

English Folk Dance: The Country Dance

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included, while such generally popular composers as Guilmant, Lemare, and Widor appear once. The last-named composer's fine 'Pontifical March,' by the way, obtained but forty-four votes. We do not think this unpopularity of the best organ music is general. We know of more than one public hall where the Bach number is invariably one of the most popular items, and recall the pleasant surprise with which we once heard the Toccata in F encored by a huge audience consisting mainly of working men.

Mr. Walton is well known as one of our finest players, and he has evidently a large audience eager to enjoy his playing. It is good that they should hear and appreciate these transcriptions, but it would be even better if their appreciation could be extended more generously to the finest of the many fine works written for the organ. Our Glasgow friends need not like the transcriptions less, but they should like the organ music more. If they can be educated to do this, they will have two sources of pleasure where now they have one, and will be the gainers.

As we finish writing the above we receive a programme from America which strikes us as being a good specimen scheme of a popular type, in which the balance between organ music and arrangements is well adjusted. The recital was given by Dr. Orlando Mansfield at Wilson College, Chambersburg, Pa., on October 18, and was as follows :

Sonata No. 2	...	...	...	Mendelssohn.
Allegretto Pastorale	...	...	...	Capocci.
Grand Chœur Symphonique				Purcell J. Mansfield.
Andante in F	...	...	...	Beethoven.
Toccata and Fugue in D minor	...	...	...	Bach.
Allegretto in B flat	...	...	...	Lemmens.
Concert Overture in E flat	...	...	...	Faulkes.
Rondeau in G minor	...	...	...	Sterndale Bennett.
'Worthy is the Lamb' and 'Amen'	...	...	...	Handel.

The programme contains some helpful annotations.

M. Camille Saint-Saëns was eighty years of age on October 9. He is still remarkably active. Good wishes flow to the octogenarian musician from many quarters. He hopes shortly to arrange for a performance at Paris of his oratorio 'The Promised Land.' It is published with French words.

THE NEW TAX ON IMPORTED MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS. The Budget proposals affecting imported musical instruments have naturally excited considerable attention in trade circles. On the whole British manufacturers, at least, have accepted the situation with equanimity, the strain on their patriotism being mitigated by the fact that they can raise their prices reasonably because the new duty will apply to the 'parts' which, in the present condition of the industry, they are compelled to import. It is not clear whether the object of the tax is to raise revenue or to discourage home expenditure on luxuries by increasing prices. Certainly not much will be collected from the duty on finished instruments, for the 20,000 German pianofortes which before the War we imported annually are now automatically barred. Pianofortes to the value of only £21,424 were imported from France in the year before the War, whereas we sent France pianofortes to the value of £36,673. The French import tax ranges from £4 to £8, according to the grade of pianoforte. It would seem from this that, so far as France is concerned, we damage our Ally without gaining much on this side.

ENGLISH FOLK DANCE: THE COUNTRY DANCE.*

BY CECIL J. SHARP.

Up till a few years ago it was commonly believed that the English race was the only one in Europe that had made no contribution of any value to the universal store of folk-song and dance. Opinions may still be divided as to the artistic worth of those folk-songs and dances which have of late years been collected and published in this country, but their existence, and in great abundance, can no longer be disputed.

In justification of the attitude of apathetic indifference which, until recently, we held toward the folk-music of our own country, it should be remembered that since the days of the Restoration the musical taste of the upper classes in England has been frankly and unashamedly cosmopolitan. This strange preference for foreign music and prejudice against the native product has been, however, characteristic only of the more educated. It has never been shared by the unlettered, who have always sung the songs and danced the dances of their forefathers, uninfluenced by, and in blissful ignorance of, the habits and tastes of their more fashionable city neighbours. But this is, unhappily, no longer so. The State schools, the railways, and the hundred and one causes which have led to the depopulation of the country villages are rapidly changing, some would say debasing, the taste of the present generation—of those, that is, whose ancestors were both guardians and creators of our traditional music and national pastimes. In the village of to-day the polka, waltz, and quadrille are steadily displacing the old-time country dances and jigs, just as the tawdry ballads and strident street-songs of the towns are no less surely exterminating the folk-songs. Fortunately, there is yet time to do for the dances what has already been done so successfully for the songs, namely, to collect, publish and preserve the best of them for the benefit of our own and future generations.

But national prejudice dies hard; more especially when it is constantly being nourished by those who profess to instruct. 'We cannot now find among the rural population (of England) any traces of what may be called a national dance,' says the author of a recent 'History of Dancing,' one, moreover, who lived in the centre of that district where, perhaps, the old dances still flourish more vigorously than anywhere else in England. A few years ago, too, the foreign correspondent of one of our chief daily journals, after giving an account of the Northern Games at Stockholm, innocently remarked: 'It would be a merrier and better England which could produce dances of this kind as a spontaneous and natural growth.'

This perverse indifference to fact is all the more remarkable when we remember that in the early days of our history we were renowned throughout Europe for our dancing no less than for our singing. 'In saltatione et arte musicâ excellunt' is an oft-quoted tribute paid to us by Hentzner in 1598; while Beaumont spoke of the delight which the Portuguese or Spaniards had in riding great horses, the French in courteous behaviour, and the 'dancing English in carrying a fair presence.' But there is no need to labour the point. The fact that we once held this reputation is not questioned. The error has been too readily to assume, with our author of the 'History of Dancing,' that because the upper classes have forgotten their native songs and dances, the peasantry have been equally neglectful.

* Being the Introduction (revised) of 'The Country Dance Book, Part I. (Novello.)

This is particularly unfortunate, for we happen to possess in England—in the Sword, Morris, and Country Dance—three folk-dances of unusual interest, not merely to the antiquary and sociologist, but to the lover of dancing also. They represent three generically distinct types, differing indeed in almost every way that one dance can differ from another.

The Morris, like the Sword Dance, of which it is an offshoot, is a ceremonial, spectacular, and professional dance; it is performed by men only, and has no sex characteristics.

The many curious customs—as well as the extra characters, *e.g.*, the squire or fool, king, queen, witch, cake- and sword-bearer—which are commonly associated with these dances, all indicate that they were once something more than mere dances, and that they originally formed part of an elaborate quasi-religious ceremony. An analysis of the figures of the dances leads to the same conclusion. This may be equally true of many of the folk-dances of other nations, but very few bear upon them, as do the Sword and the Morris Dance, such clear and unmistakable indications of derivation from the primitive nature ceremonies of the early village communities.

And these qualities, derived from their ceremonial origin, the two dances have never lost. As practised to-day, and indeed throughout their history, they have always been formal, official dances, performed only on certain prescribed occasions,—the Sword Dance during the interval between Christmas and the New Year, the Morris at Whitsuntide.

The village Morris- and Sword-men, moreover, are few in number, especially chosen and trained, and form a close society or guild of professional performers. Admission into their ranks is formal and conditioned. It is not enough that the probationer should be a good dancer, lissome and agile; he must, in addition, undergo a course of six weeks' daily instruction at the hands of the elder dancers. Upon election, he will be required to subscribe to sundry rules and regulations, and provide himself with a special and elaborate dancing dress, every detail of which, though varying from village to village, is prescribed by tradition.

Both dances, too, are remarkable for the total absence of the love motive from their movements. There is scarcely a single Morris or Sword Dance in which the performers so much as touch each other, while 'handing' is practically unknown.

Finally, it must be understood that neither the Morris nor the Sword Dance is primarily a pleasure dance. Their function is to provide a spectacle or pageant as part of the ritual associated with the celebration of popular festivals and holidays.

The Country Dance, on the other hand, possesses none of these special characteristics; although in its origin it was probably, like the Morris, a ritual dance. It has played altogether another part in the social life of the village. No ceremony or formality has been associated with its performance. It was, and so far as it is practised it still is, the ordinary, everyday dance of the country-folk, performed not merely on festal days, but whenever opportunity offered and the spirit of merrymaking was abroad. So far from being a man's dance, it is performed in couples, or partners of opposite sexes, while flirtation or coquetry lies at the root of nearly all of its figures and evolutions. No special dress is needed, not even holiday clothes. The steps and figures are simple and easily learned, so that anyone of ordinary intelligence and of average physique may without difficulty qualify as a competent performer.

Nor has the Country Dance ever been regarded as a spectacle or pageant. It has always been

danced purely for its own sake, for the pleasure it afforded the performers and the social intercourse that it provided. More than a hundred years ago a French author drew attention to this point in the following passage: 'Au village l'on danse pour le seul plaisir de danser, pour agiter les membres accoutumés à un violent exercice; on danse pour exhiler un sentiment de joie qui n'a pas besoin de spectateurs.' The same idea was expressed by Edward Philips, Milton's nephew, in 'The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence, or The Arte of Wooing and Complimenting,' when he makes the dancing master say, 'Ladies, will you be pleased to dance a country dance or two, for 'tis that which makes you truly sociable, and us truly happy; being like the chorus of a song where all the parts sing together.'

It is a moot point whether or not the Morris owes anything to Moorish or other foreign influences. No such question, however, arises with the Country Dance, which is wholly and demonstrably English. This, it is true, has been disputed even by English writers, who, deceived by a false etymology, have sometimes derived it from the French *contredanse*.* This 'brilliant anachronism' has been effectually refuted by Chappell and others, by a reference to dates. They have shown that the *contredanse* cannot be traced back further than the 17th or early 18th centuries; and that it is not even mentioned by Thoinot Arbeau (1589), or by any of the early French writers on dancing. On the other hand Weaver, in 'An Essay towards an History of Dancing' (1712), says, 'Country dances . . . is a dancing the peculiar growth of this nation, tho' now transplanted into almost all the Courts of Europe; and is become in the most august assemblies the favourite diversion. This dancing is a moderate and healthful exercise, a pleasant and innocent diversion, if modestly used and performed at convenient times, and by suitable company.' Essex, too, in his 'Treatise on Chorography, or the Art of dancing Country Dances' (1710), writes, 'This which we call Country Dancing is originally the product of this nation.'

The evidence is quite conclusive. So far from deriving our Country Dance from France, it was the French who adapted one particular form of the English dance known as the 'Square-eight,' developed it, called it *Contredanse*, and sent it back to England, where in the Quadrille, one of its numerous varieties, it still survives.

Although the Country Dance originated with the unlettered classes, it has not always been their exclusive possession. Just as the folk-songs were at one time freely sung by all classes of the community, so the Country Dances were once performed at Court and in fashionable ball-rooms, as well as on the village green. In the reign of James I. it was said that it was easier to put on fine clothes than to learn the French dances, and that therefore 'none but Country Dances' must be used at Court. This, however, never became the invariable practice. The custom seems to have been to begin the ball with the more formal and, for the most part, foreign dances, *e.g.*, the Courante, Pavane, Gavotte, and so forth, and afterwards to indulge in the merrier and less restrained Country Dance; just as, up to a few years ago, it was customary to finish the evening with the popular 'Sir Roger.' Dancers of the present day might do worse than revert to this old habit and substitute for the Quadrille and Lancers two or three examples of the more ancient and far more sociable Country Dance.

* In a recent work, for instance ('The Dance,' Heinemann, 1914), we are gravely told that *Contredanses* is a 'word which England changed to *Country Dances*.'

The traditional Country Dance of the present day is with very few exceptions performed, like 'Sir Roger,' in the familiar formation of two parallel straight lines, men on one side, women on the other—quaintly described in the old dance-books as 'Longways for as many as will.' But this was not always so. Prior to the Restoration the Country Dance was performed in other ways. There were the Rounds for six or eight dancers or 'for as many as will'; the 'Square-eight,' already mentioned as the prototype of the quadrille; the dances for two, three, and four couples; while in the once popular 'Dargason' the performers stood in a line, the men and women in different groups.

All that is—or is ever likely to be—known of the Country Dance of that period is to be gleaned from Playford's 'English Dancing Master' in its eighteen editions (1650-1728). From a careful analysis of this unique work it is to be inferred that the Country Dance, which was probably at its prime when Playford published his first edition, steadily declined during the period covered by the publication of the book, so that by the time of the 18th century it had become hopelessly corrupt and decadent. Fortunately the task of deciphering Playford's descriptions, which are often very clumsily expressed and contain many obsolete expressions, has now been more or less successfully accomplished, so that upwards of sixty of the dances contained in 'The Dancing Master' are now available, and are rapidly coming once again into general use; and this number will shortly be very materially increased.

In conclusion some reference must be made to the revival of folk-dancing in England, which has latterly attracted so much attention.

The revival, it should be pointed out, is not peculiar to this country. A similar movement is being prosecuted, and with a like enthusiasm, in the United States of America, as well as in certain European countries. The movement has, no doubt, for its chief objective the quickening of the national spirit, and this will most certainly be one of its immediate and most beneficent effects. But there are other motives as well. Educationists, for instance, advocate folk-dancing in schools for the sake of the physical exercise that it promotes under the guise of recreation, seeing in it a corrective to the 'hockey walk,' the 'rowing slouch' and the wooden stiffness of bearing induced by military drill.

The movement in England has, of course, its critics. There are those, for instance, who point out that the primitive race which evolved the folk-dance is now in a state of decadence. Starting from this premiss, which is quite unassailable, they then proceed to argue, very illogically, that for this reason the dances themselves are decadent; that they are out of tune with the spirit of the present day and deserve nothing better than to be relegated to the lumber room together with other old and useless products of a past age.

Others, however, attracted by the simple, rhythmic beauty of their movements and of the tunes to which they are allied, think that these ancient national dances are on their own merits far too good to be lost, and advocate wholeheartedly their revival and practice, particularly in the schools and by young people.

Among those who take this latter view must now be reckoned the Educational Authorities, who, in their 'Syllabus of Physical Exercises' (1909) proposed that the Morris and Country Dances should forthwith be placed in the curriculum of the elementary school.

The official recognition thus accorded to the educational value of our two national dances marked a new and almost revolutionary departure, and

disclosed a vista full of interesting possibilities. If, however, the scheme is yet to yield the best and the fullest of results, it must be administered with caution and wisdom. It is, for instance, of paramount importance that the dances should be translated into the schools as accurately as possible in their native and traditional forms; otherwise, their educational as well as their artistic value will be seriously discounted. To do this effectively will need an adequate supply of trained teachers and a staff of qualified inspectors.

Teachers, too, must realise the very different qualities which characterize, respectively, the Morris, the Sword, and the Country Dance, if they are to assign to each its own proper place in the educational scheme.

The Morris is the most difficult dance of the three. Its especial purpose in education is the development of physical qualities. Its movements are strong, vigorous, at times almost violent, and demand great agility and flexibility of limb. Nevertheless, they must be executed easily and gracefully and without apparent effort or physical distress; and the ability to do this can only be acquired by constant and assiduous practice under expert supervision. Vigour under complete control is the dominant note of the Morris Dance, as it is also its chief claim to educational recognition. The greatest care must be exercised lest, on the one hand, the dance degenerate into a disorderly romp, or, on the other hand, curbed by too rigid a restraint, it become tame and lifeless. Much drill and discipline, too, will be needed if the performers are to keep their lines straight and even, and to maintain the prescribed distances from each other. Finally, it must be borne in mind that the Morris is not so much a social, recreative dance as a physical exercise, and a very strenuous one.

The Sword Dance, too, like the Morris, exercises the whole body, but in a less exacting way. It is an ideal dance for boys, especially when it is used as an introduction to other dances and to overcome the boyish objection to dancing as an unmanly accomplishment.

The Country Dance is altogether a quieter, more reposeful dance. It is more easily learned, and is physically far less exacting than the Morris. It is, primarily, a social recreative diversion, in which both sexes take part; a homely, intimate, and above all a mannered dance. By its means many valuable lessons may be inculcated—in grace of manner and dignified behaviour, especially between the sexes; in the art of moving easily and naturally, and maintaining a fair presence and courtly bearing. In the words already quoted, the Country Dance is 'a moderate and healthful exercise, a pleasant and innocent diversion, if modestly used and performed at convenient times and by suitable company.'

So far, we have considered the educational worth of the folk-dance as a physical exercise only. But it is something more than this. It is an art, and a highly expressive one; an art, too, like music, to which children are peculiarly responsive. On this ground alone its introduction into the schools may be justified; for, educationally speaking, the quickening of the artistic sense is at least as important as the developing of muscles. Consequently, in placing folk-dances in the schools we are, or should be, introducing not merely a pleasurable form of physical exercise, but an art, something that is at once healthful, beautiful, and expressive. No one who has closely studied the best folk-dancing in England would hesitate for one moment to dignify it by the name of an art, nor deny that it seems to give to those who practise it an ease of manner and an air of refinement which are very

attractive. It is something more than mere sentimentality that would connect the upright bearing of the Morris dancer with the uprightness of his character. To those whose experience is limited to the cake-walks and skirt-dances of the music-hall, or to the monotonous circlings and 'kitchen' lancers of the drawing-room, this view may seem fantastic. But this is only because dancing has in our time become so debased that most of us have forgotten that it is one of the most elemental and universal of the fine arts.

Ease of manner, grace and dignity of carriage, upright bearing, and so forth, can scarcely be said to distinguish the age we live in. And yet it is not so very long ago since 'the dancing English' were renowned for 'carrying a fair presence.' Is it too much to hope that, with the revival of folk-dancing in the schools, these very desirable qualities may in the next generation once again become characteristic of the English nation?

SOME MUSICAL EPIGRAMS AND POEMS.

By C. EDGAR THOMAS.

The term 'epigram' originally meant and was applied to anything that was virtually inscribed as on a monument or statue, but with the lapse of time its meaning became wide enough to include a multitude of little poems. Thus from adhering strictly to the terms of its Greek etymology, *i.e.*, an actual inscription, it has since been applied to verses, especially those affecting the terseness of an inscription, and also to the little poem ending in a point, particularly of the epigrammatic or satirical type.

Practically all professions have been assailed by the epigram writer in the past, and many are the interesting epigrammatic scraps that have been handed down to us through the generations. Music and musicians have received their full share of attention in this respect, and in the present brief article it is proposed to review a few of the lesser-known compositions that have been provoked by the musical art.

An extremely beautiful epigram in its original sense—a mural inscription—is that written on Claudius Phillips, a travelling violin player:

Phillips, whose touch harmonious could remove
The pangs of guilty power or hapless love;
Rest here, distress'd by poverty no more,
Here find that calm thou gav'st so oft before;
Sleep undisturb'd, within this peaceful shrine,
Till angels wake thee with a note like thine.

The story of its authorship is interesting, seeing that it was at first ascribed to the actor Garrick, but Boswell has given an account of it from the mouth of the great actor himself. From this it would appear that Johnson and Garrick were sitting together when the latter repeated an epitaph on Phillips, by Dr. Wilkes, at which the worthy lexicographer shook his head, and said, 'I think, Davy, I can make a better.' Then, stirring his tea in silence for a while, he in a state of meditation, produced the verses given above. Dr. Wilkes's lines, which Garrick is reputed to have repeated to Johnson, ran as follows:

Exalted soul, thy various sounds could please
The love-sick Virgin, and the gouty ease;
Could jarring crowds, like Old Amphion, move
To beauteous order and harmonious love;
Rest here in peace, till angels bid thee rise,
To meet thy Saviour's consort in the skies.

Here is another, concerning 'A bad singer':

When screech-owls scream, their note portends,
To frighten'd mortals, death of friends;
But when Corvino strains his throat
E'en screech-owls sicken at the note.

One of the most celebrated and most frequently quoted (and sometimes misquoted) epigrams was born of the feud between Handel and Bononcini. It has been ascribed to Dean Swift, but it is clear that it was written by John Byrom (1691-1763), the Lancashire poet, who invented a system of shorthand. As published in Byrom's 'Miscellaneous Poems,' it runs as follows:

Some say, compar'd to Bononcini
That Mynheer Handel's but a ninny;
Others aver that he to Handel
Is scarcely fit to hold a candle;
Strange all this difference should be
'Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Bartlett, in his 'Familiar Quotations' (p. 129), prints the epigram as above, and in a footnote gives the following evidence of its authorship:

Nourse asked me if I had seen the verses upon Handel and Bononcini, not knowing that they were mine ('Byrom's Remains') (Cheetham Society, Vol. i., p. 173).

Bartlett adds: 'The two last lines have been attributed to Swift and Pope. See Scott's edition of Swift and Duce's edition of Pope.'

Another humorous epigram concerns the affairs of two singers:

Two singers were oft in contention quite warm,
Which most, when they tuned up their windpipes,
could charm;

To a master of music they jointly applied,
This often-contested affair to decide.

They quaver'd, they shaked, and such graces were shown,

That each took for granted the prize was his own.

'Indeed, my good friend,' cries the judge to the first,

'Of all earthly singers, I think you're the worst:

But as for you, friend,' (turning round to the other)

'You can't sing at all—so must yield to your brother.'

while the two lines of Samuel Rogers, of 'Table-talk' fame, regarding the departure of a certain Count for Italy, whence he sent some Italian music in score for the opera, are worth reproducing:

He has quitted the Countess, what can she wish more?

She loses one husband, and gets back a score!

In the reign of the first George, Faustina Bardoni and Francesca Cuzzoni were rival singers at the Italian Opera in London. The former was of extreme beauty, while the latter bore a very bad character indeed. She afterwards married Signor Sardoni, whom she poisoned, for which crime she was tried and condemned to death, the penalty being subsequently remitted. At one time, however, both were great operatic rivals, and each had their supporters. The Countess of Pembroke and her party asserted the pre-eminence of Cuzzoni, and the Countess of Burlington that of her lovely rival. The cantatrices eventually came to blows, and the Countesses were with great difficulty prevented from taking the same course. The whole town was divided between the two factions, and innumerable squibs and epigrams lent colour to the excitement. Lady Pembroke was accused of encouraging the *cat-calling* of Faustina, which provoked the following epigram, noticeable not so much for its merit as for the evidence it exhibits of the bitterness of the party feeling:

Old poets sing, that beasts did dance
Whenever Orpheus pleas'd;
So to Faustina's charming voice,
Wise Pembroke's asses bray'd.

Eventually Faustina won the day, and Cuzzoni's popularity ceased as a matter of course, upon which these lines appeared as the introduction to