

HINTS TO COLLECTORS.

UPGROWN as well as children are remarkably shy when asked to sing over a tune. It is this shyness that has to be overcome; we have to win the confidence of our hearer. Now we shall not gain that by any sort of a patronising preliminary conversation. Converse, to be of any use, must be free and sympathetic. Kindly talk about old customs helps; an implied reverence for old and simple ways of life helps, and this not as solo but as dialogue. It helps if one calls to mind one's own delight of oldtime merry-makings. It helps to exchange experience of old games, ancient rhymes, dandling songs and the like, even if they sound ridiculous. For one must risk something to gain any confidence worth having. It helps if you hum over snatches of old tunes of dance or singing games; and you needn't sing them too well—nay, it will hurt nothing if you break down in your attempt and start again, or blunder on till at last your hearer out of a full heart is bound in pity to help you to get the tune right—and the more familiar the tune is, the better. Once you have got your hearer to sing even one note the ice is broken, and with care there will be no more trouble on the score of shyness. For the collector, in his attempt to win this "homey" atmosphere, must use all his effort, because till this is won little or nothing can be done. Once this step is passed the rest is a matter of patience and care in writing of note and word.

With children there must be a certain indirect coaxing. In ordinary school life simply to watch an old game and show approving interest, and perhaps to ask a kindly question or two, will make the game itself popular in a remarkably short time; and when it is found that these things are appreciated, memories will be ransacked and new and extra games will be forthcoming in a remarkably short time. The writer wrote down a list of half a dozen old games on a sheet of foolscap, hung it up in a school, and asked the elder girls to put any others down they knew and sign their name to each one they mentioned. The result was that three foolscap sheets were filled in quite a short time. True, many were ordinary play-games without music, but there were at least thirty singing games in a more or less complete state.

On further enquiry incomplete games were often filled up by statements, "I know a girl who says they always say so-and-so for the last line at Ripon," or my mother says "They used to play it this way," and in one case it was "My grandmother says the last line was 'I pray you, good people, come out of the water.'" This very uncommon and very interesting line in No. 16 actually was recovered in this way.

In regard to actually taking down words and music the collector will be wise to take the words down first, encouraging his helper to sing it rather than say. Do not stop your singing if you miss a line—leave a space and catch up where you can; you can always fill up afterwards. Incidentally you will, by the time the singer is through, have a good hold of the tune yourself. Next bar the words putting the bar *before* the strong beat as thus:—

The | farmer's in his | den—
The | farmer's in his | den—
| He Hi | Diddy O
The | farmer's in his | den.