
The Life of the Party

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IT had been a successful party, most successful. Mrs. Carroway's parties always were successes, but this one nearing its conclusion stood out notably from a long and unbroken Carrowayian record. It had been a children's party; that is to say, everybody came in costume with intent to represent children of any age between one year and a dozen years. But twelve years was the limit; positively nobody, either in dress or deportment, could be more than twelve years old. Mrs. Carroway had made this point explicit in sending out the invitations, and so it had been, down to the last hair ribbon and the last shoe buckle. And between dances they had played at the games of childhood, such as drop the handkerchief, and King William was King James' son and prisoner's base and the rest of them.

The novelty of the notion had been a main contributory factor to its success; that, plus the fact that nine healthy adults out of ten dearly love to put on freakish garbings and go somewhere. To be exactly truthful, the basic idea itself could hardly be called new, since long before some gifted mind thought out the scheme of giving children's parties for grown-ups, but with her customary brilliancy Mrs. Carroway had seized upon the issues of the day to serve her social