

# The Union Dance

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Thomas Hillgrove described this in A COMPLETE AND PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE ART OF DANCING, New York, 1863. It was described immediately after The Danish Dance, and is quite similar.



## THE UNION DANCE.

MUSIC IN SIX-EIGHT TIME.

The position for this dance is the same as for the waltz or polka; the lady commencing with the right foot and the gentleman with the left, and then vice versa, the gentleman with the right and the lady with the left.

### THE STEPS.

1st. To commence, the gentleman will slide the left foot forward (sideways—count one), bring the right foot up close behind the left in third position (count two), then slide the left foot forward again (count three), bring the right foot up close to the left in third position (count four—Two bars).

Then commence with the right foot and dance back in the same manner as above described (count four more—Two bars).

2d. Take four steps of the gallopade, sliding with one foot before the other straight down the room, finishing on the fourth step with a hop, and turning half round (count four—Two bars).

Then take two polka steps, and turn completely round (count four more—Two bars).

☞ Recommence with the first part again, and so on alternately

continued...

When recommencing the dance, begin on the opposite foot, turned halfway around from the starting position. That's what Hillgrove meant by his opening words, "and then vice versa, the gentleman with the right and the lady with the left." He was quite clear about making a half turn on the gallopade, then a full turn on the polka, which therefore ends turned halfway around from starting position, and the opposite foot is free to recommence. This gallopade-polka combination is the popular Esmeralda polka variation.

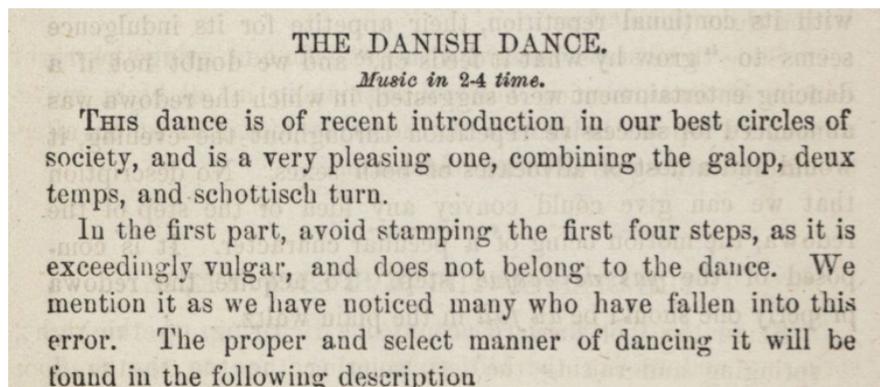
### **Tempo:**

The Union Dance and the Danish Dance share similar footwork. Therefore we wonder if the Union Dance was done at a similar tempo to the Danish Dance, specified by M. B. Gilbert as 144 bpm. The Union Dance includes a gallopade step, which could be 144 bpm, but it also has a polka step, so it's probably danced a bit slower than 144 bpm.

### **Rowdiness:**

The problem with reconstructing historical social dances from dance manuals is that we only read the *ideals* that professional dance masters preferred, not what was actually done by dancers at the time. Fortunately Hillgrove gives occasional glimpses of "improper" behavior in American ballrooms, always with disapproval, of course. His description of the Sicilian Circle is a perfect example of imperfect behavior.

The Union Dance is very similar to the Danish Dance, both in concept and footwork. And Hillgrove describes the Union Dance immediately after the Danish Dance. Therefore the stamping that Hillgrove described as done by "many" dancers during the side steps at the beginning of the Danish Dance, was probably also done during those same side steps at the beginning of the Union Dance.



We can't imagine those "exceedingly vulgar" dancers refraining from doing the same thing to the same steps of such a similar dance. Hillgrove already made his point in his description of the Danish Dance, so he didn't need to say it again on the next page.