil it by starting out with the foolish idea that home is all drawbacks and holidays all pleasure.

HOUSES IN PALESTINE.

BY SARAH F. HOWIE.

We are all more or less familiar with the general outward appearance, at any rate, of an Eastern house from the faithful representations we have in pictures, and the house before us does not differ from the usual style of house we expect to meet with in every town or village.

Absence of architectural beauty seems to be a distinguishing characteristic, which is perhaps somewhat compensated for by the commodious interior which is really larger than one would imagine from the outside view.

The numerous allusions to the house in Scripture are both interesting and profitable. We do not know whether the house was coeval with the home, but whether Adam lived in a house or not, we know that his son Cain, when he went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the Land of Nod, built a city and named it after his son Enoch (Gen. iv. 17). And it is not until six generations later that we read of tents being invented by Jabal.

A peculiarity of the Syrian house is the flat roof which serves a variety of useful purposes. It is in many cases the pleasantest part of the house, for as a rule the windows of the house do not face the street and are very narrow, admitting very little light and sunshine; so the Syrian goes to the roof to get the fresh air, bask in the sun and look out upon the world. He frequently takes his meals there, receives friends and smokes his nargileh. It is the pleasantest place for sleeping in all places where malaria does not render it dangerous. All kinds of fruits such as figs, grapes and prunes are spread on the roof to dry. The women also dry their clothes, set out their flower-pots and do numerous other things, and Dr. Howie describes his father's funeral service as having taken place on the roof, when hundreds of people attended, and that during his recent visit to Palestine he had a supper party on the roof of this very house represented by the accompanying illustration.

Many of the roofs have battlements, especially in Moslem, establishments constructed partly for safety and partly to screen the women from the prying eyes of neighbours. A Mosaic law, Deut. xxii. 8, said: "When thou buildest a new house thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house if any man fall from thence." This is not by any means an unnecessary injunction, and many serious accidents result from its disregard by Christians.

An inexpensive but beautiful ceiling is frequently found to cover the roof of some nature-loving Syrian; it consists of the vine trained gracefully over a trellis, affording a delightful shade from the fierce heat of the sun. In many cases, too, the people erect temporary booths of foliage or other light material, indeed the custom of erecting booths on the housetop is very ancient. Moses commanded the Israelites to dwell in booths seven days, during the feast of tabernacles, that they might be reminded that the Lord made them to dwell in booths when He brought them out of the land of Egypt (Lev. xxiii. 42), and after the return of the children of Israel from the Babylonian captivity they revived the custom which had fallen into desuetude since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, and the people went forth into the mount and brought branches of olive, pine, myrtle and palm trees, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the streets of the water-gate and in the street of the gate of Ephraim, and there was very great gladness (Neh. viii. 16).

The average Syrian house does not usually contain more than two or three rooms, and, as these communicate with one another, a lack of privacy is sometimes felt, and it is in these circumstances that the housetop is sometimes made to serve the purpose of a privy council room.

It is cut off from communication with the rest of the house and is reached by an outside stair. It was the place chosen by Samuel for conversing with Saul, and no doubt the young man, tired with a three days' tramp after his father's lost asses, slept soundly on the roof of the venerable Man of God. The Arabic rendering of I Sam. ix. 25 and 26 is as follows: And Samuel conversed with Saul upon the top of the house, and spread his bed for him, and he slept on the roof, and very early in the morning Samuel called Saul from the top of the house, etc.

How peaceful is the scene which here presents
To tired wanderer a calm retreat,
Upon the housetop of the holy man,
Whom God for Saul's reception had prepared;

Sweet commune held they of the time to come,
When Israel in him her king should find,
Blest hour of prayer enjoyed the men of old,
When in the spring of an eventful day
A housetop served as footstool to God's throne.

Unfortunately a few centuries later in the reign of the wicked Abaj, the Jewish nation had so far forgotten their covenant with Jehovah and had become so degenerate in their practices through the corrupt influence of surrounding nations, that they actually burnt incense, and poured out drink offerings to Ashtorith and other false gods upon the roofs of their houses, Jer. xix. 13. . . .

Alas for mortal man!

No longer true to his creator, Lord,
He desecrates the altar of his home,
And incense to the host of heaven burns.
The housetop was the scene from whence arose
Volumes of incense unto many gods,
Jehovah's name was scorned till He arose
In wrath, to chastise Israel with His rod.

It is refreshing to turn from the scene of such gross idolatry to contemplate. Peter, who in the devout spirit of an earnest believer, sought retirement for prayer on the housetop of Simon the Tanner with whom he lodged in Joppa, and the significant vision which God there vouchsafed to him dispelled for ever his narrow prejudices and taught him that the grace of God was to extend not to the Jew only but also to the Greek.

Near to the shore where stood the tanner's house,
There Peter lodged, and towards the noonday hour,
He went up on the housetop for to pray;
In vision rapt he saw the heavens open,
And God to sinful man His will revealed;
No longer may the Jew exclusive right
To privileges claim, which him were given,
But henceforth to the Gentile as to him
The offer of salvation comes from heaven.

Another striking picture of the use to which the roof of a Syrian house was put, in the time of our Lord, is given in the graphic description by St. Mark of the healing of the paralytic.

In such a house the Saviour stood,
When towards Him borne of four
A helpless paralytic came
His mercy to implore.

No access could the wretched man
Unto the Saviour find,
Until a way was opened through
His faith and comrades kind.

They bore him gently to the roof,
And through an opening wide
The bearers placed the palsied man,
Down close by Jesus' side.

My son thy sins forgiven be,
The Saviour gently said,
And forthwith rising to his feet,
The man took up his bed.

And so to-day to you who come
Believing, trusting Him,
The Saviour still will speak the word,
Son, I forgive thy sin.

THEOLOGY IN NEW YORK.

BY W. D. RUSSELL.

New York, with its teeming millions, is the great influencing centre of the continent. Commercially, politically and morally her power is felt the land over. Her vicious arms reach out to every town and hamlet, but her moral power, forced out by loving hearts and noble minds, meets vice at every turn and contends for the mastery.

New York's great moral power is her Christian ministry. Christian men of business are too hard worked to wage successfully the never-ending struggle with vice. But the pulpit is alert and courageous. Vice may raise her head as far as the law or decency will allow, but no further. To do so is to court the watchful and powerful arm of the Christian ministry from some quarter. If the act escapes one, it is seized by another. It may run the gauntlet of one section, but is certain to run foul of another. Intelligence, courage and Christian earnestness are stamped on every pulpit, and without her clergy New York would be vastly more wicked than she is. And yet the theological views and religious positions represented by the metropolitan ministry are so numerous and varied that one wonders whether if left to themselves they would ever manage to get on together. A few weeks residence here has enabled me to hear the leading thinkers and preachers, and I wish to present some of the strange contrasts I have noted.

THEOLOGICAL CONTRASTS.

Orthodox believers will be pleased to know that in the fashionable and popular Fifth Avenue pulpit Dr. John Hall preaches the traditional faith without the slightest admixture of the modern theology. He attacks no one, but one can readily gather that he has no sympathy with the higher critics. The Bible he reads and preaches is the one Calvin gave him. He rejoices in the faith as interpreted by Dr. Alexander and Dr. Hodge. His people are urged to accept the infallible inspiration of the Bible, the efficacy of prayer, and the superiority of Presbyterianism as truths that cannot be questioned. The doctrines that enabled their forefathers to live and die in the hope of eternal life, that purified and comforted their lives and made them meet for heaven, are equally helpful now. Reason must bow submissively to the traditional faith no matter how contradictory her teachings may appear. Individual investigation is not encouraged, and