

CORRESPONDENCE - To the Editor of THE CHOIR.

FOLK SONGS [Letter from J Heywood]

SIR, - With the first part of Mr. Kidson's article on folk-song in the current number of THE CHOIR I am in almost perfect agreement. Instead of the word 'for' at the end of the fifth line of par 3 I would like to substitute 'from,' for as literature was, to a large extent, derived from the ballad, as language came before grammar, so our technique may be said to owe its origin to the spontaneous music of the people.

It is not until the part beginning 'The Art Song' is reached that I begin to find myself somewhat at variance with the writer. I do not think that the Art Song has the *same* charm; it may have a similar charm, but, to my mind, composed song has rarely if ever the same charm as these spontaneous melodies. Nor do I agree that the class of people who formerly sang folk-song now sing the music-hall production. I would be exceedingly discouraged with our musical outlook if I thought that the abominable trash which is howled by a certain uneducated class of people had taken possession of the minds of our respectable middle classes of both town and country - and such I believe to have been the singers of folk-song. Editing the folksong does not, in my thought, spoil it any more than the editing of Shakespeare lowers the dignity or spoils the charm of his writing. The Bible is still the Bible, though in a Revised Version. Even to admit that concert-singers would not sing the songs which had been associated with the schoolroom is no argument against folk-songs, or the teaching of them to children in schools. I have heard of excellent performances of operas, viz., *The Mikado*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, &c., by school children, and I believe these operas are still staged by professionals. I was so delighted on one occasion with the singing of a carol by school children that I bought and used it in my choir.

And why 'under compulsion' in the last par but one. School children would, I think, rather sing - even folk-songs - than work arithmetical problems or learn geography. Do we not look back, those of us who were permitted to indulge in music at school, with a certain amount of satisfaction, and recall the feeling of pleasure at the appearance of the singing-master? Please allow us to teach the children to know and to love what we believe to be the natural and spontaneous music of our ancestors. Then we may hope (with Mr. Cecil Sharp) to have in the future Griegs and Glinkas of our own to do for English music what these patriotic musicians did for the music of their countries.

J. HEYWOOD.