

The Writing of "The Star Spangled Banner"

Anniversary of Francis Scott Key's Immortal National Anthem, Written During Our Second War With Great Britain, Will Be Celebrated Tomorrow.

By F. S. KEY-SMITH.

ONE hundred and eleven years ago in early morning hours of the 14th day of September, Francis Scott Key penned the immortal lines entitled "The Star-Spangled Banner," which not only immortalized his name but christened the flag of our country, and by popular acclaim became the national anthem.

"Lest we forget" let us, upon the occasion of the anniversary of writing the song, review briefly the principal events leading up to the sublime moment that inspired the sublime lines.

Our country was engaged in our second war with Great Britain, or the war of 1812, as it is commonly termed. The British troops having been landed at the head waters of the Patuxent river, marched upon the Capital by the way of Bladensburg. They met with little or no resistance from the untrained militia and succeeded readily in reaching the city, which they ransacked at pleasure. Congress was forced to adjourn and the British troops marching into the halls of the Capitol, Admiral Cockburn mounted the rostrum of the House of Representatives, and calling his followers to order put it to their popular vote as to whether the Capitol, "the seat of Yankee liberty," as he termed it, should be burned. The vote was in the affirmative and the building was burned.

After ravaging the city to their hearts' content the British troops made good their retreat by the way of Upper Marlboro, Md., to their ships in the Patuxent. As is the case of all such marches, some soldiers fell out of ranks and struggled along in the rear of the retreating army. Several becoming drunk and disorderly on reaching Upper Marlboro were lodged in the county jail for disorderly conduct upon the complaint of Dr. Beans, a prominent physician of Marlboro, into whose yard they straggled, insolently demanding water from his well.

Word reached the British lines of the arrest of these British soldiers and a squad of marines was dispatched in the middle of the night to the doctor's residence with orders to arrest him and bring him to the British ships.

The doctor was accordingly taken into custody and placed a prisoner in the hold of the admiral's flagship.

UPON learning of the arrest, the citizens of Upper Marlboro early the next morning dispatched Mr. Richard West to Washington to request the services of Francis Scott Key, then the United States district attorney for the District of Columbia, in securing the release of Dr. Beans, suggesting that under a flag of truce, he, Key, visit the British fleet in an effort to secure the doctor's release.

Key was prevailed upon to do this, and sending his family to his father's home near Frederick, Md., he secured letters of marque from the United States government and went to Baltimore for the purpose of securing the assistance and cooperation of Col. John S. Skinner, who was the government agent in charge of the parole of prisoners at the port of Baltimore.

Comfortably housed, and seated in our homes or our offices, enjoying the many facilities for rapid transportation and communication of the present day, we of the present time can not fully understand and appreciate the hardships which our forefathers endured and were obliged to overcome in all they attempted and accomplished in the early days of our national existence.

With the present-day facilities of a trip to Baltimore is not very much of a journey, but if we pause to consider and reflect a moment on the conditions existing 111 years ago, when the roads were not even pikes, but common, ordinary, country dirt roads, and the means of transportation was by stage coach traveling at the rate of about 5 miles an hour with horses changed at intervals of every 10 miles, the trip is one that most of the present-day generation would not care to undertake on a hot, dusty summer's day.

The exact day upon which Mr. Key left Washington for Baltimore is not definitely known, but it is supposed to have been about September 3, 1814. He could not have made the trip in less than a day with the then facilities of travel, and after he arrived there some little time must have been consumed in calling upon Col. Skinner and securing his cooperation, and the latter also was obliged to make arrangements to leave Baltimore and accompany Mr. Key down the Chesapeake bay in search of the British ships. It is probable, therefore, that two or three days elapsed from the time Mr. Key left Washington until he came up with the British fleet at the mouth of the Patuxent river, where they boarded the flagship under a flag of truce.

The trip down the bay was made on a small sailing vessel named the *Minden*, which was a little boat used by Col. Skinner in connection with his office, and known as the United States cartel ship *Minden*.

UPON boarding the flagship of the British fleet and making his mission known to the admiral in command, the latter was at first in no frame of mind to comply, but eventually Mr. Key did succeed in convincing him of the injustice of Dr. Beans' arrest and secured a promise that the doctor would be released. He was informed, however, that as the British contemplated another expedition upon the country he and his party would have to be detained within the British fleet during this expedition. They were, therefore, returned to the United States cartel ship *Minden*, under a guard of British marines, and together with the British fleet sailed back up the Chesapeake toward Baltimore. It was not, however, until several days later when the fleet arrived at North Point at the mouth of the Patuxent river that Mr. Key and his party, including Dr. Beans, realized and understood the contemplated expedition was an attack upon Baltimore. Key was a Marylander by birth and had relatives living in the city of Baltimore. The city also held very much for him, as much or more, probably, than the city of Washington where he resided. Among other relatives his oldest



daughter was married and living there, and as he afterward wrote in a letter to an intimate friend, "they detained us until after their attack on Baltimore, and you may imagine what a state of anxiety I endured."

Preparatory to the attack the British landed troops at North Point at the mouth of the Patuxent, a distance of about 12 miles from the city, covering their landing with the guns of their vessels.

which were to march from North Point on Baltimore, that "he would take the city if it rained militia and make it his winter headquarters." After the landing of the troops at North Point the British fleet maneuvered and proceeded up the Patuxent taking up position in front of Fort M'Henry, Baltimore's sole defense.

In a letter to John Randolph, of Roanoke, written shortly after Mr. Key's return to his home in Washington, he advised Mr. Randolph that he was disappointed in the character of the British officers, "who with some exceptions appeared to be illiberal, ignorant and vulgar, and filled with a spirit of malignity against everything American."

He further stated that to make his feelings still more acute the British admiral had intimated that the town must be burned and he believed that if it had been taken it would have been turned over to plunder, adding, "I hope I shall never cease to feel the warmest gratitude when I think of this most merciful deliverance. It seems to have given

me a higher idea of the forbearance, long suffering and tender mercy of God than I had ever before conceived."

THE attack on Baltimore began on the afternoon of September 13 and lasted until shortly before dawn of the following day. Key's anxiety as he paced restlessly the deck of the *Minden*, to all intents a prisoner in the British lines, culminated in the inspiration at the sight of the flag that gave birth to his beautiful poem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," which has ever since been acknowledged and acclaimed by the American people to the world at large as the national anthem.

His feelings, during the night from the time when the sun set and darkness prevented his longer seeing the flag until the dawn of the next day which again permitted of its vision, are only adequately described in the words of his own song.

"The Star-Spangled Banner."

"O say! can you see, by the dawn's early light,

What so proudly we hail'd, at the twilight's last gleaming?

Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming;

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,

Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;

O say, does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

"On that shore, dimly seen through the mists of the deep,

Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,

What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,

As it fitfully blows, now conceals, now discloses?

Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,

In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:

'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner; O long may it wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where are the foes who so vauntingly swore

That the havoc of war, and the battle's confusion,

A home and a country should leave us more?

Their high walls have washed out their foul footsteps' pollution!

No refuge could save the hireling and slave

From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave;

And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph doth wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

O thus be it ever, when freeman shall stand

Between their loved homes and the war's desolation;

Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land

Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!

Then conquer we must, when our cause is just,

And this our motto, "In God is our trust;"

And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

"Snooping" Around the White House

Pictures of Former Presidents' Wives Found Stored in Basement Room, and One Room Found That Looked Like Idealistic Barn for Cow or Horse—The Kind of Pictures President Wilson Liked.

By ROBERT E. LONG.
As Told to SMITH D. FRY.

HOW would you like to go "snooping around" such an interesting place as a house that had been the home of the Presidents of the United States for more than 100 years? Sounds interesting, doesn't it?

Well, let me tell you that if you ever get an opportunity to do such a thing, don't think of letting the chance slip. For I went on such a "snooping" tour one day after I had finished my picture, and I learned some most astonishing things. I was escorted by "Major" Brooks and Ed Norris, the freeman, and we went places where no outsider is ever permitted to go.

But first let me give you a general idea of the White House. To the west of the original building there is now a one-story building of white marble which was erected by President Roosevelt for executive offices. There the President receives the public and transacts a great deal of business. In that building, also, is the President's private office. Through underground tunnels the White House and the executive offices receive a large part of their heat from the War Department building. All the electricity for lighting comes from the same source.

On the second floor of the White House are the living rooms of the President, his family and personal guests. Previous to the administration of President Roosevelt, who built the addition, the rooms upstairs were half official and half private. Now all that floor is private and nobody from the outside is allowed there any more than outsiders could enter your private dwelling place.

One of the splendid rooms of the main floor is the state dining room. One day in November, 1920, when President Wilson was so much improved that he was walking about with a cane, there was to be a state dinner. The President and Mrs. Wilson were to entertain the members of the cabinet and their wives.

President and the chairs for the guests all in place. And what do you suppose I did? Well, I did just what most of you would have done. I sat down in the President's chair, at the head of the table, and I ate some of the candy and the salted almonds that were within reach. My object was merely to be able to say afterward, "I sat in the President's chair."

But the day I went "snooping" with Brooks and Norris we went down into the basements, and, under the big front portico, what do you suppose we found? Why, a room that looked like nothing but a stall for a horse or cow. There was actually a manger carved out of an immense block of white marble. Nothing more incongruous could have been found in the last residence of King Tut in the Valleys of Kings.

THE horse that occupied this stall, if horse it was, drank from a marble trough that was fed by a spring that has now been closed. When I first saw this remarkable room I had no idea that it was for anything except a horse, but since then I had a new idea. It has occurred to me that it might have been the cow barn of that model New England house-keeper Mrs. Adams, who, according to tradition, was accustomed to do her washing, drying and ironing in the east room. And why not? There is a marble shelf, about a foot and a half high that would have been just the place for her crocks and pans, and there was plenty of room there, too, where she might have done the family churning.

Another discovery I made, and one that may cause something of a scandal among our newly enfranchised voters of the gentler sex, is that the basement has been made the storage place for a number of fine paintings of wives of former Presidents. Why it was or what reason there could be or who was responsible for putting down there in the dust of oblivion those splendid portraits of women who had once borne the title of "first lady of the land" I could not find out. It must be



President Wilson greeting the thousands who gathered at his S street home the first Armistice day after he left the White House.

admitted that a basement does not seem a fitting place for the portraits of ladies who have been the beloved consorts of our Presidents of former days. The righting of this wrong, if such it is, must be left, I suppose, to that more or less distant day when we shall have a "Madam President" in the White House.

There is a billiard room on the basement floor, also, as well as the kitchen, the locker room for the secret service men and a room that looked like a rummage salesroom. It is right under the blue room. There is an immense collection of chinaware there dating back to the days of Adams, Jefferson, and the other early occupants of the White House. Every lot has missing pieces, but it is a valuable collection of historical junk.

FROM the basement we went into the big back yard, the great lawn south of the White House, in which is located the Spanish garden or patio, at which President Wilson loved to look from his wheel chair on the portico.

In this yard we saw the sheep that were fenced in to keep them from scampering all over that immense acreage of lawn.

President Wilson liked sheep and was affectionately interested in the lambs which he regarded as the most perfect examples of innocence in the animal kingdom. That little flock of sheep soon grazed down the grass and cut it so short that they were taken out on the front lawn, to the amazement of the thousands of tourists who flock past the White House every year.

There was a ram in the flock that the employees used to tease, and he became very ill-tempered. He would butt anybody he could reach and he once knocked a policeman so cold that other policemen had to rescue him.

The wool from the White House sheep was auctioned off for the benefit of the Red Cross. Just before the close of the Wilson administration several of the sheep were sold and some were sent over to the experimental station of the Department of Agriculture. I suppose you are asking what kind of pictures President Wilson liked best and what were some of his favorites. Well, as I have said, I showed about 400 plays, and, of course, I can not remember them all. I could, I suppose, recall a hundred of them, but it wouldn't be interesting or important.

We had all sorts of plays, from the most silly comedies to the most stupendous productions and I can remember only one repetition. It was on the screen before I noticed that it was a repetition. When I apologized to the President for the error he took it good-naturedly and told me that the picture was such a good one that he was glad of the opportunity of seeing it again.

That was an example of his perfect courtesy, and it reminds me of another occasion when I was guilty of an inexcusable indiscretion, and he made a joke of it. It was summer and the weather was very warm. While waiting for the President to appear I was strolling around the east room smoking a cigar. The President came in unannounced and earlier than usual, and I hastily threw the cigar into one of the fireplaces. These fireplaces were always kept ready for lighting, and the cigar fell among some tinsel paper, and soon the flames were leaping up the chimney with a regular Christmas spirit. Considering the weather, the effect was far from comfortable, and I was very much embarrassed. But the President laughed and remarked that if the flames spread we had better call out the fire department.

BUT to get back to the plays. There was one film that took two days to run. On the afternoon of the first day, the President, when assured that the remainder would be shown at the next entertainment, remarked that it was like a magazine story. "Continued in our next."

That play was "Way Down East," and it was a thriller all the way through. President Wilson got enough out-of-doors in that picture almost to make him chilly. The producers sent word they would send their own men to display the film, but the President said he preferred to have me, which added greatly to my pride.

In showing that picture I gave seven reels the first day and six reels the second. I am sure that no other audience in the country enjoyed that great picture more than did my audience of half a dozen in the east room of the White House.

The President was very curious as to the manner of making those films. He could not tell the studio sets from the sets taken from nature. In one of our pictures called "Hearts Are Trumps," there was a picture of Mount Vesuvius in action. It was a wonderful scene and President Wilson was greatly pleased with it. He said it was the real Vesuvius, which he had seen. He told me that Vesuvius was "one of the masterpieces of nature that man could not imitate."

As we had only one machine it was necessary for us to have intermissions between reels and I suggested to the President that we ought to bring another machine so as to do away with these intermissions. But he vetoed the suggestion, after thanking me for the kindness of my idea, saying that he liked the intermissions, as they gave him an opportunity to clear his glasses and also to rest his eyes.

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