

I shall make you understand this by giving you some account of our past week, which was our annual village fete.

Each village has its annual fete, which is kept on the anniversary of the consecration of the church, and lasts the week. England preserved for many years the remnants of this Catholic custom in her annual fairs. These were originally the anniversaries of the consecration of the several churches of the parishes in which they were held. When England became Protestant, the good custom of having church services and other devotional practices mingled with recreation, modifying and regulating it, passed away; and recreation unaided by religion, and unguided by the clergy, became soon but a scene of riot, confusion, and sin, obliging the law to take in hand to suppress the village fairs altogether, which was quite necessary. But the poor were thus left without any fixed season of recreation, and must each seek it for himself, in good or in bad occasions, as his disposition and chance led him. And the English poor are not happy: no one can be happy who requires the guidance and support of superiors, and is neglected and abandoned by those superiors. Here no one is neglected, much less abandoned; the church provides, as far as she has power, for every thing her children require, and one thing every human heart requires, viz. to be rendered cheerful by kindness, and to have seasonable recreation.

One of our chief seasons of recreation is, then, our Kermes, or Kerk-mass, Church-mass, Mass in remembrance of the consecration of our church. As each village has its own, these annual fetes bring us a large share of recreation. Every family, however poor, must go to visit its relatives in the neighbouring parishes at their Kermes, and receive in return those relatives at its own Kermes. Thus a great deal of friendly intercourse is kept up, and much pleasant amusement procured for each individual. I have told you how careful they are of their clothes, and how cleanly and respectable they always appear. Against Kermes a little money has invariably been laid up to replace some article of dress grown shabby, that they may be quite spruce and gay at this visiting time, to go to the Masses and other services. Every family must have additional provisions, and many of our economical Belgians, who rarely taste meat at any other time, have a good morsel of beef on Kermes Sunday; then a cake must be made—no one could get through Kermes without a cake. Those who cannot afford to buy the ingredients, go and glean the corn to make one with. The whole village smells of cake on the Saturday, and the bakers' shops are literally filled with cakes; every shelf, and even the floor, has cakes piled upon it. Then the cleaning of houses, and scrubbing of brass and copper utensils, of which we Belgians possess an extraordinary assortment for our cookery; the washing of windows, and stone pavements, the place is one universal flood of

water; and the Church—our most scrupulously clean old Mary, washes even the pillars, and many a warning must she receive to prevent her washing off every atom of varnish on the wood work about the church. The poor spiders never live to see Kermes, her long brooms search into their most secret hiding places. Then comes the clerk, so soon as her washings are ended, with all his best decorations for the altars, with his carpets and chair-covers, and hangings, and by Saturday evening every thing is finished and quiet, people have again opportunity to go into the church to pray. The Sunday passes over quietly, the church services are beautiful, and those who receive their friends on that day do so with decorum. The Monday is the grand day: the morning begins with ringing of bells, and an early mass. This is the day on which the Pastor begins to receive his friends. The Rectors of the surrounding parishes—twelve or more—are generally invited. Some of these usually come early enough to assist at the high Mass, which is at ten o'clock, there having been more or less Masses between this and the early Mass, accordingly as there have been priests to say them. I should have told you, that it is a great point amongst our people to have the masses of Kermes week for themselves, as the members of their families are then assembled; each family likes to have a Mass at that time for their own family. It is announced on the Sunday for whom the Mass is to be offered, that we may unite in praying for that family. Our ten-o'clock Mass on the Monday is sometimes most beautiful, several priests assisting. The church is crowded, and every one in their best, it looks very gay and lively indeed. The Mass over, they return home to dine at twelve; the priests going to the rectory, where a very handsome dinner is prepared for them by the Pastor. At half-past two are the afternoon services, or Vespers and Benedictus, as we call them; at these most of the priests assist who have dined at the rectory, and the chanting is sometimes very fine. By the time these services end we are all rather tired: the priests never remain late from home. They, therefore, now return, and many persons' friends go home also: those who remain enjoy their evening together. The children visit the stalls which are erected in large parishes, as at our fairs in England—ours is too small for these things. In some parishes very good things are sold at this time, clothing, and cutlery, &c.—Persons, therefore, go round to make purchases. There are also amusements for children, as in fairs in England. Tuesday is a less gay day, but it is still Kermes, even in small parishes like ours. Masses are again offered for different families; and the pastor receives on this day the curates of the parishes whose rectors he had received the day before. On the Wednesday it is usual not to receive company—but a stray friend or two drops in generally, and open house is kept—coffee and cake, ever ready at whatever time they fall in. Thursday is again a company day: at the priest's