

## The Comic Opera Army.

Additional light has been thrown on the Curragh mutiny, by the publication of a document drawn up by Sir Arthur Paget, explanatory of his share in the transaction. Sir Arthur it was who conveyed the orders of the War Office to the heads of the army in Ireland, and, like Colonel Seely, he exceeded his instructions. In fact, no matter in what light one regards the occurrence, there is evidence of blundering. First of all, Colonel Seely took it upon himself to add clauses to a document which expressed the clear and explicit view of the Cabinet, arrived at after anxious consideration—clauses which altered the whole tenour of the instructions to be conveyed to the military and condoned the dangerous doctrine that obedience in the higher ranks of the army is merely optional. It must be considered that this document was only issued after the insolent challenge to the authority of the Civil State had been delivered by General Gough and his fellow-officers, and at a time when it was imperative that there should be no ambiguity in the relations between the Cabinet and the heads of the army. Colonel Seely has taken full responsibility for this "mistake," though he has not explained to anybody's satisfaction why he tampered with the document, which said all that was required to be said, and definitely laid down the duty of the army. What really precipitated the mutiny was a military movement in Ulster, designed for the protection of arms stored in different centres, and on which it was feared Sir Edward Carson's volunteers would make a raid. The Government itself is notorious for its eleventh hour precautions. It might, for instance, have nipped the rebel movement in the bud. It preferred, however, to permit it to assume its present proportions, but surely it need not have waited until the actual eve of Home Rule, when excitement would naturally run high, to take measures for the preservation of the peace, and the protection of military stores. Sir Arthur Paget was placed in charge of the movement of troops to Ulster. Here is his own account of what occurred: "I explained to these officers that I had received orders to carry out certain moves of a precautionary nature. The Government believed that the precautionary nature of these moves would be understood, and that they would be carried out without resistance. I said that I personally did not share that opinion and that I thought the moves would create intense excitement, and that the country—and if not the country, then the Press—would be ablaze on the following day. I said that the moves might possibly lead to opposition, and might, even eventuate, and in the near future, in the taking of active operations against organised bodies of the Ulster volunteer force under their responsible leaders." It would seem from this that Sir Arthur Paget's conception of the duties of a soldier is almost as grotesque as that of General Gough, and that obedience to authority, instead of being a cardinal principle amongst the heads of the army, is honoured only in the breach. Military officers are notoriously bad judges of the trend of public feeling. Presumably Mr. Burrell was consulted in connection with the military dispositions in Ulster. As head of the Irish Government, he has exceptional opportunities of gauging the depth of popular sentiment. He knew perfectly well, like everybody who knows anything about Ireland, that Civil War is the thing most remote from the intentions of the Orangemen. Indeed, he should have known perfectly well, too, that protective measures on a large scale were unnecessary. As a matter of fact, the military movement, which, in the view of Sir Arthur Paget, presaged civil war, have since been carried as much as a hair of a policeman's head being hurt; without any excitement whatever; without any outcry in the Press. We must assume that Sir Arthur Paget was aware of the military plot to paralyse the Government. His speech in Dublin some months ago, when he promised to do his duty under all circumstances, was a tacit admission of the fact that the Tories had got at the heads of the army. We find him, however, using language which he had no authority to use, and for which subsequent events proved there was no justification to a body of highly inflammable military officers, whom any spark would have set Edward Carson himself could not have performed the task of transmitting the orders of the Government, had it being entrusted to him, with greater danger to the public safety. What strikes one about this entire business is