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English Folk-songs

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The English Folk Dance Society

FOUNDED BY CECIL J. SHARP



English Folk-Songs

BY

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English Folk-Songs*

THE study of English folk-song is of comparatively recent origin. For years musicians and scientists, while fully recognizing the existence of traditional music in every foreign country, and even in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, denied, for some inexplicable reason, there being any in England.

How it could be imagined that it was of the slightest use to practise the art of music in a country where its very foundations were absent, passes my understanding; about this I shall have more to say later on. I suppose it was considered that we were an unmusical nation, and that music was a sort of hothouse product to be imported from a foreign country and left to drag out a half-starved existence far from its home. It is difficult to see how such an art could be of any benefit to anybody. But at all events theory and practice coincided.

As late as the year 1878 Mr. Carl Engel was able to write in his admirable book on national music that "Some musical enquirers have expressed the opinion that the country people of England are not in the habit of singing—but," he adds significantly, "this opinion would probably be found to be only partially correct if search were made in the proper places." Actually, we had sat down and said "We are not musical—we have no folk-songs," and nobody had taken the trouble to go three steps from home and find out for themselves!

Yes, one man at all events had taken the trouble, and had found out for himself that the country people in one small corner of Sussex were "in the habit of singing." This one man was John Broadwood—whose name is to be honoured in the annals of English folk-song—who went about among the people of Sussex collecting their songs, which he published under the title of *Sussex Songs*, in 1843.

Then apparently we all went to sleep again until 1889, when Baring Gould discovered that the people of Devonshire were also "in the habit of singing," and he made a large collection, some of which are to be found in the volume known as *Songs of the West*. About the same time Lucy Broadwood and Fuller Maitland published their well-known volume, *English County Songs*, and Frank Kidson issued his *Traditional Tunes*, obtained chiefly in Yorkshire. We had at last begun to wake up to the fact that there was melody in our midst

* Abridged from a lecture.

which might any day perish with the death or the loss of memory of one man simply because no one had troubled to write it down. With the object of preventing such disaster the Folk-Song Society was founded in 1898, with the avowed object of "collecting folk-ballads and tunes."

Again in 1903 Cecil Sharp conceived the idea of making exhaustive investigations within a prescribed area—the County of Somerset—and found within these limits a wealth of melody which no one had heretofore dreamt of. His example has been followed by others, and such counties as Sussex, Dorset and Hampshire, as well as large tracts of Norfolk, Essex, Lincolnshire and Herefordshire have been thoroughly explored and have yielded up their treasures, while he himself continued his researches in other parts of England and among the English settlers in the Appalachian Mountains of the United States.

We have been rather late in the day in England in doing what other nations have long considered their duty. But this has not been altogether a disadvantage; most of the folk-music of foreign countries, and much of that of Scotland, Wales and Ireland, was collected and published about 120 years ago, a period when musicians had no respect for what they found, and had no scruple in altering and "improving" their folk-songs to make them fit the supposed "correct style" of the period: thus none of the tunes of these early collectors are above suspicion as faithful records.

But nowadays a new spirit animates the collector; he wishes to preserve and put before the public exactly what he has heard—neither more nor less—and we can be sure that whatever we find in the collections of modern investigators is an accurate transcript of the songs of traditional singers.

So now, by the efforts of a few collectors whose work is confined to almost the last 25 years, we have on record, roughly speaking, 7,000 tunes and versions of tunes, either printed or in easily accessible MS. collections. What conclusions can we draw from this mass of material?

I said a little while back that I was trying to base my conclusions on my personal observations, so I hope you will forgive me if I start my exposition of English folk-song by giving you the account of a personal experience—namely, my discovery of the first (or almost the first) folk-song which I ever heard under its native conditions.

I was at that time entirely without first-hand evidence on the subject. I knew and loved the few English folk-songs which were then available in printed collections, but I only believed in them vaguely, just as the layman believes in the facts of astronomy; my faith was not yet active. I was invited to a tea-party given to the old people of a village in

Essex, only 20 miles from London ; after tea we asked if any of them knew any of the old songs, whereupon an old man, a shepherd, began to sing a song which set all my doubts about folk-song at rest. The song which he sang was *Bushes and Briars* :—

1. BUSHES AND BRIARS (*Essex*).

Through bush-es and through bri-ars I late-ly took my
 way, All for to hear the small birds
 sing, And the lambs to..... skip and play.

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Now it seems to me that in listening to a tune like this we are face to face with a form of music which is, firstly, a thing by itself, apart both in nature and origin from the written music of definite composers ; and, secondly, a form of art which is not of mere antiquarian interest—not something which is merely quaint and old, but something which is beautiful and as vital now as ever it was. The best folk-tunes are dateless—they belong to every age, they exist, as Sir Charles Stanford has said “for all time.”

Some people, of course, will have none of this. They think it impossible that among people who know no harmony or fugue or form, who often cannot even read, there should exist, self-invented, a beautiful form of art. They refuse to think this possible and refer these folk-tunes, which collectors have been lately finding, to half-remembered scraps of forgotten music by seventeenth and eighteenth century composers.

Well, to what seventeenth or eighteenth century composer can we refer such a tune as this *Bushes and Briars* ? If it is merely a corruption, what must the original have been ? Surely such a composer would not have died out so completely that even his *name* is not remembered ?

It is, of course, true that there are a few songs which have all the outward appearance of folk-songs, and which are nevertheless traceable to printed sources. But I think I can shew that their existence proves most conclusively that there is what we may call a distinctive folk-song idiom which is a thing apart.

English Folk-Songs

Let me again introduce you to a concrete example. I was listening to a traditional singer in Sussex a few years ago. After he had sung me several songs he told me that he knew another, *The Miller of the Dee*. Of course what we should have expected would have been the well-known tune as it appears in a ballad opera of about 1750. What he did sing to me, though evidently a version of the same tune, was very different in important particulars :—

2A. THE MILLER OF THE DEE.—18th century version.

2B. THE MILLER OF THE DEE.—Traditional version (*Sussex*).

Now let us examine these two versions of this tune.

The well-known version out of the ballad opera is obviously on the eighteenth century model ; and, moreover, it is built up on a purely harmonic pattern in the minor mode with the leading note well marked and a half-close at the middle cadence.

Now look at the other : Here the minor mode changes to the Æolian—the leading note is flat throughout and the middle cadence is on that very flat 7th, a purely melodic proceeding. Besides this, the whole character of the song is in keeping with other purely traditional music which we know.

How can we account for these two versions ?

The most probable explanation to my mind is that this Sussex version is a true traditional form of the melody, which was bowdlerised by the ballad opera writer to fit the supposed cultivated taste of his period.

But it is, of course, just possible that some ancestor of this Sussex singer learnt this song out of a printed book and handed it down by oral tradition to his modern descendant, and that in the process the idiom has changed into one more in keeping with its singer's nature—that is to say, into the idiom we know as that of the folk-song; surely this is the most conclusive proof we can have, that the folk-song idiom, as a thing apart, does exist.

Now, some of my readers may possibly be thinking "Why make all this fuss about the folk-song idiom? Very likely these traditional songs differ in certain respects from songs like *Heart of Oak* or *Tom Bowling* but why is it important? Why should we not lump all tunes of a simple and popular nature together and call them folk-songs?"

I believe that it is a grave mistake to ignore this difference of nature. The Germans have characteristically distinguished between the real folk-song, which they name "Volkslied," and the song by a definite composer, but of a popular nature, such as *Rule, Britannia*, or the *Marseillaise*, which they call "Volksthümliches Lied." I do not want to be misunderstood; I am far from saying that folk-songs are necessarily better than the national or popular songs such as *Heart of Oak*, or that these latter are not well worth singing—it is a question not of quality but of kind. I think it is most important, not only for scientists and experts, but from a practical point of view for teachers, performers and especially for composers, that we should be quite clear in our minds whether the genus folk-song does exist as a thing apart or not, and for this reason, that, as it seems to me, the existence of folk-song (in the sense in which I am trying to explain it) is the keystone without which our whole structure of music would fall to the ground.

Let us look at the matter from another point of view. Those of us who are engaged either in teaching, performing, or writing music, find that our time is rightly largely occupied with the technical aspect of our art—with the means rather than with the end. And we are apt sometimes to forget that study, rules, practice, technique, ear-training, form, and so on, are not in themselves ends but are the means only to an end.

What, then, is that end, or perhaps I should say the beginning? Study, technique, instruction can do much, but we cannot sow seed on barren soil. There must be something to start with. What is that something? How much of our musical nature is spontaneous and unself-conscious?

Or, again. These rules and principles of form, expression and style which we learn and teach, are they merely refined systems of torture invented by cruel pedants? What is their ultimate sanction?

We can imagine the earnest student saying to himself, "Before I take up the study of music I will satisfy myself that it is the development of something inborn in human nature, and not only a set of clever tricks; I will try and find out the absolutely unsophisticated, though naturally musical, man—one who has no learning, and no contact with learning, one who cannot read or write, and thus repeat anything stereotyped by others, one whose utterance, therefore, is purely spontaneous and unself-conscious. Will such a man be able to invent any form of music? and, if he does, will it contain the germs of those principles and rules which my professors wish to teach me? If he does, I will believe in music as an art; if not, I will devote myself with more profit to cross-word puzzles."

To such an enquirer the answer is found in the folk-song. The imaginary man becomes an actuality. We do really find in every country among those people whose utterances must of necessity be spontaneous and unsophisticated—namely, the unlettered and untravelled portion of the community—a form of musical art, unwritten, handed down by tradition, hardly self-conscious, which is their special property, and this music is not mere clownish nonsense, but has in it the germ of all those principles of beauty, of expression, of form, climax and proportion which we are accustomed to look for in the highly developed compositions of great masters.

Face to face with this fact we need no longer feel surprised that an unlettered countryman can inherit from his still more unlettered forefathers a melody like *Bushes and Briars*—adding, without doubt, to it something peculiarly his own.

I remember a distinguished musician once expressing surprise that an uneducated countryman should be able to sing "correctly" in the Dorian mode. He might as well have expressed surprise at M. Jourdain being able to speak prose.

Now I am far from claiming that every folk-song, or even every English folk-song, is supremely beautiful. They are dull and stupid folk-songs just as there are dull and stupid people among the community to which they belong.* And all folk-song is limited in its scope. We do not find, for example, folk-fugues or folk-sonatas.

Folk-music may be said to be limited in two directions—lengthways and breadthways.

* It should be noted, however, that a traditional melody, if it appears dull or stupid to its singers and hearers, will *cease to exist*, while printed music remains to trouble us.

Lengthways the folk-song is limited by the extent of the poetic stanza or the dance figure to which it is applied. For folk-music is always an applied art ; the music is used as a vehicle for the recitation of words or for the setting of the rhythm to a dance ; the traditional singer can hardly ever think of a tune without its accompanying words or dance, and he often, conversely, cannot remember words or dance without the tune.

And the folk-song is limited breadthways, in that it is purely melodic in its nature. This is certainly so as far as English folk-song is concerned, and I believe it is true of all genuine folk-song ; the question of accompanying harmonies does not enter into the scheme.

Now these limitations are not without their corresponding advantages. The task of compressing one's musical imagination into sixteen bars of melody is a very different one from that of composing a symphony or a grand opera, and the result is of a very different character, and the difference becomes wider still when that sixteen bars have to be sung over and over again for perhaps ten or twenty verses of a ballad—a severe test of a tune.

So we find that a folk-tune often does not strike us particularly at first hearing ; it is only when it has been repeated over and over again for a long ballad that its full beauty begins to tell.

I would, therefore, ask those who wish to study collections of folk-songs not to judge them by playing them over with one finger on the piano ; first they must be heard sung to their words, and, secondly, sung several times over ; one must hear the whole ballad through, for then, and then only, one will be able to judge of the quality of the tune.

And the limitation imposed on the folk-song by its melodic character carries with it freedom of a new kind, for harmonic music has its own limitations.

Modern music has so steeped us in harmony that we find it difficult to realize what pure melody means. It is true that the street-boy may whistle some music-hall tune at all moments of the day without any harmony ; nevertheless he is unconsciously influenced by harmonic considerations : without a harmonic scheme in his mind such a tune as this would (luckily !) be quite meaningless.

Harmony has given a much wider scope to music than pure melody could make possible. But harmony at the same time confines the composer within bounds. He finds it difficult to get away from the major and minor modes, with their corresponding perfect cadences, half-closes, sharpened leading notes, and the rest.

We saw how, in the case of *The Miller of the Dee*, the pre-

sence or absence of harmonic considerations affected the whole nature of the tune. When harmony is absent the necessity for the sharp leading note disappears. The possible positions for the intermediate cadences are increased, and the whole modal system on which melodies may be built up is enlarged. It is a pity that the system of modes to which melodic music can be referred to is known as "ecclesiastical." This has led people to imagine that modal folk-songs are derived from the music of the Church. It is only necessary to look at such melodies as *The Cobbler** or *I'm Seventeen come Sunday** to be convinced that they have nothing to do with Church music except in so far as they can be referred to the same modal system.

The folk-song and the plain-song are both purely melodic. That is the sum of their similarity.†

It is interesting to note that, with the birth of harmony, composers found the modal system unsuitable to their scheme, and the modal melodies began to be altered to fit harmonic considerations, according to the rules known as "Cantus Fictus." In modern times, on the other hand, musicians are beginning to find that melodies built on a purely melodic basis are nevertheless suggestive of a new kind of harmony.‡

This, then, is the folk-song—a spontaneous, unself-conscious, unwritten musical utterance, limited in its scope, it is true, but, within its limits, often of supreme beauty, and containing in embryo all those principles which are at the basis of the fully developed art of music.

But our imaginary objector may say here, "Really you have not brought us much further. After all, someone must have invented the folk-song, and all the difference you can shew us between this kind of music and any other is that it is partly unconscious and that it is not written down."

But are these two differences so unimportant? and are we so certain that any one particular person must have invented a particular tune? Let us examine these two characteristics of traditional music.

The singing of folk-songs is only a half-conscious act; the tune is merely to the singer a vehicle for the words. Such a singer can hardly ever hum or whistle a tune without the words; on the other hand, if you sing words that he knows to another tune he will, as often as not, see no difference between your rendering and his.

* See *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. II (Nos. 6 and 8), pp. 10 and 156.

† It is probable that the melodic modes conform to certain ascertainable laws of the natural rise and fall of the human voice as modified by language.

‡ That is to say, harmonization from the melody downwards, instead of from the bass upwards, as recommended in the harmony primers.

And the folk-song obtains currency by purely oral methods. The song which you or I may have heard yesterday has been learnt by the folk-singer perhaps from his father, who learnt it, perhaps, from a friend, who learnt it in turn from his mother, till we finally get back to a remote period when someone invented *something*—but surely not the tune which you or I heard yesterday, but probably something very different, namely, the germ from which it sprang.

Even in the case of music which is printed, we know well that three separate players will make the same piece of music sound very different according to their different temperaments. But in the case of printed music the divergencies can never get very far, as each successive player goes back to the original printed copy. Suppose, however, that music had never been printed or written; suppose that Beethoven could only make his *Sonata Appassionata* known by playing it over to friends; suppose Liszt had heard him play it, learnt it by heart, and, years afterwards, played it to Wagner, who in his turn played what he could remember of it to Saint-Saëns, and that finally Maurice Ravel heard Saint-Saëns play his version, and went home and played his memory of it to his friends. Do you think that Ravel's version would be exactly the same as Beethoven's? Probably it would be very different. Now, who could be said to have composed that final version of what he had heard? Certainly not Ravel, for he was only playing his version of Beethoven; and I think it is unlikely that Beethoven would have acknowledged it as his. Would it not be the product of the united imagination of those five minds?*

We have pretty good evidence that exactly the same process has been going on on a very large scale for generations in the case of the folk-song. One man sings to several more, they sing again their versions to others; these versions, owing to the half-conscious nature of the singers, would probably vary considerably as the artistic instinct of the singer suggested, but a unity of feeling and style would be preserved (unlike the imaginary case of the Beethoven sonata), and, moreover, those variations which did not approve themselves to future generations would drop out.

And so folk-songs are handed down from generation to generation till we find, in a very short time, widely varying versions of the same tune, and, conversely, different tunes connected together by common phrases or intervals or characteristics. Thus a folk-song would appear to be a series of individual variations on a common theme. A folk-song is

* In this imaginary instance the united product of five very divergent minds would have a poor artistic result, but in the case of the folk-song the minds through which a tune would pass would be united by common sentiments.

like a tree, whose stem dates back from immemorial times, but which continually puts out new shoots.

How far any particular folk-song is an individual creation, how far it is an exact replica of what has gone before, can never be decided. On the one hand there is evidence of the extraordinary accuracy of tradition, of which those whose lives are spent among printed books have no idea; on the other hand many folk-songs which are collected shew evidence of the personal characteristics of their singer.

The folk-song collector is continually being asked two questions:

The first comes from the earnest enquirer. He always asks: "How old do you suppose that song is?" The question I believe is unanswerable. In one aspect the folk-song is as old as time itself; in another aspect it is no older than the singer who sang it. The question of antiquity does not seem to me important; it is the question of the nature of the song which is of interest. In dealing with folk-song we are face to face with something not of mere antiquarian interest, but something which is vitally important to us to-day.

Then the scoffer comes along, and he says: "I expect the old chap was having you on; I believe he made it up himself." To which I answer that it is quite possible that to a large extent he did, and that for that reason it is all the more valuable to me.

Let us return once more to the text of my sermon—the tune *Bushes and Briars*. Here is a tune which, as far as I know, has been found nowhere else; it is, I believe, largely the personal invention of its singer—not, I think consciously invented, but out of his own unrecognised artistic instinct.

On the other hand we find individual phrases in it which belong also to other tunes. The presence of the stock phrase in folk-song has an exact parallel in the presence of the stock epithet or description in ballad-poetry. We know how in Homer and certain parts of the Bible the same epithet or the same few lines of description are attached to certain individuals or circumstances.

Or, again, in our English ballad poetry we continually come across such phrases as

"Come, saddle me my milk-white steed,

"Come, bridle me my pony."

Or

"Then he took hold of her lily-white hand."

Or

"As I walked out one morning

So early in the spring."

So it is with folk-music. This tune, *Bushes and Briars* has, as I have said, certain phrases which it shares with other

tunes—notably the opening phrase, which serves either in its simple form, or slightly varied, for the opening of many melodies. Then the opening of the third strain, again, is found in many other folk-tunes; and the final cadence with the rise of a 6th and the fall by conjunct movement on to the final of the mode may be found in other tunes also.

A most interesting parallel to this tune may be found in a carol tune, *This is the truth*.

3. THIS IS THE TRUTH (*Herefordshire*).

This is the truth sent from a - bove, The
truth of God, the God of love; Therefore don't turn me
from your door, But heark-en all, both rich and poor.

(Printed by kind permission of Mrs. Leather.)

lately recovered in Herefordshire; this is an entirely distinct tune, but of which the opening, middle and closing phrases are close variants of the corresponding phrases in *Bushes and Briars*. Here, then, we have two entirely distinct tunes but which are obviously both derived from some common source. These two tunes are good examples of the continual revivifying of the old common stem by individual flowerings.

The more I see of folk-song the more important I believe the impress of the individual to be; and this fact, if it be one, may help to solve a problem which faces collectors of folk-music. Why is it that we hardly ever obtain folk-songs from any one under fifty? The practice of singing folk-songs seems to have begun to die out about the year 1860. The complaint of the old people is the same everywhere, that the younger people have not taken the trouble to learn them.

Some people may take this to be a proof that the folk-song is dead; it has done its work and is merely a relic of a past age. This I cannot believe; to my mind we have enough intrinsic evidence to shew that the folk-song has plenty of vitality left. The explanation seems to me to be this: the year 1860 marks the beginning of a great increase in the means of transport and of popular education, so that, from that time onwards, the people in our remote districts became less and less dependent on themselves for their art and more and more

inclined to take it ready-made from London. Thus the impulse to revivify the old stock by continual re-invention died down just as the art of playing football will die down if the modern rage for paying others to play for you continues. The folk-singer became uninventive, and the evolution of the folk-song ceased for the time. I believe, however, that this is a purely temporary check, and that the folk-song will live again in new surroundings and under new conditions.

So far I have dealt only with the nature of folk-song. May I now say a little about its value, as I believe, to twentieth century musicians, whether performers, teachers or composers?

I have tried to put before you the theory that folk-song is an art by itself, quite different from the simplest of composer's music. I also believe that the large majority of the tunes which have been collected in England are full of character, beauty and vitality.

However, neither of these propositions is capable of absolute proof. It is quite possible for anyone to deny both and to say there is no such thing as a folk-song in this sense of the word, or that, at all events, folk-songs are of no artistic value and of no scientific importance. Well it may be so; perhaps those who have actually been collectors are too near their subject to see it clearly. The outsiders can judge best. But the matter does not rest here, for surely if we have no folk-songs or none of any musical value, does it not follow that there is no music inborn in the nation? What, then, will be the use of all our institutions and associations for performing, teaching and fostering an art the very germs of which are not part of our nature? It is like trying to make an elaborate garden where no wild flowers will grow. Or perhaps I should say, to imagine it is possible to create garden flowers without the wild flowers as their prototypes. If the study of music in England is to be merely the artificial cultivation of a taste which finds no response in our own selves, far better give up this pretence of being musical and devote ourselves to anything else in which we can really achieve success.

But I do believe that the folk-song still exists as something beautiful and vital. As proof of this I may bring forward two facts: firstly, their extraordinary popularity with every class of hearer; and, secondly (this is a more technical proof, but none the less cogent), that folk-songs seem to take kindly to the harmony of any period at which a skilled musician may happen to treat them harmonically. Now this is not the case with "composed music." It would be ridiculous and out of keeping to try and harmonize a melody by Glück in the style of Richard Strauss; the anachronism would be apparent at once. But in folk-song there is no anachronism—it seems to defy the ravages of time.

There has been, no doubt, a check. The folk-song has ceased to grow on its native soil. The art of the *folk-song* lives, but the art of the *folk-singer* is dead. That is a special art, and I would strongly advise all musicians, before it is too late, to seize some opportunity of going to hear a genuine folk-song sung by a singer who has the traditional art of singing them; it is a wonderful experience.

The folk-song in its pure state has ceased to evolve. We must take the folk-songs we have recovered as they are now; we must not venture to alter or "improve" them; as we find them we must keep them. We may have found them at the highest point of their development, or they may have passed their climax and have begun the downward path when they were recovered. That we can never tell. It is on their face value that we must judge them. The folk-song is now on its trial under new conditions; the next few years will shew the strength of its vital power.

The evolution of the English folk-song by itself has ceased, but its spirit can continue to grow and flourish at the hands of our native composers.

I do not wish to advocate a narrow parochialism in music. A composer's style must be ultimately personal, but an individual is a member of a nation, and the greatest and most widely known artists have been the most strongly national. Bach, Shakespeare, Verdi, Reynolds, Whitman—their appeal may be cosmopolitan, but the origin of their inspiration is national.

Many critics sneer at what they call "going back to folk-song," and imagine that it is suggested that composers should devote their time to arranging traditional melodies. This is not at all what I mean.

To write rhapsodies on folk-tunes is a very good exercise for the composer, and the results may often be delightful, but to garnish our ordinary English hotch-potch of every modern composer from Brahms to Debussy with a few English folk-tunes by way of ornament will not make a national style. It is not a question (as Mrs. Newmarch has wisely said) of "playing with local colour." The matter lies deeper than this. Let me give you an example—*Die Meistersinger*, by Richard Wagner. Here is a work using to the full all the resources of colour, of harmony, of form, of expression, which go to make up the completest art, without a touch of archaism, and alive from beginning to end with the spirit of German folk-song. In art, as I suppose in every activity, the best results are obtained by developing one's natural faculties to the highest. If an Englishman tries to pose as a Frenchman or a German, he will not only make a bad Englishman, he will also make a bad foreigner.

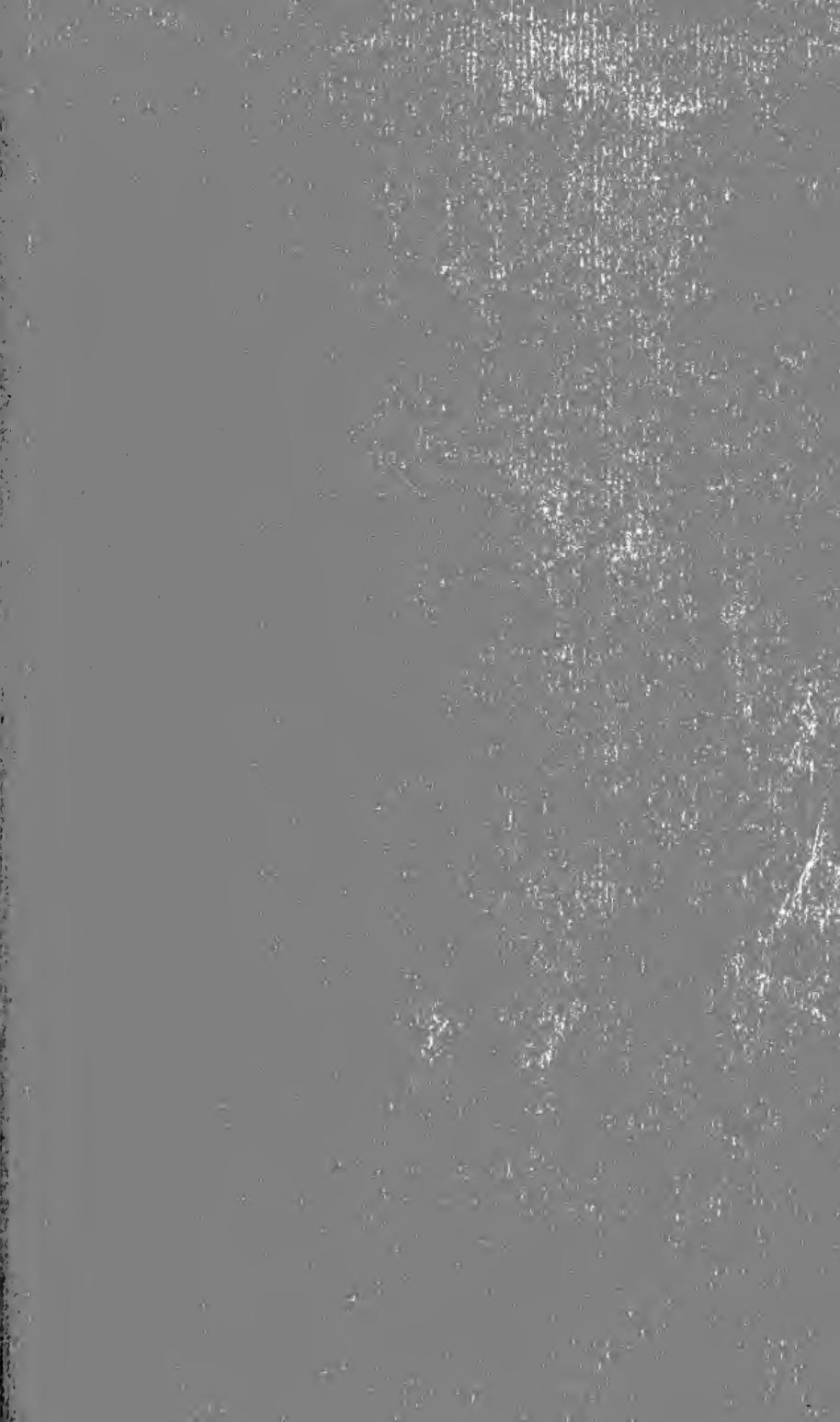
If the English spirit is capable of being expressed in music, let it be so expressed; if not, let us honestly give up the attempt.

There are already signs that some of our younger composers are finding inspiration in their native folk-songs. If this impulse leads them to develop a school of genuinely felt and sincerely expressed music, we shall owe a great debt of gratitude to those who have pointed out the way, and especially to one man without whose work it may safely be said that the large majority of English musicians would have remained in ignorance of our own traditional art. Cecil Sharp was not the first Englishman to collect folk-songs, but it is he who first saw and proclaimed their value as a guide and stimulus to the musicians of England.

The younger composers have shown their gratitude in the most practical manner; these recently recovered traditional melodies have evidently touched many of them to the quick, and led them to look on music from a new point of view. The results are already beginning to show themselves; a concert of "English Music" need no longer mean an evening of boredom—indeed, of late, an English audience has actually been known to "encore" an English composition. The work of this young school is still tentative and small in scope; the symphonies, oratorios, and tone-poems of a few years ago have given way to ballads, dances, "rambles," small suites, and works on a smaller and more concise scale. This is as it should be, it is only a step back to leap further. We have made, the mistake in England of trying to take over, "ready-made," a foreign culture, a culture which is the result of generations of patient development, and of attempting to fit on to it our own incompatible conditions. This is merely to reap where we have not sown, and the end must be failure.

An art is not a matter of detached appreciation; if it is to be vital it must be a reflection of the whole life of the community. Any direct and unforced expression of our common life may be the nucleus from which a great art will spring; of such expressions the folk-song is, without doubt, the most genuine and the most unadulterated, besides being in itself a complete form of art.

This growth from small beginnings will not take place all at once. We must look for signs of it, not to those musicians who are now in their maturity, but, perhaps, to students and beginners, to those whose names are still unknown. They in their turn will shew the way to others, and thus there will gradually be built up a musical structure which shall have that permanence and universal recognition which is only possible to an art which has grown out of the very lives of those who make it.



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