

1914

# BRITAIN IS AT WAR !

## Theatre Bars to close at 9pm

1914: The Early Closing Order, forces public houses to close at 9pm but there is some confusion as to whether it applies to Theatre bars. Some authorities allow theatre bars to stay open until the final curtain provided no one is admitted after 9pm, but others insist that no drink is served after 9pm. Theatre managers are seeking to stay open until the end of the performance, since the loss of bar profits will cause hardship for many theatre proprietors.

## Novelty of rate-payers subsidising performances

1914: The Parliamentary York Corporation Bill allows the city of York to provide entertainments by bands and singers in public halls and to charge any losses to the rates. Many feel this is creating unfair opposition to commercial theatre ventures, and it is an "outrage" for ratepayers' money to be used in this way.

1914: Theatre managers called an emergency meeting to discuss Theatres and the War. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree reported that he had already spoken to His Majesty King George to ask if the King wished theatres to remain open, but the King found it difficult to express an opinion. Mr Basil Hood felt that theatres should remain open, with authors and everyone reducing their fees (except those artists on very small salaries). Mr Cyril Maude did not like the idea of people being asked to take a cut in salaries. Mr Wyndham, of Howard and Wyndham, reported that several theatre companies had already cancelled their contracts for touring dates, blaming the uncertainties of the War, and he felt many managers were behaving in a panic-stricken manner. Mr H.B.Irving pointed out that since we had just embarked upon the greatest war that has ever been known, there might, perhaps, be some real cause for concern. The Managers decided that for the time being all their theatres would remain open, and that a Joint War Committee should be set up to help co-ordinate the entertainment profession during these difficult times.

## Recruiting Song is "Hit" of the season

1914: Paul Ruben's song "Your King and Country Both Need You So" is being performed at music halls and theatres all over the country. All the profits from the sale of published copies will be donated to the Queen's Work for Women Fund, which has started to provide work for those women who have lost their regular employment because of the War. The refrain of the song says: "Oh, we don't want to lose you, But we think you ought to go, For your King and your Country, Both need you so. We shall want you and miss you, But with all our might and main, We will thank you, cheer you, kiss you, When you come back again!". The publishers, Messrs Chappell and Co, were overwhelmed with the initial demand - W.H.Smith and Son ordered 13,000 copies for its London stores alone - and they have stopped all other printing so their presses can be dedicated to meeting the demand for copies. The song is said to be causing a massive increase in the number of men volunteering for recruitment into the Army.

## Sir Herbert says "Not Bloody Likely!" when asked to cut THAT word

## Outbreak of War likely to end Theatre boom



**HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE  
HERBERT TREE  
PYGMALION**

1914: Bernard Shaw's new play "Pygmalion" is an astounding success at the Haymarket. The thought of a Shavian treatise at the home of classic drama had prompted many to wonder if Shaw was coming to his dramatic senses or if Tree was losing his. But the end result is a brilliant comedy of modern manners, tinged with social satire, and providing two superb performances from Beerbohm Tree as Professor Higgins and Mrs Pat Campbell as Eliza Doolittle. The only note of dissension came in a letter to Sir Herbert from the Theatrical Management Association. "In view of the endless harm such language would do to the theatrical profession" it said, "would he consider deleting the "B" word from the production?". Sir Herbert replied: "Delete the word? Not bloody likely!" and promptly resigned from the Association because of its offensive letter and its attempts at censorship. When asked to reconsider his resignation, he once more repeated the immortal phrase.

Since the turn of the century there has been no end to the increasing growth in theatre building. London has seen 49 new theatres open and 23 either close or be replaced. This is a net gain of 26 and it is likely that London and its suburbs now have around 129 theatres and variety houses. In the provinces a further 288 theatres have been built and 75 have closed—a net gain of 213. This suggests there are now just under 700 theatres and Variety Houses outside London. This year, with the threat and then the reality of a War, no new theatres have opened in London, and four have closed. Outside the capital there has been a net gain of just three theatres this year. It seems that the building boom is over—at least until the end of the War. In the past few years several theatres have been used exclusively as "Picture Palaces". The increasing sophistication of the cinema-plays is making inroads into traditional theatre and variety audiences. Some are predicting that the Theatre's heydays are well and truly over.