

Yet for all this, a crowd had collected about the awning on the sidewalk, and even upon the opposite side of the street, peeping and peering from behind the broad shoulders of policemen—a crowd of miseries, shivering in rags and tattered comforters, who found, nevertheless, an unexplainable satisfaction in watching this prolonged defile of millionaires.

So great was the concourse of teams, that two blocks distant from the theatre they were obliged to fall into line, advancing only at intervals, and from door to door of the carriages thus immobilised ran a score of young men, their arms encumbered with pamphlets, shouting: "Score books, score books and librettos; score books with photographs of all the artists."

However, in the vestibule the press was thinning out. It was understood that the overture had begun. Other people who were waiting like Laura and her sister had been joined by their friends and had gone inside. Laura, for whom this opera night had been an event, a thing desired and anticipated with all the eagerness of a girl who had lived for twenty-two years in a second-class town of central Massachusetts, was in great distress. She had never seen Grand Opera, she would not have missed a note, and now she was in a fair way to lose the whole overture.

"Oh, dear," she cried. "Isn't it too bad. I can't imagine why they don't come."

Page, more metropolitan, her keenness of appreciation a little lost by two years of city life and fashionable schooling, tried to reassure her.

"You won't lose much," she said. "The air of the overture is repeated in the first act—I've heard it once before."

"If we even see the first act," mourned Laura. She scanned the faces of the late comers anxiously. No-