

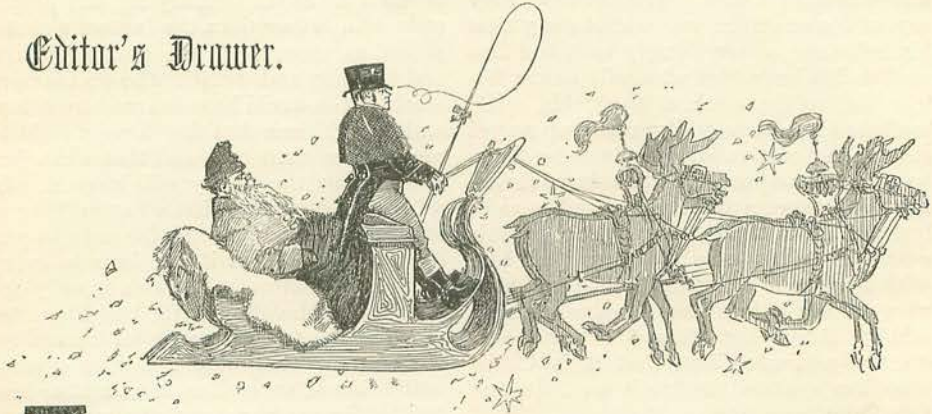
possibly virtuous and beautiful; but truth, which has succeeded to the highest mission of romance, paints these victims as they are, and bids the world consider them not because they are beautiful and virtuous, but because they are ugly and vicious, cruel, filthy, and only not altogether loathsome because the divine can never wholly die out of the human. The truth does not find these victims among the poor alone, among the hungry, the houseless, the ragged; but it also finds them among the rich, cursed with the aimlessness, the satiety, the despair of wealth, wasting their lives in a fool's paradise of shows and semblances, with nothing real but the misery that comes of insincerity and selfishness.

V.

We need not remind the reader of the Study how little it cares for literature except as the language of life; and how always it is the Study's aim to include all accents rather than to exclude any. For this reason it does not find its Christmas literature in the master-works of modern thought alone, but in all expressions, the crudest and hastiest, which have tended at any time during the year to make one think less of one's self and more of others. It recalls a series of papers in a New York journal on the treatment of

women servants in hotels which would be very good Christmas reading, and another series in a Chicago journal about the hardships of sewing-girls, which were full of matter appropriate to the holiday season. Some letters descriptive of life in the Pennsylvania coal mines which it remembers to have seen were equally calculated to call misery and hopeless poverty to mind at a time sacred to the gentler emotions. These sorrowful stories of wrong were all pregnant with the suggestion that turkeys and cranberries cannot by the utmost stretch of charity be sent to all the famine in the world, and that if they could, still one good dinner would not be enough for a whole year. A little candle on a Christmas tree may send its beams afar, but one good deed cannot penetrate all the darkness of the naughty world. Let us light the pretty tapers, and as many of them as possible, and let us do all the good deeds we can; but let us not forget the lesson of the new Christmas literature; let us realize that they are merely palliatives, and that infinitely deeper than their soothing can reach festers the plague that luxury and poverty, that waste and want, have bred together in the life-blood of society. Let us remember this, and take thought for its healing.

Editor's Drawer.



IT would be the pity of the world to destroy it, because it would be next to impossible to make another holiday as good as Christmas. Perhaps there is no danger, but the American people have developed an unexpected capacity for destroying things; they can destroy anything. They have even invented a phrase for it—running

a thing into the ground. They have perfected the art of making so much of a thing as to kill it; they can magnify a man or a recreation or an institution to death. And they do it with such a hearty good-will and enjoyment. Their motto is that you cannot have too much of a good thing. They have almost made funerals unpopular by over-elaboration and display, especially what are called public funerals, in which an effort is made to

confer great distinction on the dead. So far has it been carried often that there has been a reaction of popular sentiment, and people have wished the man were alive. We prosecute everything so vigorously that we speedily either wear it out or wear ourselves out on it, whether it is a game, or a festival, or a holiday. We can use up any sport or game ever invented quicker than any other people. We can practice anything, like vegetable diet, for instance, to an absurd conclusion with more vim than any other nation. This trait has its advantages; nowhere else will a delusion run so fast, and so soon run up a tree—another of our happy phrases. There is a largeness and exuberance about us which run even into our ordinary phraseology. The sympathetic clergyman, coming from the bedside of a parishioner dying of dropsy, says, with a heavy sigh, "The poor fellow is just swelling away."

Is Christmas swelling away? If it is not, it is scarcely our fault. Since the American nation fairly got hold of the holiday—in some parts of the country, as New England, it has been universal only about fifty years—we have made it hum, as we like to say. We have appropriated the English conviviality, the German simplicity, the Roman pomp, and we have added to it an element of expense in keeping with our own greatness. Is anybody beginning to feel it a burden, this sweet festival of charity and good-will, and to look forward to it with apprehension? Is the time approaching when we shall want to get somebody to play it for us, like base-ball? Anything that interrupts the ordinary flow of life, introduces into it, in short, a social cyclone that upsets everything for a fortnight, may in time be as hard to bear as that festival of housewives called house-cleaning, that riot of cleanliness which men fear as they do a panic in business. Taking into account the present preparations for Christmas, and the time it takes to recover from it, we are beginning—are we not?—to consider it one of the most serious events of modern life.

The Drawer is led into these observations out of its love for Christmas. It is impossible to conceive of any holiday that could take its place, nor indeed would it seem that human wit could invent another so adapted to humanity. The obvious intention of it is to bring together, for a season at least, all men in the exercise of a common charity and a feeling of good-will, the poor and the rich, the successful and the unfortunate, that all the world may feel that in the time called the Truce of God the thing common to all men is the best thing in life. How will it suit this intention, then, if in our way of exaggerated ostentation of charity the distinction between rich and poor is made to appear more marked than on ordinary days? Blessed are those that expect nothing. But are there not an increasing multitude of persons in the United States who have the most exaggerated expectations of personal profit on Christmas Day? Per-

haps it is not quite so bad as this, but it is safe to say that what the children alone expect to receive, in money value, would absorb the national surplus, about which so much fuss is made. There is really no objection to this—the terror of the surplus is a sort of nightmare in the country—except that it destroys the simplicity of the festival, and belittles small offerings that have their chief value in affection. And it points inevitably to the creation of a sort of Christmas "Trust"—the modern escape out of ruinous competition. When the expense of our annual charity becomes so great that the poor are discouraged from sharing in it, and the rich even feel it a burden, there would seem to be no way but the establishment of neighborhood "Trusts," in order to equalize both cost and distribution. Each family could buy a share according to its means, and the division on Christmas Day would create a universal satisfaction in profit sharing—that is, the rich would get as much as the poor, and the rivalry of ostentation would be quieted. Perhaps with the money question a little subdued, and the female anxieties of the festival allayed, there would be more room for the development of that sweet spirit of brotherly kindness, or all-embracing charity, which we know underlies this best festival of all the ages. Is this an old sermon? The Drawer trusts that it is, for there can be nothing new in the preaching of simplicity.

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

TOEING THE LINE.

THE Christmas carols had been sung;
The guests had turned to go;
Down from the chandelier there hung
A spray of mistletoe.

Beneath, along the polished floor,
A clear-marked line there ran;
No face was peering at the door;
I was alone with Nan.

Her hair in ripples ringed her brow,
An aureole divine;
Then courage came—I know not how—
I dared her toe the line.

She smiled a roguish smile and fleet;
She gave a dainty trip—
And oh the honey, Hybla-sweet,
I tasted from her lip!

A few months more and I opine—
(Perhaps you'd like to know)—
'Twill be the matrimonial line
This charming *miss 'U toe*.

BISSELL CLINTON.

A REASONABLE VOTER.

"WHO'D you vote for for Congress, Colonel?"
asked one citizen of another.

"Jim."

"Jim? Thought you didn't believe in Jim?"

"Neither I do. That's why I voted for him.
Got tired o' seein' him hangin' 'round home."