

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

1922

JOKES and COMEDY ROUTINES

- ▶ The character studies [of English comedian George Carney] now delighting Tivoli audiences... are polished gems that show their originator as a man of keen observation and clarity of vision...

As a contrast [to the laughter-raising sketch "The Count of No-account"], "Stony-Broke in No-Man's Land" is almost too poignant for present day conditions. In front of a fine scene depicting the Thames Embankment at night, the demobilised officer stands absolutely stationary, one hand in pocket, the other on his stick – a lonely figure whom a once grateful country has forgotten. If there are any people who still shut their eyes to the problem of unemployment among returned soldiers they should be taken to see Mr Carney's moving study.

- **George Carney** TT July (1922), 20.

- ▶ The weekly changes of revue that Jim Gerald is responsible for go gaily on their untroubled way... In **1914-1918** Mr [Howard] Hall and Mr [Ernest] Crawford appeared as a sergeant-major and a captain respectively. In uniform they looked at their best, and most successfully availed themselves of the opportunity to sing such martial songs as "The trumpeter," "The Company Sergeant-Major" and "Battle Eve." Mr Gerald was, of course, a host in himself as the re-nosed, raw recruit, while Lance vane as the camp cook and Reg Hawthorne as a private helped along the fun making...

Twinklers Who Twinkle.

The revue was in three scenes – Liverpool camp, Aboard a Transport, and Armistice day in the trenches. The characters and incidents purported to be drawn from life as Jim Gerald saw it during his three years active service. Lucky man, Mr Gerald. Someone will be trying to start a new war if he thinks he can get "The Six Twinklers" [chorus] to liven things up in his camp next time. In their scarlet tunics and caps they were very smart in their mock military drill and dance.... Shannon Raye and Essie Jennings were most attractive Red Cross sisters – always ready with a song or smile.

A Few of the Jokes.

- "Which side of the horse do you mount?" – "The outside."
- "How do you like your eggs done?" – "Like your brains. Scrambled."
- "In the war I'd like to be a general – in the Y. M. C. A." – "The only general you'll be will be a general nuisance."
- "What were you before the war?" – "Happy, sir" – "I mean what was your occupation?" – "A brass finisher. Finishing off the brass the old man left."
- "Never mind! In the next war I'm determined to be in B. Company." – "B. Company?" – "Yes; I'll be here when you go and I'll be here when you get back."

- **1914-1918; Or For the Duration** by **Jim Gerald** TT ? (1922), 19.

- ▶ The M'dlle Mimi Diggers at Fullers (Sydney) are five in number and in name – George Jennings, Roy Glenister, Lorne O'Brien, Will Saunders and Lindsay Kemble. The last-named plays the part of Mimi, keeper of the estaminet somewhere in France, wherein the action takes place. The others appear in Digger uniform, and keep the fun going with songs and topical conversation.

Mr Kemble makes a most attractive girl, especially when seen in profile. He aims at simplicity, and does not spoil his impersonations by burlesquing feminine mannerisms. His singing is the only flaw in his work. The voice is thin and indistinct.

Vocally, Roy Glenister stands out as the possessor of a fine baritone. He gives an expressive rendering of "Wonderful Mother of Mine." But isn't it time poor mother had a rest? There is scarcely a concert or vaudeville programme in Sydney today into which she is not dragged by means of some song sticky with sentiment.

Reviewed as a whole it is a bright acceptable entertainment. The interest is well sustained during the hour the Diggers occupy the stage. It could be further improved by the addition of more choruses and dancing to the songs instead of leaving so many of them solo efforts.

- **M'dlle Mimi Diggers** TT Apr. (1922), 19.

- ▶ Murphy, Mack and Co present a laughable farce in "the Major's Reflection." The maid - who represents the "co." – breaks a large mirror. Her postman sweetheart comes to the rescue by standing in the empty frame, and repeating the major's actions when he thinks he is looking at himself in the glass. Smoking shaving and physical exercise provide the two men with the opportunity for some clever, hilarious duplicate-acting.

• **Murphy, Mack and Co** TT June (1922), 17.

- ▶ The following lines have been extracted from the original manuscript (Mrs Mush's character part) which is two pages in length. Character parts contain the dialogue for that character and the last few words of whichever character speaks beforehand. Lines within brackets { } have been added by the editor to aid meaning for character B's part.

- Mrs Mush: Yer know Stiff, I'm going to turn this game up. I'm going on the stage. Do you think I could do anything on the stage?

- Stiffy: {You could} wash it.

- Mrs Mush: No I mean I'm going to be an actress.

- Stiffy: {You're going to be} a mattress.

- Mrs Mush: Now do I look like a mattress.

- Stiffy: had a tick.

- Mrs Mush: Oh did yer, here have you ever done anything on the stage?

- Stiffy: {I was a} leading man once.

- Mrs Mush: What do they do?

- Stiffy: {They} lead me off.

- Mrs Mush: Now I've written a little drama and if you will help me in it we can get about thirty bob a week.

- Stiffy: ... what's it about?

- Mrs Mush: Well you see it's in three acts. In the first act your captured by Indians and they tie you to a stake. Now in the second act you're my husband.

- Stiffy: {How long} have we been married?

- Mrs Mush: About ten years.

- Stiffy: ... smoking opium.

- Mrs Mush: And in the third act we have a baby.

- Stiffy: A what?

- Mrs Mush: We have a child.

- Stiffy: truth know about this.

- Mrs Much: Now you see I'm a broken-hearted widow and my husband has been killed at the war, and you bring me news of Archibald. Over in the room you will find a Roman soldier's suit. You put it on while I rehearse the drama. [*Stiffy exits*] Rome, Rome, thou art a cruel master. Three years the war has been on and still no news of my husband. Oh how I remember the day he went away. It was sale day at Foys. He was with me. I bought some tape and when I received my change he had been gone three weeks. Ah a warrior approaches on horseback. Perhaps he brings me news of Archie.

- Stiffy: [*Enters*] ... Here hold my horse.

- Mrs Mush: Well come on. Get on with the drama. Welcome warrior. Are you from the war?

- Stiffy: ... yea verily.

- Mrs Mush: Then perhaps you bring me news of my husband.

- Stiffy: ... yea but sorry news.

- Mrs Mush: He is not dead.

- Stiffy: ... silent as the grave.

- Mrs Mush: Where is this strange place.

- Stiffy: ... this sword.

- Mrs Mush: Verily I see just the sword.

- Stiffy: ... nutty.

- Mrs Mush: Nutty?

- Stiffy: ... unto thee [*Bis with prop*]

- Mrs Mush: Those teeth, I think I see him smiling now.

- Stiffy: ... he starts laughing.

- Mrs Mush: But I have a message for you from Caesar.

- Stiffy: take me alive.

- Mrs Mush: Why, what would you do? [*Stiffy Bis*] He is dead.

- Stiffy: ... beg {your} pardon.

- Mrs Mush: Lay down your dead. Where are you going Uncle Tom?

- Stiffy: To heaven little Eva.

- Mrs Mush: Marry me.

- Stiffy: You haven't got enough money to marry me. [*Song and exit*]

• **"In the Bank"** manuscript Nat Phillips Collection, UQFL9, Fryer Library, University of Queensland

SONG LYRICS / POETRY

- ▶ J.W. Rickaby is not a stranger to his public. His welcome is long and sincere, and the applause continues throughout his act... Some of his army song lines: -

They used to call me nursie in the infantry,
Gas-ball in the Air Brigade,
Bung-hole in the Brewery Guard,
Porky in the Yiddisher Corps,
But, dear – oh lo! – I had to stop the war –
When they started to call me Tarzan of the Apes.

- **J. W. Rickaby** TT: Mar. (1922), 15.

MISCELLANEOUS

- ▶ Mason Wood says that during the war the Prince of Wales was stationed near a camp at Amiens. Coming across an elderly officer one evening who was having difficulties with his "mobike," he kindly rendered what assistance he could. The officer thanked him and asked his name. Hesitantly, he was told – "Captain Windsor, Prince of Wales." The officer laughingly retorted, "Go On! I'm George the Fifth. Good night!" Later they met under circumstances that clearly established the Prince's identity. But he at once relieved the officer's embarrassment by saying, "Hello, dad? Here we are again!"

- **Mason Wood** TT: Nov. (1922), 23.
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