

# AMERICA'S NEW SONG HIT

What Irving Berlin Wrote In 1918

SONG hits have come and gone in the U.S.A. during the past two years, but nothing that Tin Pan Alley has ground out has had anything like the popularity of a song which Irving Berlin first wrote for Armistice Day, 1918. It is called "God Bless America," and borne on the wings of Continent-wide sentiment it is showing signs of displacing "The Star-Spangled Banner" as America's national anthem.

Berlin, who served in the U.S. Army during the last war, forgot about "God Bless America" almost as soon as he wrote it, and never thought of publishing it. Nor, for that matter, was the post-war American public very enthusiastic about patriotic songs. Then, in 1939, world war again made America conscious of her position, and patriotic sentiment again ran high. Berlin revised and published his old song, and overnight it swept through the country.

Sales of "God Bless America" have exceeded those of any recent popular tune, but Berlin is determined not to make money out of it and he turns over all royalties to the Boy and Girl Scouts of America. To safeguard the national character of the song, Berlin has also placed severe restrictions on its public performance, and broadcasting stations are not allowed to play it except by special permission.

Broadcasters, naturally, have protested, and one went so far as to deny Berlin's right to dispose of his song, which by now "is the nation's own, just as Lincoln's Gettysburg speech is the intellectual property of the American people."

## IT CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE

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ABOUT midnight they came over again. We had not heard where they were coming from, because it had all happened at night and there were no reports through for publication. We could not tell whether our air force had located their base or not. It must have been an aircraft carrier, somewhere, we thought. So it was, it turned out later, and they were a bit too slow in getting away and got caught in the Pacific a couple of days later, and sunk. For which I was glad.

This time they kept to the city. There was a good moon, and they flew low, so that the anti-aircraft guns must have had to fire down at them. The 'planes were pretty successful and we got pretty busy, having our first night actually doing something.

There were some fires, and places where rubble had to be cleared quickly away and the bodies got out. About four a.m. I had to let up for a minute and feel for my tobacco. I remembered then that she had said she would meet me a little after midnight at such and such a place, so I got off from among the crowd of people busy where I was and lit out along to this place. When I got there, there was already a gang working at the place, and sure enough there she

Here are the words of "God Bless America," reproduced by special permission of the music publishers, Allen and Co. (Melbourne):

*While the storm clouds gather  
Far across the sea,  
Let us swear allegiance  
To a land that's free;  
Let us all be grateful  
For a land so fair,  
As we raise our voices  
In a solemn prayer.*

*God bless America,  
Land that I love,  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Through the night with a light from above;  
From the mountains to the prairies,  
To the oceans white with foam,  
God bless America  
My home sweet home.*

## Books to Hand

A farmer in England has built a novel wall round his property. It is constructed of old books, covered with stones and earth. An old home was being sold up in the district, and cartloads of these ancient volumes were about to be dumped in a quarry. The farmer requested that he might utilise them to build a wall round his home.

To-day, tourists and hikers come to see the completed wall, lingering for hours amongst the old tomes. The names of many "best sellers" of past days are to be seen, and though the farmer has no literary inclinations, he declares that his wall is as good as brick and mortar for keeping the sheep out in the fields.

was, and the tea, too, I suppose, although it was hard to tell just what was there, or where it was.

AFTER that I got to thinking again about what led up to my meeting her and what led up to her falling for me. I thought about the moon that night. How kind it had been, for a while. I got to thinking about what would have happened if she had gone to sleep instead of bringing me my tea. I thought about what might have happened if I had been born of different parents and had got stubborn about a person coming away down at midnight with tea for me.

I got to thinking about the person who discovered that tea could be drunk. I thought about the man who thought of an internal combustion engine, about the man who thought of flying, and about the man who thought of dropping things from the air. I got to thinking about Hitler and those others, and who brought them into the world and what happened to them while they lived that made that particular aeroplane come over the place at that particular time.

It was about that stage I began to give it up. I thought about the moon that night, and the wind currents above the city that helped guide the bomb as it had been guided, and I began to think about God Almighty. And then I had to sit down and have a smoke.



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