

## THE OTTAWA BALL.

It began really on the previous Saturday evening, when their Excellencies called an undress rehearsal of the program for the eventful Monday night, and the Senate Chamber was the scene of a merry informal gathering in the regulation evening dress, grouping about the various standard-bearers, practising the historic dances, and learning the few preliminaries of place and time needful to avoid confusion.

Their Excellencies, seated upon the dais beneath the crimson canopy, presided with genial informality over the practice, smiling at errors, suggesting improvements in time or pose, while the A.D.C.'s moved busily about in consultation and direction. It was all over at 11.30; light supper was served in the cosy Senate restaurant, and a few minutes before midnight the carriages rolled away, the fair ladies and courtly gentlemen chatted in gay groups down the hill, and Parliament pile was left to the stillness of the early Sunday morning hours.

The evening of the 17th was a sparkle of frosty severity—a typical Canadian midwinter night. The white snow glittered skyward; the stars in thick studding twinkled frostily

down; it was a diamond world, below and above, with the warm lights of the House on the the Hill shining humanly between.

Within, all was warmth and light and low laughter, the hum of voices, and the fragmentary bars of preparatory music.

Fur-robed sleighs were pausing in swift succession before the official-guarded doors, from which cloaked forms stepped, to speed lightly down the long, luxurious Senate corridors and disappear in one of the various dressing-rooms.

Up and down these same corridors quaint figures moved—court ladies and knights, generals and judges, pretty Acadian peasants and swarthy feather-begirt Indians. There were flowing wigs and lank Puritan locks, scarlet and gold, perukes and powder, muslins and moccasins; costumes that held their wearers in close kinship with the stately worthies on the corridor walls, and those older still—the magnificent barbarisms of Norse days. Already it was a picturesque and stirring blending.

Within the Senate Chamber the scene was increasing momentarily

in brilliance. A glance upward to the galleries showed them thronged with ladies and gentlemen in evening dress, mingled with many in costume.

On the floor the standard-bearers were in their places, each holding erect the flag with the device and blazonings of the period it heralded. About these the various groups gathered rapidly, until every "court" was full.

The first bars of the National Anthem subdued the merry hum of voices, and turned every eye to the main Chamber entrance; the vice-regal court was entering. Slow and stately they moved up between the brilliant ranks, in full state ceremonial;—first, buglers, heralds, pages; then their Excellencies and suite, followed by the members of Judiciary, Cabinet and consuls with their ladies, in modern court dress, all ashimmer with lace and jewels, all wavy with feathers and veils.

Their Excellencies stepped upon the dais beneath the rich crimson canopy, their glittering court grouped itself on either side. Below them, on their right, stood the Vikings, in their picturesque dress; below them, on



A PRIVATE PRACTICE.

the left, the U. E. Loyalists—the first and last "periods" of Canadian incoming thus facing each other across the Crimson Chamber,—and following them, ranged down on either side, the intervening groups, until the entire Chamber was circled with a glittering costumed throng, while the eye gazed entranced upon a maze of color and gleam, a riot of art and history, that words fail to express.

\* \* \*

A few moments of pause; then the signal was given, the band struck up a rapid, wild chanting measure; with a rush the Vikings bore their partners to their places, and the first historical dance began.

What a mad measure it was, and how truly indicative of the period. All the verve, the vitality and passion of the barbaric was in it; all the tale of the days when physical prowess and bodily conquest prevailed; the wild triumph of the drinking cup, the bold assault upon the maidens, the days of "the taking by force"—all this the Viking dance told. The measure and music were enough; it hardly needed the accurate costuming, the flowing Boadicean robes and crowns of the women, the half-furry garb and head dresses of the men, the presence of the venerable bard with his harp, to bring before us in strong vividness the picture of those old Norse folk who came, half mythically, to our shores, in their quaint wooden ships, nine centuries ago.

The mad Vikings danced and chanted themselves into breathless group beneath their standard amid loud clappings, and their places were taken by Sebastian Cabot and his court in Venetian dress.

Slow and stately was the Venetian dance; a solemn, yet gracious and protective measure. In this, swords were brought into play; in this the courtly dames reclined in chairs while their partners paced slowly to and fro before turning to raise them. They poised and stepped in daintiest way, these high-bred dames and gallants, and bent in marvelous depth of obeisance before the vice-regal throne ere they again paced slowly and delicately beneath their banner.

This dance, too, was expressive of the day and age to which it belongs.

\* \* \*

Jacques Cartier, Canada's own particular hero, came next, bringing in his court Sieur de Roberval, the gentle Margaret of Valois, Francis I. and Henry VIII. with all his wives.

This court had large attaches of fishermen, fisher lassies and sailors.

The dance was a slow and stately quadrille, in which the rich dresses showed to great advantage.

Following it came minuet and gavotte—dances

of France in the Acadian days. Wondrously graceful in pose and coquettish in suggestion, these also were full of expressiveness, telling their story of the days when the code of chivalry taught knightiness in men—in woman, submission.

Maisonnette's period—that of the founding of our big commercial city, Montreal—called forth another solemn Venetian dance, with swords and dainty-stepping ladies.

This was followed by a stately minuet for the days of Montcalm and Wolfe—those splendid stirring days of mingling, yet antagonizing English and French interests, which no Canadian ever realizes to the full until he stands just without old Quebec City, upon the plains of Abraham, beside the simple monument inscribed with those two most heroic names.

\* \* \*

The Evangeline dance came next, and out of its very simplicity captured the hearts of the onlookers. A dance of the maidens it was; pretty peasant girls in Normandy caps, short coquettish skirts, coaxing little aprons, buckled slippers, and a

