

## My Debut as a Villain.

The company was billed to play my new tragedy, "The Dripping Dagger, or the Maiden Martyr of Tankville," at Willowtown, on Tuesday night, when suddenly our heavy villain absconded, taking with him \$5.50, the entire amount in the treasury of the concern. What was to be done about it? It was too late to advertise for another heavy villain; and besides, there were very few of them in the states at that time, because the small-pox was not raging in Montreal. We had a consultation, and decided that something must be done. I suggested that as a last resort, the part of the villain might be left out, and the heroine might make away with herself at the proper time; but as there really did not seem to be any reason why she should commit suicide in the circumstances, we concluded that it might detract from the impressiveness and destroy the unity of the play, and that on the whole my suggestion was not just the thing. Finally the heroine asked me if I wouldn't play the part of the villain! I reminded her that my contract with the company expressly provided that I should be exempt from histrionic duties, and, furthermore, that I knew I had no talent whatever for acting, and might become embarrassed and forget my part, or do something else equally as unfortunate. But she persisted that I was just the man for a villain—out for the part, as it were, by nature; and as for getting stuck in my lines, she said that she would guarantee to help me out of that difficulty herself, as she knew every word of the play by heart, and could easily prompt me in a tone that would not be heard by the audience. Well, the result was that the fair heroine—to whose charms I was not altogether blind—prevailed upon me, and against my better judgment I consented to take the part of the villain.

I devoted four days to committing the part to memory. I then rehearsed for the first time with the company, in costume, and succeeded in getting as far as the stabbing scene without losing my cue. Here I could not remember whether the victim shrieked first or I, in deep bass tones, exclaimed: "Aha! disdainful one, prepare to die!" The result was that we both gave utterance to our emotions at the same time, creating a very undramatic hubbub. The entire company broke down and laughed for several minutes. But we got through the rest of the tragedy all right, and the second rehearsal went off better still. We had time for just one more rehearsal before our appearance at Willowtown; but this rehearsal strange to say, was not as good (as far as I was concerned) as the second.

On Tuesday we took the afternoon train for Willowtown. I was rather nervous all the way down, but the rest of the company cheered me up and assured me that the inspiration of appearing before an audience would take all my trepidation away. Thus encouraged, I made up my mind not to worry, but to do the best I could when the time came.

We arrived in Willowtown just in time for supper, and, after refreshing ourselves, we went immediately to be given, and got our limited scenery and properties in shape. By 8 o'clock we were all on deck, in costume, and, when the stamping of feet and whistling among the audience warned us that it was time for the curtain to go up, we gave the signal to the shifter, and burst upon the assembled populace in all our splendor. I should state, however, that before our splendor became fully revealed, there was some levity among the audience, owing to the fact that the curtain rose at first only at one corner, revealing a large brown jug standing by a painted haycock—which, taken in connection with the harvest scene, of which it formed a part, was well enough, of course, but was rather incongruous, appearing, as it did, without the necessary scenic support.

The first scene passed off very smoothly, as neither of the principal characters, neither myself nor the heroine, appeared. In the second scene I was to come upon the stage in a sort of dark lantern fashion, wrapped in mystery and along black cloak, introduce myself to the audience in a few half audible and occult remarks to one of the actresses and then disappear as abruptly as I had come, by a well executed and rapid backward movement, as though I had melted mysteriously into the gathering twilight. I had performed this feat very successfully at all the rehearsals, and thought I was ripe for it on the present occasion. In fact, it was the only thing in the role which I felt confident of performing to perfection.

As I came upon the stage, dark, saturnine, forbidding, with one corner of my cloak thrown over my left shoulder, a hush of awe fell upon the assembled audience. My heart swelled with triumph, and I felt the inspiration of which my fellow actors had spoken thrilling to my very finger tips. The lady to whom I was to address my mysterious remarks started and cringed as I appeared suddenly before her. The sepulchral sentences were spoken. I raised my hand warningly and began to melt away in the twilight; but, alas! I had miscalculated the location of the opening through which I was to evaporate. There was a sudden crash that resounded through

every part of the building, and the next instant I was flat on my back, wrestling with the fore-ground of the twilight scene, which had topped over upon me, while roars of laughter pealed from the delighted audience. To add to the ridiculousness of the performance the sceneshifter tried to let the curtain down with dispatch, but only the end opposite to me would descend and in doing so very unexpectedly it left one of our farm laborers on the outside, near the footlights. This seemed to increase the amusement of the audience.

By the time the shifter got my end of the curtain down I was so exhausted with my emotions that I had to be carried bodily into the dressing room. Brandy and other seductive restoratives were administered, and I finally came to sufficiently to wipe the perspiration from my brow and groan. Meanwhile the unfeeling audience was clamoring for the play to proceed. All the members of the company gathered around and besought me tearfully not to give up at this important juncture. They assured me that the accident was by no means an uncommon one; that the play need not be spoiled by it if all else went well; and they suggested that the audience would be more than willing to pardon an episode which had furnished so much innocent merriment not down on the bills. Finally, when the heroine, the lovely heroine, had cast herself at my feet and clasped her clammy hands in my own, pleading with irresistible eloquence of eye and lip, I consented to struggle through the remainder of the play and then and there close my histrionic career forever.

Once more the curtain rose and the play went on. Like a man in a dream I came and went, mumbling my lines and going through my part in a wooden manner which fairly made the audience frantic. But hissing and groans moved me not; I was past caring for criticism either favorable or adverse. Only once did I partially wake up, when a small boy in the audience struck me on the side of the head with a hen pear of the vintage of 1814. At last came the stab scene in the lonely dell. I think I never prepared to kill a person with so much delicious pleasure as I prepared to put that heroine out of the way, and thus hasten the consummation of the play. The audience seemed to be slightly impressed once more as I came on in my sable cloak and soliloquized before the dreadful deed.

The fatal moment arrived. The heroine approaching through the forest buried in the sweet thoughts of innocence and love. I hid behind the mossy trunk of a tree and awaited her coming. Suddenly my head whirled and my mind became a total blank! I could not for the life of me recall the tragic words with which to preface the bloody deed. The heroine approached, passed the tree, stopped for a moment in surprise, and then kept on. I did not step forward. I still crouched behind the tree. She passed me again, and as she did so gave a slight ahem to wake up her delinquent assassin. Then I sprang out and grasped her by the hair. I ought to have known better, but I was not in a condition to know anything or care for anything. The stage direction was: "The villain grasps the lady by the throat." To be grasped by the hair was evidently as far from the expectation of the heroine as anything could possibly be, for, with the most natural feminine gesture in the world, she threw back both her hands, uttered a little scream of horror and grasped at the departing wig! There I stood with my should be gory hand filled with store hair, while my right hand clutching the bright knife, hung sleeveless at my side. There was a moment's awful hush, and then the pathos of the scene burst upon the audience and the barn was filled with thunders of applause and demoniac yells. I did not wait for the curtain to fall; in fact, it did not fall, as the scene shifter was not in a condition to perform his accustomed functions. I rushed for the dressing room and hid myself under a pile of costumes.

Since that dreadful night I have never been inside a theatre, and the very sight of a barn makes me turn pale.—Drake's Magazine.

### The Muskrat in Delaware.

The muskrat is naturally a wary animal, but when passed by hunger is quite venturesome and often vicious when disturbed. They seldom exceed 5 pounds in weight in this State. They live in burrows or hollow logs, on the margins of streams, seldom venturing out for food until nightfall. On the marshes their towns resemble the famous "dog towns" of the western prairie. They are found both near salt and fresh water. They subsist chiefly on water mollusks. They are most numerous near marshes bordering on Delaware Bay buy large quantities of marsh land and devote their time solely to muskrat farming. The sale of the hides when cured is quite remunerative, while the flesh finds a ready sale in the local markets.

A Kansas farmer was recently bitten by a rattlesnake, when he made a break for a drug store, where he commenced to pour down whisky. He was very cool about it, but expressed the regret that his wife had not been bitten instead of himself, since, as it was the busy season, he could not be well spared from the farm, while his wife could.

### What are Shooting Stars?

What do we know as certain facts with regard to shooting stars? 1. They are vastly more numerous than any one has an idea of who has not watched them continuously for many nights. Astronomers who have kept a record for many years assure us that the average number seen by one observer at one place on a clear, moonless night is fourteen per hour, which is shown by calculation to be equivalent to 20,000,000 daily for the whole earth. 2. They are not terrestrial phenomena, moving in the lower atmosphere, but celestial bodies moving in orbits, and with velocities comparable to those of planets and comets. Their velocities are seldom under ten miles a second or over fifty, and average about thirty, the velocity of the earth in its orbit round the sun being eighteen. 3. They are of various compositions, comprising both a large majority of smaller particles which are set on fire by the resistance of the earth's atmosphere, and are entirely burned up and resolved into vapor long before they reach its surface, and a few larger ones, known as meteors, which are only partly fused or glazed by heat, and reach the earth in the form of stony masses. 4. They are not uniformly distributed through space, but collect in meteoric swarms or streams, two at least of which revolve around the sun in closed rings, which are intersected by the earth's orbit, causing the magnificent displays of shooting stars which are seen in August and November. 5. They are connected with comets, it having been demonstrated by Schiaparelli that the orbit of the comet of 1066 is identical with the August swarm of meteors known as the Perseids, and connection between comets and meteor streams have been found in at least three other cases. The fact is generally believed that comets are nothing but a condensation of meteorites rendered incandescent by the heat generated by their mutual collision when brought into close proximity. 6. Their composition, as inferred from the larger meteors which reach the earth, is identical, or nearly so, with that of matter brought up from great depths by volcanic eruptions. In each case they consist of two classes, one composed mainly of native iron alloyed with nickel, the other of stony matter, consisting mainly of compounds of silicon and magnesium. Most meteorites consist of compounds of the two classes, in which the stony parts seem to have broken into fragments by violent collision, and become imbedded in iron which has been fused by heat into a plastic or pasty condition.—The Contemporary Review.

### With Blind Eyes.

New York Times.

An old man with silver hair was led into the Cyclorama of Gettysburg by a bright-faced little miss in a jaunty gypsy hat and dress and sat down while she described to him the features of the picture in detail, occasionally asking her a question or shaking his head slowly as if in doubt of the accuracy of her account. She had described to him in her own way the onrush of Pickett's men and the hand-to-hand conflict at the stone fence where the Pennsylvania veterans met the charge of the Southerners, when he asked, "But where's the artillery, Mag?"

"Oh, you mean the big guns. They're over here on the hill in a row."

"All in a row?" He asked.

"Yes," she replied.

He shook his head. "Look around," said he. "There must be some more that are not in line."

"Yes," she said, "there are some down here that are all upset and seem to be broken. I think they are bursted."

"Is that where the men are coming over the stone wall?"

"Yes, grandpa."

"Is there a grove of trees?"

"Yes, grandpa. It seems to be full of men, but the smoke is so thick you can not see them."

"Oh, I can see them," he cried.

It was then noticed by several people who were listening to him that he was blind. The little girl said, "Oh, no, grandpa; you can't see them."

"Yes I can," he answered. "I can see them very well, and the broken cannon, too."

The child looked at him with innocent surprise as she said, "You are joking now."

"No, my dear," replied the old man. "No. That was the last time I ever saw on earth. There was a cannon exploded there just this side of that fence, and that was the last terrible picture I ever saw, for it was then I lost my eyesight, and I have never got the picture of it out of my head."

Bridget, has Johnnie come home from school yet? "Yes, sorr." "Have you seen him?" "No, sorr." "Then how do you know he's home?" "Cause the cat's hidin' under the stove, sorr."—Time.

How much cider did you make this year?" inquired one farmer of another who had offered a specimen for trial. "Fifteen barrels," was the answer. Another sip. "Well, if you had another apple you might have made another barrel."

### Burglary by Telephone.

Chicago Herald.

"It is a well-known fact that no other section of the population avail themselves more readily and speedily of the latest triumphs of science than the criminal class," said Inspector Bonfield recently. "The educational criminal," he continued, "skims the cream from every new invention, if he can make use of it. No case has yet been constructed that keeps out the shrewd and determined burglar, and that's the way in everything. But I don't recall a case in which the truth was more brilliantly demonstrated than the Maxwell case."

"What case was that?" queried an old newspaper man present. "I don't recollect of ever hearing of it before."

"No, I suppose, you don't said Mr. Bonfield, musingly. "The fact of the matter is it never was a case that properly belongs to the department, but I can speak of it now. You see it was at the time when the telephone had just been introduced into business and private use. George Maxwell—that's not his real name, but it will do as well—was at that time one of the most successful speculators on the board of trade, and was currently reported to have some time ago tipped the scale which marked the million. He was a young and handsome man, and he had just married a charming woman. It was an out-and-out love match. A score or so of messages were dispatched every day during business hours. They contained such important queries: "2:10 p. m. How are you now, love?" and replies like this: "2:35 p. m. I sigh for you. How is my sweetest?" Well, to save expenses and to increase the facilities of communication, Mr. Maxwell connected his office with his home on Ashland avenue by private telephone wire. He was one of the first men in Chicago to do so. About five out of six business hours were now spent by him at the 'hello.'"

"One day just before the close of business there was a ring at the telephone. The devoted husband, with a jump, was there. 'What does my sweet pet wish?' he murmured.

"I'm no pet. You mistake me, sir!" came the reply, in an unmistakably masculine voice, a voice gruff and rasping, but very distinct.

"Who are you, then?" asked the astonished millionaire.

"I'm Thomas Jefferson Odell, the accomplished burglar, if you want to know."

"Repeat, please," gasped the other.

"Odell, the burglar, came the answer over the wire.

"The devil!" exclaimed Mr. Maxwell.

"No, only one of his faithful servants. But, now, listen. I have no time to fool away. I and two of my pals have gained access to your house. The cook, the chambermaid and your wife are lying here bound and gagged. The nigger coachman has been disposed of. Some bundles of oily rags have been judiciously distributed about the house, ready to be ignited."

"You bloody scoundrel!" shouted the agonized husband, whose eyes were bulging during the recital.

"Don't excite yourself. Now, sir, here is my proposal. If you should disappear from the telephone without acceding to it, I shall set fire to the house. It's no use applying to the police for we'd be too quick for them. You will see, Mr. Maxwell, that you are completely in my power. The only sensible thing you can do is to listen to my proposal and to agree to it."

"Oh, I wish I had my hand at your throat, you infernal villain!" shouted the millionaire, mad with rage.

"But you know you haven't, so what's the use of talking that way! Let us talk business instead. I need a loan of \$20,000 cash. I need it at once. If you are inclined to lend me that sum without guarantee I shall leave your house with my pals in exactly the same condition in which I found it."

"You are ruining me," groaned Maxwell. "And I don't think I have that much money in cash in the office safe."

"You'll force me to commit an atrocious deed," came the remorseless reply.

"All right then—yes, I'll pay, but to whom?"

"It is now 5:15 exactly. At this very moment my pal has entered your office to receive the money. You will pay him and he will tell you the watchword agreed to between us, which you will telephone to me at once."

"Mr. Maxwell turned around. A stranger of pleasant mein, dressed in the height of fashion, stood before him. Said the visitor: "I have called to collect a little matter of \$20,000 for a friend of mine, Thos. Jefferson Odell."

"Correct!" replied Mr. Maxwell, who went to the safe, took from it two bundles containing \$10,000 each, and handed the money to the stranger. The latter ascertained that the amount was correct, then placed the money inside his two breast pockets.

"And the watchword?" queried Mr. Maxwell.

"Do right and interfere not!" replied the burglar's confederate with a great deal of dignity, and strode out of the office with all the grandezza of a Spanish hidalgo.

"Do right and interfere not!" joyfully shouted Mr. Maxwell through the telephone. "And now you'll leave

my premises, Mr. Odell, won't you? And I, for my wife—"

"Have no fear, Mr. Maxwell," replied the man at the other end. "You have to deal with a burglar and a gentleman."

"Mr. Maxwell locked his office, got into his buggy and drove to his home at a Maud S. pace. The more closely he approached the keener his fear of a catastrophe became. But as he stopped at the gate he noticed nothing out of the way. He sprang up the stairs, two at a time, and entered the pretty boudoir of his prettier wife. She was quietly reading.

"How you must have suffered, my angel!" he cried, and a sob shook his voice.

"The young wife looked up astonished, suffered? I?"

"That burglar, you know—it must have been awful. Oh, you poor darling!"

"Why, George, dear, what is the matter? You speak in riddles."

"But didn't he gag you?" he asked.

"Now, see here, George, I wish you would talk sense. What do you mean?"

"After Mr. Maxwell had finished the recital of his adventure he asked: 'Wasn't there somebody here using my telephone?'"

"Why, yes there was," replied Mrs. Maxwell. "A young and well-dressed young man, looking like a successful business man, came, introducing himself to me as 'Mr. Thomas Jefferson Odell, a speculator,' and requested permission to make use of your private telephone to send you a message. Of course, I gave him permission. He used the telephone but a couple of minutes and then came back into the parlor, thanked me for the favor I had done him and went away, saying the telephone was a very useful invention—it facilitated business so much."

"And that was all?" asked Mr. Maxwell, "he didn't gag you and the servants? He was alone? He didn't offer violence to you?"

"Why, no! He was very polite and gentlemanly—quite as much as you are at this moment, George!"

"Oh, the devil!" exclaimed George, with a wild outburst. "What an infernal ass I've made of myself! Excuse me, pet, but I can't help it. I'll drive over and tell the police about it."

"That's what he did," concluded Bonfield, "and that's the way I came to know about it. But after talking the thing over with me, and after consulting with the smartest detectives we had at the time, we came to the conclusion that there was no chance of recovering the money. The pair were too slick. And in spite of all we've done since then we've heard nothing more of the \$20,000, nor of Mr. Thomas Jefferson Odell and his pal."

### Flowers in the Hat.

It is the custom in the Tyrol for a man, when he is engaged to be married, to wear a bouquet in his hat. The damsel gives him, every day or two, a fresh bouquet, picked from the flower-pots in her window. Should she prove fickle, and jilt the swain, the other young men of the village assemble under her window and throw down the flower-pots. A stranger wonders, on seeing so many men with bouquets stuck in their hats, why they do not marry, especially as not a few of them are what we call "old bachelors." The explanation is that the village commune will not allow any person to marry unless he can show that he has laid by a sum of money sufficient to support a family.

A lady, traveling through Tyrol in a stiel-wagon, a cross between a diligence and an omnibus, overheard the driver talking to a man at his side on the box, and complaining of his occupation. He had worked hard for many years, he said to get money enough to marry; but the sum was far below what it must be before the commune would give him permission to marry the woman to whom he was engaged. It increased so slowly that he did not know if he should ever get the coveted permission. Sometimes a dozen or more of engaged young men and women, despairing of ever getting money enough to secure the commune's permission, go on a pilgrimage to Rome, begging their way on foot. When there, they are married; but, on their return to the native village, they are fined as a punishment for breaking the law.

### Protection From Insect Bites.

The London Lancet says: Many people do not know how easily they can protect themselves and their children against the bites of gnats and other insects. Weak carbolic acid sponged on the skin and hair, and in some cases the clothing, will drive away the whole tribe. A great many children and not a few adults are tormented throughout the whole summer by minute enemies. We know persons who are afraid of picnics and even of their own gardens on this account. Clothing is an imperfect protection, for we have seen a child whose foot and ankle had been stung through the stocking so seriously that for days she could not wear a leather shoe. All this can be averted, according to our experience, and that we believe of many others, by carbolic acid judiciously used. The safest plan is to keep a solution of the acid. The solution should not contain more than six or seven per cent., and it may be added to water until the latter smells strongly. This may be readily and with perfect safety applied with a sponge. We have no doubt that horses and cattle could be protected in the same way from the flies which sometimes nearly madden them.

### The United States Supreme Court.

New York Graphic.

The opening of the Supreme Court is one of the stage accessories to official life at Washington. Any one who has ever been present will never forget the scene. The room is a stuffy one at best and is rather an owl-looking place. One placid-faced negro sits at the door with a string in his hand to help him open it without trouble. Another but a white-haired son of Africa sits inside to aid him. Neither one of them would demean himself by pulling the string for any one less than a Senator or a member of the House. Ordinary citizens must push their way inside unaided. No one must carry a newspaper openly within the sacred precincts, for the rule is absolute that no reading of journals is allowed in the court. Nor must any notes of the proceedings be taken—the official reporter is to do all that.

Once inside suppose the clock over the door is striking noon. If it is striking at all that is the hour one hears, for it never sounds save to call the court together. Behind the long curtains that hang in the rear of the bench the Judges are formed, dressed in their silken robes. The grave-faced old crier stands at one end of the court and then looks sternly around to note if all are in proper state to receive their honors. Then, with an elevated chin and a loud voice, he announces, "The Honorable the Chief Justice and the Associated Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States!" The audience rises, the curtain parts, the Judges step forward and, bowing low, stand an instant facing those present, who return the salutation. "Oyez oyez," says the modulated voice of the crier; "all persons having any business with the Honorable the Supreme Court of the United States are admonished to draw near for the court is now in session." And, with a quick, sharp glance around to see that no unregenerate citizen has yet dared to be seated, the official adds, impressively, "God save the United States and this honorable court." The business has begun.

### A Washington Sensational Preacher.

The nation's capital has a young preacher who is trying to blossom out as the most sensational pulpit orator in this part of the country. He bears the peculiar name of Ed Hez Swem, and is at present in charge of one of the Baptist churches. He gave notice a few weeks ago that he would commence a series of Sunday evening sermons on Washington wickedness. His opening shots were scattering, as if he wanted to be certain that his new style of preaching would take with the press and the people. In a general sort of way he told his hearers in effect that the Capital city was worse than ancient Babylon, and promised details later. Only one paper noticed his sermon. The parson is young, and has a dudish appearance. A few days after his first effort he was around on Newspaper Row leaving his card, and incidentally trying to discover if any of the outside papers had referred to his sermon. Indeed, he said that he had been told that one of the London papers had an account of his first sermon. He was told that no London publisher had become crazy enough to order by telegraph a Washington sermon. The last effort of Rev. Ed Hez Swem was aimed directly at editors, correspondents and reporters. He pictured them as a horrible class of citizens, and said that the reporters would gladly lie for their editors and that they got their orders from their superiors. The Post has taken hold of this clerical strippling, yearning for notoriety, and has published one of his letters making a request that a reporter be sent without fail to write up his sermon. Such a man as this can't last long as a preacher, and when he pictures Washington as being worse than any other city of its size he simply doesn't know what he is talking about; and according to the common expression so often heard, he ought "to take in the town" and find out something.

### A Conspicuous Arrival.

From the Boston Courier.

The brutality with which newly married people are treated by their jesting friends is constantly receiving fresh illustration. At a recent Boston wedding a couple of sportive ushers discovered the train on which the bridal couple were to leave town and what baggage they had. Driving swiftly to the station they considered their plan to the baggage master, and, with his connivance, they affixed to each handle of the trunks of the bride and an enormous bow of white satin ribbon. If the groom did not blaspheme when he saw the decorated trunks deposited in the hall of the hotel to which he went, he may take the rank of Job for patience.

### Uneasy Lies the Head.

A thoroughly well-authenticated anecdote, illustrating his great tact, was told of Disraeli soon after he was created Earl of Beaconsfield.

It appears that not long after his transplantation to the House of Lords, Disraeli met a brother peer in the street, who asked him how he liked the change.

"Like it!" exclaimed Disraeli, forgetting himself for a moment, and blundering out with the truth, "like it! I feel as if I were dead and buried alive." Then, seeing the expression of discomfort on the peer's face, he added hastily, with a courtly and irresistible smile, "And in the land of the blessed!"