

THE METROPOLITANS

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The metropolitans by Jeanie Drake

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JEANIE DRAKE

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BY
JEANIE DRAKE



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1896

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THE full moon, sailing across the sky above Staten Island, in serene indifference to mundane revel, might have perceived that the fifth annual ball of the Hunt Club was nearly at an end. Her light on the hoar-frost made grass and late foliage everywhere sparkle with myriad crystals, hid itself in hollowed wave and umbrageous forest near, and only gave way before long pencils of warmer, rosier rays, which shot forth now and then from the open doorway of a great illuminated building. The brittle earth crackled beneath the hoofs of champing horses waiting outside. Impatient coachmen came and went, flapping their arms together to keep warm, like grotesque birds in livery; finding small comfort in the fitful bursts of music which came from within, but more in visits to the rear premises of the Goldenrod Inn, whence they issued wiping their mouths with the backs of their hands.

"There 's to be another supper after the women goes. I 'm here till mornin', I 'd wager me soul!"

grumbled Mr. Pundit's coachman, with a prodigious yawn.

"Vy don't you bet somethin' large?" responded Lady Mellon's man, disdainfully. "That there yawn, fr i'stance. I thought you 'd a-swallerred me!"

"No; I ain't takin' bitters in mine," chuckled Denis, restored to good humor by the subtlety of his own retort courteous.

In the new wing of the Goldenrod, the great ball-room resounded to the strains of the Hungarian band hidden in an alcove, from which protruded two artificial heads of horses apparently feeding.

"Is that what you end-of-the-century moderns call realism in decoration, Mr. Penrose?" asked, with a smile, a pleasant-faced old man, directing his neighbor's attention to these bronzed effigies.

"I rather fancy, Mr. de Mansur," said the younger, adjusting his eye-glasses, "that Archie Pundit prides himself especially on that touch. He generally orders matters—and takes the fatal slide from the artistic to the ridiculous. Otherwise, those corn-stalks and sheaves of straw and pumpkins and vines, and the rest of the weeds, are not half bad as a background for the men's pink coats and the women's gowns."

"Why are you not in pink yourself?" asked the elder man, kindly, looking up at his tall, thin companion, whose quite smooth face, with its marked features and very fair coloring, made him noticeable. "I hear that you ride very straight to hounds."

"I am not a club member—only an invited guest."

"Well, *cucullus non facit monachum*. I think I've heard something of an impromptu leap, was it not?"