



ILLINOIS.—THE OPENING OF THE MAGNIFICENT AUDITORIUM BUILDING IN CHICAGO, DECEMBER 9TH.—SOME OF THE ALLEGORICAL FIGURES OF THE PROSCENIUM ARCH.—FROM SKETCHES BY WILL E. CHAPIN.—[SEE PAGE 355.]

THE CHICAGO AUDITORIUM.

The Auditorium Building in Chicago, which was formally opened on Monday evening, December 9th, in the presence of President Harrison and many other notables, National and State, had its origin in the conception of Mr. Ferdinand W. Peck, and has for its purpose the encouragement of the drama and music under conditions appealing to the higher and purer tastes of the community. It incloses an opera-house, a hotel, and a business block, the former having a regular seating capacity of 4,100, which can be increased to 7,000 or lessened to 3,000, this last change being effected by hinged ceilings which, when lowered, cut off two galleries. The hotel contains 474 guest-rooms, all superbly finished. The building has three fronts. The office block is entered from Wabash Avenue; the main entrances to the opera-house are on Congress Street, and the hotel fronts on both Congress Street and Michigan Avenue. The site covers 63,000 square feet. The materials used in the structure are granite in two tones, Indiana limestone, iron, steel, and porous terra-cotta. The exterior plan is a composite of great simplicity and massiveness, enlivened by graceful but dignified features. The first main characteristic is the Roman arch, affording a sense of strength and endurance. The second main characteristic is a series of temple-like windows extending uniformly on the three fronts. Each of these windows is 50 feet in height and 12 feet wide, and terminates in the Roman arch. The highest plane is adorned with a colonnade which, with the lofty windows, suggests the æsthetic character of the structure.

The building is crowned with a square tower and observatory for the signal service. The height from ground to tower top is 180 feet. On the Michigan Avenue front part of the hotel is a columned loggia, opening from the second story on Lake Michigan exteriorly, and into a spacious ladies' foyer interiorly. This double promenade will be a feature of the hotel, especially in summer, as that side of the house will be in shadow after mid-day, and the lake breeze is always cool. The entire cost has been \$3,000,000.

Plastic and color decoration, all proceeding on two principles, pervade the entire building. The first principle is that the decoration is architectural, and not a thing in fragments and independent of structural mass and relation. The second principle is that in the effectuation of the scheme a color is used in combination with gold. Gold-leaf alone has been employed throughout, and the best oil colors, so that the tone will remain pure and renovation will not be necessary every few years. The Auditorium opera-house is in ivory and gold; the Recital Hall, which seats nearly 5,000 persons, is in cream and gold, and a like divergence with unbroken unity is maintained in every great

portion of the building. The opera-house proscenium frieze is a happy if somewhat conventional conceit, comprising figures, single or in groups, suggestive of the dance, song, serenade, dirge, poetry, religion, grief, science, art—all that constitutes the expression of life. Forty boxes extend in equal divisions from either side of the stage toward the centre of the audience-room.

It is thought that the stage of the Auditorium opera-house will have the effect of revolutionizing stage structure in the United States. Nothing more comprehensive, simple, or effective can be conceived. Its depth is 70 feet, its width 98 feet, the proscenium opening is 75 feet, and the curtain width 47 feet. The entire plant is iron or steel. The rigging-loft is 89 feet above the stage floor. Twelve miles of flexible steel cable are required for the manipulation of drops and appointments. These are operated by hydraulic power, two force-pumps supplying a pressure of 2,400 gallons per minute to a tank in the tower of the Auditorium. The scenic contrivances are all managed by a lever. The horizon is an endless roll on a cylinder, and is painted in sections so as to give all the principal tempers of nature. The old style of tilt-up stage is abandoned for a flat one, the effects formerly sought by the upward plane being better secured by machinery hauled from the levers. The stage itself is the uppermost of three floors, the lower ones being used in its manipulation. It is in bridges or sections of various sizes and adjustments, and can be made to do everything that dramatist has yet desired. By simple machinery it is caused to oscillate like the sea, either gently or in a tempest. In times of national conventions it can be turned to use, accommodating not far from 1,000 persons.

The organ is a notable part of the opera-house. It cost \$45,000. It is operated by electricity. The keyboard enables the organist to see the orchestra conductor—a necessary advantage not secured in every instance. It controls five organs, the great, choir, swell, pedal, and echo. The organ-chamber is twenty-five feet wide, and the inclusion is effected so as to make its front seen a part of the general design. The pipe-box is under the floor. Powerful chimneys will give additional effect to its strains. It contains, within itself or as adjuncts, 177 stops, 7,124 pipes, and 69 bells.

Features of the grand opening of this magnificent building were an address by President Harrison and the appearance of Madame Patti in two of her favorite airs. The social character of the occasion was the most brilliant the city has ever witnessed. High premiums had been paid for all the boxes and most of the choice seats. The toilets were uniformly charming.