

BEHIND THE FOOTLIGHTS.

Reminiscences of Charles Fechter and Adelaide Neilson.

A DINNER WITH CHARLES DICKENS

Living Like a King and Dying Like a Beggar—The Peerless Neilson—Her Marvelous Success—A Fatal Promontion—Utterly End of a Gentle Soul.

[Special Correspondence.]
New York, March 8.—When some genius in the art of dramatic differentiation a couple of generations hence shall come to write the history of the stage in this country, full and exact justice will perhaps be done to the marvelous ability of Charles Fechter, who, though his triumphs were won principally on the other side of the water, was nevertheless an American actor in the sense that some of the best work of his career was done in this country, and his bones rest in a little village in Pennsylvania.

The Great Fechter.
Fechter was a man of good impulses, but he had a temper which was really uncontrollable. The greatest actor when suffering from one of these frequent ebullitions was like a crazy man. He would stop at nothing for the moment, but was



STAGE MANAGER VINCENT AT THE AGE OF 25.

always sorry afterward and willing to repair any mischief he might have done. Still, to me he was a lovable fellow. Beneath his unsmooth exterior there beats a true heart as man ever carried, and I must admit that I never suffered from his violent temper during my connection with him as the stage manager of several of his most important productions. His greatest fault, which not even his warmest admirer could fail to observe, was his intolerance.

In the opinion of Fechter, no one who held a different view from him on any matter connected with the stage was entitled to the slightest consideration, and the temerity of others in differing from him was something which was always a source of genuine surprise to this peculiar individual. These who met Fechter in the usual professional way knew practically nothing of the man's character, except perhaps his worst phases, but in my intercourse with him—a necessarily close one while it lasted—I had the opportunity to study him like a book, which I did, for even his enemies admitted that he was a remarkably interesting figure.

It is not generally known how Fechter was induced to visit this country. Charles Dickens, who was a warm admirer and personal friend of the great French actor, had for years been trying to get him to accept one of the many engagements which were offered for an American tour. Fechter, however, for some reason or other, was under the impression that he would not be so great a success here as he had been in England, and every offer was declined. Finally in 1869 Dickens succeeded in inducing Fechter to sign a contract to appear in this country under the management of Harry Palmer, who was a great friend of the novelist. I was then the stage manager for the firm of Jarrett & Palmer, and I was sent over to arrange the preliminaries for the production which were to be made in this city.

When I arrived in Paris, I hunted up Mr. Fechter, and he insisted that his opening in this country should be in the role of Jules Obenezier in "No Thoroughfare." I did not like the selection, but beyond a few mild protests I said nothing. I hurried over to London to see Mr. Dickens, who was as much opposed to Fechter's choice of an opening play for America as I had been. He communicated with his friend, and it was finally decided that the first bill in New York should be Victor Hugo's romantic drama, "Ray Bick." In this piece Mr. Fechter made his bow to an American audience at Niblo's Garden in this city Jan. 10, 1870, and scored an instantaneous triumph. Despite a few discordant notes from some of the critics, the people were delighted—electrified.

Dining With Dickens.
Approximately my consultation with Mr. Dickens concerning Fechter, a description of the great novelist as a host might be of interest to the thousands of admirers whom he won in this country. The fact and result of my visit to Mr. Fechter had been reported at Mr. Dickens' newspaper office in Wellington street, London, and he invited me to go to his home at Gad's Hill, Kent, where he expected Fechter on a visit. Naturally I was not slow to avail myself of this opportunity. When I reached the place in the afternoon at about 4 o'clock, I found, to my great delight, that Tom Taylor, the author of scores of really good plays, was also a guest there. A dinner for three, plain but well served, lasted from 6 until after 8 o'clock. What a feast of reason and a flow of words! That dinner was for me a little or nothing, although I was very hungry after the ride on the train and the bustle of a busy day in the city.

I shall never forget that occasion. These two brilliant men were in high spirits, and the feast and repartee flew back and forth with bewildering rapidity. What a picturesque figure Dickens made too! He wore a velvet jacket bound with gold braid, a waistcoat of black, bordered with a small gold cord and ornamented with beautifully embossed flowers, and a watch chain of unusually liberal proportions. His scarf of satin was decorated with flowers in much the same manner as the vest. His ruddy face, set off by curly hair, with

the stray lock hanging down upon his brow, gave him a poetic appearance which was never conveyed by his portraits. After the tablecloth had been removed I was invited to occupy the historic revolving chair, and, singly endorsed therein, I listened to the discussion between the two great men as to the founding of Punch in Vinegar Yard. I had no idea that the stories I had heard of the remarkably humble origin of the paper which boasted such a list of contributors were true, but it seems they were, "and more, too," as the clown says. That night I was assigned to the formal guest chamber which had been occupied by scores of famous men. Naturally I did not sleep, and next morning I was really sorry when a telegram was received from Fechter saying that he would have to delay his visit to Dickens for a few days, owing to the serious illness of his friend, Frederic Le Maitre, the man who, the French people like to assert, was the greatest actor the world ever produced. By the way, I enjoyed the distinction of an introduction to this wonderful player when I returned to Paris a few days later. He was then just passing from the public view, although still performing at the Porte St. Martin.

Peculiarities of Genius.
I had a taste of Fechter's stubbornness soon after his arrival in New York. He decided that "Hamlet" must be the opening bill, but the managers, who were paying him \$5,000 a week, objected, and after a wordy war they carried their point, and the original plan was adhered to. "Hamlet" was given as the last play during his engagement and was more praised and condemned than anything the French actor had previously done.

Fechter illustrated strikingly the difference in the methods of preparation for the stage in France and in this country. He painted, danced, boxed, designed, fenced, read music at sight, and, in a word, was adept at all the accomplishments which were likely to be of service to an actor. His foreign accent was a drawback to him in this country, but it was minimized by the man's great magnetism while he was on the stage.

I remember how, after the postponement for two nights of one of the plays, a dress rehearsal was called, and because I had provided artificial instead of natural grapes for one of the actors to eat Fechter stopped the proceedings summarily and declared that nothing should be done until the real fruit was provided. And the grapes were got at an expense of just \$1.

It is not to be wondered at that Charles Fechter died in poverty. When he played in New York, his apartments, at the best hotel in the city, were sumptuous, and he entertained like an eastern potentate. Never did a greater spendthrift live. He had no more idea of the value of money than a child, and when he became poor and retired to a farm in Pennsylvania there were many of his warmest admirers who declared that it would have been better for him had he never visited America. Critics may differ as to the exact place Fechter should occupy with reference to the other great actors of recent years, but they will all agree that the most brilliantly versatile genius that ever came to us from a foreign shore was this same Charles Fechter.

Adelaide Neilson.

"Stay but a little, I will come again."
LILLIAN ADELIAE LEE-NEILSON.

This was what that magnetic actress, Adelaide Neilson, almost invariably wrote in the autograph albums of the friends who pursued her incessantly and would have made life unbearable to one with less amiability. The quotation is, of course, from "Romeo and Juliet," which in her opinion was the grandest play ever written.

Adelaide had married shortly after her great success at the Haymarket theater, London, a Mr. Lee, the son of a clergyman, and Jack Ryder, who had trained the budding genius for the stage, told me in the case of the Haymarket one day some of the curious and quaint remarks which his old pupil had made about her home life. My brother Felix I were at the time guests of our old friend, Ned Sothorn, and the little episode occurred after one of the latter's performances. Besides our little party there were present at the time the Prince of Wales, who was then known generally as "Mr. Bertie," Sothorn, Buckstone, Ryder, Chevalier Wyckoff, Lord Southampton, Lord Rosebery, the present earl, and two or three others.

The conversation had drifted to Adelaide Neilson, and Ryder said: "Why, she calls her husband the pink of manly babyhood. He is so tender," she says, "that I am afraid that he will melt in my presence some day. His good heart and Dolly Sparker ways make me think that Dion Boucicault had a type of Lee in his mind's eye when he wrote "London Assurance.""

Miss Neilson was a lovable creature, and there never was an actress in America or England who attained greater popularity. Her supposed gipsy antecedents were noticeable in many little ways. She was excessively superstitious. On one occasion while she was playing under Henry Abbey's management at Booth's theater I received from Mr. Abbey, for temporary storage, a large mirror. I directed the carpenter to put it in the office. In so doing they contrived to drop it, and it was smashed into a thousand pieces. An hour later Adelaide's picture was blown from its fastenings in front of the theater and broken into smithereens: That same evening an ivory backed mirror presented to Miss Neilson by the Countess of Warwick years before slipped from her hand in her dressing room and was ruined. Turning to me, the actress observed with an expression closely approaching terror: "Fate, fate, Vincent! Something is going to happen."

Her Utterly End.

Later in the week, during a performance of "Twelfth Night," at the request of Oakes Ames, second, one of the proprietors of the theater, she consented to have his daughter presented to her. In the course of conversation, without any warning, Miss Neilson fell backward into my arms. It was generally given out at the time that it was a fainting fit, but I and many others knew better. I got some alcohol from the gas man's torch and applied it to the region of the heart. After vigorous rubbings and a glass of wine Miss Neilson was restored sufficiently to be enabled to finish the performance. When she was preparing to go home that evening, she observed to me: "Fate again. A repetition of that attack will some day kill me." And, sure enough, it did. One day she was driving in the Bois de Boulogne, Paris, when a similar fainting away

rendered her unconscious. The physicians treated her for a swoon instead of heart failure, and the career of this beautiful and talented actress was at an end.

Miss Neilson was as accessible as the most humble person in the world. I remember that I was breakfasting with her when an old man was ushered in. He presented a portrait of herself which he had painted and wished her to accept. She took it most graciously, complimented him highly, and then, after a few pleasant words about lack of appreciation of artistic ability, took out a checkbook, and calling a boy sent him to the office for the amount, \$100, for which she had written it. This she put into an envelope, with her signature and a sentiment on a card, and handed all to the artist, who little suspected that the package contained aught of value.

It used to amuse me when Miss Neilson called for Tommy Sheridan, a carpenter at Booth's theater, to "tuck her up" in the tomb scene when she played Juliet. Tommy was very painstaking in his work, for which he always received a present of \$2. She would not allow any one else to do this. I mentioned that fact one evening at the Manhattan club, and Leonard Jerome and Wright Sanford promptly inquired whether I did not want some volunteers.

Miss Neilson was another of the many generous souls of the stage. At the conclusion of an engagement at a theater she would present a check to every one connected with the stage, from the highest to the lowest. I have still a valuable malacca walking cane for which she paid \$65, and after having it suitably inscribed presented to me.

Adelaide Neilson was excessively gentle, but she was one of the best business women that ever lived. At her death she was possessed of a considerable fortune, most of which, I believe, she bequeathed to a British admiral to whom she was reported to have been betrothed at the time. Some estimates placed the value of her estate at about \$350,000. She probably made money more rapidly and consistently than any foreign player who ever came to this country.
L. JOHN VINCENT.

NIAGARA IN WINTER.

No Ice Bridge This Year—Planning a Big Hotel.

[Special Correspondence.]
NIAGARA FALLS, March 8.—They say Hoyt's comic song, with its refrain of "I'll never go there any more," did an immense amount of damage to business on the Bowers in New York. In the same way a catch phrase has done Niagara Falls incalculable harm. "As great a thief as a Niagara Falls hackman" has been quoted so often that people who plan to visit the falls are often deterred from staying more than a day, or possibly a few hours, between trains. Travel in this direction is just as great. Niagara is as much a Mecca for the tourist as ever. But it is no longer a summer resort, and this is in spite of the fact that the village has done much to redeem itself from the bad name which it gained many years ago. There are honest hackmen in Niagara now. But in these days the principal travel to Niagara is the excursion business. The New York Central had to run its trains in two or three sections on the Saturday before Washington's birthday, and every car was packed. These excursions are a boon to the people of the village in winter. They are all that make business for the place, and since the ice bridge failed to form this year there has been nothing but the unfulfilling attraction of the falling water to draw excursionists here.

It takes a long cold snap to form the ice bridge over the falls. Two or three times this winter it has begun to form, but each time a warm spell has rotted the ice, and it has been washed over the falls and down the gorge. Once or twice the dashing spray has frozen on the island trees and made a beautiful spectacle. But altogether the winter has been far from lively here.

The opening up of the electric power works and the starting of many new industries promise to give new life to the place within a few years, however. It may not become what it once was—the summer resort of rich, old southern families. The southern families which are old are not rich now, and those which are rich are not old. But it may be made more attractive as a general resort for tourists. Already there is talk of a great big hotel, one that will rival the Florida hotels in size and beauty. The suggestion is that the falls become an American Monte Carlo has been made, but it has not met with much encouragement. Since Saratoga became virtuous, Long Branch is the only gambling place in the north, and there is a demand for more of them. But gambling brings only a temporary prosperity to a resort, and it loses more than it gains.
GRANT HAMILTON.

Queer Language.

The Saturday Review says that when he was in Egypt Mark Twain hired two Arab guides to take him to the pyramids. He was familiar enough with Arabic, he thought, to understand and be understood with perfect ease. To his consternation he found that he could not comprehend a word that either of the guides uttered. At the pyramids he met a friend, to whom he made known his dilemma. It was very mysterious, Twain thought. "Why, the explanation is simple enough," said the friend. "Please enlighten me, then," said Twain. "Why, you should have hired younger men. These old fellows have lost their teeth, and, of course, they don't speak Arabic. They speak gum-Arabic."

A Wonderful Scholar.

Antonio Magliabechi, the famous Florentine scholar, was remarkable not only for the amount and variety of his knowledge—for he knew accurately 60 different languages—but also for his incessant labors as a student and librarian. He usually passed the whole night in study and when exhausted nature demanded rest a straw chair served for a couch and an old threadbare cloak for a coverlet.

Electric Bitters.

Electric Bitters is a medicine suited for any season but perhaps more generally needed when the languid, exhausted feeling prevails, when the liver is torpid and sluggish and the need of a tonic and alternative is felt. A prompt use of this medicine softens averted long and perhaps fatal biliousness. No medicine will act more surely in counteracting and freeing the system from the malarial poison, headache, indigestion, constipation, dizziness yield to Electric Bitters. 50 cents and \$1.00 per bottle at Streitz's Drug Store.

Transferring Pictures.

Prints or lithographs may be transferred to glass by a very simple process. The glass is cleaned with alcohol and a polisher, then coated with fine dammar varnish, laid on very evenly. It is then put away in a place where there is no dust, where it is to remain until it is so sticky that when touched with the finger the glass, if a small plate, may be lifted by the adhesion. The picture to be transferred must be soaked in rainwater until it is completely saturated, then placed between sheets of blotting paper and gently pressed. This removes all superfluous water. Now put the pictures, face down, upon the sticky side of the glass. The utmost care is necessary in placing it, as once it touches it cannot be moved without danger of tearing out pieces of the print. When it is adjusted, begin at one corner and press the picture flat upon the adhesive surface, watching continually to see that no air bubbles appear between the picture and the varnished surface. When this is finished, put the picture away again, let it remain until quite dry, then lay a wet towel over the back of the picture until the paper is thoroughly soaked.

Now begin at one corner, and with the fingers, frequently dipped in water so that they will remain wet, rub off the white paper. Continue this until all the white portion is removed. This will leave only the color of the picture upon the glass. At the finish give the back a rather heavy coat of transparent varnish. Let it dry thoroughly and add a very thin second coat. When this is perfectly dry, frame the picture with a very thin glass over the varnished side. Hang in the window as a transparency. A few attempts may be necessary before expert handling is acquired, but perseverance will bring success, and with care and a little ingenuity very many beautiful pictures may be prepared at the most trifling expense.—New York Ledger.

Early English Bindings.

During the reign of Elizabeth the fashion in binding underwent a considerable change, the graceful simplicity of the early work, with its rather severe and restrained ornament, giving place to a heavy, overdecorated style, in which a superabundance of gilding hid poverty of design. This style reached its height in the bindings produced for James I, which were commonly dotted all over with flowers-de-luce or thistles, while the corners were filled with a heavy block of coarse design. During the reign of Charles the bindings were as a rule copied from French work and the designs carried out with very small tools; but, though foreign influence was strongly felt at first, the English binder who plan to visit the falls are often deterred from staying more than a day, or possibly a few hours, between trains. Travel in this direction is just as great. Niagara is as much a Mecca for the tourist as ever. But it is no longer a summer resort, and this is in spite of the fact that the village has done much to redeem itself from the bad name which it gained many years ago. There are honest hackmen in Niagara now. But in these days the principal travel to Niagara is the excursion business. The New York Central had to run its trains in two or three sections on the Saturday before Washington's birthday, and every car was packed. These excursions are a boon to the people of the village in winter. They are all that make business for the place, and since the ice bridge failed to form this year there has been nothing but the unfulfilling attraction of the falling water to draw excursionists here.

A Parliament Custom.

Before the speech from the throne is read, when the houses are resumed in the afternoon, by the lord chancellor in the house of lords and the speaker in the house of commons, it is the practice in both houses to read one bill first time pro forma in order to assert their right of deliberation without reference to the immediate cause of summons. This practice is enjoined in the house of lords by a standing order. In the house of commons the same form is observed pursuant to ancient custom and of the following resolution, passed March 22, 1603: "That the first day of every sitting of every parliament some one bill, and no more, receive a first reading for form sake." In the house of commons the clerk of parliaments produces an ancient document which has served this purpose for at least a century, entitled "A bill for effectually preventing clandestine outlawries," which is duly read a first time and ordered to be a second time, and will never be heard of again till the opening of the next session.—London News.

Marvelous Mechanism of the Human Body.

The human body is an epitome in nature of all mechanics, all hydraulics, all architecture, all machinery of every kind. There are more than 810 mechanical movements known to mechanics today, and all of these are but modifications of those found in the human body. Here are found all the bars, levers, joints, pulleys, pumps, pipes, wheels, and axles, ball and socket movements, beams, girders, trusses, buffers, arches, columns, cables and supports known to science. At every point man's best mechanical work can be shown to be but adaptations of processes of the human body, a revelation of first principles used in nature.—William George Jordan in Ladies' Home Journal.

The Dance-Dictator.

The large private dances given in New York afford a means of livelihood to a number of women whose work does not appear conspicuously in the results as important as it really is. The lists of many of the hostesses that entertain in this way are taken charge of by young women who make a business of sending out invitations, overlooking lists and generally superintending the entire distribution of the invitations. This necessitates a revision of the names and the omission of all who happen to be no longer available for social entertainments from one cause or another. The women who attend to work of this kind relieve the hostess of all further responsibility than the delivery to her of the invitations. This is a particular relief to the people in society who happen to spend any considerable part of their time in Europe and are unfamiliar with the changes that take place in New York. One young woman and her mother have for several years made a very good living out of work of this kind, and there are a half dozen or more who devote their time to it. At many of the large balls a hostess never expects to know personally all the people she invites. Some of them play no more important part in her acquaintance than a place on her visiting list, and that distinction having once been gained, it is likely to be secure until something very serious happens. One of the duties of the women who make a business of this sort of thing is to see that invitations do not go to people whose friends would be grieved by the suggestion of their attending a ball.—New York Sun.

Drudgery Required of the President.

In The Century C. C. Buel has a paper on "Our Fellow Citizen of the White House," in which he writes of the official duties of the president. In opening his article Mr. Buel says:
A president who should not carry in to the White House a relish for drudgery, business habits of the strictest discrimination and a constitution of iron would be president only in name, even as regards his more important duties. His signature on the papers which he is told will not otherwise be legal might be as good as the custodian of his bank account would require, but within the meaning of the law it would be as often as not a moral forgery. Yet no complaint should be offered on this account. Presidents are made for better or for worse. Such as they are in natural faculty and strength, so they must serve, some of them leading on official advisers and bureaucratic clerks in every step they take and some of them putting the stamp of their own individuality on the papers and acts which make up an administration.

When a president elect, facing the chief justice, has repeated the constitutional oath, "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of president of the United States and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the constitution of the United States," he has indicated himself for four years of the heaviest and most arduous of all the lot of any mortal. By comparison the "hired man" talked about in the last canvass would lead a pampered existence, and a constitutional monarch is a man of leisure. A president equal to his oath is both king and premier. He reigns and he rules. He is bowed down by the crown of authority and is encompassed by the mantle of care.

Lincoln and the Widow.

During all that dreadful period when the civil war was ravaging the country Lincoln held the reins of the government, and although worn out with unremitting toil, he never neglected an opportunity to help those who suffered.

One day a poor woman, whose tears had worn furrows down her cheeks gained an audience with Lincoln, and in a few words related the sad tale of her husband, who had fought in the Union army only to lose his life, and of her three boys, who were fighting. She requested the discharge of her eldest boy, that she might have some one to support her. Lincoln's heart responded to the appeal, and he replied, "Certainly if you have given us all and your prop has been taken away you are justly entitled to one of your boys."

The poor woman went away light of heart, only to return later, tearfully begging the release of her second son. The discharge of the first son had come too late. He was killed before it reached him. So Lincoln sat down and wrote the requisite order for the release of the second son, and, rising, handed the paper to the afflicted woman, saying: "Now you have one and I have one of the two boys left. That is no more than right." Weeping with joy, the poor mother blessed Lincoln and hurried out to send her precious order.—Harper's Round Table.

A Good Deal in Him After All.

"Well," said Papa Rushweed, as he settled down to his just before retiring cigar, "now that Bella has been brought around her young man I can't say that I think there is much in him."
"Guess you didn't notice the dinner he ate, Jacob," said the practical mamma.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Marvelous Results.

From a letter written by Rev. J. Gunderman, of Dimondale, Mich., we are permitted to make this extract: "I have no hesitation in recommending Dr. King's New Discovery, as the results were almost marvelous in the case of my wife. While I was pastor of the Baptist Church at Kross Junction she was brought down with Pneumonia, succeeding La Grippe. Terrible paroxysms of coughing would last hours with little interruption and it seemed as if she could not survive them. A friend recommended Dr. King's New Discovery; it was quick in its work and highly satisfactory in results." Trial bottles free at A. F. Streitz's Drug Store. Regular size 30 cents and \$1.00. 1

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