

mental credit during dinner, was already enthroned in the ballroom; in the language of Cherry Hill, "they beat us to it." For a moment I feared we were about to break into a cotillon or worse. No such thing; it was a false alarm. A troupe of ballet dancers, in fluffy skirts and pink silk tights, poured from a side room. The orchestra struck up, and the ballet did the same. There was much whirling, and toe-twirling, and scarf-waving, and all to conclude by the pink and silken dancers piling themselves up in bewitching, not to say breathless, heaps on the floor. A young female of the Four Hundred—this was her first battle—said at my elbow:

"Fairy-land!" snorted the war-horse. "When I was a girl we did our own dancing. This is the first time I ever saw hired dancers in a private house. It is the end. I knew we had lost the use of our hands, and couldn't cook nor serve a dinner; I was aware that we had lapsed into idiocy and couldn't talk, but must have orchestras to conceal our mental defects; this, however, is the last! We've lost the use of our legs, and people must hereafter do our dancing for us. I shall yet see a day when we shall hide in the upper chambers of our houses, like those yellow-haired kings of olden France, and leave it to our majordomos—our butlers and our cooks—to carry on society in our places. Our servants will hold receptions, to which other people's servants will come; they will have dinners, which other people's servants will eat; they will give balls, at which other people's servants will dance. We shall cease to see one another, and society will be carried on by proxy. In the end I doubt not we shall send our footmen to college and our maids to finishing school, instead of our daughters and sons."

I asked the war-horse what she thought of bridge-whist.

"I won't tell you," said the war-horse. "What I will say is that, when I was a girl, the ladies would no more think of gambling at cards with men than of carousing over the wine bottles with men. It may be good form for ladies to owe gambling debts to gentlemen, and for gentlemen to press for payment; but the fashion has its pitfalls."

"And those are?"

"Read Farquhar's 'Sir Harry Wild-air,'" replied the war-horse with a knowing nod; "I've seen it played when I was a girl. Read the comedies of Wycherly and Van Brugh and Congreve. And, as you read, remember that human nature, in the days of Theodore, is one and the same with what human nature was in the days of Anne."

There was a mighty clatter; the outman hurriedly bid me return to the ballroom.

"What's the excitement?" I asked. "Snobbing and Gosling," said the clubman, "are to have a cock-fight. We mustn't miss it."

Assuredly no! I rushed to the ballroom, mindful of shawl-necks and drop-socket galls. I found that my imagination had been too headlong. There were no shawl-necks, no galls; Snobbing and Gosling were to do the fighting as cocks by courtesy.

When I arrived in the ballroom their "handlers" were making them ready for the combat. The preparations were these: Each cock had his heels tied tightly together with a handkerchief. Seated on his heels, his arms embracing his knees, his wrists were then tied together with a second handkerchief. Thus tightly bound, Snobbing and Gosling were left to hop about on their toes.

Chin on knees, wrists bound, arms embracing legs, ankles tightly held by confining handkerchiefs, Gosling and Snobbing were in their respective corners, crowing defiantly. At the word they were released, and the battle was on. They hopped about on their toes, approaching one another, each alert to seize an opening. Meanwhile, wagers in hundreds of dollars—Snobbing against Gosling—were being made.

Of a sudden Gosling, jumping sideways, precipitated himself upon Snobbing, shoulder to the ore. But Snobbing, the wary, met him full tilt. The shoulders collided in mid-air; the two cocks were jolted yards apart, but were so fortunate as to alight on their toes and maintain their original upright positions. The clubman informed my ignorance that the one first knocked over and sent rolling would be the defeated one.

There followed a dozen of these shoulder-tilting "buckles;" for Snobbing and Gosling were game-cocks of much experience and many battles. In the thirteenth "buckle" Snobbing, by leaping high, fell heavily on the unfortunate Gosling, and over that latter game-cock toppled. Snobbing, however, failed in his recovery and went rolling by the side of his foe. The battle was declared a draw.

Downstairs a gipsy fortune-teller had been installed. She said she was a gipsy queen; that her mother was of the noble blood of the Coopers, and her father a scion of the equally noble Stanleys. No one cared for her hedgerow genealogy; but, the moment she was announced, all the females of the Four Hundred then and there present rushed away as one woman to have a look into the hereafter. Even the war-horse decided to take a peep into her own personal future, of which, from her years, I cannot think she needed binoculars to see the end.

It was getting late, or rather early. The young official in the elevator, so recently a pretty page of the days of the Grand Monarch, had degenerated into a

very tired East Side Irish lad. He had had enough of the Four Hundred; his coat was wrinkled; his wig over one ear, his eyes more than half closed. The noble supers in the hall still posed, but they were plainly leg-weary.

As a crowning glory to what was declared upon all sides to be a tremendous social triumph, the hostess, at the moment of departure, presented to every female a white cat, and to every male a white rat. The unhappy animals were hived in wicker cages, and, therefore, safe; but such squealing and squeaking among the females were induced by a facetious proposal on the part of someone to turn his rat loose upon the premises.

And so we came away. I can't say what disposition the others made of those beasts of prey with which the humorous kindness of our hostess had endowed them; as to the clubman and myself, we gave our rats to a sleepy policeman, assuring him mendaciously that we had found them in the street.

[END.]

Dat Mean Nigger.

A negro servant girl on one occasion asked permission of her mistress to stay out later than usual, as she wanted to attend a friend's wedding. Next day her mistress asked how the ceremony had gone off.

"Oh, very well, ma'am," was the reply. "We ate cake, and had wine to drink, and danced all the evening."

"And how did the bride look?" asked the mistress.

"Oh, she looked scrumptious," replied the girl. "She was dressed plain, nothing gay, just plain yellow wiv a few green bows and some pink roses, that's all—just plain."

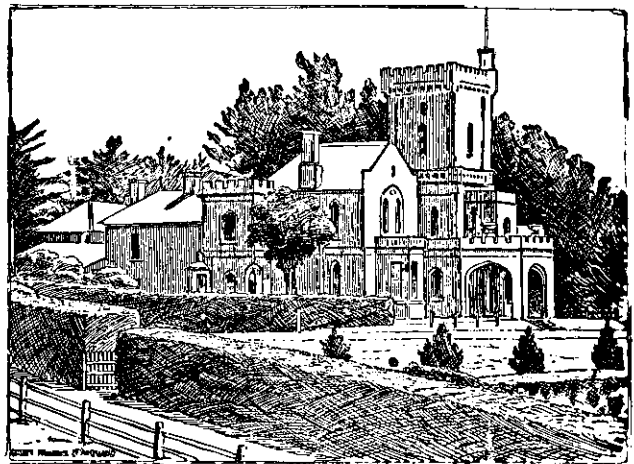
"And how did the bridegroom look?" was the next question.

"Well, do you know, ma'am," replied the girl, "dat mean nigger just never turned up at all."

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