

THE PEOPLE'S SONGS.

WHO WRITES THEM AND HOW THEY BECOME POPULAR

Most Popular Ballads Have a Very Brief but Violent Vogue—Patriotic and Sentimental Airs Live Longer Than the Others. Some Famous Song Writers.

The English-Irish author of the once very famous song called "Lilbulero" boasted that he had sung James II "out of his three kingdoms," and grave historians have conceded that there was some foundation for the boast. And this furnishes us with a most apt illustration of the immense power of a ringing popular song. "Lilbulero" is a wretchedly poor production. In truth, "Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay" is wisdom compared with it. But there was something in it which caught the popular ear, and tens of thousands of Englishmen grew wild with enthusiasm as they marched to the measure and sang or shouted the refrain of "Lilbulero! Lilbulero! Lilbulero! Bullen a la!"



MONROE H. ROSENFELD.

It is much the same with the original "Yankee Doodle." Not one American in ten thousand knows the words or the name of the author, and as a matter of fact it is extremely doubtful whether any one man did write the piece as it finally appeared in Isaiah Thomas' "Authentic Collection," printed in 1818. The literary style is much better than that of "Lilbulero," and there is a vein of humor in it, but that is not the thing. There is some mysterious force in the ring of it which suited the popular genius of the rising nation, and it "took at once." The writers of such songs accidentally do a thousand times better than they intend. Contemporary or nearly so with "Yankee Doodle" was a little ballad of 37 verses, each ending with "America," the word accented on the last syllable to suit the rhyme, thus:

While I relate my story,
Americans give ear;
Of Britains fading glory
You presently shall hear;
I'll give a true relation,
Attend to what I say
Concerning the taxation
Of North America.

The first of this was written in 1765 by Peter St. John of Norwalk, Conn., and a verse or two was added from year to year as events called for them, as thus:

Surely we were your betters
Hard by the Brandywine,
And we laid him fast in fetters
Whose name was John Burgoyne;
We made your Howe to tremble
With terror and dismay.
True heroes we resemble
In North America.

Next in wide sweeping popularity was "Hail, Columbia," which was in effect an



EFFIE ISORAH CANNING.

appeal to the parties to unite. Then came the "Star Spangled Banner" and in due time the poetry of the Mexican war and the great civil war. And now we have to consider two radically different classes of popular poetry. First is the class including "Kaiser, Doan' You Want to Buy a Dog?" "Shoo, Fly, Don't Bodder Me!" "Annie Rooney," "McGinty," "Maggie Murphy's Home," "Dot Grand Bend," "Comrades" and a hundred more such. And it is a most interesting fact that each of these is popular for just about one year. First the song is sung to crowded houses by some popular comedian or songstress till the untaught public catches the air. Then it is "all the rage." It is sung and whistled and hummed and "executed" in all sorts of ways for, say, six months. Then it is taken up by the fashionables and played in parlors or it is parodied for political purposes, and thereafter its decline is rapid.

Thus rose, reigned and fell "O Susannah," "Lucy Long," "Jim Crow," "Dandy Jim of Caroline" and scores of others. A popular song in the concert halls just now is "My Sweetheart's the Man in the Moon." The author is James Thornton, who also wrote "I'm the Man That Wrote Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay" and other tawdry but idiotic airs just now popular. Of course there is no moral or patriotic sentiment in any of those, but there is another class, combining all the fire and vivacity of the songstress's song with some deep and abiding feeling, and these songs live.

Among these is "Rock-a-by, Baby," by Miss Effie Isorah Canning of Boston, who composed it while swinging a weary child in a hammock and wrought out the music little by little while strum-

ming her banjo. When she sang and played it for her teacher on the banjo, he was astonished and urged its publication. His advice was followed, and 800,000 copies were sold in a short time. She is now studying music energetically and hopes to do much better work. Of a far different order, and yet immensely popular, is the song, "Nearer, My God, to Thee," by Albert J. Holden of Brooklyn now, but a native of Boston. He composed it especially for Emma A. Abbott when she was soprano in the choir of Dr. Chapin's church, and it has gained a wonderful pre-eminence.

Another writer of popular songs is Monroe H. Rosenfeld, and he has recently given his experience in a letter from which this is an extract:

"Johnny, Get Your Gun" is too absurd a work to be regarded seriously, and I think that the song, "With All Her Faults I Love Her Still," should simply rank as an impulsive freak. I wrote it merely to offer a gentle defense for woman—fair, frail, beautiful woman—not any one woman in particular, but the dear sex in general, of whom I have always been quite fond. The song filled my expectations. It made me more than ever a friend with the fair ones and made some gold for my publisher, and thus my object was attained.

Undoubtedly Will S. Hayes of Louisville has written more of those higher class popular songs than any other person, among them "Evangeline," "Dixie," "Wandering Refugee," "Union Forever" and many war songs, "Mollie Darling," "Driven From Home," "Nora O'Neill," "Write Me a Letter From Home," "Take This Letter to My Mother" and others too numerous to mention. He gives this account of himself and his methods:

The S in my name is for Shakespeare, but I never use the full name. I was born in Louisville in July, 1837. Song and ballad writing with me is a gift. I write songs from heart to the heart. I believe the ear to be the best critical judge of good, homely, sweet songs and music. Since my success song writing has been and is still a pleasure, not a matter of business with me. I have written and published more successful songs than any man living and am one of the few, if not the only man living, who writes his own words and music. A man who has no love for poetry has none for music, and he must have a heart and soul for both if he expects to write a sweet song that will be popular with the masses. Very few songs were ever successful where one person wrote the words and another the music. To be successful they must be wedded by sympathy in one common song of heartfelt sweetness and harmony. I don't know how many songs I have written. I never kept copies nor an account of them, but



SEPTIMUS WINNER

they exceed 800, and the sales both in this and foreign countries have exceeded 3,500,000 copies. "Mollie Darling" sold over 1,000,000 copies alone.

Septimus Winner, another very popular song writer, was born in Philadelphia in 1827 and began his musical career as teacher of instrumental music and in preparing the well known instruction books. He gives the following interesting account of his most popular song:

About this time there was a street character in Philadelphia known as Whistling Dick, an accomplishment in which he excelled, really making some beautiful music, to which he strummed an indifferent accompaniment on the guitar. One of his specialties was the imitation of a mocking bird, which suggested to me the composition of a ballad of that character, and "Listen to the Mocking Bird" was the result. It was written to suit the small compass of Dick's whistle, to whom I taught it, and this whistling genius did much to start the song on its successful career. The song won its greatest popularity in the southern states, where it was taken up by the colored people and sung far and wide. There are numerous young ladies in the United States today bearing the name of "Hallie," which was first used in this ballad. As the song was first published in the year 1855, it will be seen that it is now nearly 40 years old.

He also wrote "What Is Home Without a Mother?" "How Sweet Are the Roses," "I'll Sail the Seas Over," "Ten Little Injuns" and many others, and yet for all his songs he has received less than \$5,000. Of the song writers very few possess any knowledge of musical notation; hence the writer often gets very poor pay, but Will S. Hayes has never got less than \$100 for a song, and often much more. Other song writers are Harrison Millard, author of "Under the Daisies," and Thomas P. Westendorf, author of "I'll Take You Home Again,



WILL S. HAYES

Kathleen." Of purely religious songs, Fannie Crosby has doubtless produced more than any other person living or dead.

S. P. ROSSKILL.

A Gem From Confucius

"There are three powers—heaven, earth and man. There are three lights—the sun, moon and stars. There are three bonds—between prince and minister, justice; between father and son, affection; between man and wife, concord."