

A CHAT WITH THE DRISCOLLS.

Everybody who patronises the house of John Fuller and Sons knows these clever brothers, and I should like to see the person who could sit through half of their turn without being moved to merriment. It is good to hear the laughter that is evoked by their clever sketches. It sweeps across the audience in irresistible waves, and before one has time to recover, a fresh hit starts it going again. They are great favourites these merry fun-makers, and would be on half the evening if the audience had its way. As it is they have to answer to many recalls, and the fun lasts even after the fall of the curtain. Thinking that they must have some good stories to relate of their wanderings, I cornered them for a few, and here are one or two little incidents out of their extensive collection.

"We made a hit one night quite unexpectedly," said one of them. "We were playing in Dunedin on the night in question, and just before we were timed to go on we heard a lot of laughing and barracking in front. Scouting a possible gag we enquired into the cause of the amusement, and found that a well-known character had taken a seat right in the front of the house and had on a new panama hat. We saw our opening in a flash and shot on. Have you heard the latest? said my brother. No! what is it? Why Archie's got a new Panama!" It set them off all right and it took us a long time to get a hearing, I can tell you."

"How about your trip to Manila?" I asked, "you must have had a few experiences there?" "Oh, yes! it was a bit funny there sometimes. Our adventures began before we reached there, when our steamer ran into the tail end of a typhoon. There were a good number of us on board bound for the Orpheum Theatre, and among others were Madame Lotti, two of the Williams quartette, and the Chrystal Sisters. Madame Lotti, who considered herself too good a sailor to be upset by the heavy rolling of the ship, persisted in drinking very black coffee, so one of us remarked to her that she must be a really good sailor.

"Ah yes, Msiou Driscoll, very good," she said, and just then the boat giving an extra long roll in the seas even Madame was upset. "You are not such a good sailor after all, Madame," we said. "Oh dear no, no; to-day," said Madame deprecatingly, and everybody laughed in spite of the weather.

"The audiences at Manila are a pretty mixed lot," said one of the brothers. "You get Americans, Philipinos and coloured gentlemen of all descriptions. When we first landed we knew very little about American ways, and on our first evening we went as flat as a pancake, couldn't raise a smile in spite of all we could do. So we went to the manager and asked for our return tickets. He wouldn't hear of it, however, and said that things would be all right in a night or two. So we set to work and re-wrote pretty well all of our available stock of gags and songs, and after that we had a great run.

One evening we played at Cavite, just across the bay from Manila, and there was a big crowd of soldiers at the show. We were doing one of our dances mostly on one foot, and the crowd commenced singing out "The other foot!" "The other foot!" We stuck to the first step for about three recalls, and each time we came on the clamour grew louder. Then at last we changed just as the audience reckoned they had got us beaten and the applause was deafening. They are a funny crowd like that, and if they think you cannot do what they want, they reckon you are no good.

The rainy season is the time there though, and it is no uncommon sight to see the boys going round with refreshments in the body of the hall with their trousers rolled up to the knee. The floor gets fairly flooded in spite of the barricades that are put up at the doors, and you see people sitting with their feet up on the seats in front. It just comes down in a steady deluge for days, and one has to wear rubber overcoats and rubber boots in order to keep decently dry.

You have some lively room-mates in the hotels there, consisting of regular old men cockroaches, and big lizards that make a sort of whistling noise. The cockroaches are demons, being about twice as large as the ordinary species, and they eat holes in your clothing while you sleep. I don't know what would happen if some of them got inside the mosquito netting that envelopes the bed. I believe the beggars would eat you alive."

"Did you have any earthquakes while you were in the Phillipines?" I asked, knowing that the islands have got a great

reputation for tremors. "There were two that made a lasting impression on us." "One shake lasted a minute and a-half, and as it was in the night and the lights went out, leaving us in total darkness with the floor seeming to roll under our feet, well! we thought we were not going to see New Zea and again.

Our last adventure in the Phillipines might easily have rung the curtain down on us, and I think we were very lucky to escape as we did. We had left Manila, bound for Australia, and one evening the steamer dropped anchor at a place called Zamboanga, the last port of call for outward bound ships. Thinking there might be something to be seen there we got permission to go ashore, and found the place was full of American soldiers. After wandering about for a while in the darkness, we found that someone was shadowing us, and presently a negro came up and advised us to go on board the ship. After he had been at us two or three times we thought there might be something in it so we cleared, and going on board found an American officer there, who, in answer to our enquiries as to whether the place was safe, took off his helmet and pointed to a bullet hole in it. "I caught that last night," he drawled, "it's a wonder you didn't collect one." Then we went thankfully below.

About the funniest thing of the lot happened in Adelaide. We were strolling along the street after a performance, four of us together, and stood talking opposite some pie stalls at the corner of a street. Suddenly a man lurched up and hit my brother a bang behind the ear, bowling him over in the road. I was standing a bit to one side of him talking and did not notice what had happened, and my brother getting to his feet was promptly knocked down again. Then the man made a run at him, and my brother's feet caught him in the wind and



MR. EDWIN BROOK, a favourite baritone singer, with the World's Pictures.

curled him up on the pavement in front of me. Thinking the man was drunk and had fallen over, I carefully assisted him to his feet, and next minute got a terrible bash in the eye that flattened me out completely. Then the man cleared, and we afterwards learned that he had mistaken us for somebody else.

Madame Dolores is drawing splendid houses at the Sydney Town Hall.

The Dunedin Amateurs will shortly produce the ever popular opera "Dorothy."

"Erminie" is shortly to be staged by the Christchurch Amateurs. The name conjures up visions of Billy Elton on one of his best roles.

The Steele-Payne Family, who are at present at Ballarat, will make another tour of the colony very shortly.

Mr Harry Rickards' Vaudeville Company will play a short season at His Majesty's from October 8 to October 17.

Those who are fond of living pictures will be glad to know that the popular West-Brescians will be here in October 20 for a long return season.

"Much Ado About Nothing" will be read by the Auckland Shakespeare Society at the Y.M.C.A. Hall to-morrow evening.

Wirth's Circus will make a tour of New Zealand before very long.

Mr J. C. Williamson has concluded an agreement with Miss Olive Morrell, one of Mr George Edwardes' most popular principals, who will come out to Australia to take part in the pantomime at Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne this year. All those who collect post cards will be already familiar with Miss Morrell's beautiful face and figure. The lady also bears the distinction of being one of the best dressed women in London.

George Fuller Golden, out here last year, is still in ill health, and was lately given a benefit in New York, realising £1000.

In the performance of "La Poupée," to be given at Her Majesty's, Melbourne, on the 12th of September, in aid of the Foundling Home, just on one hundred children will take part. In addition to the opera, a big dancing scene has been arranged. The children shape well (says "Punch"), and are wonderfully clever. The Aletia of the production is just six years of age, the Lancelot twelve. These young people are singing all the music allotted to them without a note being out.

An Australasian tour of "The Little Stranger" commences in Melbourne on October 20. Mr Allan Hamilton will be in charge.

Mr Leslie Harris, the entertainer, is an enthusiastic golfer, and it was not long after his arrival in Auckland before he found his way out to the links at Cornwall Park.

Mr Chambers was recently asked if he had any advice to would-be dramatists, and the brilliant author of "The Tyranny of Tears" and a dozen other greatly successful plays replied as follows:—"The only way to learn play-writing is

urbs. A romantic and gallant farm hand had saved the hero at the expense of his own life—and was slowly, too slowly for the hour, dying from the awful effects of the blank cartridge. His sweetheart was by his side, tending the crimson stain on his shirt front, and he looked up into her face and said, with long spun out effort, "Give us a buss, lass! Just one buss—for the last!" At which a cruel gallery-ite who was anxiously consulting his watch, cried down, "What about my last bus?"

Mr Fred Franich, of Auckland, a twelve months pupil of Professor Potter's, is said to be the most perfectly developed man now in New Zealand. Some of his measurements are really remarkable, and are worth recording. Here they are:—Height, 5ft 9½in; weight, 14st 4½lb; neck, 24in; upper arm, 18in; forearm, 14½in; chest, 48in; chest expansion, 11in; thigh, 25in; calf, 16½in. The muscular development of the arm is wonderful, while the chest expansion is simply enormous. With such powerful muscles it is to be expected that Franich can do something big in the weight-lifting line, and such is indeed the case. Forming a bridge from his head and heels he can support a 200lb bar, bell, and three men on his chest, the total weight being 660 lbs. He is able to lift a 15cwt motor car, and in harness can raise over a ton. A number of other feats, which would make two average men look foolish, are done with the utmost ease. So that Auckland may judge for themselves, Franich will give an exhibition at the Federal Hall on September 12, when doctors, athletes, pressmen and others will be invited to test the genuine nature of the performance. This modern Hercules will shortly go on tour, visiting Whangarei and the Waikato, and will afterwards go South to the Christchurch Exhibition.

According to an exchange, Carl Hertz, the popular illusionist, has produced at Keith and Proctor's Twenty-third-street which has set New York wondering. It is called "The Bridal Chamber," and is in the line of cabinet mysteries. He transforms the interior of a cabin, the walls of which are constructed solely of draperies, from absolute emptiness to a completely furnished boudoir, with bedstead, mattresses, pillows and linen, and bearing also the sleeping figure of his clever assistant, Mme. Hertz.

The sensational play, "Thunderbolt," by Mr Ambrose Pratt and Mr A. J. Joseph, will be produced at the Melbourne Theatre Royal by Mr Wm. Anderson's company on Saturday night, September 1.

The veteran actor, Mr Edmund Holloway, died at his residence, "Chowring-hie," Garden-street, South Yarra (Melbourne), on Saturday evening (says the "Referee"). Mr Holloway was a prominent figure on the stage in the days of G. V. Brooke, but until recently was with Mr Alfred Dampier.

Miss Nellie Stewart, writing to a friend, says that her Chicago season has been a great success. Press notices to hand confirm the statement. The local "Examiner" says that the star was treated to an ovation, and that a number of Australians from the local colleges "buried her beneath flowers," and gave her a reception "as only youth 10,000 miles away from home would have the courage to express."

Mr Edward Lauri, the comedian, who has just returned to England from Australia, is shortly to appear at the London halls in a pantomime sketch.

In the June number of "Cassell's Magazine" Mr George Cecil relates the life history and triumph of the most famous tenor of the day. He led an eventful life in his native Naples till he was old enough to take the Italian equivalent for the King's shilling. It was while staggering beneath the weight of the knapsack in which, according to a French authority, there reposes a Marshal's baton, that the adolescent Caruso developed the voice which was—at no distant date—destined to entrance all civilised Europe and North and South America. For though he had worn the operatic sword and poignard before learning to train the guns of his battery on an imaginary enemy, the young artilleryman had not made his mark on the stage. He asked to be entered on his attestation papers as "lyric artist." Caruso's blythe comrades dubbed him "Il figlio del Maggiore," and from being the butt of the battery he became its chief ornament. "Il tenore Caruso," said the men of war when presenting him to soldiers from other regiments. "Here's your health and song!" returned his listeners.

to write plays, and the only chance of getting them accepted is to read them to managers. It's not a bit of use posting a MS. to a theatre, because no man approaches a play with the feeling that he is going to read a masterpiece. What I mean is that a manager reads so many plays, mostly bad or indifferent, that it is not surprising if he fails to recognise a good one when he comes across it. Then, again, in reading his own play, an author can convey to some extent the atmosphere he has tried to create; he can bridge over the gap that yawns between the cold text and the play in action. My advice to authors is, read your plays to managers, and if you don't read well, practise till you do."

Wit from the Gallery.—A waggish occupant of the gallery at a house of musical comedy shouted the other night to a pretty but more than somewhat indistinct lady artist, "Don't be nervous, my dear; it's only me!" At another theatre where the fare is comedy without the music, one of the "gods" called down to an actor who had just finished making rather a long speech, "Will you say that again, please? I didn't hear it!" A most disturbing remark of the "speak up" order was that made to a very romantic actor who was making love in absurdly low tones to a lady whose wrongly arranged attitude—she was somewhat inexperienced—obliged him to turn with his back to the audience. "Let's hear the story, gov'nor—if it ain't improper!" The funniest reminder to the people on the stage of the lateness of the hour was uttered during a very tearful death scene in a melodrama in the sub-