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Scots who live
is not so important
as 'Auld Lang Syne'

National Songs of the British Empire.

What is it about a national anthem that accounts for its universal appeal? Is it the sentiment of an obscure and mysterious or unusual origin or is it accounted for by the way one's patriotism is stirred by glorious words of his King and Country, or is it merely the music and melody of a fine piece of writing? In my opinion a national song, and particularly an anthem, must possess all these qualities.

It is extremely difficult to begin a new anthem as was seen by the failure of the recent competition to supply Australia with a more creditable one. Usually it is at first an ordinary song and then gradually becomes known as an anthem. By constant repetition at all solemn, official and recreative moments, it acquires an influence which no other song can possess. A song must affect people's imagination and spirits in a unique fashion to become and to remain an anthem.

Tennyson wrote:

"The song which nerves a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed."

Surely there is much patriotism in an anthem, otherwise one would be just as easily stirred

by an anthem of another country as of his own. It is the bold determined words which strike one's patriotism and make him feel so strongly towards his country, his home.

"God Save the King" possesses a slow quiet dignity of its own, which makes one feel reverent when it is played. It is obvious by the little popularity that "Advance Australia Fair" has received that it is essential for an anthem to be a reasonably fine piece of work.

Some of the older national songs could almost be said to be the history books of the times when people could neither read nor write. The custom of one main national anthem is a comparatively modern idea but we still have national songs which have been kept going either by sentimental or patriotic value.

"Advance Australia Fair" is the actual Australian anthem but it never has, and probably never will have a very great universal appeal. It was primarily written by a schoolmaster as a patriotic school song and, as such, it is really quite impressive but it does not possess the qualities of an anthem worthy of Australia, to be sung and remembered as Australia's anthem. Though it was played

before the news all through the war, it was sung at public functions as one would expect, but instead we hear "God Save the King."

One of our most famous national poets, Benjo Patterson wrote the words of "Waltzing Matilda" which has a very great universal appeal in Australia and is much better known in other countries than "Advance Australia Fair." It is typical of the true Australian swaggy's attitude to life. It has been popularised all over the world by its constant singing by the "diggers" with whom it could almost be said to be an anthem.

Australia is, as yet, too young a country to have accumulated very many songs worthy of being called "national" but in time it will collect as many as the older countries of England and Scotland.

"The Maple Leaf for Ever," Canada's anthem before its replacement by "O Canada" was written and composed in 1867 by Alexander Muir. Muir is said to have been suddenly so impressed by the beauty of his country's emblem that he immediately set to work to put his thoughts into poetry. His song did not attract much attention at first but later it became immensely popular until it was replaced by

"O Canada." This patriotic song was written in 1880 by Adolphe Basile Routhier, a judge and author. Calixte Lavallée, a Canadian, composed a tune to accompany Routhier's words.

Wales is rich in folk songs but (it is) has very few of historical benefit. The only ones have perished except for a few relics. However the song with the widest appeal in Wales is "Land of my Fathers" or, as it was written in Celtic, "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau." The author and composer of this national song are James James and his son Evan James of Pontypridd.

One of the oldest Scotch melodies is the tune of "Scots Wha Hae." This melody is so old that its origin is shrouded in obscurity but it has been traced back to 1512. Burns was greatly impressed with it and wrote his famous words, "Scots Wha Hae" to (set) it which are still extremely popular.

"Rule Britannia" and the "British Grenadiers," two of Britain's greatest national songs, defy anyone to discover their exact origin though it is known that "Rule Britannia" was written either by James Thomson or David Mallet. In 1745 the Jacobites adopted the tune to fit their own words, the whole being termed as their

"national song."

Though all the various parts of the British Empire have their own separate songs, the one song which is the connecting link between them all is "God Save the King." Before the war it was also used as the national anthem of Prussia and still is the tune of Switzerland's anthem. Like most of the world's national songs, it is ^{of} uncertain origin although many probable theories have been produced which, it is likely, contain the real one. It is commonly accepted to be written either by John Bull, a noted musician, Carey, a poet and musician, or Doctor Gore, but some people believe the song to have Scottish origin. The song became immensely popular almost immediately, its first public appearance of the complete song being in 1745 at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, an incident which has since become history.

In the same year, but a few months later, an article was printed stating that the same song had been sung in the St James' Church in support of James II when the Prince of Orange first landed in England. It is supposed that there are, still in existence, a number of wine-glasses dating back from about

1720 which are inscribed with the verses only a very little different from the words we sing to-day. It is believed that the song dates back to the time of the Stuarts.

Buckham wrote: "I must show the British people what a treasure they have in 'God Save the King'."

For over a hundred years this simple song has been sung by people all over the British Empire stirred by joy or danger, anxiety or trouble. Everywhere it is primarily the anthem and symbol of the British Empire written in the form of a prayer (to) not to a country, as the majority one, but to a man, our King.

E. Hayes in his book "The Ballads of Ireland" said: "In a nation's songs we can see the breathing of a people's inner life which history cannot possibly record. It is the history of their wants and aspirations and the truest history of their feelings."

Books used:

'Stories of National Songs'

'Waltzing Matilda' by Arnold Haskell.

'The Ballads of Ireland' by E. Hayes.