

# THE GREAT VANDERBILT FANCY BALL OF 1883, WHICH MRS.

## It Was the Most Sumptuous Fete Ever Given in the New World, and the Enormous Amount of Money Lavished Upon It Was the Absorbing Topic of America for Weeks, and Launched the Whole Vanderbilt Family Into the "Four Hundred."

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NEW YORK has a miserable memory. The sensation of one day is forgotten the next. The fancy dress ball which is soon to be given by Mr. and Mrs. Bradley-Martin is the all-absorbing object of interest in the metropolis to-day. It is to be an event of dazzling magnificence. Millions of dollars will be represented in its celebration. Millions of people are eager to know every stu-

Roman emperors with a dozen entertainments. The aristocracy of New York was to be dazzled by a display of wealth the like of which the most vivid imagination had never painted. For months and months those fortunate ones who had received invitations prepared elaborate costumes. It is on record that Mr. Chansey M. Depew laid all his politi-

"We here reach a period when New York society turned over a new leaf. Up to this time for one to be worth a million of dollars was to be rated as a man of fortune; but now by-gones must be by-gones. New York's ideas as to values, when fortune was named, leaped boldly up to ten millions, fifty millions, one hundred millions, and the necessities and luxuries followed suit. "Lady Mandeville came over to us at this

giving a fairy and elflike appearance to each of them. "The Dresden quadrille, in which the ladies wore white satin, with powdered hair, and the gentlemen white satin knee breeches and powdered wigs, with the Dresden mark-crossed swords—on each of them, was effective. "The hostess appeared as a Venetian princess, with a superb jeweled peacock in her hair. The host was the Duke of Guise for



Mrs. Kernochan in the Mother Goose Quadrille.



Mrs. Wm. K. Vanderbilt the Hostess (Now Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont) in Her Gorgeous Costume of a Venetian Princess.



Mrs. Sloane in the Mother Goose Quadrille.

of its arrangement. It is to be an unprecedented, epoch-making occasion, ever to be remembered. It is likely to be an event of importance to be chronicled everlastingly in the history of the land. You, sir, and madam, who are still young, ransack your memories and see if these reminiscences are not familiar to you? It was on the night of March 29, 1883—thirteen years and ten months ago, by actual reckoning—that Mr. and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt gave a fancy dress ball. They had hardly been admitted within the sacred precincts of New York's fashionable society for a short time, and were struggling for prestige. The fancy dress ball was to be the social coronation. It wasn't so very long ago, was it? The debts were rich—immensely rich—richer than the Bradley-Martins ever dreamed to be. They planned this ball to eclipse every fete of its kind known to history. The money that it was to cost would have provided the most extravagant of the

cal and professional, cares aside and spent a week in attending to the details of his costume. There were others who dreamt about theirs for months. There was no clergyman to set the town agog by protesting against such a lavish expenditure of money, but, in spite of that drawback, this city was pretty thoroughly excited over the affair. Then came the long-awaited night and the wildest hopes of Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt were realized. The ball eclipsed every private entertainment that had ever been given before. In those days Ward McAllister had not risen to the social eminence which he afterward attained, but he was recognized, nevertheless, as one of the leaders of the swellest social set in the town. Seven years later, when he was looked upon as the foremost man in the social life of New York, Mr. McAllister wrote his book "Society as I Have Found It," and here, after describing the development of New York society, he wrote about the Vanderbilt ball in these words:

epoch, and at once a superb fancy ball was announced by one of our fashionable rich men. Every artist in the city was set to work to design novel costumes—to produce something in the way of a fancy dress that would make its wearer live ever after in history. "The six quadrilles were really the event of the ball. The men who danced in the hobby-horse quadrille were dressed in pink, and the ladies wore red hunting coats and white satin skirts, all of the period of Louis XIV. In the Mother Goose quadrille were 'Jack and Jill,' 'Little Red Riding Hood,' 'Bo-Peep,' 'Goody Two-Shoes,' 'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary,' and 'My Pretty Maid.' "The Opera Bouffe quadrille was most successful, but of all of them the Star quadrille, containing the youth and beauty of the city, was the most brilliant. The ladies in it were arrayed as twin stars, in four different colors, yellow, blue, mauve and white. Above the forehead of each lady in her hair was worn an electric light,

that evening. The host's eldest brother wore a costume of Louis XVI. His wife appeared as 'The Electric Light,' in white satin, trimmed with diamonds, and her head one blaze of diamonds. "The most remarkable costume, and one spoken of to this day, was that of a cat; the dress being of cats' tails and white cats' heads, and a bell with 'Puss' on it in large letters. A distinguished beauty, dressed as a Phoenix, adorned with diamonds and rubies, was superb, and the Capuchin Monk, with hood and sandals, inimitable, but to name the most striking would be to name all." There were over seven hundred people at that ball. The sidewalk of Fifth avenue around Fifty-second street was thronged with curious people, who stood there for hours to catch a glimpse of the swells in their fancy costumes, their only reward being an occasional glimpse of bright color that peered from beneath a long cloak or coat. Mrs. Bradley-Martin was there in the



Cornelius Vanderbilt, who Appeared in a Blaze of Diamonds as the Electric Light.



Cornelius Vanderbilt, who Went in the Court Dress of the Louis XVI. Revire.



Miss Breese, who Took Part in the Dresden Quadrille. Three Other Ladies.