

ing in on any matter of public interest. But by 1916, when the war had gone on for almost two years, America was no longer standing aloof. Relations with Germany were strained. Agitation for preparedness was sweeping the country. It was only a question of time before America would have to enter the world conflict. And Tinpan Alley, mustering its directionless energies, went to work at solidifying national feeling and revitalizing American chauvinism in such songs as:

*America, I love you,
You're like a sweetheart of mine,
From ocean to ocean,
For you my devotion,
Is touching each boundary line.
Just like a little baby,
Climbing its mother's knee,
America, I love you,
And there's a hundred million others like me.*

Then there was:

*If you don't like your Uncle Sammy
Then go back to your home o'er the sea,
To the land from where you came,
Whatever be its name,
But don't be ungrateful to me.
If you don't like the stars and old glory,
If you don't like the Red, White and Blue,
Then don't act like the cur in the story,
Don't bite the hand that's feeding you.*

This, of course, was directed against all the anti-war forces which were rapidly beginning to find voice against the threat of American participation. But it wasn't enough. There followed a swift succession of songs far more pointed and specific in their appeal to chauvinistic sentiment. They bore such titles as *Go Right Ahead Mr. Wilson (And We'll All Stand Back of You)*, *Wake Up America, Liberty, Preparedness (The Spirit of 1916)*, and *I'll Gladly Give My Boy to Be a Soldier*. This last put the question most succinctly and was designed as a prelude to the barrage of recruiting songs which was to follow a few months later. It's worth reproducing in full:

*A foe both strong and selfish
With his cannon at our door,
Tho' peace may be our purpose,
He may force us into war.
Why be craven cowards,
Waiting for his beck or nod,
Be men of hero mettle,
True to country, true to God.*

Chorus

*If the USA needs any army brave and true,
To strike for the right and the Red, White and Blue,
Should the call come as of yore
Then as mothers did before,
I'll gladly give my boy to be a soldier.
When his country calls to arms
At the cannon's loud alarms,
To his flag and country ever true,
Full duty he will do, to strike for me and
you,
I'll gladly give my boy to be a soldier.*

The American entered the war. The wind of chauvinism sown by the song smiths bore fruit and a whirlwind of blind war frenzy swept the country over night.

But Tinpan Alley's real job had only begun. From April 6, 1917 to the end of the war, wave after wave of tuneful poison sloshed over America's head as fast as the Broadway lyricists could rhyme "we'll pay our debt" with "Lafayette." The Alley's first big assignment was recruiting songs. Dozens of them slid off the presses every day. *Its Time for Every Boy to Be a Soldier*, was one of the first. There followed in quick succession *Do Something Your Country and My Country*, an official recruiting song written by Irving Berlin, *There's Something About a Uniform That Makes the Ladies Fall* and others.

But George M. Cohan, veteran creator of catchpenny melodies who had made a fortune before the war by the simple expedient of musical comedies in which the American flag was waved, came through with the best recruiting song of the lot. If he felt like it Mr. Cohan could claim the distinction of having sent more young men to their deaths than any other living "artist" in America. *Over There* was a masterpiece of propaganda:

*Johnnie get your gun, get your gun, get your gun,
Take it on the run, on the run, on the run,
Hear them calling you and me,
Every son of liberty.
Hurry right away, no delay, go today,
Make your daddy glad to have had such a lad,
Tell your sweetheart not to pine,
To be proud her boy's in line.*

Chorus

*Over there, over there,
Send the word, send the word, over there,
That the Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming,
The drums rum-tumming everywhere.
So prepare, say a prayer,
Send the word, send the word, over there.
We'll be over, we're coming over,
And we won't come back till it's over over there.*

But if men are too quickly blinded by the carefully staged pageantry of war, women are able to count their inevitable losses more dispassionately. The Alley was quick to see the need of and the profit in songs to win those women who were still singing or thinking with bitterness and determination: "I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier."

No sooner said than done with songs bearing such titles as *If I Had a Son for Every Star in Old Glory (I'd Give Them All to You Uncle Sam)*, *My Boy*, and *America, Here's My Boy*. The last of these was not lacking in the elements of great propaganda:

*America, I give my boy to you
America, you'll find him staunch and true,
Place a gun upon his shoulder,
He is ready to die or do.
America, He is my only one,
My hope, my pride, my joy,
But if I had another,
He'd march beside his brother,
America, here's my boy.*

There was another approach from which the balladeers felt it necessary to attack mother love. There was good propaganda, good sentiment and consequently good profit, in songs written from the soldier's viewpoint. Typical of these productions were such titles as *Cheer Up, Mother, Cheer Up Father*, which contained the following bit of salve:

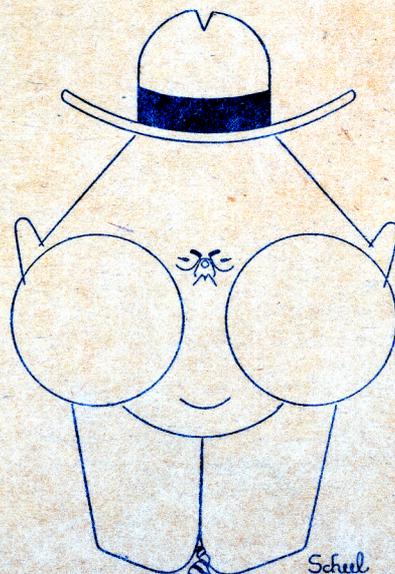
*You have a boy over there,
Your heart is filled with despair,
But could you see him tonight,
He wears a smile that's cheery and bright.
Tho' he's very far away,
Don't you seem to hear him say:*

Chorus

*Cheer up, father, cheer up, mother,
Cheer up, sister, cheer up, brother,
I'll be coming back to you some day,
And when the band starts playing
You'll be hip-hooraying,*

*Keep on smiling, all your cares beguiling,
Dry your tears away.
For the more you miss me, the more
you'll kiss me,
When your boy comes home some day.*

In the same class was a song with a similar title, *Cheer Up Mother*:
*Goodby mother mine,
Time to fall in line,*



PORTRAIT

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