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Prelude to War

Upheaval and trauma are generally the deciding factor that leads to social rearrangement and the collapse of old systems, but events of this type do not come out of nowhere, and they tend not to unleash anything that has not been in flux for a long time beforehand. The significance of the first World War in the collapse of romantic and traditional ideals has been discussed at length and is of paramount importance, but it is important also to note that this collapse did not come out of nowhere; it was already developing and even beginning subtly to show forth in the years that led up to the war. While of course, the old world ideas were still the prevailing ones, by the time of the war, they were no longer the only ones. This is evident not only in the literary discourse of the time, but also in other forms of communication including music. Madden and Morse's 1904 march chorus, "Blue Bell," exemplifies the traditional, idealistic notions of romance and valor, as well as the early signs of change and the resulting tensions that would erupt during and after the war, effectively disintegrating the trappings of the old world in their wake.

I.

"Blue Bell" tells the story of a young couple being separated by the man's call to military service, in which the speaker instructs his lady not to sigh, for he is doing his duty to his country, but he is killed in battle and never returns. Despite its melancholy content, however, the song is surprisingly upbeat, written as a march song. Given that march songs are typically performed by military bands, and in addition, given the nationalistic nature of this march in particular, it was

more than likely that "Blue Bell" would have been heard as soldiers marshaled for war and bade their friends and family goodbye. *Tempo di Marcia*, meaning "march tempo" is a rather brisk 120 beats per minute, one that does not leave room to linger on loss. The song seems to rather blithely pass over Blue Bell's grief in order to emphasize the greatness of her beloved's sacrifice and devotion to his country. In fact, it even seems to tell her that she is lucky to have been attached to such a man as would die for his nation. The idea of death in war as a glorious and worthy fate is certainly still running strong.

Aside from the primary song, however, the publication also contains several ads for other sheet music printings, the nature of which offer some insight into the concerns and interests of the time. "Where the Southern Roses Grow," for example, demonstrates a very pastoral imagery that still permeated the American ideals of the time, similar to that adoration for the country that the Vorticists in England were so concerned about. The "Suawnee River" most likely refers to the Suwannee River in the southeast U.S., known for its depiction in the earlier "Old Folks At Home." "Old Folks" is famously guilty of heavy romanticization, specifically of slavery in its relation to the Old South. The song was so iconic of the South that it would later become the state song of Florida; any mention, then, of Suwannee River was calling to mind a rich cultural tradition of rural landscapes, plantations, and southern propriety. While the States still enjoyed a greater degree amount of this pastoral landscape in reality than England at his time, it must be noted that these ideals would stagger during the war nevertheless.

"The Good Old U.S.A." and "Blue Bell" itself demonstrate the strong patriotic and nationalistic sentiments that were in vogue at the time of its publication on the heels of the Spanish-American war; as a result such a printing would have been popular during World War I as well, especially the earlier years. Despite its awareness of the inherent danger and morbidity

of war, it maintains a good deal of the romanticism of earlier warfare, because, while "shot and shell" indicates that artillery had come into play by this time, the realities of its use had not yet become apparent.

An additional point of interest in from a more commercial side of the publication is present on page 5, where the words "FREE / Send your name and address and receive four handsomely engraved souvenir post cards" appear, followed by an address for F.B. Haviland Publishing. Such an advertisement, while not directly profitable, would have served to spread F.B. Haviland's name, and would thus still suggest the reality that the nationalism in its pages may be largely for profit and obligatory propaganda, stirring up and playing off nationalistic sentiments. It uses such nationalistic concern and enthusiasm still present after the close of the Spanish-American war, validating itself as a worthwhile buy because of its association with patriotism and a love for the United States. The abrupt cutoffs of the music samples given harshly emphasize this motive, where even "The Good Old U.S.A." ad stops short of the actual 'Good Old U.S.A.' While the publication was of course a profitable one, such insights can be made from the way it extracted such profit.

In analyzing a sheet music publication, however, it is also important to acknowledge the commercial and propagandistic aspects of the material; not everything is fully meant for interpretation. The "Blue Bell" publication is undeniably interested in advertisement and profit, using ever available space that isn't taken by the primary song to promote other works by the artists, as well as notable singers. Interestingly, different copies of the "Blue Bell" publication feature different figures in the bottom left corner of the cover; in the copy used here, the figure is a singer named Dorothy Golden, but other copies exist with another woman or three men, presumably also singers. While it is possible to say that the inclusion of Golden's appearance on

the cover might have helped sales, and thus to make a limited gender analysis on the publication, such an idea would be quite a stretch considering that she is not the only one to be featured on "Blue Bell" printings, replaced by men on some iterations. Such images might have depicted different singers who performed the song, or they might have advertised different singers associated with F.B. Haviland, but any further reading on them is inconclusive.

II.

"Blue Bell" is laden with the language of patriotism and of heroism, expressed in the bugle's call, the brave hearts, the hero fighting for his beloved (4), and the campfires in the midst of gunfire (5). War clearly still retained trappings of romanticism, where death and glory went hand in hand and where a noble death exceeded even the value of love and family. Artillery and automatic gunfire had come into existence, but they had not yet been brought to the level of cold efficiency that would later threaten and traumatize Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. The warm homeland depictions of the U.S. only served to further this view of war, heightening the people's love for and devotion to the land of their forefathers in lyrics like those of "Where the Southern Roses Grow" and "The Good Old U.S.A.," both of which heavily utilize the motif of home and belonging. All this would serve to rouse the young soldier for war, as well as to encourage his female counterpart to look for such qualities in men, thus further motivating willing and eager mobilization. Coming off a recent, decisive victory against Spain in 1898, American spirits would have been high and full of nationalistic pride.

In addition to the noble, glorious depiction of war, "Blue Bell" contains strong indicators of the patriarchal understanding of women's roles in its time, in a more traditional, conservative manner and in raunchier, more sexualized versions as well. The female position is very passive, both in "Blue Bell" itself and in the surrounding songs that are advertised in this printing. The

woman of the time takes two forms. One is pastoral figure in a virginal white dress, resembling nothing so much as the stereotyped southern belle; she is a figure of propriety and traditional value. The other is Morse's alternative, the sexualized figure essentially good only for spooning and fondling (6). Both images are equally male-dominant in nature, where the female's role is determined only relative to that of the male. There is something exceedingly provincial and domestic about these depictions of femininity, both in the demure and modest girl waiting patiently for her hero, and in the coquettish creature who waits to be wooed and pursued, both in the end existing only for the pleasure and valuation of the male speaker.

Nevertheless, the foreshadowing of change is present in this printing. While the shot and shell of warfare have not yet become the horrific thing they are today, they do exist, and they are known to kill. Blue Bell's story is a sad one, even if it is overlooked by the soldier's conquest. The older ideals of propriety and modesty are loosening, as indicated by the tension between Madden's and Morse's samplings. In addition, while the female characters are passive and subject to the men, there is also a strength in this depiction of femininity, a strength and a bravery that, while perhaps unfairly expected of Blue Bell, is also positively acknowledged. She is told not to sigh, to bear up and be strong, and perhaps this is the beginning of a permission or an invitation to move on, to step up and fill empty roles left behind.

While World War I was a major catalyst to countless changes in social structure, worldviews, gender roles, and other walks of life, it was by no means the only factor. Such developments were already beginning to materialize beneath the surface and the resulting tensions are visible in the nature of such publications as "Blue Bell," though they are perhaps rather subtle. Countless changes may have erupted during such a time of conflict, but they were by no means new or unprecedented.