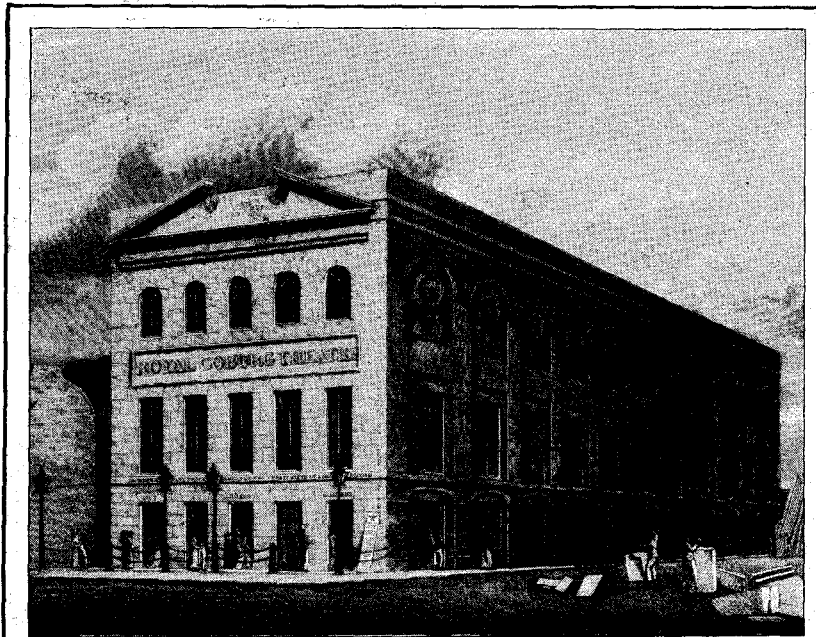


the only theater in London, almost the only theater in the United Kingdom, where Shakespeare could be seen. What a measure of the level of our national taste in the theater! Certainly a year's interest on that £100,000 could not be better spent at the present moment than in putting the old Victoria Theater into good order, thus demonstrating that, after fifty years of popular education, we can still boast an occasional performance of Shakespeare in the Waterloo Road."

The history of a theater can be scarcely more romantic than that of the "Old Vic," an account of which we cull from the *London Times* of September 20, 1916, when it celebrated its



THE ROYAL COBURG, NOW "OLD VIC."

Situated on the Surrey side of the river in London, it presents Shakespeare and opera in English at prices ranging from 2s. 6d. for stalls to 2d. for gallery.

centenary. Has it a hint for some of our languishing "outlying" theaters?

"About a hundred years ago some one conceived the odd idea that there was room for a fashionable theater on the edge of the then undrained and open Lambeth marshes. A subscription was raised. The list was headed by the Princess Charlotte, daughter of George IV., and her husband, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha; and on September 14, 1816, the foundation-stone of the Coburg Theater was laid by the unfortunate lady, who was to die in the following year.

"But the subscription was not large enough for the purpose, and the building of the Coburg Theater languished until the necessary funds were put down by a wealthy tallow-chandler of theatrical leanings—that same Glossop whom Hazlitt some years later found managing the Scala, at Milan, with his wife, Miss Fearon, for chief singer.

"The building, it is said, was based upon stones taken from the Savoy Palace, then being demolished; and thus founded upon royal patronage and royal masonry, the Coburg ought to have prospered. All looked fair when, in May, 1818, it was opened with a bill consisting of 'Trial by Battle,' a drama founded upon a famous murder trial of the day, a grand Asiatic ballet, and a harlequinade founded upon Milton's 'Comus' (the art of pantomime was of more honor then than now).

"And for some time things went fairly well with the Coburg. The large and fashionable audiences that assembled were attracted partly by the novelty, partly, no doubt, by the comfort of thinking that the way to Lambeth marshes was patrolled by a staff furnished and paid by the theater. A few years later came a new attraction—a huge curtain of looking-glass, heavier, we suspect, than any fireproof curtain of to-day, of which the Coburg was very proud until it was found to be pulling down the roof. The Coburg was ambitious. It had Clarkson Stanfield for one of its scene-painters. It lured famous actors of Drury Lane and Covent Garden to come and play on its stage. Edmund Kean acted *Richard* there; Junius Brutus Booth looked in,

and so did Henry Kemble. It was from the Coburg that Buckstone soared to the peaks of his Adelphi drama.

"But, alas! all this time the taste of 'the aborigines,' as they are called by a contemporary writer, was prevailing over that of the disporting 'fashionables.' The aborigines did not really care for Kean's *Richard* (and had not the least hesitation in telling him so); they preferred that of their own Tom Cobham, of whose acting Hazlitt has left an unparalleled description. To Mrs. Stirling they preferred their own Miss Vincent; and in Jack Bradshaw they had a Paul Bedford of their own. It was all very well for Hazlitt to use the 'Surrey' and the 'Cobourg' as sticks to beat his 'Janus Weathercock' (T. G. Wainwright) with. Pooh-poohing Wainwright's notions of vulgarity, he asks: 'How can it affect my opinion of the merits of an actor at the Coburg or the Surrey theaters that these theaters are in or out of the Bills of Mortality?' But almost at the same moment he was writing for *The London Magazine* a description of the audience at the Coburg which no modern periodical would dare to print.

"The plain truth was that the aborigines preferred melodrama to Shakespeare. And of melodrama for some time they enjoyed a very creditable quality, their repertory and company contributing not a little to the 'penny plain and twopence colored' of Skelt, which are so much sweeter in the handling or the remembering than ever the original performances can have been. In 1833 Prince Louis of Saxe-Coburg, being now the first King of the Belgians, the name of the theater was changed to that of his pupil in statecraft, the Princess Victoria. But to the 'Vic' the reign of Victoria brought none of its famous refinement. Down and down went the audience, as Charles Mathews could tell, and down and down with it went the drama. In time the theater passed out of decent theatrical history altogether.

"Daring to lift the veil during the eighteenthies, we find Miss Cons presiding over a very decent place indeed, where lectures, meetings, and entertainments, including grand opera, were provided for the public. And then came Miss Lilian Baylis, who, after working for years with Miss Cons, began three years ago that series of Shakespearian performances (the grand opera and the lectures being continued) which has not only proved that 'the aborigines' of to-day enjoy Shakespeare and that Shakespeare can be provided cheaply, but has created a company capable of taking the Benson company's place at the recent Stratford-on-Avon festival.

"On Saturday next the old Coburg, the old 'Vic,' the Royal Victoria Hall in the Waterloo Road celebrates its own centenary and Sheridan's by opening its autumn season with a week of Sheridan before resuming its Shakespeare; and, seeing how nobly the place is living down its shocking past, how it is steadily advancing when the West End theater is for the most part as steadily declining, how it is the only London theater where Shakespeare is played all the year round, all friends of good drama and good sense will wish it luck."

AN APPEAL FOR CERTAIN BOOKS—War-books are supposed to be tabu by the soldier; the impression is created that he prefers to forget in his hours of recreation the horrors at hand. But the Educational Director of our war-forces, Mr. Raymond D. Havens, writes to *The Nation* (New York) to say that as most of our soldiers are not yet in the trenches "the advice, 'Do not send them war-books,' is most unfortunate." The Camp Arthur boys, at Waco, Texas, are reported as "eager for interesting books dealing with the conflict they are entering." One sergeant he found reading "Over the Top," who assured Mr. Havens that "all the boys were trying to get it." Of such books there is a practical dearth:

"Libraries, private individuals, and the Post-office Department have been most generous in sending us quantities of magazines (including *Mother's Friend* and *The Police Gazette*) and of good fiction. We have approximately 1,000 volumes in each of our five buildings now open for the men, and in some cases 800 of these are in circulation. There are thousands of

serious-minded, educated men who ask for books other than fiction, but we have little to offer them. The American Library Association will undoubtedly do what it can to remedy this defect, but time is pressing. We could circulate one hundred copies each of such books as 'Over the Top,' 'A Student in Arms,' 'Rimes of a Red-Cross Man,' 'Victor Chapman's Letters from France,' and 'Ambulance No. 10,' as well as a considerable number of weightier works on the war and on modern history. Books, magazines, and newspapers in French, particularly if they contain illustrations, will be of real service in our twenty-three French classes, as will French coins and phonograph records.

"Are there not many of your readers who will be glad to help in one of these ways to inspire our soldiers and to render them more intelligent regarding their great mission?"

A WAR-CALL FOR THE SCHOOLS

FOR THE FIRST TIME in their history probably, the schools of this country have been systematically organized under Federal direction for any war-purpose. While this course does not include every one, it takes each school "willing and equipped or equippable" for the purpose of instructing drafted men who have not yet gone to camps, in certain branches of technical training which will make them peculiarly useful upon their arrival there. The need of the hour demands trained men both in the fighting ranks and in industry to replace those withdrawn by the draft. It is not the whole matter of soldiering to carry a gun, and, as Mr. W. L. Stoddard shows in the *Boston Transcript*, "men trained to work at trades and jobs in the Army are just as necessary in the Army and to the fighting value of the Army as is the skill of the gunner or the brains of the general." To supply these needs is the work of the newly created Federal Board for Vocational Education; and if the mobilization of the schools proves successful, says the writer, "and if the Federal Government does its part efficiently, and if the schools respond according to their estimated capacity, America will have given another evidence of her ability to meet a national emergency in a characteristically American fashion." The story has hardly beginning or end, observes Mr. Stoddard, for "events are moving so rapidly that it is impossible to state precisely who started what first and to whom belongs the credit

for any particular achievement." The step will look to some perhaps like a leaf out of the book of the Prussianized state:

"Upon his arrival at the cantonments every drafted man finds that among the other new and numerous duties imposed upon him is that of filling out a blank on which he is to declare his trade or profession. Tho the recruits may not realize it, these blanks are as important to the personnel officer as are the blanks giving his age and place of nativity. These blanks give the officer in charge of the task of allocating men to the different branches of the service a set of facts without the knowledge of which the skill of many a highly skilled man might never be utilized in the best way and in the best manner. Thus after the blanks are drawn together, indexed, and cross-indexed, a division commander is able to tell how many clerks there are in his command, how many blacksmiths, how many engineers, how many men who have once been telegraphers, or still are telegraphers, how many machinists, how many tailors, and so on. From his own charts the division commander knows his technical requirements, and, provided that the men are really what they claim to be, the rest is a simple job.

"But this vocational census clearly does not go far enough. It merely applies to the drafted men after they reach the cantonments. Officially, nothing is known of them before they reach the cantonments; the population of the United States has never been officially classified and card-indexed, with a duplicate card or tab stuck onto each inhabitant. And in filling the well-nigh insatiable demands imposed by the creation of a new national army of millions of men some substitute for such a card-index is highly desirable.

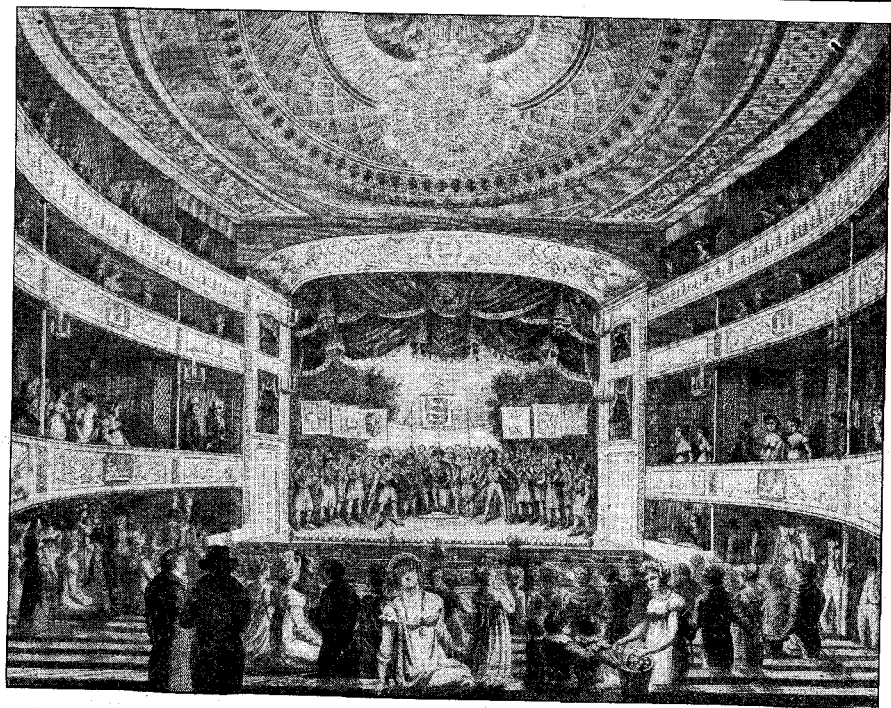
"The United States Army and the Board for Vocational Education, which is a separate institution from the Army, wholly civilian in its make-up, have devised, if not such a substitute, then at least the next logical step toward providing a complete vocational index of the United States. The method is not elaborate, complicated, or costly. It is, moreover, fundamentally American in that it depends for its success on its appeal to the best that is in every man, and in that, further, it offers every man, a chance to learn that which he feels himself drawn to."

The first extensive experiment in this new educational-military plan is made by the Federal Board in cooperation with the Signal Corps of the United States Army. Six hundred schools and colleges throughout the country have been addressed and the program thus stated:

"The Federal Board for Vocational Education appeals to you to come to the assistance of the United States Government in a grave emergency. The



TWENTY YEARS MANAGER OF "OLD VIC." Since the war Miss Lillian Baylis and Mr. Ben Greet have given continuous Shakespearean performances at this old theater.



AN AUDIENCE IN 1830 AT THE COBURG.

Now given way to people who know their Shakespeare and English opera and tolerate no liberties on the part of the actors and singers.