

The Family Circle.

A WHIFF O' THE CALLER AIR.

(Written in Australia, by Mrs. Margaret Miller David-son, daughter of Hugh Miller.)

O for a breath o' the moorlands,
A whiff o' the caller air;
For the scent o' the flowerin' heather
My very heart is sair.
O for the sound o' the burnies
That wimple o'er the lea,
For a sight o' the brownin' bracken
On the hillsides waving free.
O for the blue lochs cradled
In the arms o' mountains gray,
That smile as they shadow the drifting clouds
A the bonny summer day.
O for the tops o' mountains,
White wi' eternal snow;
For the winds that drift across the lift,
For the strong east winds that blow.
I'm sick o' the blazing sunshine
That burns through the weary hours,
O' gaudy birds singing never a song,
O' beautiful scentless flowers;
I'd gie a' their southern glory
For a taste o' the gude saut wind,
Wi' a road o'er the bonny sea before
And a track o' loam behind.
Auld Scotland may be rugged,
Her mountains stern and bare;
But O for a breath o' her moorlands,
A whiff o' her caller air.

—Presbyterian.

Written for the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

A VISIT TO THE WEST INDIES.

GEORGETOWN, DEMERARA (BRITISH GUIANA.)

We left the beautiful and fruitful Isle of Trinidad in the afternoon under a burning sun. We steamed along the western shore and had a magnificent view of the mountain scenery of this famous land.

Of the work accomplished by Revs. Morton and Grant, there can be no doubt, for every dark person spoken to knew or heard of them or their work.

Seventy hours' sail brought us to the lighthouse at the entrance of Demerara harbor. Here the land lies very low, and nothing could be seen but the tops of coconut trees and half topmasts of vessels lying in the harbor. On nearer approach the tops of houses and other buildings appeared to view. The coast appeared a fertile mud-flat, in many places below high-water mark. Like Holland, the coast has to be protected by an expensive system of dams and dykes. The tides run high and rapid, and the color of water muddy, caused by the deposits of clay brought down by the rivers. We got alongside the wharf at high tide, and from the deck of the steamer we notice some ancient boats pass by. One is a characteristic floating raft of heavy timber supported in the centre by an empty punt, on which an Indian family lives. It has a thatched roof and hammocks, and the men lounge about. The picture is very interesting to a stranger, as it resembles the primitive life of the forest. There again is a canoe, made entirely out of a tree, with fifteen Indians paddling—how rapidly they go—the old canoe is laden with fruit for sale at the markets. Now comes a boat shaped like a half moon, paddled by black women, with produce also for sale, the whole presenting a very striking picture of the primitive mode of living of these people.

In the harbor (which is full of sharks of all kinds, as well as other large fish) lies a Norwegian sunken bark, with only the masts above water.

We step ashore and proceed along the main business street (Water Street), which is thronged by a crowd of all nationalities and races, some coming from the markets with loads of vegetables, while coolies by the score are seen with baskets on their heads, or sitting on their haunches on the road side; they attract our attention more than any other tribe on account of their peculiarity in dress and manners, combined with the peculiar head-dresses.

Business begins early in the morning, slackens towards midday, and closes between four and five in the afternoon—after which Water Street is deserted.

Georgetown (the capital of British Guiana) has a population of some 50,000. Its streets are well laid out, while it boasts of some of the finest public buildings in South America. There is a tram railway on the principal streets, drawn by mules. The city stands on

the eastern side of the Demerara river at its mouth, with the sea for a second frontage. The town is protected on the west side by a massive sea-wall constructed of stone, over a mile in length and 26 feet in width. This wall is used as a promenade during the evenings. The stores, shops and warehouses are very large, and some very handsome, while the stocks are varied and comprehensive. All the private residences are built on stilts (stone or wooden pillars) about 12 feet high, as a preventive against floods and the white ant. Along the centre of the streets are canals for carrying off the water during extra high tides or excessive rain-falls. The water for drinking purposes is brought from savannahs and creeks about twenty miles distant, through the Lamaha Canal, and by means of a pumping engine forced into the houses.

The streets are good, composed of burnt clay with broken shells from the sea-shore. Some streets are laid with granite, which is the most durable. The largest public market we have yet seen is here, and covers over two acres of ground, with steel roof. It is a rare sight to visit this market, and we spent hours walking through interested in all we saw and heard. The buyers and sellers are all colored people, with an occasional white.

The race caste is very strong even in the markets, for each has their place allotted them, and in travelling the same feeling is met with. Here they have the first, second and third class.

Georgetown boasts of two magnificent gardens. The promenade gardens in the centre of the town are very artistically laid out. The walks are made of shell sand from the sea-shore, while any number of seats under shady trees may be had. The Botanical (Government's) Gardens are about a mile from town and covers an area of some 200 acres. Coolie labor is employed in keeping the grounds in order. The drives are wide and numerous, winding and straight, with canals and dams, in which grow to perfection the "Victoria Regina" water-lily. The growth of this lily is very curious, and to the stranger at first sight appears like large frying pans. They vary in size from five feet circumference to fifteen, as they turn up round the edges similar to a frying pan. The color is green, but the lilies when in flower are white, pink and yellow, and as large as an ordinary cabbage. They have a very fine effect.

The town is full of clubs, in which the inhabitants spend most of their time. Drinking is done to excess, and worse than any of the West Indian Islands we visited. Some of the clubs have three distinct departments for drinking; first comes the tony saloon for the white man; next lower down for the colored man; and still lower down for the black man. All these are kept to meet the requirements of the different classes who visit them.

The negro of Demerara is the most independent and insolent of all negroes. They are good workmen, in a large proportion well educated and up in their several vocations; very intelligent and well posted in everything relating to the country they live in. The leading business men are Scotch, then comes the Portuguese and Chinamen, while the Englishmen predominate in the ruling department, many of whom are incapables, but placed in position through influence with the Home Government—very tyrannical in their manner, especially toward the colored people who, in consequence, look upon the white men as enemies, even although the average negro is his superior in knowledge and intellectual ability. A case in point was told me to-day: About a year ago an Englishman was sent out here through the influence of the Home Government to take charge of an estate. Accounts had to be made up monthly and sent home. He tried to make up the statement, but a negro who had been on the estate a good many years saw that he was doing it wrong and told him it was not the way; the manager turned and heaped upon him all the abuse he could, then ordered him to do some menial work as a punishment for his impudence. Finally, however, the manager sent for the nigger and the result was the accounts were made out correctly and neatly and ever since the nigger does the work while the white man draws the pay. This is only one out of many such instances.

We visited the depot provided for the re-

ception of coolies on their arrival in this country; there were over 700 men, women and children just arrived from Calcutta. It was an interesting sight—such a gathering of naked beings—for all the clothing was simply a strip of gray calico tied around their loins. They were all huddled together in a building not large enough to accommodate half a dozen families. Each one had a tin tag around the neck with a number, by which he or she is known. They are brought here by the Government on the indenture system—for five years—and placed on the various estates where they are treated worse than slaves. They eat very little and save all the money they earn, converting it into jewellery for adorning purposes, many of the coolie women having as many as eight rings in each ear, one in the nose and one on the side of the nose, three or four heavy rings round the neck and ankles, while the wrists and arms are full of bracelets and with a large number of silver pieces joined together as necklets. They present a very odd appearance.

The coolies brought out in this way, after they serve the five years, on indenture, can remain five years longer as free, after which they are entitled to free passage back to Calcutta. Quite a number take advantage of this return passage but generally come back again.

The colony of British Guiana comprises the old Dutch settlements of Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice, which was captured in 1803. Along its coast line of about three hundred miles, the mouths of a dozen great rivers pour continuous streams of dark water into the Atlantic, discoloring the sea for fifty miles beyond its muddy shores. The greatest of these rivers is the Essequibo, which rises in the borders of Brazil, and flowing from south to north, drains its numerous tributaries from the interior of the colony. Other large river are the Corentzue which separates British from Dutch Guiana, and the Berbice, while the Demerara, which is about as large as the Thames, is the most important from the fact that the capital is situated at its mouth. The soil along the coast is of unequalled richness, sugar canes growing year after year in the same soil with hardly any deterioration. The crops are very heavy, while almost every tropical production can be grown to perfection.

There is a grand waterfall, exceeding in height and width that of Niagara, called the Kautera Falls of the Potoro, a tributary of the Essequibo. From a height of seven hundred and forty-one feet a sheet of water, three hundred feet wide, falls perpendicularly into a basin below, from whence it continues its course in a series of rapids for another eighty-one feet. Altogether, with its surroundings of forest, and lovely ferns and mosses which grow on the much weathered and water-worn rocks, and from which trickle hundreds of little streamlets, its awful solitude, it may be considered as one of the most interesting in the world.

(To be continued.)

THE MOULTING OF BIRDS.

The strain of a year's wear, with exposure to wet, sun, and wind, upon the innumerable fibres and hooklets brings the feather into a somewhat dilapidated condition. It then by a natural process falls from its attachment, and a new and perfect one grows in its place. Although the feathers develop rapidly, there must naturally be an interval between the loss of the old one and the time the new one is sufficiently perfected to be of use, and it may consequently be thought that the bird's power of flight would be impaired or destroyed during the time of the moult. To a certain extent this is the case, but the injurious consequences are greatly mitigated by several compensating circumstances. In the first place the moult of the wing feathers always occurs in the Autumn, after the exertion and activity called forth by the domestic duties of Spring and Summer—the courtship, nestbuilding, and feeding of the young brood—are over, and existence has become comparatively quiet and monotonous. Then again by a most admirable physiological arrangement, instead of all the feathers moulting simultaneously or even irregularly, the change takes place according to a regular plan, and symmetrically

in the two wings; the feathers on the two sides falling out in pairs. In this way the wings of opposite sides are always in the same condition, and the inconvenience is minimized to the greatest possible extent. It is well known that to incapacitate a bird from flight it is only necessary to produce an inequality in the wings by clipping the end of one. If both are shortened, the power will be retained, although of course not in the same perfection as before. On this principle birds are able to preserve to a considerable extent the faculty of flight during the whole period of moulting their wing feathers.—*Good Words.*

THE PAYMENT OF SMALL OBLIGATIONS.

Few women, let us hope, are intentionally dishonest. The majority of women are fastidious in the conduct of their finances, shrinking from debt as from disgrace, and preferring to pay fully and honorably as they go. Yet, now and then one hears a wail of complaint from people who suffer needlessly because of the heedless manner in which other people keep them waiting for money which they have earned. A dressmaker said, recently, to one of her patrons: "I am nearly frantic when I think how hard I worked and how late I sat up to finish Miss—'s graduation gown, and now I am afraid I will never be paid. I have waited six months for that bill, and I can not get one cent, though I have almost begged for it, even offering to take it in instalments. I am distressed in these hard times, when everybody is retrenching because people do not have so many new things, and others who have had them put off paying me."

On her way home the sympathetic customer thought about it, happening to know that there were no indications of want or straitened means in the family of the delinquent debtor, inferring that the thing was due to an ingrained indifference to paying for work when done. Probably there was at first a temporary inconvenience in settling the bill, and it was postponed for a day or two, and then the period lengthened incessantly, other creditors brought their bills, larger amounts were paid, and still the poor dressmaker waited and wondered and grew frantic with worry, poor thing!

To defer even for one day the paying of the laundress who has acceptably finished her day's work in your kitchen is, it may be, to force her to ask credit, grudgingly given to such as she, at the grocer's shop where she deals, or else to send her children meagrely fed to their beds. People who have a comfortable balance in bank do not comprehend the straitened circumstances of the people who live from hand to mouth.

Coal-bins filled to the overflow are a very different thing from coal purchased in the dearest way, by the pailful at a time, yet thousands of poor women can buy their coal only in very small quantities or go without. Think of being calmly told to wait till to-morrow for one's wages, when neither stick of wood nor ounce of coal was on hand for the family fire!

Apart from the inconvenience, embarrassment and misery entailed by laxity in paying what one owes, especially when the creditors are the poor, and the debts are small, there is evident a serious lack of principle in persons who can comfortably continue in debt.

Any lapse in the rigid honor which insists on meeting each demand and paying it in full at the moment of its maturity involves a loss of self-respect, and brings in its train a warped morality.

There are few things more important in the education of children than the fostering in them the right estimate of personal obligation. The child should be enjoined against borrowing and begging in his small transactions. Let him be held to strict account and responsibility as to his management of his allowance. Fidelity here will tell in years to come, when his dealings are no longer small, but affect great commercial interests.—*Harper's Bazar.*

In the native Hindoo kingdom of Mysore, they have determined to carry out "marriage reform." Hereafter no man over fifty can in that kingdom legally marry a girl under fourteen; and a man over eighteen may not marry a girl under eight, and the minimum age for marriage is fourteen for a boy and eight for a girl!