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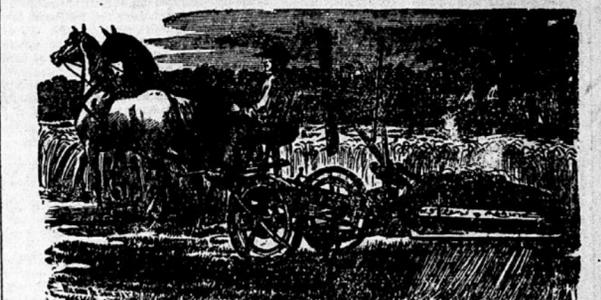
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THAT DANCE AT CHEESEMAN'S.

Flattening one's nose against the window,
and looking over the brown fields, with the
rain blotting out the distant hills, is not an
exhilarating employment.
So thought I one February afternoon;
but what else was there for me to do?
I was away in the country, staying, at a
"farm," to use the vernacular of the in-
habitants.
The rain was increasing. White mists
were rising from the sodden earth.
Even the brown fields became dim,
through the shades of the fast-coming night.
So, now that "Othello's" occupation was
gone, I turned away from the window with
a sigh.

At this opportune moment Jim Hawkins,
the tavernkeeper's son, came in.
Jim was the country Adonis. He was six
feet high and broad in proportion. With
such a physique, who can wonder that all
the maidens sighed for him?
But Jim was bashful. The very flutter of
a petticoat was terrifying to him. So I
was a little surprised when he came in and
stood before the fire in the attitude of a
man who has something to say. I looked
at Jim with quite a degree of interest. It
was mildly exciting, after my long hours of
loneliness, to meet a fellow-being. So I
mentally forgave him for having his pantaloons
tucked in the tops of his boots, which
were redolent of the stables. Jim looked
at the floor, the ceiling, in the fire, any-
where but at me. Then suddenly clearing
his throat with a stentorian "h-e-m!" he
plunged into the subject on his mind. "I
thought, meb-be, seeing you must be lone-
some—h-e-m!" His voice failed him for a
minute. He took off his hat. He had
neglected this trifling formality until now
—gazed reflectively into its depths, found
his lost ideas, and continued, "And might
kind o'—like—to." A second suspension
of the voice now took place. This time it
was alarming. I thought he was strangling.
But presently he came to the surface again.
"Thought, meb-be, you'd like—to kind o'
go to Cheese-man's dance to-morrow night."
Without having the faintest idea of who
Cheese-man was, where he lived, how he
looked, or what he did, I nevertheless rose
to my feet and accepted with eagerness.
Go to Cheese-man's dance? Of course I
would. I assured him that never in the
whole course of my existence, had I gone
anywhere with the delight I would go to
Cheese-man's to-morrow night. In fact my
thanks were so warm that Jim became
alarmed and fed before them.

The next evening at twilight we might
have been seen—in fact we were seen—in
route for Cheese-man's.
On the vehicle was a Studenbaker's wagon.
There were three seats in it. Jim's brother
Tom sat on the front seat with his girl.
His cousin Sam sat in the middle seat
with his girl; while Jim and I sat on the
back seat over the axle.
Tom confined his attention to the horses.
His girl was evidently accustomed to his
secularism. She observed to the rest of us
that Tom's "bein'" so still was no discom-
fort to her, for she could talk for two.
And she soon proved her ability.
Sam considered himself a great wag. He
said to me during the first five minutes of
our drive:
"I reckon I'm just the biggest mischief,
when I get started, that you ever seen."
And his efforts for the remainder of the
time was to make good his assertion.
As for me the ride was one prolonged
agonies. Every jolt of the wagon almost
parted my soul and body, and no man could
describe Jim's sufferings. So great was
his horror of sitting near me, he perched
himself on the extreme edge of the seat,
at the imminent risk of being precipitated
in the mud. This modesty called forth
a continual fire of remarks from the funny
Sam. He declared he "wasn't afraid of no
gall." And exemplified his courage by
winding his arm around the waist of his
Dulcinea and making osculatory demon-
strations. "Now quit that, Sam Hawkins,
ain't ye ashamed o' yourself?" she would cry
with a giggle. This amused the facetious
youth to such an extent that he made a feint
of being ready to roll out of the wagon in
convulsions of merriment. These refined
pleasantries were torture to Jim; whether
he was afraid his manifestations were ex-
pected of him, I do not know, but his suf-
fering was so evident that he was an object
of deepest sympathy to me. I was glad we
arrived at the end of our journey.

Cheese-man was a bachelor. Cheese-
man's house consisted of one large room,
with a "lean-to" kitchen in the rear.
The host stood in the door as we drove
up. Evidently he had been partaking of
something stimulating, for giving a vigorous
"whoop-ee!" when we arrived, he bounded
out to meet us with an eagerness that was
really painful. Tom allowed him to swing
his "Sary Jane" without a protest. But
Sam jumped out of the wagon with a "No,
you don't, ole fell," and took his own fair
share of a swing that landed her on the
door-step.
In the mean time Jim quickly jumped
from the back of the wagon, and giving me
his hand helped me out before the inebriated
Cheese-man perceived his intention.
We hurried into the house, while our
host helped Tom attend to the horses. The
ball-room was neither papered or plaster-
ed. The brown color of the native pine
showed in all its vigorous innocence. But
there was an abundance of candles. Can-
dles, candles everywhere, spluttering, his-
sing, making themselves into puddles of
tallow. An immense lantern was suspended
from the ceiling, two others hung over
the front door.
There were some wooden benches ar-
ranged about the sides of the room, where
sat the expectant guests. The "orchestra"
was in the upper part of the room. It con-
sisted of one man and a fiddle. A bucket
of water stood on the floor beside the or-
chestra, with a tin cup on the floor within
easy reach.
Jim whispered to me as we entered
the room: "I reckon we'd better make it up
with Jake. He won't like it, I don't."
"Jake?" I asked, "who is he?"
"The fiddler," Jim replied, at the same
time leading me up to the orchestra. The
form of introduction was the one prevalent
in that primitive region. It consisted of a
sort of flourish on Jim's part, accompanied
by an incoherent rumble of words that
might have been Sanscrit for all one could
understand.

To this formula the gallant Mr. Robinson
responded by a peculiar kind of shuffle
with both feet, and a declaration the "its
as good as goin'" to a nigger supper to see
you here to-night." This was intended for a
highly complimentary remark, though to
the uninitiated it might sound rather florid!
Jim and I now took our places on the
benches. "Mr. Robinson" gave his fiddle

a preparatory tuning up. Then called out:
"Take your gals for a big square!" Jim
nervously remarked: "Mebbe we hadn't
better gine in till next time." I agreed with
him as to the propriety of waiting and then
gave myself up to the pleasure of watching
my fellow creatures "tread the mazy."
Mr. Robinson's manner of calling the fig-
ures was unique. He would say: "Scrape
to your partners! Now cirkylate around
this hall! Throw yourselves to pieces!
Doxy—ballynet! Bally-netty all! Cirkylate
around this hall! Grab your partner tighter!
All lemonade! Allemandy left! Now cirky-
late around this hall once more! and swing
the girl behind you!"
These calls were all delivered to the tune
of "The girl I left behind me," which tune
was being vigorously evolved from the
"fiddle."
The guests were all now on their good
behavior.
"Just you wait an hour or two," said
Sary Jane to me, "and of you don't see
some of them fellers git up and git."
Just at the close of the cotillion a young
lad entered the room. She paused at the
door in order to make her presence man-
ifest and then cried out in very audible
tones:
"Law sakes! I hope nobody don't think
I'm coming late to make a stir!" Of course
everybody then looked at her, as she fully
intended then to do. She wore a light
green dress, very short in front. In fact it
was abbreviated to such an extent that her
stockings were plainly visible, as they coyly
peeped over the tops of her shoes. But
the back breadth of her dress elongated
themselves into a train. This train gave a
superior elegance to her attire, shared by
no other lady present. She fully felt the
importance of that trail, as she swept up
the room with a hand-box in her arms.
Stopping directly in front of Jim and me,
she asked in a stage whisper where the
dressing room was. The request reached
the ears of our host. "Don't be puttin' on
your 'Rindy,'" cried he; "you know I ain't
got no such French confection in my house
as a dressin'-room." "You'll have to do
like the rest of 'em, an' yank off your things
in here." After a few preliminary giggles
and oh, she never, the fair guest retired to
a corner of the room behind somebody
and made the desired alterations in her
toilet. She emerged presently with huge
scarlet bows pinned on various parts of
her dress skirt; one on her hair and another
with long streamers fluttered coquettishly
from her shoulder.
"That there gal is Clorinda Baker,"
whispered Sary Jane. "She's been shink-
in' to Jim for a long time. Bet she's mad-
der'n hops 'cause he fetched you."
If such was the case, anger did not im-
pede Clorinda's power of locomotion. Her
long train went floating through mazes of
the dance like a light green comet. The
scarlet bows pinned on her dress were as con-
spicuous as the plume of Henry of Navarre.
Here, there, everywhere, down the middle
and up again. Ladies' chain and grand
right and left. Where the bottle was thick-
est, there waved the ribbons.
Clorinda's escort was Abe Crockett, from
Sandy Ridge. His "get up" was pronounced
the height of elegance by the popular voice.
"Abe is the fanciest dresser in the whole
kit of boys," remarked Sarah Jane. He
wore a few boucans myself. So admir-
ably did I succeed that to that reel!
The orchestra and I stood up at the head of
the long line. Robinson called the fiddle
screamed "Ole Virginny never tire." How
we "do-se-doe" and "threw ourselves away."
How we balanced and swung, and went up,
and down, and across and through all the
other intricacies of that dance! How Robin-
son screamed, stamped, sung and danced,
and left to give my hand a tender pressure
whenever he considered the exigencies of
the dance required it.
Some of the gentlemen grew so warm
with the vigorous exercise that they took
off their coats and vests. Our funny Sam
also removed his collar and cravat. He de-
clared it was a sight hotter than a Fourth
of July celebration, with the fireworks
thrown in. And he'd a great mind to take
off his boots and go barefooted.
This witicism was received with great
enthusiasm. It also elicited from his Dul-
cinea the usual "Now quit! Ain't you
ashamed, Sam Hawkins?"
When the reel was concluded we sat
down, breathless, to supper. I had the
honor of being led by Mr. Crockett to a
quiet nook behind the stove. To save room
the stove had been moved close to the win-
dow and the pipe was run through a broken
pane of glass. There was a corner thus
cut off from the room. And in this com-
paratively retired spot we ate our supper.
The edibles consisted of ham, chicken,
doughnuts, and mince and pumpkin pies.
As a triangular piece of pie was passing
down Abe's throat he informed me (between
gulps) that Cheese-man "had hired the
Widder Bateman and her daughter, Hanner
Mari, to come and bake for the shindig.
That's Hanner Mari over there," he contin-
ued, pointing to a dull, discontented look-
ing girl, who wore a linsay gown and had a
string of blue glass beads around her neck.
I had lost sight of our host for some
time, but he now made his appearance from
the kitchen, wearing the look of a man who
had been taking a nap. Abe told me confi-
dently that there was liquid refreshment in
the shape of a jug of whiskey in the barn;
but for his part he desired none of it; pie
was good enough for him.
Then he asked me in an impressive man-
ner, "Are you a good pie baker?"

"Before I had time to answer, Mr.
Cheese-man came up to us, rubbing his
hands with hospitable fervor.
"Pitch in, now, and eat like you was at
home. The left of the vittles ain't teched
yet, and on he went, chuckling with glee
to see how Hanner Mari's pies were re-
lished.
After Abe had eaten another pie or two
he took a brown paper parcel from his coat
pocket. This paper contained peppermint
drops and most atrocious lozenges, made
of plaster-of-paris, I think; but the beauty
of the latter were the sentences printed on
them in red letters. These sentences were
all of an amatory nature, and Abe
selected those with the tenderest senti-
ments and gave them to me with meaning
looks. The pies had probably warmed his
heart. One lozenge had inscribed on it:
"If you love me as I love you,
No knife shall cut our love in two."
"Aint that so?" he asked, hitching his
chair a little nearer me. An answer from
me was unnecessary, for he handed me
another abomination, that read:
"Will you be my true and loving wife?"
"To live with me all the days of your life?"
Now, could any one heart fail to be
touched by the beauty of that couplet? Mr.
Crockett thought not. He hitched his chair
still closer and leaned over me.
"I am in dead earnest about that," said
he. "When I first seen you to-night, I
says to myself, I says, there's the gall for
me, I allus would have the best in the mar-
ket. Now I ain't such a bad looking fellow
am I? And I've got a hundred dollars in
the bank that Uncle Eben left me; and pap
says whenever I get spliced he'll gim me a
piece of land off'n his'n, and a nice yoke o'
oxen. I loved your folks would give you
a settin' out in bedclothes, dishes and sich
truck, won't they? Come now what d'ye
say?"
I was struck speechless at this unexpect-
ed proposal. I could not find words to re-
ply. Mr. Crockett evidently thought silence
gave consent; and I think he would have
attempted the affectionate in another min-
ute if Jim had not come to the rescue.
He was not pleased with the events of
the evening. Clorinda Baker's gorgeous
toilet had not been without effect on him.
And as Abe had been her escort, and was
now playing the devoted to me, he thought
it was too much. He stalked over to us
and said: "Abe Crockett, you are playin'
smash a keepin' this lady over here in the
corner. I know she was tired listening to
your gab half an hour ago."
I rose quietly to go with Jim, but Mr.
Crockett threw himself in a dramatic atti-
tude, and said to Jim: "I reckon you'll let
her take her choice about goin' or stayin',
won't you?" And turning to me with the
most insinuating smile: "Now you choose
betwixt us, and don't you be afeared. I
ain't goin' to 'low nobody to hurt ye." But
that choice I made was to walk hastily away
with Jim. I did not even dare to glance at
Abe.
Once safely across the room, beside
Sary Jane, I breathed again. Robinson
was calling, "After-supper polky; trot out
your partners for an after-supper polky."
At the same time he walked toward me with
an air of
"See the conquering hero comes,"
violin in hand.
"I s'pose you'll be willin' to pace through
this polky with me," said he, with the con-
fidence of a man who cannot be refused. I
was just beginning to make some desperate
kind of excuse, when Abe Crockett put in
an appearance.
"I think this yer lady would prefer danc-
ing with me," he said very stiffly.
"The dickens you do?" Robinson re-
plied. "You air a purty s'gger for a polky
you air so. Wish I had a buzzon-pin and
a red cravat; maybe I could shine in society,
then." This last remark was addressed to
the crowd, and delivered with a knowing
wink to the crowd.
"Don't you give me none of your sass,
Jake Robinson," was Abe's elegant rejoinder,
"or I'll break this ole fiddle over your
head."
This was too much for Robinson. He
informed Abe that he could whip him and
his paternal relative (commonly called dadd-
y) both, with his left hand. And his mammy
too. And if Mr. Robinson had ever been so
unfortunate as to have heard
of "Pinsone" he would undoubtedly have ad-
ded, "his cousin and his aunts." But as
it was he contented himself with the men-
tion of a few of his male relatives.
Can I describe what followed?
Can I tell how the belligerent gentlemen
went outside; a ring was formed, coats tak-
en off and pugilistic demonstrations begun?
I can never, never forget how Abe look-
ed after a few skillful passes made by the
fists of Robinson. The "buzzon-pin" was
smashed, the cravat was torn, the curl
taken out of the elaborate hair structure on
top of his head. But that was not all. His
eyes were "bunged" and his nose was bleed-
ing.
At this stage of proceedings Jake paused
for a minute and sarcastically asked Abe,
"Wouldn't ye like to stop and dance the
polky awhile?" And then went right on to
say he was now going to throw him in the
mud and sit down on him. But the crowd
interfered at this juncture, and Abe was led
away by commiserating friends. The ride
home was a dismal one. I felt I was in
disgrace, though Sary Jane tried to console
me by saying, "Some of the boys allus gits
in a fussel and breaks up the dances."
I left the place a few days afterwards, and
never saw Mr. Crockett again.
But I heard he had married Hanner Mari,
won by her superior pie abilities, no doubt.
Alas! When I think I might have made pies
for him, I am tempted to make that hack-
neyed quotation:
"O' all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, 'It might have been.'"

Cottages as Incentives to Matrimony.
From the Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle.
We understand that there are not near
so many marriages in Augusta as in, say,
Atlanta or Macon. Some of our bachelor
friends declare that one prime reason is
the scarcity in this city of cottage houses
of decent appearance and of moderate
rent. Now, from all accounts, this re-
proach does not obtain in the two Georgia
cities named above. In the interest of
morals and all that is best in human life,
we trust that men of capital will remove
this shame from our city. If, indeed, it
be true that the excellent and eligible
young men in Augusta refrain from marry-
ing the lovely and otherwise attractive
ladies of this city, chiefly because of the
difficulty of obtaining a decent house of
moderate dimensions at a reasonable rent,
then, we say, let capital forthwith make an
investment in that direction.