



7a f 21/2
Woolwich Hippodrome
Next Monday

No. 2934	
LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE.	
Name of Play.	The Hem of the Flag.
Theatre	Hippodrome, Woolwich.
Date of Licence	10th. Sept. 1914.

"THE HEM OF THE FLAG"

Topical Monologue

(European War, 1914)

— by —

KENELM FOSS.

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Celeshill,
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BUCKS.

7
Woolwich
Hippodrome



Handwritten:
New York
London
Sept 22



"THE HEM OF THE FLAG"

Topical Monologues

(European War, 1914)

by

KENNETH FOSB.

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LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE,

ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.

9th September 1914.

"THE HEM OF THE FLAG", play in one act by K. Foss, for production at the Hippodrome, Woolwich, 14th September 1914.

This is a topical monologue, spoken by a weary woman worker at a military outfitter's where she has been hemming a Union Jack. To dummies made up to represent our French, Russian and Belgian allies she discourses of various aspects of the war, in which her husband is fighting as a sailor. The moral of her spirited sermon is that, when the honours of final triumph come for the men who fight, there should be some for the women who stop at home for the hemming of the Flag.

Effectively devised and written.

Recommended for License.

(Sgd.) Ernest A. Bendall.

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LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE,
ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.



9th Sept. 14

"The Hum of A. Flag" by K. Foss. n. m. act,
for production Woolwich Hippodrome, 14th Sept. 14.

This is a topical monologue, spoken by a
woman - working at a military outfitting
shop who has been humming a known fact.
To diminish need of to represent our French
Russian & Belgian allies she discourses of various
aspects of the war, in which her husband
is fighting as a sailor. The moral of her

spirited sermon is that, when the honours
of final triumph come for the man who
fights, there should be some for the woman
who stops at home for the humming of the
flag.

Efficiently devised & written.

Recommended for Lease

Wm A. Bennett

DD, x. 14
10.1

"THE HEM OF THE FLAG"

(In the top workroom of a wholesale military outfitter's store sits a young woman, little more than a girl, completing the hem on an enormous Union Jack, which spreads over the whole stage in front of her. It is early evening in summer, and through the skylight which is the room's only window, one sees a London sunset between chimney-pots and roofs. The room is accordingly somewhat dark, and the young woman has to peer to her work. Nevertheless, her surroundings are dimly visible. Covering all the walls are, low down, labelled locker-drawers, and, above them, and up to the sloping roof, shelves of packed campaign overcoats and uniforms. Up stage at back, a curtained alcove with piles of helmets just discernible. More helmets on floor down stage. L. up stage, a glass door with "BUNTING & CO., WHOLESALE MILITARY OUTFITTERS" showing backwards. In the alcove a life-size tailor's dummy in a white and gold military uniform. Three other dummies in various parts of the workroom, all in uniform. Stacked in the corners, swords and rifles. R.C. a trestle work-table, covered with scraps of brightly-coloured material, scissors, cotton-reels, chalk, measuring tapes, etc., Round this table two or three stools. Below it, against R. wall, a full length mirror. Stretched across the room a line of flags. L. down stage, an unlit stove, with a chimney entering the wall. Below it, close to footlights, a pile of khaki-coloured military blankets, and asleep upon them a dark-haired little boy, clearly, from his resemblance to the young woman sewing the flag, her son.

PLAN OF SCENE

1. French dummy.
2. Russian dummy.
3. English dummy.
4. Belgian dummy.
5. Long mirror.
6. Trestle work-table.
7. Pile of blankets.
- 8, 9, and 10. Stools.

THE YOUNG
WOMAN

(Putting a finishing touch to the hem; then rising and viewing the completed flag admiringly) That's another done! Who says I don't do my little bit for the country, as well as Tommy Atkins? And now for home! (striking an attitude) For England, Home, and Beauty!(breaking off)...No, that's not quite right. (resuming) (very grandiloquently) For Camberwell, home, and supper! (to audience, reproachfully) I don't know what you're laughing at! There's bloaters for supper, too! Don't you like a two-eyed steak wi' your supper? (fetching her hat off mirror-post down R. and calling over her shoulder to little boy asleep on blankets down L.) Come on, Bob! It's time to go.

(BOB sleeps on. She turns)

Bob!

(He makes no sign)

(She turns appealingly to audience) Here's a pretty state of things for a poor decripit old woman like me what's brought her 'efty great son along specially to protect 'er on 'er way home to Camberwell. (to her still sleeping son) You're a nice one to keep a lady company while she's doin' a bit of overtime, I don't think! (to audience, with a jerk of her head towards the boy) That's all the overtime 'e ever does! Happy days! (Mock-lecturingly to boy) You just wait, my son, till you've arrived at the 'oly and blessed state of bein' grown-up! (sighing) I should shay so! (noticing flag, picking it up and admiring it once more) Ain't this something to be proud of? (enthusiastically) I do believe I'll 'ave to 'ave a bit of a go at another one before me supper, now! Till 'is Lordship wakes, at any rate! (shivering, suddenly) Lordy, don't it get chilly sharp-like after six these days, eh? Wish I'd brought me sports-coat now.....These English summers, eh? Bin rainin' all this week....(suddenly, to Union Jack) What's wrong wi' YOU as a evenin' wrap, any old way? (puts her hat down on centre stool, and drapes herself in Union Jack; then strikes an attitude in front of mirror) What price this? A bit of allright, I flatter

myself! The All-British Make! This style one Sovereign
 -- and 'is dominions! I say, I aren't 'arf gettin'
 peckish. (glancing at boy) 'Ardly like to wake 'im,
 though....(with sudden inspiration) There now! If I
 didn't leave some biscuits be'ind yesterday in the 'elmets,
 and forget 'em till this moment, silly cuckoo....(bustles
 up to back alcove, fetches out paper bag of provender, eats,
 speaks with mouth full) Interval for refresh! (with
 appreciation) Squashed flies, too! (She is by now C.
 again; and catches sight of herself, still draped in the
 Union Jack, in the mirror) You know, I do look a treat
 in it and no error! (suddenly addressing a dummy dressed
 in the full red trousers and Zouave coat of the French
 Chasseurs d'Afrique) Got nothing to say against that.
 I 'ope, Mr. Frenchman -- beg yer pardon, Messoc. If you
 'ave, of course, come right out and put up yer dooks like
 a man. (Pulls the dummy by its wooden hand. It trundles
 out on its wheeled stand to R.C.) Now then, Carpentier!
 (to audience) No, it's all right, 'e's friendly, though
 'e ain't got an expressive mug! (She sits former seat C.
 and eats an apple) (genially to French Dummy) Feelin' a
 bit unlike yourselves over there these days, ain't you?
 Not much of the Gay Paree this journey, eh? (elaborately)
 You'll excuse my addressing you without a introduction,
 won't you? You see...(more to herself)...one gets a bit
 lonely evenin'-times every now and then. (to dummy again,
 but seriously, as if to a real person) My boy's bin
 called off to 'elp you with your little bit of trouble. We
 'adn't bin married so very long, neither...(quickly) Oh,
 don't think I grudge 'im! But....well, I don't know where
 'e is, you see....I 'aven't 'eard since 'e left....They
 aren't allowed to write, and...Well, 'e's Navy, you see,
 and with these 'ere mines knockin' about...(with an effort)
 Well, it is a bit of a waitin'-game, isn't it? (her
 emotion gets her up from her stool and makes her pace to
 L. As she passes sleeping boy) Well, I've still got 'im,
 if it is the worst! (She comes back to French Dummy,
 recovering herself) 'Owever, let's be as cheerful as we
 can! (Standing close to Dummy, and leaning her arm on his
 shoulder) Where was you, I wonder, when you was called
 to get a bit of your own back from the 'ereditary enemy? --
 My boy 'ad a dish-cloth in 'is 'and, and was givin' me a
 bit of 'elp with the washin'-up; drying while I washed --
 Where was you? Down in the vine-yard country, where the

champagne's nuppence the large glass....In a blue blouse and clumsy great wooden shoes, and a straw-'at as big as a cartwheel? And the Angelus ringin' instead of a down-tools bell? Or in some cafe on the booley-varlds, puffin' a fag you'd just made yourself....larkin' with some pals over a comic-paper with pictures in it they daren't print in England? When you 'eard, did you 'ave a pint o' Condys Fluid on the strength of it, or was yours a penny black coffee with a spot o' brandy? 'Ow many of these 'ere little French grisettes did you kiss yer 'and to on the way back to yer striped sentry-box at barracks? Oh, naughty! (seriously) 'Ave you an old mother somewhere? Or were you sweet-'eartin' when you was took away? (intensely) I want to know!

(after a little pause)

I'm sorry you can't talk. I'd like to 'ear what it feels like to prosecute trespassers on yer frontier. I think I'd like you Froggies. You're sports, by all accounts.... I like to 'ear about you singin' as you fight.....

(swinging suddenly round)

'Ere, where's that long Tommy?

(makes a dive over to up by door, and pulls down to C. a dummy, bigger than the French one, and dressed in the characteristic scarlet of an English infantry regiment)

Allow me....

(addressing French dummy elaborately)

...allow me to introduce to you T. Atkins Esq., new style--- one of the best! Clerk 'e used to be....

(breaks off; then in an apologetic aside to French dummy)

O' course I don't know anyt'ing about 'im really, only

I makes up things about all you dummies so's to keep me mind from frettin'...

(resuming narrative, conversationally)

Yes, Mr. Atkins 'ere used to be a clerk. Spent 'is days addin' up silly figgers that no one would ever look at again. Sallow 'e used to be in those days; 'adn't a kick in 'im; a two o' gin cold sort o' man, 'e was. When 'e went 'ome 'o nights 'e didn't much care whether 'is motor-bus pitched 'im over Battersea Bridge or no. Never took a breath of air, wasn't interested. Wasn't interested in anything. There are billions like 'im in England. Then the war came; and Ping! it got 'im. Got 'is 'eart somehow. Got no sleep o' night, 'e didn't.....nearly blubbed over 'is paper every mornin'. Began to worry about somethin' worth worryin' about for a change.... Worried about what 'e could do to 'elp. 'E thought about it so much that when there was talk at 'is office about the push for a good few of them --- 'Ell! says 'e! That settles it, and 'e ups and enlists, Gawd bless 'im! That was when 'e first begun to find out what Life is, and if 'e finds out what Death is, too, before 'e's much older, what does 'e care.... Ain't that death better than moulderin' away of dry-rot? And if you want to make sure I'm speakin' the truth -- go down Whitehall and see 'em still at it --- comin' up to the scratch in their thousands!

(With a sudden step forward she puts the English dummy's R. arm in the French one's L, and leaves them clumsily entwined) I'm glad to make you known to each other, that I am! You'll suit, you two!

(The Little Boy has by this time waken up and is watching.)

LITTLE BOY (Unexpectedly) Will you be wantin' that big Russian, mum? Shall I fetch 'im out for you?

YOUNG WOMAN (Smiling) You fetch 'im out? Go on with you! You couldn't fetch 'im out! Not alone!

LITTLE BOY (Indignantly) 'Course I could! (Runs up to alcove and lugs out a gigantic bearded dummy in a white and gold Russian uniform)

YOUNG WOMAN (As the dummy arrives at C) 'Ello, Mr Russian Dancer. Sorry to leave yer vodka and yer snowy wastes and sleigh-bells and all, aren't you? It's taken a bit of a while to get you all together, 'asn't it, living the lot of you at the other end of nowhere like you do? I say, the womenfolk you chaps have left behind'll be pretty lonely, won't they, with your houses and villages so far apart? Why, some of us are going to be pretty lonely 'ere in London, with crowds of folk all round. So -- excuse my giving you advice! -- polish off these Deitchers as quick as ever it's convenient, won't you, if it's only for your women's sakes. And you look to me as if you were to eat a couple of fat Germans it wouldn't do you any harm.. This way, please... (Wheeling him over into line with the other dummies) You'll find your friends over there. Now there's the whole lot of you together.

LITTLE BOY No, it ain't the lot of 'em, Mum. You've forgotten Belgium! (Commences to wheel down from back a small dummy in a characteristic Belgian uniform)

YOUNG WOMAN Why so I 'ad! I'd quite forgotten Belgium! But that's not funny, because everybody'd forgotten Belgium. Kaiser Wilhelm 'ad for one, I reckon! (Taking Belgian dummy

from small boy) But you soon taught 'im different, old dear, didn't you? 'E thought you was all sleepy old towns dating back to nine 'undred and something, with canals, and town-clocks in high belfrys chiming every seven minutes, and big ha'penny cigars, and American visitors. 'E didn't think you could put up any fight, did 'e, little 'un? 'E thought you'd make a present of yourself to 'im, and let 'im walk over you as soon as 'e frowned, didn't 'e? But 'e's 'ad to think back a bit, 'asn't 'e, my lad, and if things go as they ought to go, it'll be you, my little feller, as 'll 've saved the world! (wheeling him over into line with the other dummies) And now.. (facing them determinedly).. now that I've got you all together, there's something I want to say. You're fine fellows, all of you -- God forbid I should say any different. You're ready, the whole lot of you, to chuck your lives away for your countries, or to save each others lands from bein' wiped out by any mad bully who happens to have an army. Well, good luck to you, and three cheers, and three times three! Nobody'll be louder than me with the shouting, even if my own boy wasn't with you and one of you. But -- just listen 'ere -- fair's fair; and if you do get the bullets you get the splash, too, don't you? The bands, and the pictures in the paper, and the 'ero-worship everywhere? Cigarettes, and flowers, and chocolates 'anded to you as you march through strange towns, and cheerin' all the time, and the laurel-wreaths and scroll of fame to follow! Well, what I want to say, very gently, is -- where do we come in, we women 'oo stay at 'ome, who've given up our boys without a murmur, and 've just got to go on now, waiting and waiting, without even any news of what's appening, till you come back again? Give us our due, lads! There's not much splash for us, is there, we others on the hem of the flag? The kids 'ave got to be washed and fed as usual, 'aven't they? The 'ome's still got to be kept goin'? And it's no good doin' it with a glum face, is it? Well, don't all that want courage? -- some courage -- Come! Dull courage, if you like; just endur'ing sort of courage, the sort no one ever got any cheers for, but courage, all the same! 'Ow would you like your hour of trial to be that nothing 'appens, EVER? 'Our of trial, do I say? Day after day after day

and nothing to do but watch, and wait, and wonder, and 'ope, and dread, and p'rape, if you're made that way, to pray a bit...

(The little Boy has long before this lost interest, and is playing at soldiers in the background. The young woman sees it, and her voice breaks.)

YOUNG
WOMAN

(Pointing) And that going on in your backyard all the time. (Weeping) "Bang! There's another dead, Mum! Now I'm goin' to kill two more. 'Ain't I a clever boy?" (Throws herself on her knees; catches the child in her arms; sobs) And I'm such a silly kipper that if my man was dead, and Bob 'ere was grown, and the country needed 'im, I believe I'd let 'im go, too... (Weeps unrestrainedly)

(After a moment she rises, somewhat calmer. The little boy crosses over to dummies, carrying his wooden sword.)

YOUNG
WOMAN

Sorry for making a fool of myself. Can't 'elp givin' way sometimes, can you? I'm not down, really. A cup o' tea'll set me as right as rain... Only (Adressing Dummies) .. all you chaps, when you're comin' 'ome triumphant after it's all over, with your flags a flyin' and your bands a playin', remember the Hem of the Flag, the women who've waited for you, won't you? Be good to 'em. They deserve it.

LITTLE BOY (Shrilly) Cheer up, muvver! We 'preciate yer. (Sternly, to the dummies) 'Tention!

(The dummies straighten themselves up, stiffly)

Get ready to salute my muvver. The Woman what waits at 'ome. The muvver of us all! SA-LUTE!

(The little boy brings his wooden sword to the salute. The dummies stiffly imitate him.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.