

With the Merry Little Dutch Trio

By WALTER ANTHONY

THEY are a breezy trio. First there's Mary Marble, then there's Mr. Sam Chip, and last and by no means least there's John W. Dunne. Miss Marble is really Mrs. John W. Dunne, and I should call her Merry. Mr. Chip is appropriately supplied with a proper patronymic. By no other name would he be quite so funny, and Mr. John W. Dunne fathers the sketch at the Orpheum and runs things generally, to the extent at least that a married man is expected to control. My suspicion, after a chat with the Delit players is that Mrs. Dunne—with her merry chuckle and vivacious manner—is, after all, the boss of the quaint combination. But that is as it should be, and usually is.

We talked separately, two at a time, and all together. Never was an interview so beautifully scrambled. We jumped from the sixties, when Dunne first came to California, via the isthmus of Panama, to the day before yesterday, when Miss Marble said she was afraid she had cracked her chuckle. That chuckle, by the way, is better off stage than on, and it isn't cracked at all. When Dunne told me about getting his financial support from Joe L. Eppinger to back "Florodora," Sam chipped in (I knew I'd do that) with a story about his valet.

I'll try and pick out some of the fragments of the most enjoyable chatter.

ONCE Sam, who wears Dutch curls at the Orpheum this week and sings and dances, had a valet. He was playing in Herbert's and Glen MacDonough's "Wonderland." The play with the little Sam in it started out at the Majestic in New York, and then was sent out on the road. Sam says he felt he should enjoy the dignity which comes of hiring a valet. He's so little that the suggestion of the need for some one to dress him up and mend his clothes seems not absurd at all. He got a Hungarian giant. Not that he picked out the big fellow, but rather he was forced upon him. He came in answer to an ad, "and I wasn't big enough to tell him he wouldn't do," says Chip.

From the very first he developed a capacity to forget—this Hungarian did. "I said nothing for a while," says Sam, "but finally I plucked courage, and on the occasion of another of his forgetful tricks I went after him. Might as well do it good, I thought, so I finished by saying some things uncomplimentary and not printable. Then I fastened the titles on him. I waited for the end. We were in the dressing room and the sound of my screams for help would likely be drowned by the orchestra. I waited and took a peck at him. He was weeping.

"It seems, so he said, that he had just received

word that his wife was suing him for divorce. I apologized for being rough with him, under such trying circumstances, and forgave the giant magnanimously. For a week I forgave him. Then one day he forgot my shoes. It was a matinee, and I didn't feel good anyhow. I went after him again and told him what my sentiments were with reference to his monumental stupidity. As before, the big Hungarian wept. This time his baby had died. By the time we reached Springfield he had killed off his family of four children, divorced his wife, buried his father and mother and three beloved sisters. Every time I scolded him he wept and killed another relative. It was becoming too sanguinary, so I fired him.

YOU know it was Dunne, Ryley and Fisher who owned "Florodora." A lawsuit between Dunne, on the one hand, and Ryley and Fisher, on the other, resulted in a compromise being effected whereby Dunne was paid a certain sum and was frozen out, as he expresses it.

"It's strange," said Dunne to me in the little dressing room at the Orpheum, after he had removed all traces of his impersonation of the wicked Dutch uncle. "It's strange, but do you know that the only 'good' money that 'Florodora' ever paid to any one of its three first owners was the compromise payment made to me, when sickness drove me to accept what was a ridiculously small amount for my equity in the comic opera?"

"I believe I have a Christian disposition in this matter. I do not say it with any sentiment of exultation in my heart, but I got the only money out of 'Florodora' that ever did any good. It made fortunes for both Ryley and Fisher, after I had been squeezed out of the firm. It made \$1,000,000, I dare say, and both became wealthy men. But everything they touched, theatrically, after that failed, until not a cent of the earnings of the original 'Florodora' in this country remains in the hands of its owners, except one. I took my bit and bought a home in West End, Long Branch—that's in New Jersey—and we have the home still.

"I would not have compromised my suit against Ryley and Fisher if I had not been sick at the time and in a hospital. I had won the first points in the case and would have won them all had I stuck; but the temptation of the ready money and the importunities of my friends decided me to accept the compromise offered, and now I'm glad I did."

Fisher had made some money as manager for Modjeska and built a theater in San Diego. John Dunne and Thomas C. Ryley were here at the California theater playing a season of Hoyt's farces. "Florodora" was making a great hit in London, but the American rights to the piece had gone begging

and so they were easily bought. Eppinger supplied Dunne's end of the purse and George Lask took the play after Frohman and Klaw & Erlanger had turned it down. Lask was sent to London; that was in 1900; Frank Pixley tinkered the book out of much of its criticism, and the result is history, all save Dunne's story of his home in New Jersey, which is all that's left of the visible signs of 'Florodora's' huge money making qualities.

"THE older the joke," clipped in Miss Marble, "the harder they laugh at it in New York."

"I don't like to see men in the audience. I'd rather play to women and children.

"This little playlet, 'In Old Edam,' is nothing but a fairy story. But everybody believes in 'fairies. Didn't you ever see 'Peter Pan'?"

"'Temperance Town' is one of the greatest satires ever written. It will not grow old.

"Gertrude Hoffman was in the chorus when we played at the California theater eight years ago. Now look at her.

"Mrs. (Anna Marble) Channing Pollock wrote the piece for us. She is my first cousin, but she doesn't complain.

"I believe the public—vaudeville public—likes the clean and wholesome. I have only surprise to exhibit in front of some presentations which managers think the people like.

"Give me vaudeville. It's easier.

"Louise Gunning was another notable that played small parts with us at the California—us' meaning Matthews and Bulger, Walter Jones, Dunne and some others.

"There's an awful lot of fraud in the world. For instance, I don't like 'leming' pie.

"Criticism is great from a player's standpoint when it says your act is good. There's no other kind of criticism. The rest is abuse. Ask any actor."

These and other things Miss Marble dropped into the contribution plate of our interview at odd and unexpected moments. She says she does not talk consecutively, but only as the spirit moves her.

She has black hair, and not blonde, as you may suppose, seeing her diminutive little person on the other side of the footlights, and her eyes are black, and not blue. She twinkles in a steady glow of merriment, and is a tonic for the tired and troubled. The spirit of fun is her slave, apparently, and when she rubs the lamp the genie appears gleefully. I do not think she works on the stage at all. She plays. She is very quaint, sunny and merry. As a comedienne

her happy moments are not confined to her professional appearances.

With Sam Chip she made her vaudeville debut only the beginning of the present season at Percy G. Williams' Colonial theater in New York, and was surprised to find that vaudeville audiences laugh much as musical comedy audiences—whenever they are amused. So she made an immediate hit as she did in "Dream City" and "Babes in Toyland."

It may be interesting to note that on the occasion of her vaudeville debut Mrs. Joseph Jefferson, widow of the late star of "Rip Van Winkle," sat in a box and applauded. She is a cousin of Miss Marble.

DUNNE's father was a carpenter who came to California in 1860 seeking better conditions than those existing in the more crowded east. Dunne remembers staging it from San Francisco to San Jose, where the family took up its abode. There were no trains then. He went to school in San Jose, and learned the printing business.

"Many times," said Dunne, "I found that trade of use to me when the theatrical fodder was low and work out of sight. I have gone back to the case a hundred times, but the dramatic virus can not be destroyed, and I always came back to the profession again."—Dunne worked on the Figaro, on the Dramatic Chronicle and on the Alta Californian. Three pioneer papers they were.

Amateur theatricals lured him first. This happened in San Jose. "My first appearance on any stage was as a female impersonator. Think of it!" said this young looking veteran.

"I played Elizabeth, who was the wife of the farmer in 'The Golden Farmer,' which was a lurid play at the time. I looked the part, I guess, because I was no more than a boy, and my cheeks were not bristling with stubble then. I remember one scene where I had to do a sort of Davy Crockett act, putting my arm through the hasp and staple of the kitchen door and defying the minions of the law, or the desperadoes, whoever they were, to come in and take my husband away. I thought it was a great scene and that I did it with tremendous impressiveness. After that I used to steal away from home whenever the chance arrived and sneak to the theater.

"The leading man at the theater in San Jose in those days was Samuel W. Piercy, and when I got on the boards now and then, he would give me valuable hints as to my department. He was a great hit then, and later became leading man for Edwin Booth. I remember his big appearance in San Francisco with John McCullough. It was in 'Othello,' and Piercy played Iago to the former's Moor of Venice. Well, when Booth took Piercy away I became leading man in the San Jose playhouse. That was a proud moment for me, but not too profitable. Poor Piercy

died subsequently of smallpox, after he had married Miss Dunphy, a bell of this city, and daughter of a millionaire.

"Players from Maguire's opera house in San Francisco used to come to San Jose and borrow me for small parts in their city presentations, and finally went out on the road. We got as far as Hayward and stranded. Somehow or other I reached San Francisco, found the town full of experienced actors, and fell back on my trade. We used to make money then. Seventy-five cents, agate type, and I was a good compositor. Every time I got a little ahead I'd go back to the theater game again. I subscribed around the printing shops and finally landed a permanent place on the Figaro. I remember old Bogardus well. He was a kindly soul and a struggler. The city was filled in those times with cheap underground theaters—dives they were in some instances, but many a good player has grown up through those environments. Bogardus used to write in his magazine little personals about the players. Then he'd drop around and read one to an actor. It would be always kindly. 'Of course,' he'd say, 'you don't have to pay me for this, and it won't make any difference to me if you don't; but advertising is pretty slim these days.' Of course, the flattered thespian would 'come through' with a dollar, and Bogardus was content."

SO THE theatrical game progressed. Sometimes Dunne was a printer and sometimes he was an actor; but always, he tells me, quite content with his lot, and looking forward to better things. So now as then. Although Dunne is approaching the time when men are called old—well past the 60 year mark—he does not look it, and he does not feel it. He wears a jaunty straw hat, his eyes are bright as ever, and he says he owes his self-preservation to the fact that he never permits himself to go without a cigar or a drink.

"Thus," said he, "I keep my temper normal. I do not get excited and I do not worry because I'm dry or suffer because I'm hungry. I eat when I choose and what I like, and there's a certain brand of Bourbon—but I'll deliver no temperance lecture.

"Don't worry—that's my motto. We are having a fine time with this sketch of ours. When the season is over there is our 'Florodora' home waiting for us. Mrs. Dunne is as reasonable as a woman should be (with a wink), and she never scolds. We are paying our way as we go, and I, personally, am inclined to look on life as a very enjoyable institution and one from which the best may be got if you don't worry."

There's very little in Dunne, you see, to remind one of the terrible Dutch uncle with the frightful disposition.

Augustus Phillips, the Alcazar's New Leading Man

WILLIAM FAVERSHAM has played "The Squaw Man" for you and me, for a consideration, and so has Dustin Farnum. That's what is making Mr. Augustus Phillips nervous now, for he is to be the third, and will make his Alcazar debut and his first San Francisco appearance in Edwin Milton Royle's drama.

"Those are hard men to follow," says Augustus Phillips, who is to be the new leading man at the Alcazar theater during a season of plays in which he hopes to make good.

Modesty is not the usual grace of a leading man. Few possess it, actually; few simulate it successfully, and still fewer cultivate it. I should say, after a single interview, which started on the "drammer" and roamed freely away, that modesty is a cardinal and quite unconscious virtue in the temperamental makeup of this man of the stage.

Phillips has played, perhaps, more leading roles than any other player of his age before the public. He has been a stock actor for eleven years in Brooklyn and in Broadway, not to mention many tours with the cast which Mrs. Mary Gibbs Spooner assembled, controlled and directed.

I was somewhat surprised that after so long a term at leading business in stock, Phillips should willingly return to the somewhat arduous duties of that position, after having been a successful star for a season (last season) in "The Wolf."

Money wasn't the only reason, though Mr. Frederic Belasco, manager of the Alcazar and spotter for the best there is in the spot light of the east, says he had to "go some" to bring Phillips out here. By which I inferred he meant that he had to "pay some," which fact Phillips himself did not discuss with me. But Phillips says:

"I think this engagement, if I make good, will be the beginning of a bigger and better career for me. You may know it or you may not, but the fact remains that in New

York the Alcazar theater has the reputation of being the best stock organization in the United States. I do not say this because I am now identified with it, but as a simple matter of fact. It has that reputation. To come here and leave with a record of success is the best reputation an actor or actress could reasonably seek. That's one reason I'm here.

"Besides, I have not the 'starring bee' in my bonnet. I want to make such a name for myself that when the producing managers of the east are assembling Broadway casts, they'll say, referring my way; 'He's the man we need.' A successful engagement will help earn that reputation for me.

ONE trouble with theatricals in the east, particularly in New York, is that the profession has become a devoted slave to 'types.' Of course, there are cultured, 'all round' players, but mainly actors exploit, or are called upon to exploit, personality. I knew a case which arose recently where a certain vaudeville sketch was being made ready for the public. The promoter was willing to spend much money on the production, and as his bookings and profits were secured, he jingled money in his purse and was qualified to get the best. One of the roles—and it was the principal part—was of the sort I speak. It was a type. Instead of engaging an actor, with training and experience on the stage, or tentatively adequate training in a school of acting, he engaged a man who had been for many years wrestling with trunks in touring theatrical companies. The man happened to fit the role, in the producer's estimation, and to do the fellow justice, I must say that he answered all the requirements after a two months' drilling in the role. Instead of 'ports' he is now an actor; and has been taught, parrotlike, I should say, to do exactly what he was told to do. It is a success, however, and perhaps he may live and die playing the same role, for vaudeville

sketches, when prosperous, are never withdrawn, you know.

THE struggle for existence is thus becoming keener, and a player who proposes to make a success of himself must be able to stand the test of thoroughness. He must know his business from a to z, and that's another reason why I anticipate great profit and pleasure from this engagement, if I only make good.

"The Squaw Man" is a difficult play in which to make a San Francisco debut, not alone from the fact that two such eminent artists as Faversham and Farnum have played it here, but because the first act—and this counts for more than you think—affords no particular opportunity for the leading man. It is a hard act to 'get by.' It is not a structural weakness in the drama, but one of the exigencies which arises out of the logic of circumstances. I have no chance in the first act. That was why I wanted to appear first in 'The Taming of Helen,' which will follow 'The Squaw Man.' I wanted it to precede it. No actor could ask for a better or more complete opportunity to make a successful first appearance, and on first impressions in this business, the stock in trade of which is impressions, how much depends!"

PHILLIPS was born and raised in Indiana and his first theatrical experiences were gleaned under his brother's wing, his brother being a well known and popular repertoire player in the east and middle west; also he (William Phillips) was for many seasons a Kalfaly star.

Augustus Phillips was but a youngster when he severed his association with his brother and struck out for himself. That was 14 years ago, and as the head of "Phillips' Ideals," a fine fancy name for a youngster's first company, he played royalty plays about the country. He never came west, however.

"To Mrs. Spooner I owe all I am or ever

shall be in the theatrical profession. For six years I played in her companies as leading man, either at her playhouse in Fifth avenue or in Brooklyn or at Lincoln square, Sixty-sixth Street and Broadway. It was my privilege to play opposite Edna May Spooner, one of the most popular of eastern actresses."

The engagement in "The Wolf" was Phillips' plum by a mere chance. And that leads him to say: "With 10 actors who have succeeded, nine owe the event to opportunity."

Phillips' opportunity to become a star in one of the notable productions of a season ago came through the fact that Eugene Walter's play, "The Undertow," was staged at the Fifth Avenue theater while Phillips was leading man there. The playwright Walter came to see a performance. Phillips was in the role of the newspaperman. Walter remembered him and when J. C. Huffman, general stage director for the Shuberts, was getting the cast for "The Wolf" Walter said: "See Phillips." Huffman did and the engagement followed as a matter of course, because Phillips had learned to play something besides a personality or a single role. Jules Beaubien, the French Canadian in "The Wolf," is not much like the newspaperman in "The Undertow."

It is that search for thoroughness that appeals to me as one of Phillips' most characteristic traits—and most valuable.

"When the part was assigned to me," he said, "I took a little journey into the north-east. I have a brother-in-law who is land agent up there for a penetrating railroad. He is a French Canadian, and so I took my script and some books and went pioneering myself.

"Ah, that is a wonderful country. You do not dream what a magnificent, great country it is. Some day it will be the home of a prosperous and numerous people. You can drive a wagon through their fields of wheat and oats, and horses and vehicle and even the tip of the whip will be hidden from sight. I spent several weeks with my

brother in law in Calgary and picked up much that was later of value to me in my portrayal of the role of Jules. An Ojibwa squaw, by the way, made me a gift of a sash which I used in the play. She made the garment herself. It is nine inches wide and nearly five feet long. The trappers and guides in that country use the sash as well as admire its gaudy colors. Wrapped skillfully around the waist it serves as a knapsack holder. The knapsacks are of buckskin, water tight and in it the natives carry their provision and their matches. The sash is used in making portage for their canoes from stream to stream. It is knotted around the light craft, which is then carried easily on the back.

BUT Walter did not get his impressions of which he set forth in "The Wolf" from this particular section. He went farther north, though there is little difference in the manners or the men.

I made the acquaintance of some of the mounted Canadian police. It is one of the greatest and most effective organizations in the world. They are brave fellows, who carry their law in one hand and their gun in the other. They make few mistakes in arrests and are a most potent influence in restraint of wrong doing. Indeed, the people up there are law abiding, even though removed from civilization's superficial manifestations. Only the halfbreeds cause trouble.

Walter is a strange personality. He lives and moves and has his being in the theater, and is happiest when watching a rehearsal, which, by the way, he does not appear to watch at all. He walks nervously about and habitually fumbles with his watch charm. His nerves seem hung on a hair trigger. Without looking up he will call out of the darkness from a remote corner of the theater to the actor on the stage, "No, that's not my idea. This is how it should be read." Then he will proceed to explain and his powers are keen and discriminating.

And, incidentally, according to Manager Cohn, these arguments are held to justify any advertising, however sensational, which may bring theatergoers to witness a performance in the last analysis highly moral and proper.

William Morris' Career

THE arrival of William Morris in San Francisco about the time that the Shuberts come in the legitimate field lends interest to theatrical affairs in this city. Morris represents in vaudeville what the Shuberts stand for in the other branch of the stage business. That is to say, Morris is an independent. The Morris attractions will be played at the Valencia, and Walter Hoff Seely is general manager. From the offices of his publicity department I glean the following somewhat curtailed account of Morris' career. The story I give you is as it is given to me. It shows at least what the Morris publicity man thinks about his energetic superior:

Morris is the idol of the artist. He is the sole bulwark which has maintained an "opposition." The theatricals

of America are so intertwined, interwoven and complex that there is but one man in the variety branch of present importance, who stands clear of all entanglements with any combination—and that man is Morris.

Through his independence, he has become one of the foremost figures in theatricals. By many he is claimed to be the foremost figure in vaudeville, for he stands alone.

From the coal and ice delivery, where Morris worked from 5:30 a. m. until 8 p. m., he graduated into a grocery upon becoming able to speak the language. He remained a grocery clerk until the age of 15, throwing up a position paying him \$29 per week to accept a job with a publishing house in Broadway for \$3.50 weekly. The publishing house issued a trade journal. Morris was promoted to the rank of advertising solicitor.

The times were prosperous. Morris was an energetic "hustler," and at 17 Printers' Ink published his photograph on the front page as the marvel of the trade.

Shortly after the "silver panic" of the nineties Morris had reached an earning capacity of \$200 weekly in his profession as a solicitor of ads. Believing

with this provision contingent, he had been declined by him.

By the "old horse" Morris referred to the time 24 years ago when he landed in New York with his parents, immigrants from Germany, and at the immature age of 11 drove an ice and coal wagon for the helpful support of his family. William Morris was born at Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1873.

On February 12 (Lincoln's birthday), 1907, when "William Morris" booking office had been swept off its support overnight, leaving but Morris and his clerks, the sweep moving with it an income estimated at from \$125,000 to \$200,000 a year, William Morris wore a smile and said, "I guess I'll have to start all over again. If the worst should happen I'll go look up the old horse, but that sign shall never be changed."

By the "sign" Morris referred to his business trademark, "William Morris," which he has retained since he opened his own booking office almost two decades ago. No offer yet made has induced Morris to allow his identity to be lost. Many tempting inducements, however, Morris is the idol of the artist. He is the sole bulwark which has maintained an "opposition." The theatricals

William Morris, "Three Weeks" and Other Impending Subjects

ALREADY the controversy starts over "Three Weeks," and though discussion and even condemnation are sometimes regarded by shrewd theatrical managers and publicity men to be good advertising, the following letter is itself intrinsically interesting and is hence set forth as follows:

Walter Anthony, dramatic editor, Call—Dear Sir: Not long ago Governor Hughes of New York signed a bill enacted by the legislature declaring it to be a misdemeanor to advertise, present or participate in any immoral or impure drama, play or exhibition "which would tend to the corruption of the morals of youth or others."

Now, of late years the stage has run to patridity unlimited. Tales have been told of a shocking nature, situations developed so suggestive as to cause innocent auditors to feel ashamed. The broadcast allusions have been made with perfect freedom. And in the main, to no good purpose.

The average theatrical manager cares nothing for the play as a missionary agent, but everything for its drawing powers, and this was never better exemplified than in the placarding of "Three Weeks" by the American theater management. Elinor Glyn's story is sa-

lacious to an intolerable degree, but it is billed as "a powerful moral lesson." It is nothing more than a shock to the finer sensibilities.

The American theater management advises to "see Three Weeks and learn to love your wife," which, in my opinion, is the most obnoxious appeal ever placarded. It is only slightly worse, however, than another flared-up line:

"Take your affinity to see 'Three Weeks.'"

These and other exhibitions of a lack of taste prove to the discerning the fact that theatrical managers are not concerned at all about the morals of productions which they proffer, but look only to the box office, to which they hope to lure the public by suggestiveness if now downright indecency.

The public too often looks vainly to the hired reviewers of the press for sharp condemnation of plays of this salacious sort. If the critics will not warn, from whom shall help come? A morbid curiosity to see and hear unhealthy things will always provide patrons for plays that should not be. Instead of fostering and cultivating this mental attitude toward the drama critics should refuse to lend themselves

to exploitation of purient productions which managers present regardless of public propriety and morals. Yours for clean drama,

MRS. FLORENCE NARKES, 929 Devisadero street, San Francisco.

"That is not the first letter that I have seen," said Manager Cohen, of the American theater, "complaining about this production. I have had many of them. They indicate merely the lack of proper understanding of the aims and issues of Elinor Glyn's work."

"I met her when in New York and was much impressed with her defense of the book. So much so that I invited her to come here this summer and lecture on the subject. She will be here, but whether she will lecture I can not say now."

"She told me that nobody was more surprised than she at the enormous popularity the book achieved."

"While writing it," said she, "my mind was intent on the message I thought it was given me to deliver to the public. A false interpretation was responsible for a general misconstruing of this message; the public concerning itself more with the sensational features of the book than with

the truths which alone they could establish.

"I made the queen a vivacious, high minded woman, healthy and full of the joy of life. Her marriage was one of convenience, and it was to the evils of royal matings such as these that I wanted to call horrified attention. So I made the king the loathsome creature he is pictured to be. Beside him stands this victim wife. The hideousness of this union is made the center impulse of book and play. I contend against marriages of this sort, whether for social station or wealth. I defend divorce when it annuls the evils which grow out of such unions. My end and aim has been to appeal to the finer impulses of the people so that public opinion might be aroused and such unions might be relegated with other evils of a too highly organized civilization to the past.

"I hint with some plainness at the duty owed future generations and to the health of the unborn. The evil is not an imaginary one, as the effete and depleted families of the nobility too frequently prove. Out of these arguments, whether left between the covers of my book or exhibited on the

stage, grows the intrinsic though blunt morality of my work."

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