

## AT THE CARNIVAL BALL.

HOW THE PEOPLE OF DUSSELDORF ENJOY THE FESTIVAL.

The Experience of a New Brunswicker Amid the Giddy Crowd—Absurd Scenes in Which Grave Germans Cut Most Ridiculous Figures—Incidents of the Merry Time.

For a great many people the carnival ball is the Alpha and Omega—the very heart of the time. The Dusseldorfers are exceedingly proud of theirs. It is an artistic affair from beginning to the end, and certainly it is very brilliant and beautiful. There are three large saals in the Tonhalle, Ritter saal, Mittel saal and Kaiser saal, and the partitions between these three were removed for that one night, the result being an enormous space which nevertheless was packed. From the gallery one could get the best view, and one's eyes are dazzled by the vivid, sparkling color as the gorgeous stream flowed past with apparently endless variety. Empire dresses were nobly in the majority this year and very exquisite they were too. Mephistopheles, Faust and Marguerite as well as the characters from Wagner's operas of course obtained much here. Peasant dresses from every country in Europe; a sprinkling of Greek gods and goddesses, together with the dear familiar clown, who proved himself as much of a nuisance here as he ever does, these were the prevailing ideas. An English pensionat was present, every girl of which was dressed as a butterfly; and another group made a bouquet of chrysanthemums. We had the pleasure of being confronted with the German idea of an Englishman, and an enchanting figure it was. A costume of virgin white—trousers turned up at the bottom, a white sun helmet, and yellow, very yellow, whiskers,—that is a son of Albion as others see him. Folly was prevalent in material forms as well as otherwise, and the dominoes were numerous and some of them rather pretty.

The ball begins with a tableau arranged by the old artists—the old and young artists form two rival parties here—and very elaborate it generally is. This year the subject was the betrothal of Reubens to his third wife, a subject which gave scope for effective grouping and plenty of color. After the tableau the dancing begins. But that, owing to the crowded state of the rooms, is a pleasure more exciting than comfortable, and the cream of the amusement is in the conversations one holds, with people totally unknown to one, and funny mistakes, misunderstandings, and mystifications one becomes involved in thereby. The formal and usual "Lie" is dropped and the more familiar "Du" used in its stead, and everybody claims acquaintance with everybody else with a cheerful mendacity that is exceedingly popular at this time.

Nevertheless it was impossible to avoid dancing to some extent, and a terrible business it was. German dancing is a bit peculiar, and the woman suffers most from the peculiarity. Very firmly she is grasped, and, as far as actual dancing is concerned, she has little or nothing to do. She is twirled about by her energetic cavalier who evidently regards her as a missile suitable to hurl against every other company in his vicinity. And there were a great many in the vicinity at the carnival ball. "On" after another they rush on, a relentless succession of breathless twirling creatures, all impressively active, and such a crowd of them. It was only possible to clear a very small space of dancing and the number who disported themselves gaily in it was ridiculously out of proportion. Everybody's object seems to be to annihilate everybody else, even if they have to go a little faster than the music in order to accomplish it. I gave up dancing after my foot had been trodden upon by a majestic lady who must have weighed twenty stone, "not pretty, massive!" She was evidently hugely enjoying her indulgence in tripping me, it no light, certainly fantastic too, and her avoirdupois did not make her proud or above the simple primitive savage joy of crushing a fellow creature. After she had crippled me she swept away triumphantly, a mass of purple velvet surmounted by an exultant and expansive smile. She was dressed to represent a pansy. Pansies are for thoughts. I thought very earnestly after she had disappeared.

Nevertheless despite these disadvantages, the Ball is a pleasure to dream of. The people are all so kind and merry. I can never understand why the Germans are so often accused of want of courtesy to strangers. As far as my experience goes they are the essence of all that is polite, attentive and complimentary. The German compliment is very deft. It is given with an air of grave simple sincerity that makes one not "unduly elated" but comfortably complacent—"cheers but not inebriates." For at least one night during the Carnival, everybody goes to one of the hotels. Why? I can hardly say, unless it is to test their own abilities for being ridiculous. After darkness has settled down the ladies and gentlemen who have walked through the streets in eccentric dresses all day, seem to still desire publicity in which to air their hilarity and the quieter folk go to look on and laugh at the others.

An immense room, or rather two immense rooms opening the one into the other and both filled with long tables spread with white clothes, and decked with an imposing array of goblets; a raised platform at one end of the room upon which an energetic band discourses "music sweet"; a dense

crowd of people seated at the tables or passing in a continuous stream up and down the aisles between them, and above all, a forest of peacock feathers mingled with pale blue wreaths of cigar smoke, which rose like incense to the glory of the "Narren" whose praises they were singing occasionally.

It was an absurd scene. The decorous Scotch lady who sat beside me looked on in holy horror, and confided to me her doubts as to whether the people about her were respectable or not.

"It does not seem possible that these are really nice people, does it?" she murmured plaintively in my ear, "and yet I am told they are—the very nicest here. Just think of it. Now we wouldn't do this in England or Scotland; surely you don't do it in America?"

I reassured her on that point, and she rambled on, with the same bewitching incoherence.

"Don't you like these hats made of a single big flower that so many of these girls are wearing—Why don't you wear one?—Dear me, how these people are laughing. Keep close to me, my dear, if you feel frightened. Did you see that impertinent man? Actually tried to thrust a peacock's feather in your face. Brute! Mercy on us, look at those two women!—Turn your face away, my dear, they are wearing short skirts to their knee, and how the men are shouting at them! What a disgraceful thing to allow such creatures in—Oh!"

The exclamation with which she stopped abruptly was caused by the near approach of the two "women." They turned their heads as she spoke and revealed two very good-looking faces, each adorned with a robust moustache.

"Men!" ejaculated Scotland, her decorous soul somewhat soothed, "How absurd. Oh!" in an ecstasy of horror. "Did you see that man with broad hat and long hair? He actually threw his arms about those two girls. How very terrible! Let us all get under the table!"

I pointed out to her as gently as possible that for a whole tableful of people to suddenly disappear beneath the festive board would be a proceeding calculated rather to attract than ward off attention. She seemed to see some force in my remarks, for she allowed me to finish my supper, parry the feather attacks and for a few minutes to observe the scene undisturbed.

A ballet dancer, a little more than six feet high was waltzing gayly down the room the edges of his brief skirts extended delicately by his thumb and fore finger. He scattered the crowd right and left but came to grief against a baby of his own size who being arrayed after the manner of German infants was made a little unwieldy by the cushion he carried on his back. Every girl in the room was engaged in a peacock feather duel with all the men within her reach; Zerbe, the dignified leader of the Tonhalle orchestra was playing with a "schweiger-mutter" as they call a certain kind of dancing doll here, and was evidently immensely entertained with it; two clowns were playing leap frog in the very thickest of the crowd, and middle-aged ladies and gentlemen who in private life are as rigidly decorous as the stiffest advocate of propriety could desire, sat now with their hands joined, swaying their bodies from side to side and lifting their voices till they roared above the band, as they sang with a devil-may-care recklessness that gave additional effect to the conviction they expressed that—

"So suiss—wie suiss—ist wahre Narren liebe!" It was a hurly-burly indeed. Pandemonium in very truth, a scene impossible to realize in any other country under the sun. It was likewise exquisitely funny and most of the onlookers were laughing heartily. My Scotch friend however roused herself from her abstraction and moaned. "What would my dear old Scotch Presbyterian father say if he could see me now?" she inquired. Having no information to give on the subject I wisely held my peace. She went on, "How can you bear it?" If one of these dreadful men touched my face with one of those outrageous feathers I should—Oh my dear look! there's another of them tormenting your sister! Tell her that if she likes she can come and sit by me. Oh I really can't stand this—I'm going home."

And go she did, immediately. Oil and water will not mix, and Puritanic Scotch propriety doesn't adapt itself readily to the eccentricities of a German carnival. The incapacity to understand, much less to sympathize with it was born with her. An iceberg would have stood as good a chance of enjoying itself in the tropics, and relief seemed positively to exhale from her as she got nearer the door. The evening was nearly over when a slim little figure clad in the rags of a beggar made its way through the crowd and extended a beseeching palm to everybody.

"I schenk mir was." "Pook!" ejaculated everybody. It was indeed Pook, the jolly little comedian whose appearance on the stage every night is invariably greeted with a roar of laughter, and with whom, through the sheer force of association, one never couples a serious thought. Yet here he was collecting for the poor, and as few refused him, had already gathered a goodly sum for the relief of some of earth's suffering ones. The triviality and good nature of the season was the shrewd little man's opportunity.

"So suiss—wie suiss—ist wahre Narren liebe." The ridiculous refrain still sounded in our ears as we made our way home and even then seemed to ring the knell of carnival. When I awakened on the glorious Ash Wednesday morning I was "ware" of a significant object lying on the table near the foot of my bed.

A broken peacock's feather. Carnival was over. N. J.

Love is frequently satisfied with quantity; but friendship demands quality.

## HER FIRST SWEET-HEART.

SOMETHING THAT A GIRL IS SURE TO REMEMBER.

Early Impressions that Are Indelible—They May be Ridiculous to the World but Sacred to Her—A Personal Experience That Illustrates the Fact.

Some standard authorities on the important subjects of love, courtship and marriage assert that a girl should always accept her first offer, since it is certain to be the best one she will ever receive. I have private reasons of a very convincing nature for differing with the authorities mentioned, because my own first offer, which I received at the early age of fourteen, was from an ancient and very tipsy sailor who must have been endowed with an unusual amount of the susceptibility to female attractions, for which the jolly tar has always been noted, since he fell a victim to my budding charms in passing me on the street. He stopped me, politely lifted his cap, rolled up his eyes tragically, placed his dirty old hand on his heart, and proceeded to invite me in impassioned language to share his fortunes. I wasn't elated in the least. I was too frightened to feel proud, and I ran all the way home under the impression that my suitor was in hot pursuit. It is much more probable that he was lying peacefully on the sidewalk, wrapped in alcoholic dreams, or being tenderly conveyed to the retreat for inebriates known as the "jug"; but I did not stop to reason the matter out, I only thought of arriving at the conclusion, which was just then, the tranquil security of my own home. That little episode occurred some years ago, but I have not yet either forgotten, or forgiven, the shouts of derision with which my explanation of my sudden return was received. As I said before, I was not inclined to put on any airs over my conquest, but the general verdict of my family circle, that "He must have been very drunk indeed" was far from flattering.

I think this little explanation will make it quite plain why I should not consider it exactly fair to Geoffrey if I accepted the popular fallacy about first offers. Probably my experience was unusual, as well as unfortunate, but as it prevents me from discussing the subject with anything like authority, I will pass on, to one with which I am more familiar—the first sweetheart—instead of the first offer.

Who says that children have short memories, and that the impressions made upon a child's mind are like shadows on a wall? I have read it somewhere, but the writer was merely displaying a most woeful ignorance; for if the early impressions of childhood resemble shadows, it must be the indelible shadows which science has enabled us to fix upon the photographer's glass, and which remain intact for years, needing only the sun's touch to call into fresh life the picture they have held so long. And so, I believe that the memory of a girl's first sweetheart is something which never leaves her as long as life lasts, and which, however absurd or ludicrous the episode itself may have seemed to other people, is always sacred to her.

My first sweetheart came to me before I was six years old, and although in the years that have passed since then he has had several successors, no one has ever quite taken his place. I have been a faithful wife to Geoffrey, and, if I do say it myself—a devoted one, but still there is one niche in my heart the door of which has been closed even to him, and the name it bears is George Washington Hopkins, for that was my little sweetheart's name.

Dear "Washie," I can see him plainly now with his broad forehead, smoothly brushed dark hair, and round bright brown eyes. He was nearly seven, and quite a hero in my eyes because he was so neat, his hands were so clean, and his turned down collar so very white. But the most marvellous thing about him was his extraordinary politeness, he was such a thorough little gentleman, that he used to fill me with surprise, accustomed as I was to the horror of having an elder brother. Washie first won my infant heart by his good looks and frequent gifts of candy; but he held it by his more solid attraction. He never pouted me vigorously, as my brother did, neither did he pull my hair or pinch me, so I naturally looked upon him as only a little lower than the angels themselves and surrendered my heart into his keeping without hesitation. He had an elder brother, I remember, whose name was Sam, a gentle, delicate looking, quiet boy, and he also possessed the sweetest mother imaginable, but I cannot recall much about his father; I fancy that even at the early age of five, some feminine instinct must have prompted me to take more interest in my future mother-in-law, who was all important than in the father-in-law, who did not count at all; but of one thing I am certain, Washie and I loved each other dearly, and were always perfectly happy together. We never exchanged rings, or any special vows, but we did exchange photographs, also marbles, pieces of string, peanuts and taffy, and we stood up for each other as manfully as if we had been husband and wife. If any other little girl slapped me Washie slapped her back again, if possible, and if it was not possible, he threw a piece of mud at her, and soiled her clean "pinnie," while I returned the compliment when another boy struck Washie, by firing the biggest stone I could lift at the assailant, and though I never succeeded in hitting

him, I always felt better afterwards, and nobody was any the worse. Dear old boy! I have his picture still, and I often wonder if he has mine. His, represents a sturdy little lad standing up very straight, and important; arrayed in the long trousers into which the American boy steps, as soon as he sheds his skirts, and an overcoat with a cape, one corner of which is thrown back to permit his fat hand to rest negligently on the back of a chair upon which rests his little "pork pie" hat of light grey felt. I think the photo must have been taken in muddy weather, because Washie confided to me that he had his new rubber boots on, and asked me to notice how "nice and shiny" they looked in the picture.

I look at that little photograph very often, because it always makes me feel so young, and I often wonder, too, whether the feet that trotted about so happily and lightly in the new rubber boots, are still treading life's pathways, and if so, whether the road they walk is rough or smooth. It may be that my little sweetheart finished his race on earth very early, without having entered life's struggles at all; and it may be that somewhere in the beautiful city of Philadelphia, where my infancy was spent, a prosperous man called George Washington Hopkins, with children of his own, and a life filled with the cares and the responsibilities prosperity brings, may live, move and have his being, blissfully unconscious that such a person as myself ever existed—men forget so easily. Wouldn't he laugh, if he could read this, and know, how a woman, hundreds of miles away, was sentimentalizing over him? And if he could just see that picture! Well, I think he would wish some women had shorter memories. That was my very best "bean," girls! Now suppose some of you were to tell me about yours? I am sure it would be interesting to compare notes. ASTRA.

"That amateur of beautiful things and dilettante of things delightful," Mr. Oscar Wilde, is once more the centre of admiring attention, and has his caustic remarks widely quoted. When the cook in a certain famous restaurant sent in, to his order, a watercress sandwich, not the slight diaphanous thing he expected, but a stout and wholesome form of food for the hungry, he sent back word. "Tell the cook with my compliments—the compliments of Mr. Oscar Wilde—that when I ask for a sandwich of watercress I do not mean a loaf with a field in the middle of it."

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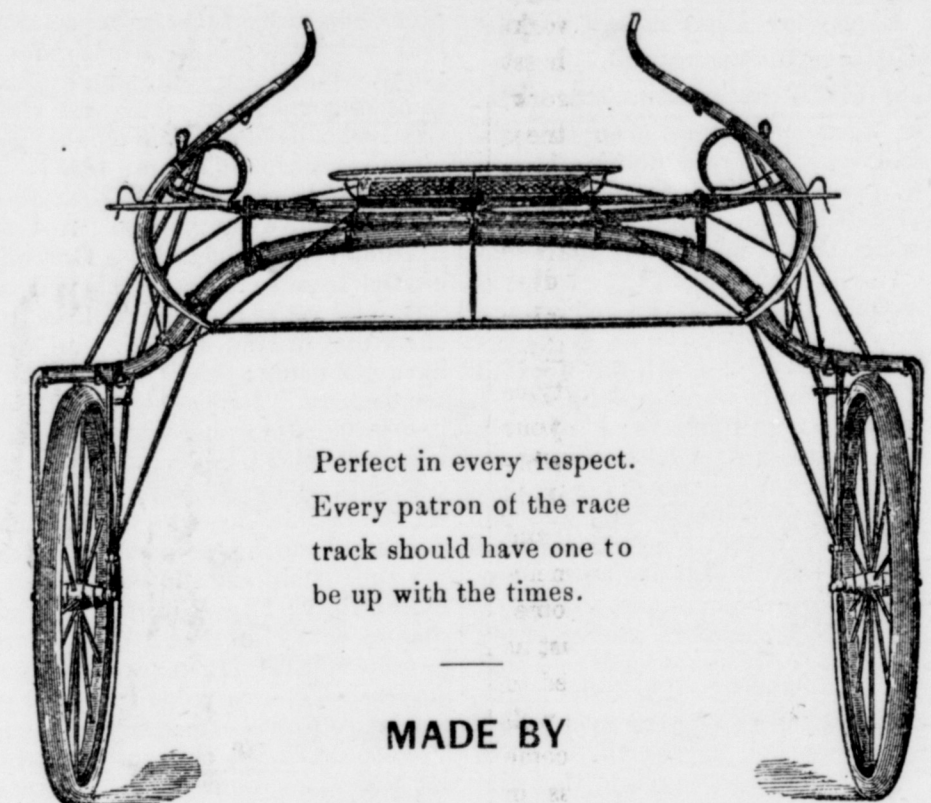
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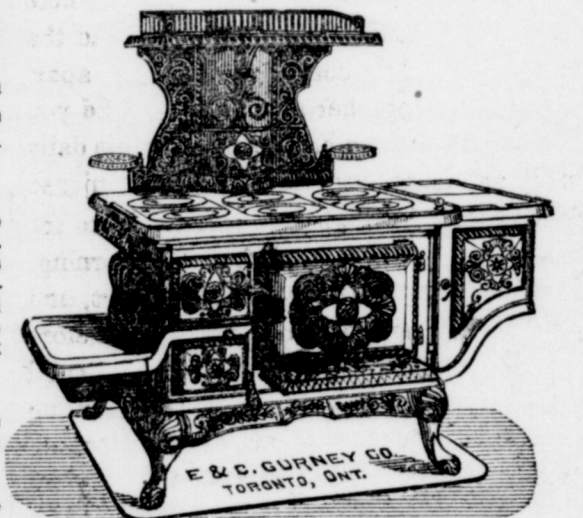
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