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EDITORIAL

ON October 12th, 1952, we joined the vast throng of musicians and music-lovers from the whole world in offering congratulations to Ralph Vaughan Williams, our revered and much loved President, on his eightieth birthday. This is a fitting occasion for us to acknowledge our indebtedness and gratitude to this great English musician not only for the services he has rendered to the Council but for his unswerving faith in the music of the people and for the glorious way in which he has given expression to that faith in his own compositions. We are proud and happy that he honoured us by his presence at our recent Conference.

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The Council was founded in London in September, 1947, and it seems appropriate that after five years it should have returned to the scene of its birth. For this it is deeply indebted to the English Folk Dance and Song Society who received the Conference in its home at Cecil Sharp House, which has arisen phoenix-like from the destruction of war. We would like especially to thank the Director of the Society, Mr. Douglas Kennedy, and all his colleagues who spent themselves so tirelessly in the entertainment of the delegates.

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The Conference, in narrowing the scope of its discussion to the significance of folk music in the present day and to its role in education and recreation, succeeded, paradoxically, in extending the Council's circle of interest, and the participation of many eminent music educationists and of representatives of some twenty broadcasting organisations is particularly gratifying.

The Conference boldly—some would say rashly—prefaced its deliberations with an attempt to define folk music. In the definition of fundamental matters—and such is folk music—it is often not so much opposing points of view as variations in emphasis which tend to obscure the truth. On this occasion the differences of approach to the subject made it difficult for the Conference to commit itself wholeheartedly to an agreed formula. It may be, as our President suggested, that folk song like the proverbial elephant is recognisable to us, the members of the Council, when we come across it, but those not acquainted with the species may and often do accept substitutes that are less worthy and less long-lived. It is therefore right and proper that we should persist in our efforts to name the essential elements of folk music.