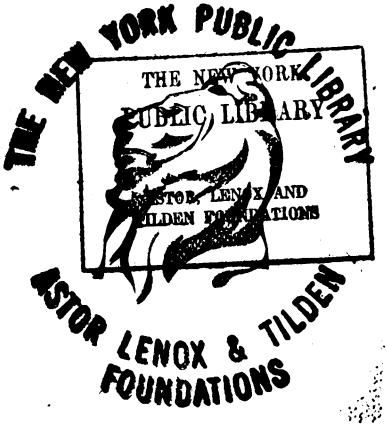
Dancing and dancers

Edward Scott



DANCING AND DANCERS;

OR

GRACE AND FOLLY,

BY

EDWARD SCOTT,

AUTHOR OF

"DANCING AS IT SHOULD BE," &C.

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PREFACE.

THE opinions expressed in the following pages on various matters directly or indirectly connected with dancing are not in any way restricted by the conventional notions that are usually entertained respecting such matters. The book, therefore, is in no sense to be regarded as a ball-room guide. On the contrary, whatever information it contains is chiefly of a kind that is not be found in ball-room guides, or, indeed, in any work on dancing that has hitherto been published.

All facts, except such as I have been fortunate enough to discover by observation, are given on good authority, and may be accepted as true; but the inferences drawn from them are simply my own, and should, of course, be assented to only when it appears that satisfactory reason is given for my way of thinking.

It may be as well to anticipate the remark that a part of the title is exemplified in the production of the book. That may, or may not be; I am not going to start by disparaging my own work. A man who does that shows at the outset that he is not to be trusted, since nobody but a fool would publish what he *really* considered worthless, unless, indeed, he had a very poor opinion of the public discernment. That is not my case. I believe the present work to be of some value—however small that value may be—because I have treated of subjects that I understand, and of which I have had actual experience. Moreover, I can certainly aver that what I have written is original.

I should not mention this fact, only it happens that originality is by no means a quality which characterises the generality of modern works on dancing, most of which are merely productions of the scissors and paste-pot. Someone has done even me the honour of reproducing whole paragraphs from "Dancing as it Should Be"—whatever may be their worth — and has skilfully

blended them with other matter, probably also, not his own, without making the slightest acknowledgment, without so much as putting the customary inverted commas. I have my own opinion about such practices, and can at least say that every quotation in this book is properly marked as such.

With regard to the manner of writing, if I have not been uniformly serious, it is because I do not consider that dancing is a subject which properly admits of such treatment—at least, not when we regard it as a diversion. Besides, I have had no intention of producing a dry treatise; I have wished, rather, to make the book amusing as well as instructive, and trust that the intelligent reader will have no difficulty in discriminating between passages intended to be taken *au sérieux* and those that are merely calculated to provoke a smile.

EDWARD SCOTT.

6, *Compton Terrace,*
Brighton.

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"The wise for cure on exercise depend."
—DRYDEN.

"There is a time to dance."
—ECCLES. iii. 5.

I PURPOSE, in the present chapter, to consider dancing in its relation to health, and to enquire how far modern terpsichorean arrangements are consentaneous with that desirable, though somewhat rare, quality known as common-sense.

From the frequent use that has lately been made of the term "hygienic," it would seem that people were becoming most solicitous that all their surroundings should be thoroughly healthful; indeed, so fashionable is the pursuit of hygiene, that the word may perhaps be reckoned an invaluable one for advertising purposes. An article needs only to be announced as "hygienic," and a rapid sale is almost assured. Occasionally it happens that the required conditions are not

fulfilled in the thing advertised; but that does not appear to make any material difference as regards its acceptance by the public. Butler has told us that—

> "Doubtless the pleasure is as great,
> Of being cheated as to cheat,"

and I suppose there is a certain amount of truth in the apothegm. Anyhow, I have seen boots labelled "hygienic," into which no healthy foot could possibly be squeezed, and "hygienic corsets" which no healthy body could endure. I know, also, that there are some so-called "hygienic exercises" which, when administered to the enfeebled frame without discretion, as they often are, invariably do more harm than good.

Now it is my firm belief that much of the present hygienic craze is the merest sham—a fashionable fad. If people were really concerned about the cultivation of hygiene, they would never dress and act in the absurd manner that some of them do who pretend to be greatly interested in the matter. Depend upon it, if the English, like the nation that made the worship of Hygeia a reality, would only exercise sufficient moderation in living, and discipline their amusements, it would do more towards preventing the

deterioration of the race than any amount of pseudo-scientific cant.

Of course, no one with a grain of wisdom would, nowadays, presume to depreciate the value of true science; that is another matter. So far, however, as actual living is concerned, even if a person should possess a most profound theoretical knowledge of the laws of hygiene, it would not make him a bit healthier unless he acted consistently with his theories. "Science," as the Master in Oliver Wendell Holmes's book observes, "is a first-rate piece of furniture for a man's upper chamber if he has common-sense on the ground-floor."

Let us, for a moment, turn to the habits and amusements of those ancient Greeks, who religiously observed what they conceived to be the laws of health, and who made the culture of personal grace and loveliness a special object of their lives. "This," says Mr. Ruskin, speaking of the beauty of the human countenance and form, "they perceived could only be reached by continual exercise of virtue; and it was in Heaven's sight and in theirs all the more beautiful because it needed this self-denial to obtain it. So they set themselves to reach this, and having gained it, gave it their principal thoughts, and set it off with beautiful dress as best they might.

But, making this their object, they were obliged to pass their lives in simple exercise and disciplined employments. Living wholesomely, giving themselves no fever fits, either by fasting or overeating, constantly in the open air, and full of animal spirits and physical power, they became incapable of every morbid condition of mental emotion. Unhappy love, disappointed ambition, spiritual despondency, or any other disturbing sensation, had little power over their well-braced nerves and healthy flow of the blood; and what bitterness might yet fasten on them was soon boxed or raced out of a boy, and spun or woven out of a girl, or danced out of both."*

What a tribute is this to the efficacy of dancing! Fancy dancing away the bitterness of life! Who would not learn to dance?

That dancing is in itself a healthful, invigorating exercise I suppose few will deny; but as regards the conditions under which it is frequently practised at the present day, I have no hesitation in affirming that they are incompatible with the true principles of enjoyment, and are detrimental to health and beauty.

It is evident that human nature is so consti-

* "Modern Painters," Vol. III., p. 183. See also "Juventis Mundi," chap. 10, "Ethics of the Heroic Age."

tuted that whatever is productive of pleasure, whether intellectual or emotional, ceases to have the same effect if continued beyond a certain limit, for ere long the nervous power becomes enfeebled and needs renovation. Thus few people, even if fond of and able to appreciate poetry, care to read a long poem at a sitting. They prefer to take a few stanzas at a time. Even a beautiful piece of music may, if too lengthy, become wearisome to listen to, as the mind gets exhausted, as it were, in its efforts to follow the subtle beauties of the various passages. Again, those who go to the yearly exhibitions at Burlington House and elsewhere, know well enough that if they attempt to see all the pictures in one visit, the last galleries do not afford them nearly the same amount of pleasure as did the first. Moreover, that a condition of actual bodily fatigue is inimical to enjoyment, is a fact too obvious to need demonstration.

Professor Bain, in his work on "Mind and Body," tells us that "the nerve-fibres and corpuscles of the brain on being stimulated undergo a process of change, whereby their power is gradually exhausted; in consequence of which they need remission and repose. Hence the first moments of a stimulus are always the freshest, and give birth to the most vivid degrees

of consciousness. This is the condition more especially requisite for maintaining a state of pleasurable sensibility."

Now if this statement be accepted as true—and true it most undoubtedly is—it certainly goes to show that, in the nature of things, the first hours spent at a ball should be more enjoyable than the last. That is, as soon as the invincible armour of stiffness that people generally encase themselves in at the commencement of the evening, has been thoroughly thrown off, then the enjoyment should be at its height.

"But," says some reader, "how can this be? Why, I have found the last dance the most enjoyable of any." To which the answer is, that, even admitting this fact to be true, it does not weaken the general statement. There may be special reasons why you, my imaginary interlocutor, should have found this particular dance the most enjoyable. It may have had something to do with your partner, whom you may have found more charming than any other, and whose agreeable company and brilliant conversation may have acted like a stimulant to your exhausted nerves, and rendered you for the time almost insensible to fatigue; just as it might happen that some particular picture in the last gallery of paintings might rivet

your attention more than any you had seen in the exhibition—might re-awaken excitement and interest, and cause you to linger and gaze with delight. Or it may have been that the mere fact of knowing that it *was* the last dance gave added zest; just as some children make a great deal of their last mouthful of pie, even if they do feel a little sick. And, after all, it is not against the *last* dance that I have anything to say. A last dance is inevitable. It is only against the *number that have gone before it* that I speak.

The tendency to prolong physical recreation of any kind to the point of exhaustion, should in all cases be carefully guarded against. It unfortunately happens, however, that discretion is a very rare quality, especially in early life. The Professor at the Breakfast Table states, that if you wish to make a crucial experiment, as to whether a human being is young or old, "offer a bulky and boggy bun to the suspected individual just ten minutes before dinner. If this is eagerly accepted and devoured, the fact of youth is established." Young people do not, I think, evince more imprudence in eating than they do in their amusements. I have known those who have gone on walking tours, and, instead of deriving any benefit from the exercise, they have

attempted too much, and so laid themselves up. Some cannot go to the seaside but they must needs stay in the water too long, and do themselves more harm than good; and as to gymnastics, young men will frequently go from hard mental work to hard physical work, without the proper intervening period of rest—will foolishly endeavour to recruit over-taxed brains by over-taxing their muscles. I have actually known students of physiology to injure themselves in this way—people who ought, at least, to have known something of the working of the muscular and nervous systems. Truly, it would have been better for them had they possessed a little less science and a little more common-sense. Dancing itself may be considered a most salutary recreation, because it brings all the principal muscles into play. Good dancing is not by any means confined to the legs, but the arms, back, neck, and, indeed, every part of the body is more or less actively employed, and as no apparatus is used—unless the partner be regarded in that light—there is little risk of the muscles being over-strained. It consequently follows, that evil of this description is only likely to accrue when the action is continued too long; in which case, dancing, like all other exercises, ceases to prove beneficial, and may become decidedly injurious.

To be really healthful, the exercise of dancing should never be indulged in longer than four hours at a stretch, for beyond the evil effects of over exertion, the air in the ball-room, however well ventilated it may be, is certain to become more or less vitiated as the night wears on. One of the effects of exercise, is, we know, to quicken the respiration, and just think how many gallons of carbonic acid may be drawn into the lungs after midnight! Think also, of the number of miles that may be waltzed between the hours of ten and four, by legs which can scarcely be induced to walk a single mile in the morning sunshine!

Is it not wonderful what heroic feats of this description are sometimes performed by delicate little bodies, under the influence of excitement and champagne?

It has always been a mystery to me how some young girls can stand so much nocturnal dissipation, if I may so term it, as they do. Directly they leave school—where it not unfrequently happens that their physical powers have been taxed by over brain-stimulation, in preparing for a final examination—the "coming-out" process begins—a round of unhealthy excitement in the shape of balls, parties, theatres, and *soirées*. Not, of course, that any of these things are necessarily unhealthy in themselves, if indulged

in with discretion; but this is rarely the case. Delicate young girls are kept up night after night, and frequently all night, until the old order of things is completely inverted, and it becomes a case of rising with the setting sun and going to bed as the lark rises. Surely this must have a detrimental effect upon their looks. Their lives are passed in an unnatural atmosphere, and we can scarcely wonder that the roses on their cheeks refuse to bloom if they are constantly deprived of the morning sunshine. One season is often sufficient to take the freshness from a face, and it is futile to attempt to restore artificially what is lost. There is as much difference between the real and sham roses, as there is between the artificial Christmas flowers of drapers' windows, and those "unlocked by spring to paint the laughing soil."

Each hour spent at a ball after midnight is, metaphorically speaking, a draught drawn on the Bank of Beauty—a bank in which few of us are fortunate enough to possess a large balance—and if nothing afterwards be paid in, as it were, in the way of refreshing sleep and morning breezes, it is astonishing how soon, by continuing the cheque-drawing process; we shall discover that the fund is exhausted.

It is generally supposed that in the human

race the male sex is composed of somewhat tougher material than the female—is hardier, in fact. But there are not, I am sure, many men who would care to venture out in the depth of Winter, with no inconsiderable portion of the upper part of their bodies exposed to the night air, or at least only protected by a loose wrap. It will be said that the reason is because men are not used to going about with their arms and shoulders bare. Well, neither are women. Many of them never wear a low-necked dress, except on rare occasions, when there is a special risk attached to their doing so. There are some women who are wise enough to always completely cover their bodies, notwithstanding the prevailing fashion to the contrary. How far they may be influenced by the fear of taking a chill, and how far by the consideration that the human form is not invariably cast in a classic mould, I will not venture to enquire; but in either case they may be credited with a more than ordinary share of common-sense. On the other hand, there is, perhaps, nothing lovelier in nature than the perfect female bust and arms—that is, when characterised by refinement and delicacy of form, as in the old Greek statues, rather than by gross development. But ladies who good-naturedly reveal their charms for the gratification of be-

holders (a practice to which, so long as a certain amount of discretion is observed, exception can only reasonably be taken on the ground of personal risk), should be careful that they do not themselves suffer thereby, and should have constant recourse to wraps. Some girls are unfortunately very imprudent in this respect. They will go from an over-heated ball-room into a cold outer conservatory, or covered balcony, without even so much as throwing a shawl around them.

I hope it will not be inferred from some of the foregoing remarks, that the writer is one of those social smellfunguses who seek to discover harm in whatever conduces to the enjoyment of young people; or one who, for some reason, is prevented from participating in the pleasures of the ball-room, and condemns that of which he has had little experience. The opinion of a lame man who deprecates the practice of dancing, may not be of much account, nor is, I think, that of those particularly orthodox people, who decry terpsichorean pleasures from a religious point of view, and prate about the impropriety attached to them. The Dean of Manchester very sensibly remarked, a short time since that "the lonely walk has oftener led to mischief than the dance," and, depend upon it, whatever there may be in dancing that shocks the tender suscepti-

bilities of the "unco guid," attaches rather to the persons than the pastime. Those who are that way inclined will probably not be much better when in church than they are in a ball-room, only in the former place their impropriety may be tempered with hypocrisy. There are, it is certain, many people who have a great deal to say about subjects of which they can practically know very little. But that is not my case. I write as a teacher of the art, and it is not against dancing, but only against the abuse of dancing, that I would inveigh.

And as for the amusements of young people, I have myself some distance to travel before reaching the downward slope of life, and can enjoy a dance as well as anybody. I like also to witness the rational enjoyment of others; but it gives me no pleasure to contemplate that which I know to be prejudicial to health, and I would that all the surroundings of the chief amusement of the Winter months were as thoroughly healthful as are those of lawn-tennis and other Summer games.

But how, it may be asked, is this desirable end to be accomplished, seeing that, from our having so long accustomed ourselves to regard dancing as an evening pastime, a dance given by daylight, especially in a room, would seem a very milk-and-

water kind of affair—would fall flat, and most probably prove altogether unenjoyable?

In other words, how is it possible to continue to dance at night without incurring the evils mentioned?

Well, I can only suggest two obvious remedies. The first is the extremely simple plan of confining the hours of dancing within more reasonable limits. This has already been tried with great success, and those pleasant early dances known as Cinderellas—which ought, consistently, to terminate punctually at twelve o'clock—bid fair to become a recognised fashionable institution. Of these I shall speak more particularly further on. The second is, however, the really efficacious remedy, although, unfortunately, it is not at present always readily obtainable. By it nearly all the inconveniences attached to the present order of things may be at once removed, and dancing at night become almost as healthful as dancing by daylight. This grand remedy is electric illumination.

It seems to me that not nearly so much mischief is likely to accrue from public balls and dances given in hired rooms—which are generally speaking well ventilated—as from parties given at private houses. In these it often happens that the only ventilation obtainable is from open win-

dows, and if gas, or even lamps or candles, be used to light the scene, the heat of the room soon becomes so unbearably oppressive that recourse is had to the rough and ready mode of sweetening the atmosphere within by letting in a current of cold air from without; despite the not altogether unremote possibility that there may be death in the draught. Such things, we know, have been.

It has been computed that a single gas jet consumes as much oxygen—the vitalizing principle of the air—as five human beings, to say nothing of the impurities liberated. It is therefore evident that in a room heated by ten burners, the effect, so far as breathing accommodation is concerned, is the same as if fifty persons were already present before the actual company invited began to arrive—a state of things that is clearly not desirable. With regard to the electric light, however, if a dozen incandescent lamps were left burning all night in a small room, and the door kept shut, no appreciable difference would be felt in the condition of the atmosphere when the room was entered in the following morning. As the light is obtained by the heating of a thin filament inside a glass bulb which is hermetically sealed, it follows that not the smallest particle of fresh air is consumed in the process, and the

amount of heat given out through the glass is so slight as to be scarcely noticeable.

I am induced to speak thus favourably of the incandescent light from personal experience of its advantages, as I have had it installed in my own ball-room with the most gratifying results. Not only may it be classed among those things that are *really* "hygienic," but it is, if anything, more becoming to the complexion than even the mellow light of lamps. The electroliers can be arranged in every conceivable design, and made to shed a rich or soft lustre according to fancy.

It is to be regretted that electricity is at present a somewhat expensive luxury, and not within the reach of everybody, but I hope the time may not be far distant, when it will be as cheap and readily available as gas.

We will now return to the subject of early dances, and it will not, I think, be difficult to show that they are the ones most truly compatible with common-sense.

Suppose someone were to ask you, my fair and fragile reader, to go for a fourteen or fifteen mile walk into the country on some bright spring morning. How you would look at the proposer of such an unheard-of thing. You would say, and with good reason, that the distance was too

great, that your legs and feet would ache, and that you would much prefer to ride. Yet you have often waltzed a greater distance, so to speak, in a far less salubrious atmosphere. "Incredible!" you say. Is it? We will see. Twenty dances down on the programme, and eighteen of them waltzes—an arrangement, by the by, in which common sense is not particularly discernible. You are a good waltzer, and are quickly engaged for all these. The "squares" you prefer to "sit out" on the cold balcony. Now observe the miles of ground you will cover; and if I err in my estimate, it shall be on the side of moderation. Seventeen hundred and sixty yards to a mile; ten minutes, or longer, to a waltz. Do you think you would go six times round a moderate sized ball-room, say making a circuit of eighty yards, during a waltz? Yes; at least, even allowing for rest. That, then, is four hundred and eighty yards if you went in a line. But you are turning nearly all the time, say, on an average, once in each yard of onward progress, and the circumference of a circle is rather more than three times its diameter, which will bring each waltz to over three-quarters of a mile, or, at least, fourteen miles for the eighteen waltzes.

I do not say that this computation is scientifically accurate, because there is a peculiarity

attached to the rotary movement in waltzing, but it is near enough for illustration, and is well within the mark.

If, then, to these fourteen miles you add the two or three miles waltzed in the "extras," and the distance traversed in promenading, and going to and from the refreshment room, you will find that by four o'clock you have done a pretty good night's work—*such as you might well complain of, if you had to do it for your living.* In fact you have done so much, that, whatever you may say to the contrary, you do not feel particularly fresh on the following day, and, if you will forgive me for saying it, you certainly do not look so. Meanwhile, had you confined your waltzing exercise to six or eight miles—surely enough in all conscience—left the ball-room at a reasonable hour, and sought refreshing sleep, you would have looked as well and charming as usual, and would have derived benefit, instead of harm, from your dance.

There are some chaperones who, having due regard for the health and looks of their charges, will never take them out on consecutive evenings, and under no circumstances will allow them to remain at a ball later than two o'clock. This, considering that dances do not in many cases begin till ten or eleven, in consequence, I sup-

pose of the lateness of the dinner hour, and the time occupied in dressing, cannot be considered out of the way; and it is a pity that all who have the care of girls do not show equal wisdom.

Of course, the givers of private parties are only anxious that their dances should be thoroughly enjoyable, and when people leave early, they are apt to feel distressed, and attribute their departure to the fact of their having failed to pass the time agreeably. Nothing, to my mind, is more calculated to spoil the success of a small party than for the company to gradually dwindle till there are only a very few left, a few who, in some cases appear to utterly ignore the possibility of such a contingency as outstaying their welcome—who, to the secret annoyance of their entertainers, and the not unfrequently expressed disgust of the musicians, keep clamouring for more "extras," and expressing their determination to "keep it up."

I daresay this book will fall into the hands of a good many people who will perfectly appreciate the above remarks. There are certain things that everybody says and nobody thinks, and others, that everybody thinks and nobody says. For instance, a polite hostess will, of course, say, "Oh! stay a little longer," when all the time she may be thinking that you have already

stayed quite long enough, and heartily wishing you were gone. It is young fellows who generally make mistakes of this description—unintentionally of course—but they should recollect that if they don't want to go to bed themselves, there are perhaps others who do. Some will actually speak of having danced all night, without having been to bed, as if they considered that they had done an extremely clever thing; but sensible people are apt to regard such a proceeding as exceedingly foolish.

How much better it would be, in issuing invitations for small parties, to always put on the cards, "Dancing from ten till two," or, if a Cinderella, "Dancing from eight till twelve." The guests would then know exactly when to order their carriages, and all would leave together, enabling their entertainers—who have had, perhaps, more anxiety than pleasure—to get a little rest. To obviate the possibility of stragglers remaining behind, a delicate hint might be given through the music, which might, during the last waltz, resolve into "Home, Sweet Home!" and if any tendency to agitate for further dances be observed, a few bars of "God Save the Queen" might be given as an intimation that it was all over. They cannot very well ask for "extras" after that!

Experience of such matters has convinced me that parties at which all the guests arrive punctually, and leave together, before the enjoyment begins to flag, where only short intervals are allowed between the dances, and where the spirit of the thing is really kept up while it lasts, are far more successful than long-drawn-out affairs, which are frequently formal at the commencement and wearisome at the end. The dancers, in the former case, carry pleasant and vivid recollections to their pillows, and awake in the morning refreshed, and in a fit condition to pursue their daily avocations, feeling, in fact, all the better for their really healthful exercise.

II.—ON LEARNING TO DANCE.

"Awkward in the parlour, neither a dancer nor elegant."
—WALT WHITMAN.

A REVIEWER of dance music, writing in the *Queen* a short time since, made a remark to the effect that, from the vast quantity now published, one would imagine that the profession of a dancing master was the most lucrative one out.

This remark, however, seems to imply the supposition that all the feet that "twinkle" to the music are properly trained to perform their part; a notion which certainly does not accord with the experience of those who observe attentively what goes on in modern ball-rooms, nor with the aches and pains, bruised feet and torn dresses of ladies who are unfortunate enough to encounter a certain class of saltatorial athletes, of powerful frame, but in whose education the important branch of muscle culture has been neglected, and who do not appear to have their movements under proper control.

Now, whether the profession of a teacher of

dancing, as things are, is a lucrative one or not, is a question which I do not feel myself called upon to determine; but, with regard to the inference above mentioned, I can safely aver that not one-half of the people who display their agility, or demonstrate the effects of gravitation, on polished boards, have ever taken a lesson at all.

It would seem that instruction received at school, whether from inattention on the part of pupils or from incapacity on the part of teachers, seldom proves sufficient to enable men and women to acquit themselves creditably in actual dancing, especially in waltzing, yet many people —perhaps from recollections of some old-fashioned, conventional individual who directed their terpsichorean efforts with all solemnity in days gone by—regard a teacher with such dread—shall I say?—that they would almost prefer to pass through life without experiencing one of its greatest pleasures than take lessons in dancing.

But the conventional teacher will, ere long, become a thing of the past. The dancing of the future, like everything else, must be taught on scientific principles; mere steps will not suffice; the laws of dynamics will have to be taken into consideration in directing the movements of

pupils, and natural grace and elegance will take the place of stiff and artificial deportment. To borrow a simile from the author of "La Morte," it may truly be said of many young girls of the present day: "*Le convenu les a défiguries; elles resemblent à ces vilains arbres taillés des Jardins de Versailles.*"

When dancing is taught on a more rational method, the tyro in waltzing, if asked a question by his partner, such as "Do you find this floor nice to dance on?" will not reply by saying, "One, two, three, yes,—two, three, I think, though,—three, it's rather—two, three, slippery —two—Oh! I beg your pardon, hope it did'nt hurt you."

Even after people have thoroughly made up their minds (a lengthy operation with some) that a lesson in dancing is what they want, it is astonishing how they will put it off, just as some of us put off going to a doctor or a dentist, when we know well enough that we ought to do so. Moreover, it is proverbial that on nearing the doors of these alleviators of suffering, we generally become aware that we are feeling much better, or that our teeth have ceased aching, and so we begin to wonder if after all a visit is really necessary. It is, of course, not possible for people to discover, on nearing the door of a teacher of

dancing, that they have spontaneously acquired the art, still they will frequently come to the conclusion that there is no immediate occasion for them to learn, and will suddenly turn to the right-abont. They think, perhaps, according to the silly old Scotch proverb, that "naething should be dune in a hurry but catchin' fleas," and so they delay and delay, and either finish by never learning at all, or else, when they do, regret the time wasted in indecision.

But why, after all, should there be this feeling of trepidation about learning to dance? People have really far more to fear in the way of criticism from their friends and partners than from teachers, for the simple reason that in a ball-room good dancing is looked for—however vainly—while the teacher does *not expect* it in pupils. On the contrary, he knows well enough that if they could dance well he would not have the pleasure of seeing them.

It is doubtless an immense advantage to people whose intelligence is not of the most brilliant order, if they are able to make up in dignity of demeanour whatever is lacking to them in other respects; since for one person who would be able to discern the mental qualification, at least a dozen will be impressed by the manner. Polish is an excellent thing; but there are

persons who, not contented with being ironed smooth, as it were, must get themselves up starched and stiff. This kind of bearing may, perhaps, possess advantages to teachers of a certain class, inasmuch as it inspires a kind of awe in pupils, and prevents them from asking embarrassing questions which it may be found difficult to satisfactorily answer; but it certainly does not conduce to the success of instruction. For a lesson in dancing to be really beneficial to the pupil there should be nothing approaching stiffness of manner on either side. I have myself found that the most troublesome people to teach were those who seemed to have the word prism perpetually on their lips, who could not laugh, and whose backs appeared to be supported by a single bone, instead of by twenty-four articulated in the ordinary way.

Then, again, most people are afraid that in learning to dance they will distinguish themselves by their—"stupidity" they call it. But what if they do? Surely the teacher, if he has had any experience at all, must have already encountered a good deal of this, and it does not strike him as anything remarkable; on the contrary, he is rather surprised when he finds perspicacity. Besides, notwithstanding the fact that Lucian credits his ideal dancer with a "vast

intelligence" and "knowledge of everything," we may safely conclude from the great demand for music before alluded to that these qualifications are *not* indispensable to the successful performance of our modern dances.

Now I generally find that when people imagine they are going to be very "stupid," they are not so at all. If they have previously taken lessons without success, it happens that the method employed has been unsuited to their individual natures—for, be it understood, that methods of instruction must vary in proportion as pupils are physically different one from another. How silly it is, then, for people to think that because they have failed to learn from their friends or teachers who know little more than they do themselves, that they would not succeed if they placed themselves in the hands of anyone who really understood what he or she was about. There is all the difference in the world between being able to dance oneself, and knowing how to direct the movements of others.

I should say, judging from my own experience, that the number of ladies who take lessons in dancing far exceeds that of men, and the reason is sufficiently obvious. Unless ladies can dance decently they do not get partners. Even beauty will not avail; and though there is certainly no-

thing that will compare with them in the way of mural decoration, the part is apt to become wearisome if continued too long. And so they adopt the rational remedy; they learn to dance well. But with regard to men, the clumsiest clod-pole that ever crippled a foot has it in his power to inflict himself on any poor girl he may select, or else deprive her of the pleasure of the dance, since she may not, according to the rules of etiquette, decline one partner and afterwards accept another. Truly, as Burke said, although on a very different subject, "the age of chivalry is gone, and that of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded;" if it were not so, a single spark of the old chivalrous feeling in a young man's breast would impel him to try to make his own dancing at least tolerable before he ventured to ask a lady to join him.

Now I apprehend that very few men would like to confess that they had never learnt Latin or even Algebra—a study, by the way, of which Mr. Phil Robinson lately said in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that he had never been able to discover the influence anywhere, either in conversation, business or literature, yet, by neglecting to learn these things, the loss, or inconvenience, if any, would be entirely their own. No one else would suffer in any way. But by neglecting to

learn to dance, unfortunately others do suffer, that is, of course, if they attempt to put their imperfect acquirements into practice. Yet a man will unblushingly say to his partner as he struggles round, as if asking for a compliment:—"I don't know how I waltz, you see I have never taken a lesson in my life," and she, with pardonable insincerity, will reply: "Haven't you? I'm sure you manage it very well." This answer is of course prompted by her ideas of politeness, but if she said what she really thought, it would probably be: "Oh, you need not tell me that, it's quite evident. I suppose you were too mean to learn properly."

Let it not be inferred from the above that I myself think that *all* bad dancing is to be attributed to pocket considerations. That would be too absurd. Many people have been incorrectly taught, to the disgrace of their instructors, and many are deterred from learning for reasons already given; but depend upon it, if, as in India, there were fewer women than men, or if ladies refused to dance with any but good dancers, there would soon be an appreciable difference in the style of dancing adopted by some of the male sex. At present, economists though they be, the amount of pleasure lost to them—for what is imperfect can never be truly enjoyable—or the

unnecessary expenditure of muscular effort employed, does not appear to have entered into their calculations; and they seem wholly unmindful of the appearance they present to onlookers.

A professor of dancing who has any aim beyond the mere acquirement of wealth, will take a positive pleasure in teaching people, in spite of any trouble they may give, because he knows that he is imparting something that will conduce to their enjoyment of life. And he can fully sympathise with the feelings of those who, having neglected to acquire the art in early youth, when witnessing the enjoyment that others seem to derive from dancing, think that they too would like to learn; only naturally they feel a little nervous about it, and are afraid, as they say, of "making fools of themselves." But this notion, however common, is altogether erroneous. People who *learn* to dance evince wisdom—especially men—inasmuch as they are in reality taught *not* to "make fools of themselves"; but it is certain that the result about which they are apprehensive is almost invariably attained by those who attempt to dance without learning.

III.—GRACEFULNESS.

"Who hath not owned with rapture-smitten frame,
The power of grace?"

—CAMPBELL.

THERE is necessarily a great deal in connection with the subject of gracefulness that I shall not have space even to touch upon in the present chapter; therefore it may be as well to state at the outset that attention will be chiefly directed to the quality, as exhibited in ease and elegance of posture and movement, the co-adaptation of the several parts of our bodies, and propriety of action.

I do not remember to have previously seen or heard it remarked, but it seems to me that propriety of action is a most important attribute, as regards a true conception of personal gracefulness, since in a world dominated by changing fashion, much that is recognised as graceful at one time, appears quite the opposite at another; and indeed, apart from fashion or custom, actions or gestures are

only really graceful when they are strictly appropriate to the conditions which impel them.

A movement, or posture—which is the result of a movement—can only be regarded as ungraceful *per se*, when the body or limbs are contorted into unnatural or constrained positions; but by association of ideas, many actions, although natural enough so far as the position of limbs and body are concerned, appear awkward and absurd.

The former class of actions are positively ungraceful, while the latter are merely relatively ungraceful.

Let us take an illustration.

A little child frequently expresses delight by prancing about with a kind of galop step, making an upward movement with its arms and hands, to correspond with the movements of its feet. This action in a little boy or girl is exceedingly graceful and beautiful, and I should not care to know anyone to whom the spectacle of a delighted child acting thus is not pleasing. But if a grown person under the influence of joy were to behave in a similar manner, the action—although there might be no approach to clumsiness in the actual movements of the limbs—would certainly not impress us as being graceful, but would appear simply ludicrous, and in a sense awkward, be-

cause not in accordance with our ideas of fitness or propriety.

Again, when we see an old person, in whom we should expect to find a staid dignity of demeanour, affecting the airy, elastic tread of youth, be the imitation never so perfect, still it does not appear graceful, because altogether inconsistent. On the other hand, however, we occasionally come across people who naturally retain a juvenility of manner, even in advanced life; and somehow in such cases we are unconscious of any absurdity or incongruity in their actions, because they are strictly in harmony with their whole being.

From these and other considerations we may be led to infer that hard and fast rules of deportment will not do alike for all people, and that actions extremely becoming in one person, may appear the merest affectation in another.

People who are said to be naturally graceful are, I think, those who intuitively move the various parts of their bodies in agreement one with the other, and who make the right movement at the right time.

The act of bending the body forward is not of itself ungraceful, nor is a perfectly upright position necessarily ungraceful; but let either of these positions be assumed in circumstances which demand the other, and it immediately appears

awkward. For instance, a man walking slowly along a promenade with his shoulders bent forward and his back curved outward, would look very ungraceful—but not more ungraceful than he would if in rapid rotary motion, as in waltzing with a partner, he kept his back rigid, because he would then be dancing in opposition to dynamical requirements, as I shall point out in a succeeding chapter. I know, from experience, that one of the most frequent reasons why some men, otherwise graceful enough, make such exceedingly awkward waltzers is simply because they put their chests forward at the very juncture when they ought to curve their backs outward.

It is, of course, possible for people to struggle round in waltzing by the mere muscular action of the lower limbs, without having due regard to the correct movements of the upper part of the body; although the motion in such cases necessarily appears ungraceful; but, in the act of swinging oneself, when no leverage can be obtained by contact with the ground, it is absolutely impossible to keep the swing in motion unless the actions of the body are strictly in accordance with physical laws.

The manner in which this may be accomplished is, however, simple enough if we know what to do. It is only necessary to make a slight downward

muscular effort as soon as the swing reaches either extremity of the arc it describes, and to keep the body always curved outward from the centre of oscillation. Thus, whenever the machine is going forward from the perpendicular, the chest will be thrown out and the back drawn in, and, on the contrary, in going rearward from the perpendicular the chest will be drawn in and the back curved out.

Swinging is a most grace-giving exercise, because it cultivates the natural action of the spinal column, and, in cases where it is not attended with symptoms of nausea, is exceedingly healthful. The muscles are duly exercised without risk of being overstrained.

I think if a number of children were placed on a swing for the first time, one after the other, and a slight impetus given to each at starting, it would be found that those who were able to keep the machine in motion by their own efforts, would be the children who were most naturally graceful in their movements, and who would most readily learn to dance.

One of the first requirements towards gracefulness in a posture or movement is that there shall be no appearance of difficulty in its execution, and whether facility be the result of natural aptitude or of constant practice, there must be no evidence

that the movement or posture is a matter of consideration to the person making it, or all the effect will be destroyed. An excellent example of this may be found on the stage, when we compare the graceful and apparently spontaneous gestures of great actors who make nature their model, with the wooden actions of "supers" who learn their attitudes by rote.

It is also requisite in a posture, which, as Dr. Warner in his work on Physical Expression tells us, "indicates the relative positions of the several members of the body with regard to one another," that, to be graceful, these should be composed in such a manner as to cause no encumbrance to each other. There should also be a general roundness of attitude and avoidance of sudden angles.

It has been said that, "at the touch of a tape measure the secret of the beauty of the Parthenon springs to light." But it is not true. Although the Grecian statues may certainly owe something to their perfect proportion, I do not think we have in this a solution to the mystery of their incomparable charm. I imagine it is rather to be found in the beautiful and delicate delineation of muscular action, and in the grace and consistency of their attitude. A statue might be perfectly proportioned and still be wanting in beauty, just as a face may have regular features and yet be

far from pleasing. It seems to me that pose and action are to the form what expression is to the countenance. The Apollo Belvedere would not look of much account with his arms akimbo and his knees turned in. Of what avail would be perfect proportion and symmetry of limb to render a statue beautiful, if treated thus?

Again, as further illustrations of propriety being essential to gracefulness, if the image of a man were posed after the manner of "the statue that enchants the world," it is certain that the erstwhile lovely, graceful attitude would appear, under the changed conditions, feeble and absurd. Also the statue of a woman, if represented standing like the "Hercules at Rest," would, however perfectly proportioned, seem wholly devoid of grace; indeed, without going to such extremes as changing sex, I doubt if any alteration of condition, any transposition or change of attitude, could be effected in the renowned statues of antiquity without in a measure detracting from their beauty.

There are, it seems to me, certain qualities of gracefulness analogous in all things. A too perfect regularity of outline would destroy the charm of any landscape; a building, of which both sides are exactly alike, does not appear so picturesque as one of irregular construction, a

fact exemplified in the works of the great masters, Claude and Turner, whose palaces, although exquisitely symmetrical, are never of monotonous uniformity. Of course, both sides of the human body are externally alike, but there is continual variety of form produced in action, because it does not, generally speaking, come natural to make precisely the same movements with opposite limbs, and in the slightest lateral deflection of the body from the perpendicular, the curve of outline on either side becomes different. Although there are exceptions—as, for instance, in preparing to take a leap or dive—I think we may take it as a general rule that an attitude appears graceful in proportion as the limbs on either side of the body are differently employed.

It will be seen that man, from his capability of maintaining an erect position, is enabled to assume a greater variety of attitudes than the lower animals; but this quality, while it enhances his grace and beauty, diminishes his speed, as much of the muscular power of the lower limbs is expended in supporting the trunk.

We have an instance of the pleasing effect of the contrary action of corresponding or opposite members in the Scotch Reel, wherein the right

arm is raised when the left foot is extended while the opposite arm is placed akimbo, and *vice versa*, so that there is always a diagonal line across the body from hand to foot. And we may perceive how ungraceful is the effect of having the same arm and leg extended, when persons, ignorant of the fact, attempt to dance the Highland schottische in this manner, as those who have not been properly taught often do.

This action is inelegant in appearance on account of the awkward angles that are formed, but, beyond this, it does not accord with the natural movements of the limbs, for we shall find that in walking or running the right arm moves synchronously with the left leg, and the left arm with the right leg, the action of the members corresponding to the movements of the fore and hind legs in animals.

It is essential that all who wish to acquire a really graceful carriage, should cultivate a habit of retaining a perfect balance of the body on either foot, as much of the grace of movement consists in the nice adjustment of the centre of gravity, which must in all cases be accomplished without conscious or apparent effort. This is necessary in simple walking or marching, for which reason soldiers are carefully drilled in what is termed the "goose-step." In terpsi-

chorean exercises it is indispensable; the beauty and also the difficulty of the minuet and most ballet movements consist in the perfection of balance required in executing them.

It would seem that so long as there is no apparent effort made to retain the equilibrium, and the position is a natural one, the idea of a body being perfectly supported on a small base is pleasing. There are statues of this description, that doubtless owe much of their charm to the fact of the beholder feeling conscious that they are perfectly balanced, but the state of mental uneasiness produced by seeing a figure or picture, either of man, animal or building, which conveys the impression that the balance could not possibly be maintained, will probably have been experienced by most people—a sensation which, absurd as it may seem, will sometimes remain long after the object which caused it has ceased to be visible.

The impatient reader may by this time be thinking that I am getting somewhat prolix on the subject of natural movements, so, by way of variety, it may be as well to turn our attention to the influence of fashion on gracefuness, a hint to that effect having been given at the commencement of this chapter.

The famous Grecian Helen, whose beauty was "the cause of a long ten years' war," was in early life a priestess in the temple of Diana, and we are told that she danced publicly therein. Doubtless her manner of dancing was very different from that of the priestesses of certain sects at the present day, whose actions are said to be so violent that they generally end by falling down in a state of exhaustion. All ancient dancing was characterised by its simplicity, the movements being for the most part unpremeditated and natural. Such was the dancing of Miriam, and of the maidens of Shiloh who "came out to dance in the dances," the leader extemporising while the rest imitated her actions as closely as they could. But whatever dances Helen may have danced, whether of the grave, gliding order, *emmelia*, or of the more sprightly kind, *cordax*, it is evident that in her simple chiton—which consisted of a piece of material sewn together, and open at each end, just fastened at the shoulders by brooches, and girt under the breasts—her movements must have been as entirely unimpeded as would those of a modern young lady who danced in her night robe.

I say entirely unimpeded, because the chiton, which was made the full length of the body, was probably always girded up before dancing, as in

the statue of Diana we see it girded up for running, otherwise the clinging folds of drapery would have interfered with the free action of the lower limbs.

Very different indeed must have been the movements and dancing of Mary Stuart, with a large unmanageable ruffle round her neck, her body encased in a tight unbendable corset, and the action of her lower limbs entirely concealed from view by an enormous farthingale.

In Helen the movements of the trunk, neck, and arms must have been perfectly natural and unrestrained, while in Mary they must have been altogether conventional and stiff—yet each lady was considered graceful in her day.

I have merely selected these two instances as illustrative of the effect of costume on personal gracefulness, because it would perhaps be impossible to find any more diametrically opposite. There can be no question, from a rational or artistic point of view as to whose movements were likely to have been the more truly graceful. It is an accepted axiom that in graceful action the several parts of the body must not be allowed to encumber one another; neither, then, should the clothes be allowed to encumber the body, and to assert that stiff corsets and tight bodices do not in a measure

encumber its natural movements is simply to talk nonsense.

The chiton was not, it is true, the only garment worn by Greek women; but there is no occasion to go into details; suffice it to say that whatever else there may have been, it was nothing that in any way impeded their movements. Charles Kingsley tells us that the first mention of stays he ever found was in a letter of Synesius, Bishop of Cyrene, who relates how, when he was shipwrecked on a remote part of the coast of Africa, the Greek ladies of that neighbourhood were astonished and shocked at the appearance of an Eastern slave girl with a pinched waist.

A garment that hangs loosely about the body is essentially graceful in itself, because it falls in natural and ever varying folds that adapt themselves to every change of position assumed by the wearer. But our ideas of dress have, of course, completely altered. The chiton is a thing of the past. Even if it were a garment suitable for the English climate, which it certainly is not, English women would never adopt it any more than they will, I think, ever adopt the divided skirt. They seem to have the greatest aversion to looking "all down alike," as they term it, and a chiton without some kind of

arrangement to make it stick out behind would be simply an abomination to them.

The Greeks had no idea in covering the body but to hide it, whereas with us the idea is to cut the clothes so as to hide the flesh, yet at the same time display the — well, not the figure, but a something that the modiste has decided shall do duty for a figure. There is all the difference in the world between making the clothes to fit the body, and squeezing, padding, and distorting the body to make it fit the clothes.

I will content myself with merely pointing to one or two of the more glaring instances that tend to show how conventional our ideas have become, and how much there is wanting a true perception of gracefulness in the present age.

The curve formed by the natural outline of a woman's back has been described by Hogarth as the "line of beauty"; and it is perfectly true of all animate and organized beings that beauty of outline consists in its serpentine direction. But mark the evident pains taken by fashionable ladies to conceal and distort this "line of beauty" out of recognition. From the neck to the shoulders there is a slight curve, it is true, after which comes a perfectly straight line, caused by the stiffness of the corset—it could not

possibly be ruled straighter—and then, suddenly, at an angle either acute or obtuse, comes a rearward extension of a few inches or a few feet, according to the fashion of the time; and the rest of the figure being, of course, hidden by the skirt, we have simply a slight curve, a straight line, and an angle in place of the lovely undulating outline of nature.

This is no passing caprice of fashion. It matters not whether it be "pannier," "bustle," or "improver"! save the mark, that is in vogue, the idea is always the same—to extend or enlarge the subsequent part of the body. And really does it not seem a marvellous thing that our fair countrywomen, with natural forms than which we can conceive nothing more lovely—not even the forms of angels—should appear as if they were desirous to emulate the characteristic development of the Hottentots?

We are told by Sir Andrew Smith and others that in the women of Central Africa this peculiarity is greatly admired—is reckoned a mark of beauty in fact. Sir Samuel Baker, in his "Albert Nyanza," mentions how the young girls of Kisoona are subjected to a regulated system of fattening, in order to increase their charms; and Charles Darwin, in his "Descent of Man," informs us, on the authority of Burton and Somal,

that there are tribes in which the men choose their wives by ranging them in a line, and selecting her who projects furthest *a tergo*—she being accounted the greatest beauty.

In these circumstances, I can well imagine than an African belle would try all in her power to extend her figure in the direction indicated. By so doing, she would be more likely to retain the goodwill and admiration of her lord and master, and there would be less probability of her being knocked down and jumped upon by him; but why our own beauties should arrange their clothes so as to give themselves a steatopygous appearance, I am wholly at a loss to conjecture.

Of course, these remarks must not be taken as applying to individuals. No sensible person would dream of advising a woman to dress in direct opposition to a prevailing style. To make oneself conspicuous in any way is perhaps indicative of want of taste; but individual good taste can often greatly modify that which it may be deemed unadvisable to completely change. It is only the extremes of bad fashion that look so supremely ridiculous.

When, however, any article becomes fashionable, the wearing of which is positively injurious to health or destructive to gracefulness of action,

then the sooner it is discarded the better, and I am very pleased to find that most sensible women are themselves giving up and refusing to allow their daughters to wear those preposterous high-heeled, pointed French boots, which have done more mischief to the physique of the female portion of the rising generation than is generally supposed.

When standing erect, the natural position of the body, with regard to the soles of the feet, is at right angles, the centre of gravity falls directly within the base, and perfect balance is maintained without conscious effort. It follows, then, that if the heels be artificially raised, and the body still retains its relative position with regard to the feet, it will be thrown forward, and can only be prevented from overbalancing by muscular contraction, which under natural conditions is not required. It will be seen, also, that the higher the heels are, the more acute will be the angle of inclination which the body tends to make with the ground in front, and the greater will be the muscular effort required to compel it to assume a vertical position. This effort must be maintained all the time the boots are worn and the wearer is on her feet.

It is obvious that this continual muscular strain must be injurious and fatiguing; but it is also

destructive to the harmony of motion, with which we are at present more particularly concerned.

Let us, then, briefly consider the natural action in walking.

First, it must be understood that the bones of the lower limbs are articulated at the hips by ball and socket joints, in the same manner as those of the arms are at the shoulders, and if allowed to oscillate, they will swing backward and forward with the action of a pendulum. If we also bear in mind that gravity produces a tendency in a limb to fall downward, we shall soon learn how it is that the action of walking becomes frequently automatic, and can be performed with so comparatively little muscular exertion.

In commencing to walk, we raise one leg from the ground, at the same time slightly advancing the body as it rests on the other foot, the effect of which action is that a great part of the step is taken mechanically, owing to the tendency of the limb to swing forward and regain its vertical position. Meanwhile the whole weight of the body remains on the stationary limb, passing from the heel to the toes. Now the heel of the foot that has been swung forward, and which, from the momentum acquired, has naturally passed a little

beyond the vertical position, touches the ground, and simultaneously the weight is thrown on to it, and the body is again advanced as the other foot leaves the ground.

In this way, then, the body is carried continually forward, the weight passing alternately from one leg to the other, and from the heel to the toe—the heel being always the part that first reaches and first leaves the ground. For this reason, viz.: that it may be capable of bearing the shock incident on striking the ground, the heel has been formed by nature of a harder substance than the rest of the foot. It would also be well to remember that when the weight passes from the sole of the foot to the toes, these, in their natural state—that is, when they have not been crushed and distorted by the wearing of pointed boots—spread themselves out to seize the ground, and lever the body forward.

As a practical illustration of the desirability of walking as here theoretically stated, that is from heel to toe, it is noticeable that in walking matches, professional men appear to actually dig their heels into the ground.

And, now, let any young lady with three-inch tapering French heels on her boots, try the experiment of walking as above described—the only natural and really graceful way of walking. It

will be well for her not to attempt this when the ground is wet, and not when there are many people about, only someone to pick her up; for she will most assuredly find that she is unable to comply with the very first requirement of natural locomotion, and that she must either put her foot down so that the heel and toe touch the ground together, or run the risk of frequently falling down.

Parenthetically, I believe that there is such a sublimity of ignorance concerning natural movements displayed in certain quarters, that some young ladies are actually *taught* to walk along the streets with a kind of *pas de minuet*.

To facilitate the obvious necessity of placing both toe and heel on the ground simultaneously, and perhaps with a view to improving their appearance, the heels of these boots are generally carried very much forward under the instep, the effect being that the weight of the body falls just on that part of the foot where nature intended that it should *not* fall, and in consequence, the slight concussion which attends each step, instead of being broken by the elastic spring of the arch naturally formed by the sole of the foot, is experienced directly on the delicate part and transmitted along the spinal column to the head.

How truly beneficial exercise under these conditions must be!

The wearer of high-heeled boots is thrown into the position of one walking on tip-toe, resting, as it were, on an inclined plane, and the fatigue in walking is increased in proportion as the heel is raised. Part of the power that should be used to propel the body is needlessly expended in supporting it, and it will be found that unless considerable muscular effort be brought to bear —an effort that cannot be long sustained—the raising of the heels has a tendency to cause the knees to bend in walking. This is certainly not so noticeable in girls as it would be if their legs were not concealed by their dresses, but the undignified gait which the action produces is distinguishable all the same.

There is, I am sorry to say, something about the manner of locomotion affected by certain females of the present day, that involuntarily reminds ue of a passage in Isaiah, wherein the daughters of Zion are condemned for walking with "stretched forth necks," "mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet."

When a girl tells you, as some will, that she can walk more comfortably in the kind of boots to which I have been drawing attention, it can only mean that she has by use learned to accom-

modate her steps and actions to them, and having acquired the habit of walking *incorrectly*, cannot easily return to the natural movement. And thus, I take it, she adduces as strong an argument *against* their use as any that could be found.

I have already hinted that the practice of wearing tightly-drawn stiff corsets interferes with the natural spinal action, that is, the wave of motion running in an anterior posterior direction —the "spiro-spiral movement" — which Dr. Pettigrew tells us "is observable in the locomotion of all vertebrates"; but, at the same time, compression at the waist causes the body to oscillate laterally in a most unbecoming manner. The reader may easily observe the effect any time he happens to be walking behind a lady who appears to have a circular waist. I say circular, because whenever this form is presented in a woman's waist, it is an infallible sign that undue pressure is brought to bear upon it. The natural form of the waist is elliptical, that is, the width from side to side is greater than the thickness from front to back, and the effect of tight lacing is to squeeze the five false ribs together and make it appear round.

An abnormally small waist is not by any means beautiful. It is generally acknowledged, I think,

that a thing can only be beautiful which it is agreeable to contemplate, and when we see a waist of this description, the mind is not only offended by the want of proportion exhibited in the outward form, but is apt involuntarily to occupy itself with ideas of the inevitable displacement of the viscera within—a subject which it will be conceded it is not agreeable to contemplate. Hence it happens that an object which is, I suppose, intended to excite admiration has in reality quite the opposite effect, at least, when seen by anyone whose eyes are in communication with his understanding.

The fashion among civilized nations which insists on small round waists as the "correct thing" in female form, is just worthy to be compared with that fashion among the North American Indians of the Western coast, which prescribes small conical-shaped heads; one is not a whit more absurd than the other. In either case mechanical means are used to bring about the wished-for result, and physical suffering is entailed thereby. Such things are not connected with the natural desire for novelty—an excuse which may be pleaded for many other ridiculous fashions—they are among savages the outcome of ignorance, and in this country we may discover a clue to their origin and practice in the well-

known aphorism of Thomas Carlyle concerning the population—"mostly fools."

One day, some years since, I was sitting in the hall of the Louvre, wherein stands the Venus de Milo, and was greatly amused at the audible criticisms passed upon the statue by different people who came in, especially the women. Many of the less educated were of course unaware that it was anything out of the ordinary, and candidly expressed uncomplimentary opinions; indeed, this is not to be wondered at, because in reality it is only an educated and artistic eye that can perceive whatever intrinsic beauty there may be in a mutilated piece of sculpture. But the more cultured of the visitors knew well enough that the statue was accounted a gem of antique art—they knew that the magic touch of some forgotten sculptor's chisel had rendered a block of marble more precious than gold; and knowing this, they feigned to admire what they evidently considered unworthy of imitation. There was one fashionably dressed lady who went into positive raptures over the beauty of the form, and she, strange to say, happened to be the one whose own manufactured form was the most opposite. Her waist had been squeezed in till it was not much more than half the size of that of the goddess, and was as round as if it had been struck in with a pair

of compasses, while her bust in consequence appeared twice as prominent as it should, and her pannier—that was the article then in vogue—was immense. Now if this lady had expressed her real sentiments, she would have said: "Yes, that kind of figure may appear very beautiful to artists, anatomists and such people; it may do well enough for *Venus*, but it won't do for *me!* My dressmaker knows far more about what is graceful than the man who carved that!"

Truly "it is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous"!

I have here said very little about the prejudicial effect of these abuses of fashion upon the health, because so much has already been written upon that subject by far abler men—though I am sorry to say with little practical result—and also because such disquisition might seem irrelevant to the matter under consideration, which is not health, but grace. I have rather endeavoured to show that these articles—that is, stays, when stiff and tight, and heels, when ridiculously high—are not only intrinsically ungraceful, but that they tend to destroy natural gracefulness on the part of the wearer; for we shall see, if we observe the gait of a lady thus equipped, that in place of the lithe, elastic movements so noticeable where there is unrestrained

freedom of body and limb, we have presented for our admiration a kind of dignified waddle—dignified in a sense, because of the inborn grace of woman, which even these atrocious inventions cannot altogether disguise, and because of the strong efforts she makes to retain composure and equilibrium.

It has been already stated that gracefulness in dancing depends in a great measure on the ease with which a perfect balance of body is maintained. In the waltz, as I shall explain elsewhere, the body should sometimes be allowed to rest on the heel, and sometimes only the sole of the foot should be allowed to touch the ground. But a girl with very high heels to her shoes is unable to raise them from the floor without standing actually on tip-toe, which is not required. It is therefore evident that the wearing of high heels is destructive to gracefulness in waltzing. The principal dancers of the ballet always wear flat shoes; they have too much respect for their ankles to risk dislocating them by adopting high heels, and they know from experience that such things are incompatible with true harmony of motion. It is also impossible to dance gracefully in a tightly-laced stiff corset. The natural supple action of the waist is effectually obstructed by its rigid case, and to the partner it feels, as a

friend of mine once tersely expressed it, "like putting one's arm around the stump of a tree."

And now it may be asked: "Are there not plenty of ridiculous and ungraceful things about men's attire?" Yes, there are; but if I were to consider them I should be going beyond the purpose of this chapter, because the things they wear, with the exception of high, stiff collars, are not such as would materially affect their natural movements. In men, ungraceful actions are, generally speaking, the result of natural awkwardness and want of proper training, whereas in women, ungracefulness is frequently attributable to the wearing of such articles as I have been speaking about. It should be remembered, however, that in all cases I have qualified the names of these articles by such adjectives as large, tight, stiff, and high; because it is these qualities that render them objectionable. A not too palpable arrangement to cause the skirt to set out a little behind may not be ungraceful; but exaggerated extension is inelegant and vulgar. A rational, pliable corset, that does not pinch the wearer, and which is simply used for the same purpose as the *taenia* of the Greek ladies, may not be without advantages; but corsets to support and corsets to constrict are different things. Also a moderate heel, which is not too narrow, may not

be harmful; but to wear a boot that distorts the foot and produces an artificial gait, is a sin against nature.

Natural gracefulness of manner and correctness of deportment, in a conventional sense, are by no means always concomitant. Often we come across people who conduct themselves in Society in a manner to which no exception could possibly be taken. They may have been taught to "enter a room," to bow to the assembled company in quite the correct way, to sit down gently on a chair, without "flopping," to rise without losing their balance, to express cordiality in hand-shaking without being unduly demonstrative; they may have been taught all this and various other little amenities of civilized life, and have gone through no end of drilling and "hygienic exercises"; yet withal their actions appear wholly wanting in real gracefulness. On the other hand, we not unfrequently see people—mostly girls—who have had no instruction whatever in these things, who have no ideas of deportment beyond their own intuition; yet whose whole bearing may be described as "charming," who move and pose their limbs in a way that would be utterly beyond the power of many ladies who have been

all their lives studying artificial correctness of demeanour.

The unfortunate Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, has always been regarded as an embodiment of grace and loveliness—"surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision"— yet her manners and deportment could scarcely be termed conventionally correct, as, for instance, when at the drawing-room held at La Muette she laughed in the faces of the old ladies who had deemed it their duty to attend, because "from the stiffness of their demeanour and the antiquated fashion of their habiliments they appeared ridiculous": or when, having slipped off a donkey during an outburst of laughter, instead of immediately rising, she sent for Madame de Noailles (Madame l'Etiquette she called her), to "ascertain the prescribed behaviour of a Queen of France who could not keep her seat upon a donkey."* Yet, notwithstanding her unconventional behaviour, Marie Antoinette was doubtless charming and graceful at any time—most especially so, perhaps, when, dressed as a country girl, with straw hat and apron, she watered her plants in the Little Trianon.

* Hayward's "Essays," Vol. ii, p. 158.

The above remarks are only intended to show that real gracefulness is not necessarily included in what is known as correctness of deportment, and may even exist independently of it. When it is naturally present in an individual, ordinary rules of conduct and action may suffice to give elegance and finish; but when it is wholly absent, its culture—presuming that it may be cultivated — must be conducted on a totally different plan. Unfortunately, cases have frequently been brought to my notice, where people have been positively made ungraceful by an artificial mode of training. It would seem that some professors of deportment even in this age of progress have never troubled to enquire why the vertebral column is formed as we find it, and teach their pupils to hold themselves even in rapid motion as if it were an unbendable bone.

Again in sitting down the conventional attitude is, it seems, to have the back perfectly erect, the knees together, and the hands, I suppose, resting on the knees. This may be all very well in its way, but the man who habitually sat like that in company would look a precious fool. The attitude is not by any means graceful or natural, nor is it healthful if continued too long. It is, perhaps, one of the cruellest things to make children assume this position for any

length of time, as it soon becomes excessively wearisome, especially if there be nothing to support the back.

There is, I think, a great deal of truth in a remark made by Charles Kingsley in his essay on "The Two Breaths," to the effect that "lolling" —which he describes as the act of "putting the body in an attitude of the most perfect ease compatible with a fully expanded chest"— is essentially more healthful and graceful than sitting perfectly upright. It is, as he points out, the attitude in which all reposing figures in Greek bas-reliefs and ornaments are depicted.

Doubtless, a good deal may be done by judicious culture of movement and training of muscles, even when there are natural defects in the proportions of the body. As William Hazlitt says in his "Plain Speaker": "A man may have a mean or disagreeable exterior, may halt in his gait, or have lost the use of half his limbs; and yet he may show habitual attention to what is graceful and becoming in the use he makes of all the power he has left—in the 'nice conduct' of the most unpromising and impracticable figure." This is perhaps an extreme case, but I can from personal experience assert that there are various ways and means by which a naturally awkward and even misshapen person may be taught the

art of gracefulness, so to speak. The kind of culture to which I allude does not exactly come under the head of gymnastics, nor is it included in those exercises known as calisthenics, and certainly not in the old school of deportment as represented by Mr. Turvydrop. It must be directed entirely to the individual, and should not be attempted by anyone who is ignorant of the principles of human mechanism.

With regard to dancing, I quite agree with Dr. Crichton Brown, who, in lecturing on Mind and Muscle at Birmingham, said, that if taught at the proper time, dancing "may discipline large groups of centres into harmonious action, enlarge the dominion of the will, abolish unseemly muscular tricks and antics, develop a sense of equilibrium and impart grace and confidence." It is, perhaps, impossible to over-estimate the salutary effects of learning to dance, but, in all cases, the movements of the upper part of the body should be looked after as well as those of the feet. I hold myself that the teacher of dancing, who aims to be something more than a mere teacher of dances—mark the distinction—and who attends, in a manner, to the physical culture of his pupils, should, before attempting to direct the movement of others, himself thoroughly study the mechanical action of

the human frame. He should carefully observe the movements of those who are naturally graceful, and notice wherein they differ from the movements of those who seem naturally awkward, then, if to acuteness of perception there be added some knowledge of physical forces, and the way in which they operate upon the body while in motion or repose—in short, if he conscientiously qualifies himself for his profession, he may probably do some good, useful work.

IV.—THE OLD TIME DANCES.

"They bid us to the English dancing-schools,
And teach lavoltas high, and swift corantos."
—SHAKESPEARE. *King Henry V.*

THERE has been for some time past a good deal of talk about reviving the Minuet and Gavotte as ball-room dances, and it was announced a short time since that the Pavana had been re-introduced with considerable success at a Continental ball. In these circumstances it may not be uninteresting to enquire a little into the nature of some of the old-time dances. We never know what a revolution of the "wheel of fashion" may bring about, or how soon some long-forgotten movement may be resuscitated as a new dance. Doubtless the step sometimes imparted under the name of the "new valse," to which I have elsewhere drawn attention, does not differ greatly from that of the ancient Passamezzo which, as its name signifies, was a movement little different from walking.

The Minuet and Gavotte were dances of the last and preceding centuries, but the Pavana, or Pavane, is of much greater antiquity, and in its original form those who took part in it must, I think, have presented a very absurd appearance. Sir John Hawkins, in his *History of Music*, says:—"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."

It is from this last peculiarity that the dance derived its name, pavo, in Latin, meaning a peacock. As the dance was an eminently characteristic one, the more the performers in it put on the airs of these proud birds, the more disdainful their general demeanour, the better might they be said to dance. Although this dance, like the Saraband, was supposed to be compatible with kingly dignity, and Voltaire, in his *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, mentions it as one in which the young monarch showed his grace, it seems to me, at least, that men and women strutting about imitating the actions of peacocks, must have looked indescribably foolish. I think the pavane, as it is now danced in Paris, as much resembles the original dance of that name as the Gavotte of

our modern stage resembles the original dance of the Gavots, or inhabitants of Gap, in Southern France.

It would, of course, be utterly preposterous to attempt such a dance as the pavane in our ordinary costume. It is a *sine qua non* that the gentleman wears a cloak and carries a sword. The lady generally holds a flower in her hand. The original music is written in common time like the Gavotte, not in three-four time as is sometimes erroneously supposed, and the dance commences by the partners walking, or rather strutting, three steps forward and then three back, bowing and curtseying at the sixth. Seven is occupied by the gentleman partly drawing his sword from the sheath, offering the hilt, as it were, to the lady, and at eight he lets it drop into the sheath again. The lady, meanwhile, coquettes with her flower, making a feint of refusal. This is repeated four times. Afterwards there is a sideways minuet movement, the couples crossing and then wheeling round with bent knee and extended foot, the gentleman extending his sword and spreading out his cloak, and the dress of the lady sweeping the ground like a peacock's tail. Then there is advancing in couples, with a very characteristic peacock strut, more turning, and so on to the end of the dance. I

am told by M. Espinosa, of Paris, who, I believe knows as much about classical dances as any modern teacher, that the Pavane was originally danced on horseback, just as we now see a quadrille sometimes danced at a circus.

The Pavane was essentially a solemn dance, and was generally followed by a sprightly movement known as the galliard, in the same manner as the *menuet de la cour*, when danced on the stage, is followed by the more lively Gavotte, and a very agreeable change it must have made from the stately actions of the former dance. Sir John Davies, Attorney-General of Ireland, and who would have been Lord Chief Justice of England, had he not died before his installation, speaking of the galliard in his well-known poem of "The Orchestra," says:—

> "Oft did she make her body upward flie,
> With lofty turns and caprioles in the air."

Evidently it must have required considerable execution.

I should imagine, from what information I have been able to acquire, that the rapid dancing of the sixteenth century was the very antithesis of that of the present day. We slide about with our feet scarcely removed from the floor, while in the time of the Tudors it was con-

sidered quite the correct thing to leap as high from the ground as possible. It is related in Sir James Melville's *Memoirs*, that on being pressed by Queen Elizabeth to say whether she or her cousin Mary Stewart, was the better dancer, he replied that Queen Mary "dancit not so hich and so disposedly as she did." *

The volta was one of these high stepping movements, "a lofty jumping or a leaping round," and was danced in couples, the man turning his partner several times, and then assisting her to make the leap or jump. The measure of the music was like that of the waltz, but the rhythm of the steps, according to Davies, above mentioned, was anapestic; that is, the accent was on the three, whereas in our waltz the rhythm is dactylic, all the accent being on the one.

Perhaps it was the consideration of the salta, volta, or lavolta, which are one and the same thing, that led old John Northbrooke, in his "Treatise against Dauncing" to reflect that women must have invented round dances so that by "holding upon men's arms they might hop the higher."

The coranto was a quick dance in which there

* Quoted in "A Tercentenary" Gentleman's Magazine, March, 1887.

was "much turning and much capering." Like the lavolta it was written in triple time, but with the accent on the first beat. The steps were rather of a sliding nature, "close by the ground," and, from what I can gather, I believe it represented a kind of love chase, something after the style of the fandango.

The canary is supposed by some to have been introduced from the Canary Isles, and by others to have originated in a masque in which the performers were dressed in savage costumes. It is thus described in Sir John Hawkins' *History of Music*:—"A lady is taken out by a gentleman, and after dancing together, to the cadence of the proper air, he leads her back to the end of the hall; this done, he retreats back to the original spot, always looking at the lady. Then he makes up to her with certain steps and retreats as before. His partner then performs the same ceremony, which is several times repeated by both parties, with various strange fantastic steps very much in the savage style." Sometimes castanets were used in this dance, and we are told that the caprioles were rapid, and the figure extremely difficult.

It will be noticed that in the above ancient description — originally taken from a work published in 1588—there is a suggestion of good

manners in the fact of the gentleman never failing to look at the lady with whom he is dancing, a mark of attention too often neglected in modern times, when, in going through a quadrille it is no uncommon thing to notice a man setting to his partner with his gaze all the time fixed on somebody else, or wandering about the room.

If ever a craze should set in for the revival of ancient dances, there is no telling into what extravagances and absurdities it might lead us. It has been suggested that even the Morris dance, which is supposed to have been introduced in the time of Edward III., might be revived in the ball-room, the dancers making up as Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Friar Tuck, the buffoon of the party, and all the rest of them. A bicycle might perhaps be substituted for the ancient hobby-horse, which used to be made to perform such queer antics. Should the taste or fashion of the time, however, incline to still older dances, there is a famous one mentioned by Strutt and others which might be suggested—the "fools' dance," a great advantage being that there would always be found plenty of people qualified to take part in it.

Several of the English sovereigns have been praised for their skill in dancing, none perhaps

more so, says Strutt in his *Sports and Pastimes*, than Henry VIII., who, like his daughter, already mentioned, was extremely partial to this amusement. There are exalted personages of the present day whose terpsichorean skill is said not to be of the highest order. This is to be regretted, since there are not wanting people who are ever ready to imitate the actions and doings of royalty, even should they be such as do not command admiration. Fashions have had their origin in, and sycophants have even affected, the personal peculiarities and physical infirmities of those in high station, a practice as heartless as it is ridiculous. We can, therefore, scarcely wonder that peculiarities of taste and style in dancing exhibited by princes, should in a measure influence the dancing of all classes.

From the time of Elizabeth to that of Charles II., the art of dancing seems to have steadily degenerated, the nature of the dances having, I suppose, in a measure partaken of the character of the rulers. In the reign of the first mentioned paragon, who is said by Dr. Johnson to "have herself had learning enough to have given dignity to a bishop," it was evidently no trivial pastime. We are told that "the grave Lord Keeper who led the brawls united a profound knowledge of dancing with much learning of the

law." It was also held necessary that all engaged in the legal profession should learn to dance, as the exercise was considered "much conducive to the making of gentlemen more fit for their books." It is almost needless to say that the dancing of that time was indulged in at more rational hours than it is now, or the above impression might not have been so prevalent.

All this, however, was completely changed in the reign of the "Merry Monarch," as he is called, when dancing appears to have become as frivolous a pastime as it had formerly been severe; in fact, it could scarcely be termed dancing at all, as I will presently show. Lord Seldon, in his *Table Talk*, says: "The Court of England is much altered. At a solemn dancing, first you had the grave measure, then the coranto and the galliard, and this kept up with the ceremony, and at length the trenchmore and the cushion dance. Then all the company dances, lord and groom, lady and kitchen maid, no distinction. So in our court, in Queen Elizabeth's time, gravity of state was kept up. In King James's time things were pretty well. But in King Charles's time there has been nothing but trenchmore and the cushion dance, omnium gatherum, tolly polly, hoite cum toite."

I have never been able to ascertain exactly what kind of a dance this trenchmore was. All that is known for certain, I believe, is that it was a lively movement; but we may, I think, safely conclude that it was a dance in which an unlimited number could join, for we are informed by John Taylor that—

"All h—— danced trenchmore in a string."

The man who penned this graceful line is not, I believe, widely remembered at the present day. He was born at Gloucester in 1580. He once attempted to sail from London to Rochester in a paper boat, and got nearly drowned for his pains. He was undoubtedly very eccentric; but, somehow, this quality does not seem to count so much in the favour of a man when he is dead, as it does while he is living. I wonder at what value the writings of some of our modern eccentric poets will be reckoned in two or three hundred years' time.

Of the cushion dance, or Joan Saunderson, as it was also called, I can speak more definitely. From a description given in a work published in 1698, it appears that the dance was begun by one of the company who, taking a cushion in his hand, danced and capered about the room till the end of the tune. Then he suddenly stopped and began singing, "This dance it will no further

go," whereupon the musician or musicians asked, "I pray you, good sir, why say you so?" and to this he replied, "Because Joan Saunderson will not come to, and she must come whether she will or no." He then went and laid down the cushion before one of the ladies, and on this she had to kneel while he kissed her, singing "Welcome, Joan Saunderson, welcome, welcome." After this interesting little performance had been gone through, the lady rose from her knees and they both danced together, singing, "Prinkum-prankum is a fine dance (I should think it was), and shall we go dance it over again?" Then it was the lady's turn to skip round with the cushion, singing, "This dance it will no further go," and the musicians, as before, asking, "I pray you, madam, why say you so?" she replied, "Because John Saunderson will not come to," etc. Then she laid the cushion before one of the men, who went down on his knees and kissed her, she singing, "Welcome, John Saunderson, welcome, welcome." (It took a good deal to shock Mrs. Grundy in those days.) After the salutation, they got up, and taking hands danced round again, singing as before. And this continued until the whole of the company was taken into the ring. Then the cushion was laid again before the first man, the lady singing as before, only after

the affectionate business, it was, "farewell, John Saunderson," instead of "welcome." And so they all went out of the ring one by one, as they came in, and the lady was kissed twice by all the men, and likewise the man twice by all the ladies.

I have described this dance at length not because I think there was anything specially beautiful in it—though interesting it was certainly—but because I believe that in the event of a general revival of old dances, it is one that might commend itself to the taste of certain Sunday-school luminaries, who, although professing to see wickedness in such dances as the polka and waltz, nevertheless astonished the uninitiated a short time since by the extent to which osculatory games and exercises were indulged in at their merry-makings. It was on this subject that a well-known paper remarked, "If the young disciples and teachers would only learn to dance, it would be, we venture to think, a salutary change, and might introduce a great improvement in manners as well as morals" *

Previous to the introduction of the minuet, towards the end of the seventeenth century, it was the custom in France for the princes and nobles to take part in ballets, in company with hired professional dancers; and it seems that

* *Saturday Review*, March 13th, 1886.

many of these performances were of a highly discreditable nature.

"A ballet," says Noverre, "perfect in all its parts, is a picture drawn from life of the manners, dresses, ceremonies and customs of all nations . . . . . If it does not point out with perspicuity, and without the aid of a programme, the passions and incidents it is intended to describe, it is a divertissement, a succession of dances, and nothing better."

Now it is evident that in these circumstances a ballet proper may be either a performance of a perfectly decorous nature, or it may be quite the reverse. If, for instance, it were decided to represent a picture from life of those people of whom the captain's laconic report was "manners none, customs nasty," why then the less refined the performance the more perfect the ballet. We know also that the gods and goddesses did not always behave themselves in the most exemplary manner, and there are certain little mythological episodes that, although sometimes alluded to by a well-known lady novelist, are generally allowed to rest within the classic volumes to which they properly belong. It seems, however, that in the time to which I am referring it was the fashion to represent those things which it were better to leave unrepresented, and it frequently happened

that the dances and tableaux of the ballets performed at the Tuileries were characterised by their extreme licentiousness.

But the introduction of the minuet brought about a salutary change. Difficult steps were added to the dances of the ballet, which placed it beyond the capacity of those who had formerly performed therein, and eventually it was relegated to the stage, while the minuet, brought into fashion by Louis XIV., became in a few years so popular that we even hear of ecclesiastical dignitaries taking part in it. It is stated that Beauchamps, who became tutor to the above-mentioned monarch danced a minuet with him in a ballet called "Le Triomphe de l'Amour," as early as 1653, Beauchamps being at that time a mere boy and taking the part of a female. It was not, however, till some considerable time after this that the minuet may be said to have reached the height of its glory, and its votaries their greatest extravagances. The following is a description of the dance, for which I am indebted to a writer in the *Cornhill Magazine*. It is, he says, taken from a work published "during the most acute period of the passion for the dance."

"The cavalier takes his lady by the hand, and makes two steps forward with her, both keeping on the same line; after which he causes her to

describe a circle round him, which brings her back to the same spot whence she started. They then cross each other during four or five minutes, looking at each other as they pass, and ending with a profound genuflexion; the whole gravely, and without laughing, since the minuet in Europe is the most serious diversion known in society."

It will be seen from this description that there was originally a good deal more pantomimic action about the minuet than actual dancing. Certainly a variety of steps and movements have from time to time been added, as in the *menuet de la cour;* but, after all, the arrangement of a minuet, or gavotte—which is a more lively dance of a similar character—depends very much on the taste of the teacher and the ability of his pupils. A good master will most likely modify a dance of this description to the capacity of those about to take part in it, since it is better to do that which is simple well, than to attempt difficulties and fail. I have previously said that a perfect adjustment of balance is most essential in dancing the minuet. Of course, there are only certain steps and movements that are admissible, and great care must always be taken that nothing of an extraneous character is admitted into the dance.

The practice of the minuet and similar dances may do something towards cultivating a kind of

artificial gracefulness of deportment; but having said so much in their favour, I must add that I scarcely think they are adapted for actual performance in the modern ball-room, and certainly there would always be a sense of incongruity in going through them in the modern style of dress. It was considered by Magri, who wrote about a hundred years ago, that "a languishing eye and a smiling mouth" were indispensable to those who would successfully dance a minuet; but I am afraid that, notwithstanding the strict injunctions given at the end of the above quoted description, although the eyes might languish as effectually as ever, the conventional continental smile would be apt to degenerate—or shall I say improve?—into a downright honest English laugh, if the dance were publicly attempted in any other costume than that of the period to which it belonged; or at least, if the dancers managed to keep their countenances, the onlookers might have some difficulty in doing so. It is not the dress of the lady, but that of the man that would look so absurdly incongruous. As fancy-dress balls are not matters of everyday occurrence, at least so far as the majority of people are concerned, I do not think that these dances are likely to come again into general favour.

V.—MODERN DANCES.

"Live while you live, the epicure would say,
And seize the pleasures of the present day."

PHILIP DODDRIDGE.

ANYONE whose taste inclines to the more sober dances, as they may be termed, and who prefers a quiet quadrille to the giddy, whirling waltz, or who finds that continuous turning is not conducive to the welfare of his constitution—as many do—is not likely to spend a particularly agreeable time in the modern ball-room. True, he may be fortunate enough to find a congenial waltz hating companion with whom to seek some out-of-the-way corner, thence to emerge once or twice during the evening to join the few who assemble to form the much-neglected "squares"; and in this manner the pair may possibly contrive to enjoy themselves in their own way. But it is not the legitimate enjoyment of the ball-room; this is entirely monopolized by the waltzers, who at present appear to have it all their own way, while the justly aggrieved quad-

rillers and others are left, as it were, out in the cold.

Now this is certainly not as it should be. I am quite ready to concede that the waltz is by far the most beautiful of all modern dances, and I doubt not that to many people it is the most enjoyable; but it is possible to have too much of a thing, however good it may be, and the fashion which confines the exercise of the ball-room to a single movement is greatly to be deprecated.

"There are," says Goethe, "many echoes in the world, and but few voices," and I am sure that the admiration expressed by many people for the waltz must be a kind of reflected, moon-light admiration, derived from the experience of others. It cannot possibly be the result of their own experience. Whatever enjoyment they derive from waltzing must be precisely of the same kind as that which anyone who does not understand a word of the language derives from witnessing a French play—make-believe enjoyment. These are the kind of people that Mrs. Lynn Lynton would call the "Pretty Polls" of Society. They ask for more waltzes simply because others do, and for no other reason whatever.

Again, there are people with whom, as I have

already hinted, waltzing does not agree. It makes them bilious, and surely the enjoyment of an evening is dearly purchased at the expense of a bilious attack on the following day. There are others also who can stand a little waltzing well enough, but too much of it upsets them, and, indeed, I very much doubt if four or five hours' continual turning can be good for anybody.

The round dances that are still occasionally seen on modern programmes, that is the dances not absolutely forgotten, are the Polka, Schottische, Polka Mazurka, Redowa and Galop.

I use the words "absolutely forgotten" advisedly, because I know many really good waltzers of both sexes, who are considered excellent dancers, as the times go, yet who cannot dance the Polka correctly even if they try, who would not attempt a Schottische, and who have no more idea of the Polka Mazurka and Redowa, than they have of the Paspy.

Yet most of these people are able to accommodate their steps in waltzing to the music of other dances if it be played, and as this is the case, I do not see why an ordinary programme could not be arranged so that those whose waltzing is not of the most perfect, or who feel that

they would like a variety of dances, should have a chance of enjoyment as well as the insatiable waltzers.

For the benefit of those who do not understand how the steps of the waltz may be fitted to the music of other round dances, I will briefly explain: For the Galop or Schottische, which are in two-four time, count one: and two, one: and two, pausing longer on the one, as here indicated by the punctuation, and letting the two, which represents the third step, follow quickly after the second step, in which the toe lightly touches the floor.

For the polka, which is also in two-four time, but differently accented, count two for the first step, making it as long in duration of time as both the others together. For the Polka Mazurka and Redowa, which are written in the same measure as the waltz, only with a different accent, emphasise and prolong the first step in each bar, letting the third follow quickly after the second, as previously explained.

It is a pity that people who wish to make a special exhibition of skill in the ball-room should so frequently omit to take proper instruction beforehand. In no dance are deficiencies of execution more observable than in that known as the Highland Schottische, which became so

fashionable a few years ago. It is a good dance in its way, but many of those who take part in it, not content with doing the simple drawing-room step, which perhaps they understand well enough, will persist in attempting the more difficult step of the Scotch Reel or Highland Fling. Of course if they know what they are about, well and good; but in nine cases out of ten they do not. Their performance is perhaps a poor imitation of something they have seen on the stage; but it is incorrect. They get the wrong hand up, as I have elsewhere remarked, the heels turned out when they ought to be turned in, or they make incongruous movements which entirely destroy the character of the dance. I have myself seen performances of this description which bore a far greater resemblance to the scalp dance of the Indians, as exhibited at Buffalo Bill's Show, than to anything Scotch; but as there did not happen to be many present who knew more about dancing than did the dancers themselves, their efforts were well applauded. These people had acquired a reputation for dancing the Highland Fling—attributable doubtless to their capering about with such vehemence as to compel all other dancers to sit down, to their making a great noise, and doing a good deal of stamping, these

things being vulgarly supposed to be peculiarly characteristic of Scotch dancing. Doubtless it is assurance that carries the day, but I cannot help thinking that, whether we regard it as a question of art or simply of enjoyment, it would be more satisfactory to such performers if they knew that what they were doing was strictly correct, and worthy of admiration. Besides, there may always be a few present in any ball-room who really understand dancing.

If it be true that the wild Highlanders originally danced bare footed between the points of swords turned edge upwards, it must have been a somewhat risky performance—one that it would not do for modern drawing-room interpreters of the Highland Fling to attempt.

In the preceding chapter I made allusion to the influence which the style of dancing adopted by those in exalted position exercises upon the dancing of all classes. But there is also another influence at work on the dancing of the present day, which appears to have its origin in a very different quarter. There is a much to be regretted tendency among certain young men, occupying what is termed a good social position, to introduce into the drawing-room a style of dancing that one would only expect to see exhibited on the platform at "a place to spend a

happy day." Heaven forbid that I should appear to make any reflection on the amusements of the people. Open air dancing is a glorious pastime, and pleasure gardens are a great boon to the toilers of a city; but there is a creature that one is apt to encounter at these places to which I have a strong objection. I am not, of course, writing for any particular class of readers, but I do distinctly draw the line at 'Arry—the typical individual whom it would appear that some of the young men above alluded to are disposed to make their model in deportment. Personally, I consider that waltzing about in the square dances, twisting with the arms to the waist, or joining both hands across in the fourth figure of the Lancers, are practices quite inadmissible in good society. These, however, are merely matters of custom; but there is a manner of holding one's partner, a way of moving one's feet, a general style of dancing, which tells unmistakably where and how the art has been acquired. It would be well if some male readers were to give a little consideration to these remarks. There is a certain *je ne sais quoi* that denotes the true gentleman; he may be awkward in his movements, he may be an egregiously bad dancer, he may even inadvertently turn his back to his partner in the quadrilles; but he *never*

stands with his hands in his pockets before a lady, and he *never*—forgive the word—swaggers in a ball-room or otherwise proclaims, if not his low origin, at least his low associations. When some vulgar fellow entreated James I. to make him a gentleman, the well-known answer of the monarch was: "Na, na, I canna! I could make thee a lord, but none but God Almighty can make a gentleman."

In my book on "Dancing as it should be," I happened to make some allusion to American Waltzes, which I was asked to explain by our cousins across the Atlantic, and I take this opportunity of stating that my remarks implied no reflection whatever on American dancing, which is generally speaking very good. I was really alluding to such movements as the "Rockaways" and Boston or "Dip Waltzes"—which latter I am informed on good authority is a "hybrid unknown in well regulated society." It is possible that the arm movement known as the "Berkley pump" is worthy to be compared with some of our own Kensingtonian monkeyisms to which I shall presently call attention; but dancing and foolery are different things, and, as I have said, legitimate dancing in America is good. I will not go so far as to say that

the Americans waltz better than we, for when the English do waltz well, they waltz as well as any people in the world; but Americans are as a rule very good waltzers, and make a great feature of reversing.

The Saratoga, or Diagonal Lancers, the most fashionable of American set dances, is one which I think we might advantageously introduce into our own ball-rooms. The figures are more animated than those of the ordinary Lancers, as all the couples are dancing at the same time, and they are not by any means difficult to learn.

As the Diagonal Lancers are not, so far as I am aware, yet known in this country, it may, perhaps, be interesting to the reader if I endeavour to explain how they should be danced. I will first, however, suppose that he or she is acquainted with the ordinary manner of dancing the Lancers, of which I have given a graphic, and I trust intelligible, description in my former book.

The Diagonal Lancers.

Fig. 1. The dancers place themselves as in an ordinary quadrille, and directly the music begins, bow, first to their partners and then to the opposite couple. This, as usual, occupies eight bars. Now the leading, or first and opposite couples turn half round to the right, while the

side couples turn half round to the left, so as to face them. All advance together, retire one step, advance again, turn *vis-à-vis* with both hands, and return to places—eight bars. Leading couples join hands and cross between the side couples to their places, and, in returning, the sides join hands, while the leading couples pass on the outside—eight bars. All set to corners and turn with both hands, as in the ordinary Lancers—eight bars.

In repeating, the side couples turn to the right, so that each couple has a different *vis-à-vis*.

Fig. 2. All the dancers join hands, and advance and retire in a ring, after which the gentlemen turn their partners with both hands and place them *dos-à-dos* in the centre—eight bars. All cross to the right and left and turn partners to places—eight bars. Promenade *half* round the figure, and turn partners with both hands—eight bars.

This is repeated, starting of course from the opposite place to that occupied at the commencement, so that at the finish all will have resumed their original places.

Fig. 3. All join hands, as in the last figure, and advance and retire in a circle; then again advance, bow, and retire to places—eight bars.

The four ladies now do the grand chain in the centre, giving the right and left hands alternately to each other and passing round till they come again to their partners—eight bars. (Those who remember how the third figure of the ordinary Lancers was originally danced, will have no difficulty in understanding this movement; indeed, it is simple enough, but when a muddle is likely to result, in consequence of the ladies not knowing which hand to give, or to whom it should be presented, it is better to adopt the simpler plan of joining the right hands across—and taking four steps to the left, and then joining the left hands across and returning with four steps to the right. This movement also occupies eight bars. I only suggest it in cases where the other is not understood).

The figure to be repeated.

Fig. 4. This is, perhaps, the most difficult figure to dance correctly, but I will endeavour to make the explanation as clear as possible. The first and second gentlemen simultaneously advance with their partners to the couples on their right, and bow, then the gentlemen exchange ladies (presenting the right hand while the lady gives the left) and cross over to the opposite side couple, keeping to the right, so as to allow the gentleman who was *vis-à-vis* and

the lady he has taken, to pass on the left. Now bow, and exchange ladies again, in the same manner as before, so that each gentleman has the lady who was originally his *vis-à-vis*, and bow to the opposite couple. All this in the original music occupies twelve bars. The leading couples now do right and left, as in the first figure of the quadrilles, only at corners, with the couples on their right—eight bars.

The whole movement is repeated, the side couples leading to the right, and as the ladies are again twice exchanged, they will, at the finish, have all regained their original places and partners.

Fig. 5. Instead of waiting for the customary eight bars, commence dancing at once, as in the ordinary Lancers. The first movement is half grand right and left, which I may perhaps explain by saying, that it is like the grand chain as generally danced, only without actually giving hands. On passing partners in the opposite places, turn round and bow, and then continue the right and left in the same manner, and again bow to partners on returning to original places. This movement, like the grand chain, occupies sixteen bars. Now the first couple lead round the figure and face outward at their place, while the side couples fall in behind them—eight

bars. Cross to the right and left, the gentlemen passing behind the ladies, as in the ordinary Lancers—eight bars. All separate, and face partners in two lines, joining hands across so as to form an arch through which the leading couple pass down and return, then, disjoining hands, all advance and retire in two lines and turn partners with both hands to places. Each of these last movements occupies eight bars.

This figure is gone through four times, each couple leading round in succession. For the finale, in place of the grand right and left, set to corners and turn, then join hands in a circle, advance and retire, advance again and bow.

It is customary, in dancing these Lancers, to bow and courtesy at the commencement of each figure. In the above description, I have merely used the word "bow," but of course it is understood that the lady will courtesy. Americans use the word "address," to cover both the bow and courtesy, and the leading couples they designate "heads," because they rightly consider that the term "tops," and especially its correlative, are lacking in refinement. Leading or first and second couples are the more correct terms here.

The original music of the Diagonal or Saratoga Lancers may be obtained from the Galop Publish-

ing Company, of Boston; but they can also be danced to any Lancers music, the only difference in the arrangement being in the fourth figure, wherein a longer pause must be made in bowing to the opposite couple to fill up the extra bars before doing the right and left at corners. The advantage of learning to dance these Lancers to the ordinary music is that any eight people who know them can form a set among themselves, and go through the figures, while others are employed in dancing the usual arrangement; in this case, however, each figure will have to be gone through four times.

I should mention that, for information concerning American dancing, I am indebted to Mr. Woodworth Masters, President of the National Association of Teachers of Dancing in America—an association which has recently paid me the compliment of voting me an honorary member.

VI.—THE "NEW VALSE."

"In Tempe's vale, her native maids,
Amidst the festal sounding shades,
To some unwearied minstrel dancing,
While, as his flying fingers kissed the strings,
Love framed with Mirth a gay fantastic round."

—WILLIAM COLLINS.

"HAVE you heard of the new valse?" "No; what is it like?" "Well, I don't know myself, but I have been told that there is one."

This is a fragment of conversation that may be overheard in any ball-room, for, like the "great gooseberry" of the silly season, the "new valse" in winter affords a never-failing subject of speculation.

But what is the "new valse?"

There is a story of a young lady who went into a music shop to purchase a *pièce de salon*, and was asked by the young man who served her if she would mind it being a little difficult, say in five or six sharps. "Oh, not at all," she replied, "because when there are more than two, I never trouble to play them."

Now that is precisely the limit which not a few young men of the present day put upon their number of steps in dancing. When there are more than two they never trouble to take them. Why should they? They have, by their own genius, without any professional assistance whatever, made the wonderful discovery that it is possible to turn round in two strides and a twist; so they think they have arrived at the *ne plus ultra* of dancing, and are pleased to call this artistic and unique performance the "new valse."

This, then, is *their* idea of the "new valse"; but yonder is a man capering round his partner on the tips of his toes. Ask him what he is doing, and he will probably inform you that it is the "new valse." And that fellow shuffling along with bent knees and oscillating shoulders; what is he doing? Why, the "new valse," of course, don't you know?

Yes, they are all dancing the "new valse"—at least, so they will tell you—and any keen observer will not, I think, take long to arrive at the conclusion that the name is often a mere euphemism for incapacity of performance.

But the "new valse" is advertised?

Well, probably those who advertise to teach it call whatever movement they impart by that name because they have discovered that it

possesses a marvellous power of allurement. It would seem that a certain order of intelligence is as readily attracted by the sound of "new valse" as another, and perhaps somewhat analogous order of intelligence, is attracted by the sight of thistles. And again, if people *will* have a new valse, and there is no genuine article of that description, what are mediocre teachers to do? They are afraid to say it is all nonsense; only teachers of good standing and reputation could afford to do that. And so it often happens that some old grandmotherly movement is trotted out, and made to do duty for the "new valse," and the people who learn, hood-winked themselves, go straightway and hoodwink others. There is doubtless about this mode of procedure a certain mixture of that which Lord Bacon assures us "doth ever add pleasure"; but perhaps this is not so much to be wondered at, if we consider that, according to some authorities, the invention of dancing itself may be attributed to the Father of Lies.

My great objection to the term "new valse" is that it is indefinite, it means nothing, since any movement may be called a new valse. Some are pleased to call the beautiful modern *trois temps*—which, by the way, is danced by all who waltz really well—by that name.

The term *new* in dancing is a very misleading one, and should only be used with discrimination. I was reading a description of a Quadrille the other day, written by someone whose terpsichorean ability was probably greater than his literary talent, for he wrote: "The gentleman now turns the *new lady* on his left, then each *new lady* in succession," after which he would, I suppose, return to the *old lady*. The writer did not, of course, say this, but the idea naturally suggests itself.

Now Minerva, when she sprang from the brain of Jupiter, fully grown and completely armed, might with propriety have been termed a brand new lady; but those coming into the world in the ordinary manner, small at first, and gradually growing out of assimilated protoplasmic material that has been used over and over again throughout countless ages, can scarcely be termed *new* ladies. Truly, as the son of Sirach observes, "There is no *new* thing under the sun"—no, not even a "new valse."

For I have not the slightest doubt, in my own mind, that a movement very much like the modern waltz was danced in Ancient Greece. Not the stride and twist affair, *that*, at least, would never have been tolerated in the country of the Parthenon; but the graceful, tripping

trois temps, which, whether danced as a *pas seul*, by the fair Aspasia in Athenian halls, or by youths and maidens together in the vale of Tempe, would surely not have ill-accorded with refined and classic taste. It may even have been danced before Greece was thought of, amid those ancient temples of Peru, compared to which, we are told, the monuments of Egypt are as things of yesterday—or in the lost Atlantis. Who knows! *

To come back a few thousand years, however, seriously, the "new valse" notion may, I think, be compared to an *ignis fatuus*, which lures would-be dancers from the path of true art. The aim of the teacher should be to bring the waltz to perfection, and not to mislead by employing ambiguous terms. I am afraid that little improvement is to be expected in the general style of dancing while people are content to go to amateurs for instruction, and to those who, instead of making Art their mistress, and endeavouring to improve public taste are, anxious only to pander to its caprices.

* Speaking of the education of a youth in the heroic age, Mr. Gladstone says ("Juventis Mundi," p. 403-4): "He joins the dance in the festivals of religion; the maiden's hand upon his wrist. . . . . as they course from point to point, or wheel in round on round."

VII.—THE ONE PERFECT WALTZ.

"Myself, if I to heaven may once aspire,
If that be dancing, will a dancer be."
—Sir John Davies.

The beautiful modern waltz, which has been already alluded to as the one that is danced by all who may be said to really waltz well, has doubtless been perfected by a kind of evolutionary process which has been going on since the introduction of the waltz some seventy years since: whatever was best in all the variations of step and movement that have been from time to time invented, having been retained, while whatever was worthless has been discarded, on the principle of the survival of the fittest. But as in the great process of evolution, there are beings which still remain much in their primordial state, so in the smaller matter under consideration, we find that many teachers still impart, and many dancers still perform, a very primitive kind of waltz; indeed it is only a comparative

few who have really been, as it were, initiated into the mysteries of that entrancing movement which may well be termed the Queen of Dances.

It is not, however, my intention to here consider what this evolutionary process has been in detail—to trace the influence of such movements as the *troistemps*, *deuxtemps*, *sauteuse*, etc., from the old circular waltz which diverted our grandmothers, or maybe, great-grandmothers, down to the present time. To be candid, my personal acquaintance with the waltz does not extend further back than about a third of the time it has been in vogue, and consequently my conceptions of the original waltz are like yours, dear reader, if you have any, the result of what I have read, or been shown, or told. But my ideas of the waltz which gives the title to the present chapter are the result of careful investigation, analysis, and considerable practical experience; for which reason they may not be devoid of interest.

One of the conclusions to which experience has led me is that, notwithstanding the variety of "steps" that are supposed to exist, all people who *can* waltz at the present day appear to waltz in very much the same manner.

Mind, I do not include among those who can waltz girls who simply flutter—that is the word that best describes the movement—around one

with an unlimited number of steps, or men who slide about with only two long ones, under the impression that they are waltzing; I mean such as take actually three steps to a bar, neither more nor less. And I would here call attention to the fact that a person's ability to waltz must in nowise be gauged by his own estimation of the matter. Many who are egregiously bad waltzers seem to entertain a notion that they are remarkably good ones, and others appear perfectly satisfied with mediocrity. The sentiment expressed by Hazlett in one of his essays that "he who is determined not to be satisfied with anything short of perfection will not do anything to please either himself or others" may be true enough of some things, but as regards waltzing it certainly will not hold water. The nearer a person's waltzing does approach to perfection the greater pleasure will he dérive from it. Moreover, one who has attained perfection in waltzing is not likely to be pleased with anything short of it in a partner.

Another conclusion I have arrived at is, that success in waltzing depends quite as much upon the action of the upper part of the body as upon the movements of the feet.

There are many people who appear to waltz very well, who do not take their steps with exact mathematical precision—who are, in fact, scarcely

aware how they do take them. If you asked such persons to show you slowly how they waltzed, they might make an effort, but ere long their mental condition would most likely resemble that of the unfortunate insect of whom we read:

> "The centipede was happy, till
> One day, the toad in fun
> Said, 'Pray which leg moves after which?'
> This strained his mind to such a pitch,
> He lay distracted in a ditch,
> Considering how to run."

Only they would probably fall exhausted on a chair, considering how to waltz.

How, then, is it that these people are able to dance so well with partners? Well, the reason is simple enough. They possess the faculty of imitation, and naturally move their bodies and limbs in accordance with physical laws; or, in other words, they are those whom I have elsewhere spoken of as being naturally graceful. They will sometimes dance the perfect waltz without any trouble whatever; without even knowing how it is done—a thing that many would give a great deal to accomplish, but are unfortunately unable to find anyone competent enough to teach them beyond a certain point—the sticking point, and so they are tempted to either give it up as hope-

less, or else content themselves, as I have already said, with mediocrity of performance.

It is not a question of step. Anybody can learn the step of the waltz with a little perseverance and patience, if it is correctly taught—which I regret to say is not always the case. More than that, however, is wanted to enable people to waltz. They must learn how to move every part of their body in harmony with the actions of their feet; how to direct, assist and reciprocate the movements of their partner; how to take advantage of—instead of work against—natural laws, centrifugal force, gravitation, etc.; how to exercise the right muscles at the right time, and many other things which it is almost needless to say cannot be satisfactorily imparted by anyone who has not given his attention to something more than the mere steps and arrangements of dances.

If I were ignorant of waltzing, and wanted to learn, I should give all professors who announced that they imparted the "new valse" a wide birth, because there is no knowing what that may mean. There may be some who teach the correct waltz under that name, but, as I have elsewhere said, *any* movement may be called a new waltz, whether correct or not.

I do not like to make a positive assertion unless I am able to prove its truth, so I will endeavour to show that there is reason in what I say.

A short time ago a gentleman living in the Isle of Wight sent me a letter stating that he had seen the "new valse" advertised, and had sent for a book professing to give an explanation of the dance. This he cut out and enclosed, asking my opinion of it, at the same time expressing his own in a very decided manner. Here is the explanation as given, and for heaven's sake bear in mind, reader, that it is not mine!

"The gentleman's step:—1. Slide the left foot, turning half round to the right. 2. *Slide the right foot* (the italics are mine). 3. Bring the left foot close up behind. 4. Slide the right foot forward and rise on it. Bring the left foot forward and repeat these four (!) steps. The lady's step: 1. Slide the right foot forward. 2. Bring the left foot past it, turning half round to the right. 3. Bring the right foot close in front. 4. Slide the left foot, turning half round, bringing the right foot close in front."

I am not aware of the name of the author of this concise explanation, only a part of the book

having been sent, but I think that the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics would be comparatively easy work to anyone who should succeed in learning from it "entirely without the aid of a master." What I want to draw the reader's attention to, however, is the step No. 2. of the gentleman, that I have italicised. It says, "Slide the right foot." Just so; but where? As no clue whatever is given as to whether it is to be slid before or behind, to the side or round, we may reasonably conclude that one may slide it *anywhere*. *Ergo*, anything does for a "new valse." Q.E.D.

The explanation is quoted *verbatim et literatim*, all there is of it; only in the original book, which is published at a shilling, it is—together with a piece of ornament, the use of which I have failed to discover—spread out over two entire pages. The writer cannot be accused of prolixity; indeed, judging from what I have seen, the whole volume could easily be read in ten minutes, but the time it would take to fathom its meaning is perhaps incalculable.

The following is a definition of a waltz given in a cyclopædia published over forty years ago:—

"Waltz: (from waltzen Germ.: to roll) a gay dance in triple time, and executed by two persons

who, almost embracing, rapidly turn round on an axis of their own while moving quickly in a circle whose radius is from ten to twelve feet, according to the size of the room."

It is evident that the waltz was far from having reached a state of perfection at the time this was written. And can we wonder that the dance should have met with so much opposition if that is the way in which its votaries behaved? What business had they "almost embracing in the ball-room?" Surely there were quiet places where they could indulge in these little endearments if they wanted to, without making such a parade of them before others. We never see anything like it now—well, "hardly ever!" The derivation is, of course, correct, and the Germans still carry it out to the letter in their waltzing. They do roll, with a vengeance; and they waltz on the tips of their toes, which is worse. But if you ask a German whether he can waltz, he will look thoroughly astonished at your audacity, and almost invariably reply by saying, "Did you ever know a German who could *not* waltz?" Well, I have, a good many, but must confess that I never yet came across one who seemed in the least aware of his deficiency.

These remarks are not intended as reflections; they are simply facts. The Germans are fine

fellows, and have many excellent qualities, but they do think they are magnificent waltzers. There is no mistake about that! In this and in other things there is little need for them to pray with the pious Scotchman, "Lord, gie us a gude conceit o' oursels."

To return, however, to the definition. If we accept the above as complete, or are content to regard waltzing, as so many appear to, as merely a means of sliding, shuffling, or jumping round, then it is clear that the result may be obtained by a variety of different steps, as has hitherto been the case. But the time has arrived when, aided by past experience, we should, I think, endeavour to take a more scientific view of waltzing. There is only one method of taking the steps so that onward progress as well as rotatory motion may result from the mechanical action of the feet, without the employment of muscular effort to impel oneself forward. This movement I described in "Dancing as it should be,"* in which I thoroughly explained the sequence of steps as that which combined the most perfect grace of action with the greatest measure of enjoyment, and it is for that reason that I here call it the one perfect waltz.

This, I venture to think, would be a correct

* Published by F. Pitman, London.

definition: The Perfect Waltz is a dance in triple time, of dactylic rhythm, consisting of six sliding steps, of which three are rotary, and three progressive and curvilineal—the curve described being of a cycloidal nature.

Now, if you were to ask an ordinary waltzer whether this was the kind of thing he did, he would probably stare at you, and ask you to repeat what you said. Then he would think a little, and eventually say "I don't know." Nevertheless, all really good waltzers of the present day do waltz thus. No matter how they may have been taught, this is what it must eventually come to before they can go round satisfactorily with partners. I have said that they do not all take their steps with mathematical precision, but they always take them in a certain order, and in a certain manner. Hence it is that good waltzers never experience any difficulty in dancing together.

The movements in waltzing ought, like those in walking, as already explained, to become to a certain extent automatic, to be taken without consideration and with a very small expenditure of muscular exertion. This can only be effected by allowing the limbs to follow the action of the trunk, in a measure. I have often succeeded in teaching people to waltz in a very short time,

who have been vainly trying to accomplish it for years, by directing my attention to the movements of their shoulders rather than those of their feet. At the same time, although, as previously stated, a person may be able to waltz without knowing the precise nature of his steps, it is absolutely necessary that whoever undertakes to teach others should be intimately acquainted with the mechanical construction of the dance, and be able to take each step and movement with scientific accuracy.

Of course there are obvious reasons why some people cannot waltz. A man with knock-knees, for instance, is not likely to become a good waltzer, because he has the disadvantage of resting on a broad base, and his legs, in turning, describe a more extended arc than they should. A bow-legged man may do better, but his movements will not be characterized by their elegance. A slight tendency to convexity of limb, such as might be induced by much horse riding in early youth, does not offer any obstacle to the acquirement of waltzing; but the slightest approach to the opposite form presents a difficulty—a difficulty, however, which, if the tendency be not too pronounced, is not insuperable.

I have already, in treating of "gracefulness," insisted on the absolute necessity in waltzing of

a free and natural action of the spinal column. As, in the act of swinging, the curve of the body must always be outward from the centre of oscillation, so in waltzing should it always be outward from the centre of revolution. It is also necessary, in order to waltz successfully, that the partners should for the time being revolve as one body; and this is to be accomplished by their drawing slightly away from one another, the resistance being regulated by the rapidity of rotation. This is taking advantage of what is termed centrifugal force, or that which tends to throw a body from the centre.

There is, I suppose, another but far less scientific method by which this kind of unification may be brought about, and that is by the partners pressing so closely together that they become as one by actual contact. But however attractive this method may appear to certain sons of Mars—who, by the way, generally assume the same attitude in waltzing as they do in drilling—it is not at all calculated to meet with maternal approbation. From such sentences as this: "Et le comte surprit ce regarde comme il avait surpris les moindres emotions de cette jolie fille qu'il serrait contre lui,"* when waltzing is described in

* "Tête Folle," by Th. Bentzon, in the "Revue des Deux Moudes."

French novels, and from personal observation, I am led to believe that this is the generally received notion of holding one's partner by our neighbours across the Channel. It is also the idea suggested by the "almost embracing" in the old definition alluded to, and you will see dancers represented in this affectionate position in all old-fashioned wood-cuts. But it is satisfactory to notice that this is by no means the approved modern style. It now seems that the dancers try rather to get as far away from one another as possible.

Without going to extremes, however, I should say that it was proper in waltzing to have the feet rather near to, and alternately glancing between and on the outside of those of the partner —that is, in the ordinary manner of turning, the right between and the left on the outside. Then from the feet upwards, the distance between the waltzers should increase, till at the waist they are at least a foot apart; after which they should incline slightly towards each other, leaving a space of about nine inches at the upper part of the chest. No one with even the most rudimentary knowledge of mechanics will deny that the figure thus formed by the two dancers—*i.e.*, with a small base, and the greatest extension at the point of resistance,

is the one best adapted for purposes of rotation.

It may be as well to call attention to the fact that in the above computation I am assuming that the partners are of about equal height, or the man slightly taller; also that their figures are not a very long way removed from those of the classic models. Where there is an abnormal development of bust on the one part and an abdominous tendency on the other, or perhaps on both, it is obvious that the relative distances must be regulated by circumstances.

One of the great difficulties which presents itself in learning to waltz, that is, to waltz *properly*, is the correct muscular action of the lower limbs. This is not alternated, as in walking, at every step, but at every three steps. Thus the extensors (the muscles which extend a limb) are employed in one leg during a whole bar, and the other remains flexed all the time, notwithstanding that a step is actually taken with it. Herein is one of the great secrets of lightness in waltzing. The second step must always be taken without the slightest weight being allowed to fall on the foot, and without the limb being in the slightest degree rigid—that is, of course, if perfection be the goal aimed at. If in the second of the three progressive steps the body be correctly balanced

and the limb allowed to oscillate by its pendulum action from the ball-and-socket joint at the hip, the foot will, without the slightest control on the part of the waltzer, arrive exactly in the right place, and consequently in the *perfect* waltz this step may always be taken without any muscular effort whatever, it being simply the result of the action of gravitation on the limb.

Lightness in waltzing has nothing whatever to do with the actual avoir-du-pois of the dancer, nor is it to be acquired by rising very much on the toes, as is vulgarly supposed. It consists entirely in the fact of having the whole balance of the body thrown on to the foot that is not actually in progressive motion—a matter which I have already fully explained in "Dancing as it should be."

A great consideration in good waltzing is that the toe must always be the first to reach the ground, because, unlike the action in walking, the weight is not immediately thrown on to the foot when it strikes the ground, but *gradually* alternated at every third step from one foot to the other. A graceful, gliding, continuous movement can only be acquired when the transfer of the weight of the body from one limb to the other is effected imperceptibly—in a legato manner, as it were. In the most perfect waltzing the feet

are never completely raised from the floor. It should also be remembered that the divisions of the bar in dancing, are not isochronous as in the music; but the first step occupies as much time as the other two together.

I have mentioned these facts because they may possibly be of interest and advantage to the reader. Moreover, they may furnish a clue to enable us to understand why it is that so many people, even after they have taken innumerable lessons and have been practising for years, are still such intolerably bad waltzers. The fact is, they have never been properly taught. As the muscular action of the limbs in waltzing differs so much from that employed in walking and running, it is clear that, except in cases where correct movements are intuitively acquired, mere practice will not suffice to ensure perfection. The notion that constant practice is all that is necessary is, however, as popular as it is fallacious. If incorrect habits of movement be once acquired, does it not stand to reason that practice will only confirm them, and do more harm than good? It is the same as if a person were to continually practice the scales with the wrong fingering. Of course, properly regulated practice is excellent in its way; but what is more important, and what is most wanted, is thorough

good instruction. One or two lessons from a teacher who knows what he is about, will go further towards making a perfect waltzer than will twenty from such as know very little more of the real theory of waltzing than do the pupils whom they pretend to instruct.

VIII.—THE REVERSE.

"Beware of desperate steps."

—COWPER.

"But still bear up
And steer right onward."

—MILTON.

A GENTLEMAN who came one day for a lesson in waltzing told me that, although he very frequently received invitations to dances, he rarely accepted them, because, being aware of his inability to dance well, he did not wish to become a bore to his partners. He had also a great objection to appearing in the *rôle* of a certain quadruped which, although known on one occasion to develop a remarkable power of utterance, has never been renowned for its terpsichorean talent.

This is not exactly as he said it, I admit. His own expression was terse and to the point, but like the fastidious divine of the Restoration who told his hearers that, unless they repented of their sins, they would all go to "a place which it was not considered good manners to mention," I adopt a periphrasis for the sake of politeness. Perhaps

it was hardly fair to compare a man who persists in dancing badly to the long-suffering animal alluded to—I mean hardly fair to the animal—inasmuch as it makes no pretention to being a dancer, and does not, like some of its, in this instance, less sagacious brethren of the bimana, delight in publicly exhibiting its incapacity.

These remarks, I am afraid, are not calculated to sit well on the stomach of certain indifferent modern dancers; but then they should adopt the same plan as did he whom I have quoted—they should either learn to dance properly or else refrain from dancing altogether. At first sight this may appear a rather unkind thing to say, because the popular impression is that some people can never be taught to dance well. This, however, is by no means my own view of the matter. I do not mean to say that all people could learn to accomplish difficult ballet steps, because some of them require special training, but I do think that anyone properly formed—that is, where there is no congenital or accidental deformity of person—can be taught to dance the ordinary drawing-room dances well enough, if he or she will only give sufficient time and trouble to the matter, and not be contented with merely trying to "pick up" dancing. In practical support of this view, I am always willing and

pleased to take the most apparently hopeless and impracticable cases in hand, and to guarantee results.

But it is the reverse in particular that here claims our attention, the above observations being called forth by the fact that much of the prejudice which has hitherto existed against reversing has been due to the clumsiness exhibited by those who, without troubling to learn the proper way in which it was to be accomplished, commenced their undirected practice in crowded ball-rooms, to the inconvenience and annoyance of all other dancers.

It is quite troublesome enough for some men to waltz in the ordinary direction, without their attempting the more difficult reverse. Facility in this case can only be acquired by having proper instruction and practice, and balls or private dances are not the proper places at which to practice dancing—at least not experimentally. There are plenty of schools for instruction scattered over the country, and a few good teachers. Let a man who wishes to reverse begin by taking lessons and practising in a class, where perfect dancing is not, of course, necessarily expected, and let him not attempt a public exhibiton of his attainment until he has acquired sufficient skill to avoid bumping against and annoying other

dancers. Until he can do this, he had better content himself with going round the ordinary way.

It is comparatively easy for a lady to reverse, provided she will only put her left foot forward at the right juncture, and not break the sequence of steps and successive alternations of balance. I would guarantee to teach almost any lady who could waltz correctly the ordinary way, to reverse well in half-an-hour, provided, of course, that she had a good partner. But with a man the case is altogether different. He has not only to learn to reverse himself, but, what is far more difficult, to convey to his partner his intention to change the direction of rotation; and this is the difficulty that so many, for want of proper instruction, find insuperable.

In reversing, as, indeed, in all dancing, it is proper for the man to take the lead, the movements of the lady being directed almost entirely by the muscular action of her partner's right arm, which is around her waist. When, therefore, we consider how muscular action results from the impulse of the will conveyed through the nerves, it is evident that any perplexity or indecision arising in the man's mind as regards the right course to pursue, will manifest itself in a feeble and erratic action of his arm, and

consequently, the lady's movements, instead of being duly controlled, so that she responds immediately to the impulse, will only be partially influenced, enough, perhaps, to cause her to deviate from the track that has already been taken, but not sufficiently to indicate a new direction. It is needless to say that hopeless confusion will result.

Again, the act of reversing necessitates a change of muscular action, for whereas, in turning the ordinary way, the man has been drawing his partner towards him, and using what are termed the flexor muscles, he must, in changing the movement, impel his partner, and thus bring the extensors into play. But even while doing this, he should still continue to draw away bodily, on account of the centrifugal force, as previously explained, and his partner is impelled to the left simply by the action of his arm, the exertion required being less in proportion as the angle made by the extended right arm and surface of the chest becomes acute, and greater as it is allowed to become obtuse.

All other things being equal, it will be easier for a strong man to reverse than a weak one, and also it will be easier for a determined than a vacillating man to do so. Anyone of an impulsive nature should endeavour to avoid waste of

energy by attempting to reverse while in rapid motion or while advancing, since part of the power that should be conserved towards directing the movements of his partner is thus expended in the movements of his own legs.

I like to see decision and vigour exhibited in a man's dancing, an air of confidence and repose, as if he had thorough control over his movements. Some, however, appear as if their legs were running away with them. A man, for instance, who tries to waltz on the tips of his toes may succeed in looking like a Merry Andrew, but he will never make a thorough good waltzer unless he alters his style. Decision in dancing can only be acquired by having a thorough control over the muscles and a perfect adjustment of balance.

Although I have here spoken at length only of the action of the man's right arm, it is obvious that in reversing there must be correct methods of muscular and dynamical action proper to every part of the body, but it would occupy too much space to explain them. Sufficient has, perhaps, been said to show that those who wish to become perfect waltzers, and reverse correctly, have something to learn before proficiency can be acquired. Unfortunately, however, simple as these things may appear, they are by no means

generally known, and are consequently not generally taught. As I have previously said, a few people may learn to waltz perfectly well by simply being shown the steps—provided they are shown correctly—but there are many cases in which such a method is wholly ineffectual. Anyhow, it is clear that a thorough acquaintance with the scientific aspects of waltzing must be of considerable advantage to the teacher, because it enables him to understand and enter into the difficulties experienced by each individual pupil. Like a doctor skilled in diagnosis, he finds out what is wrong, and goes at once to the root of the matter. He perceives immediately in what particular part of the body the muscular action is imperfect, or out of accord with the rest, and by some specially adapted exercise, he brings the part into proper working order, and thus, perhaps, in ten minutes, succeeds in doing what ten years' misdirected practice have failed to accomplish.

IX.—THE ROMANTIC ELEMENT IN WALTZING.

"And when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell."

—Byron.

Of all modern dances, the waltz is doubtless the one that most readily lends itself to suggestions of romance and love; and it may not, perhaps, be difficult to discover the reason, when we consider the reciprocal nature of the movement, the seductive measure of the music, and the exquisitely tender titles given to many of the melodies that accompany the dancers' steps.

Waltz music is certainly the only dance music which consistently admits of the reproduction of those plaintive airs which have already been wedded to words expressive of despairing passion or blighted hopes—those "sweetest songs that tell of saddest thought." It is true that standard

mournful tunes are sometimes introduced in quadrilles, but then they have to be played as quickly as the merry ones, which effectually destroys their charm. And with regard to the names of waltzes, surely such titles as "Only Once More," or "Loved and Lost," which appear quite in harmony with the graceful, gliding rhythm of the waltz, would seem altogether inappropriate if given to music that marked the sprightly action of the polka.

Those who have sufficient time to indulge in novel reading will find that wherever a ball-room scene is introduced, any of those whispered sentiments of affection that tend to make or mar the happiness of life, as the case may be, are always breathed either during the progress of a waltz, or else immediately after, in the conservatory. Without pretending to have a very extensive acquaintance with modern works of fiction, as far as I have gone I do not remember to have read a single pretty remark that was supposed to have been uttered while the couple were engaged in dancing a polka or schottische; in fact, if any mention be made at all of these or other dances, they are generally dismissed with a very few words, and anything of a romantic nature is invariably reserved for the waltz.

It is amusing to notice also how the hero, if

he dances at all, is always a first-rate waltzer, while, not the villain, but the fool of the story, is usually represented as an awkward fellow. It will sometimes happen that the heroine's notions are of such a severely orthodox character that she refrains from waltzing on moral grounds, like, for instance, Alliette in "La Morte." But was there ever a heroine who, if she waltzed at all, did not waltz to perfection? And mark how the steps of the lovers are always in perfect unison, how beautifully they keep time together —"floating" is the word generally used to express their movements.

They never tread upon one another's toes, or fall down—unless one of them happens to fall down dead, as I once read in a story not, perhaps, of the highest order. In this case, of course, it was all right, and made a startling *dénouement*, but any approach to ordinary clumsiness on either side would destroy all the romance. It must be:

> "Four feet tripping in perfect time,
> Two hearts that beat in a single chime."

and all that sort of thing.

The above couplet somehow reminds one of the fantastic notion of Aristophanes', that mortals were originally made round, having four

arms and four legs; that for some offence against Zeus they were cut asunder, and ever since, one half has been going about the world seeking its companion half. Would it not be strange if the two halves should by natural affinity come together unexpectedly in a waltz? A young man is struck with the appearance of a certain young lady in a ball-room, he seeks and obtains an introduction, they commence waltzing, and lo! the unanimity of their movements is perfect, they literally waltz as one, for indeed they are one.

But, descending from the empyrean of imagination to the sober realities of everyday life, we shall find that the feet of many whose hearts are supposed to beat in the most perfect accord, cannot be brought to trip it together in even tolerable time. Many who are regarded literally as one legally and socially, appear to have very opposite opinions with regard to the action of their extremities, when brought into juxtaposition. In other words, it frequently happens that husband and wife, although each may be able to dance fairly well with other partners, are quite unable to waltz with any degree of comfort together, and however trivial it may appear, the fact is by no means conducive to matrimonial happiness if they are in the habit of going to

many dances. This is the kind of thing that generally occurs:—

"My love!" the husband will say, before they start for the party, "I should like to have just one waltz with you this evening, if you don't mind; and do let us see if we cannot manage to keep time together a little better than we generally do."

"With all my heart, dear," will be the reply. "I'm sure nothing would give me greater pleasure than for us to be able to waltz well together, and indeed I do not see why we should not be able to do so, after all, if we try."

Then at the party, after some hours, during which the wife has been gliding gracefully enough through several waltzes—one partner, perhaps, having been specially favoured—and the husband has been acquitting himself tolerably well with different girls, it will be:—

"Now, darling, it is *our* turn; are you ready to begin?"

"Oh, yes, dear, when you like—there, now, what makes you hold me so tightly? It feels uncomfortable; I can hardly breathe."

"Do I hold you tightly? It doesn't seem to me as if I did. No one else has ever told me I held her too tightly."

"No, of course not; no one else would like to

tell you of such a thing, but you ought to know. My back is not made of iron, and your arm does hurt me so. I always ache after I have been dancing with you."

"Oh! now, don't say that. There, what makes your foot keep coming against mine? I'm sure your step must be a little wrong. I never kick anybody else's feet."

"Perhaps not, but you don't forget to kick mine; they will be all black and blue to-morrow. I always have occasion to remember it when I dance with you, and then you turn round and say it is my fault. Why don't you learn to dance properly, and not be so clumsy?"

"Well, but my dear, you know it *must* be your fault. I am sure that last dance I had with Miss Lightfoot——"

"Oh! as to that, you are welcome to dance with Miss Lightfoot as much as you like. I am sure *I* don't want to spoil your pleasure. What did you ask me to dance at all for, if you prefer dancing with others? I was getting on well enough before you came, and I am not such a bad waltzer as you would make me out to be; why, Captain Twister, who waltzes beautifully you know, says he would rather waltz with me than anybody——"

"Captain Twister be —— I tell you what it

is, Madam, I don't half like your waltzing so much with that fellow, and what is more, I won't have it."

"How can you make yourself so truly ridiculous, Charles? I think you had better take me to a seat. People are looking at us. Besides, it is impossible to dance while you are going on like that; you forget all about your steps. I wonder you like to behave so."

And with this parting shot, the lady, as usual, having the last word, they sit down and sulk, and when poor Captain Twister comes to claim his next dance, it is made palpably evident to him that something is amiss, and he is asked to forego his claim on the grounds of the lady not feeling very well.

No, these little episodes when they occur frequently, do not contribute to the happiness of life. Married people, when they find that dissimilar ideas about waltzing are apt to disturb the harmony of their relations, would do well to either spend a little time with some competent teacher of dancing, who will probably soon discover what is wrong, or else content themselves with the happiness to be found at their own fireside.

But if the practice of dancing does sometimes lead to little matrimonial differences, on the

other hand it is certain that many a happy and noble journey down the "long path" may be traced to a dance, in which those who have taken it have been first brought together. Why, even the uncompromising author of "A Treatise against Dauncing made Dialoguewise," after adducing every argument he can think of against the pastime, after endorsing St. Chrysostom's assurance that "it came first from from the devil," is constrained to confess that "by dauncings and leapings very many honest marriages are brought to parse." Those who accept the generally received opinion that happy marriages are made in a good place, will perhaps find some difficulty in reconciling the latter statement with the assertion regarding the original source of dancing.

If, however, it be true that many men have gained sweethearts by the excellence of their dancing, how shall we estimate the number of those who have lost them by their clumsiness? Truly, a man who attempts to dance and cannot, presents an appearance calculated to estrange the heart of any maiden. Wealth, good looks, or even learning, will not always compensate for awkwardness and ill manners at the present day, any more than they did in those far-off times when Hippocleides lost the hand of Agarista

through bad dancing and want of decorum on the day that was to have decided his fate, and when the lady's father, Cleisthenes, uttered the well-known exclamation, "You have danced away your marriage."

X.—DANCING CHILDREN.

"See! how the younglings frisk along the meads
As May comes on and wakes the balmy wind!
Rampant with life their joy all joy exceeds,
Yet what but high-strung health this dancing-pleasure breeds?"

—THOMSON.

"NONE of our children learn dancing. We do not encourage it. We take a serious view of life."

The above remark was made by a governess in my hearing.

Now I must confess to having no strong predilection in favour of people who are always serious. I prefer those who can laugh. To me, at least, there is no sound in life sweeter than the innocent laughter of a child, not even the lark's song, and the key-note of the music of each is gladness. There is music also in the rippling laughter of girls, and in the hearty, genial laughter of men and women. But it is the cause of laughter that determines its tone. There is no music in the laugh "that speaks the vacant mind," in mock-

ing laughter, or in that sound of merriment which the wise man of old compared to the "crackling of thorns under a pot." The ill-timed laughter of a fool is always provoking, but even this is not, perhaps, so provoking as is the imperturbable gravity of those people who do not appear to have a particle of mirth in their whole composition. These are the fools of the first water—miserable fools. I refer not to such as are bowed down by genuine sorrow and distress. Life may well wear a serious aspect to them, and we should respect their grief; I mean only those who, having really nothing whatever to trouble them, still persist in going about as if they had the whole world's cares on their shoulders, who are rarely seen to smile and never known to laugh.

The Koran says that "a mountain may change its place, but a man will not change his disposition;" therefore, as we cannot alter them, we must be content to let these people journey miserably to their life's end. They are the wet blankets of society, and cast a damper on all with whom they are brough in contact. But they should not be permitted to damp the joy of childhood. I would never send a child of mine to a school where they would not allow dancing, and professed to "take a serious view of life." Fancy teaching a little child to take a serious view of life!

The nearest approximate to a condition of perfect happiness in this world is, I suppose, to have the body in sound health, and the mind absolutely free from anxiety; and as this state of things is more frequently found in early childhood, before acquaintance is made with the real troubles of life, and the "painful family of Death," so we conceive childhood to be the happiest period of existence. But alas! it is not always so. A little child who is haunted by the fear of what takes place when life has ended—with visions of eternal torment, or the terrors of the Apocalypse, cannot be said to have its mind free from anxiety. Wise people, who have regard to their children's health, say little or nothing to them about these things; they only dwell on such subjects at schools where they "take a serious view of life."

Now I cannot help thinking that it is far more wicked to teach a little child anything that is calculated to disturb its peace of mind, than it is to teach it to dance. Why, has not the Creator of the world seen fit to ordain that the art of dancing, or frisking about, should be the natural concomitant of high-strung health in children and animals? And is it not, as Mr. Besant truly observes, "a physical law, that in youth the limbs should move in rhythmic step to the sound of music"?

Some of the Early Fathers thought it not irreverent to teach that the angels dance in heaven. And, indeed, why not? Orthodoxy teaches that the angels sing, and dancing, as Rowbotham, in his History, assures us, is the "source from which music has ever drawn," hence they are inseparably connected. But dancing, as a pure art, or an innocent diversion, needs not to be associated, as it too often is, with ideas of frivolity and dissipation.

Of course all the Early Fathers did not entertain the same views respecting dancing. Tertullian, for instance, generously includes dancers in the list of those whom he would "admire, laugh and rejoice to see groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness." It is interesting to observe that the same writer strongly disapproved of shaving, clipping the beard, and the use of the warm bath—a bath in any form being a luxury to which many of the ascetic Fathers seemed to have entertained the greatest aversion.

There is also a letter of St. Jerome's, addressed to Laeta, quoted by the Rev. Dr. Jessop,* in which he gives advice on the "education of a young lady whose mother was very anxious to bring her up religiously." Among other things, he says, according to Dr. Jessop, that she is "by

* *Nineteenth Century.* August, 1886.

no means to learn dancing or fancy work"—I suppose because these things are held to be trivial. She is "not to allow any young gentleman with curly hair to smile at her"—though, indeed, I do not see how she could prevent his doing that, if he felt so disposed. She is "not to paint," nor to dye her hair red—which is good sound advice, and she is "not to mince her words, as the fashion is"—which will apply equally well to young ladies of the present day. But excellent as this letter is in many respects, I should not advise any persons who have children to bring it forward in an argument against dancing, in case their opponent might happen to recollect that it also contains an injunction to the effect that the young lady is "not to dine with her parents *lest she should learn to be greedy!*"

It would be far better if parents were to let their children have a little more dancing and a little less cramming—I mean of the educational kind. The dancing does them good, while the cramming only does them harm, both physically and mentally. As a writer in one of the magazines said lately, "Their heads are crammed so full of other people's ideas that there is no room left for any of their own." That great scientist, Professor Huxley, for whose writings I entertain a sincere and humble admiration, speaks of this

over pressure system as "the educational abomination of the present day." He says, in his essay on Technical Education: "Some wise man (who probably was not an early riser) has said of early risers in general that they are conceited all the forenoon and stupid all the afternoon. Now, whether this is true of early risers in the common acceptation of the word or not, I will not pretend to say, but it is too often true of the unhappy children who are forced to rise too early in their classes. They are conceited all the forenoon of life, and stupid all the afternoon."

I said a short time since that we are accustomed to regard childhood as the happiest time of life, because the nearest approximate to perfect happiness is to have the body in sound health and the mind wholly free from anxiety. I do not, of course, deny that there may be higher and more complex conditions of spiritual happiness, if I may use the term, but I am here speaking of those exultant animal spirits the possession of which gives a pleasure to mere existence. That little children experience more of this kind of pleasure than we do is abundantly evident. The blood courses quicker through their veins, their minds are more impressionable, in everything they find the charm of novelty, they dance with delight and laugh with glee when to our more

sober views there is nothing to be delighted about and nothing to excite laughter.

But if little things please children, let us not forget that little things trouble them in proportion, and perhaps we do not appreciate in later life how much little boys and girls may be worried by the apprehension of failure at a forthcoming examination—how it may haunt even their hours of play and disturb their sleep at night. I have no wish to bore the reader by going into the vexed question of education, but I have personally known so much mischief to result from the ill-advised action of parents who, misled by the early promise of genius in a child, proceed to force its intellectual faculties at the expense of its physical development, that I cannot refrain from alluding to the subject.

There is one more fact I would like to mention with regard to the cramming system as applied to older children. The Right Hôn. A. W. Peel, Speaker in the House of Commons, when distributing the prizes in connection with the Cambridge Local Examinations on Tuesday, October 5th, 1886, remarked that "it was no easy task to pass the prescribed examinations, which frequently tested both the *physical and mental* powers of candidates," and he also stated that Cambridge University alone had, in one

year, examined eight thousand seven hundred and eighty-three boys and girls.

Now just think what this means. We test the *physical* powers of children — we test their *powers of endurance.* In what way? There are tribes of savages who test the powers of endurance in their *boys* by lacerating their flesh, by stinging their arms with insects, and by various other barbarous processes that we shudder to think of. But we, civilised, enlightened people that we are, test the powers of both boys and *girls* by a far more refined process of cruelty. We give them headaches, parched mouths, and anxious, sleepless nights. The arms and breasts of the Indian boys are not permanently injured by the testing process, cruel as it is; but our own children's constitutions, when not actually broken by the strain, must, in most cases, be considerably weakened.

And for what purpose? An examination that has been specially prepared for affords very little test of real permanent attainments, but only of a kind of superficial knowledge of facts got up for the occasion, and which are soon forgotten. I have frequently been surprised to find how little some people know of subjects in which they have successfully passed examinations.

The reason, however, is sufficiently obvious. If

we endeavour to nourish the body by cramming it with food, we know the result. The food is retained on the stomach a short time, but is not assimilated, and the patient is sick. Just so is it when we attempt to cram the mind with facts. We produce mental indigestion. The brain retains the facts for a time, as the stomach retains the food, but only for a time; they come out at the examination and—they remain out.

It is not, of course, the examination, but the preparation for it, that does the mischief. Ordinary school examinations, that do not test the *physical* powers of pupils, may sometimes be necessary and even beneficial. A good education is most essential, but cramming forms no part of a good education, and I venture to think that children would remember far more of what they learn if they did not work so many hours a day; * certainly they would be better in health. In the course of my professional duties I am brought in contact with hundreds of young people and little children, and I can safely affirm, from my own experience, that one of the results of over

* "I work fifteen or sixteen hours. Most girls, however stop at fourteen or fifteen hours, but some of them go on to eighteen hours." Extract from a High School Girl's letter, quoted by G. J. Romanes. *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1887.

study is to make them crooked. I do not mean that they become actually deformed, as did Pope, the poet, but they are "off the plumb," as it were—a fact which, from constant practice, I can discover at a glance. Of course this is greatly owing to the position they habitually assume in studying, and of all positions, as I have elsewhere hinted, the worst, perhaps, is to remain perfectly upright without anything to lean against. The oftener the position is changed, and the less constricted it is, the better. It has been my own experience that not one girl in a dozen is perfectly even, and I was not surprised to read a short time since, that a physician, in examining a school of between twenty and thirty girls, found that among that number there was only one whose spine was perfectly straight, and whose figure was without any deformity.

Now, reader, bearing in mind Mr. Herbert Spencer's dictum that "the first requisite of good living is to be a good animal," do you not think that if a little more time had been spent on these girls' physical education, and a little less on their mental culture, it would have been better for them? Might they not with advantage have substituted dancing for one of their more abstruse studies?

But will dancing prevent a child from becoming

crooked, or, being crooked, will dancing tend to make it straight?

Certainly it will, if properly and scientifically taught. The constant practice of waltzing would prevent a girl from becoming crooked, provided, of course, that she acquires the correct movement of her back, and dances, as it were, in every part of her body. Little children should be taught to waltz as naturally as they take hands and turn round. And I know of no more grace giving, health giving dance than the Hornpipe, either for boys or girls. Every muscle of the body is employed in the different movements. Take, for instance, the rowing step; what a capital exercise it is for the chest, so is the hauling movement for the arms and shoulders, while the feet and legs are, of course, in action all the time. There are also some calisthenic exercises which are excellent if given with discretion; but the chief remedy for any actually acquired tendency to deformity is to be found in that individual culture of gracefulness to which I have alluded in a former chapter.

XI.—SOME LITTLE WAYS OF DANCERS.

"He danced right well,
With emphasis, and with good sense,
A thing in dancing indispensable."

—Byron.

In his essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson, Carlyle, after quoting Jean Paul's observations concerning sheep—that "if you hold a stick before the wether so that he, by necessity, leaps in passing you, and then withdraw your stick, the flock will, nevertheless, all leap as he did; and the thousandth sheep shall be found impetuously vaulting over air, as the first did over an otherwise impassable barrier"—says "Reader, wouldst thou understand society, ponder well these ovine proceedings, thou wilt find them all curiously significant."

Now I doubt if there is anything connected with society in which the proceedings above referred to will be found more "curiously significant" than the ways of modern dancers.

For instance, only let a man who has the reputation of being a good dancer, whether

merited or acquired by mere force of assurance, do something a little out of the ordinary, and announce that it is the "Kensington crawl," or the "Kensington whirl," or the Kensington — heaven knows what, and mark how quickly a whole crowd of admiring youngsters will be imitating his example.

All innovations of this description originate in individual love of notoriety. There are, I believe, three primary ways of attracting notice. The first is to do something remarkably clever, the second to do something outrageously wicked, and the third, and most frequently adopted plan, to do that which is more than ordinarily foolish. Immortality of fame is, of course, sometimes acquired by virtuous and noble actions, but as these are not done with the intention of attracting notice, I do not here take them into account. There are also secondary means, or combinations of these primaries. Thus, Napoleon—the "great," as most people call him, or the "greedy," as Mr. Herbert Spencer perhaps more correctly puts it—attracted the attention of the whole world towards himself by a combination of great ability and unscrupulous wickedness, while poor Captain Webb owed his notoriety to a mixture of cleverness and foolishness—or foolhardiness, which is much the same.

But to return to our Kensingtonian friend. He wants to attract special notice. There may be natural reasons why he does not pursue the first course mentioned, and do something clever, and conscience, or the fear of consequences, may prevent him from adopting the second plan—although people have been known to commit crimes only to get their names in the papers. As the poet, John Wolcot, says—

> "What rage for fame attends both great and small!
> Better be——"

You know the rest, reader, or, if you don't, it does not matter. Well, there remains, then, nothing for our friend but to have recourse to the cheap and easy method of doing something particularly foolish; and what place better fitted for a display of folly than the ball-room. Besides, he has to keep up his spurious reputation; to slightly alter Shakespeare, he was not born a great dancer, he has not achieved greatness in dancing—if such a thing be possible—but he has had his greatness thrust upon him, consequently he will have recourse to heroic measures, he will do something more supremely ridiculous in the way of waltzing than has ever been done before, and what though he and his partner are described in *Truth* as a "pair of lunatics," his end is attained, he has attracted notice.

Here then is some excuse for him. He has a purpose in view, and that purpose is accomplished, so he is not, perhaps, quite such an idiot as it might at first appear. But what shall be said for his imitators, who can have no such object in view, seeing that when a thing becomes common, it no longer attracts attention? Why, all that can be said is that he is the bell-wether and they are the sheep.

I confess that to me it seems not a little unfair that every silly practice that obtains in dancing, should still be credited with having its origin in the neighbourhood of Kensington. The dancers that I happen to know living in that locality do not appear to have a smaller share of intelligence than other people, and what is more, they seem inclined to resent these names and practices, as being in no way characteristic of the manner of dancing adopted by the better class of residents. I expect the name of Kensington is chosen merely because it is a decent part; but why not give Belgravia and other places a turn? It would be easy enough to invent alliterative titles. The Tyburnian Tussle, for instance, would be quite characteristic of a style of dancing frequently exhibited.

Have you ever noticed, reader, how the couples in a round dance will sometimes flock together,

as it were, leaving a part of the room comparatively empty? And have you also noticed when one couple, more adventurous, or may be more thirsty than the rest, first makes for the refreshment room, how quickly the others will follow the lead?

Parenthetically, there are people who appear to evince greater capacity for distinguishing themselves in the above-mentioned department than in the ball-room—men especially—and in consequence it is occasionally noticeable that dancing that was originally somewhat shaky becomes still more shaky as the night wears on. Unfortunately the lightness produced by champagne operates at the wrong end of the body.

If there be not an efficient M. C., there is always a great difficulty experienced in forming the sets, as the dancers themselves appear to have a very confused idea of how quadrilles should be arranged. They all want to flock into the same set. They do not seem to be in the least aware that there is no room for a fifth couple, or a seventh, if there are double sides, and rather than take a position to start another set, they will squeeze themselves in at any possible angle, or even stand immediately before another couple as if quite unconscious of their presence.

There are some who are even ill-mannered

enough to contend for certain positions in the square dances when they are already taken, who, if they cannot secure the place they want, get disagreeable, and refuse to dance at all. The people who appear most anxious to be at the head of the quadrille are frequently those who know the least about dancing, and who have to be coached and helped through by the side couples.

It is said to be an Englishman's privilege to grumble, and it is a privilege of which not a few people avail themselves with regard to private parties. Those of a hostess' acquaintance who are not invited, frequently grumble because they feel themselves neglected—true, they may be perfectly well aware that the size of her rooms, or the state of her finances, does not admit of her asking all her friends, but why should *they* be the ones left out? The grumbling, however, does not stop here, for many of those who are invited, grumble about the entertainment provided for them, and imply by their remarks that they would rather they had stayed away. They grumble at the music, at the floor, at the wine —indeed, at everything. Of course, what they say is not intended to reach the hostess' ears, but, depend upon it, there is always some kind friend who will take care to let her

know that the affair was not considered a success.

Now, to grumble at any entertainment, however poor, to which you are invited, seems to me a very ungenerous action. Suppose the party does not come quite up to your expectations—and it is wonderful what some people do expect—make the best of it, and if you don't think the wine is quite up to the mark, take coffee and say nothing. There is no occasion to impart your suspicions to anyone else, because, after all, they may be unfounded. Few people are good judges of wine, though a great many think they are. There is a picture of Leech's in which the host at a party confidentially whispers to a friend who has been drinking his champagne by the tumblerful, and evidently enjoying it:—"Fine wine that — very fine, and, between you and me, only cost *twenty-four shillings a dozen.*" Thereupon, the friend is disturbed with horrible apprehensions of what he is likely to suffer, and his evening's pleasure is destroyed. No, if you see others innocently enjoying the wine, or what they believe to be such, don't upset their short-lived happiness, they will probably find out all about it the next morning, and so long as it is pure gooseberry, it is not likely to do any serious harm. Again, with re-

gard to the music; if the cornet does occasionally get a few bars behind, and then hurries on to catch up with the other instruments, and if the fiddle is half a note out of tune, don't listen too attentively, and depend upon it, that, bad as the music may be, it is not so bad as some people's dancing. And with regard to the floor, it is unpleasant, I know, when the drugget rucks up and nearly throws you over, or when the boards are waxed so that instead of sliding over them your feet stick at every step; but grumbling will not mend matters, and will only grieve your entertainers, who, you may be sure, have done their best, according to their light, to give you a thoroughly enjoyable dance, and accordingly, you should take the will for the deed.

At almost every dance are to be found a few people who seem to imagine that they are entitled to more consideration than the rest of the company, but the most objectionable are those who think themselves of greater importance—who appear to entertain a notion that the party could not possibly be a success without their presence—people to whom one would like to put the question that Charles Lamb addressed to the pompous passer-by:—"Excuse me, sir, but are you anybody in particular?" These are,

generally speaking, individuals that, for special reasons, one feels compelled to invite; but they are altogether at fault in imagining that their presence is in any way connected with the enjoyment of the other guests.

The aim of the average modern dancer is in one respect totally different from that of the political economist, for whereas the latter is occupied in securing the "greatest good for the greatest number," the former appears most intent on securing the greatest good for the smallest number—number one. This tendency is evident in many ways. For instance, whether or no he be a good waltzer himself, he will take care to secure as partners those ladies who are good waltzers, and the means by which he accomplishes this are many and various. It sometimes happens that he is invited to an impromptu dance, at which there are no programmes. Instead of taking this as a hint—which, indeed, it is—that engagements should not be made until the dance is announced, he brings out a pencil and slip of paper, and sets to work to make a little programme on his own account. If he does not happen to have a piece of card or paper by him, he jots down the engagements on his cuffs. At all hazards he means to secure the best partners for himself.

Now it may happen that the hostess has some particular reason for not providing programmes. It may be that she does not give her party expressly for the benefit of a small clique of dancers who are well known to each other, and who will be certain to arrange matters so that they will be engaged among themselves for every dance throughout the evening. She thinks, perhaps by avoiding the use of programmes, to make the dancing more general, so that if she introduces some of her guests, who are comparative strangers in the room, to others who are known to be good dancers, she will not invariably learn that the latter are "very sorry, but they have not a single dance left." Judge, then, what will be her surprise and annoyance if on taking a gentleman up to a lady at the beginning of the evening, and introducing him for a dance, she learns that, notwithstanding the fact of there being no programmes, the lady is engaged for every waltz up to the fifteenth.

Without going so far as to say that every young fellow who makes a programme in such cases is personally selfish or ill-mannered, I do think the practice is one that is greatly to be deprecated. It is, of course, those who start it that are most to blame; others, when they find out what is going on, will naturally follow their example, and

so it happens, that a late comer or a comparative stranger has not a chance to enjoy himself at all. The presence of small cliques of persons, who will not dance out of their own set, is not conducive to the enjoyableness of any assembly, but at private parties such cliques are simply intolerable.

It is, perhaps, impossible to conduct a dance so that every guest spends an equally pleasant time, but it should be the aim of the hostess to make the enjoyment as general as possible, and not allow it to be confined to a favoured few, as it too often is. It should be remembered that real enjoyment is not derived from magnificent surroundings and sumptuous fare, so much as it is from simple good-fellowship existing among the company. Hence it is, that the least pretentious entertainments are frequently the most truly enjoyable.

In conclusion, I almost fear that the worst dancer who reads these pages has never trodden on so many people's corns actually as have I figuratively in writing them. But I have not meant to give pain. My remarks have not been directed against individuals, but against practices which individuals can easily avoid if they like. I have written in what I believe to be the in-

terests of art, health, and pleasure, and though the book may not apparently be productive of any immediate result, it may, at least, influence a few readers, and induce others to reflect for themselves.

THE END.

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