

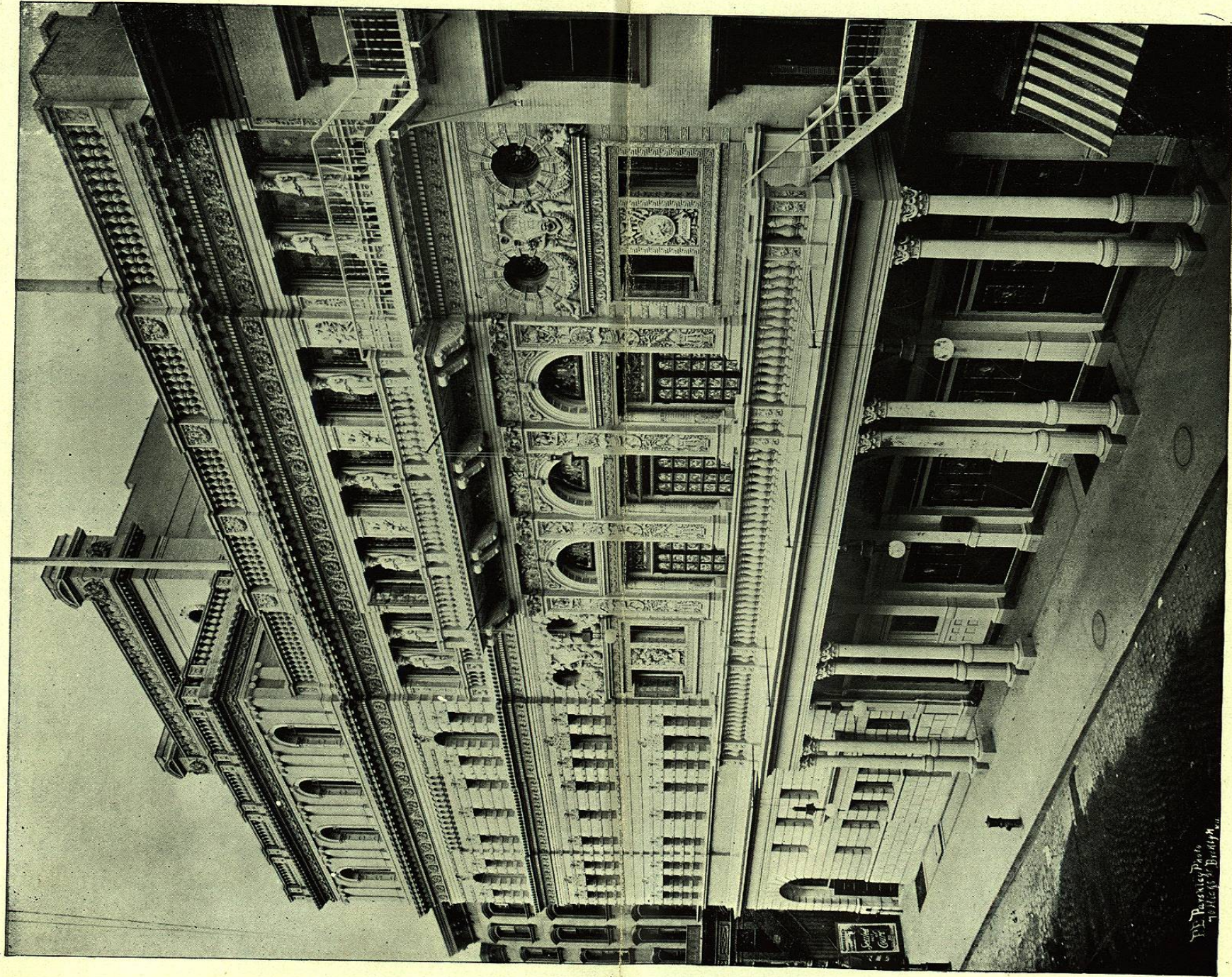
THE FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE OF NEW YORK.

This splendid example of modern architecture, the fourth playhouse that has borne that name, is situated upon the north side of West Twenty-eighth Street, a few feet from Broadway, on the site of its namesake, which was burned on January 2, 1891. The Twenty-eighth Street front, which is the broadside of the building, is in the style of the Italian Renaissance, very elaborate in the detail of its ornamentation, in which free use has been made of the emblems of the drama.

The columns of the portico, and the iron structure of the first story back of the portico, are relics of the former building, and were retained by Mr. Francis H. Kimball, the architect, in their original positions, but the cornice and balustrade of the portico are parts of the new work. Above the first story of the new theatre all the ornamental features and cornices are wrought in white terra cotta. The exterior, so elaborate, on the whole, on account of the employment of this medium of terra cotta, while maintaining the exquisitely delicate and graceful characteristics of the period which it represents, expresses in all its constructive details the continuity of an idea strictly in harmony with the purpose of the building.

In a word, it embodies in itself the most appropriate suggestion of the uses of the interior; the grand divisions or principle parts of a theatre, namely, the auditorium and the stage, being illustrated most effectively in the architectural composition, the more elaborate portion representing the auditorium, and the plainer section the stage.

The richness and minute elaboration that such a treatment is susceptible of in clay were never more apparent than in this illustration.



THE FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE, N. Y., TWENTY-EIGHTH STREET FRONT.
FRANCIS H. KIMBALL, ARCHITECT.



THE OLD LANDMARK, FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE.

On either side of the central feature of the balcony foyer are windows, with ornamental terra-cotta panels between, the one denoting comedy, the other tragedy.

Again, the mullions of the windows of the gallery foyer are in the form of caryatides supporting the main cornice, and in the panels of the larger piers are bas-reliefs representing dancing and singing figures, all of these being in terra-cotta.

The leading architectural lines of the Twenty-eighth Street side are carried throughout the entire front, and the stage portion is less elaborate than that of the auditorium just described, calling for but little decoration, comparatively, in terra cotta.

There are two principal entrances to the theatre, one of which is sheltered by the portico and opens into the main foyer, an apartment 40 feet long and 13 feet wide, and from which a wide marble stairway leads to the upper boxes and balcony.

This entrance to the auditorium is no insignificant subject for decorative treatment, and in its treatment the architect has kept well in mind that the "first impressions are everything." The illusion is complete, as this hall in itself has no great length; though well proportioned, it appears twice as long as it otherwise would, had not the mirrors placed there against the east wall been adopted.

The other entrance is through a lobby 50 feet long and 12 feet wide, which leads from Broadway to the rear of the parquette.

Both the entrances are paved with perfectly white Vermont marble, with Tennessee marble borders and plinth under-columns and pilasters, and the walls are divided into panels by pilasters and columns of Mycenium marble.

There is another marble staircase from the parquette to the balcony on the north side of the theatre, and one imme-

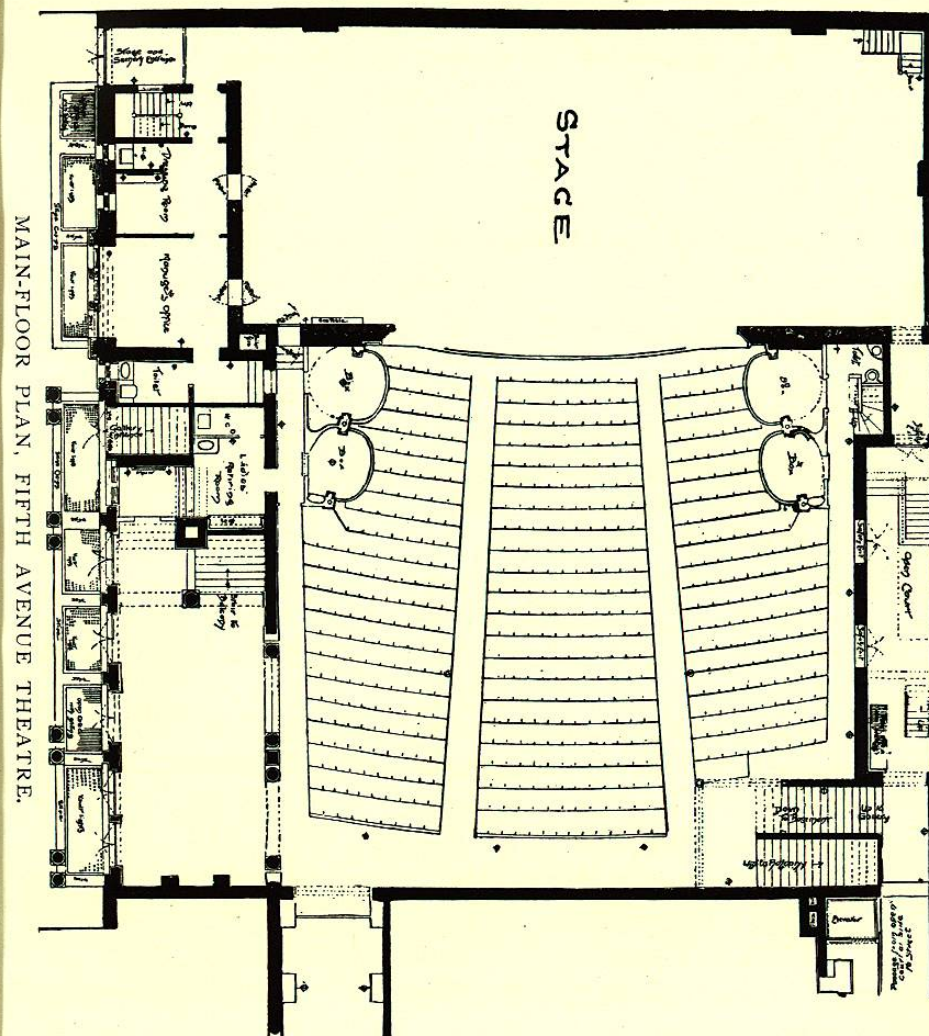
diately under, to the smoking-room and gentlemen's toilet under the auditorium.

Entering the theatre by the regular Broadway entrance, it will be noticeable that the style of the exterior is adhered to throughout entrances, foyers, and auditorium in all its elaborateness. The pilasters along the walls of the entrance represent Sienna marble with capitals of ivory and gold, and the ceiling overhead is vaulted in tile, on which are decorated ribs in plaster relief, the subject of the ornamentation being fruits and flowers, and on the plain surfaces of the walls and ceilings are frescoed ornaments in color and gold. There are three divisions combined in this entrance: the outer lobby next to the street, with iron enclosing gates, then the box-office lobby, and an inner lobby next to the theatre; the purpose of which divisions being to control the rush of cold air into the theatre when the outer doors are opened.

The main decorative feature of the Twenty-eighth Street foyer is the beautiful coloring which the marble columns and marble wainscoting give that superb wall; and when this is contrasted with the ceiling and side walls, in white and pale pinkish terra cotta, the composition is impressive in its fullest sense.

On entering the auditorium from the foyer of the Fifth Avenue Theatre we are impressed with its cosy and comfortable appearance. The parquette seats 600 people, and the entire seating capacity is 1400.

Growing out of the proscenium boxes of the theatre is the great splay of the proscenium arch, itself panelled and enriched with Italian ornamentation, and from this springs the dome, beginning from a heavy cornice as a base and supporting heavy ribs arranged in pairs. Among the most charming decorative features of the auditorium is the drop-curtain, part of which is shown, painted by H. Logan Reid, after the original by Cottazzo, "The Crowning of the Bride,"





TWENTY-EIGHTH STREET FOYER, FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE.



BROADWAY ENTRANCE, FIFTH AVENUE THEATRE.

described and illustrated by Henry M. Stevens in an article entitled "The Fifth Avenue Theatre," published in the *Scientific American*, July number 1893. Mr. Stevens says it is "A souvenir of the happy days of Louis XVI. The scene itself is one of considerable magnitude and introduces a large number of figures. The atmosphere of old French court life, and the simplicity of the country custom of the time, in which a provincial bride and groom seek distinction at the hands of Louis and his beautiful consort, Marie Antoinette, through a graceful ceremony of this coronation, are most attractively and truthfully portrayed."

By taking another glance at the auditorium we see the same general idea of design and tints displayed with equally good taste throughout the minor details. The acoustic properties are perfect and the lines of sighting of the parquette and upper tiers are carried out in the same manner as described under the remarks upon these subjects hereafter.

Symmetrical planning is to our mind the first necessity for any theatre that is to be a safe one. The position of all passages and staircases, the nearness of all exits to these essential parts and to the outer air are, all-important. The front of the site, as well as the sides looking on the thoroughfare, is of course a great advantage. In this particular but a few feet separates the auditorium from the street, and the building, in case of any emergency, could be emptied of its audience in at least two and one half minutes, even that portion occupying its farthest seats.

The Fifth Avenue is about the size of the Empire Theatre, but adjoining its 1400 seats plenty of room is allowed for aisles and passages. The seats are comfortable and elegantly upholstered.

The stage occupies a space 35 feet wide by 80 feet long upon the main floor, and adjoining is one dressing-room, the