

which they play at mass, are a treasure of amusement all the year round.

Few extend their devotional services on Christmas beyond an early mass. Excursions, full-dress promenades, and the drive on the *Riviera*, help to occupy the day. Though it is a Church holiday, I never heard of its being regarded with such sacredness as attaches to Assumption Day, when a special permit had to be obtained from the Government for the ascent of a balloon.

One of the delightful recollections of the time is that of an afternoon spent in a little Protestant circle made up of choice spirits whom it is a lasting pleasure to have known. The entertainment was half English, half Italian, as well in its arrangements as in the selection of the guests. What well-remembered rooms, with their tessellated floors, warmed and enriched with rugs! What a quaint wandering suite of apartments, all leading into one another and out on terraces! What magnificent views over the snow-capped Apennines and hot Vesuvius, and the Oriental-looking city! The dinner table was charmingly designed to make every one feel at home on Christmas. A real English plum-pudding of royal proportions, with a blue flame curling over it, was brought into the dining-room, darkened temporarily for its reception. But, alas! when the shutters were opened, it exhibited a gaping seam like that produced by an earthquake, the result of a frolicsome attempt of some of the party to spirit it away in the dark. There were present a poet, an orator, and a wit, and just common-place people enough to keep the balance—earnest men who were standing on the watch tower of Protestantism. The great Council of Rome, and the Anti-Council of Naples, with the free-thinkers in the van, had just ended, and these men had been fighting desperate battles with priests, municipal councils, lawyers and journalists, to obtain footing for the evangelistic work.

We were chiefly interested in a representation of a Mass of the Virgin, which was explained to us in all its details, showing how utterly confused in the Catholic mind are the ideas of the atonement by Christ, and "the Sacrifice of the Heart of Mary," which are placed side by side in regard to importance, in the most solemn festivals of the Church. I had often noticed that during