

THE COUNTRY TOWN

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TO THE THAXTED MORRIS DANCERS.

MY DEAR GIRLS AND BOYS,

I wonder if you know in what wonderful times we are living? And I wonder if you know how much is happening in your own little country town with its beautiful Church and the daily celebration of the sacrament of joy and thanksgiving?

Since I went up and down the streets of Thaxted and heard from so many open doors the sound of music, since I saw the little lad of three dancing so merrily while his father played and since we all travelled together on that never-to-be-forgotten journey to Cambridge, I have felt that you all belong to our Guild, and that we belong to the life in Thaxted. There is a very beautiful new life springing up all over our country and because Thaxted is one of the centres of this I want you all to realize that you have your own part to play in it.

Everything I want to say to you is really contained in a line of the folk hymn, "The White Paternoster," with which I want every festival of dance and song to finish. These are the words:—

"God is the Branch and I the flower,"

and this means that the mighty force which is showing itself in so many ways and bringing about so many changes of thought and action comes from God and rushes into everyone of us if we only understand how to keep open our hearts and our spirits to its influence.

To some of us this mighty spirit suggests new scientific truths and new inventions, so that long hours of work and study result in the conquest of the air and the sea, the conquest of disease and suffering. To some it has come as a great and overwhelming demand for a fuller and less down-trodden life and it has helped men and women to stand shoulder to shoulder in their demand and to deny themselves for the good of all. To others it has given the inspiration to cast off sloth and luxury and to live a whole and strenuous life.

To women it is bringing the call to responsible citizenship and to a share in the widest and fullest life of humanity.

New inspiration and new joy is always best expressed in the music of dance and song, and to-day much of this new inspiration is coming from the workers and the simple folk of the country-side, and so it is expressing itself in folk song and folk dance and in a new interest in folk tale, in legend, and in the wisdom of the folk.

And so it has come about that all over England, in town and country, boys and girls are dancing and singing to the deep and orderly rhythm of the music which is the inherited tradition of the English race, and which expresses the spirit of England in her best and simplest mood. And the truly Catholic Church of England opens wide her doors to this procession of youth and of joy, and as the Church of the folk has ever been even before religious thought was incarnated in its present form, and when Mother Earth and the Sun and Stars were symbols of worship, the Church to-day is the inspiration and the shelter for all this pulsating life and joy and accomplishment.

I sometimes think of music as a mighty flowing river bringing health and beauty wherever it flows, but oftener I see music as a joyful orderly procession of those whose steps are ever climbing upwards, and one after another I see the pilgrims falling into line until there are no wanderers from the ranks.

And I think this revival of folk music which has taken place throughout the length and breadth of the land is leading us to a oneness and a communion in which the life of the individual is tuned to the life of the nation.

When you dance the Morris Dances and sing the folk songs I want you to feel that you are part of the truest and best movement towards righteousness and sincerity and upright dealing. And I want every boy and girl to realise the inspiration which only comes from this consciousness of communion with the whole nation, with the universal and with God.

I should like to sign myself as I do to the members of the Esperance Guild of Morris Dancers,

Yours sincerely,

SISTER MARY.
