

# ARMS AND THE MAN

## Musicians And Entertainers In Great War

**A** SARCASTIC Sergeant-Major walked into a barrack-room one morning early in the last war: "Any of you blokes 'ere musicians?" he rapped out. Two men promptly put up their hands.

The two men happened to be Albert Sammons, England's leading violinist, and William Murdoch, who, next to Percy Grainger, is probably Australia's greatest pianist to date.

Again the S.M. spoke: "Now, you two fellows, carry the piano up to the officers' mess to-night." Sammons said it cost them four bob to get someone else to do it.

When war broke out, Albert Sammons was leading the Dieppe Symphony Orchestra, and he crossed over to England and was soon found at the Guards Depot at Caterham, sloping a rifle to his shoulder instead of a violin to his chin. It soon got round what his line was. A sergeant brought his own instrument from home, but when Sammons opened the case he found a fiddle with only one string and a bow with about half-a-dozen hairs. However, not wishing to disappoint, he began to play Handel's "Largo," to see if he could get any tone out of the instrument. His audience grew restless, and at last a man called out: "'Ere, give us '1812,' that's what I likes!"

### Recording During a Raid

Sammons, who served with the Grenadier Guards, was one of those who took part in the famous recording of Mozart's "Quintet in G Minor" in the City

counter, he tells us, was with a hammock. To this day Tommy has never understood why the powers that were should have compelled him to sleep in a hammock in a corner of the Art School at the Crystal Palace—but they did. He says you can take a man to a hammock, but you can't make him sleep—and he was no better than the rest.

### Look Out Below!

When he went up in one of the service balloons he was ordered to throw out ballast, in the shape of a sand-bag. Any sensible person would have emptied the sand gently out of the bag, but Tommy, without a moment's hesitation, heaved the whole thing over the side. They were less than a hundred feet up at the time, and he could see the watchers below jump into the air as the missile landed on the ground beside them.

As time went on he was incorporated in a company told off to afford amusement to the troops, but this job was no sinecure. For a time the party gave three shows an evening in the hospitals in and around London. He served his King and Country most efficiently in this capacity, "for the duration."

### Two Other Funny Men

Two other famous funny men served with the colours. Charles Clapham left a barrister's office in 1914, having decided that the sword was mightier than the pen, and joined the London Regiment as a private. Billy Dwyer was dismissed from war service in 1916, through having a weak heart. It was not until seven years after the war that these two formed the "Company of Clapham and Dwyer, a couple of Comics."

Ronald Frankau, too, served in France (1915-16). When war broke out, Michael Hogan joined a cavalry regiment with the idea that at the end of the war (Christmas, 1914?), it would help him to get film work if he could ride. Michael had to wait until January, 1930, before he was demobbed. Jack Hulbert served in the Army (1917-18).

That extremely amusing comedian, the late John Tilley, who rose to fame in under two years, joined the Royal Flying Corps during the war, after a spell in the Artists' Rifles. But he quickly involved the Government in a loss of about £2,000 in a crash at Hendon, so he was promptly transferred to the Gordon Highlanders. His name in real life was John Mounsey Thomson. He took the name of Tilley because while appearing in a concert party during the war, he was urged to go on the stage. The man who counselled an acting career was the late Jack Tilley, of the Alhambra. Thomson took the name out of sentimental memory.

### "Stainless Stephen"

"Stainless Stephen" (Arthur Clifford), enlisted in 1914 with the Yorks and Lincs Regiment and was twice wounded. A post-war distinction came his way, when, in 1928, he was specially engaged by the British Legion to appear as "Old Bill" at the Opera House, Lille, during the "War-time" performance given to entertain H.R.H. the Prince of Wales before the dedication of the Menin Gate Memorial.



MAURICE CHEVALIER

Was wounded and captured, but escaped

When the war broke out Norman Long joined the 2nd City of London Yeomanry. Later he became a private in the Air Force. As Norman puts it, in the R.A.F. he reached "stardom." He sang songs at army concerts with such success that after the war he determined to try his luck as an entertainer.

### Chevalier Becomes a Soldier

Like so many others, Maurice Chevalier had his war experiences. He was just coming to the close of his military service when the war began, and he soon found himself a soldier in earnest, in the trenches. Quite early Maurice "stopped one," a piece of shell piercing his lung. Luckily for him he was taken to a hospital nearby, but a few days later the Germans took the village and the hospital with it. As a prisoner he slowly got well, and in the prison camp, Ronald Kennedy, a schoolmaster by profession, taught Chevalier, among others, to speak English. Thus were laid the foundations of his career as a talkie artist. After two years' imprisonment he escaped from the camp with a friend and they worked their way back to Paris. On reporting to the military authorities for duty, Maurice Chevalier was pronounced unfit for further service.

John Coates, though fifty, and over military age, answered the call in November 1914, by joining the London University O.T.C., and was given a commission in April, 1915. He served in France with the Yorkshire Regiment, and did not resume his professional career until March, 1919. Eric Coates, composer of delightful light music, also served his King and Country, 1914-18.

Steuart Wilson, tenor, says that he was a soldier like everybody else of his age, but, unlike some of his friends, he still survives. He was twice wounded, once seriously and once severely. He then sat on a War Office stool and upon a bench in G.H.Q., France, helping to win the war in "Intelligence."

### The Germans Gave Him a Ride!

The regretted death last year of John Thorne removed another fine baritone soloist who was at one time a regular officer engaged upon that most exciting of all military pastimes, active intelligence work. On one occasion he was returning from a visit behind the German lines, and, as he had about three miles to walk and was somewhat tired, he contrived to get a ride on the back of a German ammunition limber.

When the war broke out he had already done about thirteen years' service in the territorials. But

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FAMOUS FUNNY MEN: Clapham and Dwyer both served with the colours. They "teamed up" seven years after the war

Road, during a daylight raid. Both Sammons and Murdoch played clarinet in the Grenadier Guards Band on active service.

Many singers, instrumentalists, composers, and entertainers generally, served with distinction in the forces, and some attained high rank. Among these was the Scottish basso, Tom Kinniburgh, who joined the Artists' Rifles as a Tommy and finished up in 1919 as Acting-Adjutant to the 4th Divisional College at Cologne. He was asked to continue permanently, but he wanted to get back to the concert platform.

On November 11, 1917, exactly a year before the Armistice, Tommy Handley joined the Kite Balloon Section of the Naval Air Service, and his first en-