

MISCELLANEOUS.

AN OLD TIME DANCING PARTY.

Those who today attend a ball in Utah expect to enter a fine hall, well lighted and tastefully ornamented, and to dance to the best of music, because this is the general rule. But it was not always so in Utah, as many of our elderly people will recollect. To illustrate the difference I give a sketch of one which I attended in early days.

It was in Parowan, Iron county, in the fall of 1851. The largest house in the place was a log building used for Sunday meetings, schools, dancing and other public assemblies, and in this the merry-makers met. As this party was to be rather a "swell" affair, extra exertion was made to obtain the best of music regardless of expense, and so two fiddlers were engaged instead of one, the usual number, and each gentleman was expected to bring two candles to pay for his ticket, those not burned to go to the musicians as their pay. This was no small matter, as candles were very scarce, and generally were kept in reserve for cases of sickness or other extra occasions.

This wise arrangement as to candles promised a brilliant room, but unfortunately, when the time arrived to light up it was found no one had brought a candlestick. The committee, their minds overburdened with the magnitude of the affair, had entirely forgotten this necessary appendage to a candle. But when was Young America hindered from dancing by so slight an impediment? Some took their jack knives, stuck a blade into a log, and this, when partly closed, would hold a candle very well; others rushed home and brought large potatoes or turnips which were transformed quickly into candlesticks by slicing off the bottom for a base and by making a hole in the top to hold the candle; and shingles stuck between the logs at intervals made very good brackets for them.

Then we come to the dance. The musicians are seated at one end of the room, upon a table, while the company occupy seats along the sides, formed of rough boards covered with quilts and upheld by blocks and benches. The younger part of the company show unmistakable signs of impatience until the Bishop, in humble prayer, asks the blessing of God upon the evening's enjoyment. He ceases, and expectation lights up every eye. "Numbers one to twelve," cries the floor manager, and all holding those numbers rush for their partners. The numbers, by the way, were drawn, lottery fashion, from a hat passed around at the commencement. But one of these dancers was a youth evidently new to social functions of this kind, and was a picture of embarrassment and unrest as he sat casting covert glances towards "his girl"—his first boyish love perhaps—watching the moment when he could lead his partner to the floor unobserved by any one, and she apparently a little flurried too. Here a couple of tall gawky youths are just bowing awkwardly to their partners, but unluckily they stand back to back and are a little too near each other. The result is a collision entirely spoiling the dignity of their salute, and causing a titter in those lucky enough to witness the scene, much to the inward wrath of the un-

lucky youth. But the music and "circle all" quickly banish all remembrance of the incident, and away they go. How delicious to watch this elderly couple who are just learning to dance! The only thing they seem to have really learned is how to make the most mistakes in a given time. But no one laughs at them, as they evidently are doing their best, and friendly hands pull them this way or push them the other until the figure is finished, and they stand, the picture of pleasure and content, as having got through, thus far, a very difficult undertaking.

Most young men in those days considered that the greater the number of "steps" they could execute to the second, the greater their skill as dancers, and so the boys' feet flew and the girls' skirts swished in marvelous fashion. But such violent "skill" brings copious moisture to the brow, which the few who are lucky enough to possess a handkerchief remove by its use; while others, not so favored by fortune, use their shirt sleeves. To wear a coat on such an occasion would sadly interfere with this convenience—a coat being an article of no real use, and always in one's way. Besides this, most of the boys didn't own a coat, but wore shirts of linsey or flannel, with two big pockets on the bosom. The second figure being finished, the caller cries "Promenade all—you know where," and each swain proudly leads his partner to her seat. But new arrivals have filled all vacant places, so one girl holds another on her lap, the boys looking on enviously and wishing they could hold them instead.

After a while a rest is called; some one sings a song or speaks a few words until all are rested—then, "on with the dance!" About 11 p. m., many glances are cast towards a corner where many baskets, pails and pans are piled, and the younger ones whisper, "When will they have the picnic?" Reproved by their elders, their eyes still plead, though their tongues are silent; for you know, boys are always hungry. But others, too, are hungry, and soon the eatables are all spread by the sisters, and eaten with a relish.

Let us examine the contents of this pan. Here is a cake—a little dark in color, perhaps. Well, that is because it is sweetened with home-made molasses made from corn stalks, beets, melons or parsnips, each of which will make a passable syrup. Here are cakes with dried service berries in them—rather tasteless—but it is the best we have, and good enough for anybody. Sugar is almost unknown, raisins and spices entirely so. But, luckily, happiness does not depend upon delicacies, and all are happy without them.

Again the dance goes on, and by this time the candles are becoming short and flaring. What is that fellow doing? Oh, just scraping off, as much as possible, the grease that has dripped upon his only coat, as he sat under one of the candles. He says nothing, but his eyes speak volumes of wrath. Poor fellow! He only wears his coat upon the most momentous occasions, and we must excuse his ill-feeling. But oh, the perversity of human nature! His mind becomes serene as he beholds a rival engaged in a similar manner; or, the girl

who had refused his escort to the dance, scraping the tallow from her best dress—the girl whom he has idolized in secret for the last three weeks. "Serves her right," he says to himself. She, noting his look of exultation at her trouble, vows inwardly to get even with him, even if she has to marry him to accomplish it.

The dance is dismissed with benediction, and all have enjoyed it; not an unkind word or oath has been heard; not a single breath tainted with liquor; peace and good will have reigned supreme.

And now, while the mothers gather their pans and baskets, a crisis is approaching which, to the inexperienced, is appalling, while it is to others a delightful anticipation,—the pairing off, and seeing the girls home. See those two youngsters,—timid where girls are concerned, but brave as lions when facing Indians or grizzlies. They both secretly watch the same girl and try to meet her at the door, fondly believing no one notices them. Vain thought! She sees them both, and secretly rejoices, as she perfectly understands; while seemingly utterly unconscious of all. She carelessly delays, to give them opportunity, and is trying to decide which of them to favor as they approach. Thus, it may be, she may be unconsciously settling, for good or for ill, the most important event of her life; a union that may endure through all the eternities, or may result in final and eternal separation.

This description of an old time party is not a fancy sketch, but will be recognized by many of the older readers of the News as a true picture, and bring to their remembrance many happy reunions in days long past, with friends who long ago have passed behind the veil. But I will confidently assert that no more real enjoyment can today be found in a dancing party or a Bradley-Martin ball than those of olden time within the log walls and upon the rough floor of our primitive schoolhouse.

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WISE MANAGEMENT AND MORE.

It was Aunt Laura! I knew that I could not be mistaken, although seven years had passed since I had seen her, and during that period, I had passed the boundary from childhood to maidenhood. She stood in the hall door as I opened it, and looked very hard at me, as if to make sure if I really could be the little Lol she had sent away from her without kissing, because she was angry with the child's mother.

But I did not wait for her to settle the question. I just threw my arms around her neck and screamed out: "Mother! oh, mother! here's Aunt Laura!"

By the time mother had jumped up, thrown the stocking she had just finished mending into the basket, thrust the darning needle into the cushion and brushed her apron and hands, I had marched Aunt Laura into the room, and the two sisters who, seven years ago, had parted in icy coldness, now embraced, and for some moments sobbed and wept on each other's necks.

As I stood and watched them, I thought of the meeting of Jacob and Esau, and I wept, too; almost anyone would have done the same.

"Laura!" mother said at last; and