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**OBSERVATIONS.**

WILLA SIBERT CATHER.

**Real Strike Instigators.**

Whatever may be the real cause of the disturbances that come up from time to time in Pittsburg steel circles, one fact is peculiarly significant, that strikes never occur when the demand for worked steel and steel products exceeds the supply. The press dispatchers, in figuring up the total losses to the steel corporations through the inactivity of the mills, have neglected to figure what the steel magnates would lose by meeting the weekly pay roll when their warehouses are already overstocked, and an inevitable depression in the steel industry stares them in the face.

If all strikes are the fault of the workmen altogether, it would seem but a common sense measure to strike when their labor is indispensable, as, for instance, when the government orders that followed the declaration of war against Spain had to be filled, or when Russia's orders were heaviest.

The repeated occurrence of strikes when orders are light and work is slack would seem to indicate that the steel corporations of Pennsylvania and Ohio can avoid them when they find it expedient to do so, and that if they lose money through the idleness of their mills they would lose more in the long run through their operation.

**Lax Denver Law.**

The wounding of Professor Howie of the Peru State Normal in Denver by a stray bullet from a gambler's pistol last week gives all western cities a right to make certain suggestions to the city authorities of that place.

Denver is one of the last of the "ring towns" left in that part of the

west which has indisputably established its claim to recognition as a part of civilization. Other cities to the east and west and north and south of it have worked their way out of the clutches of that debasing form of municipal government which, at one time or another, has existed in most American cities. Even St. Louis has effected an arrangement whereby the city gets some considerable portion of the service and protection for which it pays. But the funds of the Denver treasury are so largely exhausted in oiling political machinery and in concealing and repairing the bungling work of incompetent officers, that the city has experienced severe reverses of reputation during the past ten years.

Certain forms of vice and lawlessness are expected and condoned in mushroom mining towns, in the wealth-flushed copper towns and in that line of outpost cities in the new states where the Old West has made its last desperate stand. But Denver is only twenty-four hours from Chicago, a city with settled and permanent sources of income which eastern capitalists regard as a tangible fact in the kaleidoscopic history of the west. This prolonged Jesse James' melodrama is unnecessary and undignified, and is a poor card of invitation to the tourist.

An old argument is that people who come there from the east want to see a wide-open town and would not be satisfied with any thing else. There is, however, nothing picturesque about bad city government and a corrupt city council; and in the present state of affairs there is nothing to tempt the curiosity of the most jaded sensationalist.

The city has long been a menace to the tourist's pocketbook, and now it threatens his life.

An excellent and well-chosen police force has been the only thing which has kept Denver from reverting into absolute and unrestrained lawlessness, but innumerable hold-ups and shootings have demonstrated the fact that though the police may mark the danger, they cannot avert it; and that if a city keeps snakes in its cellars, occasionally somebody will get bitten. The lack of discipline and "I'm as good as you and a little better" holds throughout all grades of public service. It is one of the first things that strikes the tourist. Everywhere the most exorbitant tips are demanded. He goes to a hotel and notices that the bell boys and porters all ride in the guests' elevator, and on the second day of his stay the bell boys begin to critically discuss the other guests of the house with him.

Mrs. Potter Palmer told an amusing story in Paris about a hotel clerk there who, when she went on to meet Mr. Palmer there, told her that Mr. Palmer had been suddenly called up to one of the mining towns, but that

he himself would be entirely at her disposal until her husband's return and would be glad to show her about the town.

**A Dramatized Omar.**

After Lis production of Stephen Phillipps' "Herod" and Booth Tarkington's delightful "Monsieur Beaucaire," Richard Mansfield intends staging a drama entitled "Omar Khayyam," written by a talented young Pittsburger, George Seibel.

The text of the play is so arranged as to permit Mr. Mansfield to quote many of the most beautiful passages of the "Rubaiyat" in situations of the play to which they peculiarly apply.

The heroine of the drama is the daughter of the potter to whose house the poet often repaired to meditate upon "the things of clay." The play contains a double interest the romance which is concerned solely with Omar's affection for the potter's daughter, and an exposition of his philosophy in his half-humorous protest against the pharisaical creed of the Musselmen. It contains a brilliantly written drinking scene; and the last act, which is in blank verse, is an idyl woven about the beautiful theme:

"A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou  
 Beside me, singing in the wilderness."

The scenario of the play is such as will give Mr. Mansfield rich opportunities for those feats of stage management with which he has occupied himself much of late years; and an oriental play offers unusual temptations in the line of scenic display.

The author of the piece is a newspaper man, American by birth but German by descent; a scholar by taste and habit and widely read in three languages. His study of Oriental manners and religions has been sufficient to warrant the play's being free from anachronisms in spirit and letter. If the play is successfully produced, it will be an occasion of no small importance; for, so far, American dramatists have shown themselves woefully lacking in ability to handle poetic subjects.

**Constant's Victoria.**

The rejection of Benjamin Constant's portrait of Queen Victoria has at last been thoroughly advertised in this country, though Mme. Cecilia, Marquise de Wentworth, who is also a painter after a fashion, brought the news of its unpopularity with the royal family to Washington last winter.

The Marquise paints portraits in the old, hard manner. One of the Pope I believe is accounted a very good one, and she was a pupil of Cabanel and Gerome. She goes about a good deal among the studios of men of the older school, and as she has a handsome house and a good cook and makes a specialty of dinner-giving,

the men of the newer schools drop in on her frequently.

She had seen the Constant portrait of the Queen when it was exhibited at the Salon, and Constant had told her the story of the painting of it. Queen Alexandra had a high appreciation of Constant's work, and had repeatedly urged the aged Queen to sit to him. The artist went to England on that one commission, and received a fabulous price for his work. The old Queen granted him only half a dozen sittings, and those were grudgingly given and unsatisfactory to the artist. He was obliged to work from photographs, and resort to makeshifts that he abominates, as he usually requires from fifty to seventy-five sittings from any subject. Finally he decided to transfer his study of the Queen to a large canvas and make it one of the figures in a figure piece, filling the canvas up with portraits of the more approachable people of the court and royal family. This he did; but whether it is this picture or the original study of the single figure of the Queen, that King Edward has rejected and refused to admit into any of the royal collections, the press dispatches from London do not state.

The picture was completed about four months before Victoria's death, and on the sole occasion on which she inspected it she conceived such a violent prejudice against it that it is quite possible her disfavor has caused its rejection by the King.

**Edward MacDowell.**

"What is the best thing that can be done for American art?" said Ignace Paderewski to Mr. Krebber, the foremost of New York Musical Critics, "why, buy pictures and get the people to look at them." "What is the best thing that can be done for American music?" "Why, give Edward MacDowell twenty thousand a year and make him quit teaching and write."

Yet every day one comes across pedantic music teachers who ask: "Who is Edward MacDowell?"

With the exception of Dvorak, Grieg, Massenet and Saint Saens, there is probably no living composer who is writing music of such an intensely individual nature as MacDowell, or whose work seems to have more of that quality which gives unlimited youth and tenure to works of art. Ten or fifteen years ago his compositions began to appear in the repertoires of foreign concert pianists, and for the last eight years they have figured from time to time in American concert programs; but MacDowell seldom gives recitals himself, and, except by his pupils, very little is known about his personality.

He is a man of leonine head, with a physique not unlike Rosenthal's. For some years he has been professor of the theory of music at Columbia university.