PART III.
EIGHT PAGES.

New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 25, 1900.

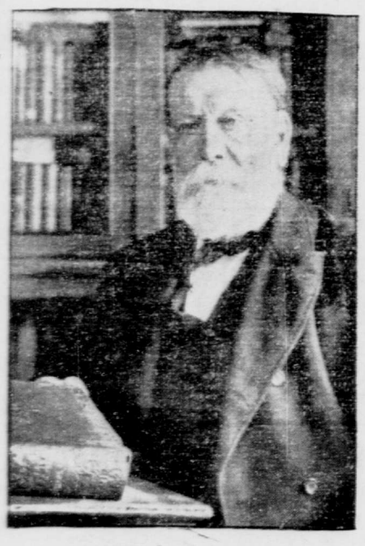
GOSSIP OF THE CAPITAL.

A BURNS ADMIRER'S INTERESTING TRIP IN SCOTLAND.

MR. STRAUS'S SUCCESS IN CONSTANTINOPLE—ALI FERROUGH BEY'S RETURN—A TURKISH WOMAN IN WASHINGTON.

Washington, Feb. 24 (Special).—W. R. Smith, who founded the Botanical Gardens and has been their superintendent continuously since, is widely known as a lover of Robert Burns and a collector of all that relates to the life and work of that great Scotchman. The rooms of the little cottage in the gardens where he makes his home are lined with valuable editions, prints and paintings of his hero, to which he is constantly making valuable additions. The collection bids fair to excel any similar collection in the world.

Last summer Mr. Smith visited Scotland, where he was born nearly fourscore years ago, and with Miss Brown, a direct descendant of "Bobbie" Burns, for his guide, visited all those places made famous by the poet. From Skibo Castle, where he was the guest of Mr. Carnegie for several days, Mr. Smith went to Dumfries, arriving at "the wee short hour ayont the twal." Of his stay there and of the places he subsequently visited Mr. Smith, who is a good story teller, tells an eloquent story.



WILLIAM R. SMITH.
Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens, Washington, D. C.

"We slept soundly at a good hotel," he says; "awoke on the Sabbath morning and soon made our way to Grey Friars' Hall, where we found Jean Armour Burns Brown, Burns's great-granddaughter, and her dear, good mother and father, who delighted us with rare Burns curios. They invited us to go to Grey Friars' Church (historic in name, at least), of which Mr. Brown is caretaker and his daughter leader of the choir. When we were comfortably seated in a front pew the minister gave to be sung by the congregation that lovely psalm of David, the sweet singer of Israel:

"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

"It was a sight long to be remembered to see the great-granddaughter of Burns, his born image, in the honored seat in the synagogue, her splendid voice leading the people with an earnestness that would have pleased even Thomas Carlyle. We visited with Miss Brown places of interest in Dumfries. The present Mayor is a great, earnest, well read Burns enthusiast, as was his predecessor, Mr. Lenox. Mr. Carnegie's letter of introduction brought us together at once. The name and fame of Burns are in good hands in Mr. Glover's care.

"We met here one of those Jasper Standstills, a sturdy follower of John Knox, who began with a shrug of his shoulders and then remarked, 'Porr Burns!'

"I at once stopped him and asked: 'Why "Poor Burns," the richest endowed Scotchman that ever lived? What would you have thought of the preacher to-day, when he gave out that beautiful psalm to be sung, if he had first given us a homily about the sins of David?'

"It is time," added Mr. Smith, "especially for the stay at home Scots, to drop the everlasting twaddle about the mistakes of Burns and look for, see and try to appreciate his grandeur in all its various and manifold aspects.

"Leaving Dumfries, we went to Kilmarnock and there saw a splendid monument to the poet, with a grand collection of books—rare editions, manuscripts and prints; from there to Ayr, to the auld clay biggin, to Alloway's auld haunted kirk, to the monument, to the Brig where Tam's mare lost her tail, and back again to Ayr to spend the evening listening to Miss Brown singing her great ancestor's songs as they had never been sung before. She thrilled all with 'A man's a man for a' that,' and so entranced my travelling companion (who has no Scotch blood in his veins) that he declared he had never heard such music.

"Our next objective point was Glasgow, to arrange with the Mitchell Library about exchanges, and see that greatest of Burns collectors and bibliographers, Craibe Angus, who is the authority for the statement that the works having the largest circulation among white men are the Psalms of David and the Songs of Burns, the Sermon on the Mount and 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.'"

The American Minister to the Sublime Porte, who spent a few days in town last week for the purpose of consulting the President and Secretary of State regarding several important matters in connection with his legation, received warm congratulations from all sides on the creditable record he has made in Constantinople. Mr. Straus, it will be remembered, a Democrat and former Minister to Turkey, was asked by the President to accept the mission to the Ottoman Empire, on President Angell's voluntary retirement, at a time when the relations between the two Governments were strained almost to breaking, and when many grave matters were at issue which seemed impossible to adjust. Their adjustment, indeed, had been tried again and again, with no result save increased irritation and bitterness on both sides.

The difficulties of the place tendered him would have deterred a man less determined, less ably equipped, but Mr. Straus, having spent several years in Constantinople as chief of the American Legation under Mr. Cleveland, knowing the Oriental character well, understanding the intricacies of their politics, and believing himself to be persona grata, undertook the work intrusted to him by a Republican Administration. On his arrival in the Sultan's empire the new Minister received a warm and enthusiastic welcome from his former friends and colleagues, and from the moment he presented his credentials in October, 1898, there was no more friction between the American Legation and the Turkish Foreign Office. Mr. Straus made no concessions, but was firm, discreet, prudent, and in the short period of his stay in Constantinople has succeeded not only in establishing the friendliest feeling between this and the Turkish Government, but has settled all the vexing questions and obtained many concessions.

The first important point gained by the present Minister was the granting of exequaturs to the American consuls at Erzeroum and Harpoot which, after the outrages in Armenia, had been refused by the Turkish Government most unjustly, since it did not withhold them from the representatives of the other Powers. This was regarded as a great victory, as is the assurance Mr. Straus received from the Sultan shortly before he sailed for home, that all the indemnity claims filed by this Government would be paid in full. Permission has also been obtained for the rebuilding of the Euphrates College buildings at Harpoot, destroyed at the time of the Armenian troubles, and at last, after four years of restriction, American citizens are permitted to travel through all parts of the empire. A most difficult concession to obtain was the entrance of American flour into Turkey, which together with all foreign flours had until recently been excluded.

Those who know Mr. Straus well do not wonder at his success. He is a man of extensive knowledge, broad experience, clever, astute, with an interesting personality, pleasant address and manners. His wealth enables him to maintain a legation equal to those of any of his colleagues in the Diplomatic Corps, where not only visiting Americans but the people among whom he lives are sure of a cordial welcome. Approachable, genial and responsive, with a profound understanding of human nature, a man of the world in the best sense of the term, the present Minister to Turkey is credited with being one of the most popular diplomatists ever sent to the Orient.

After several unhappy experiments, the Turkish Government, it seems, has at last found exactly the right person to represent it in Washington. His sometime predecessor, Mavroyeni Bey, was persona grata to this Government, acceptable to his own, and a popular member of the exclusive circle to which members of the Diplomatic Corps belong. His successor, who succeeded him in nothing save his title, was so entirely lacking in tact and diplomacy, and did so many stupid things in the first few months of his stay here, that his Government summarily recalled him. For some time after Mustapha Bey's recall the Turkish Legation was in the hands of Chargés d'Affaires of varying ability and usefulness, the last of whom surrendered it two years ago to the present Minister, Ali Ferrouh Bey, who has just returned from a long vacation home.

While at home the Minister was taken so ill that for some time it was feared he would be unable to return to his post at this capital, but the Sultan, who looks upon this accomplished diplomat with especial favor and is frankly pleased with his success here, insisted that no one should be named in his place, and upon his recovery accorded him the unusual privilege of bringing his wife with him to the United States. It is the first time that a Mahometan diplomat has been accompanied by his wife, although several Turkish representatives confessing the Greek faith have brought their wives with them, and society is wondering just how the customs governing a Turkish household will be maintained, since, it is said, permission was given Mme. Ali Ferrouh to come to Washington only on condition that she observe the same habits of life as though she were living in Constantinople.

Traditions and customs are so radically different in this part of the world that it is almost impossible to hedge in the Oriental women as is customary in their homes. After a few years' trial both the Chinese and Corean Ministers abandoned the idea, and their wives go about as freely and unrestrictedly as their American sisters. Just how the experiment will come out at the Turkish Legation remains to be seen.

The Minister and his family are at present quartered in a small but pleasant house in Q-st., with only one front entrance, which has been the home of the Legation for the last two years. This residence, while admirably suited to the needs of the Minister when he lived here alone, is entirely inadequate for his present requirements, and he will abandon it as soon as he finds a larger dwelling where it will be possible to arrange a private entrance and quarters separate from the main part of the house for his wife, his sister, who accompanies him, and their maids. Both Mme. Ali Ferrouh and her sister-in-law, it is given out, propose to accept invitations to all entertainments where women only are present, and will receive, when they are quite settled, all those women who desire to call upon them.

A few weeks ago the maid of Mrs. Alexander, wife of the Representative from Buffalo, was taken with a slight attack of varioloid, which made it necessary that the Alexander apartments be quarantined, and for several days Mr. and Mrs. Alexander were kept prisoners. They missed, of course, many agreeable things, but they escaped, too, many disagreeable things, and some of Mr. Alexander's colleagues, worried to death by clamorous constituents, threaten to acquire a malignant disease, that they, too, may be cut off for a period from communication with the outer world.

A needy man from the XXXIIId New-York District journeyed all the way to Washington for the purpose of obtaining a comfortable berth, and obtaining it quickly, too, from "his member." Not finding him at the House, the applicant sought him at his residence.

"You cannot see Mr. Alexander," announced the doorkeeper briefly, when requested to take up his card.

"But I must see him," replied the man.

"Well, you can't see him because he is quarantined."

"Quarantined! What is he quarantined for?" queried the visitor incredulously.

"Smallpox!" shortly responded the doorkeeper.

"Smallpox, here in this house?" asked the visitor.

"Yes," said the doorkeeper laconically, thinking the truth would rid him of a rather persistent visitor. As quickly as if he had been shot out of a catapult the man went down the steps, and has not as yet seen or communicated with his member even by letter, although Mr. Alexander was honorably discharged by the Health Department and resumed his seat in the House some days ago.

CHIEF CROKER BLAMES THE POLICE.

HE REITERATES HIS CHARGE THAT MANY FIRES ARE DUE TO THEIR NEGLIGENCE.

Fire Chief Croker yesterday sent a letter to Chief of Police Devery in which he reiterated his former charges that the negligence of the police was accountable for many of the large fires. He mentioned two specific instances, the first being at No. 231 Mercer-st. on February 15, about four hundred feet from the police station. The other case was in the Church-st. station, in which Chief Croker contended that no alarm was sent in, a still alarm being given to Engine No. 6 by Policeman Rohrig. Chief Devery replied that the box would not work and the policeman then gave a still alarm to the nearest engine company.

Chief Croker, speaking of his letter, said that there was no dispute between him and Chief Devery. He had no criticisms to make of the police, but merely mentioned the two cases as instances of his former charges.

BRANCH FIRE ALARM TELEGRAPH OFFICE.

A NEW BUILDING IN PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION IN THE BRONX.

A new branch fire alarm telegraph office is in process of construction at No. 716 East One-hundred-and-seventy-sixth-st., the headquarters of Engine Company No. 46. It has been found to be a necessity in the Borough of The Bronx, and will be used exclusively for that part of New-York City.

If at any time the central office should be interrupted by a blizzard or fire or from any other cause the city would be entirely without fire protection. By the new branch connections can be made and the same service obtained. The work is being superintended by Fire Chief Croker and Chief of the Telegraph Service Henry F. Blackwell.

"LUCIA" FOR A CHARITY.

The Beth-El Sisterhood will give, under the direction of the Maurice Grau Opera Company, in the Metropolitan Opera House the opera "Lucia di Lammermoor" on the evening of March 6, Mme. Sembrich, M. Saleza and Signor Campanari appearing, assisted by a strong cast. The object of the entertainment is to secure additional funds for the charity work of the Beth-El Sisterhood, which makes a special object of looking after the poor and destitute of a large district of the city. A large and representative attendance is expected. The committee includes many persons of prominence.

CANAL DIPLOMACY.

ENGLAND'S NEIGHBORLY CONCESSIONS—AMERICAN PURCHASE OF THE DANISH WEST INDIES INDISPENSABLE—SUEZ REGULATIONS BEST SCHEME OF DEFENCE.

London, February 14.

The revision of the Clayton-Bulwer Convention has been brought about in a spirit of mutual accommodation and goodwill. Mr. Laurier might have prevented the negotiation of the new treaty, if he had persisted in claiming an Alaskan port as a quid pro quo, for the British Foreign Office would not have ventured to override his veto when Canada has been setting so splendid an example of loyalty to the Empire. Mr. Laurier has risen to the height of a supreme occasion, and shown himself to be the greatest imperialist among Colonial statesmen. He has withdrawn his objections to the settlement of the canal controversy, and allowed the Foreign Office to deal with it as an Imperial question. In this way the tangled skein of diplomacy with which the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty has been enmeshed in the course of fifty years has been easily unravelled.

This settlement was easily effected on the lines of enlightened self-interest. Lord Salisbury perceived that from a British or Imperial point of view an interoceanic waterway through Central America or across the Isthmus of Darien was less important than it had been. The Suez Canal has been opened since 1850, and is now practically under British control. It provides direct communication with India and Australia, and is the chief link in the chain of Imperial possessions dependent upon sea power. England's interest in the interoceanic waterway at Panama or through Nicaragua is mainly commercial, since it will supply more direct communications with China and Japan and with the west coast of North and South America. The control of that waterway has ceased to be an Imperialist interest. The perception of this truth has enabled Lord Salisbury to relinquish England's share in the joint control of the proposed waterway. Since the Suez Canal is practically under the single control of England as exercised by Lord Cromer in Cairo, the British Prime Minister has understood the diplomatic advantage of arming the United States Government with single control over the rival interoceanic enterprise, especially as it has received from the European Powers and Japan collective guarantees for the open door principle in the Far East.

On the other hand, American interests in the interoceanic canal have been materially increased since 1850. The settlement of the Western Territories and the creation of three great States on the Pacific Coast have rendered the canal essential as a military work for uniting the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific coasts and for concentrating the naval forces. The acquisition of Puerto Rico and the emancipation of Cuba from Spanish misrule have widened the sphere of American interests in West Indian waters on the line of approach to the waterway. The occupation of the Philippine group has converted the canal into an essential link in the American territorial system, as the Suez Canal is already in the British Empire. As British interests in the interoceanic project have declined, American interests have increased since 1850, and this change of balance in the relations of the two countries to it has required the revision of a convention which was entirely out of touch with the new conditions. This revision has been completed without bargaining or backstairs diplomacy, and the British Government has acted with good feeling and neighborly accommodation in relinquishing privileges which stood in the way of the construction of a work designed to promote the highest ends of civilization and progress.

The first sequel to the ratification of the Canal Convention ought to be the purchase of the Danish West Indies by the United States Government. There are two reasons for this action. First, there are harbors in those islands which command the Atlantic approaches to the canal and also to Puerto Rico and Cuba; and their occupation and fortification are essential to the defence of the waterway. Second, if the United States Government does not purchase them promptly, some European Power, notably either Germany or Russia, will do it; and this will raise the Monroe Doctrine in a peculiarly aggressive form. The Danish West Indies are to-day in the market, and three of them can be obtained for less than Secretary Seward offered for two of them. The investment of a few millions by the United States Government in good time will secure the occupation of two of the best harbors in the West Indies, and will prevent future complications over the Monroe Doctrine. With St. Thomas and St. John in American possession, their conversion into naval stations for Germany, Russia or France would be impracticable, and the defence of the interoceanic highway would be greatly facilitated.

It is ten years since I have been in St. Thomas, but I can describe it from memory, as it was the first glimpse which I had of tropical America. The entrance to the harbor is narrow, and is guarded by lofty headlands like those of Santiago. Within is a circular basin of moderate depth, bordered by abrupt hillsides, the town lying along the shore. Unlike Greytown, which is incapable of being defended from attack by sea, St. Thomas can be rendered impregnable at comparatively slight expense. As a naval station it is superior to either Samana Bay or Mole St. Nicholas, in San Domingo. This mountainous little island can be converted into another Malta, and it lies directly on the line of European approach to a canal either at Panama or through Nicaragua. By virtue of its central position among the European possessions in the West Indies and its strategic relations with the two canal routes and courses of trade with Brazil it is an ideal coaling station. Whether Americans need it or not, they cannot afford to allow any European Power to obtain control of this natural naval station in defiance of the Monroe Doctrine.

Santa Cruz is the best of the three Danish islands in industrial resources, but it is of no value as a naval station, since its harbors are open roadsteads. St. John has, however, one of the best natural harbors in the West Indies, although it is seldom used, and has ceased to have any commercial importance. Coral Bay, Princess Bay and Hurricane Hole form a remarkable harbor for naval use. It is commanded by a conical peninsula, where are now the ruins of old fortifications, and it can readily be rendered impregnable as a naval stronghold. An eminent American naval authority has described this harbor in these words:

Compared to the harbor of St. Thomas, Coral Bay is larger, deeper, cleaner and better protected. At several places the largest steamers existing will be able to go close to shore. At the east side of the harbor a quay 2,000 feet long might be constructed cheaply. In case of the construction of the Nicaragua Canal, the harbor of St. John would have the best imaginable situation for steamers eastward or westward bound calling for orders or for coal. A particular circumstance increases the value of St. John Harbor, namely, that it has never been touched by a hurricane. As long as the harbor has been known it has never been stated that any ship in Coral Bay has been damaged by a hurricane, while at the same time neighboring islands have been devastated and a great number of ships wrecked.

Coral Bay and St. Thomas are the best sites for naval stations which are now in the market. The Dutch island St. Eustatius has no harbor, and Curaçoa is not on the line of European passage to either Panama or Nicaragua. The French islands Guadeloupe and Martinique have open roadsteads like St. Pierre and Fort de France. Great Britain has in Santa Lucia and Port Royal strongly fortified naval and coaling stations, commanding the approaches to the interoceanic waterway. The Danish islands as industrial possessions are of small account, but, with their two harbors admirably adapted for naval works, coaling stations and drydocks, they have a potential value with reference to the projected canal; and the United States Government, in assuming the sole responsibility for the control of the waterway, ought not to neglect the opportunity of purchasing them. The Danish Government was not dealt with fairly when Secretary Seward's negotiations were brought to naught through political intrigue at Washington; but if it were approached in the proper way it would undoubtedly sell the three islands at a lower valuation than was placed upon two of them thirty-five years ago. The German Government will need naval stations for the great fleet which it is now building, and St. Thomas and Coral Bay will be gladly purchased if the Americans do not want them. Even Russia has cast her eyes upon them, as is well known in Copenhagen.

Every traveller who has visited Greytown and Colon knows that the defence of these entrances is impracticable. If the revised canal treaty does not provide for the construction of fortifications at the ends of the waterway it is in accord with the natural conditions of the coast. Neither of those entrances could be protected by engineering science against the guns of a fleet; and the outlets on the Pacific side could be fortified only with great difficulty and expense. Fortifications would invite attack upon and injury to a great engineering work without providing security for either American interests or neutral rights. The real defence of the canal must always be a powerful fleet, with coaling stations accessible on each ocean. With the Danish islands in American possession, not Germany, nor Russia, nor France, nor Italy could ever operate against the interoceanic canal from the Atlantic, for there would be no facilities for coaling a hostile fleet. The British and American navies alone would have stations where they could be regularly coaled and provisioned for cruising in the Caribbean Sea. The British fleet certainly could not be kept out of the waterway by any fortifications which might be built at so indefensible a port as Greytown.

The Suez regulations in reality provide the best possible system of American control over the Nicaragua or Panama Canal. In time of peace the canal will be open to all vessels. In time of war the canal will be neutral, and not liable to blockade. War vessels will not be excluded, but if they are under belligerent flags they will not be allowed to remain more than twenty-four hours at either end, nor to coal for a long voyage. If the United States were at war its fleets could pass in and out of the canal and naval resources could be concentrated for the defence of the Pacific, Gulf and Atlantic coasts. The other belligerent would have the same privilege, and this might involve attack upon exposed American ports; but this would always be attended with the disadvantage of inferior coaling facilities. The use of the canal in wartime by a hostile fleet as a means of access to the Pacific or Gulf coasts would be a trivial matter in comparison with the immense difficulty of defending with armies and fleets two entrances to a canal which could not be adequately fortified.

The revised canal treaty provides for the most convenient and least expensive system of American control in peace and in war. The Suez regulations are perfectly adapted to the conditions of military and naval defence of the American seaboard, and they do not commit the United States to the defence of the ends of the waterway under highly disadvantageous, if not impossible, conditions. The approaches to the canal at Hawaii and in the West Indies will alone have to be guarded, and, with St. Thomas and Coral Bay purchased before the waterway is constructed, ample safeguards will be established. The American Navy, with superior coaling facilities on each seaboard and in the West Indies, will then be fully armed for the protection of the canal and for the maintenance of neutral rights in an open waterway. The fortification of the ends of the canal would involve in time of war not one, but two Ladysmith entanglements, with the obligation of carrying on a campaign at a disadvantage on both coasts of Nicaragua.

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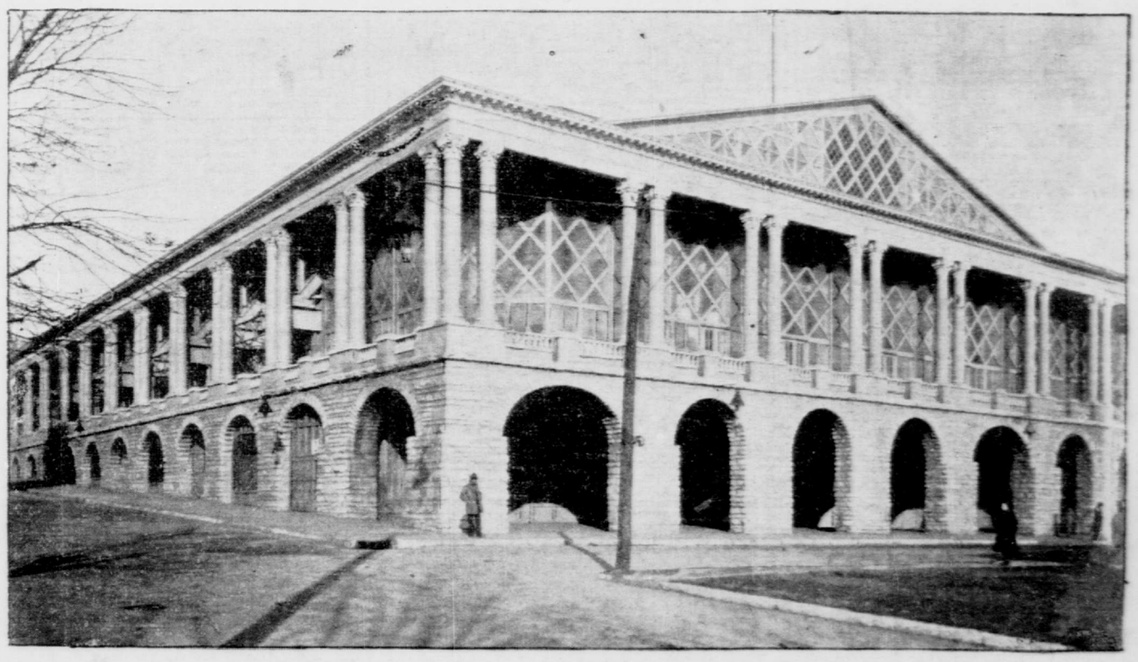
KANSAS CITY'S BIG HALL.

THE BUILDING WHERE THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION WILL BE HELD.

Kansas City, Mo., Feb. 24.—Convention Hall, where the Democratic National Convention will be held in July next, is at Thirteenth and Central sts., four blocks from the retail district of the city. It was erected at a cost of $225,000, which was raised entirely by public subscription. It occupies ground 314 by 200 feet in extent, is two stories high, and is built of native stone, cream brick and terra cotta. The first story is of the Renaissance style of architecture, and the second story in peristyle form with groups and columns. The building is of bridge construction, without a column, the roof being supported by great steel girders that span its 200 feet of breadth.

Its general seating arrangement is modelled somewhat upon the plan of the Metropolitan Opera House, New-York. The seating space is divided into arena, arena balcony, balcony and roof garden boxes skirting the arena and arena balcony. The stage is situated in the centre of the arena. The total seating capacity is nearly twenty thousand, and with standing room the building is capable of holding more than twenty-two thousand people. The arena alone seats four thousand. To each side of the arena and under the first balcony are numerous committee rooms, which have their separate street entrances. The building has no stairways, the upper levels being reached by means of inclined planes. Separate exits are used for the balconies and roof garden, and it is estimated that the hall can be emptied at the rate of five thousand people a minute.



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