

Behind The Scenes In The Nation's Capital

Uncle Sam Takes a Flyer in the Theatrical Game, and There Follows a Rude Awakening—About Liberty Theatres—Couldn't Fool Mrs. Longworth.

By THOMAS F. LOGAN.
Washington, June 25.—War has forced the Washington government into more new activities than various agitated members of the ruling organization had even heard about prior to April, 1917. Considered as a whole, the government has gotten along very nicely as the boss of an appalling number of new industries. It has fallen down a bit on aeroplane construction, but even that difficult manufacturing business has begun to look up. The administration's really spectacular troubles began to pile up, however, when the biggest democracy in the world decided to take a flyer in the theatrical game. If the powers that be had known as much about the trials and tribulations of the amusement purveyor when they took on the job of entertaining soldiers as they know now, it is just possible that certain officials would have finked under commands to rush in where a long line of theatrical "angels" learned to tread with fear.

It sounded quite simple at first. As one optimist pointed out, Uncle Sam, impresario, would never be bothered by the first problem of the purely commercial producer. "Our audiences are drafted for us," observed this cheerful philosopher with a complacency born of utter ignorance. "When we put on a show it will have absolutely no opposition. It is sure to prove a riot, because we know now, it is just possible that certain officials would have finked under commands to rush in where a long line of dramatic productions we propose to present, it will be merely a question of the capacity of the cantonment theaters. The undertaking is really quite simple!"

It was a beautiful dream, of course, but a fiction of the subconscious imagination named to a rude awakening. Do the dear boys spread the judgment exemplified in all forms of cantonment? No, gentle reader, they do not. There was, for example, the case of Meliere. Some enthusiasts recalled the fact that the celebrated French dramatist did rather well as a writer of comedy in earlier days. It would be a brilliant idea, he figured, to revive a Meliere play for America's light-hearted soldiers. It was easy enough to revive one, but not quite as easy to "put it across," as they say in the vernacular of the theater. The revival inaugurated an indefinite run on the training camp circuit at exactly 8:15 o'clock on propitious Monday evening. It ended its run shortly before 11 o'clock that same night. Why? Well the verdict of the audience was unanimous, but not in the anticipated direction. There was no disorder, no bloodshed, no comments and no "boos." But, after a half hour or so, the audience arose with great dignity and decorum and conducted an orderly exit from the theater. "If your audience walks out on you," as the sage, experienced manager of the cantonment theater tersely commented, "it's the storehouse for you! Meliere attained success when he was a living play wright, but his delivery is not quite speedy enough for a Liberty theater clientele."

It may shock high-brow lovers of classic drama to hear this bitter truth, but it is an unalterable fact that the discriminating art lovers in army cantonments fall naturally and easily into the ranks of theatrical patrons known to fame as "tired business men." Shakespeare, Ibsen and Pinero may be all right in their proper sphere, but they are out of their class when drafted for an effective offensive in the Liberty theaters. The drama's only reliable shoe kithos on the training camp circuit, must be recruited from the "merry-merry." The boys in khaki perceive more art in peppy songs and dances interpreted by reasonably prepossessing coryphees than a delegation of studio graduates could extract from an elaborate, new exhibit at the Louvre. By the time the war is over, the United States government will regard Fia Ziegfeld and Jake Shubert as intellectual giants.

And the administration will not be confined to one side of the partnership between Uncle Sam and the gentlemen who specialize on "revues" and "folies." The eyes of theatrical advance agents and company managers begin to hang out on their cheeks when they observe the efficiency which the government has applied to the staging of drama. Minor details, such as orchestration of forty pieces that do not bother about union rules, small armies of stagehands who are not interested in the standing of visiting "crews" with their "locals," and billposters who neither indulge in strong drink nor inaugurate "paper" ghts, are but preliminaries in the list of innovations that startle and amaze the visiting showmen.

The managers of the Liberty theater in the various army cantonments were borrowed from the theatrical business. They retain their professional knowledge and supplement it with a new knowledge of undreamed of power. A few days ago, for example, the manager of a New England cantonment playhouse was entertaining an advance agent. The visitor after arranging routine details, mentioned the fact that a printed sign for the lobby, that emphasized a special feature of the attraction, might be helpful. The manager yawned, but reached for his desk telephone. "Gimme the Adjutant," he commanded. "How are you fixed on sign painters?" he inquired when the proper connection was made. He listened languidly for a moment

and then issued a "request." "Slip me four of the best you've got," he said. A few minutes later four khaki-clad experts snapped a salute, received instructions and delivered an artistically painted "lobby display" in something under 18 minutes. Unfortunately, there wasn't a drop of whiskey in the theater with which to revive the advance agent.

Recently, in a Maryland cantonment theater, a big musical production that requires difficult lighting effects arrived for a three-nights "stand." When the work of setting the stage was begun, someone discovered and reported to the manager of the theater that the master electrician the house was ignominiously confined in the guardhouse for a violation of some army rule. The theater manager promptly had himself conveyed with the commanding officer. "We can't put on this show without our best electrician," he wailed. "Don't get excited," advised the C. O. in soothing tones when the situation was explained. "If that's your only trouble, I'll release him for the evening and send him up to you under guard." And that is exactly what was done. The prisoner was marched to the theater, handled the light effects under the grinning observation of sentinels stationed in the "wings" and, at the fall of the final curtain, was marched back to the guardhouse until the hour for the next night's performance arrived. "Holy Mackerel!" commented the traveling manager. "If we could pull that rough stuff on the outside show-game, life on the road would be one grand, sweet song!"

It would be a mistake to suppose that visiting theatrical men are at the receiving end of all jolts that develop from Uncle Sam's plunge into the theatrical business. Occasionally, the technical talk and peculiar idiosyncrasies of the traveling experts bewilder the commissioned officers and others in authority at the army cantonments. There are, for example, numerous recruits from American social life who labor earnestly in the army vineyard. It happens, infrequently, that these patriotic women encounter strenuous representatives of the commercial theater with consequences that are bewildering to both sides.

One theatrical expert made his debut on the training camp circuit a short time ago at Camp Meade, near Washington. When he concluded his conference with the manager of the Camp Meade Liberty theater the noon hour had arrived and he felt the need of refreshment.

"Where," he inquired "can a guy get eats in this point?"

Why not take a shot at the Hostess House?" the manager suggested.

"What the Klaw-and-Erlanger is that?" asked the visitor.

"It's a high-brow cafeteria," explained the manager. "It's very much like the hash-houses you've made in Los Angeles and other western towns, only it's run under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. on a cost basis. Come along and I'll stack you up against it."

The visitor armed himself with a tray and started down the line. He got along swimmingly until he reached a display of asparagus, marked down to 10 cents a portion. He ordered a supply of the vegetable three stalks.

"Is that all I draw for a dime?" he inquired in injured tones.

He was told that it was.

"Well, gimme five more orders," he observed, apparently with entire resignation.

En route to the cashier's stand, however, he assembled the six orders of asparagus on one dish, palmed the five "empties" and proceeded to settle his account on a one-asparagus-order basis. His strategy did not, however, escape the attention of the alert dispenser of asparagus. She followed up the transaction and instructed the cashier to collect 60 cents for her department. A battle royal ensued, but, after much heated argument, the advance agent grudgingly paid the bill and joined the manager at a table.

"Say," commented that gentleman, "do you happen to know who that was you were scrapping with about the asparagus you pinched?"

"No," replied the visitor, "I'll bite. Who was it?"

"Nobody in particular," observed the manager with elaborate sarcasm, "except that she happens to be Mrs. Nicholas Longworth, formerly Miss Alice Roosevelt, and the oldest daughter of the scrappiest president the United States has ever produced!"

However, the Liberty theater circuit is gradually settling down to the routine of an established institution. But when the kaiser and his gang finally realize that they are up against a losing proposition, the American government will know a whole lot more about producing plays than it did when Washington first took on the less amusing task of beating sense into several million thick German skulls.

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Fred Luderus, of the Phils, achieved a fond desire of every pastimer the other day, when he banged out a home run, with the bases filled in a game with the Cardinals.

WAR AIMS OF TURKEY PUBLISHED IN BERLIN

To Surrender All Occupied Parts of Palestine and Iraq—Hold Sea

Amsterdam, June 25.—Turkey's war aims, according to the Turkish newspaper, Aati, as republished in the Berlin Vorwaerts, are as follows: Surrender of all occupied parts of Palestine and Irak (an extensive district in west central Persia, correspondent to ancient Media). Restoration of Turkish domination in Egypt. Independence of Persia and the wiping out of British influence there. Domination of the Black sea by placing an Ottoman prince in Crimea, a German prince in Georgia and an Austrian prince in Armenia, as regents.

Austria to keep the occupied portions of northern Italy until Tripoli, Dedecken and Cyrenaica are returned to Turkey.

AUSTRIANS WILL JOIN IN NEGOTIATIONS LATER

Germany Learned of Bulgarian-Turk Dealings Only by Espionage Service.

London, June 25.—Preliminary negotiations presumably regarding the Dobruja have been begun between Bulgaria and Turkey and Germany only learned of them through its espionage service, the Daily Mail correspondent at the Hague is informed. Austria probably will participate in these separate negotiations in the course of a few days.

The recent speech in the reichstag of Dr. von Kuehlmann, the foreign secretary, it is added, resulted from conversations between Bulgaria and Turkey which were begun on the initiative of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

M. Malinoff, the new Bulgarian premier, is said to agree entirely with the plan of King Ferdinand to exact fulfillment of Bulgaria's demands at whatever cost.

GERMANY LOOKING FOR COLLAPSE OF AUSTRIA

Half Starved and Riotous People Will Break Under Italian Rout.

Washington, June 25.—The Germans are said to be thoroughly awake to the probability of a complete collapse of the Austro-Hungarian government, already struggling with a half-starved and riotous people, in the event of a complete Austrian rout at the hands of the Italians. Realization of this fact, Rome believes, has caused the German general staff practically not to abandon its great offensive in France and has been evidenced by the comparative lull there for the past week.

German soldiers are being rushed by rail to the northern end of the Austro-Italian battle lines with the purpose of restoring Austrian morale and not only checking the Italian counter attack, but by force of numbers breaking through the mountain passes into the plains of Venetia.

With such help as the entente armies can give immediately supplemented as rapidly as transportation can be had by troops directly from America and, even more important by ample military supplies and food for the army, the Italian general staff, is reported to be convinced that the victorious sweep of the Italian army will traverse the famous Bainsizza plateau—the scene of the great battles of last fall—and will not stop until the Italians have reclaimed all of the country up to the right bank of the Isonzo, which marked the extreme of General Cadorna's advance.

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For July

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Suburban Schedule

IN EFFECT SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1918.

WEEK-DAYS

Lv. Center	Lv. Beach
6:15 A.M.	5:40 A.M.
6:55 A.M.	7:10 A.M.
7:25 A.M.	7:40 A.M.
8:00 A.M.	8:15 A.M.

and every half hour thereafter and every half hour thereafter

until	until
5:30 P.M.	5:45 P.M.
*6:10 P.M.	6:20 P.M.
6:30 P.M.	6:50 P.M.
and every half hour thereafter	7:15 P.M.
until	hour thereafter
11:00 P.M.	until
12:10 A.M.	11:45 P.M.

Local trains stopping at all stations (on request) may be expected to leave the Center and Lumina at the times indicated.

*The 6:10 express leaves daily except Saturdays and Sundays, stopping at Fifth, Ninth, Seventeenth and Market streets, Wilmington; Winter Park Gardens, Sea Gate, Wrightsville and all stations on beach.

FREIGHT:

Lv. Wilmington	Lv. Beach
5:30 A.M.	7:05 A.M.
9:30 A.M.	12:15 P.M.
9:30 P.M.	6:15 P.M.

Freight depot open daily except Sunday, from 7:30 a. m. until 1:00 p. m., and from 2:00 p. m. until 6:00 p. m.
Freight depot telephone No. 98.

SUNDAYS:

Lv. Center	Lv. Beach
7:00 A.M.	6:40 A.M.
8:30 A.M.	7:45 A.M.
and every half hour thereafter	9:15 A.M.
until	hour thereafter
11:00 P.M.	until
12:10 A.M.	11:45 P.M.

Local trains stopping at all stations (on request) may be expected to leave the Center and Lumina at the times indicated.

FREIGHT:

Lv. Wilmington	Lv. Beach
11:00 A.M.	12:15 P.M.

Freight depot open 10 to 11 a. m.
Freight depot telephone No. 98.

During periods of heavy travel express trains will be operated between Wilmington and Lumina, stopping only at Fifth, Ninth, Seventeenth and Market streets, Wilmington; Oceanic Hotel, Seashore Hotel, Carolina Yacht Club and Lumina, on the beach.