

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

1916

JOKES, PATTEN AND COMEDY ROUTINES

- ▶ Jack Cannot in the Follies asks a man in the audience why he doesn't enlist - why he doesn't do his duty. The man (who of course has been planted there for the purpose) replies that he was turned down because he had a floating kidney. Says Mr Cannot: "A floating kidney? Then you ought to join the navy - do something for your living." Later Mr Cannot refers to what happened to him when he was at the front. "A bullet," he declares, "hit me in a very vital spot - in the Dardanelly."

• **Jack Cannot** TT: Jan. (1916), 38.

- ▶ - Charlie Brown: (to Ethel Willoughby, who saves him from being shot by the Germans as a spy) I want to thank you.
- Ethel Willoughby: (lightly) Oh, it was nothing.
- Charlie Brown: (feelingly) Nothing to you, but a hell of a lot to me!

• TT: Mar (1916), 8.

- ▶ Vaude and Verne at the Tivoli:-

- Vaude: We all know why America won't fight.
- Verne: Why?
- Vaude: Because Snowy Baker won't give a big enough purse.

• **Vaude and Verne** TT Mar. (1916), 42.

- ▶ Do you know what the unemployed are doing in Germany? Nothing.

• **Clark and Wallace** TT: Apr. (1916), 40.

- ▶ Australia was not prepared for the war. She had a terrible lot of drawbacks. But she got rid of two of them, for now there are only eight in a packet.

• **Charlie Vaude** TT: Apr. (1916), 34. [Extracted from Charlie Vaude's *Joke, Parody and Monologue*]

- ▶ The Germans must be short-sighted. They seem to be taking all the towns on the coast to be green peas. Every chance they get they start shelling them.

• **Charlie Vaude** TT: Apr. (1916), 34. [Extracted from Charlie Vaude's *Joke, Parody and Monologue*]

- ▶ - "They can't get a drink in Russia since the war started. That's what makes the Russian bitter."
- "Do you know what the Poles are doing in Russia? Holding up the telegraph-wires."

• **Charlie Vaude** TT: Apr. (1916), 34. [Extracted from Charlie Vaude's *Joke, Parody and Monologue*]

- ▶ "Just my luck!" wrote artist Cecil Hartt to his wife in Sydney after he had been wounded at Gallipoli. "There were bullets all round me. Millions of them! And I only got two."

• **Cecil Hartt** TT: July (1916), 54.

► Armitage and Hine ("The Officer and the Slavey") at the National (Sydney): -

Officer: "My father was a general."
Slavey: (extending her hand) "Well, put it there! So am I."
Officer: "You are what?"
Slavey: "I am a general. I've seen a lot of service. My father used to be a captain in the army."
Slavey: "Yes; in the Salvation Army."
Officer: "What were your father's last words?"
Slavey: "He never had any."
Officer: "Never had any?"
Slavey: "No; mother was with him till the end."
Officer: "I suppose you realise who I am?"
Slavey: "No; I don't."
Officer: "I'm Major Toolong."
Slavey: "Who made you too long?"
Officer: "My name is Toolong."
Slavey: "Well, cut a bit off."

• **Armitage and Hine** TT: Aug. (1916), 51.

► Arthur Morley to Amy Rochelle:-

- "You ought to go to the front."
- "Indeed?"
- "Yes; you face powder well."

• **Arthur Morley and Amy Rochelle** TT: Dec. (1916), 52.

► - "Have you noticed that all Germans go through the thoroughfares?"
- "Why is that?"
- "Because they can't get through the Allies."
- "What part of a pig will the Kaiser be like after the war is over?"
- "I don't know. What part of a pig will he be like."
- "The tail of course."
- "Why?"
- "Because it will be the end of him."

• **The Courtenays** TT: Dec. (1916), 54.

► Walter Emerson to Gwen Hasto: -

- "Do you know my father?"
- "No. What is he?"
- "My father's a lieutenant."
- "So he's in the army?"
- "No."
- "How can he be a lieutenant if he isn't in the army?"
- "Well, all the landlords call him a left-tenant."

• **Walter Emerson and Gwen Hasto** TT: Dec. (1916), 51.

SONG LYRICS / POETRY

▶ Me game is 'andlin' men, orl right, I seen it in the parst
When I used to 'ead the pushes in the lane,
An ev're bloke among 'em then done somethin' I arst,
For I never failed to make me meanin' plain.
Disturbers ov the peace we wus them days, but now I know
We wus aimin' to be soljers, but we never 'ad a show.

• **C. J. Dennis.** *The Moods of Ginger Mick.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1916, 110.

- ▶ *All Aboard*, a Stiffy and Mo revusical by Nat Phillips included in 1916 the song "Soldier Boy"," performed by Keith Connelly (Princess Theatre, Syd; 15-22 Sept.

A manuscript, believed to be the lyrics to "Solder Boy" is held in the Nat Phillips Collection indicates that this song was "written by Stiffy. Sung by Mo." The manuscript is in poor condition with a number of small holes on the page. Where possible, words or letters have been added by the Clay Djubal in order to aid meaning. These are identified in brackets { }

Abie Levi said he'd go to war
He don't { want } to be a tailor anymore
He wants { to } march behind the band
With a { shooter } in his hand
Wants to be a soldier grand, a soldier boy

His father said "Oh Abie please don't go"
A hero{ 's not } a business, don't you know
He { told his } intended father-in-law
He was going to the war
He said don't come back no more solder boy

Chorus

You are a soldier boy, that's all you know
You can't have a daughter if to war you go
A butcher, a b{aker}, that's a trade
You know every Saturday night you get paid
I won't have a soldier boy for my son
Cheque, you could sign it with a sword or a gun
If you want my daughter's hand you must be a businessman
But you can't be a soldier boy

• See 1916 AVTA entry and Nat Phillips Collection, UQFL9; Fryer Library, U of Qld - UQFL9. [The song was also possibly included in the Stiffy and Mo revusical *Solders* (aka *Two Stripes*)]

- ▶ Captain Blackall is proving himself a many-sided man. Successful at mumming and at soldiering, he has lately scored as a verse-writer (he would disclaim the title of poet), having published a slim volume, markedly well received by the critics, entitled *Songs From the Trenches*." I quote a sample of what is hailed as the real thing – which it undoubtedly is:-

This is the song of the blooming trench,
It's sung by us and it's sung by the French,
It's probably sung by the German Huns,
But it isn't all beer and skittles and buns.
It's a song of water and mud and slime,
And keeping your eyes skinned all the time,
Though the putrid "bully" may kick up a stench,
Remember you've got to stick to your trench -
Yes stick like glue to your trench.

• **C. W. Blackal.** "Actor, Soldier and Writer: The Many-Sided C. W. Blackall." TT: May (1916), 2.

▶ As the drill-sergeant with his martial rod,
Licks into shape the clumsy, awkward squad,
Teaching them how by painful slow degrees,
To stand straight up, not wobbling at the knees,
And do the goose-step just like real geese.

So you as if by fairy wand,
Inspired us how to talk and walk and stand,
Moulding your little army corps betimes
Into fair semblance of the real mimes
Until, 'neath Marshall Francis, so to speak,
We won the great campaign we fought last week.

And with the shouts of victory in your ears
We wish you health and length of happy years
But, sans a-dieu, we bid thee au revoir –
Come as the dove of peace after the war,
But be that late or soon, or how, or when,
We hope to see thee "Offenbach" again.

- TT: July (1916), 46. This poem, attributed to "Bianca" was recited by Fanny Daly to Mrs Arthur Hunter at a farewell social in recognition of her services in Brisbane as a producer.
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▶ Phil Percival sings: -

My father joined the army,
And like a silly pup
He went to bed with his spurs on –
My mother was cut up!

- **Phil Percival** TT: Oct. (1916), 47.
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MISCELLANEOUS

- ▶ Mr [Tom] Skeyhill is the returned soldier, at present appearing on the Tivoli circuit, in a recital of patriotic lines written by himself. He is totally blind. He was led into the *Theatre* office by Mr [Harley] Cohen, who enlisted when the war broke out, and has himself lost the sight of one eye... Mr Cohen remarks that in the hospital with him (Mr Cohen) were eleven others – or twelve in all. They had thirteen eyes amongst them! Yet this did not prevent the brave fellows making light of their injuries by humorously referring to it as "The Glad Eye Department - Lord Nelson Ward."

• **Harley Cohen** "Signaller Tom Skeyhill." TT: Feb. (1916), 44.

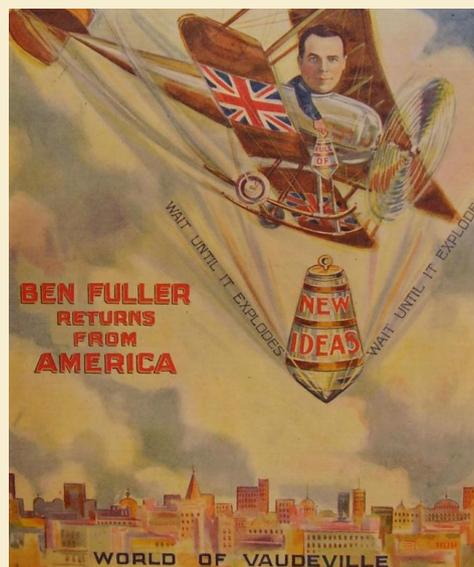
- ▶ An overhead comment during an interval at the National (Sydney):-

- First Speaker: I see the *Mirror* says that the Germans are going to poison all the sheep in Australia.
- Second Speaker: If they poisoned all the donkeys in Australia the *Mirror* would certainly get the first dose.

• "A Topicality" TT: Feb. 91916), 11.

- ▶ Mr [Vince] Courtney – in the first half, and again in the second – sang patriotic songs of his own composition, clearly and nicely. His first number had a fine swing in it; and in the second half he spiritedly defended "**Me Brother Wot Stays at Home**" – the point being that family obligations in many cases prevented some of the sons from going to the front, and the boy that remained behind often did so, not because it was his wish, but because he had to.

• **Vince Courtney** TT: Mar. (1916), 45.

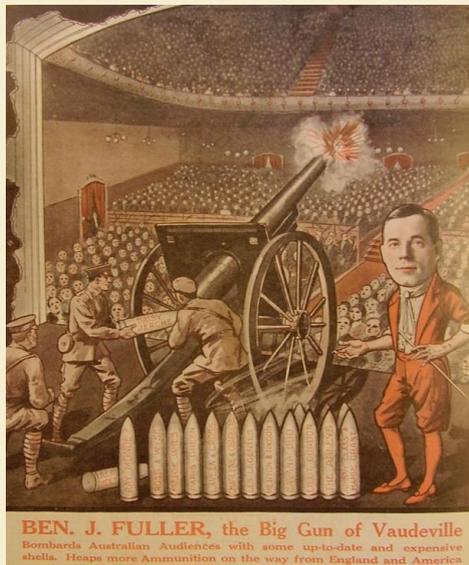


Theatre Apr (1916), 48.

- ▶ The following [extract] is from a report in one of the Sydney evening papers of a mid-day meeting in favour of the early closing of hotels:-

Mr [Walter] Bentley was heckled somewhat severely. "Walter!" called out a spectator. "You can't play Hamlet under the reformation. Good Hamlets all drink whiskey!" "Excuse me," said Mr Bentley: "I only allow my friends to call me Walter. But I can assure you that Hamlet is better today following the King than he was in his cups. I'm too old to fight; but I'm prepared to make a sacrifice, and so should every man. I've not taken a drop of liquor since the King asked me to follow his lead. (cheers) What do you do to help your country?" A Voice: "I take a drop of shicker when I want it." "Have you noticed," continued Mr Bentley, "that our armies have not made one inch in advancement in twelve months? Why is this?" A Voice: "Because the Germans drink beer."

• **Walter Bentley**. "Hamlet's Tipple: Water or Whiskey?" TT: June 91916), 55.



Ben J. Fuller, the Big Gun of Vaudeville

"Bombarbs Australian Audiences with some up-to-date and expensive shells. Heaps more ammunition on the way from England and America."
Theatre June (1916), 56.

- Stiffy and Mo in *What Oh Tonight* (The following scene is taken from the Nat Phillips Collection manuscript. Mo was originally to be called Sol. The relevant lines are at the end] First staged in July 1916 (Princess Theatre, Sydney).

SOL: Well I've bought the joint. I am now a doctor.
 STIFFY: Are you the same kind of doctor as the other bloke?
 SOL: Sure! What kind of a doctor vas he?
 STIFFY: Well you know when a patient called he didn't ask them what was wrong with them. He could tell them just by poking them. Can you do that?
 SOL: No. But I'll tell you what we'll do. You be my assistant. I'll go behind the screen. When the people come you ask them what's wrong with them. I hear it, then come from the inside outside. From the inside outside. Ven I get inside I get an insight into the patients inside thoughts. Which come from the inside outside. Is that perfectly clear?
 STIFFY: Next time it starts I'll have a sac on it. [*A bell sounds*] Quick, move behind the screen. Here is a patient.
 MARY: [*Mary Enters*] Stiffy. Here's your first mug.
 STIFFY: [*Italian woman enters*] Hello Liz, how is it?
 ITALIAN WOMAN: Come a start signor.
 STIFFY: You look very crook. What's wrong?
 ITALIAN WOMAN: Ah boss. I feel mucha sick. My heart it hurta me very much.
 STIFFY: Go on. Did some one kick you in the heart?
 ITALIAN WOMAN: Listen boss. I come from sunny Italy on da bigga ship wid my Antonio. We come to dissa country. He meeta American lady. She say, "ah Tony you looka so fine. You looka so handsome." She turna his... what you call it... nut. She say "come we make teatre," and he go. Listen, Signor. I tella you about my Antonio.
 STIFFY: Well you sit there. I will have the doctor look at you and he will make you handsome.
 ITALIAN WOMAN: I no care what you do to my face. You can push or squeeze. You make me look good, my Tony he come back to me.
 STIFFY: Alright sit down. The main bloke is down at the Post Office. He will be back in a few minutes. What's the matter?
 ITALIAN WOMAN: You look boss! I got da big blotch ona my face. I think it caused by da pain dat run from de shoulder to shoulder down de right leg. I getta no sleep after three o'clock in de morning.
 STIFFY: Well you know the doctor will tell you that as soon as he sees you. If he don't I'll kick him in the Gallipolli.
 SOL: [*From behind the screen*] In the Anzac! [*scene continues....*]

- [Ventriloquist] Sydney James (Royal Strollers) from Eltham (N.Z.), June 7: -

Will it surprise you to hear that we have all enlisted... We have to pass the doctor tomorrow in Palmerston North, or endeavour to do so. Don't know whether we shall all get through; but after the news of the naval battle, and poor old Lord Kitchener's death, we decided to do our bit, or try to do so. I had many friends who have gone down in the naval fight. We shall of course play our contracts out first. Billy's [dummy] got the needle. He wants to go with us; but the doctor won't pass him. He wishes to form a "Whattlers' Battalion."

• "Strollers become Soldiers." TT: July (1916), 6.

- Douglas McKenzie (a brother of Warwick McKenzie, "The Musical Sundowner," recently on the Fuller circuit) from France, April 16:-

I was out with one of our chaps the other day in a village when an English major passed – one of the real, vitriolic variety, of good girth, florid faced – the real story book variety. My cobber failed to salute him. The old chap roared out, "Halt, that man! - and asked him, "Don't you salute officers when you meet them?" he nearly burst the veins in his forehead when my friend replied, "Occasionally." The major went purple in the face and I had the time of my life stopping myself from laughing outright.

- "The Fighting Macs" TT: July (1916), 7. ["Theatrical Topics: Correspondent's Comments" section]
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- A foppish aristocratic officer entered Lord Kitchener's quarters and in the presence of the latter's horrified staff said, "Mornin' Kitchener! Did you want to see me?" The great soldier-statesman replied, "Don't call me 'Kitchener.' It's so beastly informal. Call me 'Herbert.'" Years ago Sir George Houston Reid was the subject of a similar story. Someone addressed him as 'Georgie.' "Don't," he said, "call me 'Georgie.' Call me Houston, and be one of the family. During the past month the Sydney dailies had something to say of the German Emperor as a humorist. He was, it appears, writing "twelve" as the number of allies' aeroplanes brought down by his own particular crack airman. "Thirteen it was your majesty," said an officer, correctly. Altering the twelve to thirteen the Kaiser replied, with a wry smile, "Why, he can bring them down quicker than I can count!"

- TT: July (1916), 55.
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- There is high art in the effective delivery of a bad joke. Sydney James (Royal Strollers) possesses it, and displays it in the stupendous preparation which precedes in his dialogue with Billy [dummy] the appalling "Green Stripe" pun. It is like the big, lazy sausage bomb the soldiers in France write about. They see it coming; they watch it flopping ungracefully round and round in the air. Yet for all these intimations it makes a sensational hit whenever it flops.

- **Sydney James** TT: Aug. (1916), 22.
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- A correspondent on Les Darcy's threats to enlist:-

First we hear that at a reception given him in Brisbane it was stated that both he and his trainer (Mick Hawkins) had answered the call and signed on and would enter camp shortly. Again, just prior to his contest with Dave Smith he was introduced, and the same thing put over again, with the alteration that he was to be transferred to Sydney. Next in a published interview with him, when the question was put, he answered in the affirmative, and stated that he would be attached to the Flying Section. A telegram from "Snowy" Baker that this was true was published. Now we hear via the *Sun* and *Times* that he has not enlisted as his mother won't let him. All this puts me in mind of a very popular song that had a vogue many years ago. If I remember rightly it was something like the following:-

Mother says I must'nt
Pals they say I dusn't
Oh dear, no dear, not just yet awhile.
I'd sooner stop in clover
Cause the war is not yet over –
Oh dear, no dear, not just yet.

- "Not Just Yet." TT: Sept. (1916), 34.
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- "[The following letter was] written to the Green Room Club by Lieutenant Charles Hamilton (Sixtieth Battalion A.I.F) from France, August 4. A few of the particulars relative to Mr Dawson's death have already appeared in these pages. Still, the *Theatre* is only too pleased to publish Mr Hamilton's communication in full, thus:-

As I thought it might interest the members of you club I am taking the opportunity of writing to let you know how Tom Dawson passed out.

I knew him well in Egypt and while there he was the life and soul of all the entertainments got up for the sake of the Red Cross funds and to cheer up the boys. Round about Cairo, and when we were miles out in the desert, where sand and flies and other things of an unpleasant nature are part of the daily routine, he was always the same bright old spirit, and did a lot to cheer everybody up.

He fell in an attack we made a few days ago. Just before our time for jumping the parapet arrived I saw him. The Bosches were sending in some big ones and things were only middling.

"Well, Tom!" I said; "how is it now?" "I'd rather," he replied, "have a hard boiled egg" (You will remember his old song). I passed Tom's remark along the line and it relieved the tension quite a lot.

- "The Month in Vaudeville." TT: Nov. (1916), 49
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▶ [The] Princess Theatre (under the management of Nat Phillips) again had a record house on Saturday last.... A comedy sketch, "**The German Spy**," concluded the program.

• **Nat Phillips** AV: 18 Nov. (1916), n. pag.

▶ The 1916 *Bunyip* pantomime production, and revivals over the next few years, introduced several scenes with war-time sentiment, including such songs as "**Bill's Enlisted**," "**Down in Australia**" and "**Hurry Up**." These were left out of later productions - possibly from around 1919 onwards.

• First staged Dec. 1916. See 1916 AVTA entry
