

that activity. In the "missionary" stages of the Society's work, it is undoubtedly necessary to provide musicians and instructors at a monetary loss, but where folk dancing is well established, it should be recognized that those who do not contribute to the Society's funds should pay more for the use of its facilities than those who do. I suggest that in many areas we have now passed the missionary stage, and to that extent the ranks should be closed a trifle.

The Broom Dance.

From MISS MARION E. SMART, 36 Main Street, Tiddington, Stratford-on-Avon.

I was very interested in the article on the Devon Broom Dance in the June-July issue of the Magazine. I had no idea that it was in any sense a folk dance. I saw a broom dance performed once at the wedding of one of my cousins in Kent some twenty years ago. As I was quite a young child at the time and not especially interested in dancing I cannot now remember in any detail how it was done, but think that in general outline it was similar to the version danced by Mr. Rowe. I know that I was very much impressed by what I regarded then as a nimble and agile piece of acrobatics.

The Broom Dance—II

SOME NOTES FROM CECIL SHARP'S MANUSCRIPTS

ON a short visit to Cambridge this Easter I took the opportunity of looking at Cecil Sharp's notebooks in the library of Clare College. I found several references in the notebooks to broom dances, and my interest having been aroused by a version of this dance which my wife and I found in Scotland last summer, I made copies of the relevant parts of the MSS. In view of the account of the broom dance in the last issue of the Magazine, it may be of interest to readers to reproduce Sharp's notes on it.

He apparently first recorded this dance at Lew Trenchard in Devon in 1906, and his notes on this occasion are as follows:—

"BROOM STEM DANCE :

- 1st Step.* Broom in R on L of R leg.
Pass R over broom and change hands.
Pass L over broom and change hands.
- 2nd Step.* Broom in L on L of R leg.
Pass R over broom and change hands.
Broom in R on R of L leg.
Pass L over broom and change hands.

Hornpipe step throughout varied with above steps to taste of dancer. If two men dance they can hold broom between them (stick only is better) and perform steps as above facing one another.

Sometimes the broom is placed on ground and hornpipe stepped on either side of broom stick after manner of sword-dance, backward and forwards in direction of stick.

This was danced by Harry Frise of Lew Down on Sept. 1st, 1906, at Lew Trenchard. Tune : "The Soldiers' Joy" hornpipe.

Broom dance always finished up Harvest Home. A brush not a besom. The dancer should twist stem in his hand so that the brush raps the floor in time with the music."

In 1907 Sharp returned to Lew Trenchard, where he noted three more figures, namely :

“ Broom on ground, dancing like sword dance.
Walk round, spinning broom resting on arms.
Hop on one foot, passing broom under other leg.”

On this occasion it was performed to the “ College Hornpipe.”

These are the only descriptions which Sharp gives of the dance, but he mentions several other places at which he encountered it. Thus

Tom Harris [of the Blackwell Morris] used to perform the broom dance to “ Greensleeves ” and gave me the words they used to sing. The verses are a variant of the well-known rhyme “ Some say the de’il’s dead,” the first verse being :—

“ Toby Colbourn had a wife
Had a wife, had a wife.
Toby Colbourn had a wife
And then at last he killed her.
Colbourn’s wife she rased again
Colbourn’s wife she rased again
Colbourn’s wife she rased again
And brought him forth two childer.”

I found this of particular interest, for my father used to sing “ Some say the de’il’s dead ” to the tune of the “ Keel Row,” and the latter is the tune for the version of the dance noted in the last Magazine and also for the version which we found in Scotland. Sharp gives also a variant of “ Greensleeves ” from Mells (Somerset) which was used for this dance.

Other places where Sharp recorded the occurrence of the dance were Littleport (Cambs), Horton-cum-Studley (Oxon.), Winster (Derbyshire) and Helmdon (Northants), but no details are given.

Sharp also recorded a flail dance which was of somewhat similar type. Of this he says :—

“ Old Mr. Day showed me . . . method of dancing flail dance. Hold handle perpendicular, twist tail on ground in a circle (with hinge as centre) and step over it as it passed under the two feet, step-dancing the while. He said they never danced when they threshed. When a shower had driven them into a barn for shelter, where the threshels were hanging up some of ’em would dance to while away the time while someone else whistled tune.”

Sharp does not mention the name of the tune or give any further details. It would be interesting to know if this dance still lives somewhere in England or Scotland.

I am indebted to Miss Karpeles for permission to reproduce the extracts above, and to the Librarian of Clare College for granting me access to the manuscripts.

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