

unexpected and delicious sensation that afternoon, and were in great demand that night to narrate their experiences to the social circles they respectively adorned. The organist actually forgot the voluntary, and was plainly visible straining his neck over the gallery to feast his vision on the Dean's stalwart form. A choir-boy, a minor canon, and two vicars-choral, singular to relate, all became afflicted with sudden illness, from which, however, they speedily recovered when they reached the open air, and were able to spread the news in Norchester with almost incredible swiftness; and not a few set out for the cathedral, eager to catch a glimpse of the truant gentleman.

As had been his wont, he read the second lesson. It revealed to more than one auditor the change that had passed over both the bodily and mental physique of the Dean. His voice rang like a clarion. It was a stronger and a better man who now stood before them, fit and eager for the battle against "the world, the flesh, and the devil."

The service was over, and the Dean, after inviting some of his special friends to come to-morrow after "morning prayer" to hear his story, was once more seated in his quiet study, thinking over the events of the day. But his reflections were rudely disturbed by a thundering knock at the front door, and by the subsequent flurried entrance of Martha to say—

"Here be the ringers, sir. They want your leave to ring a peal in honour of your return."

"Oh, nonsense!" was the response; "there is not the slightest occasion for such a fuss."

"But please, sir," continued Martha, "they say all the bells in the town will be going in a few minutes, and they don't want to be left behind."

But the Dean's orders never reached the men that day. For at that very moment such a merry din broke forth from every spire and steeple in Norchester as had never been heard before, except perhaps for a royal visit. The ringers had suddenly fled, and in a few minutes the cathedral bells were adding their sonorous notes to the clamour now filling the whole air with a joyous sound, which found an answering echo in the Dean's heart of mingled wonder and delight.

But the climax of his astonishment was reached when a little later on a "Special Edition" of the

Norchester Evening News was handed in, "with the compliments of the Editor." Now, the Dean had not been a favourite with the gentlemen of the press. But what was this he read under the heading, "Return of the Dean of Norchester"?—"We rejoice to be able to inform our readers, in the most positive manner, that the long-lost Dean of Norchester has returned, and has already resumed his customary duties. We are pleased also to be able to state that his appearance indicates that he is in the most robust health, and evidently thoroughly fit for his work. In his absence we have at least partially realised how sorely in times past we have undervalued his influence, and failed to comprehend the quiet liberality of his *charity*, using that word in its widest sense. We have not the faintest idea of the cause of the reverend gentleman's temporary disappearance, and are quite content to wait his explanation until he chooses to give it. For ourselves, we firmly believe that we are expressing the universal opinion of the inhabitants of this ancient cathedral city, when we say that we are so unfeignedly glad to get him back again in our midst, that we are not disposed to inquire too particularly into the reasons which induced a departure, which has not been without its advantages in teaching us to value more correctly a man of whom we are all proud—the Dean of Norchester."

The Dean's heart welled with emotion, in which gratitude was strangely blended with shame. "God forgive me," he cried, as he fell upon his knees, "for my lack of faith and hope! I had, indeed, forgotten that 'in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.'"

Little remains to be told. Miss Dale returned in joyful haste the very next day, and the meeting of uncle and niece was characterised by a warmth which had never before existed during their previous intercourse. Ere this the meeting with the Dean's special cronies had duly taken place, and the causes and explanation of his "escapade" had been not merely inwardly digested, but freely forgiven. In due time the story filtered down, with many unauthorised embellishments, through "the classes to the masses," but its reception was pretty much the same everywhere. What that reception was may be pretty well summed up in our last words—the Dean was never tempted to run away again.

C. A.

A "SUGARING OFF" PARTY IN CANADA.



SOMEWHAT strange sound to English ears probably is the above title, but what a *sweet* picture passes before the mind's eye of the true-born Canadian at the mention of the magic name! To a stranger visiting the country a "sugaring off" is a unique experience, interesting enough to bear the relation I am about to make.

In the Easter holidays we received an invitation

from a young married couple to come out to their home at St. Thérèse, for the purpose of attending a "sugaring off." We started by an early train, and reached our destination at nine a.m. St. Thérèse is a pretty village between twenty and twenty-five miles distance from Montreal. A small river flows through the village, greatly enhancing the beauty of the landscape.

When our party, ten in number, had assembled at our kind host's, we took our seats in an old-fashioned

box-sleigh. This vehicle, the most comfortable thing to travel in you can possibly imagine, has long fallen into disuse, except amongst the French Canadian farmers. It is a wooden sled, walled in at the sides and ends, forming a square enclosure. Straw is put in the bottom, fur rugs over the straw, then the traveller seats himself, draws the upper buffalo robes around him, and starts away to the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells in a conveyance fit for a king.

It was a fine clear day in the early part of April, the sky a splendid blue, not a cloud visible, the air keen and invigorating.

"A bad day for the sap," observed our host.

"Too much frost in the air," said another.

"What does that mean?" asked a third, to whom our present expedition was a novel experience.

"Why, the sap won't run when it is freezing as hard as this," our host began; "but wait till we get a little farther in, and you will see for yourself without need of an explanation."

After driving about four miles we came to the "bush," an extensive wood of sugar-maples. A rough road led through the trees, but soon the drifts of snow became so heavy that our progress was blocked, and one after another leaped from the sleigh and found a footing without any difficulty on the icy surface of the snow-drifts at the side of the road, while the horses, relieved by this movement, struggled on. We now knew we were drawing near the base of operations by a singular and ridiculous sight. The bush was very thick, and every tree was adorned with a kettle as large as a wooden water-bucket. Wherever the eye fell there grew a tree and a kettle. We felt we were attending a tremendous "kettle-drum;" in fact, there were six hundred kettles all told. Each hung upon a spigot, a small wooden peg grooved in the centre, down which the sap runs from a cut in the trunk of the tree into the vessel below. To-day, however, there was a hard frost, and the sap would not flow.

We soon reached the sugar-house, a log cabin with a slanting roof over rafters, and no chimney. The smoke came through a long aperture made by leaving out the top logs on each side of the roof. The floor was bare earth, save at one end of the cabin, where a portion had been boarded over for the men to sleep on. A bed was an unknown luxury; the men who

looked after the sugar rolled themselves in blankets at night, and slept on the bare boards. At the further end of the cabin stood a huge fireplace, built of brick, containing two compartments, in which the fire is built to boil the sap. These are joined by a brick arch corresponding in height to the sides of the fireplace, and help to support the great tins in which the sap is boiled. These tins are about eight feet long and a foot deep.

The sap is first poured from the kettles into huge barrels, and transferred from the barrels to these tins. The sap produces sugar, candy, and syrup; it is very thin in its raw state, and requires to be boiled almost a day before it produces syrup. If the sap is intended for candy or sugar, it must be boiled two or three hours longer. The candy stage is arrived at about five minutes before it sugars, when it has the appearance of toffy or *wax*, as it is called, and is poured off into the snow and left to cool.

The following test is applied to the sap to see if it has sugared. A spoonful is taken from the boiling tins, then blown upon with the mouth, and if glassy bubbles float off into the air, the sap has "sugared." It is then poured into tins, where it hardens into the thick cakes known in Canada as maple sugar. While the sap is boiling, a piece of fat pork is hung up over the tins to clarify the sugar and keep the sap from running over. The heat of the steam causes the pork to melt and fall in drops below. Cold sap is also poured in to prevent the boiling pan from running over.

We had brought a lunch of bacon, bread, tea, and eggs, and we now began to picnic in true sugar-camp style. Some gathered around a barrel of cold boiled sap standing in a corner, into which they dipped slices of bread, declaring the taste was delicious. Tea, too, was made, the tea being infused in boiling sap instead of boiling water, the sap of course being in its first stage, which is very thin. In its raw state the sap looks and tastes like faintly sweetened water, but has a delicate, wild flavour impossible to describe. We also partook of eggs, the great dish at a "sugaring off." They are, of course, cooked in the sap. Many prefer them boiled in the shell in the sap, but the French Canadians delight in eggs *poached* in the sweet boiling sap, and consider them a great delicacy.

F. G.

