

Advice to the Beginner

CHAPTER II

ADVICE TO THE BEGINNER

IN taking up the study of dancing, it should be considered your duty to try to appear graceful upon the floor. Do not think that the mere moving around the room in any sort of a way will bring forth favorable criticism.

As the old saying goes, "What is worth doing is worth doing well." This applies particularly to dancing, especially in these days when every one is trying to excel in the accomplishment, to the astonishment of his friends.

Back of all this display is a certain amount of practice.

You will find that the best dancers have only acquired their dexterity through diligent practice. History tells us that the greatest Premieres Danseuses were the most ungraceful and awkward at the start, but their perseverance wrought wonderful results in a comparatively short time. Practice will bring the confidence and confidence will bring the experience. So then the practice is the main thing to be considered first. After one

becomes familiar with the exact manner of placing the feet upon the floor then it is a question of patience absolutely.

The diagrams in this book will give you the proper placing of the feet and the direction in which they should travel. Follow the arrow directions hundreds and hundreds of times until you can do the step unconsciously. Make the joining of one step with the other smooth. Do not try to be conspicuous upon the floor by trying to dance a step that is more appropriate for an exhibition; appear modest always.

Do not try a step that your partner is not familiar with; you are taking her at a great disadvantage, and although you pride yourself on knowing a little more than she in that direction your effort to teach her may not always be accepted favorably.

Ladies should cultivate a pleasing manner, as that will oft bring more partners than an expert execution with a "grouchy" personality.

Another important thing in dancing is the control of the knees and the manipulation of the ankles; it will be noticed that a good dancer invariably dances with the knees bent, but never to the extreme.



THE CLOSED POSITION

THE CORRECT STYLE

The style of dancing to-day is a smooth gliding step, using the ankles and the knees moderately—a great improvement over the hop-skip-and-jump style of yesterday. Any oscillation of the body is considered vulgar; the toes are invariably pointed to the floor with the heels raised.

Remember that although one may use the feet accurately, unless the general bearing is graceful he or she cannot be considered an accomplished dancer.

It is most important that the upper part of the body be perfectly relaxed. Then it will be comparatively easy to adjust the body, for in Modern Dancing a good balance is most essential.

In executing the turns in most of the dances the feet should be kept apart, with one directly in front of the other. The foot which is in front will designate the direction of the turn—right foot in front for the right turn, and the left foot in front for the left turn.

If the directions in this book are carried out to the letter there will be no possible chance of a failure.

THE DUTY OF THE GENTLEMAN

The guiding of the various dances depends en-

tirely upon the gentleman. It is he who suggests the steps to be used and the number of times each step should be repeated.

He must have his steps so clearly arranged in his mind's eye that he can give his entire attention to the comfort of his partner.

He is better able to judge distances, and he should be careful in selecting the steps best suited for available spaces, so as to guide his lady through the various evolutions without coming in contact with other couples.

As there can be no set rule regarding the number of times a step shall be repeated it is he who must know when to change in order to make the dance most interesting.

He must be positive in changing from one step to another, for the slightest hesitancy on his part is instantly communicated to his partner. Thus the steps are anticipated, and the transition becomes easy.

Signs given by the gentleman's left hand are most valuable in indicating to the lady the step about to be taken and the direction in which it should be made. *Such a sign should always precede, and not accompany, the step.*

THE DUTY OF THE LADY

"Still unaccomplished may the maid be thought,
Who gracefully to dance was never taught."

It may seem to the aspiring debutante that in the subservience to her partner's steps she becomes, metaphorically speaking, a clinging vine. But she should remember that unless she does become proficient along the lines indicated she is very likely to become a wall-flower—which, of course, is the last thing for a debutante to be.

Her clinging, however, must be more metaphorical than real—she must not expect her partner to bear the burden of the dance physically as well as mentally. Although he is to literally set the pace she must be quick to follow, relaxing the upper part of the body and not bearing upon the gentleman's right arm.

Her effort to lead will only confuse the gentleman, although he may be too polite to say so.

The lady may aid greatly by leading meanwhile in conversation—in which, presumably, she is the more proficient.