



A YOUNG EXPERT IN FANCY DANCING



BALANCE EXERCISE

LATEST FADS AND FANCIES FOR WOMEN



HOW IT LOOKS FROM THE BACK A SPINNING POSITION



A DIFFICULT POSITION A GRACEFUL POSE

What curious little fad will next attack the feminine world it would be difficult to say, but for the present women are very busy learning the art of the French danseuse. No buck and wing or fancy skirt manipulations will pass muster nowadays. You must know how to dance on the tips of your toes just for your own satisfaction, and the enterainment of a select number of your friends.

The way the fad started is said to have been through the private exhibition to her intimate friends given by a popular young girl who had been spending the winter and spring over in Paris, and there had met one of the finest premieres that the French stage can boast. The two became very friendly, and within a short time lessons were given. The American girl showed considerable talent and a wonderful amount of natural grace, so, with a little encouragement she was moved to devote a good deal of time to perfecting herself in the art of the dancer.

Of all the graceful movements that come under the head of dancing none is more difficult than the regular toe ballet dancing. One must, of course, except in this statement, the danse du ventre for which girls have to be trained for

years. In the first place, only a woman with unusual strength of limb can do much at the dance. The French method though the hardest, is the generally approved one. Instructors of this style dwell upon the beauty and importance of the arch which is so difficult to make, and, above all, to maintain. In order to acquire it with ease beginners are put through a special course of exercises that harden the muscles of the legs and strengthen the ankles. The movement resembles the ordinary ones to give balance, for their object is essentially the same. It is necessary to have an easy and graceful poise of the body before the toe dancing is commenced.

The first exercise is to stand on the balls of the feet with the hands outstretched at the sides. Next the pupil is taught how to rise slowly upon the ends of her toes and to sink back on the balls of her feet again without swaying or breaking the rhythm of the movement. Time and time again the attempt must be made before the novice is actually able to reach the ends of her toes in the proper manner. It sounds rather easy to do, but experience proves this to be far from the case. As a variation of this exercise one that brings the body into a sitting position

is advised. The whole figure is raised on the toes and then, instead of being brought to the ball of the feet again while still erect the knees are bent and the person assumes a sitting position still balanced on the tips of the toes. This is decidedly hard to do, as you will discover the first time you try it, but nothing could possibly be a better aid to the acquiring of poise than this particular movement. The knees are spread apart and the hands may be extended horizontally at the sides, or they may be placed on the hips. On the same principle that the pole aids in keeping the balance on a tightrope, the extended arms serve to keep the body from tipping over in this exercise.

These are only the preliminaries of the dancing lesson, and the number of lessons devoted entirely to them before the real dancing is begun depends entirely upon the pupil. There is one thing that I can state positively, and that is that a woman who has passed her twenty-fifth year will find it rather hard to get the steps, while a woman over 30 might as well give up at the first. This is, of course, generally speaking. The same rule holds true in ballet or fancy dancing that is said to be true in golf, and that is that a woman past 30 lacks the right amount of suppleness to ever be great at the Scotch game. This is said of the French accomplishment of fine dancing. It takes young, lithe limbs to be made to assume unusual, if not quite unnatural positions.

After the exercises have been mastered so that the pupil shows ease and freedom, as well as quickness, she is instructed in the art of balancing herself first on the toes of both feet, then on the toes of each foot separately. Fancy steps and gay dances soon follow, but it takes a little time to master this second step. For this part of the lesson the pupil is put into the regulation harness, which consists of satin practice slippers, that are very soft and perfectly flat on the sole. The toes are well stiffened and braced, while the tips are fitted with a thick round piece of wood on which the body is balanced. Connected with this toe-piece and extending the entire length of the flexible sole is a curved band of steel, which is a wonderful help in retaining the desired arch and poise.

One essential thing about the slippers is the fit; they must be very tight at the toes, for upon this feature depends the ease with which the dancer is able to balance herself on the tips. As soon as the arch is made and the body is raised up on the toes the steel band keeps the toe right and the lightness of the

slipper toes will not permit any bulging or bending, so it is almost as difficult to come down from the lofty perch as it is to rise to it.

It is commonly known that professional ballet dancer's toes are very flat across the ends and of the same length. They are certainly not things of beauty from the artist's point of view, but those who go in for the dancing fad do not expect to become hardened practitioners of the diversion. The little dancer that a society woman does in practice and for the amusement of herself and friends will not mar the beauty of her feet. It may give her greater leg development, but even this will not be so very noticeable unless the dancing is carried to an extreme. Little callous spots may form as the result of dancing, but even these are not painful and soon disappear unless the dancing is indulged in continuously. It is great fun as all the young girls assert,

and the lessons tend to impart grace and lissomness, all of which are qualities that the feminine world strives for.

It takes very little time to finish up a pair of dancing slippers. One appearance is all that a pair can make on dress occasions, and then these must be relegated to the practice hour. The satin becomes frayed and soiled. This is one feature that adds to the expense of the fad, and then these slippers have to be made in order, as a rule, so that the cost is no insignificant sum. Fads, however, would never be popular fads with the smart set if they did not cost a lot of money, but it must be admitted that, as a general thing, there is almost invariably some beneficial results from a novel exercise or notion they take up. They find it a waste of time if there isn't some good to come out of whatever they do in the way of pleasant recreation and entertainment.

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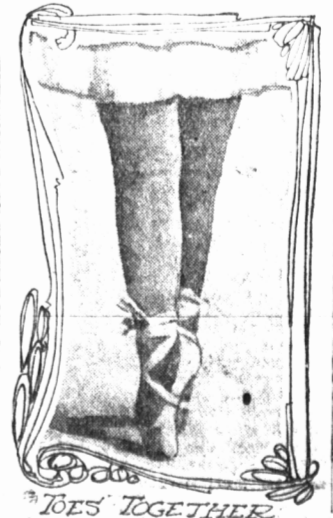
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