

Priests ; but the Church became very hot, having been successively filled from the early morning, and I began to feel it necessary to leave it. We met again some of our own fellow parishioners, entering as we left, with another set of worshippers. I envied them while going in to assist at Mass, as I dare say they pitied me because I was going out ; for there is nothing they so lament over as being deprived of hearing Mass. Our walk home was a rich treat, it being one of those fine September days, which are perfect as to weather. And the deep shadows fell among the rich foliage of the still green trees, and almost made one forget there was no longer Belgian corn to look upon in the desolate fields. Again we met troops of visiting grandmothers, and grandfathers, and aunts, and cousins, for all of whom a festival dinner was waiting, punctually as the clock struck twelve ; all but for the Cure, his arduous duties to-day would detain him far beyond that hour, that is, far into the next ; but his recreation was prepared for him also. We met many Priests, who were congregating from other parishes, some far distant, to partake of his hospitality. Many of these were our friends, at whose tables we visit. Our walk was enlivened by a little chat with each. A friendly invitation, perhaps, or a little mirth at having seen a carriage pass containing some eight or ten of their brother clergy, who they told us were professors and other Priests from a college in a town seven miles off, where one of the priests of A—— had been professor, and this was an annual visit they paid him at the Kermes. We congratulated them on the merry dinner party they were likely to have, as professors from colleges are proverbial for their cheerfulness. Often the benedict clergy pretend to envy them, because they have not the care of a parish resting upon them. Then we met one who had just returned from a visit to England, who answered some very ignorant questions I put to him, respecting the changes which have taken place in London since I left England. Amongst others, the railroads, which he tells me are over the houses, and which I, in beautiful simplicity, was quite ignorant of ; having been so absorbed in my interesting religion in this secluded spot, that I had never once before inquired any thing about London railroads. As we approached home, every thing became quiet ; our fete being over, as I have told you, we have sobered down into our daily duties, except these occasional visitings to other parishes. Our own dinner, deferred to the late hour of half-past twelve, was not the less acceptable, nor our excellent coffee after it, which was not unaccompanied by Kermes cake either, as we had a kind present from a farmer's wife in the next parish, whose good things we frequently share, in true Flemish hospitality and christian kindness. The Church encourages all this social feeling, and teaches us union in seasons of cheerfulness, and in seasons of deep devotion ; as I hope I shall have the pleasure of showing you, in some future details of the occupations of our holy, happy, community.

After showing you how much real enjoyment our clergy have provided for them, in the encouragement the church gives to friendship and social intercourse, I ought also to tell you, occasionally, of the means she employs to keep alive among them the spirit of deep and fervent devotion ; among which are their seasons of spiritual retreat. These are just over, the last having been from Sunday the 11th of September to the following Friday. During every summer the bishops of each diocese arrange a certain number of these retreats. They are held in a college, generally, during the vacation. And the choice is given to each priest as to which he may find it most suitable to be present at. Having fixed on one, he sends notice of that he has chosen, and on the day appointed they assemble. The bishop appoints one or more talented and eminently pious men, who have been educated and trained to the work, to lead their devotions and preach to them.

These seasons being expressly dedicated to the care of the soul, every worldly occupation and feeling are laid aside for the time, and they enter the college with the purpose of giving themselves up, for those days, entirely to God. For this they prepare their whole heart, and mind, and being. In the last retreat which was held in a town near us, fifty clergymen were assembled, from the surrounding parishes, some rectors, some curates. The venerable dean of the town was appointed principal, this giving him power to be consulted, or applied to, on any needful occasion ; and two missionaries were sent by the bishop. Plain wholesome food is provided by the college, for which each pays his share. No luxury is allowed, nor even wine. And during the repast the Holy Scripture is read, or A. Kempis's Imitation of the Life of Christ, no conversation being allowed. At their entrance, which is on the Sunday evening, each has a printed paper given to him, which instructs him of the allotment of the hours of every day. I have a copy of one of these which I will explain to you.

At five in the morning they rise, when half an hour is given to morning private prayer. At half-past five they go into the chapel of the college, the missionary priest goes into the pulpit, and gives a sort of exhortation, or, as it is generally called, a "Meditation," for half or three quarters of an hour, which is intended to lead them to meditate for themselves. Great order is observed in the choice of the missionary's subjects. The first three days being given to the contemplation of the deep subjects of Death, Judgment, Heaven,