

here over thirty years. They have a big tent in a meadow, or in the park, and the tables do look beautiful; the children take flowers for it the day before,—and we all have to cut our best, I promise you.”

I asked next whether “visitors” were allowed to contribute, and received the promise that when Miss — called, she should be asked to “step up.” The following day, therefore, I was quite ready to receive my visitor, and hear what part I might take in this all-engrossing interest.

My curiosity as to how the supplies could be regulated, if gifts were just “what any one liked,” was satisfied on the production of a folio sheet of paper, which led off with the names of twenty-one donors of varying joints—followed by a still longer list of puddings and so on, through potatoes, bread, tea, sugar, milk, buns, cakes and lemonade. The further explanation that this list was carefully made each year, on the day, as the things were received, and that old contributors mainly kept to the same gift from year to year, *new* contributors filling the gaps made by deaths and removals; and a little accommodation on the part of those most interested, in making a change on request, as the promises of the current year were booked, led me to see there was method underlying all the pleasant freedom of choice. •

“Besides, things help to settle themselves: the meat is cold, but potatoes and puddings hot, so those can only be given by people able to send direct to the tent, or so conveniently placed as to be able to receive a call from the cart which goes round between one and two, to pick up hot dishes at houses lying between the rectory and the meadow. Our gifts vary from the largest—the Squire’s sirloin of beef, two plum-puddings, and twenty pounds of cake—to the smallest, two pounds of sugar! We used to say we needed no money, as everything is gift or loan that day; but we now have to hire a tent from the next town, both because of increased numbers, and because the old one (which was largely a free loan) really struck work, and the expense of that is too great to be thrown on the ordinary Sunday School Fund. Therefore we take some money gratefully, chiefly from the newer comers, who cannot be expected to enter so fully into the spirit of the day with all the trouble involved in it.”

After this you may be sure I took the privilege of a new comer, and waited anxiously for the great day! It broke rather grey and doubtful, but as my landlady said, “I tell Annie it will be all right. They are mostly frightened, but it is mostly fine after all.”

Before ten o’clock I saw the Rector’s daughter and two or three other ladies meet at the school door; and from that moment onwards, a constant stream of trays covered with cloths, baskets, and bakers’ carts seemed to cross the green. As midday approached, these were succeeded by groups of children,

the elder of whom began to pass carrying huge jars of flowers from the school up to the meadow. When the Church bells began, at 12.30, and I by the advice of my landlady hastened to the Church “to get a good place,” the whole green seemed alive with gay banners, and people of every age, size, and degree. I was kindly given a place in the chancel behind the choir, and must confess to have seldom been more pleased than with the whole service, which lasted about half an hour. Exactly at one o’clock the organ began, and the choir boys filed in in their white surplices from the vestry, while at the same moment the brilliant white and scarlet banner of St. Nicholas’ Sunday School entered through the west door, carried by so completely a “young woman,” that I should have considered her a teacher, had there not been sufficient of the same kind to fill at least two long seats in the nave; to be succeeded by others a shade less womanly, with another bright banner, and so on, girls and boys, till the whole nave and one transept were filled with rows of bright faces, and with equally bright banners propped against the pillars, every text and device suited to the occasion being brought into requisition. The hearty singing of the well-practised hymns, so taken up by the very youngest that it was all the choir and seniors could do to keep them steady, the few prayers, the very short address from the old Rector, ending with the reminder that they were asked to help to give the same pleasure to a London Sunday School—an appeal well responded to when the bags went round—all showed a warmth of feeling almost too much for one. Outside the Church the procession formed in two divisions, senior and junior, the senior taking the longer route through the main village road, the juniors a shorter one by the other side of the green, so that from my window the effect of the parallel columns was very pretty. The juniors fell in behind the others as they neared the ground; but their entrance to it, and even the sight of the dinner, I was obliged to forego, only making my way to the Park about four o’clock in the afternoon. I met another small procession just coming on to the ground, very proud of their small banners; this, one of the young teachers in charge explained to me, was the “babies,” *i.e.*, about seventy children under six, who came only for an early tea, a present, and as much play as their parents consented to allow them. I found the big tent gay with the banners, and a smaller tent just being arranged for tea for the teachers, of whom I learnt that it was mainly “old scholars” who dined with the school. Games of every kind were going on with great vigour on all parts of the ground, “visitors” of every degree and age throwing themselves heartily into the pleasures of the day. “Mothers” were perhaps more largely represented than any other class; and many of these were most willing to enter into talk even with a stranger, telling how many boys and girls they had