

"Gone are those golden days of yore
When Christmas was a high day,
Whose sports we now shall see no more—
'Tis turned into Good Friday."

This was written in 1661, in the lax days of Charles II.

But we may say, after all, that it is a good thing that such days are gone, and let us hope, gone for ever. Wine and wassail, intemperance and license but ill restrained, will not suit, in these days, even merrie England herself. Men are finding out more truly every day that man should not only cease to pamper his own appetite, but should endeavor to restrain that of his brother man. There can be rejoicing without levity, festivity without intoxication. And though we have instances of men and women giving themselves up to excessive drinking—far more instances, indeed, than we ought to have—yet, as a whole, they are a little more like what Christian men and women should be, that is to say, more temperate, more reasonable in their festivities and mirth.

And in this form Christmas finds us to-day. The Church of England has always steadily observed the day as a day of religious joy. Her church bells, except for one brief moment, when the Puritans held the ropes, have ever rung out merrily through the wintry air to tell of Christ, born to bring joy to a poor sinful world. For a time the chapel doors were shut on Christmas day. No so called protestant body was known to observe it. Old prejudice, however, has at last given way and all denominations throw open wide their church doors, and set their bells aringing to tell the good old story of Christ that was born in Bethlehem.

There is as we know a religious Christmas and a secular Christmas. There are many who take the sacred name of Christmas upon their lips without the slightest reference to the Holy being after whom it is called,—a Christmas without a Christ!

But others again honor the day because of Christ. He is with them from first to last, in the services and at home, at the sacred feast of the Holy Communion and at the Christmas dinner. The day is as it should be, *Christ-mas* to them.

The spirit of forgiveness, charity, sympathy and good nature should reign supreme at Christmas time.

Glad Christmas day! Glad, for it tells us of Christ as on that first Christmas eve when Judaean shepherds watched their flocks by night.

"The stars of Heaven still shine, as at first
They gleamed on that wonderful night;
The bells of the city of God peal out,
And the angels' song still rings in the height;
And love still turns where the godhead burns,
Hid in flesh from fleshly sight.

"Faith sees no longer the stable floor,
The pavement of sapphire is there;
The clear light of Heaven streams out to the world;
And angels of God are crowding the air;
And Heaven and earth through the spotless birth
Were at peace on that night so fair."

SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE AND WORK IN COLD REGIONS.

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WE intend to devote the present and, perhaps, two succeeding articles to the consideration, necessarily brief, of Arctic natural phenomena. In no region of the globe does nature appear so gloriously wild and so awfully majestic as in Arctic climes, a fact to which all travellers in those regions bear united testimony. Between the tropics and in the temperate zones every feature of nature is stamped with a character of richness and luxury, and suggests a delicate though beautiful life. But here, in the land of eternal snow, every form of natural phenomena is rugged, wild and desolate, but sublimely grand, and, whether it be the rugged mountains which rise precipitously to the height of thousands of feet, or the deep glens and valleys which occur between the ranges and are either filled with immense beds of snow or with the ancient glaciers, the solitary icebergs which gem the summer seas, the dreadful blasts and eddies of the appalling snow storms, or the mighty upheavals of the ice, all is suggestive of massiveness, strength and unconquerable vigor.

As occupying the foremost place in the imposing pageant of nature as exhibited in Arctic climes, icebergs will naturally claim our earliest attention. We must, however, preface the observations we have to make upon them by a brief reference to their prolific parents, the glaciers. Many of the glaciers of Polar regions are identical with those of Alpine countries, only they are much grander and, owing to their proximity to the sea, different in some respects from those of inland countries. In the Arctic regions the snow-line is close to the water's edge—at most only a few hundred feet above it. The glaciers thus, sooner or later, reach the sea, which they can never do in the Alps. When they reach the sea they break off in the form of icebergs. Glaciers are seen to perfection in Spitzbergen and Greenland, but it is only in this latter country that Arctic glaciation can be seen on a great scale. In writing upon this subject Professor Brown observes: "Greenland is, in all likelihood, a large wedge-shaped island, or series of islands, surrounded by the icy Polar Basin on its northern shores, and with Smith's Sound, Baffin's Bay, Davis' Strait and the Spitzbergen or Greenland Sea of the Dutch completing its insularity on its western and eastern sides. The whole of the real *de facto* land of this great island consists then of a circlet of islets, of greater or less extent, circling round the coast, and acting as the shores of a great interior *mer de glace*—a large inland sea of fresh-water ice, or glacier, which covers the whole extent of the country to an unknown depth. The inlets between the islands constitute the fjords of Greenland, and are the channels through which the over-