

MODERN DANCING



By MR. and MRS.
VERNON CASTLE

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WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
PHOTOGRAPHS AND MOVING
PICTURES OF THE NEWEST DANCES
FOR WHICH THE AUTHORS POSED

INTRODUCTION BY
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I

DANCING AS AN ART

WE all know that the art of dancing is very old. We read of it in ancient history, and it is often mentioned in the Bible, while "dancing-girls" have been known in the East for many centuries.

Times and dances have changed. In early times dancing was limited to the few; now almost any girl who does not dance is either an invalid or the piano-player! We have nearly all come to realize that dancing is part of our education, and the more proficient we become the better we like it.

Modern dancing has come to stay, whatever may be the current opinion. Of course, individual dances are bound to change; undoubtedly we shall have a revival of the older dances. Some of these were very pretty, but some were appalling. Personally, my wife and I have never been able to see why people danced the old "square dances." For the benefit of those who do not know what is meant by square dances I will try to explain.

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Years ago dances were divided into two groups, the "Round" and the "Square." The latter were usually danced by a number of couples arranged in the form of a square, and the various movements were "called out" by the leader of the orchestra. The Quadrille, the Lancers, and the Caledonia were among the most familiar examples, while the German, or Cotillion, constitutes a dance by itself.

"Round" dances comprised the Waltz, the Polka, the Yorke, and the Schottische, the Varsovienne, and the Gallop. Practically none of these dances is seen nowadays. For this we are duly thankful; even though Gavottes, Mazurkas, and Minuets could be modified and made quite charming. As they exist now they are pleasant to watch, but our tired business men would probably fall fast asleep while dancing the Minuet.

Objections to dancing have been made on the ground that it is wrong, immoral, and vulgar. This it certainly is not—when the dancers regard propriety. It is possible to make anything immoral and vulgar; all depends on how it is done.

A vulgar man or woman betrays lack of breeding even in walking across the room; sitting down may be performed in a vulgar manner, or any other smallest act. The modern dances properly danced are *not* vulgar; on the contrary, they em-

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body grace and refinement; and impartial critics who have been called upon to pronounce judgment upon them have ended by saying that there is nothing objectionable in any of them. They are, then, not immoral, not against any religious creed.

From the standpoint of health, dancing is fine exercise and keeps one absolutely fit. We ourselves can vouch for that, and we know of many people who looked fifty years of age three years ago and look less than forty to-day. They owe it all to dancing. These facts are significant. Other facts are equally so. There was less champagne sold last year than in any one of the ten previous years. People who dance drink less, and when they drink at all they exercise, instead of becoming torpid around a card-table. There are so many arguments in favor of dancing that reasonable minds must be convinced that the present popularity of dancing among people of all ages and classes is one of the best things that has happened in a long time.

Expert medical testimony as to the value of dancing is in its favor. Our modern physicians unite in thinking it a valuable health and youth preserver. Dr. Charles L. Dana, for instance, in his *Text Book of Nervous Diseases and Psychiatry* (8th ed.) says:

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“Dancing, including gymnastic dancing and folk dancing, under proper conditions and limitations, is one of the best exercises for persons of all ages. It is especially adapted to the temperament, physique, and dress of women.”