

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE BUSY IN PEACEFUL AVOCATIONS

Heroes of Havana Harbor, San Juan Hill, Majuba Hill, the Pasig, the Modder and the Tugela Work With Vim to Push Through a Great Building in a Tense Race Against the Clock.



W. B. WESTON,
—MANAGER—



CLAUDE HARRISON
—TIME-KEEPER—



HARRY CROWE
"ROUGH-RIDER"



WALTER CUMINGS.



C. R. MCGLUMPHY—



SERGEANT TED SCHAEFFER



CORPORAL S. A.
GRIMBLOTT.



GEORGE HARDY
42ND HIGHLANDERS.



JOSEPH HUNTINGTON,
"POST-OFFICE JOE."



FROM the ends of the earth they come, these men who build. The toilers who place beam on beam and stone on stone to fill the cities with sky-scrapers are a cosmopolitan crew. By their share in the labors in society they must be nomads. Their home is where the big girders swing from lofty derricks, where the pneumatic hammers rattle their staccato trills, where brick and stone and steel must be fashioned together in the making of cities. It is an endless career of constructive activity; when their work is done they must be journeying somewhere else to begin anew. So they ramble about the world, leaving their wake marked with towering buildings.

Strange coincidence brought into Omaha for the erection of the Brandeis theater a little company of soldiers of many nations, the veterans of three wars, men of many battles turned from strife and distraction to the arts of peace. British, confederate and American, they have worked side by side in the making of this architectural tribute to beauty. Men who charged the Boers across the dun-colored veldts of South Africa, men who crawled through the rice paddies and swamps of the Philippines in pursuit of the little brown insurgents, and, yes, even a man who marched with Longstreet in the days of the war of the rebellion, have forgotten their rifles and the bugle call to take up the trowel and hammer. Tommy Atkins rubs elbows with Johnny Reb, and a veteran from the campaign in Cuba bosses the job.

Peaceful and industrious as the building scene appeared, these soldier-builders were engaged last week in a real battle, a fight against time, which, of course, they won. It was not a battle of the kind they used to fight, just a battle of hard work, and lots of it; work for days and nights without sleep or respite. To get the theater done on time was the victory for which they fought and won. The struggle against time lacked the excitement and dash of the heroics of war, but real soldiers such as they know how to fight without a band.

The general of this victorious army, the master of the game, was W. B. Weston, manager for the Thompson-Starrett company. He had nothing to do but be boss, but even that gets tiresome when it means twenty-four-hour shifts piled on end and overlapping. The boss did not sleep; there was just time enough to do the work if everything went right, each fighter to his place, and the boss stayed with the boys. A prosaic sort of heroism may be but still a place where it took the staying powers of a good soldier. When the curtain rose on the opening scene of "Arsene Lupin" in that playhouse of mauve and gold the public saw the fruits of the victory, but those who saw imagined little of the story of labor and duty behind that pretty picture. Weston was sent to Omaha to urge to completion a lagging job. They ordered so many days; he being a soldier, delivered the theater in so many days. That was all; just orders obeyed.

This same Weston it was who received an order one morning in June down in Havana harbor some years ago. He was not the builder then, just Sergeant First-Class W. B. Weston, Fifth Volunteer Engineers. The United States was there to make a call on the Spaniards, a call backed with guns and men.

Sergeant Weston it was who took his orders, went out under fire from the soldiers behind the walls of grim old Moro castle, and later came back wounded, but carrying sections out from the marine cables that had given the city and the enemy communication with the nations of the world. They sent him for the cables and he delivered the goods. This was another hard job of different kind from theater building, but a soldier put it through.

Weston and his squad put off the cruiser New York in a speedy little mosquito of a launch. The cruiser and the war vessels standing off in the bay opened fire to cover the advance of the daring ex-

pedition and the big-throated Spanish cannons in the fortifications gave answer.

The little group of men in the launch had the official chart which purported to tell where the cables were in that slimy harbor bed. There was just one place to reach them in shallow water; that place was close under the guns of Moro castle, but the orders were, "Get the cables." Incidentally the orders were a trifle wrong in the location and little mistakes in a big game make serious trouble. After groping about in the mushy ooze of the water's edge, while the fire of small arms in the castle and in the shore trenches made the water boil about them, they picked up the cables. The snaky strands were drawn up across the bow of the launch against the capstan and a man with an axe did the rest.

"That was just a little the hottest place I was ever in," remarked Weston, the boss, as he squinted down a row of opera chairs to see if they were in line. "The Spaniards did not get on to what we were after when we put off from the New York. Thought we were deserters, according to what I learned afterward." The boss builder smiled a bit at the idea of desertion. "But when they woke up they tried to shoot that launch out of the water. We were too busy to watch carefully, but my recollection is that they came near to doing it.

"We cut two twelve-foot sections out of the two cables, the American and the foreign wires into Havana, and took them back to the ship. Everybody was wounded but me. "Well, yes, I did get a scratch on the arm from a splinter they shot off the launch, but that wasn't bad," he admitted modestly. "Poor Green, one of the squad, died of his wounds. He was groaning in the pit of the launch while we were hacking at the cables and we couldn't do anything to help him while the bullets were flying about. That was the tough side of it."

After the fighting was over in the Atlantic Westons was a member of the detachment that took up the floating mines along the coast. This was a job, where tons of explosives were fished out of the harbors. That kind of fishing is work for sure hands. The first mistake with a charge of gun cotton is not repeated.

With Weston in the erection of the Brandeis building twelve veterans of war have worked. Often they have met before, so often, in fact, that they have come to style themselves "the Continental Tramps." Never before, however, have so many of them come together on a single job.

One of the "fightingest" fighters of the theater builders is Sergeant Theodore Schaeffer. "Sarg," as they call him, is too busy in his plasterer's uniform to bedeck his expensive front with medals, but he had them stowed away in his trunk. Schaeffer took a hand in twenty-eight Philippine engagements.

Schaeffer it was who carried Colonel Fredrick Funston, now a brigadier general of the regulars, when wounded from the firing line at Ilo Ilo to safety in the rear. Again Schaeffer became a factor in the making of history when he accompanied Funston in that swimming expedition across the Pasig river.

Schaeffer didn't care in the least for tan-colored marksmen in the jungle, but he is mightily timid when the innocent eye of the camera stares at him.

A bonnie working laddie of the soldier clan is George Hardy, ornamental plasterer unco' deft w' the trowel, late of the Forty-second Highlanders, the famed old "Black Watch." George was one of the bravest boys that figured in the capture of General Kronje. That military gentleman of many whiskers delivered to the custody of the English, much to the honor of her majesty, the queen, the Forty-second took up a little matter of discussion with the Boers at Paardeburg. They still tell tales among the Kaffirs about that day, when the Black Watch, with their kilties fashing in the sun, marched out to the warring shriek of bagpipes sounding the battle song of those fighting Highlanders. Hardy figured conspicuously in that fight. He had six medals for gallantry in battle.

A certain mischievous cockney plasterer of that white-coated crew often seeks to make sport of the Highlander.

"A great sodjar you be, fighting with a trowel," he teased. "Dinna ye remember what the English got off at Lucknow?" rejoined the unruffled Hardy, moving along with his work as he began to softly whistle the battle song of his regiment. "Ken ye na the Forty-two?"

Then there was silence for a bit. The English are sensitive about

that situation back there in Indian history.

Hardy had a companion in battle on the job, Private G. W. Williamson, who saw the British-Boer conflict as a member of the Royal Guards. With them was Corporal C. M. Oldham, who went through that conflict as orderly for Lord Roberts. He knows a story or two about Ladysmith that he will not tell, even now.

Harry M. Crowe, corporal in Colonel Roosevelt's Rough Rider regiment, has been a lieutenant of Weston's in the work on the Brandeis building. Crowe is in the general habit of being in a hurry.

"I remember just one thing prominent above the rest," said Crowe, speaking of that immortal charge of the Rough Riders. "We were making it up the hill, when a noisy Spanish lieutenant rose up in plain view and delivered himself of a series of remarks about what he was about to do, and some of it was not considered gentlemanlike by a few that were close enough to get next.

"When we found him on the field after the mus was all over I counted just fifteen holes in him. Every man in our company must have chosen that chap."

S. A. Grimblott, electrician, once a member of the Illinois volunteers, who saw service in Porto Rico, played a large share in the race which brought the theater to completion on time.

Grimblott put in just a solid ten days and nights with the remarkable switchboard with which the theater is equipped.

"It is the greatest board I ever saw," said the electrician. "I had to stay until it was done; that was all there was to it." So for ten days and nights he worked steadily through without leaving the building. Occasionally a bit of a cat nap was all the sleep that he got until the board was done. Other workmen carried in lunches to him. Efforts to get him to leave to take rest were futile. Grimblott had just one idea fastened in his mind—to finish that switchboard. He stayed to the finish.

After the board was finished he inspected and tested it time after time, affectionately fingering the switch levers. It is this intricate mechanism that controls all of the wonderfully delicate lighting effects of the playhouse. Every unit of illumination must be under the direct control of the man at the board.

The oldest soldier of them all is "Pap" Addleman, plasterer, a confederate veteran, whose one brightest memory is of an incident at the battle of Chickamauga. He as a youngster of 13 years had gone into the service of the confederacy to fight for what the confederacy thought was principle.

"I was a little shaver," said Addleman, laying down his mortar board a moment. "I wasn't big enough to tote a gun, so they made me a kind of a handy man. "On the day of the big fight at Chickamauga I was carrying water to the wounded in the rear. General Longstreet, to whose brigade my regiment belonged, came by. I can remember very clearly how he asked me for a drink. I was worried a bit about it, too. The idea of giving a general a drink out of an old gourd. If I hadn't have been a kid I wouldn't have thought about it at all with that battle raging in front.

"But the general took his drink from an old yellow gourd and patted me on the head.

"Even the children are fighting for us," he said. "You are a brave little man."

"Pap" Addleman reached again for his mortar board and trowel.

The boss of all these soldier-plasterers is J. H. Huntington, once a sergeant in Colonel William J. Bryan's regiment. He is better known to the builder folks as "Postoffice Joe." He has the distinction of having put on the plastering of just twenty-three United States postoffices.

"For a real war record our regiment got it," remarked Sergeant Joe. "But we whipped, killed and captured more Florida mosquitoes than any other body of men that ever didn't go to war for their country."

Huntington got the patriotic fever in Omaha when the Spanish-American war was declared. He was engaged in superintending the ornamental plaster work on the buildings for the Omaha exposition, then under construction. He enlisted here for Bryan's regiment, but he refused to admit that he fought.

"Me, I'm a plasterer, not a soldier," he declares solemnly.

Walter Burke, steel worker, who put in place the big steel trusses that arch over the Brandeis theater's roof, installed the first disappearing guns mounted in the coast defense fortifications along the Atlantic coast. He enlisted with a Pennsylvania regiment during the Spanish-American war, but was transferred to an artillery organization because of his skill in handling heavy installations.

To have seen C. R. McGlumphy unaggressively strolling about the theater job during the rush toward the finish would hardly have hinted at a military career, but he was a member of the Fifty-first Iowa volunteers, with rank of a corporal. This regiment it was which took the naughty town of Manila in hand and trimmed up the loose ends of that island metropolis.

Howard Bagley, a member of the famous crew that went around the Horn with "Fighting Bob" Evans, the admiral, had a hand in the building of the playhouse. Sergeant Hibbs, a member of the Utah battery that went to the Philippines, was employed on the building as a wire fatter. Corporal Green, a bricklayer in the employ of Bridges & Hoye, was with the Fifty-first Iowa volunteers.

The long, sleepless shifts just before the opening night of the theater found one man always on the job; that was Claude Harrison, timekeeper. He has no war record, but he is a traveler. Since the

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