

between these doors, is the orchestra. It is a considerate and merciful arrangement to place even the actors between the music and the audience, for it somewhat softens the melody, and thus must prevent many strangers from going mad on the spot. To enumerate the instruments of auricular torture that are wielded with such appalling effect is not to be accomplished in the English or any other tongue, living or dead. They were wind, string and metal. I have no sort of doubt that there were sackbuts and tabors, psalteries and fifes, shawms, and even hautboys, among them. I had my eye on a fellow who was doing his best to sound the loud timbrel. Bones, jews' harps and fire crackers mingled with shrill pipes, sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. To swell this unearthly diapason of discords, which never ceased for more than five minutes together during the evening, the cracked and squeaking voices of the actors were often added in an attempt at operatic singing. The musical effect of this addition was like driving an alarmed flock of geese among a terrified covey of guinea hens. To account for so extraordinary an absence of even accidental or occasional harmony I formed a theory, which I submit as a fair and reasonable solution of the difficulty. I assume that each performer had thoroughly mastered the programme for the evening. If there be one remarkable quality in which John excels, it is his power of repeating accurately what he has once learned; and his weakest point is a great difficulty in adapting himself to new circumstances as they arise. To illustrate this: a story is told in Victoria of a lady who instructed her Chinese cook how to make a pudding. After having broken and used two eggs for the purpose, the third was rejected "on its merits." The cook learned to make many an excellent pudding, but it was one day discovered that he still rejected every third egg that was broken, no matter how fresh or how dear they were! Well, the disturbing element in the orchestra

I take to be cigars, which they are allowed to smoke as often as they choose. They all start fairly together, each with his piece of work before him to be conscientiously carried through. One stops to light his cigar, and begins again exactly where he left off. Another, who perhaps labours with the same zeal at a wind instrument, falls still further behind because he must stop to smoke his tobacco as well as to light it. As they are all fond of the weed it does not take long to account for the very worst general results, while each man, no doubt, feels that he is doing his duty by his employer if not by his neighbour. The acting itself is a mixture of pantomime, opera bouffe, tumbling and juggling. There are no actresses, and the prima donnas are very well disguised young men. The absence of women from the stage may be an excuse for the grossness of the amatory scenes. What is concealed from the jealous lover is often confidentially revealed to the audience. The natal hour is indicated by practical obstetrics, and the introduction of the *sage-femme* upon the stage. Would the admirers of "The Black Crook," or "Babil and Bijou" like to see their darling *spectacles* carried so far? The actors are continually making direct appeals or exhortations to the pit, where John sits quietly smoking with his hat on, cheering never, but laughing often.

The Seven Dials, of London, and the Five Points, of New York, had struck me as good places to visit—with an escort; but they become insignificant by comparison with the Chinese thieves' quarter in San Francisco. My guide was indeed at home there. As if to assert his authority he at times incontinently grabbed some passing Chinaman, and after thrusting his arm up under the tunic of the submissive Asiatic to search for stolen goods, gave him a shake, and a blessing, and let him go. The central glory of this heathen Gomorrah is a square courtyard, with dens, where the wretches burrow, on four sides. No Black Hole of Calcutta, no Atlantic steamship