

MUSIC IS AN AID TO MORALE

Director of Knox Conservatory Calls Attention to America's Singing Army and to Albert Wiederhold's Work

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WE are at war, not simply the army of the U. S., but all of us. Every one should take some part in this struggle for humanity, a struggle that must finally end in the victory of the Allied forces if the home folk are as loyal and true as the Sammies across the sea. It is a thrilling

and give forth only pitches, weak, flat and discordant, there is nothing like music to tighten them and make possible melody, vigorous and vibrant.

On the other hand if we have been keyed up to a high pitch, even to the breaking point, again music relieves the strain, steadies the nerves and brings forth harmony clear and resonant.

During the first months of this great struggle, when the German army began its awful march of madness, we often read of the singing of the Kaiser's forces. It proved a great aid to the comradeship and general good feeling, but how long did it last? How long could it last? The Germans, we are told, had their "Song of Hate," but there can be no songs of murder or atrocity.

The song of the Central Powers to-day is a blatant discord and such songs when persisted in bring only ruin to the individual and are bound sooner or later to bring the downfall of a nation.

We are all familiar with the expressions "Liberty Sing Commission," "War Camp Community Song Commission," "Liberty Sings," and no doubt our Government at Washington will inaugurate something further that will place even a greater stress upon the absolute necessity of music as an aid to war "over here" as well as "over there." The "Community Sings" which are being held in almost every community in our land, have long since demonstrated the fact that they are not only a wholesome entertainment, but much more than that, the expression and sentiment of the words and music and the mingling of the voices together begets a real feeling of brotherhood, and a real interest in the comrade sitting by your side, be he a professional or a laboring man it makes no difference. Team work in music stimulates right living and puts enthusiasm into a political meeting, a prayer meeting or the social gathering. There must be no slackers, however,



tribute to music that this art should be given such a prominent place in the general activities at home and at the front.

Those who laughed at the idea of "a singing army over the top" a year ago, no longer laugh. They uncover their heads with reverence and respect and are duly thankful that there is one thing, as free almost as the air we breathe, that can alleviate the distress of the Flander's mud, the dire misery of the trench warfare or the heart breaks and sorrows of the home folk. If our heart strings hang loose and flabby

and even if the voice can't "carry the tune" alone you will find that the great current of tone of the masses will sweep you right along and you are bound to get a reaction that is of the greatest benefit not only to one's self but to the community at large.

In a recent Paris report I read the following: "The fine conduct and high spirits of the Americans who sang as they crossed marshes and rivers with water up to their shoulders have elicited the admiration and applause of all." This may give a faint suggestion of what song really means at the front. Music, especially singing together in chorus, has come into the life of the soldier boys so naturally that it seems a part of them and as necessary to their existence as any of the so-called real necessities.

From a book entitled, "Keeping Our Fighters Fit—for War and After," by Edward Frank Allen and Raymond B. Fosdick, chairman of the War and Navy Department Commission on Training Camp Activities, I quote: "Patriotism is no hollow, empty thing, it wins battles. And the music, be it instrumental or vocal, that awakens it and feeds it, is scarcely less potent than high explosives."

The song leader at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station gives the following synopsis as to the direct benefit of music at the camps. Quoted from the "Musical Leader."

- I. The Unit.
 1. Team-work.
 2. Concerted action.
- II. Mental Discipline.
 1. Memory.
 2. Observation.
 3. Initiative.
 4. Definiteness.
 5. Concentration.
 6. Accuracy.
 7. Punctual attack and action.
- III. Physical Benefits.
 1. A strong back, chest, lungs.
 2. A throat less liable to infection.
 3. Increased circulation helps to clear nasal cavities.
 4. Strengthens and preserves voice.

Thus music is a vital factor in the life among the Yankees in the cantonments; with their bands, "Liberty Songs" and the frequent appearances of visiting artists and

concert companies, the fatigue of body and spirits is alleviated and the boys made much happier.

Many of our Knox alumni and former students are doing much along these lines at home, but as far as is known Albert A. Wiederhold, a student in the Conservatory in the late 90's, is the only one of the Knox family who is devoting himself to this work in France, although several are making plans to do so.

From the New York Musical Courier we clip from a letter to that paper from Mr. Wiederhold some things of interest:

"How hungry these boys are for music! I never before realized what a music loving lot of men the Americans are and I am convinced that the musicians and entertainers of all kinds have no idea what they could do over here. If they understand the situation then why is it that so few are over here? While, as you know, thousands of soldiers have come over the past two months, and hundreds and thousands of workers for the Y. M. C. A. and other organizations, less than a dozen entertainers have come over.

"Try to realize the condition, and the dearth of entertainers, when I tell you that during the past month I have sung for thousands of men who had not had an entertainment in three months and many of the camps had never been visited by entertainers. Here is one case for instance and this should interest the New Yorkers especially: I sang at a base hospital which had about fifteen hundred patients, French English and Americans. This hospital is conducted by a New York Hospital Unit. Some of the doctors and nurses have been there for more than six months. Some patients have been there from three to five months, and ours was the first entertainment party that had ever given a concert. We were the first singers that had ever come into the wards and sung for those heroes who had been lying there for months. Some of the American men there had joined the Canadian and French troops even before our country had come into this war.

"But the boys are hungry for music no matter where you find them. I have sung for them on the day they landed, at the rest

camps, at the training stations, all along the line right up to the trenches. No one can have any idea of how appreciative the officers and men are. For instance (and this is a good example of the co-operation the army is giving the Y. M. C. A.), the other day we gave a concert at a camp of railroad engineers. The colonel came to us the next day and asked if we would not come out to the end of his division and sing for some of his boys there who had not had any entertainment in more than three months. Of course we went, he furnishing the transportation, which was run by a gasoline engine which seated about nine officials and the two entertainers, with the piano on a trailer. In that way we traveled sixty miles. Those officers gave up half a day of their time to get us to and from that camp to give one hour's entertainment to three hundred men.

“For my part, I have averaged about a concert a day. At that I am in better voice than I was when I came over, and have put on weight. I have never (for one minute) regretted coming over, and feel that it is the most worth while work that I have ever done. So here's to my friends and the friends of all the boys over here. We need you. Come over and help us.”