



WINTER DANCES AND COTILLIONS

BY GRACE LIVINGSTONE HEGGER

SALLY had just come back from the city and with keen interest we listened to the stories of her winter gaieties. "And the cotillions, my dears, were such fun that I am determined that we shall have at least three in our town this winter. Those in favor of Thanksgiving, New Year's Eve and St. Valentine's, as dates for the dances, please say 'aye.'"

The motion was carried with a loud hurrah, and Sally and one of the older girls, whose well-known executive ability was always to be relied upon for the arrangement of fair booths, picnics, commencement exercises and weddings, called on a half dozen of the leading married women in the town and asked them to form a committee of "ways and means" and act as chaperones for the dances.

The town hall was engaged in advance for the three dates. As this hall was used for the majority of our entertainments, a piano had already been installed, so, with the addition of two violins and a cello (local talent), the music was provided. The decorations were of cheese-cloth, supplemented with college banners and pennants belonging to our brothers, and leaves and evergreens from the near-by woods. With the exception of the ice-cream, the refreshments cost us nothing, for the chicken-salad, sandwiches, cakes, candies and punch were contributed by the "Junior Cotillion"—for this was the name we called ourselves.

Instead of the expensive, engraved dance-cards, we ordered from the nearest city perfectly plain, white, gilt-edged cards, three by six inches, with white cords and pencils attached. In one corner the artist of our crowd painted tiny turkeys and pumpkins for the Thanksgiving dance, and hearts and cupids for St. Valentine's. At New Year's we fastened bits of holly and tiny bells with red ribbon to the cards. The order of the dance was printed below.

We had eighteen dances in all. The first nine were waltzes, two-steps, the varsovienne and barn dance, alternately; then supper, followed by the cotillion. The music for the cotillion was first a waltz, then a two-step, which we danced at the completion of each figure.

For the first figure we always had the "Nantucket" or "Paul Jones." In this, partners stand around the room forming a large circle; the whistle blows, and giving your partner your right hand, you continue as in the "grand chain" in the lancers; the whistle blows again and you must dance with whichever man you happen to be facing. We had, of course, no favors for this, as it served simply to bring us all together again after supper.

The favors were all placed on a long table in one corner of the room. Two or three of the chaperones sat behind the table and gave out the favors for each figure to the couples who came to the table for them before each figure. Thus it was necessary for the chaperones to know all about the figures, so that they could make no mistakes in giving out the wrong favors.

Many of the favors we made ourselves out of bits of ribbon, silk, crepe paper and tinsel. Boxes of odds and ends which we had been loath to throw away, yet which were of no use to us, came at last into their own. Bags of all sorts, pincushions, mob caps, ties and belts were more than merely pretty favors. Horns, tiny drums, tambourines, jumping-jacks, pails, ribbon-covered hoops, fans, bonbon-boxes, Japanese parasols and dolls, baskets, paper flowers, masks, long staffs with bouquets of flowers at the tops and even little pots of growing flowers, all were easy to make or procure.

Of course, at each dance we essayed to have something that would either carry out the color-scheme or suggest the spirit of the occasion. At New Year's we had some favors that were edible, pop-corn balls, cookies in funny shapes and cornucopias filled with candies; on St. Valentine's hearts in all sizes and for every conceivable purpose were the favors. The figures alternated so that the girls received the favors one time and the men the next. Sometimes there were favors for both, but no matter what the figure was there were enough favors for each guest, so that no one could be slighted.

And now for the cotillion itself. Chairs were placed around the room in a circle against the wall, leaving a space for the favor-table. The leader with his partner sat at the head, and the rest of the guests in couples formed the circle.



Let me say that a good leader is of the greatest importance to the success of a cotillion. He it is who holds the whistle, announces the figures and, after arranging the first set, leads off with his partner to show exactly how the thing is done. Let him have lots of spirit, a love of fun and a little wit, and the cotillion is an assured success.

The following are a number of figures, which are easy to understand and require little preparation: Four men are blindfolded and given favors. Eight girls are led out to play Blindman's-Buff with the men within a certain limited space. The men, when they succeed in catching the girls, give them the favors and dance with them. The other four girls who are left are then blindfolded and eight men are selected to play; the figure is repeated until all have been chosen. If there are many guests, only go half-way around the

circle, starting from there with the next figure. The leader, however, always dances the first round.

For the golf figure all the girls stand in a row at one end of the room, the men at the other. The girls are given wooden sticks, shaped like golf-sticks, tied with different colored ribbons. At a whistle from the leader, they strike colored balls in the direction of the men, who, after scrambling to catch them, dance with the girls whose sticks match the color of the balls.

A pretty flower figure is to have two baskets of paper or real flowers passed around, one to the girls and one to the men. Those having corresponding flowers dance together.

Then there is the mirror figure that is always popular. A girl sits in a chair with her back to the guests, holding a mirror high in her hand. A number of men pass in back of her and she brushes her handkerchief over the mirror as each face appears in it, until she sees a man whom she prefers as a partner, and she rises and dances with him. Another girl takes her place and the figure is repeated.

This figure calls for the vanity of pretty hands and smart gloves: A sheet is fastened or held up by two men. The girls put their hands over the edge and each man chooses a hand; the sheet is dropped and they all dance.

Jockey races are always no end of fun. Red, white and blue ribbon reins are pinned to the men's coats—or they simply hold the ribbons in their hands—the girls are given jockey caps and whips—and two or four couples are then placed in a row for the race. The whistle is blown and the "horses" are off, making a complete circle of the room. The winner is given a blue or yellow ribbon rosette. This figure can be reversed by the men driving the girls, and to make it more exciting and also rather dangerous, three low hurdles of evergreens may be placed around the course for horses and drivers to jump over.

And now for the expenses, which, after all, were one of the most important things to be considered; the hall, musicians and the bunting (we had chosen red as a color that would combine most often and effectively with others, and thus could be used at the three dances; red, white and blue at Thanksgiving, red and green at New Year's and red and white on St. Valentine's); then the ice-cream, dance-cards—these could be made at home entirely if necessary—and the favors. We found that adding up the expenses, and then dividing them equally among the number of couples proved to be the simplest and most practical way to manage the financial end of it. When we wished to make the dance one of profit, we had additional tickets on sale at fifty cents or one dollar each, according to our expenses.

On New Year's Eve, after supper, we had on the platform at one end of the hall an old-fashioned minuet, which eight of us had previously rehearsed. We were dressed as ladies and gentlemen of the American Revolution, the girls with powdered hair and pannier skirts, the men with knee-breeches, long-tailed brocade coats and lace ruffles. Following the minuet one of our members danced a Spanish fandango, and then we had the cotillion consisting only of four figures as the entertainment had consumed so much time. The last figure we arranged to have at midnight so that we could welcome the new year in. The favors were toy watches in brass, set at twelve o'clock. This was a splendid financial success, as practically the whole town came to see the entertainment, and the tickets sold like the proverbial "hot cakes."

St. Valentine's was celebrated by a masked ball. We all came in fancy dress, which, with much ingenuity and little material, we made ourselves. Characters in history and fiction, and the advertisements from the magazines—all was grist that came to our mill! In one of the cotillion figures four girls stood while four men tried to guess who the masked girls were. As each one guessed correctly, he danced off with that girl and so the unmasking was accomplished.

We used this idea for our last figure and our dance closed with a true carnival spirit. We procured from a florist a large bell made of wire and covered the frame with "snowballs" made from tissue paper. The inside of the bell was lined with paper and from the clapper four streamers of narrow red and white ribbon were tied. Handfuls of confetti were wrapped in white tissue paper, forming balls, in the center of each of which was a little favor. We dipped each ball in ordinary laundry-starch and when nearly dry dipped them in diamond dust. The balls were placed inside the bell and kept in place by a piece of white paper with a hole in the center, from which red and white ribbons hung.

When the appropriate moment arrived, the streamers were given to four guests and when they pulled the "snowballs" dropped to the floor and the guests merrily pelted each other with them.

So with confetti in our hair and frocks, our cotillions were over until the next year.



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