

HAMPSHIRE CHRONICLE 13th October, 1906

THE QUEST FOR FOLK SONGS IN HAMPSHIRE.

In our edition of September 1st we published a very interesting letter from Dr. George B. Gardiner, formerly Greek Lecturer in the University of Edinburgh, who is engaged in collecting folk songs in Hampshire. Between his first visit to this county in the summer of 1905, and his resumption of the work this year Dr. Gardiner went to Somersetshire, and in the neighbourhood of Bath he collected some 30 songs associated with that county. The great collection of Somerset folk songs has, however, been made by Mr Cecil Sharp, who has got together something like 1200; he has published two volumes, and is about to issue a third selection in November. These are charming old songs, going back in some cases to the time of the ballads. When in Bath last February Dr. Gardiner made a suggestion that Mr. Cecil Sharp should be asked to give a short lecture on Somerset Folk Songs at one of the Pump Room Concerts that are conducted through the season by Mr. Max Heymann and this was carried out with signal success. The Pump Room Concerts were resumed at Bath on September 29th, and on that occasion Mr. Cecil Sharp repeated his lecture, and several of his songs were rendered with great sympathy and spirit by Miss Mattie Kay. To celebrate Mr. Cecil Sharp's visit in February Dr. Gardiner commissioned Mr. Von Holst, the rising young composer to write two selections, one based on the Rev. S. Baring Gould's "Songs of the West" and the other on Mr. Cecil Sharp's "Songs of Somerset." At the opening concert of the season the Municipal Orchestra of Bath, under the baton of Mr. Heymann, gave an admirable rendering of a noble composition by Mr. Ernest Blake, founded on two rustic themes from the Dorset collection of the Messrs. Hammond. This new composition is to be performed on the 20th inst. by the Bradford Orchestra of 80 men, which is largely composed of Richter's Manchester Orchestra. Mr. Blake's symphonic ballad is named "Far. from the Madding Crowd," the title coming from Thos. Hardy's novel, which in turn took its name from the line in Gray's "Elegy." The Bath Orchestra on Saturday also played an impromptu by Mr. Ernest Blake, founded on a song discovered by Dr Gardiner at the Southampton Workhouse, "If I was a blackbird I'd whistle and sing" - Mr. Blake, however, has entitled his impromptu "Heart's Desire." We understand Mr. Von Holst is about to compose for Dr. Gardiner a rhapsody on English rustic themes. If anyone has information to offer Dr. Gardiner that will help him in his interesting research his address until October 25th is the Black Swan Hotel, Winchester.

Since Dr. Gardiner's contribution to the columns of the *Hampshire Chronicle*, many extracts from which have been made by the London and local Press, we understand he has continued pursuing his labour of love, and has obtained many fresh additions for his collection - some of them of a very valuable nature.