

JOLLY AT THE FRENCH BALL.

WELLIE BLY TELLS OF THE FROLICS AND BRREZINESS AFTER MIDNIGHT.

How the Polleegans Winked at Wine Drinking and Took Nippers Throeselves Behind the Door—Scenes in the Cloak Room—Young Women with Nimble Feet and Fantastic Gowns—A Scramble for Wraps.

I went to the French Ball fully prepared to be terribly shocked.

But I wasn't. If I had never been to the seashore and witnessed the bathing, or to the opera-house and seen the occupants of the boxes, I might have been. I confess that once in a while a bit of high flavored conversation struck my ear, but the same thing, and worse, has happened on the street and on the Elevated trains. Ever since I have known anything about New York I have heard thrilling whispers about the French Ball. Of course, every woman who has heard such whisperings has longed as much for a glance at the ball as the ancient Eve did for a taste of the apple, and most of Eve's descendants in the female line are going to gratify that curiosity if they get the chance.

I don't confess to any desire or curiosity to gaze on and ogle Folly, but I wanted to see what a Franco-American ball was like. Covered from head to foot with a shapeless black domino and furnished with a great, strong companion, I drove to the Metropolitan Opera-House. The sunlight flickered fitfully through the misty rain and some of the clouds, as if weary of its task—told us twelve slow strokes just as we tried to find an opening among the carriages which lined the curb for three blocks. An officer came to our assistance, and the grating crowd of men that filled the sidewalk pressed as close as possible to each new carriage, eager to catch a glimpse of the masked figures it was sure to contain. Low comments were occasionally passed among them, but otherwise they were very quiet and far from being rude.

It is so dreary on the outside, and I who have had a little feeling of pity for those who are trying to catch, from this point of view, a glimpse of other people's pleasure. Our little pasteboard tickets, like a magic wand, put behind us the wet, shivering people, the dreary mist, the heavy plume, and thrust us amid bright costumes, light laughter, fragrant flowers and gay music. We rushed after other rushing figures to the cloak-room, eager to be free to see all we knew was behind the closed doors.

As I was there to see, I stood for a moment watching the occupants of the cloak-room. The room was not large and it was more than comfortably filled; but as the majority of the women were pleasing to the eye it was endurable. Very few were masked and nearly all were busy adjusting the last touches to their costumes. Pretty, high-heeled feet were being transferred from boots to dainty little slippers. There seemed so many things to do about each one that somehow I began to feel uncomfortable, because I was in the way—as the others were—of a pin just here or was taken out there, a look of hair fastened or another loosened, a glove buttoned, a slipper buckled and the powder-puff applied in spots that had been touched by heavy wraps.

THE MONEY WAS IN HER STOCKINGS.

"Can't one go on the floor without a mask?" asked a pretty, black-eyed girl. The vendor of masks seemed her that no one could.

"It's a perfect shame," she continued, as she pushed daintily feet on a chair. A quick movement, a flash of white, a faint idea of delicate color, and, against a wall of bills—she brought a pink mask with which she covered up her pretty face.

"What's the matter with you for a cloak check?" demanded a large woman whose lightning glance, as her high-domed black hair helped her to see, was fixed on the girl's stockings. "You've got to show me the bottom of those stockings for a low price."

loudest and most pronounced, the most hidden and awkward assumed the grande dame and the most quiet had on men's apparel. The girl with the big feet was kittenish and shayed them; the girl who had a turkey-before-Thanksgiving look posed as a sylph. Many costumes were very low at the top, just as many were high in the skirts—and so it was like a school of misfits.

Very few men, surely not more than fifteen, were in costume, and, with three or four exceptions, none was masked. I wondered as I looked why men do not mask at a mask ball? Are they better than their neighbors, or are they bolder, or do they not think it detrimental to them when occasionally they are less the man, or are they too vain to cover their faces for even one evening? But the music kept on and the dancing was resumed with more abandon. One young man with very supple feet began to do some fancy dancing with a girl in a short pink gown. It took but a second for a ring to form about them, and when the music ended they were warmly applauded. A kittenish girl in a blue satin Kate Greenaway gown and cap began to throw a rubber ball and in catching it made it whistle. She succeeded in attracting some men in search of fun who would catch the ball and throw it to others, keeping the kittenish girl on the run for her lost toy. She enjoyed it. She was there for fun, and she was one of the jolliest in the house.

IN THE WINE-ROOM.

When the boxes commenced to thin out and the dancers to go out one door but to come in at another with an air of reinforced ability to make amusements or find it, we concluded to leave our place of security and to mingle with the crowd. We went down and out along the corridors to a small wine room. I can't say what the room looked like, because it was so crowded that there was nothing but tobacco smoke and humanity visible. Every table held glasses and wine bottles. Around every table were men and women laughing, talking, drinking and smoking. The spaces between tables were so filled with people who had a thirist that the waiters could hardly perform their duties. Watching our chance we secured a vacant place where we could view, unobscured, a contest between the four occupants of the nearest table to see which couple could live the longest without taking a breath. Talk of a chewing-gum match! It was nothing by comparison. No one seemed at all abashed by this display of affection. Kisses were as thick as bees to a rose harvest, and the yams of old-fashioned country kissing were knocked out of time. But we caught a waiter, and for a moment he claimed our attention.

"No more wine," he said, in answer to our order. "The police have stopped the wine."

"What's no wine! We were indignant and we felt we had a right to be, for what is a French ball without wine!

The waiter watched our disappointed looks with gloom, and then he whispered:

"If you are willing to give the price you can have it."

"What is the price?"

"Three dollars and fifty cents a pint," was the reply. "I've got to square the copper."

We paid the price and drank our wine unobscured, although an officer was right at our elbow.

While I sat there a pretty girl, with large, brown eyes and short brown hair, came in. She wore a short red gown and no mask. Evidently she had been sampling wine before she came to the ball, and her escort half led, half carried her, while she laughed until her dainty cap was all awry on her curly head. She was the merriest girl in the room, and the room was a sample of the unreserved merriment everywhere. None looked so bright and happy. None was as quick and clever of speech. One year ago, when I was investigating Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum, this girl was confined in the same ward with me. She was put there for leading the life of which she is now in the midst. As I saw her drink her goblet of champagne and laugh and talk, free, free to everything, good and evil, I scanned this with scorn, rough food, iron bars, cruel treatment and God-forsaken, insane companions, and I wondered—wondered which was preferable.

Not daring to look longer at this scene we decided to go upstairs to the larger wine-rooms. Already the effect of no wine was visible there.

he said. Then the detective gave an officer a look which he meant for sly. We all saw it, none sooner than our long-nosed waiter with the innocent look, who quietly walked to another table and slid away with some glasses. He slid in and out of the room several times, apparently anxious to clear away the empty glasses from other tables. His eyes all the while watched so innocently and carelessly over his long nose that I was much amused. The one officer at our back was reinforced with two more. In a guileless manner our innocent waiter brought a cup of clam broth and set it before us. We had not ordered it, but he used this means to give us wine glasses.

"It will soon be sailing at \$7," he whispered, meaning the champagne.

"Follow the waiter out and get the wine in your own pocket," I said to my escort, and he did so. He brought it back with him and poured it out. The bottle he set on the table and we lifted the glasses to our lips with a keener enjoyment than we had experienced before in tasting the bubbling fluid.

"Where did you get this?" said an officer coming up and familiarly resting his club right next our bottle.

"What?" stammered my escort, turning color, while I smothered a laugh.

"Who said you this wine?" demanded the officer sternly.

THE POLLEEGAN'S LITTLE JOKE.

"I don't know," my escort replied.

"Well, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Don't you know you're breaking the law? If you hadn't a lady with you I'd take it from you." All this he said roughly, then he added in a lower voice:

"Have the grace at least to put the bottle under the table."

The bottle went under the table, the officer returned to his place behind us and I enjoyed a hearty laugh.

A handsome actor, now filling a leading role at one of the city theatres, strolled through the room, glancing with disgust at the empty tables. A young actress, who has been much written about this season, came in with a young man several inches shorter than herself. She is tall and slender, and her well-known yellow locks were replaced with dark brown ones. She wore a blue Turkish or Chinese costume, with a small red cap, and over her face was a heavy black lace veil. Her escort asked for wine, but when they found they could get none they left, and I afterwards saw them on the floor dancing with as much enjoyment as if wine had been free and plenty.

Presently there was a commotion at the "Violet's" table. A waiter rushed from the room, and a big officer reached under the table and took out two bottles of wine.

"Here, that belongs to us," called out one of the girls, when she saw that the officer intended to take the wine also.

"Take this man away," he said to some of his officers, as he grabbed the nearest waiter. The waiter protested that he was innocent, as did every one about; but it was useless, the smart officer must arrest some one, and what matter if he did not get the right man? Our waiter followed them out and when he came back he told us that the officer drank the captured champagne.

This turmoil had no sooner settled than the man who sat at the table near the portiers were caught hiding a bottle from under the curtain. Another bottle for the policemen and another waiter arrested. The young woman, who, I remarked, had recollection in her eye, called a burly officer to her table. She said nice things to him. I couldn't hear them, but I could see his vanity glow on his pleased face. She tapped him coquettishly with her fan; he smiled and flushed, and after it all he considerably turned his back while the waiter brought her a bottle and placed it under the table.

So we got friendly with the officer on our best, and he informed us that he didn't mind if we bought more wine, but to "please put the bottle under the table."

THE POLLEEGAN'S KISS FOR EVERYBODY.

What a change in the hall-room when we returned there! The floor looked very empty, and those who remained had an air of furred gaiety, for how could one deny of thirst be merry? Even the music seemed to lag, and at the hour when the French ball should have been the liveliest it was as cheerless as a wet blanket on a frosty night. The boxes were all blank. Almost

... a flash of skirts, a faint tinkle of diamonds, color, said, pressed a roll of bills. She bought a pink mask with which she covered up her pretty face.

"What! twenty-five cents for a cloak check?" exclaimed a large woman whose immense diamonds in her high-dressed, blackened hair helped attract some attention from her extremely low bodice.

"Here's five dollars my lady sent to pay for her check," a colored maid, with diamond ear-rings as large as her eyes, said to the cloak woman.

"Sarah," called a pretty girl in a Kate Greenaway costume to her maid; "go call Charlie to give me a bill. I want to get my white checked."

"You can pay when you come back for it," she was informed, but the maid had gone.

"I don't want silver, give me paper," said the maid with the diamonds, as she was handed her change.

"What?" she continued. "Can't you do me better? My lady can't carry silver."

"Here's my silver. They go in with my cloak," chimed in a girl in an Empire costume.

"Put my umbrella in with my wraps," commanded an old girl in a young gown—short skirts and high bonnet and all that.

"Why don't you walk on me? I can't stand here all night," complained a girl in a pink gown, with a white lace scarf over her face.

"You've waited on these new ones since I've been here," complained another. And so the din kept up in the cloak-room until I concluded at the patience and calmness of the attendants.

Outside the cloak-room, in the corridor, I watched for my escort and watched others who were waiting. Occasionally a masked girl saluted one who was not masked, and the latter would say, "Who are you? Oh, yes, I know!" and then they would fall to making inquiries as to who was there and who was not. Sometimes the man who came up to wait for their companions, not yet ready, would be spoken to by masked girls. Then there would be little tusslings, as if trying to see under the masks, and little yells of "don't," but it was done quietly.

DARKLING BRILLIANCE OF THE FLOOR.

As soon as I was in my box, which was not in the first tier, I eagerly leaned over the railing and viewed the pretty scene below. The room was dazzlingly bright, and the atmosphere, being so an Indian summer morn, was faintly laden with the perfume of flowers. The orchestra was playing a waltz with many of the little string notes that strangely thrill the heart like the touch of a hand we love, and the centre of the floor was a swaying, sweeping, straying, spinning mass of colors. The waltz was ended, and the orchestra in the opposite gallery took up a refrain. The whirling dancers fell into a circle of promenade, and so I transferred my attention to other things. The first tier of boxes was filled with beautifully dressed women, most of whom were masked. They all made a lavish display of flowers, and two or more boxes were outlined with magnificent bouquets.

One very noticeable thing was the general division of men and women—the women in boxes alone and the men likewise. One box in particular I noticed. In it were four rows of good young men. That is, they looked good—they sat there so quiet and prim. Even their vast shirt-fronts, gleaming immaculately white, seemed to suggest sobriety and goodness. In that second tier were some few people who looked more as if they were there from curiosity, and still above in the circle were two rows of people who surely came to see and not to be seen. The only real French women at the ball sat, closely veiled, in this circle watching the queer capers of those below them.

But the floor claimed my attention. The stage where dancers had been wont to strut and twist their heads—where the ballet had been wont to make an index finger of itself—was gone and the opera-chairs had disappeared as if by magic. In their place the stage had been some bits of scenery left set served as a background for the brilliant scene. The floor at a quick glance was but a conglomeration of colors, shapes, styles and sizes, but on closer observation each assumed an individuality. There were women masked and unmasked. Invariably the eldest women wore the roughest costumes, the newest wore the

the most elegant. Many were as quick looked as bright and happy. More was as quick and clever of speech. One year ago, when I was investigating Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum, this girl was confined in the sea ward with me. She was put there for leading the life of which she is now in the midst. "As I saw her drink her goblet of champagne and laugh and talk, free, free to everything, good and evil, I compared this with scant, rough food, iron bars, cruel treatment and God-forsaken, insane companions, and I wondered—wondered which was preferable.

Not caring to look longer at this scene we decided to go upstairs to the larger wine-rooms. Already the effect of no wine was visible there. The rooms were thinning out, but the broken glasses and empty bottles gave quiet testimony of what had been. We seated ourselves at a table as much to view the proceedings as for any other purpose.

WAITERS WATCHED BY DETECTIVES.

At the far end of the room was a long table surrounded by a crowd that had not judging from their manners, been cheated of their wine. At a corner table was a quietly dressed and well-behaved French family. At another table were a girl in lights and one in ballet costume with their escorts. The table nearest to us had two girls. One was a very pretty, short-haired blonde, in a violet costume. The short skirt, bodice and cap were composed entirely of violet. There were four men with "Violet" and her companion. It was after 1 o'clock, but there was

although they were not slow at drinking, seemed unaccountably always to be filled. At a table beside the partition, between the two rooms, was a thirsty-looking man and woman trying to be satisfied with food alone. She had a gleam of despair in her eyes—or maybe quiet resolution. At any rate I decided to watch her. At a side table which stood against the heavy portiere, which hid the way to the stairs, were two men. These were all there were in the room, excepting of course, the waiters (who had nothing to do except watch the policemen), and the policemen who were watching the waiters. There were also several detectives lounging about whose endeavors to look mighty smart and cunning were extremely ridiculous.

One stood over us for awhile as if expecting we would conjure up a wine bottle from a soiled menu card. When tired of standing he set down at a table and held a card open before him, while his eyes shared time between the table where the violet girl was and ourselves. The officer in charge occasionally walked about the room displaying an immense club, which he rested on the tables as he glanced beneath them. Then another big officer went through, and from a large roll of bills gave money to all of his men who were stationed about. The genial Frenchman, who had charge of the main features of the ball, rushed around with a derby hat on the back of his head, his face pale from disappointment that his guests should be treated so shabbily.

"A shame! a shame!" he wailed. "The prettiest ball we ever had, and it's been ruined—ruined."

An officer, twice the Frenchman's size, met him right by our table. He gave the Frenchman a hint that wine for the police in a private room would not be unwelcome. The poor Frenchman called his head waiter and gave him the officer's wily instructions. The waiter listened in silence then said in French: "D—the American laws."

I approved his remark when the American law will give wine to the officers and not to the guests at a ball.

"Now," I said to my escort, "if the officers break the law and have wine, so will we," and we called a waiter.

"Can you get any water?" we asked him. He had a long nose and an innocent look, but he knew several things.

"Can you get a pint of champagne for \$4," he said in a whisper, while his off eye rested on the near-by detective with a look of sublime innocence.

"But where will you get it?" I asked.

He merely turned back the side of his coat and there, in his pocket, was the bottle!

"I'll open it and you'll have to serve yourself."

his back while the waiter knelt her head and placed it under the table.

So we got friendly with the officer on our bank, and he got friendly so that he didn't mind us being near the table. "Always put the bottle under the table."

FRANCESE KISSES NOT RECORDED.

What a change in the ball-room when we returned there! The floor looked very empty, and those who remained had an air of forced gaiety, for how could one enjoy it long and so merry? Even the music seemed to lag, and at the hour when the French ball should have been the liveliest it was so absent as to be indistinguishable from any other. The beams were dimly lit. Almost every man had disengaged himself from the boxes where earlier in the evening only women had been, and the four rows of good young men with the immaculate shirt-fronts water-tanned and streaked looking. They had added several women to their list, and while I looked they looked one up from the floor, a performance that was highly amusing to all beholders. In other boxes there was much seating in one another's arms, and on the floor old-fashioned couples sat as well as smart.

At a table "Miss Smart Woman" was played and I think everybody felt that it was as good a place as a French ball without wine. Those who had been sitting on the main set up to show the crowd to rush to the cloak-room. Such a mob as there was there after champagne. Charles goes last by girls, checks

every, all the attendants were now. Some of the French girls were on the floor and the cheapest on the highest rank. At the cloak-room all traces some of the women were hiding as many men good-night as they could. One young man became so jealous that he followed the fair maid of his affections into the cloak-room to protest against her kissing so many in one evening.

We started out, stumbling over discarded bouquets on the stairs. The orchestra was still, the remnants of costumes were strewn about the corridors, every one was hurrying silently away, as the shades of night fell before approaching dawn. The carriage door was slammed shut and the French ball was a thing of the past.

HALLIE BAY.