

THE COTILLON.

EVERY year the cotillon is becoming more the fashion. In Germany it forms the finale of pretty nearly every ball; and what dance in America would be complete without the German, which is, to all intents and purposes, a cotillon?

It is not by any means imperatively necessary to have presents, bouquets, or expensive adjuncts. We will begin by describing those figures which require no paraphernalia whatever.

The company having chosen their partners, and being seated beside them, in a circle round the room, the music strikes up a waltz, in which everybody joins till it suddenly ceases, when they resume their old seats; and the lady and gentleman who lead the cotillon proceed to arrange any of the following figures, the whole party having a general waltz, at intervals between them; and in Germany it is the custom for gentlemen to ask permission of each other to exchange partners for a turn or two during these intermediate waltzes, and to have polkas and mazourkas, as well as waltzes, during the course of the cotillon.

I. Three ladies and three gentlemen make the tour of the room, the ladies selecting ladies, the gentlemen gentlemen, until two long lines are formed, the latter being one in excess of the former. The two lines, ranged *vis-à-vis* to each other, describe a snakelike movement, both going simultaneously to the right or left, till the music ceases, when those who are opposite dance off in couples, leaving one gentleman without a partner.

II. Four ladies are chosen, and each stationed in a corner of the room. Five gentlemen surround one of them, and dance round her till she selects a partner to waltz with. Then the disconsolate four retire to their seats, and another five repeat the same, till all the four ladies have partners.

III. Two circles, the inner one consisting of four ladies hand-in-hand, the outer one of five gentlemen hand-in-hand—dance round until the music stops, when the gentlemen's joined hands are suddenly thrust between the ladies nearest to them, one of the former being left without a partner; the rest waltz off in couples.

IV. The musicians play a polka. A gentleman rises, dancing the polka step till he arrives in front of the lady he selects; he bows to her, and she rises and follows him, also doing the polka step, till they turn at the top of the room. She is then leading, and it is her turn to select a gentleman in the same way, who repeats the process, and so on till there are eight ladies and nine gentlemen, when the music changes to a waltz, and one gentleman, as usual, is left partnerless.

V. Eight ladies are stationed about the room as follows: One top and bottom, and three on each side opposite to each other; seven men, following one behind each other, holding one another's coat tails, dance in and out between these ladies till the music stops, when each waltzes off with the lady who is nearest to him—all but one, that is, who has to resume his seat alone.

VI. Four ladies and four gentlemen are selected to dance the chain figure in the Lancers; the latter waltz, when the music ceases with the lady nearest to them at the time.

VII. In a room where there is a door at each end, a very good figure can be done as follows: Eight ladies leave the room by one door and eight gentlemen by the other. When a bell rings in the ball-room a lady enters on one side and a gen-

tleman on the other, and waltz together till the sixteen have all come in in turn, two and two.

So much for the figures without paraphernalia; now for some others.

The Looking-Glass.—A lady, chosen by the leader of the cotillon, is seated on a chair in the middle of the room, holding a hand-glass; the gentlemen come up behind her, and when she sees their faces there she either chooses them to dance with or rubs out their reflection with her handkerchief, when they have to remain kneeling behind her till she makes her choice; then she waltzes round the room, leaving the glass on the chair, ready for the next lady who may be called upon to take her place and repeat. She may add to the fun of this by inflicting some penance on the rejected ones. This is one of the commonest figures; there are many similar ones, viz.:

Aunt Sally.—For this a huge life-sized figure, ingeniously dressed, is brought in, and placed before a lady seated in the chair in the middle of the room. Two gentlemen have to try which can first knock out, by means of small balls, the cigar which is fixed in the mouth of the doll; whoever does this dances with the lady.

The Apron Figure.—Two large aprons are provided, round which the strings should be somewhat tightly wound; one of these is presented by the lady seated in the middle of the room to each of the two gentlemen brought up before her; whoever gets one on first has the privilege of dancing with her, still, by-the-by, wearing the apron.

The Button Figure.—Small pieces of cloth are provided, with a button, needle, and thread; the larger the needle the better. These are handed by the lady to the two gentlemen, and whoever sews one on first secures the honor of a dance with her. This always occasions a good deal of fun, and the difficulty in making a knot proves sometimes insuperable. In another similar figure the two gentlemen are required to tie a piece of colored ribbon in a bow round their legs, and this they do not find easy.

The Footscaps and Crown are bestowed as follows: The former on the two rejected swains, and the latter on the favored one. The crown must be worn during the waltz, and the wearers of the footscaps must dance together and accompany the other couple.

The Dice Figure is a pretty one. Two large cardboard dice are made, some six inches square. These are thrown by the two contending gentlemen in front of the lady, who, as in the former figures, is seated in the chair in the middle of the room. Whoever throws the highest number, dances with her.

The Wine Figure.—The lady holds a glass of wine and a glass of lemonade. She hands the glass of wine to the one she selects to dance with, the lemonade to the rejected one, and they must both drink the contents of their glasses; but she is by no means obliged to give either to the first, second, or even third couple that are brought up to her.

The Ninepin Figure.—The ninepins are set up in the middle of the room before the lady, and whoever knocks down the most dances with her.

The Broom, Lantern, and Umbrella Figure is a very amusing one. These articles are placed before the lady, and four gentlemen are brought up to her. She selects one to dance with; to another she gives the umbrella, which he must hold over her as she goes round; to another the lantern, with which he must accompany her as she waltzes to light the

way; and to the third the broom, with which he must sweep the floor before her.

The Bell Figure rather reverses the order of things. Here a gentleman is seated in the middle of the room, and has to ring a large bell he carries in his hand, until some lady relieves him from his disagreeable predicament by dancing with him, which the louder he rings will probably be the quicker brought about.

Coach and Horses is done as follows: Two sets of harness must be provided; these can be prettily made, one with four strings, the other with five, of red braid, with small bells attached, and a long loop at the end of each piece. A gentleman selects four ladies for his team, a lady five gentlemen, and these go round the room quickly. If there is a large hall and passages, it rather adds to the fun to go through them also. When the music stops the gentlemen hasten to secure a partner for the waltz as usual, and all but one succeeds.

The Cushion.—A lady, with a cushion in her hand, intending to select a partner for the waltz, pretends to offer it, to one gentleman after the other as she goes round the circle. It is their object to kneel upon it as she offers it before she can draw it away, leaving them the floor instead of the cushion. Should no one succeed in possessing the cushion against her will, she allows her chosen partner to kneel upon it before dancing with him.

The Maypole.—The leader of the cotillon stands in the centre of the room, holding a pole, to the top of which are attached long ribbons of different shades, there being two of each tint. The ladies select their colors first—the gentlemen have to take their hap-hazard, when they all dance round, and, as the music ceases, they find their partners for the waltz, according to the corresponding hues of the streamers.

La Fleur, and similar figures, occasion the giving and receiving of those beautiful presents which sometimes occur during the course of the cotillon. In the late French Imperial Court, where, by-the-by, the Marquis de Caux, the husband of Patti, was a distinguished leader of cotillons, these gifts were of the most costly description; and last season at one or two houses noted for their hospitality, the presents in this dance were most elegant and beautiful. There is a well-known story, which is often told, that a vulgar millionaire tried to induce the people in society to come to his parties by promulgating that gold watches and bracelets were given away in the course of the cotillon. Nobody has ever told us whether he succeeded in his endeavors.

La Fleur is as follows: Both ladies and gentlemen are presented with bouquets; the lady pins hers to the coat of the gentleman she selects to dance with, and when this waltz is concluded, and everybody seated, the gentlemen select fresh partners by each presenting their bouquets to the lady with whom they wish to dance. In place of bouquets, rosettes of tiny ribbon are often given to the ladies by the gentleman who leads the cotillon, and to the gentlemen by the lady who assists him. There are two of each shade, and the lady and gentleman who have the same shade dance together. Colored flag, instead—two of a kind—are a pretty innovation, especially when the waltzers retain them in their hands as they go round. Another variation is to have a *Noah's ark* filled with animals in pairs, with which the same plan is pursued; or the gentlemen may be supplied with crackers, which they pull with the lady they choose

before dancing with her; and in the same way sealed packets are presented by the ladies to the gentlemen, and by the gentlemen to the ladies, and these contain either a trifle or costly present.

In the *Orange Figure*, gentlemen and ladies stand opposite to each other; the lady throws the orange, and the gentleman who catches it dances with her; or *penny rolls* may be substituted for oranges.

The Screen is done with a screen stretched across the room (a shawl held up tightly will do as well); behind this the ladies stand, showing only a finger above the screen or shawl. Whoever guesses correctly to whom it belongs dances with the lady.

Scarf Dances and figures from *Country Dances* are often introduced with good effect. Among the newest and most original cotillon figures are the following:

The Butterfly.—A butterfly is attached to the end of a long fishing-rod and line, which is waved in the air by one of the ladies, and four or five gentlemen try to catch it in nets, of various colored gauze, on long poles. The reward to the successful knight, as in all the contests, is the honor of dancing with the lady.

The Heart.—The lady holds a large cardboard heart at arm's length; the gentlemen are provided with arrows, and whoever sends the first in is victor.

The Tournament.—For this a long pole with a ribbon attached has a slit in it, so that the other end of the ribbon is slipped through it. The gentlemen are provided with sticks, and it is their object to be the first so unthread the ribbon.

The French Bracelets, viz., colored ribbon bracelets with bells for the ladies, and the same armlets for the gentlemen to be tied round the upper part of the arm by the lady who does them the honor to choose them, and *vice versa*.

The Thermometer.—An expensive article, costing 50s., round which the company dance. Some one at the back pulls a string, which causes it to register hot or cold, and by these magical indications partners are selected.

The Sphynx is rather less costly, being only 30s. This is a figure which by a movement of the head, either nodding or shaking, by means of strings at the back, decrees whether a partner is to be chosen or not.

Snowballs.—Paper balls thrown by a lady or gentleman. In breaking they scatter atoms of soft paper, and those on whom these fall are the favored partners.

Sugar Plums.—Small bags in silver paper, attached to a line of colored ribbon held out tight. Whoever succeeds in breaking these first, and scattering the contents by means of a stick, is the victor.

A few hints, by way of conclusion to the leaders of a cotillon, and of these there ought to be two, a lady and a gentleman. Have all your paraphernalia ready in the order it will be required. We have seen quite an ornamental trophy made of these by placing them on a large ottoman, the favors or bouquets round the base, the flags in the centre, and the other things between. Have all your figures, and the order in which they come, perfectly pre-arranged. Instruct the musicians beforehand exactly as to what they have to do, and the gentleman who leads should give the signal when the music is to stop, himself, by clapping. Do not repeat your figures too often. Most cotillons are spoiled by being too long; and be careful that all the ladies and gentlemen in the room take their turn from time to time in the figures. It is a great mistake to confine them too much to a few.