

# LAST AMERICAN TROUBADOR LAYS ASIDE LYRE AS BALLADS BOW TO JAZZ IN PUBLIC FAVOR

Wm. W. Delaney, Who Wrote Songs Sung by Millions, Closes Lyric-Haunted Music Shop to Earn Living as Composer After 30 Years at Old Stand.

## "CAN'T BLAME 'EM" IS PHILOSOPHIC COMMENT AS POPULARITY WANES

Wrote Words and Composed Melodies of 300 Musical Hits in Vanished Days When Sentiment Held Sway

"Let me write the ballads of the country and I don't care who writes the laws."—Ned Yale's version. Weep a bitter tear for the departing day of the sentimental ballad! Score a knockout for the saxophone over the gentle lyre of minstrelsy!

For jazz and prohibition have put out of business the last of America's old-fashioned troubadours.

Because the youth of the land prefer tunes to words, and because saloons and taverns are no longer the gathering places for communal festivity, the king of chapbookmakers, the author of 300 popular ballads, the publisher of 17,200 more, must close up shop.

For thirty years past, William W. Delaney has spent from sunup to sunset in his little shop at 117 Park Row, New York, supplying the United States and Canada with a colorful variety of ballads, songs and snatches. But with the autumn he will bolt all the shutters and lock all the doors, for the day of his sort of singing seems to be ended.

Who is there who doesn't recall "Let Her Go, Gallagher" and "We Know Not How to Love Her Till She's Gone"? Who hasn't trilled through the songs of Willie Wildwave, Andy Lee and Ned Yale,

During the eighties and the nineties, not a saloon from Philadelphia's own tendorlin to the sinister garishness of the far Western Barbary Coast lacked the pleasant diversion and the sentimental sadness of these humble masterpieces. Nor many respectable homes.

Many were the tears, gripping the heartache and the homesickness, caused by Willie Wildwave, Ned Yale and Andy Lee, who could play upon the heartstrings of simple-minded folk with the art of a Casals on the cello, of a Kreisler on the violin.

"Yes, I'm the three of them. They are all me, Wildwave, Yale and Lee, and I guess they won't write many more songs," says Mr. Delaney. "Somehow, folks don't like that sort of thing any more. Men don't get together in the taverns and ask for a song or a recitation the way they used to. And the young folks don't pay a bit of attention to the words of their songs any more.

"But you can't blame 'em," says Mr. Delaney. "Times change. I believe in giving the people just what they want, and when they don't want any more of whatever you have to give them, then it's time for you to clear out. And that's why I'm closing down my shop.

"I remember when the people craved ballads about hit the events and accidents that happened. And John L. Sullivan fight, a big fire. They weren't satisfied with just newspaper accounts. They wanted a song about 'em. And the songs were hawked on the street just like the newsboys yell out papers on Fifth avenue today. But an old man was to quit when he can't please the younger generation any more. He's got to take a back seat when the world shoots ahead of him. And a man's a fool to worry about inevitabilities."

### Old Song Shop Is Lost Among Mercantile Marts

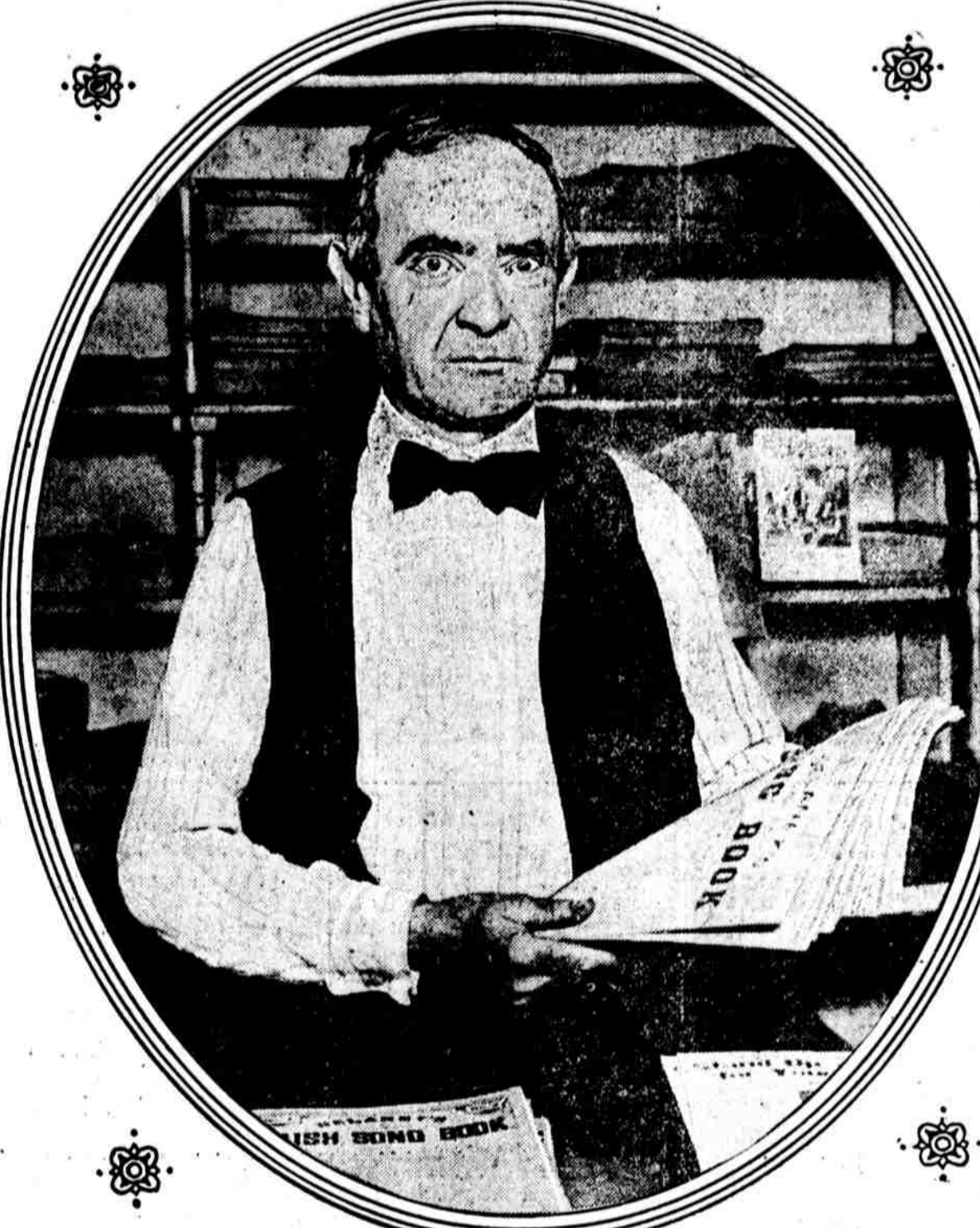
"Delaney's Song Books" is the faded sign that stretches across a narrow brick building on Park Row. The bright, blantly advertised mercantile stores on the row hide this one sign quite away. If you are on the west side of the street you can't even see the sign, because the elevated railway covers it.

But if you walk up the dark and narrow stairway and turn to your left you will enter a still darker place. And over in the corner, sitting by a dirty window, you will make out the figure of Mr. Delaney—or Willie Wildwave, or Andy Lee, or Ned Yale, as you choose to call him.

Today you'll find him with his shoulder in a brace. He was reaching for a copy of one of his song books the other day, slipped, and had a nasty fall which dislocated his shoulder. He suffers a supply of Irish humor, and insists that he was just "imitating the man down a week before by falling off a chair."

The man downstairs only got a bruised back, and Mr. Delaney declares he had to show him really "how to do it." The shop is as dusty as the windows, walls. A large lamp rests against the stands in the center of the room, with an empty pan upon it. The impression on entering the shop is one of antiquity and gloom.

But when the old proprietor peers through his steel-rimmed glasses at you and his eye catches the merry twinkle in his eye, you begin to like this second-story front; you discover it has a



"Willie Wildwave," "Ned Yale" and "Andy Lee," otherwise known as William W. Delaney, composer of 300 ballads and lyrics of a past generation, who is forced to earn a living as a compositor since jazz has dominated the popular taste

bricks, and on top of that four, and on top of that eight, the wall wouldn't stand up, he used to say. If you want the wall to stand you'll put ten bricks on top of ten bricks. And he told me it's the same way with a poem. And that's the way I learned to write songs with meter as well as rhyme."

"From 1878 on for about six years Mr. Delaney was puzzle editor of Noah's Sunday Times, a New York weekly. At that time he was interested in amateur journalism. In 1881 he was an amateur and puzzle editor of Harrigan and Hart's New York Boys."

"At that time there was a great deal of interest in amateur journalism among the youth of the land. Unprofessionally, and still in knickerbockers, many boys tried their hand at writing, and there cropped up numerous weeklies, often edited by boys, and always read by them. In 1876 there was organized, Mr. Delaney said, the National Amateur Press Association."

"James M. Beck, who became solicitor general of the United States, was one of the founders. And I remember how we forced him up on a chair—he wore knickerbockers—to make a speech. I don't suppose many people know that Governor Sprout, of Pennsylvania, and old Joe Daniels and Cyrus H. K. Curtis are members of this organization."

In the eighties Delaney was editor and publisher of The Boys of Gotham, a weekly which lasted only one year. It was published for boys by a boy, at a subscription rate of twenty-five cents a year. There were 200 subscribers and it lasted only a year.

"Early in 1888 I sold my first song. It went to The Clipper and was called 'The Battle-Ship Maine.'"

"The gang at Our Front Door." It made a hit and I found heart and soul in the song business.

"Sinking of the Maine Marked First Big Hit. 'The day the Maine was sunk my ship came in.' When news of that disaster reached us, I knew that a song about it would go big. In one day I wrote a song to the tune of 'The Cannon Ball.' My sister Annie and I set the type for it. We rushed it to a newspaper office and had a million struck off. The very next day when folks were talking about the tragedy my song was on the streets. It was hawked by men on the corners and it sold like hot cakes. Here it is."

Oh, shipmates, come gather and list to my story. It's a terrible accident that happened of late. Over two hundred brave tars who died in their glory. When the battleship Maine met her sad fate. February the fifteenth—a date we will treasure. Its memory is freighted with sorrow and pain. 'Tis a pity that God up above us should measure such a sad end to the battleship Maine.

On that ill-fated day, about ten in the evening, Havanah's fair city was peaceful and still.

### WE KNOW NOT HOW TO LOVE HER TILL SHE'S GONE

Beautiful Song with Chorus  
WILLIE WILDWAVE

### WILL YOU FORGET ME THEN?

Beautiful Song with Chorus  
WILLIE WILDWAVE

### Songs of Mother Love Touched Public Heart

Such a song, which proved unusually successful for the author, was "We Know Not How to Love Her Till She's Gone." Always bound to touch the heart of someone in an audience, it reveals even in the shallowest drunkard slithering over a table in the corner of a smelly barroom, the capacity still to be touched by memories of a better day.

In a weak but rather pleasant voice, Willie Wildwave, for that is the name signed to this particular ballad, sang the song in his dreary little store-room.

"Tis hard to realize how little do we prize. The true friends that we meet upon life's way. We may love them very well. But the facts we never tell. Unmindful we may lose them any day. None a mother's heart is dear. Fond and true from year to year. Her tender love sweet heaven smiles upon."

But we seldom know her worth. While she's with us here on earth. No, we know not how to love her till she's gone!

CHORUS  
We know not how to love her till she's gone. Our dear and darling mother till she's gone. We know not how to love her. Till the green grass grows above her. No, we know not how to love her till she's gone!

When a mother's life is done An angel's crown is won Among the loved ones that have gone before. Tho' she leave it must be so. Still it softens not the blow. Our hearts are left with grieving sad and sore.

We remember all her care As we kneel beside her chair. When we listened to the prayers that she would say. And think fondly with a sigh. That in fancy she is nigh. Ah, we know not how to love her till she's gone!

Look back thro' all the years. And think of all the tears. That she has shed when discontent was chosen. From the cradle to the grave. She would die her child to save. And as she asks in kindness from her own. Treat your mother with a smile.

### Ballads About Public Calamities Popular

"On those songs about calamities I used to clear up a pretty pocketful. For a moment Mr. Delaney was lost in thought."

"But you can't blame 'em for that. George M. Cohan wrote the only ballad of the war, when he wrote 'I've Got a Feeling That I'm Going to Get It This Time.' I'm going to tell you that folks don't give songs credit. Do you know what heartens a man? It's a good, bang-up, stirring song. And I'm ready to believe that the one man who did the most to bring about the end of this war was George M. Cohan with 'Over There.'"

"He's the greatest living songwriter. He's got the fine old sentiment."

### DELANEY'S "No. 89" SONG BOOK

163 SONGS  
PUBLISHED TRI-YEARLY

### DELANEY'S "No. 1" SONG BOOK

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- The Battle-Ship Maine
- The Sinking of the Maine
- The Day the Maine Was Sunk
- Let Her Go, Gallagher
- We Know Not How to Love Her Till She's Gone
- The Broken Heart
- The Green Grass Grows Above Her
- When a Mother's Life is Done
- Will You Forget Me Then?
- Oh, Shipmates, Come Gather
- When the Battleship Maine Met Her Sad Fate
- February the Fifteenth
- On that Ill-Fated Day

"The day the Maine was sunk my ship came in." When news of that disaster reached us, I knew that a song about it would go big. In one day I wrote a song to the tune of "The Cannon Ball." My sister Annie and I set the type for it. We rushed it to a newspaper office and had a million struck off. The very next day when folks were talking about the tragedy my song was on the streets. It was hawked by men on the corners and it sold like hot cakes. Here it is."

Mr. Delaney has three children, but shows much taste for the things their dad loves. "Why should they?" he asks. "Times change, and so do folks. And my own children are not any different from the children of the past. I was a child of the past, and I'm still a child of the past." "I'll try my hand at printing again, just as soon as this shoulder gets right. And I suppose the boys will want to see me and they'll give them 'Will You Forget Me Then?' or 'Galing Him Down,' and I'll be glad to oblige them."