

A bun apiece for the children was the supper, with a sip of elderberry wine, warmed in a vessel like a hollow horn (which the bricklayer's labourer, stirred up to abnormal activity and benevolence, borrowed from the public). And then we sang "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow," and the little party broke up; everybody wishing everybody else—our host especially—"A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." Custom has dimmed and chilled those cordial words; but the heartiness of the young Folly folk made them leap out again into warm light.

On another occasion my friend Hoppety Bob gave me an account of his summer excursion as follows:

"The kind gen'leman I've before told you on ain't content with gettin' me into the hospital when I want it; but he will make me go for a day into the country once a 'ear, an' he hires a wan sometimes, and finds the money for the grub, so that I may take my young uns with me. He was in only last Wednesday, askin' where we should like to go this 'ear. I'd put it to the little uns, on'y it's all the same to them, poor stived-up little souls, s'long as they can get a mouthful o' air that ain't downright gritty, an' have a tumble on some grass. Greenwich Park is nice an' near, an' we can get there without a wan. Cherry Gardens Pier is handy; and the river's a cur'ous sight for children. It's queer, livin' so close to it, that they know so little o' ships an' that. The Folly ain't a seafarin' part, but then it ain't a quarter o' an hour's walk to parts that is. When it's fine of an evenin', I sometimes hop down to the wharfs an' the yards. I like to see the water runnin' out an' in. It makes me think o' the quiet green country, an' the pure blue sea; an' the very mud's nice to smell. There's a deal o' mud in the Colchester river, an' I think o' my poor mother. I told you, sir, as she was buried in St. Leonard's church-yard.

"When I've took down the young uns to Greenwich—we went there two years runnin', and there ain't another place so nigh that's half so nice, to my fancy—the park, an' the 'eath, 'an the college, as they calls it there, together—I've told 'em tales out o' the jography book, about the places I supposed the ships that was bein' towed up was comin' from; and it was cur'ous to see how they suck it all in. Children is easy taught, if you can get 'em to listen to you. I wish I knew more to teach 'em; often they fair floor me. 'What's this?' 'What's that for, Mr. Hoppety?' 'Why was it made so?' they ax; an' oftener than not, I can't tell 'em. Hows'ever, when I don't know what a thing is, I tell 'em so, an' they mind all the more when I do tell 'em things. There ain't much gained with children by shammin' to be wiser than you are. Law bless you, sir, they find you out by the look o' yer eyes. A man's eyes can't tell a lie, try the best he can. God's so fond o' truth, that He will make folks tell it somehow, I reckon.

"When we used to go to Greenwich, the college-men were about—there ain't many left now, I've heard. Geese the Greenwich folks used to call 'em—I s'pose because they waddled so; but I liked to see 'em a rollin'; it was like gettin' a sniff o' the sea.