

IN A SPANISH THEATRE

Customs that Seem Odd to the Foreigner.

ABSENCE OF GALLERIES

Winter Is the Open Coughing Season

And Actors Have to Scream Above the Voices of the Storm—The Vaudeville Houses—"La Machincha" in Madrid.

Theatre going in Spain is attended in the winter season by slight physical discomforts. The result is a strain on both audience and actors. The habit of going muffled to the eyes as soon as the winter months come on, even if the weather is not at all cold, has a bad effect on the none too strong lungs of the Spanish people. The result is that they all cough a great deal. The theatres are not heated, and once inside the audience begins a coughing chorus, says the New York Times.

The theatre buildings, as a rule, are barnlike, bleak places, the sole exceptions being the homes of Italian opera, such as the Teatro Real in Madrid. Shows begin late and wind up late, too. For instance, in the Teatro de San Fernando in Seville, the best of the show houses of the place, the show begins a little after 9 o'clock.

They gave a piece one night they called "Marie Antoinette." It started out at the customary hour. At 12 o'clock the fourth act of six had been finished, and the two to come were longer than any of the others.

Tickets are sold on the sidewalk from a window in the front wall, the prospective audience gathering out there. No line is formed. It is a case of first to the window first served.

Speculators are there, too, but just why is not clear. They sell tickets just as cheap as the theatre, but like their American brethren they manage to get the best in the house.

Seville is not so large a place that it gets the best shows, but the company that did "Marie Antoinette" was a very fair stock company from Madrid. The worst feature was a young woman who took the part of the Dauphin. She was so ungraceful in her knee skirts and had so homely a face that the audience laughed even in the saddest parts when she swung around suddenly on them.

In passing it may be mentioned that a butaca or orchestra circle seat in Seville costs something like two pesetas seventy-five centimos, of fifty cents, more or less, American. That includes the tax, which has to be paid everywhere. The Government gets ten centimos.

The vaudeville houses in Madrid are many and the shows are very good and very cheap. A hard worked comic opera company gives plays of one act, filled with dancing and singing specialties.

There are matinees starting sometimes at four o'clock in the afternoon; sometimes at 6 o'clock. They last an hour.

The same company starts in at 9:15 in the evening customarily and gives three one hour pieces. That is, they are designed to last that long, but with encores they ordinarily go fifteen minutes longer. That brings it well up to 1:30 in the morning when the theatre gets out.

Tickets for good seats are very cheap. A butaca in the Teatro de Price, one of the best in Madrid, costs 1 peseta for a single section, less than 20 cents. The first show attracts very few, the house being almost empty. There is therefore very little coughing done.

Some persons buy tickets for the three sections at once. Between the acts the ushers take tickets for the next show.

For the first two sections, the play and the inevitable cinematograph are the attractions. The star feature is kept for the final section, because Madrid is a late to bed town and the final instalment is always played to a crowded house.

The calm rudeness of staring one another out of countenance differs from the American variety in that the men crowd into the aisles and get short range views by opera glass of those near by.

The custom of standing up between acts is general in Spain. The theatregoers stay with their backs to the stage until the curtain is fairly up. Then there is crowding, discomfort and confusion.

The Spanish theatre ticket is a queer slip of flimsy paper. One end has a check for entering the theatre, the other end one that is to be taken off when one gets to his seat. The rest is the property of the holder.

The original ticket is sometimes eight inches long. Even in the Royal Theatre the tickets are like that.

The inevitable vendor of lottery tickets parades the aisles between the acts crying his wares. Newspapers are hawked in the theatres too, as well as magazines and candies.

NEW YORK'S READING RECORD

Heads the List in Number of Books Drawn From Libraries Per Capita.

The observation of some visitors to New York that "everybody is on the move" here doesn't fit with the fact that New Yorkers are the greatest readers of books from libraries in the country, as the records of these libraries show, says the New York Tribune. Last year there were 6,318,000 books taken from public libraries in New York for perusal at home—6,318,000 in a city of 4,000,000 inhabitants.

Chicago last year used 1,800,000 books from its three public libraries, and Philadelphia 1,700,000 from its one public library. Chicago has half a million more population than Philadelphia, and the library standard of Philadelphia is therefore very much higher than that of the city on Lake Michigan.

St. Louis is a larger city by 250,000 than Boston, but where last year 1,000,000 books were drawn from its public library of St. Louis for perusal at home, the number taken from the public library at Boston was 1,500,000.

A city which ranks high in respect to the number of books read by its people is Buffalo, in which last year 1,200,000 volumes were drawn from the public library for perusal at home. Baltimore and Cleveland, larger cities, had a smaller number—Baltimore 750,000 and Cleveland 1,000,000.

The Milky Sea.

Of the many signs witnessed in the ocean of the globe, one of the most curious and most weird is that described by sailors as the milky sea, ships being surrounded for several hours by water that appears to be of snowy whiteness. Compiled from experiences recorded during the last seventy years, an interesting account of the phenomenon is given on the North Atlantic and Mediterranean Pilot Chart, published by the Meteorological office. The spectacle is restricted to the darkness of the night, and rare occasions, and while it is limited mainly to the warmer waters of the tropical belt, it appears to be more common in the Indian ocean than in the Atlantic and Pacific. From the white water the light is so strong that ordinary newspaper print can be read on board ship, but the scene all around is of an awe-inspiring description. The horizon is blotted out, and sky seem to become one in a sort of universal luminous fog, which like a London fog, robs the observer of the sense of distance and direction, the deck being lit up with a ghastly, shadowy light. Last June, off the west coast of South America, a bucket of the white water emptied back into the sea resembled molten lead. This curious sight has interested scientific investigators, but, while it is no doubt, related to the many phosphorescent displays common at sea, there is no sufficient explanation for the phenomenon of this particular manifestation of the singular atmospheric effects resulting from it.

Bankrupts in Livery.

At one time in England and Scotland bankrupts were compelled to wear a distinctive dress. This was a result of enactments passed at various times in Scotland from the year 1603 to 1688. The Edinburgh court of sessions specified the dress to be of parti color, one half yellow and the other brown, something after the style of the dress now worn in English prisons by the worst class of prisoners, those who have attempted to escape or been guilty of murderous assaults on officers. The enactment also provided that the bankrupt should be exhibited publicly in the market place of his town for a period of two hours and then sent away, condemned to wear the dress until such time as he had paid his debts or some one else had done it for him.

Although this was a period of laws which can only be ascribed as ferocious, this law was such an outrage on public sentiment that in 1688 it was so far repealed that the wearing of the dress was only compulsory in cases in which fraud had been proved or, curiously enough, if the bankrupt had been convicted of smuggling. The same practice was legal, but not generally in force in England down to the year 1836. The idea was, of course, to warn persons who might have given credit that the bankrupt was not able to pay, but popular sentiment soon recognized that it was wholly unfair to impose such excessive penalties on a man who might have become bankrupt through no fault of his own.

Curiosity Saves Two Lives.

The habit of a postoffice official of entertaining himself by reading postcards that pass through his hands led to the saving of two lives in Hutteldorf, a suburb of Vienna, recently.

The postman in this case read a card which stated that the two writers were about to commit suicide in a neighboring wood. It was apparently addressed to the parents of one of them.

The postman informed the police, who went to the spot named and found a young man and a girl lying unconscious, with severe bullet wounds in their heads. A revolver lay beside them.

They were at once taken to a hospital, and are now expected to recover. Disappointed love was the reason of their resolution to die together.

CULTIVATING THE THROAT.

Yawning and Deep Breathing Are Important Factors.

A little book recently published in Vienna is devoted to a method of vocal culture and also health culture that has stood the test of practical experience in numerous cases but is not as well known as it deserves to be. It is based upon the vocal method of the concert singer, Josephine Richter, the mother of the celebrated orchestra leader Hans Richter and consists essentially of peculiar movements of the jaws which ultimately give the pupil an astonishing command over the soft palate, besides strengthening the muscles of the face, neck and chest.

Herr Lanz, the author of the book, can readily understand from which that famous physicist says, "It is based upon the vocal method of the concert singer, Josephine Richter, the mother of the celebrated orchestra leader Hans Richter and consists essentially of peculiar movements of the jaws which ultimately give the pupil an astonishing command over the soft palate, besides strengthening the muscles of the face, neck and chest."

That the exercises do have that effect is proved by an examination of an average untrained throat and the throat of a singer trained by the new method. In the former the soft palate and its conical extension, the uvula, hang limp and constrict the vocal passage, which is further narrowed by the prominent tonsil on each side. In a mouth so encumbered, as in a room filled with furniture, it is impossible for the voice to ring loud and clear. The tonsils and soft palate of the trained singer, on the other hand, are retracted and hardened and the pendant uvula has entirely disappeared, giving the voice a clear and wide passage with firm walls, and consequently increasing its volume and improving its quality.

The method is recommended for the cultivation of the speaking as well as the singing voice and for the prevention and alleviation of various diseases of the throat. "It gives astonishing relief in catarrh of the throat and suggests new possibilities in the treatment of enlarged tonsils."

Now these exercises consist essentially of yawning, which has recently been recommended, independently, as a valuable exercise for the respiratory organs. According to Dr. Naegeli of the University of Luettich yawning brings all the respiratory muscles of the chest and throat into action and is therefore the best and most natural means of strengthening them. He advises everybody to yawn as deeply as possible, with arms outstretched, in order to change completely the air in the lungs and stimulate respiration. In many cases he has found the practice to relieve the difficulty in swallowing and disturbance of the sense of hearing that accompany catarrh of the throat.

The patient is induced to yawn through suggestion, imitation or a preliminary exercise in deep breathing. Each treatment consists of from six to eight yawns, each followed by the operation of swallowing.

It should be added, however, that it is quite possible for deep breathing to be overdone, particularly by persons with weak hearts, and it is at least open to question whether the obstacles to free respiration which the yawning cure is alleged to remove are not useful in preventing the entrance of germs and other foreign bodies.—Scientific American.

Florist's Frost Bells.

An electric bell tinkled sharply beside the florist's desk. "Frost!" he said, and ran hastily to the greenhouse. "The fires had sunk," the florist explained on his return. "The watchman had fallen asleep. But for my frost bell I'd have lost hundreds of dollars."

"Frost bells are now pretty generally used by florists and fruit growers," he went on. "An electrical contrivance is connected with a thermometer and when the mercury falls to a certain point—you regulate this danger point to suit yourself—a bell rings a warning in your house or office."

"Many a crop of winter fruit and flowers has been saved in the last year or two by the clever little frost bell."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Bomb in Letter.

So expert are bomb makers nowadays that an apparently harmless letter may kill any person who tries to open it. A piece of cardboard is cut to a size which, when folded over, will fit into an ordinary envelope. The four corners of this are slit into narrow strips. Fulminate of mercury is spread over three of the slits and the sheet is folded and fastened together.

Projecting from each side of the folded sheet is a little metal strip, or detonator, glued to the cardboard in such a manner that the envelope cannot be opened without striking one of them. Upon meeting this slight resistance the hand moving the paper cutter instinctively pushes harder, and the result is an explosion that either kills or maims.

SLAUGHTER BY ROAD AGENTS.

Mysterious Disappearance of Miners in Early Days of Montana.

The discovery up to the fall of 1863 of no less than 110 bodies of victims of the road agents had finally aroused the feelings of the law abiding citizens to a pitch of frenzy. They felt that the mysterious disappearance of many other men whom they had known was to be traced to the bandits.

Scores of miners who set out with large sums of money for various places had never been heard of and had never reached their destinations. Murders occurred daily, almost hourly. Had there been the most perfect system of legal procedure time would not have permitted of the orderly trial of offenders, so frequent were the crimes. Alder Gulch continued to discharge its treasure in a steady stream, and the very excess of its bounty excited the most selfish passions of men. The heart of a man possessed with the thirst for gold is like the country where gold is produced—it is wild and barren, and the flowers wither.

It must not be supposed that during these long months of sickening dread and doubt attempts had not been made to organize justice. Rude courts were established and the guilt or innocence of offenders submitted to regularly chosen juries, but the swagging outlaws would boldly force their way through the lines of spectators and into the presence of the qualified twelve men, announcing their determination to avenge every one connected with the case, any outcome other than acquittal.

Witnesses and jurors under these circumstances were afraid for their lives, and justice had miscarried under the outlaws, seeing the blanch of fear everywhere, were supreme. In the early stages of this reign of terror some of the road agents had been tried, found guilty and condemned to death by unanimous vote, but between conviction and punishment motives to reconsider had intervened, and the vauling mob, through fear or reticent doubt, had revoked the action of the previous hour.

World's Largest Station.

The South Terminal in Boston not only is the largest station in the world but sends out daily more than 600 trains, nearly twice the number dispatched from the Grand Central station by the three roads starting from there. The next largest number sent from any station in this country is about 350 from the Boston and Maine terminal in Boston, and the next about 325 from the Broad Street station, Philadelphia. Then come the Grand Central station, New York, and the Reading terminal, Philadelphia.

But these figures do not equal those of the great London terminal. There one station sends 700 trains daily, the greatest number from any one station in the world, and all of the twelve great terminals send out large numbers of trains.

Including all suburban trains, and figuring on a mean average of winter and summer, the regular scheduled trains leave the four great centers in the following numbers daily, the figures being for all roads and approximately correct: New York city, 1,400; Boston, 1,000; Philadelphia, 850; Chicago, 850. No other American city has 400.

Keen Sight of Birds of Prey.

The sharp-eyed hawk can spy a rat upon a piece of earth almost exactly the same color at twenty times the distance it is perceptible to man or dog. A kite soaring out of human sight can still distinguish and pounce upon lizards and field mice upon the ground, and the distance at which vultures and eagles can sight their prey is almost incredible.

Recent discoveries have inclined naturalists to the belief that birds of prey have not the acute sense of smell or of hearing that has hitherto been accredited to them. Their keen sight seems better to account for their action, and they appear to be guided by sight alone, as they never sniff at anything, but dart straight at the object of their desire.

Their counterparts in the ocean doubtless smell and see, but are more guarded by smell than sight. In both sharks and rays the eyes are good and have a distinct expression, though since they scent their prey from a short distance and swim up to it with greatest rapidity, smell may be called their real eye.

The Baby Beetle's Cradle.

If, at almost any time of the year, we walk through the woods where the red, scarlet, black or pin oaks are growing—that is, where we find those that ripen their acorns in two seasons and therefore belong in the pin oak group, says St. Nicholas, we shall probably find on the ground fallen branches that vary in size from that of a lead pencil to that of one's thumb or even larger. These at the broken end appear as if cut away within the wood, so that only a thin portion is left under the bark. Within the center uneven cut, generally near the center of the growth, is a small hole tightly plugged by the "powder post" of a beetle larva. Split open the branch or twig, when a burrow will be seen; and the little, white, soft, hard-jawed larva that made it will be found or perhaps the inactive pupa.

CRACKING SHELLS OF CEYLON.

Sounds They Make Like the Notes of an Aeolian Harp.

Sir J. Emerson Tennent, having heard a story about musical sounds issuing from the lake at Batticaloa, in Ceylon, paid a visit to the place. The fishermen told him that the sounds, which resembled the faint sweet notes of an Aeolian harp, were heard only at night and during the dry season, were most distinct when the moon was nearest the full and proceeded, they believed, not from a fish, but from a shell called the "crying shell."

"In the evening," says Tennent, "when the moon rose I took a boat and accompanied the fishermen to the spot. We rowed about 200 yards northeast of the jetty by the fort gate; there was not a breath of wind or a ripple except those caused by the dip of our oars. On coming to the point mentioned I distinctly heard the sounds in question. They came up from the water like the gentle thrills of a musical chord, of the faint vibrations of a wineglass when its rim is rubbed by a moistened finger. It was not one sustained note, but a multitude of tiny sounds, each clear and distinct in itself, the sweetest treble mingling with the lower bass."

"On applying the ear to the woodwork of the boat the vibration was greatly increased in volume. The sounds varied considerably at different points as we moved across the lake, as if the number of the animals from which they proceeded was greatest in particular spots, and occasionally we rowed out of hearing of their altogether, until on returning to the original locality the sounds were at once renewed. This fact seems to indicate that the causes of the sounds, whatever they may be, are stationary at several points, and this agrees with the statement of the natives that they are produced by mollusca and not by fish."

"They come evidently and sensibly from the depth of the lake, and there was nothing in the surrounding circumstances to support the conjecture that they could be the reverberation of noises made by insects on the shore conveyed along the surface of the water, for they were loudest and most distinct at points where the nature of the land and the intervention of the fort and its buildings forbade the possibility of this kind of conduction."

The Most Famous Cat.

Probably the most famous cat in the world is the handsome jet-black creature known as White Hea hea, which was saved as a kitten from the wreck of the Elbe, which went down some years ago in Southampton water. His first public appearance was in the hands of the only woman rescued from the sinking vessel, and she brought him to the bazaar held in aid of the orphans and widows of the sailors drowned. Lots were drawn for him, the tickets being a guinea each, and he became the property of Miss Panofa, the court pianist of the Kaiser. He was a favorite of the late Queen Victoria, who, as a rule, did not like cats, and Queen Alexandra has his portrait in her possession. He has been introduced to most of the royal courts of Europe, the Vatican, and the presidential palace, White House, Washington, D. C., and lately he was presented to President Loubet on the occasion of his visit in London. White Heather is Miss Janofa's mascot, and is known to bring good luck to all his admirers.

John Oliver Hobbes calls him the Marquis of Haddock, because haddock is his favorite food. He has been petted by the late pope, and has trotted over the ruins of the capitol and other historic grounds of the Eternal City. He killed a viper in Rome, and a young rattlesnake in America. He has opened graciously more than half a dozen bazaars for charity.

Among others the bazaar for the new cats' home at Bournemouth, or rather Parkstone. He never goes by himself, but is taken out on a lead. He wears a golden necklace when in state, and is in every respect kept more like a little prince than like a cat. White Heather seems to be a peculiar name for a black cat, but both are said to bring good luck.

Seasoning Wood in Sweden. The Swedish method of insuring lasting qualities in timber, as reported in Woodcraft, is so simple and practical as to be worth at least a trial in America. Trees which are to be felled are fast "girdled," that is, the bark is removed for a space completely round the tree near the root. This is done at a certain season of the year. The tree, thus deprived of the nourishment which it should receive through the inner bark, will die, but not immediately.

It will first live for a time on the sap which remains in the wood, and thereby it withdraws and uses up the sap, which is the main cause of decay in all wood. The tree is allowed to stand a certain length of time—not long enough to attain that brittleness and dryrot which in this country have been regarded as characteristic of trees which die standing.

A small passenger steamship has been launched on the lake of Galilee, in connection with the railway in the Holy Land. The railway bridge which connects Venice with the mainland is 12,050 feet long and has 222 arches.

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