The Fado
(Destiny or fate)
The "Blues" of Portugal
and American Blues

While working on the story behind the song “April in Portugal” I found the composer of the English version was Jimmy Kennedy, the lyricist of many popular songs. He added lyrics that did not mirror the Brazilian words but did try to keep the emotion behind the original music and lyrics by Raul Ferrdo and Jose Galhardo.

Upon further research I found out that the tune was what is called a “Fado” (fate) in Portugal. In Portugal the Fado is considered the national music. Its impression is a nostalgia felt when missing someone or losing someone (in Portuguese the word ‘saudade’ is used much as the word blues is used). The origin of the Fado is said to have been a mixture of African slave rhythms with the traditional music of Portuguese sailors and Arabic influences. This fact got me thinking about the similarities and differences between the Fado and the Negro Blues. Further research finds that some jazz players also became interested in the Fado. Don Byas had an interest in the Fado and actually performed with Fado singers.

There are many similar things about Fado and the Blues. Both seemed to have origins in Negro Slaves. Slaves during the era of slavery that went to Brazil numbered 3,646,800. In Louisiana the total was 54,000. 90% of the slaves brought to the New World ended up in the
Brazilian area and only 4.5% were brought to the U. S. Brazil was out of the trade in the 1850s. (It is interesting that Darius Milhaud spent 2 years in Brazil in 1917-18, then returning to France in 1919. He then composed “The Creation of the World,” the first large jazz influenced classical composition.)

Both in Portugal via Brazil and in New Orleans (and the area around the city, namely the Delta area) we find these two styles of music being fostered. The string instruments were used in both instances: the guitar in Fado and the banjo and guitar in blues and jazz. The harmonic tonal system was European in origin. The Negroes of the south that began blues were not educated musicians and the chord progression of their music was simply, mostly using the three main chords of the major scale. In Portugal the Fado was played by the oppressed class, but, was there a difference in the oppression of the lower class laborers and the slave’s life? The slaves were suppressed in their education and learned music by trial and error. The Fado musicians were the oppressed class but did have a culture of great guitar music. It seems that the Fado musicians later became more accomplished musicians. The Fado was seen also as a political music where the Blues sang of freedom from oppression. Both cultures (the Fado and Slaves) were oppressed and both wanted freedom from their conditions. Both the styles were not written down but developed by trial and error, although the Fado seemed to be more structured. The Fado was also influenced by Arabic music. Dr. Miller wrote a book that explains how much closer North African music performance techniques are to Jazz than central African music is. The technique of Arabic music is more like the improvised technique of early jazz and central African music is more of a metamorphous technique.

Both styles are sentimental and speak of hardships, of love ones lost, and of oppression: the Fado by the government, the slaves by their masters and culture of the south.

The feeling of the political Fado and the Negro spiritual have deep emotional messages within them. Both had very similar feelings. The Negro spiritual had duel meanings. The River Jordan was not a river but a destination to the free north. The Fado directed lyrics to the political officials in power or the deep feelings of saidade. The Fado was banned and the Negroes use of drums was banned.

Both have strong meanings within their lyrics. In the Fado the lyrics are intertwined references to love and university life, and refer to the scenery of beauty of the Choupal, along the Mondego River and the
famous Medieval Fountain of Love. The Fado speaks of love between humans. The blues refer to love of God. The Fado also had a duel meaning or purpose – as it articulates symbols, tastes and interest and on the way it became a tourism symbol of unforeseen relevance.

Throughout the world, in the name of Portugal were two things immediately related: the bullfighting and the Fado. Although taking many forms, (as it is sung in Parto, in Coimbra and in Lisbon), the Fado is, by self-came right, the expression of the Portuguese soul. Portugal has, since the moment it was born, emerged in a crossroad of cultures. First there were several people who, besides living in the area which later would become Portugal, also left their marks. Then there were those who invaded our country after it was born, and still today, many people who beyond living, contribute to a common culture.

That's why it's so hard to point out a precise origin of Fado, but all scholars agree that it goes back many centuries. The most commonly accepted explanation, at least when speaking about Lisbon Fado, is that it came from the songs of the Moors, which kept living nearby this town even after the Christian take-over. The sadness and melancholy of those songs that are so common to Fado, would be the base for such explanation.

However there are those who say that the Fado came to Portugal, once more through Lisbon, under the form of Lundum, the music of the Brazilian slaves. This world have arrived to Portugal with the sailors returning from their long trips, about the year 1822. Only after a while Lundum started changing, until the Lundum became the Fado.

Supporting this belief is the fact that the first music of this kind were related not only to the sea but also with the lands far beyond them, where the slaves lived. one can look as an example to one of Arnalia's song, called "The Black Boat," which takes precisely of a senazla (place where the slaves were kept).

Another possibility puts the birth of Fado back to the middle ages, a time of the minstrels and the jesters. Already in that era one could find the characteristics that even today it conserves. For example, Cantigas de Amigo (friend songs), that were love songs for a woman, have great similarities with diverse subjects of the Fado of Lisbon. The love songs, (that were sung by the men to a woman), seem to find kinship in the Fado of Coimbra, where the students intone their songs beneath the window of the loved one (serenades). We still have, in the same time, satire songs, or of disclaim that are still today frequent themes for Fado, by social and political critics.
Anyway, Fado seems to have first appeared in Lisbon and Porto, being later taken to Columbia by the University students (since Combra was, during many years, the university City by excellence), and have their acquired different characteristics.

In Lisbon and Porto we can find the sung Fado (fado Cantado) in the oldest parts of the city, in the labor Fado houses. They are small, old, with cold walls, decorated with the symbols of this form of song on the cities, the black shawl and the Portuguese guitar. The man that sings Fado usually does it in a black suit. He sings his love affairs, his city, the miseries of life, Criticizes society and the politicians. he often talks about the bull fights, the horses, the old days and the people already dead, and talks, almost every time of the saudade (longing).

Ana Moura biography - January 2005 - Interview by Mark Holston

Ana Moura

Guarda-me a vida na mao / Harmonia Mundi / World Village

Portuguese vocalist Ana Moura, whose soulful and riveting interpretation of her land's captivating Fado style has made her a star in Europe, brings her gentle, persuasive magic to North American audiences with the release of her debut album Guarda-me a vida na mao (Keep my life in your hand) on the World Village label. The 25-year old singer has become a leading exponent of this psyche as it explores such universal themes as lost love, separation, and longing. As Ana explains, "It's very special because it's all about emotions and feelings, It needs no translation."

Ana was born in Santarem, the bustling capital of the Ribatejo province in the center of Portugal's heartland on the Tejo River northeast of Lisbon. The city of half a million souls is also one of Portugal's most historic cities -- an ideal place to develop an appreciation for Fado. "I've been singing Fado since I was little, because grew up listening to it at home," recalls of her early home life. "My parents sang well, and at family gatherings, we all would sing."

Like young people everywhere, she soon developed an appreciation for other styles of music. The lure of singing Fado,
however, never waned. In her late teens, while sing pop and rock music with a local band, Ana always included at least one Fado in each performance. Then, one night on a whim, about five years ago, she and some friends went to one of Lisbon's storied Fado houses -- small performance venues where singers, guitarists and aficionados gather to worship the affecting style that's become Portugal's most important music export.

At the urging of her companions, she sang. "People liked me," she recalls of her first foray into a venerated bastion of the Fado culture. Later that year, at a Christmas party that was attended by a lot of faddists (Fado singers) and guitarists, she sang again and, as fate would have it, noted Fado vocalist Maria de Fe was in the audience and was duly impressed. "She asked me to sing at her Fado house," Ana recalls of the fortuitous moment that launched her career.

"My life changed when I began going to the Fado houses," Ana states today. "There's no microphone -- it's very intimate. New singers learn through a kind of apprenticeship, learning the intricacies of the style from the older, more established singers."

Before long, word of Ana's rich contralto, stunning looks and innate affinity for the demanding style spread, winning airtime on local television programs devoted to Fado and rave reviews in Lisbon newspapers. Music critic Miguel Esteves Cardoso captured her essence when he wrote of her "rare and primitive quality" and her "natural truth, without effort or premeditation."

Ana has emerged as a leading voice of traditional Fado just as the venerable idiom is enjoying a renaissance of popularity. The singer's association with composer, producer, arranger and guitarist Jorge Fernando, the former guitar player of Amalia Rodrigues, the undisputed queen of Fado who died at the age of 79 in 1999, has helped stimulate her artistic development and has provided her with an alluring repertoire. "Today," she explains, "there's a new generation that sings lyrics related to our time. There are some older Fado songs that we, the younger singers, cannot perform, because the lyrics are about a time and themes we don't identify with. We don't feel it, and Fado is all about feelings. We must feel what we sing, and there are many older fades that don't belong to our generation. Younger singers use lyrics that speak of today, so young people have begun to get more interested in the music again."

As with jazz and country music in the U.S., tango in Argentina, samba in Brazil, Fado sprang from the culture of working class people.
And, as with the aforementioned examples, over the years the style evolved from humble origins to win broad appeal. Today, as Ana proudly proclaims, "In Portugal, Fado is for everyone."

Like virtually every aspiring faddist, Ana drew early inspiration from the example of Amalia Rodrigues, the revered singer who most personified the style. "It was her soul and her voice," she comments of the late vocalist's singular imprint on the music. "She had everything in her. Some singers have a great voice by no soul, no intensity. Others have feeling but not a suitable voice. She had it all, and, she was a very good improviser."

Improvising is an under-appreciated part of the Fado tradition. One technique, which Ana uses to great effect on the song "Lavava no rio lavava" (I Went to the River to Wash), is what the Portuguese term vocalisos -- the expression of words and effects through use of vocal trills. The practice is believed to have been absorbed over centuries of exposure to Spanish flamenco and Moorish styles.

A key track from her album exquisitely sums up the magnetic pull Fado has Am a Fadista) by her mentor and primary collaborator Fernando, eloquently explainsAna's total surrender to the style:"I know my soul has surrendered, taken my voice in hand, twisted in my chest and shown it to the world. And I have closed my eyes in a wistful longing to sing, to sing. And a voice sings to me softly, and a voice enchants me softly, I belong to Fado, I belong to Fado, I am a Faddist."

Today, even as the U.S. release of Guarda-me a vida na mao and a Carnegie Hall performance scheduled for March 12 trumpet her international success, Ana Moura still thinks of how and where it all began, and of the importance of keeping those vital ties alive. "Before," she muses, "I used to sing in Fado house every day. Today, because of my concert schedule and travel, it's impossible. But, when time permits, I like to return. Sometimes I feel that I must go there. I need that."

The Fado in the above articles states that "that were love songs for woman.....we still have, in the same time, satire songs, or of disdain." One could write the same thing about the early blues.

Origin & Genre
The Fado became the emotional music of Portugal, much like the Blues became the emotional music of the southern slaves. Its origin dates back to about 1829. With in it were traces of African, Brazilian and Arabic influences.

Elements:
Origin –
FADO –
African (native music & Arabic, Brazil, and Labor class near Lisbon
BLUES – African, European

Lyrics:
Fado – Portuguese poetry & literature
Blues – Bible, environment

Use:
Fado – saudade, political environment (freedom)
Blues – religious & environment (freedom)

Music:
Fado – steady rhythm, tightly rehearsed, highly stylized
Blues – rubato, sang different each time,

Harmony
Fado – simple chords
Blues – simple I, IV, V

Emotional
Fado – sentimental, personal & political
Blues - sentimental & personal (not political

Instruments:
Fado – vocal, guitars
Blues – vocal, banjo,

In another interview by Ana Moura by Mark Holston she expressed the following:

“The Fado very special because it's all about emotions and feelings. It needs no translation. There are some older Fado songs that we, the younger singers, cannot perform, because the lyrics are about a time and themes we don't identify with. We don't feel it, and Fado is all about feelings. We must feel what we sing, and there are many older fades that don't belong to our generation.”

Throughout the world, to the name of Portugal were two things immediately related: the bullfighting and the Fado. Although taking many forms, (as it is sung in Porto, in Coimbra or in Lisbon), the Fado is, by self-carried right, the expression of the Portuguese soul. Portugal has, since the moment it was born, emerged in a crossroad of cultures. First there were several people who, besides living in the area which
later would become Portugal, also left their marks. Then there were those who invaded our country after it was born, and still today, many people who beyond living, contribute to a common culture.

That’s why it’s so hard to point out a precise origin of Fado, but all scholars agree that it goes back many centuries. The most commonly accepted explanation, at least when speaking about Lisbon Fado, is that it came from the songs of the Moors, which kept living nearby this town even after the Christian take-over. The sadness and melancholy of those songs, that are so common to Fado, would be the base for such explanation.

However there are those who say that the Fado came to Portugal, once more though Lisbon, under the form of Lunduym, the music of the Brazilian slaves. This would have arrived to Portugal with the sailors returning from their long trips, about 1822. Only after a while Lundum started changing, until it became the Fado. Supporting this belief is the fact that the first music of this kind were related not only to the sea but also with the lands far beyond them, where the slaves lived. One can look as an example to one of the Amalia’s song, called ‘The Black Boat’, which takes precisely of a senzala (place where the slaves were kept).

Another possibility puts the birth of Fado back to the middle ages, a time of the minstrels and the jesters. Already in that era one could find the characteristics that even today it conserve it. For example, Cantiqas do Amigo (blend songs), that were love songs for a woman, have great similarities with diverse subjects of the Fado of Lisbon. The love songs, (that were sung by the man to a woman), seem to find kinship in the Fado of Coimbra, where the students intone their songs beneath the window of the loved ones (serenades). We still have, in the same time, satire songs, or of disdain that are still today frequent themes for Fado, in social and political critics.

Anyway, Fado seems to have first appeared in Lisbon and Porto, being later taken to Coimbra by the University students (since Coimbra was, during many years, the University City by excellence), and having there acquired different characteristics.

In Lisbon and Porto we can find the sung Fado (Fado Cantado) in the oldest parts of the city, in the laborers or Fado houses. They are small, old, with cold walls, decorated with the symbols of this form of song on these two cities; the black shawl and the Portuguese guitar. The man that sings Fado usually does it in a black suite. He sings his love affairs, his city, the miseries of life, criticizes society and the politicians.
He often talks about the bullfights, the horses, the old days and the people already dead, and talks, almost every time, of .....”

It is ironic that the African Moors brought their music to Portugal. The African Negro brought his music to America and South America. I wonder would be the result if the Moors had come to America and the African Negro to Portugal. Would we have ‘blues or ‘Fado’ in the New World? The Fado has the feelings of the blues.

Improvising

Ana drew early inspiration from the example of Amalia Rodrigues, the revered singer who most personified the style. "It was her soul and her voice," she comments of the late vocalist's singular imprint on the music. "She had everything in her. Some singers have a great voice by no soul, no intensity. Others have feeling but not a suitable voice. She had it all, and, she was a very good improviser."Improvising is an under-appreciated part of the Fado tradition. One technique, which Ana uses to great effect on the song "Lavavano rio lavava" (I Went to the River to Wash), is what the Portuguese term vocalisos -- the expression of words and effects through use of vocal trills. The practice is believed to have been absorbed over centuries of exposure to Spanish flamenco and Moorish styles.

Spirituals

The words of the spirituals had double meanings. These words were used as secret communications between the slaves with the masters not realizing their true meaning. In the first spiritual the words “I’m a comin” has the spiritual meaning but also that it was code that the person was going to go to the ‘free’ north. In this way one slave could let the others know that he (and probably others) would be leaving to flee north.

I Don't Want You Go On and Leave Me
The next spiritual tells about a slave traveling north: “I’m traveling thro’ the wilderness,” and “I’ve traveled all day.”

We find the lines: “Jus’ wait till I get on the mountain top, gwine to make my wings go flippity flop.” The mountain top is again the north and freedom and flopping; his wings is to feel freedom.

Little David, Play on Your Harp

Big Camp Meeting in the Promised Land.

The spiritual below also has a hidden meaning. The line “big camp meeting in de promised land” = the Promised Land is the north and freedom.
When That General Roll is Called
Again the below lyrics refer to the freedom of the north = When the general roll is called I’ll be there.”

Don't you want to go?
Again we find lyrics that refer to going north with the Jordan—not a river—but going north to freedom.
You Can't Cross Here

Perhaps the warning “going down to the rivers of Jordan, you can’t cross here” is a warning that another route should be chosen.

Git on the Evening Train

Could the ‘train’ mentioned be the Underground Railroad? Could the ‘evening train’ mean that that was when they were going to start their journey to the north? Could the blowing of ‘Gabriel's horn’ be a signal that it is safe to begin the journey to the north? We know that the spirituals had double meanings and they served as a notice about the
movement of slaves that planned to leave their plantation. It was a stroke of genius to use their hymns as a secret message.

The New Burying Ground

The new burying ground was the north. Judgment day is the time they were leaving. “Let not your chariot wheels delay” surely is a sign for the trip north. “Open the grave, let him down” also has a duel meaning – to start the trip north and let him go.

Sabbath has no End

How about the words “When John first came out of Egypt” and the following words of that stanza? Again this is a description of traveling north.
Jes' Gwine Ober in de Heabelye Lan'

The words “You can hinder me here, but you can’t do it there,” and, “Jes' gwine ober in de heavenly land” refers to heaven as the north.

"Goin' Over On De Uddar Side of Jordan"

The words of this hymn hardly needs explaining. What else could the words “O' I'm jes' goin' over on de other side of Jordan. This leaves no doubt about the use of the word ‘Jordan’ for the north.

"Soon in de Morning"
The words “I’m goin’ up home soon in de morning.” If this is not a code where was the slave all night to come home in the morning? And the words “A dunno what my brother wants to stay here” It refers to the slaves the runaway is leaving behind.

"New Born Again"

This song is another great example of words meaning other than the obvious. If one understands that “New born again, been a long time. Talkin’ bout a startin’ on de way. Free grace.” This hymn leaves no doubt about the true meanings of the words.

"This world is not my Home" The world (in this case ‘the plantation’) is not my home. This world’s a howling wilderness” meaning his existence as a slave is a ‘howling wilderness.’
"Come Along"

The lyrics of this hymn speaks of a slave that is going to leave and head north. This slave was probably born on the plantation but now he is going to run north.

"Wear a Starry Crown"

This is the final example of hundreds of spirituals with double meaning and hardly needs explaining. The 'crown' is freedom and 'away over Jordan' is the northern border that means freedom.
The Blues and the Negro spiritual, like the Fado, went through a transition. The Lundum changed to the Fado; the Blues evolved into jazz.

In Portugal it was the students that progressed the Fado. In the south it was the slaves. Could jazz have evolved in Portugal?

THE STORY OF THE BLUES

The Blues are a one-man affair, the expression of one's inner feelings. They began as a vocal treatment that sprung up among illiterate Negroes of the South's Delta, using the prominent chords of harmonic music - I, IV and V.

While primarily a vocal music, the Blues' influence was technical and melodic - the blues scale and characteristic style became a major influence in spreading an authentic early 'jazz sound' to legit dance musicians and arrangers. This can be seen in the numerous songs labeled 'blues' but which did not contain the authentic blues progression given above, but the melodic/harmonic style of the blues, although the title might be labeled 'blues.'

THE BLUES

This new found change from group call-and-response singing to more of an individual solo song can be seen in the development of the group holler to the solo style of singing that we now call the Blues. It was in the groups of the Negro choruses that the voices of the Negroes are heard to best advantage. It was rare to hear any attempt at regular harmony. It is doubtful whether the American Negro ever attempted more than a crude bass or tenor part in their singing and the most effective spirituals were sung in a quasi-unison sounding like cacophony. Unlike the Baroque style, in Negro music, the outer voices were not the important ones and the importance of the bass line in Baroque music was never carried over to American Negro music. The limited knowledge of chordal harmony at this step in the slave's musical development was seen in the simple progression of the blues.

At first, we know that the spirituals were not intended to be a harmonic music. But, we have seen how the Negro slave imitated and used the music he heard around him. Organized groups like the Fisk
University Singers adapted a more 'cultured' use of their melodic material. From the development of the New England School of deaconing into a more schooled harmonic music, the Negro's musical direction had a similar development, the Negro still retaining some of his early techniques. The New England and Southern Hymns did not. The freed Negro slaves, after emancipation, were unbelievably poor and under-privileged and in many ways their life was harder than in the days of slavery. It could be likened to a domestic animal being sent to live on his own in the forest. As slaves they worked together. The Negro as free men tended to work alone, each man for himself, or in smaller groups. Their work songs returned to more melodic individualistic hollers, part sung and part cried seemingly to return to their primitive roots of Africa.

The major population of Negroes at the time of emancipation lived in the South. In his new found social position the tendency was to lose the superficial forms borrowed from the White man. With the change of environment, and a different change of mood and new meanings of life and of his music, the words no longer being influenced by forced labor, the hollers became individualistic and personal. He now could run his life as he saw fit, but within unknown boundaries within a new strange social structure that he didn't quite understand. With the heritage of the call and response and his individual technique, the holler became one of the Negro styles that developed into the form we now know as the Blues. The Blues then must have developed after slavery. With the end of the exclusive hold of the Christian Church on the Black man's leisure time, this freedom resulted in a great many changes in the emphasis of his music. Social emphasis became much more personal and this leisure, and the ability of movement of the Negro, standardized the form of the Blues. It can be seen that each phase of the Negro's music came directly from and is dictated by, this social and psychological environment. The Blues were an adoption to his peculiar position in American society. The Negro could sing as an individual person within the super-structure of the society he found himself in.

The Blues can be thought of as a secular spiritual containing the deep emotional feelings of the spiritual and the style of singing the Negro possessed. There is one slave song "Rain Fall and Wet Becca Lawton" that surprisingly one could super-impose the traditional 12 bar blues progression. I am not saying that it is the first Blues because the Blues are more of a style of singing than a definite form.
Progress and History of Blues as Covered by Magazines and Newspapers of the Era.

As with most 'folk' songs, their origin is seldom discovered. No one can really put a date on the origin and beginning of 'Blues.' In our first article W. C. Handy, often called the 'father of the blues,' discusses the blues. He states that: "Every one of my blues is based on some old Negro song of the South. Blues are not new musical inventions, but they have been publicity developed and exploited in the last few years. Blues are a state of mind."

1916 - FOLK LORE SOCIETY OF TEXAS

"THE "BLUES" AS FOLK-SONGS by Dorothy Scarborough - There are fashions in music as in anything else, and folk-song presents no exception to the rule. For the last several years the most popular type of Negro song has been that peculiar, barbaric sort of melody called "blues," with its irregular rhythm, its lagging briskness and its mournful liveliness of tone. It has a jerky tempo, as of a cripple dancing because of some irresistible impulse. A "blues" (or does one say a "blue"? - What is the grammar of the thing?) The blues usually likes to end its stanza abruptly, leaving the listener expectant for more, though; of course, there is no fixed rule about it. One could scarcely imagine a convention of any kind in connection with the Negroid free music. It is partial to the three line stanza instead of the customary one of four or more, and it ends with a high note that has the effect of incompleteness. The close of a stanza comes with a shock like the whip-crack surprise at the end of an O. Henry story, for instance - a cheap trick, but effective as a novelty. Blues sing of themes remote from those of the old spirituals, and their incompleteness of stanza makes the listener gasp, and perhaps fancy that the censor has deleted the other line.

Blues, being widely published as sheet music in the North as well as the South, and sung in vaudeville everywhere, would seem to have little relation to authentic folk-music of the Negroes. But in studying the question, I had a feeling that it was more or less connected with Negro folk-song, and I tried to trace it back to its origin.

Negroes and White people in the South referred me to W. C. Handy as the man who had put the bluing in the blues. But how to locate him was a problem. He had started this indigo music in Memphis, it appeared, but was there no longer. I heard of him as facing been in
Chicago, and in Philadelphia, and at last as being in New York. Inquiries from musicians brought out the fact that Handy is now manager of a music publishing company, of which he is part owner, Page and Handy, and so my collaborator, Al Gulledge, and I went to see him at his place.

To my question, "Have blues any relation to Negro folk-song?" Handy replied instantly, "Yes, they are folk-music."

"Do you mean in the sense that a song is taken up by many singers who change and adapt it and add to it in accordance with their own mood?" I asked. "That constitutes communal singing in part, at least."

"I mean that and more," he responded. "That is true, of course, of the blues, as I'll illustrate a little later. But blues are folk-songs in more ways than that. They are essentially racial—the ones that are genuine (though since they became the fashion many blues have been written that are not Negro in character), and they have a basis in older folk-song."

"A general or a specific basis?" I wished to know.

"Specific," he answered. "Each one of my blues is based on some old Negro song of the South, some folk-song that I heard from my mammy when I was a child. It is something that sticks in my mind that I hum to myself when I'm thinking about it. Some old song is a part of the memories of my childhood and of my race. I can tell you the exact song I used as a basis for any one of my blues. Yes, the blues that are genuine are really folk-songs."

I expressed an interest to know of some definite instance of what he meant, and for answer he picked up a sheaf of music from his desk. "Here's a thing called Joe Turner Blues," he said. "That is written around an old Negro song I used to hear and play thirty or more years ago. In some sections it was called "Going Down the River for Long," but in Tennessee it was always Joe Turner. Joe Turner, the inspiration of the song, was a brother of Pete Turner, once governor of Tennessee. He was an officer and he used to come to Memphis and get prisoners to carry them to Nashville after a kangaroo court. When the Negroes said of any one, 'Joe Turner's been to town', they meant that the person in question had been carried off hand-cuffed to be gone no telling how long."

I recalled a fragment of folk-song from the South which I had never before understood, but the meaning of which was now clear enough:
"Dey tell me Joe Turner's come to town.
He's brought along one thousand links of chain,
He's gwine to have one nigger for each link.
He's gwine to have dis nigger for one link!"

Handy said that in writing the Joe Turner Blues he did away with the prison theme and played up a love element, for in the song Joe Turner became not the dreaded sheriff but the absent lover.

*Loveless Love*, a blues which Handy calls a blues ballad, was, he said, based on an old song called *Careless Love*, which narrated the death of the son of a governor of Kentucky. It had the mythical "hundred stanzas" and was widely current in the South, especially in Kentucky, a number of years ago. Handy in his composition gives a general philosophy of love instead of telling a tragic story as the old song did.

*Long Gone* has its foundation in another old Kentucky song, which tells of the efforts a certain Negro made to escape a Joe Turner who was pursuing him. Bloodhounds were on his trail and were coming perilously close, while he was dodging and doubling on his tracks in a desperate effort to elude them. At last he ran into an empty barrel that chanced to be lying on its side in his path. He sprang out and away again. When the blood-hounds a few seconds later trailed him into the barrel, they were nonplused for a while, and by the time they had picked up the scent again, the darkey had escaped.

The song was printed as broadside. I reproduce by permission the words. It is interesting to note that the chorus varies with some verses, while it remains the same for others.

"LONG GONE"

Another "Casey Jones' or "Steamboat Bill"
Everybody is singing
"Long Gone"
With These Seven Years
Eventually you will sing "Long Gone" with a hundred verses First
Verse:
Did you ever hear the story of Long John Dean,
A bold bank robber from Bowling Green,
Sent to the jailhouse yesterday,
Late last night he made his getaway.

CHORUS

He's long gone from Kentucky,
Long gone, ain't he lucky,
Long gone and what I mean,
He's long gone from Bowling Green.

Handy said that his blues were folk-songs also in that they are based on folk-sayings and express the racial life of the Negroes. "For example," he said, "the Yellow Dog Blues takes its name from the term the Negroes give the Yazoo Delta Railroad. Clarksville colored people speak of the Yellow Dog because one day when some one asked a darkey what the initials Y. D. on a freight train stood for, he scratched his head reflectively and answered: 'I dunno, less'n it's for Yellow Dog.'"

Another one of his blues came from an old mammy's mournful complaint, "I wonder whar my good ole used to be is!"

He says that presently he will write a blues on the idea contained in a monologue he overheard a Negro address to his mule on a Southern street not long ago. The animal was balky, and the driver expostulated with him after this fashion:

"G'wan dere, you mule! You ack lack you ain' want to wuck. Wel, you is a mule, an' you got to wuck. Dat's whut you git fo' bein' a mule. Ef you was a 'ooman, now, I'd be wuckin' fo' you!"

The St. Louis Blues, according to its author, is a composite, made up of racial sayings in dialect. For instance, the second stanza has its origin in a Negro's saying, "I've got to go to see Aunt Ca'line Dye," meaning to get his fortune told, for at Newport there was a well-known fortune teller by that name. "Got to go to Newport to see Aunt Ca'line Dye" means to consult the colored oracle.

Been to de Gypsy to get mah fortune tole,
To de Gypsy done got mah fortune tole,
"Cause I'se wile about mah Jelly Roll.
Gypsy done tole me, 'Don't you wear no black'
Yas, she done tole me, 'Don't you wear no black.
Go to St. Louis, you can win him back.'
I asked Handy if the blues were a new musical invention, and he said, "No. They are essentially of our race and our people have been singing like that for many years. But they have been publicly developed and exploited in the last few years. I was the first to publish any of them or to develop this special type by name," He brought out his Memphis Blues, his first "blues" song, in 1910, he said.

The fact that the blues were a form of folk-singing before Handy published his is corroborated by various persons who have discussed the matter with me, and in Texas the Negroes have been fond of them for a long time. Early Busby, now a musician in New York, says that the shifts of Negroes working at his father's brickyard in East Texas years ago used to sing constantly at their tasks and were particularly fond of the blues.

Handy commented on several points in connection with the blues—for instance, the fact that they are, he says, all in one tone, but with different movements according to the time in which they are written. The theme of this modern folk-music is, according to Handy, the Negro's emotional feeling apart from the religious. As is well recognized, the Negro normally is a person of strong religious moods—but they do not reveal all his nature. The Negro has longings, regrets, despondencies and hopes that affect him strongly, but are not connected with religion. The blues, therefore, may be said to voice his secular interests and emotions as sincerely as the spirituals do the religious. Handy said that the blues express the Negro's two-fold nature, the grave and the gay, reveal his ability to appear the opposite of what he is.

"Most White people think that the Negro is always cheerful and lively, he explained."But he isn't, though he can be that way sometimes when he is most troubled in mind. The Negro knows the blues as a state of mind, and that's why this music has that name,"

Handy said that the blues were unlike conventional, composed music, but like primitive folk-music in that they have only five tones, like the folk-songs of slavery times, using the pentatonic scale, omitting the fourth and seventh tones. He added that while most blues are racial expressions of Negro life, the form has been imitated nowadays in songs that are not racial.

The blues, Handy pointed out represent a certain stage in Negro music. "About forty years ago such songs as Golden Slippers were sung. That was written by a colored man but is not a real folk-song. At about that time all the songs of the Negro liked to speak of golden streets and give bright pictures of heaven. Then about twenty years ago the desire
was all for coon songs. Now the tendency is toward blues. They are not, as I have said, a new thing among the Negroes, for they were sung in the south before the piano was accessible to the Negroes, though they were not so well known as now."

It is not often that a student of folk-songs can have such authentic information given as to the music in the making, for most of the songs are studied and their value and interest realized only long after the ones who started them have died or been forgotten. Rarely can one trace a movement in folk-song so clearly, and so I am grateful for the chance of talking with the man most responsible for the blues.

Even though specific blues may start indeed as sheet music, composed by identifiable authors, they are quickly caught up by popular fancy and so changed by oral transmission that one would scarcely recognize the relation between the originals and the final results—if any results ever could be considered final. Each singer adds something of his own mood or emotion or philosophy, till the composite is truly a communal composition. It will be noted in this connection that the song called "Long Gone" announces of itself that while it is first published in seven verses, people will soon be sing it "with one hundred verses." (Negroes ordinarily speak of a stanza as a verse.) The colored man appropriates his music as the White person rarely does.

Blues also may spring up spontaneously, with no known origin in print, so far as an investigator can tell. They are found everywhere in the South, expressing Negro reactions to every concept of elemental life. Each town has its local blues, no aspect of life being without its expression in song. Here, as in much of the Negro's folk-song, there is sometimes little connection between the stanzas. The colored mind is not essentially logical, and the folk-song shows considerable lack of coherence in thought. Unrelated ideas are likely to be brought together, and stanzas from one song or from several may be put in with what the singer starts with, if they chance to have approximately the same number of syllables to the line. Even that requirement isn't held to, for a Negro in his singing can crowd several syllables into one note, or expand one syllable to cover half a dozen notes. The exigencies of scansion worry him but slightly.

The Texas Negroes are especially fond of blues, and, as I have said, were singing them for years before handy made them popular in print. W. P. Webb published, in an article in the Journal of American Folk-Lore, some years ago what he called a sort of epic of the Negro, which the singer called Railroad Blues, which didn't stick to one subject,
even so popular a one as a railroad, but left the track to discuss many phases of life. Fragments of blues float in from every side, expressive of all conceivable aspects of the Negro's existence, economic, social, domestic, romantic, and so forth.

Morton Adams Marshall sends an admirable specimen from Little Rock, Arkansas, which, however, was taken down in southern Louisiana, reflecting one black man's bewilderment over the problems of love.

DON'CHER LOOK AT ME, CA'LINE!
Don'cher look at me, Ca'line, Don 'cher look at me.
You done busted up many a po' niggah's heart,
But you ain't a-goin' to bust up mine!
Oh, it's hahd to love, an' it's might hahd to leave,
But it's hahder to make up yo' mind!

_A fragment sent by Mrs. Cammilla Breazeale, of Louisiana, expresses an extreme case of depression, without assigning any cause for it._

Ah got de blues, Ah got de blues,
Ah got de blues so doggoned bad,
But Ah'm too damn mean-I can't cry!

A good many of these fugitive songs have to do with love, always excuse enough for metrical melancholy when it is unrequited or misplaced. Mrs. Tom K. Bartlett, of Marlin, Texas, sends two specimens having to do with romance of a perilous nature. The first one is brief, expressing the unhappiness felt by a "creeper," as the colored man who intrudes into another's home is called.

Baby, I can't sleep, neither can I eat.
Round your bedside I'm goin to creep.
Four o'clock, baby, four o'clock.
I'll make it in about four o'clock.

_Mrs. Bartlett says of the next: "You will brand me as a shameless woman when you read this. I wrote it without a blush, however, and say that I have read as bad or worse is classic verse and fiction."_
Late last night when the moon shone bright,
Felt dizzy about my head, Rapped on my door
Heard my baby roar, "Honey, I'se gone to bed!"
"Get up and let me in, 'case you know it is a sin.
Honey, you haven't treated me right.
I paid your big house-rent
When you didn't have a cent."
"Got to hunt a new home tonight!"

CHORUS
"Baby, if you 'low me one more chance!
I've always treated you right. Baby, if you 'low me
One more change! I' goin' to stay with you tonight!
Baby, if you 'low me one more chance
I'll take you to a ball in France. One kind favor I ask of you,
'Low me one more chance!" Then this coon begin to grin,
hand in his pocket, pulls out a ten
The her eyes begin to dance, "Baby, I'll 'low you one more chance!"

The central character in a ditty sent by Louise Garwood, of Houston, advocates adoption of more bellicose methods in dealing with the fair dark sex. No wheedling or bribing on his part!

Ef yore gal gits mad an' tries to bully you-u-u,
Ef yore gal gits mad an' tries to bully you,
Jes' take yore automatic an' shoot her through an' through, Jes' take yore automatic an' shoot her through an' through!

A similar situation of a domestic nature is expressed in a song given by Gladys Torregano, of Straight College, New Orleans, through the courtesy of Worth Tuttle Hedden.

A burly coon you know who took his clothes an' go,
Come back las' night But his wife said, "Honey,
I's done wid coon. I'se gwine to pass for white."
This coon he look sad, He was afraid to look mad,
but his wife said, "Honey, I can't take you back.
You wouldn't work, so now you lost your home."

CHORUS
Oh, my little baby, Do you make me go!
I'll try an' get me a job, ef you'll 'low me a show.
All crap-shooters I will shun. When you buy chicken,
all I want is the bone; When you buy beer
I'll be satisfy with the foam. I work both night and day,
I'll be careful of what I say, Oh,
Baby, let me bring my clothes back home!
"Oh, Baby, 'low me a chance! You can even wear my pants.
Don't you give me the sack. I'll be quiet as a mouse.
All round the house. If you'll take me back,
Tell the world I ain't shook, I'll even be the cook
I won't refuse to go out in the snow," "Don't you tell, my little ink-stand,
Life's dreaming is over. So there's the door, and don't you come back no more!"

Mrs. Bartlett contributes another that describes the woes of unrequited love, which she says was sung by a colored maid she had some years ago.

Ships in de oceans, Rocks in de sea,- Blond-headed woman made a fool out of me!
Oh, tell me how long I'll have to wait! Oh, tell me, honey, don't hesitate!
I ain't no doctor, nor no doctor's son, but I can cool your fever till the doctor comes.
Oh, tell me how long I'll have to wait! Oh, tell me, honey, don't hesitate!
I got a woman, she's long and tall, sits in her kitchen with her feet in the hall!
Oh, tell me how long I'll have to wait! Oh, tell me honey, don't hesitate!

A brief song from Texas uses rather vigorous metaphors in addressing some one.

You keep a-talkin' till you make me think. Your daddy was a bull-dog,
your mammy was a mink. Oh, ho, Baby, take a one on me!

You keep a-talkin' till you make me mad, I talk about yore mammy mighty scandalous bad.
Oh, ho, Baby, take a one on me!
A Negro lover does not sonnet his sweetheart's eyebrows, but he addresses other hymns to her charms, as in the blues reported by Professor W. H. Thomas, of College Station.

A brown-skinned woman and she's chocolate to the bone
A brown-skinned woman and she smells like a toilet soap.
A black-skinned woman and she smells like a Billy-goat.
A brown-skinned woman makes a freight train slip and slide.
A brown-skinned woman makes an engine stop and blow.
A brown-skinned woman makes a bull-dog break his chain.
A brown-skinned woman makes a preacher lay his Bible down.
I married a woman; she was even tailor-made.

The colored man in a song sent by Mrs. Buie, of Marlin, obviously had reason for his lowness of spirits. Po' Lil'l Ella is a favorite in East Texas saw-mill districts.

I'll tell you something that bothers my mind,
Po' Li'l Ella laid down and died. (twice)
I wouldn't 'a' minded little Ella dyin'
but she left three chillun. (twice)
Judge, you done me wrong,-
ninety-nine years is sho' too long! (twice)

Howard Snyder heard one of the workers on his plantation in Mississippi singing the following song, which could not be called entirely a paean of praise for life.

I WISH I HAD SOME ONE TO CALL MY OWN

I'm tired of workin', but I can't fly. I wish I had some one to take my care
I wish I had someone to call my own, I'm tired of livin' an' I don't want to die;
I'm tired of coffee and I'm tired of tea, I'm tired of you, an' you're tired of me.
I'm so tired of livin', I don't know what to do;
You're tired of me an' I'm tired of you.
I'm tired of eatin' an' I'm tired of sleepin'"'); I,
tired of yore beatin' an' I'm tired of yore creepin'.
I'm so tired of livin' I don't know what to do;
I'm so tired of givin' an' I've done done my do.
    I done done my do, an' I can't do no mo';
    I've got no money an' I've got no hoe.
I'm so tired of livin' I don't know what to do;
    You're tired of mean' I'm tired of you.

Other interests of the colored man's life beside love are shown in another song from Professor Thomas' monograph. Note the naive confusion of figures in the first stanza, "a hard card to roll."

JACK O' DIAMONDS

Jack o' Diamonds, Jack o' Diamonds, Jack o" Diamonds is a hard card to roll.
   Says, whenever I get in jail, Jack o' Diamonds goes my bail;
And I never, Lord, I never, Lord, I never was so hard up before. (Three additional verses)

The music for "A Brown-skinned Woman," "Baby, I Can't Sleep," and "Jack o' Diamonds" is here reproduced.
And so the blues go on, singing of all conceivable interests of the Negro, apart from his religion, which is adequately taken care of in his spirituals and other religious songs. These fleeting informal stanzas, rhymed or in free verse that might fit in with the most liberate of verse-libertine schools of poetry, these tunes that are haunting and yet elusive within bars, have a robust vitality lacking in more sophisticated metrical movements. One specimen of blues speaks of its own tune, saying "the devil brought it but the Lord sent it." At least, it is here and has its own interest, both as music and as a sociological manifestation. Politicians and statesmen and students of political economy who discuss the Negro problems in perplexed, authoritative fashion, would do well to study the folk-music of the colored race as expressing its feelings and desires, not revealed in direct message to the whites. Folk-poetry and folk-song express the heart of any people, and the friends of the Negro see in his various types of racial song both the best and the worst of his life."
The first recorded jazz number was a blues - "The Livery Stable Blues," recorded by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. There was doubt as to the real composer of the song. In answer to the question: "What are Blues?" the answer was:

**VARIETY - OCT. 1917**

"**BLUES ARE BLUES, THEY ARE**" SAYS EXPERT IN "BLUES" CASE - Chicago Judge Dismisses Feist's Application for Injunction against Roger Graham, Music Publisher. "Livery Stable Blues" under discussion. Testimony Causes Merriment. Graham's Victory Complete. Chicago, Oct. 17. Roger Graham, Chicago music publisher, and Leo Feist, New York ditto, went to the judicial mat here last week. Graham won. The decision and the case itself, while of considerable importance in the profession, occasioned a lot of horse-play during the proceedings, and were made much of by the daily papers as a comic feature story.

Feist attempted to get a permanent injunction to restrain Graham from publishing "Livery Stable Blues," by Ray Lopez and Alcide Nunez. The temporary injunction was issued against Graham.

The supplementary suit, fought out in Judge Carpenter's courtroom in the Federal building, brought large crowds. The testimony of a number of "experts," who admitted on the stand they could not read notes, was utilized. After a full hearing of the facts the bill of complaint was dismissed for want of equity and the injunction automatically dismissed.

Unless Leo Feist, Inc., remove from the front cover of their "Barnyard Blues" the reference to Graham's number, which states that the Feist blues are identical with the "Livery Stable Blues," as played on phonographs under the latter title, Graham will institute a counter action to compel Feist to do this.

Aside from the legal victory the case is in the nature of amoral triumph for Graham's number over the Feist blues. "Livery Stable Blues" has been the better seller of the two. This was demonstrated when, after the case had been dismissed, Harry Munns, Graham's lawyer, was approached by Feist's attorney with a proposition to publish "Livery Stable Blues."

A most colorful trial it was from the point of view of the lay audience. Among the experts called was one Professor "Slaps" White. Professor White, a black man, testified, in backing up his claim as an
expert, that he had written blues for Brown's band, which played in a red cafe. It was Professor White who established the origin of the "blues" melody. Judge Carpenter, a musician himself went into the spirit of the trial, and interpolated dry rejoinders and permitted the various witnesses to tell their stories in their own way.

The most interesting testimony was the story of how the various cries and calls, imitative of various fowls and animals, came to be used in the number. It appeared that at the Schiller cafe, where the Dixieland band was playing (ed. the ODJB), a young woman who had imbibed generously began to cut indiscreet capers on the dance floor. One of the members of the band ripped out the shrill neigh of a horse on his clarinet. It encouraged the young woman, and the cornet came through with the call of a rooster.

All the instruments followed with various animal cries. It had such an effect on the people in the cafe that Nunez suggested their use in the "blues" number.

Professor White accomplished during his testimony what numberless others have failed to do. He defined "blues." The answer came when White told the judge he was the author of several hundred compositions, including several "blues."

"Just what are blues?" Asked Judge Carpenter

"Blues are blues, that's what blues are," replied the professor. The answer was written into the records and will stand as the statement of an expert."

The Blues reached Broadway in the talents of Gilda Gray. This began an interest in the blues and their origin. In the following article we read some information as to the lyrics of blues and their beginnings:

CURRENT OPINION - Sept. 1919

"ENIGMATIC FOLKSONGS OF THE SOUTHERN UNDERWORLD. Young woman appeared for no more than five minutes in a Broadway revue and crooned a ditty in a minor key. Few of the words of the text were comprehensible. The singer made no effort to point their meaning, but mechanically kept on staring ahead of her. A reference to the graveyard, writes the critic of the N. Y. Sun, added to the decadent, macabre impression of as much of the song as the audience could hear. "High cheek-bones, short, rather kinky hair of an ashy blond, and her unaccustomed rich attire gave her the look of a
Nubian page in a Veronese drawing. Then she suggested a Beardsley drawing for Salome's head. She drawled out her song, looking straight into the audience without the least expression in her odd face." The young woman was Gilda Gray, and the song was "The Beale Street Blues." Her sensational triumph in the "Gaieties of 1919" led to a lawsuit between claimants for her services, and aroused widespread discussion of the origin of the "blues," a type of folksong of the underworld, upon which Miss Gray bases her singing and dancing. The archeology of these communal chants is worthy of as serious study as Cecil Sharp and others have given to the ballads of the Appalachians.

The N. Y. Herald declares:

"It is a form of art new to Broadway, that which Miss Gray has introduced, for as the carvings of Dahomey and the totem poles of Alaska are art, crude, even repulsive though it is at times, so the 'blues' are a form of art, an expression of the moods of a certain class of individuals. Indigenous to sections of Southern cities which men frequent only after night has cast her pall over their doings-ask any one who knows Memphis what Beal Street is-they have been transplanted on the stage in New York. And Miss Gray's art is that she treats the illegitimate so deftly that her success is legitimate."

In an interview in the Herald, Miss Gray, who might be described as a sort of Yvette Guilbert of the "blues" confessed familiarity with no less than 200 of these anonymous, nameless and yet often strangely expressive songs:


"The Dirty Dozen' has a wayward sound. I don't suppose there'd be room enough to give all twelve verses.

"The chorus runs like this: "Oh, the old dirty dozen, the old dirty dozen; Brothers and cousins, Livin' like a hive of bees. They keep a buzzin', fussin' and muzzin'. There wasn't a good one in the bunch. (Believe me, boy, that ain't no bluff.) Ah-h, daddy, that's enough. Git over dirty!"

"The lyrics were incomprehensible enough, yet the singer fairly froze in atmosphere of red lights. While her minor notes tore at the auditory nerves she had a peculiar quality of impassiveness which showed her
complete control over the swaying muscles in what now is called 'the shimmy.'"

It would require no less a person than Nicholas Vachel Lindsay to explain the composition of the song which has created such widespread discussion. As reprinted by the dramatic editor of the *Sun*, it runs as follows:

I have seen all the lights of gay Broadway, Of Market Street down to 'Frisco Bay.
I have strolled the Prado, I have gambled on the Bourse.
I have seen pretty browns, beautiful gowns, tailor-made and hand me downs.

I have seen honest men, pickpockets skilled,
The place never closes until somebody gets killed.
I'd rather be here than any place I know,
For it's going to take a sergeant to make me go.
I have been in jail with my face to the wall,
And a great big tall man is the cause of it all.

The graveyard is a nasty old place.
They lay you on your back and throw dirt in you face,
(Get over, dirty)
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust,
If my singing don't get you, my shimmy must.
(Step on it, boys.)

The writer on the *Sun* offers this explanation of the origin of the "blues":

**MISS GILDA GRAY'S "BLUES" AROUSE A DISCUSSION CONCERNING THEIR QUESTIONABLE ORIGIN.** "Listeners have sometimes thought that a blue must be founded on a Negro spiritual. It has the musical character as well as the reflective nature of some of the Negro hymns. Walter Kingsley says the missionaries did sing these hymns to the inhabitants of Beale and similar streets in the South in their efforts to change the ways of life that maintained there. Perhaps this was not accomplished so often as the good men and women hoped. But the hymn made its effect. It remained in the knowledge of the Negroes who had heard it shot at their ears in the attempt to make them better."
"So the 'blue' is the song of their aspirations and desires, good or evil, and it assumes the form and sometimes the tune of the hymn, since that appears to Beale Street the only spiritual form of expression that ever came into its knowledge. The blue may be about an altogether unmentionable aspiration. It may on the other hand be expressive of a temporary piety. Sometimes the words of the missionaries and the desires of the singer become most incongruously blended, as in Miss Gray's song. As the 'blue,' which must inevitably be syncopated in tune and more or less affected by the rubato of jazz, comes to the public now, it mingles the voice of the dweller in the depths of Beale Street with the hoarse calls of the missionary to higher things."

Mr. Walter Kingsley, who has taken the time to investigate the origins of most of our distinctly popular American forms and methods in music, writes with some authority to the Sun on the origin of the songs of the underworld:

"Blues are not for the expression of religious aspiration or the normality's of home and wife and mother. 'Blues' are not written to relieve the soul of church wardens, commuters, disciples of Dr. Crane, and the pure in heart of the theater. They are the little songs of the wayward, the impenitent sinners, of the men and women who have lost their way in the world. 'Blues' are for the outlaws of society; they are little plaintive or humorous stanzas of irregular rhythm set to music not of the conservatories. When one laments a season in prison one sings 'The Jail House Blues.' For the girl whose 'sweetheart' of the dark alleys has gone other where there are many blues, such as 'He Left Me Flat Blues,' 'Kidded Again Blues,' and 'A Rat at Heart Blues.' The forsaken male has his own repertoire, which includes 'Lying Skirt Blues,' 'She Done Him Dirt Blues,' and 'He's sore on the Dames Blues.' The loser at craps, the luckless sport ruined by slow horses and fast women, the mourner for rum, the profiteer in things forbidden whom the law has evicted, the sick and lonely woman—all these have their appropriate blues. On the other side there are blues for luck at cards and women and horses, for big nights in the restricted districts, for pungent pleasures in the sectors of society that have no thought of the morrow; and again there are blues with just a laugh for their object-low comedy fun in subterranean experiences. Just as Henley and Farmer's seven volumes of slang and naughty words covers the outlaw vocabulary of the English language, so do the blues embrace the outlaw emotions. They are right down on the ground in the matter of expression and packed with human nature and always interesting. As Wellington said,
"There's no damned talk about merit' in them. They are gruff and sincere and as authentic as a ballad by Francois Villon."

We begin to find articles in the leading magazines as to the history and origin of "blues." To me the following account is rather 'bizarre,' but I give it for your information:

**VARIETY - JANUARY 6, 1922**

“ORIGIN OF "BLUES" (OR JAZZ) - By the Leightons (Frank and Burt). In Butte, Montana, when life was harsh, spectacular, percussive, uncertain, two boys climbed to the cinders from the rods beneath a freight car. They were explorers. The equipment they packed consisted of a guitar and a banjo. They were pushing deep into the forbidden regions of the underworld, then flourishing in every American city and, while making a flighty living as troubadours from bar to bar, from dive to dive, were collecting material which gives the clue to the original sources of the jazz wave now rippling over the world.

Butte received the wanders well. The silver pieces that flew into the caps of the strollers between numbers were of generous proportions. For the songs the boys gave were songs native to the surroundings; songs of the Mississippi river traffic, of the railroad, of the mines and the cattle ranges. Not one could have been printed. Their most pungent verses were marred, according to accepted standards, by phrases of medieval frankness. What our old ballads have lost in passing into print, these songs retained.

In a stuffy room, reeking and rattling with crude revelry, the singers found an accompanist on the piano, a mulatto girl, hollow-eyed, who turned her back on the throng at intervals to manipulate a hypodermic syringe that flashed against the brown of her lean arm. With her, the two singers hushed the racket with such choice outpouring of sentiment as:

Listen now, white folks, while I tell to you,
Coons without a habit are mighty few;
Some have a habit of dressing near,
But my bad habit is to sleep and eat.
I'll tell all you coons you'll soon be dead
If you don't stop sniffin' coke in your head.
There's two bad habits that I have barred,
That's fightin' 'bout the gals an' workin' hard.

Chorus
Oh, that is a habit I never had,
That kind of a habit is mighty bad.
I'm tellin' you, white folks, I'm mighty glad,
That is a habit I've never had.

"Dell's got a song of her own," said the white proprietor, "Let 'em have it, Dell."
The mulatto struck a minor chord and, in a husky soprano, wistful and pain-fought, she voiced the lament of the forsaken woman -

"I never loved but one woman's son, Far thee, honey, fare thee well.
And I hope and trust I never love another one, Far thee, honey, fare thee well.
I worked out in the rain, I worked out in the snow
What all I done for that man nobody will ever know.
He woke up one mornin' and skipped with all my doug,
an' just said - Fare thee honey, fare thee well."

Chorus
I done all that a poor ol' gal could do.
I fed him pork chops, cooked him kidney stew;
I even knelt down on my knees and blacked his shoe.
All for that man, that measly man."

That was the first time, or one of the first times, that the Leighton Brothers conceived the idea of commercializing the pathetic lamentation of the unfortunates of the underworld.

That was an origin of the blues, and the blending of the blues and ragtime created the jazz now prevalent, although the authentic composition, springing from the deeps of Negro woe in haunts of urban vice, is seldom found in music shops.

The explorers, Frank and Burt Leighton, now standard variety artists, belonged to a group of American minstrels, most of whom died young after going down into strange places to bring up the songs of negro outcasts, of cowboy, miner and gambler. The Negro was the true singer of that feverish section of America. Before the Civil War, the Negro population was rural. The black man had his sorrows and his
'spirituals" and jubilee songs were chants of barbaric somberness. These are preserved intact. Some of the motives have been ambitiously elaborated, but only a chorus of Negro voices can capture the primitive swing and appeal of them.

After the war, the Negro quarters of industrial cities began to grow. Black folks and yellow huddled in slums and the child nature of many succumbed to vice. It is only fair to say that many went up into respectability while the few descended, but it is also only fair to state that the rag-time melody, which Negro leaders are glad to have credited to their race, grew in lawless haunts. The Negro lives at his worst with an abandon utterly lacking in white debaucherie. He never acquired the hard cynicism of the white sinner. He laughs, loves, fights, gambles with an ardor, the colder race cannot imitate. When the outburst of hot animalism dies down, and the dicer has lost his last dime, the gunman or the razor wielder is in a cool cell, the lover and his mistress are torn apart by jealousy or death, then the black man's soul is overwhelmed with grief which translates itself into song.

In Memphis, a colored gambler lost his "high-yallow" girl to a rival. He lured the lady back into his clutches and returned her to the new love, dismembered and packed in a trunk. The lover, who beheld the handiwork of outraged passion, ran screaming into the street, stark mad. The vengeful one was caught, and while the gallows were being prepared for him, composed "The Death House Blues," which he played on the piano in the sheriff's home, and sang with all his heart a few hours before the trap fell from beneath his feet. The song consisted of numerous verses on the order of the following:

"I'm sittin' in the jail house behind the stone wall
And a brown-skinned gal was the cause of it all;
In the morning at half-past nine, hacks and hearses will form in line,
Friends and relations will gather 'roud to carry my body to the buryin' ground."

To one who has glimpsed the sources of jazz music, there is always a shock to be received when some sweet, young thing, tinkling the piano in the sanctity of a good American Methodist home, sings:

Won't you come home, dear daddy, please, dear, come home
She cries the whole day long.
I'll do the cookin' honey, I'll pay the rent,
I knows I'se done you wrong.
Remember that rainy evein' I drove you out
With nothin' but a fine tooth comb,
I knows I'se to blame, now ain't that a shame,
Dear daddy, won't you please come home!"
(Ed: We know this lyric as "Bill Bailey.")

Whosoever name is on the folio, the song came to being in the soul of some dusky light o' love, dwelling so far beyond the world of the sweet young thing that its existence is unsuspected by her. Nor does she, or her mother, or her brother, or her chums, know the real meaning of the words they carol.

Billy Considine, famous in the sport world, sat in Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre, New York, and heard, for the first time, the Leightons sing their sterilized version of "Frankie and Johnnie."
"I held by breath," he said afterward; "I thought you boys had gone balmy, and I knew if you sang the real verses there would be a riot. I laid 'Betsy' (his revolver) on my lap and figured I'd do my best to save you from being mobbed."

But Mr. Considine had no cause for alarm. The minstrel men who discovered the coon song placed it on the market in strongly censored form. "Frankie and Johnnie," a standard ballad of dance halls and "joints" from coast to coast, remained obscure to the polite world until published by the Leightons. They have recorded more than 100 original stanzas of the ballad. Versions and tunes are varied. How barren and how empty are the words in print when once they have been heard to the mob and twang of guitar, with a mixed company of harmonists to join the refrain:

"He was my man, an' he done me wrong."

Frankie she was a good girl, most everybody here knows,
Went out and spent most a hundred dollars for Johnnie's new suit of clothes.

'Cause he was her man, but he done her wrong.

Some of the conclusions of "Frankie and Johnnie" are as follows:

Frankie she dashed around the corner, peeped through a window so high,

There she saw her lovin' Johnnie makin' love to Nellie Bly
Oh, Lord, my man he's doin' me wrong.

Frankie came back around the corner, this time it wasn't for fun,
Underneath her silk kimono, she had a great big 44-gun
Lookin' for her man, 'cause he done her wrong.

Johnnie he ran down the hallway, cryin' oh, Frankie, don't shoot!
But Frankie she fired her forty-four gun five times with a rooti-toot toot.
She killed her man 'cause he done her wrong.

The Judge he said unto Frankie, there ain't no use to cry to me,
The jury done brought in the verdict of murder in the first degree.
You killed your man, 'cause he done you wrong.
Send for the rubber-tired hearses, go get the rubber-tired hacks,
Take my lovin' Johnnie to the graveyard and never, never, bring him back.
He was my man, but he done me wrong.

The ballad in its reconstructed shape is popular in Y. W. C. A. parlors. "Frankie and Johnnie" is a specimen of the authentic coon song, and was taken from a true happening. The story of this song's ascent into respectability is the story of the authentic coon song, not the counterfeit produced in tin-pan alley by the commercial exploiters. The first line informs the experienced ear whether the jazz composition is real or faked. Few white men have been able to create the rag-time of the true quality, although many have been skillful in adaptation of the tunes created by nameless Negroes.

The Leightons, young men yet, represent the only active survivors of the pioneers in the discovery of jazz. With them, two decades or less ago, were Hughie Cannon, Gutter Wilson, Johnny Queen and Ben Harney.

By what miracle of self-respect and good sense they avoided the pitfalls which swallowed up many of their comrades, they cannot explain. Hughie Cannon, who wrote, "Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey," as a sequel to the Leighton's "Bill Bailey, Ain't Dat a Shame," died in the charity ward of a hospital in Toledo before he was forty. Hughie's songs, which netted publishers tens of thousands, were sold by him in barrooms where he played the piano for a living. A round of drinks for the house and a suit of clothes was the price he received for
"Goo-Goo Eyes," the favorite of a season, and is still remembered as the forerunner of the deluge of coon songs.

"Casey Jones" was given out by the Leightons. They frankly admit that their work in connection with this classic consisted of selecting a series of clean verses and standardizing a tune. Many of the Negro ballads require a variation of the melody with each stanza, and change the refrain to fit the unfolding of the story. They sold this song outright for $5,000. No one ever identified the author of "Casey Jones." He was undoubtedly a Negro engine wiper in the railway yards of a Southern city in the United States. A haunting tune and a verse or two start such a song in circulation. Gifted ones add to it; it grows from town to town; it produces off-shoots; it would die in a few years if it were not preserved, expurgated, by a publisher. Two-thirds of its character is lost, of course, when it becomes conventionalized. Following are some of the songs the Leightons wrote which became popular:

"Ain't Dat a Shame."
"Casey Jones."
"Fare Thee, Honey, Fare Thee Well.'
"Steamboat Bill."
"I Got Mine."
"Frankie and Johnnie."
"There's a Dark Man Comin' With a Bundle."
"Lonesome Blues."
"Bill, You Done Me Wrong."

And numerous other songs which did not obtain such wide popularity.

(Frank and Burt Leighton are the earliest singers of "blues" known in vaudeville. That type of song was their dependence almost as an act. They have grown to be so strongly identified with "blues," it is expected of them, especially "Frankie and Johnnie," mentioned by them in the above article. But comparatively in recent vaudeville times were the "blues" a strange song style to an audience. A minute percentage of the audience knew what it was all about. The Leightons had to work harder in those days to get across the "blues" than, now, when almost all popular song-singing turns, even to sister acts, are using one or more. The sister acts found the "blues" songs were easy to harmonize.")
The popularity of using the terminology 'blues' becomes the fad of the Jazz Age. When using the term 'blues' it is not as we think of blues but it is used almost as another word for 'jazz.' The majority of songs with the word blues in their title are indeed not the traditional 12 bar blues as we know it today; not in form or feeling but merely songs that might use blue notes and the slurring of pitches (often called 'scooping' the pitch). The term blues was this altering the pitch of a note written. So a blues is not a blues but merely uses some blues technique-just as Alexander's Ragtime Band is not a rag but a popular song.

In the May 11, 1922 Music Courier article "Jazz, Our National Anthem" the following is written:

"These queer harmonies, mostly used in the 'blues,' are either invented by the composer or imitated from the accidental inventions of 'ad lib,' players of 'jazz.' They are often refined by the arrangers, but not entirely abandoned because of their characteristic nature. These 'blues' came direct from the Negro field hand, and were originally long-drawn out wails, not, however, expressive of grief or discouragement, but, generally, of uplift and joy-often religious. But to the white borrowers of the idiom they seemed blue, hence the name. Hence also, in imitation of the strange slurring and gliding of the Negro singer at work (when he is unconscious of any listening ears), toe so-called 'blue note' in the arrangement (a diminished interval or minor note not belonging to the key) and the sliding harmonies with their frequent consecutive fifths, etc. Thus is American music made. The Negro borrows from the whites, puts his own interpretations on things, and then the whites borrow it back again and adapt it to their own uses."

Using a blue note in a popular song seemed to have been instigated by Jerome Kern in his song "The Magic Melody." We read of this evolution of style in the August 10, 1922 article "Jazz A Form of Art."

"He makes a plea for good jazz which he dates from 1915 when Jerome Kern introduced into "The Magic Melody" a modulation which has, in popular parlance, become known as "blue" and on this are based the "blues" with which we have been deluged. So far as known the first "blue" chord was used by Wagner in "Tristan and Isolde."
The "blues" were a step in advance of "rag," declares Mr. Engel, for, whereas rag was mainly melody and rhythm, the blues were melody plus rhythm plus harmony, but jazz has gone a step farther and to melody, rhythm and harmony, has added counterpoint."

This use of blue notes and the "Magic Melody" is again discussed in the August, 1922 Atlantic Monthly. The article ("Jazz, A Musical Discussion") discusses the evolution and influence of blues into the mainstream of American popular music and the history and role of the 'blue chord.'

I have added the music to ‘Magic Melody.’ There are a number of small modulations in the song. At the time of composing this simple melody, modulations in popular songs, especially the many small modulations found in this song, was innovative.
Words by
SCHUYLER GREENE.

The Magic Melody.

Music by
JEROME KERN.

Voice.

What's the name of that melody?

Piano.

Something hard to beat about it.

Oh What's the name of that melody?

What a pity not to know the name of such a pretty ditty.

It always

seems to interrupt you when you're talking.
It seems to lift you from your feet and start you walking.

When those cellos and fiddles start

into fiddle that middle part Clouds, fears,

sighs, tears, disappear as if by Magic. The
Chorus.

world goes a-round to the sound of a Syn-co-pa-ted melody.

Come on take a chance and we'll dance to the Syn-co-pa-ted melody.

Be ware have a care, have a care, when you're do-in' it.
Keep moving or you'll ruin it and just so you'll know we'll show you all the late improvements in those syncopated movements. Oh you start kind of slow till you know how to throw your shoulders in the air. Then you
"I have not given the subject sufficient study to say definitely at what point the course of popular American music took a new turn, but, unless I am very much mistaken, "The Magic Melody," by Mr. Jerome Kern, was the opening chorus of an epoch. It is not a composition of genius, but it is very ingenious. While it is almost more tuneless than was 'Everybody's Doing It,' - if that be possible, ' and largely adheres to the short, insistent phrase, it stands on a much higher musical plane. Its principal claim to immortality is that it introduces a modulation which,
at the time it was first heard by the masses, seized their ears with the
time of magic. And the masses, for once, showed excellent judgment.
Mr. Kern subsequently proved to be one of the most fertile, tasteful, and
characteristic composers of light music. When he tries to be purely
melodic, he is apt to fall back upon cheap sentimentalism, tinged with
spurious folksong color. But his little harmonic device had a hue all its
own, and popular parlance decided that it was 'blue.'

A veil of mystery covers the first dark deed that went by the name
of 'Blue.' Forever hidden, perhaps, is the identity of the melancholic
culprit who perpetrated it, although stout hearts are ready to cite the
man, the place, and the tune. They are not apt, however, to tell you of an
ancestral and bona-fide 'blue chord,' which Richard Wagner
deliberately chose in order to make more graphic the word blau when
Tristan, in the beginning of Tristan and Isolde, refers to the green, but
distant, shore as shimmering still in a blue haze. That is the sublime
instance. The ridiculous one is the madudlin glissando on ukulele and
steel guitar, the tear-duct of popular music. What stainless ears
considered a rather weird turn of the melody, a morbid shifting of
harmonies, entered the dictionary of professional jargon as 'blue note,'
of 'blue chord.'

I am under the impression that these terms were contemporary
with, if they did not precede and foreshadow, the period of our
innumerable musical 'blues.' What the uninitiated tried to define by
that homely appellation was, perhaps, an indistinct association of the
minor mode and dyspeptic intonation with poor digestion, in reality, it
is the advent in popular music of something which the textbooks call
ambiguous chords, altered notes, extraneous modulation, and deceptive
cadence.

The trick had irresistible charm, everybody tried it. It was in the
preludes and interludes of the popular songs that the radicals began to
break down the old order - that is, in those measures where the voice
did not interfere with their freedom. The black-eyed 'Till ready' was
mercifully dispatched to limbo, and superseded by some dexterous
harmonic tricks that not only stood, but demanded and deserved,
rehearing. Instead of the traditional sequence of dominant diminished-
seventh, and dominant seventh harmonies - which formed the timeworn
tradition into the refrain and accompanied the chanted announcement.
"When he to her did say,' - there sprang up a diversity of the freshest,
most unexpected modulations, which fell upon the ear like drops of
evening rain upon a parched and sun baked soil. The various shades of
blue, in which untutored harmonists indulged, ranged all the way from faint cerulean to deep indigo. The last could often be more fittingly compared to mud.

Between the earlier 'rag' and the 'blues,' there was this distinction: the rag had been mainly a thing of rhythm, of syncopation: the blues were syncopation relished with spicier harmonies.

In addition to these two elements of music, rhythm and harmony, the people - who in the beginning had known but one thing: melody, fastened upon a primitive and weak harmonic structure of 'barbershop' chords - the people, I say, who had stepwise advanced from melody and rhythm to harmony, lastly discovered counterpoint. And the result of this last discovery is jazz. In other words, jazz is ragtime, plays 'Blues,' plus orchestral polyphony; it is the combination, in the popular music current, of melody, rhythm, harmony, and counterpoint."

The use of the genre of the blues is discussed in the next article and earlier statements about the redoing of the blues are affirmed in the article entitled "Quality in Blues."

METRONOME - SEPT. 1923 -

QUALITY IN "BLUES" - "Blues" are distinctly the creation of the colored people. They live them, they breathe them, and they write them. A white man has about as much right to compose a "blues" as a man without any knowledge of music would have to write a symphony.

The craze for "blues" is now at its height. The end is not yet. Mechanical companies are tumbling over each other in their eagerness to discover "real blues." There are bushels of inferior compositions on the market labeled "blues," but the genuine article by born writers of "blues" is as scarce as the proverbial "hen's tooth." A "real blues" has a certain "struttin'" rhythm that is irresistible. It sways the hearer almost with every note and underneath it all there is the wail of the aborigine.

Perhaps no other publishing house has taken as much trouble to unearth genuine "blues" as "The House of Hits" (E. B. Marks Music Company). They were pioneers at the game. In the days before "blues" were universally popular, they collected such marvelous type of this style of composition as Tishomingo Blues, Shim-me-Sha-Wabble, Corinne Blues, Graveyard Blues, every one a giant in its class, a standard "blues" and a household word in musical and stage circles. No
mechanical company can boast of a complete "blues" catalog without these famous leaders. And now that the call is more acute than ever, those record companies who have not as yet listed these numbers, or who are not satisfied with their former recordings made some years ago, have not only re-made them but are reporting most astounding demand and sales for every one of them. It has been no easy task for "The House of Hits" to find "blues" that will measure up to the standard of Tishomingo, Corinne, Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble and Graveyard, but they have at last succeeded in doing so through a special tour of the south arranged for the purpose.

There they found among others, the African Opera Series of Blues, very popular in Memphis, and the adjacent cities. Although this series consisted of nine numbers, the E. B. Marks Company analyzed the situation thoroughly and accepted but two of them, Strut 'Long Papa and Uncle Bud (Bugle Blues). The fame of these numbers (composed by Bob Miller) has already reached the North and they are both being recorded by practically every company of standing. Daisy Martin, well known in recording circles and other recording artists now has these numbers in their permanent repertoire. In this connection, it has become an established fact that the millions of colored folks who are the principal buyers of "blues" prefer them not only by colored artists, mostly girls whose training and natural sympathies enable them to give an interpretation to "blues" with such natural and telling effect that white singers cannot hope to in anywise equal.

While on the trail for "blues" material, the E. B. Marks Company unearthed another bonanza when they discovered four or five unmatchable "blues." They negotiated for these numbers and finally secured them, thus rounding out what is undoubtedly the best catalog of "Strut Blues" winners in the world with such catchy material as Brown Baby, There'll Be Some Changes Made, Memphis Man, 2 A. M. Blues, Log Cabin Blues and Georgia Blues. In such a wealth of "African Blues" material, the one trouble lies in the fact that it is difficult to choose the best. There is no best! Each has in its own way distinctive and novel features, so much so that the large record companies have given up the task of choosing, and list the lot as a whole."

The blues was a 'sorrowful spiritual' at a personal level of one individual. How the use of blue shadings developed, using a faster tempo is mentioned in the next article. In the article appearing in the April 19, 1923 Melody Magazine: "Jazzing Jazz to Death," The author
remarked "American popular music is essentially humorous even the 'blues' are often so funny that everybody laughs." The article continues:

"From the "laughing trombone" to the "moaning saxophone" everything is performed with an eye for sprightly humor. Negroid tunes and manner of interpretation, featured in many current musical styles, often yield a humorous way of rendering a basically sad subject. The Negroid melody and words coupled with it may emphasize a troubled heart over some unfaithful lady love, but the heaviness of heart is usually interpreted in as funny a way as a negro camp meeting song."

We read of the use of the vocal techniques of the blues in using its characteristic intonation variations as singing different pitched notes as a blues third or seventh and of the sliding of the voice from below a pitch to the pitch itself. This technique is taken over by the jazz instrumentalist, especially the violin and trombone, instruments most capable of slides between notes, but also reed and brass instruments. (Example: the slur of the clarinet in the beginning of Rhapsody in Blue.)

This subject is discussed in "The Jazz Fiddler" from the June, 1923 issue of Etude:

"The present vogue of jazz will surely do a great deal of injury to the musical taste of the rising generation, and to the development of our young violinists. In addition to the outlandish noises produced by the jazzers, the style of compositions produced by the composers of 'jazz' of the present day is banal and demoralizing to the last degree. How can a young violinist or other music student listen to this stuff constantly, without having his taste corrupted: We have this 'blues' and the blues,' and all sorts of demoralizing rubbish, written in the worst possible taste and examples of the lowest type of music."

In "A Brief History of Jazz" in the June, 1923, Vanity Fair, the contributions of the blues is given credit for being 'the musical speech of this country (America):

"That large body of songs known as "The Blues," of infinite variety, is an interesting by-products: they reflect the various reactions of the unsophisticated Negro soul to a not altogether perfect Universe. They have here an emotional, as well as the rhythmic, kinship with the
old Negro spiritual. The rhythm is distinct, though languid; the 'blue' state is indicated by an appropriate monotony of melody.

The Negro genius has been chiefly responsible for whatever musical development. American can boast. It is that genius which has produced the American jazz, the only distinct and original idiom we have. It, and not the music of MacDowell and Foster and a host of imitators of the German and French, is the musical speech of this country."

Clarence Williams was the other major figure in popularizing the blues and jazz music. While not getting the notoriety of Handy, he was an important figure in the popular music publishing scene.

**METRONOME - September, 1929**

"**CLARENCE WILLIAMS A SPECIALIST ON "BLUES"** - Clarence Williams, recognized as one of the most famous "Blues" writers of the day, and head of the largest colored music publishing firm in this country, started out in life to be a tailor. He tells this little story of the cause of his changing his life's work.

"Twelve years ago, on the strength of the fact that I could play two songs fairly well, I took a job in a New Orleans wine room, playing a piano. When a patron would request any number except the two which I knew, Some of These Days and Lovey Joe, I always excused myself by saying I did not have the music with me, but that night I would purchase that number and have a girl play it over and over until I could play it by ear."

Each time the girl played a song it cost Mr. Williams $1. He finally decided it would be much cheaper to take piano lessons at 25 cents per lesson. He started out, but at the end of his eighth lesson was satisfied he had learned all there was to be learned about piano playing. Those who have heard his phonograph recordings will realize that today he is a pianist par excellence.

Mr. Williams has written a number of Blues hits. Among them might be mentioned: Brown skin, Who You For?, Ain't Giving Nobody None of This Jelly Roll, You're Some Pretty Doll and Royal Garden Blues. He collaborated with A. J. Piron on all these numbers. Since entering the publishing business, he has sponsored such hits as Got To Cool My Doggies Now, Sister Kate, If You Don't Believe I Love You, Look What a Fool I've Been and Sugar blues. The latest and what looks like one of the
biggest hits to come out of this "hit" factory is *Gulf Coast Blues*. "If you know what the people want, and what they like and you give it to them when they want it, they are going to be satisfied, and the satisfied public spells success to any publisher," said Clarence, and I guess he is right.

When the articles begin to discuss blues it is not necessarily the 12 bar blues we think of. The name blues was used in titles because it would help sell sheet music. While the melody did use blue notes these songs were actually just regular popular songs given a blues name for sales. They were related more closely to ragtime and popular jazz songs than the traditional blues. The article discusses the origin of the blues and is a good account of past blues that really had not much to do with the current blues song.

**SHEET MUSIC NEWS - ORIGIN OF "BLUES" NUMBERS**

October, 1923

Some Interesting Facts concerning the History of Their Origin and Growth. Reports from dealers, publishers and recording companies in various parts of the country indicate that there is to-day a great demand for "blues" numbers, which is likely to continue unabated during the coming winter season at least. Such numbers are by no means new—for several of them have been among the big sellers of quite a few years ago—but during the past year or so they have achieved popularity greater than ever before.

So important are "blues" numbers regarded to-day that there are several publishers who are specializing in them, and such well known popular publishers as Irving Berlin, Inc., Jack Mills, Inc., and the Edward B. Marks Music Co., have special departments devoted to "blues" numbers. The recording companies are also giving special attention to "blues" songs, and such firms as the General Phonograph Corporation (Okeh Records), Columbia, Victor, Vocalion, etc., have special colored "blues" artists for this type of songs.

In view of these facts, it is interesting to trace back the history or origin of "blues" songs, and their growth in popularity. Everybody, of course, knows that "blues" numbers originated with the colored folks in the South. If we trace back into the music of the colored race we find that there are two general types of music popular among them, viz., spiritual (as sung or chanted at revival meetings) and plantation songs. Roughly speaking, these might be considered as corresponding to the white man's sacred and secular music.
Old Darkey melodies

It was from this old music—practically all of which was never written on paper, but like Topsy "jes' grew"—that the modern "blues" numbers really originated. Back in the days before the Civil War these tunes originated, and it is peculiarly interesting how they really did "jes' grow," without apparently having either lyricist or composer.

Here is how many of them originated: A colored person, presiding at a camp meeting or revival meeting, would begin a spirited prayer, in which he would start a sort of chant, repeating over and over again various religious thoughts. The colored person, presiding at a camp meeting or revival meeting, would begin a spirited prayer, in which he would start a sort of chant, repeating over and over again various religious thoughts. The colored folks present would join in with vim, and together they would chant the words over and over again, creating a wild sort of combination between discord and harmony. From this chanting originated some of the spiritual music among the colored race. These tunes would be carried to the colored boys working in the fields, who, not so much interested in matters spiritual, would proceed to change the tempo somewhat and use words of their own, describing perhaps some event that took place. For example, if a colored acquaintance was whipped by his master for some reason or other, they would evolve an extemporaneous set of words around the incident and sing them in the fields. Not infrequently they would compose their own tunes as they worked. Although they knew absolutely nothing about music, they had a native instinct for harmony, which gave some of these melodies some tributes of music.

The Coming of "Blues."

These old melodies with their quaint words kept increasing in number as the years rolled on, but still only here and there did one find its way on paper. However, with the coming of the cabaret and the dance craze ten or so years ago, some of these melodies were taken in hand by colored composers, arranged to meet more modern demands and sung widely in the cabarets of the South catering exclusively to colored people. Their popularity continued to spread until it reached all parts of the country but still it was confined to colored people. It was only a
comparatively few years ago that white people became interested in these numbers too.

The first popular publisher of the modern school to actually appreciate the latest possibilities of these old strains was W. C. Handy, of the firm of Handy Bros., New York, formerly known as Pace & Handy. Mr. Handy was born in the vicinity of Muscles Shoals and was brought up in an atmosphere that made him capable of appreciating this type of music. Possessing a musical education, he began composing music based on these old strains and writing suitable lyrics to go with them. Music dealers all over will remember the "Memphis Blues," written and published by W. C. Handy. This is generally conceded to have been the first big hit among "blues" numbers, and it has since been followed by numerous others, both from the pen of Mr. Handy and others.

Care in Lyric and Melody

To the unthinking person who labors under the impression that "blues" numbers are just dashed off in a haphazard sort of way, without thought as to melody or lyric, it is a revelation to get the views of the people who write and publish such numbers. Charles Handy, brother of William C. Handy, and his partner in the publishing business, in recently discussing this subject, said:

"There is as much thought and care given to the writing of 'blues' numbers as to any other kind of music. In the lyric an attempt is always made to actually tell a story or convey a message, while harmony and the various other musical attributes are invariably taken into consideration by the high class 'blues' composer.

"It might interest you to know that a good blues number could very easily be arranged for a symphony orchestra. As a matter of fact, my brother is right now making symphonic arrangements of some of his most popular blues numbers."

Theme of a "Blues" Number

An interesting example of the type of old southern folk-lore that eventually found its way as the theme of a popular 'blues' number, is the following story of John Henry, a southern character:

"John Henry, so the legend runs, was the king of the riveters and rillers. Black but comely, he possessed a physical contour that would
bring joy to the heart of a sculptor. He could do more work than any four ordinary men, consume prodigy's quantities of grog and was the center of a myriad of maidenly sighs from the hearts of dusky belles. He was Grand Mentor of the lodge, official umpire at the baseball games and the Supreme Court and last word in all community disputes. It was thus he reigned for many years with due dignity and decorum, seemingly unconscious of his power, yet with his royalty unquestioned and unsullied.

"Like other dynasties whose tenure is not zealously guarded. John Henry's throne of physical prowess tottered when one morning a usurper appeared in the form of a pneumatic punch and riveter. The new invention was installed with the guarantee to perform the work of ten men. John's heart becomes heavy beneath the dense clouds of gloomy foreboding. He felt his throne sinking beneath him and foresaw the passing of his fame.

"Then, as falling monarchs usually do, he evinced the human side and resolved to make one last stand against the mechanical pretender for his dynasty. His powerful, elastic muscles, potent in all previous emergencies, would serve him in this crisis and he would yet show his subjects that he was supreme. He issued a ukase that he, John Henry, King of All Drolleries and riveters and Defender of the Faith in Physical Strength would drive more rivets than any machine made by the hand of man. Over a brimming glass of sparkling beverage, long since extinct by the ruthless hand of Volstead, he placed a generous wager as an earnest of his confidence.

"All the world loves a fighter and his votaries rallied to him and bets were freely made upon the result of this peculiar contest.
"In the finale of this tragedy, tradition comes to the parting of the ways. One version, the one which Mr. Handy has epitomized and painted in "blue" has it that on the day of the vital test. John Henry's hammer fell in tripper blows to the song he sang: while the mechanical riveter hit a tap-tap-tap, from the compressed air behind it, and it was truly Taps, the funeral dirge of the dethroned John Henry that our hero, feeling all was lost and his fame departing, gathered his energies for a last stand, strained his muscles for one supreme effort, with his hammer suspended, he then fell dead beneath it.

"Another and more romantic version is still given in the legends and songs of the quarries and among the section hands is that John Henry met and acknowledged defeat at the hands of the new
mechanism, and with bowed head faded away—passed out from the haunts of his erstwhile glory and was never seen nor heard of again."

Definition of Term "Blues."

Two interesting questions have often been raised regarding "blues" numbers. The first of these is, whence comes the term "blues"—and why? The other is, "what is the definition of a "blues" number Mr. Haynes of the Clarence Williams Publishing Co., New York another well known publisher of "blues" songs—offered the following thoughts: "In my opinion they are called "blues" because of the fact that there are certain strains in them which are really "blue"—that is, they have a 'blue' reaction.

"Regarding the definition, the following one from a prominent orchestra leader may or may not be worth something. A blues number, he said, is one that has a tendency toward discord, but just before it became discord, it recovers."

Reflects Sadness of Slavery Days

The people who manufacture records also have some interesting information to offer on the subject of "blues." A. Glander, publicity representative of the General Phonograph Co., New York, the first recording company to appreciate the commercial possibilities of "blues" numbers, and whose "blues" catalogue is famous, had the following to say:

"The first real big 'blues' number was "Memphis Blues," by W.C. Handy. This was followed shortly afterward by 'St. Louis Blues,' another hit by the same writer. Both of these numbers are still selling on the records. We went into the 'race' or 'blues' field about three years ago, and they are now a very important branch of our business. Our first artist to sing 'blues' numbers exclusively was Mamie Smith.

"'Blues' numbers invariably contain a sad strain, reflecting, in all probability the condition of the colored race before the Civil War days. A peculiar characteristic of blues numbers is that some of the lines and strains are repeated over and over again. This is explained, in all probability, by the fact that they were originally written for poor colored laborers, who lacked education and consequently required this repetition in order that they could comprehend."
"There are two distinct kinds of 'blues' numbers-'white blues' and 'low down blues.' The former are popular numbers with a ballad strain and jazz tempo, while 'low down blues' are the typical numbers of the southern colored folks. No white man can write 'low down blues'-nor can a colored man, for that matter, unless he was born and brought up in the South. For this reason, 'blues' numbers are frequently purchased from uneducated, untrained colored writers down South.

"Blues" Singers.

W. G. Monroe, manager of the record department of the Columbia Phonograph Co., emphasized the fact that colored singers from the South only can properly render 'blues' numbers. Concerning this he said:

"One of our most popular 'blues' singers is Bessie Smith, who was unknown and practically broke when our Mr. Walker discovered her. She was brought up north and given a tryout. Her first few recordings were terrible, for her voice was absolutely uncultured. However, she had a deep, powerful voice, particularly suitable for 'blues' songs, and Mr. Walker, realizing that she possessed latent talent, put her through a course of training. She finally came through in splendid style and her rendition of 'Gulf Coast Blues,' 'Downhearted Blues' and several other numbers helped to make them big sellers on the Columbia records."

Just how long "blues" numbers will be in vogue is purely a matter of speculation, but there is little doubt but that they will prove good sellers over the counter for the current season, at least, and dealers will find it to their interest to keep a supply of such sheet music in stock during the coming months."

In defending jazz as an important American music we read that the blues use in jazz is one of the elements denoting character of jazz music:

"But there is good reason to suppose that jazz, although it had its birth in the most popular of popular music, and although the tunes which it accompanied were of the most nauseating triviality, is not inherently wedded to these elements but is, in fact, nothing more or less than a particular orchestra color and treatment, used in conjunction with peculiar altered chords, a simultaneous use of minor and major modes (known as 'blues')."
The use of blues harmony and melodic characteristics is talked about spoken of in "Jazz" in the August, 1924 issue of Mercury:

"In the current jazz one hears piano figures that are ingenious, counter-melodies that are far from timid, and experiments in instrumental balance that are of interest to any composer. The harmony itself is at times varied and delicate. The blues formula - subdominant modulation with alternations of tonic major and minor - is simple and effective. The chromatic (or diatonic) succession of dominant ninths so dear to Franck and Chabrier has become popular, and the mediant or sub-mediant tonality offers a pleasing relief from the more obvious dominant. The Neapolitan sixth is quite common and even the "barbershop" chord, the augmented six-five three, or German sixth, is sometimes used in a manner that is not at all crude."

An interesting statement is given in the next article in the March 1, 1925 Survey: "Jazz was the Negro's explosive attempt to cast off the blues and be happy." It states the true spirit of jazz:

"The true spirit of jazz is a joyous revolt from convention, custom, authority, boredom, even sorrow - from everything that would confine the soul of man and hinder its riding free on the air. The Negroes who invented it called their songs the "blues," and they weren't capable of satire or deception. Jazz was their explosive attempt to cast off the blues and be happy, carefree happy even in the midst of sordidness and sorrow. And that is why it has been such a balm for modern ennui, and has become a safety valve for modern machine-ridden and convention-bound society. It is the revolt of the emotions against repression."

The technique of sliding becomes one of the main elements in jazz. We read of the 'scooping' in the article "Jazz and the Dance" in August, 1925 Pictorial Review"

"The blues is, to our idea of thinking, a truly melancholy form of jazz; it is a result of the scooping on trombone and wail of the saxophone that drag out the comic tragedy of the unmelodious-syncopated-tempoed delirium......Do you realize that the scooping of the strings in our jazz and in the blues, the pulling out of the roaring trombone, and the
droning of the saxophone are distinct holdovers from our savage brethren and the Oriental race?

Carl Van Vechten was one of the most authentic and accurate writers and the following article is an excellent essay on the 'Black Blues.'

VANITY FAIR - August, 1925 “THE BLACK BLUES - NEGRO SONGS OF DISAPPOINTMENT IN LOVE: - THEIR PATHOS HARDENED WITH LAUGHTER by Carl Van Vechten

The Negro, always prone to express his deepest feeling in song, naturally experiences other more secular emotions than those sensations of religion published in the Spirituals. Perhaps the most poignant of all his feelings are those related to his disappointments in love, out of which have sprung the songs known as the blues. These mournful plaints occasioned by the premature departure of "papa," these nostalgic longings to join the loved one in a climate of sunlight and colour - although in at least one instance the singer indicates a desire to go back to Michigan - are more tragic to me than the Spirituals, for the Spirituals are often informed with resignation, or even a joyous evangelism, while the Blues are consistently imbued with a passionate despair.

Like the Spirituals, the Blues are folksongs and are conceived in the same pentatonic scale, omitting the fourth and seventh tones - although those that have achieved publication or performance under sophisticated auspices have generally passed through a process of transmutation - and at present they are looked down upon, as the Spirituals once were, especially by the Negroes themselves. The humbleness of their origin and occasionally the frank obscenity of their sentiment are probably responsible for this condition. In this connection it may be recalled that it has taken over fifty years for the Negroes to recover from their repugnance to the Spirituals, because of the fact that they were born during slave days. Now, however, the Negroes are proud of the Spirituals, regarding them as one of the race's greatest gifts to the musical pleasure of mankind. I predict that it will not be long before the blues will enjoy a similar resurrection which will make them as respectable, at least in the artistic sense, as the religious songs.

The music of the Blues has a peculiar language of its own, wreathed in melancholy ornament. It wails, this music, and limps languidly; the rhythm is angular, like the sporadic skidding of an automobile on a wet
asphalt pavement. The conclusion is abrupt, as if the singer suddenly had become too choked for further utterance. Part of this effect is indubitably achieved through the fact that the typical Blues is created in three-line stanzas. As W. C. Handy, the artistic father of the blues, has pointed out to me, the melodic strain can thereby be set down in twelve bars instead of the regulation sixteen. Not only are the breaks between verses and stanzas frequent, but also there are tantalizing and fascinatingly unaccountable - to any one familiar with other types of music - gaps between words, even between syllables. These effects are more or less characteristic of other Negro music, but in the case of the blues they are carried several degrees further. When these songs are performed with accompaniment, the players fill in these waits by improvising the weirdest and most heart-rending groans and sobs, whimpers and sighs, emphasizing, at the same time, the stumbling rhythm. Extraordinary combinations of instruments serve to provide these accompaniments; organ and cornet, mouth organ and guitar, saxophone and piano; sometimes a typical Negro jazz-band - and by this I do not mean the Negro Jazz-band of the white cabaret - is utilized by a phonograph company to make a record. Many of these men do not read music at all. Many of these songs have never been written down. Notwithstanding the fact that the musical interest, the melodic content of these songs is often of an extremely high quality, I would say that in this respect the Blues seldom quite equal the Spirituals. The words, however, in beauty and imaginative significance, far transcend in their crude poetic importance the words of the religious songs. They are eloquent with rich idioms, metaphoric phrases, and striking word combinations. The Blues, for the most part, are the disconsolate wails of deceived lovers and cast-off mistresses, whose desertion arouses the desolate one to tell his sad story in flowery language. Another cause has contributed to the inspiration of symbolic poetry in these numbers. Negroes, especially in the south, indulge in a great deal of what they themselves call "window-dressing," in order to mislead their white employers. This is the reason for the prevalent belief in the South that Negroes are always happy, for they usually make it a point to meet a white man with a smile and often with a joke. It is through this habit of window-dressing that the Negroes have grown accustomed to expressing their most commonplace thoughts in a special tongue of their own. For example, a Negro boy who intends to quit his job surreptitiously sings to his colored companions: "If you don't believe I'm leavin', count the days
I'm gone." A favorite phrase to express complete freedom has it: "I've got the world in a jug, the stopper's in my hand."
The Blues bulge with such happy phrases; "The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice," referring to the preference yellow-girls frequently bestow on extremely black men, or the contrasting refrain, which recurs in a score of these songs, "I don't want no high yella." Other picturesque locutions are; "I've put ashes in my papa's bed so that he can't slip out." "Hurry sundown, ets tomorrow come," "Blacker than midnight, teeth like flags o' truce,"

Certain refrains, for a perfectly logical reason, recur again and again in these songs. For instance, "I went down to the river":

I went down to the river, underneath the willow tree.
A dew dropped from the willow leaf, and rolled right down on me.
An' that's the reason I got those weepin' willow blues.

or:

Goin' to the river, take my rockin' chair. goin' to the river, take my rockin' chair.
If the blues overcome me, I'll rock on away from here.

or:

Goin' to the river, I mean to sit down.(twice)
If the blue-blues push me, I'll jump over and drown.

So many of the papas and mamas depart on trains that the railroad figures frequently in the blues:

Got the railroad blues; ain't got no railroad fare, (twice)
I'm gonna pack mah grip an' beat mah way away from here.

or:

Goin' to the railroad, put mah head on the track, (twice)
If I see the train a-comin', I'll jerk it back.

or:
I went up on the mountain, high as a gal can stan',
An' looked down on the engine that took away mah lovin' man.
An' that's the reason I got those weepin' willow blues.

There are many blues which are interesting throughout as specimens of naive poetry, related in a way it would be difficult to define, but which it is not hard to sense, with oriental imagery of the type of *The Song of Songs*. Such a one is that which begins:

A brown-skinned woman an' she's chocolate to the bone.
A brown-skinned woman an' she smells like toilet soap, etc.

A typical example of this class of song is *The Gulf Coast Blues*, which also happens to possess a high degree of musical interest which, unfortunately, I cannot reproduce here. However, as sung by Bessie Smith and played by Clarence Williams, it is perfectly possible to try it on your phonograph.

I been blue all day. My man 's gone away. He went an' left his mama cold For another girl, I'm told.
I tried to treat him fine, I thought he would be mine, that man I hate to lose, That's why mama's got the blues.

The man I love he has done lef' this town, (twice)  
An' if he keeps on goin', I will be Gulf coast boun'.

The mailman passed but he didn't leave no news, (twice)  
I'll tell the world he lef' me with those Gulf Coast blues. 
Som o' yo' men sure do make me tired. (twice)  
You got a handful o' gimme an' a mouthful o' much oblige.

In connection with this depressing lament, Langton Hughes, the young Negro poet, has written me; "The blues always impressed me as being very sad, sadder even than the Spirituals, because their sadness is not softened with tears, but hardened with laughter, the absurd, incongruous laughter of a sadness without even a God to appeal to. In *The Gulf Coast Blues* one can feel the cold northern snows, the memory of the melancholy mists of the Louisiana lowlands, the shack that is home, the worthless lovers with hands full o' gimme, mouths full o' much oblige, the eternal unsatisfied longings."
"There seems to be a monotonous melancholy, an animal sadness, running through all Negro jazz that is almost terrible at times. I remember hearing a native jazz-band playing in the Cameroon in Africa while two black youths stamped and circled about a dance hall floor, their feet doing exactly the same figures over and over to the monotonous rhythm, their bodies turning and swaying like puppets on strings. While two black boys, half-grinning mouths never closed, went round the room, the horns cried and moaned in monotonous weariness - like the weariness of the world - moving always in the same circle, while the drums kept up a deep-voiced laughter for the dancing feet. The performance put a damper on the evening's fun. It just wasn't enjoyable. The sailors left.

"Did you ever hear this verse of the blues?

I went to the Gipsy's to get mah fortune tol' (twice)
Gipsy done tol' me goddam yore unhard-lucky soul.

"I first heard it from George, a Kentucky colored boy who shipped out to Africa with me - a real vagabond if there ever was one. He came on board five minutes before sailing with no clothes - nothing except the shirt and pants he had on and a pair of silk socks carefully wrapped up in his shirt pocket. He didn't even know where the ship was going. He used to make up his own blues - verses as absurd as Krazy Kat and as funny. But sometimes when he had to do more work than he thought necessary for a happy living, or, when broke, he couldn't make the damsels of the West Coast believe love worth more than money, he used to sing about the Gypsy who couldn't find words strong enough to tell about the troubles in his hard-luck soul."

The first blues to achieve wide popularity was *The Memphis Blues*, by W. C. Handy, who lived at that time in Memphis, and was well-acquainted with life on the celebrated Beale Street. For this song - published in 1912, a year after *Alexander's Ragtime Band* - Mr. Handy received a total of one hundred dollars. Since then he has issued so many of these songs, The St. Louis Blues, Hesitation Blues, John Henry Blues, Basement Blues, Harlem Blues, Sundown Blues, Atlanta Blues, Beale Street Blues, Yellow Dog Blues, etc., that, taking also into account that he was the first to publish a song of this character, he is generally known as the father of the Blues. Nevertheless, Mr. Handy himself has informed me categorically that the blues are folksongs, a statement I
have more than fully proved through personal experience. To a greater
degree than other folksongs, however, they have gone through several
stages of development. Originally, many of these songs are made up by
Negroes in the country to suitably commemorate some catastrophe. As
one of these improvised songs drifts from cabin to cabin, verses are
added, so that not infrequently as many as a hundred different stanzas
exist of one song alone. Presently, these ditties are carried into the
Negro dives and cabarets of the Southern cities, where they are served
up with improvised accompaniments and where a certain obscene
piquancy is added to the words. Many of the Blues, as a matter of fact,
are causal inventions, never committed to paper, of pianist and singer in
some house of pleasure. This does not mean that composers and lyric
writers have not occasionally created Blues of their own. For the most
part, however, the Blues that are sung by Negro artists in cabarets and
for the phonograph are transcribed versions of folksongs. Even with
such blues as are definitely composed by recognized writers, it will be
found that their success depends upon a careful following of the folk
formula both in regard to words and music.

So far as Mr. Handy's own Blues are concerned, he admits
frankly that they are based almost without exception on folksongs which
he has picked up in the south. Occasionally he has followed the idea of
an old blues, more frequently he has retained a title or a melody and
altered the words to suit Broadway or Harlem's Lenox Avenue. For
example, the tune of Aunt Hagar's blues - Aunt Hagar's Children is the
name the Negroes gave themselves during slave days, - is founded on a
melody he once heard a Negro woman sing in the South to the words, "I
wonder whar's mah good ol' used to be." The Joe Turner Blues are
based on the melody of an old Memphis song, "Joe Turner come an' got
mah man an' gone." Pete Turney at the time was governor of
Tennessee. His brother, Joe, was delegated to take prisoners from
Memphis to the penitentiary at Nashville, and the Negroes pronounced
his name Turner. Mr. Handy has utilized the old melody and the title,
but he has invented the harmonies and substituted words which would
have more meaning to casual hearers.

Another of Handy's songs, Loveless Love, is based on an old Blues
called Careless Love, invented by the Negroes to tell the story of the son
of a governor of Kentucky, shot in a love affair. Handy's Long Gone is
based on an old Negro song called Long John, Long Gone. The story
runs that with the arrival of some new bold-hounds on a plantation it
was decided to experiment with them on Long John. Getting wind of
this unpleasant prospect, the Negro supplied himself with a trap which 
he dragged behind him in a barrel. Inveigling the bloodhounds into the 
trap, Long John escaped into the woods and was never caught. Hence 
the song, Long John, Long Gone, soon spread from shack to shack. 
Long familiar with the words and tunes of such songs, the possibility of 
harmonizing them and treating them instrumentally came to Mr. 
Handy early in the present century. On tour with his band, he was 
playing for a white dance at Cleveland, Mississippi, when, during, an 
termission, three local Negroes appeared, and asked if they might 
perform a number. Permission was granted and the men, mandolin, 
guitar, and viola, began to play a mournful, wailing strain, the strain of 
the Blues. Nowadays such accompaniments to Blues are improvised in 
dimly lit cellars while you wait.

So far as I know there has been as yet no effort made - such as has 
been made with the Spirituals - to set down these songs, verses and 
music, as they are sung under primitive conditions. To me this is a 
source of the greatest amazement. Any Negro recently from the south 
knows at least half a dozen of them. I myself have heard as many as fifty 
in Lenox Avenue dives and elsewhere that have never been put down in 
any form. They are not only an essential part of Negro folklore but also 
they contain a wealth of eerie melody, borne along by a savage, 
recalcitrant rhythm. They deserve, therefore, from every point of view, 
the same serious attention that has traditionally been awarded to the 
Spirituals."

We find another article that discusses the blues, again using W. C. 
Handy as a source. Handy is given credit for writing the first blues. 
(There is a blues published in New Orleans entitled "I Got The Blues" 
in 1908.) Handy did use the blues feeling and incorporated this feeling 
into songs that were not 'real' blues. Thereby lies his importance as 
others followed this lead and we have the 'jazz' blues, not a traditional 
blues but using blues elements.

A. Maggio, of New Orleans, is one of the earliest blues published for the 
ensemble of the era, called usually the ‘string band.’ Its 
instrumentation: violin, flute, clarinet, cornet, trombone, piano, bass 
and drums. Section ‘C’ is a blues in a minor key. Handy published his 
“Memphis Blues in 1913.”
The cornet part (written for ‘A’ cornet). With the use of the violin in this and many other arrangements of the era the cornet and clarinet parts are written for ‘A’ instruments which made it easier for cornet & clarinets to play in a key better suited for their instrument when playing with orchestral instruments such as a violin.
BLUE NOTES (The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mr. W. C. Handy for much historical information included in this article.)

The blues are one of the most interesting and significant examples of Negro folksong, but they wouldn't stay put. They broke through into American popular music; became confused with almost every related type; their origin forgotten, they have generally been passed over by collectors and students.

Say that a was conducting a kitchen courtship of Miss B, who was cool, unsympathetic, and sparing of family eatables. As he sat, disconsolate, on the back of his neck, self-pity might call a thought into his head...
which would forthwith emerge, *thrice* repeated as a quavering and diffident bit of song:

"Got no more home than a dawg."

Attention being obtained, and warming to his idea, there would come a second stanza:

"Ain't got a frien' in this worl".

He might expect desirable results if he could keep this up indefinitely - and he could. It might, therefore, seem well to try it again elsewhere, with improvements; the song might be adopted and further elaborated by others.

In their developed condition the blues would still retain an intensely personal flavor, and the three-line stanza. But the first line, now, would probably voice some grief, longing, or unhopeful "if"; the second either repeats or reinforces the first; while the third would state a causa dolaris, some collateral conclusion, or the course which would be taken should the "if" come true:

Goin' to lay my head right on the railroad track, (repeat)
'Cause my baby, she won't take me back.

Goin' to lay my head right on the railroad track, (repeat)
If the train come 'long, I'm goin' to pull it back.

If the river was whisky, and I was a mallard (I said a mallard - I mean a duck)
If the river was whisky, and I was a mallard duck -
I'd dive right down, and I'd never come up.

Improvisations in this form and spirit with the peculiar melodies associated with them, had lacked a distinguishing name, but shortly before 1910 they had acquired the title "blues" from persons unknown, and the term was in use from Kentucky down by that date. The essence of most is found in the traditional common-property line:

Got the blues, but too dam' mean to cry
No one sentence can sum up more completely than this, the philosophy between the lines of most of these little verses. Yet in them the forgotten singers did not always amuse themselves with their troubles: nearer universal was the element of pure self: one sang of one's own feelings, thoughts and interests, and if the subject was generally painful, that was the result, not of convention, but of racial history. This personal and philosophical tinge distinguishes the blues from such three-line ballads as Frankie and Johnny, leaving them a secular counterpart of the spirituals.

The structural peculiarities of the music parallel those of the stanza. As the latter had one less than the four lines normal to simple verse, so the voice would sing (in two-four or common time) four less than the normal sixteen bars to the strain - each line of the stanza being confined to four bars of music. As each line was more or less of a complete thought, so the air with the last syllable of each line would return to and rest on the keynote or another element of the tonic triad, so that the whole presented a period of three almost independent phrases, with successive bizarre effects of internal finality and of final incompleteness. The line, relatively, was very short, its last syllable usually falling on the first beat of the third bar of its musical phrase, thus leaving a long interim to be filled in somehow; perhaps with a hummed echo; perhaps with vocal or instrumental vagaries which later came to be called "the jazz." Meanwhile, in the mind of the improviser, the next line could be going through its period of gestation.

Unwritten, unharmonized melodies, yet if the singer wished to accompany himself, he could do so with just three chords: The common chords of the dominant and subdominant and the chord of the dominant seventh. The melody would be a four-bar phrase favoring a syncopated jugglery of a very few notes; the second phrase would vary somewhat the first, suggesting to the musical ear an excursion into the subdominant; the third would give a final version. Play between the keynote and its third was particularly frequent, and the tonic third characteristically coincided with the antepenultimate syllable of the line. And in these as in other Negro songs, the singer was apt, in dealing with this particular note, to slur from flat to natural or vice versa in such a way as to furrow the brow of anyone who might attempt to set the tune down on paper. In singing to the banjo - a cheerful instrument - the slur might be expected; if the guitar was in use, the minor would be even more prominent; the melody therefore might seem, like Krazy Kat, uncertain as to its own sex.
The trickle of the blues into the national consciousness was started by W. C. Handy (an Alabama Negro then living in Memphis and now his own publisher), the first of his race not only familiar with these weird's, but able and willing (racial reticence is peculiarly involved here) to set them down and write more in the tradition. Although, the title "blues" being commercially valuable, even with him it is not always an index to what follows, he has preserved some of the original examples in a very pure form, while some entirely his own, such as Beale Street, Saint Louis, Aunt Hagar's Children, meet every test of the folk-product except anonymity of authorship.

In writing down this music he chose to represent the primitive treatment of the tonic third, in some cases by the minor, simple, sometimes by introducing the minor third as a grace-note to the major, or vice versa. The grin of the singers had been sardonic; the songs were as melancholy as their name would imply, but sadness in negro music is no more dependent upon the minor than is the color of the sea upon pigment, and the blue airs demanded the prevailing major. Handy's minor third, therefore, appeared as signifying a temporary change of mode, and it caught attention as none of the structural features (more important because indispensable) did. It acquired a name of its own: "the blue note." The more blue notes, the "meaner" the blues. And its occasional use, especially when immediately preceding a cadence, furnishes most white writers with their only excuse (from the historical standpoint) for having ever used the title "the ......Blues." There are not enough pedants, however, to preserve the integrity of the word at this late date.

To Handy is also to be credited the introduction, in the accompanying bass of some blues, of the habanera or tango rhythm (a dotted quarter, an eighth and two quarter-notes), with a success explainable on the well supported theory that this rhythm - the native word is tangana - is of African origin. He also wrote in strange figures for the long line-end holds (lineal descendants of the echoing wails in the originals), which soon came to emerge through the mouths of saxophones or the crowns of derby hats as the jazz we know. The relative shortness of a line of the blues had much to do with the birth and development of the most-discussed phenomenon of our present regime.

The blues are at their best as dance-music, but the orchestral treatment usually accorded them is a jazzing so continuous and indiscriminate that the melody is buried beneath the cowbells, rattlers
and miscellaneous screeching machines. This is unfortunate because in many blues there is not only strangeness, but beauty, dependent only on a competent rendition. It may be a softly wistful beauty, or it may be the beauty of a savage and bitter power; this where it is jazzed, but properly, and without obliteration of its line. Some music (to be dogmatic) can be "properly" jazzed; some should be; many blues should be. Between those slow beats of the tympani, in those long holds, is room for such a syncopated gnashing of teeth, such cries of pain and passion, as might attend the ceremonial mock-marriage of two fiends - and while this brutal and aphrodisiac orchestral development of the simple tunes is recent, the germ was latent in the originals. The contempt rightly visited upon a ham conductor's gratuitous jazzing of some anemic steal from the Narcissus of Ethelbert Nevin, is not a sign of intelligence when applied to a jungle treatment of laments of the jungle's grandchildren. The latter may merely be liked or disliked, and the writer peaceably begs leave to like it. Abbe Niles

Whiteman discusses jazz in a series of articles in the Saturday Evening Post. He discusses the difference between ragtime, blues and jazz:

"The best way I have found to differentiate between ragtime, blues and jazz is to indicate each one of them by a line. The ragtime line is jerky. Blues has a long easy line and the jazz line rises to a point. The maple Leaf was the first rag, Memphis Blues was the first blues, so far as I have been able to find.....At first both ragtime and blues were a sort of piano trick passed on from one performer to another. Up to the time that Handy organized an orchestra in Memphis, it is doubtful whether a single blue measure had ever been put on paper. Handy wrote out the blue notes for the first time. At the House-Rent Stomps

According to John Stark, publisher of ragtime in St. Louis, ragtime originally meant a Negro syncopated dance, and the real Negro blues were never intended as a dance at all, but were a sort of Negro opera, more like a wail or a lament than anything else. Big sessions of blues were held in the south among the colored people, the biggest of all occurring at "house-rent stomps" when a Negro found himself unable to pay his rent. The entertainment consisted of a barbecue with music afterward, during and before. The guests raised a purse to save their host's home and also composed a new blues for the occasion.
Jazz, which is ragtime and blues combined with a certain orchestral polyphony which neither had, was still another way of letting off steam."

In the same article we read a discussion as to who is capable of playing blues. I don't mean the traditional slow blues but as the term is used by the era's jazzmen, including white jazz musicians. Gus Mueller, a white clarinet player is mentioned remarking about playing blues with a new band:

"The real blues player is more hidebound in his way than the symphony men. Blues are a religion with him and he doesn't think a man who is able to read music can really play blues. He "suffers the blues," as one Southern player to me when I complimented him.

"Yassah, I suffah' em" he said.

I (Sic: Whiteman) had a New Orleans boy, Gus Miller, Mueller) who was wonderful on the clarinet and saxophone, but he couldn't read a line of music. I wanted to teach him how, but he wouldn't try to learn, so I had to play everything over for him and let him get it by ear. I couldn't understand why he wouldn't make an effort to take the instruction I wanted to give him. Finally, I got it out of him.

"Well, it's like this," he confided seriously. "I knew a boy once down in N' Awleens that was a hot player, but he learned to read music and then he couldn't play jazz any more. I don't want to be like that."

A few days later Gus came to me and said he was quitting. I was sorry and asked if it was money. He said no, but stalled as to his real reason. Finally, though, he came out with it.

"No, suh, I jes can't play that pretty music that you all play!"

Then in a wild burst of words, "And, anyway, you fellers can't play blues worth a damn!"

Handy was a major influence in American popular music for his early use of the blues. The "Memphis Blues" is usually thought of as one of the earliest and most popular blues. We read why and how Handy began his work in the background of Negro blues. We read in the 1926 issue of Popular Mechanics:

"But the effects by which modern jazz is identified originated in our own southland and its Negroes. We first came to recognize them in the Negro blues. W. C. Handy an Alabama Negro put the blues on our
musical map. Handy was proprietor and manager of a dance orchestra. One night, more than thirty years ago, he was filling an engagement at the little town of Cleveland, Miss. Three local Negroes applied for permission to interpolate a selection. This permission granted, the trio, equipped with mandolin, guitar and bass viol, played, over and over again, a mournful primitive strain of twelve instead of the orthodox sixteen measures.

There were just three changes of harmony in this unfinished symphony, but it made a bit, partly because the guitar and mandolin players slid their fingers along the frets and produced the effect we now hear in the Hawaiian steel-stringed guitar and ukulele and partly because the bass viol played "wolfed" his tones. White folks present showered money upon the local Negroes.

`Handy sat up and took notice. He studied the new type of music, which had a melody something like the Negro spirituals, but encouraged encores because if left the impression that there was something "Blues." It was a song without words at first, but it went big. Then Handy wrote some verses for it, referring to a Memphis election campaign. They were not so good. George Norton, a white man, contributed a new set of verses, which became permanently attached to the Handy melody praising the hospitality of Memphis and the skill of Handy's orchestra. "The Memphis Blues" traveled from coast to coast. There was an outbreak of blues in every musical quarter."

Our next article also is an excellent discussion of the blues. It states that: "Next to the spirituals, the blues are probably the Negro's most distinctive contribution to American art. They have not been taken seriously because they have never been thoroughly understood. Behind the popular blues songs of today lie the more spontaneous and naive songs of the uncultured Negro.

MUSICAL AMERICA - OCTOBER 16, 1926 - NEGRO WORK-SONGS PROVE TREASURE HOUSE OF RACE CHARACTER.

On the illuminated page of song the Negro has written the story of his life among us. His is by no means a completed history, nor have the last stanzas of his song full chronicle been flung into the unimpressionable air. The Negro is still singing, and the style of his musical speech is changing with the times-just as he changes. He is spreading his lore all over America, wherever he wanders to take up work in factory, furnace, construction gang, field, or levee.
It is the workaday songs that make up the diary of the Negro's everyday experiences, and they constitute a chain that binds the present with a past as old as that of the spirituals. They are the alluvial deposit of all the emotions that have possessed generations of laborers; and they range from religion to romance.

In the workaday songs, the complete Negro character is adumbrated, for every facet of his volatile spirit is reflected in one or another. Sociologically, then, they are of more value than the spirituals, and many of them are as rich musically.

The University of North Carolina, through Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, has made an attempt to compile a representative collection of this secular music. The gleanings are published by the University of North Carolina Press in one volume, entitled, "Negro Workaday Songs."

All the songs in the book were collected by the authors at first hand from the Negroes themselves. Concerning their task, they say: "Perhaps the most striking observation that comes from the whole experience is the seemingly inexhaustible supply of songs among workaday Negroes in the South. We have yet to find a 'bottom' or a limit in the work songs among the crowds of working men in one community... Likewise we have yet to find an individual, whose efforts have been freely set forth in the offering of a song, whose supply of songs has been exhausted. Time and time again the approach has been made, with the response, 'Naw, sir, cap'n, I don't know no songs much,' with an ultimate result of song after song, seemingly with no limit. Partly the singer is honest; he does not at the time think of many songs, nor does he consider himself a good singer; but when he turns himself 'loose' his capacity for memory and singing is astonishing."

"Careless Rapture"

Into these everyday songs, wanderer, ditch digger, chain gang worker, have all thrown their unconscious, unguarded feelings; thus are they perfect artists; so are these songs the true ghosts of the race.

The Negro with the pick is no less poetic than the Negro at camp meetin' for he can sing:

Ev'rywhere I look this, Ev'rywhere I look this mo'nin', Looks like rain.
I got rainbow tied 'round my shoulder, Ain't gonna rain, Lawd, ain't gonna rain.

For humor, the wanderer has tossed off this bit from the roadside:

I done walk till, Lawd, I done walk till Feet's gone to rollin',
Jes' lak a wheel, Lawd, jes' lak a wheel.

"No story of the workaday song life of the Negro can proceed far without taking into account the kind of song known as the blues," say the authors, "for next to the spirituals, the blues are probably the Negro's most distinctive contribution to American art. They have not been taken seriously, because they have never been thoroughly understood. Behind the popular blues songs of today lie the more spontaneous and naive songs of the uncultured Negro. Long before the blues were formally introduced to the public, the Negro was creating them by expressing his gloomy moods in song. To be sure, the present use of the term 'blues' to designate a particular kind of popular song is of recent origin, but the use of the term in Negro songs goes much further back, and the blue or melancholy type of Negro secular song is as old as the spirituals themselves."

Lonesome

The blues cover any kind of loneliness or sadness. Many tell of "po' boy long way from home" yearning for his "babe" and a place to lay his weary head. In such sentimentalities a heart-felt "damn" or stronger expletive often finds a place.
Other blues are those songs which the authors describe as "Songs of the Lonesome Road." The following lonesome note comes from a present-day wanderer's song:

Freezin' ground wus my foldin' bed las' night
Got up in the mo'nin', couldn't keep from cryin'
Shoes all wore out my clothes done tore to pieces
Trouble gonna follow me to my grave.

Vivid self-pity is expressed in the tramp's reflections on his hard life. He sees himself at his own funeral, the most important figure, of
course, receiving the elaborate last rites of a crowd of friends and mourners:

    Look down po' lonesome road, Hacks all dead in line;
    Some give nickel, some give a dime, to bury dis po' body o' mine.

Bad Man Ballads

In the bad-man ballads we find some folk portraits as picturesque as Paul Bunyan on this side of the Atlantic or Ilya Mourometz on the other. For delicious exaggeration, we place the narrative of Travelin' Man alongside the story of how Paul Bunyan got the ox team out of the frozen soil. Travelin' Man "Made a livin' stealin' chickens an' anything he could see," and the police could not kill him. He even disappeared from his coffin. "Ran so fast that fire came from his heels and he scorched the cotton and burnt the corn and cut a road through the farmer's fields." Then;

The coon went to spring one day to get a pail of water;
The distance he had to go was two miles and a quarter.

He got there an' started back, but he stumbled an' fell down;
He went to the house and got another pail, an' caught the water 'fore it hit the ground.

There are others just as miraculous: Bad Man Lazarus, Billy Bob Russell, Dupree, Bolin, Jones, Roscoe Bill, Slim Jim from Dark-Town Alley, etc.

Referring to the Bad Man Lazarus ballad, the authors say:
"It would be difficult to find a scene and setting more appealing than this ballad being sung by a group of Negro workingmen, in unison, with remarkable harmony, fine voices, inimitable manner. Doesn't this singing hinder you and your work?" We asked one of the pick-and-shovel men, just to see what type of reply he would make. With first a slow look of surprise, then a sort of pity for the man who would ask such a question, then a 'Lawdy-Lawd-Cap'n outburst of laughter, 'Cap'n, da's whut makes us work so much better, an' it nothin' else but."

The subject comes far enough up to late to indicate that the creation of songs among the Negroes is still in motion. Perhaps the
Negroes possess the most extensive active folk-lore that is to be found in this country. A cursory dance through the specimens given in the chapter, "Just Song to Help with Work," will show this clearly. The poetic imagery, the humor, the abandon, the plaintiveness are just as rich as in the older creations.

Man and Woman

"There is probably no theme which comes nearer being common to all types of Negro songs than the theme of the relation of man and woman," we are told. "It is the heart and soul of the blues. The Negro bad man is often pictured as being bad because of a woman. The jail and chain gang songs abound in plaintive references to woman and sweetheart, and the worker in railroad gang and construction camp often sings to his 'Cap'n' about his woman. Likewise, in the songs of woman, man plays the leading role......

"Conflicts, disagreements, jealousies, and disappointments in the love relation have ever been productive of song. They are the chief source of 'hard luck' songs or blues, and the Negro's naive way of singing of his failure and disappointments in love is what has made the blues famous. Sometimes his songs portray vividly, often with a sort of martyr-like satisfaction, his difficulties with women. At times his song is defiant. At other times it is merely a complaint. Again it is despondent, in which case he is going 'to jump in the rivuh an' drown' or 'drink some pizen down' or do something else calculated to make the woman sorry that she mistreated him......."

"Woman's song of man is in most respects parallel to man's song of woman. Her themes are about the same. She sings of her 'man' or 'daddy,' of her disappointments and failures in love, of her unfaithful lover, and of her own secret amours.'

Here is a man's song of woman

De women don't love me no mo'
I's a broke man from po' man's town.
De women don't love me no mo',
Cause I can't buy her stockin's an' a gown.

I don't keere, don't matter wid me,
I don't love to work no mo'.
Got to have money, got to have clo'es,
Don't a feller can't make no show.

De gal love de money
An' de man love de gal;
If dey bofe don't git what dey wants,
It's livin' in hell.

The pain is experienced by both sexes, though, and the woman sings of hers thus:

When de man dat I love says he didn't want me no mo',
I thought it was the hardest word I ever heard befo'.

I give myself to de sick an' my soul to de God above.
If you quit me, daddy, it won't worry me now,
Because when we are together I am worried anynow.

There's a note of victory along with a lament in this song of a woman:

Leavin' here, I sho' don't wanta go
Goin' up de country, Brown-skin, i can't carry youl

Don't write me no letters, don't send me no word,
I got another daddy to take your place.

The influence of the ordinary popular song of the whites is noticeable in several of the folk minstrel types given by Messrs. Odum and Johnson

Religious Element

Religious emotion, today as well as yesteryear, is still giving birth to song. The authors have this to say about this phase of modern Negro folk-song:

"There seems to be an impression abroad to the effect that the making of Negro spirituals stopped long ago. On the contrary, it is quite probable that more spirituals are being made today than during the days of slavery. As a matter of fact, the old spirituals have never been static.

"Among the lowly Negro folk of the South the making of spirituals is still a reality. Every community has its 'composers."
Often they are supposed to possess some special gift of the 'spirit.' From sermon, prayer, and crude folk wisdom they draw ideas and inspiration for their compositions. Sometimes the results are pathetic, but not infrequently there springs up a song which would compare favorably with the old spirituals."

Left Wing Gordon

These two folk-loreists have been fortunate in having been able to find a flesh-and-blood representative of the wanderer on the "lonesome road." His name is John Wesley Gordon, and he has worked and sung all over the country, practically. Negroes know him as Left Wing Gordon, or Wing, for short. Wing epitomized his history to Messrs. Odum and Johnson in these words:

"You see, boss, I started travelin' when I was 'leven years ol' an' now I'll be thirty this comin' August 26th. I didn't have no father an' mother', so I jes' started somewheres. I'd work fer folks, an' they wouldn't treat me right, so I moved on. An', lawd, Cap'n, I ain't stopped yet."

"And so he hadn't," the authors add. "For when on the morrow we came to put the finishing touches on his story, a fellow laborer said, 'Law,' boss, Wing done gone to Philadelphia."

We are told that Wing is really a great songster. "When de 'Wing Blues' come out, dat's me," he would say. His chief refrain was always:

O my babe, you don't know my min',
When you see me laughin' laughin' to keep from cryin'.

He has many versions of this, we are told.

The mythological John Henry is given a chapter after the very real Wing. John Henry would hold his own beside Paul Bunyan any day. The authors give thirteen of the actual tunes. There are some wonderful ones among them. Your preference will naturally be dictated by your taste, but we offer the John Henry tune to the American composer who is looking for good material for his next symphonic work." Stuart Mims.

The next write-up gives a good account of the work of W. C. Handy as he discusses the "Memphis Blues."
Vastly entertaining is the volume of "Blues" edited by W. C. Handy which comes from the press of Albert and Charles Booni, New York. An anthology of the native creations which go by its title, "Blues" presents an absorbing survey of the birth, adolescence and apotheosis of a "form" which was first appreciated by Mr. Handy, according to the foreword by Abbe Niles which is one of the ornaments of the book.

Mr. Niles tells the story of the blues thus: "They began as a sort of Afro-American folk-song-a 'form,' since they were distinguished primarily by their peculiar structure. The form became popular among Southern Negroes (not of the highest class), as a vehicle for expressing the individual's mood of the moment." In regard to Mr. Handy, of whom Mr. Niles speaks as "a colored musician with creative as well as analytical powers," it is recorded that his first published blues began "a revolution in the popular tunes of this land comparable only to that brought about by the introduction of ragtime."

A spiritual, Mr. Niles observes, is matter for choral treatment; a blues- the word "blues" seems to be perfectly good for either singular or plural usage-was a one-man affair, which had its origin as the natural outpouring of the singer's feelings, reaching its glorious, inglorious, or vainglorious finale in a single verse. A blues might start as a phrase, an ejaculation, sung because singing was as natural-more natural, probably-a means of expression as speech.

There continue notes on the folk-blues as verse, and as music; their harmony, tunes, the origin of their names. Mr. Handy and the history of his creations are discussed in vivid style.

"The Memphis Blues"

The story of the "Memphis Blues" is of particular interest:

"In 1909 the fight for the Memphis mayoralty was three-cornered, the corners being Messrs. Williams, Talbert and E. H. Crump. There were also three leading Negro bands: Eckford's, Bynum's and Handy's. As a matter of course the services of these three were engaged for the duration to demonstrate to the public the executive ability of their respective employers; through Jim Mulcahy, a ward leader before whose saloon the Handy forces had often serenaded, his candidate turned out to be Mr. Crump. This was a matter of
moment, involving the organization of sub-bands in order to cover all possible territory, and Handy was spurred to creative effort, which he happened to exercise through the aid, not of remembered tunes, but of that blues form which had, without analysis, somehow imbedded itself in his thoughts. His band opened fire at the corner of Main and Madison with a piece (named, of course, 'Mr. Crump'), of such vivacity that it caused dancing in the streets and an outbreak of public whistling. With such a song, and none like it forthcoming from Eckford's or Bynum's, the popular choice (Crump and Handy) was a foregone conclusion; the one became mayor, the other locally famous, the sought-after for all celebrations, the writer of manuscripts of his one lion-child for the belles between numbers at the dances, the magnificently tipped accordingly by their beaux; the proprietor of a whole chain of bands, sending out nearly ninety men to this quarter and that of a single night." Thus did a new form win immediate recognition for itself and its instigator and a political conflict at the same time.

With an introduction of such attractiveness, added to the printed script of over forty-five blues or near relatives of blues, including excerpts from Gershwin's "Rhapsody" and his Piano Concerto, and Carpenter's delicious "Krazy Kat," "Blues," which is illustrated with some of the most perfectly priceless examples of Miguel Covarrubias art, is a book to have and to hold!

Second Folk-Book

"The Second Book of Negro Spirituals," edited and with an introduction by James Weldon Johnson, with musical arrangements of J. Rosamond Johnson, continues the work of putting this music, characteristically treated, in a permanent form. The new volume contains many of the favorites that were omitted from the first because of the exigencies of space.

It would almost seem, as Mr. Weldon Johnson remarks, that the number of beautiful spirituals is inexhaustible. And this is true with regard no only to the number, but also to the variety of moods and thoughts which are expressed in them.

The numbers contained in the Second Book are as thrillingly sincere and moving as those which caused general rejoicing when the preceding volume was issued by the Viking Press. Mr. Rosamond Johnson has done his customary artistic arrangements-arrangements which consist largely of lightly suggested harmonization which in no
case mars the naïveté, the simplicity, or the power of the original utterance.

Included are "Nobody Knows De Trouble I See," "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child," "I Want To Die Easy When I Die," "Members, Don't Get Weary," "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" "Same Train," "Walk in Jerusalem Just Like God," and many others, all of tenderness, rejoicing, reverence, wistfulness, indignation, of humanity that is remarkable—and a little terrifying."

William Spier

The blues were new to most of the American public and Handy's book "The Blues" is a welcome addition to the field. Abbe Niles writes an introduction to the book that contains a few mis-information but the article is an interesting one. Especially pointing the fact out that "Harlem Blues" breaks tradition of the 12 bar phrase of the blues and also does not use the 'blue' notes of a traditional blues.

MODERN MUSIC - NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1926 - “THE BLUES”

There have been folk songs ever since there have been folk to sing them; but until a generation or so ago, these folk songs were left to the folk. About that period they first began to be taken up in a serious way by our best people-musically speaking. Some composers took well-known ones and treated them honestly, enhancing their simple beauties; others maltreated them until they were almost ugly and unrecognizable caricatures of themselves. It became the fad to employ them copiously as thematic material for works in large form. Some of the masters had done this long ago, of course, but without making so much fuss about it. Richard Strauss himself mistook Funiculi, Funicula for a genuine Italian folk song and built a whole movement on it.

When the known supply of folk tunes had been more or less exhausted through exploitation, musical entomologists got out their butterfly nets and began to chase through forest and jungle, seeking rare specimens. Before many years every country in the Western world had its collections of folk songs. There were British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, Grecian, Austrian, and Scandinavian folk songs; the numerous countries ending in "ia" proved exceptionally prolific in tunes, generally mournful.

Every country, it seemed caroled out of its inner consciousness—except ours. In nearly three centuries we had not been moved to enduring song. This, of course, would never do, and, as a matter of fact,
it wasn't so. As far back as 1867, three Massachusetts citizens working among the North Carolina Negroes, out of pure love for music made a collection of their songs and published it under the title *Slave Songs of America*, printing merely the vocal line and the words. This little volume has become the Bible of American folk song.

Back in those days few people in America knew and still fewer people (here or elsewhere) cared what a folk song was, even if they chanced to know; but when, if we would not blush with shame for our delinquency, it became necessary to have American folk songs, some ingenious person or persons took out these *Sperichils*, as the Negroes called them, and nominated them for the basis of American folk song. In the absence of anything better, let them stand as such, with their secular cousins, the various varieties of "work" songs, also of Negroid origin. Add to these the few Foster songs which have become genuine folk music, the minstrel song *Dixie*, a few country tunes of unknown origin, such as *Turkey in the Straw* and the *Arkansas Traveler*, perhaps half-a-dozen universally known tunes, (so called "college songs," *Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party*, for instance), a handful of Creole patois songs from Louisiana, and the tale of American folk song is pretty nearly complete.

It is in one of these secular cousins of the spirituals that we are particularly interested just now because of the recent appearance of W. C. Handy's book, *The Blues*, with its introduction by Abbe Niles.

Probably no musician has ever so genuinely and entirely fathered any single form in music as Handy the Blues. Traveling all through the South for many years as leader of the band of a large minstrel show, his acute ear caught the artless, simple tunes that came from the mouths of the common people of his race, and whenever he heard a new one, he noted it down, from a collector's love of collecting and without a thought of putting it to definite use. One evening he saw a hall full of white people dancing, with vast enjoyment, to the monotonous repetition of one of these tunes as played by an extraordinary orchestra of three Negroes, not one of whom could read a note of music, performing upon a mandolin, a guitar, and a bass viol. Before long, there came a city election in Memphis where Handy was living and conducting his own orchestra and band at the time (1910). Three rival candidates hired each a Negro band. Handy's championed the cause of a certain Mr. Crump. He bethought himself of one of those primitive tunes that he had jotted down, and elaborated it into a campaign song, "Mr. Crump." It had ribald words, but a catchy tune; and on the back of this tune Mr. Crump rode into the mayoralty.
Handy had learned his lesson. He renamed that tune, which became the *Memphis Blues*. Nobody would print it. It had only a twelve measure refrain instead of the conventional sixteen. So he printed it himself. It went. It is still going. So are a lot of the others that he began to arrange and publish from then on.

Though complications in copyright ownership have prevented Mr. Handy from including a number of well-known blues, the fifty-odd piece in the book give a good view of the available material and its development. Particularly interesting are the examples of primitive blue themes in the introduction and the first part of the music section of the book. This introduction, by Abbe Niles, covers the subject with considerable thoroughness, especially when he writes of the texts of the blues. In treating their musical characteristics he is less exact. He invents the complicated and misleading term, "tonic third," by which he means merely the third not of the scale, and writes "diminished seventh" for "dominant seventh," though these are minor inaccuracies which would amount to nothing did they not give on the impression that the author is writing about something with the technique of which he is more or less unfamiliar. The illustrations by Miguel Covarrubias are superb. The artist has an uncanny power of suggesting motion. His black and white band plays so that one hears it from the page; his jammed hall full of dancer's wriggles and surges before the eye; and there is a portrait cartoon of Mr. Handy more like him than a photograph.

Blues is a book worth doing, necessary to the library of anyone interested in American music, and one that will be wanted also just for personal enjoyment. But there will be no need of a second volume. The blues are indeed folk songs, but most of them, to speak frankly, are pretty poor stuff. As a rule they are improvisations out of the mouths of musical illiterates—and they sound like it. When Handy had a good theme he knew what to do with it—witness The *St. Louis Blues*, The *Beale Street Blues*, The *Florida Blues*, and a few others.

The blue clichés— the "blue note" (flatted third of the scale,) the twelve measure refrain, certain oft-appearing melodic phrases—soon pall on the ear; the harmonic pattern is restricted and monotonous; few of the texts have more than transitory interest or value, Handy himself, in the refrain of one of his newer songs, The *Harlem Blues*, (an original composition, not founded on a folk theme) has written a sixteen measure refrain and dropped the "blue note" entirely. Also it is a comment on the whole material that, from the aesthetic standpoint, by far the best
song in the book is the artificial *The Half of It, Dearie, Blues*, manufactured by George Gershwin.

As a document the book was necessary and is valuable. It is the only anthology of a distinct branch of genuine folk music, part of the very little produced in our country; but it hardly seems material of sufficient strength or value perceptibly to influence in any way the development of music as an art, here or elsewhere. Henry O. Osgood

The blues are being analyzed to insure an understanding of what they were and how they were constructed melodically. The 'blue' notes are discussed and the fact is pointed out that the blues were being used for dance music.

**THE ETUDE - MAY, 1927 - “MORE "HOT AND DIRTY" BREAKS**

Some time ago we good-naturedly reprinted an advertisement from one of the theatrical trade papers, in which some of the jargon of the modern jazz music was introduced. We confessed that we did not know the meaning of such words as "hot," "Dirt," "gliss," "blue," "break," "weird," and so on, as applied to music; and we know that in none of the musical dictionaries of the world could these words be found. They are the patois of the newly rich in the apparently highly lucrative field of dance music.

With the beginning of the jazz era, people with uncontrollable tootsies have created a demand for dance rhythms the like of which the world has never hitherto known. There was the demoralizing epoch of the waltz, the polka and the saucy French can-can, which seem like kindergarten processions compared with the modern dance and all that goes with it. Some are blaming the dance on the intoxicating rhythm of jazz. We shall not attempt to adjudicate this question. However, it will be interesting to readers of The Etude to know the angle of the jazz musician's mind, as he views his own music. A recent work entitled, "Sure System of Improvising for All Lead Instruments, Especially Adapted to the Saxophone, Clarinet, Violin, Trumpet and Trombone," by Samuel T. Daley, published at $3.00 is a most illuminating book. It should be of immense value to anyone whose chief concern in life is how to make "hot breaks," play "dirt" choruses, create "weird" blasts, "chromatic runs," "blue" notes, and so on indefinitely. Incidentally, it shows in an unusual manner how a great deal of piquancy and stimulating rhythm, almost to the point of *tremens agitans* and outright
epilepsy, has been added to modern dance music under the broad caption of "jazz."

Who has been able to resist the exciting, irritating, intoxicating, nerve-flaying influence of modern jazz? In fact, the music has been made to act like a million whips upon human emotions. If it does not lash our nervous systems into new thrills, it does not succeed as jazz. Just how is this done? Mr. Daley tells us that it is done by virtue of "breaks." The "break" comes at any place in a "chorus" (usually a half cadence or whole cadence) of a popular song, where the performer may improvise upon the chord employed in harmonizing the measure where the "break" is introduced. In a thirty-two measure piece, the "break" would come in the seventh and eighth, in the fifteenth and sixteenth, in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth, and in the thirty-first and thirty-second measures. It might be introduced in other places as the nature of the chorus permitted. The author of this book provides several hundred rhythmical forms which the player of the particular instrument can introduce, employing the notes of the chord needed where the "break" comes. This is known as "hot" playing.

If he introduces certain kinds of chromatically altered notes, instead of playing the straight notes of the chord, itself, this is called "blues." Under other conditions, these notes are known as "gliss" notes. A "Gliss" evidently indicates a note sliding one half tone up into the principal note.

"Dirt Playing" is the result of embroidering a rhythmical pattern around the harmony of each measure throughout the entire composition. This "dirt" (sometimes known as "sock") pattern bears little resemblance to the original theme, except for the fact that it employs the same harmony in each measure.

There are "chromatic" runs and "weird" notes, in which the harmonies are varied. In fact, the author goes so far as to say "a very weird break is the whole tone scale." At the beginning, he admits that his system differs from the strict rules of harmony, but explains he is dealing with improvising and not harmony, although harmony plays a great part. Many of our teachers of harmony will read the book with surprise, but at the same time they will realize that out of this enormous amount of experimentation (the author says he has provided four thousand "breaks" in the book, which are only a limited number when the possibilities are considered) there has come a certain kind of spontaneity, akin only to the old Italian "improvisatore," those itinerant Mediterranean minstrels who would improvise both words and music.
for any event from a funeral to a wedding, or from a christening to a coronation, for a few pieces of copper. After reading this book, we understand the origin of some of the terrible and destructive cacophony that sometimes comes from a jazz band. On the other hand, it explains how some of the very interesting effects are achieved through an accidental improvisation upon the part of ingenious wind instrument players, after the manner of the improvisations of gypsy performers in Hungarian bands.

The next article, while a short one, lists and explains the characteristics of the blues: 1) a tone of plaintiveness, 2) the relationship between man and woman, and 3) the expression of self-pity.

**ETUDE - JUNE, 1924 - BLUES**

"BLUES! - This from "Negro Workaday Songs," by Odum and Johnson, both of the University of Carolina where they have made an exhaustive study of Negro songs. (The passage is slightly condensed): "What are the characteristics of the native blues, in so far as they can be spoken of as a type of song apart from other Negro songs? "In the first place, blues are characterized by a tone of plaintiveness. Both words and music give the impression of loneliness and melancholy. In fact, it was this quality, combined with the Negro's peculiar use of the word 'blues,' which gave the songs their name.

"In the second place, the theme of most blues is that of the love relation between man and woman. There are many blues built around homesickness and hard luck in general, but the love theme is the principal one. Sometimes it is a note of longing. At other times the dominant note is one of disappointment.

"A third characteristic of the blues is the expression of self-pity. Often this is the outstanding feature of the song. There seems to be a tendency for the despondent or blue singer to use the technic of the martyr to draw from others a reaction of sympathy.

(Psychologically speaking, the technic consists of rationalization, by which process the singer not only excuses his short-comings, but also attracts the attention and sympathy of others-in imagination at least-to his hard lot.)"

Referring to the popularization of blues by the phonograph records, these authors observe: "It is doubtful whether the history of song affords a parallel to the American situation with regard to blues.
Here we have the phenomenon of a type of folk song becoming a great fad and being exploited in every conceivable form."

The blues are now a major influence in the jazz era. The elements are still present but are being presented in a new package, the jazz song. Again W. C. Handy is quoted.


What are the blues? Or, shall one ask, what is the blues? This term, blues, holds a conspicuous position in modern-day musical development. It denotes a distinctive type of musical composition, originated and developed in the United States and now recognized throughout the world as a fascinating formula capable of unlimited evolutionary excursions.

While definitely associated with current "popular" or dance music, the "blue" idea contains so much of real musical importance that it is not to be passed up by students as something unworthy of serious attention. Indeed, some of our most progressive and significant composers have seized upon it as a really characteristic and indigenous thing in American music-a tonal formula which could come from no nation other than our own. Carpenter, Gershwin, Kern, and a long line of other contemporary composers have given us exalted and highly perfected versions of the blue spirit in music; while one may not predict to what lengths such experiments will unfold themselves, the type itself is assuredly deserving of the student's consideration.

The word "blues" as applied in the jargon of the day to one's state of mind, is not unrelated to the outstanding characteristics of the blues as a pattern of musical expression. There is the thought of sadness, melancholy or complaint in the music, though frequently one finds in it an admixture of good humored resignation.

W. C. Handy, a veteran colored musician, known as "the father of the blues," is the one man who is responsible for the development of the blue form from its original, primitive estate. It is he who first recognized the possibilities of the blues; and through his efforts the whole face of American music was changed. For it is quite evident that the form has exerted a very definite influence on all our musical expression-even the moderns of the classical school.

Mr. Handy gives us this version of the characteristics of the blues:
"The blues is written for the purpose of bolstering up the hope of its author. He may be tired, weary, his family without enough to eat, no money to pay the rent. But tonight he will go out and have a good time in an attempt, not only to throw aside his own gloomy reactions to hardship, but to present an appearance to the world of unconcern, nay even of prosperity. So he sings the blues, adapting the words to the tune. "The chief difference, then, between the blues and the spiritual is that the blues sings of the material sufferings of life, while in the spiritual the singer turns his appeal to heaven. The 'Memphis Blues,' 'St. Louis Blues' and the authentic blues of all kinds are really a mixture of ragtime, spiritual and 'coon song,' the environmental music of Stephen C. Foster, and all the other Negro tunes and chants. The spirit is all jumbled together in one single form. My own compositions are all original so far as musical material and words are concerned, but for spirit I have called upon the traditional chants of my race."

W. C. Handy came from an unmusical family. He was born near Muscle Shoals, in Florence, Alabama, November 16, 1873. While very young he displayed a bent for music and in the face of opposition from his father, who was disinclined to have a musician in the family, he managed to pick up all the information available. He purchased a badly mutilated cornet for $2.50 and stealthily learned to play it. He soon became a member of the Florence Quartet which had in its repertory such gems as "Little Annie Rooney" and "Little Fisher Maiden."

He was an apt musician and the quartet he organized soon found its way to the World's Fair in Chicago. After that he pursued a varying career, organizing bands and playing all sorts of music. But he was attracted more and more to the essential value of Negro music and at length began to compose original melodies. The first blues was the famed "Memphis Blues," so called after the city of its birth. Then followed a long line of other blues all named for the particular southern cities in which they had their inception. Then came blues on other subjects—everything from alcohol to homesickness. In 1920 Jerome Kern copyrighted the "Left-All-Alone-Again-Blues." This started the fashion for blues songs with titles in which the detailed account was given of the exact nature of the melancholia.

A full account of the blues and its relationship to the popular music of today may be had in "Blues-An Anthology," edited by W. C. Handy himself. This book is probably the only authoritative work on the subject.
It was in 1910 that the word "blues" was first applied to the musical form. It had its origin among the "lower class" Negroes of the South. There were several variations on the use of the Word; "Weary Blues" and "Worried Blues" being the most common. But the word itself as it now stands is very likely a shortened form of these.

One of the chief characteristics of the "blues" song is the peculiar treatment of the tonic third in the melody. It is a minor third and is introduced into melodies which (no matter how melancholy in feeling) would ordinarily exhibit the major third instead. This is generally considered to be a distinguishing feature and the device appears nearly as often as the melody reaches the third at all. It is called the "blue note."

The old-time Negro spiritual has long since made a dignified entrance into the realm of formal, concert auditorium music. Essentially a matter for choral treatment and reflecting the deeply religious nature of the colored race, it differs in conception and manner of expression from the blues. The latter form is a one-man affair, in which the singer gives vent to his feelings and emotions in a single verse. These emotions have little to do with religion; they are the ejaculations of a more or less despised class of Southern Negroes, classified in Mr. Handy's book as barroom pianists, careless nomadic laborers, watchers of incoming trains and steam-boats, street corner guitar players, strumpets and outcasts.

The whole idea in a blues song might have been contained in a single interjection, a single line, and might have been complete in a single verse. It generally favored repetition and was sung to the point of its author's emotional saturation. It was very simple indeed and subject to any amount of improvisation. It is not necessary that the blues express, as its name might imply, depression; humor may enter in-a shrewd generalizing-kind of humor. But it is probably that the general run of blues is melancholy in tone." Paul Kempf, Jr.

CONCLUSION

We have read of the many different opinions as to the origin and beginning of the blues. It is usually impossible to really accurately trace the origin of any folk songs. Thus it is with the origins of the music called blues. The 'blues' is usually believed to be of southern origin and an outgrowth of the Negro music of the 19th century. I believe that the sorrowful feelings of the slaves and his religious music is the ancestor of
the blues. Becca Lawton dated 1867 is the earliest example of a 'quasi' blues. (Sic: This spiritual is presented in the musical show "The Evolution of the Blues," and surely the feeling of the blues is present. The first published blues I have found was "I Got the Blues," written in 1908. W. C. Handy's "Memphis Blues," was probably the most popular blues that gained national attention.

During the twenties the word blues was used in a way to describe a 'jazzy' melodic application and many songs with the word 'blues' in the title denoted a jazzy song and not a true traditional 12 bar blues formula.

The blues seemed to be the secular neighbor of the Negro spiritual and its evolution should be placed as an outgrowth of the sorrowful Negro spiritual. It later became a vehicle for faster tempos and happier connotations.

_I got the Blues_ – 1908 by A. Maggio (piano part of arrangement.

It's the traditional Portuguese ballad, influenced stylistically somewhat by Moorish (Arabian) styles, as is a great deal in Portugal. The idea that it is something like the blues is not so much in form or style but the cultural role in the society -- it's more, traditionally, although now it's very stylish, from the working classes and is about life's struggles. It's stylistically perhaps more like a Cuban (or Mexican) bolero or the Brazilian samba cancao, but not necessarily as overtly romantic in the lyrics, as the boleros usually are. It's a very emotional style where the focus is almost exclusively on the vocalist and the lyrics with usually very basic accompaniment (as the bio states, usually just a guitarist) is kind of a coffee house music -- very personal and intimate.
COIMBRA

Coimbra é uma lição de sonho e tradição.

O sen-te-fu-menta canção, e a lua a Faculdade;

O livro é uma mulher, só passa quem souber.

To Coda Θ Am

Pern-de-se a dizer, Saudade!

Am Am(maj7) Am7 Am# Am#

Coimbra do Chou-pal. Analisés capital do am-

Coimbra, em Portugal. Ainda! Coimbra.