

# WWI-RELATED VAUDEVILLE JOKES, SKETCH MATERIAL, SONGS, POETRY and MISCELLANEOUS STAGE-CRAFT

## 1917

### JOKES, PATTTER and COMEDY ROUTINES

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- ▶ - "Did you bring me home those stockings?"  
- "Yes."  
- "What colour are they?"  
- "Red, white and blue."  
- "Whatever made you bring home the Union Jack?"  
- "Because the Union Jack never comes down."

• TT: Mar. (1917), 31.

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- ▶ - "Can you tell me why German school-children cannot rule a straight line?"  
- "No; I cannot."  
- "Because they have a crooked ruler."

• **Kingsley and Graham** TT: Apr. (1917), 39.

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- ▶ - He: "[Do you know] the best way to see Europe?"  
- She: "What's the best way to see Europe?"  
- He: "When you get up in the morning and dress, look in the mirror and you'll see 'you're up.'"

• **Ross and Wise** TT: May (1917), 41.

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- ▶ - Will: As I was coming down the street I saw four boys fighting; and what do you think they were fighting over?  
- Dora: I can't say.  
- Will: A bit of cheese.  
- Dora: Over a paltry bit of cheese! And you didn't try to stop them.?  
- Will: I did. I told them that a bit of cheese wasn't worth fighting over.  
- Dora: Did they stop?  
- Will: No; one of the boys said that that in Europe they were fighting over less than that.  
- Dora: Less than a bit of cheese?  
- Will: Yes; over the Rhine.

• **The Gilberts** "Newtown Bridge Theatre." TT: May (1917), 44.

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- ▶ - "When the war is over who will be the most popular general?"  
- "General Joffre."  
- "No."  
- "General Haig."  
- "No."  
- "Well, what general will be the most popular?"  
- "General satisfaction."  
- "Can you tell me the richest nation in the world?"  
- "Why Great Britain, of course."  
- "No; you're wrong."  
- "Well, which nation is the richest."  
- "Germany."  
- "How do you make that out?"  
- "Because they are retiring."  
- "Now, you're smart - aren't you? I'll give you a threepenny bit if you can answer this one."  
- "Can you spare it?"  
- "Well, I'll risk it."  
- "Go along then."

- "What's the most warlike nation in the world."
- "Germany?"
- "No."
- "England?"
- "No."
- "Well, what nation is the most warlike?"
- "The Vaccination."
- "And why vaccination?"
- "Because it's always in arms."

• **The Cayleys** TT: June (1917), 51.

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- ▶ - "Have you been to the front?"
- "Yes; I was with the solicitors' regiment. My word they know how to charge."
- "Did you distinguish yourself?"
- "Well, you see, I am a bit hard of hearing. When the colonel saw the enemy approaching he said: 'Now men! Here's your chance. Do or die!' But I though he said, 'Now, men. Here's your chance. Do a guy.'"

• **The Farrows** TT: July (1917), 33.

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- ▶ The Farrows, who were at the Princess (Sydney) during the week June 16-22 do infinitely better in the restaurant scene than with the bargain hunter. Some of their jokes:-

- She: "What have you got on?"
- He: "My brother's shirt. It's my turn this week."
- She: "Bring me the menu."
- He: "I'm sorry. He died last week..."
- She: "I want turkey."
- He: "You can't have turkey."
- She: "I must have turkey."
- He: "But you can't have turkey. The allies want Turkey."

• **The Farrows** TT: July (1917), 32.

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- ▶ - Son: What are pieces of artillery Pa?
- Papa: I think they must be the kind that the girl next door plays on the piano.

• "The Suffering Neighbour" TT: Nov. (1917), 47.

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- ▶ Charlie Brown at the National:-

I was standing in Leicester Square talking to an Anzac, when a Salvation Army captain came up. "Young man," said the captain to the Anzac, "I am a soldier, too – a soldier of heaven." "Well," replied the Anzac, "yer a long way from yer barracks – ain't yer?"

• **Charlie Brown** TT: Dec. (1917), 24.

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- ▶ - Applicant: (tremulously) But I have very poor eyesight.
- Recruiting Sergeant: That's nothing. We'll put you right in the front line where you'll have no trouble seeing the enemy.

• "Have You Heard this One? The New and the Old" TT: Nov. (1917), 47.

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- ▶ - Jerry: "I've joined the Guards."
- Mr Johnston: "What guards?"
- Jerry: "The Black-guards."

• **Laurence Johnson and Jerry** TT: ? (1917), n. pag.

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## SONG LYRICS / POETRY

### "I've Been So Busy Knitting"

(Wish Wynne)

Young Miss Smith was affected with  
A desire to knit all day  
She would sit in the chair and knit

Till the dark wool turned to grey  
Once a gentleman came to call  
But her hands were both quite full  
She looked so nice that he kissed her twice  
But she never lost her wool  
And when her mother said, "Miss  
How can you behave like this?"

She answered, "I've been so very busy knitting  
Making socks and mufflers for soldiers thin and fat  
And if anybody kissed me, I've been so busy knitting  
That I never noticed a little thing like that.

She got wed to a man called Ted  
And she knitted all his socks  
They had two little children

Who ran around in knitted frocks  
One day someone asked her  
How her delightful children were  
She looked dazed and upon him gazed  
With an empty vacant stare.

- **Wish Wynne** TT: Apr.(1917), 41.

She answered, "I've been so very busy knitting  
making socks and mufflers for soldiers thin and fat  
If I've a son and daughter, well I've been so busy knitting  
That I never noticed two little things like that.

One day she told her husband  
He was exceedingly unkind  
Off she ran with a soldier man  
Down to Coogee where they dined  
Later on when the case was heard  
Her defence was "heaven forbid!  
I don't know any soldier  
O, sir I only wish I did  
Then the judge said "Well miss,  
Who was that soldier with you?"

She answered, "I've been so very busy knitting  
Making socks and mufflers for soldiers thin and fat  
If the man is not my husband, well I've been so busy knitting  
That I never noticed a little thing like that.

- This song by English-born variety artist, Skipper Francis, was mentioned by Prime Minister Billy Hughes during a speech in May 1917. Speaking of Australia's commitment Hughes said:

"Australia could now hold up her head and look the world in the face. She had proved herself worthy of the men of Gallipoli and Pozieres and the men who when the "Ballarat" was sinking stood unbroken in the ranks and sang "Australia Will Be There" (TT; June 1917, 47).

### "For Auld Lang Syne! - Australia Will Be There"

(Skipper Francis)

There has been a lot of argument  
Going on they say  
As to whether dear old England  
Should have gone into the fray  
But right-thinking people  
All wanted her to fight  
For when there's shady business  
Britannia puts it right.

Ch: Rally 'round the banner of your country  
Take the field with brothers o'er the foam  
On land or sea  
Where'er you be  
Keep your eye on Germany  
But England, home and beauty  
Have no cause to fear  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
No, no, no! Australia will be there.

You've heard about the Emden  
That was cruising all around  
It was sinking British shipping  
Where'er it could be found  
Till one fine summer morning  
Australia's answer came  
The good ship Sydney hove in sight  
And put the foe to shame.

When old John Bull is threatened  
By foes on land or sea  
His colonial sons are ready  
And at his side will be  
From Africa, India and Canada  
Come men to do or die  
And motherland is glad to hear  
Australia's battle-cry,

Chorus

- **Skipper Francis** TT: June 1917, 47. [A Welshman by birth, Skipper Francis immigrated to Australia in 1913 due to ill-health. He was contracted by the Fullers that year and appeared on their circuit constantly past 1917. The song was first performed in 1916.]

► **"The City of Make-Believe"**

Arthur Morley

A wee little girl sat playing  
Her face bore a look of despair  
She seemed to imagine her dolly was cross  
She scolded her big teddy bear  
Each toy held a charm to this girlie  
For they were part of her life  
Her little heart knew of no other delight  
She shared in their sorrows and strife

She lives in a world of make-believe  
Surrounded by all of her toys  
Each doll tells a story of love to her  
Each toy beats her sorrows and joys  
She shares with her pets her own little gifts  
And when they're in trouble she'll grieve  
She's only a child and the world to her  
Is a city of make-believe.

The take the daughter of fashion  
Like a butterfly scorching its wings  
Living a life of pleasure and ease  
In the charm that society brings  
Her cup is brimful of enjoyment  
A circle of light is her life  
Living for self - she never can be  
A true-hearted mother or wife.

She lives in a world of make-believe  
At society's open door  
She lives for the present- no thought of the days  
That the future may hold in store  
The lights of the ball-room - the sparkle of gems  
Are the sights that alone will please  
But sooner or later she'll find all is dross  
In her city of make-believe

Somewhere in France there's a soldier  
Fighting for country and king  
Doing his bit for the land he loves  
Gaily he'll laugh and he'll sing  
First in the charge is our hero  
First to the guns if he can  
Fighting he lives and fighting he dies  
Just like a soldier and man.

It isn't a world of make-believe  
It's a world of bitterest strife  
A fight where justice is fighting 'gainst wrong  
A struggle of life for life  
Around him his comrades are falling fast  
And though he may his death-wound receive  
He fights for that woman and child he left  
In their cities of make-believe.

- AV: 17 Dec. (1917), n. pag.

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► ***Run for the Doctor*** (revusical) by Arthur Morley:

The 26 April issue of *Australian Variety* records: "*Run For The Doctor*, a new musical revue, was presented and made a big impression on the large audience... Arthur Morley was a tower of strength for the combination, his topical numbers going big. His offering "**The Soldier's Story**," introducing his little daughter, was a winner. The little mite, of four years of age, went through a drill which would astound a soldier, and in her own way sang a song which brought down the house.

- AV: 26 Apr. (1917), n. pag.

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► There's a "Lest we Forget" touch in these lines, sung by Grace Quine:-

What did I do in the great war, laddie -  
What did I do, you want to know?  
When they called for men  
I was ready then  
To go and fight the foe.  
I did my best for king and country, laddie,  
Just to keep Australia free;  
But when I'm old and grey  
For what I've done today  
What will Australia do for me?

- TT: Nov. (1917), 31.
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## MISCELLANEOUS

- ▶ "Roy Redgrave was deservedly the hit of the evening in the characterisation of a war veteran in the comedy dramatic sketch "The Story of Waterloo." Mr Redgrave was ably supported by Truman Neilson."

- **Roy Redgrave** TT: Apr. (1917), 39.

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- ▶ The Paul Stanhope Revue Co. on May 16 finished a seven-weeks' season at the National (Sydney)... The closing revue [was] *Topsy Turvey*. The setting is semi-naval, Paul Stanhope appearing as a Dick Deadeye type of sailor, and Val Newman – who throughout the Sydney season has proved an admirable feeder for Mr Stanhope - as an officer...

- Paul Stanhope: "What's a hero?"

- Val Newman: "A hero's a man that would make love to his mother-in-law..."

- Val Newman: [*Excitedly*] "You call me a coward?" "I'm going to prove to you that I'm a hero. The other night there was a building afire. At the window of the sixth story was a mother with her six children, screaming for help. I got a ladder, placed it against the wall, and I ran to their rescue. I dashed in through the flames, brought them out, and descended the ladder, with the mother on one arm and the six children on the other. Now – would you call me a coward after that?"

- Paul Stanfield: [*Hesitates for a second*] "No," I'd call you a liar."

- **Paul Stanhope** and **Val Newman** TT: June (1917), 45.

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- ▶ Mr Charles A. Wenham, the producer and Miss Minnie Everett, the ballet mistress, had a difficult and embarrassing position confronting them when it came to the selection of the girls who were to represent Germany in the War Ballet in the J. C. Williamson "Dick Whittington" pantomime at Melbourne's Her Majesty's. When the selection was made the girls picked refused to go on. They declined, they said, to represent Germans. Mr Wenham and Miss Everett called for volunteers, but none was forthcoming. At last a simple expedient was agreed upon - to select the girls by ballot. This was agreed to, and those who drew the blanks were picked as the "Germans." They accepted the position as gracefully as could be expected.

- **Charles A. Wenham** and **Minnie Everett** "Music and Drama." BC: 29 Dec. (1917), 9.