

THEATRE HORRORS.

Some of the Holoocausts and Panics of the Past.

HOW CAN SAFETY BE ATTAINED?

The Ideal Theatre Should be Provided with Exits Broad and Plentiful and Should be Without Galleries.

A panic in the little Park opera house at Johnstown, Pa., recently resulted in the loss of about a dozen lives. It was the first theatre disaster of the season, and in consequence has been made the text for many newspaper sermons on the fact that a person can never tell whether his check for a reserved seat at the play will not serve also as a ticket for the great Elysian ferry.

In reckoning up the news probabilities of a winter, every newspaper man confidently counts on at least one or two great theatre horrors. They are as certain to come as are the railroad accidents and big fires. In 1887 the whole world shuddered at the news of the Paris opera comique catastrophe was flashed over the land and under the sea. This fire resulted in the loss of more than a hundred lives; half as many were severely injured, and nearly a hundred were slightly hurt.

A peculiarly horrible feature of this disaster was the fact that fully half of those burned to death were so disgraced that identification was impossible. During the same year occurred the burning of the Theatre Royal at Exeter, Eng. Eleven years before, in December, 1876, the destruction of the Brooklyn Theatre was attended by almost double the loss of life and by incidents somewhat similar and quite as terrible. In 1888 there occurred the fire and attendant panic and wiping out of human lives in the theatre at Oporto, Spain. In the cheaper parts of the house on that dreadful March night the occupants were principally of the rougher class—sailors, porters, etc. Most of these men escaped, but at what a cost to others! Fists, clubs, and even knives, they used in forcing their way through the mass of weaker people. Many a charred body was found in the ruins after the fire, with a stab wound in its back, or disfigured by blows and kicks administered by these ruffians. It is said that had these men waited to allow those ahead of them to pass out, all could have escaped in safety.



PARK OPERA HOUSE, JOHNSTOWN, PA.

In fact, it is safe to assert that in most of the great theatre disasters of the past, loss of life could have been averted if the audiences had kept cool. Several terrible fatal panics have occurred when there was no fire nor no danger. Some fool cried "Fire!" and in an instant there was a mad scramble for the exits. Not long ago some supers in the Lyceum theatre in New York raised a great dust by sweeping up fallen plastering. The audience thought it was smoke, and went wild immediately. Had it not been for the admirable provisions for exit and the cool headiness of one or two, there would have been another "fatal panic" to record in the newspapers. Quite the opposite of this event was one which occurred nearly a year ago in Harlem. In this case there really was a fire, and in a second the audience, too, but nobody seemed to be frightened, nobody screamed, no women fainted, and the firemen went in and trained their hose on the flaming scenery and put the fire out, while the audience sat still and looked on as if it were a part of the play. Afterwards the play went on. This is probably the only case of its kind on record. That audience had already been made up of unusually sensible people.

The question, "How can theatres be made safer?" after one reads of the horrors of the past and imagines those that the future may have in store, is naturally of absorbing interest. To accomplish this the audience must not only be protected from fire but must be protected from itself. In a great assembly the first thought of nine hundred and ninety-nine people in a thousand, when the slightest cause for anxiety occurs, is of him or herself. Ordinary courage seems to be of no avail in such circumstances; judgment flies to the winds and common sense is instantly forgotten. For these reasons, the only way in which absolute safety could be attained would be to have theatres so built that doors to the street or court yards could open directly from the auditorium on at least two sides—to have matters so arranged, in fact, that two whole sides of the auditorium could be practically removed at a moment's notice. This is not at all impossible for it has been done. One or two theatres in New York are so arranged, and it is said that a small theatre in Buffalo is provided with a contrivance by which wide doors along one side and the front of the auditorium can be thrown open simultaneously by pulling a lever on the stage or in the lobby. Provisions of this kind would take care of the people on the main floor, you say, but what would become of those in the galleries? That is a question that remains to be answered.

Fire escapes have not yet been invented which provide perfect safety in theatre galleries; therefore, in the ideal theatre, there should be no galleries. To build a theatre without galleries at the present time would be an innovation, and would probably not be a success, from a financial standpoint, in ordinary circumstances. For that reason it is not probable that such theatres will become common very soon. One will be built before long on Fifth avenue, New York, but exclusiveness and not safety is the end sought for in this case.

Notwithstanding the fact that perfection has not yet been reached in safety appliances for theatres, many things in that line have become common which would have been decided novelties ten years ago. Dozens of theatres have asbestos or iron curtains, which can be lowered at a moment's notice, and which completely cut off the stage from the auditorium. Automatic fire extinguishers have also been extensively introduced, and coils of hose and "fire grounders" form a very essential part of theatrical furnishings nowadays.

For some time, too, the municipal and town authorities have devoted considerable attention to the subject, and new theatres in most places have to be built on plans approved by men who are ready to look out for the safety of the public. In some places the law compels the attendance of at least one fireman, with hose constantly in hand, on the stage during every performance. Let us hope that, with the advance of time, theatre

horrors will occur less frequently, and that a not very remote generation will think of the past, which is now the present, and thank their stars that in their time such things could not occur.

FIGHTING THE POOL SELLERS.

Patrons of the Turf Say Bookmakers Are Degrading the Sport.

Lovers of sports, more particularly the horsemen, properly so called, are making common cause with the opponents of the pool sellers in and about New York. It is not only true that the men who so vigorously opposed the Ives pool bill in the New York legislature have organized a movement to repeal that act, and that Anthony Comstock is ready to lend to their movement all the aid that is in the power of the Society for the Prevention of Crime, but the more respectable of the horse breeders and horse racers are disgusted with the methods of racing as at present conducted in the vicinity of New York.

Only a few days ago that honest old turfman, Sam Bryant, of Louisville, said that he believed horse racing to be on the brink of destruction. He complained of the number and character of many men who run horses, and of the number of horses they run.

In summing up his reasons for disposing of his racing stable, including the great Brecker Knott, Mr. Bryant said: "The business is getting tough, sir—too tough for me." Frederick A. Lovcraft, secretary and treasurer of the American Jockey club, of New York, gives his reasons for believing that the days of racing, as a sport, are numbered. He says plainly that it is simply an adjunct of the pool room—practically speaking, the roulette wheel of a vast gambling community. He speaks of the limited number of visitors to the race courses as compared with the thousands who frequent the pool rooms so openly conducted in New York city.

These pool rooms—places where anybody can bet on the races—are not only many in number, but they are also openly conducted. No precautions are taken against the police; there is no surveillance over the bettors. The office boy can bet as freely as the veteran turfman, and money is as soon accepted from men who must evidently have stolen it as from those who are known to be able to indulge their sporting propensities.

Everything has been sacrificed to the end of giving as many races as possible in the shortest possible time. Distances and weights have been cut down to the last extreme. It is only a few years since there were many horses in the country who could run in least races of one, two, three and even four miles. Today they have vanished from the turf. The so-called improvement of the breed of horses has resulted in the production of a class of colts which can show, even in 2-year-old form, considerable speed, but they cannot show any bottom.

One of the best trainers and breeders that this country ever saw said, in speaking of the rampant evil:

"They are running the whole thing into the ground. The bookmakers are too greedy. It is not enough for them to run a fully developed horse to the full extent of his strength; they must start an unlimited number of races at distances less than a mile, simply so that the bookmakers may bet against them. No horse can stand the strain. We have seen repeated instances of unbeaten 2-year-olds never doing anything afterward, and 3-year-olds forced into the stud. This is not right, and if there is not a speedy reform racing will sink to the lowest depths and occupy a position on a par with the faro layout."

It has already come to the point where competition between the tracks is so strong that some must go to the wall. In place of seven last year there are eleven now, and they are all well equipped. It is only a few days since visitors returning from one track were met on the train by emissaries from another, offering free admission tickets to the next day's racing.

These are a few of the things that militate against the grandest of all sports, and if unchecked will ruin it utterly.

ORRISTES CLEVELAND, JR.

Herr Arthur Nikisch.

One of the most renowned orchestral conductors of the day is Herr Arthur Nikisch, the successor of Herr Wilhelm Gericke as conductor of the Boston Symphony orchestra. He has won considerable fame in Germany, and the impression of his work in Boston has been vivid and lasting.

In 1885 Herr Nikisch was ushered into this world at Arent-Nikisch, a small town situated in the principality of Silesia, Germany. At an early age he displayed a wonderful musical talent, and played the violin in public when only 8 years of age.

In his eleventh year he entered the Royal Conservatory of Music in Vienna, where he worked very hard. He paid special attention to the composition of music, and was so successful that two years later he sent a string sextet to an open competition and carried off first prize. Eight years were spent at the conservatory, during which time he won other prizes for composition, and the first prize and silver medal for violin playing.

One of Nikisch's compositions is a cantata for chorus and orchestra, was often repeated. When he graduated from the conservatory he was allowed, as a tribute to his abilities as a conductor-composer, to conduct a symphony in public. His fellow students, among whom were Mottl and Faur, were very fond of him. His class presented him with a costly basket as a parting gift.

Herr Nikisch easily obtained a desk among the first violinists at the Royal Opera and occupied it four years. In 1878, after his experiences as a member of the above orchestra, he went with Angelo Neumann, a celebrated manager, to Leipzig and was installed as assistant conductor in the old opera house. He remained there for a year, drilling the chorus and soloists and conducting the smaller operas and operettas. Neumann was soon convinced that in Nikisch he had found a real musical wonder. At the end of that year he transferred him to the new opera house as chief conductor. He attended to his important duties for nearly ten years and was then engaged to take his present position.

He Was Particular.

Conductor (to man smoking)—This is not a smoking car, sir; I shall have to ask you to put the cigar out, if you intend to remain here.

Smoker—"Shall have to ask me, eh; shall, future tense. All right, conductor, when you get ready to ask, I'll be ready to comply."

Conductor (getting impatient)—I shall have to insist, sir.

Smoker—"Shall" again; more futurity. Puff, puff.

Conductor—Remove that cigar instantly, sir, or go into the smoking car.

Smoker—"That's better. Present imperative. Out of the window goes the cigar. Please be more careful next time, conductor, in using the English language. I am a trifle particular on points of grammar.—Yankee Blade.

The Earliest Way.

Jones, having sent a stupid servant to do an errand, was greatly annoyed on finding that he had done exactly the opposite of what he had been ordered.

"Why, you haven't common sense," he remonstrated.

"But, sir!"

"Shut up! I should have remembered that you were an idiot. When I'm tempted to send a fool on an errand again I'll not ask you—I'll go myself."—Judge.

PLEASANT GROVE POINTS.

Utah lake is frozen over.

Snow is about four inches deep. Professor Douglas M. Todd takes the up train this morning for Logan, to resume his labors at the B. Y. college. Douglass returns with a heavy heart, after his sad bereavement.

Rumors from Provo are to the effect that diphtheria is quite prevalent there. We think the report is exaggerated very much. New Year's day passed off to the pleasure of everybody. No drinks, no rows, no nothing to mar the peace of the populace.

Utah stake conference convenes at Provo on Sunday and Monday next.

Sleighting rather poor.

The Scandinavian portion of the town held New Year's greetings at the Central schoolhouse. Other nationalities spent the day at home or making calls upon their neighbors.

Pleasant Grove needs a roller mill. E. J. Ward & Sons are turning out washboards by the wholesale.

Scarletina is abating. PLEASANT GROVE, January 2, 1890.

Language is hardly strong enough to express my admiration of the merits of Chamberlain's Cough Remedy. It is the best remedy for croup and whooping cough I have ever used. During the last eighteen years I have tried nearly all the prominent cough medicines on the market, but saw with pleasure that Chamberlain's Cough Remedy is the best of all. Thomas Rhodes, Bakersfield, California. For sale by Z. C. M. I. drug department.

MOUNT PLEASANT MATTERS.

The subscribers of Mount Pleasant are not unappreciative of the beautiful Christmas Herald. The following are some of the many comments heard by your correspondent. "It's the finest thing out!" "Never saw it so equal!" "We might ought to have thought of this long ago, as the good it will accomplish abroad cannot be over-estimated." "President Cannon's article is worth a one many times the price paid for the number." "We might multiply quotations, but feel that our words of praise are inadequate to express our warm appreciation of THE CHRISTMAS HERALD."

A deep fall of "the beautiful" now covers the ground much to the delight of the whole community. For the last three weeks we have had nothing but rain, mud and slush.

Our city grows in improvements almost daily. A number of street lamps have been put up along Main street during the last month, besides other street improvements.

Quite a number of new buildings, both public and private, have been erected during the year just past.

The all-prevailing topic nowadays is Salt Lake politics. A prominent Liberal of our city remarked a few days ago, that there was a cool \$100,000 in Salt Lake to bet that the Liberals would carry the election next February. "If so," said he, "it is only a matter of a very few years before Utah will experience such a boom as she never felt before. Then the territory will emerge from her present sullen, thralldom into an age of prosperity." Yes, we would remark, such as Tooele county enjoyed a few years ago, and such as Ogden is feeling at present. Liberal prosperity! As long as the treasury is not depleted.

Never, for years, have we had so much rain as during December. The dry, parched earth is perfectly saturated with moisture, and the land is in better condition at any previous time within the recollection of the writer.

Mt. Pleasant, Nov. 1, 1890.

Big force extra clerks on hand for the rush at People's Equitable Co-op.

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Clocks, Bronzes, Gold and Silver-headed Canes, Plated Silverware the finest ever displayed in the west.

We have lately added a line of the Celebrated ELECTRIC RAZORS AND SCISSORS, with and without Cases, which make an elegant birthday Present. Give us a call and see for yourselves.

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NOTICE. TO THE STOCKHOLDERS OF THE SALT LAKE CITY RAILROAD COMPANY.—Notice is hereby given that at a meeting of the board of directors, held at the company's office December 23, 1889, the following resolution was adopted, viz.: It is resolved by the board of directors of the Salt Lake City Railroad Company, that a meeting of the stockholders be and the same is hereby called and directed to be held at the office of said company, No. 115 S. East Temple street, Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, on the 21st day of January, 1890, at the hour of 2 o'clock, in the afternoon of said day, for the purpose of taking into consideration whether additional shares of stock shall be issued by said company or whether bonds shall be issued by said company, secured by deed of trust or mortgage of its property.

JOSEPH W. WELLS, Secretary. SALT LAKE CITY, Utah, Dec. 23, 1889.

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