



The THISTLE

A MAGAZINE OF SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING AND ALLIED SUBJECTS.

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EDITORIAL

Now that the Christmas hustle and bustle is all over, we hope that everyone really enjoyed the Christmas festivities; may we take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very happy and prosperous New Year.

At this season some of us are considering our New Year's Resolutions, and after much cogitation, we feel that we might all benefit by considering some of the following suggestions.

1. To pay attention to the instructor, with no chattering or interrupting during a lesson.
2. To practice at home any of the steps of which we are not sure.
3. A firm resolve to learn the pattern of at least one dance per month.
4. To support other dancing groups to the best of our ability, e.g. by attending their open nights and parties and generally try to promote Scottish Country Dancing.

OUR DANCES: NO. 3: The Dashing White Sergeant

Song and dance go closely together. An example of this is furnished by The Dashing White Sergeant.

In 1826, Sir Henry Rowley Bishop wrote a song of this name to words by General John (Gentleman Johnny) Burgoyne. The tune we know. Here are the words.

If I had a beau for a soldier who'd go,
Do you think I'd say no? No, no, not I.
When his red coat I saw, not a tear would it draw,
But I'd give him eclat for his bravery.
If an army of amazons e'er came in play,
As a dashing white sergeant I'd march away.
When my soldier was gone, do you think I'd take on
Or sit moping forlorn? No, no, not I.
His fame my concern, how my bosom would burn,
When I saw him return crowned with victory.
If an army of amazons e'er came in play,
As a dashing white sergeant I'd march away.

Bishop's attention was probably drawn to Burgoyne's verse by the fact that he had, in 1812, composed additional music to an opera called "The Lord of the Manor," written by Burgoyne with music by William Jackson of Exeter.

We next meet the D.W.S. as a country dance. It occurs in two late nineteenth century Scottish collections of country dances. Here it is:

The dashing white sergeant (2/4 time)
The first couple change places and pass round the second couple.
Turn with right hands, stopping between the second couple. The
four form a line; advance and retire. Advance again down the centre
and up. The first and second couples poussette.

This is D. Anderson's description; Mozart Allan's is almost identical.

The next reference is the familiar one in the S.C.D. Book 3. The dance described there was collected by Miss Milligan in Angus. But if he has this D.W.S. in mind, the reader of Anderson's book will inevitably have his attention caught by La Danse Florence, a dance devised by Anderson himself. It is executed by a trio (one gentleman and two ladies) facing a similar trio and the figures are precisely those of our D.W.S. except that at the end, instead of the trios passing right-shoulder, the trio facing the bottom raise their arms, and the others dance under. Anderson states that the dance is to go to a reel tune; but does not specify any particular one. He lived in Dundee, which is, of course, in Angus.

It is not difficult to see what happened. The older D.W.S. died out (it does not look very exciting), and the D.W.S. tune and the figures of La Danse Florence somehow became united. The resulting combination is one of the most popular of Scottish dances, perhaps even more popular outside the R.S.C.D.S. than inside it.

Recently Sir Hugh Robertson has written words (in English) to the tune (which fit the tune very nicely, but are quite unlike the original words) and has had them translated into Gaelic.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

If you enjoy reading about dancing you will enjoy "Northern Junket". It is mainly concerned with New England contra-dancing, a cousin to our Scottish country dancing, and New England square-dancing, which is closely related to our quadrilles. The magazine also contains occasional articles on other types of dancing (including Scottish and Irish), folk songs, country recipes and folk-lore. The editor is Ralph Page, 182 Pearl Street, Keene, N.H., U.S.A.

LOCAL NEWS

The club was pleased to see fifty or so dancers from the other Vancouver dance-groups (and two from Victoria) at our annual dance. We had piano music for the first time; and everyone we spoke to agreed that Mrs. Stuart gave an excellent performance. The favourite dance of the programme (somewhat to our surprise) turned out to be "The Flying Scotsman".

ANSWER TO THE SASH PROBLEM

Miss Cameron's fiance is Abercrombie. Miss Drummond borrowed Miss Buchanan's sash.

COMING EVENTS

January seems a lean month, though no doubt there will be plenty of private parties on Burns' night; the next event we know of is the Vancouver branch's Valentine party on February 17th.

BOOKSTALL

Twelve Scottish Country Dances. 50¢
Schiehallion. 10¢
Inverness reel. 10¢
Scottish Country Dances in Diagrams. 60¢. (Available soon).
From the Editorial Committee. Prices include postage.

THE WHITE COCKADE (Book 5, No. 11).

The note in the S.C.D. book says that the earliest version of the tune occurs in Aird, 1782, and is there called "The Ranting Highlandman". But it seems to have been known as The White Cockade for a long time previously, and is in fact common to Scotland and Ireland. To this tune the Irish Brigade was piped to victory at Fontenoy (1745; it was this charge that prompted Cumberland's remark "God's curse on the laws that made these men our enemies". It is definitely a Jacobite tune; to it the Irish Jacobite poet Sean Clarach MacDonell (1691 - 1754) set a poem, supposed to be the words of Flora Macdonald, praising Prince Charles, comparing him to the old Celtic heroes. The Irish term is an cnotadh ban, i.e. the white knot, or a knotted ribbon worn in a lady's hair. The Scots Gaelic is an suaithneas ban, i.e. the white badge, namely the favour worn in men's bonnets, showing the party allegiance by its colour, much as the rose was used by York and Lancaster; the white cockade was worn thus by the Jacobites at the Battle of the Boyne (1690). The old Gaelic lines to the air are:

Soraidh bhuan don t-suaithneas bhan
Gu la-luain cha ghluais on bhas . . .
Cha bhionn ar cuairt ann so ach gearr
A's leanaidh sinn an suaithneas ban.

(Farewell for ever to the White Cockade; till the Day of Doom it will not rise from death; our sojourn here will be but short, and we will follow the White Cockade.)

There are several sets of words in Scots: the earliest would seem to be:

My love was born in Aberdeen,
The bonniest lad that e'er was seen:
But now he's made our hearts fu' sad,
He's ta'en the field wi' his White Cockade.
O he's a ranting roving blade!
O he's a brisk and bonny lad!
Betide what may, my heart is glad
To see my lad wi' his White Cockade.

(This text from Gilchrist, 1814) Incidentally this rhyme shows the true pronunciation of the word. Many sound it to rhyme with "aid", which is incorrect.

Burns, who was a real Jacobite at heart, took this tune for the song sung by the beggar-woman in his cantata, "The Jolly Beggars". And here we do find it allied to a Highlander: her "braw John Highlandman" may be the poet's interpretation of the old name of the tune, and certainly cannot have suggested it, since the poem was published posthumously in 1799. Whatever the original name (and it could be something entirely different, since Crawford suggests the air goes back to medieval times,) it was a great favourite all over Scotland, and turns up in the bothies of Aberdeenshire with these words:

Frae a butcher laddie that lived in Crieff,
A bonnie lassie cam' to buy some beef;
He took her in his arms and down she did fa',
And the wind blew the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'.

words which connect it with "Tom, Tom the piper's son" and several other lyrics.

Finally, this was the tune chosen by Jim Connell, the Irish journalist, for the song he wrote inspired by the London dock strike of 1889: The Red Flag. It was not until later that A.S. Headingley started singing it to the old German hymn-tune "O Tannenbaum" (known to the U.S. as "Maryland, my Maryland,") to which it is indissolubly wedded today.

Murray Shoolbraid.

Sources:

De Blácam, A.: Gaelic literature surveyed (1929).

Ord, John: Bothy songs and ballads (1930).

Fowke, E. and Joe Glazer: Songs of work and freedom (1960).

ONE-TWO-THREE-HOP

Some folk there are, a stubborn tribe,
Whose dancing I can best describe
As lacking life, zip, vim and pep,
Because they won't "skip-change-of-step,"
And while the others gaily skip
They slip-slop-slip-slop-slip-slop-slip.
Then let them read this moral snippet.
(The rest - forgive the pun - can skip it.)

This is the tale of one who fell
Flat for a Scottish dancing belle.
Nothing, he vowed, could be more classy
Than her sublimely graceful chassis,
With golden curls arrayed above.
"Can this," he thought, "can this be Love?
Is it that strange and mystic thing
Of which the minor poets sing
When female charms to rapture move?
Is it, "he wondered, "is it Love?"
(The reader knows, of course, because
I've said already that it was.)

Thereafter, when he had the chance,
He always led her to the dance.
He loved to watch her, lithe and supple,
Repeating (having passed a couple).
Love ripened, till one fateful night
He seized her hand and held it tight.
Then down upon his knees he flopped
And gulpingly the question popped.

She paused a while, and then she sighed,
"Of your attractions," she replied,
"I'm not by any means oblivious.
Your face is not unlike Olivier's.
Your manners cannot fail to please.
I love your nude and knobby knees.
Besides" - she gave a gentle cough -
"I hear you're comfortably off.
But there's one fault I cannot stand
In any man who seeks my hand.
Your dancing lacks its proper pep.
YOU NEVER DO SKIP-CHANGE-OF-STEP.
The trials of life I could not meet

With one who cannot lift his feet;
Who, when he leads me to the top,
Produces not the faintest hop;
Who lurches up and down the set
Like Charlie Chaplin slightly wet,
Or some great ape galumphing through
A limitless expanse of glue.
My chances of connubial bliss
I cannot trust to one like this.
So, if you love me, do your prep.,
And learn to do skip-change-of-step."

Now, reader, on this poignant scene
I fear that I must intervene.
There are, if you will please attend,
Two versions of the story's end.
One version tells us that he did
Obediently as he was bid
Then soon the banns - 1st, 2nd, 3rd -
And then the wedding bells were heard.
And when the knot was safely tied
He turned and kissed his blushing bride
And proudly led her down the aisle,
Skip-change-of-stepping all the while.

The other version, strange to say,
Proceeds in quite a different way.
It says that under her abuse
He turned a pure and brilliant puce,
And shouted, rising from his knees,
"I'll do exactly as I please.
I dance for fun, I won't be fussy,
And what is more, ill-mannered hussy,
I won't be spoken to like that."
Then off he went, and left her flat.

So, reader, in the end, I fear,
The moral's very far from clear.
You take your choice, and if you think
That both these versions frankly stink,
You may adopt the daring view
That neither, after all, is true.

B.D.F.

HOW DO YOU DO?

This article is tremendously interesting because it is about you. What sort of dancer are you? What class - if any - should you attend? (if you don't think you should attend any class, you are a beginner.) Score a point - no, let us be generous - score 100 points for every "Yes".

- A.1. Do you know all the dances once they begin?
- A.2. Are you a natural dancer?
- A.3. Does the music tell you what to do?
- A.4. Would you like strathspeys to be played faster?
- A.5. At a Ball, do you dance all the Scottish dances?

If you have scored 400 or over, you are a beginner.

- B.1. Do you wonder why the R.S.C.D.S. want to publish so many dances?
- B.2. Do you wish the descriptions in the booklets were clearer?
- B.3. Can you count up to eight, and do you?
- B.4. Did you get a shock when you last danced in front of a mirror?
- B.5. Do you prefer to sit out a dance you don't know?

400 or over means you are elementary.

- C.1. Are you longing to see Book 22?
- C.2. Do you find beginners very slow in the uptake?
- C.3. Are you sure how every figure should be phrased?
- C.4. Has anyone who knows your dancing asked you to move to the top of the set?
- C.5. Do you find it intolerably boring to sit out a dance?

400 or over means that you are intermediate.

- D.1. Have you given up trying to learn all the dances by heart?
- D.2. Do you find beginners fairly easy to control?
- D.3. Can you phrase a figure the way you are asked even if you usually phrase it another way?
- D.4. Can you wake up in less than half a bar?
- D.5. Are there some dances you prefer to sit out?

400 or over means you are advanced.

And now for some general questions:

- E.1. (for women only) Have you ever excused yourself from dancing with a man by saying you have already refused someone else?

If so, think of something more plausible next time.

- E.2. (For men only) Has a woman ever asked you to dance with her? If so, try honestly to imagine why.

- E.3. Have you read this far?
If so, you must be very interested in yourself.

SCOTTISH DANCE GROUPS (Additions)

The Lady Aberdeen Club - Tuesday 10-12, Scottish Auditorium.
Mrs. Faulkner, 3290 West 48th, AM 6-8866.

Kelowna, Rainier Avenue School. Tuesdays 7.30 - 9.30. Mrs. Russell,
387 Bernard Ave.