



TROUBLEMAKER

(By SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER, in "The New Yorker")

say how silly the first people were, there was quite a nice little uproar. This did not surprise me. Already I had known that tune for a troublemaker.

When I was a child, I lived at Borogove, the seat of a famous English public school renowned, as are all famous English public schools, for its irrational customs and the piety with which they are defended. My father was a master there, so on Sundays I was taken to worship in the Hencoop—a transept of the school chapel set apart for the wives and daughters of the staff. The opposite transept was set apart for Old Borogovians.

Eight Into Six Won't Go

At Borogove, the singing is conducted in sturdy congregational unison, and the choir is drawn from distinguished athletes, whose achievements command respect and following from the rest of the congregation. It is therefore grand to be in the choir. The first and last Sundays of the term are marked by one or the other of a pair of hymns, one beginning, "Lord, behold us with Thy Blessing," and containing aspirations for improvement, the other being "Lord

dismiss us with Thy Blessing," and expressing hope that shortcomings may be overlooked. These hymns are in use at most educational establishments, but at Borogove they had a particular traditionalism and patina because the six-line stanzas were sung to the tune of "Deutschland Uber Alles," which is an eight-line tune.

It is obvious that there are two expedients by which this discrepancy may be overcome. One is to repeat two lines of the stanza, the other to cut out two lines of the tune. Borogove adopted the second expedient. It elided the third and fourth lines and the effect was arresting, not unlike what one feels when one thinks there is going to be another step down on the stairs and there isn't: a jolt, a temporary dizziness and disbelief, followed by the acceptance of the hard fact. But it was a custom and nobody dreamed of questioning it (nobody at Borogove) till, in the year 1915, there was a movement to taboo German music as being full of corrupting implications of enemy origin, and not as good as Allied products anyway. When this movement reached Borogove, the school music master began in a serpentine way

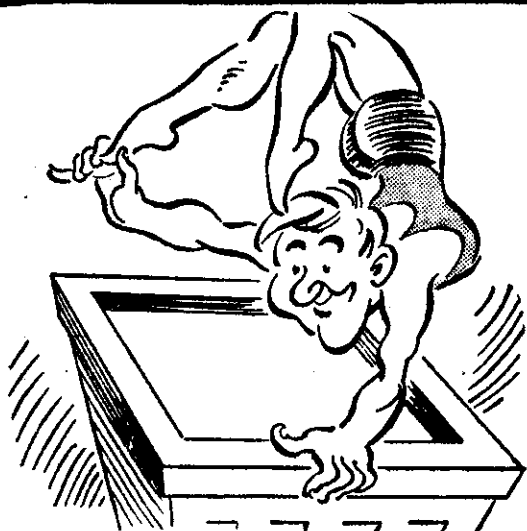
to inflame public opinion against such things as the Venusberg music, and especially to deplore the use of what was really the German national anthem for our two dearest and most valued hymns.

This, of course, was very reprehensible of him—he should not have taken up such a shoddy crusade—and it was also injudicious, for his knowledge of the world and of Borogove should have warned him not to raise spirits he might not be able to appease. Largely through his efforts, the German national anthem was cast away and he was requested to compose a substitute.

No Pains Were Spared

He did so, and it was considered to be very melodious and national. It was taught to the athletic choir, and when they were pretty sure of it, there were weekly practices for the whole congregation, so that even if the choir should have a temporary aberration, the rest of us should not be left like sheep without a shepherd. Some of the masters taught it to their wives. No pains were spared.

Meanwhile, other masters, who also happened to be Old Borogovians, were oppressed with doubts and disaffections and a sharp sense that an impiety had been committed. The new tune might be all very well—patriotic, no doubt—but it was new. That in itself was bad. But it was not even like the old one, and that was worse. It was new, it was different. It lacked the trenchancy of an



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