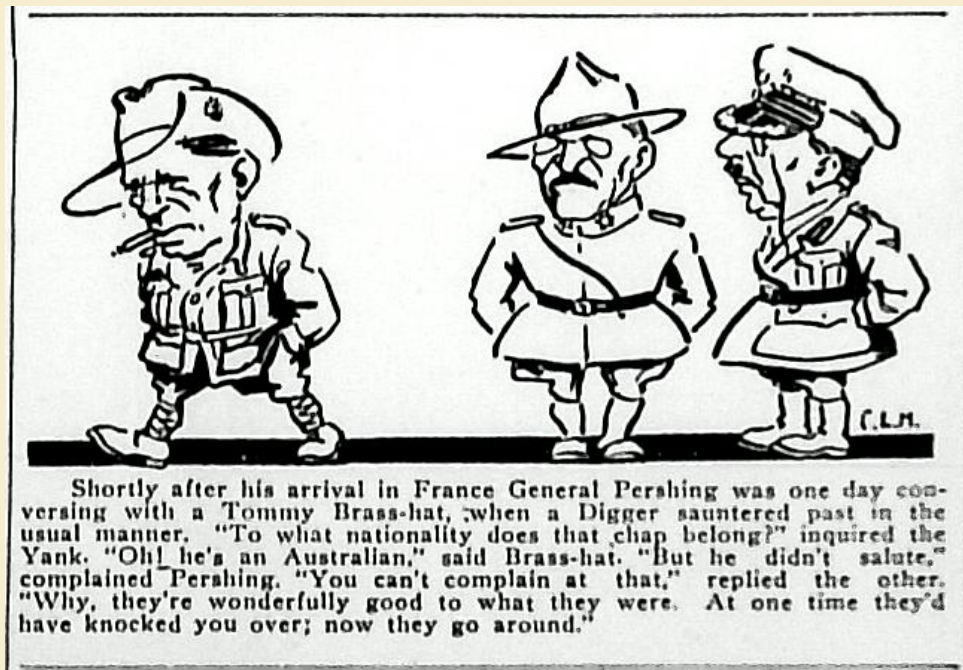


WWI-RELATED VAUDEVILLE JOKES, SKETCH MATERIAL, SONGS, POETRY and MISCELLANEOUS STAGE-CRAFT

1919



Smith's Weekly 15 Nov. (1919), 23.

MISCELLANEOUS

- ▶ By the end of 1919 [Jim Gerald's] health had returned to near normal [following his collapse during a performance of the comedy-realistic trench scene in *Time Please*] and he began to concentrate his energies as much on writing and producing new works as he did on performing. Not surprisingly he found a great deal of material in his war experiences, beginning with sketches such as his immensely popular turn with Essie Jennings "*The New Recruit*" (1919). "Originality and cleverness mark the sketch," wrote the *Theatre* reviewer in response to their performance at the Fullers New Theatre prior to the second part revue by Nat Phillips and Roy Rene (Stiffy and Mo). At times "exceptionally funny," particularly when Jennings played the military officer to her husband's raw recruit. The sketch also contained a moment of pathos when Gerald gave an account of how he lost his pal in the war. "High art indeed is his work in this monologue," noted the reviewer (July 1919, 23).

Charles Norman recalls that Gerald had devised the sketch shortly after his return from active duty in 1918. No mention has yet been found in any reviews prior to June 1919, however (this as a first part attraction prior to Stiffy and Mo's *In A Harem* revue at the Fuller's New Theatre). Norman also gives a brief description of the sketch: "Essie, with her beautifully turned out figure, was an officer, replete with slouch hat and ostrich plume, jacket with brass buttons and regimental colours, tights of a brown hue and brown lace-up boots... but with high heels. Jim was a rookie soldier and dressed in his blue dungaree sloppy suit (today blue denim or jeans) and wearing a nondescript white washing hat. He had a song, right up to the minute: "They May Break the Heart of My Old Dear Mother but They'll Never Break Mine!" After some standover business from Officer Essie, and to the last step in his acrobatic dance with the neck reel at the finish, they were a riot. On the first night with this marvellous routine the audience were so carried away that they were forced to play the whole sketch over again. They just had to in order to quieten the audience" (226-7).

- See 1919 AVTA entry

- ▶ *They All Sang Annie Laurie*, a musical scena produced by Hugh Huxham at the Cremorne Theatre, Brisbane 7-13 March.

The *Brisbane Courier* records, "Mr Huxham with 'Comrades' attired as 'diggers' appeared in [this] picturesque camp fire scena... and provided most effective harmony - a sweetness of sound which was later reproduced when the entire company joined in "Old Songs Up To Date" and selections from *Il Trovatore*" (8 Mar. 1919, 6).

- See 1919 AVTA entry

MORE DIGGER STORIES



A company commander was awaiting an inspection by a rather fussy General. He was troubled over one of his men, who was very drunk. The only way to get rid of him was to put him on a stretcher covered by a blanket. As he was being carried to the rear they unexpectedly met the General.

"Dear, dear!" said the General, "What's this? What's this? A casualty, eh?"

"Dead, sir!" said one of the stretcher-bearers. The General drew himself up to his full height, "I salute the honoured dead!"

Then the blanket was violently thrown back, and a voice said, "Say, what's that blinkin' old geezer talkin' about?"



A massive Digger was doing his best to have a wash out of a two-by-three pannikin. General Birdwood happened to pass.

"That's right, my man," said the General, "having a good wash?"

"Yes, sir," said the Digger, "only I wish I was a blinkin' canary."

Smith's Weekly 24 May (1919), 7.

► **Artilleryman Wins** a revusical by Art Slavin (first known to be staged at the Gaiety Theatre, Sydney beginning 29 Nov.)

- See 1919 AVTA entry



M.O.: "That's a bad cough, my lad."
Digger (jerkng his thumb at cemetery): "Well, any 'er those blokes 'd be glad of it."

Smith's Weekly 31 May (1919), 6.

► **"Recruiting Soldiers"** a sketch staged at the Cremorne Theatre, Brisbane during the 1919/20 Town Topics season.

"Messrs. Gray, Vernon, Mackay and Black were even more popularly received in their rich comedy scene, "Recruiting Soldiers." Miss Jessie Barlee and Mr Black fully understand each other in their dual roles, and their cockney affectation in "The Fancy Ball" was realistic enough to guarantee their success.... Mr Percy Mackay ranks as one of the best bass singers Brisbane has heard, and his song, "The Sergeant of the Line," ensured his recall."

- BC: 8 Nov. (1919), n. pag.

MORE DIGGER STORIES



First Digger: "You and I have got these profiteers beat, Dig."
 Second Ditto: "How's that?"
 First Ditto: "Well, we both take the same size, so what's wrong with going halves in a pair, o' boots, eh?"

Smith's Weekly 11 Oct. (1919), 9.



The "Quack," notoriously "hard," gave the Digger a good overhaul. Instinctively, the latter knew there was no hope for another week in Blighty, but he failed to see any humour in the doctor's verdict: "You're 'A3,' lad. Your battalion got badly cut up in the last stunt. They want men, so I'm going to send you back."

The Digger slouched to the doorway, halted, and caught the Quack's eye. "Well, what's wrong now?" asked the M.O.

"Oh, nothing much," replied the Digger. "Only at the last C.C.S. that I passed through they were mighty short of doctors. What about coming back with me?"

Smith's Weekly 13 Sept. (1919), 9.



M.O.: "What's wrong with you?"
 Digger: "Bad knock, sir. Hit in the stummick with a dud shell."
 M.O.: "What! Why, you're mad, man!"
 Digger: "Yessir. Put that down, too."

Smith's Weekly 19 July (1919), 9.