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## FOLK SONGS AND FOLK DANCES

### Recital at Southampton last evening

Through the instrumentality of Dr. Gardiner, who is so well-known in Winchester and the county of Hants as an indefatigable collector of folk songs and music, the Literary and Choral Societies of the Hartley University College, Southampton, arranged for a recital of folk music in their large hall, and it was given last evening in the presence of a large audience, over which Sir Alfred Wills presided. The main object of the recital, which included demonstrations of songs and dances, was to arouse interest in the educational possibilities of folk music, and following on this recital it is proposed to form classes for the purpose of instruction for those teachers and others who are desirous of taking advantage of them. It was a truly delightful evening. After a few introductory remarks by Sir Alfred Wills and Professor Clarke, Mr. E. Burrows, H.M. Inspector of Schools for West Sussex, outlined the purpose of the first part of the programme. He proposed, he said, to give a short account of what had been done in West Sussex in the promotion of

### INTEREST IN FOLK MUSIC

and his remarks would be illustrated with friends—all teachers in elementary schools—who had specially come from Chichester and district to give the demonstrations. This body of twelve young ladies, clad in old English costumes of mauve, green, yellow and red, then ascended the platform and made their entrance with the traditional "Morris-on" dance, in which the Morris dancers of old introduced themselves to the public. When they had opened the programme with the beautiful song, "Mowing the Barley," Mr. Burrows referred to the presence among them of Mr. Cecil Sharp, whom folk song collectors regarded as the high priest of the movement, for he had actually collected from the old folks the folk music which they were trying to develop in England. West Sussex had done a great deal for the movement initiated by the Folk Song Society, and it would be disgraceful to Hampshire if it allowed West Sussex to hold the lead in this matter. He became interested in the movement through finding the Morris dances in the Midlands, and particularly in Warwickshire, and these dances had been collected by Mr. Sharp and Mr. McIlwaine from the people themselves. They were then taught to London girls, and by this means were spread over London, and the first exhibition which he saw was at the Queen's Hall. Everyone was struck with the extraordinary and marvellous character of the music, and he personally determined to approach his West Sussex friends with the object of introducing the movement into the towns and villages there. He began with the children through the teachers, and Miss Florence Warren, one of the best Morris dancers of the present day, taught a succession of classes, with the result that almost every teacher in the elementary schools, and a good many of the secondary and higher grade school teachers, had learnt the dances and many of the folk songs. There was hardly a village where they were not practised, and on the village greens they were now danced as

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He had even been invited by the mothers of children to see them dance the Morris, so that through the children the parents and grown-up brothers and sisters had been taught. The

outcome was merriment and good fellowship, and by these songs and dances they were striking the same note as those who desired to get the people back to the land and to establish garden cities. They brought to life fully joy and good fellowship, and they were the means of persuading people that even in England work was better done when hearts were light. As to the educational value of folk songs there was no doubt. He wanted to find something better than the music often taught in schools, and he had found it in folk music, and children danced the Morris in playtime and sang their songs at home, thus bridging over the space between school life and home life in the manner they all desired to see.

Mr. Burrows' party of ladies then gave their programme, which space will not allow us to describe. The whole of the dances were quaint, old-world exhibitions, and the following were the items given:—Dance, "How do you do, sir?" and "Bean-setting"; song, "I'm seventeen come Sunday"; song, "Henry Martin" (pronounced Mar-tin); Miss Moore, accompanied by Mr. Cecil Sharp; dance, "Laudanum Bunches"; song, "Two Magicians"; stick dance, "Rigs of Marlow"; song, "Keys of Heaven"; dance, "Trunkose"; song, "Hares on the Mountains"; concluding with the pretty exit, "Morris off."

#### EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF FOLK SONGS

Mr. Cecil Sharp then took the platform, and gave an account of the nature and educational value of folk songs. He said in the course of an excellent address, that they had been listening to and looking at songs and dances which gave an indication of what folk music was. He wished them to understand why this kind of music they had been listening to was so different from what they had been ordinarily acquainted with. Ordinary music might be popular, and it might not be popular. The folk song was always said to be popular music because it had originated from the people themselves; and had come out of the hearts of the English people. Folk songs were not individual songs. They had been kept going for generation after generation, probably through many centuries, by the process of oral tradition. They had been handed down from one singer to another by mouth and lips and through the memory and the minds of people. During the process of being handed down these songs had changed according to the taste of the singer. A man had learnt one song from another, and had sung it himself all his life long. In doing so he would constantly change it, and other singers heard it, they would imitate him, and so on, and with each generation the song would grow organically, perpetually being changed and adapted according to the taste of the community. The Folk song was an essentially evolved product, not a composed one, and a product of the community, not of an individual, which made a big distinction. Another point was that all this process was done unconsciously and not intentionally. These songs had a strong racial, communal character, and as to their intrinsic value he believed the English folk music was beautiful because it was English, and therefore strongly appealed to them.

With the assistance of Miss Mattie Kay, a talented singer who has greatly assisted Mr. Sharp in popularising folk songs, a programme of examples collected by Mr. Sharp was rendered, illustrative of some further remarks which Mr. Sharp made, and altogether the evening proved a very enjoyable one