

month, as our number—the employer has to pay six shillings a year for each labourer. The general fund contributes the same sum, and the poor man himself must be answerable for twelve shillings' worth of added work.

This twelve shillings a year is one shilling a month; and, one shilling being the payment for five hours' labour, ten additional half hours, or twenty quarters of an hour, in the month, would make up the money—no very great addition to a man's daily labour.

Thus the annual cost for twelve holidays for a hundred labourers is—to the general fund, 30*l.*; to me, who have twenty labourers, 6*l.*; to a man who has ten labourers, 3*l.*; and to a man with five, only thirty shillings. I must give the farmers the credit of having consented cheerfully to this arrangement, and we are now in the full enjoyment of the scheme.

One condition the Vicar made, which no one had a right to object to,—namely, that these holidays should be, as far as possible, identified with our Church holy-days, one of which comes near the close of each month, May only excepted; and so, last month being June, we had our first parish holiday on St. John Baptist's Day; and a prettier sight I never witnessed.

It was a glorious day; and early in the morning the bells, of which we have a beautiful peal, woke up the whole parish with their joyous chimings. Long before eight o'clock—the hour of prayer—lounging groups of pleasantly-idle people were seen sauntering along the green, or walking in their gardens, or sitting at their cottage-doors, dressed in all their best, as for a Sunday. At eight o'clock the bells ceased, and service began. I never saw so many present before upon a week-day. Civility to the Vicar, who was to be the master of the revels, had possibly more to do with this than religion; still it was pleasant to see them there, and a symptom of prejudices declining. Very few remained for the Holy Communion, but they all listened with great attention to some solemn words spoken by the Vicar after the Creed—in which he explained the nature of the day—spoke of St. John's bold rebuke of vice wherever he found it, and his patient endurance of suffering for the truth's sake. Then, wishing them a most happy day in the enjoyment of their forthcoming amusements, he closed his brief address.

After service came breakfast, everywhere; and then, about ten o'clock, when all were assembled on the green, the Vicar, in a short speech, told them his proposed arrangements for the day. On the green, cricket for the men and boys, croquet for the girls and children. At the shore, boats ready for the use of all, with only one condition, that none should venture out in them save under the care of an experienced sailor. A visit to the Hall to see the gardens and grounds, thrown open by the Squire on the occasion. Admission even within the charmed precincts of the house, amid the wonders of beautiful pictures and statuary. A ramble to the top of a neighbouring hill, to see an old Roman fort, and have a wide look-out over the surrounding country and far spreading sea. A stroll in the wood, up the stream to gather wild flowers, hear the birds sing, and now and then have a rest, and a story, or a song, under the shadow of the trees. They must all make their own selection, and help to amuse themselves during the early part of the day; then at two o'clock they would reassemble for dinner; after that music on the green.

A few of the farmers, with my bailiff and gardener, who had talked the matter over beforehand, and who knew pretty well the tastes of the people, moving amongst them, and as if by chance sharing in their conversation, soon helped each to choose the pleasure most congenial to him. So that ere long the green was deserted, save by those who turned to cricket and croquet; while several of the women retired to their homes, to make preparations for the coming banquet.

The hours sped swiftly and pleasantly away, if one might judge from the freshness and abundance of talk which dropped from every mouth, when, as it drew near the hour of dinner, the various groups reassembled. From shore and wood, from hill and vale, from park and village green, all thronged in, full of the happiness they had been enjoying; and, as some hasty readjustments of dress were made, hands washed in the

brook-basin, and hair smoothed in the mirror-brook, each told the other of some sight, some feat, or some adventure.

The nearest headland had been rounded by some, fish caught by others. There had been a race between two of the fastest boats in the bay, and all its chances and excitement still lived in the recital of the contest. The wonders of the Hall gardens, with their exquisite flower-beds, bright in all the beauty of June, vied with the pictures, statues, grand rooms, and rich furniture, of which they are full, who, following the Squire into the house, had felt themselves thereby a little exalted above their less fortunate neighbours, who were led by the gardener through the grounds.

The younger and more adventurous had sought the Roman fort, and, once upon the downs, had started off in an exciting paper-chase, for which the coachman and grooms had made previous arrangements. The women and the more aged and musing of the men had followed the Vicar up the stream, charmed by pleasant talk, and playful jokes, and hearty laughter—with here and there, as they sat down, and rested on the grassy knolls under the shadow of the trees, a ringing, cheerful song, a beautiful poem, or thoughtful allegory read by him to the listening group; while to the music of his voice was added, as an accompaniment,

"A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune."

In fact, a happier set of people I never saw in all my life. A great tent had been pitched the day before in a woodland glade near the green. A bright, happy stream went dancing by it, offering, in its frequent pools, basin or mirror, as we have already seen, for the village toilet; or less romantic accommodation for such culinary cleansings as were needful in the course of the dinner.

All whom the tent could accommodate (the elders and women) sat down there; the rest (chiefly boys and girls), in groups under the trees, made a merry picnic. The tent, tables, table-cloths, and several barrels of beer, had been provided for them. The main material of the dinner, with plates, knives, forks, and glasses, they furnished for themselves. It was pleasant to see the thrifty neatness which each little display of household economy revealed. Evidently there had been prudent savings beforehand to enable them to make so fair a show on this day; for good joints, and savoury pies, and smoking dishes of vegetables, imparted a most hunger-stirring smell to all the air around.

We left them to themselves, and retired to the Vicarage, to a jolly luncheon provided by the Vicar for his friends, and which, after the exertions of the morning, all were prepared to enjoy. The sound of the band told us when the village feast was ended, and, on reaching the ground outside the tent, which was level, and well suited for the purpose, we found the various groups of dancers already assembled.

The evening was delightful—still, and soft, and calm—scarce a shadow on the sky; just here and there a few fleecy clouds to make the scene more lovely, and remind us that it was England, and not Italy, we were enjoying; gentle breezes rustling through the leaves, coming, with their grateful freshness, to cool, not the brows of energetic movers only, but even of those who were taking life more easily, stretched at full length on the grass.

Meanwhile, as these revels were proceeding, there were hurrys to and fro, out and in of the tent, with sounds of plates, and cups, and saucers, and carrying of great smoking tea-laden tins, and smells of bread and butter, and fresh currant-eyed cakes—when suddenly at the close, a bell rang, and the Vicar having announced that tea was ready, all thronged to the tent. Here were tea and coffee and cake in abundance, provided by a few of us who had subscribed for the purpose; and here again as at dinner, those who could not find room in the tent, scattered themselves on the grass around; while merry children with ready romp and ringing peals of laughter, ran about conveying, and now and then in the heedlessness of their fun, upsetting, the superabundant supplies of cake and tea.

This pleasant pastime spread over an hour at least, at the close of which,

"Sweet church-bells sounding solemnly,"

and yet joyously, again gladdened our ears; and after they had dropped twice, the Vicar gliding away, all the people one by one, quietly followed him, without any monition to do so, till, in a few minutes, the old church was as full as, or fuller than I ever saw it on Sunday.

We had a hearty service. The choir, for the first time, chanted the Evening Psalms. On any other occasion, this would have created at least surprise, if not disturbance. Some rather nasty spirits had been talking about sundry symptoms of such things, which the great zeal and greater progress of the choir of late had betokened, and which had received considerable encouragement by a choral festival, held in the deanery in the month previous, where all the choirs had appeared in surplices, and had marched in procession into the church. That we soon should have a surpliced choir, and choral services, and lighted candles, and I know not what besides, many whispered. So, at any other time, I am sure the chanting of the Evening Psalms, no matter how harmoniously done by the choir, would have made discord in the congregation. But now all people were pleased; their hearts were glad and thankful; so it seemed the natural thing for them to sing out their praise themselves, instead of listening to the dull duct too often droned out by the clerk and clergyman only. It was Tallis's chant—simple and easy, familiar to every one; and before the first psalm was over, hundreds of voices were chiming in all around. I am sure every one must have felt what I did, that the Psalms were intended to be sung, and that we lose much devotional fervour in our worship by simply saying them.

Then we had such a sermon—such a tender, genial, simple, earnest appeal to all our hearts. It flowed out so naturally. One felt as if they were the first thoughts which rose in his mind, that dropped from his lips, so easily they followed one another. And yet one felt that it was out of a depth they welled up to the surface, a depth where they had been brooding in his heart, through a lifetime. And certainly if ever Christ, in all the fellowship of His human affections, making the joys as well as the sorrows of His people His own,—if ever the Son of Mary was set before the sons of men in all the power of His incarnate sympathy, and all the tenderness of His divine love,—it was on that evening. A hint was just dropped, which I had never heard before, but the thought of which has never since left me,—that, though for our sin Christ was known emphatically amongst us as "a Man of sorrows;" but for our sin, He would have been known only as a Man of joy—the brother, the friend, the teacher, the companion of His people. That in the great purposes of God, His incarnation was designed, without any reference to His death, to be the elevating power by which our free but frail spirits might be trained for the fellowship on high; and that, had it not been for man's fall, He would have come and lived amongst us, as He walked with Adam in the garden in the cool of the day, working His nature into ours, as He had taken our nature into His, and leading us by the glorious and bloodless footsteps of His incarnation up into the highest mysteries of His heavenly love. But man, having fallen and lost the image in which he was originally made—that of the very Son of God Himself—the firstborn of every creature, He came amongst us in the sorrow of a grieved spirit, "His visage marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men," to work out in suffering and by death the restoration of His creatures.

What a gleam of light such a thought let in upon one's soul! What a vision woke up with the words—a vision of what this world with such a companionship might have been!—sinless and sorrowless; but yet with all the blessed helps of duty to strengthen and stablish our fallible but not fallen wills, and all the mystic power which Christ's humanity gives us, to lift up the human into oneness with the Divine.

I never heard a sermon which moved me more. It wanted only what followed—that dear hymn,

"Abide with us, fast falls the eventide,"
to make its influence perfect. Never did I feel