



Club Meeting – Letter from “Disgusted of Ludgershall”

To the Editor of the Salisbury and Winchester Journal

Sir, On Thursday, 25th ult., the little village of Ludgershall had its second club meeting; unfortunately St. Swithin was not propitious, and the rain continued to pour down steadily from an early hour. The bells and band endeavoured to enlighten matters a little, but the falling rain and the heavy atmosphere rendered everything dead and sombre. At the appointed hour the club attended divine service, then went in to dinner, and then, I am sorry to say, some of the members got very drunk. Now these benefits clubs are very beneficial, there is not a doubt, but they require ventilation. Let us take one in question. Here we have friend Giles, with a wife and seven children, with prospects of number eight very shortly. Giles earns 9s. a week; for his club dinner he pays 2s., for doctor, 2s. 6d., for getting drunk, an undefined sum, according to the strength of his head. Giles cannot afford this; turnip hoeing has been but a “catchy business” - many half days - and instead of having saved a few shillings to help Mrs. Giles through her troubles, he has spent the little he had in making a beast of himself. Giles getting muddled is not the worst part of the business. Towards evening, many bedraggled females, of questionable character from the neighbouring villages, began to flock in to the dance, presently a fiddler, with banjo under his arm, turns up, and the fun begins to grow fast and furious. On the rest of this scene I shall drop the curtain. If with night, the drunken scene had ended, if the disgusting expressions, the drunken howls, the obscene language, had ended at a respectable hour, the quiet portion of the inhabitants would not have had much to grumble at, as the rain kept the brawlers confined; but on Friday and Saturday the scene of drunkenness was enacted over again, men lying about drunk in the streets and before the beershops, using filthy language to any respectable women passing by, cursing, swearing, quarrelling, and

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blaspheming. Even Sunday night was not free from it. Now all this takes place for Giles's benefit, although it would appear entirely to his disadvantage, and not only his, but also to madam Giles, and the morals of the juvenile Giles's. As I have already said, those matters require well ventilating. With that I have nothing to do. I can only say that I have travelled over the larger part of the world, have seen the customs and habits of civilized and uncivilized nations, in all their forms, but I never remember having seen so many disgusting scenes, and heard so much disgusting language, during the number of years I have lived under a foreign sun. Do we live in a civilized village? Is the schoolmaster really abroad?

A Constant Reader.

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