



Annual School Fete At The Park

We had been impressed sometime since the almost unparalleled scarcity of rain, which this season has brought us, that nature itself would be exhausted, and become stripped of that garment of floral beauty - the richness and diversity of which is unsurpassed by art, and compelled to assume the smile of life and cast it over the withered tenants of her own bosom; but the opportunity we had, in common with the general public, on Tuesday last, of visiting Lady Herbert's park, entirely dispelled the idea from our minds, for instead of the flowers languishing, and the young verdure fading, we found everything, from the tiniest closed daisy to the most gigantic cedar, throbbing with life, and blossom, everywhere displaying beauty and vitality, in fact, the only signs of exhaustion were to be observed in the tracts of lawn most exposed to the sun, even there no signs of premature display appeared, but only a temporary stagnation of life, and into this (we beg pardon of our Isle of Wight friends) "Garden of England" the school children of Wilton and the surrounding neighbourhood were invited to partake of tea, and afterwards join in the sports provided for them. During the afternoon a procession was formed at the National School, Wilton, composed of scholars from National Free School, Grovely, Quidhampton, Netherhampton, Bemerton, and the Park School, and proceeded to the Park, headed by the band of the 14th Wilts (Wilton) Rifles, under the leadership of Mr. Fry, the children bearing banners of many shapes and hues, seemed to be enjoying in anticipation, much of the delight in store for them.

It would be almost superfluous to say that the good things provided for the children disappeared with a delightful rapidity, and if any moralising bachelor stood by summing up in his mind a random estimate of the struggles and perplexities parents had endured in rearing the group before him, he could not but have had a faint wish that one of them bore his name and semblance, they looked so happy, and the happiness imparted to the minds of children on such an occasion is not, as we often imagine, of brief duration, only to be remembered for a few hours, but such scenes like the one we describe, often form a green spot in memory's barren waste which the mind in fiercer years delight to look back on, and though "sorrows crown of sorrow" may be at times "remembering happier times," yet more frequently the recollection of one bright day lightens the shadows of many dark ones, and when the little white hand become worn, and the smooth forehead furrowed, we are sure the memory of Wilton Park, and the pleasant hours spent there will still recur to the minds of some with increased freshness and beauty.

The sports into which the children entered were of the usual diversified and amusing character, the girls ran for bonnets - we do not mean of the present style- but real bonnets - with sufficient material in them to cover the head, and although the winner seemed to receive more approbation than her

trophy, as she walked round the enclosure, still her own mind seemed to be absorbed in getting at a just conclusion as to the length and width of the strings.

The boys ran for coats and other useful articles of clothing, and we noticed that one was the fortunate winner of a coat of such prolific dimensions, that there was no hesitation in pronouncing it to be a misfit, but no doubt "mother" will be able to make arrangement for the transfer of it to an older son, or the swift-footed Victor must wait till he has grown up to its requirements. Running wheelbarrows by the boys who were blindfolded afforded much amusement, as there were several collisions, and most opposite directions taken by some to reach the goal. An amusing incident occurred in the blindfold chase after the Rev. Mr. Melenden, for at the conclusion he fell on the grass, and from the sound of a bell which the Rev. gentleman carried, the boys quickly found his whereabouts, and seine do him, each believing himself winner. Jumping in sacks, and climbing greasy-poles, brought the juvenile sports to a close.

When the evening drew on, kiss in the ring and dancing attracted and delighted many, whilst others walked over the park admiring the perfection, in which nature and art had been combined by the refined taste of the benevolent owner, everything both ancient and modern seemed to suggest materials for a volume.

We thought of one that was good and great, whose name the page of history bears,
Because he loved the labours of State, And stooped to carry a nation's care.
Who fell asleep when mind and brain Put on the majesty of thought,
And while we mourn for him in vain, We learn the lessons he has taught.

Amongst the distinguished persons present we noticed Lady Herbert and family, Thomas Fraser Grove, Esq., M.P., Rev. Mr. Pigott, Rev. Mr. Tower, Rev. Mr. Hinxman, Rev. Mr. Powell, E. Hamilton, Esq., H. J. F. Swayne, Esq., J. E. Nightingale, Esq., Miss Gladstone, &c.,

The balloons sent up by Professor Buck, had very successful flights considering the stillness of the atmosphere. Great praise is due to the band for its untiring exertions to amuse the company, and supply the requirements of the dancers, we may observe that the treat was not so numerously attended as on former occasions, but we think the fact of its being Salisbury market day will account for the absence of many.

At nine o' clock the proceedings were brought to a close, the company giving three hearty cheers for Lady Herbert, and the band playing "God save the Queen."

Salisbury Times & South Wilts Gazette, 25 July 1868