The NEW PLAYS

"The Vampire" a Strange Bird of Theatrical Feather.

BY CHARLES DARNTON.

THE only bright spot in the play at the Hackett Theatre yesterday afternoon was the spotlight itself. It was an altogether cheery little thing, welcoming the actors with a broad smile, chasing them about good-naturedly and giving them a soul bath every time it got a chance. The rest was something dark and mysterious called "The Vampire," a strange bird of theatrical feathers that flapped its wings and kept circling around and around through the ever-thickening gloom until Miss Maxine Elliott, perched high in a box, looked as though she would like to run home and brew a nice cup of tea for the audience.

First afternoons breed strange audiences. They are here to-day and gone to-morrow. First nights never see them. They belong to the curtained afternoon. Usually they are like the play—you can't quite make them out. Sometimes you almost believe the author wrote them, too. And yet there is something to be said for the first afternoon in connection with the play that has dark rings under its eyes. After "The Vampire" it was good to see daylight again.

If Poe were alive to celebrate his hundredth birthday, and went to the Hackett Theatre to do so, "The Vampire" would probably finish him. For there are mysties and mysties. Edgar Allan Woolf and George Sylvester Viereck may know the dark secrets of life, but they seem rather young to go on a bat of this kind. When they came rollicking down to the footlights at the close of their melancholy affair they looked like jolly youths who had been having their little joke on the audience. They might have sung with Kipling:

"When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre,
He'd 'eard men sing by land an' sea;
An' what 'e thought 'e might require,
'E went an took—the same as me."

John E. Kellerd as the Vampire, John Westley as Caryl.

The Vampire, otherwise Paul Hartleigh, certainly believed in helping himself when it came to other people's ideas, and furthermore he knew the trick. He had a happy faculty of making life miserable for everybody around him. To begin with he had a young sculptor dreaming about green bats when as a matter of fact this dippy genius should have been putting all his time and thought on a promising faun. But the greedy Vampire had stolen all the poetry out of the sculptor's mind and turned it into verse of his own. He was growing old and his "inspiration" was a trifle rusty. To gain fame he was perfectly willing to deal in second-hand goods. As a result the sculptor was in despair. He gave up the faun as a bad job. In fact he smashed it on the floor. Mr. Warner Oland, who suffered the tortures of the sculptor, fairly wallowed in woe until a fat friend who suggested the travelling salesman at the Gaiety took him away to Italy. All this was supposed to take place in London, but the fat friend as well as certain references in the play smacked loudly of New York.

The Vampire then turned his attention to an adolescent poet from Canada, and this genius had no sooner taken the sculptor's old room in Hartleigh's house than he began to feel long, tapering fingers groping in his brain. The Vampire pulled poetry out of him by the yard. Sometimes he would just absorb it by the long-distance system and then again he would make passes over the youth's head and get an extra good haul, Mr. John E. Kellerd, who had the whole business at his fingers' ends, looked like a literary Svengali with a clean shave. He was so convincing that you felt thankful you were not a genius.

When the Vampire started out after an idea he got it without the slightest difficulty. But it hurt him, it pained him, to do this. He wasn't as bad as he seemed. He had Napoleon's failing—he worshipped the god Ambition, poor chap! He wanted to be famous, that was all. Money didn't count with him. He was always ready and willing to "stake" his victims. Only once did he stray from his crooked path. That was when he seized his lovely ward and told her that he loved her. Incidentally this was the only time he acted like a human being.

The lovely young lady, of course, was dreadfully shocked, and she didn't feel any better when "Dad" told her that he had loved her mother. But he had stolen all of the sweetness and poetry and things out of mother's voice and when she was hissed at a concert he was so cut up about it that he didn't have the heart to marry her. However, the lovely young lady was to have her revenge.

The Canadian poet adored her and she thought pretty well of him when he told her that he had seen her in a poem. It all came back to him as she stood in the spotlight with a veil drawn across her face. She was his "Princess of the Golden Veil." Incidentally it didn't take the Vampire long to sneak that poem and win a silver wreath with it.

The Princess was among his victims, though she didn't realize it, when her painting came back from the Academy. She just sobbed "Turned down!" and took it for granted that her work was coarse. Anyway, it was a relief to hear Miss Katherine Florence cry, for she had been so sweetly gladsome all along that you felt a change would do her good. It did.

The Princess put her wits together when the poet announced he was losing his, and the plot thickened with her suspicions. By this time Mr. John Westley had grown thin and pale as the poet. His good performance told on him. The Vampire, who was inclined to be jealous, said he could turn the youth into a driveling idiot—and you believed him. But he was merciful. After a little confidential chat with a grumpy Chinese idol, he decided it would be bad business for him to spoil a good thing.

The poet needed sleep, and the Princess said she would sit beside his couch and keep an eye open for the thief who was stealing his ideas. She didn't have to wait long. The poet had no sooner dropped off than—click! click!—a secret door opened and the hungry Vampire stood in the room, also in the spotlight. Of course, it was all up with his little game. The poet slept through his long explanation. Like other great geniuses, he said he absorbed things. Balzac had drawn evil out of the air to the point of his pen; Shakespeare had taken ideas from books and worked 'em over. He got his ideas in his own way. He really wasn't an evil genius. Wouldn't the Princess forgive him? No, she wouldn't. She took her poet and went away from there.

And so they left the Vampire alone in his ill-gotten glory. It was a sad play.

Opportunity

By George Hopf

Edgar Allan Poe.

The Wonderful American Genius Was Born 100 Years Ago To-Day.

By Elisabeth Ellicott Poe.

(One of the nearest relatives now living of the poet.)

I ONCE asked Mark Twain to give his opinion of the genius of Edgar Allan Poe.

"Why," rejoined the wizard of wit, "Poe is remembered after a hundred years. That is fame enough for any man and testifies the height and depth of his genius. If the creations of a man's mind, art, poetry, letters, science, outlive a century, then they are good for the millennium."

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

On Jan. 19, 1909, the sum of Edgar Allan Poe's existence, living and dead, will round out its century mark. It will be the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, and the literary world has prepared a festival of Poe lovers who will gather around noted literati and bring the offering of devotion to the altar of this man's genius.

And so, extolled by sage and bard, Poe will have his day at last.

Priceless MSS.

The manuscripts Mrs. Clemm hawked about newspaper shops glad to sell for $2 and $3 bring thousands of dollars at auction.

The grave of Poe is the shrine and Mecca of literary pilgrims. From the four corners of the globe they come, following the leadership of Tennyson, who said the only thing he wanted to see in America was the grave of Edgar Allan Poe. One learned British peer travelled to America to stand at Poe's grave in Westminster churchyard, Baltimore, Md.

Born in Baltimore.

In January, 1809, the Hopkins Theatrical Company, of which the poet's parents were members, was filling an engagement at the Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, a famous playhouse, where the best talent of the nineteenth century performed and which was the first theatre in the United States to be lighted by gas.

On the evening of the 19th of the month, Edgar Allan, the second child of David and Elizabeth Poe, was born in a boarding house at No. 9 Front street, two doors from the old shot tower. The place was kept by a Mrs. Beers, who afterward asserted that she had to provide clothes for the little stranger. The place is now utilized as a German drinking saloon. This spot, where the lovers of "The Raven" and "The Bells" should worship and revere, is now desecrated by the clinking of beer glasses and the hilarity of their devotees.

Writing "The Bells."

"The Bells," that haunting bit of word-melody, was not the inspiration of Mrs. Whitman, but a Baltimore poem written in one of those periodical visits to Baltimore after the death of Virginia, when with an inborn love of the Maryland city he would return to the joy-haunted retreats of youth and manhood. The house where this famous poem was written still stands, and a visit to it last week awoke many reminiscences from its occupants.

Near Hollingsford street on Pratt, it was not a little difficult to locate the oyster shop of the Widow Meaghers, where the prize story, "The Gold Bug," was written on the top of an oyster barrel for a desk and the noise of outgoing and incoming customers powerless to disturb the divine flow of Poe's inspiration. True to tradition, the place is still a groggery.

The world knows the history of his life until his tragic death. He was not so much a victim of drink as a victim of circumstances. Old friends and neighbors, mother-in-law, teachers, boyhood and college mates have refuted this fabrication. There is a legend in our family that stimulants of the lightest form would excite him and act almost instantly on his nerves. A cup of coffee has been known to have had the effect of liquor.

His Tragic Death.

My grandfather, the first cousin of the poet, was passing down Baltimore street on the night of Oct. 3, 1849, when he saw lying under the steps of the Baltimore Museum, corner of Baltimore and Calvert streets, a man in what he thought was a drunken stupor.

It was election night, and his first thought was that it was some one overcome with indulgence of the day. Pity for the unfortunate caused him to bend over the man, when to his amazement he saw it was his cousin Edgar. Quickly sending a message to Neilson Poe, another cousin, who lived near, he took a carriage and, placing the still unconscious poet in it, took him to the Washington University Hospital, now the church home on North Broadway.

On Sunday morning, Oct. 7, as the Angelus was ringing all over the city, his soul passed with the bells into the surging sea of death.

Players of the Period.

No. 26.—Digby Bell.

By Johnson Briscoe

DIGBY BELL, an actor who has certainly had a widely varied stage career, was born in Milwaukee, Wis., in 1849, his father being William J. Bell, a Wall street broker. He passed his childhood days in New York City, where his parents moved in 1854, and, upon completion of his school days, he became a member of the New York Stock Exchange. After the death of his father he was a cabin passenger clerk with the White Star Steamship Company. Being the possessor of an exceptional baritone voice, Mr. Bell determined to follow an operatic career, with which end in view he went to Italy and studied music for five years under Domenico Scafati. He made his stage debut on the island of Malta in 1876 as a grand opera singer, his first part being Count Rudolpho in "La Somnambula," afterward singing Valentine in "Faust." He next sang at the Teartro Fondo, in Naples, and in addition to the two parts mentioned above he was also cast for the Count Di Luna in "Il Trovatore," Germont in "La Traviata" and Antonio in "Linda di Chamounix." Returning to the land of his birth, Mr. Bell made his New York debut in oratorio in Chickering Hall, followed by a tour of the country. He then joined the Martinez English Company, with which organization he sang his first role in light opera, Sir Joseph Porter in "Pinafore."

DIGBY BELL

It was in this same part that Mr. Bell made his first operatic appearance in New York, at the Madison Square Garden, Aug. 25, 1879, the stage setting being an actual ship placed in a huge tank of water. From this time on his services were in great demand, appearing at the Bijou Opera-House in the spring of 1880 in "Ages Ago," "Charity Begins at Home" and "The Spectre Knight," one-act Gilbert operettas. The fall following he appeared for a brief time with the Comley-Barton Comedy Company, being Alfred Puddifoot in "Lawn Tennis" and Cliquot in "Olivette." In January, 1881, Mr. Bell joined Daly's company, with which he remained for a year and a half, appearing in "Zamina," "Cinderella at School," "Needles and Pins," "The Passing Regiment" and "Americans Abroad."

He then rejoined the Comley-Barton combination, being to the fore in "Madame Favart," "Patience," "The Sorcerer," "Virginia" and "Heart and Hand," after which, in December, 1883, he appeared under E. E. Rice in "Orpheus and Eurydice." The season of 1884-'85 Mr. Bell joined the McCaull Opera Company, with which he remained five years, during which time he was seen in the following operas: "Nell Gwynne," "The Princess of Trebizonde," "The Pirates of Penzance," "Don Caesar," "The Crowing Hen," "The Black Hussar," "The Mikado," "The Begum," "Ruddygore," "Indiana," "Boccaccio," "Fatinitza" and "The May Queen," in which last he took his farewell to the McCaull forces on May 7, 1889, at Palmer's (now Wallack's) Theatre. The season following this Mr. Bell was seen with the Duff Opera Company in "The Mikado," "Patience," "The Pirates of Penzance," "Paola" and "The Queen's Mate," and then came a season's return to the McCaull company, adding to his repertoire "Clover" and "The Seven Suabians."

Mr. Bell spent the season of 1891-92 in "The Tar and Tartar," the season following starring at the head of his own company in "Jupiter." He then spent two seasons as principal comedian with Lillian Russell, cutting-up capers in "The Princess Nicotine," "Girofle-Girofla," "The Queen of Brilliants," "The Grand Duchess" and "La Perichole." Mr. Bell resumed his starring tour in the fall of 1895, appearing for a brief time in an opera called "Nancy Lee," after which came several stellar years in legitimate comedies, "A Midnight Bell," "The Hoosier Doctor" and "Joe Hurst, Gentleman." Beginning with the season of 1899-1900 and for three years altogether, Mr. Bell did a monologue act in vaudeville, during which same time, however, he participated in several special productions; for instance he was Ko-Ko in "The Mikado," with the Savage-Grau Opera Company, at the Metropolitan Opera-House, in November, 1900, and in October, 1901, he was on tour for a brief time as Adam Hogg in "The Chaperones." The seasons of 1902-03-04, Mr. Bell was Sam Weller in "Mr. Pickwick," supporting De Wolf Hopper, and the three seasons following this he starred as Mr. Pipp in "The Education of Mr. Pipp." Last season he toured in "Shore Acres," and this year he is at the head of the cast of "An International Marriage." In 1882 Mr. Bell married Laura [illegible]yce, an operatic contralto, a great favorite in her day, who died May 7, 1904.

Examples of Poe's Poetry.

Alone.

FROM childhood's hour I have not been
As others were; I have not seen
As others saw; I could not bring
My passion from a common spring.
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow; I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone;
And all I loved, I loved alone,
Then—in my childhood, in the dawn
Of a most stormy life—was drawn
From every depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still.

Lenore.

(First Verse.)

Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever!
Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river:
And Guy de Vere, hast thou no tear?—weep now or nevermore!
See, on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!
Come, let the burial rite be read—the funeral song be sung:
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young.
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young.

To Helen

HELEN, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicaean barks of yore,
That gently o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.
On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs, have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.
Lo! in yon brilliant window niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

The Barrier

Love and Gold Hunting In the Frozen Klondike

By Rex Beach, Author of "The Spoilers."

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

John Gale, post trader at Flambeau, on the Yukon, has an Indian wife, Alluna, and one beautiful daughter, Necia. The girl has just returned home from a mission school. Lieut. Burrell, local military commander, falls in love with her. She reciprocates his affection. Poleon Doret, Gale's young French partner, secretly loves Necia. Burrell learns with horror that Necia is a half-breed Indian. Runnion, a desperado, whom Burrell has ordered out of Flambeau, returns, in company with a professional "bad man" named Stark. "No Creek Lee," a prospector, finds gold some miles from Flambeau. He tells Gale and Poleon, who start thither with Lee to stake claims. Necia tells Burrell the secret and persuades him to go there with her by a short cut, hoping to arrive on the scene of the gold strike in time to stake out prior claims. They do so, and stake out three choice claims in Necia's name. Meantime Gale, Lee, Poleon, Stark and Runnion start for the "strike" by another route. They find Burrell and Necia there ahead of them. Stark is furious.

CHAPTER VII.

(Continued.)

The Magic of Ben Stark.

"I CALL it dam' sleeck work," chuckled the Canadian, slipping out of his straps. "De nex' tam' I go stampedin' I tak' you 'long, Necia."

"Me, too," said Lee. "An' now I'm goin' to tear into some of them beans I smell a-bilin' in yonder."

The others followed, although Stark and Runnion looked black and had little to say. It was an uncomfortable meal—every one was ill at ease; Gale, in particular, was quiet, and ate less than any of them. His eyes sought Stark's face frequently, and once the blood left his cheeks and his eyes blazed as he observed the gambler eying Necia, gazing at her with the same boldness he would have used in scanning a horse.

"You are a mighty good-looking girl for a 'blood,'" remarked Stark, at last.

"Thank you," she replied, simply, and the soldier's vague dislike of the man crystallized into hate on the instant. There was a tone back of his words that seemed aimed at the trader, Meade thought, but Gale showed no sign of it, so the meal was finished in silence, after which the five belated prospectors went out to make their locations, for the fear of interruption was upon them now.

First they went down-stream, and, according to their agreement, the trader staked first, followed by Poleon and Stark, thus throwing Runnion's claim more than a mile distant from Lee's discovery. From here they went up the creek to find the girl's other locations, one on each branch, at which Stark sneeringly remarked that she had pre-empted enough ground for a full-grown white woman.

Runnion's displeasure was even more open, and he fell into foul-mouthed mutterings, addressing himself to Poleon and Stark while the trader was out of earshot.

"This affair don't smell right, and I still think it's a frame-up."

"Bah!" exclaimed Doret.

"The old man sent the girl on ahead of us to blanket all the good ground. That's what he did!"

"Dat's fool talk," declared the Frenchman.

"I'm not so sure," Stark broke in. "You remember he hung back and wanted to go slow from the start; and didn't he ask us to camp early last night? Looks now as if he did it just to give her time to get in first. He admitted that he knew the Black Bear trail, and if he lied about keeping his mouth shut to the squaw, he'd lie about other"——

"Wait wan minnit," interrupted Poleon, his voice as soft as a woman's. "I tol' you dat I know all 'bout dis Black Bear Creek, too—you 'member, eh? Wal, mebbe you t'ink I'm traitor, too. W'at? W'y don' you spik out?"

The three of them were alone, and only the sound of Gale's axe came to them; but at the light in the Canadian's face Runnion hastily disclaimed any such thought on his part, and Stark shrugged his denial.

"I don' know you feller' at all," continued Poleon, "but Ole Man Gale, he's my frien', so I guess you don' better talk no more lak' dat."

"Don't get sore," said Stark. "I simply say it looks bad." But the other had turned his back and was walking on.

There are men quite devoid of the ability to read the human face, and Runnion was of this species. Moreover, malice was so bitter in his mouth that he must have it out, so when they paused to blaze the next stake he addressed himself to Stark loud enough for Poleon to hear.

"That Lieutenant is more of a man than I thought he was."

"How so?" inquired the elder man.

"Well, it takes nerve to steal a girl for one night and then face the father; but the old man don't seem to mind it any more than she does. I guess he knows what it means, all right."

Stark laughed raucously. "I thought of that myself," he said.

"That's probably how Gale got his squaw," concluded Runnion, with a sneer.

It seemed a full minute before the Frenchman gave sign that he had heard, then a strange cry broke from his throat and he began to tremble as if with cold. He was no longer the singer of songs or the man who was forever a boy; the mocking anger of a moment ago was gone; in its place was a consuming fury that sucked the blood from beneath his tan, leaving him the pallor of ashes, while his mouth twitched and his head rolled slightly from side to side like a palsied old man's.

The red of his lips was blanched, leaving two white streaks against a faded, muddy background, through which came strange and frightful oaths. Runnion drew back, fearful, and the older man ceased chopping and let his axe hang loosely in his hand. But evidently Poleon meant no violence, for he allowed th passion to run from him freely until it had spent its vigor, then said to Runnion:

"M'sieu, elder you are brave man or dam' fool."

"What do you mean, Frenchy?" said the man addressed, uneasily.

"Somebody, goin' die for w'at you say jus' now. Mebbe it's goin' be you, m'sieu; mebbe it's goin' be him; I can't tell yet, but I'm hope an pray its goin' be you, because I t'ink w'at you say is a lie, an' nobody can spik dose kin' of lie 'bout Necia Gale."

He went crashing blindly through the underbrush, his head wagging, his shoulders slumped loosely forward like those of a drunken man, his lips framing words they could not understand.

When he had disappeared Runnion drew a deep breath.

"I guess I've framed something for Mister Burrell this time."

"You go about it queer," said Stark. "I'd rather tackle a gang saw than a man like Poleon Doret. Your frame-up may work double."

"Huh! No chance. The soldier was out all night alone with that half-breed girl, and anybody can see she's crazy about him. What's the answer?"

"Well, she's mighty pretty," agreed the other, "most too pretty for a mixed blood, but you can't make that Frenchman believe she's wrong."

"Why, he believes it now," chuckled Runnion, "or at least he's jealous, and that's just as good. Those two will have trouble before dark. I wish they would—then I'd have a chance."

"Have you got your eye on her, too?"

"Sure! Do you blame me?"

"No, but she's too good for them. I think I'll enter the running."

"Better stay out," the gambler advised; "you'll have sore feet before you finish. As a matter of fact, I don't like her father any better than you like her lovers"——

"Well, it's mutual. I can see Gale hates you like poison."

"— and I don't intend to see him and his tribe hog all the best ground hereabouts."

"They've already done it. You can't stop them."

Before answering, Stark listened for the trader, but evidently Gale had finished his task and returned to the shack, for there was neither sign nor sound of him.

"Yes, I can stop them," said Stark. "I want the ground that girl has staked, and I'm going to get it. It lies next to Lee's, and it's sure to be rich; ours is so far away it may not be worth the recorder's fees. This creek may be as spotted as a coach dog, so I don't intend to take any chances."

"She made her locations legally," said Runnion.

"You leave that to me. When will the other boys be here?"

"To-morrow morning. I told them to follow about four hours behind, and not to run in on us till we had finished. They'll camp a few miles down the creek, and be in early."

"You couldn't get but three, eh?"

"That's all I could find who would agree to give up half."

"Can we count on them?"

"Huh!" the other grunted. "They worked with me and Soapy on the Skagway trail."

"Good. Five against three, not counting the girl and the Lieutenant," Stark mused. "Well, that will do it." He outlined his plan, then the two returned to the cabin to find Lee cooking supper. Poleon was there with the others, but, except for his silence, he showed no sign of what had taken place that afternoon.

Stark developed a loquacious mood after supper, devoting himself entirely to Necia, in whom he seemed to take great interest. He was an engaging talker, with a peculiar knack of suggestion in story-telling—an unconscious halting and elusiveness that told more than words could express—and, knowing the West so well, he fascinated the girl, who hung upon his tales with flattering eagerness.

Poleon had finished several pipes and now sat in the shadows in the open doorway, apparently tired and dejected, though his eyes shone like diamonds and roved from one to the other. Half unconsciously he heard Stark saying:

"This girl was about your size, but not so dark. However, you remind me of her in some ways—that's why it puts her in my mind, I suppose. She was about your age at the time—nineteen."

"Oh, I'm not eighteen yet," said Necia.

(To Be Continued.)

COUNT TOLSTOY

My "Cycle of Readings."

By Count Tolstoy.

Translated by Herman Bernstein.

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The italicized paragraphs are Count Tolstoy's original comments on the subject.

JAN. 19.

Erroneous Faith.

ERRONEOUS faith is the chief cause of the wrong order of life.

THE life of man should be devoted to changing the irrational in our life into something rational. For this two things are necessary: 1. To see the irrational in life and not to turn your attention away from it. 2. To realize the rationality of the possible life in all its purity.

Realizing the entire irrationality and the misery always emanating from such life, a man will involuntarily turn away from it; on the other hand, the man who clearly realizes the rationality of life is involuntarily striving toward it. Therefore the task of all teachers of mankind should be not to conceal the harm of folly, but to present the bliss of rational life in all its clearness.

But the place of teachers of humanity is usually taken by those who do not go toward the light because their deeds are evil, and therefore the people who pose as the teachers not only fail to point out the follies of life and the rationality of the ideal, but on the contrary they conceal the follies of life and undermine the faith of the people in the rationality of the ideal.

This is done in our life. The entire activity of the people of the world consists of concealing the follies of life.

WE must treat our public affairs with deep attention; we must be ready to change our views, to renounce our old views and adopt new ones. We must cast aside prejudices and reason with a perfectly free mind. The sailor who will make use of the same sails, regardless of the changes of the wind, will not reach his harbor.—Henry George.

IF you will look in history you will find that one of the principal causes of the constant miseries of mankind was that people served either those whom they saw no longer and who no longer needed their aid, or they served the proud and the wicked, who dazzle the eye and who should not be aided.