

ALL SOCIETY IN COSTUME

MRS. W. K. VANDERBILT'S GREAT FANCY DRESS BALL.

A BRILLIANT SCENE OF BRIGHT AND RICH COSTUMES, PROFUSE DECORATIONS OF FLOWERS, AND SOME UNIQUE DANCES.

The Vanderbilt ball has agitated New-York society more than any social event that has occurred here in many years. Since the announcement that it would take place, which was made about a week before the beginning of Lent, scarcely anything else has been talked about. It has been on every tongue and a fixed idea in every head. It has disturbed the sleep and occupied the waking hours of social butterflies, both male and female, for over six weeks, and has even, perhaps, interfered to some extent with that rigid observance of Lenten devotions which the Church exacts. Amid the rush and excitement of business men have found their minds haunted by uncontrollable thoughts as to whether they should appear as Robert Le Diable, Cardinal Richelieu, Otho the barbarian, or the Count of Monte Cristo, while the ladies have been driven to the verge of distraction in the effort to settle the comparative advantages of ancient, mediæval, and modern costumes, or the relative superiority, from an effective point of view, of such characters and symbolic representations as a Princess de Croy, Rachel, Marie Stuart, Marie Antoinette, the Four Seasons, Night, Morning, Innocence, and the Electric Light. Invitations have, of course, been in great demand, and in all about 1,200 were issued. As Lent drew to a close, everybody having decided what he or she was going to wear, the attention of the select few turned from the question of costumes to the settlement of the details of the ball itself and the practicing of the parts assigned to them in the various fancy quadrilles decided on to make the most conspicuous features of the entertainment. The drilling in these quadrilles has been going on assiduously in Mrs. William Astor's and other private residences for more than a week, while prospective guests not so favored as to be able to witness these preliminary entertainments have had to content themselves with recounting such items of information as could be extracted from the initiated. As early as 7 o'clock last evening, although the ball was not to begin until 11, gentlemen returning from the hair-dressers' with profusely powdered heads were to be seen alighting from coupés along Fifth-avenue, and hurrying up the steps of their residences to complete their toilets. About the same time the passage up the avenue of an express wagon containing the horses for the hobby-horse quadrille attracted a great deal of attention. By 8 o'clock a large crowd of inquisitive loungers was collected in Fifth-avenue and Fifty-second-street watching Mr. Vanderbilt's brilliantly illuminated residence and a group of workmen putting up the awning before the entrance.

Inside, long before the ball commenced, the house was in a blaze of light, which shown upon profuse decorations of flowers. These, which were by Klunder, were at once novel and imposing. They were confined chiefly to the second floor, although throughout the hall and parlors on the first floor, were distributed vases and gilded baskets filled with natural roses of extraordinary size, such as the dark crimson Jacqueminot, the deep pink Glorie de Paris, the pale pink Baroness de Rothschild and Adolphe de Rothschild, the King of Morocco; the Dutchess of Kent and the new and beautiful Marie Louise Vassey. But a delightful surprise greeted the guests upon the second floor, as they reached the head of the grand stairway. Grouped around the clustered columns which ornament either side of the stately hall were tall palms overtopping a dense mass of ferns and ornamental grasses, while suspended between the capitals of the columns were strings of variegated Japanese lanterns. Entered through this hall is the gymnasium, a spacious apartment, where supper was served on numerous small tables. But it had not the appearance of an apartment last night; it was like a garden in a tropical forest. The walls were nowhere to be seen, but in their places an impenetrable thicket of fern above fern and palm above palm, while from the branches of the palms hung a profusion of lovely orchids, displaying a rich variety of color and an almost endless variation of fantastic forms. In the centre of the room was a gigantic palm, upon whose umbrageous head rested a thick cluster of that beautiful Cuban vine, vougén villa, which trailed from the dome in the centre of the ceiling. To make the resemblance to a garden more complete, two beautiful fountains played in opposite corners of the apartment. The doors of the apartment, thrown back against the walls, were completely covered with roses and lilies of the valley.

The scene outside the brilliantly lighted mansion, as the guests began to arrive, was novel and interesting. Early in the evening a squad of Police officers arrived to keep the expected crowd of sight-seers in order and to direct the movements of drivers and cabmen. Before 10 o'clock men and women were wandering about the streets outside of the house and glancing at the windows, or peering under the double canopies which led up to the door. They took up positions on the steps of the houses opposite or stood on the adjacent corners waiting for the carriages to arrive, and then all who could obtain room on the sidewalks crowded at the outsides of the canopies and gazed curiously and enviously at the gorgeously costumed gentlemen and ladies whom the ushers assisted to alight. Carriages containing the more youthful and impatient of the maskers drove past the mansion before 10:30 o'clock, the occupant peering surreptitiously under the curtain to see if others were arriving as he rolled by. Carriages drove slowly by, while the ladies and gentlemen in them, who were not in costume, gazed out of the windows and at the crowds about the house, indicating that curiosity was not confined to the humble walks of life entirely. At 11 o'clock the maskers began to arrive in numbers, and the eager lookers-on in the street were able to catch glimpses through the windows of flashing sword-hilts, gay costumes, beautiful flowers, and excited faces. Handsome women and dignified men were assisted from the carriage in their fanciful costumes, over which were thrown shawls, ulsters, and other light wraps. Pretty and excited girls and young men who made desperate efforts to appear *blase*, were seen to descend and run up the steps into the brilliantly lighted hall. Club men who looked bored arrived singly and in pairs and quartets, in hired cabs, and whole families drove up in elegant equipages with liveried coachmen and footmen. A great many ladies were accompanied by their maids, who were not allowed to leave the carriages, whereat there was some grumbling. Gentlemen's valets were treated in the same manner, and the ushers insisted that these orders were imperative. At 11:30 o'clock the throng of carriages before the mansion and waiting at the corners was so great that the utmost efforts of the Police were necessary to keep the line in order, and many gentlemen left their carriages in adjacent streets and walked up to the canopy which was the entrance to the fairy-land. Most of the gentlemen gave orders to their coachmen to call for them at 3 o'clock. Others made the hour as late as 4, and some of the more seasoned and wiser party-goers ordered their carriages as early as 1 and 2 o'clock. The guests had all arrived, save a few stragglers, at midnight, and the crowd began to disperse. A few still remained to wander about in the vicinity of the house, or to gaze into the area windows or up to the more brilliant plate-glass in the stories above. At 1 the Police were the sole occupants of the street before the house, with the exception of an occasional wondering belated pedestrian.

The guests on arriving found themselves in a grand hall about 65 feet long, 16 feet in height, and 20 feet in width. Under foot was a floor of polished and luminous Echallon stone, and above them a ceiling richly paneled in oak. Over a high wainscoting of Caen stone, richly carved, are antique Italian tapestries, beautifully worked by hand. Out of this hall to the right rises the grand stairway, which is not only the finest piece of work