

## Hoodooos of the Stage.

An English actor whose name has been well known in theatricals for nearly forty years, has protested emphatically against the charge that he is personally unlucky and has been identified with a much greater number of failures than those falling to the average player. 'This remark' he said in effect, 'was made about me by a friend about fifteen years ago after the failure of a play in which I had a part. 'Poor fellow he said 'he is always unlucky.' The man who said that intended it as an expression of sympathy, but it has cost me the money I would have made as a successful actor, and has practically put my career under a blight since it began to spread through the profession.'

'Every actor cannot appear always in successful plays. He is bound to take part in failures, and I don't think I had a share in any more than falls to the lot of men in my profession. But the impression got around that I was unlucky in my influence on productions. Managers did not care to engage me, for they are sometimes superstitious. The press began to expect that anything that I was concerned in would fail because the impression that I was to exercise some baleful influence on every play was also communicated to them. So my professional career has been wrecked by a careless remark of a sympathetic friend until the impression got about that I failed always and so did everybody connected with me. I attained as many successes as any actor who meets his regular alteration of good plays and bad ones.'

If this actor had lived in the United States he would have been known as a hoodoo and his career proves the existence of the same superstition here as in England. Certain actors, presumably, for no more fault of their own than in the case just mentioned, seem to be looked upon as unlucky to any theatrical venture, quite independent of what their talent may be. One notable case of this is an actress still on the stage and for two years past connected with a successful company. She is no longer a beginner, and had in fact had a long career which began in a somewhat different branch of her profession from that in which she is now active. She has always occupied a respectable place and at one time promised to take a brilliant one but that was never realized and is now not likely to be. By what could have been no more than coincidence she was connected from time to time with plays that did not succeed, and made in fact rather conspicuous failures. If she had not, at that time, occupied a considerable share of the attention devoted to the stage, nobody would have known that she was concerned in them, but she came to be known as a hoodoo in the profession. One Boston manager who died several years ago, had refused for several seasons before his death to receive at his theatre any company in which she was. He looked upon her as a hoodoo and felt certain that he would have a failure on his hands.

'Look here,' said an agent to him one day. 'I want to get three weeks' time at your theatre for 'The Rimestone Pin' which is going to be produced in New York. We think the play is a good one, have engaged a first-class company, and here is the list of actors.'

The name of the taboored leading woman was in the cast.

'I wouldn't take you in on any terms,' was the manager's answer, 'as long as that woman is in the company. She is a hoodoo and for the last three seasons she has been here every play was a failure. Two of those plays were productions I made myself with every chance of success until I engaged her. So I can't book you.'

'I will tell you what I will do,' was the agent's compromise, 'for it is impossible to chance the cast on account of any superstition against her. She has the part that suits her splendidly and there is no woman in the business who could do it as well. If the play doesn't go along I will put her out the first thing and get some one else for the role, and believe forever afterward that you are right.'

The Boston manager had the satisfaction early in the season, when the new play had not been on the road for more than

six weeks, of seeing the unlucky actress replaced by somebody else. The enterprise was successful, and after the objectionable member of the company had been removed, played a profitable season at his theatre. His superstition seemed to be verified, although as a matter of fact the woman concerned in the play was unfortunate only in that she had a part unsuited to her. It was more adapted to the personality and talent of the second, and naturally that change was sufficient to make a success of what might have been a failure with such an important phase of it inappropriately looked after.

But to this day the actress is known as a hoodoo in her profession. Managers are loath to engage her and her own profession looks upon her as one of its predestined unfortunate members who exercises a spell almost as bad as the evil eye upon all her associates in the business. From a matter of fact point of view it is almost impossible to sympathize with any such transcendental idea, and the facts of her failures could be explained in a much more practical manner. Whether the woman knows or not that she is regarded in the profession as an unlucky influence nobody has ever heard. It ought not to bother her as much as it has some of the managers for whose production she has been engaged. In spite of the prejudice against her, she has always been able to obtain engagements enough to keep her employed and to accumulate a very comfortable competency as a result of her long labors. During recent seasons, however, she appeared usually in combinations of a less pretentious order than those in which she used to act.

Prosperity and the hoodooos are by no means irreconcilable. A popular comedian who retired from the stage a long time ago took with him into private life a small fortune, quite sufficient for his needs, yet he had come to be looked upon as the worst sort of a hoodoo who could never, by any chance, be connected with a success, and was said to bring misfortune to his managers and everybody associated with him in business.

The disparity between the actual facts and the common impression about a person is shown in his case, for instead of being a failure, as the world had always taken him to be, he was quietly laying by a competency in spite of few brilliant successes. If this impression about him had not existed, he might have accumulated more money and might have had to be less saving about it. Another comedian who acts in comic opera now as often as he can get the opportunity, has for years been looked upon by managers as a hoodoo, whose existence it is impossible to counteract.

'I knew what it would be when I engaged Will,' said a manager the other day, 'and I don't know that I would have done it if I could have put my hands just at that moment on somebody else for the part. He was the easiest man to get and willing to take what I wanted to pay, so I ran against my own judgment and hired him. I don't know whether the show was any good or not, and whether it had any real chances of success. At all events it only took Will to knock them sky-high and close up the house in two weeks. Business had been bad before I put him in the cast, but it went down 50 per cent. as soon as he appeared.'

This experience, of course, satisfied one more manager that the unfortunate actor was a hoodoo, when, as a matter of fact he had been called in to take the part of a more expensive and popular performer, who was the sole attraction of a weak comic opera. It could never have been made a success under any circumstances, and with the retirement of the one popular feature in it, the end came quickly. It is from such accidental experiences as this that the actor may acquire a reputation as a hoodoo, when he is nothing of the kind and might, under favorable circumstances, prove a valuable member of a company. Just now one of the most popular actresses in New York is a woman who, a few years ago, came within an ace of being declared a hoodoo. She was disadvantageously placed in poor or unattractive plays, and the public interest in her was not commensurate to her great talent. She was charming personally and the public liked her, but did not turn out to see her in numbers sufficient to make her a success financially. Three or four bad plays following one another, in which her acting was praised without attracting the public, gave grounds for the growing theory that she, too, might develop into a hoodoo. One successful, well-written play, in which her own work was no better than it had been in half a

dozen others before, was enough to take a firm hold on public taste and there will never in the future be any discussion of this young woman as a hoodoo.

A Sun reporter asked a manager the other day how actors come to be hoodooos, or at least, came to be thought so, by members of their profession. 'It happens in this way,' he said. 'After an actor or an actress has acquired a certain prominence and is able to demand a certain salary, the manager who engages them relies in a measure on their share in making his enterprise a success. If it fails on account of the quality of the play itself, or for any other reason not connected with the abilities or personalities of the actor, the manager is likely to mark down the piece a failure and look upon everybody concerned in it as having done their part in accomplishing that result. After a man or a woman has been identified for two or three years with unsuccessful plays it takes a mighty far-seeing, unbiased man to have confidence in their abilities and to believe that the failure would have come apart from what they did. A manager is likely to approach every new production with as much uncertainty and nervousness as it were the most important he had ever made. I have known men to control half a dozen important theatrical enterprises at once; yet, on the day preceding the least important play they undertake, their nervousness and apprehension will be just as great as if they had never been through that experience before. If it fails they may be good losers and take the event philosophically; but before its production they will neglect no precaution to ensure success and be very respectful of what may seem like mere superstition.'

'If it comes to the question of engaging a man or woman who had been identified with failures, they are likely to look every where else before settling on them. Naturally, these people find it harder and harder to get the best engagements. More failures mean the strengthening of the prejudice against them, and it takes considerable strength of character on the part of a man or woman to struggle against this sort of opinion when it begins to exist. If a man happens to be a star and continues to fail, he will drop out of that position, unless he has the money or a manager who has confidence enough in him to continue the effort until luck has turned. It is not a difficult matter for a star who has been a failure in that capacity to find employment in less exacting positions. The same thing is true of a woman. It is the stock actor or actress who has never emerged from that sphere on whom the blight of the hoodoo rests most heavily. It is impossible for him to drop back, because he has never got out of the ranks. So, gradually these actors find employment more difficult to obtain, have to work with smaller companies, and find their professional career is to lie in very humble lines.'

'Mind you, I have no belief in the theory that any man or woman ever acts as a hoodoo so long as they are sufficiently competent and talented to play the part that falls to them. Some people have more magnetism for the public than others, and that quality is valuable in an actor; but no play that is good in every particular, or, at all events, good enough to make a moderate success, is going to fail because the man or that woman with a past full of failures happens to play a leading or important role. At the same time, I can't say that I would ever engage, if I could help it, anybody who had come to be looked upon as a hoodoo. I am not prejudiced against them and I don't believe in their influence on a play's success or failure, but at the same time, I would rather have somebody who hasn't been called by that baleful name when I pick out a company of actors.'

### THE KIMBERLEY DIAMOND MINES.

Process of Getting out Gems—Damage the Boers Might do.

The military objective of the Boers who surround Kimberley is the destruction of the diamond mines of which Cecil Rhodes draws his wealth and if possible, to capture Mr. Rhodes himself. The mines within the limits of the city of Kimberley furnish 95 per cent. of the world's supply of diamonds and are unique in two ways. The De Beers and Kimberley mines are probably the two biggest holes ever dug in the earth by man and the deposit in which they are dug is the only one known in the world where diamond is found in the original matrix in which it was formed. Since the chemist Moissan has succeeded in making artificial diamonds, we can now form some idea of how nature worked in making these deposits, and it is believed that the diamonds found in the 'blue earth' of Kimberley were crystallized there while the whole mass was held under enormous pressure within the more than white hot interior of a mountain of fire. When the workings were begun at Kimberley the diamonds were found in disintegrated 'earth' at and



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near the surface, but as the workings were deepened the 'blue earth' was found in its native state, rock like and required to be blasted to be taken out.

When the De Beers and Kimberley mines reached a depth by open working of something like 500 feet and an area of thirteen to fourteen acres each, that method of procedure was abandoned and a new system begun of working from shafts dug to the blue ground deposits at some distance from the original pits and working these by transverse drivings. Some of these shafts go down to a depth of 1,500 feet. Great care has to be taken to prevent these workings being filled up by a caving of the upper soil about them, and it would be easy for the Boers not only to destroy millions of dollars' worth of mining machinery about the pit mouths, but also to fill up the pits so that it would be a work of years to resume diamond gathering. In the old days when the open pits were worked, these were strung with miles and miles of wire cables, which served as roadways by which men and material were sent back or forth from the working hundreds of feet below. All of that has changed and much more expensive and elaborate hoisting machinery is used now.

When the blue ground reaches the surface it is still a long way from yielding up its store of diamonds. Crushing it finely enough to reveal all the gems it holds hidden, would be out of the question, for by such a process the bigger diamonds would be ruined. Nature, however, stands ready to help, and the blue earth softens readily under exposure to sunshine and moisture. For this purpose great flat fields are prepared on the surface within the mine compounds, where the blue earth is taken on little cars and dumped out as one might spread top soil on a lawn. These 'floors' as they are called, cover about 600 acres.

The floors are covered with diamondiferous earth to a depth of about a foot. When the larger pieces begin to crumble under the influence of sun and moisture heavy horse harrows are set to work upon the earth, and the scene is like that on a farm in the spring when the planter is getting ready to put in his crops. It takes from three to six months' exposure to prepare the blue ground for the process of searching out the diamonds.

Running water is the first agent used in this search. Elaborate and costly washing machines, designed by Americans, do this work, and out of perhaps each one hundred tons of earth these will gather and save one ton of what looks like coarse sand and blue pebbles. Another machine separates these into lots of four different sizes and these then go to the assorting tables, where a lot of whitemen sort them while they are wet and another lot of black men go over them when they are dry, picking out the diamonds and discarding all other matter. Then they are all boiled in a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acids to clean their surfaces, after which they are again gone over by experts, who assort them for size, color and purity. The daily production of the consolidated mines is about 5,500 carats, worth at \$40 a carat, \$220,000.

The works employ about 1,300 Europeans and 5,700 natives, and every one gets good wages. Mechanics and engineers get from \$30 to \$35 a week, miners from \$25 to \$30, and natives in the underground work receive from \$1 to \$1.25 a day. Overseers on the floors get \$18 to \$20 a week; assorters, \$25 to \$30, and native laborers from \$3 to \$5.25 a week, but in addition to these sums each man gets a premium upon diamonds found by himself. The native laborers receive 3d. premium for each carat found, and the white employees get 1s. 6d. for each carat. The men in the mines get larger premiums for the stones found by them.

The premium system is meant to help break up the stealing of stones and the illicit dealing in them, out of which many fortunes have been made. Extraordinary precautions are taken to prevent these losses. The white men are engaged for two years at a time and are not allowed outside the compound during that time, and the natives are engaged for periods of three months each and are stripped and searched every night after they leave the workings.

### HAD TO LEAVE JOHANNESBURG.

Capt. MacAdam, of the Victoria Rifles, Hears From His Sister.

A letter was recently received from Mrs. D. M. Paton, sister of Captain MacAdam, of the Victoria Rifles from South Africa. It is dated Naamport Junction, Cape Colony, October 17, 1899.

'A line to tell you we are safe, so far, but, oh! what an experience! We stayed in our home, Johannesburg, four days after martial law was proclaimed, and were then told to leave. We left our key with a Kaffir boy, and a burgher, and his wife were going to live in our home, and we had to leave provisions for them.'

'We travelled here two days and two nights, in a coal truck, with our luggage for seats, and at night the moon for our lights. British soldiers are encamped here. We passed through a camp of Boers on the way, and were chucked out by the wayside, and drove in a bullock wagon for two miles to cross the border, but, burrah! we are in British territory now. We are going further to the 'seaside, and will get a furnished house. Four of our party, including our two youngest, were left at Bloemfontein, and we are waiting for them.'

'We have been living on sandwiches and biscuits and water; have had no sleep scarcely for three nights, and oh! it was cold last night, but the weather is dry. The four of us have no coats, or rugs, or food, as we have all the baggage. I wonder shall I ever see my home as I left it.'

### STOMACH TROUBLE.

#### A FREQUENT SOURCE OF THE MOST INTENSE MISERY.

Mr. Harvey Price, of Elmavak, Suffered For Years Before Finding a Cure—Dr. Williams' Pink Pills Restored Him.

Those who suffer from stomach troubles are truly to be pitied. Life seems a burden to them; food is distasteful, and even that of the plainest kind is frequently followed by nausea, distressing pains and sometimes vomiting. Such a sufferer was Mr. Harvey Price, a well known farmer and stock-grower living at Elmavak, Ont. To a reporter who recently interviewed him, Mr. Price said:—'I have found Dr. Williams' Pink Pills of such incalculable value in relieving me of a long siege of suffering that I am not only willing but anxious to say a good word in behalf of this medicine, and thus point the road to health to some other sufferer. For five years I had been afflicted with stomach trouble and a torpid liver. I doctored and also denied myself of many kinds of food pleasant to the taste but neither the medical treatment nor the diet seemed to help me to any degree. In January, 1898, the climax of my trouble appeared to be reached. At that time I was taken down with la grippe, and that, added to my other troubles, placed me in such a precarious position that none of my neighbors looked for my recovery. My appetite was almost completely gone, and I experienced great weakness, dizziness, vomiting spells and violent headaches. I was also troubled with a cough which seemed to rack my whole system. I shall never forget the agony experienced during that long and tedious sickness. Medical treatment and medicines of various kinds had no apparent effect in relieving me. After existing in this state for some months, my mother induced me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. In May last I purchased three boxes, and before these were gone I had obtained relief was experienced. Thus encouraged I continued the use of the pills, and with the use of less than a dozen boxes, I was again enjoying the best of health. I can now attend to my farm work with the greatest ease. My appetite is better than it has been for years, and the stomach trouble that had so long made my life miserable has vanished. I have gained in weight, and can safely say that I am enjoying better health than I have done for years before. I feel quite sure that those who may be sick or ailing, will find a cure in a fair trial of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills.'

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills make pure, rich blood, thus reaching the root of disease and driving it out of the system, curing when other medicines fail. Most of the ills afflicting mankind are due to an impoverished condition of the blood, or weak or shattered nerves, and for all these Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are a specific which speedily restores the sufferer to health. These pills are never sold in any form except in the company's boxes, the wrapper round which bears the full name 'Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.' All others are counterfeits and should always be refused. Get the genuine, and be made well.

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