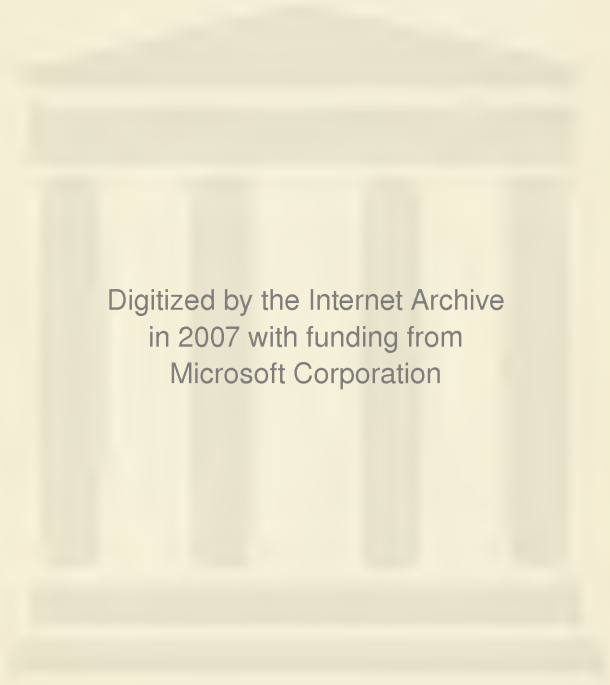

A HISTORY OF DANCING.

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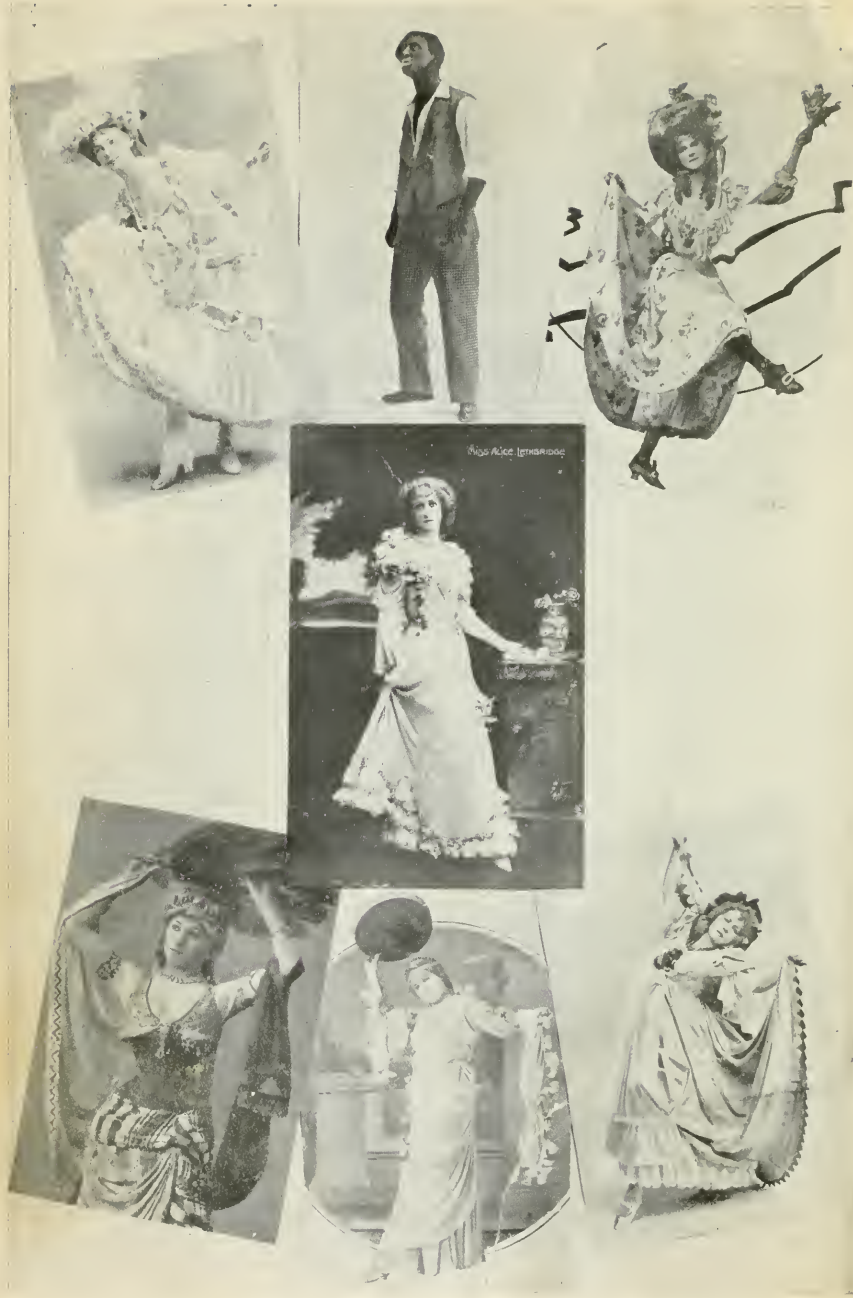

SOME MODERN STAGE DANCERS.

Miss Adeline Genee.
(Hana).

Mr. Eugene Stratton.
(Langfier).

Miss Alice Lethbridge.
(Chancellor).

Miss Kate Vaughan.
(Downey).

Miss Letty Lind.
(Ellis).

A History of Dancing.

BY

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M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,

Author of "The Dream Face," etc.

1906.

LONDON.
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, & Co.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PREFACE.

THERE was a time in England, in the far-off past, when dancing was considered as an accomplishment to be acquired by every true knight; has not Chaucer himself given as the quartet of courtly graces, Valour at Arms, Dancing, Drawing, and Writing? Since those days dancing has both gained much and lost much, but grace is still the keynote of the art, an Art that is as true a one as that of Music or of Painting. Let dancing be but graceful and it will always be a thing of beauty.

Of late years there has been a tendency, not only on the stage, but also in the ball-rooms, to wander from "the polished graces of our ancestors," and to introduce, in the former, certain styles of dancing that are far from graceful, such as "cake-walks," high-kicking, and other extravagant forms which can only debase the art; and in the latter, a wild and irresponsible romping, which has made such expressions as "Kitchen Lancers" a bye-word.

In this book I have endeavoured to show from what beautiful origins many of our dances have sprung, and how the great dancers of the past were wont to associate with their dances the poetry and noble thoughts that were the theme round which their skill revolved.

In tracing the history of the subject I have found an almost entirely new field to work upon, for with the exception of two books, one by a Frenchman,

M. Vuillier, and the other, written more from a technical than a historical point of view, by Edward Scott, there have been practically no works on the subject since the year 1712, when Weaver published his "History of Dancing."

It is a subject full of never-failing interest, and the deeper I have gone into it the more curious, and to me hitherto unknown, facts I have been able to bring to light.

I have throughout been careful to avoid technical details, for my object has been not so much to point out how the various dances should be performed, as to trace their gradual development from their origins, and to show how beautiful and picturesque a thing a dance well done may be.

REGINALD ST. JOHNSTON.

Cheltenham, 1905.

"Hark! The speaking strings invite;
Music calls us to delight;
See the maids in measure move,
Winding like the maze of love.
As they mingle madly gay
Sporting Hebe leads the way.
Love, and active Youth advance
Foremost in the sprightly dance.
As the magic numbers rise
Thro' my veins the poison flies,
Raptures not to be expressed
Revel in my throbbing breast.
Jocund as we beat the ground
Love and Harmony go round."

CUNNINGHAM, "*The Dance*," 1766.

Chapter I.

THE MUSE OF DANCING IN ANCIENT MYTHOLOGY,

AND HER ALLIANCE WITH THE KINDRED ARTS.

"*Come and trip it as you go*
On the light fantastic toe."

Milton.—"L'Allegro."

DANCING—A little word, and yet so full of meaning. What true lovers of dancing are there whose blood does not rush tingling through all their veins, and whose feet do not start an involuntary tap, tapping on the floor, when they hear the word, and its meaning flashes upon them?

To be moving, nay, rather floating through the air, to the sounds of distant music; to be madly rushing, now here, now there with a thrill of delicious intoxication, yet all the while in perfect harmony with the tune; to be now whirling round at an

almost incredible speed, now apparently standing still, yet with the brain afire the whole time; and to hear throughout, mingled with the music, the ripple of merry laughter,—for happiness is the reflex action of dancing,—such are the thoughts and memories conjured up at the sound of the word.

And not merely thoughts and memories of our own making, but thoughts and memories of a long stream of other happy and merry dancers, stretching back as through a long, mirror-lined room, far, far away into the distant ages of the past; other dancers from whom we have inherited these feelings, other dancers who in their turn had the memories borne upon them out of the far-off past, right away back to the earliest ideas of primitive man; for dancing and music were the first pleasures of mankind.

One can almost imagine the Earliest Man walking one morning and finding the sun shining, the air bright and cheerful, the birds singing, and everything good to see. And then, through very joy of life,

he started dancing, and laughing at the pleasure of this new sensation, he would start singing and clapping his hands to keep time, and thus there—out in the grey wilderness of Ancient Earth—were the two great arts of Dancing and Music first brought to life.

Dancing was prevalent among all the early races of the earth, and it is from the Ancient Greek Mythology of thousands of years ago, that we claim her who is known as the present goddess of dancing, the one whom, though we may not actually worship her, as did the ancient Greeks, we yet hold in reverence, and for whom we erect a pedestal in our inmost hearts—Terpsichore.

Terpsichore, how often have you been invoked in picture and song, how often have the painter and the poet had good cause to thank the old Greeks for creating you and placing you, perhaps the first, among the Sacred Nine? O, Terpsichore! what a boon you have been to mankind! Poetry, Music, even Art, may sometimes be sorrowful and sad, but you—never. You were sent into the world to cheer up our hearts, to

bring back the roses to the maiden's cheeks, to send the warm blood coursing through the bodies of all your votaries. You, with your handmaids Laughter and Lyric Song, came along, and lo! all the world was again cheerful and full of smiles. Keep with us, Terpsichore, and may the flame on your altars never die out.

There was once upon a time—(I will start in the old, old way, for it is not all Mythology like a beautiful old fairy tale, and all the better for telling in the established way?)—an infant called Zeus, who was the son of Kronos, the god of Time, and Rhea, who was the daughter of Father Heaven and Mother Earth. That, I always think, was a pretty fancy that only the artistic Greeks could have thought of—Time marrying the daughter of Heaven and Earth.—Now, Zeus, after many wonderful adventures and hairbreadth escapes, grew up and became King of the Gods.

And one day he fell in love with the pretty goddess of Memory, whose name was Mnemosyne, and marrying her, their children became, very naturally, the goddesses

of all the beautiful arts of mankind, and were known as the Nine Muses; and one of the chief of these was Terpsichore, the goddess of Dancing.

She and her sisters of Poetry, Drama, and the kindred arts, were wont to disport themselves on the gentle slopes of Parnassus, or the rugged sides of Helicon; and in every town of ancient Greece, there was an altar, however small, in honour of sweet Terpsichore.

Not that the Greeks were necessarily the first to imagine a goddess of Dancing, for probably older and more barbaric nations had worshipped some Divinity of the Dance, who especially watched over its votaries, but I think it is to the Greeks that the earliest ideas of Dancing as one of the arts, one of the refining influences on mankind, may be attributed. They, as it is seen, closely associated the Muse of Dancing with those of Music, Poetry and the Drama, and sought to show her kinship more especially with the two former.

And how closely is she a sister of Music and Poetry! Just as Poetry is but Music

without sound, so is Dancing, Poetry without words. Plutarch was the first to really understand this, and in his "Symposium" he describes dancing as the "Handmaid of Poetry." In every movement of the feet, in every evolution of the body, there is that true rhythm and concord which is the mainspring, the basis, of all Poetry and Music.

How often has dancing been described as the "true poetry of motion," and how appropriately! Dancing in its poetry, outvies Poetry itself, if one may make use of a seeming paradox. For poetry—as understood by verses, or even the placing of words and sentences in a rhythmical concurrence—must, to be appreciated, have the cool and calculating intelligence brought to bear upon it, to be poetry it must also have a certain meaning, a certain sequence of ideas; but dancing appeals purely and simply to the imagination; one is fascinated, passively if watching, or actively if taking part, by the dance, and is carried away from oneself by the mere sensation of the movement: the uncivilized savage, equally

with the most cultured person, can take a delight in the quick turns and swaying motions of a dance, and it is thus we can see that this "rhythm of motion" is the fountain-head of the later, and more civilized, art of poetry, or the "rhythm of words."

Again, in Art, is it not the chief idea, the one great essential, of the picture or piece of sculpture, that it should be graceful and pleasing, and here in dancing, we have grace and beautiful motion personified, as of a still picture suddenly brought to life and capable of movement.

For be the picture what it may—I speak of course in reference to the pictures portraying Nature—be it sea-scape or land-scape, we have in the dance, the *movement* which is the great theme of Nature, embodied in the movements of living persons. For the artist, in catching and impressing on his canvas one of the phases of moving Nature, whether the swaying of trees, the floating of clouds, or the rolling of the billows of the ocean, is merely trying to get the general effect of movement, such

as we see continually in the dance. And, could we invent some art by which we could get the continuous idea of movement instead of merely one phase of it, as we see in a picture, we should be more nearly approaching the mental picture that we ourselves make, if only for a fraction of a second, of the sequence of the evolution of a dance.

Chapter II.

DANCING AS A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY.

"Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns
with cloven hoof
From the glad sound would not be
absent long."

Milton.—"Lycidas."

ROM the earliest ages dancing has formed an important part of the religious ceremonies of many nations, and although, in connection with religion, it is now practically non-existent — except in remote and primitive tribes—it was at one time almost universal among the nations which were pre-eminent in the world for their civilization.

Religious fanaticism affects men's minds as perhaps no other emotion can do; it fills them with a sudden rush of frenzied thoughts and incoherent ideas, and as a

result, all calm and intelligent reason is swept aside, and all control over the actions of the body is lost. And to work off, as it were, this superfluous energy created in the brain, strong muscular action takes place, and unconsciously the man throws himself into all sorts of paroxysms of the body and wild motions of the limbs, yet throughout, owing to a vague directing impulse in his brain, he keeps his balance, and consequently his frenzy develops into a wild form of a dance.

So, probably, were the religious dances of the early nations first brought about, and though in the accounts we have of them there was none of the absolute loss of control—except, perhaps in some of the Dionysia of the Greeks—that we see for instance in the spinning Dervishes of to-day, yet there is no doubt that they were all of them a direct result of exaltation of the mind, produced by a constant dwelling on religious ideas.

And these dances, once inaugurated, become more and more organized and methodical, till at length they gradually

took their place among the regular ceremonial observances of each particular religion. And the dance, from a dramatic point of view, could express so much that was necessary in the act of worship,—thanksgiving, praise, supplication and humiliation were all shewn by means of it—that there is little suprise that it should have become an important factor in the history of religion. One of the earliest forms of religious dancing that we hear about occured in the Dionysia, or festivals to Dionysus, of the early Greeks.

These took place chiefly in Attica and the Grecian Archipelago, and also in Asia Minor; though it must be remembered that the worship of Bacchus, which was merely the Roman name for Dionysus, was also carried on in Italy, though at a rather later period. The cult of Dionysus, under both his Greek and Roman names, rapidly spread, and traversing the South of Europe, passed Bactria and Media, and even reached far off India, so that his worship became almost universal throughout the known world. This his votaries explained by say-

ing that he himself was wont to make pilgrimages, accompanied by a train of Nymphs, Satyrs, and Centaurs, into distant lands to teach mankind the cultivation of the grape and the preparation of wine.

In Attica there were two annual festivals in his honour, the Lesser and the Greater Dionysia. The Lesser occurred in country places where the vine was grown in December; while the Greater took place at Athens in March. Here great feasts were indulged in, and a regular series of dances was performed, in which a multitude of people took part. These festivals were held to signify the joy of the people at the departure of Winter and the approach of Summer, for Dionysus was said to have delivered his people from the troubles of the cold season. During the Dionysia the ancient image of the god, which had been brought from Eleuthera to Athens, was conveyed in solemn procession, from the sanctuary of Lenaeon to another temporary shrine, and accompanying the procession were numbers of priests, troops of dancers, and chorus of singing boys with masks.

Of a more essentially religious nature, was the dancing ceremony in connection with the worship of Mars at Rome.

Here, in his two shrines, the Quirinal and the Palatine, were stationed twenty-four priests, the twelve from the Palatine being specially called the Salii or dancers ; and for a number of days from March the First in each year, these made a solemn dancing procession through the city, in full armour, clashing their lances on the sacred ancillae or shields, and singing votive songs to Mars.

Now it is curious to notice that, like so many other heathen customs, this practice—only in a modified form,—re-appeared at a later date in our early Christian churches, and though many deny that the church-dancing had any connection with the Roman salii, there seems no reason to doubt that they originally arose from them.

Be as it may, the fact that dancing took place as one of the religious observances of the early Christian church is indisputable, and special provision in the choir of the building was made for it. Moreover, so component a part of the religion did dancing

become, that, according to the early fathers, the angels were continually dancing to the sound of music, and the company of the apostles was a glorified Chorus. And Scaliger, the Italian scholar famous for his researches into Greek and Italian literature, and who so astonished Charles V. by his powers of dancing, declared that the bishops were called "præsules" because they led the dance on feast days.

For many years dancing flourished in the Christian church, till it was finally discredited with the Agapé feast, and sundry other observances, at the close of the fourth century. After this it became so strongly disapproved of, that St. Augustine is said to have remarked *Melius est fodere quam saltare.* "It is better to dig than to dance," and some centuries later, the Albigenses and the Waldenses, two religious sects in the South of France, made a special point in their tenets to rage against it, and called it the "Devil's procession."

Yet, never-the-less, right up to the middle of the 18th century, there were traces of religious dancing in the cathedrals of Spain,

Portugal, and Rousillon, on Saints' days and special Feast days, and particularly in the Mussarabian Mass of Toledo, and probably many of our church rites—especially the Roman Catholic ones—whose origin is now lost, came originally from this observance

The Spinning Dervishes are a remarkable instance of a carefully cultivated religious frenzy, for in their case the dance is not the result of the frenzy, but exactly the opposite takes place. They start from a stationary position and gradually increasing the speed of their rotation, get quicker and quicker with each evolution, till they actually seem not to move, so fast do they spin.

Another extraordinary form of religious ceremony was the devil-dance of the Veddahs, now a practically extinct tribe of people, who were once a leading race in Ceylon. This dance, which was the equivalent of a spoken incantation, was performed as follows :

A tripod, on which were offerings of eatables, was placed on the ground, and before a concourse of people, the priest or devil-dancer proceeded to dance round it, getting more and more violent in his movements, till

he fell into a sort of paroxysm, in which state he was supposed to receive from the gods the information required.

In contrast to this there is a very quiet form of religious ceremony in Fiji, which is distinctly a dance, though the dancers do not move from the ground. This is called the "Hiba," or dance of seated dancers, which takes place in the ceremony of Ava-drinking during the preparation of that drink. The men sit round in a circle, and to the sound of a low chanting, move their arms and legs about in rhythmical cadence till the drink is ready, when, after some incantations, the *mbete* or priest, passes the cup round and the dancing ceases.

In Madagascar the women dance every day while their husbands are absent, as a sort of religious ceremony which is supposed to inspire the men with courage in battle: and another curious custom is the funeral dance of the Todas, an Indian Hill-tribe, who have a peculiar dance which chiefly consists of moving backwards and forwards a few steps at a time, to the chanting of the wailing cry "ha-ho." The origin of this was probably

to frighten away the evil sprits from the presence of the dead. This idea occurs in many other funeral customs of primitive tribes.

So we have, in connection with religious ceremonies, the custom of dancing, for the following reasons :—

(1). As a result of fanatical frenzy.

(2). To express by gesture: thanksgiving, praise, supplication, and humiliation.

(3). To express joy at the departure of Winter (though the Dionysian dances were probably partly caused by wine intoxication).

(4) In honour of Mars.

(5) As an incantation.

(6) To frighten away evil spirits.

And through all these primitive minds—for we must remember that even among the civilised Greeks and Romans the origins of the dances were at an early period—we find the one idea running, to attract the attention of the deity by violent exertions, and to force the notice of their needs upon him by the vigour of their dancing.

Chapter III.

ANCIENT FORMS OF DANCING IN GREECE, ITALY AND THE EAST.

"Memory wakes her magic trance
And wings me lightly through the dance."

Moore.—"Odes of Anacreon."

ALTHOUGH the dancing systems of ancient Greece and Italy were far more elaborate and carefully organized than those of any of the contemporary nations, and at one time reached a pinnacle of perfection which has been barely equalled by even the best endeavours of modern times, yet in Egypt, which might well be called the mother-country of all civilised dancing, we must look for those first traces of the art which, carried over into Greece and Italy, became there polished up and brightened till it shone forth as one of the most refined and cultured pursuits of the day.

The act of dancing has been divided under three headings: Exuberant feeling, Panto-

mimic, and Social, though the Social division might more aptly be expressed as a result of exuberant feeling, or as a deliberate cultivation of it. And to these divisions a fourth may be added, namely: Dancing as an Art itself; that is to say the performance of one person (for if more are dancing, it developed into the pantomimic division) for the gratification of on-lookers, and to show a complete mastery over the art.

And it was in Egypt that this fourth division first sprang up, when the dancing girl—a girl being chosen as more graceful and agile than a man—gave what was perhaps the first "pas seul" of the world.

It seems wonderful when we come to think of it, that Egypt, the Egypt as we know it now, the land of the silent Sphinx and the stupendous Pyramids, the land of those monuments and temples at whose greatness and vast size even the men of our modern times pause to regard with marvelling and awe, should have been at one time the centre of a busy civilization such as few can realise, and a civilization, be it remembered, of three, four and even five thousand years ago. Yet

so it was, and it was here that dancing as a separate art, as a resulting development of the culture of men's minds, first was practised.

The earliest information we can gather concerning the development of the dance from the spasmodic movements of exuberant feeling, which was here, as everywhere else, the first origin of dancing, is the mention of the *Maneros*, which was a slow rhythmical song accompanied by the distinct movements and phases of a regular dance.

Not much is known about this, but concerning another dance, that of the pantomimic mourner who accompanied funerals, and by his dancing set forth in gesture all the accomplishments and deeds of the dead man, we have ample evidence from a great number of sculptures and pictured papyri.

Then came the wild dances of Osiris, who was the Egyptian equivalent of Bacchus and Dionysus; and co-eval with them was the Astronomic dance, a dance which was one of a marvellous age, and about which more perhaps has been written, than about any other dance of the early ages.

Sir John Davies, the great Elizabethan lawyer, has well described the Astronomic dance in his long poem, the "Orchestra," written in 1596. It was an intricate and cleverly-executed dance, meant to represent the courses of the stars, and performed by a large number of dancers. Not only in Egypt, but in Assyria and even Greece was this dance known, and respectively around the fire-surmounted altars of Ra, Baal-peor, and Jove,—who were the three chief, or sun-gods, of these nations—did the dance revolve.

I have often wondered whether this dancing round the sun-altars might not have been a possible origin of the old English myth of the sun dancing at Eastertide (mentioned in Suckling's "Ballade upon a Wedding) perhaps brought to us by the Phœnician traders, and afterwards, like the hot cross bun and so many other myths, appropriated by the early Christian priests.

We have also evidences from the ancient hieroglyphics and paintings, that it was customary to have professional dancers at feasts. These were called "Almehs," and they are generally depicted waving small

branches or beating tambourines while they danced, singing the refrain, "Make a good day, make a good day. Life only lasts for a moment. Make a good day." Which is the same idea, it will be noticed, as that of the feasters in the Bible, who said, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

One thing is noticeable in reviewing the customs of the ancient Egyptians, and that is, that the higher classes themselves never seemed to have indulged in dancing, but always employed others to dance before them, so that social dancing, as we understand it now, was practically non-existent. And therefore, the dancing of Miriam, the sister of Moses, at the passage of the Red Sea, might have been one more instance of the complete subjugation that the Israelites had undergone whilst with the Egyptians, inasmuch as it showed an intimate acquaintance with the manners and customs of the lower classes; or else, and this seems more probable, it is simply a case of exuberance of feeling.

It has been suggested that the dancing on this occasion, may have been a survival of

one of the ancient rites of the passover, but there seems little ground for such a theory.

And here it may not be out of place to briefly sketch what little is known about the custom of dancing among the Jews, because, for many generations after their captivity among the Egyptians, they were so impregnated with the ideas of Egypt, that a number of their most important customs and habits were practically of Egyptian origin.

Thus we gather from the Bible, and from the writings of contemporary nations, that, as in Egypt, no social dancing was practised, though the solo or figure dancing, such as carried on in Egypt, appears to have also been unknown to them. Yet that dancing of a kind was indulged in we have abundant proof from the numerous instances in which the word occurs in the sacred writings. Principally, however, it seems to have been connected with religious ceremonies, some to us now obscure and meaningless, such as the dancing of David, when the Ark was brought into Zion; others of which we have a more or less complete knowledge, such as the dancing in the orchards on the occasions of the

Feast of Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement, ceremonies which were carried on for many years.

The only reference to what may be termed "figure dancing" in the whole Bible, is the dancing of Herodias' daughter before the guests assembled for Herod's birthday, and this due to the influx of Greek fashons which began about that period.

Turning now to the art as practised among the Greeks, we cannot do better than start with an axiom from the lips of the great master of poetry, Homer himself, who speaks of dancing as the "Sweetest and most perfect of human enjoyments," and who particulary praises the grace and proficiency of the Phaiakian youths in it. Thus even in his time, it must have arrived at a certain standard of excellence.

The chief dances of the Phaiakians of whom he speaks, were of two kinds; the dance of a number of men in slow measured time around a singer stationed in the centre, and the dance of two skilled dancers, who kept time with each other; a dance, in fact, which was the precursor of our modern "pas de deux."

One of the earliest known dances among the Greeks, was that of the "men in armour," a very popular dance among the Doric states. This was called the Πυρρίχη and was essentially a mimetic dance, the performers imitating the attack and defence of armed warriors.*

At about this period, too, the Dionysia, to which reference has been made in the preceding chapter, first began to be performed. And then the country festivals to the different gods became common, and the dance began to be an important part of the ceremonies.

In all the festivals it was practically the same, and consisted of a series of measured movements around the altar, generally accompaned by singing. In connection with these semi-sacred dances, we have records of a dance performed by noble Spartan maidens to the goddess Artemis Karyatis, but little is known about the mode of procedure.

*In a somewhat altered form this dance survived right down to the time of Byron,—it may exist still,—when he wrote, "You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet. Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?"

A dance, however, of which we have numerous records, both in the books of well-known writers, and the drawings on vases and friezes, was the ὅρμος or Chain Dance, performed by a band of young men and girls placed alternately in a ring, and with hands clasped. They then danced round, at the same time twisting in and out, much in the manner of our English Maypole Dance, and a very pretty sight it must have been.

Various pantomimic dances or ballets were carried on by the Greeks, such as the Καρπέα and the Gymnastic dances. The former represented the surprise by robbers of a warrior ploughing a field, his rush for his weapons, and the subsequent fight; while the gymnopædic dances were imitations of the sports of the Palastra, such as the gymnastic exercises, wrestling, and leaping, and were accompanied by a series of graceful rhymes specially composed for the occasion, and also by singing.

These ballets led to the drama, and thus we find that theatrical representations had their origin in the dance, and this remark applies equally to the most intricate and well-staged

plays of the present time, for by means of the connecting link of the plays of Milton, who founded his dramas on the Greek model, our modern English play is really a descendant of the old Greek drama.

With the drama came the elaborate stage dances, which served as interludes to the play, and of which the best known were the Delian dance of the Labyrinth, ascribed to Theseus, and said to be one of the first stage dances ever performed, and the dance of the Eumenides or Fates, a very powerful and vigorous dance, representing the Fates in their different capacities. The dance of the Labyrinth was also called Τέρανος, as the movements resembled the flight of a flock of Cranes.

These stage dances were entirely confined to the Chorus, though the chorus were in those days important members of the cast, and not mere adjuncts as they are now; and the choric dancing resembled the modern ballet, both in the rhythmical movement of the feet, and in the pantomimic motions of the arms and the whole body, in order to give a more realistic meaning to the theme portrayed.

The Social dancing among the Greeks, was confined to dancing of a pantomimic nature, or else to the dancing of professionals at feasts, though at times the guests seem to have taken part in the dances, and Socrates himself, so high was his opinion of dancing as an art, is said to have taken lessons in it at an advanced age.*

The Greek banquets were divided into two chief stages, the feast proper, and the Symposium, or wine concert afterwards, and it was at these symposia that the dancing took place. This was often of an artistic and dramatic nature, and in "The Banquet" of Xenophon there is an excellent description of one of these dances, a representation of the meeting of Ariadne and Dionysius.

Greece and Rome have always been closely allied in both philosophy and art, and it is therefore only to be expected that Rome should have derived most of her ideas concerning the art of dancing, from the older and sister nation, Greece. The very earliest forms of dancing in Rome were, however, of

*When he was sixty years old, and from one called Aspasia Aspasia thus becomes probably the first known dancing-master in history.

Etruscan origin, and were said to have formed part of what was perhaps the first scenic performance in Rome, when, in 364 B.C., a theatrical representation accompanied by mimic dances was given by certain Etruscan actors as a means of appeasing divine wrath during a plague.

This performance took the public fancy, and soon became popular, and later on, recitative verses in changing metre, were added, —this being an idea taken from the Greek model—and the result was the satirical drama.

Then came, about the time of Hannibal, the famous Fabulæ Atellanæ called after the city of Atella. These were farcical burlesques, accompained by dancing, and formed interludes to the regular drama, much as some forty or fifty years ago, our English pantomimes were often wedged in between two serious plays. They were performed by young citizens of good name and standing, who were dressed up in various kinds of hideous and grotesque masks, and who carried out the theme of the play, generally a rough rendering of episodes in the lives of mythical gods and heroes.

The Pantomimus was an outgrowth of the Canticum, or singing portion of the comedies, and the Fabulæ Atellanæ; and in this an actor indicated by dramatic dancing or gesture the subject of the song. In later republican times this dancing became a separate branch of the art, and the pantomimic dance may be said to have reached its climax when performed and taught by Pylades of Cilicia and Bathyllos of Alexandria, in the time of the early empire. The subjects of the pantomimus were again the myths of the gods and heroes, favourite ones being "The Labours of Hercules," and "The Suprising of Venus and Mars by Vulcan," Vulcan being always a comic part.

As a rule, when there were both male and female characters in the cast, one actor would double a part, taking up the female character as well as his own, but occasionally both male and female dancers appeared in the pantomimus, especially in later times, and it then became a regular dramatic ballet.

What may be considered the golden age of theatrical dancing in Rome, was in the time of Augustus, in whose reign so many other

things attained their golden epochs. At this period, the stage became an imperial concern, and the Italic dance of the Imperial theatre, with its good music and brilliant dresses, completely supplanted the older dramas.

The great aim of Augustus was to gain the favour of the people, and also to drive all thoughts of politics from them, so he gave special attention to the theatres and other means of popular amusement, and passed laws for the protection of the pantomimists. They were given many advantages and privileges, amongst these being exemption from the "Jus Virgarum," but it was not long before they used this freedom against the peace of the city, so that, in the times of Tiberius and Domitian they were severely oppressed and finally banished.

However, the reigns of Trajan and Aurelius saw them once more reinstated, and with increased honour, for they were now made decurians, and had the title of "Priests of Apollo," given to them. But from this time they began to degenerate, and finally sank into insignificance with the general corruption of the city.

Chapter IV.

SOME EARLY FORMS OF ENGLISH DANCING.

"You jig, you amble, and you lisp."

Shakespeare.—"Hamlet."

WE in England have, in times past, been scoffed at in respect of our dancing; we have been told, a little unjustly perhaps, that we were far inferior to such nations as France, in grace, style, and deportment, and it is entirely true that for many years we had to employ foreign dancing-masters to give that polish and touch so necessary in the courtly dance; yet in the earlier periods of our history, when agility abandon, and skill,—combined, nevertheless, with a certain amount of grace and finish—were the chief essentials of the dance, we could, I venture to say, hold our own with anybody. And as to happiness and merriment, which, after all, are but the origin, aim

and result of dancing, right worthily did the little island acquire and retain its title of "Merrie England."

Dancing as a means of entertainment, seems to have been brought over with the Saxons, and though they appear to have practised it but little among themselves, yet the "Glee-men" or professional singers and entertainers who went about from place to place were noted for their skill in it.

The Mummers, too, who seem to have now altogether died out, were a distinct survival of Saxon times, and though they did not do much dancing, yet in some parts of their performance a dance was sure to take place.

The last time I saw the mummers, and probably the last time that mumming was ever done, at all events in that part of England, was in 1888 at Leckhampton, now a suburb of Cheltenham, at the foot of the Cotswold Hills. It was Christmas time, and a band of some seven or eight youths, evidently villagers from the Cotswolds, came to the house where I was living, and asked if they might perform the old play of "St. George." They were all dressed up in fancy

costumes representing St. George, the Dragon, the Faire Maiden, the Doctour of Physike, and other characters, and with some awkwardness they managed to get through the performance. At intervals there was a little dancing of rather a cumbersome kind, but the most interesting part of the whole performance was the use of many words and phrases which we could none of us understand, and which I doubt if they understood themselves. These were evidently bits of the pure Anglo-Saxon phraseology of the play, which had been handed down unaltered from father to son through all those centuries in this little out-of-the-way spot in the Severn Valley.

Coming to later times, the times of Norman chivalry and knight-errantry, we find that dancing began to be more of a refined and social amusement of the upper classes, and in the old romances so important a place did it assume, that no hero seemed complete unless he accounted it as one of his accomplishments. Thus Chaucer, in the Canterbury Tales, gives as one of the courtly attributes of the Squire that he could

"Juste and eke dance, and well pourtraie and write."

Yet it was by no means absent as a pursuit of the lower and middle classes, and we know of many dances, some now altogether lost sight of, some that were still existing up to not many years ago, and some still carried on, which they were wont to indulge in.

Among the amusements of the lower classes which are now lost sight of, were the "egg-dance"; and another dance whose name I am unable to find out which appeared to be a sort of figure dance performed by two girls who danced to the sound of music, now side to side, now back to back, ever casting glances over their shoulders at each other, so that, as it is graphically described in the "Roman de la Rose,"

"They threw yfere
Ther mouthes, so that, through ther play
It seemed as they kyste alway."

The Egg-dance, or hop-egg, as it was also called, was a dance generally performed by women, who, in much the same manner as that of the present Scottish sword-dance, performed their figures about eggs placed

on the floor. This also has been described by Chaucer, who says the performers are called "hoppesteres"; and Strutt, the eminent antiquarian, in his "Sports and Pastimes," written about 1790, mentions that the so-called slang phrase, "Going to the hop to-night?" (which appears to have been old even in his time) evidently came from this dance!

Among the many old institutions which we must now regretfully place among the class of "bye-gone customs"—regretfully, by reason of their picturesque beauty and quaintness, apart from the memory of old associations which had gathered round them—as around all old customs—are the Maypole Dance and the Morris.

The Maypole is still, I believe, existing in some parts of the country, and is the oldest dance we have in England, possibly in Europe. For it is undoubtedly of Roman origin, and came from some ceremonies connected with the worship of Maia, the mother of Mercury, and the presiding goddess of that month. For many centuries it was the chief dance of rustic England, and much im-

portance was attached to it by all classes of people; but the milk-maids, the rosy-cheeked Phœbes and Phyllises of the idealist, the type which now one only sees on the stage of light opera, considered it their own special festival, and were the most enthusiastic in the keeping of it.

Tall maypoles were erected everywhere, with many-coloured streamers hanging down from them; and, grasping these, a number of young men and girls ranged themselves alternately in a circle and commenced to dance round in one direction, to the merry strains of a fiddler and a piper. Intricate movements were then performed, the girls twisting under the arms of the men, some going forward, some backward, till all the streamers were wound tightly round the pole. This was the signal for a change in the music, and then gradually the reverse of the previous figures took place, till all the ribbons were unwound.

There were many other customs connected with May-day, and the whole affair was conducted with much mock ceremony; two girls were chosen by vote to preside over the

festivities, one being called Lady Flora, queen of the flowers, and the other Lady May, but in later times only one sovereign was elected, the Queen of the May.

So universal was the Maypole at one time, that in every village, in every community almost, was one to be seen; and actually in the Strand—then, as now, the heart of busy London—the Maypole was a noted landmark. Thus Pope remarks:—

> "Amid the area wide they took their stand
> Where once the Maypole overlooked the Strand."

Another quaint and equally English custom, and one that perhaps more than any other gained for this country the title of Merrie England, was the Morris Dance.

Coming originally from Spain, where it is said to have derived its name from the Moriscoes or Moors who then dwelt there, it soon became altered and improved, and twining around the hearts and affections of the people, became a naturalised English dance.

It is said to have been brought over in the reign of Edward III. by John of Gaunt, after one of his missions to Spain; and

though in some slight details it differed from the original Spanish Morris, it retained most of the important characteristics. Thus the castanets, the dancing accompaniment so typical of Spain, were changed for the clashing of swords and wooden staves, which sound distinctly resembled the clicking of the castanets, and also more persons were introduced into the dance, showing the developing tendency of its pantomimic nature.

In the early forms of our English Morris, five men (one being known as the "foreman of the Morris"), and a boy who was dressed up to represent Maid Marian, were the only performers. Accompanying these were a piper and tabourer; and to the sound of this music, the clashing of staves, and the jingle of small bells fastened to their costumes, they danced their lively measures.

Later on, the characters of the "Merry Men of Sherwood" were introduced, and Robin Hood, Friar Tuck and Little John became conspicuous figures of the dance. By the reign of Henry VIII. it had become widespread and universal, and representa-

tions of it appeared even in the stained glass windows of churches; and at Betley, in Staffordshire, there is still to be seen an excellent picture of it, with all the characters of the Sherwood Foresters. In Beverley Minster, too, there is a stone carving of a Morris, but only one or two performers are shown. About the time of Henry VIII. the hobby-horse, that strange monstrosity that so delighted our ancestors, seems to have been introduced into the Morris, and mock tournaments were held; though this, of course, detracted from the care that had hitherto been solely devoted to the dancing.

A special representation of the Morris was given before James I. when on a visit in Hertfordshire, and we are told that the performers evinced great skill in their art; and from this time, right through the reign of Charles I. up to the commencement of the Commonwealth, it was enjoying the zenith of its popularity; but on the accession of the Puritans to power it was sternly put down as an ungodly performance, and not until the Restoration was it revived in the slightest way.

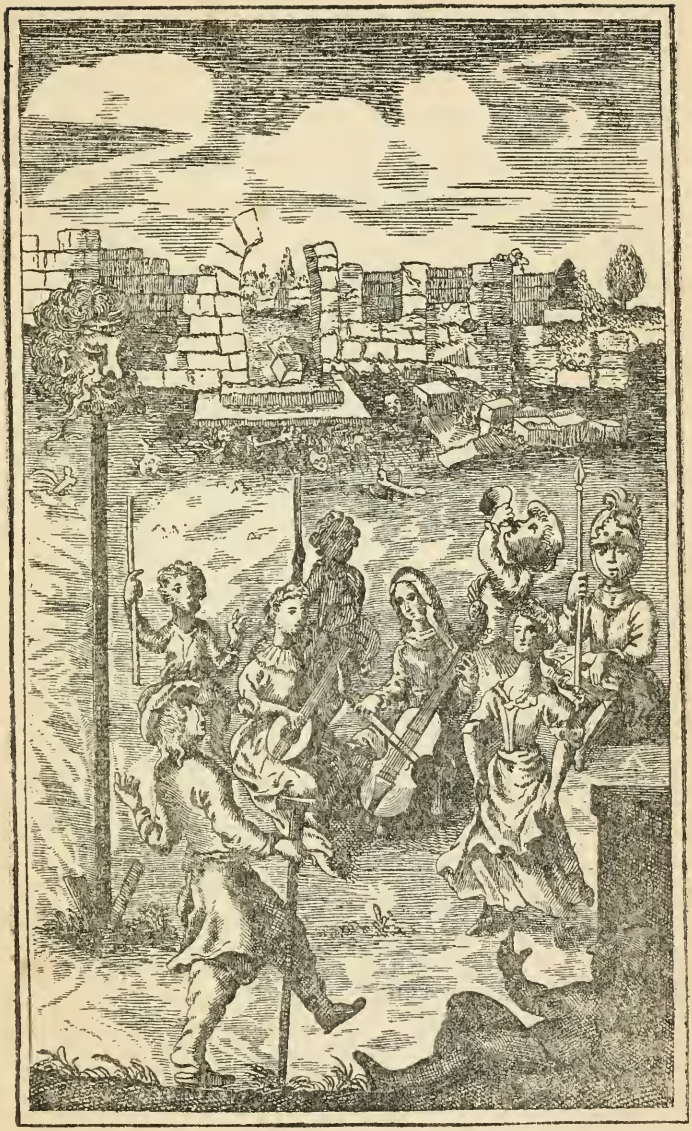
With the reign of Charles II. it was resuscitated, but only in a mild way; and as the gradual development of the theatres and masques began to do away with the need of it, many of its chief characteristics died out. Thus, Maid Marian became converted into a clown called Malkin, from which we probably get the later Grimalkin, and the other personages began to gradually disappear. However, as a dance, it was kept up in full swing in country places for nearly two hundred years more, being recognised as an especial Whitsuntide and May-time ceremony, and not until some forty years ago did it finally die out.

Like the mummers and many other old customs, it died hard in the district of the Cotswold Hills, and I was not long ago given an account, by an eye-witness, of the last time it was apparently danced in the town of Cheltenham, about forty years ago.

He told me that the performers appeared in knee-breeches, tall or "box" hats, as he called them, and short jackets with white sleeves. They were about twenty in number, and formed up in two lines facing each other.

The music was supplied by two men with long tin whistles, and also by the clashing of the two wooden sticks of the dancers, the last remnants of the pipes and sword-staves of the earlier Morris. The Sherwood foresters had been reduced to two clowns or fools, who, armed with inflated bladders, cut capers and went about among the onlookers demanding contributions. Yet, with all these differences, it was still the old morris, the morris of centuries ago, and it is only with regret that we can watch all these quaint and interesting old customs slowly dying away.

Two more curious old dances of the Middle Ages were the Roundel and the Hay. The former, synonymous with the Rondelay or song written for accompaniment to this dance, was chiefly a measure for the country people, and was danced in two ways, either all joining hands in a ring and revolving, now in one direction, now in another, and changing steps to the music; or else all following one person, and varying the step as he commanded, in much the same way as the schoolboy game of "follow-my-leader."



DANCE OF JOY AT THE OVERTHROW OF DOUBTING CASTLE.
From an early copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress."

The Hay is said to be the same as the older Chaucerian "Reye," and was also danced in a ring. Little is known about this dance now, but it seems probable, mainly from the evidence of Shakespeare in "Love's Labour Lost," that it was either a dance for the upper classes, or else one of a more intricate nature than the Roundel; for Dull, the constable, is made to say:—

> "I'll make one in a dance or so, or
> I will play on the tabor to the worthies, and
> let them dance the Hay."

In those times the dance formed a great part of the festivities at weddings, and dancing nearly always took place in the interval between the wedding breakfast and supper, though it must be remembered that the breakfast was a very late meal, and the supper a very early one. Numerous dances were indulged in—the Jig, the Brawl or Brantle, the Galliard, and the Cushion Dance, being the favourites; and with all the people decked out in their best, the gentlemen as well as the ladies clothed in a gorgeous array of colours, it must have been a dazzling sight; and one can under-

stand the full scorn and bitterness of Katherine's remark in reference to her sister in the "Taming of the Shrew"—

"I must dance barefoot on her wedding day."

A curious and apparently at times disagreeable custom at these wedding dances was that of the bride being compelled to dance with everyone present; and as open house was often kept at the time of a wedding, the result was sometimes the reverse of pleasant.

In an old book, Christen's "State of Matrimony," 1543, a remarkable passage occurs illustrating this—

"Then must the poor bryde kepe foote with a' dancers, and refuse none, how scabbed, foule, droncken, rude, and shameless soever he be";

and though the writer, being puritanically inclined against dancing, is perhaps a little too prone to exaggerate, yet he must have had good grounds for such a statement.

The "Cushion-Dance," often corrupted into "Kissing-Dance," and also known by the name of "Joan Sanderson," was a lively and mirth-provoking dance, which has now quite died out. There is an excellent de-

scription of it in the "Dancing Master," an old manual on dancing of 1698, which runs as follows :—

"Joan Sanderson, or the Cushion Dance. An old Round Dance."

"This Dance is begun by a single person (either man or Woman), who, taking a Cushion in his hand, dances about the Room, and at the end of the Tune, he stops and sings, 'This Dance it will no farther go.' 'The Musician answers, 'I pray you, good Sir, why say you so?' Man : 'Because Joan Sanderson will not come too.' Music. : 'She must come too, and she shall come too, and she must come whether she will or no.'

"Then he lays down the Cushion before a Woman, on which she kneels, and he kisses her, singing, 'Welcom, Joan Sanderson, welcom, welcom.' Then she rises, taking up the Cushion, and both dance singing, 'Prinkum-prankum is a fine Dance, and shall we go dance it once again, and once again, and shall we go dance it once again?' Then making a stop, the Woman sings as before, 'The Dance it will no farther go.' Music. : 'I pray you, Madam, why say you so?'

Woman : ' Because Joan Sanderson will not come too.' Music. : ' He must come too,' etc. (as before). And so she lays down the Cushion before a Man, who, kneeling upon it, salutes her, she singing ' Welcom, Joan Sanderson,' etc. Then he taking up the Cushion, they all three take hands and Dance round singing as before, and thus they do till the whole Company are taken into the Ring."

All our sovereigns of the Tudor and Stuart periods, with the exception perhaps of the austere Mary, took a keen delight in dancing, and were often past-masters in the art; while Henry VIII. in his younger days was especially noted for it, and so keen was his enthusiasm about it that he often wrote dance tunes, and danced to his own compositions. Dances, too, formed a large part of the festivities of the " Field of the Cloth of Gold," when Henry and Francis I. met in a splendour the memory of which will never die out.

The reign of Elizabeth, famous for so many wonderful and beneficent impulses towards the growth of the nation, might with-

out these yet have been noted as the epoch during which the social dance, the founder of all our present-day society dancing, came into existence.

In this reign, dancing was a special feature at court functions, and the stately Pavane and Cinq Pace, the lively Coranto and La Volta, and Trenchmores, Fancies, and Measures of all sorts were the order of the day. Elizabeth took a special delight in dancing, and was apt to rather pose her courtiers by asking them point-blank whether her dancing was not better than that of Mary of Scotland, who was her great rival, and also a very good dancer.

The Pavane, the most recent innovation of all these figures, was a slow and dignified dance, and is sometimes considered to be the progenitor of the 18th century Minuet; while the "La Volta" seems to have been a much more spirited and lively affair, and one also requiring no little dexterity and skill.

For, as its name implies, it consisted of a remarkable progression of leaps and entrechats, in which the man, holding his partner's

hands, assisted her to spring into the air, and at the same time revolved on his own axis, thus bringing her round to the other side, and then he himself gave a spring in the same manner, and after one or two steps the process was repeated, all being, of course, in time to the music. We can get some idea of its leaping motion from the words of the Duke of Bourbon in Shakespeare's "Henry V.":—

> "They bid us to the English dancing schools,
> And teach la voltas high, and swift corantos;"

and again, Sir John Davies, in the "Orchestra," calls it

> "A lofty jumping or a leaping round,
> Where arm in arm two dancers are entwined,
> And whirl themselves with strict embracements bound,
> And still their feet an anapest do sound."

James I. was a great patron of the dance, though this was probably due to the influence of his queen, Anne, who was one of its most enthusiastic votaries.

This reign, too, saw the creation of those masques and acting dances, about whose splendour and magnificence even now we marvel. The first masque ever written by

Ben Jonson was performed at Court, and we are told that the queen herself, together with other noble ladies, came out of a huge shell and "danced the Coranto."

These masques might well be wonderful and beautiful productions, with Ben Jonson as author, Inigo Jones as scenic artist, and, in later times, Henry Lawes as composer of the music. Surely no such three men will ever again be gathered together in the collaboration of one single piece.

It was a very necessary thing for a courtier in those days to be an expert and graceful dancer, if he wished to keep in favour with the king. An amusing illustration of this is given in a letter written by the chaplain of the Venetian ambassador in the time of James I., who describes a scene that took place at a masque got up by Prince Charles in 1617, as follows:—

"——— the dancers were now getting tired, when the King shouted out, 'Why don't you dance? What did you make me come here for? Devil take you—dance!' Whereupon Buckingham sprang forward and cut a score of lofty and very minute capers with so much grace and agility that the King was delighted.'

All through the early history of social dancing, it was customary for the gentleman to kiss his partner at the conclusion of a dance, and he would have been considered uncouth and *gauche* had he not paid this delicate compliment. Thus, in "Henry VIII." the King remarks:—

> "I was unmannerly to take you out and not to kiss you";

while an old book on dancing has this verse in it, a verse which seems to imply that the kiss was a reward of valour for dancing, which depends on the lady—

> "But some reply, what fool would daunce
> If that when daunce is doone,
> He may not have at ladyes lips
> That which in daunce he woon?"

In 1634, Prynne, the notorious lawyer and pamphleteer, had both his ears cut off—"in that he did write a violent book against the masque, well knowing that the Queen and Lords Council approved of it."

But a great reaction was to come with the supremacy of Parliament and the rule of the Puritan; for all theatres were closed, and no masques or dancing of any description were allowed under pain of heavy penalties. No

sooner, however, had Charles II. ascended the throne than dancing returned with full force, and became as before the chief pastime of the Court.

At first the old dances, such as the Coranto, the Brawl, and the Hay, were in favour; but, as Pepys, our accurate and minute historian of the times, informs us, in about 1666 French dances began to be introduced, and from that time onwards society dancing lost its essentially English character, and could not again be called thoroughly English till nearly two centuries later.

Chapter V.

ALLEGORICAL DANCES AMONG PRIMITIVE NATIONS.

"What do you dance?"
(Saying among African tribes.)

Livingstone.—"Travels."

DANCING has always played a great part in the everyday life of primitive peoples; and inasmuch as it is always easier, and, to a limited intelligence, more natural, to express ideas by gesture than by speech, we can hardly be surprised by their predilection for it.

Moreover, since an appreciation of rhythm and musical sound is a fundamental principle of man's nature, and is as much the inherited right of the savage as of the man of civilization, one would naturally expect, as music and dancing are inevitably bound together, to find the latter also among even the most primitive races of mankind.

And so one does; for the Bushman and Hottentot, the Kaffir and South Sea Islander, alike have their national dance; and, indeed, dancing is a far more important—one might almost say necessary, part of their life than it ever has been or ever can be with us.

An illustration of the regard in which dancing is held by many of the tribes of Central Africa is given in the quotation at the head of this chapter. As Livingstone tells us in his "Travels," this is the phrase used when any stranger from another tribe is encountered. He is asked, "What do you dance?" and this is simply another way of asking him to what tribe he belongs; for the different tribes are known by their different dances, and by this question the man's nationality is ascertained.

In practically all the primitive communities the dance is the most important part of any ceremony which may take place; and at any political meeting between two great chiefs, at a reception of any foreign envoys, or at any great coronation or wedding ceremony, a dance is sure either to commence or terminate the proceedings.

And these dances, especially the great allegorical dances that so many primitive nations possess, dances that have been performed by their ancestors from time immemorial and which are generally accompanied by a chanting record of the deeds of the nation, are of inestimable value to them, far more than they ever dream of; for they form that bond of sympathy and union among them which is replaced in more civilized nations by the magic word "patriotism."

Take some of the peoples of the South Sea Islands, for instance. Unread, uneducated, and without the intellectual abilities of the white races, it is only in these great dances, when a man can feel the rhythmical sway of his body moving in perfect unison with two or three hundred of his fellow-countrymen, and can hear recited the deeds of his ancestors and the past glories of his tribe, that he can fully appreciate the idea of "*L'Union fait La Force*," and can understand that he is but a unit in the welfare of the nation.

Most of the great dances of the primitive nations are either allegorical in character,

representing the triumph of War, Death or Love; or else pantomimic, imitating the manners and customs of men and animals. We generally find that those dances imitative of the pursuits of man are performed by peoples more highly developed than those who tell of the ways of animals, just as, in the same manner, the drama is but the result of the intellectual growth of those races who imitated man in their dances.

The chief forms of pantomimic dance in which the habits of man are portrayed are those imitating the everyday occurrences of life, such as hunting, fighting, courtship and marriage, funerals, labour, and harvest or vintage; while of the imitations of animals, we have representations of them feeding, at play, fighting among themselves, fighting against or pursued by man, or wandering about in herds.

A theory has been advanced, and with very good foundation, that many of the positions and figures of modern society dances are but the remains of hunting and war-dance movements of the early primitive dances, movements whose origin we have

now quite forgotten, and for which there is now no reason, but which we still go on doing from hereditary instinct in just the same way as a dog will walk round and round trampling down imaginary grass on the hearth rug before lying down, after the manner of his ancestors when out on the prairies.

So many of the allegorical dances are mixed up with those representing man and his actions, that it is difficult to pick out any that are totally representative of abstract ideas. The one which would have best illustrated this form of dance is the "Astronomic Dance," mentioned in a previous chapter; but this is now extinct, as is also the "big dance before the Inca," which was once one of the features of ancient Peru.

This latter was a dance representing the idea of "Union is Strength," and, moreover, it was given solely with a view to emphasizing that phrase, and was not an accidental result of the movements of certain figures, as dances representing the same idea among other primitive nations often are. Though, as a matter of fact, we cannot call the

ancient and now extinct races of Peru primitive, for they appear to have been highly developed and civilized.

On the other hand, a tribe of Lower Bengal, called the "Coles," who really are primitive in their ideas, have also a dance representing this idea.

Another allegorical dance, but one about whose origin and meaning we know very little, is that of the Santal women. In this all the performers join hands, and form into a figure resembling the arc of a circle, to and from the centre of which, with slow and graceful movements, they alternately advance and retire. At the same time the whole line moves slowly round to the right, so that the circle is completed within the hour. The meaning of this dance has never been satisfactorily investigated, but it seems not improbable that it may have a common origin with the Astronomic Dance, the idea of which extended at one time over a great part of the world; and the act of revolving round a central point in the exact space of an hour certainly seems to point to a connection with the movements of the heavenly bodies.

A very curious dance which may be allegorical in nature, and which has a reference to some forgotten chapter in past history, is the public "baile" or dance of Guatemala.

Here all taking part are dressed up in skins and wear head-dresses composed of the horns of various animals, some savage and fierce, some retiring and timid. A mock combat between the beasts takes place, and, contrary to expectation, the timid deer are always made to be the conquerors.

At the end of the fight a symbolical ceremony takes place, in which the victors trace in the sand with a long pole a picture of some strange-looking animal. No one seems to know what this is meant to be, nor can any guess be made as to the nature of the event which is thus so strangely celebrated.

The natives of the Pacific Islands have always been noted for their dances, and many of their ballets are not far behind the best efforts of civilized countries. Of recent years, however, there have been great changes in the customs of these islanders, and many of the older dances are now lost; though, thanks to the excellent descriptions

that Captain Cook has left us in the account of his voyages, we are enabled to see what alterations have been made in the dances, and to compare them with those now in existence.

*In one place, Hapæe, in the Friendly Islands, a special notice is made of how splendidly drilled the performers were, moving "with an exactness and dexterity far surpassing what they (the natives) had seen of our military manœuvres."

A description then follows:—". . . A dance performed by men, in which one hundred and five persons were engaged; each having a paddle or an instrument resembling a paddle, about two and a half feet long, with a thin blade and a small handle. With these instruments various flourishes were made, each of which was accompanied with a different movement, or a different attitude of the body.

"At first, the dancers ranged themselves in three lines, and so changed their stations by different evolutions, that those who had

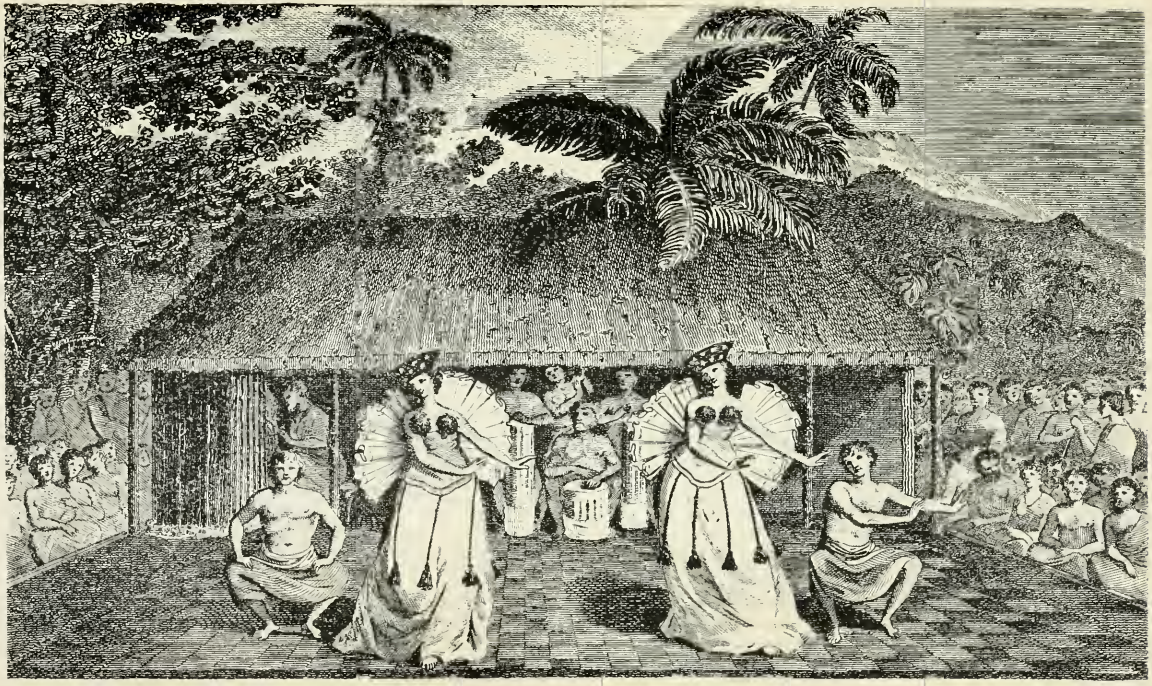
* The following extracts are taken from an early copy of "A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean," 1784.

been in the rear came into the front. At one part of the performance they extended themselves in one line; afterwards they formed themselves into a semi-circle; and then into two square columns. During the last movement, one of them came forward and performed an antic dance before Captain Cook, with which the entertainment ended."

In these islands there appears to have been a certain amount of figure dancing also, and an illustration, from the same book, of two Otaheite girls performing a *pas de deux* is here given.

At another time, he tells us, a performance was given by women dancers, and it is interesting to note that here was a very similar idea to that of the ancient Greek singing and dancing chorus. In the Captain's own words:—". . . Twenty women entered the circle, whose heads were adorned with garlands of crimson flowers; and many of their persons were decorated with leaves of trees, curiously scolloped, and ornamented at the edges.

"They encircled those of the chorus, with their faces towards them, and began by



A Dance in Otaheite.
(*From a first edition "Capt. Cooke's Voyages."*)

singing a soft air, to which responses were made by the chorus; and those were alternately repeated. The women accompanied their song with many graceful motions of their hands, and continually advancing and retreating with one foot, while the other remained fixed. After this, they turned their faces to the assembly, and having sung some time, retreated slowly in a body, and placed themselves opposite the hut where the spectators sat. One of them next advanced from each side, two of whom returned; but the other two remained, and to these from each side came one by intervals, till they all had, once more, formed a circle about the chorus."

Among dances imitative of mankind and his actions, the war-dance will always be found to be the most numerous. For, next to that of eating, the great idea of every primitive mind—despite the moralists—is to have a fight with his neighbour.

And in these dances, a very accurate description is given of the methods of warfare, so that, apart from the rhythmical beauty which a number of them possess, many are

of historical value, for in almost all cases the dance outlives the method of fighting, and in places where civilized weapons, and the resulting difference of tactics, may have been introduced, we are able to have, nevertheless, a life-like picture of the old fighting weapons and customs. Thus, I believe, in remote parts of Mexico the natives still perform a war-dance, showing traces of the once famous "Rabinal Achi" of their ancestors, the fierce Aztecs.

Again, the Bhils, the war-like people who were once the terror of Central India, have a dance which was originally a war-dance, but which has now degenerated into a performance by professional players, who go on a tour through the country, giving their show at the different villages they come to.

And this, which started by being a fierce imitation of war, has become a sort of comic pantomime, in which men fight against women, the men using short clubs and the women being provided with long poles, though what is the origin of these peculiar weapons is not absolutely known.

Men dance very little in India, but the

grace and dexterity of the Nautch girls is well known. Girls are employed, too, at most of the temples, for the ceremonial dancing, being often devoted to the use of the temple in babyhood by their mothers as a thank-offering.

A curious war-dance is performed by the Natal Kaffirs. A war-dance in every sense of the word, being performed just as they are going off to battle, it seems to have a symbolical meaning, and probably signifies that they will be all-conquering. For the men form up in ranks, and, turning their backs in the direction of the enemy, face the village and the assembled women. These women, in a singing tone, appeal to them to stay; but they only answer by darting their assegais towards the sky, and then slowly withdraw to the sound of chanting, step by step, and always facing the women; thus giving a picture of what they will, or hope to, be like after they have met the enemy, showing a bold front and with full ranks.

Nearly all the primitive war-dances are recitative in character, and either the chorus sing of the past events of the nation, or else

the performers will tell, somewhat boastfully as a rule, of their own deeds. Among two such dissimilar peoples as the natives of Tasmania and the North American Indians, this idea of singing one's own prowess is alike carried out in the dance, the women giving special facilities to it, by purposely taunting the men of cowardice.

Many tribes celebrate the act of hunting in their dances; but there is, I believe, only one people where women go through a big pantomimic dance concerning their own hunting and domestic operations. This dance is also of Tasmania, though now fast dying out, and in it the women describe their daily life, the clambering for opossum, diving for shell-fish, digging for roots, and —shade of Mrs. Caudle!—quarrelling with their husbands.

A number of dances that were originally of a warlike character grow, with the peaceful instincts of the people, into mere games and amusements, and thereby lose, in a great measure, their dancing nature. Thus in Yucatan there is a dance, or rather a game, in which one man shuffles in a cowering

position round a circle, catching on a stick the bohordos or canes thrown at him by a ring of other men seated around. This is probably a survival of the catching of arrows or spears on a shield during a war-dance.

In Fiji, also, there is a club-dance, a *pas seul* of a comic nature, in which the performer is dressed up in a complete framework of leaves, and has also a mask on his face. This is the same idea as the now fast disappearing Jack-in-the-Green of our own country, though the Fiji dance has probably a very different origin.

Animals have always been favourite things to imitate in dances; but, as these so-called dances are seldom more than a series of uncouth leaps and falls, they are hardly worth mentioning. Those of the Ostyaks of Northern Asia, who imitate the wolf and the bear, the people of the Congo Free State, who act the gorilla and its movements when attacked, and the dance of the Demerara natives, in which four men covered with skins stoop with their heads in contact to represent an ox, which is continually being annoyed and teased by another performer

dressed as a baboon, are perhaps more highly developed than the rest, but even they are without the rhythm which should typify a true dance.

A curious instance of origin and development is that of the "cake-walk," the dance which a year or two ago created such a *furore* on its first introduction from America. This, of course, came from the plantation negroes, whose ancestors were imported many generations ago from Africa.

Now a friend of mine, lately returned from Africa, told me only to-night that many of the special movements of the cake-walk, the bending back of the body, and the dropping of the hands at the wrists, amongst others, were a distinct feature in certain of the Kaffir dances, and that he had been at once struck by the marked similarity between them.

Chapter VI.

QUAINT DANCES IN CIVILIZED COUNTRIES.

"On with the dance, let joy be unconfined,
No sleep till Dawn, when Youth and
Pleasure meet."

—Byron.

OF all a country's customs, its national dance is the last to die out. And it is seldom, if ever, that a nation will adopt a new dance and acclaim the foundling as its national custom, so that, in almost all dances of the people, we find a history of considerable antiquity.

In seeking for a national dance, we have to enquire for the dances performed by the people, especially the rustic population, and not for those devoted to the upper classes. For the dances of the upper classes, who travel into different countries and mix with the social pursuits of other nations, become like their performers, cosmopolitan in nature.

Thus, in nearly all civilized countries, we find now the waltz, the polka, the lancers, and other social dances, just as we have at home. But in the rural districts the people go on dancing what has been danced by their fathers for centuries upon centuries, and there we find the real national dance.

In England, however, although by no means under a republican form of government, the habits and customs of the people have become so assimilated with those of the upper classes, especially during the last fifty years or so, that all distinctive characteristics of the commons are rapidly dying out.

Thus, we cannot now find, even among the rural population, any traces of what might be called a national dance. Certain dances, such as the Maypole and the Morris, described in a former chapter, might, had they still been kept up, have been termed national dances; but now even these are dead, and the country-folk dance the waltz, the polka, or the lancers, just as the upper classes do, albeit generally with more *abandon* and fun. Turning, however, to another

portion of the population, "they who go down to the sea in ships," the music-loving and frolicsome Jack Tar, we find a dance that might almost be called a national dance—namely, the Hornpipe.

This is said to have been originally an inland dance, and one performed at fairs and merry-makings in the country; but for the last two or three hundred years it has been almost exclusively associated with the sea. Danced, as every one knows, by one performer, or at the most two facing each other, it is perhaps the liveliest and most interesting of all English dances to watch. Necessarily lively, as the music is in very quick time, the feet move so rapidly that they literally seem to twinkle; yet all the time the body is kept perfectly rigid, and in this lies the charm and skill of the dance; for, with arms folded and an air of perfect repose in the features, the performer gives one the idea that the upper half of his body and the lower belong to two different persons, so that the dance has a novel and strange effect on the observer. At intervals in the music, however, the whole of the

man becomes endowed with movement, and the performer goes through the various motions of his ship's duties, such as loosening an imaginary rope here, tightening one there, hauling at a pulley, etc.

Originally, as its name implies, it was danced to the music of the pipe, the particular one, the hornpipe, having a horn bell or rim attached to the open end. Afterwards, as in Nelson's time, the violin was generally used, and this instrument is still a favourite one, although the more prosaic concertina and mouth-organ occasionally take its place.*

Scotland, that delightful country of paradoxes and surprises, presents one of its most striking contrasts in relation to dancing. For the people, the staid and sober Scotch folk of fiction, aye, and of reality too, at the first sound of the bagpipe or fiddle, burst into dances so spirited and lively as to be hardly equalled in vigour and wildness by any other nation's dance, save perhaps the Irish jig.

* Captain Cook, in his account of his voyages, specially attributes the immunity of his crew from disease to their taking exercise and their dancing of the hornpipe.

Yet even in their wildest dances there is an incongruity; for, as we are told by an historian of Scotch customs, the dance is entered into, especially on the part of the men, with the greatest gravity and decorum, and the performers go through it heroically from beginning to end, however long and arduous it may be, without that laughter and amusement which generally characterises the dance.

The two chief dances of Scotland, and these are really woven into one, are the Reel and the Strathspey.

A curious thing about the reel is that it was at one time an important dance in Denmark, and is still danced there to a slight extent. This is but one more link in the chain which binds the people of the Highlands with those of Denmark, for they were originally of the same race.

The Reel is a very beautiful dance to watch, as its smooth and gliding motion gives one the pleasant though rather strange impression of rest and vivacity combined Hogarth probably had this idea in his mind when he instanced the reel as exemplifying the line of beauty.

It is danced by two couples or more, and occasionally a circular form of the dance is introduced, when the performers do most of the steps on the points of the toes. The music is generally in common time of four crotchets in a measure, though sometimes in "Jig-time" of six quavers. It was probably after hearing this latter music, that Gilbert rather aptly described them in the "Bab Ballads" as "Jiggetty Reels." The Strathspey, said to have originally been danced in the Strath or Vale of the river Spey first took up a position as a regular dance about the year 1750. It is danced alternately with the reel, but with slower movements; yet, at the same time, it is more arduous and exhaustive than its companion dance, as the motions are very jerky, and without the smoothness which characterises the reel. It was at one time very popular, and its peculiar rhythm caught the ear of the people in a way that no other dance had done. Its tunes were hummed everywhere, and it was a common thing for the dancers to sing some words to it while it was being performed. Burns, among others, wrote several songs for the Strathspey.

The Jig we always associate with Ireland; though, when we come to think that the Celts of Ireland, and those of, at all events, the west and south-west of Scotland, are of one and the same race, there is no reason why it should not be one of the dances of Scotland too.

And so it was, though being an indefinite sort of thing at the best, and of no fixed steps or movements, it is now difficult to trace it in any of the Scottish dances. Shakespeare makes a special mention of it as a Scotch dance, though whether he was mixing it up with the Reel or not we cannot say. His description certainly seems to tally with the dance as we now know it in Ireland, for he says—

"*Hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig.*"

"Much Ado about Nothing," ii. 1.

There is but one more of the well-known Scotch dances, and that is the "Sword-dance." This is really more a test of skill and agility than a social amusement, since only one person dances it at a time; yet it is a cherished Highland custom, and, if danced in the correct way, with sharpened

swords and but thin covering for the feet, not without the additional excitement of the chance of getting a serious wound.

It is a most picturesque dance; and if one has had the good fortune to witness it up in the Highlands, with the flaring lights in the roof, and the ring of people sitting around the central performer, who, dressed in all the glory of his tartan colours, goes through the quick and difficult steps between the crossed swords, it is a sight he will not readily forget.

The dance itself is of considerable antiquity, and originated with the great North Scandinavian race, and thus, via the German Saxons, came over to England as well as going direct to Scotland. In the time of Tacitus, even, it was of some importance as a dance, and was described by him with much detail in his "De Morib. Ger.," cap. 24.

Spain, the land of warmth, of sunshine, of music, of art, can justly claim pre-eminence among the nations for her graceful and beautiful dances.

Not perhaps so vigorous, nor yet of such intricate and involved movements, as those

of her Northern sisters, they are nevertheless the acme of all that is pleasing and artistic in the rhythm of motion. Dancing comes as naturally to her daughters, as swimming to the Polynesians, or singing to the Germans; while Cervantes, who had such a keen insight into the natures of the Spanish people, was undoubtedly thinking of his countrywomen when he said, "There ne'er was born a woman yet, but she was born to dance."

Yet, even now, while she is a nation laid low amongst those whom she once despised, she can still claim a great distinction, for it is from Spain that those dancers come who by the grace and perfection of their dancing become the wonder and admiration of every capital of Europe.

The dances peculiar to Spain are mostly of Moorish extraction; but the interval has been so long, and the dances have been so added to and improved by the people themselves, that there is now but little trace of their ancient origin. Andalusia is the classic home of the dance, and it is there that one sees the best displays of the national dances.

These are three in number—the Fandango, the Bolero, and the Seguidillas, though, of these, the Seguidillas is really only the Fandango or the Bolero danced by a greater number of people. The Fandango, which means literally, "Go and dance," is danced in slow six-eight time, by two people facing each other. It is the prototype of all the others, and is the most popular of the Spanish dances. In this, as in all the others, the arm movements play an important part, and much of the peculiar grace and charm of the Spanish dance is due to them. The performers hold castanets in their hands, and often the clicking of these, and the rhythmical hand-clapping of the onlookers, is all the music they have, though sometimes a mandolin or a guitar is added.

There is a curious old story in connection with the Fandango, which nearly all the Spanish historians vouch for as true. It is said that in the year 1700 the Sacred College, or Ecclesiastical Court from Rome, condemned the Fandango as an irreligious performance, and were about to forbid the dancing of it anywhere.

But some enthusiastic votaries of it asked to be allowed to have it performed before the Court, to show the learned members how harmless it was. So some dancers started it, and so contagious was the music and the rhythm of it, that eventually the whole Court joined in, and there was to be seen the unusual spectacle of the Sacred College dancing the Fandango, which they had specially met to prohibit!

The Bolero is a more modern dance, and is found less in the Southern than in the Northern districts, as it is of French extraction and was introduced from Provence, passing through the Basque country into the North of Spain. It is a dance for a solo performer, almost always a woman, and the hand and arm movements are a great feature in it. It consists of sharp turns and revolutions of the body, of short quick rushes of two or three steps, now to one side, now to the other, the feet always stamping on the floor in time to the music, while at intervals, when there is a sudden pause in the tune, the dancer stops rigid in a picturesque pose, with the body bent

slightly backwards, the hands on the hips, and the head erect and defiant.

The Seguidillas is in quicker time than the Fandango or Bolero, and is a combined dance of eight people. The performers range up in two files, with three or four paces interval between them, and commence dancing to the usual accompaniment of castanets, guitar, etc. It is a very exact and definite dance, and the bars of the music are counted for each fresh movement. Thus, on the fourth bar the dancing begins, on the ninth there is a pause, while at intervals, just as in the Bolero, the performers stop in a rigid and immovable pose, this, if good, being especially applauded by the on-lookers.

There are numerous other minor dances of Spain, among which the Sarabanda, made historic by its performance by Cardinal Richelieu to please Anne of Austria, La Cambelas, and the Chacona, are the most important.

There is also the Cachucha, which is a comparatively modern dance, brought into prominence by Fanny Elssler, the famous ***premiere*** on the Paris Opera stage.

About this dance James Russell Lowell, the American writer and statesman, remarked in his account of the wedding celebrations of the late King of Spain:—"By far the prettiest and most interesting feature of the week was the dance, in the Plaza des Armas, before the Palace, of deputations from all the provinces of Spain, in their picturesque costumes. The dances were curious rather than graceful, and it was odd that the only one which we are accustomed to consider pre-eminently Spanish, the Cachucha, was performed by two professional dancers. The rest had, however, higher interest from their manifest antiquity and almost rudimentary characters."

A famous dance of Naples is the Tarantella, a dance with surely the most strange and curious history of any. For it is said to have originally been invented to cure a disease, Tarentism, from which it got its name! This peculiar remedy was organized as early as 1374, when the disease, which was the terrible "dancing mania," a form of hysterical madness which once spread over the whole of Germany, first made its

appearance. This Tarentism was for a long time thought to be the result of a bite from the Tarantula spider, owing probably to a confusion of names; but it is now practically certain that it was merely a form of nervous hysteria, of which the better known "St. Vitus' Dance" is a distant branch.

In France, the great revolution having removed the sharp dividing line between the upper classes and the lower, there is now no real national dance; for, just as in England, the dances of the country people have become assimilated with those of the upper classes.

In remote country districts, it is true, one may still find occasionally the "contre danse," a dance not unlike our own Sir Roger de Coverley, and of which our old-fashioned "country dance" is a corruption, while there is, of course, in Paris, the "Can-can"; but, apart from these, one may safely say that the present dancing of France is in all respects similar to that of England.

Not so in Russia. Here we have dances of a wilder and more vigorous kind than are

to be found in any other European nation. And I think it may be regarded as a general rule, that the colder the climate of a country may be, the more vigorous will be its dancing.

The dances of Russia (I am not speaking of their society dances, which are, of course, the same as those of any other civilized country) are of many varieties, as is only natural in a country so large, and divided into so many provinces; but through them all runs one general type.

I was once fortunate enough to see some Russians performing one of their national dances, and was struck by the really difficult and exhausting nature of the movements. Some seven or eight men and girls took part in the performance, though most of the time only one of them would be dancing, the others meanwhile standing round and making the music by clapping their hands, singing, and beating tambourines; although at certain intervals they would all join in, passing and repassing each other, dancing the whole time, till some fresh performer commenced a solo once more.

This, the solo performance, seemed the

most difficult to do, as it was danced throughout in a crouching position, as if a man almost sitting on his heels were to suddenly start dancing, keeping his body bent at an angle the whole time. Occasionally he would straighten out and leap up in the air, and then go through one or two steps in an upright position, also making one or two very swift revolutions on the points of his toes, but only again to resume the original crouching pose. It is this bending of the body that is typical of all Russian peasant dances; and, though it may not sound so, it is in reality very picturesque to look at.

For, in performing this dance, the people put on all their best and brightest-coloured clothes; and to see a group of them dancing to the sound of the tambourines and the singing of their companions is a very pretty sight. In Germany the waltz is really the national dance of the people, and it was from the German peasants originally that the waltz, the one delight of our English ball-rooms, came. Also the Gallopade, from which, in a slightly altered form, we get our modern Gallop; but both of these I shall deal with in another chapter.

Chapter VII.

THE BALLET: ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.

"*To brisk notes in cadence beating*
Dance their many twinkling feet."

Gray.—"Progress of Poesy," Part II., 3, 6, 10.

PERHAPS the nearest approach to perfection which dancing as an art ever reached, was to be found in the ballet. The only detracting circumstance being that the dancing in the ballet was of a mechanical rather than an inspired nature. So that, while from a purely artistic point of view one can hardly regret the decadence of this form of dancing, yet when one remembers the great impetus it gave to dancing in general, and that without it our stage dancing of to-day might never have existed, we cannot help feeling grateful for the important part it has played in the history of dancing.

Giving, as it did, such splendid chances for acting, for expression, and for minute and intricate movement, it naturally came to be regarded as the climax of all forms of dancing; yet in itself it was unreal and artificial, and had none of the artistic effects, the ideas of waves, clouds, and swaying trees, which the long skirted dancers of to-day, in their nearer approach to the old Greek style, are able to give. It has been pleaded for the ballet that it was eloquent, dramatic, full of gesture; so it was, but so are also such well-known plays as "L'Enfant Prodigue," and moreover, in these the art of acting is confined to its proper sphere, the drama. It is no plea, I think, for the ballet, as a form of dancing, that its acting was so superb.

The ballet has a long and ancient history of its own, extending right away from Roman times, through mediæval Italy and France, eighteenth and nineteenth century England, up to the present day; though in speaking now we generally carry in our minds a picture of the ballet of the late Georgian and early Victorian times, when it was at its zenith.

But the ballet, if we regard it in its real meaning as a dance in rhythmical time by a number of persons who combine gesticulation and acting with their dancing, was undoubtedly performed among the Romans, and in the later Augustan times had arrived at a considerable standard of excellence. The first ballets given at Rome were simply comedies helped out to a considerable extent by gesture, and similar in nature to the old comedies of the Fabulæ Atellanæ, on which, indeed, they were founded; the only difference being that the ballets had a larger number of performers and included both male and female dancers. Then, in time, the dancing began to take the first place in the performance, the acting being helped out by the Chorus singing Cantica describing the plot and occurrences of the play after the Greek manner. These ballets became immensely popular, and the chief poets in Rome were called upon to write the songs and words for them, and several librettos by Lucan, written for the ballets about the year 65 A.D., may still be read.

From the late Roman period there is a long gap till the fifteenth century, when in Italy again appeared the ballet, though of a different and much more artistic nature than the old Roman performances. Indeed, the Italy of mediæval times may be regarded as its original home; and with that country must always be associated the idea of the ballet as a separate art in itself. The very name ballet is derived from the late Latin "ballare, through the Italian "balletto"; and our English word ballad, literally "a song for dancing," is drawn from the same source.

The first revivals of the ballet in Italy were without doubt founded on the performances of the old Roman pantomimi, and probably these performances had been carried on among the country towns in a but slightly altered manner through all the interval between the Augustine period and the fifteenth century; but about the latter date more attention began to be paid to dancing in general, and particularly to this form of dramatic dancing. So that, in the year 1489, matters were ripe for a sudden revival

of popular feeling in favour of the ballet, brought about by a big spectacular performance arranged by one Bergonzio di Botta, in celebration of the marriage of the Duke of Milan, at Tortona. This was a magnificent affair, and the performance of it was spread over many hours. Five great spectacles were set forth in it, namely, the Siege of Troy, the Judgment of Paris, the Seasons, the Conquests of Alexander, and a Carnival, each of these shows being in five acts, and each act having three, six, nine or twelve entries for dancers; singing and recitation going on the whole time. This was the precursor of many similar ballets in Italy, some of them fine performances, but none being quite equal to di Botta's.

Soon, however, the best ideas, and some of the best dancers also, of the ballet, were imported into France, then the most civilized country in the world, and from that time France established that reputation for dancing which with the centuries has gone on steadily increasing, and which she has never lost.

Katherine de Medicis was the first to introduce the ballet into France, originally with the idea of withdrawing the mind of her son, the king, from affairs of state, in the hope that she might get thereby more power into her own hands. It soon became exceedingly popular with the Court, and performances were given on every possible occasion. Baltazarini, the ballet master whom Katherine had brought over from Italy, reorganized and introduced a uniformity into the ballet, which now began to run on fixed and regular lines, and from this time the modern history of the ballet may be said to have commenced.

In 1581 a great ballet, the "Ballet Comique de la Reine," was given at the marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse, and this was a noteworthy event, in that a few months later a printed book about it, the first book on the ballet ever written, was published; and in this is described, at some length, the music, dialogue, and plot, illustrated by pictures of the various movements and the dresses.

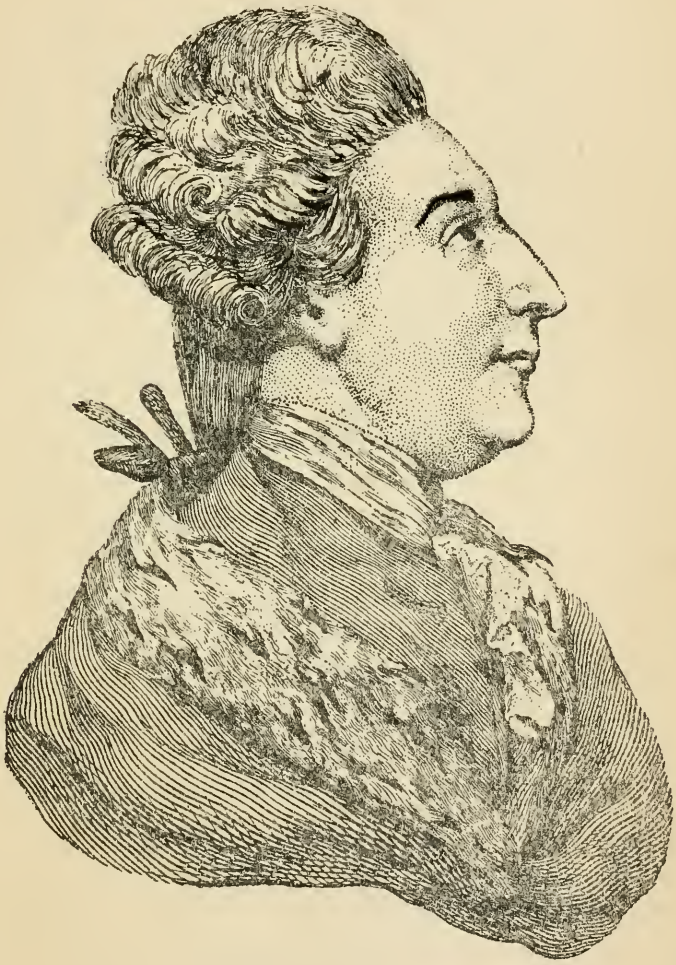
Henry IV. of France was a great supporter of the ballet, no less than eighty special performances being produced between the years 1590 and 1610, while Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. were equally zealous in their patronage of it. Indeed, both of these monarchs danced publicly in the ballet, and so enthusiastic was the latter that he founded an Academy of Dancing, placing Quinault as the Director, and Lully as the chief composer. A great innovation, the introduction of female dancers, took place in the ballet in 1681; Lully, with the true eye of the artist, foreseeing the far more graceful effect which would be produced by this. The new scheme was a great success, and from that time the ballet has never had to entirely rely on the heavier and naturally more clumsy dancing of men only. The first ballet, in 1681, in which ladies took part, was one called "Le Triomphe de l'Amour," the music of which was written by Lully; but it was not till some years later that female dancers in any number took part in the performances. In this year also, a book, "Des Ballets Anciens et

Modernes," was written by a Jesuit, Le Pere Menestrier, and for a long time this book was the great authority on dancing.

Louis XIV. now becoming too stout to dance in person, the ballets for a time went out of favour, and for some thirty years matters were at a standstill with regard to their development. However, in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, two female dancers, Mdlles. Sallé and Camargo,* sprang into fame and caused a sudden revival of interest in the ballet. Thousands flocked to see them, and Voltaire himself made special mention of them in his writings. Mdlle. Sallé paid a triumphant visit to England in 1741, this being the first record we have of any noted *danseuse* appearing in London.

About this time, too, Vestris, the great Gætano Vestris, first came upon the scene, and by his methods quite revolutionized the ballet. He followed close in the footsteps of another male dancer, Dupre, but his own fame quite overshadowed that of his fore-

* Camargo was said to be able to do no less than eight *entrechats* before retouching the ground, undoubtedly a record up till that time, and probably still a record.



SIGNOR VESTRIS.

London Magazine, April, 1781.

runner. He, in company with Mdlle. Camargo, created a sensation in Paris in the year 1775, by a new ballet, "Leandre et Hero," in which they took the two name-roles; this ballet was a noteworthy performance, and is also especially interesting in that Mdlle. Camargo wore for the first time the short-skirted ballet costume, all previous dancers having worn full-length dresses.

Contemporary with Vestris was another great dancer, Jean Georges Noverre, who was noted for the great wealth of acting and expression he put into his dancing. Up till Noverre's time the ballets had been performed in much the same manner as they were under Katherine de Medicis. Each act had been introduced by fresh dancers, and nearly always by a different style of dancing; while invariably a dialogue explaining the plot had been carried on throughout the whole performance by the Chorus. Songs, also, had been introduced at frequent intervals, and indeed the dancing had always been more or less of secondary importance compared to the acting and sing-

ing. Noverre changed all this, and produced what has ever since been known as the "ballet d'action," the unravelling of a plot by dancing and gesture pure and simple. With him was revived the true art of pantomime, such as had been made use of by the old Roman mimes when at their best; and from the time of Noverre the new school of dancing, which lasted all through the remaining life of the ballet, may be said to have commenced. Noverre was accustomed to say that genius and a power of acting were essential to a good dancer, and in a book he wrote, "Lettres sur la Dance et les Ballets," he lays much stress on this.

In 1772, a new dancer, Maximilian Gardel, appeared, and under his auspices a further important change took place in the ballet. This was no less than the removal of the masks which all dancers had hitherto been in the habit of wearing. This, a relic of Roman times, had been considered a *sine quâ non*, to the complete equipment of a dancer, and when Gardel first ventured to appear without one, it was the cause of

considerable surprise and questioning. He nearly lost his popularity through its disuse, but in time people became more accustomed to it; other dancers copied his example, and in two or three years the masks disappeared altogether.

During the period of the French Directory, and after the retirement of Noverre, there was an inclination to introduce a patriotic note into the "grand ballet," as it was now called, and the theatre was much made use of by the authorities to keep up the national spirit among the populace. Some very fine ballets, notably one named the "Marsellaise," were performed at this time; and though there were no individually great dancers, yet the general standing of the ballet was never more brilliant.

The leadership of the dancing world was next taken up by Vincenzo Galleotti, a dancer who secured much fame in Copenhagen, and after him Bournonville, a pupil of his, became the acknowledged head of the profession. Bournonville was made Director of the Academy at Copenhagen between the years 1830 and 1836, and during

that time he produced many famous ballets, among them being the ballet of "Napoli," at that time considered to be the finest the world had ever seen.

It will be noticed that all the names yet mentioned have been those of foreigners, for we in England have never been able to lay claim to any of the world's dancers, and indeed even the English history of the ballet is but the history of foreign dancers who have appeared in this country. The ballet was practically unknown in England till the appearance of Vestris in 1741; and, though ever since that time the English have always been great patrons and admirers of the ballet, they have never been able to produce any dancers equal to those of the Italian or French schools. The first English ballet we have mention of was one called "The Tavern Bilkers," performed at Drury Lane in 1702. This was a descriptive ballet, but danced, of course, in the old style, with songs and dialogue illustrating the plot. As early as 1667, Dryden uses the word "balette" as an English word, but with the exception of this one in 1702 there

seem to have been no ballets worthy of the name till about 1740. The earlier Italian operas in London were performed without the ballet, and this was one reason why the continent was so much more advanced than England in respect to its dancing; for with the history of the opera is entwined that of the ballet. But with the further development of the opera in England, and the accompanying introduction of the ballet as in the Continental manner, we arrive at a period that stands out by itself as the golden age of the ballet in this country, namely, the first half of the nineteenth century.

Not so very long ago, perhaps—indeed, the latter part of that period is well within the memory of many still living; but the ballet is now a thing of the past, and so sharp is the boundary line dividing the days of the opera, of the early Victorian dandies and all their accompanying environment, from the matter-of-fact people of to-day, that the period seems to have been placed almost in another world. The names of Taglioni, Fanny Elssler, Cerito, are merely

names to most of us—names of once celebrated people, it is true, but for all that nothing more to our ears than are the places on a map to one who has never travelled; and it is difficult for us to imagine the magic influence, the magnetic power, which once surrounded them.

Those were the days when the Haymarket, Her Majesty's, or Covent Garden, were but patronized for the ballets that were staged there; and when one who had not witnessed the last success of Taglioni, or had not helped to applaud the new performance of Duvernay, was of no account, and but little better than a barbarian. How they flocked to the opera, and how they crowded the boxes and promenades night after night, these bucks of the D'Orsay period, staring through their quizzing glasses at the newest *premiere*, or bowing with well-measured grace to some fair leader of society in the opposite box! And, sheltered under the protecting wing of fashion, which, contrary to her usual manner, remained unchanged for some thirty years, the ballet made great advances towards perfection, and at the

end of Taglioni's reign had become as artistic an affair as mechanical skill could ever hope to make it.

Taglioni! Name to conjure with! Can any of our modern celebrities claim to have created the sensation that was caused whenever the great Taglioni was announced to appear? Her name was upon everyone's lips, songs were composed about her, books and music dedicated to her, while "Taglioni" hats, dresses, overcoats, were common signs in all the shop windows. Many, though fewer every year, are yet able to recall scenes of the nightly thronged houses, when the theatres kept on absorbing more and more eager enthusiasts, till they seemed swollen almost to a bursting point; many still living are able to proudly say they saw Taglioni at her prime; yet now her name is almost forgotten, so complete has been the extinction of the ballet!

Another great *danseuse*, who, if her skill was not so great, was said to have possessed an even greater personal attraction than Taglioni, was Fanny Elssler. The story of how these two competed for fame on the

Paris Opera stage, first one gaining the acknowledged supremacy, then the other, is one of the romances in the annals of dancing. And to see Elssler dance the Cachucha! That was the one thing to live for in those days. What a perfect *furore* it caused, and what storms of applause used to greet her appearance every night! It was said that Fanny Elssler could do anything with her feet that it was in mortal power to do. Oliver Wendell Holmes' admiration for her is shown in the sentence he puts into the mouth of the "Master," in the "Poet at the Breakfast Table." He says: "I have seen the woman who danced the cap-stone on to Bunker Hill Monument, as Orpheus moved the rocks by music,—the Elssler woman, Fanny Elssler."

But with the retirement of Taglioni and Elssler, both in the year 1845, the ballet, having lost its two most brilliant stars, began to fade into insignificance, and though for nearly thirty years afterwards it still retained its original characteristics, it was never quite the same again. The name of Henriette d'Or stands out among the last

of the old school of the ballet, but from the time of Taglioni the *premieres* who could lay any claim to the title "famous" might be counted on one hand.

About thirty years ago, however, the ballet received a new impetus with the production at the Variety Halls, such as the Alhambra, and, a few years later, the Empire, of performances which, if not exactly ballets of the old school, were still sufficiently like them to deserve the name. This new school, which was distinguished by the transformation of the short-skirted *coryphées* into a radiantly-coloured chorus dressed in tights, a chorus whose chief duties seemed to be those of looking nice and marching about with military precision, had, and still has, a strong leaning towards the spectacular effect, and each year the dancing became more subservient to this, until it is now of quite secondary importance compared to the rest. That fine effect is gained by all this wealth of colour and display of dazzling dresses cannot be denied, but it is effect gained at the expense of dancing; and though the scene becomes like a coloured

picture, a painting that an artist might delight in, it is in reality the destruction of a high form of one art for the sake of an inferior form of another.

The stages of the Alhambra and the Empire have for the last thirty years or more been noted for their ballets, and many fine performances have been produced there. At the Alhambra in 1860 was produced a ballet, "Yolande," by Alfred Thompson, which was just on the boundary line between the old and the new schools, having many of the characteristics of the old style, combined with the brilliant spectacular and coloured effects of the new. And that it should have had this display of colour was but natural, as it was a Japanese ballet, the first ever produced in England, and was dressed in all the bright colour and scenery for which Japan is famous.

The Empire, and the Alhambra too, have of recent years, with the introduction of the electric light effects, produced some wonderful ballets, among the best known at the former place being "Faust," "Round the Town," "Les Papillons," etc., of which

the staging and colour effects have all been arranged by Mr. C. Wilhelm, who has had much experience in that work. For many years Madame Katti Lanner has been a famous director of the ballets at the Empire, and it is in a great measure due to her that the dancing has retained that degree of importance which it still holds.

Nowadays the *premieres* are all that are left to remind us of the once famous ballets of the "forties." They still preserve the old style of costume, and many of them go far towards preserving the old excellence of dancing, Mdlle. Adeline Genée, one of the latest arrivals at the Empire, recalling much of the grace of Fanny Elssler. But, for all that, the ballet is now a thing of the past, and, with the modern change of ideas, a thing that is never likely to be resuscitated. And in a way it is perhaps as well, for, as I have said elsewhere, a forced and mechanical style cannot contribute to the furtherance of the real art of dancing, and movements such as walking on the extreme points of the toes can only be regarded as unnatural.

From the point of view of acting, it has no doubt been of inestimable service to that kindred art, for it has taught us how much can be performed by mere gesticulation, and that, to an actor, speech is really of secondary importance compared to the acting itself, the correct movements of the limbs and features. An interesting story is told of how Roscius, the great Roman actor, and Cicero, the famous orator, once had a dispute as to whether gesticulation or elocution could best convey meaning. Finding that their arguments led to nothing, they decided to hold a trial of their respective arts, before certain friends who were to be the judges. After some time, the prize was awarded to Roscius, and so delighted was he at the result that he went off and wrote a book on the subject of gesticulation.

The ballet was without doubt the school of pantomimic acting, but from the point of view of dancing itself, it can never be compared to the free and natural style of the best dancers of to-day. And though with its decay a great amount of the interest devoted to the art of Terpsichore

has been withdrawn, and popular favour much diminished, yet in the best interests of dancing no one can really regret the wane of the Ballet.

Chapter VIII.

THE STAGE DANCING OF TO-DAY.

"*Il ne sait sur quel pied danser.*"

Old French Proverb.

IN heading this chapter, "The Stage Dancing of "to-day," I intend the words "to-day" to be used in their widest sense, that is, as referring to the present generation.

And the stage dancing of the present generation, the graceful skirt-dancing which is now the chief, if not the sole, type of the art, and which has collected to itself all that was most beautiful of the bygone forms, may be said to have sprung, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of its immediate progenitor, the Ballet. For there is no distinct line of demarcation between modern skirt-dancing and the ballet of the old Italian school, different as at first sight they seem; this

fact Miss Alice Lethbridge, one of the finest exponents of our modern skirt-dancing, has expressed as follows: "As long as dancing continues, the special movements of the older ballet, its entrechats, pirouettes, and countless other steps, must also exist, for they are but the great groundwork of it all."

In dealing, therefore, with the present-day dancing, I shall commence with the birth of that particular form known as skirt-dancing.

To most people the word "skirt-dancing" will at once call to mind the Gaiety Theatre, and not without reason; for with the Gaiety Theatre (I may say with both the Gaiety Theatres, for the new one is, so far, well carrying out the plans of the old) skirt-dancing has ever had its closest ties. From the time of that ever-memorable four, known to all as "The Gaiety Quartette," namely, Edward Terry, E. W. Royce, Kate Vaughan, and Nellie Farren, when Kate Vaughan revolutionized the stage world by her long-skirted dancing, down to the moment at which I write, this, perhaps the most skilful, and certainly the most beautiful form of

the Terpsichorean art, has been the great tradition of the Gaiety.

It is unnecessary here to go into the previous history of the old Gaiety, beyond remarking that the building was originally the "Strand Music Hall," but was converted into the "Gaiety Theatre" under John Hollinshead's management in 1868, being then devoted to musical burlesques, a form of play which was carried on in an almost unbroken line for nearly thirty years. But the date 1876 marked a great epoch in the history of the theatre, for it was in this year that the "quartette" was formed, a quartette which instantly became famous, and which was the foundation stone for that success which has never since deserted the Gaiety.

Nellie Farren, Kate Vaughan, Edward Terry, and E. W. Royce! Those were indeed the days of "Stars." Nellie Farren, affectionately known to the whole of England as "Our Nellie," the greatest burlesque actress, and the brightest and kindliest woman that ever lived; Kate Vaughan, who created a new era in the world of dancing,

whom thousands came to see for the grace of her art, and of whom the late John Hollinshead wrote: "In all the troubles and worries of rehearsals she was never once known to be wanting in patience and perfect courtesy," a tribute that could be rendered to but few; Edward Terry, equally clever in song, dialogue, or dance, and whose fame as a burlesque actor is now only equalled by his later fame and reputation in the higher comedies; and "Teddy" Royce, acknowledged at the time to be the finest dancer in England, if not in the world!

Kate Vaughan, by her institution of the long-skirted form of dancing, took by storm the hearts of all theatre-goers, for the grace and charm of the new style could not be denied, and the superiority, if only from an artistic point of view, of this form of dancing, built on the old Greek model, over the stiff and conventional movements of the Italian school was so evident that from that time ballet-dancing began to lose a popularity which it has never since regained.

"*Ars est celare artem*," and this must have surely applied to Kate Vaughan; for though,

in discarding the old form of dancing-dress, she was prevented from displaying her skill and mastery over the movements and steps particularly associated with the Italian school, she nevertheless gave such an artistic performance that all beholders were delighted with the innovation, and the degree of refinement that was thenceforward associated with stage dancing has more than made up for any loss sustained in point of actual technical skill. On the model of Kate Vaughan's style is built practically all that is best in the stage dancing of to-day, and had it not been for her happy inspiration a very different type of dancing might now be in vogue. She was one of those who are born to dance, dancing because they must, and in whom there is a distinct inspiration; and though through a strange perversity she suddenly, in the zenith of her fame, threw everything on one side and invaded the domain of Old English Comedy, yet in later years she again sought her first love, and when I last saw her, only a few years before her death, she even then showed herself a complete mistress of her art.

The skirt-dancer is not solely dependent on her steps or the manipulation of her skirts for effect, as is sometimes thought, for a great portion of the skill consists in the proper attention paid to arm movement; though in a good dancer this is so submerged in the *tout ensemble* that it is hardly noticeable. The importance of this arm movement, the χειρονομια of the Greeks, can only be realized when we try for a moment to imagine how strange and harsh would be the effect if the arms were kept stiff and motionless through an entire dance. Ovid understood the artistic effect of the arm-movement, and was much impressed by it, saying, "*Si vox est, canta; si mollia brachia, salta,*" which is literally, "If you have a voice, sing; but if you have good arms, then go in for dancing."

Much of the grace, too, of skirt-dancing depends upon the body-postures, and on the perfect balance that is so necessary to a good dancer. In fact, many of the most difficult movements are only possible to those who possess this gift of balancing to a marked degree, while even the ordinary

movements are much beautified and added to in grace by those with an obvious facility of balance. It is to this additional power that much of the skill and success of Miss Alice Lethbridge is due, and many of the movements which have made her name famous, such as that wonderful revolving movement of which she is said to be the sole mistress, are in a great measure dependent on it. This revolving movement was one which she first introduced in a dance when playing the part of Pepita in "Little Christopher Columbus" at the Lyric. She has given it no special name, merely calling it the "waltz movement," as it is in this form of dance that she has been in the habit of introducing it; but it is an open secret that many have tried to imitate her in it without success.

The movement itself consists of, while still dancing the ordinary waltz, suddenly bending the body backwards, till it is almost at a right angle, and in this position slowly rotating the body around its own axis, making all the correct steps of the dance, and moving round in a big circle the whole time.

The swaying of the body in slow time to the rapid movements of the feet, and the effect of the waving skirts, lend an air of grace to the dance such as has seldom been equalled. One of the critics at the time wrote: "She looked like a big white poppy in that ceaseless revolving movement round such a large circle, and the amateur wondered how the dancer could possibly preserve her balance."

Her dancing in "Little Christopher Columbus" was one of the sensations of the theatrical year, and from that time her name was assured, though even earlier, when little more than a child, her dancing in "Mynheer Jan" at the Comedy Theatre had caused her to be declared by many critics the finest dancer on the stage, since Kate Vaughan had some years before retired from the field of burlesque. All her dancing shows great knowledge of both the practical and theoretical sides of the art, and she is without doubt the most graceful exponent of dancing we now have.

Returning to the early Gaiety days, mention must be made of another dancer of the

Kate Vaughan type, and one who was closely associated with all the Gaiety productions immediately succeeding her—Miss Sylvia Grey. Miss Grey appeared in most of the famous burlesques of the "eighties" and early "nineties," and her dancing, contrasted with that of Miss Florence Levy, another Gaiety favourite who was in almost all the same pieces, was an object lesson of the wide differences that the art of dancing could range over.

For the dancing of Miss Levy was of the "high-kicking" type, and clever and difficult of execution as it undoubtedly was, it yet could hardly be called artistic, and merely served as a foil to show up the far more graceful effect of the other style. The high-kicking type, which for a time threatened to become very popular, is now fortunately dying out, and is only seen occasionally in some of the "Halls."

Two other artists who, like Miss Grey, have now apparently retired from the dancing world, are Miss Letty Lind and Miss Mimi St. Cyr. The latter always had a predilection for the foreign styles of dancing,

and though at one time a pupil of Mr. J. D'Auban, who taught such true English dancers as Miss Grey, Miss Lethbridge, and Miss Sinden, it was in her expositions of the Tarantella dances that she made herself famous, while her Spanish castanet dance in the part of La Frivolini in "La Cigale" will long be remembered.

Miss Mabel Love, another pupil of Mr. D'Auban, has of late years been directing her attention away from the Terpsichorean field, and practically the only good dancers we now have are Miss Alice Lethbridge, Miss Topsy Sinden, and, the latest addition to the ranks, Miss Winifred Hart-Dyke. Miss Hart-Dyke is a pupil of Madame Cavallazzi, and was dancing in the last of the "Savoy" pieces, coming to the front by her performance in "Merrie England," where she gave a very excellent *pas seul* in the second act.

Miss Topsy Sinden, who up till recently was connected with Daly's Theatre, would be far the most graceful dancer on the stage to-day, were she not a little too apt to sacrifice some of the charm of her perform-

ance to occasional bursts of step-dancing, almost of clog-dancing, and at times a slight suggestion of high-kicking, both of which are fatal to the artistic effect. She has, however, some wonderful dancing to her credit, and her performances in "San Toy," "The Country Girl," and other musical plays, left little to be desired.

She started young, as all the best dancers have done, commencing in one of Sir Augustus Harris' Covent Garden pantomimes, at the early age of five.

The question of allowing young children to perform on the stage has been much discussed of late years, and though at one time stage children may not have had that proper care and attention which should have been bestowed on them, the same cannot be said now; and with the present system of magisterial control to supervise their school education, and benevolent manager-esses such as Miss Ellaline Teriss to look after their pleasures, the lot of a stage child is generally a much-envied one. And for quite seventy per cent. of the plays produced, children are a necessary part of the

performance, for nothing looks more out of place than a grown-up person trying to take the part of a child, while for pantomimes and spectacular plays large numbers of children are required. As pantomime fairies they are most appropriate, for many of the pretty children one sees engaged might have come straight from the "fairy rings," of the light-footed blue-eyed elves which so appealed to the imaginations of our forefathers.

Dancing was the "little people's" recreation, and the fairies would have lost half their charm in the minds of their believers, had they not indulged in their merry moonlight capers. And with their love of dancing was associated everything that was bright and cheerful and pretty. Fairies were always represented as bedecked with posies and garlands of flowers.

"The dances ended, all the fairy train
For pinks and daisies search the scattered plain."
—Pope.

And so also we, the more prosaic mortals, always deck our dances with bright dresses and colours, for with dancing everything must be cheerful.

But to return to the children. It is set forward by every authority on the subject of dancing, that the only way to succeed in the art is to commence young, and for this reason alone we might advance the cause of the stage children. But when we see how the little ones really enjoy themselves while at their duties, and look forward so eagerly to the time when the curtain goes up, and when we know also that the extra money they earn adds little comforts that would otherwise be denied to many a home, we can look on it with sincere approval.

It has been said that all good dancers start young, but it must be added also that all good dancers work hard. Just as in every profession, it is hard work that brings the best to the front; but to those dancers who enter their profession because they feel attracted to it, it is a labour of love. That they do have to work hard there is no doubt, for the keen eye of the public is ever upon them, and they must be therefore in a sort of perpetual training. Especially was this applicable to the ballet-dancer, and Oliver Wendell Holmes has remarked in his "Poe

at the Breakfast Table"—"Yet they have been through such work to get their limbs strong and flexible and obedient, that a cart-horse lives an easy life compared to them while in training"; but, at the same time, this hard training has always had inestimable advantages from the point of view of the worker's health, for it is no doubt the finest exercise in the world, and keeps the body in a state of suppleness, and the muscles in a condition that nothing else will do. And through the body we approach the mind. "*Mens sana in corpore sano.*" The ancients were strongly of the opinion that dancing developed character. Plato put forward a theory as to dancing in regard to the development of both mind and body, and Lucian also, in his "Essay on Dancing," gives a very high value to the art.

But there must be moderation in all things, and some of the forms of dancing on the stage to-day cannot be considered in any way as of health-giving value. I refer to those in which strange and unnatural postures are brought into use, such as an American form of dancing I have

lately heard of, called "Rock Dancing." This is practically a dance of the ballet movements of the Italian school, performed almost entirely on the instep, a painful and ungraceful proceeding which might justly cause the performers to be called contortionists rather than dancers.

There are other forms of modern stage-dancing which are as far removed from the best, the long-skirted type, as what is known as "the illegitimate performance," from the true drama, in the sister profession. Among these may be mentioned such dances as Plantation Dances, Cake Walks, and other innovations which have unfortunately crept in of late. The old-fashioned Clog Dancing is without doubt very clever, and one cannot but admire the skill shown in a good performance; but it is not graceful, and relies more on the sense of sound than of sight for a proper appreciation of it.

As opposed to this essentially "foot-dancing" is the equally definite "arm-dancing of the Serpentine Dance, that dance which has given name and fame to La Loie Fuller. Wonderful and beautiful effects are

produced in this Serpentine Dance, "*mais il n'est pas la guerre.*" All things considered, there is only one true form of dancing on the stage to-day, and that is what, for want of a better name, is known as "skirt-dancing."

And this skirt-dancing, what is it?

A vision of laughing eyes and twinkling feet, a swift rushing of floating draperies through the air, a twirl, a whirl, now here, now there, yet all with a certainty and precision whose very apparent absence declares its art; then, as the music slows down, a delicate fluttering, like a butterfly hovering among the flowers, and lastly, as a soft falling snow-flake, silently she sinks to the ground. Is not this something worth living for, to be able to dance it, to be able to see it? You, who are now learning your art, and who are to carry on the traditions of your seniors, and you others, who would rush to any new forms, any momentary crazes, if they but took the popular fancy, keep to the paths of the true art, for they are assuredly the best, and avoid, as you value your chances of success, as you value your art for its own sake, such things as "Cake Walks" and "Rock Dances."

Chapter IX.

DANCING AS A SOCIAL PASTIME.

"*God match me with a good dancer.*"

"Much Ado about Nothing," ii. 1.

I WONDER how many times this ejaculation of the fair Margaret's has been unconsciously repeated by the frequenters of our modern ball-rooms, when by some mischance an ungainly or awkward partner has been encountered. For there can be nothing more out of place in a ball-room than a bad dancer; if one cannot dance well, it is better to refrain altogether; one can gain more enjoyment by watching the good dancers, and by one's very abstinence can give them an equal amount of pleasure. From the early Plantagenet times, down to the present day, a certain skill in the technical parts of the dances, and polished and courtly movements in general, have been essentials, and it is a

pity to think that these centuries-old traditions should be so often disregarded in the dances of to-day. But in a modern hurrying world, where Turveydrops no longer reign, we must be satisfied to think that what still survives of the old-time courtesy of manners, regarded as an out-of-date custom, perhaps, but yet present, is to be found in the ball-room.

What may be called Society Dancing, really commenced with the Danses Basses, or Court Dances, as distinguished from the Danses Hautes, or Country Dances, in the sixteenth century, though dancing at Court had been of course in vogue for many years before this, witness the famous ball in the reign of Edward III., where we are told the Order of the Garter was instituted; and there is also said to have been a form of the Contre Danse existing at the Court of William the Conqueror. But the Danses Basses, or dances of the upper classes, were the real beginnings of our social dances of to-day, and they were dances of France, from the mirror of which country our own dances have been but one long reflection ever since.

One of the earliest of the courtly dances was the Pavane, according to one theory the original form of the Minuet. The name of this dance is probably derived from the Latin *pavo*, a peacock, because of the stateliness of its movements, but some say it takes its name from Padua in Italy. This, I think, is refuted by the fact that the Pavane was almost undoubtedly of Spanish origin. There was a Spanish proverb, perhaps it still exists, "Every Pavane must have its Galliard," the Galliard being a short lively dance coming at the end of the more sober Pavane. Ben Jonson, too, in "The Alchemist," speaks of the Spanish Pavin. Concerning the stateliness of the dance, Sir John Hawkins has written in his "History of Music," "It is a grave and majestic dance; the method of dancing it anciently, was by gentlemen dressed with caps and swords, by those of the long robe in their gowns, by the peers in their mantles, and by the ladies in gowns with long trains, the motion whereof in dancing resembled that of a peacock."

The Pavane was common in England after

about 1540, and it is no doubt to this dance that Sir John Suckling refers in his "Ballade upon a Wedding," in the famous lines—

"Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice stole in and out
As if they feared the light;
But, oh, she dances such a way,
No sun upon an Easter Day
Is half so fine a sight!"

Shakespeare himself was probably an ardent votary of dancing, to judge by the frequency with which he introduces it into his plays, and the Pavane was certain to be the one he mostly danced. That he was well versed in its technicalities we may judge by the words he puts into the mouth of Sir Andrew Aguecheek in answer to Sir Toby's question, "What is thy excellence in a galliard?" "Faith, I can cut a caper, and I think I have the back-trick simply as strong as any man in Illyria."

But in another part of "Twelfth Night," he would seem to have mixed up, perhaps intentionally, the Pavane with the Passamezzo, an Italian dance of a different form. For he makes Sir Toby speak of the surgeon as a "passy-measure pavin," but Reed, in

his work on Shakespeare's Plays, suggests that either Sir Toby in his drunken babbling may have meant to say, "a past measure panicin," or else that the reading of the line is incorrect, and should be "a passy measure or a pavin."

Following the Pavane, and according to the Parson in Washington Irving's "Christmas Day," founded upon it, was the Minuet.

But the more commonly accepted theory of the Minuet is that it was derived from the Courante, an argument in favour of which being that it was at first a quick dance, and therefore far more like the "swift Coranto" than the stately Pavane. It was called the Minuet because of the small steps, and at its very commencement was a rustic dance, a brawle or branle of Poitou. In the year 1650 it was introduced in Paris, and three years later was given a musical setting by the great Lully, but it did not become really popular till some years after this.

About this time, dancing as a social pastime was becoming more frequent in France, and in 1662 the King founded a Royal Academy of Dancing, putting Beauchamp, a

noted dancing-master, at the head of it. The King himself took lessons for over twenty years in dancing, and often danced in Minuets at the Court functions. In Beauchamp's time, however, the Minuet had hardly come into favour, and it was left to Pécour, a later dancer, to bring it to the front as the first dance in France. From that time its popularity never failed, and for over a hundred and fifty years every State Ball, not only in France but in all the civilized countries of Europe, was opened with a Minuet.

The Minuet, surely the most famous of dances, was essentially a product of the age, and a dance that only such an age could have produced. When the correct method of proffering a snuff-box, or doffing one's hat, were actions ruled by certain definite formulæ, and only to be attained after years of practice, one can hardly be surprised at the stateliness and constrained movements of the Minuet. It was an age of artificiality, and this was a make-believe dance, at least so far as the generally adopted axioms of dancing, which declare for a combination of

vigorous movements, would have it. Yet they would seem to have enjoyed this mathematically precise game of walking about, those powdered and satin-clad ladies and gentlemen; they must have, or they would not have done it, nor would its popularity have lasted in so marvellous a manner. Mimicked in the play, written of in books, and set down in pictures more times than anyone can number, it has yet rarely undergone the humiliation of buffoonery, its cold superiority repelling all but the hardiest mockers. The caricaturists of the day laid hands upon it, it is true, and in many of the cartoons of Bunbury, Rowlandson and Gillray, we find the Minuet occurring; but they caricatured the people rather than the dance, for to them there was nothing strange or out of place in a dance that was solemnly walked. And to us it has been handed down as the outstanding type of that age, and whether it be the cover of a chocolate box, a painted fan, or a Christmas almanac, we always find these Georgian dandies in the act of dancing a Minuet.

The earliest form of the Minuet was a

dance for two people in moderate triple time, and their movements over the ground covered the shape of a letter S. Later on, the angles were turned more abruptly, and the figure became that of a Z, and shortly after this the whole dance was enlarged, and was followed by the Gavotte, in itself originally a stage dance. In the early French days the dances were often held out of doors, on one of the lawns, and consequently the gliding movements of the feet when a fresh step was taken were not brought into such prominence as they were later on. It is the Minuet of these early days, danced in the sunny afternoons out on the green swards, that Watteau, Lancret and Bourcher have loved to portray. In the time of Marie Antoinette, there were four Minuets commonly danced, but one, known as the "Menuet de la Cour," arranged by Gardel, was the favourite one.

The golden age of the Minuet in England was undoubtedly during that period when Beau Nash was Master of the Ceremonies at Bath. It may not be out of place to give here a short sketch of Beau Nash,

one of the most interesting figures of the eighteenth century.

The son of a Welsh country gentleman, he entered the army while still in his teens, but after a short period of magnificent riotousness resigned his commission because "he did not care to be trammelled by the narrowness of a military life." Even at this time he was one of the acknowledged leaders of the day, and his horses, clothes, and dinners, had begun to set their mark on the "beau monde." Living, as he did, upon no apparent income whatever, it is little wonder that at times his companions suspected him of being a highwayman. Probably he won large sums by gambling, and he would also have been merely following the custom of the day in owing his tradesmen for everything. In whatever way his income was derived, he certainly stands out as one of the greatest "chevaliers d'industrie" in an age when this was almost one of the fashionable professions.

Moving with certain other society leaders to Bath, his wonderful organizing powers soon found scope for themselves here also,

and he started those famous evening functions and balls with which his name will always be connected. It was he who engaged the band of musicians, who at a sign from him at the close of the evening instantly stopped playing, thus causing all dancing to end; and so much was his name feared, that no one would have dared to go against his wishes. He was appointed by his own desire, "Master of the Ceremonies," and once being elected he ruled the assemblies with an iron hand. The well-known "Code of Etiquette at Bath" was drawn up by him, and was posted in the dancing rooms, and woe betide any hapless person who broke its rules. He himself started all the balls by taking a lady out to dance the Minuet, the rest of the evening being always carried out on the lines of a fixed precedent. At eleven o'clock to the minute, he held up his finger, and the music stopped, and after a short interval for final refreshment, all the guests left the building.

Brewer describes him in three words as a "notorious diner-out," but so great was the wonderful personality of the man, that

I have no doubt, had he chosen to devote his fine organizing powers to the services of the country instead of to the fads of society, he would have become one of the leading statesmen of the time. However, his name, as Beau Nash, Master of the Ceremonies of Bath, has been handed down to us in a perhaps more permanent manner than it would have been had he been a statesman only, and will probably last longer. As a dramatic contrast to this life of almost regal magnificence, he ultimately died, destitute, friendless, and in rags.

The Minuet can hardly be called a dance at all, but it was without doubt one of the finest schools of courtesy and deportment ever invented. Pope was, I am sure, thinking of the Minuet when he wrote—

> "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
> As those move easiest who have learnt to dance."

It is interesting also to note that in the days when no gentleman could be seen in public without a sword, special short "dancing-swords" were made, which made the carrying of a sword possible and yet

did not interfere with the freedom of the movements for dancing.

One of the dances that followed the Minuet was the Quadrille, or "Quadrille de Contre Danse," to give its full name. This was one of the "Square" dances that used to delight our ancestors, and about which we so often read in old-fashioned books. Quadrille was originally a card game for four people, but the name was given to a dance introduced into the French ballets about 1745. The dance itself was probably a direct descendant of that contre danse in use at the Court of William the Conqueror. It did not, however, become popular as an ordinary dance until some sixty years after its appearance in the ballets, and it was not until 1808 that it was introduced into England by a Miss Berry, to be ultimately taken up by the Duke of Devonshire and made fashionable about 1813. This is on the authority of Raikes, but others would have it that it was not danced in England till the famous Lady Jersey, Lady Castlereagh, and other society leaders, brought it over from Paris, and danced it in Almack's rooms in 1815.

The French Quadrille was for two, four, or any number of couples, but four pairs seem to have been the ideal number in England. The dance itself was divided into figures, usually five, being Le Pantalon, L'Eté, La Poule, La Tremise, and Le Final, and with each figure there were appropriate movements and phases of almost a pantomimic nature—as, for instance, during the figure La Poule, the performers clucked like a hen; but later on these adjuncts were left out, though the figures remained, as names only, for a very long time afterwards. Each pair of dancers remained always *vis-a-vis*, and only danced with each other, thereby differing from the more modern Lancers, and the whole dance in its later years often ended with a galop. The Quadrille was a far more lively dance than the Minuet, and was thus paving the way for that great revolution in social dancing,—the Waltz.

What a sensation the Waltz must have caused to those who witnessed its first invasion of England. Sweeping all precedent on one side, and overturning all

the old thoughts and ideas on dancing, the Waltz came and conquered, but not without the severest opposition that a dance has ever had. Such a distinct departure from all established forms was bound to be regarded with disfavour by those of conservative ideas, for it must be remembered that this was practically the first time in the history of dancing that two people had ever danced with each other and together; and, to crown all, it was considered by many to be positively immodest! Byron took this latter point of view in a half-mocking, half-serious way, in his famous "Apostrophe to the Waltz," which he wrote anonymously from Cheltenham at the end of the year 1812, when that town was rapidly becoming a leading fashionable resort, and where he would probably have seen it danced for the first time. He was afterwards inclined to disown this poem, not considering it up to the usual standard of his writing; but, for all that, it contains many charming and memorable lines, such as the ones where he describes the ship coming across the seas bearing various things to England, among them

———"her fairest freight
Delightful waltz on tiptoe for a mate."

To Baron Neuman is attributed the honour of first introducing the Waltz into England, and though it was so strongly opposed at first, we nevertheless find Byron writing at the end of 1812—the very year in which it was first seen in England—

"To one and all the lovely stranger came,
And every ball-room echoes with her name."

but it was nearly three years before it finally overcame all opposition, and was brought to the front place among English dances by its public performance at Almack's Rooms by the Emperor Alexander, Princess Esterhazy, Lord Palmerston, and other society leaders. The stamp of fashion once on it, it became all the rage, and was danced nightly at Almack's, Willis's, the Pantheon, and other famous dancing rooms.

Byron addresses it as "Imperial Waltz! imported from the Rhine," for its original home was in Western Bavaria, where it was called Dreker, "the turner," while the other name given it, Waltz, also signifies a turning. At first it was in very slow time,

compared to the way it is danced now, and yet it was the first of the quick-step dances! There have been many innovations since then, slight variations in the manner of dancing it, such as the hop-waltz, and, of course, the system of reversing, but the main idea has remained the same since the beginning, and it is still the queen of our ball-room dances.

A curious thing about this reversing is that though in England it was introduced merely as a variation to relieve the monotony of continually turning in one direction, in Germany the dance is always from right to left, the opposite to the hands of a watch, or what an Irishman might call "continuous reversing." In some dancing rooms I went to in Cologne, I was surprised to see the dancers, after every certain number of bars, take their partners' hands and walk a few steps forwards, after the manner of the pas-de-quatre, reverting to the ordinary Waltz almost immediately. Whether this was typical of the German Waltz, or merely some local variation, I could not ascertain.

The "Dreamy Waltz" has inspired many

of the greatest musicians to write for it, Schubert, Chopin, Weber, and Strauss, all contributing their share, but the Waltzes of the last-named will always remain as the finest examples of dance music ever written.

The Galop or Galopade was the next dance to be introduced to England. This was, and is, a dance in very quick time, but beyond the fact that it was usually danced as a finish to some other dance, it is of little interest. It came to us from Hungary, translated, like most of our other dances, via the channels of Paris, and though introduced some seventy years ago, and never at any time very popular, it is still occasionally seen in our ball-rooms.

In striking contrast to the somewhat cool reception of the Waltz, was the open-armed enthusiasm with which the Polka was received. It is true that all Paris had gone mad over it in a way that only Frenchmen can, but the staid English people were quickly endeavouring to outdance even the French, and the new excitement spread like wildfire.

The way in which the Polka was discovered is somewhat romantic. Up in the wilds of Bohemia, in 1835, Joseph Neruda—whose discovery of this alone might have brought him fame—found a peasant girl dancing and singing to herself, and a dance such as he had never seen before. He got her to repeat it, and seeing the great possibilities of it, took it down to Prague and and afterwards Vienna. It was an instantaneous success, and the *Polka*, or half-step, as it was then called, took the public fancy as no other dance had done. Paris was still too full of the Waltz to heed other dances, and it was not until 1840 that the Polka assailed the capital of the dancing world. But the quaint and captivating "half-step" once inside the walls of Paris, it immediately secured a following, which was almost fanatical in nature. M. Cellarius, a professional dancer, performed it one evening on the stage of the Odeon, and the next day it was being danced in half a dozen of the best Paris Salons. A few days later it became more general, and it was not many months before all Paris had run Polka-mad.

It was danced publicly in the streets and boulevards, not only in the evenings, but all day long; traffic was disorganized, and its tunes were whistled and sung on all sides. New phrases were coined, and the word "polkeur" was upon everyone's tongue. Even the sober "Times" plaintively declared it could get no news through from Paris, except accounts of the Polka! When it did come to London, it came as an already established dance, and though the excitement did not run wild in the streets, as in Paris, it was enthusiastically received, and without a shadow of opposition. The "Illustrated London News" on May 11th, 1844, reported the first Polka at Almack's, and the description I will give in its own words.

"'La Polka,' like its predecessors, the Waltz and the Galop, is a 'danse a deux,' couples following each other in the salle de danse, commencing at pleasure, and adopting of the following figures that which pleases them most at the moment. All those anxious to shine in La Polka will dance the whole of them, returning from time to time by way of rest to the first figure.

"The measure is 2–4, but to facilitate our definitions, we subdivide each measure or bar into 1-2-3-4, the accent on the 2, to be played not so fast as the Galop.

"The steps are two, and the following description may in some measure convey them to our readers. We commence with the first and most general.—At the one, hop on the right leg, lifting or doubling the left at the same moment: at two, put your left leg boldly forward on the ground: at three, bring your right toe to the left heel: at four, advance your left foot a short step forward. Now is the 'one' in the next bar or measure of the tune. Hop on the left leg, doubling or lifting up your right leg, and so on—proceeding in this step with your arm circling your partner's waist round the room.

"In conclusion, we would observe that La Polka is a noiseless dance. There is no stamping of heels or toes, or kicking the legs at sharp angles forward. This may be very well at the threshold of a Bohemian auberge, but it is inadmissible into the salons of London or Paris. The Polka as

danced in Paris and now adapted by us, is elegant, graceful and fascinating in the extreme."

Even then there were apparently traces of that rowdyism which is unfortunately seen too often in our ball-rooms to-day.

The Polka was very wella dapted for a stage dance, and there may be some now living who can remember seeing Perrot and Carlotta Grisi first dance the Polka at the Opera in Slavonic dress. It was afterwards introduced into many of the ballets as a *pas de deux*, and always met with success.

"Punch," of course, had his say in the matter, and during the year 1844 there were many pictures and humorous references to the dance in his pages. There is one excellent parody on the "Maid of Athens" in which the Polka is the central theme. In connection witht he Polka should be mentioned the Schottische, which also claimed Bohemia as its home, and which was at first called the "Polka tremblante."

About this time, in 1845 to be exact, there was also introduced to England a Polish

dance called the Mazurka, and though it was at one time fairly popular, and was occasionally seen in our ball-rooms, till a very few years ago, it never really attained the success which came to its contemporaries. It has been called "the melancholy Mazurka," possibly owing to the sad strains of some music that Chopin set to it; but it must be remembered that much of Chopin's so-called dance music was never really meant to be danced to. The mazurka is one of the oldest Polish dances, being invented in the sixteenth century, and it is still, I believe, common in Poland, but it can no longer be called an English dance.

A square dance which we still have, and one which has caused so much discussion of late years, is the Lancers. In itself a most picturesque and pleasing dance, it unfortunately gives opportunities for conduct which, to say the least, is not that of a ball-room, and which almost justifies the dance being sometimes called "the break-neck Lancers," or again "Kitchen Lancers." This is a great pity, as there is something very fascinating in a set of lancers well

danced, and the constantly kaleidoscopic changing of the positions is a very charming thing even to watch. The Lancers, with its quaint old-fashioned phrases, "Set to Corners," "Grand Chain," and "Visiting," and those courtly movements which seem to bring with them a faint aroma of the past, has always been a favourite of mine; and to see a dozen people careering madly down the room, knocking aside all who may come in their way, at once destroys all the poetry of it. It is said that on more than one occasion a broken limb has resulted from this rough and tumble play, and in no way could one call the Lancers as now too often danced "Mannerly modest, as a measure full of state and ancientry."

The Lancers was introduced to France by M. Laborde in 1836, and in 1850 it made its first appearance in England, a set being composed by Lady Georgina Lygon, and seven other ladies and gentlemen. It is certainly not now so popular as it was a decade or so ago, but it still holds three or four places in most ball programmes.

The Cotillon can be almost disregarded as

a dance, as it has become merely a medley of movements, and is only occasionally introduced by some hostess as a novelty, or as a means of distributing small gifts. It was started in the reign of Charles X. of France, and was for some time a popular dance at the French court, but in modern France as in England it is now seldom seen.

One of the last dances to be invented was the "Pas de Quatre," said to have derived its name from the fact that it was at first danced to the tune of the famous Pas de Quatre of the Gaiety, composed by the late Meyer Lutz, for so many years conductor at that theatre. This was for a time exceedingly popular, as it came as a welcome relief to the monotony of the Waltz, but the last two or three years it seems to have gone out of favour again, and is now not often seen. It was also at first called the Barn Dance, through some idea that it was a revival of a peasant dance, but beyond a slight likeness to the old form of Schottische, and that in only a few of its movements, it has broken fresh ground in every way.

Two dances have of late years been brought over from America: one the Washington Post, enjoying an enthusiastic but short-lived popularity, while the other, the Two-step, a variation on the Waltz, has as yet not had time to seek a fair judgment. It is certain that our American cousins are fonder of dancing than we are, and it is to them that we must look for any new dances, praying only that they will not send us another cake-walk!

The only other dance that is still sometimes seen in our ball-rooms is the dear old Sir Roger de Coverley. This is the only genuine survival of our old English dances, and it is one of the prettiest of them. Founded, of course, on the Contres Danses, or Country Dances, it has retained enough of their movements to give us a general idea of what they were like. Perhaps it will not be inapropos to give here the fable of how the Country Dances began, as told by the poet Jenyns in the verses on dancing which he dedicated to Lady Fanny Fielding, said to have been the finest dancer of the early eighteenth-century ball-rooms:—

"Then let the jovial country dance begin,
And the loud fiddlers call each straggler in:
But e'er they come permit me to disclose
How first, as legends tell, this pastime rose.
In ancient times (such times are now no more),
When Albion's crown illustrious Arthur wore,
In some fair op'ning glade each summer's night,
Where the pale moon diffused her silver light,
On the soft carpet of a grassy field,
The sporting fairies their assemblies held:
Some lightly tripping with their pigmy queen,
In circling ringlets marked the level green,
Some with soft notes made mellow pipes resound,
And music warble through the groves around;
Oft lonely shepherds by the forest side,
Belated peasants oft their revels spyed,
And home returning, o'er their nut-brown ale,
Their guests diverted with the wondrous tale,
Instructed hence, throughout the British isle,
And fond to imitate the pleasing toil,
Round where the trembling Maypole fixed on high
Uplifts its flow'ry honours to the sky,
The ruddy maids and sunburnt swains resort,
And practise every night the lovely sport;
On every side Aeolian artists stand,
Whose active elbows swelling winds command;
The swelllng winds harmonious pipes inspire,
And blow in every breast a gen'rous fire.
Thus taught, at first the country-dance began,
And hence to cities and to courts it ran."

In a curious old book, "Playford's Dancing Master," published about 1690, the music of the Sir Roger is printed, with full dancing instructions. Though an English dance, it was taken over to France and introduced into the French ballets in 1745, the same year as the Quadrille; and, like the Quadrille, it became popular as a ball-room dance at the beginning of the last century. On the rare occasions on which we now see it, it is used to finish up the evening, and in the same way, with this, the last of the ball-room dances, I will end the present chapter.

Chapter X.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S DANCERS.

"When you do dance I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that."

"Winters Tale," Act iv. 3.

HISTORY of dancing necessarily involves an account, however small, of those men and women who by their individual genius and skill have assisted in the making of that history. For as the life history of each great dancer of the world was unrolled, so too did the history of dancing itself advance, for each of the dancers brought their tribute in the shape of some fresh movement, some hitherto unknown step, or some new invention for the general good of the art, and with each name is thus associated a page in the history of dancing.

Pylades and Bathyllos, the great Roman dancers, Scaliger the scholar and antiquarian, even Henry VIII. and Anne, wife of James I., have all helped in their several ways; while musicians, directors of ceremonies, and ballet-masters innumerable, have also added their quota to the general store; but it is only when we come to the later periods, the times when dancing began to be regarded more seriously, to be regarded as a distinct and not unimportant art, that the real makers of its history came upon the scene.

To France, as is only right, belongs the earliest of the notable dancers, Noverre, who was born in Paris in 1727. He made his *début* at Fontainebleau, at the Royal Theatre, in 1743, when only sixteen years old, and within a year had become famous. In 1755 he came over to London at the special invitation of Garrick, and remained in England for two years, dancing in most of the important operas produced during that period. After leaving London he lived for some time in Lyons, holding a post as Director of Ballets, and while there he published his "Lettres sur la Danse et les Ballets."

At length, in 1775, he gained the coveted post of "Maitre des Ballets" at the Paris Academy, which he held till the time of the Revolution, when he lost money, position, everything, and had to retire in comparative poverty to St. Germain, where he died in 1810.

Noverre will always be remembered as the founder of the true ballet, the "ballet d'action," and it is in a great measure due to him that dancing took the important position it did. Himself a good actor, he enforced the necessity of good acting upon all those under him, for without capable histrionic powers it would have been impossible to do away with the recitations and descriptive songs hitherto in vogue, and the outcome of this was the pantomime ballet.

Gaetano Vestris was an Italian, born in Florence, the original home of the ballets, in 1729, two years after the birth of Noverre. In his own time he was acknowledged to be the best male dancer the world has ever seen, and many now say that no one has ever since equalled him. And, knowing his

fame, he was unable to resist the temptation of being inordinately vain about it. People, in speaking of him, were wont to describe him as "the best dancer and the vainest man that ever lived." He himself took the title of "Le Dieu de la danse," and an anecdote is related of him that once, when the conversation turned on the subject of European celebrities, someone asked him whom he considered to be the greatest man in Europe; Vestris turned round with a bow, and said, "There are only three great men in Europe—myself, Voltaire, and the King of Prussia."

Vestris is credited with being the inventor of the spinning movement known as the Pirouette, but Gardel, a later dancer, so altered and brought this to perfection that he is now generally regarded as its author.

He had a son, Marie Augustus Vestris, who also became a great dancer, though he was never quite able to achieve the success of his father. Madame Vestris, the celebrated English actress of half a century later, was also a connection of his. He died, an old man of eighty, in 1808.

Gardel, as the first to do away with the face masks, and also as the perfecter of the pirouette, and Mdlle. Camargo, as the first danseuse to wear the ballet dress, are worthy of mention, but little is really known about their lives, and even their feats of dancing were quite overshadowed by those who came immediately after them.

Carlo Blasis, however, was at one time a celebrated dancer, though he is now more generally remembered for his writings on the subject, and for the ballets which he composed. Born at Naples in 1803, he seems to have been able to dance almost before he could walk, and in 1815, when only twelve years old, he was actually principal dancer at Marseilles.

From Marseilles he went to Paris, and there studied under Maximilian Gardel, taking part in some well-known ballets produced at that time, and in which he had as partners two noted danseuses, Mdlel. Gosselin and Mdlle. Le Gallois.

He next made a success at La Scala, Milan, and in 1826 proceeded to England. Meanwhile his sister, Mdlle. Blasis, was

making a name for herself by her magnificent singing at the Italian Opera, and in her spare moments writing music of all sorts, for she was a clever musician, and incidentally helping her brother, who was devoted to her, by setting some of his ballets to music.

While in England, Carlo Blasis wrote his "Code of Terpsichore," an exhaustive treatise on the technical details of the ballet, which was published with some music by his sister, and a little later translated into English. It was in England also that the accident occurred that terminated his career as a dancer, for he so severely injured his leg while rehearsing a *pas de trois* with Mmes. Bougnoti and Vaguemoulin, that he never publicly appeared again. He was able, however, to take charge of and direct the ballets for many years after, and as a director of ballets he even achieved more fame than he had as a dancer.

In 1837, he became Director of the Imperial Academy at Milan, then a very important post in the dancing world, and ten years later he came to England once

more as "Composer of the Ballets" at Drury Lane, afterwards holding the same appointment at Covent Garden, this latter being the last post of any consequence he held before his death.

Antonius Augustus Bournonville is chiefly noted as being Denmark's greatest dancer, and also the producer of some very famous ballets.

Born in Copenhagen in 1805, and brought up in an atmosphere of dancing from the first, being the son of a ballet-master in that city, he soon showed signs of great dancing powers, and after taking some good engagements in his own country he made his *début* in Paris at the age of twenty-one. Four years later he was made Director and Ballet-master of the Academy at Copenhagen, and it was there that he produced those ballets for which his name will ever be remembered. Waldemar, Les Noces, Faust, and the famous Napoli, were among the best known, and they disclosed a new field in the management of the ballet, namely the extent to which perfection in the staging and dressing of it might be carried out.

Next in order come the names of Taglioni and Elssler, perhaps the greatest in the annals of dancing, certainly so in the annals of the ballet. These two great dancers seem by a curious fate to have been brought together all their lives, and the coincidence in relation to them, though not so much noticed during their lives, became very remarkable when looked back to from after years. Taglioni was born in 1809, Elssler a few months later in 1810. Both made their *début* in Vienna; both competed for fame on the Paris Opera stage, and at the same time; both came over to England, and both appeared at Her Majesty's Theatre under Lumley's management in 1842; both of them left the stage in 1845, and having thus been thrown together at most of the important points of their lives, they both died, old women, in the same year, 1884.

Taglioni, slightly the elder of the two, was born at Stockholm. The daughter of an Italian ballet-master, her future was cut out for her from the beginning. It seemed destined by fate that she should be a great danseuse, but the stern determination of

her father had also a great influence on her ultimate career. He subjected her to the severest discipline, and from her babyhood almost she was accustomed to practise a great many hours a day, and to rule her every mode of life with the one view of dancing constantly before her. At length, after ten years of arduous training, she was considered fit to make her *début*, and appeared in Vienna in June 1822. She made an instantaneous success, which was repeated at Berlin and other cities in Germany, till in 1827 she reached what was then the culminating point of a dancer's ambition, the Paris Opera. Here she created a perfect *furore* of excitement, her new style taking all beholders by storm. She was in the habit of wearing her dancing dress much longer than was the usual custom, and this, combined with certain novel steps and movements of her own, and the fact that by her skill she was able to give a much improved rendering of the routine steps of previous dancers, gave the impression to those observing her that they were watching an entirely new style. Indeed, one writer

in speaking of her has remarked, "She revealed a new form of dancing, a virginal and diaphanous art instinct with an originality all her own, in which the old traditions and time-honoured rules of choreography were merged."

In 1832 she married the Comte de Voisins, and by this time, too, she had amassed a considerable fortune, which was greatly augmented by her English engagements, when for dancing at Her Majesty's and Covent Garden she was said to have received the largest sums ever yet paid to any dancer. Some years later, however, she was drawn into speculation, and lost the whole of her fortune with the exception of a small sum, which she eked out by becoming a teacher of deportment. She spent the latter part of her life at Marseilles, and died there in 1884.

In "Guillaume Tell" and "Robert le Diable" she made her two greatest hits, though Thackeray in "The Newcomes' especially praises the graces of her dancing in "La Sylphide"; but for her performances of the Tyrolienne and the Pas de Fascination

in the two former, if for nothing else, the name of Marie Taglioni will always be remembered.

Fanny Elssler, her great contemporary, was born in Vienna in June, 1810, making her first appearance in the same city at the age of six. Then, and for the next twelve years or so, she danced in company with her sister Theresa, who was slightly her senior, though by no means so skilful in the art, and it was in a great measure due to this elder sister's generous self-effacement that Fanny's splendid dancing became so evident. This sister eventually became the Baroness Von Barnim, though not till some little time after she had ceased dancing in company with Fanny.

They appeared together in Naples in 1827, and it was here that Fanny made that success which was the means of her getting her first big engagement at Berlin in 1830. Four years later she arrived at the Paris Opera, and by her dancing of the Spanish Cachucha at once sprang into fame. Taglioni was at the same time engaged there, and so there arose a natural rivalry between

them, which was sustained by the fact that neither could for any length of time outvie the other in popularity.

In 1840, Elssler sailed for New York, and there for two years repeated her European triumphs, after which she made a tour of the capitals of Europe for some years, and then, while still in the height of her fame, she retired and settled in Hamburg, dying many years later in her native home of Vienna.

Of what may be called the intervening dancers, those who filled in the time between the last of the ballet performers and the dancers of the present day, the figure that stands out clear against the background of all the rest is that of Kate Vaughan. As the pioneer of a new style of dancing, as the inventor, the creator, of all that is best in the dancing of to-day, she would alone have been worth all the admiration and praise we can bestow upon her. But when in addition we remember that her dancing was so superb, so graceful, and so artistic, that in a moment it could sweep aside all the rooted prejudice of years in favour of ballet danc-

ing, and could assert its superiority by sheer force of its own merits, we must unhesitatingly place Kate Vaughan as the greatest dancer of her time. And as such her contemporaries justly proclaimed her. She and Nellie Farren were the great mainstays of the old Gaiety Theatre, and to them primarily was its great success due.

In the recent biography of her husband, Lady Burne-Jones has written, "Another and different vision also flits across my mind in the form of the wonderful dancer, Kate Vaughan—'Miriam Ariadne Salome Vaughan,' as Edward called her. Never shall I forget seeing him and Ruskin fall into each other's arms in rapture upon accidentally discovering that they both adored her." And a critic reviewing this says, "That Ruskin and Burne-Jones should fall into each other's arms in a transport of enthusiasm for a skirt-dancer seems incongruous to us only because we forget that dancing is as natural an expression of emotion—secular or religious—as singing."

Night after night the theatre drew the eager public to its doors, to see these two

wonderful women, whose personality was so great as to shine out, strong and resplendent, through all the tawdry glitter and make-believe of the stage, and whose many unrecorded acts of kindness to the needy and distressed will perhaps never be known in full, and yet who, when old age at last overtook them, were allowed to sink, one in actual want, and the other with a mere pittance, to the grave.

This is one of the saddest phases of stage life, this contrast of the successful period of a popular favourite's career, with the too-often latter ending in misery and want. People without thinking are apt to say, "Serves them right, they should have put something by. Look at us; we are prosperous in our old age, because we saved." But they forget the very different conditions under which they lived; they forget that the people of the stage have seldom had that business training, that mercantile sense which almost naturally impels a habit of thrift; they forget that in the precarious nature of the profession judgment by appearances is unfortunately one of the leading

factors of success, and that a certain style has to be kept up even when it is often at heart not wished for; and lastly, they do not know that from many of these apparently glittering incomes commissions of a most usurious and almost incredible nature are too often extracted by theatrical agents, in whom rests practically the sole power of obtaining engagements for them. On the top of all this, it is but little understood that nearly three months in the year, during the summer, there is for seventy-five per cent. of those on the stage no work to do at all, and that, year in and year out, nine months' income has to suffice for twelve months' living, a state of things that surely exists in no other profession.

But to return to Kate Vaughan. Her theatrical history practically starts with her appearance in the Gaiety Quartette in 1876, though she had been on the stage, occasionally dancing and occasionally acting, for some years before this. Her maiden name was Candelon, but she, in company with her sister Susie, took the name of Vaughan, when they helped to form the "Vaughan

Dancing Company," a well-known combination in the early seventies. She had before this studied dancing and acting under Mrs. Conquest at the famous "Grecian," and her first appearance in the "legitimate drama" was with Miss Litton's company at the Court Theatre in 1872.

Appearing at the Gaiety with Edward Terry, E. W. Royce, and Nellie Farren, in "Little Don Cæsar de Bazan," she met with instantaneous success, and from that time forward became the supreme ruler in the Terpsichorean field. Then came that quick succession of burlesques from the pens of some of the readiest and wittiest writers of the day. The names of H. J. Byron, F. C. Burnand, and Robert Reece, will always be associated with the time when the Gaiety was, *par excellence*, the home of the burlesque; while later, A. C. Torr, the *nom-de-plume* of poor Fred Leslie, was constantly found beneath the title of the play.

In all of these Kate Vaughan won her way into the hearts of the people, and no one was more sorry than her Gaiety audiences when

she relinquished the dancing shoe for the buskin, and joined in her lot with the drama. Had not her dancing prowess so completely overshadowed her efforts in this direction, she might have made a big name for herself as an actress also. As it was, her rendering of Peg Woffington in "Masks and Faces" drew forth the genuine praise of the critics, and in many other parts she showed that she had the capabilities of a great actress.

But it was in the Gaiety burlesques that her people loved to see her, and many will recall the tumultuous applause that greeted her as Alice in "Dick Whittington"—one of her big hits—when she made her bow dressed in a lilac-tinted early Victorian costume, with white furs and a big white muff.

How different was all this to her last days, forgotten and almost unknown, in far-off Johannesburg! Though she would have been happy to know that some of her old comrades accompanied her to the grave, and among them Edward Terry, the companion of her first triumphs, who by a fortunate coincidence was in South Africa at the time.

Among the dancers of the period, or a little later, was Miss Sylvia Grey. She was closely associated at the Gaiety with the productions of "Little Jack Sheppard," "Ruy Blas," and "Cinderellen-up-too-late," to mention some of the best known; while as Flo Fanshawe she achieved a success at the Prince of Wales' in "In Town." Her dancing was graceful in the extreme, and she wisely understood that to dance with the feet alone does not constitute the whole of the Terpsichorean art. A critic in the "Savoy," an art magazine of ten years ago, wrote, "Sylvia Grey's dance is perfect, from the waist upwards, swan-like in the holding and slow movement of the head and neck, exquisite in the undulations of the torso." Such dancing masters and mistresses as D'Auban, Espinosa, and Madame Katti Lanner can lay claim to a reflected part of her success, for she studied under all of them, and at the last, retiring from the stage, she in her turn began to impart her knowledge to other younger aspirants for dancing fame.

Of Florence Levy there is little to be

said, except that she contributed her due share as a burlesque actress and dancer to the brightness and general excellence of the Gaiety's performances.

Katie Seymour was more of a step-dancer than a *danseuse* of the best type, but so intimately was she connected with all the later Gaiety productions that it would be unfair to pass over her without comment. Originally in a music-hall sketch with the Brothers Horne, her dancing, slight as the opportunities were, attracted general notice, and she quickly found a place for herself in the realm of musical comedy. She appeared in "Blue Ey'd Susan" at the Prince of Wales', and afterwards in "Joan of Arc" at the Opera Comique. When this latter production was transferred to the Gaiety in 1891, she went with it, and from that time was in all the Gaiety pieces until 1901, when she went to America with the "Casino Girl." On her return, she essayed business on her own account, and took a troupe of dancers with her round the "Halls"; but for some time she had been in failing health, and she died, regretted by all who knew her, in the autumn of 1903.

Miss Letty Lind came to the front by a lucky chance, and it was by the merest accident that we have her as a dancer at all. When she was still unknown to fame, in the days when she was a member of Mrs. Saker's company, she had a song given her in one of the plays. Her voice was, to say the least, never powerful, and she asked if she might do a dance instead. The result was magnificent, and from that time her career was marked out. She had small parts in the Gaiety productions, but in the second edition of "Cinderellen" she took up with great success the name-rôle, which had been created by Miss Kate James a few months before. From that time she took the leading part at Daly's and other theatres devoted to musical plays, and in whatever little dances she has had to do, has always shown herself a finished performer.

Of the dancers of to-day, Miss Alice Lethbridge is in many opinions far in advance of any other dancer on the stage, both in *technique* and grace, and it is she to whom future generations will look back, as those of the present do to Kate Vaughan.

Learning the stage business and technical details (I was almost saying, "learning her art," but that was surely born in her) under Mr. John D'Auban, she commenced to study while yet a child, and her first engagement in the revival of "Rip Van Winkle" at the Comedy was a child's minor part, in which she had very little to do, though even then a solo dance as a little Dutch girl in wooden sabots caused a genuine applause, and had to be encored.

Some years later, at the age of fourteen, she appeared in "The Commodore," taking up a part originally created by Miss Phyllis Broughton, and with this company she went to America, in a short-lived tour of seven weeks. Earlier in that year she had been engaged for the part of "Boboski" in the famous comic opera "Falka," an old favourite by that time, in which the chief singing part was undertaken by Herbert Sims Reeves, the son of the famous tenor, and when the piece reached the grand total of a thousand nights she played in the special performance of it given at the Comedy Theatre.

But it was in the beautiful production of

"Mynheer Jan" at the Comedy that as a dancer she first came to the front, and people began to know that somebody had at last arrived worthy of taking up the old traditions of the art. "Mynheer Jan" took the public fancy from the first, and the opening night saw this bright and tuneful piece firmly set on the path of success. The spectators were most enthusiastic, and their enthusiasm was perhaps raised to its highest pitch when in the second act a novel and difficult dance was brilliantly executed by this new *danseuse*. Storms of applause greeted her, and they would have encored her many times, but the strain and excitement proved too much for the young and then unknown girl, and she fainted while still on the stage. Next morning the papers were full of the new piece, and were unanimous in praise of her dancing, and she, like Byron, awoke to find herself famous. The leading theatrical critic wrote: "But the loudest applause heard throughout the three acts came of the Salterello dance, splendidly executed by Miss Alice Lethbridge, in the second act. It 'brought

down the house,' it had to be repeated, and the delighted spectators clamoured for it a third time, and were only quieted when Mr. Harry Paulton announced that the clever young lady, overcome by her efforts and by the excitement of the occasion, had fainted in the wings."

Following this well-deserved success, she attracted attention in "Carina" at the Opera Comique, and in "La Prima Donna" at the Avenue, in the cast of the latter piece Albert Chevalier, Harry Gratton and Joseph Tapley being also prominent names. Then came a provincial tour in the musical farce of "Venus"; Harry Nicholls, Kitty Loftus, Agnes Delaporte, and the famous Belle Bilton (Lady Dunlo) filling a bill of exceptional strength, and in this her dancing as "Euphrosyne" was one of the features of the performance.

In "Joan of Arc" she appeared in two rôles, as the Duchess d'Alencon in the first edition of the play at the Opera Comique, and as Catherine de Rochelle when, in the zenith of its success, it was transformed to the Gaiety. Other well-known dancers in

this play were Phyllis Broughton, Katie Seymour, and Willie Warde; and in the "Era" account of the first night of "Joan of Arc" at the Gaiety special mention was made of the generally excellent dancing in this piece, and among other remarks was the following:—"Miss Alice Lethbridge brought down the house by her dainty dancing as Catherine de Rochelle, and some very pretty saltatory exercises were introduced by Miss Katie Seymour, who, with Mr. Willie Warde, the "Bishop of Bovril," won great applause for a remarkable *pas de deux* in the second act."

After a brief appearance in the succeeding Gaiety piece of "Cinderella," curtailed because of the Australian engagement, she left England for that famous tour of the Gaiety Company to Australia and New Zealand, which, arranged for twenty weeks, extended to over sixty, and which then only returned on compulsion of other engagements at home. What a programme of "stars" that was: E. J. Lonnen, Marion Hood, Bert Haslem, Robert Courtridge, Alice Lethbridge, and other names which

would make any manager's mouth water to mass together now. And how the colonial papers raved about her dancing; indeed, she had many lucrative offers to remain out there simply as a teacher of the art, but she preferred to stay on in the profession, and so returned to England, and took up the part of Pepita in "Little Christopher Columbus."

It was in this that she first invented that wonderful "waltz movement" that I have spoken of elsewhere, and it is in this play also that she and E. J. Lonnen danced their "Marionette Dance," which was one of the biggest hits of the piece, and the popularity of which may be judged from the fact that it was so freely copied in contemporary and succeeding plays.

Next followed a tour in South Africa, in a dancing sketch with E. J. Lonnen; and on her return there was a big offer to go to Paris, where, in the home of dancing, her art might have been appreciated even more than in England; but this she refused, preferring to remain on the English stage. Then came numerous theatrical engagements in the provinces; and, in the inter-

vening times, tours with the big productions of George Edwardes' musical comedies; and dancing solos in "San Toy," "The Toreador," and "The Country Girl," are among her latest successes.

Miss Lethbridge, as well as being one of the most graceful of dancers, is also one of the most vivacious, two things that are compatible only in those who have a perfect mastery over the art, and, far from dancing with her feet only, she literally seems to dance all over, the quick movements of her arms, hands, and even her eyes, being all in perfect accord with the rhythm of the music. Sallust once blamed a woman for dancing too well; what would he have said could he have seen her! And with all this vivacity there is so much refinement in her dancing that her name has become typical for all that is best in the dancing of to-day.

Her usual dances are, of course, waltzes and gavottes, as these lend themselves best to her style; and among her chief performances have been the revolving waltz movement, her marionette dance, a wonderful "fire-dance" in a Christmas production

at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, and some very clever and beautifully executed "Shadow Dances," by means of reflected lights.

Miss Topsy Sinden has by sheer hard work pluckily won for herself a permanent place in musical comedy, and has proved herself quite worthy of the position. Her first appearance was in one of Sir Augustus Harris' pantomimes at Covent Garden, after which she appeared in the musical extravaganza of "The Old Guard" at the Avenue in 1887. She then had small dancing parts in some of the Gaiety pieces, "Cinderella," "Don Juan," etc.; and in "In Town," at the Prince of Wales'. At the Prince of Wales' also she appeared in "The Gaiety Girl," and, coming to the front as a dancer, was transferred to Daly's, where she has had big parts since.

Miss Mabel Love should, of all people, have excelled in the art, for she is the daughter of a former *danseuse* at the Gaiety. A pupil of Mr. D'Auban for dancing, and of Miss Carlotta Leclerq for gesture and the dramatic art, she had all that could be

desired to help her, and it was not surprising when her dancing performances began to attract attention. She appeared in one or two pieces at the Gaiety, and then obtained two big parts at the Lyric, succeeding Miss St. Cyr and Miss Lethbridge in "La Cigale" and "Little Christopher Columbus" respectively. Since then she has appeared in several other musical plays, and has had a number of pantomime engagements; but lately she has taken to the drama, and at the time of writing is appearing in "Sweet and Twenty" in the provinces.

"Place aux dames," I find, has been my motto in this chapter, and up till now I have left the gentlemen severely alone. Perhaps this is because one is apt to forget that there are such things as male dancers, since so few men take up as a profession stage-dancing purely and simply. Nearly all of them combine with it either teaching or else singing and low-comedy business. But one cannot leave an account of the later dancers, without mentioning such names as John D'Auban, E. W. Royce, Willie Warde, and E. J. Lonnen.

Mr. D'Auban has been for many years ballet-master and director of the dances at Drury Lane, besides frequently taking a leading part in them himself. I remember seeing a particularly fine performance of his in a "dance of the savages" in one of the pantomimes there a few years back, and was much struck by his agility. Indeed, "Punch" once wrote a little verse about him, which went as follows:—

"Mr. Johnny D'Auban,
He's so quick and nimble
He'd dance on a thimble—
He's more like an elf than a man."

But it is as a dancing master that his name is best known, and so famous have his pupils become that a certain type of dancing is now always known as that of the "D'Auban school." Practically all the stage dancers I have mentioned in this chapter have been pupils of his, and among those whose fame has not been won by dancing the names of Mrs. Langtry, Miss Mary Anderson, and Mr. W. S. Gilbert, may be mentioned as having appeared on his books.

The reminiscences of Mr. E. W. Royce

naturally extend back over a number of years, though he did not actually appear on the stage until after he had reached "years of discretion," as he had not been brought up with any thought of dancing as a profession. His first appearance was at the old Lyceum in 1860 under Oscar Byrne in the "Peep o' Day," and at that time, of course, the Italian Opera dancing was in full swing, and naturally his sympathies lie with the old-fashioned ballet. And from a male dancer's point of view, his advocacy of the ballet over the present stage dancing is undoubtedly right, as it gave opportunities of dancing such as a man never gets on the stage to-day: but I must still repeat that for a woman the ballet was, to my mind, ungraceful and inartistic in the extreme.

Referring to the dancers of former years, he has often told me that in his opinion the secret of their success was that they knew when to leave off. They executed their pirouettes, their entrechats, their arabesques, and then, before they had time to get stale in the eyes of the audience, they made their bow, and the dancing for the evening was finished.

But in those days the dancing was the feature of the performance, and the people were on the *qui vive* to watch for new steps, new movements; and with the cheering knowledge that every single person in the audience was interested in one's performance, it must have been an easier thing to be a dancer then than it is now. As a writer in one of the weekly papers recently wrote: "Then singing was not the sole attraction of the opera, for the great dancers had as great a following as the singers of to-day. In those times dancing was an art, and was studied affectionately. Its traditions were respected and handed down."

Mr. Royce's last appearance in the Italian Opera was under the management of Gyes in 1876, and later in the same year he went to the Gaiety to help form the famous "Quartette."

From that time he became known as the greatest dancer in England, and, old as he now is, he might have been dancing yet had not he been stricken with paralysis in the height of his fame. The attack, though not severe, was sufficient to destroy any ideas

of continuing on the stage as a dancer, and though he returned to the Gaiety in 1864, he found he was unable to perform the movements which he had formerly executed with ease. He then turned his attention to the drama, and to the teaching of dancing, in both of which pursuits he has met with considerable success. He has had the training of many now famous pupils, and on the stage his performance of the Miser (Shiel Barry's great part) in "Les Cloches de Corneville," has elicited the greatest praise.

Mr. Willie Warde is a brother-in-law of Mr. D'Auban, which alone might certify to his knowledge of the art of dancing, but it is as composer of the ballets at the Gaiety that his name has become a great one in the dancing world. He himself, like most dancing masters, is also an expert dancer, and many of his performances at the Gaiety and the Empire will be remembered.

Of the late E. J. Lonnen it is impossible to say too much, for though an actor rather than a dancer—nor would he have ever termed himself a dancer—his dancing powers were most marked. Directly he commenced

any dancing steps, whether merely as a break-down accompaniment to a song or as a *pas seul* pure and simple, one could see that he was a finished performer. Born and reared to the stage, he knew the ins and outs of the profession better than any other actor of his time, and having in addition an undoubted genius for acting, it is no wonder that he achieved the success he did.

His first part in a musical play was in "Falka," at the Avenue, where his *métier* was quickly discovered, and from henceforward comic opera, or its later development, musical comedy, held him right up to the time of his death. The mere mention of such plays as "Miss Esmeralda," "Faust-up-to-date," and "Carmen-up-to-date," will at once recall him to whoever saw them, for whether in a minor part or in a leading one, his personality on the stage was sure to impress itself on the spectator; while such songs as "Killaloe" or "The Bogie-man" have not quite died away yet, and the life of a comic song usually ends with the run of the piece.

Other dancers who are also actors are Fred Wright, *Junior*; Harry Grattan, equally

clever with pen, pencil, dancing or acting; Bert Sinden, a brother of Topsy Sinden; and that veritable genius, Fred Storey, whose magnificent acting of "Rip Van Winkle," is said to almost equal Jefferson at his best, whose scenic paintings for some of the big productions at "His Majesty's" and elsewhere are works of real art, and whose dancing, though eccentric, is skilful in the extreme.

Lastly a word as to Eugene Stratton. This clever comedian is always regarded as an actor and comic singer. but few people realise that had he never sung a song or done any acting, he must still have made a name for himself as a dancer. His dancing is perhaps the most graceful of anyone now on the stage, and for lightness of movement he is unequalled. One seems unconsciously to listen for some slight sound of his footsteps on the boards, but they never make any, they are absolutely inaudible, and like the leaves fluttering down from the trees, they float about and finally settle without a sound.

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With this account, scanty as it is, of those who have helped to make the history of dancing, I must say "finis"; satisfied if, in bringing before you the dances of the past, I have also been able to show you what a beautiful thing good dancing still may be.

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