

A Message and a Story from Billy Merson.

Interviewed by THE EDITOR.

When I called on the great little comedian, Billy Merson, at the Palladium recently, I found him vigorously engaged in a sparring bout with an officer, who was about twice his size and weight. If Billy had not taken to the comedian business he would have done great things in the ring, judging by his show on this occasion.

To say the least, Mr. Merson is one of the most courteous gentlemen I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Asked if he had any message for me to give the Canadians through the medium of the "Bulletin," he said: "Yes, you can tell the boys from me that I wish them all the luck in the world—that I have followed their exploits throughout this war with the greatest of interest and admiration; they have been wonderful, and I am delighted to think of the tremendous way in which they answered the call to the Colours. They deserve the best that's coming to them, and when they get back to Canada I hope they will not forget the admiration we have for them."

The real, sincere way in which this message was given to me would surprise those who have seen Mr. Merson on the stage. He went on to relate an experience he had recently, which he said I could tell the boys. I will give it to you in his own words:

"It's rather singular," said Mr. Merson, "but a Canadian—at least he said he was—called at the stage door the other evening, and on being asked his business he informed my dresser that he *must* see Mr. Merson personally. It was important. So I agreed to see him. Expecting to be greeted with at least a "Good evening, Mr. Merson," he came in, and on catching sight of me started off in a most excitable manner, throwing his arms about now and again to emphasise any special points. 'So you are Billy Merson, eh?' he said. 'I am,' I got in quickly. I expected trouble. 'I've been watching your turn, Mr. Merson, and I think it's absolutely rotten! Call yourself a comedian? Ah! ah! why you can't sing! You can't act! You're not even funny! You want me to show you how to sing "The good ship Yac-a-nickey-doolah" (my own song). You don't know *how* to sing it. Look here, my lad, I have played before *Generals*! *Generals*, mind you, no end of them. In France I belonged to a Concert Troupe, *eleven* of us, but I'm a bit above the others and don't

A Little Story

BY

Little Tich.

One of my hobbies is playing the 'cello. I am very fond of playing the 'cello.

In fact, if my public was as fond of listening to me as I am fond of playing it I should be one of the greatest players in the world. But I admit frankly and with all due modesty that I am *not* one of the greatest players in the world. I suppose really I ought to consider myself one of the smallest players in the world. (Joke.)

Anyhow, once a smoking concert was to be given at a certain Bohemian Club of which I was a member, and it was suggested that as a novelty I should contribute a 'cello solo to the evening's entertainment.

I did so—contributed 3 solos, in fact, and was greatly "bucked" by my success until I happened to stroll up to the bar where two members were having a heated argument about music generally, and a popular violin virtuoso in particular. One said he was a great artiste. The other disagreed. The latter turned to me and said: "Don't you think so, Tich?" I said I had never heard the gentleman play, whereat he remarked: "Play! He can't play the fiddle for nuts. He plays like, like—well, look here—he plays the fiddle like you play the 'cello!"

"LITTLE TICH."

BILLY MERSON—continued.

mix with them. I'm Richard Timberley, I am. In Canada I used to command ten pounds a week—ten pounds, mind you.' (I started at this news.) 'And look! you're make-up's all wrong, you don't know *how* to make up. If I were playing your part I would put my eyebrows higher up than yours. No, you ought to have *me* to help you out. After I get back to Canada I'm coming over here again, and I'll startle the country.' (I agreed, inwardly.)

"And so he went on for about an hour, and I sat through it all without a murmur. At the end I ventured to explain how sorry I was I had disappointed him. But the funny thing is the man was *Sober*. And this story, mind you, is perfectly true. I subsequently learnt that he was not a Canadian at all. We then proceeded to pull his leg for about an hour, gave him a drink, and bade him good-night, leaving me wondering at the audacity of the man."