



BY THE AUTOGRAPHIC IDLER.

A Distinguished Visitor.

The Hon. John McIntyre, Minister of Lands, Victoria, has lately visited Wellington. I knew Mr McIntyre at Bendigo twenty years ago. He was gold buyer for the Bank of Victoria, and so popular that for several years all the bulk of the Bendigo gold passed through his hands. So I called to see him in his private secretary's apartment. I found the carpet literally covered with piles of New Zealand papers, and statistical returns—charitable aid, land, industries, and every phase of New Zealand life was represented by a separate pile of books and papers. The Secretary said he had just seen the Hon. Mr Seddon, who was awfully kind in furnishing information. The Premier he said, reminded him very much in appearance of Tom Bent (Speaker of the Victorian House of Assembly). I said, 'Seddon is considerably a bigger man than Bent, also a better man.' 'No, I'm—— if he is,' said the Secretary; 'Tom Bent can't be bettered as a good fellow.'

Twenty Golden Years.

When Mr McIntyre came in, I saw that twenty years had not made a very great difference in him: he was still the same clean-cut, spare, wiry, active and sprightly man that bought gold in '72. His well-known voice I recognised again in a moment. I mentioned several men, leading citizens of Bendigo in those distant days. They were gone—gone every blessed one of them. He mentioned a number, too, and told me that they also had passed away. 'I'm afraid,' I said, 'all the people we knew in those days are dead.' 'Well,' said he, 'I'm not dead,' and you seem quite alive. We are the sole survivors, and neither of us are at all old yet.' Mr McIntyre is a great admirer of our Richard John. He says Seddon's very roughness and ruggedness are an immense advantage to him; and I told him how our Premier hewed his way from boiler to bureau altogether without superfluous aid or polish. Johnny McIntyre will return to Victoria much impressed with our capabilities, progress, and prosperity. 'I observe,' I said to him, 'that you are going in for a big study of our laws, and are taking back with you countless volumes of our statistics; but fail not to take, also, back with you, a perfect cartload of our advanced democratic ideas—that is, if you really mean business, and making your people a trifle less miserable than they are.'

The Schooner Pitcairn.

For the past fortnight, a trim little schooner, painted white, with two rakish-looking masts, and altogether novel in appearance, has been lying at the Queen's Wharf, Wellington. She resembles somewhat a yacht that the builder had improperly rigged. Her net tonnage would be, I should say, something about 100. The scrupulous neatness, tidiness, and cleanliness of her small bunks and cabins strike one at once; but her sea-going qualities are not so observable, for she seems somewhat delicate and light, and even frail. Nevertheless, she has accomplished long voyages, and has ridden (like a Mother Carey's chicken) through many a storm. The albatross has swooped and skimmed about her in Southern Seas; the stupid penguin has remained mute and motionless as she has scudded past his lonely rock; and the booby bird has come down from his lone isle in the sea, to hover over her masthead, before returning with the latest news (of the strange white creature on the ocean) to his comrade boobies on shore! When I also add that this smart tiny vessel cost £5,000 to build; that the coppers and small change of little children almost altogether made up the amount; that she was constructed in California for the purpose of doing business—of a sort—in ocean solitudes in these South Sea latitudes; that her crew consists of eight men, and that her name is the Pitcairn, I think I have told you as much as is necessary, as to her build, capabilities and general appearance.

A Missionary Ship.

I said nothing at all about the hymn-books, *Bible Echoes*, *Signs of the Times*, and other publications of the same not very worldly nature, in every cabin: strewing also the table of the

modest saloon, and present, besides—most unusual to say! in the sailor's crie and the captain's room. To tell you the truth, I didn't like to say, or want to say, straight out, that the Pitcairn was a missionary ship. My idea was to break the fact gently, and with some circumlocution and preparation. We don't, I think, care to hear about missionary ships. We don't care to read about them. Tracts—who on the face of this earth reads tracts? We are quite aware—everybody is—that tracts are printed by the ton. But nobody reads them. I have had, I daresay, as many tracts presented to me as most people. I have, indeed, had a tract presented to me when the thing I wanted was the grasp of the hand of a friend, with a human heart, and bowels of compassion! I never read a tract right through in my life—what is more, I have never yet fallen across anybody who did so. I have seen, in public libraries in various parts of New Zealand and Australia, the *Bible Echo*. Thinking it bore some resemblance to the general run of such literature, I never took the trouble even to glance through it. It is one of the numerous prints of this remarkable sect—the Seventh Day Adventists. The same people own and run the Pitcairn. When I became interested in the Pitcairn, I thought, also, I might scan over the *Bible Echo*. I found that newspaper very interesting after all. There were well-written travels in its pages, and some really capital descriptions of places. So that it is quite evident that the Seventh Day Adventists have a method in their religion which is altogether different to other methods; and I am not sure that they had not some design totally unconnected with sailing qualities when they gave their missionary schooner those raking and rakish masts, and that airy, happy-go-lucky outline! Evidently, they know their way about. They are 'cute in many worldly things. Their unselfishness, their earnestness is still more palpable; and I really believe they are thoroughly sincere. Now sincerity is just the quality we want—especially in a pulpit, in a religious publication, or on board a missionary ship.

The Pitcairn schooner will be on her way once more to Island People.

Pitcairn Island. The Adventists, it appears, have converted the whole of the inhabitants of that isle from the Anglican to the Adventist faith, and the missionary ship is taking another missionary there to convert them from the Anglican faith, still more so, if possible. It is probably unnecessary to remind you of the geographical position and romantic history of this famous ocean solitude? The island lies at the South-Eastern corner of the great Polynesian Archipelago, in lat. 25° 3' 6" S.; and long 130° 6' W. Its length is about two and a-half miles. It is remarkable for fertility of soil, is of volcanic origin, and, unlike other Pacific islands, it has no coral reefs. It is but a mere speck in the vast ocean and was discovered in 1767 by Carteret of the British marine. Twenty years later the British ship *Bounty* was engaged in conveying bread-fruit trees from Tahiti to the West Indies, under the command of Bligh. Leaving Tahiti in April 1789, a mutiny broke out on the 28th of that month, and Bligh and eighteen men were set adrift in an open boat—25 sailors—remaining (under the leadership of Fletcher Christian) on the *Bounty*. The mutineers at first returned to Tahiti, arriving there in September 1789, and sixteen of them were put ashore at their own desire. In the meantime Bligh had succeeded in reaching England, and the ship *Pandora* was despatched to capture the mutineers. Fourteen were apprehended, and three of these were executed. The nine mutineers under Fletcher Christian sailed for Pitcairn, after the others had been arrested, and, having arrived there they set fire to the *Bounty*. Almost all of them died violent deaths. The survivors were Adams and Young. The former was the founder of a race unique in the history of the world. In 1856 close on 200 Pitcairn Islanders were removed to Norfolk Island, as their own isle was too small for them; but some of these subsequently returned. Stanley, I think, points out the fascination that fertile solitudes in Africa have for travellers. It was impossible to get some of his people to leave, or tear themselves away from, the country in the vicinity of the

mountains of the moon. Pitcairn exercises the same spell over its inhabitants. Again and again have the Pitcairners sighed for its repose, and sought again its silent, peaceful shores. At the present moment there are 142 persons living on the isle. They are all, as already stated, Seventh Day Adventists. The missionary from Pitcairn (whom I met on the schooner) informed me that the Pitcairners had ideas more in harmony with the Bible than the people of any other religion. Pitcairn is an isle of perpetual summer. Tropical fruits flourish there, and all fruits and vegetables of the temperate zones as well—limes, oranges, lemons, bananas, coffee and arrowroot grow together with the apple and the cauliflower. The inhabitants drink no tea, but brew a beverage in place of tea from orange buda. The coconuts supplies milk. If a visitor lands he doesn't go to an hotel. He simply goes to the first house he arrives at—and stays just as long as he likes! Everyone cultivates his own plot of ground and grows the bulk of his own food. Goats, sheep and fowls furnish the meat supply—there are no horses or cattle. There is no money in circulation. Hence the happiness of the simple people of this Arcadia of the Pacific.

A Christmas Robin.

It is at this season of the year that the trace of a benign smile plays around the hard countenance of the sordid man; at this time, too, it is, that the poor are more compassionate than ever! Of either class—it is pleasant to say—we have not a great many in this country. The intermediate people—the people not very rich, but still tolerably well to do—enjoy themselves, and are still more happy in seeing the multitude do so. Once a year, anyhow, in all Christian countries, the human voice speaks in one language, and prays one prayer—'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men!' The very animals seem to be aware of the fact that Christmas has come round again. It is in the month of December that we open the window, in the Old Country, to let in poor robin from the cold and the snow, to pick up the crumbs on the breakfast table. Well I remember how his bronze back glistened, and his red waistcoat swelled out with gratitude, as he hopped, confidently, over the tablecloth. He hopped on to the window sill punctually at eight o'clock on Christmas morning—on every Christmas morning, as long as I knew him. That, of course, was ever so long ago. The snow, I daresay, and the icicles, and the rows of bare and naked trees, looking as if no miracle even could burst them into green foliage again, are there, on Christmas morning, still. The robin may be there too, and may hop, for all I know, on the same identical window-sill that the robin I knew used to hop on. Perhaps a warm and cheerful fire still glows in the same grate; perhaps a bright copper urn still steams at the head of the table. The old people, however, that used to be there are not there now; the young people have long grown up and scattered themselves to the remotest parts of the earth. One little girl that loved the robin, and fed him, and talked to him, and laughed at his arch impudence, grew to be a lithe creature just bursting into womanhood. Then she went down into the awful vortex, with the 'London.' So straightforward, so guileless was she, that the very sailors of the ill-fated ship led her to the side, and implored her to save herself by a spring into the boat, dancing on the mountain swell beneath her. But when she looked down on the terrible tumult of the waves, and saw the terror-stricken visages of the seamen in the boat, and measured with her eye the yawning distance between, the bulwarks where she stood, and the trough of the sea on which the boat danced and reeled like a drunken thing—she shrank back. 'Oh no! I cannot do that,' she said—and went back to her cabin. Quietly she lies now, in the restful deep, at the bottom of the Bay of Biscay. The bones of other young friends of the robin are crumbling in India and China; and one was lost in the dreary parched Australian desert. I should not wish you, oh gentle reader, to look back on so many of the Christmases that are gone. Far rather should I hope and expect that you have not even by a long way numbered so many Christmases as I now look back upon; that you are still ever so young, and have the most, and the best years of your life before you. It is not so with me, when I think of that lovable, cheeky, cheery Christmas robin! And what can I do but wish—oh vain wish! that I could live all those past years over again; that I could be as I was, and that we all could be as we were at the beginning of those years that have rolled away—those times when the pert, trustful, friendly, all too familiar Christmas robin used to come into the breakfast-room and look round, from one to another, with a merry twinkle in his eye, as much as to say, 'I wish you all, good people, young and old, a merry Christmas, and I'll help myself to a right good breakfast, thank you, all the same!'

To all 'Graphic' People.

And now—if the kindly and no doubt weary editor will allow me—I will conclude this festive week's 'Etching' by wishing the countless readers of the GRAPHIC newspaper, its enterprising proprietor, its editor, cartoonist (a man of uncommon and most incorrigible ability), staff, and all connected with its handsome weekly appearance,

'A MERRY CHRISTMAS!'