



CHILDREN'S CALICO BALLS.



CHRISTMAS is essentially the children's season, and as it approaches anxious mothers revolve in their mind how best to cater for the amusement of the little folks who make the sunshine of their life. Few entertainments give them more in-

tense pleasure than a calico fancy ball, and it is difficult to imagine a prettier sight than the young, fresh faces, beaming with interest and enjoyment—the several picturesque costumes adding much piquancy to their young charms. In this I am sure all will bear me out who were present at the juvenile ball given at the Mansion House some two years ago. There, a good plan was adopted of having a march round from time to time, so that the dresses could be seen to perfection. I am inclined to think the boys had rather the best of it on that occasion. We all lost our hearts to a dear little fellow barely four years old who, as Portia, appeared in a black silk legal gown and wig, a brief carried in the hand; a Post-boy, top-boots and all, true to the life; a Yankee in a large-patterned checked suit, with high collar; and a Cook, in white cap and apron. One of the very best of all the dresses, however, was an Incroyable, of which our illustration will give a good impression. Note the short-waisted, long-tailed drab cloth coat,

with its large lapels, the blue satin striped waistcoat and breeches, the lace frills at the wrists and front of the shirt, the cocked hat with tricoloured rosette, the top-boots, the double eye-glasses, and the massive gold chains hanging from either fob—a veritable dandy of the Directoire period.

It is customary at these juvenile balls to provide some amusements besides dancing, such as conjuring or Punch and Judy, tumbling, Christy Minstrels, Marionettes, Fantrecini, or any similar entertainments which may be the fashion of the hour, just as the hand-bell ringers and the Arab jugglers have been in time past. But I consider, besides all this, it is almost an essential part of the programme that there should be a special quadrille of the evening, those dancing in it assuming a particular dress. The choice is a large one. There might be a Dolly Varden and Joe Willet Quadrille, including Sam Weller, Mrs. Nickleby, Mrs. Gamp, Squeers, the Marchioness, and many others “familiar in our mouths as household words,” which are best copied from the illustrations that accompanied the first edition of the great author's works. A Shakespeare or a Waverley Quadrille is to my mind better suited to grown-up people, but a Cracker Quadrille is quite charming for children, the dancers being enveloped in different coloured dominoes, and tied up with ribbons like monster bonbons. At the present time, however, the most popular of all are the Singing Quadrilles, the best-known of which are the “Nursery Rhymes” and the “Blue Boy.” As the figures proceed, the dancers accompany their movements by singing in concert, and there are one or two airs for each figure—old-fashioned ones, originally associated with “Jack and Jill,” “Goosey Goosey Gander,” “Hey Diddle-diddle,” “Jack Horner,” “Where are you going to, my Pretty

Maid?" "Baa, Baa," "Boopeep," "Sing a Song of Sixpence," "Ride a Cock Horse," "Mary, Mary, quite Contrary," &c.

Illustrated nursery lore has made these several heroes and heroines so familiar to children, that I



think most of them could themselves explain how they should be dressed. Boopeep is brought before you in the first of our illustrations. It should be made up in a pretty light blue sateen, trimmed with pink cotton-twill, the long pointed bodice laced in front over a low jaconet muslin chemisette. The sleeves are tied up with pink; a pink rose nestles at the side. The blue Shepherdess hat is worn over powdered hair. Blue silk stockings and high-heeled shoes with pink rosettes complete the costume. A basket of flowers and a crook tied with ribbon and flowers are carried in the hand, and often a small toy lamb under the arm, which probably pleases the little woman, though the chances are, before the evening is over, all these paraphernalia will become a burden, and they will find a resting-place in some obscure corner, only to be unearthed before departing,

At the memorable ball at Marlborough House, there was a Fairy-tale Quadrille, in which Beauty and the Beast, Princess Fair Star, Cinderella, the Goose Girl, and many other similar characters flourished, but they are not all suitable for a veritable calico ball; as the Goose Girl, for example, wore a shimmering robe of silver tissue and feathers; and the Duke of Connaught, as the Beast, a cloak of tiger-skin; for though the greatest licence is allowed with regard to material, a line must be drawn somewhere.

When calico balls first started, as I believe they did in India, only veritable cotton goods were admissible, such as calico, print, sateen, muslin, tarlatan, net, cretonne, and cotton velvet; tinsel replacing gold trimmings; while specially made cotton ribbons, cotton gloves and mittens, cotton velvet and sateen boots and shoes were worn. Now, however, fur trimmings, ribbon, and plenty of cotton-backed satins are to be seen at calico balls.

The pretty cretonnes and cotton fabrics to be had at every draper's make it an easy matter to concoct little girls' dresses in the correct material, but with the boys

there is more difficulty, and only where ample licence is admitted would the top-boots of a Postboy in our sketch be admissible. As it is, it is one of the most favourite characters. Any two colours may be selected—pink and blue are a happy mixture; the several divisions of the cap should be of the alternate shades, the jacket pink, the sleeves blue, the breeches white, and the tops of the boots pink.

"Folly," on the contrary, could just as well be carried out in sateens as in cotton-back satins, and should be a motley mixture of shades—the cap part blue, part red; the ruff white lace; the upper part of bodice half red, half blue; the plastron green, the sleeves blue with yellow epaulettes, the belt red; the basques, one Vandyck red, one blue; one leg encased in blue, one in red—shoes, cotton tights, and all.

A Clown is a very easily made dress for a boy, carried out in white calico with blue stripes pasted on it, so that when completed the stripes have the effect of being wound round the white. It is after the Pierrot order—a loose paletot, cap, and tights—but somewhat prettier, for Pierrot has white linen shoes, very large trousers, a loose paletot guiltless of belt, a huge flapping frill-edged collar, and red calico rosettes down the front; and he ought by good rights to have his face painted, which would be a tiresome process for a very little boy, though one of nine or ten might enter into the fun of it. Peppé Nappa, Pierrot's Italian relative, is generally dressed after the same fashion, only all in blue, and with a large ruff.

Mothers who do not care to go to much expense can dress their boys as veritable sailors—suits which can be subsequently used for every-day wear, and are to be had ready to put on at some of our seaports, in white drill or Galatea for under half-a-sovereign, and in serge for a few shillings more. To very little boys especially the dress is most becoming.

Father Christmas, without any doubt, ought to put



in an appearance, and has a further claim than his costume, which is easily concocted—only a white wig crowned with holly, a long flowing white robe with a monk's hood at the back, a girdle round the waist, a staff in hand, and a slight dredging of flour on the

shoulders, as though just out of a snow-storm ; and, above all, a wallet, which, if filled with bonbons or trifling presents for everybody, will secure him a heartier welcome—this is all that is needed.

Little Boy Blue is generally dressed as Gainsborough's Blue Boy, and is specially appropriate in the Blue Boy Quadrille, if that is preferred to the ordinary Singing Quadrille. How familiar the artist has made the costume to us all !—the blue jacket with slashed sleeves and lace collar, the blue breeches, stockings, and blue shoes, the cloak depending from the shoulder, and held gracefully through the arm—a part of the costume, by-the-by, which for the wearer's sake, at a calico ball, might very easily be dispensed with.

To aid in selecting dresses when the occasion occurs, I may mention the following characters that might be adopted by boys—a Zouave, an Eastern Water-carrier, a Watteau Shepherd, Feramorz, a Knight of Malta, an Italian Fisherman, a Cricketer, a Grey



Friar—and they are none of them difficult to carry out. But *place aux dames*. National costumes have always many copyists at calico balls, and we have selected the Italian as, perhaps, the most picturesque for our illustration. It should be made up in dark scarlet and dark blue cotton, the upper and under skirts both bound with the contrast. The apron for calico balls presents a difficulty, and the best way of surmounting it is to procure a fancy chintz and stitch it in bands on to the dark blue ; it is held on by the string passed round the waist, the upper portion turned over. The chemisette and head-dress are made of thick jaconet, and the portion resting on the head should be lined with cardboard, gold pins being used to keep it on. Gold or coral ornaments are best.

The Swiss with its silver chains and embroidery on a velvet bodice, the Normandy with the high cap, the Welsh with the high hat, the Alsatian with the large bow on the skull-like cap—all these find favour, as also does another distinctive class, the French Soubrette (illustrated above), which may be prettily rendered in a pink and white striped skirt, pink bodice, pink-trimmed muslin cap, bibbed apron, and pink-striped stockings.

Many effective dresses may be made in these striped cottons—Dolly Varden, Fille de Madame Angot, for



example. Last year, in America, what were known as Mother Goose Parties were started, and there all the children appeared in characters taken from nursery lore, made up literally with nothing but coloured cotton, and they are described as being most successful.

For the benefit of the little ones, it has been found an excellent plan to introduce other country dances into the programme besides "Sir Roger"—such as "Le Carillon de Dunkerque," Scotch Reels, "Tempête," "Off She Goes," "Haste to the Wedding," and similar old-fashioned jigs.

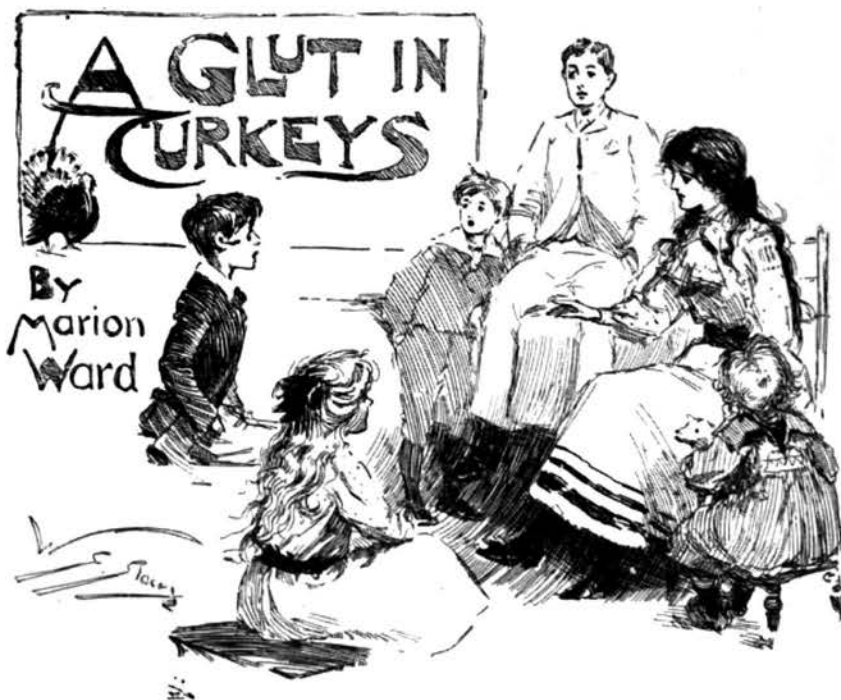
I have only now a few more dresses for girls to mention. Pamela I have seen charmingly represented in a black cotton over a cerise cotton petticoat, with demure cambric cap, fichu, and apron ; and Grace Darling in a short blue skirt, loose tunic, sailor bodice, and fisherman's cap, carrying a lantern and a life-buoy. I do not, as a rule, consider that historical characters can be well carried out in calico, or that they are suited



to little children, always excepting Charles I. children as Vandyck painted them, in their long dresses and sleeves, and baby-caps, the most quaint and charming

of ideal infant splendour and rank. Lady Jane Grey, however, in silver-grey cotton, and cotton-backed black velvet, may be made to look as demure as a Puritan Maiden, both of which I commend to the notice of those who contemplate taking part in a juvenile

calico ball, together with Mother Hubbard, in her pointed hat; or a Witch, not so very unlike, having cats and serpents cut out in black cotton, and stitched or pasted on to the scarlet cap. There are so many suitable characters, the only difficulty is which to select.



It seems to be the fashion nowadays for quite young girls to write stories all about themselves and their thoughts and escapades, and get them published, even when they are most ordinary and uninteresting—excepting to themselves, of course; so I don't see why I should not tell about our Turkey Christmas, or, as Ronald calls it, our Glut in Turkeys, which really was very funny, and tragic as well. It happened last Christmas. I was quite a child—only fifteen. Father had not patented his wonderful discovery then, and made a whole fortune just by—but I forgot; that is another story, as Mr. Kipling would say. We really were horribly poor. Father was abroad on business, and had been unexpectedly delayed, so that he could not possibly get home till after Christmas, and quite suddenly mother had almost come to the end of her ready money.

Mother never kept things from us, so we children knew just how bad things were. There were five of us: myself (Nora) the eldest, then Jack, then Dulcie, then Nicholas, and lastly Noel, who was just a baby of three. And besides us there was Ronald from next door, who was sixteen and very

big, and always called himself the head of the family.

So just before Christmas I called a council. First I called down the telephone for Ronald (we made that telephone between the nursery and Ronald's own private sitting-room ourselves, and it had a tremendous bell, an old dinner-bell, so that he could hear plainly if he happened to be in any different part of the house). And when he came I summoned the rest of the family, and solemnly proposed that, owing to the financial resources of the family being pretty well bankrupt, we should one and all cheerfully consent to forego our usual Christmas presents this year.

Ronald seconded the motion, but some of the others looked doubtful. Dulcie consented instantly, and amended further that we should each put our own private little hoards into a general box and give it to mother to add to the housekeeping-money. Dulcie always was a sweet little saint.

But Jack jibbed at that.

"Hang it all!" he said. "I'll go without my present, though I did want that 'Animals in Motion' desperately. But I jolly well can't give up my money as well. Why, I've been saving for months to buy a pair of skates!"