

Roman named Valerian, who was deeply attached to her, but a Pagan, like all the rest of the fashionable world in his day. Cecilia, although she loved the young man like a brother, was averse to wedlock. The high and exalted conceptions of the early Christians set up the ideal of celestial purity, regarding marriage as a weakness of our nature; and Cecilia shared these notions, like other Christian maidens of her time. Yet, in obedience to her parents' will, she consented to marry Valerian. The wedding day was fixed. The company assembled at the palace of the Cæcili in the Campus Martius. The lovely bride appeared, dressed in white robes, and with her beautiful face hidden in the crimson veil, which with the Romans took the place of the white bridal veil used by us. The marriage ceremony was performed according to the ancient Roman rites, which were of the greatest solemnity and impressiveness. The symphony of the far-famed Latin pipes pealed forth, in strains less melodious than the music of Cecilia, yet entrancing to all who heard them. The bride, at the conclusion of the ceremony, was escorted by her maidens to an inner chamber, there to await the arrival of her husband, who should take her away from her father's house to the mansion prepared for her in another part of the city. She was left alone in the room by her maidens and friends, who departed to mingle in the banquet and dances, which were proceeding in another part of the palace. The bridegroom hastened to join Cecilia. On

entering the room where she was, he is said to have found the angel there with her who came to visit her from heaven, ravished by her harmony. Astonished and dismayed by this unexpected apparition, Valerian retreated from the chamber before his entry had been discovered either by his bride or her celestial ministrant. He sought not the company of the guests, but went to a sequestered part of the city where a holy man lived, to whom he confided what he had seen. This man was a Christian, and his exhortations, combined with the entreaties of Cecilia herself, converted Valerian to Christianity. His brother Tiburcius was likewise converted, and Cecilia found her new home in every sense of the word a Christian one, and looked forward to passing her life in a dream of happiness and the cultivation of the true faith. But alas! the high position of Valerian drew on him the attention of the authorities; and refusing to offer incense to the idols, he was condemned to die along with his brother. Cecilia had the bitterness of seeing him taken to execution down the Latin Way amid a long file of soldiers. Since Romans were forbidden to inflict capital punishment on one of their own nation, some foreign mercenary troops were engaged to perform the office on Valerian and Tiburcius, who were beheaded amid the wails of their kindred, and chiefly of her who was the wife of one and sister of the other.

Cecilia herself was soon to follow these two martyrs to the tomb. Her simple and innocent life was no protection against the malevolence

of the Pagans. She, as her husband had been, was required to throw a few grains of incense before the statue of Jupiter, and refusing, was brought before the tribunal of the Prefect Almachius, a coarse and brutal soldier. Her reply to him, when he asked her name, is a famous one: "Cecilia," she said, "is my name, but Christian is my most beautiful name." Almachius, after hearing the charges against her of professing the religion of Christ, brutally ordered her to be suffocated in a bath. His orders were carried out, but with insufficient ardour by those entrusted with the duty, and Cecilia survived the ordeal. Almachius again asked her to adore the image of Jupiter, and she again refused. His second command was that she should be beheaded. The lictor struck her three times before he dealt the fatal blow, and even then Cecilia lingered in agony for three days afterwards. Her constancy and fortitude under persecution have obtained for her canonisation as a saint, while her skill in music, and the marvel which, according to the legend, it effected, have placed her on a pinnacle of the art, where her only companions are the legendary minstrels of ancient Greece, of whose skill wonders are reported likewise. In the words of Dryden, which Handel has so sublimely set to music—

Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or loth divide the crown.
He raised a mortal to the skies,
She drew an angel down.

A NEW WAY OF ENTERTAINING FRIENDS.



It is often said that one of the needs of the present day is the need that people, and especially young people, should get together in a simple

fashion, and enjoy each other's company in a hearty, human, friendly way. Of getting together from the society point of view there is enough and to spare; but the ma-

majority of the gatherings approved by society are nothing but a fraud. They are pretentious and vulgar; their object is display; they are not intended to afford opportunity for kindly greetings, but to pay social debts; and they merely serve to rouse envy and encourage extravagance. Yet it is mutually helpful, pleasant, and profitable that people should get together. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so does the countenance of a man his friend." We feel kindly to those whom we meet frequently. Isolation begets suspicion, and nothing rubs off one's corners, and liberates us from prejudice, selfishness, and narrowness, like association and contact with our fellows. People who conduct their lives on the self-centred principle are always less genial, bright, and happy than are those who form part of a circle; and the very best thing that could happen to a large number of individuals who now lead cold, dull, dreary, monotonous lives, would be that they should be drawn into the warmth and light that is generated by communion with others.

"The best thing one can do with a home is to share it with those who have none," is a saying to be remembered. There are many possessors of homes who would be glad enough to share their joy with others if they did not feel that the orthodox modes of entertaining friends are too costly and troublesome; that

they involve too great an outlay of time, labour, energy, and money. If we could return to simpler ways of living, they would be quite willing to be "sociable," and to let their neighbours benefit by their advantages. It would, therefore, be a real kindness if some enterprising members of the community would set an example of simpler ways, so that their neighbours might take their ideas and act upon them. If individuals could once be brought to see how much satisfaction was to be gained thereby, perhaps the more excellent way would be adopted and approved, and the inane, pretentious forms of hospitality would not be regarded as the only ones possible.

It happens that in a certain corner of the United Kingdom this experiment of entertaining without display has been tried for several winters, and it has been so abundantly successful, has afforded so much innocent enjoyment, and has tended so much to the cultivation of sympathy and kindly feeling, that it has been decided to give an account of it here, in the hope that in other corners of the land individuals may be found who will be inspired by the narrative to go and do likewise, and that they will get as much out of the enterprise as did the original founders.

Was it not Mrs. Browning who said somewhere, that it is a characteristic of modern Britons that they cannot do so simple a thing as give a cup of cold water without first forming themselves into a society? Carrying out this peculiarity, the founders aforesaid (who will henceforth be referred to as the "I. Q.'s.," because that was the name they bore amongst themselves, someone having once said of them in fun that they all must have come originally from an intellectual quarter), had no sooner entertained the notion of experimenting in sociability, than they met together and formed themselves into a society, the avowed object of which was to provide mutual pleasure and innocent relaxation by cultivating and en-

couraging an acquaintance with English literature. Their rules were extremely few. There was to be one official, the secretary, whose duty it was to take and read the minutes of the proceedings and to keep the affair going. His stock-in-trade was a six-penny memorandum-book. The meetings were to be held fortnightly, and invitations were never sent out, but it was understood that the members were to come regularly unless they received a notice to the contrary. This arrangement saved a good deal of trouble.

The master of the house where the meetings were held was the president of the society, and his wife was the vice-president. The president took the chair at the meetings, he signed the minutes, he regulated the method of procedure, he determined the length of the speeches, and he kept order generally. If the truth must be told, he was rather arbitrary; he would not permit his authority to be questioned, and he ruled with a rod of iron. Once or twice daring individuals attempted a mutiny, and facetiously tried to introduce rebellion in the form of a resolution; but they never succeeded in their attempt. They were put down instantly and ruthlessly, and speedily had to acknowledge their defeat. But indeed the president's "arbitrariness" was salutary; it tended to peace. Obedience to lawful authority may be out of date, but decidedly it promotes harmony. Insubordination and turbulence die a natural death when they are not allowed even to utter a word. The duties of the vice-president were less pronounced than those of the president, but they were quite as important. The "Vice" paid for the postage-stamps needed occasionally, she provided the refreshments, she admired and supported the president, and she thoroughly enjoyed herself. She was like the parrot that Bernal Osborne once mentioned in the House of Commons—she did not say much, but she thought a good deal.

When first the idea of founding this society was mooted, the vice-president was much exercised about the matter of refreshments. Full well the vice-president knew that many a promising social enterprise had been wrecked on the rock of an ambitious, extravagant, and pretentious "spread," whose tendency it was to grow more extravagant and more pretentious as time went on. Yet she was a somewhat hospitable individual, who had learnt from experience that to exercise the intellect makes people as hungry as does the exercise of the limbs, and that it is hopeless to expect human beings to be brilliant, witty, and agreeable when they are feeling the keen demands of appetite. After due consideration, therefore, she resolved to furnish refreshments, but to provide only food of a frugal sort. A little well-made coffee and home-made lemonade were the only beverages allowed, while plain cake and a few biscuits, with bread and butter, constituted the solid viands. Even sandwiches were discarded because they took so much cutting; and it was an aim to reduce labour and trouble to a minimum as well as expense. One consequence of the arrangement was that the meetings of the society were never felt by the host and hostess to be burdensome. The arrangements for them were made so easily, and they involved so little outlay, that the hostess never once dreaded them. This was a great triumph. Social gatherings that are dreaded by the individuals who are responsible for them will never be of long continuance.

The subjects which occupied the attention of members of this society were sufficiently varied. At each meeting the subject for the next meeting was announced, and members were made clearly to understand what they had to do. Great stress was laid upon the fact that everyone must do something: the society was not divided into brilliant members who distinguished themselves, and modest, retiring members, who applauded and were silent. Everyone took a part, and did his or her best; and this being imperative, it was wonderful how able the members were found to be, how courageous they became. At the first meeting which was held everyone was

afraid to speak; remarks were made in jerks, and speeches were exceptional. But after a little practice, nervousness seemed to disappear. The members of the society wrote their papers as a matter of course, and read them out even when strangers were present in the most matter-of-fact way. Before they could do this they had to read and acquaint themselves with the subject, and the necessity led to a more familiar acquaintance with English literature. Thus one of the objects of the society was attained.

The majority of the papers read were indeed most able. If the authors had been told six months before the society was established that they would produce such papers, they would have declared their incapacity for anything of the sort. But none of us know what we can do until we exercise our powers to the utmost. Here are a few of the subjects which occupied the members at their meetings:—

Characters from English Literature.—Each member gave an outline of a character, and concealed the name. The rest of the company tried to guess the same. Only one guess was allowed from the entire company, and a vote was taken to determine what this should be. The individuals who described a well-known character clearly, and baffled the guessers, were supposed to excel.

Characters from Shakespeare and Living Characters were treated in the same way.

Papers were read and *Discussions* held at intervals on "The Effect of Music"; on "The Drift of Modern Fiction"; on "The Newspaper Press"; on "What constitutes Success?"; on "Socialism"; and on "Women's Suffrage."

Production of a Story.—Fifteen members of the society each wrote one chapter of a story, a brief sketch of his or her share of the plot being given to each: the whole plot was known to the secretary alone.

Reviews of well-known works by well-known authors.

Nursery Rhymes.—Each member wrote a rhyme, imitating the style of a well-known author; the name of the author to be guessed.

Discussion on Who is the Greatest Prose

Writer of the Day; and Why?—Each member of the society stated and defended his opinion. (In this discussion there were eighteen different opinions, and only three members chose the same writer.)

Each member furnished the second chapter of a story in three chapters, the plots of chapters one and three being furnished by the secretary.

Mock Election to a Literary Club.—Each member had to propose and defend the election of an author whose name he had drawn by lot.

Interview with celebrated living people. Names of persons to be interviewed drawn for.

A Competitive Examination on "Alice in Wonderland."

Description of scenes from Shakespeare.—The scenes were described vaguely, and all names and titles were suppressed. The members of the society then tried to say from which play the scene was taken.

Production of a Child's History of England.—Each member had a certain period of English history assigned to him.

A Mock Trial between the British public, plaintiffs, and the admirers of Charles Dickens, defendants. Charles Dickens was charged with exaggeration and vulgarity. The president was the judge; counsel was chosen on both sides, and the members of the society were called as witnesses.

An Ideal Summer Holiday.—Each member imagined himself transported into 1990, and from that standpoint reviewed the literature, art, and music of to-day.

Each member gave a description of the book enjoyed most or least during the year. And so on *ad infinitum*.

The consideration of these subjects usually occupied a couple of hours. When they were dismissed, the members of the society partook of refreshments, after which there was a little music and conversation, and very shortly the meeting broke up. The interest was well maintained up to the close of last winter. It is believed that if a similar experiment were tried in other quarters, much innocent enjoyment would be produced thereby.

A LONELY LASSIE.

By SARAH TYTLER, Author of "A Young Oxford Maid," etc.

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE GRAYS.

FLORA had shared in the Bennets' prosperity, and she had had a greater share in their tribulation. She felt as if she really belonged to them, which was a happy feeling to a creature of her social, friendly nature. It seemed as if it would be wrong to call herself lonely any more.

Though Mary recovered steadily, her constitution had been severely tried, and her chest had to be carefully guarded. It was impossible for her to go to school through the winter, and Mrs. Bennet yielded to Flora's entreaties to let her give the child her easy morning lessons in reading and writing, etc. "But remember, Flora, it is your own doing; it is because I think you really wish it, and it is entirely optional. Indeed, I will not consent to gratify this fancy of yours unless you promise to tell me when you are tired of teaching. In any case

the performance must stop with the return of the fine weather, for you must go out with Dorothy and me after Easter. When a girl is eighteen it is time she went into company."

Flora readily promised and appreciated the concession. She was sure she would feel more at home—more "settled," she called it—with regular duties to perform daily; and she did not go on to regret having gained her point, though it would be idle to say that poor little Mary, still sickly, and, in spite of Mrs. Bennet's conscientious endeavours, a good deal spoilt, was never trying and tiresome. Neither did Flora ever flag in her turn, and hanker after some other occupation, especially when the season drew near Christmas, and there was early frost, with skating on the Round Pond and the Serpentine, skating in the morning as well as in the afternoon, in order to take advantage of the ice, and to get into the full swing of the play

while it lasted. Both Dick and Dorothy insisted they ought to skate all day and all night too if the moon shone, and the seniors were propitious. But these were only inevitable drawbacks. Mary was a lovable and bright little soul in the middle of her worst naughtiness; and in order to relish play fully, there was nothing like an alternation of work and play. A little steady occupation was good for everybody, Flora tried to impress upon Dick and Dorothy, getting herself laughed at for her pains. Well, they might laugh; she would almost rather work always than play always; for when it came to that, work done in the right spirit was better than play—was the best play.

Poor Flora was not uniformly logical, but she knew what she meant, and she realised her meaning, which was to her immense gain. She felt rather shy about going into the gay world—it seemed very gay to her, though it was