

DEAR SIR,—I feel certain that Mrs. Kennedy's recent article in "English Dance and Song" has stimulated an already existing interest in the traditional dance.

A form of the traditional dance which we have neglected and which appears to have been once widespread over England* is step dancing. It is probably too late now to do anything about step dancing as such (although I notice that "Display by Mendip Step Dancers" was an item in the programme of Somerset Summer Festival as late as 1933), but we know that step dancing is incorporated in the reels danced in the Lake District and probably elsewhere. (With the help of the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, it might yet be possible to recover examples from Cornwall).

I believe that in these reels we have the remnants of the dancing of the "work folk" to which the late Thomas Hardy referred (see E.F.D.S. Journal, 1927, p. 52). It is to be regretted that an attempt to collect these dances was not made earlier, for they would have provided a link between our Morris and Sword dances, on the one hand, and our social dance, on the other.

Douglas Kennedy has remarked that it was unfortunate that Sharp grew so interested in the Playford dance before traditional sources were thoroughly explored. In transcribing the Playford dances Sharp, in his wisdom, avoided the mannered steps of the ballroom and by using the simplest of steps gave us a dance which it is possible to enjoy as much in the open air as indoors. However, the number of "bookish" dances taught and published, being out of all proportion to those collected from traditional sources, has led to the "conjectural" style setting the pace. By the introduction of American dances an attempt has been made to correct this state of affairs, but, in what I believe to be a critical stage in the development of the social dance, our own English reels too should be allowed to make their contribution.

I would suggest the following as a practical measure:—

- (a) These dances be demonstrated *with stepping* at, perhaps, the next Summer School.
- (b) That a simple notation (together with suggestions for tunes) be published, that could be followed at least by those who had seen the demonstration.
- (c) That the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies be approached, if this has not already been done, and other likely sources, if known.
- (d) That a responsible person be appointed for collecting all the available information regarding this type of dance and for giving this practical effect.

Yours faithfully, (signed) C. D. A. CAPP.
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London, W.1.

* See, for instance, F. J. Harvey Darton "English Fabric" (1935) and two interesting letters in "Notes and Queries" (1907), series 10—VII, p. 269 and p. 378.

**Extract from letter from Elizabeth Marler,
now interned in Germany**

We have about three hundred people here divided into three houses. In the house opposite are mostly people from Poland and Germany, they have been here the longest. In our house mostly people from Holland and in the third those from Belgium and people picked up at sea. But they have got somewhat mixed up now.

The following I should like passed on to any of the Folk Dancing Society who are interested. This winter I have just started a country dance class. There is quite a lot of interest in it, between 30 and 40 people turn up, mostly young and energetic with a fair sprinkling of the elderly, awkward and elephantine. I have been hoping to start it for some time but there were several obstacles to overcome; the chief was that I had neither the dance notation nor the music and having danced only twice in four years myself had forgotten everything more or less completely. However, a friend of mine got into touch with the Dutch branch of the E.F.D.S. "De Meihof," and sent me a copy of the Dutch translation of Cecil Sharp's 3rd Country Dance Book, containing the Dance Notations of 15 dances and tunes but without bass, so the pianist had to invent the accompaniment. So far we have had two lessons of an hour in the Theatre and people are most enthusiastic. A few of the younger girls have done a little at school in England and one or two of them brought up in Holland have also done a bit here, but the rest are complete beginners and many of them do not understand much English.

We have learnt "Christchurch Bells" and "Circassian Circle" so far. A further difficulty is that the piano has to be moved out of the ice cold Theatre, which is too expensive to heat, to a warmed room. This will be smaller but it is an advantage in itself because I shall have to split the class. Fifty people is far too many for any individual attention and I have had to bellow myself hoarse in that huge theatre which brings us to the further difficulty of getting enough time to give everyone a bit of dancing twice a week. The two pianos in the camp are so much in demand for the several professional pianists here, who must all have their two hours a day, that it takes about two headaches and an hour's committee meeting to get a free hour at a time that suits everybody. And then the pianist question—everyone who has ever taught country dancing will sympathise with me on that point. However, it seems to be a success and I am hoping to get some books from Holland soon.

PERSONAL ADVTS.

WANTED.—Complete Set of the Morris and Country Dance Books. All volumes of the News and Journal published before 1930. Reply Box XYZ c/o Editor "English Dance and Song."

WANTED—Treble and Descant Recorders. Good make. Send Particulars to: Eileen Black, 9 Brooklands, Eversley Crescent, Isleworth.