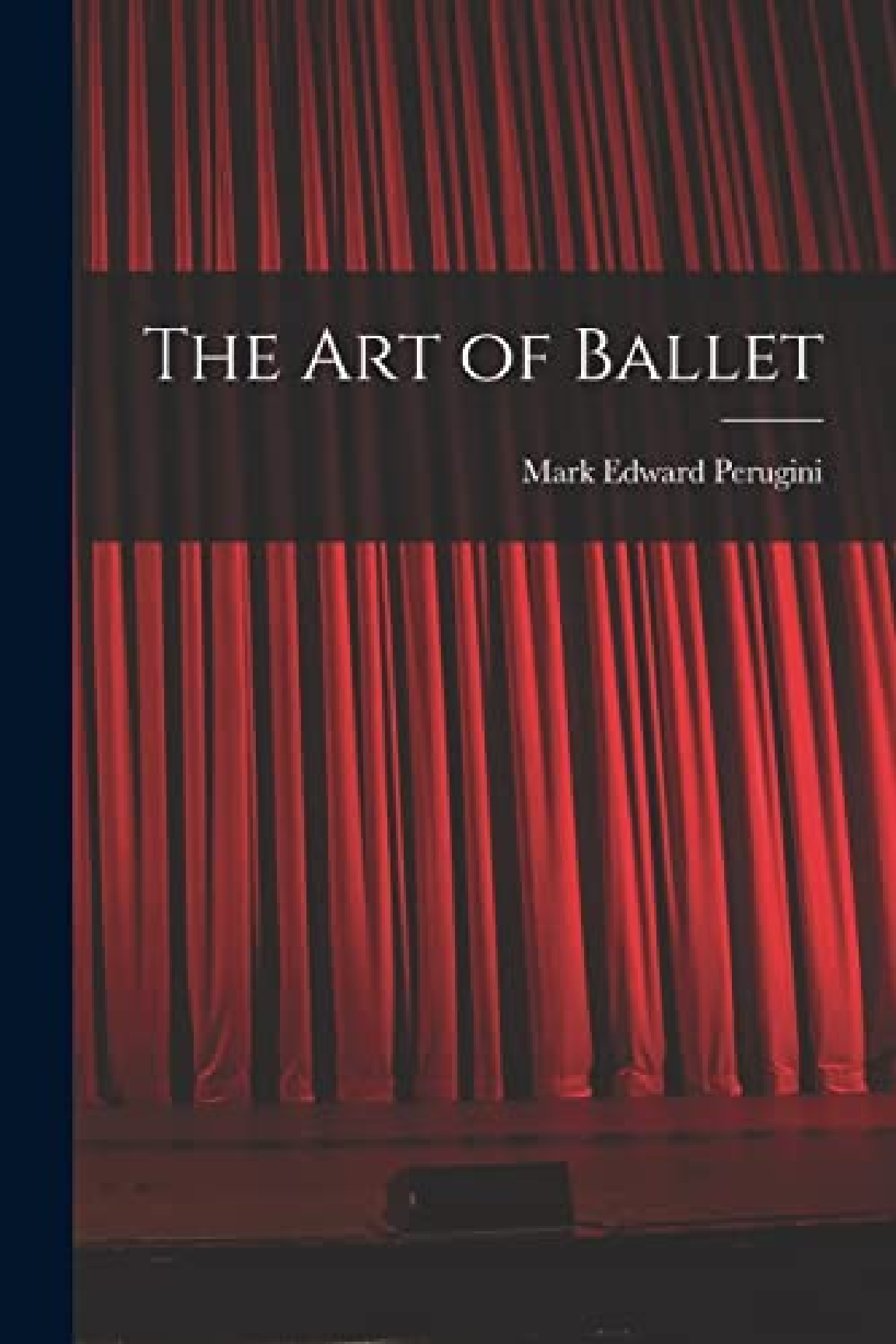

THE ART OF BALLET
Mark Edward Perugini

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THE ART OF BALLET



Adolph Bolm in "Carnival."
from a photograph by E. O. Hoppé

THE ART OF BALLET

BY MARK E. PERUGINI

LONDON: MARTIN SECKER

NUMBER FIVE JOHN STREET ADELPHI

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TO
MY WIFE

PREFACE

SOME may possibly wonder to find here no record of Ballet in Italy, or at the Opera Houses of Madrid, Lisbon, Vienna, Buda-Pest, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Warsaw, or Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg), not to speak of the United States and South America. This, however, would be to miss somewhat the author's purpose, which is not to trace the growth of Ballet in every capital where it has been seen. To do so effectively were hardly possible in a single volume. A whole book might well be devoted to the history of the art in Italy alone, herein only touched upon as it came to have vital influence on France and England in the nineteenth century. We have already had numerous volumes dealing with Russian Ballet; and since the ground has been extensively enough surveyed in that direction there could be no particular advantage in devoting more space to the subject than is already given to it in this work, the purpose of which only is to present—as far as possible from contemporary sources—some leading phases of the history of the modern Art of Ballet as seen more particularly in France and England.

A brief series of biographical essays "Cameos of the Dance," by the same writer, was published in *The Whitehall Review* in 1909; various articles on the subject also being contributed to *The Evening News*, *Lady's Pictorial*, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and other London journals during 1910 and 1911; and a series of "Sketches of

the Dance and Ballet," coming from the same hand, appeared in *The Dancing Times*, 1912, 1913 and 1914. They were based on portions of the manuscript of the present work which, begun some years ago by way of pastime, and written during the scant leisure of a crowded business life, was completed at the publisher's request, and was—save for a few brief insertions in the proofs—ready, and announced for publication before the Great War began in August 1914.

The preparation of this book has involved the marshalling of a vast array of facts and dates, the delving into and comparison of some three hundred or more ancient and modern volumes on dancing and on theatrical and operatic history, the study of scores of old newspaper-files and long-forgotten theatrical "repositories" and souvenirs. Error is always possible in spite of care, and if it should have happened here the writer will be grateful for correction. In covering so wide a field a full bibliography becomes impossible from limits of space; but to those interested the following list of leading authorities—supplemented by those referred to in the text—may be of service. "La Danse Grecque Antique," by M. Emmanuel; "Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire," by L. Friedländer; "Dramatic Traditions of the Dark Ages," by Joseph S. Tunison (University of Chicago Press); "Orchésographie," by Thoinot Arbeau (1588); "Des Ballets Anciens et Modernes," by Père Menestrier (1682); "La Danse Antique et Moderne," by De Cahuzac (1754); "The Code of Terpsichore," by Carlo Blasis (1823); "Dictionnaire de la Danse," by G. Desrat (1895); "Dancing in all Ages," by Edward Scott (1899); "Histoire de la Danse," by F. de Menil (1905); and "The Dance: Its Place in Art and Life," by T. and M.

W. Kinney (1914).

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BOOK I: THE FIRST ERA

THE ART OF BALLET

OVERTURE

ON THE ART OF BALLET

THERE may be some who could not agree that Ballet *is* an "art," or even that it has, or ever had, any special charm or historic interest. The charm—as in the case of any other art—will probably always remain rather a matter of individual opinion; the historic interest is merely a matter of fact.

No man can hope for agreement with his fellows in all things. The world were flat if it could be so. He may hector, and not convince; he may cajole and not convert; he may tell the simple truth in simple speech and still be misunderstood. So many of his partners in the dance of life speak in different tongues; or, speaking the same, use words and phrases more familiar to them than to himself.

In going to a foreign land we change our currency; but it is hardly to be accounted spurious because it is not as ours. There may be something to be said for the variety; and, also, there may be some common basis of value which can be accepted readily by both. A world-currency has not yet arrived. In opinion it is much the same.

But the sense of "fair play" is so admirable, and so truly British a characteristic, that one may usually

rely on it for a considerate hearing. Possible dissentients may be the more inclined to grant this if they are informed at the outset that this book has no specially persuasive purpose, and that I am content that it should be mainly accounted a record of fact.

One of the facts which it chronicles is that Ballet, whether an "art" or not, has existed, in some form or another, for about two thousand years. An interest which can show so long a record may yet not be of such surpassing importance, let us say, as Statecraft or Religion; but one which has thus long and widely appealed to the æsthetic sense of mankind can hardly be considered worthless. It were a vast and complex matter to decide the relative values of the various "arts," and, certainly this book is no endeavour to pronounce thereon, nor to persuade any that Ballet is the greatest, though it is unquestionably one of the oldest of the arts. But it will suffice to offer the opinion that, whether it has reached its highest level or not as yet Ballet *is* an art in itself; one that in the past has had so many judicious and sympathetic exponents, and has so long a record of existence, that there is really some justification for the expenditure of casual leisure by any who cares to play the chronicler or to read such chronicle.

This much said, before setting out to travel the road of the past, let us for a moment reconsider another fact, namely, that we have in London two theatres where for about a quarter of a century Ballet *was* the main attraction. The fact is unique in the annals of the British stage.

Ballets have been produced elsewhere occasionally. We have seen operas, pantomimes, burlesques, of which they formed a part. At earlier periods—as in the 'forties of last century—they have

also been seen as separate items in the programme of an operatic season; and there has been a quite remarkable revival of interest during the past few years. But in all the history of the stage there was never before a time when it could be said that for such a period not one but two theatrical houses in London *continuously* offered this kind of entertainment as their chief attraction.

It has to be remembered that this sustained existence of Ballet in England has been, as in the case of all "legitimate drama," without State aid such as it has received in Milan, Rome, Naples, Paris, Vienna, Petrograd, Copenhagen, and elsewhere on the Continent, where the physical advantages of dancing and the artistic value of Ballet are fully appreciated. The arts must flourish haphazard here! We have no national conservatoire in which this art of Ballet is taught as it is abroad. Consequently it has been less generally understood; and, being so, has had to exist in face of considerable prejudice.

Some critics profess to despise it because it ignores the spoken word. Some have decried it because of the presence of dancing. Some will not admit that it is worthy to be called an art at all, and there are possibly still some primly primitive people who pretend to view with moral pain the existence of any such entertainment. They may patronise a theatre or tolerate an actor or actress—but a Ballet or a Ballet-Dancer!

The misunderstanding of the aims and possibilities of the Art of Ballet, as seen at its best, is to be regretted.

Not for such critics are the music of moving lines, the modulating harmonies of colour, the subtleties of mimic expression, nor all the wealth of historic

associations and romantic charm which a knowledge of its past recalls.

Austere critics would do well, when deprecating Ballet, to remember that many others have found it, as Colley Cibber regretfully admitted it was found in his time: “a pleasing and rational entertainment.”

That it is “pleasing” many know from witnessing some of the best of modern examples. As to whether it can be considered “rational” depends so much on the kind of meaning that may be given to that word. All rational people speak in prose; constantly to speak in verse might be considered quite irrational. But are we to banish poetry from the world because it is not the common form of speech?

Some people might find it quite irrational to sit in a theatre and laugh or weep at the imaginary joys or woes of imaginary characters impersonated by people who are not seriously concerned therewith, and with whom, personally, we are not at all concerned.

It might be well considered irrational to be moved by any “concord of sweet sounds,” at least in the shape of “opera”; or to be enspelled by the charm of a statue or a painting, or by the wizardry of any form of art; for once it is questioned whether it be “rational,” there need be no end to dispute; and one remembers how poor Tolstoy fared in essaying to decide: “What is Art?”

That of Ballet surely is no less rational than Poetry, than Drama, than Music, Sculpture, Painting—all of which exist by *their* conventions, all of which in principle it employs; to all of which it is akin. It is not less an art; and when looking at a modern ballet we can hardly fail to consider the long train of

reasoned thought and of artistic tradition that lie beyond the entertainment that we see to-day.

What is it that we see? An orchestra of dancers who are also mimes, who represent—one should rather say, realise—the imaginative creations of an author, or a number of authors working harmoniously together, in terms of rhythmic movement and dramatic expression, with the aid also of colour and music and sound.

Every one of these dancers has had to undergo a special and arduous training, the traditions of which reach back through centuries till lost in time's obscurity.

Each has an allotted place at any given moment in the general scheme. Every grouping and dispersal of a group—like the formation and modulation of chords in music—is part of an ordered plan.

Every step of every dancer, every gesture, every phrase of music, is composed or selected to express particular ideas or series of ideas; every colour and each change of tone in the whole symphony of hues has been appraised. Not a thing that happens is haphazard.

It is probably by reason of the number of people that must be employed, and the labour entailed before a successful result can be achieved, and on account of the difficulties and risks attendant on its production, that we have had so few theatres devoted to an art so thoroughly appreciated abroad, not only as one of ancient institution, but as one that still offers wide scope for the creative genius of poet, artist and musician, apart from the interpretative abilities of dancer and of mime.

CHAPTER I

A DISTINCTION, AND SOME DIFFERENCES

THE chief elements of Ballet as seen to-day are—dancing, miming, music and scenic effect, including of course in this last the costumes and colour-schemes, as well as the actual "scenery" and lighting.

It is in the proper harmonising of these elements that the true art of Ballet-composition, or, as it is called, "choreography," consists. Each has its individual history, and all have been combined in varying proportions at various periods. But it is only in the past hundred and fifty years or so that they have been harmoniously blended in the increasing richness of their development to give us this separate, protean and beautiful art—the Ballet of the Theatre.

These four elements are the material of which Ballet is composed, and the result may be judged by their balance.

We are to think not of the worst examples that have been, but of the best, and of those that yet might be.

Most of the older writers on dancing speak of almost all concerted dances as ballets and refer to the "ballets" of the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans. The Abbé Menestrier, however, writing in the seventeenth century, wisely observed the distinction between dances that are *only* "dances," and those that approximate to "ballet."

It should be borne in mind that it is possible to

dance and not represent an idea save that of dancing, as when a child dances for joy, *not in order to represent the joy of another*. That is the province of the Mime. It is equally possible to mimic without dancing.

The best ballet-dancer is one who has intelligence and training to do both, whose dancing and mimicry are interpretative.

Speaking of certain Egyptian and Greek figure-dances and the approach of some of them to the Ballet as he knew it towards the end of the seventeenth century, Menestrier wrote: "*J'appelle ces Danses Ballets parce qu'elles n'etoient pas de simples Danses comme les autres, mais des Representations ingenieuses, des mouvements du Ciel et des Planétes, et des evolutions du labyrinthe dont Thésée sortit.*" That is a distinction to be remembered by any who may look on the Art of Ballet as simply—dancing.

It is necessary to-day to make another distinction, that between "ballet," and "the ballet of the theatre." In a sense the Hindus, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, indeed all peoples in past ages have had ballets; that is, dances which were "*representations ingenieuses*," which represented an idea or told a story.

There have been entertainments, too, of which dancing formed a considerable part—such as our English "masques," which, contemporaneously, were often spoken of as "ballets."

But though they may for convenience have been so called, they were never more than partly akin with the ballet of the theatre as we see it to-day. They never exhibited that balance of subordinated and *developed* arts which the best examples of later times

have shown; and were not seen in the public theatre, as a form of dramatic entertainment apart from others.

One has only to consider for an instant what were the musical and scenic resources of the Greek and Roman stage, and compare them with the resources of modern orchestration and scenic effect to realise the difference between antique "ballet" and that of to-day.

Setting aside this difference, which arises from the development of the several elements through the centuries, one may find many an ancient definition of "ballet" that appears apt enough to-day, for the difference is not so much one of principle as this of resources.

Athenæus, a second-century Greek critic, declared: "Ballet is an imitation of things said and sung," and Lucian, that—"It is by the gesture, movements and cadences that this imitation or representation is made up, as the song is made up by the inflections of the voice." This is a happy illustration. Inflections might well be described as "gestures" *of the voice*.

Menestrier (who, besides writing an exceedingly entertaining history of Ballet, also wrote extensively on Heraldry, and was author of several solid historical works as well as numerous poems and *libretti*) has said: "Ballet is an imitation like the other arts, and that much has in common with them. The difference is, that while the other arts only imitate certain things, as painting, which expresses the shape, colour, arrangement and disposition of things, Ballet expresses the *movement* which Painting and Sculpture could not express, and by these movements can represent the nature of things, and those characteristics of the soul which only can find

expression by such movements. This imitation is achieved by the movements of the body, which are the interpreters of the passions and of the inmost feelings. And even as the body has various parts composing a whole and making a beautiful harmony, one uses instruments and their accord, to regulate those movements which express the effect of the passions of the soul."

These definitions have decided value, but hardly quite meet the case of modern Ballet.

Noverre, Blasis, Gardel, and other of the older *maîtres de ballet*, have told us in several charming books, essays, letters, dialogues and *libretti*, much as to what Ballet can and should be, but yet leave something to seek in the matter of brief yet comprehensive definition.

It is with some hesitancy, therefore, that I venture, before talking of its history, to suggest as a simple definition that: "a ballet is *a series of solo and concerted dances with mimetic actions, accompanied by music and scenic accessories, telling a story*."

It is by reason of this definition that I propose to pass somewhat lightly over the early dawn of Ballet, or rather of its earliest elements, the dance and miming; and that I propose to deal more fully with the period *after* the advent of Louis Quatorze—in France and in England—which saw the development of the *Ballet du Théâtre*.

There have, of course, been modern ballets that did not tell a story. But the true Ballet of the theatre should.

Such have been the best of those of Noverre, of Blasis, of Perrot, Nuittier, Théophile Gautier, and of later composers of ballet like Taglioni, Manzotti,

Coppi, Mme. Lanner, Wilhelm, Curti, Fokine, and, indeed, all the best ballets of later years; and such will the best always be.

CHAPTER II

EGYPT

THE origin of the drama is hardly to be reckoned among the historic mysteries. By serious triflers debate might be held as to what should be considered the first dramatic representation and when it actually took place.

Some five centuries before the Christian era the first plays of which scholarship has taken note were performed at Athens, those of Thespis, forerunner of the first great dramatists of the world—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

For convenience the origin of Western drama may be dated from Thespis because it seems first to have assumed then a definite form. That is not its actual origin any more than the origin of any human being is to be dated from its birth. As a possibility it may be said to have existed always. Even Chronology has its limitations, and preceding any given event there must have existed principles or tendencies.

When it is said, therefore, that the origin of the Drama is not an historic mystery it is because we are not very much in the dark as to when it began to assume a somewhat definite form; and, moreover, we can be fairly clear as to what must have preceded it. There seems rather more than a probability that the Drama derived its existence from the Poet, in his capacity as a Narrator.

For some hundreds of years the Drama has been chiefly a representation of character and events,

whether real or fictitious. In its earliest forms it was mainly descriptive. It would seem to be the natural order of things that from mere description there should arise in time—possibly from a half-conscious feeling of the need of *emphasis*, of a desire to *impress* the hearers—the attempt to *illustrate* or to *represent* the scenes or actions described. The mere repetition of any story seems to tend towards that. Have we not observed that no "fish" story is ever quite complete—if not convincing—without histrionic illustrations?

Though in India and China, with their more ancient civilisation, the chronologic origin of the Drama might be more remotely placed, it is probable that in the Homeric bard and the Homeric audience, should be sought the true beginning of the Western theatre; while, all the world over, the evolution of the dramatic form has probably been much the same—namely, a gradual transition from poetic *narration* to imitative representation. Thus at the back of the Drama is probably the Poet. Beside the Poet, too, is often the Priest.

Greek tragedy is usually said to have had a purely "religious" origin, and certainly it was from early times employed for the purposes of, or in the service of, Religion; but it would, one feels, be rather truer to presume its actual origin to be purely secular, and to be found in the Poet making his appeal to an ordinary audience, in a word, to the People, while sometimes under the patronage of priestly and ruling classes.

When, however, we come to consider the origin of the Dance—first and most important of the "four elements" of Ballet—we are forced to the conclusion that, even though we are on more uncertain ground, it must, nevertheless, be far older than the Drama.

Why this should be so, even though we have no approximate date to go upon as in the case of the Thespian theatre, is not difficult to see.

The Drama evolved from, and has always depended on, the faculty of speech, and on the growth of a language. A copious vocabulary and flexibility of verbal expression are not exactly characteristics of the primitive races; and, without both, the Drama, as we have known it for some centuries, could not have existed.

But the Dance (with mimicry, which has always followed close upon its heels) has no need of words, and is itself a kind of speech, in which the whole body is used as a means of expression.

We are none of us old enough to remember, and there is consequently no need to be dogmatic and assert that the Dance actually *did* precede speech; but it is far from improbable that it could have done; and while one shudders to think of the ardent *danse tourbillon* our Mother Earth must have danced from the moment of her birth, it is perhaps more amusing —and yet not wholly frivolous—to contemplate a possible origin of the Dance in the sport some Simian ancestors may have found in rhythmically swaying on the flexile branches of some primeval tree, before they had acquired a vocabulary sufficiently copious for the analysis of their sensations.

Seriously, however, and just because it has a rhythmic basis, dancing in some form is among the earliest instincts of mankind, even as it is of children. In all climes, at all periods, men and women have danced; and its origin is lost in the mists of prehistoric years. Non-civilised races still existent may offer evidence as to stages in its evolution; but even among the more primitive races, dancing seems

to have some definiteness of form, marking a heritage of long practice.

From some earliest, uncouth leapings and gestures of savage or half savage tribes (the effect of mere exuberant physical energy) may have grown the idea of thus expressing joy and thankfulness; for joy, not sorrow, one feels must surely have been always the first inspirer of the Dance; and possibly a victory over an enemy, or gratitude for a full harvest may have come to be first the inspiration, and then the excuse for repeating such manifestations.

Repetition of an act tends to create a habit, and what may be at first apparently a spontaneous experiment grows by repetition into a cult, with set form and ritual.

The ritual of the Dance seems to be as ancient as the stars, in representing the movements of which, it is supposed by some to have had its origin in Egypt over two thousand years ago. Nowhere is it found without form. All must be done in a certain way, according to the traditions of the locality in which the dance is seen, or according to some wider tradition. Always it has a ritual of its own, but also with religious ritual the origin of the Dance—as also of the Drama—appears in some mysterious manner to be upbound.

Of all the records that we have of dancing, the earliest are, apparently, those of Egypt. Its origin is not there; it must be older; but we know at least that the Egyptians were among the first people with a civilisation that encouraged dancing.

One of the finest among modern historians of the art, divides dancing, for convenience in tracing its evolution, into “sacred” and “profane”; that is, the

Dance forming, as so often it did in ancient times, part of a religious ceremonial, and that which in any other of its forms was merely a pleasure of the people. For our purpose in tracing the growth of Ballet, however, it would seem advisable to divide the Dance yet further, into "sacred," "secular," and "theatrical."

The Egyptians had no Ballet of the theatre, because they had no theatre. They had dances which seem to have been "*representations ingenieuses*," and to that extent, as mimetic dances, partook of the nature of Ballet; but they were not organised as theatrical spectacles for private or public entertainment.

The Greeks had no Ballet of the theatre because, though they had the theatre, they, like the Egyptians, had merely mimetic dances, not Ballet.

But if Egypt had no popular theatre in which dancing was seen, it appears to have existed, nevertheless, in three distinct forms—as a pleasure of "the man in the street"—just as we see children dance to a barrel-organ in the London streets to-day; again, as an entertainment for the wealthy, just as a popular singer, dancer or other entertainer of to-day is engaged for an "at home" or dinner-party; and, finally, as an element of the elaborate and somewhat theatrical Egyptian religious ceremonial.

Monuments from Thebes and Beni Hassan show pictures of Egyptian dancers performing steps very similar to some we can see to-day. They appear to be performing them for the pleasure of onlookers as well as their own. This acquiring of an audience has, after all, been always of first importance, and without it the Drama could hardly have come into existence.

Most people are interested in seeing others do something they are unable to do themselves, and when they can see it well done, in a manner, that is, suggesting a difficult feat accomplished with ease, they will even pay for the exhibition. That is the popular (with managers the extremely popular) side of the theatrical arts, of which dancing is one. When there arises the desire to see the exhibition repeated frequently, then must follow the special place with special facilities and accessories for the performance, and the theatre, or something like it, thus comes into existence as an institution sustained by popular support. There is first the thing done for pleasure—which is art; then the exploitation of it for profit—which is commerce; that is the brief epitaph of any art as a fruit of civilisation.

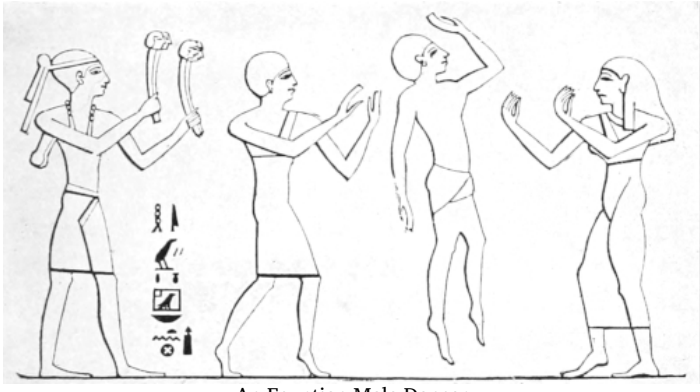
The Egyptians did not reach the "theatre" stage. But dancing, essentially a popular art, received encouragement as an element in religious festivals and as an entertainment of the wealthy classes.

Considerable difference of opinion exists as to the "religious" dances of Egypt. Enthusiastic historians of dancing seem rather too prone to expand the little store of fact we possess, and some go to the length of speaking of the religious and popular "ballets" of the Egyptians. But it is certain that they had no regular theatrical spectacles in which dancing was of prime importance; and their popular dances, to any such extent as they could be described as "*representations ingenieuses*," were primitive in comparison with any of later times.

Solo-dances and *pas de deux* were general enough, but the dancing of massed groups, and the dramatic representation of a story, appear to have been unknown, or have passed unrecorded if they were

known. The nearest approach to them, though not of course performed as a theatrical spectacle, would seem to have been an “astronomical dance,” which was done by or under the direction of the priests of Apis, and is said to have been—appropriately enough!—a representation of the movements of the stars. It is probable that it was employed mainly as a means of education.

Holy Church in mediæval times took advantage of the popular craving for theatrical shows, and sought by the aid of “mystery plays,” and “moralities” to extend the knowledge of religious truths. It may be conjectured that the Egyptian hierarchy similarly had some such end in view, and that the priestly caste sought to utilise the popular taste for dancing as a means of influence, and that the actual performance of the dance served to fix more lastingly in the minds of novices the religious and astronomical truths it embodied.



An Egyptian Male Dancer
(*From a Theban Fresco*).



Egyptian Dancing Girls
(*From a mural painting in the British Museum*).



A Greek Funeral Dance
(*From a coloured plaque in the Louvre*).

In addition to the star-dance, the Egyptians are said to have had a “funeral” dance, but it is doubtful if this, the “Maneros”—of which Herodotus speaks—was a solemn dance. The fact is, however, that information both as to the religious and ceremonial uses of dancing among the Egyptians is very scant, and what little record we have of their dancing is mainly on its popular side and is to be gleaned from monuments.

One of the frescoes in the British Museum shows two girls performing, apparently before a select audience of women, one of whom is seen to be applauding, or perhaps marking the time with

syncopated clapping, as negroes do to-day.

Another representation of dancing is on a fresco from Thebes showing three figures, the centre of whom is apparently performing an *entrechat*, as seen to-day, the step in which the dancer crosses feet in mid-air; while a fourth acts as orchestra with a couple of the curious curved maces which were beaten together to mark the rhythm in sonorous fashion.

Other Egyptian monuments also show dancers, one from Beni Hassan depicting several couples, apparently boys, performing a dance that obviously had certain set steps, and suggests that it was used mainly as a rhythmic athletic exercise, as were many of the Greek dances. And yet another monument shows men apparently in the act of performing a pirouette. About them all there is the air of decision, a suggestion of trained performance that in itself, remembering that these monuments are some four thousand years old, and depict steps similar to some performed to-day, is testimony to the antiquity of the art of dancing.

CHAPTER III

GREECE

THERE is no lack of testimony, pictorial and literary, to the ancient Greek love of the Dance.

Among the various arts of war and peace that Vulcan engraved upon that wondrous shield which he fashioned at the entreaty of sad Thetis for her son Achilles, the Dance was not forgotten; and the Homeric singer must have been a lover of the art to limn as clear a picture as is given in the eighteenth book of the Iliad.

"There, too, the skilful artist's hand had wrought
With curious workmanship, a mazy dance,
Like that which Dædalus in Knossos erst
At fair-haired Ariadne's bidding framed.
There, laying each on other's wrists their hand,
Bright youths and many-suitored maidens danced."

"Now whirled they round with nimble practised feet,
Easy, as when a potter, seated, turns
A wheel, new-fashioned by his skilful hand
And spins it round, to prove if true it run:
Now featly moved in well-beseeming ranks.
A numerous crowd, around, the lovely dance
Surveyed, delighted; while an honoured Bard
Sang, as he struck the lyre, and to the strain
Two tumblers, in the midst, were whirling round."

The "two tumblers" is an interesting detail, but it does not necessarily refer to the sort of acrobatic "tumbling" we are familiar with to-day. There have always been two phases of the Dance which can best be understood by noting the distinction marked by

the use of two words in French—at least by their use among the masters and writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—namely, *danser* and *sauter*. The former means to dance, "*terre-à-terre*," that is, always with the feet, or one foot at least, on or close to the ground; *sauter*, means invariably to leap into the air, or even to perform steps while both feet are in the air.

We usually speak of "a somersault," a "double somersault," and so forth. The word is a corruption from the old French *soubresault*, from the Latin *supra*, over, and *saltus*, leap.

Early historians of the Dance frequently speak of "saltation," without any reference to the "somersault" as we know it, but to what we should call simply dancing.

The Homeric picture must have been repeated innumerable times since it was first limned, whenever and wherever there has been a gathering of men and maids on a village green, dancing in a circle, with a couple of high-leaping lads in the centre inciting all to quicken the rhythm of the whirling dance. Many an Elizabethan village must have realised such a scene; and for all the artifice of the stage, with its paint and footlights, does it not hold something of the antique tradition in the picture often seen, of a circle of dancing girls enclosing two wildly turning "stars"? Is it impossibly un-Hellenic to presume that the "Two tumblers, in the midst, were whirling round" in *pirouettes*? At least it may be considered—a presumption!

Far later in Hellenic days we have a gracious picture of the Dance in Theocritus' eighteenth Idyll, "The Bridal of Helen," which reads delightfully in Calverley's translation:

"Whilom in Lacedæmon tripped many a maiden fair
To gold-pressed Menelaus' halls with hyacinths in her hair,
Twelve to the painted chamber, the queenliest in the land,
The clustered loveliness of Greece came dancing hand-in-hand.
With woven steps they beat the ground in unison and sang
The bridal hymn of triumph till all the Palace rang."

The Greek dance, it should be noted, was almost invariably accompanied by singing; and the poet probably was often indebted to the dance for the rhythm of his verse. The bridal dance was of very ancient institution. Indeed, there were few occasions which were not celebrated with dancing, and the Greeks even followed the Egyptian custom of having "dancers" at their funerals! It is not to be thought, however, that the steps were exactly gay; nor need there have been anything incongruous, for we can be sure the instinctive taste of the people would not have admitted such a thing, and, moreover, a dance and a dancer as they saw it, were rather different from the vision we have recalled by such words.

To the ancient Greeks the Dance was a cult, an element in the religious and physical well-being of the individual and the State: and the dance that was taught to the child became an important and lasting factor in the physical growth and culture of the man.

We who, most of us, are only too apt to look on dancing as a mere trivial pastime, may wonder that it *was* so seriously considered by the Greeks, and that it should have so earnestly engaged the attentions of such philosophers as Plato and Lucian. But perhaps that is only because we have not considered it sufficiently ourselves and have associated it too closely with theatrical display.

In any form in which it is at its best the theatre is one of the noblest and most influential institutions of

civilisation; as dancing, at its best, is one of the finest, because most comprehensive, of the theatrical arts. But there is a vast difference between the dance which was a means of physical and mental development, pursued amid the health-giving surroundings of sunshine and fresh air, and, let us say, some such degradation of art as some examples of the "classic" dance we have seen of recent years, performed in the glare of footlights, amid the smoke-laden atmosphere of a music-hall.

The contrast is an obvious one, but the thing to consider is that we in England have allowed an art which held an important place in Greek national life, and which should be of the greatest educational value to ourselves, to become mainly a spectacle of the theatre, where more often than not it is seen at its best, not necessarily because it is the result of the best system, *but because it is the fruit of the greatest practice*.

It is obviously impossible to deal very fully with the Hellenic dance in the space of a chapter in a volume which is not intended to trace the evolution of the Dance but of Ballet. An entire book were needed to treat the subject adequately—and we have not such a book in English, as yet. But Emmanuel's masterly technical review of Hellenic dancing in his volume *La Danse Grecque*, is invaluable, and is testimony to the sound and catholic scholarship which in France scorns no subject as "trivial" merely because those ignorant of its history dismiss it as such; and which finds sympathetic students in a country where all the arts are treated with a respect that is at least as great as that offered to commercialism.

The Greeks are said to have derived their earlier

dances from Egypt. This may be questionable, because it is equally likely that there was a traditional, indigenous dance in Greece. But it was *through* the Greeks, certainly, that dancing first assumed that variety and perfection of form and style which all the arts seemed destined to attain under their quickening, purifying, and inspiring influence; and it was the Greeks, too, who first began to develop the art of mimicry.

First, as already suggested, there would probably have been some occasion for joy, tending to express itself by dancing; and a victory over an enemy, or gratitude for a full harvest (the more exalted when the harvest was of the grape!) would have been such occasions. Later must have come the idea of *representing* the victory celebrated, or the imagined characteristics of the being or beings who were supposed to be the cause of the earth's fruition, and who, if propitiated by this tumultuous acknowledgment of gratitude, perhaps might renew their favours.

Thus, in time, out of the ritual of the Dance would have grown the ritual of representation—Mimicry, miming, or "acting," as we call it; and little by little, from the wild exuberance of recurring poetic festivals, such as those in honour of Dionysus, would have grown the ordered sense of Drama, the *representation* of thanksgiving, of feelings, events and things by Mimicry, the actor's art; either allied with, or separate from, dancing.

The Greeks, improving on the Egyptians, invented and developed the idea of the Theatre. But though the Greeks in their Drama *utilised* the arts of dancing and mimicry, it would seem that they were quite subordinated to the literary and dramatic art of the

all-inspiring Poet, and that words, with a meaning behind them, words representing, as far as words can, thoughts, passions, emotions, actions, things, were the essential medium of Greek Drama, *not* the art of the Dancer or the Mime.

It should be noted that the Greek *orcheisthai* (ὀρχεῖσθαι), to dance, implied more than mere steps with the feet. It included much that goes to make a really good ballet-dancer of to-day—interpretative dancing and mimetic gesture. The Greeks in fact had some of the material, if they did not have as we know it—the Ballet.

The earliest dramatic poets, Thespis, Phrynichus, were called "dancers" because in addition to providing the drama as poets, their function was to train their choruses in the dances which, accompanied by singing, were introduced in the play.

One of the most celebrated of the actors in the plays of Æschylus, Telestes, was said not merely to indicate feelings but to "describe" events with his hands; and this, which was really miming, was considered as part of dancing, which Aristotle defined as "the representation of actions, characters and passions by means of postures and rhythmic movements."

Plutarch analyses dancing as "Motions, Postures and Indications," a "posture" being the attitude of the dancer at the moment of arrested movement, and an "indication," the gesture which indicated an external object referred to in a poet's lines, such as the sky; or such as an orator would use when raising his hand heavenward invoking the gods.

The chief dances used in the Greek drama were the

Emmeleia, a stately measure; *Hyporchemata*, lively dances; the *Kordax*, a very coarse and rough comic dance; and finally the *Sikinnis*, which was attached especially to satyric comedies and parodied as a rule the measure of the *Emmeleia*.

These were all a part, though a subordinate part, of the classic drama, and, according to some authorities, had their foundation in the rhythm of the poet's verse as it was sung by the chorus or declaimed by the chief actors.

But apart from these there were mimetic dances. One, in which we may perhaps even see a hint of the origin of dancing itself, is found in Longus' novel, *Daphnis and Chloe*, in which Dryas performs a vintage-dance, "pretending to gather grapes, to carry them in panniers, to tread them in a vat and pour the flowing juice into jars, and then to drink of the wine thus newly made"; and all done so cleverly that the spectators were deceived for the time and thought they really saw the grapes, the vats, and the wine the actor made pretence of drinking. This, probably an incident drawn from life, was indeed a "*representation ingenieuse*," and even suggests yet another of the many possibilities as to the origin of the Dance, namely—that dancing itself may have originated from the treading of grapes.

The famous Pyrrhic dance was of course mimetic and represented a series of war-like incidents, all of which had an educational purpose, as by their means the youthful soldier was taught how to advance and retreat, how to aim a blow or hurl a javelin and to dodge them; and how to leap and vault, in event of meeting ditches and walls. Apart from military dances in which physical culture and grace were the chief aims, there were many dances of a purely

festival character taken part in by young men and girls, and by girls alone.

The close association between religion and the Dance in ancient Hellenic days is seen in the number of festivals in honour of the gods, at which special dances were performed, apart from those which formed part of the classic drama and others which were merely by way of joyous pastime. Certain dances were performed annually in honour of Jupiter; others, such as the *Procharysteriæ*, were in honour of Minerva; then there was the *Pæonian* dance in honour of Apollo; the *Ionic*, and the *Kalabis* and the famous Dance of Innocence, instituted by Lycurgus, and executed to the glory of Diana, by young Lacedæmonian girls before the altar of the goddess. The Delian dance, special to the isle of Delos, was much the same in character and closed with the offering of floral garlands on the altar of Aphrodite. One of the most solemn incidents of the Eleusinian mysteries was the mystical dance-drama representing the search of Ceres for her daughter Proserpine—practically a "ballet," in the older acceptance of the word.

The secular dance of the Greeks was essentially an individualistic form. Men and women only rarely danced together, and when they did, the joining of hands, or anything like chain-dancing was exceptional. One of these exceptions was the *Hormos*, or Collar-dance as it was called, which Lucian describes as being danced by youths and maidens advancing one by one in the form of a collar, made up of the alternating jewels of feminine grace and manly strength, the dance being led by a youth. Most of the Greek dances had a leader, and the favour in which the art was held is shown by the fact that they

termed their Chief Magistrate *Pro-orchestris*, or Leader of the Dance. As a rule, chain-dances were performed by one or the other sex.

In another sense also the Hellenic dance was individualistic. We are accustomed to see entire groups, eight, sixteen, or even thirty-two or more dancers all performing the same step simultaneously. It is one of the conventions of Ballet, like the chorus in "musical comedy." But the Greeks had not that convention.

Although their dance was based on strict rhythm and was governed by rigid rules, they governed the dance of the individual, not of groups. He, or she, was adjudged a good dancer by the grace of line displayed and rhythmic balance of movement, and many a vase painting exhibits groups of dancers who, though dancing in the mass, are each doing different steps; and equally the gestures and mimetic expression of each differed.

The system unquestionably had its advantages, for while the rhythm of the song or poetic verse which accompanied the performers was the common basis of the dance for all, the individuality of expression undoubtedly gave a vitality to the group which accounts for the vividness and charm of their representation on many an antique vase.

Numerous indeed were the various forms of the Hellenic dance, sacred, dramatic, secular—Meursius catalogues some two hundred—but further description would detain us too long *en route* towards the culmination of all these earlier types of mimetic and other dances in the Ballet of to-day, and we have next to trace the growth of Latin Mime and Pantomime.

CHAPTER IV

MIME AND PANTOMIME: ROME, HIPPODROME—OBSCURITY

If to Greece modern Ballet owes much for the encouragement of the Dance, to Rome it is even more indebted for the development of the art of Pantomime.

By many the word Pantomime is associated solely with that time-honoured entertainment which children, home for the Christmas holidays, are supposed to be too *blasé* to care for, but which they go to by way of obliging parents who feel it their duty to take them.

The Christmas pantomime has long been one of our cherished institutions, though, like the British Constitution, it has undergone many changes. It is still given at Christmas. That much of tradition remains. But most of its original features have all but disappeared. Time was, two hundred years ago, when it was mainly "Harlequinade," and Harlequin and his gay comrades of Italian comedy were the heroes of the play. Then classical plots and allusions, with an elaboration of scenic effect and "machines," brought about a gradual change. In the early nineteenth century a "topical" and "patriotic" element had crept in; but the Harlequinade, although shortened, and, shall we say, *broadened*, still remained.

Then a craze for "transformation" scenes set in because the extreme gorgeousness of the tinsel productions of Kemble and Macready—the

archæological and historic "accuracy" of which was always emphasised!—forced the pantomime producers in self-defence to go one better.

And then came Grimaldi to give a new life to the whimsies of that Clown whose prototype dates back to ancient Rome; and for half a century or more the Christmas pantomime continued much the same—a familiar nursery-story played out to the accompaniment of fairy-like and glittering scenic accessories, concluding with a rough-and-tumble Harlequinade, until in recent years the introduction of the Music-hall performer gave us the entertainment we have to-day.

Not thus, however, was the antique "pantomime," which, evolving from the more ancient and spoken "Mimes," became, because it took all nature for its province—pan-mimicry, or pantomime; the stage representation, without the spoken word, of all that eye could see or mind of man conceive.

Now, it is a far step from narrative to impersonation—marking an advance in the technique of acting; and it was some time before the Greek Drama had achieved this. But it was not so much the impressive and noble side of the Greek Drama that taught the actors, not merely to *declaim* situations but to *act* them; it must have been the popular, the comic side; and it was probably the Doric farce, and later the early Latin comedy derived therefrom, that really brought to perfection under the Roman Empire the art of *Miming* apart from the art of Dancing.

The comic is so much nearer to life as we see it every day than the tragic; and it was this ability to see the more familiar comic side of life, and the

desire to travesty the serious—whether in Greece or Rome—that first gave flexibility and variety to the art of miming, or "acting," as we call it nowadays.

It is because of this nearness to the life of the time, because of the travesty of contemporary types and public affairs, that the Latin actors made their wide appeal.

From public encouragement would come the increasing endeavour of popular actors to outshine each other in technical *tours de force*; and from playing the familiar types of Latin Comedy, such as Maccus, with his double hump, prototype of our Punch; Pappus, forerunner of Pantaloon, and other characters (some from the early *Mimi*, some from the *Atellanæ* and *Togatæ* of tradition), the Latin Actors of the first and second centuries A.D. ultimately aspired to the wordless representation of the gods and heroes of myth and legend.

According to one authority, "the Latin Pantomime grew out of the custom at this period—the first century of the Christian era—of having lyrical solos, such as interludes to flute accompaniment, between the acts of the Latin comedies." According to that admirable historian of the stage, Mr. Charles Hastings, "this new mode (Pantomime) was a kind of mime, in which poses and gestures constituted the fundamental portion of the play. Words occupied a secondary place, and *eventually disappeared altogether*. Only the music was preserved, and in order that the audience might understand the gestures of the actors, little books were distributed in Greek text, intelligible only to the learned and to the upper classes. Later on the mask—rejected by the mime—was adopted, and a chorus was employed to *accompany the comedian with their voices, and to*

explain the multiple gestures by which the actors created the different characters in turn. Moreover, there was a company of mute players. The libretti left almost unlimited liberty of detail. Sometimes the music broke off to enable the actor to finish his *fioritura* and variations. Sometimes, on the other hand, the comedian paused, or left the stage, while the story was taken up by the recitative and the instruments."

All this reads much like a description of a modern "mimodrame," such as "L'Enfant Prodigue," or "Sumurun." Again it reads not unlike a description of a modern ballet, for with these do we not often have printed synopses distributed, though *not* in Greek text? But we have to remember that the music was primitive, the scenic effect, though often remarkable, was different from that of our modern stage, with its greater mechanical resources; and, finally, that all this was an innovation of the Roman stage, for we are talking of the period that saw the dawn of the Christian era.

Among the more famous of the Latin pantomimists were Pylades, who was the inventor of tragic pantomimes; and Bathyllus, who was the composer of livelier episodes. For some time they joined forces and had a theatre of their own, where they staged comedies and tragedies composed by themselves without words or any other aid in telling the story of the play than dancing, pantomime and music.

The innovation struck the popular fancy, and all Rome flocked to support the new venture. The two actors were received at the Emperor's Court, and became the spoilt darlings of the Roman "smart" set. The inevitable happened. They began to intrigue at Court, and were made the centre of intrigue; they became as jealous of each other as rival opera

singers, and in time a financially happy partnership was dissolved, and there were two theatres devoted to pantomimes instead of one.

But as this form of drama was a novelty, and pleased the "connoisseurs," who were numerous and increasing in numbers, both theatres were equally successful, perhaps the more so in that the public is always specially interested in ventures that appear to be in rivalry. The taste for existing stage-productions slackened in favour of those offered by Pylades and Bathyllus. Their "ballets" whether tragic, comic or satiric were looked on as the very perfection of tragedy, comedy or satire.

It was no longer a matter of declamatory style to enjoy or to criticise, it was a matter of steps, movements, gestures, attitudes, figures or positions that were discussed by wise connoisseurs of "the new thing," who in Rome, as elsewhere to-day, had much to say on what they presumed to understand because —it was new! And such, it is said, was the genius of the "producers" of this novel form of entertainment; the effect was so natural, the stage-pictures were so convincing, the pathos was so moving or the gaiety so free and infectious, that the audiences forgot they had ears while using enchanted eyes; and expressive gestures took the place of vocal inflections, of the power of words and the magic of poetic verse.

Pylades before long found a rival star arise in the person of Hylas, whose greatest performance was said to be in *Œdipus*. If Pylades and Bathyllus had quarrelled, there was evidently no love lost between Pylades and Hylas.

Hylas on one occasion was giving a representation of Agamemnon and, at a particular line referring to that historic personage as "the great," he rose up on

tip-toe. “That,” said Pylades scornfully, “is being *tall*, not ‘great’”; a criticism not only just, but giving an excellent insight into the methods and ideas of the famous Latin pantomimist.

It is somewhat uncertain whether it was the Court intrigues of Bathyllus or of Hylas or of both which ultimately secured from the Emperor the sentence of banishment for Pylades, or whether it was the daring, not to say impudence of the actor in representing well-known people, or whether again it may not have been the increasing danger of the constant brawls which were taking place daily in the streets of Rome between the rival factions—the Pyladians and the Bathyllians.

But whatsoever the reason, the probability is that the perpetual strife between the parties supporting the adored actors (worse than ever was that between the Piccinists and Gluckists of the eighteenth century), with the constant blood-shed it involved, was made the excuse for the convenient removal of one of the principal factors in the disorder, and that the influence of Bathyllus, possibly backed up by that of Hylas, was able to secure the removal of the tragic actor.

Pylades, however, had his revenge, for such was the uproar in Rome on his banishment that the Emperor was practically forced to recall him, and he returned in triumph.

It is time, however, to leave the affairs of popular actors of the ancient world, since it is less the details of their personal history we need to consider than their importance as the virtual inventors of the second element of Ballet, the art of the mime, or, to use for a moment the more comprehensive word—pantomime. Thus we can see that it is largely due to

the perfecting by the Italians of that art which seems to have been even more natural to them than to the Greeks—miming, that we have the Ballet of to-day.

From the dawn of the Christian era, comedy gave place to a perfect craze, first for the mime, and then for its offspring, pure pantomime. But, finally, the mimetic art as a standing entertainment of the Roman public, came to suffer neglect in favour of circuses; then, together with the circuses, it was opposed by the Churches. There were spasmodic revivals in the fourth and fifth centuries, but from the fifth century mime and pantomime practically ceased to exist in Constantinople, to which the seat of the Roman Empire had by that time been removed; and the arts both of the dancer and the mime fell upon a period of obscurity, though they went into retirement with all the reluctance of a modern “star.”

CHAPTER V

CHURCH THUNDER AND CHURCH COMPLAISANCE

IT is a truism of history that opposition towards the amusements of a people only increases the desire for them, and that the undue pressure of a law, or of a too rigid majority, only stimulates the invention of evasions. In dramatic history there is ample proof of this.

In England during the seventeenth century the force of Puritan opinion and of law did not crush the Drama, but led to unseemly licence.

When, in the early eighteenth century, Paris was enlivened by the spectacle of the majestic Royal Opera, endeavouring by legal thunder to suppress the lively vaudeville performances of the too popular Paris Fairs, and even going to the length of obtaining decrees forbidding the Fair theatres to perform musical plays in which words were sung, were the managers of the little theatres downhearted?

No! they merely evaded the law and made a mockery of pompous interference by having the music of their songs played, while the meaning was acted in dumb-show, and—the actual words, printed very large, were displayed on a screen let down to the stage from above! Their audiences, catching the spirit of the thing, enjoyed the wit of the evasion and supported the performances all the more.

There are many people who can only relish that which they have been told is wrong.

Much the same spirit was abroad about sixteen

hundred years ago, when the growing power of the Christian Church began to be a calculable factor in "practical politics," and the embarrassment of successive Roman emperors in trying to rule an unwieldy and decaying Empire was increased by the moral warfare between the more rigid sects of the new Church and the pleasures of the people.

It should, however, be said in justice to the early Churchmen that many of the pleasures of the people had become entirely scandalous, and detrimental to the manhood of the Empire, at least as seen in the Empire's capital. Over such let us draw a veil!

While, in these "democratic" days, it may be doubted if there *are* any of the English-speaking race who "dearly love a lord" (though there is really no reason why they should not!), there were certainly some thousands of the Byzantine populace in the third and fourth centuries to whom a successful circus-rider or gladiator, actor or dancer, was of far more interest than any peer of their period.

The histrionic favourites lacked, of course, the advantages of picture-postcard fame, and had to be content with immortality in verse. But as for the now hackneyed "stage romance" of the marriage of a youthful scion of a noble house with some resplendent star of the theatrical firmament, did not a Byzantine Emperor, Justinian, marry Theodora, once a popular dancer at the Hippodrome!

Yet he it was who made one of the more effective moves to suppress some of his people's excessive opportunities for amusement, by abolishing the laws under which the expense of the performances in the Hippodrome, and some of the less important theatres had been met by the Imperial treasury. This, however, was mainly due to his beautiful wife, who

had seen all the vilest side of theatrical life in a time when the older dramatic culture had given place to banal and vulgar entertainments involving a horrible servitude of those engaged in providing them.

Before this, however, the Church's thunder had been launched at the grosser theatrical spectacles, and the Theatre had retaliated by mocking the adherents of the then new religion. Where fulmination failed, control by influence was essayed. But for all the attacks of the more advanced and severer leaders of the early Church, there must have been something of confusion for at least the first five centuries of the Christian era. Indeed, in the endeavour of the Church to transmute the popular love of theatrical spectacles into something higher, and to awaken the public interest in the service of the Church, what with the introduction of choral song, with strophe and antistrophe, and of solemn processionals, even it is said of ceremonial dances performed by the choir—such as the Easter dances still seen in Spain to-day—the Church itself must have come at times to seem perilously sympathetic towards the very things it was professing to condemn.

Did not Gregory Nazianzen implore Julian, before he became "the Apostate," to be more discreet, saying in effect: "If you must dance, and if you must take part in these fêtes, for which you seem to have such a passion, then dance, if you must; but *why* revive the dissolute dances of the daughter of Herodias, and of the pagans? Dance rather as King David did before the Ark; dance to the glory of God. Such exercises of peace and of piety are worthy of an Emperor and a Christian."

In short, wise cleric as he was, he found no fault

with the healthy exercise of the dance itself, but only with such dance and other Byzantine entertainment as had tended, or might tend, to become merely an exhibition of depraved taste.

Indeed, how could he have inveighed against the dance as an expression of clean rejoicing when it had been recorded: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels *and with dances*"?[1] Had not the servants of Achish said: "Is not this David the king of the land? did not they *sing one to another of him in dances*, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?"[2] Had it not, too, been written: "And David danced before the Lord with all his might."[3]

No, the Church thunder had been directed against the licence by which the arts of dancing and miming had been corrupted, and against, not wholesome athleticism and healthy sport, but the hysterical brutalities and "professionalism" of the arena.

And if further proof were required of ecclesiastical interest in and practice of the thing it only attacked when seen in degraded form, it is to be found in the fact that in 744, the Pope Zacharias promulgated a Bull suppressing all so-called "religious dances," or "baladoires" as he called them, which were showing signs of becoming "degenerate."

These were dances which were performed in, or within the precincts of cathedrals and churches at certain festivals such as Easter, Midsummer and Christmas; and of which the old English bonfire dances of St. John's Eve, were (and the modern carnival, and the Eastertide ceremonial seen in Seville to-day, *are*) probably survivals, though, to be

sure, they should be accounted originally as survivals of earlier pagan dances in honour of the sun, and of the harvest, and not as originating with the Christian Church.

It may seem a far cry from the date of Pope Zacharias' edict of 744, to 1462, when the first of the *ballets ambulatoires* is recorded, but it must not be supposed that dancing, if not miming, is entirely lacking in history during those seven hundred odd years. Any history of dancing would aid us in at least partly bridging such a gap; but it will be convenient in a chapter dealing more especially with early ecclesiastical influence on the evolution of Ballet, to deal now with a form of entertainment or of religious festival which was essentially a creation of the earlier Church.

The famous procession of the Fête Dieu which King René d'Anjou, Count of Provence, established at Aix in 1462, was, as an old historian tells us, an "ambulatory" ballet, "composed of a number of allegorical scenes, called *entremets*." This word *entremets*, which was later replaced by "interludes," designated a miming spectacle in which men and animals represented the action. Sometimes jugglers and mountebanks showed their tricks and danced to the sound of their instruments. These entertainments were called *entremets* because they were instituted to occupy the guests agreeably at a great feast, during the intervals between the courses. "The entre-actes of our first tragedies," the writer adds, "were arranged in this manner, as one sees in the works of Baif, the interludes in the tragedy of *Sophonisbie*. More than five hundred mountebanks, Merry Andrews, comedians and buffoons, exhibited their tricks and prowess at the full Court which was held at Rimini to

arm the knights and nobles of the house of Malatesta and others."

As the fêtes and tournaments, given on these occasions, were accompanied by acts of devotion, the festivals of the Church often displayed also something of the gallant pomp of the tournaments.

These *ballets ambulatoires*, however, with all their richer pageantry, were yet to be outshone by the two secular entertainments to which we must devote our next chapter—the banquet-dance of Bergonzio di Botta, of 1489, and the still more famous "Ballet Comique de la Reine," of 1581, the last of which, there can be little doubt, had important effect in the development if not creation of our English masque, which, in turn, had an immense influence on the evolution of modern Ballet.

CHAPTER VI

THE BANQUET-BALL OF BERGONZIO DI BOTTA, 1489, AND THE FAMOUS "BALLET COMIQUE DE LA REINE," 1581

A SUPERB and ingenious festivity was that arranged by Bergonzio di Botta, a gentleman of Tortona, in honour of the wedding of Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, with Isabella of Aragon.

The good Bergonzio was a lover of all the best things of life, but especially of dining and of dancing. That historic *gourmet*, Brillat Savarin, commends him for his taste in the former matter, as may we for the bright idea of combining a dinner with a dance, one of somewhat nobler plan than any modern example!

The dinner was of many courses and each was introduced by the servers and waiters with a dance in character, the whole constituting a sort of dinner-ballet. In the centre of a stately salon, which was surrounded by a gallery where various musicians were distributed, there was a large table.

As the Duke and his lady entered the salon by one door, from another approached Jason and the Argonauts who, stepping proudly forth to the sound of martial music and by dance and gestures expressing their admiration of so handsome a bride and bridegroom, covered the table with the Golden Fleece which they were carrying.

This group then gave place to Mercury who, in recitative, described the cunning which he had used in stealing from Apollo, who guarded the flocks of Admetus, a fat calf, with which he came to pay

homage to the newly married pair. While he placed it on the table three “quadrilles” who followed him executed a graceful *entrée*.

Diana and her nymphs then succeeded Mercury. The Goddess was followed by a kind of litter on which was a hart. This, she explained, was Actæon, who, although no longer alive, was happy in that he was to be offered to so amiable and fair a nymph as Isabella of Aragon. At this moment a melodious symphony attracted the attention of the guests. It announced the singer of Thrace, who was seen playing on his lyre while chanting the praises of the young duchess.

“I mourned,” he sang, “on Mount Apennine the death of tender Eurydice. Now, hearing of the union of two lovers worthy to live for one another, I have felt, for the first time since my sorrow, an impulse of joy. My songs have changed with the feelings of my heart. A flock of birds has flown to hear my song. I offer them to the fairest princess on earth, since the charming Eurydice is no more.”

A sudden clamour interrupted his song as Atalanta and Theseus, heading a nimble and brilliant troupe, represented by lively dances the glories of the chase. The mimic hunt was terminated by the death of the wild boar of Calydon, which was offered to the young Duke, with triumphal “ballets.”

A magnificent spectacle then succeeded this picturesque entrance. On one side was Iris, seated on a car drawn by peacocks and followed by several nymphs, covered in light gauze and carrying dishes of superb birds. The youthful Hebe appeared on the other side, carrying the nectar which she poured for the gods. She was accompanied by Arcadian shepherds, laden with all kinds of food and by

Vertumnus and Pomona who offered all manner of fruits. At the same time the shade of that famous *gourmet* Apicius rose from the earth, presenting to this superb feast all the delicacies he had invented and which had given him the reputation of the most voluptuous among ancient Romans. This spectacle disappeared and then there was a wondrous ballet of all the gods of the sea and rivers of Lombardy; who carried the most exquisite fish and served them while executing dances of different characters.

This extraordinary repast was followed by a yet more singular spectacle opened by Orpheus, who headed a procession of Hymen and a troop of Loves, followed by the Graces who surrounded Conjugal Faith, whom they presented to the Princess, while offering, themselves, to serve her.

At this moment, Semiramis, Helen, Medea and Cleopatra interrupted a recitative by Conjugal Faith to sing of the delights of Passion. Then a Vestal, indignant that the recital of pure and true marriages should be sullied by such guilty songs, ordered the notorious queens to withdraw. At her voice, the Loves, who accompanied her, joined in a lively dance, pursuing the wicked queens with lighted torches and setting fire to the gauze veils of their headdress! Lucretia, Penelope, Thomiris, Porcia and Sulpicia replaced them and presented to the young Princess that palm for chastity which they had merited during their lives. Their “modest and noble” dance, however, was interrupted by Bacchus, with a troop of revellers who came to celebrate so illustrious a bridal, and the festival terminated in a manner as gay as it was ingenious.

The fête achieved a prodigious fame throughout Italy. It was the talk of every city and a full

description of its glories was published, while crowds of "society hostesses" of the period endeavoured to emulate the ingenuity of its originators, and the vogue of the dinner-ballet "arrived."

One effect of its fame was that for a century it set the fashion for the Royal and Ducal Courts throughout Europe. Every Court had its "ballets," in which lords and ladies of highest degree took part; and the movement was greatly fostered by Catherine de Medici, who sought to divert the attention of her son, Henry III, from political affairs towards the more congenial ways of social amusement, of which Court-ballets formed considerable part.

The culmination of these sumptuous entertainments came, however, in 1581, when in celebration of the betrothal of the Duc de Joyeuse and Marguerite of Lorraine, sister of the Queen of France, a spectacle was arranged, the splendour of which had never been seen in the world before. This was Beaujoyeux's famous "Ballet Comique de la Royne"—or *de la Reine* in modern spelling—which set all cultured Europe aglow with praise of its designer. A special account of it, with many charming engravings, was printed by order of the King to send to foreign Courts. So much did it set a fashion that the elaborate masked balls and the numerous Court-masques and entertainments which followed in the reigns of Henry VIII, Elizabeth and James were directly inspired by the success of Beaujoyeux's ballet, even as they in turn influenced the subsequent productions of Louis XIV in France.

The author and designer was an Italian, by name Baltasarini, famous as a violinist. He was introduced by the Duc de Brissac to the notice of Catherine de Medici, who appointed him a *valet de chambre*, and

subsequently he became official organiser of the Court fêtes, ballets and concerts, assuming the name of Baltasar de Beaujoyeux.



Stage Effect in the 16th Century
(*A Scene from the "Ballet Comique de la Royne," by Baltasar de Beaujoyeux*, 1581).

The account of the ballet was sumptuously published. The title-page read as follows:

BALET COMIQUE

De la Royne, faict
aux nopces de mon
sieur le Duc de Ioyeuse &
madamoyselle de Vau
demont sa sœur.

par
Baltasar de Beavioyevlx
valet de chambre du
Roy et de la Royne sa mère.
à Paris
par
Adrian le Roy, Robert Ballard, et Mamert Patisson

Imprimeurs du Roy.
MDLXXXII
Avec Privilege.

After a courtly dedication “Au Roy de France, et de Pologne,” full of praise for his prowess in arms and his taste in art, full of graceful compliment by classic implications, he follows with an address:

AU LECTEUR.

Povravtant, amy Lecteur, que le tiltre et inscription de ce livre est sans example, et que lon n’a point veu par cy deuant aucun Balet auoir esté imprimé, ny ce mot de Comique y estre adapté: ie vous prieray ne trouver ny l’un ny l’autre estrange. Car quant au Balet, encores que ci soit vne inuention moderne, ou pour le moins, repétée si long de l’antiquité, que l’on la puisse nommer telle: n’estant à la verité que des meslanges geometriques de plusieurs personnes dansans ensemble sous vne diuerse harmonie de plusieurs instruments: ie vous confesse que simplement representé par l’impression, cela eust eu beaucoup de nouveauté, et peu de beauté, de reciter vne simple Comedie: aussi cela n’eust pas esté ny bien excellent, ny digne d’vne si grande Royne, qui vouloit faire quelque chose de bien magnifique et triomphant. Sur ce ie me suis advisé qu’il ne seroit point indecent de mesler l’un et l’autre ensemblement, et diversifier la musique de poesie, et entrelacer la poesie de musique et le plus souvent les côfrondre toutes deux ensemble: ansi que l’antiquité ne recitoit point ses vers sans musique, et Orphée ne sonnoit jamais sans vers, i’ay toutes fois donné le premier tiltre et honneur à la danse, et le second à la substâce, que i’ay inscrite Comique, plus pour la belle, tranquille et heureuse conclusion, ou elle se

termine, que pour la qualité des personnages, qui sont presque tous dieux et déesses, ou autres personnes heroiques. Ainsi i'ay animé et fait parler le Balet, et chanter et resonner la Comedie: et y adjoustant plusieurs rares et riches représentations et ornements, ie puis dise avoir contenté en un corps bien proportionné, l'œil, l'oreille, et l'entendement. Vous priant que la nouveauté, ou intitulation ne vous en face mal juger; car estant l'invention principalement. Composée de ces deux parties, ie ne pouvois tout attribuer au Balet, sans faite tout à la Comedie, distinctement representée par ses scènes et actes: ny à la Comedie sans prejudicier au Balet, qui honore, esgaye et rempli d'harmonieux recits le beau sens de la Comedie. Ce que m'estant bien advis vous avoir deu abondamment instruire de mon intention, ie vous prie aussi ne vous effaroucher de ce nom et prendre le tout en aussi bonne par, comme i'ay desire vous satisfaire pour mon regard.

Although the quaint spelling of the old French may offer a passing difficulty to some readers, I have felt it advisable to give the address as it stands, for it presents several points of extraordinary interest.

First and foremost is the fact that it claims Beaujoyeux's ballet to be the first ever printed!

His description of a ballet as "*meslanges geometriques de plusieurs personnes dansans ensemble*" is extremely interesting. Pylades the Latin dancer-mime declared that no man could become a perfect mime who did not understand music, painting, sculpture *and* geometry! And in recent years a well-known Italian *maître* with whom I was discussing Ballet remarked, as he held up a case of drawing instruments, "Here is the whole art of

choreography," or ballet-composition. This may seem a somewhat exaggerated assertion, but it is a fact that without some knowledge of geometry it would be difficult for a composer of Ballet to tell the effect that would be produced by lines and groups of dancers in the sight of a huge audience all looking at the stage from different angles.

Beaujoyeux's claim to appeal to and satisfy "*l'œil, l'oreille, et l'entendement*" is also interesting, and quite in accord with modern ideas of the Ballet.

The entertainment itself must have been a remarkable affair. It began with a fine water display by a fountain with twelve sides, on each of which were two naiads, with musical instruments, for the "concert," which accompanied the singers. Above the fountain-basin, which was full of fish, rose another on pillars, where twelve niches made seats for so many nymphs. In the middle, dolphins carried a crown and formed a throne for the Queen. Two other basins rose again above, formed of other dolphins grouped, which spouted great jets of water, and the whole was topped by a golden ball five feet in diameter.

It was from this "machine," drawn by sea-horses and accompanied by twelve tritons and as many sirens with their instruments, that there descended the Queen, the Princesse de Lorraine, the Duchesses de Mercueil, de Guise, de Nevers, d'Aumale and de Joyeuse, Marechal de Raiz, and de l'Archant and the Demoiselles de Pons, de Bourdeille and de Cypierre —who had all been seated in golden cars, and who were dressed in silver cloth and crêpe encrusted with gold bullion and precious stones. Thus they made the first entrance, arranging themselves in twelve different figures. At the first entrance they were six

abreast and three in front in a triangle, of which the Queen formed the first point.

After this impressive opening the ballet meandered through the story of Circe, with musical interludes, songs and dances, and elaborate allegory. But as the first act began at ten in the evening and the last did not finish till after five in the morning, it will be seen that the production was as lengthy as it was magnificent. Some idea of the splendour of the fête, indeed, may be gathered from the fact that it cost something over three and a half million francs. The conclusion was graceful. The Queen and the Princesses, who had represented naiads and nereids, presented gold medals to the princes and seigneurs who, in the guise of tritons, had danced with them—presumably as a reward for their patience! This presentation of gifts became quite a custom at these courtly ballets, and doubtless the modern *cotillon* is a survival.

The "Ballet Comique" set a fashion throughout Europe, and various Courts vied with each other in similar entertainments. The English Court had, of course, already had its ceremonial balls, masked balls and "masques," but their splendour had been nothing to this, and the subsequent fêtes at the Courts of Elizabeth and James were directly influenced by the example of the French in this direction, as we shall see when we come to deal with the English masque as a form of Ballet.

Let us first, however, consider the dances of the period, for which we have an excellent authority in the work of Thoinot Arbeau.

CHAPTER VII

THOINOT ARBEAU'S "ORCHÉSOGRAPHIE," 1588

"IN Spring," we know, "the young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." In the winter of life it would seem that an old man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of the dances that his time-stiffened limbs can no more achieve with their earlier agility and grace, and he takes to—writing about them. For it is strange but true that some of the most entertaining volumes on the subject are those written on the history of the dance by "grave and reverend seigneurs"; who, one would imagine, had long foregone all thought of youthful pastimes and turned their minds to solemner affairs. Three such, at least, I can recall—Thoinot Arbeau, Bonnet, and Baron.

Over three centuries ago—nay, nearly four, we come upon a somewhat sage and elderly gentleman, Thoinot Arbeau, whose book with its strange title, *Orchésographie*, was published in 1588.

Was it shyness, or sheer fraud that made him write it under a false name, a *nom de théâtre* it would almost seem. For Thoinot Arbeau was *not* his name, but a sort of anagram on his real one, which was Jehan Tabourot. Moreover, he was sixty-seven when he wrote it, and was a Canon of the Church! He was born at Dijon in 1519, and was the son of one Estienne Tabourot, a King's Counsellor! Think of it—born four hundred years ago, yet he speaks to our time, telling us, albeit in somewhat stiff and difficult French, of the dances that were in vogue in *his* dancing days.

As to the strange title of his work, its meaning will of course be apparent to all who know anything of the history of the subject, for they will remember that the Greek word for the dance was *Orcheisthai* (the *Orchestra* being the floor-space where the dancers performed); and so Orchéso*graphie* is merely a treatise on the writing of dances; that is, the setting of them down in such form that subsequent readers could study the dances therefrom.

The recording of the actual steps of dances has always been a problem, and other leading masters in France (such as Beauchamps, Pécourt, Feuillet) and in England (such as Weaver) had several more or less successful shots during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at inventing a sort of dance-shorthand.

The very first author to attempt such a thing with any real success was apparently our friend Arbeau; for earlier works, such as that of Caroso, are very poor. Into the full details of his system, however, I do not propose to enter now, for the matter is somewhat technical. The interest of Arbeau's work, however, is by no means mainly technical.

The book, which was published at Lengres in 1588, is written in the form of a dialogue "by which everyone can easily learn and practise the honest exercise of the dances," to give the quaint phraseology of the original, the two speakers being Arbeau the author, and Capriol, a youth who some few years earlier had left Lengres to go to Paris and Orleans and now, on his return, has sought out Arbeau to learn from him all that he can of dancing. Thoinot at first does not recognise him because, as he says, "You have grown so, and I believe that you have also enlarged your spirit by virtue and

knowledge." He asks the young man's opinion of the study of Law, remarking that he was also once a law-student.

Capriol expresses his admiration for the law as a necessary institution, but complains that his neglect of the polite arts, while in the company of the Orleans law-students, has made him dull and wooden. He says that his knowledge of fencing and tennis makes him an acceptable companion with other youths, but he fails as a dancer to please the *demoiselles*, a point on which, it seems to him, depends the whole reputation of a young man who contemplates marriage. Then follows some sound advice, with curious details, from Arbeau, on the advantages of dancing as a matrimonial agent, and he acclaims the art as one necessary to social welfare.

Capriol agrees and expresses his disgust that the dance should have been so subject to bitter attacks, of which he quotes historic instances. Arbeau neatly responds that, "For one who has blamed, an infinity have esteemed and praised the art," also following with quoted examples, saying, indeed, that "*Le S. prophete royal dauid dāça au deuāt de l'arche de Dieu*," or, in other words, that "the holy prophet, King David, danced before the Ark of God."

In the course of their conversation, Arbeau makes learned references to the derivation of the word "Dance," mentioning others then in use that were allied to it, such as *saulter* (from the Latin *saltare*), *caroler* (hence our "carols," or songs which, originally, accompanied certain religious dances), *baler*, and *trepiner*, Capriol remembers that the ancients had three kinds of dances: the sedate *Emmeleia*, the gay *Kordax*, and the mixed *Sikinnis*, the

first of which Arbeau likens (quite unhistorically) to the *pavanes* and *basse-dance* of his own period; the second, to the *gaillardes*, *voltas*, *corantos*, *gavottes* (note that—a reference to the *gavotte* in 1588!) and *branles* (or, as Elizabethan Englishmen called them, "brawls"); while the third, he declares, must have been similar to the *branles doubles* and to "the dance which we call *bouffons* or *matachins*."

Then, very wisely, he points out that most objections to dancing have been provoked not by decent but by—objectionable dancing! And as Capriol hastily assures his austere but kindly teacher that he wants none of *that* sort, but that he is anxious to teach his twelve-year-old sister what Arbeau is good enough to teach him, the old man proceeds on most polite and methodical lines.

Arbeau, truly remarking that rhythm is the basis of the dance, as it was always of all military marching and evolutions, then goes on to give a wonderful disquisition on that glorious instrument, the drum, and a masterly analysis of its rhythmic possibilities, both as an inspirer of soldiers on the march and as a stimulus to the dance.

The old man's enthusiasm for an instrument that has never really received its due homage is truly fine, and he gives no less than seventy-six examples of drum-beat on a common-time basis. He follows this with an exposition of fife-playing (with musical examples); his earnest plea for this study of drum (*tambour*) and fife being only preparatory to a study of the *basse-dances*, which were properly accompanied by both instruments.

As several of these dances of three centuries agone have been revived in our time, it is of interest to consider them in some detail, more especially as they

formed the choregraphic basis of all the ballets subsequently for some two centuries. Arbeau informs us that most of what he calls the "recreative" dances (or as we might say "social," as opposed to the more ceremonial affairs necessitating an orchestra) were performed in his forebears' time to the music of the flute and little drum.

Capriol asks: "Tell me, what are these dances and how are they done?"

To which Arbeau replies that they danced, in his father's days, "*pavanes*, *basse-dances*, *branles* and *courantes*, which have been in use some forty or fifty years."

Capriol asks: "How did our fathers dance the *basse-dance*?"

Arbeau replied that they had two sorts, the one common and regular, the other irregular, the former being danced to "*chansons régulieres*," and the latter to "*chansons irrégulieres*," and proceeds to explain that, for the former songs, there were sixteen bars which were repeated, making thirty-two to commence with; then a middle part of sixteen bars; and a close of sixteen, repeated; making eighty bars in all. If the air of the song was longer than this, the *basse-dance* played on it was termed "irregular." He then explains that the *basse-dance* proper was in three parts, the term being really only applied to the first; the second being called "*retour de la basse-dance*," and the third and last being termed "*tordion*."

Then comes the following:

"*Memoire des mouvements pour la basse-dance.*

R b ss d r d r b ss ddd r d
r b ss d r b c."

Not unnaturally Capriol, who is for ever asking quite intelligent questions, wants a translation of this cryptic-looking array of letters. It is better understood when one hears that "R" stands for *reverence*, "b" for a *branle*, "ss" for *deux simples*, "d" for a *double* (or three "ddd" for three "doubles"); the small "r" stands for a *réprise*, and "c" for *congé*; all of which are terms understood by dancers of to-day.

He gives very careful directions not only for performing the "*reverence*," the "*simple*," the "*double*," the "*réprise*," and the "*congé*," but for performing the various movements of the *basse-dance*, the *retour*, and the *tordion*; as, for instance, when he remarks that "You begin the dance of the *tordion*, which is in triple time, just like the *basse-dance*: but it is (to give his own words) *plus legiere and concitée*."

He describes the *Pavane* as "easy" to dance, and gives details of its performance, together with the music of that famous and lovely example, "*Belle qui tiens ma vie captive*," the words being given in full, for four voices and *tambour* accompaniment.

The *Gaillarde*, he says, is so-called "*parce qu'il fault estre gaillard and dispos pour la dancer*," and with much detail as to its performance explains that while danced somewhat like the tordion the latter is done "*plus doulcement and avec actions and gestes moings violents*."

He gives nearly a dozen musical examples for the *gaillarde*, one called "*La traditors my fa morire*"; another "*Anthoinette*"; another, with the charming title "*Baisons nous belle*"; another, "*Si j'ayme ou non.*"

Capriol, by the way, remarks *apropos* after the second-named, that "At Orleans when we give *Aubades* we always play on our lutes and *guiternes* a

gaillarde called '*La Romanesque*,'" but that it seemed so hackneyed and trivial that he and his companions took to "*Anthoinette*" as being livelier and having a better rhythm.

The *Gaillarde* was in triple time, and was made up of five steps (or four steps and a leap) and one "position"; the term *cinq pas* also being alternatively applied to it, hence the Shakespearean "cinque-pace" and "sink-a-pace."

The *Volte*, from which is derived the modern valse, was described by Arbeau as "a species of *gaillarde* familiar to the Provençals," danced, like the *tordion*, in triple time, and consisting of two steps and a leap. The *Volte*, or *Volta*, as it was as often called, was popular in England, as was the *Gaillarde*, and references to it are found in Shakespeare (*Troilus and Cressida*) and in the one really great work on the Dance in English literature, namely, Sir John Davies' richly imaginative and finely musical poem, *Orchestra, or a Poeme on Daunciny*, which was published in 1596, only eight years after Arbeau's *Orchésographie*.

The *Courante*, Arbeau describes as very different from the *Volte*. It is also (in contrast to the *Pavanes* and *Basse-dances*) a *danse sautée*, but in twelve time, with running steps, requiring from time to time not the quick, light leaping of a *volte*, but the sort of slow soaring for which Vestris was famous in the eighteenth century and Volinin and Bohn can perform so superbly to-day.

Arbeau says that in his youth the dance was given as a kind of "ballet," by three young men and three girls, with grace and dignity and he bewails its subsequent decadence. The old English term was "current traverse." In Sir John Davies' *Orchestra* one

finds the following reference:

"What shall I name those currant travases
That on a triple *dactyl* foot do run
Close by the ground in sliding passages?"

In Shakespeare's *Henry the Fifth*, too, is the following:

"*Bourbon*: They bid us to the English dancing-schools
And teach *lavoltas* high and swift *corantos*;"

and Sir Toby Belch, it will be recalled, asks: "Why dost thou go to church in a *galliard* and come home in a *coranto*? My very walk should be a jig ... sink-a-pace."

There seems, however, considerable ground for question as to what the *courante*, or *coranto*, really was, whether a slow or quick dance. Arbeau's directions are, for once, not quite clear. He speaks of it being a more graceful affair in his younger days; and he was an old man at the time his *Orchésographie* was published. In England it certainly seems to have become a fairly lively dance, of which the main feature was its "running" steps.

In France that characteristic seems to have been the same though the *tempo* may have been slower. Certainly it became slower there, for the *courante* under Louis Quatorze was considered a dull dance, disappearing in favour of newer types requiring a more developed and quicker technique.

However, dances alter in character, like everything else, in the course of time. The *waltz* or *valse* has considerably altered since it was first introduced into London drawing-rooms—and considered shocking!—in the first decade of the nineteenth century; and even to-day there is considerable difference between the *valse* as danced by Swiss or German peasants, and

as seen in the London ball-room. It is probable that the *courante* of Arbeau's day was as varied in performance as the tango of our later time.

Let us return, however, to his description of other dances of the period. The *Allemande*, he explains, "*est une dance plaine de mediocre gravité, familiere aux Allemâds, et croy qu'elle soit de noz plus anciennes car nous sommes desendus des Allemandes*." But his authority for the latter statement he does *not* give! It was danced by two or more people, in twelve time, and later was a very popular dance with Louis the Thirteenth.

A lengthy description follows of the *Branle*, which is also sometimes spelt *Bransle*, and from which comes our English word Brawl, the meaning of which has sadly degenerated from its original significance.

Saying that, "since you know how to dance the *Pavane* and the *Basse-dance*, it will be easy for you to dance the *branles*," he then proceeds to give account of over a score, including two which seem later to have assumed a right to be considered as separate dances, namely, the *Triory de Bretagne* (or simply, the Triory) and the *Branle de la Haye*, sometimes called merely the Haye, Hay, or Hey, which was an interlacing chain-dance.

Among the examples he gives is a *Branle d'Escosse*, of which he says: "*Les branles d'Escosse estoient en vogue y a environ vingt ans*," and it is much like the customary Scotch reel. The *Branles des Lavandières*, he explains, is so-called because the dancers make a noise by clapping their hands to represent that made by the washerwomen who wash their clothes on the banks of the Seine. Another, the *Branle du Chandelier*, was danced with lighted candles.

A description of the *Gavotte* follows, and it is interesting to note that this dance which is still seen on the stage sometimes to-day, was an established favourite as far back as 1588. Then comes an account of the "Morisque" dance, the origin of which Arbeau places in the Saturnalia of the ancient world, not without reason, one fancies; and then he gives account of the *Canaries*, which, he says, *some* say takes its name from the Canary Isles, while others derive it "from a ballet composed for a masquerade in which the dancers were dressed as kings and queens of Mauretania, or even as savages therefrom, with headdress of varied plumage." The last chapter is devoted to the dance of Bouffons, a dance with sword and buckler supposedly derived from ancient Rome and a never-failing source of delight to French playgoers and opera-lovers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Before the "Dialogue" actually closes, young Capriol politely thanks Monsieur Arbeau for the trouble he has taken to teach him dancing, and Arbeau responds by promising a second volume (alas! never written) dealing with the ballets of the masquerades "made" at Lengres. He urges him meanwhile to practise "*les dances honnestement*," and so become a worthy comrade of the planets "*qui dancent naturellement*": and he closes his discourse very prettily with the words, "*Je prie Dieu vous en donne la grace*."

We have lingered somewhat over this old manual of dancing, but there are some half-dozen points in the history of ballet that it is of vital importance to emphasise, and Arbeau's book is one of them.

Dancing itself of course had continued to exist through all time. But from the decadence of Rome

until fairly late in the fifteenth century, ballet had only a precarious sporadic existence; and the production of Beaujoyeux's volume of the *Ballet Comique de la Royne* in 1582, and Arbeau's *Orchésographie* in 1588, made a turning-point in the history of ballet—the *point where a popular amusement was once again taken up by men of intellect and given a new form and a new spirit*. Beaujoyeux created an interest in ballet, Arbeau assisted an advance in the technique of one of the chief elements of the art, namely, dancing; and there can be little doubt that both men were largely instrumental in forwarding that movement towards popular delight in the theatrical masque and ballet which were to become an outstanding feature of the next two centuries, the seventeenth and the eighteenth.

CHAPTER VIII

SCENIC EFFECT: THE ENGLISH MASQUE AS BALLET

In considering di Botta's elaborate feast, and Beaujoyeux's "ballet," one is struck by their similarity to the English "disguisings" and masques, which, first introduced to the Court of Henry the Eighth in 1512 as a novelty from Italy, only began to assume definite literary form about a century later. That century contributed towards the development of scenic effect.

In studying Arbeau's manual of contemporary dance and music, one is struck by another thing: he is dealing with a social amusement of the upper classes. The dances he describes were mainly the proper accomplishment of the well born, or were such of lower origin as might with adaptation become worthy of performance by more courtly dancers. It is certain he does not describe all the types of dance known to his period. The old Provençal "*Rigaudon*" which was later to come into such favour owing to Camargo, is not referred to by Arbeau; nor the languorous "*Sarabande*," which was probably of Moorish origin derived through Spain—or possibly earlier through Augustan Rome; the lively "*Chaconne*" is another omission; the "*Tresca*" yet another. These, and perhaps others, must have existed in Arbeau's time and long before; but would be among the traditional amusements of the people, and were not yet elected to the company of courtly dances.

It is needful to linger over these points here, for

they account for much that we find in the subsequent development of theatrical ballets in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Speaking of Beaujoyeux's "*Ballet Comique*," Castil Blaze, the scholarly historian of the Paris opera, remarks that it "became the model on which were composed a number of *ballets*, sung and danced, a kind of piece which held the place of Opera among the French and English for about a century." That century was, roughly, from about 1500 to 1600. And he adds: "The English gave them the name of *masque*."

In the few years after Henry VIII came to be crowned the young monarch spent considerable time and spared no expense in entertaining himself and his Queen with "disguisings," "revels" and masqued balls.

On Twelfth Night, 1511, before the banquet in the Hall at Richmond, so records the contemporary chronicler, Edward Hall, there "was a pageant devised like a mountain, glistering by night as though it had been all of gold and set with stones; on the top of which mountain was a tree of gold, the branches and boughs frysed with gold, spreading on every side over the mountain with roses and pomegranates; the which mountain was with (de) vices brought up towards the King, and out of the same came a lady apparelled in cloth of gold, and the children of honour, called the henchmen, which were freshly disguised and danced a Morris before the King, and that done re-entered the mountain: and then was the wassail brought in and so brake up Christmas."

The next year the King himself took part in a similar pageant; and in the next, *i.e.* in 1513, so Hall

tells us, “the King with eleven others were disguised after the manner of Italy, called a Mask, a *thing not seen before in England*. They were apparelled in garments long and broad, wrought with gold, with visors and caps of gold; and after the banquet these masquers came in with six gentlemen disguised in silk, bearing staff-torches, and desired the ladies to dance.”

A little later came the introduction of singing, and dialogue as well as dancing, some allegorical story forming the basis of the masque. In Beaujoyeux’s “ballet” of 1582, we have all this. Up to then in England the masque made no great advance beyond those of Henry VIII’s early years. In Beaujoyeux’s “ballet,” however, we have all that *had* been, and more. We have dancing, singing, dialogue, elaborate scenic effect, all in illustration of a mythic and allegorical story; and achieving a definiteness and grandeur of form hitherto unequalled, as well as publicity which made it famous throughout Europe. In some ways it was as much masque as “ballet,” and as much opera as masque. Actually it did stimulate the development of the Masque in England; and Opera in France.

At the English Courts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, the masque developed in the direction of scenic elaboration and splendour (with *music*) that made up for its literary shortcomings, at least in its earlier period.

At the French Courts of Henry IV and Louis XIII, what were known as Opera-ballets (later to be separated as opera and ballet) developed a musical richness (*with* scenic effect) that made up for similar literary shortcomings. Yet again came another form in the *Comedie Ballet* of Molière.

With the accession of James I of England came the real efflorescence of the English masque, which under the hands of Ben Jonson was to become a fairly balanced harmony of the three arts—the poet's, the musician's, and the painter-designer's.

It must of course be understood that in both the masque and ballet there was dancing; but at the period with which we are now dealing, namely the last decade of the sixteenth and first few decades of the seventeenth centuries, the technique of that art was—for stage purposes—comparatively so primitive as to make it almost a negligible quantity. There was dancing of course—that of "henchmen" and men and boys who performed a Morris, or *bouffon-dances*; and that of courtier, Court-lady, or even, it might be, a Royal personage, who would take part in the stately *Pavane* or *Almain*, now and then unbending sufficiently to dance a *Trenchmore* (once Queen Elizabeth's favourite) or *Canary*.

But it was all either an intrusion, alien to the general purport of the production, or else vastly overshadowed by the chief design, which was to present, with the aid of "disguisings" and elaborate "machines," a sort of living picture or series of living pictures, expressing some mythological, allegorical episodes or complimentary idea.

The chief aim was splendid pageantry; something mainly to please the eye; and secondarily to charm the ear; without making too great claims upon the intellect.

Among the leading English masque writers during the period we are considering were George Gascoigne, Campion, Samuel Daniel, Dekker, Chapman, William Browne, Beaumont and Fletcher and Jonson.

In France, at the Court of Henri Quatre, and under the direction of his famous minister, the great and grave Sully—who himself took part in them—some eighty ballets were given between 1589 and 1610, apart from state balls and *bals masqués*.

In England among the more notable masques produced during about the same period were the following:—

1585. The Masque of "Lovely London," performed before the Lord Mayor.

1589. A Masque planned by order of Queen Elizabeth in honour of the wedding of King James VI of Scotland and Anne of Denmark.

1594. A Masque before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall.

1604. A Masque by Samuel Daniel, "The Twelve Goddesses," arranged by Queen Anne, Consort of James I, in honour of the Spanish Ambassador, at Hampton Court.

1605. "The Masque of Blackness," by Ben Jonson (his first real masque) given on Twelfth Night at Whitehall.

1606. Ben Jonson's "Masque of Hymen," for the marriage of Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, with the Earl of Suffolk's younger daughter, Frances Howard.

1608. Ben Jonson's "Masque of Beauty"—a sequel to the "Masque of Blackness" at the request of the Queen Consort, who, with the Ladies of the Court, took part in the performance. This was followed in the same year by his "Hue and Cry after Cupid," given at Court

on Shrove Tuesday, in celebration of Lord Viscount Haddington's marriage.

1609. Ben Jonson's "Masque of Queens" at Whitehall on Twelfth Night.

All these were elaborate productions; those of Jonson being indeed beautiful. Their literary value has long been realised, and one sees in them some of his finest work. The introductory descriptions and the stage-directions are singularly minute and careful, and, in their way, are quite as well worth study as the beauties of his strong and noble verse.

He writes of scenes and costumes as if he loved them: as when, in "The Masque of Blackness," he describes the Moon, "triumphant in a silver throne.... Her garments white and silver, the dressing of her head antique, and crowned with a luminary or sphere of light; which, striking on the clouds, and brightened with silver, reflected, as natural clouds do, the splendour of the moon. The heaven about her was vaulted with blue silk, and set with stars of silver, which had in them their several lights burning."

And again: "The attire of the masquers was alike in all, without difference: the colours azure and silver; but returned on the top with a scroll and antique dressings of feathers, and jewels interlaced with ropes of pearl. And for the front, ear, neck, and wrists the ornament was of the most choice and Orient pearl: best setting off from the Black."

For the scenery and mechanical effects or "machines" as they were called—there was Inigo Jones, the travelled artist-architect who had seen many a masking in Italy; for the music there was Alfonso Ferrabosco, son of the Italian composer,

appointed music-master at the Court of James I; and for *Maître de danse*, there were Thomas Giles and Hieronimus Herne.

It was a noble company who took part in the performances. In "The Masque of Blackness," though there were only three speaking parts, Oceanus, Niger and Æthiopia—the impersonators of which are not recorded—there was no less a personage than Queen Anne herself, Consort of King James, who appeared as Euphoris, supported by the Countess of Bedford (Aglaia), Lady Herbert (Diaphane), the Countess of Derby (Eucampse), Lady Rich (Ocyte), Countess of Suffolk (Kathare) and other fair ladies of title.

The "Masque of Beauty," a superb spectacle given at the Court some three years later by express command of Her Majesty, had for speaking parts only three, namely those of Boreas—"*in a robe of russet and white mixed, full and bagged; his hair and beard rough and horrid; his wings grey, and full of snow and icicles; his mantle borne from him with wires and in several puffs*"; Januarius—"*in a throne of silver; his robe of ash colour, long, fringed with silver; a white mantle; his wings white and his buskins*"; and Vulturnus —"*in a blue coloured robe and mantle, puft as the former, but somewhat sweeter; his face black, and on his head a red sun, showing he came from the East*."

Following the entrance of Vulturnus, bringing—in reference to the former "Masque of Blackness"—the good news of his discovery of a lost isle whereon the black but lovely daughters of Niger had been languishing in obscurity, there came a fine pageant.

"Here," as Jonson's stage directions describe it, "a curtain was drawn in which the night was painted, and the scene was discovered which (because the former was marine, and these, yet of necessity, to

come from the sea) I devised should be an island floating on a calm water. In the midst thereof was a Seat of State, called the Throne of Beauty, erected; divided into eight squares, and distinguished by so many Ionic pilasters. In these squares, the sixteen masquers were placed by couples; behind them in the centre of the throne was a tralucent pillar, shining with several coloured lights, that reflected on their backs. From the top of which pillar went several arches to the pilasters, in front, little Cupids in flying posture, waving of wreaths and lights, bore up the cornice; over which were eight figures, representing the elements of Beauty, which advanced upon the Ionic, and, being females, had the Corinthian order."

They were: Splendour, Serenitas, Germinatio, Lætitia, Temperies, Venustas, Dignitas, and Perfectio. Minute description is given of their garments, but is too lengthy for inclusion here. The stage directions then proceed:

"On the top of all the throne (as being made out of all these) stood HARMONIA, a personage whose dressing had something of all the others, and had her robe painted full of figures. Her head was compassed with a crown of gold, having in it seven jewels equally set. In her hand a lyra, whereon she rested.

"This was the ornament of the throne. The ascent to which, consisting of six steps, was covered with a multitude of Cupids (chosen out of the best and most ingenious youth in the kingdom, noble and others) that were torch-bearers; and all armed with bows, quivers, wings, and other ensigns of love. On the sides of the throne were curious and elegant arbours appointed; and behind, in the back part of

the isle, a grove of grown trees laden with golden fruit, which other little Cupids plucked, and threw at each other, whilst on the ground, leverets picked up the bruised apples and left them half eaten. The ground-plat of the whole was a subtle indented maze; and in the two foremost angles were two fountains that ran continually, the one Hebe's and the other Hedone's; in the arbours were placed the musicians, who represented the shades of the old poets, and were attired in a priest-like habit of crimson and purple, with laurel garlands.

"The colours of the masques were varied; the one half in orange tawny and silver; the other in sea-green and silver. The bodies of short skirts on white and gold to both.

"The habit and dressing for the fashion was most curious, and so exceeding in riches, as the throne whereon they lay seemed to be a mine of light, struck from their jewels and their garments.

"This throne, as the whole island moved forward on the water, had a circular motion of its own, imitating that which we call *motum mundi*, from the east to the west, or the right to the left side.... The steps whereon the Cupids sat had a motion contrary, with analogy *ad motum planetarum*, from the west to the east; both which turned with their several lights. And with these three varied motions, at once, the whole scene shot itself to the land."

After a chorus with echoing refrain, "Vulturnus the wind spake to the river Thamesis, that lay along between the shores, leaning upon his urn, that flowed with water, and crowned with flowers; with a blue cloth of silver robe about him; and was personated by Master Thomas Giles, who made the

dances.

"*Vul.* Rise, Aged Thames, and by the hand
Receive the nymphs, within the land,
And in those curious squares and rounds
Wherewith thou flow'st betwixt the grounds
Of fruitful Kent and Essex fair
That lends the garlands for thy hair;
Instruct their silver feet to tread,
Whilst we, again, to sea are fled.

"With which the Winds departed; and the river received them into the land, by couples and fours, their Cupids coming before them.

"These dancing forth a most curious dance, full of excellent device and change, ended it in the figure of a diamond, and so, standing still, were by the musicians with a second SONG, sung by a loud tenor, celebrated.

"So Beauty on the waters stood,
When Love had severed earth from flood!
So when he parted air from fire,
He did with concord all inspire!
And then a motion he them taught,
The elder than himself was thought.
Which thought was, yet, the child of earth,
For Love is elder than his birth.

"*The song ended; they danced forth their second dance, more subtle and full of change than the former; and so exquisitely performed, as the king's majesty (incited first by his own liking to that which all others there present wished) required them both again after some time of dancing with the lords. Which time, to give them respite, was intermitted with a song.*

"This song was followed by others.

"*After which songs they danced galliards and*

corantos; and with those excellent graces, that the music appointed to celebrate them, showed it could be silent no longer; but, by the first tenor, admired them thus:

"SONG.

"Had those that dwelt in error foul,
And held that women have no soul,
But seen these move; they would have then
Said, women were the souls of men;
So they do move each heart and eye
With the world's soul, true harmony.

"*Here they danced a third most elegant and curious dance, and not to be described again by any art but that of their own footing, which ending in the figure that was to produce the fourth*, JANUARY *from his state saluted them thus*:

"*Janu.* Your Grace is great, as is your Beauty, dames;
Enough my feasts have proved your thankful flames
Now use your seat; that seat which was, before,
Though straying, uncertain, floating to each shore,
And to whose having every clime laid claim,
Each land and nation urgéd as the aim
Of their ambition, Beauty's perfect throne,
Now made peculiar to this place alone;
And that by impulsion of your destinies,
And his attractive beams that lights these skies;
Who, though with ocean compassed, never wets
His hair therein, nor wears a beam that sets.
Long may his light adorn these happy rites,
As I renew them; and your gracious sights
Enjoy that happiness, even to envy, as when
Beauty, at large, brake forth and conquered men!

"*At which they danced their last dance into their throne again.*"

These quotations, though necessarily brief,

illustrate the characteristic elements in the construction of the masque—dancing, music, song, spoken verse and *elaborate scenic effect*.

The reference to Thomas Giles, "who made the dances," to the dances themselves, "*galliards and corantos*," and that charming admission as to "a third most elegant and curious dance" not to be described again "by any art but that of their own footing"; the reference to the arbours in which "were placed the musicians, who represented the shades of the old poets, and were attired in a priest-like habit of crimson and purple, with laurel garlands"; the song of the "first tenor"—"Had those that dwelt ..." and January's speech apostrophising women's beauty; above all the loving descriptions of the scenery and mechanical effects, must all be of uncommon interest to those who know anything of the history of the French ballet, because it is so closely paralleled in the descriptions given some seventy years later by the Abbé Menestrier of the entertainments at the Court of Louis XIV. The English "masques" of the early seventeenth were, in effect, the French "ballets" of the early eighteenth century. To return, however, to the English Court of James I.

The Queen and Ladies of her Court once again took part in the entertainment of His Majesty as representatives of the various types of Beauty introduced in the course of the masque, and yet again were they found in the noble "Masque of Queens," celebrated from the House of Fame, by the Queen of Great Britain with her Ladies, at Whitehall, February 2nd, 1609, which was dedicated to the young Prince Henry, as to the origin of which Ben gives the following interesting note: "It increasing," he says, "to the third time of my being used in these

services to Her Majesty's personal presentations, with the ladies whom she pleaseth to honour; it was my first and special regard, to see to the dignity of their persons. For which reason I chose the argument to be *A celebration of honourable and true Fame bred out of Virtue*."

All of which in a sense foreshadowed the various symbolic ballets later at the Court of France, such as *La Verité, ennemie des apparences*, which we shall come to consider in due course. The thing to realise now is that these masques of Ben Jonson and of other men of his period were the finest flowering of a form of entertainment which had been struggling for definite shape throughout the previous century, indeed from the days of di Botta's fête in 1489, and had received its most recent and most effective stimulus from France in the production of Beaujoyeux's wondrous symbolic and mythologic "ballet" some twenty odd years before Ben Jonson's first "masque" was produced. The English masque—partly dramatic "interlude" with song, music and dance introduced, was in effect a ballet, and was a direct influence in the formation of the "opera-ballets" which were subsequently to be the delight of the French Court for a century or more.

CHAPTER IX

BALLET ON THE MOVE

IF the masque was a kind of ballet that did not move from its appointed place within sight of the Royal and Courtly audience, by whom it was commanded as a spectacle for private entertainment, there was a "ballet" which did, and became, like the "carrousels" and "triumphs," a very public spectacle, namely the *ballet-ambulatoire*, or peripatetic "ballet," said to have originated among the Portuguese, and much encouraged by the Church.

The Beatification of Ignatius Loyola in 1609 is an instance of peripatetic "ballet" famous in the history of the dance.

Interesting account of it is given by the invaluable Menestrier, who writes:

"As the Jesuits had a war-like character, they chose the Siege of Troy for the subject of their ballet. The first act took place before the church of Notre Dame de Lorette. It was there they stood the wooden horse. Full of Jesuits, the machine began to move, while numerous dancers acted the most remarkable feats of arms of Achilles, Ajax, Hector and Æneas. The monstrous horse and its retinue advanced, preceded by a brilliant orchestra. They arrived at the Place St. Roch, where the Jesuits had their church. The city of Troy, or at least a part of its towers and ramparts, constructed of wood, occupied a third of this place. A piece of wall was broken down, to give entrance to the horse, the Greeks descended from the machine and the Trojans attacked them with guns.

The enemy defended with the same arms, and the two sides fought—while dancing! Eighteen great staves filled with fireworks caused the burning and the ruin of Troy!"

One might be puzzled to know how the author of such a drama would introduce Saint Ignatius Loyola on the scene. The maker of the "book," however, had no qualms, and, leaving the Greeks and Trojans buried beneath the ruins of Ilium, on the following day, he led the spectators to the seashore. "Four brigantines," the chronicler proceeds, "richly decorated and fenced, painted and gilded, covered with dancers and 'choirs of music,' present themselves at the Port. They bring four ambassadors, who, in the name of the four quarters of the globe, come to swear homage and fidelity, to offer presents to the newly beatified, to thank him for his benefits and to beg his protection for the future. All the artillery of the Forts and of the vessels salute the brigantines on their entrance. The ambassadors then mount the cars in waiting and advance towards the College of the reverend fathers, with an escort of three hundred Jesuits on horseback, dressed as Greeks! Four troops of inhabitants of the four quarters of the world, dressed in national costumes, dance round the cars. The realms, the provinces, represented by their *genii loci*, march before their ambassador. The troop from America is the first, and among the dancers are many children disguised as monkeys and parrots, and twelve dwarfs, mounted on little nags. The car of Asia is drawn by two elephants. Six superb horses form the team of the others." The diversity, the richness of the costumes was not the least ornament of this singular ballet, for it is said that several of the actors had on their garments precious stones of great value.

It is the Portuguese who claim to have invented the true ambulatory ballets, which—designed in imitation of the Thyrennian "pomp" described by Appius Alexander—were danced in the streets of a town proceeding from place to place, with movable stages and properties. The performances were given on saints' days and with the greatest solemnity.

In the year 1610 Pope Paul V. canonised Cardinal St. Charles Borromée, who, under the pontificate of Pius IV., his uncle, was patron of the kingdom of Portugal, and that grateful nation wished to honour him publicly.

In order that it should be done with the greater solemnity, they put his image on board a ship, as if he were coming back once more to assume the protection of the kingdom of Portugal.

"A richly decorated vessel with flying sails of divers colours and silk cordage of magnificent hues, carried the image of the saint under a canopy of gold brocade. On its appearance in the roads all the vessels in port, superbly arrayed, advanced to meet it, and rendering military honours, brought it back with great pomp, and a salute from the guns of Lisbon and all the vessels in Port. The reliquaries of the patron Saints of Portugal, carried by the nobles of state and followed by the religious, civil and military bodies, received the new Saint on disembarcation."

As soon as the image was landed, it was received by all the monks and the whole of the ecclesiastical body, who went to meet it in procession with four large chariots containing different tableaux. The first car represented Fame, the second the town of Milan, the third Portugal, and the fourth the Church. Besides the chariots, each company of monks and

each Brotherhood carried its own particular Saint on rich litters, called by the Portuguese “andarillas.” The image of St. Charles was ornamented with precious stones to the value of twenty-six to twenty-seven thousand crowns; several others to the value of sixty, seventy and eighty thousand crowns, and the jewels that were displayed at this fête were estimated at more than four millions.

Between each chariot were troops of dancers, who represented, in dancing, the more notable of the acts of the Saints. Octavio Accoromboni, Bishop of Fossombrone, who obtained these honours for St. Charles, was at this time in the town of Lisbon, where he had gone to collect certain monies that Portugal was giving to the Pope. He has left us a description of this fête, in which he remarks that “the Italians and more especially the Romans, should not be surprised to read that dances and ballets formed a part of so sacred a ceremony, because in Portugal processions and fêtes would not seem elevated nor serious enough unless accompanied by these manifestations of joy.”

In order to prepare for these fêtes, dances, ballets and processions, the Lisbon folk had decorated, several days beforehand, big masts erected at the doors of the churches where the service was to be held, and at different places on the roads where the processions and performances would pass. “These masts were of pine, gilded and decked with crowns, streamers and banners of different colours, similar to the masts put up in France at the doors of the magistrates’ houses on the first of May in several towns of the kingdom, a custom which has given to these masts the name of ‘Maypole.’ The Spaniards call them ‘Mayos,’ or ‘*Arboles de Enamorados*’ (Lovers’

trees) because young men plant them on the first of May at the door of their mistresses' houses." The procession passed through triumphant arches, and the streets were hung with tapestries and strewn with flowers.

Three masts were planted at the places of the actual performance, one at the spot at the port where the procession was to start after the landing of the image of St. Charles, another in the middle of the route, and the third at the door of the church where the procession was to end, and where the image of the saint was to be placed. These masts marked the places for the performances, for it was there the procession stopped, and the dancers made their chief entrances in the "ballet." Needless to say immense sums were spent on the fête.

These are but two instances of the *ballet-ambulatoire*. More might be given, but these will suffice to afford some idea of a type of spectacle which the older historians speak of as a "ballet," but which is of special interest to us by reason of the contrast it forms to the masque, which was the reverse of "ambulatory," and from the fact that though in direct contrast on another score, namely, that it was not a private but a public spectacle, it was under the "immediate patronage" of the Church!

Neither the masque nor the *ballet-ambulatoire*, was yet a theatrical entertainment; but it is curious, is it not, to note that they had a certain kinship with theatrical tradition, for these magnificent peripatetic "ballets" of the ecclesiastics had had a primitive forerunner in the performance of Thespis with his travelling car in Grecian towns and villages some six centuries before the Christian era! Even as, later, we in fourteenth-century England had our Mystery and

Miracle plays travelling from “station” to “station” in similar fashion, and our “mummers” or mimers; while, on the other hand, the masque itself, as a private entertainment of the English Court, with its stage, and “machines,” scenery, dancing, music and song, not to mention its Royal and Courtly audience, was forerunner of similar entertainments which a century later were to become the features of the Courts of Louis XIV and XV, and from that to develop under Royal Patronage into the Ballet of the Theatre.

CHAPTER X

COURT BALLETS ABROAD: 1609-1650

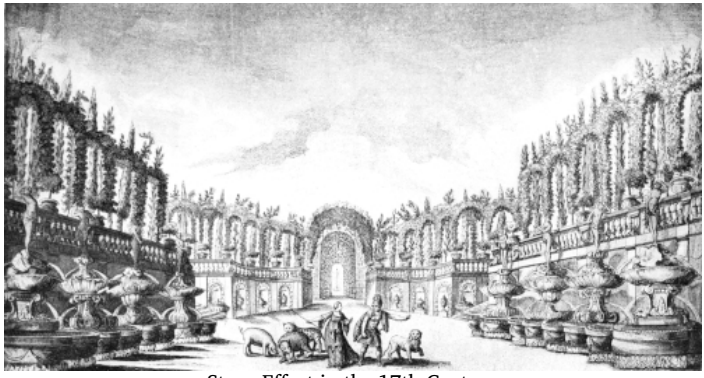
WHILE the English Court was enjoying its masques, during the reigns of Henry VIII, Elizabeth and James, and the French were labouring forth their heroic ballets under Henri Quatre—more than eighty having been given from 1589 to 1610, without counting insignificant balls and masquerades—Italy was similarly keeping up in the movement which her example had originally inspired.

It was the custom there to celebrate the birthday of the Princess by an annual public fête. As one old historian records, the more usual spectacles of these celebrations were in the form of "Carrousels, Tournois, des Comedies, des Actions en Musique, des Festins, des Feux d'Artifice, des Mascarades quand ces Fêtes se trouvent au temps du Carnaval, des Presens, des Illuminations, des Chasses, des Courses sur la Neige et sur la Glace suivant la saison, des Promenades et des Jeux sur les Eaux."

The Court of Savoy was particularly devoted to such entertainments.

In 1609 there was a *ballet d'armes*, entitled, "*Il Sol nascente nell' oscurità dell Tile*," danced by the "Serene" Princes of Savoy, the occasion being the anniversary of the birth of their Royal father, the Duke Charles Emannuel.

Again, in 1611, the Prince of Piedmont gave a fête in honour to his father's birthday, representing "The Taking of the Isle of Cyprus."



Stage Effect in the 17th Century
(*From a coloured engraving of a scene from "Circe,"* 1694).

In the year 1615 was produced a mounted ballet at this same Court (Savoy) for the arrival of the Prince d'Urbin. This was an attack and a combat to music against three hundred men on foot, who formed different companies of various shapes, lunated, oval, square and triangular. They had drilled their horses so well that they were never out of step with the rhythm of the music. There were numerous cars drawn by lions, stags, elephants, rhinoceroses, etc., and as they represented the triumph of Love over War, the Four Quarters of the World followed the cars of the victors mounted in as many chariots. The Car of Europe was drawn by horses, that of Africa by elephants, that of Asia by camels, that of America by "unicorns"! The cars of this festival had engraved work on them by Callot.

In 1618, "The Elements," a grand ballet and tourney was represented by the Duke of Savoy and his son, the Prince of Piedmont, on the former's birthday.

"The Temples of Peace and War on Mount Parnassus," a ballet and tourney "avec un Festin à la

Chinoise," formed the entertainment of the following year.

"The Judgment of Flora on the Dispute of the Nymphs over the Crown of Flowers presented to Mme. Royale on her Birthday," is the long and stately title of a fête given at Turin in 1620.

"The Tribute of the Divinities of the Sky, Air, Sea and Infernal regions," was a grand ballet and tourney of 1621. "The Ballet of the Seven Kings of China" was another.

"The Joy of Heaven and Earth," a fête in honour of the Duke's birthday in 1624, was followed by "Bacchus triomphant des Indes, avec une Action en Musique et une Chasse Pastorale," in the same year. This was a fête in honour of the Duke Charles Emmanuel's birthday, and was performed by the pages of the Prince Cardinal Maurice of Savoy, at Rome on January 22nd, 1624.

"Mount Parnassus and the Muses," "The Quarrel of the Defenders and the Enemies of the Muses," took place in February, 1624. "Cadmus, victorieux du Serpent," and "Prometheus" were notable ballets in 1627.

One of the most remarkable, and, according to contemporaries, beautiful mounted ballets ever composed was that of "Æolus, King of the Winds," which Alfonso Ruggieri Sansoverino presented at the wedding of the Prince of Tuscany in the year 1628 in the St. Croix Square, in Florence. On one of the sides of this square was a large reef with a cave hollowed out of its rock and closed by a great door secured with padlocks.

Don Anthony de Medici, who took the part of

master of the combat, having reconnoitred the course, Æolus, King of the Winds, entered, accompanied by twelve watermen to whom he "had taught the use of sails and the nature of the winds." Twelve Tritons walked before him blowing their trumpets. Eight Sirens replied on other instruments, accompanied by Hoar-frost. Eight pages represented the many effects of the Winds, causing cold, hot, damp, dry, clear, dull, serene or cloudy weather.

The two sponsors walked behind their pages. The chariot of the Ocean followed, drawn by two big whales. It represented a rock covered with seaweed, coral and different kinds of shells. Nymphs of the sea, rivers and springs were seated on this rock, and gave a musical concert with wind instruments presided over by Dolopea, wife of Æolus. Æolus, having passed in his chariot and arrived in front of the Prince's box, saluted the bride, and after offering her his kingdom and all his troops, took a lance in his hand; then, suddenly departing, went and thrust against the door of the Cave of the Winds. The padlocks broke, and the door being opened, thirty-two mounted men and a hundred and twenty-eight on foot were set at liberty. The men, rushing like the winds they represented, ran to the other side of the square. Here Æolus stopped them and gave them orders to arrange themselves into a triangular figure. He led them in this order to salute the Princess for whom the fête was arranged. After having taken their places, they began to manœuvre their horses in a ring on the right; they went in single file to make a chain, and sixteen of them having broken it, they formed a smaller one, from which eight more detached themselves, making a still smaller one. The first horsemen, curveting, manœuvred their horses to perform voltes and half-voltes, joining again without

a halt, and, forming twos, fours and eights, “they mingled capers at the galop, with caracolling in figures, performing a marvellous labyrinth with their intertwinings and evolutions.”

In the year 1628, the students of the College at Rheims danced a ballet in joyful commemoration of the taking of La Rochelle, the design of which, after ancient Roman models, was “The Conquest of the Car of Glory by the great Theander.”

Unlike modern musical comedy, or “revue,” there purported to be a plot. The Giants of the Black Tower, trusting in the might of their magic, published a challenge “full of empty pride,” by which they summoned all Knights-errant to the conquest of the Car of Glory.

Lindamor, wishing to chastise the insolence of these fiends, arranges with three of his friends to go and fight them. The Black Tower is full of sorceries, and there was no means of opening it, except by the sounding of an enchanted horn which the Giants had fastened to the Gate. Lindamor sounds it; the Giants issue forth upon him and his comrades, and the contest being unequal, Lindamor is compelled to withdraw and to leave his comrades in the hands of the Giants, who load them with chains, and fasten them to the Castle Gate to serve as a trophy to their vanity.

Some country shepherds who had seen the adventure of Lindamor and the Giants, persuade Caspis to take a part in favour of these unhappy knights. This shepherd, who was above the power of all magic, presents himself before the captives, and first of all breaks their chains and sets them at liberty. Lindamor, well pleased at the courtesy of

Caspis, discusses with him the means of avenging himself on the Giants of the Black Tower. He learns from this shepherd that the sword of Cloridan is necessary for this enterprise, and that, in order to get it, it is necessary to put to sleep the Dragon to whom the Giants have given the charge of it. The shepherd offers, himself, to do this and succeeds. But to get the sword of Cloridan something more was wanted than to put the Dragon to sleep. The shepherd evokes the shade of Cloridan to find out from him what must be done to make use of this sword successfully.

The shade when called forth, informs him that Theander alone is capable of using it. The rumour of this oracular response having got abroad, Vulcan with his Cyclops prepares arms for Theander, who being preceded by Renown and followed by Lindamor, reaches the place where the sword of Cloridan is guarded, seizes the sword, after having chained the Dragon, presents himself with it at the gate of the Black Tower, causes the gate to open at the sound of the horn, defeats the Giants, draws from the Tower the Car of Glory, harnesses the Giants to it and triumphs finally over the arms and the enchantments of his enemies.

The story, which smacks of some mediæval romance of Chivalry, was really allegorical of the capture of La Rochelle. The late king was Theander; the shepherd Caspis was the Cardinal Richelieu, his prime minister; Lindamor, the King, Henry III, who, being as yet only Duc d'Anjou, had attempted this siege in vain. The sword of Cloridan was that of Clovis; the Black Tower was La Rochelle; and the magic charms were Heresy and Rebellion.

Again, in the year 1628, a ballet of "The Court of the Sun," by an Abbé Scotto, was danced at the Court

of Savoy. Night played the overture, and at her command spirits and goblins made a “pleasing” entrance, coming on from different directions. Night, however, warning them to be careful that Day did not surprise them, they retired into their caves, when the Morning Star introduced visions of the Morning, bright Dreams issuing from the ivory gate. The Star of Venus rose from the sea to announce the arrival of the loveliest Aurora ever seen, and ordered the Zephyrs to rise and to strew flowers, the Dew to sprinkle perfumed water and the sweetest and most healthful influences.

Aurora followed them, and having descended from Heaven, suddenly caused the Palace of the Sun (in Ionic architecture) to appear; the seven Planets and the twelve Hours were seen in niches, from which they emerged to dance; the Muses in other niches performed concerted movements, Time, the Year, the Seasons, the Months and the Weeks providing the music in the boxes of this palace.

From the last examples, it is seen that philosophic, poetical and classic allegories were often used as the basis of ballets. The philosophic were “those in which causes and effects, peculiar qualities and the origin of things, were expressed in a suitable story by the devices of the ballet.” Several ballets of this kind were seen at the theatre of the College of Clermont, principally, those of “Curiosity,” “Dreams,” “Comets,” “Illusion,” “The Empire of the Sun,” “Fashion.” In that of “Curiosity” it was desired to show that the good or bad use made of it contributes to the perfecting or spoiling of the mind. Curiosity was represented by four characters, each forming a part of the ballet. The first of these was Useless Curiosity, which occupies itself only with trifles; the

second, Dangerous Curiosity, which seeks forbidden and harmful things, and it was shown that these are the two kinds of curiosity to be avoided!

Among Useless Curiosities, was seen Idleness, with a troop of loiterers who ran about hunting for gossip and false rumours, merely to pass the time and "to find out what was going on in the world"; others who consulted almanacks to discover what the weather would be; and also sleepers, who, awakening, entertained each other with their dreams, from which they foretold what was about to happen! Mistakes, New Opinions, Alchemy, Sorcery, Magic and Superstition were some of the "characters" in the scene showing Dangerous Curiosity.

The third and fourth parts showed Useful and Necessary Curiosity, respectively. Useful Curiosity was represented by travellers whose desire to learn all about the manners and customs of different nations drove them into foreign countries; also "by physicians who work to gain experience." In Necessary Curiosity was introduced the art of navigation, instanced by sailors, who, under the guidance of Tiphys, helmsman of the *Argo*, set out "to discover new worlds"; another example of "necessary curiosity" being the fire brought from Heaven by Prometheus for people eager to discover its use. The poetical allegories were not less ingenious than the philosophic, although "they did not pretend," as one old chronicler informs us, "to so much precision."

In the same year at the Savoy Court, "*Alcée*," a ballet of fishermen, with *intermezzi* and some superb presents brought to Mme. Royale for her birthday by the Prince of Piedmont and his Cavaliers, was a

grand water entertainment in which appeared, to quote an old historian, “Le Vaisseau de la Felicité accompagné de toutes les Deitez (sic) avec les Concerts de Musique, des quatres Elemens avec leur machines; de la Representation en Music (sic), d’Arion, du Temps avec les années heureuses, des quatres parties du monde avec des Entrées de Ballets, des quatres Saisons avec le tribut de toutes leurs douceurs pour le Festin.” This was given by the Duke in honour of Mme. Royale on her birthday, and it was declared that a fête “plus complette, plus magnifique et plus agréable” had never been seen.

“Eternity” was the title of a ballet given in 1629; “Le Temps Eternel” following next year; “La Felicité Publique” the next; and in 1632, “La Chasse Theatrale, representée en Ballet,” by the Cardinal of Savoy at his country mansion was given in honour of his brother, the Duke’s birthday.

Among the “moral” ballets, there is hardly one more pleasing than that composed to commemorate the birthday of the Cardinal of Savoy in 1634. The subject of this ballet was “Truth, the Enemy of Appearance, as proved by Time”—*La Verita Nemica della Apparenza sollevata dal Tempo*.

This ballet opened with a chorus of False Rumours and Suspicions, followed by Appearance and Lies! They were curiously represented by characters dressed as cocks and hens, who sang a dialogue half in Italian and half in French, mingled with the cluckings of cocks and hens. The chorus by the latter ran as follows:

“Su gli albori matutini
Cot, cot, cot, cot, cot cantando
Col cucurrii s’inchini
E bisbigli mormorando

Fra i sospetti, e fra i Rumori
Cu, cu, cu, cu, cu, cu, cu,
Salutiam del novo sol gli almi splendori."

The cocks replied:

"Faisant la guerre au silence
Cot, cot, cot, avec nos chants,
Cette douce violence
Ravit les Cieux et les Champs.

Et notre inconstant hospice
Cot, cot, cot, cot, cot, coné
Couvre d'apparence un subtil artifice."

After this quaint song, the scene opened, and a large Cloud was seen, accompanied by the Winds. "Appearance" also made her entrance at this moment. She had wings and a long peacock's tail and her dress was hung with a number of mirrors. She was brooding over some eggs, from which hatched out—Pernicious Lies, Deceits and Frauds, White-Lies, Flatteries, Intrigues, Mockeries, Ridiculous Lies and Idle Tales! An eternal crew!

The Deceits were dressed in dark colours with serpents concealed among flowers; the Frauds, clothed in hunters' nets, struck bladders as they danced; the Flatteries were dressed as monkeys, Intrigues as lobster-catchers with lanterns in their hands and on their heads; Ridiculous Lies were represented by beggars who pretended to be cripples with wooden legs.

Time, having driven away Appearance with all her Lies, opened the nest on which she had been sitting and there appeared a great hour-glass from which Time ordered Truth to come forth; the latter then calling back all the Hours, danced with them the finale of the "grand ballet."

Surely, the time is ripe for a revival of such a production!

"Pâris" (1635), "Le Théâtre de la Gloire" (1637) and "La Bataille des Vents" (1640) were notable productions at the Court of Savoy; but one of the most interesting of these seventeenth-century entertainments was that on February 19th, 1640, when at the same Court was given a "Ballet of Alchemists" in which, under a charming allegory, they made fun of those seekers of the philosopher's stone who pretend to make gold.

Hermes Trismegistus, dressed as a philosopher, with the master's ring, introduces some of the most celebrated chemists of different nations: Morieno, an Italian; Bauzan, a Greek; Körner, a German; Untser, a Swede; Calid, a Turk; Sandivoge, a Pole; Raymond Lulli and Hortulaus, Spaniards; Dolcon and Beguin, Frenchmen; Pierre, a Lorrainer; Rasis, a Jew; and Geber, an Arab.

The Italian and the Greek brought in a furnace of five storeys and octagonal in shape. The German and the Swede brought in the alembics; the Turk and the Pole came with flowers for distilling, which they carried in baskets; the two Spaniards brought charcoal; the French came with bellows to blow up the fire; the Lorrainer carried sieves for sifting; the Jew and the Arab had in front of them leathern aprons with various pockets, where they carried alum, vitriol, sulphur and ingots of metal.

For the grand ballet they all worked together around the furnace, whence they drew a thousand pretty novelties to give to the ladies in the audience —essences, liqueurs, glass jewellery, mirrors, bracelets, Cyprus powder, paint and other treasures, very much as presents are given at Cotillons and big

fancy dress balls to-day.

Yet another delightful production of this period must be chronicled, namely, the "Ballet of Tobacco," danced at Turin, the last day of Carnival, 1650. The scene represented the Isle of Tobago, "*from which tobacco took its name, and gave happiness to the nations to whom the gods had given this plant*. First entered four High Priests of that country, who drew forth snuff from certain golden boxes which they carried, and threw this powder in the air to appease the Winds and Tempests. Then with long pipes they smoked around an altar, making of their smoking tobacco a sort of sacrifice to their favourite Deities. For the second entry two Indians were twisting into a rope tobacco leaves. Two others were pounding it in mortars to reduce it to powder, and made the third entrance scene. The fourth was of snuff-takers, who sneezed and presented the snuff to each other, taking it in pinches with amusing ceremony; while the fifth was a band of smokers gathered together in an Academy or place set apart for smoking, wherein Turks, Spaniards, Poles and other nationalities received the tobacco from the Indians and proceeded to take it in their different ways."

Such, in brief, were some of the continental ballets of the first half of the seventeenth century, a period, it must be admitted, not lacking in ingenuity, or resource in means of entertainment.

CHAPTER XI

THE TURNING POINT: LE ROI SOLEIL AND HIS ACADEMY OF DANCING, 1651-1675

FOR some two centuries Italy had amused herself with Ballet as a courtly entertainment; and so, during one, had England and France.

Now, in 1651, it was France who was to give the lead to Europe, for in February of that year Louis-Quatorze, then a lad of thirteen, appeared in a ballet by Benserade, entitled "Cassandra," and this was the first of many in which he took part until, at the age of thirty, he withdrew from the stage and gave his farewell performance in the ballet of "Flora" in 1669. Strange, is it not, to think of a king as a ballet-dancer? Yet, had not our own King Henry VIII been among the joyous masquers?

But Louis XIV was to become more than a mere participant in Ballet—he was to become the virtual founder of modern Ballet as seen on the stage; for it was he—universal patron of the arts—who was to found a Royal Academy of Dance and Music, to the existence and encouragement of which the modern development of both arts is largely due.

All these ballets had been either the principal object or the supplement of superb fêtes given at Versailles or in the other royal palaces. Historians have described the fêtes which Fouquet, the Comptroller of Finances, offered to Louis XIV. As a sidelight on the Comptroller's magnificence and extravagance, the following is of interest.

The king left Fontainebleau one evening in September, 1660, with his entire Court, in order to have supper at the castle of Vaux-le-Vicomte. The route, five leagues long, was illuminated with waxen torches; and booths, put up at intervals, were laden with all kinds of refreshment for the travellers. The castle, blazing with light, seemed to Louis like some palace of faerie. A magnificently furnished suite was set apart for His Majesty, and the Court was put up in the minister's house. An immense sideboard, laden with gold and silver plate, was a feature of the room in which the king was to have supper, with a fountain playing in the middle. A splendid banquet was served, and a band placed in a gallery discoursed sweet music. Numerous other tables were set out for the Court; and the whole of the king's guard, even to the famous livery servants, were entertained most sumptuously during the two days that the fête lasted.

After supper the king took a walk by a lake the shores of which were decorated with orange trees, lemon trees, and pomegranates, planted in gilded tubs, the fruit being available to all who wanted any. Thousands of torches diffused a brilliant light. A theatre, built in the middle of the lake, offered yet further entertainment with a representation of "The Triumph of Venus," a ballet of a new kind, in which Tritons and Nereids, having swum about in the waves, afterwards proceeded to sing eulogies of King Louis. All the best musicians of Paris had been added to the king's orchestra, and they were hidden behind the scenery of the theatre, and in the neighbouring thickets. On the following day there was a royal hunt, with tables served at all the meeting-places. There was fishing in the lake, from which the net brought in enormous fish; there was a play, then a

ball, and finally fireworks; not to mention the sumptuous and delicate fare; the exquisite wines and delicious liqueurs which were provided on the same scale of unlimited extravagance.

On the first day Louis, whilst admiring the gardens and park from his window, had remarked on its beauty, but said that the view would be still more lovely if it were not shut in by a wood of tall trees that he pointed out. Next morning Fouquet drew the king to the same window and led the conversation in such a way that Louis might repeat the remark he had made the evening before.

"Sire, since that wood has the misfortune to displease you, it shall fall immediately."

Then at a given signal the forest disappeared with a crash as if by magic, and the royal eye could see to the horizon. Sawn through during the night and attached to ropes that a hidden army of peasants pulled all at the same time, the trees fell at the voice of command.

All this magnificence and extravagance astonished the courtiers, but served also to arouse considerable suspicion. The king's brother remarked that the name of the castle should rather be *Vol-le-Roi* than *Vaux-le-Vicomte*. This fête, an act of homage, as imprudent as it was ambitious, hastened the downfall of its author, and from that very day his doom was assured.

Among the many ballets in which Louis XIV himself took part, the more notable were "Le Triomphe de Bacchus," "Le Temps," "Les Plaisirs," "L'Amour Malade," "Alcibiade," "La Raillerie," "L'Impatience," "Vincennes," and "Les Amours Déguisés," as well as some of the comédie-ballets of Molière.

Louis represented only the more exalted characters, such as Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo; though on occasion, to display the variety of his talent, he essayed an experiment in *genre bouffonesque*. Among the *entrées* in the "Triomphe de Bacchus," for instance, there was one for some *filous, traîneurs d'épée, sortant du palais de Silène, échauffés par le vin*, and the King playing the *rôle* of one of the "filous," sang the following stanza:

"Dans le metier qui nous occupe
Nos sentiments sont assez beaux,
Car nous prisons plus une jupe
Que nous ne ferions vingt manteaux."

The Duc Mercour, the Marquis de Montglas, the Messieurs Sanguin and Lachesnaye, garbed as attendants on Bacchus, addressed the following verses to the ladies of the Court, and the author had carefully indicated that they were to be spoken to the "demoiselles":

"Il n'est pas mal aisé d'acquérir nos offices,
Et pour y parvenir le chemin en est doux;
Mais vous ne sauriez mieux vous adresser qu'à nous,
Si vous voulez apprendre à devenir nourrices."

Copies of the "book" of the ballet are, I believe, extant; and the designs for the costumes of the actors are still more curious.

The members of His Majesty's ballet, if they were not expert ballet dancers, could at least give ample proof of their nobility. Louis XIV counted marquises and marchionesses, dukes and duchesses, even princes and princesses and queens among his subjects, that is, his dancing subjects.

It was in 1661 that the king founded the Dancing Academy. A room in the Louvre was assigned to this

learned society, which, however, preferred to gilded ceilings the smoky walls of an inn having for its sign "L'Epée de Bois." It was in this favourite retreat that the members of the new Academy met together. It was here that the interests of the kingdom of the *rigaudon* and the *minuet* were regulated, where elections were held, and, without breaking up the session, without even leaving their academic chairs, dinner was served to the members on the table where each had just cast his vote. A tablecloth covered the green cloth; the bottle followed the inkhorn; supper replaced the ballot-box; and the assembly drank long draughts to the health of the new member.

The letters patent for the foundation of the Dancing Academy read curiously. In the preamble, for instance, the king thus expressed himself:

"Although the art of dancing has always been recognised as one of the most honourable, and the most necessary for the training of the body, to give it the first and most natural foundations for all kinds of exercises and amongst others to those of arms; and as it is, consequently, one of the most useful to our nobility and others who have the honour of approaching us, not only in times of war in our armies, but also in times of peace, in the performance of our ballets, nevertheless, during the disorder of the last wars, there have been introduced into the said art, as in all others, a great number of abuses likely to bring them to irretrievable ruin.

"Many ignorant people have tried to disfigure the dance and to spoil it, as exhibited in the personal appearance of the majority of people of quality: so that we see few among those of our Court and suite who would be able to take part in our ballets,

whatever scheme we drew up to attract them thereto. It being necessary, therefore, to provide for this, and wishing to re-establish the said art in its perfection, and to increase it as much as possible, we deemed it opportune to establish in our good town of Paris a Royal Academy of Dancing, comprising thirteen of the most experienced men in the said art, to wit:

MM. Galant du Désert, dancing-master to the Queen;
Prévôt, dancing-master to the King;
Jean Renaud, dancing-master to His Majesty's brother;
Guillaume Raynal, dancing-master to the Dauphin;
Nicolas de Lorges;
Guillaume Renaud;
Jean Picquet;
Florent Galant du Désert;
Jean de Grigny."

These, let us note, are the names of the patriarchs of the French dance.

In 1669 the Abbé Perrin, who was official introducer of Ambassadors to Gaston, Duc d'Orléans?, having obtained exclusive rights from the king, went into theatrical management, taking as his colleagues the Marquis de Sourdeac to direct the scenic and mechanical effects, and Cambert to supply the music. A certain Champeron advanced the money, and on March 28th, 1671, "Pomone," a pastoral in five acts, words by Perrin, music by Cambert, dances by Beauchamps, was produced at the theatre of the Rue Mazarine.

The whole thing was poor, but this did not prevent the house being crowded for eight months, so that at

the end of this time Perrin drew out thirty thousand francs as his share: but the various members of the little syndicate disagreed when it came to sharing out. Lulli profited by their disputes, cleared out Perrin and his partners, and started again in a disused tennis-court known as the *Bel Air*, situated in the Rue de Vaugirard, near the Luxembourg. He had as colleagues Quinault for the poetic libretti, and an Italian named Vigarani for the mechanical effects, one of the cleverest stage managers in Europe at the time. They produced there in 1672 the "Fêtes de Bacchus et de l'Amour." When Molière died in the following year, the hall of the Palais-Royal, which he had occupied, was given to Lulli.

Louis XIV, by letters patent, dated 1672, concerning the non-forfeiture of nobility of ladies and nobles who were prepared to figure in the scene at the opera, authorises his "faithful and well-beloved Jean-Baptiste Lulli to add to the Royal Academy of Music and Dancing, instituted by these presents, a school suitable to educate pupils as much for dancing as for singing and also to train bands of violins and other instruments."

The Sun-King, in fact, exerted his care to such a point that he himself superintended and wrote with his own hand the budget of the *corps de ballet* at the Opera.

The order is dated January 11th, 1713.
The male dancers were twelve in number.
Their united salaries amounted to 8400 francs.
Two of them had 1000 francs.
Four, 800 francs.
Four, 600 francs.
Two others, 400 francs.

The ten female dancers earned together 5400 francs.
The two principals had 900 francs.
The four seconds had 500 francs.
The four last 400 francs.

There were besides:

A master of the dancing-room, at 500 francs.
A composer of ballets, at 1500 francs.
A designer, at 1200 francs.
And a master-tailor, at 800 francs.

The king busied himself even with the author's royalties, and it must be confessed that he showed himself more generous proportionately towards the authors than towards the artists. According to a rate fixed by him, a hundred and twenty francs were paid for a ballet for each of the first ten performances and sixty francs for each following.

La Bruyère, author of "Les Caractères," has spoken of the virtuosi of the dance who shone in his time, and in criticising their methods, he sheds light on the difficulties which had already been surmounted in 1675. "Would the dancer Cobus please you, who, throwing up his feet in front, turns once in the air, before regaining the floor?" Again, "Do you ignore the fact that he is no longer young?" says La Bruyère, when speaking to the susceptible ladies of the Court. It was Beauchamps or Le Basque, dancers at the Opera, that he meant. The famous Pécourt is also described under the name of Bathyle. "Where will you find, I do not say in the order of knights which you look down upon, but among the players in a farce, a young man, who leaps higher into the air whilst dancing, or who cuts better capers? As for

him, the crowd is too great, he refuses more women than he accepts."

Pécourt, the adored of the beauties of the time, was the favoured lover of Ninon de l'Enclos. One day, the Maréchal de Choiseul, his rival, met, at the house of their common mistress, the popular dancer, who was dressed in what was apparently a uniform.

"Ah," said he ironically, "since when have you turned soldier, M. Pécourt? And in what corps are you serving?"

"Marshal," was the reply, "I *command* a *corps* in which you have long *served*."

Blondi, Beauchamps' nephew; Feuillet, Desaix, Ballon, Baudiery-Laval, and his son Michel-Jean, a good dancer and an excellent mechanical contriver; Mesdemoiselles Subligny, Prévôt, Carville, and Le Breton, were also stars of the period, of some of whom there will be more to say presently.

BOOK II: THE SECOND ERA

CHAPTER XII

SOME EARLY STARS AND BALLETS

FOR some time after the founding of the King's Dancing Academy the French Opera stage was ungraced by the feminine form, though women took part in the performance at some of the minor theatres, such as the famous Theatres of the Fair in Paris.

For the entertainment of the more exalted sections of Society the more exalted ladies themselves performed; at Court, however, *not* on the public stage, where, as in our own theatre in Elizabethan times, youths played the women's *rôles*.

Such was the case in the production of a ballet by Lulli and Desbrosses in 1672, "Les Fêtes de l'amour et de Bacchus," in which M. le Duc de Monmouth, M. le Duc de Villeroy, M. le Marquis de Rassen, and M. Legrand, executed various dances "supported" by Beauchamps, M. André, Favier and Lapierre, professional male dancers at the Opera.

Of these the leader was Beauchamps, director of the Royal Academy of Dancing, composer of, and superintendent of, the Court Ballets of Louis XIV in 1661, and made *maître des ballets* to the Academy in 1671. He danced with the king in the entertainment at Court, and though La Bruyère says of him, "*qu'il jetait les jambes en avant, et faisait un tour en l'air avant que de retomber à terre*," showing that even in those days the public loved "sensation," he was ordinarily a grave and dignified executant. He was one of the first experimentalists in the direction of

inventing a system of Choreography, or the writing down of dances in a kind of shorthand, so that a dance once designed should never be lost, but could be read and repeated as easily as a piece of music. In this he was only following on the track of old Arbeau, but his system was different, and, if not ideal, at least it paved the way to a better. Beauchamps died in 1705.

Pécourt, who was "*premier danseur et maître des ballets de l'Opéra*," made his *début* only in 1672. His style was what is known as "*demi-caractère*," and he is said to have had notable effect on the ladies of his day, his amazing lightness fairly turning their heads.

Blondi, a nephew of Beauchamps; Ballon, who became *maître à danser* to Louis XV; Baudiery-Laval, a nephew of Ballon, who succeeded his uncle as dancing-master to the Royal Family and *maître des ballets* at Court; Michel-Jean Baudiery-Laval, son of the last-named, who was not only a *maître à danser*, but is said to have been the first stage manager to have used lycopodium powder, which used to be the chief means of producing stage lightning; these were some of the lesser stars of the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries in France, and they were to be followed by Louis-Pierre Dupré, who came to be known as *Le Grand Dupré*, and who surpassed all his forerunners by the grace and the dignity of his dancing, and the *noblesse* of his poses. He made his *début* in 1720, was long the *premier danseur* at the Opera, and did not retire till 1754.

To hark back, however, to 1672, when there were only men to play the women's parts. The reason for the dearth of feminine stars was quite simple. The Academy was in its infancy. There were no properly qualified professional *danseuses*, and the courtly

amateurs were too courtly—and too much amateurs —to appear to advantage on the stage. The Academy came to alter all that.

It revived a genuine interest in dancing as an art worthy of serious consideration; and Lulli, that inspired monkey of a dancing-musician, did the rest; for it was his opera-ballet, "Le Triomphe de L'Amour," produced on May 16th, 1681, which brought the presence of women dancers to the boards.

Various high ladies of the Court, the Dauphine, la Princesse de Conti, Mlle. de Nantes, and others, formed a useful background, but the entire feminine *personnel* of the dancing school numbered only four —Mlle. Lafontaine, Mlle. Le Peintre, Mlle. Fernon, and Mlle. Roland, the first-named being the leader, the *première des premières danseuses*, and accorded the title so often granted to successive *premières* since then, of *Reine de la Danse*.

That admirable historian of French opera, Castil-Blaze, has given excellent account of the state of affairs towards the end of the seventeenth century.

"The lack of good dancers," he says, "was doubtless an obstacle in the way of the introduction of grand ballet at the Royal Academy. 'Les Fêtes de L'Amour et de Bacchus,' 'Le Triomphe de L'Amour,' and all productions of the same kind commonly called at that time Ballets, were really nothing less than Operas treated in such a way as to give a little more freedom for the introduction of dances, the singing being nevertheless still the main object. Pécourt, who made his *début* in 'Cadmus,' shared the honours of the dance with Beauchamps, with Dolivet, a capital mime, and another good dancer named L'Etang. The company of singers also

included some notable personalities, and though the functions of singer and dancer were usually kept pretty well apart, one actress, Mlle. Desmatins, managed, in the opera of 'Perseus,' to score a double success as singer and dancer, a very unusual combination, as it is seldom indeed that a dancer is good for much as a vocalist. Vigarani, an Italian theatrical *machiniste*, of great talent, had charge of the theatres of the Court; and another Italian, Rivani, and Francis Berein, fulfilled a similar function with regard to the Opera."

Italian ballets, executed by Italian dancers, were among the favourite diversions of the French Court towards the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, which accounts for the frequency with which they appear in the paintings of Watteau, Lancret, and other artists of the period. That of "L'Impatience" had been partly translated into the French in order that Louis XIV might take part in it, and was, like all the comedy-ballets of the time, a series of detached scenes quite independent of each other, merely depicting the various amusing examples of impatience which one usually finds—in other people!

The taste, however, for the Italian ballet, by no means interfered with the development of the native type, which received not only the support of the nobility, but increasing support on the professional and technical side, for authors, musicians, and dancers were beginning to realise that ballet was a form of art which had long been too neglected, and that it was worthy of attention.

"Le Temps de la Paix," represented at Fontainebleau, was given by the *corps de ballet* of the newly founded *Académie Royale*, illustrious dancers

and scions of the nobility all taking their share in the production. The women dancers from the theatre, who mingled with the princesses and ladies of the Court, were termed *femmes pantomimes*, in order to distinguish them from the titled *dilettanti*. Among the amateurs one finds the name of the Princesse de Conti; Duchesse de Bourbon; such good old names as Mlle. de Blois, D'Armagnac, de Brienne, D'Uzès, D'Estrées; on the theatrical side such artists as Hardouin, Thévenard, and the amazing Mlle. de Maupin—heroine of a hundred wild and questionable adventures—were among the more illustrious of the singers; while Ballon, whom we have already named, won applause for the energy and vivacity of his dance, and Mlle. Subligny was equally admired for the grace and dignity of hers.

CHAPTER XIII

PANTOMIME AT SCEAUX: AND MLLE. PRÉVÔT

THE mention of Subligny recalls the interesting fact that during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV of France there was a considerable importation of French and Italian actors, singers, dancers, and musicians into England.

We all know the complaints in *The Spectator* and other journals of the period against the craze for Italian opera.

A little earlier than that Cambert, who had been Director of the King's Music to the Court of Louis-Quatorze and organist at the Church of St. Honoré in Paris, and who, after breaking fresh ground in French opera, was also one of the first to experiment with Ballet, became attached to the Court of our own Charles II in 1677. He died in London, whence he had withdrawn out of jealousy towards his pushing young rival Lulli.

Desmarets, Campra, Destouches, Rebel, Bourgeois, Mouret and Monteclair are also names of French composers of opera and ballet, from about 1693 to 1716, well known to students of musical history, perhaps their only successor worthy of mention being Quinault, until all, from Lulli onwards, were to be eclipsed by the greater Rameau, who was composer of nearly a score of notable ballets, and who made his appearance on the musical horizon in the 'thirties of the eighteenth century.

To return, however, to the dancers. Nivelon was

one of the more famous French dancers who visited London towards the end of the seventeenth century, and had considerable success; as did another of the early *danseuses*, Mlle. Subligny, who came to London with influential introductions to John Locke, of all people in the world, author of the famous but soporific *Essay on the Human Understanding*, which, however, omits any reference to that of the charming dancer.

It can readily be imagined that the introduction of women to the French stage made for improvement in many directions besides access of grace. The little rivalries and successes of women dancers induced a general spirit of emulation that had its effect on technique.

Now, following on the introduction of women dancers to the stage, we come to another interesting point in the history of the dance and ballet; for, once again, it was due to a woman that we had the invention—or rather the revival—for it had not been seen since the days of Bathyllus and Pylades in Augustan Rome—of ballet-pantomime, a ballet acted entirely pantomimically, or in dumb-show.

It was the happy idea of the learned and extravagant Duchesse du Maine, whose *Nuits de Sceaux* have been chronicled by that fascinating bluestocking, Mlle. Delaunay, who was later to become famous as Madame de Staël.

Among the endless round of fêtes and entertainments at Sceaux, at the little theatre in which she took such prominent part, the ever-restless Duchess never presented her guests with a greater novelty. Day and night—and especially night—they had all been requisitioned to invent ingenious amusements. Sleep had been banished from the

exigent little Court. Dialogues, “proverbs,” “literary lotteries,” songs and comedies had been turned out without cessation as from a literary factory. Always it had been “words, words, words,” and play on words. Now, for the first time for centuries—as it *was*, in fact, and must certainly have *seemed* to the Duchess’s house-parties!—there was to be silence on the stage at Sceaux.



The Duchesse du Maine

Having chosen the last scene of the fourth act of Corneille’s “Horace,” the Duchess commanded the composer Mouret to set it to music as if it were to be sung. The words were then ignored, the music was played by an orchestra, and the two well-known dancers, M. Ballon and Mlle. Prévôt, of the Royal Academy, mutely mimed the actions and emotions of the leading characters, so dramatically and with such intensity of feeling that, it is said, both they and their audience were moved at times to tears!

Françoise Prévôt, or Prévost, was born about 1680,

made her *début* at the age of eighteen, and when Subligny retired in 1705, took her place as *première danseuse*. For some twenty odd years she was the joy of all frequenters of the Opera, for her grace and lightness of style. She retired in 1730, and died eleven years after. Among the more famous of her pupils were Marie Sallé and Marie-Anne de Cupis de Camargo, of both of whom there will be more to say in due course. Meanwhile, among the dances mainly in vogue during Prévôt's earlier period were the *Courantes*, *Allemandes*, *Gigues*, *Contredanses*; and in her later years, *Chaconnes*, *Passacailles*, and *Passepieds*. For the dancing of the last Prévôt was especially famed.

In the preface to his "*Maître à Danser*," published four years after the dancer's retirement, Rameau describes her in the following terms: "*Dans une seule de ses danses sont renfermées toutes les règles qu'après de longues méditations nous pouvons donner sur notre art, et elle les met en pratique, avec tant de grâce, tant de justesse, tant de légèreté, tant de précision qu'elle peut être regardée comme un prodige dans ce genre.*"

Again, Noverre, in his *Lettres sur la Danse*, published later, makes graceful reference to Prévôt in recalling his impressions of famous dancers whom he had seen in earlier years, and gives us, too, an interesting criticism of the methods of the composers of ballet in the mid-eighteenth century. "*La plupart des compositeurs*," he says, "*suivent les vieilles rubriques de l'opéra. Ils font des passe-pieds parceque Mdlle. Prévôt les courait avec elegance; des musettes parceque Mdlle. Sallé et M. Dumoulin les dansaient avec autant de grace que de volupté; des tambourins parceque c'était le genre où Mdlle. de Camargo excellait; des chaconnes et des passacailles parceque le célèbre Dupré s'était*

comme fixé à ces mouvements; qu'ils s'ajoustaient à son goût, à son genre et à la noblesse de sa taille. Mais tous ces excellents Sujets n'y sont plus; ils ont été remplacés et au-delà, dans des parties et ne le seront peut être jamais dans les autres...."

Though Noverre was writing this about 1760, we have to remember that he cannot actually have seen Prévôt, since he was only born 1727, and *she* retired in 1730. But he records an interesting tradition in complaining that the greater number of the composers of his time still followed the older canon of the opera, and composed *passepieds* because "Mdlle. Prévôt *les courait*"; for it shows that the technique of the dance had already begun to outgrow that of the composer. Musicians were following in their forerunner's tracks; dancers were advancing on the road of invention. Indeed, we shall see that this was so when we come to consider the differences between the styles of Prévôt and her later successors. For the moment it suffices to record that Prévôt, star of the French opera from about 1700 to 1730, was famous for her elegance, for her "grace," "lightness," "precision," as revealed in the comparatively slow dances of her period, when the technique was obviously not immature (or Rameau could not have noted such qualities in her dancing), but evidently had not yet developed in the direction of speed, or of *tours de force* such as some of the later dancers were to exhibit. The *passepied*, of which an old French dancer-poet wrote:

"*Le léger passe-pied doit voler terre à terre*,"

was a dance in three-four time, a species of minuet, performed, as the poet records, "*terre à terre*," hence Noverre's description:

"Mdlle. Prévôt les *courait* avec elegance."

A modern versifier has—perhaps presumptuously—put the following lines into the dancer's mouth:

PRÉVÔT SPEAKS

"Though others by Courante may swear
Or some the grave Allemande prefer,
Or vow for Gigues alone they care,
Or Contredanse's vulgar stir:
For me—who am no villager!—
I love not dances rough and free,
Nor yet too slow! Without demur
The Passepied's the dance for me.

"Hark to its gentle, plaintive air!
Was music ever mellower,
More full of grace, more sweetly fair?
No dancer, sure, could wish to err
From the staid rhythms that recur—
As softly as a breath may be—
With base like a pleased kitten's purr:
The Passepied's the dance for me!

"No other music now may share,
With this my favour, or could spur
My feet new measures now to dare.
What of Camargo? As for her—
(Of passing fancies harbinger!)
Quickness, but naught of grace has she.
She dance? That plain, fast foreigner?
The Passepied's the dance for *me*!"

ENVOI

"*Lovers of dance, let naught deter*
Your love from graces all can see
In Passepied! And all aver
The Passepied's the dance for me!"

Of the jealousy which might have impelled Mlle. Prévôt to speak thus of her young rival Camargo and her quicker style there will be more to say presently.

It is necessary for a while to turn aside (even to hark back a little, perhaps, since in dealing with a period of transition there must be several threads to trace back and gather up), and to glance at another phase of theatrical history than that of the *première danseuse* and the august Royal Opera, namely, the less exalted—and more popular—theatre; one which proved often the antechamber to the greater stage and Royal favour, to wit—the Italian Comedy and the Theatres of the Fair.

CHAPTER XIV

ITALIAN COMEDY AND THE THEATRES OF THE FAIR

HUMANITY, like history, repeats itself in its recurring moods. Some years ago London playgoers went rather mad over what was a comparatively new thing to that period, the production of a delightful play without words, namely, MM. Carré and Wormser's "L'Enfant Prodigue," acted to perfection by a cast headed by Mlle. Jane May, as Pierrot, with Mlle. Zanfretta as Pierrette.

About two thousand years ago the playgoers of ancient Rome began to go mad about what was *then* thought to be a really new thing—pantomime acting without words.

The two pantomimists, Bathyllus and Pylades, then set a standard in mimetic representation never achieved before. The two Roman actors were "dancers," but it was because they were panto-mimes of such brilliant quality that they became famous. Had they been merely dancers they would hardly have made the impression they did.

The modern ballet-dancer—as we understand the word—knows, or should know, that dancing without the ability to mime is not enough to win the fame of a Taglioni, a Grisi, Génée or Karsavina, in ballet.

In opera a voice of the loveliest tone, together with an acquired technical excellence in the use of it, has not the power to move the hearers if *expression* is lacking. *It is the art of the mime which gives expression and significance to the art of the dancer*; and it was as

dancer-mimes that Pylades and Bathyllus moved their audience to something like worship.

It is, of course, a pretence, this doing without words. I say “pretence” because you cannot do away with words. You may have a “wordless” play, but behind the dumb-show there are still the words. It is so in life. Behind all things is—the Word. Things are only representative of thoughts; and thoughts are inconceivable without words. We may not always speak with tongue and voice; but, if we have the impulse to speak, the instrument matters not, and we may “speak” with our hands. So doing, a look or gesture becomes a word, a series of gestures a sentence.

Now, in ancient Roman days when the ordinary spoken comedy merged first into a sort of musical comedy, and then, at the dawn of the Christian era, into unspoken comedy or pantomime; and when, in addition, all the Greek plays and stories of the Greek and Latin myths were drawn upon for pantomime, some of the original characters stayed and others were incorporated in the general make-up of the purely wordless play as this form of entertainment grew increasingly popular; and among the new-comers was probably Mercury, who became a sort of Harlequin, with gift of invisibility and magic wand.

The *spoken* comedy of ancient Rome becoming superseded, first by the pantomimes and secondly by the craze for the circus, finally died down with the fall of the Empire itself, and did not revive for some hundreds of years, until the world’s great reawakening, in the Middle Ages, to the wonders of the classic past. But it is more than probable that this dumb comedy, or *panto-mime*, any more than dancing, *did not die*.

In Sicily and Southern Italy more especially it would have survived; for expressive pantomime was always as much a means of speech among the Southern Latins as verbal language itself.

In the old Latin Comedy the same set of characters were often made to appear in other guises, and in different comic situations. Maccus, for instance, though still called so, would appear at one time as an old maid, at another as a raw soldier: Pappus would be a doting old husband, or father whose daughter was abducted: and he was usually outwitted whatever the situation he was in. These and various other types, and this custom of making them each a kind of "quick-change" artist, survived, or at least revived.

In Italy, as time went by, various local types were added to the original cast of the pantomime. The old man would be a Venetian; the Doctor, from Bologna, famous for its University and—poisons; the Clown would be a peasant-servant from Bergamo; the braggart soldier, a "Capitan," would be from Spain; sometimes they would each speak in their own particular dialect, and fun would be made thereof. Throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries the fame of the Italian comedians spread throughout the world.

Troupes found their way to Paris and London, and no slight traces of their influence are to be found in Shakespeare and Molière. Pre-Shakespearean comedy in England was often impromptu and pantomimic; and the actors worked much as the Italian players had always done.

In 1611 a well-known Italian comedian, Flaminio Scala, printed a book of plays performed by his company. *There was no dialogue!* They were simply

something like what we know as “plots,” though the French word “*canevas*” expresses it better. It was merely the outline of the play, entrances, exits, “business” written on canvas and hung up in the wings as a reminder to the actors, who “gagged” the play throughout, each usually introducing his own stock tricks or business (*lazzi* was the Italian word) as the play proceeded. In one of the Flaminio Scala’s plots we find a Pantalon, a Dottore or Doctor, a Captain (a braggart such as Pistol), a Pedrolino, later to become better known to us after various changes of spirit as Pierrot.

In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Paris the Italian players had a sensational success, being honoured by Louis XIV and his successor; and were regularly introduced into the lighter operas, were copied by the players in the Paris Fair Theatres, and were often the subject of the brush of Watteau and other artists.

In a little volume I have, *Le Théâtre Italien* (published 1695), by the famous actor, Evariste Gherardi, the author explains that “the reader must not expect to find in this book entire comedies, because the Italian plays could not be printed, for the simple reason that the players learn nothing by rote, and it suffices for them merely to have seen the subject of the comedy a moment before stepping on the stage.” He says that “the charm of the pieces is inseparable from the action, and their success depends wholly on the actors, who *play from imagination rather than from memory, and compose their comedy while playing*.”

Among the titles of the plays we find: “Arlequin, Emperor in the Moon”; “Colombine, Advocate”; “Arlequin Proteus”; “Arlequin Jason”; “The Cause of

Woman"; "Divorce"; and "Arlequin, Man of Fortune." In most we find Arlequin assuming various disguises —"*Arlequin en More*," "*Arlequin deguisé en Baron*," "*Arlequin deguisé en Comtesse*" being among stage directions, for instance, to "The Cause of Woman."

By the early eighteenth century the leading characters had become Arlequin, Pantalon, Punchinello, the Doctor, the Captain, Scaramouche, Scapin, Leandre, and Mezzetin; and women had become incorporated in the generally enlarged cast, the chief being Isabelle, Octavie and Colombine.

Reference has already been made to the Duchesse du Maine, who in 1708 revived the art of pure pantomime by producing an act of Corneille's "Horace," which was performed entirely in dumb show by the dancer-mimes, Mdlle. Prévôt and Monsieur Ballon, to music by Mouret.

Soon after, Nivelon, and other dancers who were also mimes, such as Sallé, began to come to London; and in the early eighteenth century was seen the birth of the first real English *pantomime*, which bore some resemblance to that of ancient Rome, owed something to the Italian comedy and to the more recent French theatre, with certain new ideas of its own—especially in the way of costume and elaborate staging. This was due to the enterprise of John Rich.

By Rich's time Arlequin had become the all-important character of the French comedy-stage, and he followed a then recent custom (also the ancient Latin custom) of placing one character in various sets of circumstances. His first production at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1717 was "Harlequin Sorcerer," which was followed by several others with Harlequin as the hero. Their form was always much the same. A serious, classic or fabulous story, such as one from

Ovid, was the basis of the work; while between the serious scenes, and partly woven into them, ran a lighter story, consisting mainly of Harlequin's courtship of Columbine, with interference from other characters, on whom in turn Harlequin played tricks with his magic wand. Rich played Harlequin, and made him dumb, for the simple reason that, though a clever actor, he could not speak well enough for the stage. Thus he gave us once again the ancient classic art of pantomime, which now became the true wordless English Harlequinade; and he taught his players of the other parts, Pantaloon, Pierrot, Clown, Columbine, an art of wordless acting equal to his own. He realised the value of fine mounting, and his productions were gorgeously staged and almost invariably successful.

It would be interesting, of course, to trace with some detail the history of Italian comedy and its influence on the French and English stage; indeed, to go fully into the vexed question of its origin. Certain modern scholars, such as Miss Winifred Smith in her extremely able and interesting volume on the *Commedia dell' Arte*, issued by the Columbia University of America, holds the view that it was *not* derived from the classic stage at all, but was a spontaneous growth of fifteenth-century Italy.

Another view is that there was an unbroken thread of tradition from Greece, through Sicily and the Greek settlements in south-eastern Italy, and that when the *Commedia* attained its great vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, spreading through Italy and thence through western Europe, the charm and complexity of its texture was due to the numerous strands that had been gathered up from various localities in the progress of years.

Yet another possibility is, that this central idea of pantomime, or dumb acting, may merely have occurred again and again through the centuries, as a "new" idea, without direct impulse from tradition.

Personally I feel that acting *without* words implies a greater technical advance in the art of representation than acting *with* them, for it makes the actor more than merely repeater, or even interpreter, of an author; *it makes him partly creator, or author*. It is impossible, however, to go fully now into the question of the origin of the art of pantomime. Whatsoever diverse theories students may hold, the fact remains that it *was* known in classic days, and that the form of it which we know under the Italian title of the *Commedia dell' Arte* flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and certainly had its influence on the French and English stage, literature and art, and also on Ballet.

The Duchesse du Maine in her pantomime production of Corneille's "Horace" was deliberately harking back to a form of entertainment which she believed had held the classic stage; and the production was not without effect on the history of Ballet. The appearance of Italian pantomime actors in Paris had additional influence.

Look at some of the pictures of Watteau, Lancret and Fragonard. You will see there the types of the Italian Comedy; turn to the scores of the opera-ballets of the early eighteenth century and you will note that, more often than not, the Italian players were introduced; just as we to-day, in our *revues*, have introduced Russian dancers, or English players impersonating, or parodying, the Russians—simply because the Russians have in recent years attained a

vogue similar to that attained by Italian singers in the 'forties of last century, and to that attained by the Italian comedy troupes of two centuries ago. These things are introduced into current dramatic productions just because they have their vogue, just because they are "topical." Equally they influence art and literature.

Even the French critics seem hardly to have realised the extent to which French art of the early eighteenth century was influenced by the contemporary stage. All can see, of course, that it *was* influenced, to the extent of introducing the types of Italian comedy. One has only to glance at Watteau's "L'Amour au Théâtre Italien" to see that patent fact. But the fact also that, except for his earlier landscapes and camp scenes, several of Watteau's pictures were, in all probability, *derived from ballets actually seen* on the French stage seem to have been overlooked.

One of the earlier works attributed to Watteau is a picture representing the "Departure of the Italian Comedians." The engraving of it by L. Jacob in the wonderful Jullienne collection of engravings from Watteau's works plainly gives the date of the incident as 1697. Watteau, however, did not arrive from Valenciennes to take up his abode in Paris until after 1702, when he came to reside and work with Claude Gillot, the engraver.

So either this seems a mistake on Jullienne's part, or the picture is not by Watteau, but is worked up from sketches and descriptions by Gillot or some other person who was an eyewitness of the incident; for it is quite obvious that Watteau cannot have seen what took place in Paris before he arrived there, and when he was only thirteen years old, as he would

have been in 1697.

Let us turn aside for a while from this minor problem and consider who, exactly, were these Italian comedians. From the sixteenth century, in 1570 as a fact, when Catherine de Medici invited a company of Italian players to Paris, there had been several troupes arriving from time to time, under Court patronage. One of the earliest of importance came in 1576, and were known as *Gli Gelosi*, *Les Jaloux*, that is, according to one authority, folk jealous of pleasing; though they may also have been so called from the fact that they achieved their success first in a comedy of that name, *Gli Gelosi*, or *Les Jaloux*.

Nearer the dates which are our concern was Fiorelli's troupe, which in 1660 was properly established at the Palais Royal, where they played alternately with Molière's company, and received the title of "*Comédiens du Roi de la troupe Italienne*."

In 1684 it was established by order of the Dauphin that the troupe should always be composed of twelve members, four women and eight men, made up as follows: two women for "serious *rôles*," two for comic, two men for lovers, two for comic parts, two "*pour conduire l'intrigue*," and two to play fathers and old men generally. These kept the traditional names respectively of: Isabelle, Eularia; Columbine, Marinette; Octave, Cinthio; Scaramouche, Arlequin; Mezzetin, Pascariel; Pantalon, and the Doctor.

In 1697, however, the Italian comedians, who by now had begun to develop, from the *Commedia dell' Arte*, or purely improvised dumb show play of an earlier period into a more or less written "literary" comedy, had the audacity to produce under the title of "La Fausse Prude," a play, the title of which

seemed to suggest foundation on a novel (published in Holland) which had attacked the King's mistress, Madame de Maintenon. For this they were banished, and were not recalled to Royal favour until 1716.

Hence the problem of deciding Watteau's connection with the painting of an incident that occurred in 1697, five years before he *can* have reached Paris; and also of "placing" the rest of his avowedly theatrical pictures, when apparently the Italian comedians were not to be seen, or if seen, *not until 1716*; thus giving Watteau only five years before his death in 1721 to account for the fairly extensive collection of works dealing expressly with these stage types.

Speaking of the period shortly after Watteau arrived in Paris, one critic has declared (though it in no way lessens the value of his decisions concerning Watteau's art): "Indeed, during these early years Watteau could have had no opportunity of studying the Italian comedy, otherwise than through the works of his new preceptor and friend": this "preceptor and friend" being, of course, Gillot, by whose enthusiasm for the stage Antoine's own was unquestionably awakened.

The same writer goes on to say: "It can hardly be doubted that from him—and not, as legend has it, from the stage itself—Watteau obtained his first peep into the strange realms of the *Commedia dell' Arte*."

But the plain fact is that there was every opportunity, despite this earlier banishment of the Royal troupe of Italian comedians, for Watteau to have obtained not only his first peep into the realms of the *Commedia dell' Arte* and to have been influenced throughout his Paris life, especially by Ballet.

From the time Antoine reached the city in 1702 until his death in 1721 there were four marked opportunities for stage influence, namely, the legitimate and royally patronised French comedians; the Opera, still flushed with Lulli's magic, and not despicably illumined by Campra; the Ballet, then finding wings to soar; and finally, the Theatres of the Fair, which, with their gay quarrel against authority, with their reckless parodies and splendid spectacles, have been strangely neglected by Watteau's biographers as a contributory influence on his choice of subject.

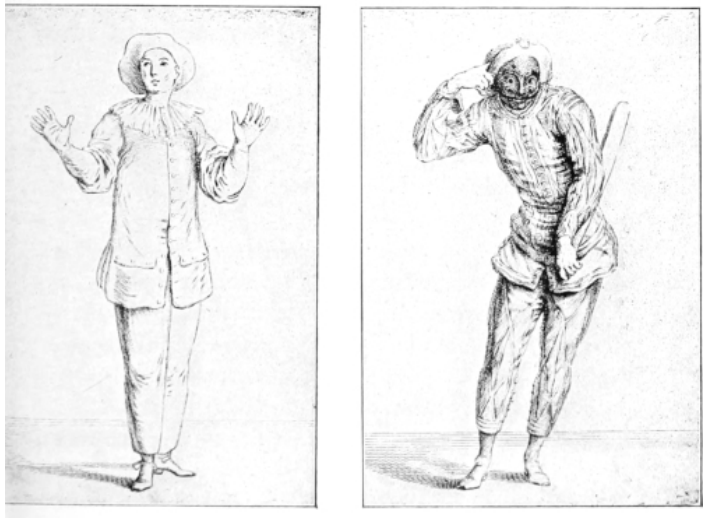
Let us consider first the Theatres of the Fairs. The fairs themselves, of St. Germain and St. Laurent, were of ancient institution, and from early times they had their side-shows of tumblers, rope-dancers, trained animals, such as performing bears, monkeys, and white mice, as well as balladists and marionettes, which were the chief attraction by the middle of the seventeenth century.

Towards the end of the century each Fair had one or more troupes of actors, especially Italian, who played improvised pieces in dumb-show, as well as written farces, vaudevilles and parodies in Italian, French, and sometimes a mixture of both languages. These troupes were quite apart from those which from time to time had been brought from Italy by special invitation from the French Court.

It was the Royal Troupe *only* that was expelled in 1697, for its performance of "La Fausse Prude"; and it was really their expulsion which aroused the Theatres of the Fair to a new and more vigorous life.



The Departure of the Italian Comedians, 1697
(*From an engraving by L. Jacob of Watteau's picture*).



Pierrot and Arlequin in the early 18th Century
(*From Riccoboni's "Histoire du Théâtre Italien"*).

The Fair of St. Germain was open from February 3rd to Easter Sunday; the Fair of St. Laurent began at

the end of June and closed in October, so that for the greater part of the year both offered opportunities for amusement of a less expensive and more popular sort than did the aristocratic Comédie Française and Comédie Italienne; in fact, so popular were they that, on suppression of the Comédie Italienne, the aristocracy themselves patronised the foreign troupes of the Theatres of the Fair.

From the dawn of the eighteenth century, however, this very popularity became a source of worry to the managers of the troupes at the Fairs, for it involved the jealousy of the Comédie Française and the still youthful Opera; and the attempts of grandiose Authority to smother these minor theatres (which had public sympathy wholly on their side) and the amazing resource shown by their managers in meeting each fresh legal thunderbolt by some new and more hilarious evasion, is a veritable comedy in itself, but must not detain us now. All we need to consider at the moment is that, despite attempts to suppress them there *were* these troupes, at the Theatres of the Fair, from before 1702, when Watteau came to Paris, until after 1721, the date of his death.

There was the troupe of Madame Jeanne Godefroy, widow of Maurice Von der Beck, from 1694 to 1709; that of Christopher Selles, from 1701 to 1709; that of Louis Nivelon (who, by the way, was a theatrical visitor to London), from 1707 to 1771; that of Saint-Edmé from 1711 to 1718; and, most important of all, that of Constantini, known as Octave, from 1712 to 1716.

Thus from the time he arrived in Paris Watteau could, for a few pence, have seen any of these companies, and in view of the fact that the first thing

any young man up from the country usually does is to see the “sights” of the town, and more especially in view of the fact that soon after his arrival Watteau was in the studio of Gillot—popular engraver of such popular subjects, and himself a lover of the stage—what was more probable than that Antoine *did* include the Theatres of the Fair among the sights he saw, and so was influenced to choose, as some of the earlier subjects of his brush, the Italian players he *could* see there.

CHAPTER XV

WATTEAU'S DEBT TO THE STAGE

THE stage has from time to time been indebted to Watteau for costume and *décor*. But Watteau's debt to the stage of his period, to the Opera, to the Italian Comedy, and to the Theatres of the Fair, has hardly been considered sufficiently. Here is not the place to bring forward all the evidence that could be produced. Only an indication of some of the leading possibilities can be given. But while the subject has an interest of its own, on the purely critical side, it is also of interest to students of the ballet, for they may trace in some of the famous French pictures of the early eighteenth century the influence of ballet on contemporary art. Again, history "repeats itself" to-day, for have not many artists of our own time found inspiration in many of the productions of the Russian ballet?

It is interesting first to compare Watteau's picture of "L'Amour au Théâtre Italien" with the reproductions given here from an old volume in my possession, Riccoboni's *Histoire du Théâtre Italien*, which was not published until six years after Watteau's death, but which may be regarded as a contemporary work since it describes the stage of his time.

These prints represent the various types of the Italian comedy as they were actually costumed, and comparing these with the figures in Watteau's group, one sees in their close resemblance proof that the master was painting from things seen, from life itself

(albeit stage life), not some graceful creations of his own imagination, as some of us to-day have been too apt to think.

In “L’Amour au Théâtre Italien” we have a faithful record of costumes actually worn; but the whole attitude of the group of figures suggests something vastly more than merely an artist’s study of costume. The figures are alert, the moment dramatic. Something is happening, or rather has happened, and there is a suggestion of culmination, as if the interruption of a song by the entry of a character had called forth, or was about to call forth, some whimsical comment from Pierrot, the singer. It seems a captured moment in a comedy.

Comparing it with the obviously companion picture, “L’Amour au Théâtre Français,” one might well be somewhat puzzled by the title, since in neither is there any apparent love-scene taking place. The one suggests an interruption in a comedy, the other—a dance in progress.

Beneath the engravings of these two by C. N. Cochin in the Jullienne collection, however, are inscribed a couple of six-line stanzas, one beneath each, in which the treatment of love themes in Italian and French comedies respectively is contrasted.

L’AMOUR AU THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS

“L’amour badine en France; il se montre un grand jour
Il ne prend point de masque, il se parle sans detour;
Il vit dans les festins, aux plaisir il s’allie,
C’est une liberté que le noeud qui nous lie
Nous servons sans constrainte e Bacchus e l’Amour.
Et nos tristes voisins nous taxent de folie.

M. Roy.”

L'AMOUR AU THÉÂTRE ITALIEN

"La jalouse Italie effrayante les amours,
Les fait marcher de nuit, les constraint au mistère
Mais une Serenade y supplie aux discours;
Un geste, un sel regard conclud on rompt d'Affaire,
L'impatient Francois en intrigue préfere,
Des chemins moins couverts, les croyée—vous plus courts?

M. ROY."

These stanzas are by Roy, a contemporary poet who was a librettist for the Opera, two of whose operas were produced in 1712.

One thing is certain, that Watteau's own eyes must have noted the contrast between the Italian and French comedy to have painted such pictures. He could not have painted them without being an observant theatre-goer. What, then, did he see, and when could he have seen such productions as might suggest such works? While acknowledging that positive evidence is still to be sought, I cannot help feeling that these two pictures, and one or two others, could fairly safely be placed as work done about 1711-1712.

In 1709 Antoine, still with Audran at the Luxembourg, competed for entry, and was admitted with four other students, for the Academy. Then he left Paris for Valenciennes, defraying expenses by selling a military picture, "Départ des Troupes," to the dealer, Sirois, who urged him to paint a similar picture, which he did at Valenciennes.



L'Amour au Théâtre Italien



L'Amour au Théâtre Français
(*From the Jullienne engravings from Watteau, British Museum*).

There is no direct evidence that Watteau painted any stage-pictures *before* this period; and it would seem that his work in the country was mainly on

military and naturalistic subjects. We *do* know that he was again in Paris at a date uncertain in 1712, and went to live with a Monsieur Crozat, by whom he was engaged to paint a series of panels of The Seasons. It is extremely likely that he would have returned to Paris refreshed by his country sojourn and with a new zest for work, *and* for theatre-going, which was then beginning to be particularly interesting, a crisis in the Fair Theatre troubles being over by 1710, and some new productions there as well as at the opera being well worth seeing.

As I would trace his movements, still admitting that positive evidence is required, Watteau returned to Paris early in 1711, took up his quarters for a time with Sirois the dealer, who would have the disposing of work done at Valenciennes. One of his first pictures of this period was probably "Gilles and his Family," in the Wallace collection, which is supposed to be a portrait of Sirois dressed as a Pierrot or Gilles (the names being synonymous at the period) in a costume supplied by Watteau's own wardrobe.

Then would come visits to the Fairs of St. Germain and St. Laurent, whence he would return reinspired with a love for the gay, reckless, satiric Italian comedy.

One has only to compare the Hertford House "Gilles" with the central figure of Pierrot in the "L'Amour au Théâtre Italien" to see that one is an earlier work and is the figure of a man somewhat self-conscious and not quite used to the clothes he is wearing; the other a maturer work, representing a vivid impression of a born comedian, momentarily master of the scene. Doubtless at this time, too, would be done some, but only some, of the remaining works dealing with the Italian stage types,

such as “Les Jaloux,” “Arlequin Jaloux,” “Comédiens Italiens,” and “Pierrot Content.” A little after, I think, would come such works as “Arlequin et Colombine,” (in the Wallace collection), “Mezzetin,” and the maturer “Gilles,” in the Louvre.

In 1712 there were at the Theatres of the Fair in Paris two famous players of Gilles or Pierrot, namely, Hamoche, who made his *début* in that year with the St. Edmé troupe; and Belloni, who was also a lemonade-seller, quite a popular character, notable, as one chronicle tells us, “for the grand simplicity of his acting and for his naïve and truthful speech.”

The most famous of the players of Arlequin was Pierre-François (otherwise Domenique) Biancolelli, who was also of the St. Edmé troupe, somewhere between 1710-1712.

Thus it was not unlikely that Watteau saw these actors, as he may have seen another, Delaplace, as Scaramouche, and Desgranges, who came to Paris from Lyons, in 1712, as “the Doctor”; though the Mezzetin offers a minor problem in that Angelo Constantini, the most famous impersonator of the character, after suffering banishment with the Italian comedians in 1697, went to Poland, where an intrigue with the Queen resulted in his imprisonment for twenty years, by which time Watteau was no more. Him, therefore, Watteau cannot have seen. But the character was a familiar one on the stage at the time, 1710-1712, and must have been played by other popular actors, even if not of sufficient note to be chronicled.

To turn from the Italian actors to other theatrical characters which form the subjects of some of Watteau’s pictures, it is of interest to note that one of the engravings in the Jullienne collection represents

"Poisson en habit de paysan." Poisson was a familiar name in the annals of the French stage, for it was borne by three generations of Parisian actors, Raymond Poisson, who died in 1690, Paul, his son, and François, grandson. Watteau's picture is presumably that of the second, Paul.

Another interesting point to note is that a portrait of Raymond Poisson, painted by Netscher, was engraved by Edelinck (who was employed by Watteau's employer—Audran) and represents the actor in the character of Crispin, one of his most famous parts (that of a sort of black-dressed Pierrot, a messenger distinguished by his long boots, worn by Raymond Poisson to increase his stature), which was successively played by his son Paul, and grandson François, and became a traditional type.

Watteau cannot have seen Raymond, who died twelve years before the artist came to Paris, but he may well have seen Paul, and it is significant that he should have drawn a figure representing *not* "*Poisson en habit de Crispin*" (whose costume was now a tradition) but "*en habit de Paysan*" as if it was the very fact that the part was one different from that especially associated with the Poisson family which made it of interest to Watteau.

In connection with the same portrait there is one point that is particularly noteworthy, namely, *that it is exactly like the central figure in "Le Concert," or "Les Charmes de la Vie" in the Wallace collection*; and close consideration of the latter inclines me to the belief that the picture represents—as certain others not unusually so considered may well do—a scene from an opera.

Another of the engravings in the Jullienne collection of "Mdlle. Desmares en habit de Pelerine."

Mlle. Desmares was a well-known Danish actress; and "pelerines" appear in Watteau's "L'Embarquement pour l'Ile de Cythère."

One has only to pass in review a succession of Watteau's works, or reproductions thereof, to notice how very frequently he repeats himself in matters of detail. In a general way, for instance, it is curious to note how frequently dancing and music are repeated in the course of his life's work. In "L'Amour au Théâtre Français" is a couple dancing; in the "Bal sous une Colonnade" another; in "Le Contrat de Mariage" and its variants—another, and very similar; in "Le Menuet" (at the Hermitage, Petrograd) another; in "Amusements Champêtres" (Chantilly), and in the "Fêtes Vénitiennes" (Edinburgh) are more such couples; while there is, of course, the dainty single figure of the child in "La Danse," in the Royal Palace, Potsdam; and the famous "L'Indifférent," in the Louvre, also represents a young man dancing. Dancers and musicians are thus a constant theme for Watteau's brush.

There are, however, more distinctive and more curious repetitions to note than these obvious evidences of a general taste for music and the dance; the repetitions of figures or groups in particular positions, and of details in *mise en scène*.

The well-known "Joueur de Guitare," in the Musée Condé, reappears *in almost exact facsimile* in "La Surprise" (in Buckingham Palace) and also in the "Fête Galante," or "Fête Champêtre," in the Royal Gallery, Dresden.

The couple in "La Gamme d'Amour" is simply a detail from the centre of the "Assemblée dans un Parc," in the Royal Gallery at Berlin. The musician in

"La Leçon de Musique" (Wallace collection) is repeated in "Le Concert," also in the Wallace collection.

To turn now to details of *mise en scène*, it is curious to note that the pillars seen in the last-named picture also occur in the "Bal sous une Colonnade," in the Dulwich Gallery.

The reclining statue to the right of the picture, known as "Les Champs Elysées," in the Wallace collection, is another, presumably an earlier version of the "Jupiter and Antiope," in the Louvre.

The statuette and amorini in the "Fête d'Amour" at the Dresden Royal Gallery are variants of those in the "Embarquement pour l'Ile de Cythère"; while the terminal statue of Pan seen in the "Arlequin et Colombine," in the Wallace collection, reappears again and again in the Italian Comedy series.



Le Concert
(*From the painting by Watteau, Wallace Collection*).



La Leçon de Musique (*From the painting by Watteau, Wallace Collection*).

To some, unaware, perhaps, of the influence which the stage of Watteau's time was exerting in other directions, these comparisons may possibly seem unnecessary. But in considering the extent to which that influence may have expressed itself in the painter's work, it is just these details which, taken in conjunction with the trend of theatrical taste at that time, are likely to be of importance. There was never an artist yet—whether in colour, sound, or spoken or written word—who created a new world out of nothing. The spirit of art can only find its expression in the manipulation of existing material. Every work of art must surely be the culmination of a long series of impulses due to external stimuli the connection of which, perhaps over a lengthy period, consciousness has failed to analyse and memory to record.

Now Watteau's work as a whole exhibits the frequent repetition of certain *motifs*, but they were never of something he can never have seen in reality.

It was not automatic reiteration of some pictured or imagined type, group or material object. His earliest impressions of stage-life, it is true, may well have been those conveyed by the prints or paintings of his master Gillot. But there was *no necessity* for him to subsist for the rest of his life for inspiration on second-hand impressions.

When, therefore, we find in works *other* than those avowedly theatrical, a repetition of certain details which *are* found in those dealings obviously with the theatre, it may be conceded, perhaps, that the direct influence of stage scenes and stage effects upon his art was somewhat more extensive than might be thought merely from a study of those pictures which are ostensibly studies of dramatic types and subjects; and for an instance we may take the introduction of a group of Italian comedians among the bystanders in the "Bal sous une Colonnade," already referred to. They need a little looking for amid so many figures, but when discovered one might question what Pierrot, Arlequin and their fellows are doing "dans cette galère."

When we come, again, to consider the picture called "Le Concert" (in the Wallace Collection) and find, in the central figure, a striking likeness to another picture by Watteau of "Poisson" in the costume of a peasant: and observe also a repetition of a scenic detail such as the terrace-columns, which are similar to those of the Colonnade: further noting that the treatment of the distance between these same columns is strangely suggestive of the flatness of a stage "back-cloth," it begins to seem not improbable that we have here a pretty faithful translation of actual stage scenes.

In one of these, the "Fêtes Champêtres," also

known as “Les Fêtes Vénitiennes” (in the National Gallery, Edinburgh), it is possible that we have a clue.

Can it be mere coincidence that from 1710—the year after Watteau had become a student at the Academy—one of the most popular and most frequently revived ballets at the Opera was Campra and Danchet’s “Les Fêtes Vénitiennes?”

True, Watteau must be presumed to have been at Valenciennes from about the end of 1709 until shortly before 1712, when he took up his abode with Crozat, but the ballet was revived again *in* 1712; not to mention a *pastiche* called “Fragments de Lulli,” which included an *entrée* entitled “La Vénitienne,” produced in January, 1711, which, as has already been suggested, was the more likely time than 1712 for Watteau’s return to town after his stay at Valenciennes.

At this time, in any case, there were several productions at the Opera which may have easily proved an influence in the thoughts of an impressionable young artist. It was in 1712 that two operas were produced, namely, “Créüse l’Athénienne” and “Callirhoé,” the libretti of which were by Roy, whose stanzas form the inscriptions already referred to as appearing under the engravings of “L’Amour au Théâtre Français” and “L’Amour au Théâtre Italien.”

In one of the few of Watteau’s letters quoted by the Goncourts is one to Gersaint in which Antoine accepts an invitation to go “avec Antoine de la Roque,” and dine next day. It is not insignificant that the first opera of which De la Roque was librettist was produced in April, 1713, and entitled “Médée et Jason.”



Les Plaisirs du Bal
(*From the Jullienne engravings from Watteau, British Museum*).

To return, however, to "Les Fêtes Vénitiennes." The score of this ballet, or rather "opera-ballet," was published by the great French printer Ballard in 1714, and an examination of it reveals further possibilities of its having influenced not only the picture of the same name, but the "Bal sous une Colonnade," "Le Concert," and possibly others of Watteau's composition, just as yet others might have been partly inspired by Monteclair's ballet "Les Fêtes de l'Eté," published in 1716, and Bertin's "Les Plaisirs de la Campagne," published in 1719.

"Les Fêtes Vénitiennes" was in four acts or *entrées*, with a prologue. The third act was entitled "De l'Opéra," and opens with a music-lesson, practically the rehearsal of a duet between Léontine, the prima-donna, and her music master, just before the production of a miniature opera; and the fourth is headed "Du Bal." The stage directions for this are:

"*Le Théâtre représente un lieu préparé pour un Bal*"; and in a bragging duel between the music-master and the dancing-master the latter boasts:

"Je scais l'art de tracer aux yeux
Les sons qui frappent les oreilles,"

which the other counters by saying that he can raise a storm musically, which he proceeds to do, giving a musical representation of the rising wind, of thunder, and so on. This, however, is by the way. The one thing important is that there *are* these two acts devoted to illustrating the charms of music and the dance, that the opera contains an "air pour les Arlequins," an "air des Polichinelles," an "air Champêtre," and closes, as several other ballets of the period also did, with a sort of *divertissement*, introducing the Italian players, and a general gathering of all the *dramatis personæ* on the stage while the dances of this *divertissement final* are in progress; all of which suggests the "Bal sous une Colonnade" of Watteau.

Monteclair's "Les Fêtes de l'Eté" is of special interest in that it was produced in 1716. In 1717 Watteau, after requests from the Academy authorities, painted his diploma picture, the immortal "Embarquement pour Cythère." It would seem that Monteclair's ballet contains the first suggestions which culminated in that picture.

It is in three acts, with a prologue, and the stage directions for this are: "*Le Théâtre représente une Campagne dont les beautés commencent à fletrir: Le Printemps y paroit environné d'Amants et Amantes qui lui font la cour.*" In the course of the act one of the lovers, expatiating on this charm of their surroundings, sings: "*Et la mère du Dieu des Amants a*

quitté Cythère pour ces lieux charmés."

The second act has the following stage directions at the start: "*Le Théâtre représente un relais de chasse, on y voit un char doré, une Meute et une partie de l'equipage des Chasseurs.*" One of the characters introduced is a young man, Lisidor, who is remarkable for his indifference to feminine charms, and might well be the origin of Watteau's exquisite "L'Indifférent." Another of the characters, Dorante, is counselled to imitate him; and in a discussion between Agatine and Cephise, the former is advised by the latter "*pour s'assurer de ce qu'on aime, la feinte indifférence est d'un puissant secours*."

In 1730, by the way, a play was produced at the theatre of the St. Laurent Fair called "L'Indifférence," in which the hero preaches the doctrine of indifference to love! Watteau, of course, cannot have seen this play, but it is significant that both in 1716 and 1730, the stage should be found dealing with what was evidently a current type of character.



Mlle. Desmares en habit de

Pèlerine
(*From the Jullienne engravings from Watteau, British Museum*).



L'Embarquement pour l'Ile de Cythère
(*From a photograph, by E. Alinari, of Watteau's painting in the Louvre*).

In the third act of Monteclair's ballet, the opening directions are: "*Le Théâtre représente les Rives de la Seine. On voit le soleil prêt à se coucher*" (which might possibly account for the soft, warm tone of Watteau's Embarquement) and one of the characters comes to warn some lovers with a song: "*Tendres amants, la Barque est prête*"; and the ballet concludes with a *dance divertissement*, as was usual at the period.

One cannot dogmatically assert that these operas *did* directly inspire the pictures named, but that Watteau caught his first suggestion of some from such performances as his own taste and his association with a theatrical and musical set would have led him to frequent, must seem, at the least, probable.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPECTATOR AND MR. WEAVER

QUEEN ANNE had long been dead, but she can never have been very lively when alive, for her period was one when political intrigue, theological controversy, and the War of Spanish Succession were the chief subjects that occupied everybody's attention, especially her own, and—could anything be duller? Moreover, she was of somewhat portly proportions, had a solemn husband, and—unlike Queen Elizabeth—was really no dancer.

With such a queen on the throne, at such a time of stress, can it be wondered at that theatrical dancing was at a comparatively low ebb? Why, there were only two theatres, Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields! and they were striving hard to outdo each other—in dullness.

Indeed, it was not until practically the close of Queen Anne's reign that stage-dancing began to come to its own; for though the craze for pantomimes (and his importation of French dancers) started by John Rich in Anne's last year, were mainly responsible for this, I cannot help thinking that Steele and Addison's ever lively *Spectator*, together with the works of Mr. John Weaver, had considerable effect in rousing the attention of playgoers as to the possibilities of dancing on the stage; for while there are four papers in *The Spectator* in which dancing as a *social* accomplishment is discussed, Steele, in one of them, makes the interesting suggestion that "It would be a great

improvement, as well as embellishment to the theatre, if dancing were more regarded, and taught to all the actors"; and another calls special attention to *An Essay towards an History of Dancing*, by John Weaver (a 12mo. volume published in 1712), who was also author of a very interesting *History of Pantomimes*. These literary efforts cannot have been without their influence on current taste in things theatrical.

Before the appearance of *The Spectator*, however, Addison had made amusing reference to a dancing-master in one of his papers for *The Tatler*. The date is 1709. He heads it as written "From my own Apartment, October 31," and goes on: "I was this morning awakened by a sudden shake of the house; and as soon as I had got a little out of my consternation, I felt another, which was followed by two or three repetitions of the same convulsion. I got up as fast as possible, girt on my rapier, and snatched up my hat, when my landlady came up to me and told me that the gentlewoman of the next house begged me to step thither, for that a lodger she had taken in was run mad; and she desired my advice; as indeed everybody in the whole lane does upon important occasions," he slyly adds.

With much detail and delightful humour Addison goes on to describe his adventure, at greater length than can be given here. Suffice it to say that he went in next door and upstairs, "with my hand upon the hilt of my rapier and approached this new lodger's door. I looked in at the keyhole and there I saw a well-made man look with great attention at a book and, on a sudden, jump into the air so high that his head almost touched the ceiling. He came down safe on his right foot, and again flew up, alighting on his

left; then looked again at his book and, holding out his right leg, put it into such a quivering motion that I thought he would have shaken it off."

Eventually, of course, he discovers the lodger is a dancing-master, and on asking to see the book he is studying Addison "could not make anything of it." Whereupon the *maître* explains that he had been reading a dance or two ... "which had been written by one who taught at an academy in France," adding the interesting comment "that now articulate motions, as well as sounds, were expressed by proper characters; and that there is nothing so common as to communicate a dance by a letter." Ultimately Addison begs him to practise in a ground-room, and returns to his own residence "meditating on the various occupations of rational creatures."

To return, however, to the later publication, *The Spectator*, in which Addison was also assisted by Steele and other writers of such varied character as Motteaux (debauchee, tea-merchant and translator of *Don Quixote*), Ambrose Philips (whom Swift nicknamed "Namby Pamby"), and Isaac Watts—the famous hymn-writer. In a comparatively early number a short note introduces in very learned fashion a quaint letter purporting to be from "some substantial tradesman about 'Change,'" in which the writer grows querulous over the way in which his daughter (who "has for some time been under the tuition of Monsieur Rigadoon, a dancing-master in the city"), has been taught to behave at a ball he takes her to.

With some of the dancing the old man is delighted, as he is with the art generally, but presently he has to complain: "But as the best institutions are liable to corruptions, so, sir, I must acquaint you that very

great abuses are crept into this entertainment. I was amazed to see my girl handed by and handing young fellows with so much familiarity," and he finds that fault especially with "a most impudent step called 'Setting.'"

There can be little doubt, however, that the good citizen was shocked by a dance that was probably quite innocuous, and only seemed to suggest a familiarity of behaviour unusual to his prim eyes, viewing a ball-room for the first time.

Almost the whole of one issue of *The Spectator* is taken up with a letter from John Weaver, to whom Steele gives a fine advertisement by not only printing the letter *in extenso*, but introducing it with sapient comments from himself. One point he makes somewhat recalls to mind the complaint of Arbeau's young friend, the law-student Capriol, who had grown dusty over his studies.

Speaking of dancing, Steele says: "I know a gentleman of great abilities, who bewailed the want of this part of his education to the end of a very honourable life. He observed that there was not occasion for the common use of *great* talents; that they are but seldom in demand; and that these very great talents were often rendered useless to a man for want of small attainments." One can hardly perhaps consider dancing to-day as a "small attainment," however it may have been considered in the reign of Queen Anne.

Weaver's own letter is too long to quote in its entirety, but I cannot refrain from giving at least the following, since, while speaking of his own work, he offers incidentally several peculiarly interesting glimpses as to the state of the art in 1712.

"MR. SPECTATOR,

"Since there are scarce any of the arts or sciences that have not been recommended to the world by the pens of some of the professors, masters, or lovers of them, whereby the usefulness, excellence, and benefit arising from them, both as to the speculative and practical part, have been made public, to the great advantage and improvement of such arts and sciences; *why should dancing, an art celebrated by the ancients in so extraordinary a manner, be totally neglected by the moderns, and left destitute of any pen to recommend its various excellencies and substantial merit to mankind?*

"*The low ebb to which dancing is now fallen* is altogether owing to this silence. *The art is esteemed only as an amusing trifle*; it lies altogether uncultivated, and is unhappily fallen under the imputation of being illiterate and 'mechanic.' And as Terence, in one of his prologues, complains of the rope-dancers drawing all the spectators from his play; so may we well say, that capering and tumbling is now preferred to, and *supplies the place of, just and regular dancing in our theatres*. It is, therefore, in my opinion, high time that someone should come to its assistance and relieve it from the many gross and growing errors that have crept into it, and overcast its real beauties; and to set dancing in its true light, would show the usefulness and elegance of it, with the pleasure and instruction produced from it; and also lay down some fundamental rules, that might so tend to the improvement of its professors, and information of the spectators, that the first might be the better enabled to perform, and the latter rendered more capable of judging what is (if there be anything)

valuable in this art.

"To encourage, therefore, some ingenious pen capable of so generous an undertaking, and in some measure to relieve dancing from the disadvantages it at present lies under, I, who teach to dance, have attempted a small treatise as an *Essay towards an History of Dancing*; in which I have enquired into its antiquity, origin and use, and shown what esteem the ancients had for it. I have likewise considered the nature and perfection of all its several parts, and how beneficial and delightful it is, both as a qualification and an exercise; and endeavoured to answer all objections that have been maliciously raised against it. I have proceeded to give an account of the particular dances of the Greeks and Romans, whether religious, war-like or civil; and taken particular notice of that part of dancing relating to the ancient stage in which the pantomimes had so great a share. Nor have I been wanting in giving an historical account of some particular masters excellent in that surprising art; after which I have advanced some observations on the modern dancing, both as to the stage, and that part of it so absolutely necessary for the qualification of gentlemen and ladies; and have concluded with some short remarks on the origin and progress of the character by which dances are writ down, and communicated to one master from another. *If some great genius after this would arise, and advance this art to that perfection it seems capable of receiving, what might not be expected from it.*"

All modern students of dancing will be interested especially in the passages I have italicised in the foregoing excerpt, for one gets a significant glimpse as to the state of theatrical dancing (they had no

native *ballet*) in London during the reign of Anne; such a contrast to Paris, where Louis XIV's *Académie Royale de la Danse* was beginning to bring forth "rare and refreshing" fruit and the Ballet was beginning to be understood as a genuine work of art.

"The art is esteemed only as an amusing trifle!" In an earlier paper had not "Mr. Spectator" introduced the subject with a little apology for dealing at all with a reputedly trivial theme, and had he not backed himself up with scholarly reference to classic writers on the Dance, such as Lucian?

Oh! Anne! That the art should have been, in your reign, "esteemed only as an amusing trifle!" And when you might have followed a royal example and, emulating your contemporary Louis, ennobled the art by founding an English "Royal Academy of Dancing."

Well, Weaver, at any rate, knew that the art was something more than an "amusing trifle" when he wrote almost prophetically: "If some great genius after this would arise and advance this art to that perfection it seems capable of receiving, what might not be expected from it." What would he have said had he lived to see the triumphs of Noverre, of Blasis, and of the British, French or the Russian Ballet of modern times?

CHAPTER XVII

A FRENCH DANCER IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

We have seen that the state of dancing in England was nothing to boast of in the early eighteenth century. We have seen that London had not yet what Paris had had some fifty years—State-aided Opera and Ballet.

But the public appreciation of art was there all the same, and an astute manager of that day was as capable of realising, quite as well as any modern, that where there was no home supply it might be profitable to import foreign talent.

Strange, is it not, that there was not then, any more than to-day, anyone clever enough, apparently, to realise that since foreign talent would prove attractive to a dance and spectacle-loving public (had not the English proved their innate love of spectacle in Elizabethan times?) it *might be less expensive and still more profitable, to encourage native talent*. Still that is our way. We let the foreign artist discover England, and then discover the foreign artist. We never seem to discover ourselves. We shirk the horrible revelation that the English really are an artistic, an art-loving nation. But whatsoever the foreigner may have or have had against us, he can never accuse us of lack of enthusiasm, of indifference to his efforts to please.

In the early eighteenth century—French actors, dancers, and acrobats; in the later eighteenth and mid-nineteenth—Italian opera singers and ballet; in the later nineteenth—light French Opera (at the

Criterion, Gaiety and Opera Comique); and in the twentieth—Russian Opera and Ballet; these London has had, and more, and always greeted with generous praise and enthusiastic approval. Whatsoever may be said of the English as a nation of "shopkeepers" slow to adopt new ideas, there is nothing small or hesitating about their adoption and praise of foreign art and artists; and so it was that the delectable French dancer Mlle. Marie Sallé, one of the two chief pupils of the famous Prévôt, found a warm welcome when she visited London in the reign of George I.

Mlle. Sallé, born in 1707, was the daughter of one minor theatrical manager, niece of another, and made her first appearance at the age of eleven in an opera-comique by Le Sage—author of the lively "Gil Blas"—entitled "La Princesse de Carisme," at the St. Laurent Fair, in Paris, in 1718. She spent the next few years in touring, or, when not on tour, in playing at the Fair theatres in Paris. It is just possible that Watteau may have seen her as a young girl at the Fair theatres before he died in 1721. That, however, though pleasant to contemplate as a possibility, is less our concern than the circumstances of her *début*, and her subsequent appearance in London.

"La Princesse de Carisme," a romantic-satirical, three-act musical comedy, dealt with the love-affairs and adventures of a Persian Prince and his boon companion and "confident"—Arlequin. There was some charming music in it, and so great was its success at the theatre of the St. Laurent Fair that it was put on at the Opera in Paris by Royal command.

By the year 1718, it will be remembered, old Christopher Rich had died, leaving his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields in London to his son John Rich,

who made himself famous and increased his wealth by producing the first pantomimes ever seen in the great metropolis, which were mounted on the stage with all the attractions of gorgeous scenery and dresses, grand "mechanical effects," appropriate music, and striking ballets; the various acts of the spectacle being interspersed with a comic or serio-comic element, supplied by the eternal love-affairs of Arlequin and Columbine.



Marie Sallé
(*From an engraving by Petit after a picture by Fenouil*).

This form of entertainment became so popular as to rival seriously the power of London's two chief theatres, Drury Lane and Haymarket, mainly through Rich's enterprise in securing all the best opera-singers, dancers, acrobats and other performers from the Continent. In fact, he may fairly be described as London's earliest music-hall manager, for the entertainment provided at the Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre was much like that of a modern variety

house. It was thus he came to engage Mlle. Sallé and her brother, who made their first appearance here as dancers in an English comedy, “Love’s Last Shift,” in October, 1725.

Next year also they appeared in London, and in April, 1727, Mlle. Sallé was given a complimentary benefit, in which she and her brother introduced some of their youthful pupils. In that same year she made her *début* at the Paris Opera, where she remained till, for some obscure reason, she broke therefrom, and in October returned to London, once more under John Rich’s management.

The reason for the break may have been that professional jealousy did not give her the place which her talents should have justified; or may have been over the question of costume-reform, which was a matter of burning interest to some of the younger spirits in those days. Or it may have been merely as the result of managerial changes at the Opera in 1728. But whatsoever the reason, what Paris lost London gained, and her greatest triumph here came at the end of 1733, when she made her first appearance at Covent Garden, following it up with still greater success in the spring of the following year, when she achieved a striking success in a classic ballet, “Pygmalion,” in more or less correct costume, instead of in the absurdly befrilled garb, with laced cuirasse, powdered hair and plumed helmets, which were considered *de rigueur* on the stage at that absurdly artificial period.

Marie Sallé was not only a dancer of exquisite lightness and grace, she was a woman of taste and sense, and, forestalling Noverre’s fight on the same ground, had tried to bring about costume-reform at the *Académie Royale* in Paris, only to find that those

in authority were strong in—authority, *and* convention! She rejoiced, therefore, in a return to London, that gave her more scope for the expression of her artistic ideas, and two ballets of her own composition, "Pygmalion" (February, 1734) and "Bacchus et Ariane" (March, 1734), were mounted with more regard for classic feeling. Her appearance in both caused a furore. Royalty came to Covent Garden on the nights she danced. The whole town flocked to see her, and numerous duels were fought by ardent young gentlemen who trod on each other's toes when jammed in the crowds that endeavoured to enter the theatre.

Mlle. Sallé must have been a woman of character. In a loose era she was cordially detested by her stage colleagues in Paris for her virtue! It was such a reflection on them that one should not be as they!

Another aspect of her is revealed in a significant little anecdote. The great Handel, having admired her in Paris, had offered her three thousand francs to appear at Covent Garden, and specially composed for her a ballet, "Terpsichore." Hearing of this, Porpora, Handel's great rival and manager of the King's Theatre, Haymarket, promptly offered her three thousand guineas, and had the tact to suggest that she might accept it as she had not yet signed a contract with Handel. To which proposal Sallé replied with quiet scorn: "And does my word then count for nothing?"

London was delighted with the novelty of Mlle. Sallé's ideas in the production of Ballet, and with the personal grace of the young dancer herself. One of the older historians of the dance has described her in the following glowing terms: "*Une figure noble, une belle taille, une grâce parfaite, une danse expressive et*

voluptueuse, tels étaient les avantages de Mademoiselle Sallé, la Taglioni de 1730."

As an influence in the revolution of the Dance and Ballet she might perhaps not incorrectly be described as the Isadora Duncan of her period. True, she did not dance barefoot, but she came to loosen the bonds of tradition, and to free the spirit of the Dance from the stiffening conventionalities which had grown up around Ballet as seen at the Paris Opera. In London she had greater freedom, and—greater success; indeed, so triumphant was her final season that when she did return to Paris she was welcomed by Voltaire with the following verses:

"Les Amours, pleurant votre absence,
Loin de vous s'étaient envolés;
Enfin les voilà rappelés
Dans le séjour de leur naissance."

In yet another poem he pays tribute to her virtue in describing her thus:

"De tous les cœurs et du sien la maîtresse,
Elle alluma des feux qui lui sont inconnus.
De Diane c'est la prêtresse
Dansant sous les traits de Vénus."

Later there was to come a change and the idealistic young dancer was to be attacked for the very virtues her adoring poets—for Voltaire was not the only one—had celebrated. Her austerity got on the Parisian nerves! A more modern scribe has pictured her thus:

SALLÉ

"The perfect dance needs music sweet
As dreams; seductive, so the feet
Are led to move as by some spell;
Or music as of murmuring shell.
True dance shows naught of haste or heat,

Nor trick, nor any kind of cheat.
Beauty and Joy, twin souls, should meet
To make that lovely miracle,
The perfect dance.

"A field of wind-kissed waving wheat;
A swaying sea, scarce waked to greet
The dawn; clouds drifting; these things tell
What dance may be—if it excel.
Men said they saw in hers complete,
The perfect dance!"

But if the Parisians did not quite appreciate her as they should have done at first, her return to Paris after her London successes was triumphant. Her portrait was painted by Lancret; her every appearance was greeted with enthusiasm.

She remained at the Opera for some years, retired therefrom in 1740, but made frequent appearances after, at Versailles and at Fontainebleau, until a few years before her death in 1756.

It is interesting to think that her personal dignity had won her the respect, and her beauteous art the homage of London before her qualities came to be recognised in Paris. It is possibly just the suggestion of austerity about her performance that appealed to the London audience. She had a poetic distinction above the average. She was an expressive *mime*, and her dancing was marked by supreme refinement, a magnetic reserve, a strange suggestion of pictured stillness, an exquisite simplicity and grace.

CHAPTER XVIII

LA BELLE CAMARGO

SOME say that Camargo had no right to be described "La Belle." Contemporary accounts of her appearance differ. It was a time when people took sides, and duelled for their opinions.

It is a curious fact that several famous dancers have been of questionable beauty—at least, as to face, and when in repose; for it is another curious thing that no dancer ever did or possibly ever could, look plain when dancing, that is, if dancing really well. The animation or gentle grace of the dance, whether quick or slow, seems inevitably to confer a beauty that otherwise might not be apparent. This fact in itself would appear to suggest that in dancing, as in other arts, and in life itself, it is the "spirit which quickeneth"; and, where that sufficiently illumines the body, what the body itself may otherwise be profits little.

But if some of her more jealous colleagues may have found Camargo too dark for their taste —"swarthy," said some—you may in turn criticise her critics and see for yourself what she was like if you go to view her portrait by Lancret, in the Wallace collection in Hertford House.

Marie-Anne de Cupis de Camargo was born at Brussels early in April, and baptised in the parish of St. Nicholas—it is well to be exact in matters of such importance!—on the 15th of that month, in 1710.

She was the daughter, and first child, of a

gentleman who had “seen better days”—and, through his daughter, was to see them again. At the time of her birth he was a teacher of music and dancing, and was employed by, or dependent on, the Prince de Ligne. Through her father the little dancer claimed descent from an exalted Roman family, which from time to time had given a bishop, an archbishop, and a cardinal to Holy Church; while on her mother’s side she was descended from a famous and ancient Spanish house.

Romance was ever ready to find in the earliest years of a popular star predictions of future fame, and it is probably only romance that tells how Camargo danced, on hearing a violin played, when she was but six months old!

It is rather more certain, though, that her first lessons were from her father, and that under his tuition she did well enough, by the time she was nearly ten, to deserve the patronage of the Princesse de Ligne, when that lady paid the expenses of some few months’ study under the then famous Mlle. Prévôt.

Even so she must have been remarkably precocious, for before she was eleven she had returned to Brussels finished enough to achieve a remarkable success on her first appearance. An auspicious *début* was followed by an engagement at Rouen, but, through no fault of Marie-Anne be it said, the manager failed.

As the Camargo luck would have it, however, there was a new director at the *Académie Royale* in Paris, by name Francine, and from him the little dancer received the welcome chance of appearing at the Opera, where she made her Paris *début* on May 5th, 1726, in “Les Caractères de la Danse,” and

achieved an instant and emphatic success.

Over the new-comer the impressionable capital fairly lost its head, and soon every fashion—shoes, hats, fans, coiffures, everything—was "*à la Camargo*," of which craze relics survive, for even to-day we have Camargo shoes. Such a threatened eclipse of her own popularity not unnaturally made poor Prévôt—now about forty-six, and having been before the public over twenty years—furiously jealous, and for the next year or so Marie-Anne's progress was made difficult by intrigue, and ere Paris set its seal of favour on her art by imitating her fashions, the young dancer had to find herself more than once occupying the comparative obscurity of the "back row."

Her chance came, though, when one of the famous male dancers, Dumoulin, for some reason failed to make his entry, and Camargo, in a sudden devil-may-care mood, taking up his cue, leapt forward and went through his dance with such dazzling brilliance and won such universal acclaim that henceforth any intrigue for the suppression of the youthful artist was impossible, and it was Prévôt, not Marie-Anne, who eventually had to go.

While Sallé—also a pupil of Prévôt—was making a bid for fame in London, Camargo was taking Paris by storm, and creating another of which she was temporarily the unhappy centre. Furious at this second obtrusion on the public notice Mlle. Prévôt bitterly upbraided her pushing young pupil, refused to give her any more lessons, and even to dance with her in an *entrée* in which the Duchesse de Berri had asked her to appear.

A well-known male dancer of the Opera, seeing Camargo in tears, said to her: "Leave this severe and

jealous mistress, who seeks only to mortify you. I will give you lessons, and will compose the *entrée* which the Duchesse requires and you shall dance in it." Under the careful direction of Blondi the young dancer—then only sixteen—made rapid progress. She combined *noblesse* and brilliance of execution, with grace, lightness, and a gaiety which was natural to her—on the stage. One who had seen her described her in the following terms: "*C'était une femme d'esprit; fort gaie sur la scène et fort triste à la ville; qui n'était ni jolie ni bien faite, mais légère, et la légèreté était alors un mérite fort rare. Elle exécutait avec une extrême facilité la 'royale' et 'l'entrechat' coupé sans frottement....*"

There was for a little time considerable rivalry between Sallé, Camargo and a third young dancer named Roland, of whose record history has been neglectful. But the rivalry was testified by an anonymous scribe whose verses may be translated as follow:

"Of Camargo, Roland, Sallé
The connoisseurs have much to say!
One holds 'tis Sallé's grace that tells,
And one—Roland in joy excels.
But each is struck by the display
Of nimble steps and daring way
Of Camargo.

"Equal the balance 'twixt the three
But were I Paris, forced to choose,
Only I know I could not use
But crown the dance, sublime and free,
Of Camargo."

There was of course the inevitable tribute from Voltaire, whose poem, apart from the ingenuity with which he divides his favours between the rival stars, is of unusual interest, since it gives a useful impression of their contrasted styles in

apostrophising the dancers thus:

"Ah! Camargo, que vous êtes brillante!
Mais que Sallé, grand dieux! est ravissante!
Que vos pas sont légers, et que les siens sont doux!
Elle est inimitable, et vous êtes nouvelle;
Les nymphes sautent comme vous
Et les Grâces dansent comme elle."

It is all safe praise of course, but when we separate the qualities one finds that he is only versifying the current opinion—Camargo is "brillante," her steps are "légers," and the "nouvelle" refers less to *her* than to the novelty of her steps, with the clever invention of which she delighted her audience; and the nymphs, you observe, "*sautent* comme vous," an appropriate phrase for one whose *entrechats* amazed a generation to which such things were new. On the other hand, Sallé was "ravissante," her steps were "doux"; she was "inimitable," and "les Grâces *dansent* comme elle," a point of special significance when we recall the historic distinction between the words *sauter* and *danser*.

Voltaire's admiration was not exactly fevered—could the icy "intellectual" ever have been that? Not so the rest of Paris. Rumour soon gave her countless lovers—as it will a pretty actress to-day?—but history does not record that she succumbed to their protestations. Certainly duels were fought on her behalf; but probably she was unaware that she was the cause; and certainly she did not provoke them. *Was* she a pretty actress? Setting aside the opinion of her feminine contemporaries, unbiased colleagues thought not. Yet painters such as Lancret, Vanloo, and Pater sought for the honour of depicting her graceful figure and—was it her face? Well, as to actual features perhaps she was not faultlessly

beautiful, but with that mingled Italian and Spanish blood, even if she were swarthy as some said, she must have been striking, temperamental, full of fire and "interesting" as we might say to-day. Much of her fascination must have been in expression, and one feels that she had that quality which often makes a dancer—sheer joy in dancing.



M. Ballon and Mlle. Prévôt
(*After an engraving [reversed] in the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra*).



Camargo
(*From the painting by Lancret in the Wallace Collection*).

Her style was noted by contemporaries as combining quickness with grace to a degree not previously achieved, and she won special credit for her invention of new steps. Her improvisation of new dances was remarkable, and it is important to note that she was the first to perform an *entrechat*, which, only for the benefit of non-dancing readers, may be described as the step in which a dancer actually crosses her feet rapidly while in mid-air. This historic innovation took place in 1730, and she could make four crossings; while eight are said to be as many as any dancer has since performed.

Another interesting point to note is that until the advent of Camargo the ballet skirts reached nearly, or quite, to the ankles. She was the first to shorten it, not, of course, to the brevity one can only regret has been too often seen since, but to such degree as to enable the steps to be better seen and the dancer to have greater freedom of movement. Her favourite

dances were the *Tambourin*, *Gavotte*, and *Rigaudon*, or *Rigadoon*, as it is known in English. But for all the shortening of the skirt and the rapidity of her steps, Marie-Anne was never accused from departing from modesty, grace, and refinement of deportment.

A curious personal characteristic was, that while on the stage she was the incarnation of gaiety, yet in private life she was for the most part strangely grave, and even sad; though, with all the advantages of talent, position, and wealth of which she was possessed, it might have been expected she should be quite otherwise. No one ever discovered the reason. One imagines it to have been that modern disease, "the artistic temperament," and a steady perception of the pitiful fact that all stage triumphs are but transient; and that, popular as she might be, and was, on her retirement in 1751, her fame would not long endure after her death, which actually occurred in 1770. Yet to-day she lives for us in Lancret's exquisite picture, for all to see who visit Hertford House.

CAMARGO SPEAKS

"Talk to me not of poor Prévôt,
With all her peevish airs and graces;
Her day is past! 'Tis sad, I know,
But then—we cannot *all* be aces!
'Tis time she learned her proper place is
A little lower in the pack;
For all in favour now *my* pace is:
Of Rigaudons I have the knack.

"Though some still like a vogue that's slow,
Formal, and stiff, the present craze is
All for the dance that has some 'go;'
And Minuet enjoys all praises.
But yet my dance the more amazes,
And none can follow on my 'track,'

As step with swift step interlaces.
Of Rigaudons I *have* the knack.

"When in my aerial flight I go,
High leaping, see the people's faces!
How round their eyes begin to grow,
And what a shout each one upraises!
Perchance some jealous girl grimaces.
But what of that! when, smiling back,
I see the one thing *she* betrays is—
Of Rigaudons *I* have the knack!

ENVOI

"*But oh! one fear my soul abases.*
Time will some day my fair limbs rack!
Who then will reck that now the phrase is—
'Of Rigaudons I have the knack'?"

CHAPTER XIX

THE HOUSE OF VESTRIS

IT is recorded that during one of the many revolts indulged in by the dancers of the Paris Opera against managerial control, which incidentally meant, of course, State and Royal control, some of the leaders were sent to Fort l'Evêque—including Auguste Vestris.

So melodramatically pathetic was the farewell scene with his father, Gaetan, that even his colleagues laughed! "Go my son," said *le Diou de la Danse*. "This is the most glorious moment of your career. Take my carriage, and ask for the cell which was occupied by my friend the King of Poland. I will meet every expense."

And the great Gaetan is said to have added, with an air of injured dignity, that this was the first time in history that there had been "any difference of opinion between the House of Bourbon and the House of Vestris!"

What *was* the—"House of Vestris?" Well, it was a fairly numerous one, of which, so far as our interest is concerned, Gaetan was virtually the founder. He had a father it is true, who, being employed, it is believed, in a Florentine pawnbroker's, got into some trouble and with his young family "cleared" to Naples. There being no trains, "wireless" or Scotland Yard in those days, they stayed there in safety for a while; the children, who had been taught music and dancing, being made to exercise their talents in that direction for their general support.

Palermo was the next move, where two of the girls, Marie-Therese and Violante, with one of the sons, Gaetan, entered the Opera. After that they seem to have scattered and travelled over most of cultured Europe, appearing now in one opera house, now in another, and always deeply engaged in love affairs. It is with their arrival in Paris, and with Gaetan more especially that we now have to do.

He was one of the eight children of Thomas Vestris and his wife, *née* Violante-Beatrix de Dominique Bruscagli, but only of three of the family have we much record, namely, Gaetan and the two sisters already mentioned.

Gaetan-Appolino Balthazar Vestris was born at Florence in April, 1729, and in importance—though far from it in physique—was the Mordkin of his era. There, however, the resemblance ceases.

He was a little man, with the biggest ideas of his own talents. But his size did not detract from his merits, his sheer style as a dancer; and from all accounts he is to be ranked as one of the finest male dancers the world has ever known. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he is one of the most important factors in the history of the modern dance and that his influence as a teacher is seen to-day in the real classic school, that is, the school which is based on ages of tradition. For Gaetan was in his time the supreme leader of the Dance, and undoubtedly gave a new standard and tradition to Paris, the influence of which spread to every Opera House on the Continent.

He is a link in a chain. One of the first dancing masters to assist Louis XIV in establishing his Royal Academy of Music and Dance—and modern

theatrical dancing dates from that event—was Beauchamps, whose pupil was "the great" Dupré. *He* taught Gaetan Vestris. Gaetan in turn taught his son Auguste, of whom, in his later years, Carlotta Grisi was a pupil, and there may be some to-day who have studied under pupils of Carlotta Grisi, who herself died comparatively recently.

According to a contemporary biographer Gaetan made his *début* at the Royal Academy of Music and Dance "*sans retribution*," in 1748; entered there for study in 1749, became a solo dancer in 1751, a Member of the Académie Royale de Danse in 1753; *maître de ballet* in 1761 until 1770, and composer and master of Ballet from that year until 1776.

From time to time he visited Stuttgart—as the Russian dancers to-day have visited London—in vacation, and in the theatre there under the direction of that master of ballet-composition and stage reformer, Jean Georges Noverre, found greater scope for his artistic abilities than in the more conventional work of the Paris Opera.

We have seen that by her invention of new and rapid steps, Camargo infused new life into the technique of theatrical dancing some years before the rise of Gaetan Vestris to supremacy. He, in turn, came to bring a new influence mainly in the direction of a certain *largeur* of movement and gesture, a certain grandiosity, as well as setting a new standard in perfection of execution.

A contemporary critic declared: "When Vestris appeared at the Opera one really believed it was Apollo who had come to earth to give lessons in grace. He perfected the art of the Dance, gave more freedom to the 'positions' already known, and created new ones."

Undoubtedly he learnt much from Noverre, even as the latter had learnt much from David Garrick. Noverre conceived the idea of creating the dance with action, in short, the ballet-pantomime; at least its creation was claimed, and by some of his contemporaries, attributed to him; though we have seen that he had forerunners in the Duchesse du Maine, and, too, in Sallé, who was an ardent stage-reformer and seems to have influenced Noverre. But it was the latter who took practical steps towards instituting the real ballet in action, the true ballet-pantomime as we have seen it to-day.

Up to this time, opera-ballet had had a somewhat rigid form: there were music, singing and dancing; but the dances were detached items in the general effect. The regulation form was: *passe-pieds* in the prologue; *musettes* in the first act; *tambourins* in the second; *chaconnes* and *passacailles* in the third and fourth.

In all this it was not the plot of the opera which decided the introduction of the dances, but quite other considerations, such as the particular excellence of particular dancers in their special dances—the best performers usually appearing last. It was routine, not the action of the story by which these things were ordered; and the poet who had provided the plot, the musician who had composed the music, the costumier and scenic artist, and even the ballet master, each worked detachedly, without regard to consultation and cooperation towards an artistic unity of effect.

The lines had been set, the routine laid down for all time; any deviation therefrom seemed impossible, a thing vainly imagined only by a heretic, who could not hope to win in a fight against the established

form and authority of the Opera. Yet the reformation came. Noverre, the reformer, found in Gaetan Vestris a technical exponent who responded to his influence; and in Dauberval, another; and at Stuttgart the time and place for artistic experiment. It is to this triumvirate that credit was given in their own time for the reform of the *scène chorégraphique*, a reform which had to struggle against and overcome tradition, prejudice, ignorance and the obstinacy of authority. Slow progress was made at first. Stuttgart had its effect, but the Paris Opera still clung to the bizarre accessories which were then regarded as inherent to the dignity of the theatre—the masks, under which the faces were hidden, the towering wigs by which the heads were bowed; the absurd panniers; the puffed skirts; the great breastplates, all forming the heroic panoply by which the leading histrions were known for hero and heroine, and traces of which may be found in those spangled figures beloved of our grandfathers and grandmothers in their childhood, during the first half of last century.



Gaetan Vestris
(*From an old print*).

Gaetan Vestris was the first dancer who dared to discard that absurd convention—the mask, and so reveal that expressive play of feature which made *acted* ballet possible. This was in 1770, when he appeared in a ballet-pantomime on the story of *Medea and Jason*. He astonished the audience by the dramatic force of his miming and by the nobility of his physiognomical expression. One critic wrote: "*Le mérite particulier de Vestris, c'était la grâce, l'élégance et la délicatesse. Tous ses pas avaient une pureté, un fini dont on ne peut se faire une idée aujourd'hui et ce n'est pas sans quelque raison qu'on compare son talent à celui de Racine.*"

For all his artistic talent as dancer and mime, however, Gaetan was practically illiterate; ignorant of all save the art in which he excelled; and his conceit was colossal.

One day, when he was coming from a rehearsal at

the Opera, a somewhat ample lady happened, in passing, to tread rather heavily on one of his feet. In deep concern she apologised profusely, and expressed an earnest hope that she had not seriously hurt him.

"Hurt me, Madam!" he answered. "Me? You have merely put all Paris into mourning for a fortnight!"

His pride in his son was stupendous, and he once declared that, "If Auguste occasionally descends to touch the earth it is merely out of consideration for the feelings of less talented colleagues." As to himself, on one occasion he volunteered the assertion that his century had produced but three really great men—Frederick the Great, Voltaire and himself!

Of the many susceptible ladies who succumbed to the questionable fascination of this "*Diou de la Danse*"—as in his Italianate-French he called himself—the most notable—apart from his legitimate wife, the beautiful *danseuse* Heinel, whom he married in 1752—was Mlle. Allard.

Born of poor and none too honest parents, Marie Allard first drew breath on August 14th, 1742, at Marseilles, where at an early age she entered the local theatre. On the death of her mother, she decided to leave a disreputable father and made her way to Lyons, where she found another not very brilliant theatrical engagement. At the age of fourteen, tiring of Lyons, she set out to win fame in Paris, where she entered the Comédie Française. In the course of time, she came to know Gaetan Vestris, and with him she studied dancing.

She made her *début* at the Opera in June, 1761, and delighted the audience with the verve, grace and gaiety of her dancing. Though she shone especially in

comedy, she was noted as a clever actress in tragedy; and while "Sylvie," in the comedy-ballet of that name, was one of her most successful parts, she is said to have moved beholders to tears by her performance in Noverre's "Medea."

In the lighter *rôles*, however, she was especially popular, and from the moment of her *entrée* (she was the only dancer at the Opera who was allowed to compose her own *entrées*, not edible!) her gaiety of manner was such as almost to eclipse the real talent displayed in her dancing.

Unfortunately, her public career came to a close all too soon for her admirers, from a cause which even she with all her agility and incessant exercise, was unable to control—a tendency to *embonpoint*! She retired in 1781, and died in 1802; not before she had seen the success of her and Gaetan Vestris' son, Auguste, who, known as Vestr'-Allard, seemed to combine within him the respective choreographic perfections of mother and father.

Gaetan Vestris, having retired in 1782, lived until 1808, and rejoiced to see his son acknowledged as supreme. On him he graciously conferred the title of *Le Diou de la Danse*; and he declared that it was, after all, only natural that Auguste should excel, since the young man possessed one advantage over himself—he "had Gaetan for his father!"

Auguste, or Marie-Auguste, to give his full name, was born at Paris in 1760. He made his *début* at the age of twelve in a *divertissement* entitled "Cinquantaine" with a *chaconne*, which he danced in a manner such as had never been seen. In 1773 he made a strikingly successful appearance as Eros in the ballet of "Endymion;" and though already

recognised as a master he entered the Academy school in 1775 and the Opera in the following year. For some time he accepted subordinate *rôles*, but gradually his consummate ability in all he undertook brought him forward, and as he became more and more the pet of the ladies of the Opera and the admiration of its patrons he began to develop his father's traits, especially conceit.

On one occasion the Director, de Vismes, annoyed at some impertinence of the young man, said, "Monsieur Vestris, do you know to whom you speak?"

"Yes," Auguste replied, "to the farmer of my talent."

It says much for that talent that his appearance at the Opera during some thirty-five years, under Louis-Seize, the Republic and the Empire, largely accounted for its prosperity in those amazing times.

He had his father's grace, precision, suppleness, and style, but more spirit and vivacity; a greater gift of mime; and was as good in *genre* as in the nobler *rôles*. He paid several visits to London, always with success.

He married in 1795, a young dancer, Anne-Catherine Augier, who had made her *début* at the Opera two years before under the *nom de théâtre* of *Aimée*, but his infatuation for her modesty and charm and many good qualities did not last any longer than had his other infatuations for worse qualities in less desirable ladies, and his infidelities led her to attempt suicide, with results that left her more or less an invalid until death put an end to her unhappy existence in 1809. Auguste Vestris himself died in 1842, and left one son Auguste-Armand. He made his

début at the Opera, as did a cousin, Charles Vestris, both being pupils of Auguste; and both went abroad; but neither added greater brilliance to the family name than had been achieved for it by first Gaetan, and then Auguste, the first and most distinguished upholders of the House of Vestris.

CHAPTER XX

JEAN GEORGES NOVERRE

SUPREME above all other writers on the dance and ballet is Jean Georges Noverre, whose genius has been praised by Diderot, Voltaire, by D'Alembert, Dorat, and by David Garrick, the last of whom described him as "the Shakespeare" of the dance.

Born at Paris in April, 1727, he was the son of a distinguished Swiss soldier, who had served as an adjutant in the army of Charles XII, and intended his son for a military career.

Jean, however, early developed a passion for the stage, and especially for dancing, so was apprenticed by his father to the famous Parisian dancer and *maître de ballet*, Dupré.

In August, 1743, young Noverre made his *début* at the Court of Louis-Quinze in a fête at Fontainebleau, but with only moderate success. Not discouraged, however, he went a little later to the Court of Berlin, where he became a favourite with Frederick the Great and his brother, Prince Henry of Prussia.

He returned to France in 1747, and two years later obtained the post of *maître de ballet* at the Opéra Comique, where the success of his "Ballet Chinois" aroused considerable jealousy among his colleagues and brought him some distinction in the art world. But the success was not great enough for his ambitious spirit, and he again travelled, and did not return to Paris for nearly twenty years. Noverre and such are seldom recognised as prophets in their own

country, until their genius has received recognition abroad. As Castil-Blaze, the historian of opera in France, has neatly expressed it: “Noverre and the two Gardels effected in the dance the same revolution that Gluck and Sacchini achieved some years later in French music.” But Noverre was unable to do this as a young man in Paris fighting against the sheer dead weight of convention and hide-bound authority. He was unable to do it until he had won his laurels abroad.

Sallé, one of the most exquisite and “intellectual” of *danseuses*, had left Paris for a more appreciative audience in London because the Paris Opera disliked her attempts to discard the ridiculous conventions of stage costumes then ruling and to “reform it altogether” in favour of something more congruous.

Noverre visioned to himself a theatre devoted to a kind of ballet as different from that he saw in Paris, as the Russian ballet we have seen to-day differs from that which London had seen in the ’thirties of last century; a ballet that should be informed by a technique so perfect as to be unobtrusive, and combining the arts of dance, pantomime, music and poesy into a new, subtle, resourceful and comprehensive means of artistic expression.

He wanted to see swept away all the mechanical rules of ballet composition, the stereotyped and unimaginative story, the conventional arrangement of stage groups, the stilted “heroic” style of the dancers, the formal sequence of their *entrées*, and above all, the *bizarrerie* of their masks, their panniers and helmets with waving, funereal plumes. He wanted to infuse a new spirit of art and efficiency into what he found about him and—he had to go elsewhere! An invitation from the Duke of

Würtemberg to become *maître de ballet* at the luxurious Court of Stuttgart gave him his chance, and he founded here the school which was to influence European Ballet in that and the successive generation, as the school of Petrograd seemed like to do to-day.

The publication of his *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets*, in 1760, dedicated by permission to this same Duke of Würtemberg and Teck, caused a sensation among dancers in Paris and other capitals, and having produced ballets in Berlin, London (1755), Lyons (1758), and Stuttgart, he was reintroduced to Paris by Vestris (who had been in the habit of visiting Stuttgart every year to dance during his vacations) in 1765, when he achieved a success with his tragic ballet of "Medea."

Later he was to visit Vienna, to superintend the fêtes on the occasion of the marriage of the Archduchess Caroline (Queen of Naples), produce there a dozen ballets, and become appointed Director of Court fêtes and *Maître de Danse* to the Empress Maria Theresa and Imperial Family, the Empress heaping favours upon him and granting a lieutenancy to his son.

From Vienna he went to the Court of Milan, where he was created Chevalier of the Order of the Cross; then to the Courts of Naples and Lisbon; then to London, and finally again to Paris, in 1775, on the invitation of his old pupil, Marie Antoinette, who made him *Maître des Ballets en Chef* at the Imperial Academy of Music, and Director of the fêtes at the Petit Trianon; finally retiring at the outbreak of the French Revolution, to London, where it is possible—or, at any rate, in England—some of his descendants may yet be living.

A translation of these wonderful *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets* was published in London in 1780, and was dedicated to the then Prince of Wales, later George IV. In the preface the anonymous translator says: “The works of Monsieur Noverre, especially the following letters, have been translated into most of the European languages and thought worthy of a distinguished place in the libraries of the literati.” To which, let me add, they should be so thought to-day, at least in their original French form, for they are of uncommon interest and literary charm.

In the somewhat stiff manner of the English of the late Georgian period, his translator remarks of Noverre’s work in the original: “His manner of writing is chaste, correct and elegant; perfectly master of his subjects, he treats of them with the utmost perspicuity; and by the connection which he proves to exist between the other arts, and that of dancing, the author lays down rules and precepts for them all; so that the poet, the painter and the musician may be greatly benefited by the perusal of his works.”

The translator follows with a short history of dancing, and three extremely interesting epistles to Noverre from the great Voltaire, in the first of which, apropos the publication of Noverre’s *Lettres*, he says: “I have read, sir, your work of genius: my gratitude equals my esteem. You promise only to treat of dancing, and you shed a light on all the arts. Your style is as eloquent as your ballet is imaginative.” In another he remarks: “I have for admiring you, a reason personal to myself; it is that your works abound with poetical images. Poets and painters shall vie with each other to have you ranked with

them." Again he says: "I am surprised that you have not been offered such advantages as might have kept you in France; but that time is no more when France sets the example to all Europe"; but elsewhere remarks, curiously enough: "I believe that your merit will be fully recognised in England, for there they love Nature."



Jean Georges Noverre

It was just this love of Nature and "natural" acting which brought Noverre and Garrick together in mutual admiration and friendship, to the latter of whom, by the way, the French *maître* pays the highest tribute in his tenth letter. To turn, however, to the first: "Poetry, painting and dancing are, or ought to be, the faithful copy of Nature ... a ballet is a piece of painting, the scene is the canvas; in the mechanical motions of the figures we find the colours ... the composer himself is the painter.

"Ballets have hitherto been the faint sketch only of what they might one day be. An art entirely

subservient, as this is, to taste and genius, may receive daily variations and improvements. History, painting, mythology, poetry, all join to raise it from that obscurity in which it lies buried; and it is truly surprising that composers have hitherto disdained so many valuable resources.... If ballets are for the most part uninteresting and uniformly dull, if they fail in their characteristic *expression* which constitutes their very essence, the defect does not originate from the art itself, but should be ascribed to the artists. Are then the latter to be told that dancing is an imitative art? I am indeed inclined to think that they know it not, since we daily see the generality of composers sacrifice the beauties of the dance and forego the graceful *naïveté* of sentiment, to become servile copyists of a certain number of figures known and hackneyed for a century or more.... It is uncommon and next to impossible now to find invention in ballets, elegance in the forms, neatness in the groups, or the requisite precision in the means of introducing the various figures."

"Ballet masters should consult the productions of the most eminent painters. This would bring them nearer to Nature and induce them to avoid as often as possible that symmetry of figures which, by repeating the object, presents two separate pictures on one and the same canvas. A ballet, perfect in all its parts, is a picture drawn from life, of the manners, dresses, ceremonies and customs of the various nations. It must be a complete *panto-mime* and through the eyes speak, as it were, to the very soul of the spectator. If it wants expression, if it be deficient in point of situation and scenery, it degenerates into a mere *spectacle*, flat and monotonous.

"This kind of composition will not admit of

mediocrity; like the art of painting it requires a degree of perfection the more difficult to attain in that it is subordinate to a true imitation of Nature, and that it is next to an impossibility to achieve that all-subduing truth which conceals the illusion from the spectator, carries him, as it were, to the very spot where the scene lies; and inspires him with the same sentiments as he must experience, were he present at the events which the artist only represents.

"Ballets, being regular representations, ought to unite the various parts of the drama. Most of the subjects, adapted to the dancer, are devoid of sense, and exhibit only a confused jumble of scenes, equally unmeaning and unconnected; yet it is in general absolutely necessary to confine oneself within certain rules. The historical part of a ballet must have its exposition, its incidents, its *dénouement*. The success of this kind of entertainment chiefly depends on choosing good subjects, and dealing with them in a proper manner."

The above brief quotations are all of interest as bearing on particular points in dancing and ballet-composition, but I cannot refrain from giving one more and a lengthier excerpt, the sound common sense of which applies to-day and will appeal to all modern dancers who realise that the finest opportunities of displaying their skill are, and can only be, found in ballets worthy of their art.

"Every ballet," he says, "complicated and extensive in its subject, which does not point out, with clearness and perspicuity, the action it is intended to represent, the intrigue of which is unintelligible, without a program or printed explanation: a ballet, in fine, whose plan is not felt, and appears deficient in point of exposition, incident and *dénouement*; such

a ballet, I say, will never rise, in my opinion, above a mere *divertissement* of dancing, more or less commendable from the manner in which it is performed. But it cannot affect me much, since it bears no particular character, and is devoid of expression.

"It may be objected that dancing is now in so improved a state that it may please, nay, enchant without the accessory ornaments of expression and sentiment.... I readily acknowledge that, as to mechanical execution, the art has attained the highest degree of perfection: I shall even confess that it sometimes is graceful: but gracefulness is but a small portion of the qualities it requires.

"What I call the mechanical parts of dancing are the steps linked to each other with ease and brilliancy, the aplomb, steadiness, activity, liveliness, and a well-directed opposition between the arms and legs. When all these parts are managed without genius, when the latter does not direct these different motions, and animate them by the fire of sentiment and expression; I feel neither emotion nor concern. The dexterity of the dancer obtains my applause; I admire the automaton, but I experience no further sensation. It has upon me the same effect as the most beautiful line, whose words are uncouthly set asunder, producing sound, not sense. As for instance, what would a reader feel at hearing the following detached words: *Fame-lives-in-dies-he-cause-who-in-virtue's?* Yet these very words aptly joined by the man of genius, by Shakespeare, express the noblest sentiment:

'He lives in Fame who dies in Virtue's cause.'

"From the above comparison we may fairly conclude that the art of Dancing has in itself all that

is necessary to speak the best language, but that it is not enough to be acquainted only with its alphabet. Let the man of genius put the letters together, form the words, and from these produce regular sentences; the art shall no longer be mute, but speak with true energy, and the ballets will share with the best dramatic pieces the peculiar advantage of exciting the tenderest feelings; nay, of receiving the tribute of a tear; while, in a less serious style, this art will please, entertain and charm the spectators. Dancing thus ennobled by the expression of sentiment, and under the direction of a man of true genius, will, in time, obtain the praises which the enlightened world bestows on poetry and painting, and become entitled to the rewards with which the latter are daily honoured."

The closing lines of the above are so curiously prophetic one questions whether we have not already reached the period when an "enlightened world" bestows on dancing—at any rate on dancers—the "rewards" with which poetry and painting have been (or ought to have been) hitherto honoured.

CHAPTER XXI

GUIMARD THE GRAND: 1743-1816

FOR some thirty of Madeleine Guimard's seventy-three years of life she was the idol of Paris, having risen from obscurity to power, and returned again from a joyous life set in high places to a lonely death in obscurity.

Authorities differ, as authorities so often do over the advent of new stars in the firmament of life, as to the date of Guimard's birth. One says the 2nd, and another the 10th, and yet a third the 20th of October. Edmond de Goncourt—not infallible on other points—gives the date of her baptism correctly as December 27th, 1743.

She made her *début* before the Parisian public when she was about sixteen, at the Comédie Française. She was received into the Academy in 1762, at the age of nineteen, and at a salary of six hundred livres.

In face she was not beautiful; some have described her even as ugly. She certainly had not Sophie Arnould's shrewish wit, though she had humour; but her gestures, her face, above all her expressive eyes spoke eloquently, her dancing seemed ever the true and spirited expression of sentiments really felt, and in whatsoever *rôle* she was always brilliant, entrancing. She had that glamour which makes up for lack of looks, and had, too, caprice of mood and a commanding manner, both qualities which susceptible men find adorable.

Her historians have not always been kind. A contemporary wrote: "*La Guimard a des caprices entre nous. On ne peut compter sur elle.... Son arrogance n'a pas de nom.... Ce que la Guimard veut, bon gré, mal gré, il faut qu'on le veuille.*" And there you have it! "What Guimard wishes, willy-nilly one must wish." That is a touch that tells; the words ring true. Intriguing, capricious—masterful! What wonder, then, that she came to rise by her own buoyancy, of manner and morals, and sought the rarefied, but, in the days of Louis XV, far from inaccessible atmosphere of Court circles.

Guimard made her *début* at the Opera in May, 1762, as Terpsichore in a ballet called "Les Caractères de la Danse," and achieved a triumph. From that time until she retired from the stage she was practically without a rival in the affections of the Parisian audiences. One testimony to her popularity is found in the promptitude with which she was nicknamed. Guimard, if not beautiful in face, had, nevertheless, a beautiful figure, was quite unusually graceful, carried herself nobly, was altogether a commanding and magnetic personage, but for all her beauty of figure Guimard was amazingly slim.

Seeing her in a classical ballet dancing as a nymph between two fauns—impersonated by the celebrated male-dancers Vestris *père* and Dauberval—Sophie Arnould said it reminded her of "two dogs fighting for a bone." Another of her footnotes on Guimard was her description of her as "Le Squelette des Grâces," which also had the saving grace of being partly a compliment, and it was by this nickname that Madeleine was generally known throughout Paris.

To judge from this insistence on Madeleine's thinness one might imagine that she could not be as attractive, certainly hardly as graceful as has been said. But such nicknames are, though emphasising some special characteristic, usually only marks of popularity, and that Guimard really was graceful can be gathered from the summing-up of Noverre who had seen her dance for years and knew, as only a great ballet-master could, what he was talking about when he said that "... from her *début* to her retirement she was always graceful, naturally so. She never ran after difficulties. A lovable and noble simplicity reigned in her dance; she designed it with perfect taste, and put expression and sentiment into all her movements."

Of her performance in Gardel's ballet, "La Chercheuse d'Esprit," in which she played the title-*rôle*, a contemporary wrote that "her eloquent silences surpassed the vivid, easy and seductive diction of Mme. Favart;" and he mentions one point that is of interest when he remembers that the struggle that Noverre had had to achieve some reform of costume on the opera-stage, namely, that Guimard, "following the example of Mme. Favart, discarded the panniers and the cuirasse of conventional costume."

In the ballet of "Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour," in 1766, Guimard had the misfortune to have one of her arms broken by a piece of falling scenery. Such was her place in public regard even at this time, that a Mass was said at Notre-Dame for her recovery.

It was not long after success came to her that Guimard accepted the protection of the notorious Prince de Soubise. One of her first acquisitions, in

1768, was a superb residence at Pantin, just outside Paris, which was decorated by Fragonard. It was visited by everybody who *was* anybody, for, apart from the charms of its mistress, there was a theatre in the mansion, where entertainments of a very special kind were staged, little poetic trifles or risky comedies, which while delighting a circle of appreciative connoisseurs would not have been staged in the ordinary way, as being caviare to the general.

The place at Pantin, however, did not suffice the exigent Madeleine, and a town-house was taken also in the Chaussée d'Antin,—next to that of Sophie Arnould by the way—where another theatre was built and where even more festive entertainments were provided, a theatre which could seat five hundred persons (only present by invitation) which received the name of The Temple of Terpsichore. It was designed by the architect Ledoux, decorated by Fragonard, who did numerous lovely panels in which Guimard appeared; and by David, then a youthful assistant, whom Madeleine's generous aid is said to have sent to Rome for the furtherance of his art education.

Here in the course of time all Paris came. Here Guimard held her famous receptions—three a week, to the first of which were invited members of the Court circles, the aristocracy of the aristocracy; to the second—artists, actors, actresses, musicians, poets, the aristocracy of the world of intellect; to the third—all the polished rakes and roués, with their attendant Phrynes, the aristocracy of vice.

There seem to have been wild times in the Chaussée d'Antin Hôtel, and some of Madeleine's private theatrical productions must have been

worthy of tottering Rome. Well might discreet Abbés, and reputedly virtuous ladies of the Court hide behind the curtains of the darkened and mysterious boxes with which her theatre was provided. Not be seen while seeing was their only chance to retain a virtuous reputation! It was now doubtless that after having long danced *le genre sérieux*, Guimard abandoned it as one record says for the *genre mixte*, and was "inimitable" in "les ballets Anacréontiques!"

One example of the sort of dramatic fare Madeleine was giving her guests on occasion at Pantin, or at the Chaussée d'Antin residence, will suffice. In 1721 at the Château of St. Cloud, in the presence of the Duc d'Orléans as Regent, there had been given a ballet called "Les Fêtes d'Adam." Some of her friends suggested that Madeleine should go one better and produce a ballet on a classic subject with herself as Venus rising from the sea. But the Archbishop of Paris got news of the affair and managed to nip the suggestion in the bud. Perhaps it was never seriously intended; it may have been "merely a suggestion—nothing more."

One of her first lovers was Delaborde the financier, poor only as an amateur musician, who directed her theatre at Pantin till it was closed in 1770; and only of greater importance in her life, financially, was Soubise. But Madeleine had a particular *penchant* for bishops it seems, and incidentally some of her later and most devoted friends were De Jarente, Bishop of Orleans, De Choiseul, the Archbishop of Cambrai, and Desnos, Bishop of Verdun.

The first-named of these clerical worthies had the disposal of a whole sheaf of livings, that is to say, he was supposed to have, but it was really Madeleine who allotted them—abbeys, priories, chapels and so

forth. She did not forget her friends, and De Jarente found himself unable to resist. "What Guimard wishes one must wish!" It was this allotment of the bishops' *feuille des bénéfices* which drew from Sophie Arnould the whimsical remark that "*Ce petit ver à soie* (Guimard) *devrait être plus gras. Elle ronge une si bonne feuille.*"

Another favour which, through the Prince de Soubise, Madeleine was able to dispense among her friends was permission to hunt in the Royal forests, and it led to trouble on more than one occasion—her friends were so much of a *genre mixte*.

But if men were weak where Guimard was concerned, there is no need to consider her as infamous. There is so often a tendency among chroniclers to consider that because a pretty woman, with every inducement to succumb to temptation, had a "protector," all her men friends found her equally ready to receive their attentions. Nothing could be more unjust. There may have been reasons why Madeleine did not marry sooner than she did, and she may not have been quite that paragon of virtue our present time prefers, but in an age notorious for its callousness and cruelty as well as for its moral laxity she was distinguished as a woman not merely of fascination but of good heart and generous impulses.

Did not one writer say of her that "*En quittant le théâtre, cette virtuose emporta le genre agréable avec elle*?" Did not Marmontel, referring to her well-known acts of charity, write of her the poem beginning:

"Est-il bien vrai, jeune et belle damnée
Que, du théâtre embelli par tes pas,
Tu vas chercher dans le froid galetas,

L'humanité plaintive abandonnée?"

Did not a preacher speak of her in the pulpit as "Magdalen not yet repentant, but already charitable?" and add, too, that "The hand which gives so well will not be refused when knocking at the gates of Paradise?" And why? Because all who were in trouble had but to turn to Guimard for help —poor players, artists, poets, all. Because, though every year she received a handsome present from Soubise, one year, in 1768, when the winter had dealt cruelly with the Paris poor, she begged that instead of sending her jewellery, the Prince would send her the equivalent in money, and when she received it she added more, and herself went to all the poor folk in her neighbourhood and fed the starving; went unostentatiously, from simple good-heartedness and sympathy; and it was the populace who spoke of it, not she.

She had her foibles, her little vanities perhaps, as when at Longchamps one summer she appeared in an equipage most gorgeously embellished with somewhat startling arms—mistletoe growing out of a gold mark, which glowed in the middle of a shield, the Graces serving as supports, with a group of Cupids as a crown.

Guimard could be jealous on occasion. A Mlle. Dervieux, appearing as a singer at the Academy without success, had the audacity to reappear as a dancer and triumph. This Madeleine would possibly not have minded, but her own pet poet Dorat celebrated Mlle. Dervieux's success in verse, and this poetic infidelity was more than Madeleine could stand, with the consequence that all the pamphleteers of Paris were forthwith ranged on sides and a paper war took place between the rival

supporters of the two fair dancers, characters were torn to rags, and in the course of time the battle burnt itself out, as such usually do, without anyone being seriously the worse.

Strangely enough it was just at this time that Guimard herself elected to make an appearance as a singer. When there was a revival of some of the old pieces in the repertoire of the Royal Academy, including "Les Fêtes d'Hébé ou les Talents Lyriques," for which Rameau had written the music, Guimard appeared in this as Aglaia, one of the three Graces —"with song and dance," as one might say to-day. But it was, as so often the case in modern days, only the charm of the dance that made it possible to forgive the disillusion of the song, for Madeleine's voice was thin and hard.

It was as a dancer and always as a dancer that Guimard excelled. It was as a dancer she won her chief successes in the ballets "La Chercheuse d'Esprit" (1778), "Ninette à la Cour" (1778), "Mirza" (1779), "La Rosière" (1784) and "Le Premier Navigateur" (1785), all of which, by the way, were by Maximilien Gardel. Of her work in these one historian has written: "Her dance was always noble, full of life, light, expressive and voluptuous; her acting naïve, gay, piquante, tender and pathetic." Connoisseurs reproached her at times for having grown a little "mannered," but she always preserved in her dance that finish, even preciosity, and those delicate *nuances* of style of which later times have proved the rarity.

It was as a dancer she had the good fortune to please the King who, always a generous patron of the arts—with the nation's money!—gave her for one dance she performed before him and the Queen, a

pension of six thousand livres a year, giving at the same time a pension of one thousand a year to the man who danced with her, Despréaux, who later became her husband. This pension came to her the year following her appearance in "Le Premier Navigateur," in 1786, apparently just at a time she was much in need of money. One may believe that Madeleine's impulsive generosity had helped to bring about that need, as well as her known extravagance. For one thing, apart from her being ready to assist less fortunate artists, she had been the prime mover in an act of wholesale renunciation.

The Prince of Soubise, in the manner of his King, a generous patron of the arts, had been allowing a handsome annual pension to a number of dancers at the Opera, as well as treating them all to periodical supper-parties of most sumptuous kind. Suddenly the supper-parties ceased, the Prince was no longer seen among the audiences at the Opera and it came to be known that his son-in-law, the Prince de Gueméné, had become bankrupt, disastrously so, and that the entire family were doing their best to meet the creditors honourably. When this was known all the dancers foregathered in Madeleine's *loge* at the Opera and a stately, kindly, tactful letter was drawn up and signed by all the *pensionnaires*, some thirty or more, headed by Guimard. The length of it precludes entire quotation in a chapter all too short to cover Madeleine's crowded seventy-three years, but after referring to their regret at the Prince's absence, to a delay in approaching him due to fear lest they be thought wanting in consideration, and to the urgent motive which had overcome such delicate scruples on hearing the news of the bankruptcy confirmed on all sides, the writers of the letter proceed that, finding there can be no prospect of the position

improving, they feel they would be guilty of ingratitude were they not to imitate the Prince's exemplary renunciations on behalf of his relative, and restore the pensions with which his generosity had provided them. "Apply," the letter continues, "these revenues, Monseigneur, to the relief of so many old soldiers, poor men of letters, and such unhappy retainers as the Prince de Gueméné draws with him in his downfall. As for us, other resources remain. We shall have lost nothing, Monseigneur, if we retain your esteem. We shall even have gained if in refusing to-day your kindly gifts we force our detractors to acknowledge that we were not unworthy of them. We are, with deep respect, Monseigneur, your Serene Highness's very humble servants, Guimard, Heinel, Peslin, Dorival, etc., etc." The letter is dated 6th December, 1782.

It was now that Guimard was paying periodical summer visits to London for the Opera seasons. Edmond de Goncourt in his monograph on the dancer gives two very interesting letters written by Guimard apropos to these London sojourns, one to Perregaux the Banker, dated 20th June, 1784, the other to M. de la Ferté, Director of the Académie, dated 26th May, (1786) and both addressed from No. 10, Pall Mall.

In the former she gives a spirited and amusing account of the way in which Gallini and Ravelli, then directing the Opera in London, had sought to take advantage of a fire at the old Opera House in order to break through the contract with Guimard by which she was to receive six hundred and fifty guineas for the season. The fire seemed at first likely to put a closure on the season, but Covent Garden was placed at the disposal of the Opera. Gallini,

making alleged losses the excuse, tried to persuade Madeleine to lower her terms for the rest of the season. Finding she would only agree to providing her own costumes—no light consideration—he pretended satisfaction and departed. Ravelli, however, followed and, evidently by arrangement, informed her that Gallini was several kinds of idiot, and that he had been deposed in favour of Ravelli who, as the new stage-manager, came to offer her fresh terms—twenty-five louis a performance, on behalf of Gallini.

Guimard smiled and expressed astonishment that Ravelli should make such propositions from Gallini since the latter was no longer in power, and added that she held them to her contract. When she turned up at rehearsal with a couple of witnesses and having consulted solicitors, Ravelli "looked green" and Gallini "stupefied." They offered fresh proposals and tried hard to wriggle out of their contract but Guimard won, of course, and the more so in that though her chief friends among the English aristocracy, notably the Duchess of Devonshire, were out of town, enough were left to make things uncomfortable for Gallini, who found his conduct the talk of the town.

The second letter, to M. la Ferté, is mainly good advice on the direction of the Opera and encouragement of rising talent, and for this giving of counsel she begs that he will excuse her since it is out of friendship for him and also on account of her desire, in her own words, "*ne pas voir détruire entièrement la belle danse, que j'ai vu exister à l'Opéra.*" In both letters she sends—in the inevitable postscript!—charming messages to the wives of her correspondents and mentions some little

commissions with which they had entrusted her.

That she did not have a bad time in London may be gathered from the fact that she excuses herself for not having written sooner because since she arrived in town she had not been left a minute to herself by "*les plus grandes dames*," and principally by the Duchess of Devonshire with whom she spent most of the time that she had away from the theatre; and of the London audiences generally she remarks: "*Ils m'aiment à la folie, ces bons Anglais!*" Not the first time a charming foreign dancer has been beloved of "*ces bons Anglais!*"

But with all the friendship of the great and the love of the populace and her six hundred and fifty guineas for the London season, Guimard's financial position was not what it had been. The Soubise pension had been relinquished; that she received from the King in view of twenty years' service at the Opera hardly sufficed her rather magnificent requirements, and the time came, in 1786, when she found it convenient to dispose of her mansion in the Chaussée d'Antin. This she did by arranging, without police sanction, a lottery, the tickets for which numbered two thousand five hundred, at a hundred and twenty livres each, a total sum of three hundred thousand livres. There was a fierce demand for the tickets, and twice the number could have been sold. The drawing took place in a salon of the Hôtel des Menus-Plaisirs, Rue Bergère, on the 1st of May, 1786, and Madeleine's mansion with all its furniture went to the Comtesse du Lau, who, by the way, had only taken one ticket!

It is worth noting now that Madeleine had reached the age of forty-three, that she had never been pretty and that she was marked with smallpox, with which

—a current danger at those times—she had been attacked in 1783. To a clever and magnetic personality age matters not, nor do looks mean everything since in any case they are bound to alter in the course of a few decades; and even smallpox is not fatal to fascination. But these things, nevertheless, have to be admitted when one comes to years of discretion, and forty-three may be accounted such. One wonders whether Madeleine, who was eminently a woman of sense, began about now to face facts and the future, and whether the doing so, or else mere circumstances, political and social, impelled her to the next step in her career.

People had wondered how Guimard had managed to keep exactly the same appearance for so many years. This was the secret! When she was twenty she had a portrait painted that was true to life and afterwards, for some twenty years or so, every morning she would study this and make herself up to resemble it exactly; and neither lover nor friend was ever admitted to this toilette.

This was an ingenious idea, but it could not last for ever. It is all the more interesting then to note the next important incident in Guimard's career. Ninon de l'Enclos, acting on the principle that it's never too late to have a lover, flirted when she was ninety. Guimard gave up lovers when she was past forty and took a husband, a man, moreover, whom she had known for years.

In 1789, Guimard retired from the Opera; in 1789 she married Jean Despréaux, dancer and poet; and in 1789 the gathering storms of Revolution broke and Paris, smitten first by famine, became for the next few years a hell, in which strangely enough, there was still a demand for entertainment lighter and less

fervid than massacre.

When Guimard and Despréaux—comrades for at least twenty-five years—married, they settled down, on a fairly comfortable income, derived from their pensions and acquired property, at Montmartre and one of Jean's poems gives a charming picture of their retreat in those troubled times. But during the Revolution, State finances were in disorder, and pensions were curtailed or discontinued and all the old favourites of the Opera were more or less involved in difficulties. In 1792, the city of Paris having confided the care of the Opera to Francoeur and Celerier, they nominated Despréaux director of the theatre and a member of the administrative committee, but this did not last. The following year Francoeur and Celerier were imprisoned, the actors were authorised to manage the theatre themselves and Despréaux—whose father, by the way, who had been leader of the orchestra at the Opera, killed himself the same year from despair at the general ruin around him—was allotted some part in the management of the public fêtes.

In 1796—the year of the establishment of the Directory—Madeleine made a reappearance at a benefit given on January 23rd for the veteran performers at the Opera who had all suffered grievous losses in the Revolution. In 1807, three years after the crowning of Napoleon, by which time the national ferment had begun to settle down a little and the languished arts to take hope again, an Imperial decree dated July 29th, reduced the number of theatres in Paris to eight, and the Académie Impériale de Musique—as it was now called—had for Director, Picard, the comic poet, and for "inspecteur"—Despréaux.

But these casual and precarious employments were not enough to remedy the losses that husband and wife sustained in the lean and fevered years from 1789, when they settled down in their high-perched nest overlooking all Paris in Montmartre until 1807, when Despréaux became again attached to the Opera, and that this employment too did not last we know from a letter which Madeleine wrote to a friend in 1814 imploring him to use his influence with people at Court to obtain from Louis XVIII some position for her husband, a letter in which she mentions the loss of their entire fortune owing to the Revolution and pleads that "*nos besoins sont bien urgents*."

There is then every probability that their needs really were urgent. Guimard had never been charged with thrift; and Despréaux was a poet. Both started married life with a fair capital—all things henceforth held in common of course, according to the law—but fortune was against them, and though they might perhaps have weathered the storm had they been twenty years younger, it was almost inevitable that, their pensions gone, their capital diminishing, they should find the struggle growing yearly harder and their chances of replenishing their coffers less and less. De Goncourt gives what one cannot but feel is a too idyllic picture of the last years of the old couple, mainly on the basis of Jean's poems (and *he* was ever an optimist!) but he also gives us one true, interesting, and poignant glimpse of Madeleine as an old lady who, with her toy theatre, would, for the amusement of friends who chanced to drop in, go through the scenes of former splendour and with her frail fingers perform the steps that had made her famous in many a ballet of the past.

Apparently Madeleine's appeal to friends at Court must have had some success for Despréaux. In the following year, 1815, he was appointed inspector-general of the Court entertainments, and professor "*de danse et de grâces*" at the Conservatoire. But it is probable that only the last three or four years of their married life brought them any return of fortune.



Madeleine Guimard
(*From the painting by Fragonard*).

Madeleine died on May 4th, 1816, and, for years out of sight of a public which had long had other and less gracious objects for thought, her death passed almost unnoticed by the populace for whose amusement she had worked so loyally in her prime. Four years later, on March 26th, 1820, Despréaux followed her who had been his adored comrade for the greater portion of their lives. He had seen her, as little more than a child, win her earliest triumphs at the Opera, had seen her growing splendour as a woman of fashion, watched her through many years,

danced with her, written for her and about her, seen her worst and best, and loved her well enough all through to wait till she would consent to marry him and with him retire from the stage they had so long adorned; and through the years, troublous for no fault of theirs, which followed their marriage, he cheered and consoled her for all she had relinquished, for the public worship all foregone, and for the neglect of the rising generation.

He it was who, though their means can hardly have permitted it, instituted the little *déjeuners* and supper-parties of kindred spirits, where songs were written and ballads sung in praise of love and wine and "la Gloire"—the one cry of the French Romanticists; all, one may well think, to cheer his beloved whose charm and goodness, poet himself, he never ceased to sing.

All this could not have been had not Guimard, with all her faults had more reserves of goodness than her earlier circumstances can have given opportunity for developing. Guimard had been grand; Guimard had been gay; but through it all Guimard must have been good in heart, full of sympathy and courage and generous charities of mind and soul; and Despréaux, gentle, wise, humorous, idealistic, honest, must have found her so, to speak and write of her as he always did, with ardour and a kind of boyish awe, even after she had passed away. No note of discord marred their married years, and when Guimard came to make her exit from the stage of life, silently, with nothing but ghostly memories of applause, her comrade, well we may be sure, waited only with impatience for his cue to follow her.

GUIMARD SPEAKS

(*Ætat.* 70)

"Yes, ye may laugh at Mère Guimard,
Laugh well, my girls, while laugh ye may!
But none of ye will fare as far
As I, who long have had my day.
Time was when Paris all did pray
Because I broke my arm! And yet
Who now recalls my queen-like sway
O'er those whom Death did not forget?

"Time on my visage many a scar
Hath graven deep. No longer gay
My voice, that once could make or mar
The Minister who failed to pay
Just tribute to my charms. Decay
My once slim, rounded limbs doth fret;
And scarce my feet could tread their way
O'er those whom Death did not forget.

"Yet ere I dance to where they are,
Take heed, my girls, the words I say!
I had a power none might bar,
A court that rivalled the array
Of aught Versailles could best display,
For at my Court Versailles was met!
And still I triumph, old and grey,
O'er those whom Death did not forget.

ENVOI

"'Squelette des Grâces' they called me!
Yea, and now? Sans-graces! A mere 'Squelette!'
But grace I *had*, and have, to-day
O'er those whom Death did not forget."

CHAPTER XXII

DESPRÉAUX, POET AND—HUSBAND OF GUIMARD

THERE can be nothing more irksome to a man than to be known merely as the husband of his more famous wife.

In speaking, however, of Despréaux as "husband of Guimard," it is not my intention to cast any slight on an estimable and, in his own time, well-known personality; but I do so merely that the reader will thereby be able to "place" her genial and accomplished husband, M. Despréaux to whom reference has already been made. He was born in 1748, five years after Mlle. Guimard, and was the son of a musician at the Paris Opera, where he himself was entered as a supernumerary-dancer in 1764. He made rapid progress in the art of his choice and won increasing reputation until, unhappily a wound in the foot completely closed his career as a "star," and being a man of much theatrical experience and general culture, he then became a *maître de ballet* and also gave dancing lessons. In 1789 he married Madeleine Guimard, whom he had long worshipped, and the two retired, as we know, at the opening of the Revolution to a cosy nest on the heights of Montmartre. So high, indeed, were they and so steep was the roadway approaching their dwelling, that the patrols refrained from troubling them, and save for financial losses, and rumours of revolution and distant guns, the couple remained untroubled by the red and raging Anarchy in the city stretched at their feet.

Edmond de Goncourt makes out—on what authority I cannot fathom—that Despréaux was born in 1758, and *not* 1748, thus making him out to be fifteen years the junior of Guimard when they married in 1789. As on other points he writes with such accuracy and copious wealth of detail one might suppose him to be correct, but seeing that Despréaux was undoubtedly entered a supernumerary-dancer in the Opera in 1764, and could hardly have been so at the age of six, one can only infer a slip of the pen, and that Goncourt really meant 1748, which would make the young male dancer's age the likelier one of sixteen on appearing at Opera as a super, although he would, of course, have been training earlier.

The question of age, however, is comparatively small. The thing that matters for us is that Despréaux, following modestly in the footsteps of his far greater predecessor Boileau-Despréaux (not an ancestor, by the way) had cultivated a taste for poetry, and during his retirement at Montmartre, divided his time between amusing his wife and friends with cutting silhouettes—at which he was an expert—and singing songs and parodies which he wrote himself.

It seems an odd thing, does it not? that a man should be thus amusing himself and his friends—should be sufficiently undistracted to do so—while the greatest revolution then known to history should be in progress. But what could he do? He was a dancer, a singer, an artist; and could have had little weight had he meddled in the risky game of politics. As it was, perhaps, he chose the saner course, and when most were losing their heads he kept his own, and, as Richard Cœur de Lion had when in prison,

wiled away the hours in song.

His poems were collected and published in two volumes under the title: "*Mes Passe-Temps: Chansons, suivies de l'Art de la Danse, poème en quatre chants, calqué sur l'Art Poétique de Boileau Despréaux.*" They were "adorned" with engravings after the design of Moreau Junior, and the music of the songs appears at the end of the second volume.

The work was published after the Revolution fever had subsided, in 1806, and perhaps the very strangest comment on the Revolution is implied in Despréaux's preface, which calmly opens with the following: "In 1794 I suggested to a number of friends that we should meet once or twice a month to dine together, under the condition that politics should never be mentioned, and that each should bring a song composed upon a given word. My proposition was taken up; we decided that the words should be drawn by lot, after being submitted to the judgment of the gathering, in order to eliminate subjects which might only present needless difficulties."

And so the year 1794, being one of the worst of all those red years of Revolution, this little centre went placidly through it, dining and wining and rhyming, as if there were nothing worse than a sham fight raging round the distant horizon. It positively makes one wonder if there *was* a French Revolution after all. But no, there evidently was, for our author had a nice little library, and in the following year, owing to monetary losses occasioned by the general *débâcle*, had to sell many of his beloved volumes. Of course he made song about it—"Ma Bibliothèque, ou Le Cauchemar"—in which he pictures the spectre of want asking him what he will do, and urging him to

sell his books for food. “Que feras-tu, Despréaux?” the nightmare questions:

“Ni bois ni vin dans ta cave
De chandelle pas un bout:
Faussement on fait le brave
Lorsque l’on manque de tout!

Une tartine de beurre
Vaut plus que jadis un bœuf
Dans un mois, à pareille heure
Quel sera le prix d’un œuf?
Par décade mille livres
Ne peuvent payer ton pain
Mon ami, *mange tes livres*
Pour ne pas mourir de faim.”

The spectre points out that the prospect of having to do so is no mere dream and urges him to sell “*tous tes auteurs fameux*,” pointing out that he could live on the “divine” Homer for at least a day or two, while on the “pensif” Rousseau he could exist a long time. He could count on his precious Virgil for the rent, while the translation “de Delille” should yield his old gardener’s wages. Among the many works mentioned in indiscriminate order are Plutarch, La Fontaine, Don Quichotte, Anacreon, Newton, Milton, Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, Boccaccio, Erasmus, Montesquieu, Boileau, Corneille, Voltaire, Racine, Favart, Molière, Plato, Dorat, Seneca, and a set of the British Drama!

It should be noted, by the way, that Despréaux had some knowledge of English and had paid occasional visits to London with his wife, who was rather a favourite of the then Duchess of Devonshire, and in one of his poems he gives an amusingly bitter “Tableau de Londres,” in which he complains of—

"Cette atmosphère de cendre
Qui ne cesse de descendre,"

speaks of the lower classes as "insolent" and chaffs the English taste for beer and the eternal "roast-biff" (*sic*); while as to the English Sunday, the stanza must really be given in full:

"Deux cents dimanches anglais,
N'en valent pas un français,
Ce jour, si joyeux en France,

Est le jour de pénitence;
Et lorsqu'un Anglais se pend
Se pend, se pend,
C'est un dimanche qu'il prend;
A Paris, le dimanche on danse.
Vive la France!"

Our poet's range of subject was remarkable—high philosophy, discussed with smiling raillery; curious life-contrasts, like that of his wife being a popular dancer and his sister a nun; charades, dialogues, charming and pathetic little word-pictures like "La Neige," a "Bacchic" song on "The End of the World," and so forth, nothing seemed to come amiss that could be turned into song. Throughout his varied work there runs a consistent strain of Gallic gaiety—itself a form of bravery; and if his Muse has not the hard, biting intensity of a Villon, nor the lofty rhetoric of a Victor Hugo, it manages to keep a middle course of sanity and pleasantry with invariable success and an infallible though limited appeal.

Among his many ingenious poems are two of special interest to stage-folk of all time, one "Le Langage des Mains," *Chanson Pantomime*, the other "Le Langage des Yeux"; both of which require to be illustrated by the actor who sings them and

emphasise the need of facial and manual expression. As he truly says:

"Le comédien ou l'orateur,
Sans mains, serait un corps sans âme."

In one of the poems appears the phrase, "La Walse (*sic*) aux mille tours," while among the notes at the end of the volume is a definition which may be translated as follows: Walse—a Swiss dance the music of which is in 3-4 time; but it has only the value of two steps. It is done by a couple pirouetting while circling round the salon. It has nothing in it of complexity; it is the art in its infancy. When its rhythm is in 2 time it is called "*sauteuse*." The word "*sauteuse*" suggests the ordinary polka in 2-4 time, in the customary manner, for any dance described as "sauteuse" means one in which the feet are raised from the ground, or in which leaping is indulged in, *not* when the feet glide on the ground, as in the modern waltz. The old *volta*, from which the modern waltz is derived, was, it will be remembered, a *leaping* dance.

The greater part of the second volume is mainly devoted to his lengthy paraphrase of the great Boileau's "L'Art Poétique," under the title of "L'Art de la Danse," which is full of sound instruction to dancers and interesting criticism of his contemporaries.

CHAPTER XXIII

A CENTURY'S CLOSE

We have lingered somewhat over these sketches of the eighteenth century; let us hasten over that century's close, for was it not steeped in blood?

"Revolution," did they not call the madness which seized France? Heralded by fair promises of universal brotherhood, what did all the fine talk of her "intellectuals" and "philosophs" end in? A state of anarchy, national madness; in which no man's life was safe, and no woman's honour.

War is horrible enough between nations. What, then, is universal war between individuals, "men, *brother* men?"

Strange, is it not, that while the dying century was performing its dance of death, theatres should be open; operas, comedies, and ballets be performed.

Before Guimard and her literary husband had begun to find their fortunes affected by the advent of the popular madness called Revolution, there were few theatres in Paris. Indeed, there were only five of any importance giving daily performances in 1775 and of these the Opera was of course the leading house as of old—the work of Gluck, Grétry, Piccinni and Sacchini holding the bill in Opera, for a period of some thirty years onward, the work of ballet composition being mainly in the hands of Noverre and the brothers Maximillian and Pierre Gardel.

It was from the end of that year, too, when Noverre's "Médée et Jason" was produced that the

novelty of ballet-pantomime, having come to replace the earlier opera-ballet, now became generally known simply as ballet.

In 1781 the Paris Opera was the scene of a tremendous conflagration, in which, owing to the presence of mind of Dauberval, one of the leading dancers, in quickly lowering the curtain, during a performance of the ballet, the audience were able to escape, but several of the dancers were burnt, and Guimard herself, discovered cowering in one of the boxes clad only in her underwear, was rescued by one of the stage hands. The famous house was ruined, and the company removed to a provisional house erected by the architect Lenoir by the Porte St. Martin.

Ten years later, in 1791, a Royal decree establishing the freedom of the drama did away with the former paucity of Paris in regard to places of amusement, and in that year alone eighteen new theatres were added to those already in existence, and old ones sometimes changed their names.

The Opera was known as *L'Académie Royale de Musique*. Then the King having displeased his people and fled to Varennes, it became simply the *Opera*. Then the King having pleased his subjects they graciously permitted a return to *L'Académie Royale*. Then, a month later, in October, 1791, it became the *Opera-National*; and later the *Théâtre des Arts*, all of which changes foreshadowed in a way the advent of blind Revolution; and the next change of title to *Théâtre de la République et des arts*; which yet was not its final title. Meanwhile, what of the dancers?

Guimard had left the stage in 1790. Two years later the leaders of the ballet were Mlle. Miller (later to become Madame Pierre de Gardel), Mlle. Saulnier,

Mlle. Roze, Madame Pérignon, Mlle. Chevigny.

Pierre Gardel, born in 1758 at Nancy, had been *maître de ballet* at the Opera from 1787, and had produced "Télémaque," "Psyché," and other ballets out of which he made a fortune. "Psyché" alone was given nearly a thousand times! In most of them Madame Gardel appeared and with remarkable success. At fifty, as at twenty, she was still admired. She was an excellent mime, a graceful dancer in all styles, seemed in each new *rôle* to surpass herself, and Noverre, describing her feet, said "they glittered like diamonds."

Then there were the brothers Malter, the one known as "the bird," the other as "the Devil," because he usually played the *rôles* of demons.

Madame Pérignon, who succeeded Madame Dauberval (*née* Mlle. Theodore), was a dancer of talent, but was considerably surpassed by Mlle. Chevigny of whom an eyewitness of her dancing remarked: "*Quelle verve! quelle gaîté dans le comique! dans les rôles sérieux, quelle chaleur! quel pathétique! Tout le feu d'une véritable actrice brillait dans ses beaux yeux.*"

Then there were Miles. Allard, Peslin, Coulon, Clotilde, Beaupré, Brancher, Chameroy; Gosselin, who was, despite *embonpoint*, so supple as to win the nickname "the Boneless"; Fanny Bias, and Bigottini; and M. Laborie, who in 1790 had "created" the title-*rôle* in "Zephyre;" Messieurs Lany, Dauberval; Deshayes, a marvel of soaring agility; Henry, whose mobile figure recalled "le grand Dupré"; Didelot, Duport; Auguste Vestris, with whom we have already dealt; and Lepicq, known as the Apollo of the Dance.

Throughout the Revolution the theatres had been

open, and had been full. The people had gone mad with lust of blood and lust of power; but the dancers continued to maintain their aplomb in difficult *poses*, and pick their steps, more carefully amid the lit and flowered splendours of the theatre, than statesmen could theirs upon the blood-stained slippery mire of current "politics."

France might hold its fantastic State ballet, the Fête of the Supreme, indeed might go stark mad, and all Law and Order and Reason be overthrown, but one man, the greatest world-man known to history, was gathering strength to bring order out of chaos, to remake a nation and a nation's laws; to set the world a-wondering if he should master it.

Strangest of all, perhaps, that he, the great Napoleon, should have found time to flirt with a ballet-dancer—the famous Bigottini, of whom the Countess Nesselrode in her letters said that the effect she produced with her dancing and miming was so moving as to make even the most hardened man weep.

But she seemed rather to have amused Napoleon, more especially when, having told the President of the Legislative Chamber, Fontanes, to send her a present, she received a collection of French classics; and on being asked later by Napoleon—unaware of the nature of the gift—if she was content with Fontanes' choice, she exclaimed that she was not entirely.

"How so?" asked Napoleon.

Bigottini's reply must be given in the original.

"Il m'a payée en *livres*; j'aurais mieux aimé en *francs*."

In spite of the library, Mlle. Bigottini became a millionaire—in francs.

BOOK III: THE MODERN ERA

CHAPTER XXIV

THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

THOUGH it had not died during the Revolutionary period, either in Paris or London, the art of Ballet, from the death of Louis XV was really of little artistic interest, and was to remain so until the famous 'Forties of last century.

The dancers were mostly mechanical; the ballets uninspired; the mounting meretricious; and it was not till the 'forties of last century that a new and all-surpassing *danseuse*, Marie Taglioni, came to infuse a new spirit into the art and found a tradition that holds to-day.

In London Ballet was in almost the same state as in Paris, but not quite, possibly because having been always imported at its best, it had had less opportunity of becoming hide-bound by tradition at its worst, as in the case of an old-established continental school. For the continued production of soundly artistic ballet the existence of a good school is a necessity, a school founded and sustained on right principles. But in its continued existence there is inevitably danger of ultimate stultification from the "setting" of the very tradition it has created, unless there is a perpetual infusion of new ideas.

In Paris the new idea was not then encouraged, if it came counter to the traditional technique of which the Vestris, father and son, were the supreme exponents.

In London there was more freedom, because there

was less of tradition; and while we had to wait until the mid-'forties for the productions which were to the Londoners of the early Victorian period what the Russian ballet has been to Londoners in recent years, there was some fairly sound work being done here from 1795 to 1840.

I have, among my books, a volume of libretti of ballets composed by Didelot and produced at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, from 1796 to 1800. It contains "Sappho and Phaon," *grand ballet érotique, en quatre actes*; "L'Amour Vengé," *ballet épisodique, en deux actes, dans le genre anacréontique*; "Flore et Zephire," *ballet-divertissement*, in one act; "The Happy Shipwreck, or The Scotch Witches," a dramatic ballet in three acts; "Acis and Galatea," a pastoral ballet in one act; and "Laura et Lenza, or The Troubadour," a grand ballet in two acts, "performed for the first time for the benefit of Madame Hilligsberg," who played Laura.

"Laura and Lenza," is of particular interest to us to-day, for among the performers, in addition to M. Didelot, who played the troubadour hero, Lenza, was a M. Deshayes—a capable dancer and producer of ballet in London and Paris—and a Mr. d'Egville, bearer of a name which is well-known in both cities at the present day.

"Flora et Zephire," was the most popular, and was frequently revived even as late as the 'thirties, when Marie Taglioni made her *début* in it at King's Theatre, for Laporte's benefit, on June 3rd, 1830.

Both in Paris and London, however, during the first two decades of the nineteenth century Ballet was comparatively undistinguished and it was not really until the 'thirties that it began to assume new interest. True, there were in Paris, some remarkable

exponents of advanced technique as regards dancing, but in the glamour of technical achievement the greater idea of the art of Ballet was somewhat obscured.

At the Paris Opera the *dieux de la danse* were MM. Albert Paul and Ferdinand, all of whom visited London from time to time and the second of whom was known as *l'aérien*, a descriptive nickname emphasised by the quaint criticism of a contemporary who wrote: "Paul used to spring and bound upwards, and was continually in the clouds; his foot scarcely touched the earth or rather the stage; he darted up from the ground and came down perpendicularly, after *travelling a quarter of an hour in the air*!"

M. Paul, by the way, later became a celebrated dancing-master at Brighton, in good Queen Victoria's early days.

Then, too, there was Paul's sister who became Madame Montessu, hardly less celebrated than her brilliant brother. Then, too, Mlle. Brocard, who so won Queen Victoria's girlish admiration that some of her dolls were dressed to represent the pretty dancer in character. Brocard, however, was more remarkable for her beauty than for her dancing.

Another famous artist of the period was M. Coulon, to whose careful tuition the graceful, and *élégante* Pauline Duvernay owed much of her success, as did also the sisters Noblet—Lise and Alexandrine, the latter of whom forsook the dance to become an actress.

Of Lise Noblet a contemporary chronicler wrote in 1821: "*Encore un phénix! Une danseuse qui ne fait jamais de faux pas, qui préfère le cercle d'amis à la*

foule des amants, qui vient au théâtre à pied, et qui retourne de même!" In 1828, she created, with immense success, the *rôle* of Fenella, in *La Muette de Portici*, and was described as "*le dernier produit de l'école française aux poses géométriques et aux écarts à angle droit*"; the same critic drawing an interesting comparison between the old school and the rising new one, in adding: "*Déjà, Marie Taglioni s'avancait sur la pointe du pied—blanche vapeur baignée de mousselines transparentes—poétique, nébuleuse, immatérielle comme ces fées dont parle Walter Scott, qui errent la nuit près des fontaines et portent en guise de ceinture un collier de perles de rosée!... Lise Noblet se résolut non sans combat—à prouver qu'il y a au monde quelque chose de plus agréable qu'une femme qui tourne sur l'ongle de l'orteil avec une jambe parallèle à l'horizon, dans l'attitude d'un compas farée. Elle céda, à Fanny Elssler, 'Fenella' de La Muette qu'elle avait créée, et lui prit en échange—'El Jales de Jérès.' 'Las Boleros de Cadiz' 'La Madrileña,' et toutes sortes d'autres cachuchas et fandangos. Grâce à ces concessions, Mdlle. Noblet resta jusqu'en 1840, attachée à l' Opéra.*"

These references to contrast of styles, to Scott, and to Spanish dances are particularly interesting as illuminating the change which was coming over the Ballet about 1820-1830. Mere technique as the chief aim of Ballet was beginning to fail. It had become too academic and needed the infusion of a new spirit of grace and freedom. It came in a sudden craze for national dances, particularly Slav and Spanish, and in the craze for Scott and all his works, which undoubtedly became an influence on Opera and Ballet, as they did on the forces which led to the growth of the great Romantic movement, of which Hugo was to be hailed as leader and of which the effects passing on through the Art and Literature of

the ’fifties, ’sixties, and ’seventies, can still perhaps be traced to-day.

Much of the popularity of the Spanish and Slav dances during the early part of the nineteenth century was due to their frequent performance by Pauline Duvernay, Pauline Leroux and the Elsslers. There were two Elsslers, sisters, the elder of whom, Thérèse, was born in 1808, and Fanny in 1810, both at Vienna.

Thérèse was less brilliant a dancer than her sister —whom she “mothered” always—but had a charming personality. She eventually gave up the stage to marry, morganatically, Prince Adalbert of Prussia, and was afterwards ennobled.



Fanny Elssler
(*From an old engraving*).



Carlotta Grisi
(*From a lithograph*).

At the outset of her career Fanny achieved distinction, or had it thrust upon her, by becoming an object of the “grande passion,” on the part of l’Aiglon, the Duc de Reichstadt, Napoleon’s ill-fated son. But it was said that the rumour was only put about by her astute manager, in order to get the young dancer talked about, and as an advertisement the manœuvre succeeded admirably.

Both sisters, after acquiring a favourable reputation in Germany, came to London, and it was here, in 1834, that Véron, the manager of the Paris Opera, came over to tempt them to appear in Paris with a salary of forty thousand francs, twenty thousand each. Thinking to impress the young Viennese with an example of Parisian magnificence, Véron gave a dinner-party in their honour at the Clarendon, in Bond Street, to which the best available society was invited, and the menu, the wine and the equipage were of unparalleled quality.

At dessert an attendant brought a silver salver piled high with costly presents for the ladies of the company—pearls, rubies, diamonds, superbly set—a miniature Golconda. But somehow it all fell a trifle flat. The Elssler girls, true to their simple German training, drank only water with their dinner, and with dessert merely accepted, the one a hatpin, and the other a little handbag; and they would not agree to sign their contract until the day of Véron's departure!

Both in Paris and London the sisters were triumphantly successful, and when in 1841 they toured through America they met with a reception that was sensational. It was "roses, roses all the way"; and in some of the towns triumphal arches were erected. At Philadelphia their horses were unharnessed and their carriage drawn by the admiring populace, headed by the Mayor!

Fanny was an especial favourite, and when the sisters left New Orleans, some niggers, who were hoisting freight from the hold of an adjacent steamboat—and niggers are notoriously apt at catching up topical subjects—thus chanted, as the vessel bearing the dancers left the wharf:

"Fanny, is you going up de ribber?
Grog time o' day.
When all dese here's got Elssler fever?
Oh, hoist away!
De Lor' knows what we'll do widout you,
Grog time o' day.
De toe an' heel won't dance widout you.
Oh, hoist away!
Day say you dances like a fedder,
Grog time o' day.
Wid t'ree t'ousand dollars all togedder.
Oh, hoist away!"

Fanny Elssler was at her best in the ballet of “Le Diable Boiteux,” the plot of which is founded on Le Sage’s famous romance. An enthusiastic contemporary described her in the following quaint terms: “*La* Fanny is tall, beautifully formed, with limbs that strongly resemble the hunting Diana, combining strength with the most delicate and graceful style. Her small and classically shaped head is placed on her shoulders in a singularly elegant manner; the pure fairness of her skin requires no artificial whiteness; while her eyes beam with a species of playful malice, well-suited to the half-ironical expression at times visible in the corners of her finely curved lips. Her rich, glossy hair, of bright chestnut hue, is usually braided over a forehead formed to wear, with equal grace and dignity, the diadem of a queen, or the floral wreath of a nymph; and though strictly feminine in her appearance, none can so well or so advantageously assume the costume of the opposite sex.”

As a dancer she excelled in all spirited dances, such as the *Fandango*, and the *Mazurka*, while in the *Cachucha* and the *Cracovienne*, she stirred her audience to a frenzy of admiration. Thérèse Elssler retired from the stage in 1850. Fanny, a year later, married a rich banker, withdrew, and died in 1884.

CHAPTER XXV

CARLO BLASIS

THE Dance and Ballet had made progress during the past two centuries and had reached the point when, unable to attain to greater perfection of technique, it needed some fresh artistic inspiration. Italy, however, had long been degenerate as regards the Dance, her whole artistic ambition having expressed itself in Opera and an unrivalled excellence in vocal technique. So that towards the end of the eighteenth century and for half the nineteenth, her singers were unmatched throughout the world.

The introduction of French dancers and the production of some of the ballets of French composers turned the attention of the lovers of *bel Canto* to the possibilities of the sister art. Noverre had produced some of his ballets at Milan, and his methods and artistic taste gradually spread through Italy, his influence being further extended by several of his Italian pupils, such as Rossi and Angiolini.

It was not, however, until Carlo Blasis came to preside over the Imperial Academy of Dancing and Pantomime at Milan, 1837, that the Italian ballet began to assume any importance, and the Milan Academy, becoming recognised as the first in Europe, came in turn to influence Paris, London and other capitals of the world. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that probably every opera house which has been established a century owes something directly or indirectly to the genius of Carlo Blasis, who in his enthusiasm for, and appreciation of, the

Dance and Ballet, and in his ability to write thereon was another Noverre, but with an even wider range of talent and scholarship.

In the history of art there can be few records of such amazing power of assimilation, combined with a high standard of achievement. We have but to glance at a list of his works, to realise this. While the theory and practice of dancing were his leading theme, one to which he returned again and again, few things failed to stimulate his interest and his pen.

"*Observations sur le Chant et sur l'Expression de la Musique Dramatique*" were a series of essays contributed to a London paper. He wrote considerably on the art of Pantomime. He contributed biographies of Garrick and of Fuseli to a Milan periodical; and another of Pergolesi to a German paper. A dissertation on "Italian Dramatic Music in France," was another of his subjects. He left in manuscript works on François Premier; on Lucan and his poem of Pharsalia; on Alexander the Great; on the Influence of the Italian Genius upon the World; on the then Modern Greek Dances; on "*La Grande Epoque de Louis XV en France, en Italie, et en Angleterre*"; a "Lexicon of Universal Erudition"; while perhaps the greatest of his works—according to contemporary criticism—was "*L'Uomo Fisico, Intellettuale e Morale*," a book of some thousand pages.

His education had been of a kind that should incline him to take, as Bacon did, "all knowledge," for his province. Madrolle, the famous French publicist of his period, described Blasis as "a man of the most comprehensive mind that he had ever known," and further declared him "a universal

genius." Indeed, though he achieved fame as a *maître de ballet*, he seems really to have been a sort of super-maître of all the arts.

He was born at Naples on November 4th, 1803, the son of Francesco Blasis and Vincenza Coluzzi Zurla Blasis, both, it is said, of noble descent. The family claimed an ancestry reaching back beyond the reigns of Tiberius and Augustus, when there were patricians known as the Blasii. Machiavelli mentions the same family, and various monuments in Italy and Sicily bear the name of De Blasis.

When Carlo was two years old, his father, who had forsaken the ancestral profession of the sea for literature and music, took his family from Naples to Marseilles, where the *De* was dropped, for political reasons, and the name became simply Blasis. Having studied the tastes and tendencies of his children somewhat carefully Francesco determined to give his son Carlo a thorough grounding in the classics and the fine arts. His daughter Teresa was taught singing and the pianoforte; and his younger daughter Virginia, who was born at Marseilles, was destined to Opera. It must be set to the credit of the fond father's discernment and influence that each of his children achieved distinction in their own sphere and day.

The education of Carlo, we are told in a contemporary biography, "was at once literary and artistic and theatrical." He showed such enthusiasm and ability in his studies that it was said that he might easily have become a painter, a composer of music, or a dancer and ballet-master. He finally chose the last as his profession owing to the fact that it offered more lucrative prospects as well as combining all the varied opportunities for artistic expression which his young soul craved. In other

directions, however, his general education was not neglected, and the subjects he studied all came to be employed in the profession he had chosen, rendering him valuable assistance in dancing, pantomime and the composition of ballets. In later life when asked how he came to get through such masses of work as he did he used to declare: "*Le temps ne manque jamais à qui sait l'employer*," and to add Tissot's saying: "*Dormons, dormons, très peu; vivons toute notre vie, et pendant trois semaines que nous avons à vivre, ne dormons pas, ne soyons pas morts, pendant quinze jours.*" Indeed, he *lived* every minute of his incessantly active life, and in his later years seldom worked less than fifteen hours a day.

As a lad he studied music, in all its branches, with his father. Drawing, painting, modelling, architecture, geometry, mathematics, anatomy, literature and dancing he studied with some of the best available masters of his period, at Marseilles, Rome, Florence, Bordeaux, Bologna and Pavia; and when he came to practise his profession as ballet-master and composer, he was able not only to evolve the plot of the ballet, and explain every situation, teach every step and gesture and expression, but to furnish designs for the costumes, scenery, and mechanical effects.

He was avid of learning, and absorbed something of value from all with whom he came in contact. He haunted the artists' studios and made a special point of visiting all he could in any town in which he happened to stay, Thorwaldsen, Longhi and Canova being among the more prominent of the sculptors and artists whom he came to know. He became a connoisseur and collector of paintings, sculpture carvings, cameos, jewellery, old instruments; had a

remarkable library, not only of books in Greek, Latin, Italian, French, English, German and Spanish, but an interesting collection of music, from Palestrina to his own time, his library and gallery being valued at somewhere about ten thousand pounds.

He started his professional career and travels at the age of twelve, when he appeared as a dancer in the leading theatre at Marseilles, then at Aix, Avignon, Lyons, Toulouse; finally settling with his family for some time at Bordeaux, where he had a very successful *début* and where—under the able direction of Dauberval, of whom we have already heard—most of the best dancers in France appeared preparatory to an engagement in Paris.

Blasis then received an invitation to the capital, where his *début* was so extraordinarily successful that he was promptly placed in the front rank, and for a time studied under the famous Gardel, who thought so highly of him that he selected for him as partner in several ballets, Mlle. Gosselin, one of the leading dancers at the Opera, followed by Mlle. Legallois, a dancer of the classic school.

On account of intrigues and cabals—which are not, alas, unusual in the theatrical profession, or in any other perhaps—Blasis left the Opera and was next engaged at Milan, first going on a successful tour, during which he composed various ballets, notably "Iphigénie en Aulide," "La Vestale," "Fernando Cortez," "Castor and Pollux," "Don Juan" and "Les Mystères d'Isis."

His appearance at La Scala, Milan, was triumphant, and he remained there for fourteen seasons, as dancer and ballet-composer. Then followed a successful Italian tour. Painters, sculptors and engravers as well as various poets celebrated his

progress, and one Venetian painter, having seen him dancing some *pas de deux* with his famous partner Virginia Leon, in which they entwined and enveloped themselves in rose-coloured veils—presumably very much as Mordkin and Pavlova did in the "L'Automne Bacchanale," made sketches of the various graceful groupings and afterwards introduced them into the decorations of an apartment in the house of a rich Venetian nobleman.

There can be no doubt that the appeal of Blasis' work to artists was greatly due not merely to his technical excellence as a dancer but to the fact that—steeped as he was in the study of music, sculpture and painting—his work was a living expression of a classic art-spirit. Again and again in his writings he emphasises the necessity the young dancer is under of studying not only music, but drawing, painting and sculpture. In one interesting passage, especially, he remarks: "It is in the best productions of painting and sculpture that the dancer may study with profit how to display his figure with taste and elegance. They are a fountain of beauties, to which all those should repair who wish to distinguish themselves for the correctness and purity of their performances. In the Bacchanalian groups which I have composed, I have successfully introduced various attitudes, arabesques and groupings, the original idea of which was suggested to me, during my journey to Naples and through *Magna Grecia*, on viewing the paintings, bronzes and sculptures rescued from the ruins of Herculaneum."

The publication at Milan, of his first work, in French, *A Theoretical, Practical and Elementary Treatise on the Art of Dancing*, brought Blasis into prominent notice throughout the Continent and in

London, owing to press notices and demands for translations of a work that was unrivalled of its kind and is valuable to-day.

In 1826 Blasis came to London, where, at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, he was triumphantly received as dancer, actor and ballet-composer. He remained here for some time, and in 1829-1830 published his still more important work, in English, namely, *The Code of Terpsichore* in which the whole subject of dancing is dealt with exhaustively. The book was "embellished" with numerous line-engravings, accompanied by music, composed by his sisters, Virginia and Teresa Blasis, and was dedicated to Virginia, then Prima Donna of the Italian Opera at Paris. The work was an instant success and did much to further the aim which Blasis had in all his writings, namely, the raising of the art of the Dance and Ballet nearer to a level with the other imitative arts.



Carlo Blasis
(*From a lithograph*).

The *maître* now divided his time between England and Italy, sometimes appearing as a dancer, sometimes producing ballets of his own composition; or yet again as journalist and author, contributing articles to leading reviews, or seeing some fresh volume through the press, always occupied in propagating his school and principles, demonstrating his method, and putting into practice wherever he went every new improvement or suggestion which could advance the cause he had at heart; always encouraging and inspiring all those of his profession with whom he came in touch, with a newer and higher idea of the possibilities of theatrical dance and ballet. It was now said, indeed, that "all who followed the same profession became either his disciples or imitators."

His triumphs as a dancer, however, were unhappily cut short during an engagement at the San Carlo, Naples, by an accident which occurred during rehearsal, some unaccountable injury to the left leg, for which every remedy was tried without avail. Though he was not unable henceforth to perform the simpler and more natural movements he found himself handicapped by a certain stiffness that made anything like a *cabriole* or *entrechat* impossible, and wisely decided to retire rather than diminish the fame he had already acquired as a dancer. Hereafter it was as a composer of ballets and as a widely informed writer on the arts that he elected to occupy himself, and in Italy, France and England—notably at Drury Lane—his productions both on the stage and in the Press, won him increasing recognition and respect.

In 1837 Blasis was appointed by the Italian Government Director of the Imperial Academy of

Dancing and Pantomime at Milan, where the reforms he introduced and the new artistic ideal he created shortly raised it to the position of the leading Academy of the world.

By the end of the eighteenth century dancing and ballet at the Paris Opera, had grown, as we have seen, a stiff, formal, dull affair. Carlo Blasis' rule at the Milan Academy, which put new life into the art, had a tremendous influence throughout the Continent, so much so indeed that Russia, Austria, France, and even England *all* to-day owe something to the traditions of style and efficiency his genius laid down at that time.

The system of training he instituted then is still much the same in present-day opera-houses, from which most of the famous dancers are drawn. Pupils entered the Milan Academy at an early age. No one was admitted before the age of eight years, nor after twelve, if a girl, or fourteen, if a boy. They were to be medically examined, and be proved to have a robust constitution and to be in good health. They had to be children of respectable parents; and, when admitted, were to remain in the school, devoted to its service and to the service of the theatre for eight years. For the first three years they were to be considered as apprentices and receive no salary; those who were qualified for performance in the theatre came to receive progressive salaries. Their daily practice in the school was for three hours in the morning, from nine to twelve, at dancing; after which they were to be exercised in the art of pantomime for one hour.

To-day the training is just as severe and much the same. For the Russian ballet pupils enter the Academy at Petrograd at the age of nine and remain

till eighteen. Madame Karsavina, one of the most finished dancers in the world, has told us how, even now, she continues to practise a couple of hours or more every day.

A well-known Italian *maître de ballet* at a famous West End theatre once told me that he always practised dancing from two to three hours a day, and "pantomime" or "mime," as it is usually called, from one to two hours. Mlle. Génée, too, has stated that she practises from two to three hours daily. Such practice is necessary, not merely to a pupil, but to a finished and successful dancer to keep the limbs absolutely supple and enable the artist to give that impression of consummate ease in performing the most difficult steps, which is the true test of the really great dancer; while the study of "miming" is equally necessary, since it is the art which gives life and expression to the dance.

Before a dancer has achieved the distinction of becoming a "star," it may be safely reckoned that she has had from eight to ten years daily drudgery, and that her earlier years have been without financial reward, and may even have involved her parents or relatives in considerable expense for her training or apprenticeship. Given the physique, the instinct for dancing, and the intelligence, what then must the prospective "star" expect before she can become a *première danseuse*, or even a "seconde"?

Go into any large school where "toe-dancing" is taught and what will you see? A large, barely furnished room, on one or two, or perhaps on all sides of which is fixed a bar or pole, some four feet from the ground. Here, having already been thoroughly grounded in the "five positions," which every dancer learns, the pupils, perhaps a dozen or

more in number, ranging from eight upwards, will be found at "side practice," as it is called, going through the various "positions" and steps, while one hand rests on the bar. Here she goes through the fatiguing and endless training known as practice "on the bar," learning "*battements*," which consist in moving one leg in the air, now forward, now back, while the other, on tip-toe, supports the body; learning the even more difficult *ronds de jambes*, or circles made by one leg while resting on the other; learning all the while to get the legs free and supple, to keep the shoulders down and the elbows loose, before proceeding to the more complex steps and poses.

After incessant drilling at the bar comes the "centre practice," in which many of the same positions and steps are repeated with new and more difficult ones, away from the bar; until little by little after months, indeed, it may be years, of incessant practice, the young dancer becomes qualified to take a place in the minor ranks of the ballet where, in watching the more finished work of the *première danseuse*, she is further inspired to yet more arduous practice in the school or at home, in the hope of achieving a perfection that shall bring her similar rewards—a princely income, unlimited bouquets, and the clamorous applause of an adoring audience.

All this is severe enough training; but the dancer's training always has been severe. The hard thing, from the ballet composer's point of view is—that the individuality and artistic spirit of the dancer is, only too often, crushed by the training or at least subordinated to an exaltation of mere technique. Technique is a necessity, of course. But it was in the power of such men as Noverre and Blasis to inspire in their disciples something more than an emulation

for technical efficiency, and to give them an artistic ideal which made the drudgery of their training seem worth while as a means of attaining to greater ease of artistic expression. Blasis' influence undoubtedly ran like a quickening spirit through the capitals of Europe and led the way to that great revival of romantic ballet which marked the era of the 'forties and found its fullest and most poetic expression in the idealism of Taglioni.

CHAPTER XXVI

MARIE TAGLIONI ("SYLPHIDE")

THE great theatrical sensation of the mid-'forties was the famous *Pas de Quatre*, composed of Lucile Grahn, Fanny Cerito, Carlotta Grisi, and Marie Taglioni, the last-named making a welcome return to the stage after an absence of some years. This was in 1845. Taglioni's reappearance and a dispute between the dancers as to the order of their *entrée* gave the event a handsome advertisement.

In the end the difficulty was settled by Lumley, the manager of the Opera, deciding that, as Mlle. Taglioni herself was indifferent as to when she made her entrance, they should appear according to age, the youngest first; and in consequence Lucile Grahn led the quartette, a crescendo of applause finishing in a terrific climax as Taglioni, greatest of them all, appeared, and, as one witness declared, "the whole house went clean mad."

Marie Taglioni, greatest of the four, was the first to give the impulse towards the creation of that new school which the others represented. The technique of all four was virtually the same, that which had always been traditional. In the foundations of their art all were of the old school. All had been thoroughly drilled in the eternal "five positions." But in the spirit of this art all were as new for their period, and by contrast with the eighteenth-century school, as Camargo had been when she first quickened that school by the introduction of a fresher inspiration and new miracles of execution;

and as Sallé had been when she had striven to replace the convention of pannier and cuirasse for classic hero and heroine, with a costume nearer to Hellenic truth and beauty. And of the four who made theatrical dancing in the 'forties of last century what it was, Taglioni was the pioneer.

She was one of a family of Taglionis. There was Louise, who had won distinction at the Opera under the Empire, and who had a sister so beautiful that when she left the stage to marry an Italian gentleman and settle down at Venice, it came to be a proverb, "To see Venice and the beautiful Contarini." Marie was the niece of these two.

Born at Stockholm in 1804, she was the daughter of Philip Taglioni (1777-1871), a ballet-master from Milan, and a Swedish mother, *née* Anna Karsten, whose grandfather had been a famous actor and singer at the Swedish Court. In these two strains probably we have one of the secrets of Marie Taglioni's art, for, while from the Italian side she would have inherited that passion for technique which is innate in the Latin races, from the maternal she would have received the impulse towards a poetic and dreamy idealism which is characteristic of the North.

Add to this the fact that her father was not only a really accomplished teacher of dancing but was steeped in the romantic legends and poetry of Scandinavia, and we are better able to understand how it was the stiff formalism and poetic conventionalities of Ballet in the pre-Taglioni period had to succumb to the new breath of inspiration which was to set all London and Paris raving of its beauty in the 'forties, and fire even so temperate and cynical an observer as Thackeray to enthusiastic

expressions of admiration of Marie Taglioni in "Sylphide."

As a child she was unprepossessing to look at and had physical defects. It is said that when the famous dancing master, Coulon, was consulted as to the teaching of the child, he exclaimed: "What *can* I do with that little hunch-back?"

Nevertheless, her father intended that she should become a dancer, and, taking her in hand himself, a dancer she became; with the result that—to adapt the expression of an ingenious French critic—between them they ultimately *taglionised* the Ballet.

Marie made her first appearance at Vienna in 1822, in a ballet bearing the lengthy title, "Réception d'une jeune nymphe à la cour de Terpsichore." Her father had arranged a *pas* for her *début*, but in her confusion, it is said, she forgot it, and substituted another of her own invention, which proved a triumphant success.

From Vienna she went to Stuttgart, where the Queen of Würtemberg became so attached to her that she treated her like a sister, and was seen to shed tears on the occasion of Taglioni's last appearance at the Stuttgart Opera House. She next proceeded to Munich, where she was equally well received by the royal family, finally making her *début* at Paris on July 23rd, 1827, in a ballet called "Le Sicilien."

Her appearance was an immediate success, and was followed by fresh triumphs in "La Vestale," "Fernando Cortez," "Les Bayadères" and "Le Carnaval de Venise," this first engagement terminating on August 10th. One critic of her time writes enthusiastically of the effect she created with:

"*sa grâce naïve, ses poses décentes et voluptueuses, son extrême légèreté, la nouveauté de sa danse, dont les effets semblaient appartenir aux inspirations de la nature au lieu d'être les résultats des combinaisons de l'art et du travail de l'école, produisirent une sensation très vive sur le public. Le talent d'une virtuose qui s'éloigne de la route battue par ses devanciers, trouve des opposants que la continuité des succès ne désarme pas toujours: il n'y eut qu'une voix sur Mlle. Taglioni: tout le monde fut enchanté, ravi.*"

The Ballet had grown formalised, stale. Taglioni came as spirit from another sphere to infuse new vitality and idealism into its wearied splendour, and she provided jaded opera lovers with a new thrill. After her Parisian *début*, she was re-engaged for the following year and returned in the April of 1828 to win further admiration in "Les Bayadères," and "Lydie" and "Psyché"; then, the year after, in "La Belle au Bois dormant," a fifteen years' engagement being finally offered to her at the Opera, with intervals of absence sufficient to enable her to pay visits to Germany, Russia, Italy and England, when, in every country, she achieved fresh triumphs.

Her London *début* at the benefit of Laporte, manager at Her Majesty's Theatre, took place on June 3rd, 1830, in Didelot's ballet of "Flore et Zephire."

A contemporary account of her dancing says: "Taglioni unquestionably combines the finest requisites for eminence in her art. The union she displays of muscular ability with the most feminine delicacy of frame and figure is truly extraordinary. A charming simplicity, the principal characteristic of her demeanour on the stage—an utter absence of that false consequence and *bombast* of carriage and

manner which have so peculiarly marked too many artistes of our time; and a native grace and matchless precision in her movements, even those in which the most astonishing difficulties are conquered, and which yet appear to demand of *her* no effort, leave us delighted with the *fairyism* of the lovely being before us ... and enchant us into forgetfulness of the unwearied perseverance and application by which, in aid of the lavish gifts of Nature, such unrivalled excellence has been attained."

Every contemporary account of Taglioni insists always on that one note, the *idealism* of her art. The late Mme. Katti-Lanner, who saw her dance, told me once that she appeared like some fairy being always about to soar away from the earth to which she seemed so little to belong.

Was it not Victor Hugo who inscribed a volume which he sent to her: "*à vos pieds—à vos ailes*"?

It was but natural then that she should be the ideal exponent of the title-*rôle* in that graceful Ballet "Sylphide," which was produced at Paris on March 14th, 1832.

The importance of the new influence brought to bear on the art of Ballet by the advent of Taglioni and the contrast between the older and the newer schools was well defined by Théophile Gautier who, writing of "Sylphide" said: "*Ce ballet commença pour la chorégraphie une ère toute nouvelle et ce fut par lui que le romantisme s'introduisit dans le domaine de Terpsichore. A dater de la 'Sylphide,' les 'Filets de Vulcain,' 'Flore et Zephire' ne furent plus possibles: l'Opéra fut livré aux gnomes, aux ondins, aux salamandres, aux elfes, aux nixes, aux willis, aux péris et à tout ce peuple étrange et mystérieux qui se prête si merveilleusement aux fantaisies du maître de ballet. Les*

douze maisons de marbre et d'or des Olympies furent reléguées dans la poussière des magasins, et l'on ne commanda plus aux décorateurs que des forêts romantiques, que des vallées éclairées par le joli clair de lune allemand des ballades de Henri Heine...."

The poet Méry remarked of the new dancer: "*Avec Mlle. Taglioni la danse s'est élevée à la sainteté d'un art.*" That is just what she achieved. Dancing, which had become a mechanical display of technical *tours de force*, was restored to the dignity—or sanctity—of an art.

But her influence extended further. She enlarged the perspective of the stage effects. The stiff formalism of "classic" scenes, of neat temples and trim vistas gave place to mysterious lakes and umbrageous forests, vast spaces that stirred the imagination and prepared the mind for the *entrée* of visionary dancers.

The story of "Sylphide" is of the love of a sylph for a handsome young Highland peasant, who is haunted by visions of her in his dreams and memories of the vision on awaking, so much so that the heart of his own betrothed is broken and his brain is turned by the manifestation of his aerial love, who herself becomes the victim of an unhappier fate by a terrible spell cast on her by infernal powers and woven during a witches' sabbath, which forms one of the more impressive scenes of the ballet. The plot was adapted from Charles Nodier's story, *Trilby*, by Adolphe Nourrit, and the music by Schneitzhöffer was pronounced "excellent" by Castil-Blaze, who remarked that it was an "*Œuvre infiniment remarquable dans un genre qui peut devenir important lorsqu'un homme de talent et d'esprit veut bien l'adopter.*" He also reports of the first production of

"Sylphide" in Paris, that it had a *succès merveilleux*.

Elsewhere Taglioni's success was no less remarkable. Indeed, wheresoever she went she achieved a triumph. At Petrograd such tempting offers were made by the Emperor and Empress that she prolonged her stay for three years, and left laden with gifts from their Imperial Majesties. At Vienna, on one occasion, having been called before the curtain twenty-two times, when she finally got away from the Opera House her carriage was drawn to her hotel by forty young men of the leading Austrian families. In London she was worshipped by the public, and was one of the special admirations of the youthful Queen Victoria, some of whose dolls (as in the case of Brocard, Pauline Leroux, and other dancers) were dressed to represent the characters Taglioni played, and may be seen to-day in the London Museum.



Marie Taglioni
(*From a lithograph dated 1833*).



The Pas de Quatre of 1845
(*Lucille Grahn, Fanny Cerito, Carlotta Grisi, and in the centre Marie Taglioni*).

Taglioni was married to Gilbert, Comte de Voisins, in 1835, but the marriage was not a happy one and was dissolved in 1844. She retired for a little time, but returned to the stage again and appeared in London, with triumphant success, in 1845.

The climax of a great season came in July of that year, when, at the request of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, the *Pas de Quatre*, to which reference has already been made, was arranged for the four great dancers, Taglioni, Cerito, Carlotta Grisi and Lucile Grahn. One critic remarked that the appearance of four such stars on the same boards and in the same *pas* was "truly what our Gallic neighbours call *une solennité théâtrale*, and such a one as none of those who beheld it are likely to witness again."

It was, he declared rightly, "an event unparalleled in theatrical annals, and one which, some two score

years hence, may be handed down to a new generation by garrulous septuagenarians as one of the most brilliant reminiscences of days gone by."

Without being a septuagenarian, or being in a position to remember an event about which to grow garrulous, all who have studied theatrical history at all can freely endorse the remark. Probably never in any theatre was seen such excitement as there was on this occasion. Contemporary testimony, when authoritative, is always valuable in such cases, and as there is no better account of the famous "Pas de Quatre" than that given by the *Illustrated London News* of that day, July 19th, 1845, it may be quoted at length with advantage.

Speaking of the curiosity which so unusual an event must necessarily excite, and which led him to "hurry" to the theatre, the writer declared that:

"curiosity and every other feeling was merged in admiration when the four great dancers commenced the series of picturesque groupings with which this performance opens. We can safely say we have never witnessed a scene more perfect in all its details. The greatest of painters, in his loftiest flights, could hardly have conceived, and certainly never executed, a group more faultless and more replete with grace and poetry than that formed by these four *danseuses*: Taglioni in the midst, her head thrown backwards, apparently reclining in the arms of her sister nymphs. Could such a combination have taken place in the ancient palmy days of art, the pencil of the painter and the song of the poet would alike have been employed to perpetuate its remembrance. No description can render the exquisite, and almost ethereal grace of movement

and attitude of these great dancers, and those who have witnessed the scene, may boast of having once, at least, seen the perfection of the art of dancing so little understood. There was no affectation, no apparent exertion or struggle for effect on the part of these gifted artistes; and though they displayed their utmost resources, there was a simplicity and ease, the absence of which would have completely broken the spell they threw around the scene. Of the details of this performance it is difficult to speak. In the *solo* steps executed by each *danseuse*, each in turn seemed to claim pre-eminence. Where every one in her own style is perfect, peculiar individual taste alone may balance in favour of one or the other, but the award of public applause must be equally bestowed; and, for our own part, we confess that our *penchant* for the peculiar style, and our admiration for the dignity, the repose, and exquisite grace which characterise Taglioni, and the dancer who has so brilliantly followed the same track (Lucile Grahn), did not prevent our warmly appreciating the charming archness and twinkling steps of Carlotta Grisi, or the wonderful flying leaps and revolving bounds of Cerito. Though, as we have said, each displayed her utmost powers, the emulation of the fair dancers was, if we may trust appearances, unaccompanied by envy.

"Every time a shower of bouquets descended, on the conclusion of a *solo pas* of one or other of the fair *ballerines*, her sister dancers came forward to assist her in collecting them; and both on Saturday and Tuesday did Cerito offer to crown Taglioni with a wreath which had been thrown in homage to the queen of the dance. We were also glad to see on the part of the audience far less of partisanship than had been displayed two or three years since, on the

performance of a *pas de deux* between Elssler and Cerito. The applause was universal, and equally distributed. This, however, did not take from the excitement of the scene. The house, crowded to the roof, presented a concourse of the most eager faces, never diverted for a moment from the performance; and the extraordinary tumult of enthusiastic applause, joined to the delightful effect of the spectacle presented, imparted to the whole scene an interest and excitement that can hardly be imagined."

Yet another triumph for Ballet was scored in the following season, July, 1846, when Taglioni's appearance in "La Gitana" having been hailed with quite extraordinary enthusiasm, there came a piece of managerial enterprise equalling that of the famous *Pas de Quatre*.

A new ballet by Perrot, "Les Tribulations d'un Maître de Ballet," was arranged for production and during the performance a *pas* was to have been introduced, combining the matchless three—Grahn, Cerito and Taglioni, supported also by the niece of the last named, Louise Taglioni; and St. Leon, husband of Cerito; and Perrot, husband of Carlotta Grisi.

This *pas* for the leading dancers was intended to form part of a *divertissement* entitled "Le Jugement de Pâris," which the aforesaid *maître de ballet* was supposed to be arranging and to be having "tribulations" about. But on putting the *divertissement* into rehearsal the idea was found to be so attractive and to assume such importance as to overshadow the rest of the production and the "Jugement de Pâris" was therefore detached and staged as a separate

ballet in itself with the happiest result.

The *pas* so isolated was of course the famous *Pas des Déesses*, the goddesses naturally being the fair rivals Juno, Minerva and Venus, impersonated by the three great *ballerines*, who contended for the apple thrown by the Goddess of Discord, and awarded by Paris to the most beautiful of the three.

Needless to say, with such dancers, the production found favour with audiences and critics, one of whom wrote:

> "The idea of this *pas* is an excellent one; for it is an important qualification in choregraphic compositions, that the dancing should appear to be a necessary result of the action—that an intelligible idea should be conveyed by it, and a story kept up throughout. Without this, dancing, however beautiful in itself, loses half its charm to those who look for something more in it than mere power and grace of motion. Here there is a purpose in the varied attitudes and graceful evolutions of each *danseuse*, as she is supposed to be endeavouring to outstrip her rivals, and vindicate her right to the disputed apple; and the effect is a charming one, independently of the interest and excitement that must inevitably attach to the combined performance of such unequalled artists as these. The *Graces*, enacted by Louise Taglioni, Demississe, and Cassan; *Cupid*, by that graceful child, Mdlle. Lamoureux; *Mercure*, by Perrot, etc., etc., are all numbered amongst the *dramatis personæ* of the *ballet*, and a more charming combination could hardly be met with.
>
> "Taglioni is, however, the principal 'star' at the present moment. Those who have visited Her

Majesty's Theatre predetermined to find her marvellous talent diminished, and to 'regret' her reappearance on the English stage, have come away enchanted, despite themselves, at that marvellous union of unrivalled agility, with the most perfect grace and elegance, in which no dancer has as yet equalled her. If there is any change perceptible, she seems to have advanced in her art—in person, an increase of *embonpoint* has proved decidedly favourable to her appearance. It is, no doubt, in the *danse noble* that she excels; but in every style of dancing the *je ne sais quoi* of peculiar refinement and grace, for which she is remarkable in her style, distinguishes her. As long as Taglioni continues to dance, she will continue to excite an enthusiasm of applause, as the famous Guimard, styled in 1770, 'La Reine de la Danse,' had done before her. A peculiar gentleness and amiability of look, and a dignity of manner which never abandons Taglioni, is in admirable keeping with the style of her dancing; and, if we may believe report, these do not belie her real character."

As a matter of fact, the appearances and "report" did *not* belie her character, for Taglioni always won the respect and love of all she met. She had done so abroad, where crowned heads and royal families had made a friend of her, enchanted with her sweetness and modesty, and won to equal respect by her innate dignity of character.

It was the same in London, where, it is said, she received not only the generous homage of her stage colleagues and was offered a superb testimonial at the close of the season of 1846, but also met with special favour from Queen Victoria herself, who was as much a connoisseur of good dancing as she was of

virtuous conduct.

It may have been by reason of this that Taglioni was appointed teacher of dancing and deportment to some of the younger members of the English Royal Family; and later undertook the tuition of a few favoured young dancers. Yet Fortune did not favour her always, and she died at Marseilles on April 25th, 1884; like Guimard, also neglected and in poverty. But while there is one to read the records of the stage her name will survive as one of the founders and supreme exponents of the idealistic school of Ballet.

TAGLIONI ("SYLPHIDE")

"Slim, virginal, upon the stage she springs:
And joy forthwith relumines weary eyes
That, looking ever on dull mundane things,
Long had forgot youth's heritage of joy:
Slim, virginal, clad in resplendent white
With floral coronal and fluttering wings
She stands serenely poised; then, swift to rise,
Gleams like a sunlit dove in sudden flight:
So, once again, return to our dulled sight
Dreams of a golden age without alloy.

"How many sages sought in ancient time
Some magic stone transmuting all to gold;
Elixirs rare have many yearned to find,
Recalling refluent youth ere life depart;
How many strove to conjure from the air,
From water, earth or fire with subtle art
The elemental beings therein divined!

"But thou, with art more potent and sublime,
Transmutest all! None seeing thee is old!
All hearts forlorn, from dross of woe are freed!
And in the magic glamour of thy grace,
Hope's listless wings win strength once more to fare
Towards that Ideal whose lineaments we trace
Importally incarnate in—'Sylphide!'"

CHAPTER XXVII

CARLOTTA GRISI (GISELLE)

SELDOM is a good dancer also a born singer; and still more rarely do both talents develop simultaneously to such a point that there can be any serious doubt as to which to relinquish in favour of the other. Yet such was the happy fate of Carlotta Grisi, the cousin of the two famous singing sisters, Giuditta and Giulia Grisi.

Carlotta at one time showed such promise of becoming a vocalist that no less a person than the great Malibran advised her to devote her life to singing. But when Perrot, the famous ballet-master, who had received his *congé* from the Paris Opera, saw her, when she was earning her living as a dancer at Naples, he was clever enough to suggest that she should develop *both* talents, fully intending that under his encouragement and tuition she should become at least a finished *danseuse*, for he saw in the future of such a pupil an opportunity of securing his own return to the Opera. Moreover, although—as a famous *maîtresse de ballet* of our time once described him to me—"ogly as sin," he managed to become her husband!

Carlotta Grisi was born in 1821 at Visnida, in Upper Istria, in a palace built for the Emperor Francis II. When a mere child of five years old she was dancing, with other children, at the Scala, Milan, where she danced with such grace that she was nicknamed *La petite Heberlé*, a Mlle. Heberlé then being a very popular star. Subsequently she toured

with a company through Italy appearing at Florence, Rome, Naples, and it was here she met and became the pupil and then wife of Perrot.

Brief visits to London, Vienna, Milan, Naples followed, the young dancer gathering fresh triumphs at each, until finally she made her Parisian *début* at the Renaissance on February 28th, 1840. Here she appeared both as singer and dancer in "Le Zingaro," but on the closing of the theatre she went in February, 1841, to the Opera, and achieved an instant success in "La Favorita." From that moment her career was one of continued triumph.

In June of that year she appeared in "*Giselle, ou les Willis, ballet en deux actes, de MM. de Saint Georges, Th. Gautier et Coralli, musique de M. Adam, décors de M. Ciceri*," as it is described on my copy of the original libretto. Carlotta's appearance in it was *the* artistic sensation of the Continent.

"Giselle" is founded on one of those romantic legendary themes in which Germany was once so rich, and tells of the fate of a village girl who falls a victim to the mysterious *Willis*, or spirits of betrothed girls who in life were passionately fond of dancing, who have died ere marriage, and are doomed after death to dance every night from midnight to dawn, luring whom they may to the same fate. This, and the story of shattered hope and love forlorn, which bring about poor little Giselle's destruction, are the two leading themes of a ballet which, touching both the heights of gaiety and depths of tragedy, is rich in every element that can interest or charm, and presents many dramatic situations that demand from a supremely accomplished dancer a power of mimic expression, intensity and poetic sympathy that are rare. Carlotta Grisi was ideally equipped, and she

was *par excellence*—Giselle. A revival of the second act, under the title of "les Sylphides," was given by the Russian dancers at the Coliseum a few seasons ago.

Gautier's admiration for Grisi was enthusiastic. "*Qu'est-ce que Giselle?*" he asked the day after the first performance, thus answering his own question: "*Giselle, c'est Carlotta Grisi, une charmante fille aux yeux bleus, au sourire fin et naïf, à la démarche alerte, une Italienne qui a l'air d'une Allemande à s'y tromper, comme l'Allemande Fanny avait l'air d'une Andalouse de Séville.... Pour la pantomime, elle a dépassé toutes les espérances. Pas un geste de convention. Pas un mouvement faux. C'est la nature prise sur le fait.*"

Another of her admirers described Carlotta in the following quaint terms: "... a blonde beauty; her eyes are of a soft and lovely blue, her mouth is small, and her complexion is of a rare freshness and delicacy.... Her figure is symmetrical, for, though slight, she has not that anatomical thinness, which is so common among the *danseuses* of the Académie Royale. Her grace is not more surprising than her aplomb. She never appears to exert herself, but can execute the most incredible *tours de force* with a perfect tranquillity."

Grisi's success in London was stupendous. She appeared here at Drury Lane, and later at Her Majesty's, for the Opera seasons. On her farewell appearance in "The Peri" (by Théophile Gautier, Coralli and Burgmüller) at the end of the season in November, 1843, the *Illustrated London News* gave the following note:

"Carlotta Grisi took her farewell of an English audience on Saturday night (i.e. November 18th,

1843) in the popular ballet of 'The Peri,' when a brilliant company was present to bid adieu to their favourite dancer. On the entrance of Mdlle. Grisi, there was one unanimous burst of applause, and each movement of her graceful figure was the signal for renewed approbation. When the famous leap was given, cries of *encore* re-echoed from every part of the house, and once again the favourite, with a spirit undaunted, leaped into the arms of the lover in the ballet. The applause continued undiminished until the fall of the curtain —then the enthusiasm became a *furore*, and the name of 'Grisi' was uttered by a thousand voices. She soon appeared, led on by Petipa, and in looks more expressive than words, spoke her thanks for the kindness which she has received and merited. Wreaths and bouquets were plenteously showered on the dancer, and our artist has attempted a representation of the enthusiastic scene.

"After the performances, Mr. Bunn gave an elegant supper in the grand saloon of the theatre to about seventy of his friends and patrons. The entertainment was intended as a complimentary leave-taking to Carlotta Grisi, on her quitting London to fulfil her engagements in Paris. After proposing the health of Carlotta Grisi, Mr. Bunn presented that lady with a superb bracelet of black enamel, richly ornamented with diamonds, as a slight *souvenir* of her highly successful career at Drury Lane Theatre. Attached to the bracelet was the following inscription: '*Présenté à Mlle. Carlotta Grisi, la danseuse la plus poétique de l'univers, avec les hommages respectueux de son directeur A. Bunn, Théâtre Royal, Drury Lane, 18th November, 1843.*'"

A contemporary enthusiast, writing of her in 1846,

said: “Her name is henceforth inseparably connected with the charming and poetic creations which her own grace and beauty have immortalised: ‘Giselle,’ ‘Beatrix,’ ‘La Péri,’ have attained a celebrity equal to that of ‘La Sylphide’ and ‘La Fille du Danube,’ and the most devoted admirer of Taglioni can scarcely refuse a tribute of homage to the bewitching elegance of Carlotta Grisi. Wherever she goes, her reception is the same; if she is idolised in Paris, she is adored in London. The impression produced by her performance of ‘La Péri,’ at Drury Lane, in 1843, will not be easily forgotten, and her more recent triumph in the ‘Pas de Quatre’ is still fresh in the recollection of the *habitués* of the Opera. Nor must we omit her last creations of Mazourka in the ‘Diable à Quatre’ and ‘Paquita.’ It is impossible to describe the fascinating *naïveté* of her manner, the arch and lively humour of her pantomime, and the extraordinary precision and grace of her dancing!” High praise, certainly! But, evidently not exaggerated, for all contemporary accounts of Grisi are equally enthusiastic.

Carlotta’s married life was not entirely happy. She had many admirers, and her husband had a temper, and though she always kept the former at a discreet distance, the latter was not so easily managed, and after a few years of marriage, which had apparently been entered upon more as a matter of mutual interest than mutual affection, she and her husband agreed to separate. Grisi left the stage in 1857 at the climax of her success, and retired to live quietly in Switzerland, where she died only a few years ago.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FANNY CERITO (“ONDINE”)

Of the great quartette, Cerito was the especial pet of London audiences, among whom she was always known as the “divine” Fanny.

This but echoed the pretty worship of her good old father to whom she was always “La Divinita,” and who in the heyday of her success used to go about with his pockets stuffed with her old shoes, and fragments of the floral crowns which had been thrown to her on the stage.

From the time of her birth at Naples, in 1821, he had guarded her, and his pride in her talent and her triumphs was but natural, seeing how young she was, how early she won fame, and how great was her charm.

She made her *début* at the San Carlo, Naples, in 1835, in a ballet called “The Horoscope.” She then toured, appearing at most of the Italian cities. Even before she had left Italy she had earned, on her *début* at Milan, the complimentary title of “the fourth Grace,” one of the many “fourth” Graces the world has seen since ancient classic days!

After Italy there followed a couple of years at Vienna and then, strangely enough, reversing the customary order of things, her London *début* was made some years before she appeared in Paris. She was seen regularly in London for some seasons from 1840 onwards.

In May, 1841, she appeared at Her Majesty’s, in

the “Lac des Fées,” with great success; in June “Sylphide” was revived for her, and on August 12th she took her benefit, to which people flocked from all parts of London and, notwithstanding the usual deserted state of town at such a time, the audience was one of the biggest and most fashionable on record. Then she went on a brief visit to Liverpool, and then returned for a time to Vienna.

It was in the two ballets, “Alma” and “Ondine,” that the beauteous Fanny achieved her greatest triumphs, in the former representing a fire-spirit, in the latter, a water-nymph given, as was Hans Andersen’s little Mermaid, mortal life and form.

She appeared in “Alma,” a ballet by Deshayes, on its first production in London during July, 1842, on the night when the famous “Persiani” row took place, and which was said to be worse than several similar riots in the previous year at the Opera. Mme. Persiani had been “too ill to sing,” and the audience had been incredulous. Comparative quiet was at length secured by the respected manager, Lumley, and, as a journal of the time quaintly records: “A beautiful, sylph-like Cerito, danced in the splendid ballet of ‘Alma,’ and by her inspiration hushed the stormy elements with a repose that ought always to reign when genius and talent are supreme.”

Another chronicler speaks of the “new and glittering ballet of ‘Alma,’ which reflects the greatest credit on the inventor, M. Deshayes,” and adds: “We have no hesitation in saying that this is the ballet of all ballets, and carries our memory back to our young, innocent and merry days of juvenility, when care was not care, and tears not tears of woe, to the days of bright sunny smiles, when fairies in our eyes *were* fairies, and when the brilliant realisations of the

doings of ‘Cherry and Fair Star’ were real, existing things of creation, and part and parcelling of our then dreamy nature and being. Such is the new ballet of ‘Alma.’ It is one of the best ever put on the opera boards.” That this impression was created was due certainly to the talent, both as actress and dancer, of Cerito, for whom the ballet had been specially composed.

Apropos of her great popularity in London a contemporary record mentions an interesting “fact which will bear testimony at once to her perfect embodiment of the poetry of motion and her excellent private character,” namely, that “The Queen Dowager of England was lately graciously pleased to bestow on her a splendid enamel brooch, set with diamonds, and accompanied by a most flattering message.”

“Alma” was succeeded in the following year by “Ondine,” also composed specially for her, by Perrot, with admirable music by Pugni, and produced at Her Majesty’s on June 22nd, 1843. The plot is somewhat like that of Hans Andersen’s story, “The Little Mermaid,” and the production gave Cerito fine opportunities for expressive miming as well as dancing, one of the great moments of the ballet being the scene in which the little Naiad realises at last the mortal life which has been given her, when, for the first time she sees her shadow cast by the moonlight; and then came one of the chief sensations of the ballet—Cerito’s dancing of the famous *pas de l’ombre*, a thing of such beauty that the audience wished it a joy for ever.

Cerito made her Parisian *début* with success in 1847, in a ballet called “La Fille de Marbre,” composed by St. Leon.

A French critic, speaking of her personal attractions, described her as "*petite et dodue ... les bras ronds et d'un contour moelleux, les yeux bleus, le sourire facile, la jambe forte, le pied petit, mais épais, la chevelure blonde, mais rebelle*." A charming little picture.



Fanny Cerito and St. Leon



Lucille Grahn and Perrot

Another critic wrote: “Short in stature and round in frame, Cerito is one example of how grace will overcome the lack of personal elegance, how mental animation will convey vivacity and attraction to features which, in repose, are heavy and inexpressive. With a figure which would be too redundant, were it not for its extreme flexibility and abandon, Cerito is yet a charming *artiste*, who has honourably earned a high popularity and deservedly retained it.”

Some idea of her style as a dancer, as well as of her personal appearance, is afforded by another contemporary who described her as “bondante and abondante.”

Among her other successes were “La Vivandière” and “Le Diable au Violon.” For the last-named the violin was played by St. Leon, the violinist and ballet-master, whom she married. She separated from him in 1850. In April, 1854, she won a striking

success in a ballet, “Gemma,” which she had composed in collaboration with Théophile Gautier—a great admirer of her—and she retired later in the same year.

CHAPTER XXIX

LUCILE GRAHN (“EOLINE”)

LUCILE GRAHN was born at Copenhagen, June 30th, 1821, and is said to have been so delighted with a ballet to which she was taken when only four years old, that she forthwith insisted on learning to dance, and made her regular theatrical *début* as Cupid when she was seven!

For a time she left the stage in order to pursue her studies as a dancer. After seven years of the usual and always taxing training she reappeared, at the age of fourteen, first in “La Muette de Portici,” following with success in a ballet of her own composition, “Le Cinq Seul,” then creating the *rôle* of the Princess Astride, in a ballet entitled “Waldemar,” and followed with the title-*rôle* in “Hertha,” both Scandinavian in subject.

Then she proceeded to Paris, and after studying a while under Barrez, was recalled suddenly to Copenhagen to take part in a fête arranged in honour of the Queen of Denmark, and so did not make her Parisian *début* until she appeared at the Opera in “Le Carnaval de Venise,” in 1838, in which she achieved an immediate success, only excelled in the following year when she captured all Parisians’ hearts in the ballet which Taglioni had already made famous —“Sylphide.”

Unhappily, in the spring of 1840, her career was interrupted by an accident while rehearsing a *variation* which she was to perform at the benefit of Madame Falcon, the singer; and in consequence of

inflammation of the knee she was laid up for some time in spite of the most careful attention. She never appeared at the Paris Opera again; but in the next few years her recovery was sufficient to allow of her achieving many successes in London, as well as taking part in the famous Quartette.

In 1844 she appeared in "Lady Henriette" at Drury Lane, and in the following Spring was engaged for the entire season of the Italian Opera at Her Majesty's, where she won the most dazzling of her successes in a ballet entitled "Eoline," produced in April, 1845.

A contemporary critic records the production in the following amusingly naïve terms: "The ballet 'Eoline,' with its poetic story, and its lovely feminine features (*sic*), was the great hit of the first night, spite the difficulties of complicated scenery and mechanical effects. The ballet worked wonders, and Lucile Grahn exhibits nightly the most delightful grace and modesty of deportment, in addition to certainty and aplomb of position, reminding one of Canova's masterpieces of sculpture."

Grahn made a great success as Catarina in "La Fille du Bandit," during May, 1848. According to one critic it "exhibited her talents in a higher degree than anything she has previously appeared in. As the bandit's daughter she assumes a dignified bearing, like that of one born to command, and supports it throughout whether in dancing or action ... and the grace of her solos commands numerous encores."

Yet greater success followed in "Le Jugement de Pâris," the honours therein, however, being shared with Cerito and Taglioni. This appearance was in connection with one of the most striking sensations of the theatrical season of 1848 (certainly the most

remarkable in the history of ballet, save for the famous *Pas de Quatre* of three years before), namely, the *Pas des Déesses*, which was performed in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

Even the Russians of our day never evoked greater excitement or enthusiasm than that which greeted the appearance of these three great dancers of the ’forties in one ballet. A contemporary critic, contrasting the production with that of the former *Pas de Quatre* remarked that “for poetry of idea and execution the *Pas des Déesses* has decidedly the advantage,” and goes on to say: “Besides this, though the attention is principally directed to the three great *danseuses*, yet the grouping is rendered far more effective by the addition of other actors.

“The *Pas des Déesses* has another recommendation; it is longer, and the intervals while the three ‘stars’ are resting themselves, are filled up by the charming butterfly steps of Louise Taglioni, and the most incredible feats on the part of St. Leon and Perrot. In fact, all here surpass themselves—of Taglioni, Grahn, Cerito, each in turn seems to obtain the advantage—though, of course, the palm is finally adjudged by each spectator accordingly as his taste is originally inclined. For ourselves, as critics, obliged to put away all previous predilections, we are compelled to confess that each in her peculiar style, in this *pas*, reaches the *ne plus ultra* of her art, and each is different.

“Though the styles of Taglioni and Lucille Grahn at first sight would seem to be identical, yet they have both their own peculiar characteristics. The buoyant energy of Grahn contrasts with that peculiar quietness that marks Taglioni’s most daring feats, while Cerito, who by her very smallness of stature,

seems fitted by nature for another style of dancing, bounds to and fro, as though in the plenitude of enjoyment. We have never seen either of these great *danseuses* achieve such wonders as in this *pas*. The improvement of Lucile Grahn is, above all, marvellous; she introduces a step entirely new and exquisitely graceful; and, though it must be of most difficult achievement, she executes it with an ease and lightness which gives her the appearance of flying. It is a species of *valse renversée* on a grand scale. One of the most effective moments with Cerito is that in which she comes on with St. Leon, executing a *jetés battus* in the air, and, at the same moment, turning her head suddenly to catch a sight of the much-desired apple. This never fails to elicit thunders of applause, and an encore.

"As for Taglioni, after taking the most daring leaps in her own easy and exquisitely graceful manner, she flits across the stage with a succession of steps, which, though perfectly simple, are executed with such inconceivable lightness and such enchanting grace, as invariably to call forth one of the most enthusiastic encores we ever remember to have witnessed; in fact, from beginning to end of the *divertissement*, all the spectators are kept in a state of excitement, which finds vent in clappings, in shoutings, and *bravas*, occasionally quite deafening."

The reference to the styles of Taglioni and Lucile Grahn as being almost "identical" is made additionally interesting by the discerning manner in which the critic contrasts the "buoyant energy of Grahn" with that "peculiar quietness" that marked Taglioni's most daring efforts.

Both had studied in the traditional school and to that extent were bound to be somewhat similar.

Their differences were due to physique and temperament, Grahn, the fair Dane, was somewhat heavier in build, had always been stronger and was also younger than Taglioni, who, weakly in childhood, had always been of more *raffinée* build and temperament, and was now perhaps a shade less energetic than in the days when she had delighted London with her earliest appearances some fifteen years before. Still, that "peculiar quietness" had always distinguished her and was that very quality which had made her so ideal an exponent of "Sylphide."

Lucile Grahn, who was tall, slim, with blue eyes and blonde hair, was said, as regards her dancing, to possess "less strength than Elssler, less flexibility than Taglioni, but more of both than anyone else."

She appeared in London each season until 1848, when the arrival of Jenny Lind created such a craze for Opera—and for Jenny Lind—that Ballet temporarily lost its attraction for London audiences. She comes close to our own times, for she died at Munich in the spring of 1907.

CHAPTER XXX

THE DECLINE AND REVIVAL

FOLLOWING what may be called "the Taglioni era" came a period of comparative dullness. There *were* successors who charmed their audiences in London, in Paris, in Rome, Vienna and America. There was the brilliant Caroline Rosati; the stately Amalia Ferraris; dashing Rita Sangalli—who married a Baron; dainty Rosita Mauri; Petipa, Fabbri, and others whose name and fame were brilliant but transient. But these, you will say, were all foreigners. Had we no English ballet dancers? Well, it may safely be said that Ballet in England was never more thoroughly English, or more thoroughly banal, than for some twenty years before and after the Taglioni period.

From 1850 onwards it was the period of the Great Utilities, of which Ballet was not one! Save for a few good examples later at the old Canterbury Music Hall, with Miss Phyllis Broughton as *première danseuse*, at Weston's Music Hall, Holborn, and at the Alhambra under Strange's management, and some good productions at the Crystal Palace arranged by M. Leon Espinosa, it was practically a close time for artistic dance and ballet for something like a quarter of a century.

The state of public disfavour into which the art had fallen is well seen from the interesting extract from the *Era Almanack* of 1872, in which one reads: "Judging from Mr. Mapleson's extensive productions the ballet was another sheet anchor on which he

relied. Madame Katti Lanner, a Viennese *danseuse* of great repute, was, with other foreign artists, engaged for the *express purpose of reviving an interest in the old-fashioned, elaborate ballet of action*. The experiment was boldly made, but failed; and it is clear that all modern audiences care for is an incidental *divertissement* which may mean something or nothing. As for a story worked out by clever pantomime, people refuse to stay and see it, and the deserted appearance of the theatre while 'Giselle' and other ballets were in progress was a significant hint that incidental dances only are appreciated by opera-goers of the present day. The ballets invented by Madame Katti Lanner were 'La Rose de Séville,' 'Hvika' and one or two nameless *divertissements*. She danced in them all, and in the first act of 'Giselle.'"

Thus, London audiences from, roughly, 1850 to 1870, had not that burning interest in the art of ballet which they had displayed for the twenty years or so preceding 1850; indeed, they had little or no interest in it. In Paris conditions were much the same. There were dancers of some ability and transient popularity, as we have noted, but no ballet and no dancer appeared of outstanding merit such as those of the great periods of the eighteenth century, the mid-nineteenth, or such as we have seen to-day. Even dancing, apart from ballet, was of comparatively little interest.

In London, with the 'eighties came the dear old Gaiety and another *pas de quatre*, that in "Faust Up-to-Date," a very different one from that of the 'forties, not the toe-dancing of classic ballet, but step-dancing of the characteristic and admirable English school; and it was a very bright and inspiring dance done with tremendous *verve* by the Misses Florence

Levey, Lillian Price, Maud Wilmot, and Eva Greville.

Supreme, however, as an exponent of the English school of dancing was, unquestionably, Kate Vaughan, who, with Sylvia Grey, Alice Lethbridge, Letty Lind, and others of that period, and for well into the 'nineties, were the delight of London.

Kate Vaughan herself was one of the most distinguished dancers England has ever had—distinguished for incomparable grace, finish, and characteristically English refinement of manner. There were no ragged edges to her work. Her art was—as all good art must be—deliberate; her every pose and movement beautiful, and always instinct with the quintessence of a special and personal charm that never failed her to the end. I saw her dance, shortly before her death, at a concert given on behalf of one of the various charities which arose out of the Boer War; and all the art and all the charm which had made Kate Vaughan a stage influence in her time were as amply evident as when she had first delighted us some twenty years before.

With the 'eighties came the rise of the Ballet as a regular London institution, on the founding of those two veteran Vaudeville houses, the Empire and the Alhambra, where for about a quarter of a century, practically without interruption, Ballet was the chief item on their always varied and attractive programmes. Of course, there was in 1884 the famous production of Manzotti's great ballet "Excelsior" at Her Majesty's Theatre; but it was not really until the opening of the two aforenamed houses that we had a real revival of Ballet in London apart from the Opera, and without that State-aid which the art receives on the Continent.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ALHAMBRA: 1854-1903

BOTH the Alhambra and the Empire were alike in having had a somewhat varied career before they became the rival "homes of English ballet."

There was something like a craze for music-halls in the early 'sixties of last century, and it was probably partly due to this that the Alhambra, which had been opened in 1854 as a Panopticon of the Arts and Sciences (with a Royal Charter granted by Queen Victoria in 1850) failing of its more ambitious purpose, ceased (unsuccessfully) to instruct, and sought (with better success) only to amuse.

First it was given over to more or less unorthodox religious services on the Sundays and to boxing contests and wrestling on the week days! Then for a time it came under the direction of a then well-known theatrical manager and speculator, the late Mr. E. T. Smith, who called it the Alhambra, and in 1870 secured a regular music-hall licence. The place was still not very successful. It became a circus for a short time.

Then it was taken over by a Mr. William Wilde, of Nottingham, who introduced Leotard, the famous gymnast, about whose wonderful grace and daring London went mad, so much so that on his return visit in 1866, under the late John Hollingshead's management, he received a salary of £180 a week.

Then Mr. Frederick Strange, who had been connected with the Crystal Palace, became manager

and introduced ballet, his most notable production being one called "L'Enfant Prodigue," which was adapted from Auber's opera. Mr. Jules Riviere was the conductor of the orchestra; and among those who became responsible for the arranging of the ballets were the brothers Imré and Bolossy Kiralfy, assisted by their sister Aniola, one of their most successful productions being one entitled "Hungary."

At this period the old quarrel between the young "music-halls" and the "legitimate" theatres was growing serious. A ballet might be produced so long as it was called and was, in effect, a mere *divertissement*. Anything else, a musical sketch, or opera—in which words were said or sung—was held an infringement of the rights of a regular theatre, and when John Hollingshead, as stage director during 1865-1867, produced in 1866 a pantomime called "Where's the Police?" the management were fined by a magistrate some two hundred and forty pounds. Apart from ballet and such a production as this pantomime, there was, of course, plenty of the "variety" element, contributed by such performers as Leotard, the Farinis, and the Foucarts, gymnasts; and various vocalists known to their period.

With the dawn of the 'seventies came a new taste for ballet and "Les Nations" was staged at the Alhambra with a Mlle. Colonna and other dancers, including Esther Austin (a sister of Emily Soldene) in the cast; and a "Parisian Quadrille" became a feature of the production.

Then came a season of "Promenade" Concerts, and during the Franco-Prussian war the conductor, Mr. Jules Riviere, gave the "War Songs of Europe," those of the French and Prussian nations evoking such passion that free fights occurred, and the theatre lost

its music-hall licence; and the Directors of the Alhambra Company promptly secured a regular theatre licence from the Lord Chamberlain!

So on April 24th, 1871, the place was opened as the Alhambra Theatre, with an evening's entertainment including a farce, "Oh, My Head!"; a comic opera, "The Crimson Scarf"; and two ballets, "The Beauties of the Harem" and "Puella." Then followed another ballet "The Sylph of the Glen"; and then "A Romantic Tale," by J. B. Johnston, and an extravaganza, "All About the Battle of Dorking."

In September of the same year the Vokes, a famous family of dancers, made their appearance, the programme including "The Two Gregorys," a comic ballet, and "The Mountain Sylph," and "The Beauties of the Harem," in which a Mlle. Sismondi appeared with much success. The Christmas pantomime which followed, with the title "Harlequin Prince Happy-go-Lucky, or Princess Beauty" (a title quite in the good old pantomime style), included a ballet, with such performers as Mlles. Pitteri, Sismondi, and another well-known dancing family, the Elliots.

There was a change of management in March, 1872, when John Baum, from Cremorne Gardens, took up the reins and produced Offenbach's "Le Roi Carotte," with M. Jacobi as musical director, and ballets as a feature of the production. Then followed "The Black Crook," and Offenbach's beautiful opera, "La Belle Hélène," and then, in December, 1873, "Don Juan," in each of the last two Miss Kate Santley playing "lead."

In the spring of next year came "La Jolie Parfumeuse," followed in the autumn with a ballet, "The Demon's Bride," and "Whittington," an *opéra bouffe*, in which the honours were shared by Miss

Kate Santley and Miss Julia Mathews.

In the autumn of 1875, with Mr. Joseph A. Cave as Manager and producer, came "Spectresheim," and a comic ballet, "Cupid in Arcadia," in which the Lauri family and "The Majiltons" appeared. A succession of farces, pantomimes, extravaganzas, light opera and ballets followed, the more noteworthy productions being Strauss's "Die Fledermaus," produced at the Alhambra on January 9th, 1877.

As an example of the lavish manner in which the audiences of those days were catered for, the programme for that evening is interesting. There was none of the "9 to 11" business about the theatres then. The "gallery boy" paid his sixpence, or the "pittite" his two shillings expecting a run for his money—and got it! The majority of theatres began their performance at 7.15 p.m.; and those that did not, started even earlier, sometimes as early as six o'clock, and often with four or five productions. On January 9th, 1877, the programme at the Alhambra was as follows:

7.15.	"A Warning to Parents."	A Farce.
8.0.	"Die Fledermaus."	Opera Comique by Johann Strauss.
10.0.	The Celebrated Girards.	Eccentric Dancers.
10.15.	"The Fairies' Home."	A New Grand Ballet.

"Die Fledermaus" had an excellent cast, including Miss Emma Chambers—a very popular soubrette of the time—and Mr. Harry Paulton; while in the ballet were a Mlle. Pertoldi, a very handsome *danseuse* of statuesque proportions, a Mlle. T. de Gillert, a clever mime, and among lesser lights Mlles. Sismondi, Melville, Rosa and Richards, who were for several

years to be more or less prominently associated with the Alhambra ballet.

In September of the same year was staged Offenbach's *opéra bouffe*, "Orphée aux Enfers," with handsome, golden-tressed Cornélie d'Anka as the chief attraction; the same programme including the ballet of "Yolande," "invented and designed" by Alfred Thompson, with music by Mons. G. Jacobi, and dances by Mons. A. Bertrand, from the Paris Opera, who was later to become more closely associated with Alhambra productions. The principal *danseuses* were Mlles. Passani, Pertoldi, de Gillert and M. A. Josset.

It has been stated that it was "towards the end of 1877" that the late Mr. Charles Morton—one of the ablest theatrical managers London has known—took charge of the Alhambra, and that he started his connection therewith by reviving one of his former great successes, namely, "La Fille de Madame Angot." He may have become connected with the theatre towards the end of 1877, but apparently the first time his name appeared on the programme as Manager was early in January, 1878; and not with "Madame Angot" as his first production, but with "Wildfire," a "Grand, Spectacular, Fairy, Musical and Pantomimic Extravaganza" (as it was described) by the then very popular *collaborateurs*, H. B. Farnie and R. Reece—an extra extravagant extravaganza in three acts and fourteen tableaux!

This remarkable production had a strong cast, including Harry Paulton, J. H. Ryley, two charming singers, Miss Lennox Grey and Miss Pattie Laverne; and among the *danseuses* in the *divertissement*—Mlles. Pertoldi, de Gillert and Sismondi.

Next month came a triple bill, starting at 7.20 with

a farce, “Crowded Houses”; then, at 8, “La Fille de Madame Angot,” with Mlles. Cornélie d’Anka, Selina Dolaro and Lennox Grey as the bright particular stars; followed, at 10.30, with “Les Gardes Françaises,” a grand military ballet; with Mlles. E. Pertoldi and T. de Gillert as the leading artists, the dances being arranged by Mons. A. Bertrand, the whole production proving very successful.

Much of its success—as in the case of the two or three preceding spectacles—was attributable largely to the beauty of the staging and the splendour of the costumes, apropos to which it should be noted here that it was first in 1877 that M. and Mme. Charles Alias first began to make costumes for the Alhambra, and were associated with it in several subsequent productions until the end of 1883.

It was not, however, until 1884, when the Magistrate’s licence for music and dancing was again recovered, that M. Alias (to whom I am indebted for several details of the theatre’s history) regularly took up the position of Costumier to the Alhambra, in which capacity he had entire control of the costume department—a very important factor in spectacular production—and supplied every dress worn on the stage for a period of about thirty years. Considering that there were some nine or ten complete changes of management during that time it speaks volumes for his ability and the excellence of the work done by M. Alias that his services should have been retained through so lengthy a period.

To return, however, to the days when the Alhambra was not a “music-hall” but a theatre, with the Lord Chamberlain’s licence, and was giving *opéra comique* and *opéra bouffe* as well as ballet. Charles Morton’s next production, in April, 1878, was

another Offenbach revival, namely, “The Grand Duchess,” with Mlle. Cornélie d’Anka, Miss Rose Lee and J. D. Stoyle (“Jimmy” Stoyle), Pertoldi and T. de Gillert in the cast, M. Bertrand (by now engaged as “resident” ballet-master) introducing two ballets, one Hungarian and the other Bohemian.

In the following June came the production of Von Suppé’s comic opera, “Fatinitza,” adapted by Henry S. Leigh, with the late Aynsley Cook, Miss Rose Lee, John J. Dallas and other popular stars in the cast. It was preceded by a farce, “Which is Which,” and followed by a “grand Indian” *ballet d’action* by the late J. Albery, entitled “The Golden Wreath,” arranged by Bertrand, with music by Jacobi, and with Mlles. G. David, E. Pertoldi and T. de Gillert as dancers. It was, from all accounts, a very gorgeous production. Indeed, so successful was it that when Offenbach’s “Geneviève de Brabant” was staged in the autumn, this ballet was “still running.”

The sensation of the following spring was the production of “La Poule aux Œufs d’Or,” a “new grand Spectacular and Musical *féerie*,” by MM. Denhery and Clairville, adapted to the English stage by Frank Hall, with a very strong cast including such well-known favourites as Constance Loseby, Emily Soldene, Clara Vesey, Violet Granville, the celebrated French duettists Bruet and Rivière, Aynsley Cook, E. Righton (“Teddy” Righton), with Pertoldi and de Gillert as leading *danseuses*.

In the autumn came a revival of Offenbach’s “The Princess of Trebizonde,” with Miss Alice May, Miss Constance Loseby, Miss Emma Chambers, Mr. Charles Collette, Mr. Furneaux Cook, in the cast, the opera being followed by “Le Carnaval de Venise,” a ballet in which that fine, statuesque dancer and

expressive mime, Mme. Malvina Cavallazi—later to become so great a favourite with the Empire's audiences—was supported by Mlle. de Gillert and other Alhambra favourites, and for which, as in the case of many ballets at this period—the gorgeous costumes were from designs by Faustin.

This was succeeded by Lecocq's comic opera "La Petite Mademoiselle," of which the English libretto was by Reece and Henry S. Leigh, a very brilliant cast including the late Fred Leslie, Harry Paulton, Constance Loseby, Emma Chambers and Alice May, the opera being preceded by a farce and followed by a ballet, "Carmen," dances by Bertrand and music by Jacobi.

On December 22nd, 1879, came the production of "Rothomago," a "Grand, New, Christmas Fairy Spectacle," arranged by H. B. Farnie from the French, in four acts and *seventeen tableaux*! It was the day of big adjectives and big productions.

This apparently started the modern fashion of requiring a positive syndicate of musical collaborators, for the late Edward Solomon was responsible for the music of the First Act, P. Bucalossi for the Second, Gaston Serpette (composer of "Les Cloches de Corneville") for the Third, no less than three ballets being contributed by Jacobi. The cast included Constance Loseby, Mlle. Julie, Emma Chambers, Harry Paulton, Pertoldi, de Gillert, Rosselli; the costumes were designed by Mr. C. Wilhelm, and executed, as were so many of the costumes for these earlier productions, by Madame Alias, Miss Fisher and Mrs. May.

The spring of 1880 was marked by the successful production of Offenbach's "La Fille du Tambour-Major," with an excellent cast including Constance

Loseby, Edith Blande, Fanny Edwards, the fascinating Fanny Leslie—who later became so popular a "variety artiste"—Fred Leslie, and Fred Marvin. It was followed by a gorgeous Egyptian ballet "Memnon," in which Mlle. Pertoldi, Miss Matthews—a very handsome English dancer—and Mlles. Rosa and Marie Muller (pupils of Mme. Katti Lanner) were the chief attractions, not to mention Ænea, known as the "Flying Wonder."

Mr. Charles Morton left the Alhambra in 1881, and a striking success was achieved by the new manager, Mr. William Holland, with "Babil and Bijou," the cast including Miss Rosa Berend, Miss Constance Loseby, Harry Paulton, and Harry Monkhouse; while in the two grand ballets arranged by Bertrand and for which the dresses were designed by Mr. Wilhelm, were to be seen Mlle. Pertoldi, and Mme. Palladino, a *petite* and fascinating dancer who later was to become one of the leading favourites at the Empire.

In December, 1882, the theatre was burnt down, and on rebuilding various successful productions were staged. The house, however, did not really enter upon its most triumphant phase until October, 1884, when it became the Alhambra Theatre of Varieties, with ballet now as its main attraction.

The first of the productions was "A Village Festival," a new grand ballet of Olden Times, with Mlle. Palladino as the *première danseuse*. It was followed in the December with another, a very successful ballet, "The Swans," with Mlle. Palladino and a Miss Mathews, a very popular dancer in her day. On the Christmas Eve yet another was staged, "Melusine," a new fantastic ballet, in which a Mlle. Sampietro was supported by Miss Mathews. "Nina the Enchantress"; "Le Bivouac"—a military spectacle;

"Cupid;" "The Seasons"; "Nadia"; "Algeria"; "Dresdina"; "Enchantment"; "Antiope"; "Ideala," a "pastoral divertissement"; "Irene"—a fantastic ballet; "Our Army and Navy"—patriotic spectacle; "Astrea," were progressively successful productions.

"Asmodeus"; "Zanetta" followed, bringing us to June, 1890, and these too, were notable for some gorgeous stage effects which drew "all London," and for the dancing of principals such as the two already mentioned, and of Mme. Cormani, Signorina Legnani, Signorina Bessone, Mme. Roffey and Signor de Vicenti, the last named being for many years associated with the Alhambra productions.

"Salandra," given for the first time on June 23rd, 1890, was a remarkably fine production, and with the late Charles Morton as Acting Manager, Vernon Dowsett as Stage Manager, Mr. T. E. Ryan for Scenic Artist, Signor Casati as *maître de ballet*, M. and Mme. Alias responsible for the costumes; and a superb orchestra of fifty instrumentalists under Mons. G. Jacobi, the Alhambra's new era of growing prosperity was now assured.

The ballet was in five tableaux, and involved some striking changes of scene. The heroine, Salandra (Signorina Legnani) was a Gipsy Queen, and the opening scene introduced various Tzigane dances. There was an exciting wrestling match, and a lively hunting dance in the third tableau; a charming fair scene in the last, and the whole production exhibited to the full those characteristics of brightness, efficiency of performance, and splendour of stage effect, which were long to mark the Alhambra as a house of distinction and one high in popular favour.

For Christmas of that year "The Sleeping Beauty" proved attractive, and was followed in 1891, by "On

the Roofs," a "pantomime ballet" by the famous Lauri troupe. "Oriella," a new fantastic ballet—described as "the most beautiful of all" then produced at the Alhambra—followed; then a musical pantomime by Charles Lauri, "The Sculptor and the Poodle"; then a comic ballet, "The Sioux," by Charles Lauri and his troupe, with music by Mr. Walter Slaughter; and in September, 1892, came "Up the River," a very popular production invented by the late John Hollingshead (who was now Manager) in which the rural and riverside scenery by Mr. T. E. Ryan was very much admired; the scenic effects—including a remarkable storm—being admirably managed; the ballet capitally performed; and M. Jacobi's flowing and richly orchestrated music proving better than ever.

"Temptation," a "new, grand fantastic ballet, in three tableaux," invented and arranged by Signor Carlo Coppi, with scenery by Ryan, and music by M. Jacobi, was a big and very successful production, in which a Signorina Elia, as *première*, made a hit.

The production of "Aladdin" by John Hollingshead on December 19th, 1892, called forth tributes of praise for the enterprising and ingenious Manager. The familiar story was well kept to, the situations were telling, and the four changes of scene were effected without once lowering the curtain, while the last, "The Veil of Diamonds," was amazing. A tableau curtain of glass was introduced, composed of some 75,000 glass facets held together by *twenty-four miles* of wire, and illuminated by various electric and other lights of different colours, the whole achieving one of the most wonderful effects ever seen on the stage, one not easily forgotten.

The cast was a strong one, Signorina Legnani—a

finished dancer of the typical Italian school—as the Princess; Mlle. Marie, a charming little dancer and clever mime, as Aladdin; Signorina Pollini, as the Spirit of the Lamp; that fine actor and dancer, Mr. Fred Storey, as the Magician; with good support from Mme. Roffey, Miss Hooten, the Almonti Brothers, and, of course, a wondrous array of beauty among the Alhambra *corps de ballet*. Mr. Bruce Smith had provided artistic scenery; Mr. Howard Russell was the designer of the costumes—as for several of the Alhambra ballets—which were admirably turned out as usual by M. and Mme. Alias; and M. Jacobi had once again surpassed himself in the music, that for the beautiful "chrysanthemum" scene and a waltz in A, in the finale, proving especially popular.

Another great success was achieved in the production of "Chicago," in March, 1893, a lively, up-to-date production, which later ran into a second edition. "Fidelia," adapted from "Le Violon du Diable," was a romantic ballet that also went into a second edition. The Alhambra by now had as Business Manager, Mr. Albert A. Gilmer, with Mr. A. G. Ford as Stage Manager, though Signor Casati, as *maître de ballet*, M. G. Jacobi, as conductor and composer of the music, were still continuing in their accustomed spheres.

Yet another success achieved under the same able direction was "Don Quixote," with Mr. Fred Storey as a brilliant exponent of the title-*rôle*, and Signorina Porro as the Dulcinea, La Salmoiraghi as the niece, and Mr. Fred Yarnold, as the Sancho Panza, other parts being well filled by Miss Julia Seale (a handsome and clever dancer and mime long associated with the Alhambra), Mme. Roffey, Miss Hooten and the Almontis.

The ballet was a great success with the public, and a happy comment by a leading critic was as follows: “Within the charming framework of the four admirably painted scenes by Ryan there is a continuous procession of ballet incident, the costumes quaint, picturesque, poetic, splendid, and nevertheless suggestive always of old Spain. Mr. Howard Russell, the designer, deserves great praise for the fancy and versatility which he has been able to show without proving unfaithful to his theme. While his beautiful dresses give rare variety and character to the dances of maidservants, pages, millers, grape-gatherers, brigands, wood-nymphs, in the earlier portions of the piece, they are seen to really magnificent effect in the grand gathering of all the Terpsichorean forces of the theatre in the final tableau. The stage organisation of the Alhambra is always good. Nowhere do we see better mass dancing; and nowhere either do the dancers receive more assistance from the musician. M. Jacobi’s ballet music is as sympathetic as its tunefulness is inexhaustible. This is M. Jacobi’s eighty-ninth ballet here.” That last remark may come as a revelation to those who do not realise how much of ballet we have had at two London theatres in the past thirty years. “Don Quixote” was M. Jacobi’s “eighty-ninth ballet” at the Alhambra, and—there were other Jacobian productions to follow!

Mr. Alfred Moul in 1894 became the General Manager of the Alhambra and the evidences of his long associations with the dramatic and lyric stage were quickly apparent in the series of brilliant successes with Ballet which now were placed to the credit of the historic house of which he had assumed control.

A marked success in the summer of the same year was “Sita,” the story of which dealt with an Indian girl’s hopeless love for the accepted lover of her master’s daughter.

A grand spectacular ballet, on the familiar theme of “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,” was the sensation of the close of 1894, more particularly owing to the introduction of an “aerial ballet” by the well-known Grigolati troupe. The treatment of the story was on conventional lines, naturally, but the ballet was gorgeously staged, and introduced an especially attractive dancer, Signorina Cecilia Cerri, while Mlle. Louise Agoust, as Morgiana, added to the laurels she had already won in other productions as a first-rate mime of dramatic character. “Bluebeard” was another popular success on familiar lines; and “Rip Van Winkle”—with Mr. Fred Storey, masterly as Rip—yet another, towards the end of 1896.

Mr. Alfred Moul then staged “Victoria and Merrie England,” a “grand national ballet in eight tableaux,” the scenario being arranged and the ballet “invented” by Signor Carlo Coppi, the music being by no less a personage than Sir Arthur Sullivan, M. Jacobi still conducting, while the scenery was by Mr. T. E. Ryan, the costumes by M. and Mme. Alias from designs by Mr. Howard Russell, the cast including Signorina Legnani, Miss Ethel Hawthorne, Miss Julia Seale and Miss Josephine Casaboni. The ballet was a huge success. It was certainly one of the finest spectacular and “patriotic” productions ever seen on the London stage, and it is one of the proudest records of the Alhambra that the performances were honoured with nearly a score of Royal visits.

One of the great successes of the spring of 1898 was a grand ballet on the old theme of “Beauty and

the Beast," invented and produced by Signor Carlo Coppi, with music by M. Jacobi, the interest being kept up throughout in a *crescendo* of pageantry. The sensation of the production was, perhaps, the second tableau, "The Garden of Roses," in which the popular Signorina Cerri, supported by the *corps de ballet*, appeared in a grand valse representing every known kind of rose, each dancer being almost hidden by gigantic presentments of the flowers—red, tea, moss roses and every other type—a luxurious mass of living blossoms, weaving itself into ever fresh and endless harmonies of colour and enchantment. Yet another gorgeous effect was attained by a Butterfly ballet, and the whole thing was one more triumph for Mr. T. E. Ryan as scenic artist, Mr. Howard Russell and M. Alias, responsible for the wonderful costumes; a triumph indeed for all associated with the production.

On the retirement of Mr. Moul, which took place in 1898, Mr. C. Dundas Slater became General Manager, with Mr. James Howell as Business Manager, Mr. Charles Wilson as Stage Manager, Mr. H. Woodford as Secretary and Treasurer; and Mr. G. W. Byng as Musical Director—the last two named gentlemen holding their appointments for many years following.

A very popular production of this year was "Jack Ashore," modestly described as "an unpretentious Sketchy *Divertissement* in One Tableau" which was invented and produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, with dances arranged by Signor Pratesi, and music by Mr. George Byng. It had a delightful early nineteenth-century setting for its dramatic little story and was capitally done by a cast including Miss Julia Seale, Miss Casaboni, the Misses Grace and Sybil Arundale,

Mr. Albert Le Fre, and the Brothers Almonti.

An attractive production of the following year was "A Day Off," which, however, was somewhat outshone by the beauty of "The Red Shoes," a fine spectacular ballet based on Hans Andersen's famous story, with a good cast including Mlle. Emilienne D'Alençon, Miss Julia Seale, and Miss J. Casaboni—a very vivacious and attractive dancer.

Two noteworthy ballets of 1900 were "Napoli," in one scene, written by Signor Giovanni Pratesi, produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, with music by Mr. George W. Byng; and a patriotic military display, "Soldiers of the Queen," produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, under the direction of Mr. C. Dundas Slater, the scene representing Queen's Parade, Aldershot, from sunrise to sunset, concluding with an Inspection and Grand March by the combined bands of Infantry, Drums and Fifes, *corps de ballet*, chorus and auxiliaries, numbering over two hundred and fifty, and representing some thirty leading regiments. Needless to say, produced as it was when patriotic feeling was at its height on account of the Boer War, it was as successful as it was magnificent.

A "romantic nautical ballet," in three scenes, entitled "The Handy Man," followed in January, 1901. It was written and produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, with music by Mr. George W. Byng, and dances arranged by Signor Rossi. In the same programme was a vocal *ballet divertissement*, "The Gay City," by the same author and musician, the dances arranged by Mme. Cormani. Later this was retained, and was followed by a "fanciful" grand ballet, entitled "Inspiration," invented and written by Mr. Malcolm Watson, the music being by Mr. George W. Byng, and the dances by Signor Carlo Coppi, the

cast including Miss Audrey Stafford, as the Goddess of Inspiration, Miss Judith Espinosa, as the Genius of Inspiration, Miss Edith Slack, as a Greek Dancer, Mr. Fred Farren, as Caliban, and other well-known people. The year closed with a charming *divertissement*, "Gretna Green," and a revised edition of "Soldiers of the King."



Mlle. Palladino in "Nina" at the Alhambra



Dover St. Studios
Mlle. Britta

"In Japan," a delightful ballet, adapted by Mr. S. L. Bensusan, from his story, *Dede*, with music specially composed by M. Louis Ganne, proved particularly attractive. There was a good story, the acting and dancing were unusually good, and the mounting and stage effects, under the direction of Mr. C. Dundas Slater and Mr. Charles Wilson, were fresh and beautiful, especially the "Ballet of Blossoms."

The theatre at this period was now again to come under the influence of Mr. Alfred Moul. At an Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders at the commencement of the year 1902, when the fortunes of the theatre seemed once more uncertain, Mr. Moul was invited again by both Shareholders and Directors to assume control. He responded, and within a few weeks was installed as Chairman of the Company, once more throwing his energies into a congenial task. One of his first achievements was to secure the services of an old *protégé* and a now eminent

musician, Mr. Landon Ronald.

From the pen of that accomplished artist came the music for a spectacular Patriotic Ballet entitled "Britannia's Realm," in a prologue and four scenes, invented and produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, with dances by Signor Carlo Coppi. It was one of the best planned and most extraordinarily sumptuous productions ever seen at the Alhambra, long famous for the splendour of its effects, and while there were several charming novelties, such as the *Pas des Patineurs*, in the Canadian Skating Carnival scene (the music of which must still haunt those who heard it), for sheer magnificence probably nothing finer has ever been produced on the Alhambra stage than the Indian jewel scene, and the grand *finale* representing "Homage to Britannia," and the formation of the Union Jack. It was a remarkable achievement, and well deserved the enthusiasm with which, night after night for some months, it was received.

An excellent ballet of 1903 was "The Devil's Forge," invented by Mr. Charles Wilson and Mme. Cormani, with music by Mr. George Byng. This also ran for some months, and was a charming and dramatic work, beautifully staged, and uncommonly well acted, particularly good work being done by Miss Edith Slack (a clever mime) as the hero, Karl, and Miss Marjorie Skelley, a sound and graceful dancer, as the Fairy of the Mountain.

Before this was withdrawn a delightful adaptation of "Carmen" had been staged, with much of Bizet's music, ingeniously handled by Mr. George Byng, who had composed some admirable extra numbers. It was finely staged, notable for the strength of the cast and vitality of the entire *corps de ballet*, but above all for the superb acting of Guerrero as Carmen and M.

Volbert as Don José.

Apart from Guerrero's fine presence, her magnificent dancing, the breadth, realism and intensity of her acting throughout, all of which one could never forget, there were two particularly memorable moments of that production; one was the fortune-telling scene, the other—the scene in which Carmen flirts with the Lieutenant of Gendarmes in order to lure him away from the gipsy camp, and is dividing her attention between her flirtation and the knowledge that Don José has only just been frustrated from stabbing her while so engaged, by the sudden intervention of her comrades, who are endeavouring to drag him away silently so that the Lieutenant who is just in front shall not hear and so discover the presence of the gipsy band.

In the card scene, Guerrero gave in all its fullness the sense of a tragic, overhanging doom. In the other, all the combined cunning and fighting instinct of a savage animal at bay with circumstance, and trying by sheer cunning and audacity, to master it, came out, and it was not acting but reality, the real Carmen of Mérimée extricating herself and her comrades from discovery and disaster by superb daring in the use of her dazzling, unconscionable charm.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ALHAMBRA 1904-1914

THERE was plenty of novelty and ample charm in "All the Year Round," a ballet in seven scenes, written and produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, with bright and appropriate music by the well-known *chef d'orchestre* of Drury Lane, Mr. James Glover, on January 21st, 1904, by which time the late Mr. George Scott was Manager.

It was one that should always be worth revival, with topical modifications, and though a genuine ballet with a central idea connecting its varied scenes, it seemed in form somewhat to herald the *revue* which has since become such a craze. It was what one might call a ballet in free form.

The chief theme was the whim of a young French Marquis, who, having invited friends to a dinner-party and engaged a Hungarian band for their entertainment, himself turns up late to find that his *chef* is about to resign because the dinner is spoilt, and the servants are on the verge of striking, while the guests are dancing. Annoyed at a clock which reminds him of his unpunctuality, he orders its destruction. The band now "strikes" and as everything is topsy-turvy, the young host—not too blasé to enjoy any new freak—suggests that servants and guests shall change places. This done, they welcome in the New Year, and on the departure of the last guest, the butler brings his master a large Calendar which the young man is mockingly about to destroy also, when the Spirit of Happiness descends

from it, and as he pursues her, she asks him to learn how he may obtain Happiness throughout the dawning year—thus paving the way for a sort of *revue* of the Months.

The scheme gave scope for a number of charming and novel effects and topical reference to various old festivals, such as St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day; various sports and pastimes; a river scene, a seaside bathing scene, an August Bank Holiday Revel. But the greatest charm of the production was in scenes where a more poetic fancy had had free play, as in the May scene, with the approach of Spring, a glory of white and pink may, lilac and laburnum, and heralding the blossoms of early summer, finishing with a ballet of swallows and May flowers.

The Autumnal scene, with its ballet of wheat, cornflowers, poppies and autumn leaves, was a charming incident and provided an excellent contrast to the earlier scene in the warmth of its colouring. The November scene was, rightly enough, placed in London, on the Thames Embankment by Cleopatra's Needle, amid a typical London Fog; while that of December closed with a grand Christmas ballet of holly and mistletoe and icicles, with snow-clad tree and hedgerow in the background.

It was indeed a capital production and was still in the programme when a new and topical ballet, "The Entente Cordiale," was staged on August 29th following. This also was invented and produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, with excellent music by Mr. Landon Ronald, and dances arranged and composed by Signor Alfredo Curti, who was for the next few years to be closely associated, in the capacity of *maître de ballet*, with the Alhambra Theatre.

The opening prologue took place in the "Grove of Concordia," where the five Great Powers of Europe assemble to pay homage to the Goddess of Progress. But, later, the Demon of War enters upon the world-stage and stirs up strife among the Nations, so that all the horrors of War are felt throughout the world, until finally Peace prevails and summons the Ambassadors to enter and the Nations to assemble in the Temple of Peace, where the Representatives of all the Nations, assisted by the Orders of the Legion of Honour of France and the Garter of England, at last form a grand alliance of all the Powers and ensure the peace of the world in one *Grande Entente Cordiale*, a scene of splendour strangely annulled in the face of present history but, let us hope, prophetic of the future.

"Parisiana," a grand ballet in six scenes, invented and produced by Mr. Charles Wilson, with music by Mr. James W. Glover, and dances arranged by Signor Alfredo Curti, and some gorgeous costumes by Alias, from designs by Comelli, gave us in 1905 fascinating glimpses of Paris at various periods—1790, 1830, 1906. Among noteworthy members of the cast were Mlle. Jane May, heroine of the earlier production of "L'Enfant Prodigue," and one of the finest modern mimes; and also Miss Edith Slack, Miss Cormani, Signor Santini, and, for a time, Signorina Maria la Bella.

Between October, 1906, and May 14th, 1907, the Alhambra underwent partial reconstruction, with complete and elaborate redecoration, under the supervision of Mr. W. M. Brutton, the Alhambra Company's architect; and big as the task was it was carried through with entire success and with additional triumph in that it was done without

closing the theatre for a single night!

Mr. Alfred Moul had now assumed the dual task of Chairman and Managing Director, with the result that under the influence of a gentleman of extensive theatrical experience, and wide musical culture, the Alhambra entered upon a new and even yet more brilliant phase of artistic success in 1907, when "The Queen of Spades," a striking ballet of which the action and dances were composed and arranged by Signor Alfredo Curti, was staged and proved so successful as to run into a second "edition" and continue in the programme for some months.

Signor Alfredo Curti hailed from the Scala, Milan, where he had studied the difficult art of Ballet composition on the historic lines laid down by the virtual founder of the Milan school, Carlo Blasis, of whom, as of Noverre, he was a great admirer, and about whom I had many an interesting conversation. Signor Curti, whose scholarship in the history of the dance was remarkable, was an enthusiastic follower of the traditional school, and as an accomplished dancer and mime, an artist, trained geometrician, and devotee of literature and music, he brought to bear on his work as composer of Ballet, a theatrical experience and artistic sympathy, somewhat akin to that of Blasis himself; and while the action of his ballet was always coherent and dramatic his appreciation of stage effect and handling of massed groups of dancers in motion, were uncommonly fine.

In the production of "Queen of Spades," a dramatic ballet, the story of which dealt with the allure of gambling, he was supported on the musical side by that distinguished Italian composer, Signor Mario Costa, some additional numbers being contributed by Mr. George W. Byng, the costumes, of course, being

by Alias, from designs by Comelli, and scenery by Mr. T. E. Ryan.

With Signorina Maria Bordin, a finished dancer of the typical Italian school, as *prima ballerina assoluta*, seconded by that admirable mime, Miss Julia Seale, Signorina Morino, Signor Santini, and an excellent *corps de ballet*, the production achieved instant success, and enthusiastically appreciative audiences found special reason for approval in the novelty of the stage effects, such as the "Dream Visions" in the third scene, with its "Valse des Liqueurs," the "Grand March of Playing Cards and Roulettes," the novel "Bridge" minuet; the "Conflict between Evil and Good," not to mention the dramatic effect of the "Temptation" scene which followed, and the gorgeous finale in the "Nymphs' Grotto of La Source."

Ambitious and successful as was this production, it was followed, in October, 1907, by one even more striking, namely, "Les Cloches de Corneville," adapted from Planquette's world-famous *opéra comique*. The *ballet d'action* was invented and presented by Signor Alfredo Curti to the original music, as ingeniously selected, arranged and supplemented by Mr. George W. Byng. Some wonderful costumes were supplied by Alias from designs by Comelli, and the entire spectacle was produced under the personal direction of Mr. Alfred Moul. Signor G. Rosi gave an uncommonly fine study of the miserly Gaspard, Signor Santini making a "dashing" Marquis de Corneville, Miss Daisy Taylor an attractive Germaine, Miss Julia Seale playing cleverly as Grenicheux, Signorina Morino as Serpolette, while Signorina Maria Bordin won fresh laurels as the Spirit of the Bells, a part naturally

calling less for dramatic ability than for the music of motion.

The production was beautifully staged. No prettier scene has ever been set on the Alhambra stage than that of the Hiring Fair and Apple Harvest, with its dance of apple-gatherers and sabot dance; nor one more gorgeous than the last, in the Baronial Hall of the Corneville Château, with its striking Grand March of Knights. The ballet ran continuously *for over seven months*, and was revived with no less success two years later.

Once more a "topical" ballet held the place of honour in the programme on May 25th, 1908. "The Two Flags," a Franco-British *divertissement*, arranged and produced by Signor Curti, with some capital music by Mr. George W. Byng, was presented under the personal direction of Mr. Alfred Moul, the chief *rôle* of "La Gaieté de Paris" being taken by Mlle. Pomponette—the very personification of French *enfantine* gaiety—well supported by Miss Julia Seale, Signor Rosi, Signorina Morino, and other Alhambra favourites.

In the same programme was given, under the title of "Sal! Oh My!" an amusing satire on what we may term the Salome School of Dancing, then recently instituted by Miss Maud Allan. The Alhambra skit, described as "a musical etcetera" (the delightful music of which, by the way, was by Mr. George W. Byng), served to introduce to a London audience for the first time La Belle Leonora, a very handsome *danseuse* of, I believe, Spanish origin, who was, for several seasons, to become the "bright, particular star" of the Alhambra.

These two productions held sway for some months, but gave place in October, 1908, to "Paquita," a

charming romantic ballet arranged and produced by Signor Alfredo Curti, with music by Mr. George W. Byng, who once more proved his talent for composition of the kind essential for ballet, music rich in expressive melody, dramatic in orchestration, and always appropriate to the action and mood of the situation. The production introduced to London audiences for the first time, Mlle. Britta, a young Danish dancer, with an interesting personality and a marked gift for acting.

In the same programme was included "On the Square," a *divertissement* arranged and produced by Miss Elise Clerc, the scene of which was laid in Herald Square, New York, and formed a background for dances by newsboys, flower-girls, equestriennes, cake-walks, "apache" dances, a dance of "Fluffy Ruffles and Rough Riders," a clever eccentric *pas de deux*, by Miss Elise Clerc herself and the late Mr. Frank Lawton (the whistler, who first came into prominence in London in the original production of "The Belle of New York"), the most attractive item in the whole production perhaps being a marionette *pas de deux* by Mlle. Britta and Miss Carlotta Mossetti, a clever dancer and mime.



Hana
Mme. Guerrero



Dover St. Studios
Mlle. Leonora

The *divertissement* held its place in the programme for a considerable time, but was in general character

hardly up to the artistic tone of the Alhambra's past; and the production of "Psyche," a classic idyll in three scenes, of which the dramatic action and dances were by Signor Alfredo Curti, and the melodious, and always expressive music was by Mr. Alfred Moul, came as a welcome relief to the banalities of ragtime, the more so in that it provided a fine opportunity for another striking success by Mlle. Leonora, whose statuesque grace was particularly well displayed by the classic beauty of the setting provided for her.

"Femina," another fine production by Signor Curti, gave Mlle. Leonora opportunities, of which she fully availed herself, more especially in her own national dance, and Mlle. Britta achieved a marked success both as dancer and actress. Since then the more recent influx of Russian dancers to the Alhambra, in "The Dance Dream," invented and produced by Alexander A. Gorsky, and notable for superb mounting and the fine dancing of Mme. Catrina Geltzer and M. Tichomiroff; then the exquisite "1830," and since then again, another superb production of a new version of "Carmen," produced by Mr. Dion Clayton Calthrop, and with some especially fine dancing by La Malaguenita and other Spanish artists, all offered us fresh and delightful examples of the enterprise of the management responsible for them.

We must, however, leave any further consideration of the many notable examples of Ballet at the Alhambra, which during the past two or three years has been mainly given up to the *Revue*; and must now turn to the Empire where an extensive series of always artistic productions have provided those who witnessed them with many interesting and happy

memories.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE EMPIRE 1884-1906

BEFORE it opened its doors as a regular theatre, with the late H. J. Hitchins as Manager, on April 17th, 1884, the Empire had "played many parts." The site had been occupied by a royal residence which became in time a picture, or exhibition gallery and a café chantant, before being burnt down in 1865. Then the late John Hollingshead and some friends proposed erecting a theatre on the site, but the scheme fell through and the ruin remained ruinous for some years, until it became for a time a panorama of Balaclava. Then a theatre was started, to be called the Pandora, but did not get finished under that title. Finally it opened as the Empire in 1884, with "Chilperic," a musical spectacle in three acts and seven tableaux, founded on the opera adapted by H. Hersee and H. B. Farnie, with music by Hervé. The production included three grand ballets invented and arranged by Monsieur Bertrand.

The sensation of the third act was a "midnight review and electric ballet of fifty Amazons, as invented by Trouvé, of Paris (being the first time where three electric lamps are carried and manipulated by one person, with the most startling and gorgeous effect)."

The dancers included Mlle. Sismondi, Mlle. Aguzzi and Fräulein Hofschuller; and the costumes by Mons. and Mme. Alias were after designs by Bianchini, Faustin and Wilhelm, the last name being famous in association, from the opening in 1884, with the

many brilliant productions at the Empire.

It does not seem to be commonly known that while still counted as a "theatre," the Empire was already foreshadowing its destiny as a home of English Ballet. The production of "Polly" was followed by a real ballet, a version of Coppélia—*not* that of Delibes—but one founded on Hoffman's famous story, with music by Léo; Delibes' "Sylvia" also being produced at about the same period. Probably few people of to-day are aware that the famous ballet "Giselle" was also given in these early days at the Empire, in December, 1884. And again, on December 21st, 1885, was produced "Hurly Burly," a military pantomime ballet. Yet again, on June 12th, 1886, came "The Palace of Pearl," in which there were a Moorish ballet, with a Mlle. Luna as *première*, and a lace ballet, in which Mlle. Pertoldi was the bright particular star. The Empire was afterwards occupied for a time by the Gaiety Company in burlesque, while a French company was occupying the Gaiety, and, later, by the musical extravaganza, "The Lady of the Locket," in which Miss Florence St. John played the lead, and Mr. Hayden Coffin, I believe, made his first appearance as "Cosmo." Mr. Edward Solomon's opera, "Billee Taylor," was also mounted for a short run, as well as—on March 3rd, 1886—a version of "Round the World in Eighty Days," in which Miss Kate Vaughan and Mons. Marius appeared.

Its career as a regular theatre not being as successful as had been hoped, a fresh licence was obtained, and on December 22nd, 1887, under the joint direction of Mr. George Edwardes and the late Sir Augustus Harris—with Mr. H. J. Hitchins as Manager—it started afresh as a theatre of varieties, with Ballet as its chief attraction, and it at once

assumed an important place as one of the leading variety houses of the world.

At the beginning of the Empire's prosperous career a wise choice was made in the selection of the late Madame Katti Lanner as *maîtresse de ballet*.

Daughter of the famous Viennese waltz composer, Joseph Lanner—who, when he died, was followed to the grave by some ten thousand people—and herself a keen lover of music, Mme. Katti Lanner had been in her earlier years a famous *danseuse*, who had appeared as a child at the Vienna Opera-House, and later made her world-tour, as great dancers did then and do to-day.

She told me, in the first of many pleasant interviews I had with her in her retirement, how, as a young girl, she had danced with Cerito, and with Fanny Elssler, and how the latter had prophesied for her a successful career; and she spoke with deep enthusiasm of the personal fascination, the brilliant art, and the noble bearing of the great dancer who was known to London of the 'forties as the "divine" Fanny.

In the course of time Mme. Lanner came to settle in London, and had produced ballets at Her Majesty's —at which she had also appeared—and at Drury Lane, before her invaluable services were secured by the far-seeing management of the Empire in 1887.

She had already, some ten years before, established her National School of Dancing; and with this to draw upon, it was only natural that, from the first, her productions at the Empire should be marked by a uniformly high standard of technique. At no theatre or opera-house can a high standard be maintained unless it can draw upon some such

school, either on the premises or off, where young talent is fostered and developed, where consistent practice is kept up under critical eyes, and where a uniform degree of technical efficiency and a high sense of style are cultivated. So it has been with Milan and Paris, Vienna and Petrograd; and so it became when Mme. Lanner began her association with that series of productions at the Empire of which it may be truthfully said that each achieved both artistic and financial success.

The programme on the opening night, Thursday, December 22nd, 1887, included two ballets, “Sports of England” and “Dilara.” The former—the costumes for which were designed by Mr. Percy Anderson—was, as its title betokens, a representation of the various British sports and pastimes, and was naturally very popular with the *habitués* of the Empire. The second—the costumes of which were designed by Mr. C. Wilhelm—was a brilliant spectacle, of Eastern character; and both ballets, arranged by Mme. Lanner, with music by Hervé, had a run of some months.

They were succeeded by “Rose d’Amour” in May, 1888, which those who remember it speak of to-day as one of Mme. Katti Lanner’s greatest triumphs. It was notable, too, for the appearance of such dancers as Mlle. Adèle Rossi—who, I believe, had come from the Paris Opera—Mlle. Santori, Mlle. de Sortis; Ænea, the flying dancer, and the wondrous Mons. Cecchetti, who, gifted with amazing youth, was appearing recently with the Russians at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. “Rose d’Amour,” like Darwin’s poem of a century earlier, dealt with “the loves of the plants,” or at any rate of the flowers, and the quarrels in flowerland. It was a long and rather

elaborate production, with a prodigal array of lovely costumes designed by Mr. Wilhelm; and it rather opened the eyes of Londoners as to the possibilities of the art of Ballet. “Diana,” a graceful idyll on classic lines—the scenario of which was suggested by Mr. Wilhelm, and arranged by Mme. Lanner—followed on October 31st of the same year, with that graceful dancer, Mme. Palladino, and Signor Albertieri in the cast, and, later, Mme. Malvina Cavallazzi, who appeared for the first time in ballet skirts at the Empire, and for the last time in the same typical costume; her subsequent appearances being usually in male character, of which she was a truly fine exponent. “Diana” was followed by “Robert Macaire.”

Early next year came the first London production of Paul Martinetti and Hervé’s “A Duel in the Snow,” which was less in the nature of a regular ballet than of pure pantomime, was a finely dramatic effort well staged and acted. In the spring of ’eighty-nine was produced another superb ballet, “Cleopatra” (inspired by Sir Rider Haggard’s novel, then appearing in serial form in the pages of the *Illustrated London News*), which ran for some four months and was immensely admired.

In the autumn it gave place to a popular production, dealing with the diversions, and bearing the title of “The Paris Exhibition”; and in December of the same year, on the eve of Christmas Eve, came a wonderful production, “The Dream of Wealth,” by Mme. Katti Lanner, with music by that fine composer—so long afterwards associated with the Empire—Mons. L. Wenzel, and with costumes and accessories designed “as before” by Mr. Wilhelm. The cast included that superb mime, Signora Malvina

Cavallazzi, as a Miser; Signor Luigi Albertieri as the Demon of Avarice; and dainty little Mlle. Bettina de Sortis as *première*, representing "The Key of the Jewel Casket."

The same admirable trio were included in the new ballet, "Cécile" (by Lanner, Wenzel, and Wilhelm, again), which followed on May 20th, 1890, the *première danseuse* being Mlle. Giuri, a dancer of exquisite finish and singularly *élégante* style, as well as a most admirable mime. The period of the *divertissement* was Louis-Seize, and the production was very charmingly staged, one of the chief points being a wonderful colour scheme of almost one tone, composed of white and silver and mother-of-pearl. This was in the second tableau, depicting a court in the palace of a Rajah who had very wrongly abducted a pupil from a French school! In this ballet that delightful English dancer Miss Topsy Sinden first made her London *début* as a tiny child, with her brother, Bert Sinden.

The spring of next year was marked by the production of "Orfeo," the scenario of which was by Mr. Wilhelm, the scenery by Telbin. It was an impressive example of classic ballet. Mme. Cavallazzi was a superb exponent of the title-*rôle*, Miss Ada Vincent was excellent as Eurydice, and good support was given by Mlle. Adèle Rossi and Signor Cecchetti. The autumn of the same year saw the advent of "By the Sea," perhaps the earliest of the "up-to-date" ballets; and on December 22nd that of "Nisita," the latter a romantic ballet with an Albanian setting, a very pretty second tableau showing a "Revel of the Fairies," and with Mlle. Emma Palladino as the handsome heroine Nita, and Mme. Cavallazzi as the hero, Delvinos. The first night this was produced,

December 22nd, 1891, by the way, there was one of the very worst fogs London has ever seen, so thick that you could not see the drop curtain from the third row of the stalls! But the innate brightness of the production overcame its gloomy environment at birth and it ran for months.

In May, 1892, came “Versailles,” another superb production for the scenario of which, as well as of course the costumes, Mr. Wilhelm was mainly responsible, though it was as usual “choregraphically” arranged by Mme. Katti Lanner, with delightful music by Mons. Leopold Wenzel. This ran until September, when “Round the Town” (a ballet the scenario of which was by Mr. George Edwardes and Mme. Lanner) was staged, and proved so popular as a topical *divertissement* (not unlike our present day *Revues*) that it held the bill for some months. An interesting point in connection with this ballet was that the late Miss Katie Seymour, one of the very neatest English dancers that ever trod the London boards, joined the cast after the production had run a little time, and as a Salvation Lassie performed an eccentric dance with Mr. Willie Warde, also an extremely able English dancer, that was one of the successes of the theatrical season. In 1893, the theatre was closed from October 27th to November 2nd, owing to intervention by the County Council.

One of the finest productions yet seen at a theatre which by now had become famous for its ballets, was “Faust,” first produced on May 6th, 1895. The scenario of this, as well as the costume designs, were by Mr. Wilhelm, and it was an ingenious variation of the Gounod version, the music not by Gounod, but by Mr. Meyer Lutz and Mr. Ernest Ford, the ballet being arranged as usual by Mme. Lanner. Mme.

Cavallazzi was superb as Faust; Miss Ada Vincent was the Gretchen, Mlle. Zanfretta was a striking exponent of Mephistopheles, and among the cast was Mr. Will Bishop, a clever eccentric dancer, who was associated with the Empire for several seasons. This was followed, in the January of 1896, by a charming ballet entitled "La Danse," in which the history of dancing was illustrated and various dancers of the older schools, such as Sallé, Taglioni and others, as well as the modern, were typified. In October came "Monte Cristo"—another superb production staged and designed by Mr. Wilhelm, to whom I am indebted for many interesting details of the Empire's history. This brings to a close the record of success from the opening of the Empire in 1887 to the close of 1896. This first phase was one of increasing triumph; a second, more splendid still, was to come. We had seen Ballet perfect of its kind. But yet, perfection was to be crowned by the supremacy of terpsichorean and mimetic art—the art of Adeline Génée.

"Under One Flag," a topical ballet in celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, in 1897, ran for some months. Before the close of the year the Treasure Island tableau in "Monte Cristo" was staged, and in this, on November 22nd, 1897, a certain historic event took place—Mlle. Adeline Génée made her London *début* at the Empire Theatre.

One of her critics at the time wrote that: "Her *pas seuls* commanded encores which were thoroughly deserved. The dancer is lissom to a degree and thoroughly mistress of her art. With her terpsichorean ability she has the advantage of a prepossessing personality, which will assist in endearing her to the public." So much did her

personality endear her to the public that Mlle. Génée's first engagement at the Empire *for six weeks extended to over ten years*, with return visits after that!

Looking back at the great dancers of the past, we see that all illustrate the incalculable value of personality in art. The technique of a Camargo or Sallé, Taglioni or Grahn, Karsavina or Génée, has the same foundation—the traditional "five positions," which are to the Dance what the octave is to the sister art of Music. Before a dancer can hope to appear with success on any stage she must have acquired a knowledge of those "five positions," and their possibilities of choregraphic combination. The ease and rapidity with which she illustrates them, the fluidity of the phrases and melodies of movement which she evolves from them, and the qualities of "finish" and "style" are finally achieved only by incessant practice. She must attain as complete a mastery of the mechanism of her body as can be attained. No technique in any art is acquired without labour; and no success is won without technique. That much therefore can be taken for granted in any great artist. But persistent practice and the acquisition of a fine technique may still leave a dancer merely an exquisite automaton if she has not "personality"; a quality not readily defined, but which undeniably marks her as different from others. Perhaps that is, after all, the truest definition—a differentiation from others.

Endowed with the royal gift of personality, Mlle. Génée had worked incessantly before she made her first appearance in London at about the age of seventeen. Born in Copenhagen of Danish parents, the famous dancer began her training when only

eight years old, under the tuition of her uncle and aunt, Mons. and Mme. Alexander Génée, both of whom (the latter as Mlle. Zimmermann) had won considerable reputation as dancers, and producers of ballet, at various continental opera-houses and theatres in the 'sixties and 'seventies. They had appeared at Copenhagen, Vienna, Dresden, Munich, Budapest, and at Stettin, where Mons. Alexander Génée had a theatre for some years, and where Mlle. Adeline made some of her earliest appearances as a child. Subsequently she went to Berlin and to Munich, and it was while dancing in the latter city that she was called to London by Mr. George Edwardes on behalf of the Empire management.

Her first appearance here was emphatically a success. But it was her performance as the Spirit of the "Liberty of the Press" in the famous Empire ballet, "The Press" (invented and designed by Mr. Wilhelm with the choregraphic support of Mme. Lanner and music by Mons. Wenzel), on February 14th, 1898, that first marked her—and for many years to come—as a London "star." The ballet gave her scope for some wonderful *pas*, and proved immensely popular. It was a novel idea, artistically carried out, and illustrated the history and power of the Fourth Estate. A number of charming coryphées were ingeniously attired as representatives of the various newspapers, boys' costumes indicating the morning and girls' the evening journals. The venerable *Times* was typified by a man in the guise of Father Time, with hour-glass and other symbols of his ancient office, and accompanied by a retinue. Mme. Cavallazzi represented Caxton, Father of the Printing Press; Mlle. Zanfretta, the Spirit of Fashion; and there were typical costumes for *The Standard*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Globe*, *The Daily Mail* (then

two years old!), *The Illustrated London News* (who announced that she was "Established 1842"), *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *The Lady's Pictorial*, *The Sketch*, *The Referee*, and others too numerous to name. So popular did the ballet prove that this also ran for months, and it was not until October of the same year that a new production, "Alaska," was staged, the scenario of which was by Mr. Wilhelm, the choregraphy by Mme. Lanner, and music by Mons. Wenzel.

The production which a contemporary critic described as "one of the most gorgeous ballets ever produced at the Empire," is another example of the influence of topical events on the history of the Ballet, for it was due to the discovery of the Klondyke goldfields, the first news of which had come to us the year before, that is, in Jubilee year, but the real wonders of which only began fully to reveal themselves in the summer of 1898, when everyone talked and dreamed of little else than "Klondyke"! The ballet opened with a blinding snowstorm, and the scene, laid in the snow-bound regions of the North-West, glowed, as the storm ceased, with the grandeur of the Aurora Borealis. The story dealt with the adventures of one Alec Wylie (Mme. Cavallazzi), leader of an expedition to Klondyke, who, tempted by the Demon Avarice, quarrels with and leaves for dead his partner, Frank Courage, whose life is saved by the ice fairies and who is vouchsafed a vision of golden realms by the Fairy Good Fortune. The production was rich in striking scenes and stage effects, and once again Mlle. Génée further confirmed her growing capacity to "endear" herself to London audiences by her performance as the Fairy Good Fortune.

On May 8th of the following year, 1899, “Round the Town Again,” by Mme. Lanner, Mr. Wilhelm and Mons. Wenzel, was produced. This was entirely different from the original “Round the Town,” and with a second edition, also further altered, in January, 1900, ran until the end of August, 1900, that is, for fifteen months! Mlle. Génée, Mlle. Zanfretta and Mr. Will Bishop were the leading dancers, with a change of cast for a time when Mlle. Edvige Gantenberg took up Mlle. Génée’s part of Lisette, a French maid, during the latter’s absence on a brief holiday. A revised edition of “By the Sea,” under the title of “Seaside,” came on in September, 1900, the cast including Mlle. Génée, Signor Santini, Mr. Will Bishop and also Mr. Frank Lawton, whose whistling had so long been one of the attractions, elsewhere, of the “Belle of New York.”

Next came a fascinating ballet “Les Papillons,” the scenario and staging of which were by Mr. Wilhelm. Of this an enthusiastic critic declared: “It is, indeed, a beautiful butterfly ballet that the Empire Theatre is just now able to boast. With it the management draws crowded houses, and sends them away delighted—delighted with the colour, exhilarated by the movement, charmed by the fancy, and ready to sing the praises of all concerned in a truly marvellous production, and particularly of Mr. Wilhelm, whose designs have given further proof of the taste which governs his fertile imagination and invention, and of Mme. Katti Lanner, for whom the dances and evolutions mean another veritable triumph.” Mlle. Adeline Génée, as lead, played “Vanessa Imperialis,” the Butterfly Queen, who was “discovered” at the opening of the ballet fast asleep in the lovely realm over which she reigned. A glow-worm patrol guarded her slumbers, which ended with the coming of dawn,

when she joined her subjects and the flower-fays in dances, and the revels of a fairy midsummer's day dream.

On November 6th of the same year followed "Old China," a delightful ballet, invented and designed by Mr. C. Wilhelm, associated, as usual, with Mme. Lanner and Mons. Wenzel, and with Mlle. Génée as *première danseuse*. The opening scene showed a mantelpiece, backed by a great mirror, in which the actions of a little Dresden China Shepherdess (Mlle. Génée) and her two troublesome lovers, were exactly repeated in the looking-glass, through which finally the indignant damsel stepped—to the chagrin of her disconsolate lovers—right into Willow Pattern Land, which formed the second scene, and into which some particularly rich and beautiful effects were introduced. "Old China" ran for some months, and on May 28th of the following year was succeeded by another "topical" ballet, "Our Crown," again the work of the accomplished trio, who had so long contributed to the success of the Empire productions, and were now receiving the brilliant assistance of the Danish *première*, who had thoroughly established herself in popular favour. It was, of course in celebration of that crowning of the late King Edward which had been so unhappily postponed, through his late Majesty's illness on the very eve of what should have been his Coronation. This, again, was a most brilliant production, and the final tableau, practically a "Staircase" scene, in which the great stage was built up with groups representative of the jewelled products of the various British colonies, rubies, emeralds, diamonds, pearls, was magnificent. As in the case of the Victorian Jubilee ballet of five years before, this was a conspicuous triumph in the

particularly difficult sphere of *ballets d'occasion*.

The first production of 1903 was also the first of what may be called essentially the Génée ballets—ballets, that is, which seemed more particularly than before, infused with the personality of this accomplished dancer. Since her London *début* in 1897 she had played the leading part, certainly, but now it seemed almost as if her personality coloured the whole ballet itself, even as unquestionably her supreme technique set an example and had its influence in raising the already high standard of technique throughout the *corps de ballet*. The scenario and staging of "The Milliner Duchess" were by Mr. Wilhelm, and the story was specially designed to give Mlle. Génée an opportunity of further exhibiting her gifts as an actress. Into a fashionable throng frequenting the establishment of an up-to-date duchess who was running a milliner's business was introduced her demure little niece, impersonated, of course, by Mlle. Génée; and her first entrance, in a gown of primitively early-Victorian simplicity, was charming in its hesitancy, and one realised that she was something more even than a finished dancer, namely, a born mime with a fine artistic appreciation of the *nuances* of comedy.

In her dance descriptive of the charms of country life, so clever and so perfect was the combination of mime and dance that a positive illusion was created; and only at the close did one realise, suddenly, that it was veritably a song without words. A step, a gesture, a little glance, and one could have sworn one heard a poet's lines! Popular as the dancer had already made herself, her work in this particularly charming ballet confirmed the growing opinion that here was a dancer who was supreme in her art as a

dancer-mime; one to be reckoned among any gallery of the great artists of the past.

In the autumn of the same year was staged a ballet by the same experienced trio, Wilhelm, Lanner and Wenzel, entitled "Vineland," which introduced to us some novel and sumptuous colour schemes and gave us the sensation of Mlle. Génée's "champagne" dance, a piece of terpsichorean music as sparkling as the most glittering of Offenbach's operatic melodies. Early next year there followed the lively, up-to-date *divertissement*, "High Jinks," in which the leading parts were played by Mlle. Génée, Mlle. Zanfretta, Miss Dorothy Craske, and Mr. Fred Farren.

An adaptation by Mr. Wilhelm from the popular Viennese ballet, "Die Puppenfee," under the English title of "The Dancing Doll," was produced on January 3rd, 1905, and was notable, among other things, for Mlle. Génée's impersonation of an automaton in situations not very dissimilar from those of "La Poupée," and a notable point in the production was a delightful eccentric dance by Miss Elise Clerc and Mr. W. Vokes, as a pair of Dutch dolls. This very successful ballet went into a second edition on April 3rd, and on June 30th the theatre was closed for redecoration.

When it reopened on October 9th of that year the *habitués* found considerable alterations had taken place under the direction of Mr. Frank Verity, F.R.I.B.A., all designed for their increased comfort, while the decorative style, representative of the true Empire period, had a note of distinction hitherto lacking in some of the London vaudeville houses, a note more in keeping with the demands of modern times. The opening ballet, by Mr. C. Wilhelm and Mr. Sidney Jones, was "The Bugle Call," which had a

well defined plot, and in which Mlle. Génée played the part of a French bugler boy of the late eighteenth century.

On the afternoon of January 6th (1906) a version of "Cinderella," one of the most charming of Mr. Wilhelm's creations, was staged, originally with a view only to *matinée* performances, but it proved so successful that it went into the evening bill on February 5th. The creator of the ballet had treated the age-long legend of Cinderella with that respect for its mingled poetry and pathos which an artist of sympathy must always feel for one of childhood's most appealing legends; and he provided Mlle. Génée once more with an opportunity for proving her remarkable gifts as an actress, fully in sympathy with the character and sufferings of the little heroine she impersonated.

On May 14th, Delibes' classic example of Ballet in its ideal form, namely, "Coppélia," was produced specially for Mlle. Génée, and gave her, as the heroine, Swanilda, fresh opportunity for further revelations of her amazing accomplishments as a dancer and for her expressive acting; in which, by the way, she was admirably supported by Mr. Fred Farren in the character of the old doll-maker, Coppélia; and by Miss Dorothy Craske as Coppélia's somewhat wavering lover. The production was a great success. How should it have been otherwise? Perfectly staged and perfectly performed, it is, with its haunting Slav rhythms and flowing *valse* melodies, one of the most charming, and musically, one of the most expressive ballets in the world's *répertoire*.

This was followed on August 6th by one of the most exquisite productions the Empire had yet seen,

a ballet by Mr. C. Wilhelm, entitled “Fête Galante,” which had been expanded from the opening scene of “Cinderella.”

To see the “Fête Galante” was itself a liberal education in the art of stage effect. It was an ideal realisation of the art of Watteau, Lancret, and Fragonard. The very spirit of the period was caught, and it was as if all that one had learnt at secondhand of the people, the dress, the manners, dances, arts and music of the “Grand Century” in France had suddenly awakened into life, and become a living reality of which one was a living part. Yet, paradoxically, it was strangely dream-like still, even as are Watteau’s pictures.

The scene represented a garden such as you see in so many of his paintings, and those of his school, primarily reminiscent of Pater’s “Conversation Galante” and Watteau’s “Fête Galante,” “L’amour au Théâtre Français,” and the “Terrace Party.” One of the young Court ladies reminded one of the central figure in the “Bal sous une Colonnade.” A minuet was in progress. All was stately and dream-like, made the more so by the music.

For all the gaiety of the huntsmen’s entrance it was gaiety demure, as if restrained by an inherent sense of fitness with stately surroundings; and so with the troupe of dancers, introduced for the diversion of the Marquise Belle Etoile, and the Court ladies and courtiers grouped about her. The mood of all, demurely gay, or gaily demure, was suffused with a stately languor, a dream-like grace that found an echo in the subtle colour-harmonies of the old-world garden in which the people moved.

And when the opera-dancer, L’Hirondelle, and Passepied the master of the revels, began their *pas de*

deux, the climax of exquisite illusion was reached, and Camargo was before us—the Camargo of Lancret's famous picture, with the soft, full white skirts, trimmed with garlands of small pink roses and falling almost to the ankle; Camargo with the red-heeled, red-rosetted shoes; with blue shoulder-knot and powdered hair adorned with pale blue ribbons.

As the fête drew to a close the picture mellowed in the amber light of a waning day; and, amid fallen leaf and chestnut bloom, slowly marquise and prince, Court lady and courtier, dancer and page, began in stately fashion to dance, their shadows lengthening in the failing light, the music growing slower and dreamier as, little by little, the picture was re-formed into the likeness of the opening scene, and the falling curtain brought one back into the world of living things to-day.

Another brilliant reconstruction of the Past was achieved by Mr. Wilhelm in his creation of "The Débutante" (November 15th, 1906), which revivified the men and maids and *modes*, the dance of life, and the life of the dance, of that strangely interesting period of the 'thirties and 'forties, the days of Pauline Duverney, Leroux, Fanny Elssler, and Taglioni's earlier years. The scene represented the *Salon de Danse* attached to an opera-house, the story dealing with the refusal of a star to take up her part in a ballet which is on the eve of production, her place being taken at the eleventh hour by a *débutante* (Mlle. Génée) with almost miraculous abilities. For this production, and in order that the style of the earlier dances should be represented on the stage with regard for accuracy and tradition, Mme. Katti Lanner, who had left the Empire in 1905, was induced to withdraw from her retirement

temporarily at the request of the Directors, and out of personal friendship towards Mr. Wilhelm, with whose artistic aims she had so constantly shown her sympathy. Her reappearance to take another "call" proved another personal triumph. The ballet was indeed a charming work, fascinating to students of the dance and mime; and it proved so successful that a new one was not required until "Sir Roger de Coverley," by Adrian Ross and Dr. Osmond Carr, staged by Mr. Wilhelm, came into the bill on May 7th in the following year. As its title betokens, it dealt with the period of Queen Anne and showed a charming representation of the life of old Vauxhall. This, too, ran for some months and was succeeded on September 30th by "The Belle of the Ball," which delighted many old frequenters of the Empire with its recollection of scenes from many of the earlier operatic favourites of the 'sixties and 'seventies, such as "Madame Angot," "The Grand Duchess," and other light operas, coming up to more recent productions, such as "The Belle of New York," "The Geisha," and others.



Mlle. Adeline Génée

The production marked the *début* of that brilliant young English dancer, Miss Phyllis Bedells, and also the end of Mlle. Génée's unbroken ten years' reign at the Empire Theatre, the tenth anniversary of her first appearance being celebrated on November 22nd, when the house was packed from floor to ceiling with a crowd whose growing enthusiasm culminated in a perfect tornado of applause on the falling of the curtain and something like a score of "calls"; the dancer having achieved by her personality and technique such a triumph as had not been known in London since the great days of Taglioni and the famous *Pas de Quatre* of the 'forties. She left to carry her influence to America, but there were of course return visits which concern us not at present in dealing only with what may be styled her ten years' reign.

But in watching that decade closely with all its procession of successes, one thing there is that strikes

one very forcibly. It was only the natural corollary of the previous decade before the advent of Mlle. Génée. For some twenty years the artistic influence of one mind had been, never obtrusive, but invariably evident; never obtrusive, that is, to the detriment of that balance of the arts which makes a perfect ballet; I mean the artistic influence of Mr. C. Wilhelm. Before the coming of Mlle. Génée they had had some good dancers and some great artistic successes; but there had hardly been, perhaps, quite that unity and perfection of *ensemble* which the coming of a dancer of superb technique made possible, and which, it may be, enabled a designer of ballet, already of great experience and inspired always by high artistic motives—not only to aim at, but to *count on*, achieving just the effect at which he aimed. Theatrical art must always be a somewhat composite art, but its best achievements come from a perfect blending of artistic sympathies, forming a source of mutual inspiration. So, while the personality and technical accomplishment of Mlle. Génée must have proved a stimulus to the poetic imagination of an artist like Mr. Wilhelm, so, too, the famous Danish *danseuse* could well afford to admit a debt of inspiration to the refined, sensitive and poetic art of Mr. Wilhelm, who has provided so invariably a worthy and gracious medium for her supreme art as dancer-mime.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE EMPIRE 1907-1914

WHEN the news was first announced that an end was to come to Mlle. Adeline Génée's ten years' reign at the Empire and that the famous dancer was seeking, if not new worlds to conquer, at least to conquer what was once always spoken of as "The 'New' World," many who had followed the progress of Ballet in London must have wondered where anyone could hope to find a successor to her throne, and who would have the courage to accept an offer thereof.

But London theatrical managers are not lacking in resource, or English girls in courage; and it was with real pleasure that we heard that so worthy a successor had been found as that graceful and essentially English dancer, Miss Topsy Sinden, who had already been associated with the Empire as a child some years before.

Of Mlle. Génée's triumph in "The Belle of the Ball," I have already spoken. Shortly after, the production underwent a change, and the fact that the new version was still in the bill on the following June 1st, proves the popularity of the production and of the Empire's choice of Miss Sinden as *première danseuse*. Her success was the more interesting in that in temperament and in methods she was entirely different from the famous Danish dancer. A typical English girl, with all the charm of looks and manner implied thereby, she had studied not so much the purely traditional French or Italian school of ballet-

dancing—though she had, of course, acquired that too—but the English school; of which the late Miss Kate Vaughan was, in her time, the finest exponent, and of which Miss Sylvia Grey, Miss Phyllis Broughton, the late Miss Katie Seymour, Miss Letty Lind, Miss Alice Lethbridge, and Miss Mabel Love, may be taken as leading representatives during the past twenty years.

Miss Sinden had had long and invaluable stage experience before becoming *première danseuse* at the Empire; had appeared in pantomime at Covent Garden, Drury Lane, at the old "Brit," and at Liverpool and elsewhere; had "done" the Halls; had appeared at the Haymarket under Sir H. Beerbohm Tree's management; had appeared at the Gaiety in "Cinderella Up-to-Date," "In Town," "Don Juan," "The Gaiety Girl," and "The Shop Girl"; at Daly's in "The Greek Slave," in "The Country Girl," and other productions; and always she won fresh distinction as one of the most vivacious, *piquante*, graceful and finished English dancers the London stage has ever known.

Her appearance in "The Belle of the Ball" was marked by the most cordial welcome from the Press and the public, and one of the first greetings she received on her return to the Empire was a telegram from Brighton which ran as follows: "My good wishes, and I hope you will do yourself justice. You are one of the best dancers I know.—Adeline Génée." That Miss Sinden *did* do herself justice was seen in the enthusiastic cheers and demands for *encores* which greeted her at the close of her scenes on that "big night" of her return to the Empire stage.

"The Belle of the Ball" gave place to a revival of "Coppélia" and—the return of Mlle. Adeline Génée.

Many as her triumphs had been during her ten years' unbroken reign, that Wednesday night, June 10th, 1908, must be recorded in Mlle. Génée's memory in letters of gold, for even she can never have seen such a house, so crammed from floor to ceiling with a distinguished audience, including King George (then Prince of Wales), and been welcomed with such thunderous cheering and applause as greeted her on her first appearance through the little brown door of Swanilda's balconied house, when she floated down the stairs to the centre of the stage, so lightly indeed that she seemed almost to flutter before the storm of enthusiasm which welcomed her return. And how she danced! Only her peer among poets could describe it, and then he would probably feel as Thackeray felt when endeavouring to do justice to Taglioni in "Sylphide!"

For some seasons past we have had the Russian ballet as a standing dish, over which various epicures have gloated as if no other fare had ever been. But it is interesting to note that the first of "all the Russias" was Mlle. Lydia Kyasht, who made her London *début* at the Empire, in some dances with M. Adolph Bolm, on August 17th, 1908. For the present, and to preserve historical order, let the fact be merely recorded, leaving further reference thereto until the time it becomes necessary to chronicle the handsome Russian dancer's later successes.

On September 7th of that same year came the production of one of the most perfect gems yet seen in the historic gallery of Ballet, namely, "The Dryad," a pastoral fantasy in two tableaux, by that brilliant composer, Miss Dora Bright. From time to time, in such productions as "The Milliner Duchess," "Coppélia," and "The Débutante," we had had an

opportunity of realising something of Mlle. Génée's gifts as an actress apart from her supremacy as a dancer, but it was mainly as a dancer, surrounded by dancers, that we have seen her. Now, however, we were to have a conclusive revelation of the fact that had Mlle. Génée not elected to become a great dancer she could have achieved distinction as an actress. The story, of which she was the heroine, gave her an opportunity of proving that; and with herself in the title-*rôle*, that artistic singer, Mr. Gordon Cleather, as a shepherd, and with the support of wonderfully expressive and beautifully orchestrated *mimodrame* music, the sister arts of dance, song, mime, and music, were brought together to give us a balanced harmony of lovely and memorable impressions.

The fantasy told how a certain Dryad, fairest of the Wood Nymphs, subdued all mortals to her by her loveliness and the magic of her dancing, whom the implacable Aphrodite caused to be imprisoned in an oak tree, only granting her freedom to come forth once in every ten years between sunrise and sunset until she should find a mortal faithful to her during the allotted period. A shepherd, passing through the wood on the night of her freedom, sees her dancing beneath the moon, and is lured to love her and vows eternal constancy. When the dawn breaks she bids him farewell and re-enters the tree, which closes around her. After ten years have passed away, the Dryad comes forth again seeking to allay the longing she has kindled, but her lover had not been constant, and the wood is empty. She dances through the night, deluding herself with hope until the hour of her doom returns and she is compelled to re-enter the tree.

The Dryad, afire with joy at being released from the imprisoning tree, and discovering the beauty of the sunlit, flower-strewn forest glade; joyous in her love of the handsome shepherd and his love returned; her sorrow at parting to return to the tree; her deeper joy on her renewed release; her alternating hope and fear as the concluding moment of the ten-year tryst draws nigh; her eager search for her lover; the shuddering tremors of doubt as she finds him not; her triumphant happiness as she hears his voice; the heart-wringing suspense, and then the overwhelming despair, as she finds he has forgotten her for another love and passes on his way, leaving her solitary and doomed to be imprisoned yet again within the tree, desolate amid autumnal desolation; these, and a thousand more *nuances*, expressive of poetic emotion, were conveyed with a sureness, a sensitiveness, a depth of instinctive dramatic genius that astonished, delighted and enthralled.

So great was the success of "The Dryad" that Mlle. Génée's engagement was extended, but the strain of appearing in both "Coppélia" and Miss Bright's exquisite fantasy proving too considerable, the famous dancer reserved her strength for her final appearance in the latter, while Mlle. Lydia Kyasht, then comparatively a new-comer to the Empire audiences, took up the part of "Swanilda," in Delibes' masterpiece with considerable success.

Ere departing for a forty weeks' tour of America, Mlle. Génée gave a farewell "professional" *matinée* at the Empire, at which everyone of note in "*the* profession" was present, and gave her the same enthusiastic appreciation as had always been accorded by the lay public.

Following Mlle. Génée's departure for America,

and Mlle. Kyasht's appearance in "Coppélia," came the production on October 19th, 1908, of a ballet in five scenes by Lieut.-Col. Newnham-Davis, entitled "A Day in Paris," produced by Mr. Fred Farren, with music by Mr. Cuthbert Clarke, the entire production being designed and supervised by Mr. C. Wilhelm, who was at his happiest in invention and control of colour in the prismatic beauty of the final tableau of the Artists' Ball.

On the occasion of her previous appearance Mlle. Kyasht's name had been printed in the programme as Mlle. Lydia Kyaksht, and I remember well the humorous dismay the late Mr. H. J. Hitchins expressed to me as he asked: "How *can* one pronounce a name like that?" and the eagerness with which he welcomed the suggestion that it would be easier if the second "k" were omitted. Kyasht it became, and it is as Mlle. Kyasht that we shall always remember the handsome dancer who was first of the Russians to win a following in London. She had, of course, received her training at the Imperial Theatre, Petrograd, to which she had been attached some time, appearing there for some eight months each year, and at Monte Carlo and other fashionable centres for the remaining months, before she made her London *début*. She has little of that vehemence and abandon which characterises so many of the modern Russian school, but she has *au fond* the same technique, a finely formed and balanced figure, and personal beauty, and her first appearances with that fine dancer, M. Adolf Bolm, in national dances and *pas de ballet* evoked very cordial admiration.

"A Day in Paris" was notable not only for the appearance of the new Russian *première* in a couple

of *pas seuls* and an extremely charming *Danse Russe*, but for the brilliant acting and step-dancing of Mr. Fred Farren, who as a Montmartre student freakishly officiating as "a man from Cook's" to a party of tourists, proved himself a born comedian; while in association with that lithe and graceful dancer, Miss Beatrice Collier, his *Danse des Apaches*—a dance without the charm of beauty but undeniably clever—was one of the "sensations" of the production, so much so that the dancers became in much request for entertaining at social functions that season, as Tango performers have been since. Another member of the company, who, though but a child, achieved a marked success, was Miss Phyllis Bedells, who did some wonderful toe-dancing with, and without, a skipping rope. The ballet was one of the liveliest and "jolliest" of many such topical and essentially "modern" entertainments at the Empire, and it ran from October 1908, well into the next summer.

Yet once again Mlle. Adeline Génée returned to the scene of her former triumphs to achieve one more, this time in the famous *ballet-divertissement* from the third act of Meyerbeer's opera, "Roberto il Diavolo," which was produced by her uncle, M. Alexandre Génée, on July 3rd, 1909, the *mise en scène* and costumes being designed and supervised by Mr. C. Wilhelm. Once more we had an opportunity of enjoying a perfect representation of one of the classics of Ballet, in which Mlle. Adeline Génée appeared as the Spirit of Elena the wicked abbess, who, with the spectres of the dead and buried nuns, haunts a ruined Sicilian Convent. It was a fine and *spirituelle* performance, and a fitting crown to what we may perhaps be allowed to call Mlle. Génée's Imperial career.

This was followed on October 9th, 1909, by "Round the World," a new dramatic ballet in six scenes, by Lieut.-Col. Newnham-Davis and Mr. C. Wilhelm, the entire production being designed and supervised by the latter, and the dances arranged by Mr. Fred Farren, who himself played the part of a resourceful chauffeur, while Mlle. Lydia Kyasht impersonated the lovely heroine, Natalia, a Russian gipsy girl, and Miss Phyllis Bedells her younger brother, Dmitri. The story concerned the winning of a wager by the hero, a Captain Jack Beresford, (Mr. Noel Fleming), who has to circle the world in a month; and the course of his adventures took us from the grounds of the Monaco Club to the Place Krasnaia, Moscow, on the occasion of a wonderfully realised national fête, where he rescues Natalia and her brother from Tzabor, a brutal proprietor of a troupe of gipsy dancers. The third scene was on the Siberian railway; the fourth a lovely scene at Tokio, in the Garden of Ten Thousand Joys, where the hero is nearly poisoned; the fifth, 'Frisco, in "One-eyed Jack's" saloon, with a capital *Duo Mexicain* for Mr. Fred Farren and pretty Miss Unity More; the sixth and last scene being laid in the foyer of the Empire Theatre. The production was a sort of cinema-ballet in the variety of its scenes and the excitement of its story, and gave scope for a number of attractive and characteristic dances from Mlle. Kyasht, Mr. Fred Farren and Miss Phyllis Bedells. It proved so popular that it ran on into 1910, when, on March 21st of that year, it went into a second edition called "East and West."

Mlle. Kyasht and M. Adolf Bolm, who, early in May, 1910, appeared in a "Fantaisie Chorégraphique," a series of charming dance-idylls, produced by M. Bolm, are remarkable for that high-

voltage dancing, that volcanic energy and rapidity yet grace of movement, characteristic of the Russian school, some notable exponents of which were appearing just about the same time elsewhere.

The chief dance of the suite at the Empire was one in which Mlle. Kyasht appeared as a beautiful Princess, and M. Bolm as her enamoured slave—Mlle. Kyasht all charm and poetic ecstasy, M. Bolm all fiery energy and terpsichorean miracles, now whirling madly as the wildest of Dervishes, now suddenly stopping, poised and posed like some perfect example of classic statuary. The dancers received excellent support from Miss Phyllis Bedells and Mr. Bert Ford; the mounting and costumes were novel and admirably designed; and the production generally was voted a great success.

In the following July came a delightful *ballet-divertissement*, "The Dancing Master," by Mr. C. Wilhelm, adapted from the first scene of his earlier success, "The Débutante," the period chosen—that of 1835—affording a delightful opportunity for a quaint and picturesque *ensemble* of "early-Victorian" or slightly pre-Victorian character and costume. Mr. Fred Farren repeated his excellent character-study of M. Pirouette, the excitable *maître de ballet* at the Opera-House; Mlle. Kyasht made a handsome impersonation of Mimi the *débutante*; and Miss Phyllis Bedells added to her laurels as Mlle. Lutine, the clever head pupil. On August 8th of the same year Miss Bedells took up Mlle. Kyasht's part of Mimi during the latter's absence on a holiday, and made a great hit as a bewitching representative of the *débutante*.

On October 10th following Mlle. Kyasht and Mr. Fred Farren appeared in another of Miss Dora

Bright's ideal little fantasies, "The Faun," in which the former played Ginestra, a little flower-girl, and the latter appeared in the title-*rôle* as a marble faun who comes to life when sprinkled with water from a magic fountain. The production, designed and supervised by Mr. C. Wilhelm, was enchanting in its blending of legend and mystery, with a sunny naturalism in presentation.

It was a charming idyll, and provided an excellent opportunity for clever acting by Mr. Fred Farren, who fully realised the classic and poetic idea in his representation of the Faun, while Mlle. Kyasht quite surpassed her former work in her appealing and dramatic impersonation of the bewitched Ginestra.

A considerable contrast to the classic grace of this Tuscan idyll was seen in the following month when "Ship Ahoy!" a nautical one-scene *divertissement* by Mr. C. Wilhelm, with music by Mr. Cuthbert Clarke, was staged by Mr. Fred Farren, who also arranged the dances. It was a lively and attractive production, with plenty of fun and a dash of melodrama, the fun being contributed mainly by Mr. Fred Farren as a dandy young officer on leave, and for all his "dudism" wide-awake enough to frustrate the horrid machinations of a treacherous Ayah (originally and admirably played by Miss Beatrice Collier and later by Miss Carlotta Mossetti) and her accomplice. The young officer's lighter moments were happily given up to entertaining the Anglo-Indian passengers on H.M.S. *Empire* with step-dancing, the nimbleness and neatness of which only Mr. Farren can excel. Bright and charming dances were also contributed by Miss Phyllis Bedells and Miss Unity More, while Mlle. Lydia Kyasht distinguished herself as Léontine L'Etoile, a French *danseuse*; and a special word of

commendation is due to the freshness of invention and novelty of effect achieved by the designer in dealing with the somewhat hackneyed stage subject of life aboard ship. The final *ensemble*, when the lady passengers improvised fancy ball costumes from the ship's flag-lockers and danced beneath the soft glow of the swinging lanterns was a particularly novel, pretty and inspiriting picture.

Once more we had a classic ballet when, on May 18th, 1911, Delibes' "Sylvia," which, originally in five tableaux, was compressed by Mr. C. Wilhelm into one for production at the Empire. With its poetic mythological story and charming sylvan setting, "Sylvia"—first produced at the Paris Opera on June 14th, 1876—has always been popular on the Continent; and it is curious that London should have had to wait some twenty-five years before again seeing a ballet, selections from which had long been familiar as *entr'acte*-music for theatre orchestras. Still, it was worth waiting to see it so admirably staged.

Another contrast followed in the extremely modern and somewhat formless production, "New York," an original ballet in two scenes, by Lieut.-Col. Newnham-Davis, in which seemingly every form of American eccentricity in dancing—including the "Yankee Tangle!"—was introduced. There was a dance of Bowery boys and girls; a "Temptation Rag," by Mr. Fred Farren; a Buck Dance, an "Octette Eccentric"; a "Bill-poster's Dance"; the aforesaid "Yankee Tangle," and other not particularly beautiful or edifying examples, though the staging of the "Roof Garden" scene gave one a very agreeable scheme of warm crimson and rosy colour, and a picturesquely conceived and dressed episode of Pilgrim Fathers and

Red Indians.

Early in the next year, a brief but graceful “Dance Episode” was staged, “The Water Nymph,” arranged by Mlle. Kyasht, who followed on September 24th with another, entitled “First Love,” in which she was supported by Mons. Alexander Volinin. This was followed on February 11th, 1913, by another fanciful ballet-idyll, “The Reaper’s Dream,” in which Mlle. Lydia Kyasht appeared as the “Spirit of the Wheatsheaf,” seen and pursued in his dream by the reaper (Miss F. Martell); while Miss Phyllis Bedells made a dazzling personage as “Sun-Ray,” flitting in and out the autumn cornfield, which formed the setting for some very pretty dances by the three ladies and the Empire *corps de ballet.*

One of the most artistic productions at the Empire in quite recent years was certainly the choral ballet, in three tableaux: “Titania,” which, adapted of course from Shakespeare’s “Midsummer Night’s Dream,” was arranged and produced by Mlle. Lydia Kyasht and by Mr. C. Wilhelm, the latter of whom was, as usual, entirely responsible for the pictorial side of the ballet. It is interesting to note that this was not the first time a Shakespeare play had been so treated. No less a person than the great Dryden had adapted “The Tempest” at a time, shortly before the Great Fire of London, when Sir William Davenant was producing “dramatic operas” at a theatre designed by Wren, the Duke’s Theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, which he held under a patent granted in 1662 by Charles II. These, as an earlier historian records, were “all set off with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers.”



Dover St. Studios
Mme. Lydia Kyasht



Hugh Cecil
Miss Phyllis Bedells

Then, too, it was but a return to early history to give us vocal-ballet, for all the earliest ballets on the

French stage were always described as "opera-ballets," long declamatory and choral scenes being interspersed with dances. Lulli, Rameau, Mouret, Campra and Monteverde were among the composers of such ballets, many of which, musically at least, seem wonderfully fresh to-day. This, however, is but a digression. "Titania" at the Empire was a very graceful and poetic production, quite fairy-like enough, one feels, to have delighted even Shakespeare himself, with Mlle. Lydia Kyasht as a truly regal-looking Titania, Mr. Leonid Joukoff as a dignified Oberon, Miss Unity More as a nimble Puck (a part later played by Miss Ivy St. Helier), and Miss Phyllis Bedells as an enchanting "first fairy," Philomel. On Mlle. Kyasht's departure for America the part of Titania was taken up by Miss Phyllis Bedells, who added yet another to her growing list of artistic successes. The ballet, which was beautifully staged, gave us some enchanting pictures, one of which, the apotheosis of the Fairy Realm seen through a tangled hawthorn brake, lingers hauntingly in one's memory.

A new edition of "The Dancing Master" was subsequently staged and was notable for some brilliant dancing by Miss Phyllis Bedells, and by Mr. Edouard Espinosa in the title-*rôle*, by whom it was produced. Mr. Espinosa, by the way, forms an interesting link with the historic past. As the son of Mons. Leon Espinosa (1825-1903), an Officier D'Académie, Mr. Edouard is heir of a great tradition, and sustains the heritage most worthily. His father was a pupil of seven of the great masters of the early nineteenth, namely, Coulon (1820), Henri (1821), Albert (1829), Perrot (1831), Coralli (1831), Taglioni (1834), and Petipa (1839), to most of whom reference has already been made, and who were

themselves, variously, pupils of the previous generation—which included Vestris, Noverre, Gardel, and Dauberval—who, in turn, were tutored by Pécourt and Beauchamps in the reign of Louis-Quatorze. Mr. Edouard Espinosa himself is a fine dancer and teacher of the classic and traditional school, and is also one of the best informed on the history of the dance.

"Europe," a topical and patriotic *divertissement*, invented, designed and produced by Mr. C. Wilhelm (who, despite his *nom de théâtre*, has an English name and is essentially English born and bred), achieved, on its first performance on September 7th, 1914, an instant success. It was worthy of the best traditions of the Empire Theatre. The choice of such a theme as the condition of Europe, just before and during the greatest war in history, might have been called into question on the score of taste, and in the hands of any but a fine artist might have easily been trivialised. The subject was treated with marked dramatic ability and poetic dignity, and the production, passing from the comparative lightness of the first scene, into the more serious note of the second, attained to a high level of art in the patriotic symbolism of the third, and offered a tableau worthy the brush of any English painter of historical subjects. Since then we have seen "The Vine," an Arcadian dance-idyll, invented, designed and supervised by Mr. C. Wilhelm, while it was produced, and the dances were arranged, by Mr. Fred Farren. It was superbly staged and proved one of the most original, picturesque and dramatic productions ever seen at the Empire. Miss Phyllis Bedell's impersonation of the Spirit of the Vine seemed to have in it something of Dionysiac fire and revealed her not only as an exquisite dancer, but a

sensitive and temperamental actress. Miss Carlotta Mossetti, another singularly expressive and sympathetic mime, exhibited a sense of classic inspiration in her study of the young Shepherd tempted by the Vine-Spirit; excellent work also being done by Miss Connie Walter as the Shepherd's unhappy wife, and "Little June," a lithe and clever little dancer, as the Spirit of the Mountain Stream. The scenery, painted by Mr. R. C. McCleery; the costumes, executed by Miss Hastings, were well in keeping with the poetic character of the story, and the entire stage effect achieved formed an exquisite setting for the dancer-mimes who were to interpret the dramatic little idyll.

So runs, in brief, the chronicle of ballet at the Empire, one which, if it is somewhat attenuated in later years by the increasing emphasis of that somewhat casual type of entertainment, the "Revue," is nevertheless quite remarkable when one remembers that of the sixty or more ballets produced at the famous house in twenty-seven years all were commercially as well as artistically successful, and that the theatre has not received State-aid, as have the continental opera-houses where Ballet has been a staple attraction.

Thoughtless folk, who know little or nothing of the hard, unremitting toil which goes to make a dancer, or of the artistic training, thought and feeling which go to make a designer or producer of ballet, often speak lightly and slightingly of a type of theatrical production in which are blended colour, form, movement and music into a balanced harmony of varied arts under the term the art of Ballet. They rank it, usually, somewhere lower than Drama or Opera. But the placing of a colour in a colour scheme

requires quite as delicate a taste as the placing of a word in a sentence, or a chord in a phrase of music; the introduction of a dancer or a group needs just as critical a care as the introduction of a character in a play or opera; and the telling of the story, albeit mutely mimed, may be just as dramatic in effect as in any verbal drama. The art of Ballet is a complex and beautiful art, at its best a very beautiful; and those who are prone to dismiss it lightly as a thing that more or less occurs of itself, and is of slight account as a vehicle for the deliberate expression of beauty, should rather feel proud to think that at the Empire in London we have seen, in the course of a quarter of a century, Ballet of such artistic value as to place it among the few real art influences of nineteenth and early twentieth-century London.

CHAPTER XXXV

FINALE: THE RUSSIANS AND—THE FUTURE

IT is curious to recall the fact that a taste for dancing has always been a characteristic of the Londoners, who have supported really artistic ballet as often as they have had an opportunity.

The Elizabethan masques; the ballet dancers imported by Rich in the reign of Anne; and by Garrick, later; by Lumley at Her Majesty's in the 'forties; the native productions of Ballet at the Empire and Alhambra for over a quarter of a century; and, since, the importation of Russian ballet, first at various "vaudeville" theatres and then at Covent Garden and at Drury Lane, have all met with enthusiastic support, and the support has been as catholic as it has been cordial.

Dancers, of various schools, whether of the traditional ballet "school," or otherwise, have quickly found their way into popular favour. Looking back over theatrical memories of the past twenty years or so, dance lovers will recall with pleasure seeing at the Palace Theatre that statuesque and extremely graceful dancer, Miss Mimi St. Cyr, in a delightful little miniature ballet, "La Baigneuse," a dance-*scena* invented by Mr. George R. Sims, in which she lured to life the fountain-statue of a piping faun. Some will recall also a dancer of very different school, Miss Lottie Collins, whose "Tarrara-boom-de-ay" was a sensation in its way. Then, too, who that saw her could ever forget that electric dancer hailing from Australia, Mlle. Saharet, who entered as on the

wings of a whirlwind and, seeming all compact of

"Passion and power and pride incarnate in laughter," held us all spellbound and breathless with sympathetic joy in her abounding vitality, stimulating and tonic as champagne.

In more recent times the sensational success of Miss Maud Allan—who presented us with the somewhat mystical definition of dancing as "the spontaneous expression of a spiritual state"; and, subsequently, of Mme. Pavlova and M. Mordkin; is too recent to need recalling, and too evident to call for specific praise from me when so many and abler pens have already exhausted their ink in regretting they could not write in fire. Admirers, particularly feminine devotees, flocked in hundreds to see Miss Maud Allan dance in a manner which many doubtless thought wholly new to London, though some might have recalled that it was somewhat of the same school—though temperamentally very different—as that of Miss Isadora Duncan, who had given us dances of a rather similar order some ten years before, and that they were akin to the mimetic dances of ancient days.

Miss Allan achieved a remarkable flexibility of movement that was seen to advantage in her dances to the music of Chopin and other classic masters. Her interpretation of the "Spring Song" of Mendelssohn was not wholly new to those who had seen Miss Isadora Duncan's exposition of the same music some ten years before. Her "Salome," a melodrama in dancing, created a sensation, though somewhat morbid in effect, and hardly of the same artistic interest as some of her other achievements. Of her popularity there was no doubt, and a photograph of one of the queues which awaited any one of her

performances, especially the *matinées*, would—if one exist—always be valuable to future historians of our time as a mute but eloquent record.

Mme. Pavlova, who also first appeared at the Palace Theatre, is an extremely accomplished *danseuse* who probably has not troubled, and certainly has not *needed* to trouble herself, about definitions of the dance, for she belongs to a "school," the basis of which was defined a century or more ago, and she herself is one of its most recent and perfect blossomings. Mons. Mordkin, nurtured by the same school, is superb, and it was no wonder that the first appearance of these two artistes in their wonderful *pas de deux*, "L'Automne Bacchanale," should have fired some of our finest dramatic critics to expressions of almost frenzied admiration and doubtless driven shoals of lesser men to the neighbourhood of Hanwell in despair at the impossibility of finding suitable adjectives for the new wonder that had come amongst us. One can only deplore the fact that the harmony which made possible the *pas de deux* of the first season should have been, even temporarily, broken, and permitted us only to enjoy the work of both dancers subsequently in *pas seuls*, or in *pas de deux*—with other partners.

One could hardly close a reference to the popular Palace—a reference necessarily brief, as must be any concerning the various "vaudeville" houses in a review covering so wide a field—without a passing word of grateful praise to that bevy of bright young dancers, the "Palace Girls." As people of catholic enough taste to enjoy *all* dancing that is good in itself—from the vigorous cellar-flap of the street urchin to the aerial *pas* of a Pavlova—we may agree

that, in a sense, the Palace has been all the more attractive for the "Palace Girls." Somehow the modern comedic spirit appears to express itself best in short skirts, shapely legs and a jolly smile; and in their insouciante charm, their neatness, agility, precision and *enfantine* gaiety, the "Palace Girls" always seemed to focalise the requirements of "vaudeville," and symbolise the attractions of music-hall modernity.

Then, at the London Hippodrome, in many a Christmas entertainment, ingeniously arranged and gorgeously staged, half pantomime, half ballet, we have seen regular feasts of dancing and always with enjoyment. But apart from the spectacular productions for which the Hippodrome early became famous, many a delightful solo dancer and dance-*scena* have been viewed there. To have seen those exquisitely dainty artists, the Wiesenthal Sisters, is to have ineffaceable memories of a stage-art that seems strangely enough to link up the classic simplicity of ancient Greece with the Watteauesque artifice of the eighteenth century, and yet again the clear-seeing artistry, the supreme and joyous colour-sense of latter day decorative art. The tone and hue of their chosen background, the simple yet daring colour-scheme of their dress, the thoughtful, almost dreamy, grace of their every pose and movement, the purely picture-like effect of their whole performance, summed up the modern spirit in art that is striving—perhaps as yet half-consciously—for a revolt from old methods and stereotyped traditions and for something simpler, clearer, more direct and, be it said, more beautiful and vital than we have yet had; the art, in fact, of the men to come rather than the men who have been, albeit it has drawn inspiration

from the eternal past. The Wiesenthal Sisters were not mere “performers”; they were poems.

Elsewhere, at various houses, what other dancers have we seen of individual distinction? Long remembered must be the sensation caused by Miss Loie Fuller on her first appearance in London some years ago, as the introducer of a curious form of dance in which the stage effects she achieved were the paramount attraction. And what effects they were—kaleidoscopic, magic, wonderful! Just a woman, with a brain and shapely form, a mass of filmy draperies floated here and there, on which were shed the splendour of changing coloured lights, so that she seemed now some wondrous butterfly, now like a mass of cloud suffused with the gold of dawn, now like a fountain of living flame! Yes, Loie Fuller should have been an artist! Should have? *Is* an artist, who has not painted pictures but has lived them.

Then there was Miss Ruth St. Denis at the Scala—a vision of all the poetry and the mystery of the East. Ruth St. Denis in an Indian market-place representing a snake-dance, making cobras of her flexible arms and hands! Ruth St. Denis as a Buddhist acolyte in the jungle! Ruth St. Denis in a “Dance of the Senses,” so significantly poetic and full of strange allure. Always the glamour of the East, but without its menace and without its vice; the East exalted and austere. Moreau himself might have envied her those dreams of form and colour she made manifest, and all who saw her surely must have realised that Ruth St. Denis danced her lovely pictures as an artist born.

Yet another artist of marked individuality and intellectual distinction, Miss Isadora Duncan, was really the first to appear in London who showed any

marked ability to break away from the traditional schools of ballet and step-dancing, and, casting back to the days of ancient Greece, began deliberately to use posture and movement as a means of expressing poetic ideas. I first saw her at her London *début*, when she appeared in a performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," one of a series of Shakespearian revivals which Mr. F. R. Benson was giving—on February 22nd, 1900—at the old Lyceum.

She had but lately arrived from America, and was fired with an enthusiasm for the graceful dance of classic days, an enthusiasm which found ample expression in her dance as a wood-nymph in a Shakespearian production which I still remember as one of the most beautiful I have seen. Shortly after Miss Duncan gave a special *matinée* at the old St. George's Hall entitled, "The Happier Age of Gold," at which idylls of Theocritus, poems by Swinburne and other poets of classic inspiration, were recited to music and were either accompanied or followed by an appropriate dance designed and performed by Miss Duncan, who also set herself the task of interpreting well-known musical *morceaux* by means of a dance.

One of the items on her programme was Mendelssohn's "Spring Song," which received a thoroughly graceful and sympathetic interpretation. Miss Duncan has, of course, appeared in London frequently since then, and all dance-lovers will remember the extraordinary charm of the series of *matinées* which she gave at the Duke of York's Theatre at which she introduced a number of child pupils. There has never been anything meretricious or pretentious about the work of Miss Isadora Duncan. It has always been marked by a sense of

deep-rooted culture, classic dignity and poetic charm, and to her, certainly, so far as London is concerned, belongs the credit of having first introduced a form of dancing which has only too often since been parodied under the term of “classic dancing”; and even as she was the first, so, in my humble judgment, she is the best and truest exponent of a school which is justified by the beauty of its results, and which is having, and is likely yet to have, far-reaching influence.



Dover St. Studios
Miss Isadora Duncan

Then again, the Coliseum, young as it is, has already created dance traditions for itself, and of the best sort. Was it not there first of all that we were enchanted with the Russian ballet? They were not the first Russian dancers seen in London, for Mlle. Kyasht and Mme. Pavlova had preceded them; but they were the first collective example of Russian ballet from the Moscow and Petrograd Opera-Houses, and it was here we first saw Mme. Karsavina, one of

the most supremely finished and *élégante* dancers it has been London's good fortune to see. What lightness, what purity and dignity of style, what perfect execution and perfect ease, and what poetic charm!

Her *variation* in the "Sylphide" was a revelation of classic art of the Taglioni school, and howsoever some may prefer one "school" to another there must always be much to be said for a training which assists the evolution of such artists, for at least it is a sure training with sure and gracious results.

There is something in tradition when all it said and done, and one has to remember that while even an iconoclastic "Futurist" cannot help creating tradition in attempting to do away with it, and while pure ballet-dancing may not be the one and only kind which can give delight, it must command the respect that is due to any art which respects its own traditions, and can produce such dancers as Mme. Karsavina and those who were first associated with her at the Coliseum.

More recently, we were to see at the same house, "Sumurun!" It was strange indeed to think that a London audience could be held by some seven scenes of a play in which not a word was spoken; it was a *tour de force* of the art of miming, but then also it was a revelation of the art of stage effect. The decorative scheme, with its simple lines and ample space, was unlike anything that we had had before—unless perhaps in the nobler art of Mr. Gordon Craig—and the colour schemes, mostly of a curiously dry, cool note, were a pleasant change from the traditional attempts at a stage realism that is only too often too unreal.

Since then too there was, of course, the

appearance of that dainty Dresden-china dancer, Mme. Karina in a graceful little dance-*scena*, "The Colour of Life," the expressive music of which was by Miss Dora Bright. Mme. Karina, another dancer who hails from Denmark, won instant appreciation for the beauty of her work, and is indeed notable for her precision, grace and distinction.

Yet again has Mlle. Adeline Génée made welcome reappearances at the Coliseum, especially in "La Danse"—first produced, I believe, at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York—which formed a series of representations of the dances and dancers of the historic past—forming practically a collection of little cameos of the dance, having a distinct educational value and presenting a veritable re-creation of all the great stars of Ballet in the past, from Prévôt to Taglioni; in all of which the world-famous dancer exhibited the same high qualities of artistry that she had ever done.

But among the many dance productions seen at this handsome house probably the two most satisfactory judged as ballet were the production of Mr. Wilhelm's "Camargo," with Mlle. Génée in the title-*rôle*; and M. Kosloff's production of "Scheherazade," the two forming an outstanding contrast in one's memory. The former, with the quiet dignity, soft light and sumptuous stage embellishments of furniture and *décors*, and the dream-like quality assumed by the characters in this rich and harmonious setting. One found in it something of that visionary quality which gave the peculiar charm to the "Versailles" production which I spoke of in referring to the Empire. The music and the acting were so expressive that one did not miss the words, and yet half-consciously one knew they

were not there just because of the dream-like atmosphere which the music itself so helped to create.

The royal grace and dignity of Louis-Quinze, the butterfly vivacity of Camargo herself, and the more vital and quieter actions of her young soldier friend for whose misdeeds she pleads for pardon from the King, were all but dream figures in a dream, and it was as if the veil of the past had been suddenly drawn aside and one had a glimpse of a century seen through the half light of early dawn. Once more Mlle. Génée excelled herself in doing apparently impossible things with consummate ease, and once more one was glad to welcome the sensitive, expressive and scholarly work of so accomplished a musician as Miss Dora Bright.

There was nothing of the cool and dream-like quality, however, about Mons. Kosloff's "Scheherazade." Exotic, bizarre, palpitant with warmth and colour, the production stormed the imagination with its extravagance of hue and tone, even as the tangled rhythms and seductive melodies of the music captured the hearing and through it subdued the mind to a sort of dazzled wonder. It was a stupendous achievement, the more so in that it was brief.

At various times and at various places we have seen in London during the past ten years or so every form of dance and ballet it would seem could possibly exist. "Sand" dances; "Buck" dances; "Hypnotic" dances; "Salome" dances; "Vampire" dances; "Apache," "Classic," "Viennese," Turkish, Egyptian, Russian, "Inspirational" dancers, and even English ballet-dancers in an all-British ballet once at the handsome Palladium; and also at the Court and

Savoy, where Stedman staged some delightful ballets performed, under the direction of Miss Lilian Leoffeler and Mr. Marshall Moore, by English dancers. Not only at the regular vaudeville houses and theatres, however, is to be found genuine appreciation of the British dance and dancer. Elsewhere an English school of dance has been founded, and that in a form for which the English nation was famous in Shakespeare's time.

Henley made his plea for "Gigues, Gavottes and Minuets," but there are many other lovely, or lovelier, examples of old-world dance to old-world music, which scholarship has revived and good taste has been eagerly accepting wherever they were seen —*Pavane*, *Chaconne*, *Coranto*, *Galliard*, *Bourrée*, *Rigaudon*, *Passepied*, and *Sarabande*. These, and other ancient dances, were, as we know, the delight of the Courts of Queen Elizabeth, of Charles II, of Anne, of Louis-Quatorze—*le Grand Monarque*, of Louis-Seize and Marie Antoinette. Many have been revived and performed to the music of the harpsichord, violin, viola, viole-d'amour, and 'cello; and the curious thing—or, rather, interesting thing, for it really is not strange—is that both to scholars and to those unlearned in their history, to cultured townsman or woman, and to country lad and lass, to bored frequenters of the West End drawing-room, and to those who find only in their dreams relief from the sordidness of an East End environment, this old-world dance and music make an instant appeal.

I saw this put to the test once when, at a hall in the somewhat dingy neighbourhood of Bethnal Green, a performance of the "Ancient Music and Dances," arranged by Miss Nellie Chaplin, was received by an audience of East End work-people

with such whole-hearted enthusiasm that practically every item in a programme often performed in West End drawing-rooms and at Queen's and Albert Halls, as well as at Liverpool and Manchester, Guildford, Oxford and elsewhere, was encored, and several were doubly and trebly so.

A Galliard of the seventeenth century, an Allemande by an English composer, Robert Johnson (1540-1626), Handel's Oboe Concerto (1734), a Sarabande by Destouches (1672), "Lady Elizabeth Spencer's Minuet" performed at Blenheim in 1788—all these and other historically interesting items were encored by the audience, not because of their historic interest, but simply because of their joyousness and charm; while a *bourrée* by Mouret (1742), and the fascinating Old English dance, "Once I loved a maiden fair" (one of a group including "Althea," "Lord of Carnarvon's Jig," and Stanes' Morris-dance) had to be given three times. This was all complimentary, of course, to the beautiful way in which the dances and music were performed; but it was an interesting revelation of the eternal appeal to humanity, whatsoever the degree of caste or wealth, of the really good thing in art, and certainly the centuries are bridged with ease by the charm and joyousness of these old-time dances to their appropriate music, seen and heard more recently and to such advantage amid congenial environment in "Shakespeare's England" at Earl's Court.

Veritably we seem to have seen every known form of dance and type of dancer in London during the past twenty years or so, and latterly we have had at the Royal Opera-House, and, since, at Drury Lane, such a festival of ballet as has not been seen in England since the 'forties of last century, for here we

have seen a galaxy of dancers from the two great opera-houses of Russia, that of the Mariensky at Petrograd, and that of the great theatre in Moscow, where the traditional training for ballet has been kept up and infused with a new artistic spirit such as is hardly to be found in any other continental opera-house.

Early in last century Carlo Blasis brought the Milan school to perfection, and thence went teachers to Paris, Vienna, Dresden, Moscow, Petrograd, wherever they went carrying something of the artistic spirit and culture of their master, one of the most versatile *maîtres de ballet* there has ever been, for there seems to have been scarcely an art of which he did not know something, and of which he could not say something worth hearing.

But since those days probably nowhere quite as in Russia has the ballet moved with the times and been so imbued with the new artistic spirit which has been at work within the past generation.

Painter, musician, poet, dramatist, and *maître de ballet*, are called upon to produce the homogeneous and individual spectacle which we call the Russian ballet.

One has to recall but a few examples from the Russian *répertoire* to note with what serious artistic purpose the art of Ballet is studied by the representatives of the best school. Glazounov's "Cleopatra," a "mimodrame" in one act; "Les Sylphides," a *rêverie romantique*, the music by Chopin; Schumann's exquisitely whimsical "Le Carnaval," made into a pantomime-ballet in one act; "Le Dieu Bleu," by that curiously interesting and *rêveur* composer Reynaldo Hahn. These are among

the productions which, ranging over classic, poetic and romantic subjects, would veritably have appealed to such artists of the Ballet as Rameau, Noverre, Gardel and Blasis, not to mention other *maîtres* of more recent times. And what dancers to interpret them! M. Nijinsky, perhaps the best male dancer of our time, so good that one's usual objection to the male dancer melted into admiration: Mme. Karsavina, Mlles. Sophie Fedorova and Ludmilla Schollar were among the *danseuses* who had been seen in London previously, and were each in their degree remarkable not only as dancers but as brilliant mimes. There was not one among the extensive and interesting cast who was not of Russia's best, the best that is that can come from the school where the traditional art of Ballet is understood not to be the result of a mere few lessons in "dancing," but the result of a study also of all that is best in the traditions of art and music and literature, from all of which the art of Ballet draws its inspiration.

Yet again, one must pay tribute to the Russian artists on their masterly sense of stage effect, and for that supreme sense of what the ballet should be, namely, a harmony of the arts. One has but to contrast three such productions as "Les Sylphides," "Cleopatra," and Schumann's "Carnaval," to see a revelation of stage artistry which put to shame the conventionality which, save in rare instances—and in English ballet—had characterised the London stage so long.

In "Les Sylphides" we had the very essence of that spirit of romanticism in which cultured Europe was revelling during the 'twenties and the 'thirties of last century, a spirit which found expression in depicting

the wildness and grandeur of mountain scenery, in the cloud-like fantasies of Shelley, in the poignant intensity of Byronic passion, and the romantic glamour of Spanish and German legend.

In “Cleopatra” we had a glimpse of the pride and passion of an imperious Queen, ruling over a nation whose own passions were but subdued by tyranny, in a land where earth itself seemed satiated with the fructifying influence of water and a burning sun. From the first moment to the last the stage was in a glow, and a red thread of tragedy deepened to a climax of despair.

What a change to turn from such a production to the whimsies, romance and fantasy of such a thing as Schumann’s “Carnaval!” Here was the obverse of the romanticism of “Les Sylphides”; the undercurrent of mockery and poetic cynicism so characteristic of Schumann’s own music in its lighter moods, characteristic of Heine and of de Musset. Here again one found a masterly idea in the audacious simplicity of the stage setting. To see the great stage of Covent Garden decorated with long curtains and two sofas of the truly early-Victorian pattern—stiff, prim, unyielding, and covered with striped repp—was a thing to take one’s breath away, until, as the music began, little figure after little figure slipped, like figures in a dream, between the curtains: Pierrot, Pierrette, Harlequin—little men and women of the ’thirties mingling with these eternal characters of drama, to make a series of pictures of wooings and repulses, of meetings and partings, of provocations and denials, revealing the comedy of life, seen as it were in a glass “not darkly,” but as a dream far off and mistily; eminently unreal; yet, in some other world far, far away, in some mysterious land of

dreams, one felt such things perchance might be.

"Le Sacre du Printemps" was an ambitious attempt at primitivism—if one may use the word—but while disliking its suggestion of megalomania and the formlessness of its decoration, one could not but admire so audacious an endeavour to break wholly with tradition; and it was redeemed by the virility and fantastic, mocking humour and scenic splendour of Rimsky-Korsakov and Michel Fokine's "Le Coq d'Or," and still more by the beauty of Leon Bakst and Tcherepinin's "Narcisse," and the poetic charm of "Le Spectre de la Rose."

These, however, are but brief impressions of recent pleasures, shared by many others who may have been differently impressed. We have had many books and articles on the Russian ballet—some perhaps a little over-enthusiastic—and it is not my purpose to deal extensively with history so recent that most readers can as readily give account thereof.

When all is said, the significant fact remaining is—that at this end of the history of an art some two thousand years old we find most recently in popular favour not English ballet as it was in the sixteenth-century days of the essentially English Masque; not French as it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; not Italian, as it was in the 'forties of last century; nor English as we have seen it, at its best, at the Empire and Alhambra in the past quarter of a century; but the Russian ballet! the balance of the arts; which the Russians have only been able to do *by sheer technical efficiency*—quite apart from ideas or ideals expressed—in *all* the arts of which ballet is composed, and which has enabled them to do exactly that which they have set out to do. That, perhaps, is the one thing that Russian ballet has shown us,

which is of the greatest value and significance for any lovers of the art in any capital of the world.



E. O. Hoppé
Mme. Karsavina and M. Adolf Bolm in "L'Oiseau de Feu"

One may ask, however, what is the position of England in regard not only to ballet, but to the other arts? We have State, and County Council Art and Craft schools; we have the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College, the Guildhall School, and numerous private schools and "academies" where music and the dramatic arts are taught; all admirable as far as they go. We have, as yet, no State-aided theatre and no State-aided opera-house, to which, as on the Continent, an academy for the study of the dance and ballet is attached. Is it not strange that the richest city in the world should be deficient in these things?

It may be that there is greater vitality in the arts when they are pursued only under the conditions of competitive, private enterprise; but it is curious that in practically every other country the dramatic arts

have been fostered by the State, and that we in this country seem ever to show a greater welcome to foreign singers and dancers than we do to our own.

There is, of course, always a great danger that an institution, secure in the support it receives from the State, may become conventional; the spirit of its art may grow arid and unprofitable, but at least it ensures a standard of technical efficiency, and, if there be a vital spirit in the nation, that spirit will show itself in the work of such an institution. Russia has proved all this.

Given a National Opera-House, to which were attached a Royal Academy of Dancing, what might the future of Ballet be in this country?

The answer depends mainly, one feels, on the extent of the possibilities to which the art of Ballet could be realised by those who lead in the artistic expression of the national spirit. The poet, the artist, the musician, the Master of Dance, and the dancers—men and women—realising the possibilities of the composite art of Ballet, might foreshadow possibilities greater than any we have seen. Yet greater possibilities might be foreshadowed of one who was all these things; and could combine (as Mr. Gordon Craig would have the master of the Art of the Theatre combine) *all* the arts of the theatre.

It would seem that now and then, through lack of technical efficiency in one or other of the arts which go to the making of ballet, that ballet itself has not always attained its highest possible level in England.

But without that basic technical efficiency in the living material which he manipulates, how can the creator of the ballet express himself? A standard of technique at least should exist. That given, what

might not yet be done with this art, which history shows has always been so plastic in the hands of the master-artist, so responsive to the artistic or national moods of the people among whom it has been found.

It has the value and significance of painting, together with the vital and impressive effect of drama. It is not the art of depicting reality; but the art of pictorial suggestion, giving life and form to poetic ideas.

At the Royal or Ducal Courts of earlier days the compliment to monarch or to minister would be conveyed by means of a courtly ballet, the story of which dealt outwardly perhaps only with the doings of some mythic hero of the classic past. But the art of Ballet always had greater possibilities than courtly compliment, in that it is always a plastic vehicle for the expression of all ideas; and, given the standard of efficiency which makes production possible at all, it only becomes a question of what theme shall be treated by this means rather than by the arts of painting, or of music, or drama, or of literature.

On these two points—the standard of technical efficiency attained by those associated in the production of ballet, and on the choice of theme and manner of treatment by the artist-mind ultimately responsible for the production, depends the whole future of the art of Ballet. The spirit of the artist and his means of expression; there lies the future.

What shall be the technique of ballet, and to what extent shall it be influenced by that of the dance?

To-day, the forms of dancing are various, but there are three main divisions: first, all popular forms of “step,” or, to adopt an old and useful term, “toe-and-heel” dancing; secondly, the traditional “toe”-

dancing of classic ballet, capable of every *nuance* of expression; and thirdly, the various forms of rhythmic movement and effects of poise, which seem to approach nearly to the ancient Hellenic ideal of the Dance, and of which Miss Isadora Duncan was perhaps the first exponent in England, as Mrs. Roger Watts is the latest; while yet another phase of the same ideal is seen in the Eurhythmic system of Jacques Dalcroze, which has had, and will have, great influence in many directions.

We have seen on the London stage ballets in which the dancing was almost wholly "step"-dancing, toe-and-heel—such as "On the Heath," at the Alhambra; we have seen numberless ballets in which the traditional "toe"-dancing was paramount, from "Coppélia" to "Roberto il Diavolo," or the later productions of the Russians; we have not yet seen a ballet composed entirely, or even mainly on the lines of the Hellenic revival, though we have had hints of it in concerted dances by pupils of Miss Duncan and others, and the complete thing may yet come, though, personally, I question the advisability. We have already had some curious, interesting, and not quite illogical attempts to suggest scenic effect by means of living people performing appropriate and rhythmic movements, as in the production of Mr. Reginald Buckley's poetic drama "King Arthur."

In one or other of these three divisions of the dance and the respective technical advance in each, lie the chief means of artistic expression for the master of ballet in the future, and it may be that the traditional "ballet"-dancing, with its marvellous flexibility of expression, will, so long as the present standard of technique is sustained, always maintain its supremacy over the purely popular forms of

dancing, and the newer modes of rhythmic movement and gesture. It has at least stood the test of time, as a definite and logical medium of artistic expression.

As to the master-mind that is to select one or other of these forms of the Dance, and combine it with miming, music and scenic effect to achieve a ballet that shall be the medium of ideas, worthy to range as a work of art alongside the tried masterpieces of painting, music, drama or literature, it may be questioned if we shall see anything worthier than the past has given us at its best. Some new Noverre or Blasis, Wilhelm or Fokine may yet arise, of course; but until such a one come forth we may be well content with the standard which the Past has managed to achieve.

To that standard this volume is a willing tribute; a faithful record, which may have novelty for some, unaware of days before their time; while for others, whose memory of more recent—but yet receding!—events, grows dim, it may come as a friendly reminder of pleasant hours spent, by writer and by reader, in contemplating from the auditorium the varied examples seen at London theatres of the protean Art of Ballet.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Exodus*, XV. 20.

[2] I *Samuel*, XXI. 11.

[3] II *Samuel*, VI. 14.

Transcriber's Note

1. Minor French language errors and punctuation errors have silently been corrected.
2. Inconsistencies in hyphenation and spelling such as "ballet-dancers/ballet dancers" and "terre-à-terre/terre

à terre” have been maintained.
3. Em-dashes within the Index have been removed in order to improve readability.
4. Page 12: “PRÉVOT” changed to “PRÉVÔT”.
5. Page 12: “LÉON” changed to “LEON”.
6. Page 22: “evolutions du labyrinth” changed to “evolutions du labyrinthe”.
7. Page 43: “tours de forces” changed to “tours de force”.
8. Page 69: “d’Escosse estoiet” changed to “d’Escosse estoient”.
9. Page 69: “Je prie Deu” changed to “Je prie Dieu”.
10. Page 94: “La Vaisseau” changed to “Le Vaisseau”.
11. Page 102: “vous addresses” changed to “vous adresser”.
12. Page 109: “Choregraphy” changed to “Choreography”.
13. Page 168: “choregraphic” changed to “choreographic”.
14. Page 192: “Madaleine” changed to “Madeleine”.

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