



"Now, then, you men, snap into it!" Lieutenant Lovely has been detailed to take the depot brigade out on the parade ground to play games—to keep up the morale while the final papers are being made out at headquarters. There's no telling when they will be ready to sign, what with the two men who know all about making them out home on furlough. In the meantime Lieutenant Lovely, who was never very good at games, has started the men on "Drop the handkerchief." Some one in the crowd has just suggested a game of "Postoffice."



Private Herman Kidney of Polkcenter hopes the company commander will get his point of view and hand him transportation to New York instead of Polkcenter. Polkcenter being fifty miles from this camp and New York five hundred, Polkcenter has it.

Among Us Mortals The Demobilization Camp by W. E. HILL



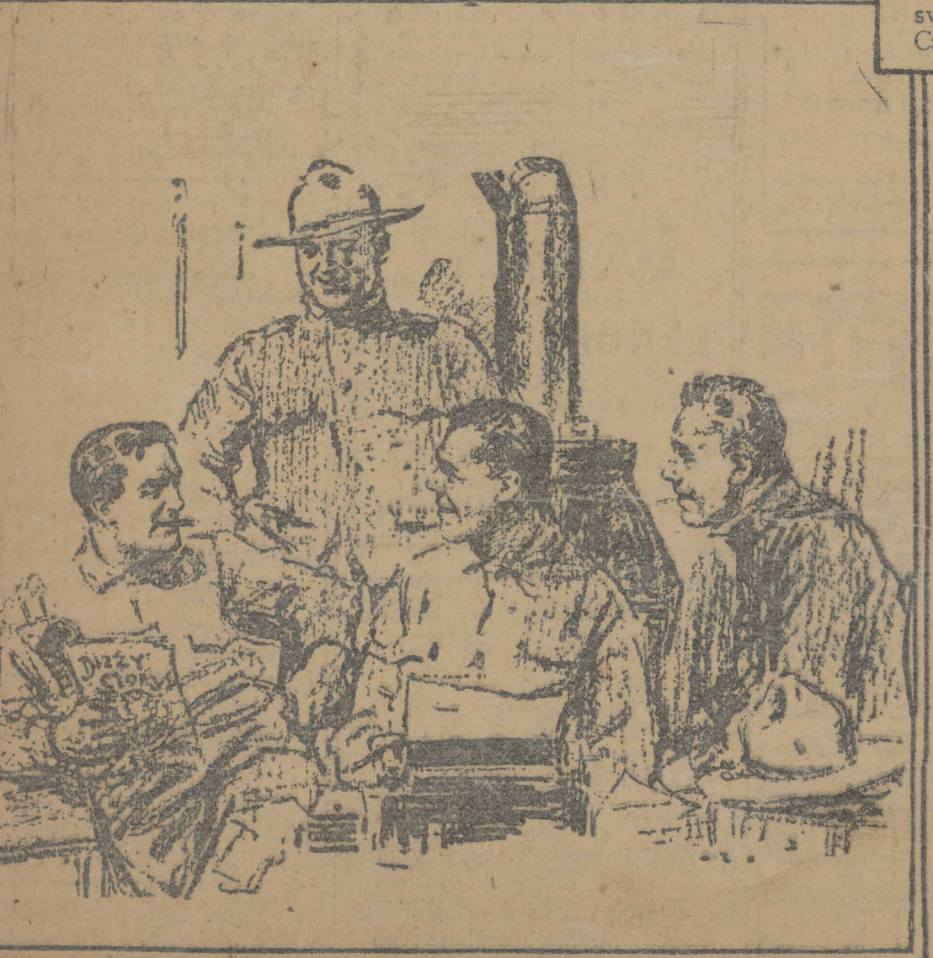
"Well, be good to yourself, sergeant!" Things begin to look rosy even to the guy who, the minute he was out of the army, was going to "knock hell out of the top sergeant" with your discharge in your pocket, the red stripe on your arm, all ready to go home and pull the hero stuff—O, boy!



"All them pretty lookin' second lieutenants have better jobs than they ever had before, that's why they're keepin' us here in camp so long—for them to have somethin' to do!" "Red," whose discharge has been sidetracked, believes he has got at the bottom of things.



"No more hick town for me! Me and my pal are going to New York, grab a couple of swell jobs, and live like Caesars!"



"Next morning the bride says to the groom, 'O, Henry,' she says—'A busy day in the personnel office, where no one is interested in rushing his discharge."



It took three senators, a member of the military committee, and a governor to get Lewis this far out of the army, and now, the personnel office having lost a part of his service record, there's no telling when he will be discharged. Lieutenant Pratt, just refused a week's furlough, is unsympathetic when consulted. "It may be three months, it may be a year," he tells Lewis.

"The Better 'Ole"; Theater Gossip

By Sheppard Butler

CURIOS entertainment with a curious history is "The Better 'Ole," which comes to the Illinois tomorrow night with De Wolf Hopper in all his comic majesty as its leading figure. Essentially a break of the theater—the kind of thing the biologists, I believe, call a "sport"—it started its career in this country some months ago as an unexplained waif that nobody wanted and has wound up, to every one's amazement, as the most persistently popular and profitable of all the wartime plays.

Readers of THE TRIBUNE, of course, are familiar with the droll war sketches which Capt. Bruce Bairnsfather sent back from the trenches in Flanders. In England the young officer (he's only 30 now) is hailed as the creator of characters which rank with Dickens' Micawber and Kipling's Mulvaney, and he blundered upon the fame they have brought him in the most casual fashion. In school Bairnsfather had carried a sketch book about with him, as many Englishmen do, but had never taken his drawing very seriously. Nor did it seem a matter of any particular moment when, early in 1915, he took to scribbling things on the walls of a ruined farm house in Flanders where he was quartered. To his fellow soldiers in the hard pressed British army, however, a man who could make them laugh was a Godsend, and it wasn't long before everyone, up and down the line knew about Bairnsfather. Some one argued him into sending one of his sketches to a London paper, and the artist promptly became a national figure.

After a time he wrote a book, and later on put some of his characters into an amiable sort of play, punctuated with an occasional song. Old Bill, the role in which we shall see Hopper, was played by Arthur Bourchier, one of the London dependables, and the originator of another part we are to see soon, that of the central figure in Cosmo Hamilton's "Scandal," which impends at the Garrick. London didn't go wild over the show. One critic dismissed it by observing that "it is not worth five minutes' consideration." The war was nearly over by the time it was brought to the attention of American managers, the reaction against war plays had set in, and for months the really crude Bairnsfather manuscript went begging.

One after another the producers turned it down for reasons that seemed unanswerable, until Charles Coburn thought he saw an appeal in the quaint soldier characters. Coburn has never claimed to be an expert in estimating the popular taste. His forte has been staging things for the highbrow university communities who know what they like and don't care for "shows." The play was put on at an out of the way New York theater down in Greenwich village, with Coburn himself playing Old Bill—and then came the deluge. To the profound astonishment of the managers who didn't want it, "The Better 'Ole" drew prodigious crowds. A larger theater had to be found. Then a second company, with James K. Hackett, was sent to Canada; a third, with Edmund Gurney, to Boston, and a fourth, with Maclyn Arbuckle, to Philadelphia. The Chicago company, for which Hopper was induced to leave his employment at the New York Hippodrome, is the fifth of the series.

And in all the records of recent seasons there is no play that has hung up so high a mark of unvarying success as this makeshift piece which the pundits of the theater unanimously cast aside. Just what it is all about remains to be seen. All I know is that it centers about the figures of Old Bill, Alf, and Bert, the Three Musketeers, of twentieth century war literature, and that the apparently cryptic title has to do with the wheeze that accompanied one of the Balmsthather sketches—that of Old Bill in a shell hole, with bedlam out loose around him, withering a scared companion with the sarcastic advice: "Well, if yer knows of a better 'ole, go to it."

Burns Mantle's New York Letter

NEW YORK.—[Special Correspondence.]—George Cohan is getting himself talked about again. Thinking it might be time for a good, old-fashioned romantic opera comique, with the dare devil prince of Burgundy in love with Anita, the milliner, and masquerading as Ferenz, the bandit, in order to be near her, his firm bought one such and put it in rehearsal. When it was running fairly well young George (he's 40 odd, now, but we still think of him as a youngster) went to the city in which it was playing, looked it over, and saw that it not only was quite awful but that it would lose a lot of money if persisted in. Yet, on the other hand, there was a considerable investment to be considered. How was that to be saved? Cohan gave the matter a night's consideration and then decided to burlesque his comic operas and turn it into a modern musical comedy with an old-fashioned setting. To do this he had to write several new essentials, all of them having to do with the liberties he was taking with the plot. The opening chorus, for instance, now introduces the minor characters and the merry villagers humorously and in person, as "I am Marcel, the barber," "I am Janku, the apothecary," etc., and when the soldiers are announced they come trooping in with a Cohan hop-skip and admit in song that they are not really soldiers, but merely dressed that way.

But so far as the plot is concerned, that is permitted to stand. Ferenz, the bandit, is still the prince in disguise, which Anita discovers when she visits the palace in the second act. But he is a modern prince, for in the third act he not only resigns the throne to marry the milliner, but permits the populace to elect him first president of the new republic. By giving this happy and really clever twist to "The Royal Vagabond" Cohan has turned the entertainment into what promises to be one of the big successes of the year. His cast includes Frederick Santley, Tessa Costa, Robinson Newbold, Frances Demarest and Louis Simon. The music is by