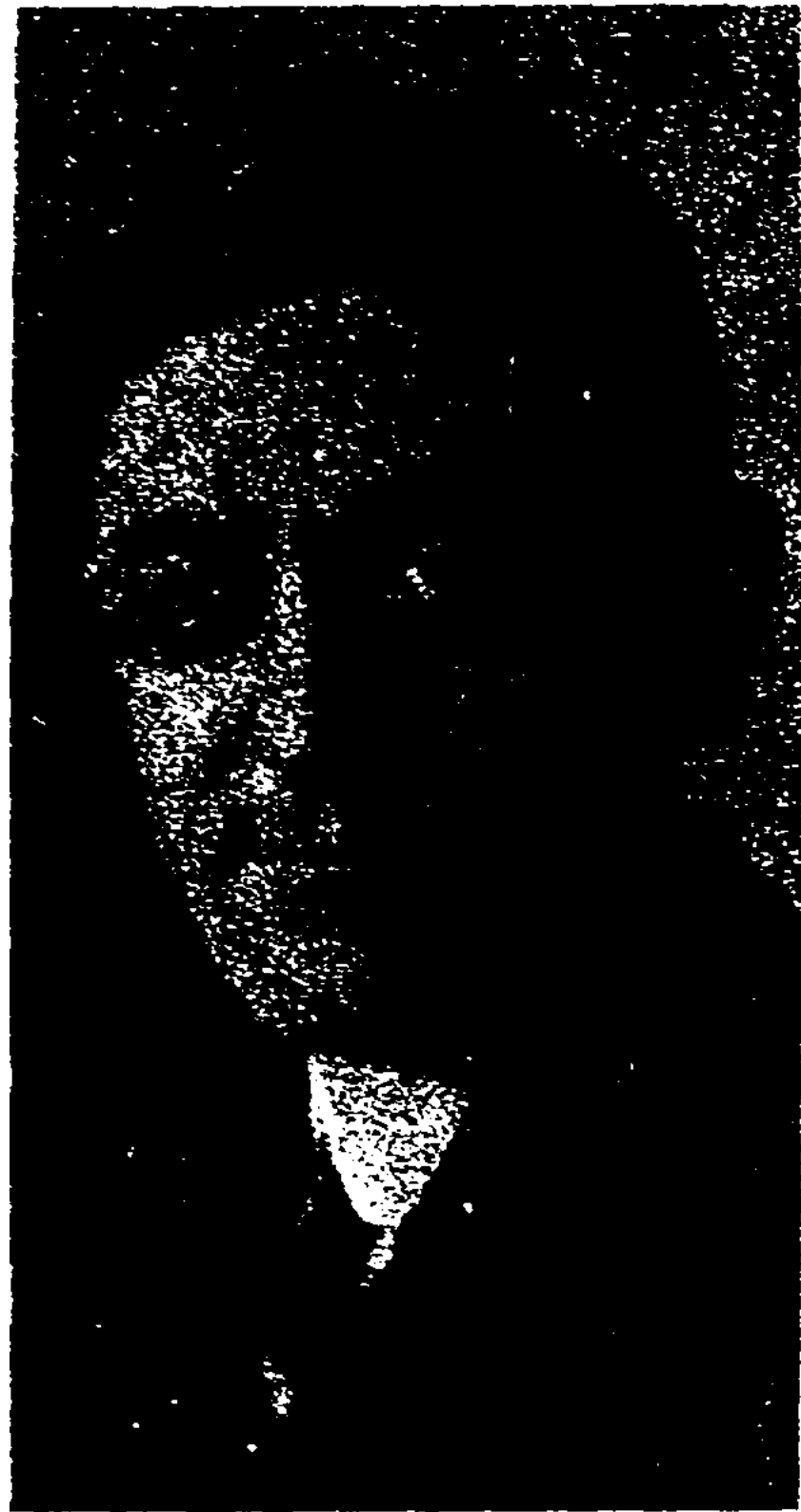


Marc Klaw.



Sam H. Harris.



George M. Cohan.



Irving Berlin.

FOUR OF THE MANY THEATRICAL MEN WHO ARE GIVING THEIR TIME AND ENERGY TO ARRANGE CAMP ENTERTAINMENTS.

Real Theatres in Every National Army Camp

Soldiers in the Cantonments Will See Best Plays and Leading American Actors Each Week—Highest Ticket Price Twenty-five Cents

MARC KLAU is about the busiest theatrical manager in the country these days. He is soon to open sixteen new playhouses in territory where at present there is not a single theatre. And he is protected from competition in the future. Furthermore, he gets the houses rent free, light free, service free. About 600,000 persons in the said territory are waiting with eagerness, impatience it might be called, for him to throw open the doors.

In all the days of the inclosed theatre, from William Shakespeare's Globe until today, there has not been such another situation as that which confronts Mr. Klaw. Everything has been provided beforehand for the manager to grasp his unprecedented opportunity—everything except one thing. That one thing is money. Yet, even with money short, he has decided to push the plans forward, to open the theatres at the earliest possible date. For in the midst of his perplexity over the lack of money an idea struck him. It was an original idea. Nothing like it had ever been tried by a theatrical manager before. It was this: He would get the money from the great public before the opening of the sixteen theatres!

Mr. Klaw is now about to carry out his idea. What is more, he feels certain he will "get away with it." The money, he says, will come in as fast as he can count it and receipt therefor. Probably it will, for the sixteen playhouses are the sixteen Liberty Theatres to be opened under the auspices of Uncle Sam himself in the sixteen military cantonments of the national army for the entertainment of the young Americans who are getting ready for that great business over in France.

Uncle Sam, through Congress, was so absorbed in voting millions for armies and navies and ships that, after providing the money for the erection of theatres at the training camps, he forgot to include a few extra thousands to start them going. As the member of the Commission on Training Camp Activities representing the theatrical business, Mr. Klaw was asked to take charge of building and operating the sixteen cantonment theatres. It was a good-sized job, but, as he accepted it as his bit in war work, he expected to be free from one worry that usually accompanies theatrical undertakings. There would be no lack of funds. Then he discovered the little over-

sight. How he purposes to raise the needed money and start the theatres is here announced for the first time.

"The families and friends of the young men in the camps are sending them presents all the time. From the big stores, and little ones, too, many packages are being forwarded to the men at the cantonments—that's how I got the idea that is going to solve this problem," said Mr. Klaw. "What better present could there be than a book of coupons entitling the soldier to a given number of admissions to one of the Liberty Theatres? This idea we have worked out in practical form, and Liberty Theatre coupon books will be placed on sale in a few days. We have given them the name of 'Smileage Books'—so many smiles for the boys in the camp, and you are to buy them with a smile, glad of the opportunity to give pleasure to men who later will make such great sacrifices for us on the battle front in France. On the back of the books is this: 'The coupons in this book will be accepted in purchase of theatre tickets at any Liberty Theatre in the national army cantonments.' Below is a place for the donor to write his or her name, and another blank line for the address of the intended recipient. There will be two kinds of books, one for \$5, with 100 five-cent coupons, and one for \$1, with twenty five-cent coupons.

"The Stage Women's War Relief will have charge of the distribution of the books. The books will be placed on sale at all the large stores, so that customers who make purchases to be forwarded some soldier boy will have no trouble in including in the package a 'Smileage Book.' We expect to raise all the money we need in a short time.

"All the other plans for the theatres are well advanced, and we expect to have them open and going by Dec. 1. The houses are being built all on one plan. Each theatre will have but one floor, to save money, but they have been designed so as to be attractive and convenient. The auditorium will be wide and shallow, half-saucer shaped, so that every one can see. We have adopted the old stock system of scenery, in order that the companies will not have much to move about, as we know how heavy the call will be on the railroad: for the transportation of other kinds of freight. Some ingenuity has been used in designing the scenery. Doors and windows will be interchangeable, by an arrangement on the order of the sectional bookcase. 'Set' trees—

that is, trees standing out by themselves—will have detachable blossoms and leaves; thus, by making a change, Spring and Autumn can be represented by one tree.

"We will have eight companies on the road all the time, four dramatic and four vaudeville. Plays will be up to date, and only first-class performers will be engaged. With eight companies on tour each cantonment will have one week of professional entertainment every other week. The shift from camp to camp will be made on Sunday, and there will be no performances on that day.

"A special effort will be made to organize amateur entertainments from among the men themselves. There are several reasons for doing this, besides filling in the gap. One reason is important. It will provide the regiment with an entertainment function that will be of much value in hours of relaxation from the strain at the battlefront in France, for our plans do not contemplate supplying professional entertainment for the troops after they go abroad. All the more important, therefore, that they, while in camp here, be taught to provide their own fun. Another idea is, if the military authorities permit, to have some of the best amateur companies visit the different camps on a tour. We believe that this would arouse a healthy spirit of emulation as nothing else could. In order to discover, train, and assemble local talent, Sam Harris, George M. Cohan, and Irving Berlin, accompanied by two professional minstrel men, will soon make a tour of the cantonments.

"We have had many other offers of assistance from men and women well known in the theatrical profession. Winchell Smith and John Hazzard will let us have 'Turn to the Right' free of royalty. Al. Woods offers 'Cheating Cheaters.' Earl Derr Biggers gives 'Inside the Lines.' E. F. Albee of the Keith circuit will organize the vaudeville companies for us. Maude Adams and Harry Lauder have volunteered to appear several Sunday nights.

"One of the questions which had to be carefully considered was the price of admission. Manifestly it was impossible under the conditions to have free admission, and we did not believe that would be best anyhow, as practically the whole camp would be there to get in every evening. Our decision was to put the maximum price at 25 cents. There will be 1,000 seats at 10 cents, and a large

number at 15 cents. The total number of seats in a house will be 2,500.

"The shows we send out will be worth four times the cost of admission. This is because one heavy charge in the theatrical business is cut out. We shall have very small local expenses—money to pay a manager and ticket seller is about all. We shall have no theatre rent to pay, no outlay for light and heat. Ushers, electricians, and so forth, will be detailed, cost free, from among the men. At the prices of admission, however, we feel sure that the proposition will sustain itself, and we hope it will show a profit. If it does, we plan to distribute the surplus to the various camps in proportion to what each has contributed in patronage. We will open the theatres early, at 7, or not later than 7:30, so that the boys will not be kept up late. We think the diversion will be a helpful relaxation.

"Our chief need now—and I want to emphasize it again—is money to start on, as the receipts will take care of operation after we get under way. Therefore, every one who buys one of the 'Smileage Books' will be assisting in the early opening of these houses. Lend a hand, everybody!"

As Chairman of the Military Entertainment Service Committee, Mr. Klaw has the following working with him: Secretary, Jasper J. Mayer; committee heads, David Belasco, A. L. Erlanger, Lee Shubert, E. F. Albee, Giulio Gatti-Casazza, Sam Scribner, Henry W. Savage, Arthur Hammerstein, Sam H. Harris, George M. Cohan, Irving Berlin, John L. Golden, A. H. Woods, W. L. Lillard, Arthur Hopkins, Winchell Smith, Arch Selwyn, F. Richard Anderson, Joseph Klaw; Advisory Committee—Otto Kahn, Chairman; George F. Baker, George Gordon Battle, James M. Beck, August Belmont, Paul D. Cravath, William A. Delano, Charles Dana Gibson, Daniel Guggenheim, Augustus D. Juilliard, Alvin W. Krech, Clarence H. Mackay, Thomas W. Lamont, Brander Matthews, W. Forbes Morgan, Frederic R. Coudert, H. Fairfield Osborn, Charles H. Sabin, Nicholas Murray Butler, Francis Lynde Stetson, George W. Wickersham; Club Affiliations—The Lambs, William Courtney; the Friars, George M. Cohan; the Players, John Drew; Actors' Equity, Francis Wilson; National Vaudeville Club, Willard Mack; General Distribution of Tickets, &c., the Stage Women's War Relief.