

# FOREWORD

ON the night of November 20th, 1926, ten thousand people assembled in the Albert Hall to launch the "Daily Express" Community Singing Movement.

There were a few minutes of shyness, strangeness, and timidity. Then suddenly, the spirit of song took complete command of the enormous audience. The chorus of "John Peel" swelled and volleyed round the great hall, and in that moment was born the astounding social movement that has since swept over the country like a prairie fire.

The story of the delight and the inspiration of Community Singing flashed from suburb to suburb, from town to town. Wireless had already brought the cheeriness and the friendliness of it all to millions of listeners who caught the infection and sang as they sat at their receiving sets.

From north, south, east and west there poured in requests that other centres should be given the opportunity of enjoying at first-hand the wonderful thing which London had so successfully inaugurated.

It was not a question of capturing communities, they capitulated joyously and eagerly. Within a

month the people of the Midlands were singing as they had never sung before. Wales, with her traditional genius for song, both found and gave inspiration in full measure. Northern cities and southern towns joined in the movement with irresistible enthusiasm.

Then came another and more dramatic development. The packed grounds of famous football clubs were turned into gigantic open-air concert centres. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty thousand men and women provided unforgettable spectacles as they stood in wintry sunshine or biting wind to sing sea shanties, old, well-known choruses, and—most memorable of all—"God Save the King."

Villages and hamlets began to organise their own Community Singing. Churches, clubs, institutes, workshops, schools — practically every place where men and women gather—joined in.

Three months saw Great Britain turned into a land of song, and the whole country in the grip of a new force the social consequences of which, even now, are incalculable.