

BRITAIN'S BANDS (2)

Every schoolboy knows that an army marches on its belly, but it marches faster and farther if its feet move to music. This is the second of a series of short histories of the most famous bands of Britain. The author is an expert who prefers to remain anonymous.

H.M. COLDSTREAM GUARDS ("Godfrey's Glory")

THE beautiful playing of the Band of His Majesty's Coldstream Guards that radio listeners enjoy night after night seems so far removed from war with all its horrors that a scene like the following appears uncannily unreal.

Holy Communion Under Fire

During the Great War the "Coldstreams" served in Great Britain, at the front, and under fire. On April 16, 1916, Bishop Gwynne of Khartoum, who was popular with all ranks, conducted a Church Parade service in a hall "somewhere in France." His address was straight and friendly. The soldier congregation listened intently and about two hundred officers and men stayed for Holy Communion.

The ceremony took well over an hour, during which the "Coldstreams" played the softest music. It was a sight that surprised even the officers, because soldiers generally are supposed to be inclined to fight shy of the Sacrament. Many of these communicants went into the line that night, fortified, as perhaps they had never been before, by the twin influences of religion and music.

Caricaturing the "Hymn of Hate"

It was the Coldstream Band that introduced and popularised the "Hymn of Hate" with the Allied Troops. Lt.-Col. J. Mackenzie-Rogan, the conductor, made an "arrangement" of the famous song of venom that became one of the "hits" of the war. The first verse of the "Hymn" was played "straight"—packed full of hate, as the Germans played and sang it.

In the second verse the music was constantly interfered with by phrases of the "Marseillaise," "Rule Britannia," "Highland Laddie," "Dixie," "If You Want to Know the Time Ask a Policeman," "The Old Kit Bag," "Another Little Drink," and other popular things. The conductor called the second verse "The reply to the Hymn of Hate from the British and French trenches." It was received everywhere with roars of applause.

Origin of Name

The name "Coldstream" comes from a village five miles from Flodden Field, which once rivalled Gretna Green as the scene of runaway marriages. Here General Monk raised the famous regiment of Foot Guards—the Coldstreams—with which he secured the restoration of Charles II. to the throne.

On the house, or rather its successor on the same site, where Monk spent a whole winter, is the inscription, "Headquarters of Cold-

stream Guards, 1659; rebuilt 1865." The Coldstreams are therefore the oldest but one of our British regiments.

Humble Beginnings

A good case can be made for the theory that military music came in as an aid to recruiting as the old incentive of loot went out. Whatever the facts, the beginnings of the Coldstreams band were modest enough. When Monk's regiment marched on London in 1660 to restore Charles II. they marched to the music of one fifer and one drummer to each company—an almost ludicrous foundation for the present band of sixty-six performers.

The title "Godfrey's Glory" has been applied to the Coldstream Guards Band, because for close on half-a-century Charles Godfrey, founder of a well-known musical family, was bandmaster.

A Coldstream Band existed in 1742, since there are pictures of it in the possession of the regiment; but the formation of military bands was really begun in England about twenty years later than this, the Foot Guards coming first with their "Bands of Musick" about 1768.

The members were civilians, hired by the month, their only military duty being to play the guard from St. James' Park to the Palace and back. About 1783 the officers petitioned their Colonel-in-Chief, the Duke of York, then in Hanover, for his assent to their having a band which they could command on all occasions.

Accordingly a band of regularly attested soldier-musicians was enlisted in Hanover by the Duke and sent to England—the forerunner of many a German band that later went there. It numbered twelve performers including the leader, Music-Major Eley, and comprised two oboes, four clarinets, two bassoons, one trumpet, two horns, and one serpent.

Negroes Added

At a later stage what used to be called "Turkish Music" was added to the band of twelve. The "musicians" consisted of a batch

of Negroes, who performed on such instruments as the "Jingling Johnny" (a collection of bells on a pole), "Clashpans," and anything else that clashed or jangled or rattled.

The black men who played these instruments were dressed in most elaborate uniforms, with gorgeous slashed tunics and high feathered turbans of great splendour. It was part of their business to perform all sorts of contortions and evolutions whilst playing their instruments. These "blacks" remained a feature in British military bands until the accession of Queen Victoria; but ten years afterwards scarcely any regiments had one on their establishment.

The Coldstreams and the Scots Guards had one solitary black trombone player each until just before the Crimean War. John Baptist was the name of the "coloured" gentleman of the Scots, but alas! he was no forerunner; he was the last of his profession, and very soon he too had "gone where de good niggers go."



Negroes, dressed in elaborate uniforms, were once a feature of English regimental bands. They performed all kinds of contortions and evolutions while playing their instruments

By 1815 the band had been augmented by the introduction of flutes, trombones, and key bugles, until it numbered 20 performers. With this composition it was ordered to Paris during the Allied Occupation.

Bandmasters

Mr. Eley, the bandmaster, was succeeded in turn by Messrs. Weyrauch, Denman, and Willman, the latter being acknowledged the finest clarinet player of his age. On Willman's retirement he was succeeded by the Charles Godfrey previously mentioned.

All of Godfrey's sons were educated in the musical profession, three of them joining the Guards, and each becoming, subsequently, bandmaster of his regiment. The second son, Fred Godfrey, entered the Coldstreams in 1856, and was appointed bandmaster on his father's death in 1863, a position he held for 17 years.

Fred Godfrey's successors have been Cadwallader Thomas, J. Mackenzie-Rogan, R. G. Evans, and J. C. Windram, under each of whom the Band has maintained the proud motto of the regiment "Nulli Secundus" (Second to None).