

Captain Jenks

As sung by
John Muench
08-23-1946 Lancaster, WI



Verse 1.
Slip your partner right and left,
Join your hands and 'round t' the left.

Verse 2.
First lady out t' the right of the ring,
Swing Mr. Jinks and Mrs. Jinks,
Now the captain of the Army.

Verse 3.
Now ont' the next,
Swing Mr. Jinks and Mrs. Jinks,
Now the captain of the Army.

Verse 4.
Ont' the next,
Swing Mr. Jinks and Mrs. Jinks,
Now the captain of the Army.

Verse 5.
On t' the next,
Swing Mr. Jinks and Mrs. Jinks,
Now the captain of the Army.

Verse 6.
Places all and allemande all,
All around the Beetown Hall.
(or – All around the Calloway Hall.)

Verse 7.
Second couple out t' the right of the ring,
Swing Mr. Jinks and Mrs. Jinks,
Now the captain of the Army.

Verse 8.
Third couple out t' the right of the ring,
Swing Mr. Jinks and Mrs. Jinks,
Now the captain of the Army.

Verse 9.
Last couple out t' the right of the ring,
Swing Mr. Jinks and Mrs. Jinks,
Now the captain of the Army.

Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Called by John Muench, age 61, Lancaster, 1946.

Popular songs of earlier periods are still part of the repertoire of square dance musicians. Captain Jinks was first sung to American audiences in 1868 by the London musical comedy star, William Lindgard, who wrote the words. The song has been used for both play party games and square dances in Wisconsin.

In his instructions for the allemande, Mr. Muench made a practice of inserting the name of the hall in which the dance was being held.

[Handwritten notes with no credits or explanation]:

I remember these verses being used at play parties in Dodgeville.

When Captain Jenks comes home at night

He claps his hands with all his might

Salute your partners once and a half

For that's the style of the army.

Promenade all around the hall,

Around the hall, around the hall

Promenade all around the hall

For that's the style of the army

When Captain Jenks comes home at night

He swings his lady to the right

Salute your partners once and a half,

For that's the style of the army

My grandfather had a close friend by the name of Captain Jeungst (the English called him Jenks) and I assume the song was about him.

Editor's notes:

Helene Stratman-Thomas spells this name either "Jinks" or "Jenks" at different times in her fieldnotes and lyric transcriptions. This song was popular in the Civil War era, and was often a play party game (Randolph 355). Vance Randolph describes the game: "The players 'ring up' to form one large circle, made up of alternate boys and girls, so that each girl stands at her partner's left. All girls step to the right as the first line is sung, and at the second line each stands still while her partner dances around her. When the third line is sung everybody swings, and at the fourth they all promenade to their original positions in the circle" (Randolph 355).

Alternate titles/related songs: "Captain Jinks."

Sources:

Chapple, Joe Mitchell. *Heart Songs Dear to the American People: and By Them Contributed in the Search for Treasured Songs Initiated by the National Magazine*. Boston, Mass.: Chapple Pub. Co., 1909.

Newman, Katharine D. *Never Without a Song: The Years and Songs of Jennie Devlin, 1865-1952*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995. "Captain Jinks."

Randolph, Vance, collector and editor. *Ozark Folksongs*. Vol. III. Columbia, Mo.: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946-50.

Spaeth, Sigmund. *Weep Some More, My Lady*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927. "Captain Jinks."

Wier, Albert E. *The Book of a Thousand Songs: The World's Largest Collection of the Songs of the People, Containing More than a Thousand Old and New Favorites*. New York: Mumil Publishing Co.: 1918. Tune has some similarities.

K.G.