

The Pittsburgh Gazette.

HOW I GOT INTO THE BALL OF ST. PETER'S.

BY FRANK LESLIE.

Most persons are aware that the cathedral church of St. Peter's, in Rome, is the grandest edifice for Christian worship in the world; that it is presided over by the Pope himself, who resides in a vast palace adjoining the Vatican, within which are collected treasures of art of centuries.

Three hundred and fifty years were spent in building this structure, extending through three reigns of no less than forty-three Popes. It covers an area of nearly six acres, and it cost fifty millions of dollars. The annual amount expended in keeping it in repair is upward of forty thousand dollars.

It is six hundred and thirteen and a half feet long inside the walls, four hundred and forty-six and a half feet wide, and four hundred and forty-eight feet high from the pavement to the top of the cross. Beneath the pavement is the crypt, so that the actual height from the foundation to the top of the cross is four hundred and eighty-eight feet, making it by nearly fifty feet the loftiest dome in the world.

Having provided myself with the necessary order from the director, or janitor of St. Peter's, I readily obtained admission to the hall leading to the doorway. The elaborate iron fretwork door locked and barred, and guarded by an official, is only opened to visitors presenting orders in due form, and then only from eight to twelve o'clock, and no person is allowed to remain after one o'clock.

The first one hundred and eighty-five feet, leading from the floor to the top of the vestibule, has a very easy ascent, being a gently inclined plane without steps, about six feet wide, and floored with brick. From a door at the head of the incline the visitor emerges at the top of the vestibule, which is paved with flags of four hundred and sixty-eight feet long by fifty feet wide, forming a magnificent promenade.

Up to this point I could have ridden on horseback, the ascent being so gradual. I began to congratulate myself on the trifling effort required to gain such a magnificent view, but soon found that I had only got over the easiest part of my task. Crossing over the roof of the vestibule, I had to climb a double staircase to the drum, which was supported by the dome. The stone stairway runs around between the outer and inner shells of the drum and dome.

Looking up into the top of the dome from this gallery, the fresco, which, from the pavement below, appears so elaborately finished, are discovered to be in reality executed in a coarse but vigorous style, intended to produce the proper effect when viewed from a distance.

FEBRUARY FASHIONS.

Tolles for February are rich and elegant. A very handsome dinner dress is of heavy black silk, with train of sixty inches. Apron in front formed by folds of superior satin, nearly an inch wide, headed with a silk gimp.

House dress of black mohair, trimmed skirt, plain in the back, front trimmed with three rows of satin. Such a dress can be worn on all occasions and will always be useful, rich and elegant.

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