

“THE PARTY”

BY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Dey had a gread big pahty down to Tom’s de othah night;
Was I dah? You bet! I nevah in my life see sich a sight;
All de folks f’om fou’ plantations was invited, an’ dey come,
Dey come troopin’ thick ez chillun when dey hyeahs a fife an’ drum.
Evahbody dressed deir fines’ —Heish yo’ mouf an’ git away,
Ain’t seen no sich fancy dressin’ sence las’ quah’tly meetin’ day;
Gals all dressed in silks an’ satins, not a wrinkle ner a crease,
Eyes a–battin’, teeth a–shinin’, haih breshed back ez slick ez grease;
Sku’ts all tucked an’ puffed an’ ruffled, evah blessed seam an’ stitch;
Ef you ‘d seen ‘em wif deir mistus, could n’t swahed to which was which.
Men all dressed up in Prince Alberts, swaller–tails ‘u’d tek yo’ bref!
I cain’t tell you nothin’ ‘bout it, y’ ought to seen it fu’ yo’s’e’f.
Who was dah? Now who you askin’? How you ‘spect I gwine to know?
You mus’ think I stood an’ counted evahbody at de do.’
Ole man Babah’s house–boy Isaac, brung dat gal, Malindy Jane,
Huh a–hangin’ to his elbow, him a–struttin’ wif a cane;
My, but Hahvey Jones was jealous! seemed to stick him lak a tho’n;
But he laughed with Viney Cahteh, tryin’ ha’d to not let on,
But a pusson would ‘a’ noticed f’om de d’rection of his look,
Dat he was watchin’ ev’ry step dat Ike an’ Lindy took.
Ike he foun’ a cheer an’ asked huh: “Won’t you set down?” wif a smile,
An’ she answe’d up a–bowin’, “Oh, I reckon ‘t ain’t wuth while.”
Dat was jes’ fu’ Style, I reckon, ‘cause she sot down jes’ de same,
An’ she stayed dah ‘twell he fetched huh fu’ to jine some so’t o’ game;
Den I hyeahd huh sayin’ propah, ez she riz to go away,
“Oh, you raly mus’ excuse me, fu’ I hardly keers to play.”

But I seen huh in a minute wif de othahs on de flo',
An' dah wasn't any one o' dem a-playin' any mo';
Comin' down de flo' a-bowin' an' a-swayin' an' a-swingin',
Puttin' on huh high-toned mannahs all de time dat she was singin':
"Oh, swing Johnny up an' down, swing him all aroun',
Swing Johnny up an' down, swing him all aroun',
Oh, swing Johnny up an' down, swing him all aroun'
Fa' you well, my dahlin'."

Had to laff at ole man Johnson, he 's a caution now, you bet—
Hittin' clost onto a hunderd, but he 's spry an' nimble yet;
He 'lowed how a-so't o' gigglin', "I ain't ole, I 'll let you see,
D'ain't no use in gittin' feeble, now you youngstahs jes' watch me,"
An' he grabbed ole Aunt Marier—weighs th'ee hunderd mo' er less,
An' he spun huh 'roun' de cabin swingin' Johnny lak de res'.
Evahbody laffed an' hollahed: "Go it! Swing huh, Uncle Jim!"
An' he swung huh too, I reckon, lak a youngstah, who but him.
Dat was bettah 'n young Scott Thomas, tryin' to be so awful smaht.
You know when dey gits to singin' an' dey comes to dat ere paht:

"In some lady's new brick house,
In some lady's gyahden.
Ef you don't let me out, I will jump out,
So fa' you well, my dahlin'."

Den dey 's got a circle 'roun' you, an' you's got to break de line;
Well, dat dahky was so anxious, lak to bust hisse'f a-tryin';
Kep' on blund'rin' 'roun' an' foolin' 'twell he giv' one gread big jump,
Broke de line, an lit head-fo'most in de fiah-place right plump;
Hit 'ad fiah in it, mind you; well, I thought my soul I 'd bust,
Tried my best to keep f'om laffin', but hit seemed like die I must!
Y' ought to seen dat man a-scramblin' f'om de ashes an' de grime.
Did it bu'n him! Sich a question, why he did n't give it time;
Th'ow'd dem ashes and dem cindahs evah which-a-way I guess,
An' you nevah did, I reckon, clap yo' eyes on sich a mess;
Fu' he sholy made a picter an' a funny one to boot,
Wif his clothes all full o' ashes an' his face all full o' soot.
Well, hit laked to stopped de pahty, an' I reckon lak ez not

Dat it would ef Tom's wife, Mandy, had n't happened on de spot,
To invite us out to suppah—well, we scrambled to de table,
An' I 'd lak to tell you 'bout it—what we had—but I ain't able,
Mention jes' a few things, dough I know I had n't orter,
Fu' I know 't will staht a hank'rin' an' yo' mouf 'll 'mence to worter.
We had wheat bread white ez cotton an' a egg pone jes like gol',
Hog jole, bilin' hot an' steamin' roasted shoat an' ham sliced cold—
Look out! What's de mattah wif you? Don't be fallin' on de flo';
Ef it 's go'n' to 'fect you dat way, I won't tell you nothin' mo'.
Dah now—well, we had hot chittlin's—now you 's tryin' ag'in to fall,
Cain't you stan' to hyeah about it? S'pose you'd been an' seed it all;
Seed dem gread big sweet pertaters, layin' by de possum's side,
Seed dat coon in all his gravy, reckon den you 'd up and died!
Mandy 'lowed "you all mus' 'scuse me, d' wa'n't much upon my she'ves,
But I's done my bes' to suit you, so set down an' he'p yo'se'ves."
Tom, he 'lowed: "I don't b'lieve in 'pologisin' an' perfessin',
Let 'em tek it lak dey ketch it. Eldah Thompson, ask de blessin'."
Wish you 'd seed dat colo'ed preachah cleah his th'oat an' bow his head;
One eye shet, an' one eye open,—dis is evah wud he said:
"Lawd, look down in tendah mussy on sich generous hea'ts ez dese;
Make us truly thankful, amen. Pass dat possum, ef you please!"
Well, we eat and drunk ouah po'tion, 'twell dah was n't nothin' lef,
An' we felt jes' like new sausage, we was mos' nigh stuffed to def!
Tom, he knowed how we 'd be feelin', so he had de fiddlah 'roun',
An' he made us cleah de cabin fu' to dance dat suppah down.
Jim, de fiddlah, chuned his fiddle, put some rosum on his bow,
Set a pine box on de table, mounted it an' let huh go!
He's a fiddlah, now I tell you, an' he made dat fiddle ring,
'Twell de ol'est an' de lamest had to give deir feet a fling.
Jigs, cotillions, reels an' breakdowns, cordrills an' a waltz er two;
Bless yo' soul, dat music winged 'em an' dem people lak to flew.
Cripple Joe, de old rheumatic, danced dat flo' f'om side to middle,
Th'owed away his crutch an' hopped it; what's rheumatics 'ginst a fiddle?
Eldah Thompson got so tickled dat he lak to los' his grace,
Had to tek bofe feet an' hol' dem so 's to keep 'em in deir place.
An' de Christuns an' de sinnahs got so mixed up on dat flo',

Dat I don't see how dey 'd pahted ef de trump had chanced to blow.

Well, we danced dat way an' capahed in de mos' redic'lous way,
'Twell de roostahs in de bahnyard cleahed deir th'oats an' crowed fu' day.

Y' ought to been dah, fu' I tell you evahthing was rich an' prime,
An' dey ain't no use in talkin', we jes had one scrumptious time!