

# SAVING THE DREAMY WALTZ



The Cotillon by Stewart, showing the Waltz Figure.



The Barn Dance, one that threatens the Waltz's popularity.

## All the Dancing Masters Combine to Save the Sensuous Measure

THERE had been an intermission during one of the "hops" at the leading hotel of Atlantic City, that famous eastern summer resort.

As the crowd drifted back the orchestra began to play—with a luring lilt and a rhythm so slow that to the younger ears it seemed funereal—the swaying numbers of the old, old "Beautiful Blue Danube."

The younger set, gymnasts with their expectations set upon the reeking exercise of the barn dance and the breathless dashes of the two-step, smiled at one another in surprise. But not for long.

A little space, and one delighted couple after another, among the older men and women, rose, and swept out upon the floor in the inimitably graceful, facile circles of the old, true waltz, dancing it with an enjoyment that indicated the very poetry of delicate, unaffected grace.

A little longer, and the younger set were exclaiming: "It's something new; let's try it!"

That was the way—just once, like some lovely, lost joy—that the queenly waltz returned, for a brief, graceful moment, to its own, although hundreds of dancing masters, assembled in Berlin, were binding themselves, with solemn vows, to restore it to its forfeited pre-eminence.



The Cakewalk, an invader of the Waltz Realm.



The Parasole, by Breguete, a rival of the Waltz, for Modern Favor.



Hi li, hi lo: hi li, hi lo—  
Bei uns geht's immer  
Schlimmer und schlimmer.  
Hi li, hi lo: hi li, hi lo—  
Bei uns geht's immer so-o-o-oi!

YES; that's it—the ancient German pivot waltz music, which has become the melody properly appertaining to the latest impudent interloper in the guise of the waltz—the newest fashionable forgery among the countless frauds on human feet perpetrated since the waltz proved itself the sweetest measure humanity can tread in the joyous dance.

It is now the Boston Drop Step, the only new thing in dancing within the last couple of years. It is going to be under the ban, like all the rest.

For dancing masters, in choreographic council assembled, with seventeen countries represented at Berlin, arrived recently, at a firm resolve. They would combine to save the waltz—THE waltz, which means the waltz as it was originally waltzed, and not as it has been parodied, garbled, mangled, distorted, gargoyled and railroaded into all the nefarious multiplicities of glides, slides, hops, drops, dips and catch-as-catch-can struggles-for-life.

Delegates from a dozen lands adduced evidence before the Dancing Masters' Congress to prove, beyond the last despairing doubt, that the waltz is doomed, unless all loyal devotees of Terpsichore and Strauss arise in patent leathers and their might to save it.

They imagined they were saving it, chiefly, from America; and they are both right and wrong—which is somewhat confusing, yet eco-

phatically true.

"Show me any dance program," remarked Walter H. Wroe, a Philadelphia instructor who divides his time between teaching the society maids and matrons in the East and training fancy dancers for the stage, "and I will point out what is the most obvious fact about dancing in the United States today. The waltz appears in more frequent repetition than any other dance number the program specifies.

"Truth is, there is far too much of waltz and two-step—so much that the three-quarter time measure has suffered harsh transformations which carry it out of its real sphere as a graceful, enjoyable waltz, and leave it masquerading under the ancient and honorable name, but with its nature changed as greatly—well, as greatly as the honest flour that goes into bread can be changed into indigestible pie and cake.

"It is still a waltz, for it is still in the three-step measure. But we have made it into various things which are far more gymnastics than they are waltzing.

"As for the dancing masters restoring the waltz to popular favor, I wish we could—we all wish we could. But it doesn't lie with us. The fate of the waltz, the fate of all dances now popular or ever popular, lies in the hands of the leaders of society.

"Put every dancing master of the world to work exhorting, in a single hall, for the renaissance of the waltz, and let Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish casually remark that she's going to have a galop in imitation of Texas cowpunchers, or a kimono saraband a la geisha, or a Salome caracol with a dancing master's head as the piece de resistance—and I'll promise you the dancing master will furnish the head, and on a silver platter. We teach what the fashions demand; the fashion-

ables lead, the dancing masters follow."

Yet there has arisen, during the last few months, a world-wide demand—world-wide so far as dancing goes—for the preservation of the old-time waltz; for its return unto its own.

Ten years ago the set dances vanished into the limbo that hides still the oldest and most stately of their type, the courtly minuet. Plain quadrille, polka quadrille, waltz quadrille, elegant polacca—one with another they fled, with the real, delightful waltz dancing hurriedly to its doom in the gasping glide, and the nimble polka and sociable schottische already in the class that our mothers talk about.

### TWO-STEP-A WHIRLWIND

The two-step came in like a whirlwind. For an interval even the waltz time was despised and rejected as something altogether out of fashion. But three-quarter time in music and in the dance is something that is basically human; and humanity can never free its feet from that fundamental measure. It is, pre-eminently, the dance tune.

The waltz returned, but changed from its delicious dreaminess to a sort of lightning-express whirligig, to be used as a staple to fill the already breathless interval between the grotesque horrors of the cakewalk and the hopping agilities of the barn dance.

Any "progressive" dancing master can teach the barn dance—but one of them will tell you the story of its origin of trace its disreputable ancestry. On the second beat of the three-quarter measure the dancers throw up the foot it calls for in a sort of discreet outward kick with a sweeping curve to it. A girl, on that kick, looks as though she'd just been tempted to join the merry chorus and had begun to practice high kicking, but changed her mind in the middle of the kick.

"There's the waltz for you!" American dancing masters have said, with one eye on the three-quarter measure of the music and the other on the sweeping turn the dancers describe at the step after the kick.

"Donnerwetter nochemal!" vociferates the Berlin congress. "Aber nit!"

Signifying that the newly fashionable Boston Drop of savage America is merely another horror piled upon the heaped mound of our crimes. Society gazed surreptitiously upon the brawny freedom of the new waltz as kicked at Coney Island, and thought that it was good—in default of anything better. It adopted the new kick for its very own, modifying its elephantine muscularity to the smooth grace demanded in the current reaction against the spinal curvatures of the recently defunct cakewalk. A studious count of the relative degrees

of popularity attaching to the few dances that furnish our present meager variety would place them in this order: First, the various forgeries on the waltz—chiefly whirlwind gyrations with the Boston Drop gradually infiltrating downward from the social stratum to which it was so suddenly uplifted from its original low level at Coney; second, the aboriginal two-step, unchanged in any of its primal savagery, except that it is somewhat more ferocious; third, the barn dance, always a children's dance until their older sisters and brothers stole it from them because the other playthings of the grown-ups seemed for the time made of sawdust; fourth, the lancers, danced as a quadrille with a two-step round dance relieving what little monotony remains after everybody has introduced every figure anybody ever heard of; and fifth, the Paul Jones figure from the german, where you two-step until a signal bids all play ring-around-a-rosy up to the next signal, which makes them change partners along a chain until each secures another partner whose step is the worst ever, with more two-step, more ring-around-a-rosy, and more chain changes until you get some one worse than the worst.

That is all. Gone is the polka; gone the schottische; gone the swablike elegance of the original waltz.

The dancing master is rushing to the rescue. Society is also taking note. There is a general movement to revive and make permanent the delightful old waltz of "Beautiful Blue Danube" days.