



Wedding Celebrations

Baverstock

MARRIAGE FESTIVITIES AT COMPTON PARK

Though the nuptials of Charles Penruddocke, Esq., and Flora Henrietta, second daughter of Walter Long, Esq., M.P., of Rood Ashton, were solemnized in the metropolis, the owner of Compton Park, mindful of the enjoyment of his poorer neighbours, caused every preparation to be made which should render Tuesday last a day of rejoicing to the poor of Compton and Baverstock.

Fortunately the weather – the variable and treacherous April weather – was propitious on the occasion, and the sunshine over head gave a cheerful aspect to the park and the revelers congregated within its precincts. On the brow of a hill, commanding a prospect which James Prior must have seen when he penned the following lines:-

A park in front by undulations broke,
Firs graceful rise, tall elm, and cone-shaped oak,
Or beech umbrageous, on whose mystic head
No lightnings strike, as country tales have said,
O'er mount or dell, as varied pastures change,
Here woolly flocks, there antlered tenants range,
A quiet lake, where, drawn from frozen floods,
Shy wild fowl winter with their northern broods,
Order and car o'er all evince such away,
That Time has half forgot his work – decay!

- on an eminence overlooking just such a thoroughly English scene as that which is here described, a long booth had been erected, neighbored by a conspicuous fir tree, from the summit of which a white flag fluttered in the breeze, and betokened the happy event which marked the day. Within the booth, shortly after noon, we found four hundred double rows of teeth plying their vocation with a vigour worthy of their owners' appetites and worthy of the abundant and substantial fare which covered the tables. They were of all ages, these banqueting villagers, from the greyheaded patriarchs, who had attained their majority before the present century was born, down to the rosiest of rosy-cheeked children, yet in arms, but with a wonderful capacity for the consumption of plum-pudding, a visible relish for smiling countenances, and an entire affection for the music of the band.

By the way Compton boasts of a brass band of its own, and a "terrible tidy" band it is, as we were confidentially informed by a communicative and good-natured rustic;- we wish every village in the county had just such another band. After dinner, grace having been sung, under the direction of the officiating clergyman of the parish (who was most indefatigable in ministering to the enjoyment of his flock), our Compton instrumentalists followed up the toast of the Queen by the National Anthem. Other toasts met with similarly harmonious sequence. The bride and bridegroom were, of course, "freshly remembered in their flowing cups," so were the family at Rood Ashton, so were the Bishop and Clergy, and so were the village school, and a cluster of small choristers clubbed their voices together and returned thanks by singing a hymn, a much more rational matter and far pleasanter to listen to than many after-dinner speeches which we have been doomed to hear. Finally, "God save the Queen" was sung in full chorus, and then the dinner tables were forsaken, and there was a general dispersion of the four hundred merry-makers. Staid elders, in sociable knots fell to smoking and bucolic talk, -

"Some, skilled in such, pass'd judgement on the stock,
Short horns, or long – the fat, or fine-woolled flock."

Others discoursed of contests in the cricket field –

"Who chief in cricket found his name enrolled
Who batted the best, or true and strongest howled;
Who ran – who caught – the innings best maintained,
Or now the game or now the wicket gained."

The band played country dances, and fifty animated couples went through all sorts of complex figures and executed all sorts of curious steps with irresistible energy. There was also a pig, as black as Topsy and as full of sly movements, which was chased by the younger fry, and by virtue of its greased tail constantly eluded the grasp of its pursuers. Two donkeys – perverser than the perversest of their tribe – were introduced to run for the Great St. Leger, but inasmuch as it was impossible to mount them, and every attempt resulted in the overthrow of the valorous jockies, the races were abandoned, and the long-eared animals, shaking their heads in the most knowing manner imaginable, as though they gloried in their triumph, trotted off the field, and before they had passed out of speaking distance, turned round and facing their remote persecutors uttered the nearest approach to a derisive chuckle which donkeys are capable of expressing, and their performances in this respect were more amusing than their racing feats would have been. While these and other sports were going on in the park, the clergyman, to whom we have before alluded, was busily visiting those who were detained at home by age, sickness or other infirmity, and taking care that they also should be provided with an abundance of good cheer, so as to compensate them for their absence from the special festivities of the day, and comfort them by their own firesides.

In conclusion we must not omit to mention that the day's proceedings commenced with Divine Service in the village church, where an appropriate discourse was preached to them by their pastor, and that in the course of the afternoon a congratulatory address was signed for presentation to the newly married pair, by the assembled company, headed by the Rector and Curate of the parish.

This document expressed the sincere pleasure which the subscribers felt on the occasion of the auspicious union to which it referred, their gratitude for the entertainment which had been provided for them, and terminated by invoking the Divine Blessing on the nuptials, and by tendering, on behalf of each individual who signed it, his or her best wishes for the domestic happiness, welfare, and prosperity of Mr and Mrs Penruddocke.

It only remains to say that the rustic sports were prolonged till sunset, when the company dispersed to their respective homes in perfect good order and cheerfulness.

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