

It is when we come to Anglo-Irish and to English literature that we come into the region of fact. There are three Irish dances frequently mentioned in sixteenth century writing--the Irish Hay, the Trenchmore, and the Rinnee Fada.

Nash, in his "Shepherds Holiday," 1598, speaks of roundelays and Irish Hays. Spenser speaks of the Hay de Gie, and in "A West Country Jig," published in Roxburghe collection, we read:

The piper he struck up  
And merrily he did play  
The shaking of the sheets  
And oke the Irish Hay.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, plays by Middleton, Marston, Massinger, Haywood, Dekker, and Shirley make allusions to Irish Hays. A book entitled "Complainte of Scotland" (1549) mentions the Hay.

Another dance frequently alluded to is the Trenchmore, Ring, Trink, Trenk, Rinnee, Rinnee Fada. A quote from the above-mentioned book gives "Highlanders who frequently dance the Ring (Rinnee) in the open fields. . . . Similar seems to be the Rinnee Fada, Rinky, or field dance."

In a work entitled, "A Voyage Through the Kingdom of Ireland," (1681) by a traveller named Dineby, there is the following reference to the Rinnee Fada or Long dance.

"They (the Irish) are much addicted on holidays, with the bagpipes, Irish harps and Jews harps, to dance after their country's fashion, that is the Long dance one after another. Those of all conditions participated, masters, mistresses, and servants."

The Rinnee Fada, like the Hay, penetrated to England. Beaumont and Fletcher have, "Fading in a fine jig, I assure you, gentlemen." Shakespeare in "Winters Tale" has, "Their dildos and fadings."

The Jig is the most popular of Irish dances, and Jig tunes are the most numerous. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were popular in England. In a very well known book, Playford's "Dancing Master," successive editions of which appeared between the years of 1650 and 1725, there numerous tunes. Naming a few we find, Kerry Reel, Bantry Bay, Humors of Cork, Nora Oricinna, The Irishman in Spain, Drops of Brandy and High Road to Dublin.

The music for the Reel steps is in all probability native to Ireland. It is in two-four or common time, and is generally in two parts of eight bars to each part. In some parts of Ireland it is a custom to play each part twice--16 bars. In Munster it is not doubled. The Hornpipe which like the Reel is written in two-fourth time is played at a slower tempo and has a much different rhythm. Next comes the Slip Jig. This is written in nine-eighth time. In the opinion of Dr. Petrie, the measure is almost peculiar to Irish music. It is essentially a girls' dance.

The oldest of Ireland's solo dances is the sword dance--Rinnee Claidhimh. It has been danced all over Ireland and there is an old Gaelic poem which shows that at one time it was danced in all the Big Houses of Ireland. Because of its ancient heritage this solo dance should be revived.

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