

The Songs Our Soldiers Sing



1776 — 1929

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

EVER since the world began men have gone to war and, going, having sung songs. Among savages the singing of war songs was an essential part of the preparation for battle, but in so-called "civilized warfare," soldiers have lightened campaign hardships or camp life monotony by singing about their officers, their regiments, what they had to eat and the shelter, or lack of it, in which they slept, as well as any number of other details of their everyday life.

In this respect the soldiers of the American army, ever since there was such an institution, have been no different from the soldiers of other nations. What is a typical American soldier song? The answer is: there is no such thing! The type of song that was popular among our soldiers of one period, the soldiers of another war would scorn to sing. With but few exceptions, perhaps, the songs which were sung during one war are all but forgotten by the time another war comes along. For the soldier song is one of the most ephemeral things in the world.

Fortunately for our national balladry, there has recently been collected in one volume the greater part of our soldier songs "from Yankee Doodle to Parley Voo," which are published under the title of "Sound Off!" by the Cosmopolitan Book corporation of New York. The collector of these songs is Lieut. Edward Arthur Dolph of the United States Military Academy at West Point and two brother officers on the academy staff have co-operated with him in producing a piece of work which, aside from its inherent interest, has great historic value. They are Lieut. Philip Egner, teacher of music, who arranged the music for many of the songs in the book, and Lieut. Lawrence Schick, instructor in drawing, who made the illustrations.

In the foreword to the book, Peter B. Kyme, a veteran of the Spanish-American and World wars, makes the following comment: "A soldier song is, essentially, a song of the people. Its melody must be simple, the words either sad or humorous, and it must have a resonating chorus in which the tone-deaf can join without fear of discovery. It is for this reason that the most popular song of the World War was 'All We Do Is Sign the Pay Roll,' sung to the tune of 'John Brown's Body.' Then, too, it lent itself readily to improvisation. I remember a chief cook I had. He had a hellowing baritone and was one of the funniest men I ever knew. One day, after having passed through three British rest camps, this fellow suddenly roared forth: 'All we do is go to rest camps—'. A joyous shout greeted this opening line. The men knew instantly what was coming and with mighty vigor, indeed, did they come in on the last line: 'And we never get a d—d

bit of rest!" His song was a hit!

The oldest American war ballad, according to Lieutenant Dolph, was "Lovewell's Fight," written about 1725 in commemoration of Captain Lovewell's victory over the Indians at Pig-wacket on May 8 of that year. Just before the Revolution the Americans frequently wrote ballads to express their ideas about tea and taxation. These ballads, however, were not nearly so popular among the soldiers of the Continental army as were songs which dealt with events of the war itself, such as the famous "Battle of the Kegs," "Mad Anthony Wayne," "Brave Paulding and the Spy," "Nearly all of these Revolutionary songs were sung to tunes borrowed from the British," says the author. "This was natural, for soldier songs are generally sung to old, well-known tunes, or to popular music of the day. . . . It was not until many years after the Revolution that we began to have a national music of our own." It is interesting to note that the one outstanding song of the Revolution, the one which has survived longest in popular knowledge and which was the basis for other songs during all our wars, down to and including the Civil War, was written originally by a British army surgeon. This was the famous "Yankee Doodle."

Here is the story of its origin as Lieutenant Dolph tells it: "In the summer or early fall of 1758, during the French and Indian war, a British army surgeon, Doctor Richard Shuckburgh, who had spent most of his time in America, was encamped with General Abercrombie on the old Van Rensselaer estate, near Albany. A number of provincial troops were mobilizing there. Their rustic appearance was so ludicrous that Doctor Shuckburgh, who was quite a wit, wrote a song about them and set it to an old tune which we now know as 'Yankee Doodle.'"

To the men who served in France a decade ago and sang of "Madelon," it may be a surprise to know that "Madelon" was a soldier's sweetheart long before the World War. In proof of that consider this stanza from a soldier song which appeared in one of the earliest American songsters and was probably sung in the War of 1812:

Could you to battle march away
And leave me here complaining?
I'm sure 't would break my heart to stay
When you are gone campaigning.
Ah, non, non, non!
Pauvre Madelon
Could never leave her lover!
Ah, non, non, non!
Pauvre Madelon
Would go with you all the world over.

Although the War of 1812 did not produce many soldier songs—mainly because the army didn't have much to boast about until near the end of the war! But there is one exception to this statement and it is "one genuine soldier song that will live as long as the republic—The Star Spangled Banner." For this product of the inspiration of a volunteer soldier, Francis Scott Key, has become our national anthem and had thrilled millions of

Americans even though not one out of a hundred can sing it all the way through.

Unlike the Revolution and the War of 1812, the Mexican war produced no great outstanding song which has survived to the present time. In the main, this conflict saw the revival of the favorite songs of the two previous wars mentioned, although the soldiers, both volunteer and regular, seized upon the opportunity offered by various events in the Mexican campaigns to compose crude songs which were sung to familiar tunes.

"No other war in our country's history produced as many songs as the Civil war," says Lieutenant Dolph. "The struggle lasted so long and the feeling on each side was so intense that hundreds of songs of all degrees of merit appeared." Some of them seemed destined to be sung as long as the American nation lasts, for such songs as "Battle Cry of Freedom," "Dixie," "Bonnie Blue Flag," "Maryland, My Maryland," have become an essential part of the American tradition.

"Not all of these songs were sung by the soldiers, however—nor were they intended to be," writes the author of "Sound Off!" "Many were wholly unsuitable for camp or marching songs, or were too far removed from the intimate details and stark realities of a soldier's daily life. . . . As a rule, sentimental songs were not in great favor. . . . As the first wave of feeling passed, and men settled down to the serious business of fighting, marching, sleeping in the mud and rain, and living on 'sow belly' and beans, their attention was more and more focused on the immediate details of their soldier life. It was then that true soldier songs were born."

For it was at this time that the essential character of the American soldier began to assert itself—his ability to make a jest about danger and hardship and to seek an emotional outlet by singing satirically about himself and his uncomfortable life. That quality became even more apparent in the songs of the Spanish-American war and those of the Philippine insurrection. And it reached its full flower in the World War. The fact that "Hinky Dinky, Parley-Voo" is the outstanding survivor of the soldier songs sung "over there" reflects as nothing else can the spirit of the young man who took part in the Great Adventure of 1917-18. And lest anyone deplore the fact that the World War songs breathed none of the crusading spirit, let him consider these words of the author of "Sound Off!": "Perhaps, after all, it is a blessing that these soldier songs of '17 and '18 were light, non-sensical, and even bawdy. As long as soldiers sing these kinds of songs they do not become cynical and bitter, as did the French, Germans and English. The Americans came out of the war with the ability quickly to regain their normal perspective. No feeling of hate rankles in their breasts today. This fact alone is worth more than all the war songs that have ever endured."

First British Flyer Found
The first British subject to make the first flight in a heavier-than-air machine in the British Isles has just been determined by a committee of three appointed by the Royal Aero Club. It was Col. J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon, M. P. The flight was made at some time between April 30 and May 2, 1900. The airplane rose 50 to 80 feet, flew for a quarter to half a mile, and, turning, crashed, with no injury to the pilot, says the committee's report.

Old Superstition
During the Middle Ages the signs of the zodiac were supposed to influence human life and were distributed to different parts of the human body. Disease was supposedly cured by the aid of the zodiacal power presiding over that part of the body. The dominion of the moon over the body as she passes through the 12 signs of the zodiac is as follows: Aries, head and face (ram); Taurus, neck and throat

(bull); Gemini, arms and shoulders (twins); Cancer, breast and stomach (crab); Leo, heart and back (lion); Virgo, bowels and belly (virgin); Libra, reins and loins (balance); Scorpio, secret members (scorpion); Sagittarius, hips and thighs (archer); Capricornus, knees and hams (goat); Aquarius, legs and ankles (water bearer), and Pisces, feet and toes (fish).
A doctor is up against a stubborn case when his patient comes of a long-lived family.

Community Building

Communities Look to Their Future Highways

The American Nature association calls on the women's clubs and the business organizations to inquire into the question of roadside beautification and thus look to the future on this point the Hudson (New York) Star says:

"The roadside tree is at last coming into its own. Those that have survived the ravages of modern traffic are being protected and new trees are being planted along shadeless highways.

"Ancient enemies of the roadside tree are the sign and bill poster, the road builder, the lineman and the landowner. For years they took an appalling toll in trees, but all are now on the defensive, if not giving voluntary co-operation in the preservation of trees along the highways.

"There are times when the removal of a tree or a whole row of trees is necessary to eliminate a dangerous curve or to widen a highway. Under the old order of things such trees were removed and forgotten. Today trees thus removed are being replanted in many states.

"No longer do the linemen of telephone, telegraph and electric power companies recklessly hack and saw at highway shade trees because their limbs interfere with the wires. Unscientific trimming by linemen killed countless valuable trees before the government began holding the owners of the wires accountable for the trees damaged by their employes.

"The motor highway of the future will be a broad thoroughfare bordered on both sides by shade-giving trees and with all communication and power transmission lines running free of the trees and concealed by the trees from the roadway."

Town's Aspiration for Ideal Means Progress

There are many ideals for towns, and somewhere there is a town that is striving toward each of them. "For instance," reads an editorial in the Household Magazine:

- "The richest town in the state.
- "The cleanest town.
- "The most beautiful town.
- "The busiest town.
- "The most fashionable town.
- "The most homelike town.
- "The most modern town.
- "The most helpful town.
- "The most religious town.
- "The most co-operative town.
- "The gayest town.
- "The most intellectual town.
- "The most enterprising town.
- "The most public-spirited town.
- "The best town in which to bring up children.

"What is your town's ideal?" continues the editorial. "Is it the best ideal for your town?"
"Or does your town lack a conscious ideal? If so, is it not worth while to develop a conscious ideal?"

Community Economy
An interesting example of community economy and efficiency was set forth in a report presented before the North Carolina school of economy. By conveying children in trucks from outlying districts of Cumberland county to six consolidated schools it was found possible to have 886 pupils taught by 30 teachers at an average cost per child of less than \$38 for the school year. Another county reported a saving of \$24,000 by means of the consolidated schools plan. Through this arrangement the state is able not only to effect substantial savings but also to pay higher salaries to its teachers and to provide better buildings and equipment for its school children.

Surroundings Count
Developers of residential districts are headed for the wall if they do not supply desirable surroundings before putting their property on the market, according to an expert, who gathered his experience in the development of 77 different subdivisions.

"Men know today that no home can be more desirable than the desirability of its surroundings," he said. "Men want those surroundings before they build. They seek a home site with established characteristics which will insure them against any 'guesses' in the future."

Guard Against Fire
The evils of fire-inviting construction have received tremendous publicity of late. Our annual fire loss is estimated at \$500,000,000. Builders and owners are coming to realize that all construction should be truly fire resistant, whether built of wood fully protected or of incombustible material. The superiority of metal lath and plaster protection for wood studs and joints has been recognized for years through general knowledge of the material and successful stopping of fire in many buildings.

It Takes Two
As the individual is incomplete without the home, so is home incomplete without the community.—Farm and Fireside.

Public Playgrounds
More than 800 communities in the United States have established public playgrounds under trained leadership.

From Youth To Old Age

THERE are three trying periods in a woman's life: when the girl matures to womanhood; when a woman gives birth to her first child; when a woman reaches middle age. At these times Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound helps to restore normal health and vigor. Countless thousands testify to its worth.



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Rodent Has Worn Out Its Welcome in Hawaii

Those who know the mongoose only through Kipling's immortal story of Rikki-Tikki-Tavi may be surprised to hear that Hawaii hunts the little brown rodent as a pest. Originally brought to the islands on the theory that it would do battle with sugar-cane-gnawing rats, the mongoose has become a nuisance which many people feel is worse than the rats. Its destruction of birds, small poultry and eggs is perennial and extensive. Some years ago the legislature put a bounty on the mongoose in the hope that sufficient scalps would be collected to diminish its ravages. However, the mongoose is both wily and prolific, and his kind has not appreciably diminished. A bill in the present territorial legislature proposes to do away with the mongoose bounty on the grounds that were the little chap welcomed and encouraged instead of chased and persecuted, he might co-operate with society more cordially in campaigning against the sweet-toothed rats.

Tattoo Turkeys in Texas

Cattle brands have given way to turkey brands in Gonzales county, the center of Texas' famous turkey raising region, notes the Farm Journal. The turkey-growers' association, in its campaign against thieves, has devised a tattoo mark by which each member can brag his birds harmlessly but indelibly.

When the Serpent Entered In

Mother—George, why are you striking your little sister?
George—Well, we were playing paradise and I gave her an apple so she might tempt me and then she ate it all.

By placing the speaking likeness of a woman in a locket it can be shut up.

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Cream—25c