

## CAILÍN A TIGHE MHOIR.

## The Girl of the Great House.

THIS air, which appears to me to be a very characteristic specimen of the true old Irish jig, is a very popular dance-tune in the counties of Cork, Kerry, and Limerick, in all of which it is considered to be very ancient, and to have been originally used as a march. It is known amongst the Irish-speaking population of these counties, as the *Cailín a tigh Mhoir*, or, literally, the "Girl of the Great House;" but in English it is called "The Housekeeper." The set of the air here given has been selected as the truest from a variety of versions of it obtained from those southern counties, and of which three have been communicated to me by Mr. Patrick Joyce, and one by the Rev. Father Walsh, the present kind-hearted old parish priest of Iveragh, in Kerry. Amongst these versions of the tune there are, however, no essential or important differences.

As this tune is the first well-marked example which I have selected for publication of the dance-music of Ireland—a large class of our airs which has received from preceding collectors but a very small amount of attention, as if such airs were considered of little value, but which I think of equal interest to those of any other class of our melodies—it appears to me to be desirable that I should offer some remarks, not upon the antiquity of this class of music in Ireland, which will be found treated of in the preliminary Dissertation, but upon the various forms or subdivisions under which the innumerable airs of this class may be arranged, and upon the characteristic features by which they are to be distinguished and denominated. I shall also, in connexion with a specimen of each subdivision or varied form of these tunes, offer some descriptive remarks upon the mode in which they were danced,—a subject not hitherto, as I believe, in any way illustrated, and which I should be unable to treat of, but for the kindness of Mr. Patrick Joyce, who has communicated to me his knowledge of the subject, and whose words I shall in every instance use; for though his observations, which have been formed on his intimacy with the dances of the Munster peasantry, are applied only to them, they are, as I have every reason to believe, equally applicable to the dances of the other provinces of Ireland.

The dance music of Ireland may then be described as of several kinds, of which the principal are,—the common, or "double jig;" the "single jig;" the "hop jig;" the "reel;" the "hornpipe;" "set dances," of different kinds; and various "country dances." Of these dances I shall at present only notice the common, or "double jig," of which the tune that follows is an example.

The common, or "double jig," is a dance tune in *six-eight* time, usually consisting of two parts of eight measures each, each of these measures usually presenting two quaver triplets throughout the tune, and each part being always played twice. In these general features, this most common variety of our dance tunes only differs from the great majority of the old clan marches in the somewhat greater rapidity of time in which they are generally performed; and I have already expressed my conviction, that very many of these common jigs were originally marches, and were anciently used for both purposes; but on this point the reader will find more in the preliminary Dissertation.

"The common, or 'double' jig," as Mr. Joyce writes, "is generally danced by either four or two persons, but the number is not limited. The dance to this, as well as to every other kind of dance-tune, consists of a succession of distinct movements called 'steps,' each

of which is usually continued or repeated during either four or eight bars of the tune. Every step is danced at least twice in succession, first with the right foot, and after with the left. If the step extend to four bars, or measures, only, it is danced twice with each foot, in order to extend it over the whole of one part of the tune *played twice*. Every 'step' has corresponding to it what is called its 'double step,' or 'double,' or 'doubling,' that is, another similar step which extends to *double* the time of the former; and in relation to this, the original on which the double is founded is called the 'single step.' After a single step has been danced, it is 'doubled,' that is, its double step is danced immediately after with right and left foot in succession.

"A movement, or as it is called in Munster, a step, is always danced in one place,—a promenade round the room is never called a step.

"All steps are formed by the combination of certain elementary movements, or operations, which have got various names expressive of their character, such as 'grinding,' 'drumming,' 'battering,' 'shuffling,' 'rising,' 'sinking,' 'heel and toe,' &c. A few of the most important of these may be described.

"The dance of the jig always commences with what is called 'the rising step,' in which first the right foot is *raised* pretty high from the floor, and thrown forward,—then the left,—and lastly the right; which three movements correspond with the first three bars of the tune, and the fourth bar is finished by either 'grinding' or 'shuffling.' Grinding is performed by striking the floor quickly and dexterously with the toes of each foot alternately, six times during a bar, corresponding with the six notes of the two triplets forming the bar, and requires much practice from the learner. Grinding, when performed with *nailed shoes*, is of all the dance steps by far the most wofully destructive to the floor—especially if an earthen one. Instead of grinding, however, shuffling is often substituted, which latter is a lighter movement, and, as its name imports, is performed by giving each foot alternately a kind of light *shuffling* motion in front of the other.

"After the rising step follow various other steps of a light and skipping kind, and comparatively easily performed, until a certain stage of the proceedings, when all the dancers move round the room, while one part of the tune is played, i.e., during the playing of sixteen bars. This movement is commonly called 'halving' the jig, for it usually occurs about the middle of the dance; and the steps after it are generally of a very different kind from those used before. After halving comes the really hard work, when battering, drumming, and all the other contrivances for making the greatest possible quantity of noise, come into requisition. Battering is of several kinds, according to the kind of tune. In a jig it is called 'double battering,' or simply 'doubling.' This is done by first leaning the whole weight of the body on one foot; the dancer then hops very slightly with that foot, and throws forward the other, drawing it back instantly again, and striking the floor with the ball of the foot twice,—once while moving it forward, and again when drawing it back. Thus the floor is struck three times, and these strokes must correspond with the three quavers forming one of the two triplets in a bar. Frequently this is done twice with one foot and twice with the other,—which corresponds with two musical bars,—and so on to the end of that part of the tune; but, generally, battering is intimately blended up with various other evolutions, and not continued for any length of time by itself. The term 'doubling' has been applied to this kind of battering from the double stroke given by the foot that is thrown forward; and from this the jig in *six-eight* time came to be called the 'double jig.'

"In grinding and battering, the toes only are used. Drumming is performed by both toes and heels, and is, perhaps, the most noisy of all the operations in dancing. In drumming, also, the triplets of the jig are timed, and it is sometimes continued for a considerable time, but is more commonly united with other movements.

"The movements I have described under the above names are only a very few out of the number of those in use,—the rest having either no names at all, or names which I never knew. No description can give an idea of the quickness, the dexterity and gracefulness, with which these various movements are performed by a good dancer; and notwithstanding their great variety and minute complication, scarcely a note in the music is allowed to pass without its corresponding stroke. There are few movements of the human body that require so much skill, dexterity, and muscular action, all combined; and, for my part, I must confess that I have never seen any exhibition of manly activity that has given me such a sense of pleasure as a double jig danced by a good Munster dancer."

To the preceding remarks of Mr. Joyce I may add, that the jigs of this class are also popularly known, at least in Munster, by the appellation of *Moinin* (pron. *Moneen*) jigs,—a term derived from the word *Moin*, a bog, grassy sod, or green turf, and which, according to Mr. Curry, is also an ancient name for a sporting place, somewhat in the same sense as the English word "turf" is now applied to a race-course: and hence the application of its diminutive, *Moinin*, to this kind of jig; because, at the fairs, races, hurling-matches, and other holiday assemblages, it was always danced on the choicest green spot, or *Moinin*, that could be selected in the neighbourhood.

♩. = *Pend.* 10 inches.

The musical score is written for a double jig in 6/8 time, key of D major. It consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system is marked "Allegro. p" and "cres.". The second system is marked "f" and "p". The third system is marked "dim.". The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplet markings. The score is a single melodic line with a simple harmonic accompaniment.