

## WINTER IN MONTREAL

By L. T. REICHEL FOR THE TABLET.

It is just four months since I marched in that memorable procession, the chief feature of the great Eucharistic Congress. Then the trees were still clad in their summer verdure and the weather was gloriously warm, so warm, indeed, that some thousands of pilgrims who failed to find accommodation in the hotels or in any one of the 100 special trains which that night left the historic city, were glad to stretch themselves under the trees in the park adjoining the tabernacle which Our Divine Lord had that day visited.

Now, however, the city presents a different aspect. The icy hand of winter is laid over everything. The trees are bare and lifeless, the parks are covered with some two feet of snow, the magnificent churches with their lofty spires which were then so gaily decorated, are now clothed in white, and the great river, upon whose bosom countless yachts and bedecked steamers started to and fro, is now silent. An unbroken field of ice stretches from shore to shore.

But it must not be thought that the city is dull or lifeless. At this festive season hundreds of sleighs with their jingling bells and fur-covered occupants glide through the crowded streets. In every large emporium Santa Claus or one of his relatives—a numerous family evidently—recently hold court, and the stores are doing a roaring trade. The prosperity of the city is reflected at the Chief Post Office, where, during the week before Christmas the registered letter department was besieged by thousands anxious to send some of their savings to their relatives in the Old Land across the sea. So great was the rush of mail matter that the postal authorities were forced to requisition twenty extra horse sleighs and 120 men to assist with the city deliveries and clearances.

Out in the parks the children amuse themselves with their toboggans and sleighs, while on the mountain slides their elders are similarly busy. The skating rinks are in full swing, and the hockey and curling matches—both

played on the ice—excite almost as much interest as football in New Zealand.

The snow, which we are accustomed to associate with distress, has quite an opposite effect here, for every storm provides work for over 1000 hitherto unemployed men who, before the city is awake, are out with their ploughs and shovels clearing the streets and spreading sand on the footpaths to make walking safer for the pedestrian. While the snow is falling the temperature is moderate—about 25 to 35 degrees—but when it ceases and the sun comes forth in all the splendor of a cloudless sky, the mercury goes down, down below zero. On New Year's eve, a glorious day, the highest temperature recorded was 4 degrees below zero. The sunrises and sunsets are magnificent, the sky assuming all the different tints of orange and gold.

Christmas Eve brought along with it a thaw which made the streets very slushy. However, in the evening the temperature began to fall, and at 11 p.m. the snow was whirling in the air. Midnight Mass was celebrated in all the churches with great splendor, and so great was the number of worshippers that in most admission had to be regulated by ticket. In order to make sure of getting a seat we went to Notre Dame, which is the largest church in Montreal. Besides the ground floor there are two immense galleries extending one above the other right round the church. By midnight every seat was occupied, there being about 10,000 people present, and still they crowded in till the standing room also was filled. At the stroke of twelve the bells rang out a merry chime and instantly the altar and sanctuary blazed forth with electric lights. The electric illuminations are quite a feature in many of the churches in America. Then while a Christmas hymn was being sung by a splendid boys' choir, the clergy in magnificent vestments and accompanied by over 100 altar boys filed into the sanctuary and the Mass commenced. That immense congregation assisting with marked devotion and reverence at the Holy Sacrifice with such surroundings was a sight to see and remember. About 2000 persons received Holy Communion, and while this was taking place the choir sang the 'Noel' and 'Adeste Fideles.' The Mass terminated at 1.30 a.m., and about half of the congregation remained behind to assist at the next one. In the other churches it was the same. Over 4000 attended St. Patrick's, where about half of that number approached the Holy Table. It is evident that the Eucharistic Con-

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