

## THROUGH A MONOCLE

### THE THEATRES OF SPAIN.

THE popular theatre in Spain is run on what is called the "hour system." That is, you do not go to the theatre to spend an entire evening listening to a play of three to five acts; but you drop in for an hour and in that time you hear a complete playlet, often of several acts. There are usually four of these "hours" during the evening, the first beginning at a quarter after seven, the second at half-past eight, the third at a quarter to ten and the fourth and last at eleven. So little do they expect the same audience to stay through the entire programme that not infrequently the same play is repeated during the evening. Thus in a programme of the "Teatro Cervantes" of Seville which lies before me as I write, "Las Mil y Pico de Noches" is named for the "primera seccion," and also for the "cuarta seccion." The price for a "butaca con entrada" for each "seccion"—that is, for an orchestra chair with the right of entrance to the theatre (which is often sold separately in Spain)—is one peseta or twenty cents. A box (platea) with four "entradas" costs five pesetas and a half, or \$1.10. Then the prices grade down until you can get standing room in the top gallery for fifteen centissimos or three cents. To be perfectly correct, I should say that the orchestra chair (with the right of getting in to it—quite an essential to its enjoyment) costs 18 cents, while the other two cents go for a revenue stamp on the sale of the ticket. In the case of the three-cent tickets, one-fifth of a cent is put down for the stamp.

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LIKE most Latin nations, the Spaniards apparently seldom reserve theatre seats except for grand opera; and then—in Spain—it costs extra. This seems to me a much wiser plan than ours. It is truly an awful responsibility to bind yourself to go to the theatre next Wednesday night, be it calm or stormy, be you well or ill. When Wednesday comes, you may not feel in the least like going to the play or, indeed, anywhere away from your own fireside. Yet you pledge yourself to go, and put up a deposit which will be a forfeit if you do not keep your pledge. The light-hearted Spaniard does nothing so foolish. When he feels like going to the theatre, he just puts on his hat and goes; and his wife "and his sisters and his cousins and his aunts" do likewise. They look upon going to the play as a form of amusement, and they do not intend to make a task of it. One result of this is that it is almost impossible to tell, outside of opera and serious productions, what is going to be played at any particular theatre a day in advance. You must wait for the announcement of the day to be put up, which usually happens about ten in the morning. Possibly—if you are a Spanish business man—you take note of it on your way home to luncheon; and that evening at dinner the family decides whether it would like to drop in to the theatre for an hour—and for what hour. It is all very easy and irresponsible and quite what amusing one's self should be.

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THE subject of the plays is usually precisely what the tourist would have—native themes. The street scenes that you see during the day are reproduced to the life on the stage at night. One act will show the characters waiting at a railway station, and quite possibly they will kill time by introducing a native dance. Another act will hinge upon the fact that what is apparently a blind beggar, is not a beggar at all—nor a particle blind. But the street scene surrounding him might be taken from in front of the theatre in the morning. The adventures of a shrewd countryman who always manages to outwit the more knowing ones who try to swindle him, are always popular; and they particularly like to see him succeed in some far-away city, such as Paris. The triumphs of Spanish dancers in such surroundings is also pleasing. Sometimes they import a play, as, for instance, "Raffles" at a Madrid theatre, and the "Merry Widow" (condensed to an hour) everywhere.

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YOU can never tell during one "hour" what the audience is going to be like for the next. One night I dropped in for the hour I usually patronised—that beginning at 8.30—and found as usual plenty of room in the orchestra chairs. When that performance was over, I thought I would like to stay for the next hour; so I gave the attendant a peseta to go out and re-book my seat. When he came back, instead of leaving me where I was, he insisted on my moving away back, almost to the last row. Of course, I protested; but he

insisted that all the nearer seats were sold, though there had been very few in at the previous "hour" and no rush now in sight. But in a few minutes, he was justified. A perfect procession set in through the doors, and the house was packed. All the clubs in the city must have marched on us "en masse"; for most of the new arrivals were obviously club men. I wondered at their unanimity; but a study of the programme explained it. During this "hour," there was to be an "estreno," that is, a premier performance of a play. These were what George Ham calls the "connoisseurs" who had come to judge it.

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THE Spanish acting is—like that of all Latin artists—natural, vivacious and captivating. I was reminded constantly of the work of Paul Marcel's company of French players in Montreal. There is the same luxurious plenitude of action—the same easy power of being perfectly at home—the same absence, except in passionate scenes, of all appearance of acting. Beauty is not made so much a point in the selection of either actresses or choruses as it is with us; and the dancing is far more restrained and modest than is usually seen on our stage. Dancing here is an art—not an adventure into the daring. Humour is plentifully sprinkled throughout most performances, and is keenly appreciated by the audiences. The Andalusians especially love wit. Scenery is simple but sufficient, and we would think the mechanical contrivances primitive. But they thus take their proper secondary place to the acting. Altogether art is supreme and ostentation absent.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

### Millionaires and Pictures

WHILE Canada watches Wall Street for stock market quotations, it is none the less certain that Gotham keeps a pretty shrewd eye on Canada. Not long ago a well-known Canadian artist was in New York and called on a picture dealer there who became quite curious about Montreal and Toronto. Happened that he had several European pictures which he had not yet disposed of to his New York patrons.

"Say! You've got some pretty rich men up in Toronto and Montreal, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes, we've a few."

"Well, let me see—oh, yes! d'you know So-and-So?" mentioning three or four prominent financiers up this way.

"Oh, very well, yes."

"Well, say, I'd like to sell them those D'Aubignes and Corots. I'll sell the lot for seven thousand. Tell you what—you put in a word or two that'll close the deal, and I'll give you two thousand rake-off. Eh? That's pretty good commission."

But the Canadian artist didn't see it that way.

### PREMIER ASQUITH'S LAMENT

How the Punch Cartoonist regards the result of the General Election.



THE MANDATE.

Liberal Champion.—"I asked for a charger and they gave me this!"