

damaged, and the draper says he has bought it thirty-three and a third below cost price, that it is being offered so much cheaper, whereas nothing of the kind happens. Don't Mrs. Truelove unfold her purchase to her husband and tell him what a bargain she has made. Don't she chuckle and connubially relate how the draper has been taken in. "Why, my love," she says to her husband, "the man doesn't know his business. As for the part that has been singed, it is only on the selvage, and as for what damage the water has done, why, my sweetest, we may say the same whenever the calico goes into the wash as an article of wearing apparel." Mrs. Truelove thinks she has rather got the better of old Softgoods. What Mr. Softgoods thinks on his own side I'm not going to say. I have my own opinion on the subject. It is not as a rule tradesmen who cheat; it is the public—the female public, be it more especially understood. They glory so much in obtaining something for half-a-crown what in the innocence of their hearts they believe has cost the tradesman three shillings buying it at first hand, that in self-defence he has to resort to all sorts of devices to save himself from ruin, and enable him to build a villa residence. Hence we have a selling-off of bankrupt stock, goods damaged by fire or water, and so on.

An auctioneer of this amiable and virtuous city told me some time back (in strictest confidence, and such confidences I never betray) that he had received a consignment of really excellent congon teas in splendid condition, which he was instructed to submit to public competition, with a reserve leaving the narrowest margin of profit. "Do you think, Mr. Snyder, that I could get a bid for these teas? No! the best offer would have left the importer a loss of three pence a pound. Well, it so happened that of this consignment there were some chests of damaged tea, and I advertised these for sale without the slightest reserve. Scores of buyers were in attendance, and the bidding reached far beyond the price the sound teas were held for. So it struck me I would continue the sale, and I commenced putting up the good tea as a damaged article, when I sold every chest at two pence half-penny per pound beyond the reserve price, and at an average of four pence beyond what was bid for the tea guaranteed full-weight chests and in good condition. Now, Mr. Snyder," he said, "how do you account for this?" I said, "Human nature." Then he asked, "Why human nature?" "Because," I replied, in the language of old Tony Weller, "human nature is a rum 'un, and can't be calculated on with any degree of certainty how it's going to turn up."

Human nature delights in deceiving and being deceived; in cheating and being cheated. Some time ago a Provincial Councillor, while the Council was in session, came to me and said that the parliamentary reporter on the staff of the paper on which I have the honour to be engaged had been the means of bringing about a domestic quarrel, the end of which was not yet. I asked him how that had come to pass? Well, he told me it came to pass in this way. After attending the Council, and joining fervently in the prayer read by the Speaker, and responding to the petition it contained with due solemnity, he and a few others who had a horror of hearing a long-winded speech from the member for Bunkumtown, and the reply which would follow from the representative of Fernland, agreed in the library that they would adjourn to an hotel and make a night of it. But it so turned out, things being uncommonly pleasant, that they not only made a night, but they made a good part of the morning of it. And each Councillor, when he returned home, excused his long absence to his wife on the ground that they had been spending so many long hours in the Council Chamber in fighting for the grand principle of insisting that the Bible should be read in schools. And the wives lauded their husbands for their efforts in so good a cause. They took pity on them, and before they closed the bed curtains bidding them to take rest and recruit their exhausted energies, they prepared them a mixture of hot and strong and sweet as a solace. But it came about that several of the wives, interested in so moral a debate, read the discussion in the newspaper, and the last paragraph contained the following short announcement, "The Council then adjourned at a quarter past ten." Then the better-halves of the councillors at once saw how they had been treacherously deceived, and much that was very unpleasant followed. "Now, Mr. Snyder," said my friend, "if you can only induce your reporter and the reporters of the other journals to omit all mention of the hour the Council adjourns, you will be assisting conjugal freedom of action; you will be a silent advocate of the liberty of the subject in map with regard to his married state; and you will confer peace upon many a household. 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.' What good can be done by announcing in such precise terms what time a Council sitting terminated?"

But there is a good deal which follows on all this. If innocent and trusting wives were being deceived, was not the Licensing Act at the same time being

broken through, and the feelings of Mr. Fox, our ex-Premier, grossly outraged? It is well-known that the Ordinance is very severe, and that all licensed houses are required to close by midnight at the very latest. Then how was it these Councillors who make the licensing laws should break through them. One of these worthy men told me with elation that he it was who was chiefly instrumental in getting the public-houses closed on Sundays. "Then," I said, "of course you never enter one of these establishments on that day." And he winked his left eye, and exclaimed, "Don't I, neither; but I just do." "Why," I said, "you who tell me you helped to make the law now almost boast of breaking through it." "Mr. Snyder," returned my friend and Councillor, "I was one who proposed the measure in order to shew what a soft lot we have in our Council, who had no more sense in them than to pass it. I knew and a few others with as much experience as myself knew that such a law could not work. Don't I—don't you—don't everyone know that if he wants a glass of beer on Sunday that he can get it at any hotel or public-house in the city. Don't you know and don't all of us know that if we want a bottle of beer or a bottle of anything stronger taken into our house on that day that there is scarcely a hotel that wouldn't supply it—that doesn't supply it in fact to all that will go through the back-door and ask for it—all except a constable, and I am not quite sure about him. I proposed the restriction in the Provincial Council just to shew our legislative wiseheads. Now, if I had inserted in the bill that hotels might be opened for a couple of hours after church time in the morning, and for the same period in the evening to allow families and single men to get their dinner or supper beer, it would have been so reasonable a thing that the majority of the members would have held up their hands as expressing horror at the proposal. Sometimes a fit of virtuous indignation will arise within the bosoms of the police, and they get up a case. They see a little girl or a little boy coming out of a public-house on Sunday with something in a basket or covered over with an apron, and straightway he proceeds to examine it. He draws the cork, and testing the bottle, he finds the child has been sent for sixpenn'orth of beer. Then he lays the information, and makes sure of getting the landlord fined something from ten pounds up to fifty, according to the moral anger raging at the time among the justices presiding on the Bench. What does the publican do? Why he gives two men ten shillings a piece to prove that he was sound asleep in bed at the time, while somehow or other the little girl or boy is made to remember to forget that the same publican ever served them with beer. There is perjury and subornation and wicked evasion, because of an absurd clause in the Licensing Bill, which results in the charge against the delinquent being dismissed. Every one concerned in the matter knows very well that the child did get sixpenn'orth of beer—the landlord knows it, the police know it, the justices know it, and the false witnesses know it, but the publican gets off. Now, Mr. Snyder, I didn't think at the time I caused all public-houses to be closed on Sunday that it would tend to so much wickedness or I shouldn't have taken a leading part in it. I only wanted to see to what length of stupidity my brother councillors would go, but I am sorry now for the joke I perpetrated. I break the law as regularly as Sunday comes round. Once I tried to keep it, but found it did not answer. I said to my wife, 'Jane, my love, we will get our beer in on a Saturday night so that we shall not desecrate the law by sending for it on the prohibited day,' and Jane said, 'Very well, my dear, and we sent for it in a bottle with instructions for the landlord to cork it up tight. And he corked it up tight and it came home. Then the beer looked fresh and bright and inviting as it stood between my vision and the lamp. What came over me I don't know, but I thought the wife looked tired after her Saturday's work, and I said, 'Jane, you shall have a glass of this ale,' and she said, 'John, I will if you will,' and in no time the cork was out. I can't say how it all came to pass, but I know that before we seemed to be aware of the fact, the bottle could have been turned upside down, bottom upwards with the cork out, and there would not have been so much come from the neck as would have soiled the table-cloth. 'Jane,' I said, 'this Saturday night's forethought of getting Sunday's beer in advance won't answer; I see failure in it; and she said, 'No, John, it won't.' So we had to send out one of the youngsters on the Sunday before church came out, with instructions to say, if any one asked her who it was for, to tell them that it was for somebody else. I didn't think, Mr. Snyder, when I helped to pass that law I should be the means of causing children to tell lies, and publicans to get men to perjure themselves. It's a bad law, Mr. Snyder, a wicked law, and I hope to be forgiven for having a hand in that which I now regret."

This is exactly what a provincial councillor told me, and I believe every word he said. People might have cakes and ale, and be virtuous, but the law interferes.

THE FESTIVE SEASON.

PLEASURE SEEKING.—EXCURSIONS AND THEIR RESULTS.—THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.—HOW I SPENT MY LAST CHRISTMAS DAY.—HALLOWED ASSOCIATIONS AND CREDITORS.

The festive season approaches. Let us make the most of it, for Christmas comes but once a year. This, by the way, is a perfectly original remark. I never heard it made before; therefore, all rights to it are reserved. I trust I may in this matter offer a few hints upon the proper way of keeping Christmas, so that people shall say they have had a jolly time of it. If you have a family of children, let the mother tog them out early in the day in their best clothes. When this has been accomplished, each child should be well spanked and placed on cool chairs, that they may be thoroughly impressed with the joyousness and hilarity of the occasion, and the necessity of keeping their holiday dresses free from speck or spot. Then let mamma dress herself out in her very best, while papa is preparing a basket with about twenty-eight pounds of eatables and drinkables in it. This accomplished, papa is to carry the basket in his left hand and the baby on his right arm. This looks homely and domestic-like. Father can't but feel happy and comfortable under such circumstances in combination with a broiling sun. Mamma, who is hot and agitated with her previous efforts, will have repeated her spanking, when the whole will get into a very crowded steamboat and go somewhere. Mamma's temper will have been ruffled rather when she finds that her dress has been awfully crumpled by the pressure of the crowd, and that one of the lambkins has lost a shoe. Father, too, will be a little out of sorts, in remembering that he has left the lemonade-bottle of pale brandy behind, and has forgotten to put knives and forks in the basket. But he cheers up, nevertheless, and hums the song of "Let us be happy together," as if he really felt the sentiments expressed by the words. Upon landing, the family party (father still in custody of the baby and the basket) drag along a rocky beach for two miles, when they encamp upon a picturesque rock all over sharp elevations composed of rock oysters. Here their joyousness increases. Mamma has quite ruined her new dress, and the lambkins are dead beat with heat and fatigue. The basket is unpacked, when it is found that, besides the absent soda-water bottle of brandy and table cutlery, both salt and bread have been forgotten; but then there are two bottles of ale to the good, although the corkscrew has been omitted. This difficulty is overcome; the necks are knocked off in succession, and fowls out up with a tobacco blade of a pocket knife. What a jolly time this family party is having of it, to be sure! After the feed there is more trailing over the rocks. An investment is made in strawberries, which are all squashed by the time mamma, who has given over all hopes about her dress, sits down to serve them out—three pieces of squash at a time, each in their turn. Then, as the sun begins to descend, the happy family make for the return boat, where there is a great crush. One of the children falls off the gangway board, and is picked up quite safe but very damp. The party return home, the children quite done up and cross. But they are got rid of by being spanked again and sent to bed. Mother has called father "a wretch" several times during the day. Father goes out in the evening and gets three parts tight; but both mother and father will tell their friends next day what an exceedingly pleasant time they had of it, and express a wonder how people could stop at home mewing themselves up so.

There is another jolly way of keeping a Christmas-day. If you have a room sixteen feet by fourteen, with a table in it which will comfortably seat six, invite twenty of your friends to dinner. Stuff them and yourselves with fat greasy prize beef and rich plum pudding. Fill their tumblers over and over to overflowing with strong sticky beer. Give them rich cake and strong brandy. Make them feed until they are ready to burst, and drink till the liquor oozes from the pores of their skins. Stuff them afterwards with all sorts of fruit, then all male hands set to smoking, so that the room will be filled with the perfume and aroma of the delicious weed. The dinner and the drink will have cost you a fortnight's screw; but then what's the odds so long as you

are happy? Your friends, when they have gone away, will be sure to say that you don't know how to give a Christmas dinner. You will a splitting headache all next day. But then, you know, everything was so jolly. Wasn't it?

How I spent my last Christmas-day perhaps ought to be kept in oblivion, but, as it may serve as a warning to others never to do the like, I will relate how I passed it. I rose at my usual hour, got into my tub of cold water and had my morning bath. Then, arranging myself in a pair of old trousers and a regatta shirt, I carefully spread myself out to air on the verandah for the day. My dinner was a bunch of watercress, a bit of cream cheese, and some well-iced fresh butter. My drink was cold hollands and water (also well iced), and my amusement was reading "Artemus Ward Among the Mormons." Mrs. Snyder, with a neighbour for company tore the characters of six of her female acquaintances into shreds, besides impeaching the fidelity of three married men. When she had done this I never saw a woman's countenance more radiant or beaming. I don't know what she had for dinner, but I am under the impression she had none, feeling too happy to eat. My children were fastened in the back kitchen in company with two shillings worth of oranges and mixed lollies. I don't think throughout the whole day they fought at outside more than half a dozen times, which was preserving the peace more than ever I had known them preserve it before. I know that Mrs. Snyder and myself, with the young Snyders, ought to have passed a very miserable day. But we didn't; so I suppose there must have been something wrong somewhere, which I can't account for. People who have taken their children to picnic at the sea side and the people who had given parties, expressed a large amount of pity for me. The cost of my Christmas-day's holiday, including the children, all totted up, came to three-and-ninety; consequently I must have been four pounds sixteen-and-three more miserable than those who spent five pounds.

I have been asked to write upon hallowed associations in connection with Christmas-day. I can do much. I could do an interesting article upon squaring the circle, trace the origin of rock oysters, or give an intelligible and amusing article upon conic sections suited to the taste and comprehension of general readers. All these things are within the compass of any ordinary newspaper writer's powers. But there the line must be drawn. When a man is asked to go into the subject of "hallowed associations," it is time for him to pull up. A very young lady of great personal charms, and who has got Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy at her fingers' ends, and is deep into yellow paper-covered novels, said to me the other day, that Christmas was quite an oasis in the desert of the three hundred and sixty-five days, six hours, and fifty-six minutes of the solar year. It was all that was to memory dear. The reminiscences of the season were as the morning dew upon the sylvan expanse. It was a time to forgive and forget—a time for family greetings and reconciliations, when hearts in symphony were attuned to fond responses, and obeyed the call of love in exquisite mutualities. "Christmas," continued my sweet companion, "ought to be all hearths and homes, new bonnets, currant cake, and glittering sovereigns, enclosed in gilt edged morocco portemon-aies."

I listened enchanted to this sweet discourse till I was subdued and overcome. Then, after a time, I ventured upon words. "I suppose, my dear young lady," I said, "that you, in the course of your experience, have never felt what it is to be the father of a family—family, say of from six to ten children."

Her answer was, that she never had. "Then," I said, "sweet creature, come a little nearer, do; you know what it is to be a wife and a mother, with that small boiling of maternal juveniles about you?"

Then the sweet creature, with a roseate hue mantling to her eyebrows, asked me whether I intended to insult her?

I said I didn't intend anything of the kind; but should it ever come to pass—and the strangeness of the thing was nothing compared to electricity, or the involute forces—should it ever come to pass that she found herself in the condition of a father of a family, her ideas about oases in deserts, and memories dear, and forgiving and forgetting, and hearths and homes, and such-like rubbish, would be materially changed.