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## "TENTING ON THE OLD CAMP GROUND," AND ITS COMPOSER.

*By Gordon Hall Gerould.*

"I KNEW a very wise man," wrote Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, long ago, to the Marquis of Montrose, "that believed that if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws, of a nation."

The rare privilege of making a nation's songs is given to no one man. Often it is granted to those who make no claim to literary distinction or great learning, but who pour out their deep and universal feeling in simple melody that takes a people captive. The fame of such composers is largely merged in the renown of their songs; yet they have their reward in the enduring power of their work over men's hearts. Such a composer is Mr. Walter Kittredge, whose name indeed is widely known by the older generation, but whose greatest song, "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground," is one of the enduring legacies of the Civil War to America.

Mr. Kittredge's own testimony concerning folk songs is of value. "I believe," he once told me, "that one must be almost ashamed of his song at first, because of its simplicity, if he is going to make a success. He must feel what he is writing, actually see it, if he is going to write a song that will move men. I tell you," he added, "a song will often do more than a speech." So it has proved in his own case. The song which seemed to him most simple has been his greatest success. Though heralded by no trumpets, it yet became within a few months of its publication, as sung by the author and his companions, the famous Hutchinsons, a household word all over the country. It has been sung on battlefields and by camp-fires, in war and in peace. It

has become incorporated into the national life as only a few other songs have been.

Walter Kittredge was born at Reed's Ferry, New Hampshire, October 8, 1834. He was the tenth of eleven children. His father, Eri Kittredge, was a prosperous farmer and owner of a thriving brickyard. Five sons settled near him as they grew up. Of the eleven children, only two still survive, Walter Kittredge and his youngest brother. As a boy, Walter Kittredge went to the district school near his home, and later, while helping his father at brickmaking and farming during a large part of the year, he attended the Merrimack Normal Institute during the winter months.



WALTER KITTREDGE AND JOSHUA  
HUTCHINSON.

He early became interested in music, and with his older sister Sophia, who herself had a remarkable voice, studied singing and harmony as best he could. The brother and sister practised faithfully, and used to please the brickmakers at their work and the people of the village by their singing. Their first musical instrument was a rude flute which Walter constructed from the stalk of a seed onion. When he was between twelve and fifteen, their father bought a seraphine, a rough reed instrument, with which they learned to play and to read music readily.

Kittredge's first ambition as a young man was for the stage. To one who has heard him sing and who remembers the dramatic power of his expression, his success as an actor would not seem to have been problematical. Indeed, the songs in character which he was accustomed to introduce into his concerts used to be among his most popular productions. He studied elocution as carefully as singing, and undoubtedly, if his family with their inherited hatred of the theatre had not opposed, would have followed his bent. As it was, he had to abandon his plan and aid his father till he came of age.

After he was twenty-one, Mr. Kittredge determined to strike out for himself as a concert singer, beginning in a very humble way. He bought a horse and wagon from an older brother, had some advertising bills printed in Boston, strapped a melo-

deon on to a rack behind his wagon, and with little noise started on a tour through the villages of the county. His repertoire consisted chiefly of old popular ballads like "King Solomon's Temple" and "A Bachelor's Woe." He interspersed the songs with recitations, Poe's "Raven" and "Bells," with other American favorites, and humorous selections like "A Smack in School." He held the entertainments in small, bare, candle-lighted country halls, or in the churches, which were scarcely less desolate.

Obscure as was this beginning, it gave the young singer experience. In the following year he became associated with the famous Hutchinson family, who had already made their reputation as singers in the antislavery cause and whose history has lately been written by the surviving brother. With the Hutchinsons, Mr. Kittredge sang at intervals for twenty years, a great part of the time with Joshua Hutchin-

son. During the years preceding the Civil War, though separated for a time in 1857, the two travelled together extensively over New England and into New York, Pennsylvania and Canada. They sang simple patriotic and popular songs. Gradually, as need required, Mr. Kittredge began to compose airs of his own and words to fit the music. In time they came to make up their concerts largely from this source, and in 1862 gathered the songs into a little book.

When the Rebellion broke out, in-



WALTER KITTREDGE.



MR. KITTREDGE'S BOYHOOD HOME.

terest in concerts declined, but there was an increased demand for patriotic singing at mass meetings, both in country and in city. The Hutchinsons and Mr. Kittredge became more widely known and were sought after as the great patriotic singers of New England. They attended numberless out-of-door gatherings for the support of the Union cause and stirred much slumbering loyalty into life by their songs.

"In my best days," Mr. Kittredge has told the writer, "I thought that I wasn't singing at my best at all, unless I could make my audience first cry and then laugh on the very next song. That's the secret of popular

singing. Make your audience understand by pronouncing plainly, and if you feel the song yourself, you can carry them with you. Learning to enunciate distinctly is half of popular singing. It is so to-day, for all the advance music has made."

When in Boston during the war, Mr. Kittredge used sometimes to go out of an evening with a plain wagon and sing to the people in the streets. Even in the times of greatest excitement he received respectful attention when he began to sing. Sometimes the mob would fill the street from side to side and surge around his wagon, but even in the worst quarters of the city no one ever attempted to do him harm. One night as he stood on the wagon seat that all might see him as he sang, the horse started and pitched him headlong into the crowd. A great cry went up, which changed to a shout of joy as the singer rose unhurt and clambered back into the wagon.

In the midst of a life like this, alternating the excitement of the great cities with the quiet of his home,—which he had built near his father's after his marriage to Miss Annie E.



MR. KITTREDGE'S PRESENT HOME.



Fairfield in 1860,—Mr. Kittredge composed his famous lyric, "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground." It was in 1863. He had never enlisted in the army because he felt that he could do better service as a singer than as a soldier. Now he was drafted and felt keenly disturbed over the matter. One night, on his return from a visit with the Hutchinsons at High Rock, Lynn, a persistent melody began to run in his head. "Tenting on the old camp ground" came the refrain. Yielding to the impulse, he went into his parlor and took up an old violin, though he seldom played the instrument and never, before nor since, used it in composing. Melody and words came together, and so were set down. That night both song and score were written as they now stand, except for one slight alteration.

Although he had written many songs before this time, Mr. Kittredge was so reticent in regard to this that for some time he did not show it to any one. He went to Concord to answer the draft, and was rejected by the surgeons. Later he went to High Rock, Lynn, and there taught "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" to Asa Hutchinson, who was the first to learn the now famous melody. In the autumn, while singing at Lowell, he was persuaded by Mr. Hutchinson to bring out his song there. It is related that the song received its first encore from a policeman in the hotel where the company was practising the music, he insisting on hearing it a second time. A little later, Asa Hutchinson, who was then in New York, wrote to Oliver Ditson, the Boston music publisher, that he had a new soldier song which he wished to have published. With Mr. Kittredge's permission he offered him "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" for fifteen dollars. Even at this modest figure Mr. Ditson declined the offer, on the ground that there was no demand for a new war song. Early in 1864, however, there came a demand for a new patriotic air. Mr. Ditson engaged a Mr. Turner to

write something to meet the requirement; but his song did not prove successful. Later on the publishers bethought themselves of Mr. Kittredge's rejected song, which they finally published that same year. The result was almost unprecedented. Within three months over ten thousand copies were sold, and the song was known everywhere. In it there found expression the weariness of strife which the long-continued war had engendered. It was really a "peace song," as the author said, and therefore well fitted to catch the ear of a



nation which nothing but dogged perseverance held to its purpose.

"Many are the hearts that are weary to-night,  
Wishing for the war to cease;  
Many are the hearts looking for the right,  
To see the dawn of peace."

The great war song is virtually a gospel of peace. And who shall say that it does not on that account more truly express the spirit of the nation? Certain it is that the continuous popularity of "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" through so many years proceeds from the universality of its sympathy. It can be sung by North and



THE BABOOSIC.

South alike, now that North and South are one. It has been translated into one or two foreign languages, for it can be sung by any nation. Several hundred thousand copies have been sold since the beginning, and the demand is not yet satisfied. Indeed, the composer received a larger amount from royalties on the song during 1897 than during almost any preceding year.

"Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" has been sung on many interesting and historic occasions. In 1866, a great antislavery meeting was held in Philadelphia to celebrate the consummation of the long struggle. Lucretia Mott, Anna Dickinson, Susan B. Anthony, Fanny Gage and Robert Purvis were among the leaders. Every day for a week Wendell Phillips addressed the assembly, and every day Walter Kittredge and Joshua Hutchinson sang their great song. Perhaps, however, "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" was never sung with more striking effect than in the great spectacular "America," which was presented at the Auditorium in Chicago during the Columbian Exposition. There it was sung by a chorus of over five hundred voices

and was the central attraction of the composition.

It would be a mistake to assume that Mr. Kittredge is the composer of only one song. He began to write very early and has continued to write all his life. The larger part of these compositions, though sung by the author in his concerts, have never been published. Very many, however, have been printed in one form or another, and some of these have had a wide circulation, notably "No Night There," published by Ditson and Co. in 1874, and "The Golden Streets," an earlier composition. "The War Will Soon Be Over" and "The War is Over," published respectively just before and just after the close of the Rebellion, were popular at the time. Some of Mr. Kittredge's other published songs are "When They Come Marching Home" (1864), "I'm a Child of the Mountain" (1864), "Life's Cares" (1865), "Make My Grave in the Lowland Low" (1867), "The Old Log House," and "Scatter the Flowers" (1889).

After the war, Mr. Kittredge went back to concert singing, which he followed for many years, long with Joshua Hutchinson and later by himself. He aimed to be nothing else than a minstrel of the people, and in that his success was great. There is



A FAVORITE SPOT.

scarcely a town in New England that has not heard his voice, and the larger towns and cities of New York and Pennsylvania, as well, have received him at one time or another. At the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876, he sang with Joshua Hutchinson an original song, "Good-by, Uncle Caleb," which was afterwards published. He was an early advocate of the temperance cause, and wrote a rhymed lecture, which was very popular with his audiences.

crowd of disorderly miners had made some disturbance about tickets, in which one burly fellow, partially intoxicated, was peculiarly exasperating. After the concert had begun and in the midst of a song, he tramped into the hall, stamping his great cowhide boots with all his might. The disturbed audience did not stir. Without a moment's delay, Mr. Kittredge, who was at the time a very slender but wiry man, jumped from the stage, seized the ruffianly giant by the collar, and

*Tenting on The Old Camp Ground. composed 1866*  
By *Wallace Kittredge* 1899

*4/4, Tempo di marcia*

*We're tenting to-night on the old camp ground, give us a song to*  
*cheer our weary heads a song of home and friends we love so dear.*

*Chorus*

*Many are the heads that are weary to-night, wishing for the sun to come*  
*Many are the heads looking for the night to see the dawn of peace.*

*Tenting to-night, tenting to-night, tenting on the old camp ground.*

In the course of his long career as a singer and lecturer, Mr. Kittredge has had many interesting and exciting experiences. Together with the Hutchinsons, he has been hissed and threatened for his opinion's sake, though he never received bodily injury. That courage and summary methods of treatment were sometimes necessary among his audiences is illustrated by the following incident. With Mr. Hutchinson, he was singing in a town near one of Vermont's copper mines. Before the concert a

before he could recover himself dragged him out of the door. The miners gave no further trouble that night.

Mr. Kittredge's experiences, however, have not often been of such an unpleasant character. He knew many of the great antislavery leaders of the country, and has often met the greatest men and women of the land, sometimes by chance and sometimes at gatherings like that at Philadelphia in 1866. In 1892, he attended the great soldiers' reunion at Washington with

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 WALTER KITTREDGE'S

UNION

## SONG BOOK;

CONTAINING

*Some of his most Popular Songs, Humorous and Sentimental.*

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BOSTON:

S. CHISM,—FRANKLIN PRINTING HOUSE,  
No. 112 CORNHILL STREET.

1862.

Mr. John W. Hutchinson. There the two veterans met many old friends of war-time and made many new acquaintances. They were fêted and honored with the best, and sang again the old songs which still have power and life.

Mr. Kittredge remembers with pleasure Henry Ward Beecher, Horace Greeley and Bayard Taylor, whom he met, among other famous men, at various times and places. With Joshua Hutchinson, who knew the poet well, he once called on Mr. Whittier at Amesbury. This was at the time when Whittier was writing his patriotic and war poems, which stirred the country like bugle notes. In reply to some praise from his guests, the poet said with characteristic simplicity, "If I have done any good I am glad, and if I have done any evil I am sorry."

For some years, Mr. Kittredge has sung little. A disabling accident, re-

ceived soon after his return from Washington in 1892, and increasing years have kept him much at home. He finds the duties of his farm increasingly engrossing. Would you see him at home? You go westward from the little village of Keed's Ferry, which lies beside the Merrimac on the line of the Boston and Maine Railroad. You follow a sandy road out through fields and pine woods, which seem to be advancing in a broken wave. You pass a little pond, and soon come out where the fields stretch away on either side of the road, with the Uncanoonuc rising beyond. Before you stands an old-fashioned farmhouse surrounded by magnificent elms, Mr. Kittredge's boyhood home. A little beyond, you see a pretty cottage, rather fantastically decorated and having a great bow-window that reaches to the roof. By the door stand an oak and two Norway spruces, and across the road a grove of large pines. A well-kept barn with wide open doors is connected with the house.

Here Mr. Kittredge lives very quietly. At first sight you would hardly suspect him to be the composer of a song known round the world, so simple and homely is his appearance. But when his blue eyes light up with memories and his mobile face kindles with thought, you realize that you are with an unusual man, a man of intellectual power.

All Mr. Kittredge's tastes show a love for simplicity and simple greatness. Emerson and Thoreau are perhaps his best-loved authors, though Ruskin too is a favorite. Like John Burroughs, he is fond of all the school of nature lovers, if that free fraternity can be called a school. The writings of Frank Bolles, with their delicate delineations of New England scenery and the wood-life with which he is familiar, are especially dear to Mr. Kittredge. As he himself said, in speaking of these books, "I like them because they seem like nature itself."

He is attached to his home and its



surroundings as only a lover of nature who has kept his home for a lifetime can come to love any place. All the region was once his father's, and most of it is still in the possession of his family. Behind the house is a hill whence Monadnock and the neighboring ranges are visible. Baboosic Brook winds down through fields and pastures near at hand. Beyond the brook is his birthplace and the old brickyard. Every spot has its memory of boyhood or manhood. Here he wrote a song once known and now

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FIRST SONG-BOOK.

perhaps almost forgotten; there a song, it may be dearer, that never was published; and always within doors is the place by the window where he wrote "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground," a song that will never die.

This earth-flavor he has embodied in his songs, which are simple and heart-felt melodies, truly "like nature itself." Many of them were composed while he was at work on his farm, and one at least was first written on an axe-handle in the woods. Withal,

Mr. Kittredge is something of a mystic. Certain of his best known songs came to him as he woke from dreams, and were written in the night. He is a firm believer in inspiration;—and why not, since nothing else can account for the pervasive power with which a simple lyric like "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" is vitalized. "When I wrote 'Tenting,'" he says, "I actually saw the whole scene, as described in the song. It must have been inspiration. They sometimes ask when the national song is going to be written. I answer, never except in some humble way. It can never be written to order. It must come from the heart of the people, with no thought of a public, in order to live."

That "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" still lives would be amply proven by the number of letters concerning it which Mr. Kittredge still receives. During last year more than a hundred such letters came to him, as they have been coming for thirty-four years. He greatly values these expressions of sympathy and interest, coming as they do from men and women of every condition and place. Last year he received a cordial invitation to visit the Hawaiian Islands, with the announcement of his election as an honorary member of the Kanai Kodak Klub, an association which boasts of "Mark Twain," Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Joseph Jefferson and E. S. Phelps among its honorary members.

Although he sings but little now, except at home or about his work, as has always been his light-hearted custom, Mr. Kittredge retains to a great degree the power of his mellow voice. It gives new meaning to some old ballad when sung with the expression which a lifetime of practice has taught. The pathetic refrain:

"Many are the hearts that are weary to-night,  
Wishing for the war to cease,  
Many are the hearts looking for the right,  
To see the dawn of peace.  
Tenting to-night, tenting to-night,  
Tenting on the old camp ground,"—

never was rendered with greater feeling than by its composer.

So he lives, a simple, great-hearted man, touched by the hand of time, but still youthful and buoyant in spirit, with much to remember and little to regret, not wearing his laurels in

sight, but sincerely unassuming. He has stirred and strengthened the heart of a great nation; yet he only says with modest simplicity, "People sometimes tell me that I have done something with my songs. I can only say that I am glad if I have done so."

## IS THE UNITED STATES A GOOD NEIGHBOR TO CANADA?

*By Edward Porritt.*

JUST before the recent temporary agreement was reached between the United States and Great Britain with respect to the Alaska boundary, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the premier of Canada, made a statement as to the relations between Canada and the United States, in the House of Commons at Ottawa. He had been questioned in the House by Sir Charles Tupper, the leader of the opposition, who had again put forward a suggestion that the Dominion government should make use of the powers it has possessed since 1897, of imposing export duties on pine logs and other raw materials imported into the United States from Canada.

"I do not believe," said Sir Wilfrid Laurier, in reply to Sir Charles Tupper's suggestion, "that either in the future or in the past any policy of retaliation towards the United States would have or could have had any effect in settling our difficulties with them. But I am quite as much in earnest as Sir Charles himself in this respect, that we must stand upon our rights and upon our dignity. But standing on our rights and on our dignity does not call upon us to enter on a policy of hostility to the United States, even though the United States

sometimes try our patience very much. Even though they sometimes more than try our patience, still I think it would be the part of wisdom in us under such circumstances to continue to be patient, and not allow ourselves to be moved by any sentiment of irritation."

It may come as news to many Americans that the United States has ever tried the patience of Canada, that the United States has ever irritated Canada; for the despatches sent out from Washington in reference to the Joint High Commission persistently give the impression that Canada is wrong-headed and needlessly bent on acting an irritating part towards the United States. The questions with which the Joint High Commission is concerned affect Canadian interests from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, and it is worth while to examine them, to see what ground there is for Sir Wilfrid Laurier's statement that the "United States sometimes try our patience very much."

Nearly all the conduct of the United States of which Canada complains arises out of one phase or another of the protective policy of the United States. To begin on the Atlantic coast and with the fisheries