

IN FRANCE'S FAMOUS OPERA HOUSE

The Free Shows Generally Result in a Riotous Evening—Character of the Crowd.

So magnificent a palace is the Paris Opera that the Parisians long ago ceased to consider whether other nations have good music or good artists. It is a temple for music so surpassing all others, with such troops of governmental priests, all decorated with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, with such throngs of worshippers in diamonds, silks and black dress coats, that good old favorites like "Faust" and "Les Huguenots" suffice it. It is true that lately they have taken up Wagner, so that the tourists of the summer may hear such novelties as "Tannhauser" and "The Valkyrie," but this must be taken as an extraordinary innovation. The Paris Opera is for French composers. And as French composers just now are not making great successes the repertoire is made up from the good old ordinary. Owned and patronized by the government, the Paris Opera is administered on well-considered civil service principles. No disloyal rivalry may mar its decent regularity. No carpe enterprise disturbs its mild serenity. It is content to bring out two new failures every year, and say that all is well.

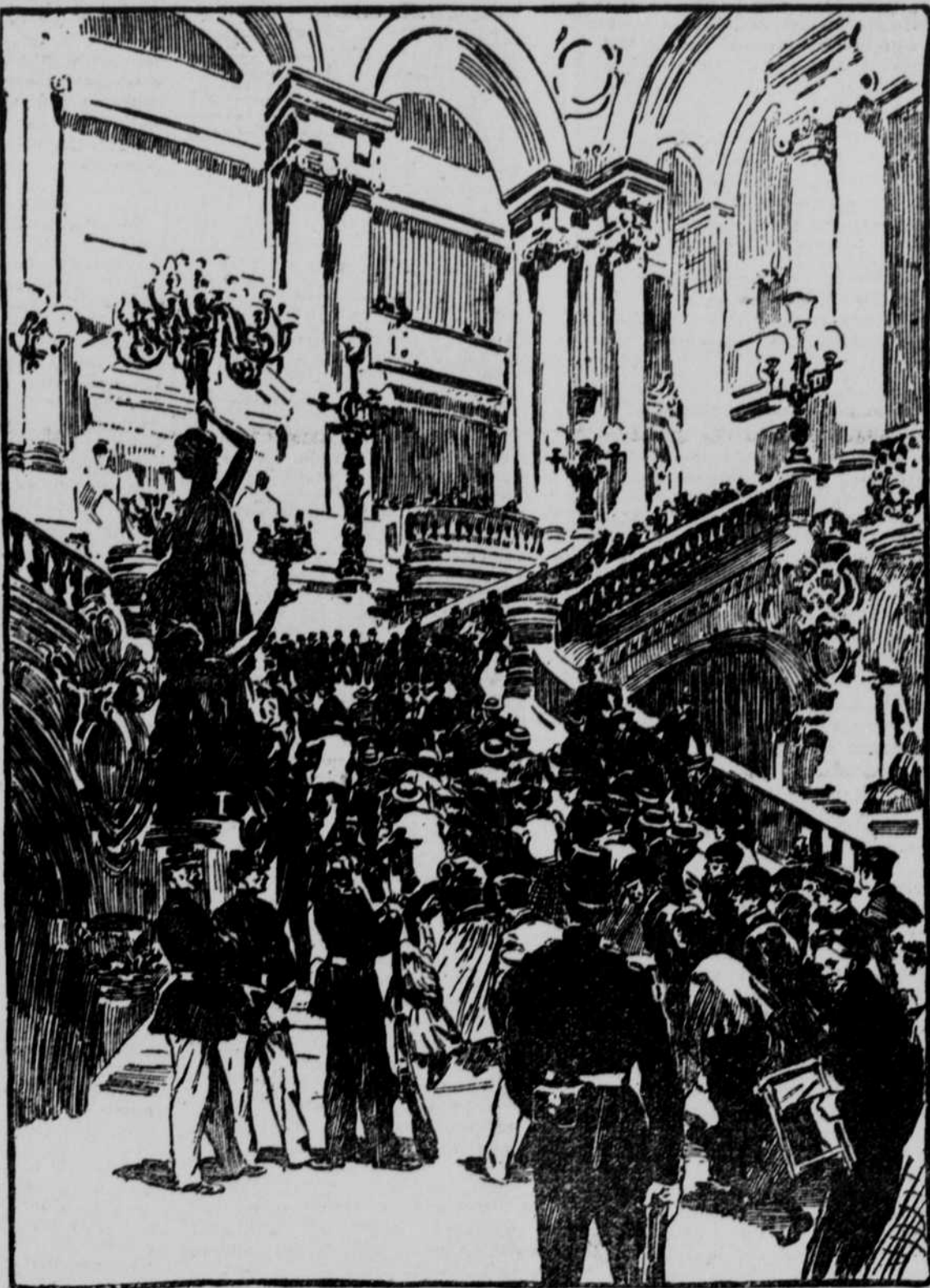
The public of the Opera would not have it otherwise. The orchestra and parquet chairs, reserved to men in evening dress, make calm digesting stools for clubmen, where the well-known arias comfort them and aid their calculations for tomorrow's races and tonight's baccarat. Between the acts you stand up, put on your hat, adjust your opera glasses, and stare upon the ladies in the boxes with prolonged and comprehensive familiarity. "Tiens, Mme. X." "Her diamonds are imitations!" "The belle Mme. G. Quelle décolletage! Why does she keep her gaze lowered?"

They talk aloud now, having whispered through the act. To do otherwise is to show that you have no acquaintances around you, and to be alone in the orchestra indicates that you are an outsider.

A la bonne heure! as they say in French, a great change comes over the scene on the afternoon of a "free representation." Really, these free performances at government playhouses, the Opera, Opera Comique, the Theater Francais and the Odeon, present one of the most remarkable spectacles of up-to-date Paris. They take place regularly on the various grand fete days of the year, and cost heavily in breakages and cleaning up. They are no newer than the idea of socialism itself. Ancient Rome offered free spectacles at the Colosseum to its citizens, just as it made gratuitous distributions of wheat, Panem et circenses! was the word—

bread and shows! The "people" pay a good part of the taxes, and the subventioned playhouses of Paris take a good slice of the public revenue. Therefore it is just. It is an attractive sight to see the riff-raff tumbling into the great monument of the Third empire's greatest effort—individuals of every age and both sexes, with their bottles and their bundles, eager to enjoy for a few hours the splendors and the luxury belonging to their betters. Some of them sit all night upon the steps, and all the morning of the day itself, to be in time to occupy "the royal box," or the loggia of the Jockey Club. Then they throw orange peel upon the floor. The character of the crowd depends much on the weather. If the long waiting must be done in the wet, tramps will abound, poor devils with enough of the ideal still in them to save half their brandy bottle to attune their nerves to the sweet strains of "Samson et Dalila" and fire their imaginations to the heights of the bacchanalian ballet. If the day is fine the crowd will be of a more definite social situation—clerks, workmen and all the little bourgeoisie. But the head of the string will always be composed of speculating loafers, with no music in their souls. They are there to sell their places for three francs, or even two francs. A mother and three daughters coming late—an hour or so before the opening of the doors—will squeeze their way into the place of one of

them. It is the custom, and nobody protests. But when such customers are rare the speculators, "threatened with the performance," sadly slip away to pick up pennies elsewhere. The crowd is good-natured, singing, eating, drinking, chaffing, four deep all around the opera house, hedged in by ropes. Now and then a woman faints or a child gets an arm broken, but the general cheerfulness is irrepressible. When the doors open the great



THE RUSH OF THE PEOPLE UP GRAND STAIRWAY.

"push" rolls into the aristocratic vestibule and up the magnificent escalier d'honneur like a tidal wave. Out of thoughtful delicacy the entrance to the cheapest seats of the Paris opera is by way of the great stairway. There is no side entrance for the gallery gods. Well, such is the force of habit that a great part of the crowd always starts to rush up those four flights, when the best seats of the orchestra are waiting for them.

The ordinary odor of a Paris Opera night is that of femininity and perfumes. But when the populace has gained possession the smell is of ham, wine, oranges and peppermint. Those who get into the boxes—and there are many boxes at the Paris Opera—spread their table. A quart bottle of red wine for each individual, plenty of cold ham and chicken, with bread and cheese and fruit, is thought to be a model lunch.

The constant change in bicycles is easy of solution. For every time the wheels go round there is a revolution.

Lakefront—That circus man must be a fool.

Wabash—What's he doing?

Lakefront—Why, he actually wants to pay money to watch animals eat.

QUEER NAMES OF SOME FLATS

Do They Affect the Characters of Those Who Dwell Within?

"As for me," ventured the man with the wooden head, "I can't indorse your views. You lay claim that our apartment-house—our flat—nomenclature, as given expression in Chicago, is too airy, too exalted, too fanciful. On the contrary it is not the one nor the other nor the last of these. You say: 'Here, a man lives in the Santa Maria. He comes home with a Saturday night tolerance of feeling for all men. He is willing to sleep on the grass in the in-

J. SMITH, MILLIONAIRE

It was a typical autumn London night, the streets flowing with greasy mud, the air yellow with smoky fog, and a cold, sleety drizzle falling, as Hilda Smith arrived at Paddington station.

It was her first experience of the great metropolis, but she had received her instructions, and selecting her portmanteau she had it removed to a cab, and, jumping in, ordered the man to drive to the Ballarat mansions in Victoria street, Westminster.

Hilda was not a little anxious because she had arrived in town a day ahead of her invitation, and she was not certain whether her bachelor brother, with whom she was going to stay for a month or six weeks, would be ready to receive her.

The door was opened by a hard-faced looking woman of the charwoman type, who stood gazing at her without moving away from the entrance.

"Is this Mr. Smith's?" asked Hilda.

"Yes, miss," replied the woman, without offering to let her in, however.

"Is he at home?"

"No, he ain't, and I don't know when he will be."

"But did he not expect me? He is my brother, and I have come to stay with him."

"Oh, indeed, miss. Well, he didn't say nothing to me about it," answered the woman. "But I suppose you'd better have the spare room," and she stepped aside with a grudging air as she allowed the fair girl to enter.

Turning on the electric light, she showed Hilda into a handsomely furnished bedroom, whose white and gold paint and blue satin furniture caused her to open her eyes in wonder, for her brother was not supposed at home to be in luxurious circumstances, and by the time she had washed her face and hands the housekeeper brought her a cup of tea and some bread and butter, after which she retired to rest, and did not wake until late the following morning.

"Mr. Smith came home late last night, miss," said the housekeeper, when she aroused her with the hot water, "and told me to say that he would join you at breakfast."

The breakfast table was a picture to the eyes of the frugally brought up country girl, for it was covered with every delinquency in or out of season, and

would most probably find "the other Mr. Smith" at home to lunch.

Hilda hurried away to put her hat on, and the more she looked at the exquisitely furnished room, with its cut-glass perfume bottles, chased silver powder boxes, and all the hundred and one little additions that go toward making a woman happy, the more she wondered who it had been prepared for.

Fortunately, when they arrived at 8 Ballarat mansions, they found "the other Mr. Smith at home on the top floor, and Hilda could not help noticing how wonderfully civil he was to her host, and how eagerly he accepted his offer to dine on the following evening for himself and sister.

After he had gone, however, the matter was explained.

"That is John Smith, the millionaire, said her brother, impressively, "and he is the managing director of the company I work for."

The dinner was followed by a theater and a supper, and so it went on, until the night before she should have gone home Mr. Smith asked her if she would change her appellation from Miss to Mrs. Smith.

Hilda has always had an overwhelming desire to penetrate the mystery of the spare room, but all the information she could obtain from her husband was, that he kept it fitted up in that manner in order that he might be able to entertain an angel if one called upon him unawares, and he always added:

"And if it had not been for that precaution, my dear, I should not have had the dearest and sweetest little wife in the world."—Ally Sloper.

BANK CLERKS.

Are Specialists in Handwriting, but Are Not Experts.

New Orleans Times Democrat: "I am free to say I don't repose much confidence in bank clerks as experts in handwriting," said an experienced paying teller of this city. "I mean, of course, experts in the broad acceptance of the term. The average teller becomes familiar with the signatures of the customers of his bank and in time he acquires a remarkable facility for memorizing the characteristics of any autograph on sight, that doesn't make him a scientific expert in chirography. In nine cases out of ten his opinion as to whether two documents, for instance,



HILDA HURRIED AWAY TO PUT HER HAT ON.

Hilda was admiring the priceless china when she heard footsteps approaching, and turned around to welcome her brother.

"Oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, dancing toward the door with her arms outstretched. "I'm so glad—"

Then she stopped suddenly as though she had been shot, for a tall, dark, handsome man, quite the opposite of her brother in appearance, entered the room.

"I am afraid that somebody has made a mistake," he said, in a soft, kind, reassuring voice. "But I can not be sufficiently grateful to whoever is to blame for sending me such a charming guest to breakfast."

"I expected to meet my brother—Mr. Smith," observed Hilda, nearly choking with confusion. "John Smith."

"My name is John Smith," said the stranger, with an amused smile.

"Of No. 8 Ballarat mansions," continued Hilda.

"Ah! Now I see how the mistake occurred," exclaimed Mr. Smith. "This is No. 6, but there is another John Smith at No. 8, and our letters frequently get mixed up. I can only say that I am sorry it is the other John Smith who is the lucky man on this occasion. And now, my dear young lady, let us go to breakfast."

At first Hilda could neither eat nor speak, but her host in a short time had succeeded in putting her so much at her ease that she was chattering away to him about her family, her home, and all her little domestic affairs.

That breakfast must have lasted an unconscionably long period, but Mr. Smith did not appear to be desirous of hurrying it, and everything was so delightfully strange and novel to Hilda that she did not notice the lapse of time until her companion suggested that if they went around now they

were written by the same man, would have no special value, and for that reason a great deal of the so-called expert evidence received in court is really worthless. A bank teller or cashier is a specialist in signatures, but exactly how he identifies them and detects forgeries with almost unerring accuracy is something that very few of them are able to explain. It is very difficult, in fact, to put it into words. As nearly as I can express it, a teller recognizes a signature in much the same way that he recognizes a friend on the street—not by any single feature, but by the ensemble, by a general summing up of all his characteristics. He would know him in spite of changes in attire and even changes in the manner of wearing his hair or beard, and by a similar process he recognizes signatures written under varying conditions—they are dissimilar, but they have the old familiar look. A forger on the other hand is almost certain to impress him as strange. He can't tell exactly why, perhaps, but he knows it "doesn't look right." A modern expert in handwriting basis his opinion on certain exact rules and close, detailed analysis, but with a banking man the thing is half instinctive. He has to decide on the spot of the moment and has no time for measurements and microscopes. Most tellers know nothing whatever about the science of chirography."

Mrs. Gladstone.

Mrs. Gladstone, widow of the grand old man, is a woman of wonderful strength and endurance. Not long ago she was driving in a pony carriage, when the animal started to run and overturned the vehicle. Though much shaken up and shocked at the time, the venerable lady soon recovered and showed no ill effects of her accident.



SCENE IN A PROSCENIUM BOX.

RELIC PILFERING MINISTERS.

They Chip Pieces off the Washington Monument and Pay Well for Them.

From the New York Mail and Express: Colonel Bingham, superintendent of public buildings and grounds, who has charge of the Washington monument, says one of the greatest troubles the watchmen at the monument have to contend with is the chipping of these memorial stones by relic hunters. "One of the strangest things in regard to these relic hunters," said

Colonel Bingham, "is the fact that more than one-half of the men arrested for chipping off relics are clergymen. When the police arrest these despoilers and start with them to the station house the man will begin to ask what is the penalty and try to beg off. He is told that the fine is a heavy one, but that \$15 security can be put up for appearance in the police court. Then the prisoner explains that he is a minister of the gospel and meant no harm, and that he could not stand the disgrace of appearing in a police court. He ends

up by giving up the collateral, after generally trying to cut it down to \$10, saying he has only that amount with him."

Well Informed.

Teacher—"Johnny, can you name the chief product of the Philippine Islands?" Johnny—"Yes'm, Trouble."—Life.

Five Per Cent Soldiers.

Five per cent of all Europeans are trained soldiers.

A Dog's Bath Tub.

A sagacious dog lives at a red brick house on Bellevue avenue, near Sixteenth street, in Kansas City. He is a full-grown pointer. At the corner of Seventeenth street, a block and a half from the home of this dog, is an iron watering trough set into the sidewalk near the curb. The trough is always full of water. He leaps into the trough and squats down till the water, which is more than a foot in depth, is almost over his back.

Twenty-Five Hanged.

Twenty-five women have been hanged in England during Queen Victoria's reign.