

PRIZE ESSAY.

Picnics.

BY MISS E. JANE AYLMER, BELLEVUE, MELBOURNE, P. Q.

"Picnics—Bah! A cramp in the legs! Wet feet! Flies in the tea! Sour cream! Everything hot that ought to be cold, and everything cold that ought to be hot!" So talks the irascible old gentleman, as he surveys his gouty foot, tucked up on the comfortable lounge.

"Picnics!" cries sweet sixteen, with clasped hands and parted lips, as she gazes eagerly at the face before her. "Oh, nothing more delightful," and bright visions of dancing waters, shady groves, with pretty dresses showing to advantage underneath, and beautiful drives, flit quickly before her mental vision. And so it is, I think, that the definition of picnics is apt to depend a good deal upon our points of view; and it is useless to make any sweeping assertions, such as: "Picnics are horrid!" or, "Picnics are charming!" The same entertainment may prove all that fancy painted it to the man who, with good digestion, enjoys his lunch, laughs at the jokes, and gets the society that he most delights in; while to his dyspeptic brother or unsuccessful rival the whole thing may seem an unmitigated bore. But still, I think that most people with the usual capacity for ordinary pleasures will agree with me, that a well-arranged picnic may be a very pleasant way of spending a day. By a well-arranged picnic I do not mean the carrying out of any particular code, for I think nearly every place has its own peculiar fashion for such an entertainment. I have been at picnics where one person arranged the programme and provided everything, and at others where everyone brought a basket, and the only extras the hosts provided were a table-cloth and kettle. No; by a well-arranged picnic I mean that due thought has been given to the place, and the way of getting there, the people invited to meet each other, and the care of the host and hostess that congenial spirits should be allowed to enjoy the river or woods together, and that there should be some amusement provided, something to do, or some place to visit, so that people with small conversational powers should not tax each other too much. Shall I ever forget my flatness of soul at finding myself, a stranger, embarked for a distant island, the third in a boat with a spooney couple! There was thoughtlessness on the part of our entertainers! I have been at some very tiresome picnics, where everything seemed flat, stale and unprofitable; and at some where the days, looking back upon them, seem almost poems in their wealth of beauty. I recall one of the latter now. A lovely little island, carpeted with the soft, green grass of May, and the early, fresh spring flowers. Stately trees with their branches meeting overhead, and teeming with chattering squirrels, and singing birds, darting into the sun for a look at the world, then back to their cool retreat beneath the leafy shade, gay and busy with the season's responsibilities, and wondering at the laughter and talk from the gay throng below; and when at length, lunch over, those mortals vanished, some in the fairy-like birch canoe, some in the more sober punts, up the glinting, sun-flecked stream, then the merry foresters ventured out to gather up the fragments, and, with the crumbs from the feast, they, too, made a gala day. Then, later on, bright faces gathered

about the fire on the rocks below, or watched the shadows lengthen on the deep, still water all about us. Then came a rest after tea, with a gradual hush of nature, as the sun sank lower and lower; and the moon stole up in her pale glory, and, touching the trees and waters with her soft witchery, set us dreaming of long ago, as she always does. The mists began to rise, as if to veil, and to enhance the beauty that fair Luna showed. The last bird's note died away; nothing was heard but the steady dip of our oars, as we rowed slowly homewards, or the ripple of the water on our bows as we drifted along; not a word till we had all taken a satisfying draught of this beautiful world. Then we woke to each other, and the songs began to echo.

"Row, brothers, row—the stream runs fast: The rapids are near, and the daylight is past,"—and so home. That was one pretty picnic in Canada, where a dozen of us, all intimate friends, met with our baskets and enjoyed the day together in a free, unceremonious way.

Last year I experienced a few Irish picnics, and one out to Killaloe was particularly enjoyable. From Limerick, where I was staying, to Killaloe it is about fifteen miles. Some of the gentlemen of our party, who could not get away early, had to go by train; but we fortunate idlers were to drive, some with the ponies in the crogden, some in the wagonette, and some on real outside jaunting cars, which in themselves always had an elevating effect upon my spirits; and so we flourished away down George street, a merry party; and then on through the greenest of green fields, through dirty villages, past fine trees, quaint, ivy-covered churches, bare, square stone barracks for the constabulary; dilapidated cabins, with a view of the chickens hobnobbing with the family inside; and the pig, rooting up his pleasure grounds in front of Paddy's domicile; past the iron gates and the picturesque lodge guarding the imposing mansion, standing out from its background of oak; past the fair equestrienne, with her liveried attendants; past the wayside beggar, holding his rags together while he tramped his weary way; lights and shadows in quick succession, until we found ourselves depositing our wraps in the neat little inn at Killaloe.

"What shall we do first—have dinner or climb the mountain?" As the train is not yet in, the voting is for the mountain. All men do not care for scenery, but all men do care for dinner.

"We will drive to the foot," said our host. At this picnic our host provided everything. So drive we did, on "cars" with native "jarveys," who amused us not a little by their Irishries. What a climb it was!—up, up, up!—and the higher we got the more the summit seemed to recede. A long time before we were allowed to turn and look at the view below; but we were well repaid when at last we saw the panorama spread out for our delectation. For miles to our left, and to our right, and before us, the Shannon spread itself in lakelike expanse, its surface rippling and sparkling in the sun, which shone with uncommon brightness for rain-deluged Ireland, and many boats spread their white wings to the gentle breeze. We looked, and looked, and said: "Surely, this must be the St. Lawrence!" No; the grass is too green, and the gorse too yellow—and behold! the Doubrey.

Down again to the inn for dinner. And was not the salmon, fresh from the Shannon, some-

thing to dream about? and the trout, in speckled beauty, greatly to be commended? and the chickens! none the worse for their early and intimate association with Pat. After dinner we wandered about in orthodox picnic fashion, and visited the ancient oratory of Saint Kilda, 600 years old, and the grave of Brien Borru's son. In the evening we did an unusual thing, for picnickers; we went to a circus; and great fun it was, too, in that queer little country place, with the brogue thick around us. After supper at the inn, we had songs, speeches and recitations; and we were a merry party driving home, barring two maids, one a young one, and the other—well, not so young. They shared a common fate; they had, by some mismanagement, been separated from their affinities; and, consequently, Dismal's cloak had fallen upon them, and the sound of their voice was not heard in the land, as the rest of us made night hideous with our comic songs, as we retraced our fifteen miles to Limerick, where we said good night, with three rousing cheers for our jolly host.

"Gentlemen."

BY SNOWDROP.

Snowdrop is sorry to have annoyed anyone. Our disputant owns only to being amused; but the tone of his letter seems to express a deeper emotion; though, possibly, we may be giving that tone an "extreme interpretation." It must, indeed, be a rash judgment that condemns the terms in which Snowdrop referred to the subject of the letter from the North-west, as an "extreme interpretation." And Snowdrop, herself, spoke distinctly of "a certain class of farmers." How could the expression, "an utter lack of refinement, etc., among the farmers," mean that the general farmers lacked these qualities? When we hear that small-pox is raging among the inhabitants of a certain place, we do not suppose that those not attacked by the malady are in the minority. "Talking shop" is simply "an expression," and has not necessarily anything to do with "shop-keepers."

Those who have never met with farmers who live more as the lower creation—to work, eat, and sleep—who treat ordinary politeness in the family as superfluous—who do not recognize man's nobility—have no right to say, because they have not met them, that many such do not exist. And Snowdrop wrote of these, suggesting that if all children were educated in Christian courtesy, the future might have none such.

It is pleasant to find a farmer proud of being one. We have generally found them strangely lacking in this respect; those acquiring an education—thinking, we supposed, that a farmer did not need one—becoming teachers, doctors, etc.; those not having an education, going to the States rather than work manfully and honorably at home upon the farm.

We do not defend the girl who disdains a farmer as such, but rather pity her lack of common sense. We are also delighted to know, as a positive fact, though it is what we never questioned, that there are very many farmers in our vast Dominion worthy of the name; and none, not even "Young Farmer" himself, is more proud of them than Snowdrop.

The Rural New Yorker assures its readers that one heaping tablespoonful of pyrethrum, or Bubach powder in two gallons of water will rid a rosebush of every rose bug in half an hour. The remedy must be repeated every day, however, for several days.