

hour or more before its usual time, and the dinner too was over.

Time, with no flagging wing, sped on his steady and unvarying course, for schoolmen say his motion is always uniform. But ask the sick and restless sufferer, tossing and turning on his sleepless couch the live-long night, and he will tell another tale, and utterly deny that he has wings at all; or if he has, he does not always use them. Then again, if we should make the same enquiry at a wake* or wedding, the merry-makers would repudiate such dogmas, and declare, that whenever he gets a chance to escape the vigilance of his numerous progeny, which he never does except when they are happy, for in all the toils and labours of this cheequeered life they watch his movements narrowly, while in their revels they forget him, he mends his pace, from spite at the affront, and flies unheeded by, and the sun, and moon, and stars, and day, and night, all bow obsequious to his sovereign and despotic sway.

To tell of all the sports and pastimes of that joyous party, on that happy afternoon, would be an endless tale. We will not, therefore farther dwell upon the race, the wrestling, and the dor-rack,† than merely to say that those and other ancient games were duly honoured, and all the prizes fairly won. But hasten to describe the well-contested foot-ball match which closed the sports upon the village green.

The young athletic reader may regret he was not there, to take a part upon the winning side, and share the prize.

The vassals on the verge of each manor, of which respectively those bridegrooms, whose nuptials they were celebrating, were the lords, marshalled their forces against each other. And a goodly sight in sooth it was to see those stalwart forces stand forth in eager expectation for the fray; impatient as the greyhound to be loosened from his leash, when the quarry is in view.

The bounding ball was now thrown out between the two contending lines, when a simultaneous rush was made upon it by some half a dozen on each side. Of the rest, a few broke through the fœmen's ranks, and took up a position in advance, in hopes to take the ball, if their side should suc-

ceed, and it should chance to come that way: while others of the opposing party retreated with them to stay its progress and regain their ground.

But I ought to have stated, ere the game began, that whichever party drove the other home; that is to say, within the precincts of their lord's immediate domain, had won the day.

Away then went the ball, from out this first encounter. Bravely was it driven along a quarter of a mile or more by one of Strickland's swiftest runners. A swifter Newbyer was at his heels, and soon he bit the dust; but not until he'd sent it far before him. It lighted among a party of his friends. These took it up. And away it went again, at such a pace that few could follow it. And those few, for a moment had the contest to themselves. A breathing time had hardly passed, ere the ball came bounding back with a deafening shout from the Newbyers, as they regained their ground. The opposing party now threw back, into their rear, a powerful reserve, in case this first reverse of theirs should be maintained. And well for them it was they did so, as many of their best and bravest were thrown out, by being too far in advance in trying to maintain the slight advantage they had gained in the first brush of the encounter. The ball was soon again among them; and anon sent bounding o'er the heads of the contenting crowd. When those Stricklanders, who were hastening up to the main body returned, and drove it onwards into Newby Manor. Thus the conflict swayed from side to side, until, in short, it ended in the triumph of the Stricklanders; and that hard fought day was won.

Then again the festive board was spread. All again sat down together; and in such friendly guise, one could not single out, the vanquished from the victor.

And now the closing scene commenced. The last and brightest of them all. The merry dance; led off by those two happy bridegrooms with their blushing brides, decked out in all the — Nay, gentle reader I must crave your kind indulgence here.

Willingly I'd tell you all I know, an' e'en sometimes a little more, about a haunted hall, a ruined castle, or a border foray, or a murder, or a foot-ball match, which happened a hundred years ago; but to tell how those fair brides were dressed upon their wedding day! I cannot—dare not venture so far beyond my depth. I can, however, tell you all I know about their dress, which is, that it was white—a stainless, spotless white. As chaste, and pure, and beautiful, as were the forms within it. Or I may do better still, by calling in the aid of Billy Stone, for he, of course, was

* This word is not here to be understood in its Irish acceptation. A "wake," in the North of England, is a very different affair, being a general merry-making, in a large village or small market town. It lasts a week or more, and is nearly allied to a fair but without its buying and selling. Hence the old song—

"When bidden to the wake or fair."

† This is a game peculiar, I believe, to the Border country, and is something like the "shinty" in other parts of the country.