



THE ALHAMBRA BALLET.

LONDON MUSIC HALLS.

BY F. ANSTEY.

LONDON music halls might be roughly grouped into four classes—first, the aristocratic variety theatre of the West End, chiefly found in the immediate neighborhood of Leicester Square; then the smaller and less aristocratic West End halls; next, the large *bourgeois* music halls of the less fashionable parts and in the suburbs; last, the minor music halls of the poor and squalid districts. The audiences, as might be expected, correspond to the social scale of the particular place of entertainment, but the differences in the performances provided by the four classes of music halls are far less strongly marked.

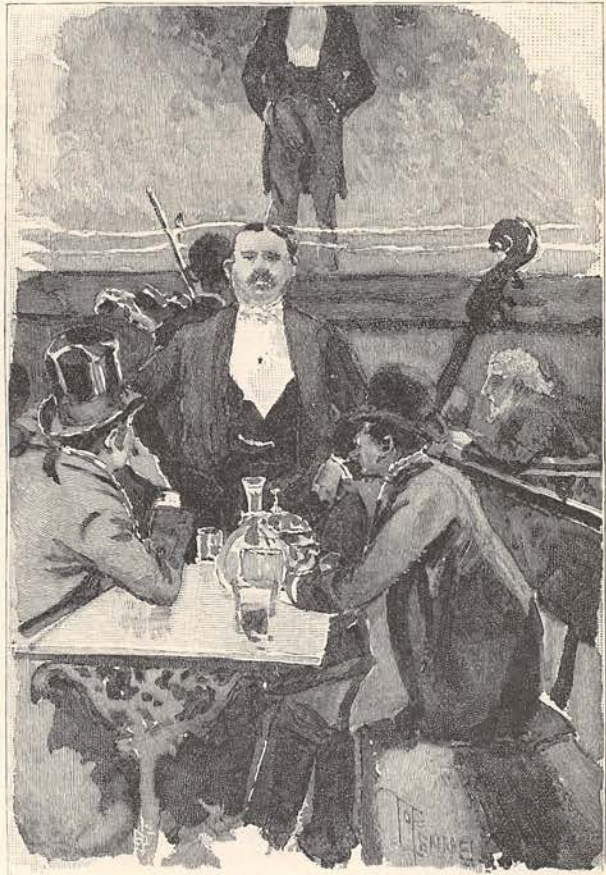
Let us take a typical establishment of the first class. Its exterior is more handsome and imposing than that of most London theatres, even of the highest rank. Huge cressets in classical tripods flare between the columns of the façade, the windows and *foyer* glow with stained glass, the entrance hall, lighted by softened electric lamps, is richly and tastefully decorated. You pass through wide, airy corridors and down stairs, to find yourself

in a magnificent theatre, and the stall to which you are shown is wide and luxuriously fitted. Smoking is universal, and a large proportion of the audience promenade the outer circles, or stand in groups before the long refreshment bars which are a prominent feature on every tier. Most of the men are in evening dress, and in the boxes are some ladies, also in evening costume, many of them belonging to what is called good society. The women in the other parts of the house are generally pretty obvious members of a class which, so long as it behaves itself with propriety in the building, it would, whatever fanatics may say to the contrary, be neither desirable nor possible to exclude. The most noticeable characteristic of the audience is perhaps the very slight attention it pays to whatever is going on upon the stage. In the upper parts of the house the conversation renders it impossible to hear distinctly anything that is said or sung, though the same remark does not apply to the stalls, where the occupants, if not enthusiastic, are at least languidly attentive. There is a large and excellent

orchestra, with just a tendency to overdo the drum and cymbals. Stage footmen, more gorgeous of livery but far meeker of aspect than their brethren in private service, slip a giant card bearing a number into a gilded frame on either side of the proscenium before each item of the programme. The electric bell tings, the lights are raised, the orchestra dashes into a prelude, and the *artiste* whose "turn" it is comes on. The main and distinctive feature of the entertainment, however, is the *ballet divertissement*, for which all else is scarcely more than padding, and these ballets are magnificent enough to satisfy the most insatiate appetite for splendor. There are two in one evening, and each lasts about half an hour, during which time the large stage is filled with bewildering combinations of form and color. Company after company of girls, in costumes of delicately contrasted tints, march, trip, or gallop down the boards, their burnished armor gleaming and their rich dresses scintillating in the limelight; at each fresh stroke of the stage-manager's gong they group themselves anew or perform some complicated figure, except when they fall back in a circle and leave the stage clear for the *première danseuse*.

To the writer this lady's proceedings are a source of never-failing enjoyment. There never was such artless *naïveté* in any other human being. To see her advance on the points of her toes, her arms curved symmetrically above her head, a smile of innocent childlike delight on her face, as if she had only just discovered the art of dancing and was quite surprised to find it so agreeable a pastime, is an experience indeed. Then her high-stepping prance round the stage, her little impulsive runs and bashful retreats, the astonishing

complacency with which she submits to being seized and supported in every variety of uncomfortable attitude by the personage next in importance to herself, her final teetotum whirl, are all evidently charged with a deep but mysterious significance. It is not un instructive, too, to watch the countenances of the *corps de ballet* during these evolutions. Some are severely critical, and obviously of opinion that they could do it infinitely better themselves; others whisper disparagement to sympa-



THE CHAIRMAN AT GATTI'S.

thetic ears; others again study the signorina's every movement until she is opposite them, whereupon they assume an ostentatious abstraction, as if she was really below their notice. And then she stops suddenly, amidst thunders of applause, the infantine smile giving place to a calm supe-

riority as she haughtily makes her way to the wings through the ranks of *coryphées*. At last the end comes; the ballet girls are ranked and massed into brilliant parterres and glittering pyramids, the *première danseuse* glides on in time to appropriate the credit of the arrangement, and the curtain falls on a blaze of concentrated magnificence.

Such is the main attraction on the programme of a first-class music hall. Lately an attempt has been made to introduce an intellectual element into the other portion of the entertainment at one establishment, where the management engaged a celebrated and justly popular actress to recite dramatic pieces by Lord Tennyson and other poets. On the night when the writer was present, the lady appeared after a man-serpent and before a couple of child clog-dancers, and was heard with respect and attention, being rewarded by applause quite equal to that accorded to the clog-dancing, though a shade less enthusiastic than the acclamation which greeted the contortions of the man-serpent.

It is unnecessary to describe the second class of music halls, in which neither audience nor entertainment presents any characteristic features.

Both externally and internally the *bourgeois* and suburban music hall differs considerably from its more fashionable rival. For one thing, it is generally dingier and gaudier of appearance; the entrance is covered with huge posters and adorned with tea-garden plaster statues bearing colored lamps; the walls are lined with tarnished looking-glass, gilded trellis-work, or virgin cork. Sometimes there is a skittle-alley or a shooting-gallery in the "Grand Lounge."

The interior is as often rectangular as semicircular, and the scheme of decoration of the old gaudy crimson, plaster, and gilding order. In many places, too, the chairman still lingers. This personage is, of course, a survival from the old "Cave of Harmony" days, and his duties are now confined to sitting at a table either in front of the orchestra or in the centre of the stalls, from whence he rises at the conclusion of each "turn" to announce, "Ladies and gentlemen, that celebrated comedian, Mr. Paul Pongwell [or that favorite lady vocalist, Miss Peggie Patterville, as the case may be] will appear next," after which he resumes his seat and ap-

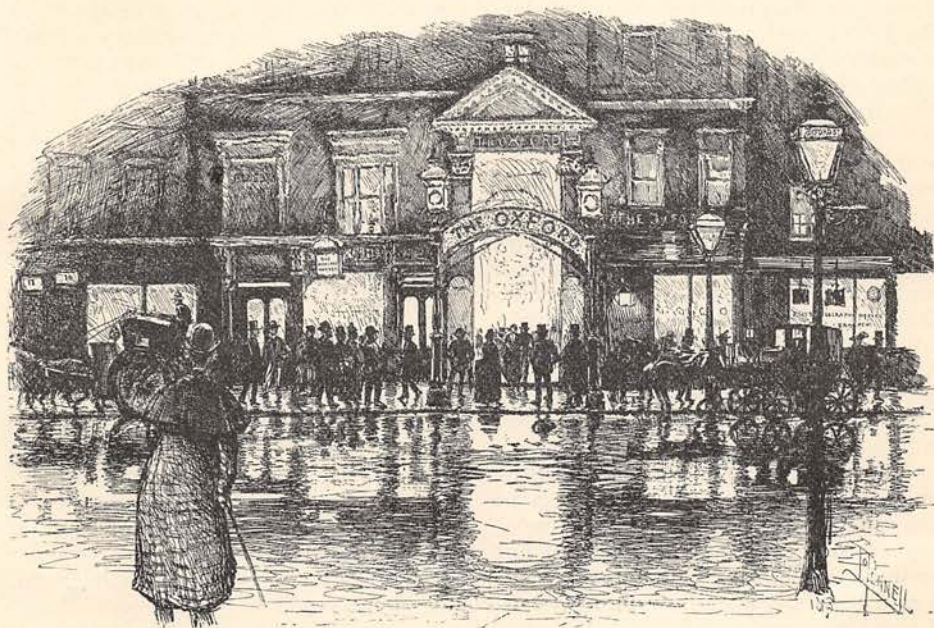
plauds himself with a little auctioneer's hammer. There is a melancholy dignity about him, however, which causes him to be approached with much deference and respect by the young clerks and shop-boys who take their pleasure here, and who are proud to be distinguished by a shake of the hand from him, and flattered when he condescends to accept liquid refreshment or "one of the best twopenny smokes in London" at their expense. Even the torrent of chaff from a lady *artiste*, with a talent for improvising light badinage which would render an archbishop ridiculous in two minutes, fails to rob him of his prestige.

The audience is not a distinguished-looking one; there are no dress-coats and caped cloaks, no dashing toilets, to be seen here; but the vast majority are in easy circumstances and eminently respectable. You will see little family parties—father, mother, and perhaps a grown-up daughter or a child or two—in the stalls. Most of them are probably regular visitors, and have the *entrée* here in return for exhibiting bills in their shop-windows; and these family parties all know one another, as can be seen from the smiles and handshakes they exchange as they pass in or out. Then there are several girls with their sweethearts, respectable young couples employed in neighboring workshops and factories, and a rusty old matron or two, while the fringe of the audience is made up of gay young clerks, the local "bloods," who have a jaunty fashion in some districts of wearing a cigar behind the ear. Large ham sandwiches are handed round by cooks in white blouses, and when a young woman desires to be very stylish indeed, she allows her swain to order a glass of port for her refreshment. Taken as a whole, the audience is not remarkable for intelligence; it is seldom demonstrative, and never in the least exacting, perfectly ready to be pleased with dull songs, hoary jokes, stale sentiment, and clap-trap patriotism.

The character of the performances which find favor may be best illustrated by a description of part of the actual programme at a well-known music hall in South London when the writer was present. After a song and some feats by a troupe of acrobats, came an exhibition by a young lady in a large glass tank filled with water. She was a very pretty and graceful young lady, and she came on accompanied by a

didactic gentleman in evening dress, who accompanied the announcement of each new feature of her performance by a little discourse. "Opening and shutting the mouth under water," he would say, for example. "It has long been a theory among scientific men that by opening the mouth while under water a vacuum is created, thereby incurring the risk of choking the swimmer. Miss So-and-so, ladies and gentlemen, will now proceed to demonstrate the fallacy of that opinion, by opening and shutting her mouth several times in succession while remaining

circumstances." Then a cigar was borrowed from the audience, lighted, and given to the lady, who, shielding it with her hands, retired under the water and smoked vigorously for a minute or two, reappearing with the cigar still unextinguished. Lastly the manager announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, Miss So-and-so will now adopt the position of prayer"; whereupon the lady sank gracefully on her knees under water, folded her hands, and appeared rapt in devotion, while the orchestra played "The Maiden's Prayer," and the manager, with head reverently bent, stood delicately



THE OXFORD EXTERIOR.

at the bottom of the tank." Which Miss So-and-so accordingly did, to our great edification. Then came "gathering shells under water," which was accomplished in a highly elaborate manner, so that there could be no mistake about it. "Sewing" and "writing under water." "Eating under water," when the lady consumed a piece of bread with every appearance of extreme satisfaction. "Drinking from a bottle under water. Most of you," remarked the manager, sympathetically, "are acquainted with the extreme difficulty of drinking out of a bottle under *any* cir-

aside, as one who felt himself unworthy to intrude upon such orisons. Then the lady adopted a pose even more imploring, and a ray, first of crimson and then of green light, was thrown into the tank, presumably to indicate morning and evening prayer respectively. After some minutes of this, the fair performer, a little out of breath from her spiritual exertions, rose, sleek and dripping, to the surface, hopped nimbly out, and bowed herself off.

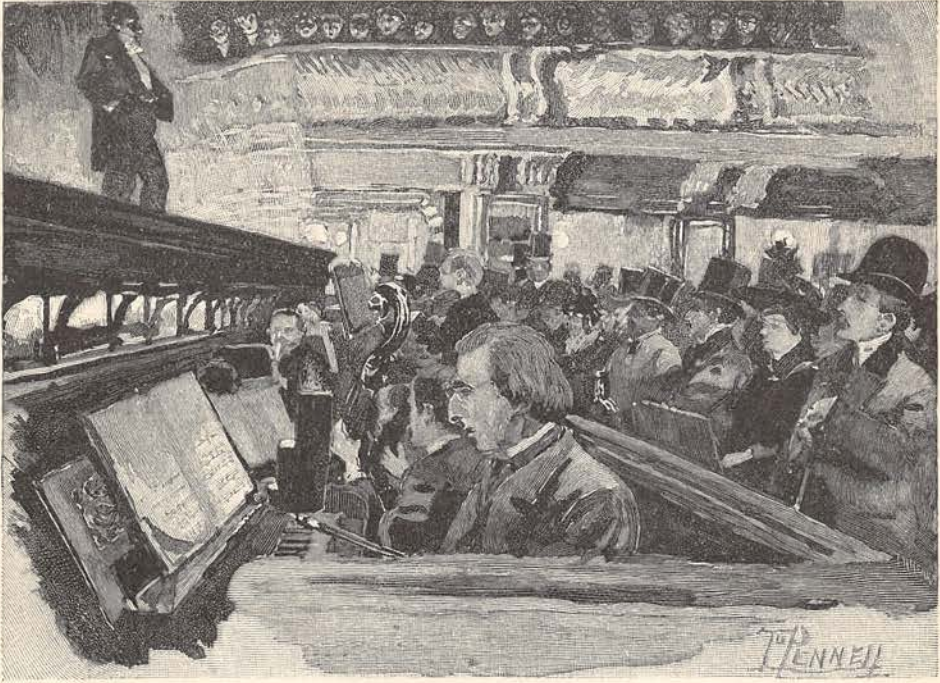
After that there was a lady vocalist who informed us in song of her self-denial on a recent occasion, when

"She wouldn't call for sherry; she wouldn't call for beer;
 She wouldn't call for cham, because she knew 'twould make her queer;
 She wouldn't call for brandy, rum, or anything they'd got;
 She only called for Bovril—hot! hot! hot!"

—a ditty to the moral of which not even the Brick Lane Branch Temperance Association could reasonably take exception. Next we had an exposure of some familiar conjuring tricks by a gentleman with a foreign accent, who was genuinely amusing; some fantasias performed with hammers on a grisly instrument constructed of bones—veritable skeleton music; and, to wind up, the great sensational sketch, *The Little Stowaway*, which apparently touches the hearts of the audience.

Music halls of the fourth and lowest class are perhaps the most characteristic, and certainly not the least entertaining, although a visit to one of them makes a stronger demand upon one's powers of physical endurance. You must penetrate to the heart of some obscure and unsavory region, until, in a narrow thoroughfare of small shops stocked with the most uninviting comestibles—skinned sheep's-heads, with a gleam of lackadaisical sentiment in their upturned eyes, pale pigs' feet, fried fish, and appalling arrangements in pastry and jam—you come upon a public-house with bills in the window which inform you that it is part of the establishment of which you are in search. There is no other indication; no transparency or illumination of colored crystal. You find a narrow steep staircase at the side, leading up from the street, and, half-way up, a rough pay box and barrier. The first performance (for there are two every evening) is just concluding, you are told, but by paying ninepence you can retain your seat in one of the side boxes as long as you please. You have to force your way through a dense crowd standing packed at the back of the dress circle, and eventually stumble into a partitioned recess, fitted with rough benches, cushionless and without backs. The house is dingy and tawdry, and a kind of grimy murk is in the air; the atmosphere is something terrible, with that acrid sting in it which is so indescribably depressing to an unaccustomed sense. There is a curious absence of color in the audience, probably due to the scarcity of the female element, the majority being youths of between seventeen

and twenty. A man on the stage in crumpled evening dress is giving a series of imitations of popular music-hall "comiques," of whom he speaks with a laudable absence of professional jealousy. "I will now give you an imitation of that justly celebrated comedian Mr. —, or that quaintly comic vocalist Jerry Something, or [this with a touch of manly pathos] that great singer who has lately been taken from us, and whom I am sure we all sadly miss, the inimitable Blank," he says by way of preface to each imitation; and his mimicry, to judge from the enthusiasm of his hearers, is of a high order, though we are not in a position to form any personal opinion. Then follows an eccentric performance by two Irish comedians, who exchange a fire of rapid repartee interspersed with assault, to the unbounded delight of the spectators, after which the curtain is lowered, and the audience is expected to make way for others. All the dirty youths in the pit jostle and shove their way to the doors, where they meet an entering stream of equally dirty youths. A cascade of whooping hobbarthyoydom pours down the steep incline of the gallery; for some minutes there is a deafening babel of the piercing whistles by which the social greetings of the local society are conveyed. The last puff at the clay pipes is stealthily taken, for smoking is forbidden here, the seething, sombre mass of pot-hatted youths, many in their shirt sleeves—though these last, being flannel and of subfusc hues, impart little relief or color to the general effect—slowly settles down, and some produce "penny dreadfuls," with which they beguile the interval of waiting. At last the orchestra, a small but fairly efficient body, appears, to be rapturously "chihyked" and whistled at, and the second performance begins. There are comic songs of precisely the same kind as may be heard at higher-class music halls, duets and step dances if anything rather better done, and free from any offensiveness; the refrain, indeed, of one is a recommendation to "Listen to the old church bells," and is sung by two pretty young ladies in costumes which, for taste and propriety, would be quite worthy of more ambitious surroundings. After this comes a farce, "licensed by the Lord Chamberlain expressly for this theatre," and called *The Tinker's Holiday*. Here we are introduced to a nobleman



A LION COMIQUE AT THE OXFORD.

who bears the aristocratic title of "Lord Crumpet," and wears evening dress, a gray dressing-gown, and a brown felt hat in the privacy of his gilded saloons. He is a stout elderly man with a yellow wig and a black mustache, and he tells us he is desperately in love. Unhappily the object of his passion is a ward in chancery, and, as he complains, "a strick watch is kep' over her," which prevents him from approaching her in his ordinary patrician garb. Consequently he is anxious to disguise himself in some old clothes, and presently discovers the ragged coat, leather apron, and brazier of a travelling tinker, who, being, as he says, "out for a beano," has naturally deposited them temporarily in his lordship's apartments.

Lord Crumpet exchanges the dressing-gown and brown pot hat appertaining to his rank for the tinker's coat and apron, and departs on his amorous adventures. The tinker, entering later, puts on the peer's discarded raiment, and finds himself mistaken by the whole household for their master. His "head-ostler" comes in to inquire what horse his lordship will

ride. "What 'orses have you got?" asks the tinker lord. "Well, there's old Jumbo and little Jenny." "Ah! And is little Jenny a goer?" "Why, surely, my lord, you 'aven't forgot seein' her come in first for the Hascot Cup? You were on the lawn." "Right!" says the tinker. "I *was* there"—adding, "sellin' 'ard-boiled eggs," behind the brown hat. However, the only directions he can be induced to give are to the effect that the "head-ostler" is to "go and get as drunk as he can, break little Jenny's leg, and bung old Jumbo's eye up," a piece of practical pleasantry which convulses the house. The ostler protests feebly, but eventually departs to carry out his instructions. Next comes the French cook, whom the tinker accosts as "Old Grub-shunter," and who comes to know what his lordship wishes to have for dinner. "Well, 'ow's Kippers—elthy?" is the only suggestion the tinker can make. But at length he selects what he is pleased to term "a good old full-roed saveloy and a buster," with a strict injunction to the cook to get drunk immediately. Then come interviews with the house-maids, who

enter to ask in what chamber Lord Crumpet wishes to sleep that night—"the Scarlet Room, the Magenta Room, or the Lavender Room?" But the pseudo-nobleman astonishes them by saying that they may put him "in the rabbit-'utch," which they justly regard as an eccentric preference. Needless to say, he makes love to them both, and easily persuades each that he has long secretly marked her with the eye of affection, or, as he prefers to word it, "kep' his off-side lamp" on her. Having made two separate appointments to elope with them both, the tinker retires under the table to enjoy the sequel. The real Lord Crumpet returns, having been completely successful, and, as he says, "the 'appiest man in creation." Whereupon he is surrounded by the ostler, who hiccoughs out that he has broken little Jenny's leg and bunged old Jumbo's eye up, the French cook, who staggers up, presenting a sausage and a penny roll to the perplexed and indignant nobleman, and the two house-maids, who urge him to keep his promise and elope with them to be married, while the tinker in the background rubs his hands and exclaims, delightedly, that he "is 'aving a beano!" and the curtain falls.

To say that this performance amuses the audience would convey a very faint and inadequate idea of their demeanor. They rock with laughter, the whole pit swaying like a field of wheat in a breeze. Those who assert that the London poor are a joyless class, incapable of merriment, should see this crowd when genuinely amused, and consider whether there is not some exaggeration in descriptions of their hopeless gloom. True, the farce that provokes their risibility is not a masterpiece of refined humor, but there *is* real humor of a rough and primitive kind in it nevertheless, in spite of the touch of quite unnecessary brutality in the treatment of the horses, which, it must be owned, was not the least successful hit in the piece.

At another of the minor music halls we came upon our friends Lord Crumpet and the Tinker in a farce called *In the Law*. This time the comedian whom we had last seen as the Tinker enacted a solicitor's clerk, and was discovered lunching surreptitiously under the lid of his desk, upon a pig's foot, or trotter, which he apostrophized in an eloquent eulogium.

"*Good ole trotter!*" he remarked, enthusiastically. "I like a trotter, I do.

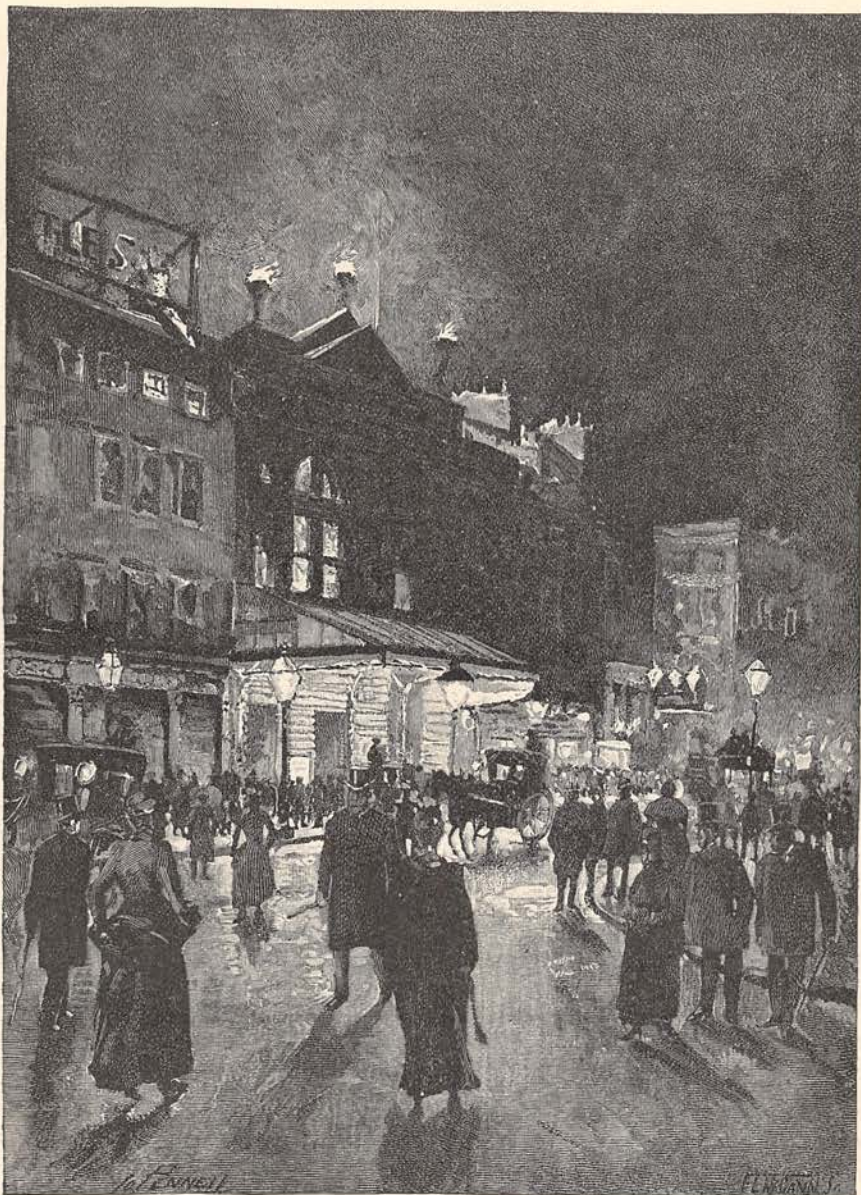
Some toffs when they lunch ull weigh in their tanner; but I ain't that sort; no, I go in two an' a orf; and—well, that's a different thing, *ain't* it? It ain't the 'Orseshoe, nor yet the Criterion, but if you shet your eyes and dab on a bit o' mustard, why, it's like turkey! Ah, the bloke oo invented trotters must ha' known a bit." When his employer, a gentleman in whom we immediately recognized Lord Crumpet, surprised him at his repast, he feared to receive his dismissal, which he characteristically expressed by saying, "I shall cop the push."

While he was gone to fetch a certain deed-box, the solicitor soliloquized thus: "E little thinks that that box contains the deed that would make 'im a gentleman; but so it is. 'Is father, the late Colonel Jinks, left 'im £5000 by will when he came of age. As executor under the will, I am entitled to the interest in the mean time, and though he is long past twenty-one, I cannot bring myself to relinquish the interest yet."

However, Colonel Jinks's ill-used son discovered the will, whereupon his ecstasy was quite lyrical. "What!" he cried. "All that mine? Five thousand jimmy-oh goblets, five thousand good old golden sorcepin lids! To think I've bin sech a bloom-in' crackpot all this time and never tumbled on it! I'll be a gentleman now, and live in stoyle. No more trotters for *me*, arter this. I'll lunch on champagne and faggits every day, I will. 'Ere"—and at this he took the once-lauded pig's foot from his desk and threw it off the stage—"outside, trotter!"

His employer returned to be confronted by his victim, with the cold observation, "Guv'nor, I've got you weighed up!" But eventually the matter is compromised by the couple agreeing to share the £5000, and retire from the practice of the law.

But the dramatic pieces at the minor halls are not all farces. It has been our privilege to see at least two thrilling miniature melodramas. The first was called *The Wrecker*, and the principal character was a scandalous old fisherman, who lured ships to their doom by means of a lantern suspended to a mast. He had an inconvenient daughter, who disapproved of this form of industry, which drove him to the misogynistic lament that "Adam ever lost a rib." Having pacified her, and induced her to retire, he returned to his nefarious occupation, first



THE LIGHTS OF THE "EMPIRE."

cautiously remarking, "I cannot see her, and so I *suppose* she is out of sight." He was next interrupted by a young naval officer, whom he slew, and bending over the body, he said solemnly, as he felt the heart: "'E's all right. 'E's learning the *great secret!*" Then, to insure against the rope which hoisted the lantern being

lowered, he artfully lashed a pistol in the fastenings. His daughter reappeared, and implored him to desist from crime. "Think of all those poor suffering souls at sea!" she said (or rather shouted, for in these pieces all the characters shout). "Think of their lives! Think of their mothers!"

"I'll think of nothing," was the stern reply.

"Then Heaven help them—and me!"

"Amen!" said the wrecker, grimly.

"You are a woman, and nothing shall save you"—and here he dropped into blank-verse. "The learning of my secret takes from you your life, and I will have it!"

"Take it, then!" retorted the spirited girl, rushing to the mast, and in the attempt to undo the rope, discharging the pistol, which, of course, shot her unnatural old parent, greatly to his chagrin.

But the other piece perhaps contained the stronger situation. There is a wicked step-father who forges bank-notes, and sends his innocent step-daughter out to change them. He suspects her of an intention to betray him, and resolves that she must die, or, as one of the characters poetically phrases it, "to put her light out." "This phial," he says, speaking through music, "contains a deadly poison which leaves no trace be'ind. Now, to prepare the draught for Jane." So, to a chord from the orchestra, he pours the contents of the phial into one of two glasses on the table, and composedly sits down to await Jane's return. But he little knows that a friend of Jane's, a small and extremely cheeky *gamin*, has been concealed under the table, from which retreat he has, indeed, been making running and very audible comments upon the villain's soliloquy. While his attention is distracted (he "thought he heard a sound"), the small boy deftly changes the position of the glasses, and dives behind the table again. Jane returns.

"Jane," says her perfidious relative, "you look pale, my girl. Drink this glass of wine. Nay, to encourage you, I myself will drink a glass. The *wine* for me," he adds, in a sinister aside; "the *poison* for Jane!" Jane drains the glass, whereupon the forger informs her who and what he is. "The wine you have just drunk contained a deadly poison which leaves no trace be'ind. In less than *ten* minutes you will be a corpse!"

"No, she won't, old Tiddywinks!" says the boy, rising suddenly from his hiding-place. "In less than ten minutes *you* will be a corpse!"

"What mean you?" cries the villain.

"Why, after you'd filled the glasses, I changed them, and so *she* got the good stuff, and you the poison which leaves no trace be'ind."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaims the girl; "you are caught in your own trap!"

"Have you spoken the trewth?" the baffled forger demands, trembling.

"Ah, *you'll* soon see if it's true or not, old cock; and the best thing you can do now is to say yer prayers and lay down and die."

The forger neglects the first part of this recommendation, but adopts the latter, after much clutching at his dressing-gown, and as he falls lifeless, the boy pronounces this touching funeral oration: "'E's a stiff 'un, and the devil will 'ave his doo!" Whereupon the drama comes to an impressive and highly moral conclusion.

The vocal portion of the entertainment has been purposely left to be treated last. At every music hall from twenty to thirty songs, or even more, will be sung in the course of the evening, and of all these, perhaps two or three in a year will catch the popular favor, be played on barrel-organs, whistled by street boys, adapted for burlesques and pantomimes, and overrun the entire country in a marvellously short time, until it palls upon the very villagers. Some fifteen years ago, for example, it was impossible to go anywhere in the United Kingdom without hearing a certain Tommy being vocally adjured to make room for his uncle. It would be curious to resuscitate Tommy and his uncle now and see how much success they would obtain with the public of to-day. The tune was irresistibly catching; but it would probably fall on deaf ears now. No super-annuated thing is so utterly dead and forgotten as a once popular music-hall song, compared to which Jonah's gourd was a hardy annual. Who compose these ephemeral tunes? Their names seldom or never appear, any more than do those of the gentlemen who write the songs, though it is safe to conclude from internal evidence in either case that they are not persons of exalted musical and literary eminence. And what are the songs like? Do they show any graphic or satirical power, any command of the pathos and humor which appeal to popular tastes? One would hesitate to answer in the negative, since these ditties are found acceptable by those whom they are intended to delight, and yet to hear or read them is apt to produce a conviction that the music-hall public is entertained with the same facility as excited Mr. Pickwick's envy in the case of Mr. Peter Magnus's friends.



"THE PAVILION," PICCADILLY CIRCUS.

Let us take a few typical specimens. The patriotic song is a very frequent feature, and always rouses the most stolid audience to enthusiasm. They like to hear the national virtues summed up in some refrain of this kind:

"Old John Bull is ever faithful;
His money from his pocket he will pull;
He's gentle, and he's kind, and you'll never,
never find
A better friend than old John Bull!"

The amorous is another familiar type. A young lady in a startling costume, with yellow hair, and a smile of knowing artlessness (a paradoxical expression not uncommon with lady vocalists), will trip forward and sing, or more usually half sing and half speak, some verses with the following chorus:

"Oh! the girls, oh! the girls, and the boys, yes,
the boys!
You'll find them together in all sorts of weather;
They go kiss, kiss—yes! they go kiss, kiss!
And they squeeze, and they spoon, and they say,
'Oh, what joys!
For the boys are in love with the dear little girls,
And the girls are in love with the boys!"

Then there is the vocalistic sketch, written to display the singer's versatility. The

comedian appears in ordinary evening dress, and produces his effects by suggesting a series of typical characters, comic and tragic. For instance, one such song begins thus:

"On the bridge at midnight stood I in dismay,
Watching weary stragglers passing on their way."

First comes "the wretched gambler, looking deathly white, All his fortune vanished in one single night." And his desperate soliloquy, with the refrain, "Crushed and broken-hearted, too, Across the bridge he goes!" "Next, with steps erratic, comes the city clerk, Button-hole and stick, too, ready for a lark," and so on, who "lights another cigarette, As o'er the bridge he goes." Then the pretty little actress, who remarks, "Didn't they go frantic when I did my dance? I told you I should knock them when I got the chance." And lastly, as a tragic contrast, the betrayed one, who "frantically her hands high, In the air she throws. A sigh, a leap, a scream; 'tis done, As o'er the bridge she goes!"

Another song of this sort is entitled "Called to the Bar," which deals with

"the youth of modern culture, where he fails and where succeeds." In the refrain to the first verse we are told:

"Now his student days are past,
And he dons the silk at last,
Wig and gown and thoughtful face,
Pleads with telling speech the case.
Nothing his success can mar,
Now that he's called to the bar."

Unfortunately the young barrister indulges in "midnight orgies" with "chosen friends. Gambling—baccarat they teach him—anything to gain their ends." After which he naturally falls into the toils of a bar-maid at the Horseshoe. "Flossie's his attractive star, Since he's been called to the bar." From this to forgery is an easy step, and in the dock, "He stands there undefended, Who for others used to plead." Now comes the melodramatic moment of the song. He is supposed to be in jail, and the jailer has brought him a letter containing the news of his father's death. Thereupon the singer, in the rays of green light which are thrown upon the stage, commits suicide, to the following refrain:

"Poor old father, slain by me!
This small phial shall set me free.
To the great unknown I'll leap."

Here he drinks, staggers, and falls, to

rise presently to impersonate the jailer, while keys and bolts are jingled outside:

"Now, then, prisoner, still asleep?"

Then, to a solemn organ chord,

"Passed from earthly justice far,
He's called to the last great Bar!"

Songs of this Hogarthian type are invariably well received, and if they strike some minds as slightly absurd, it must be confessed that they are distinctly above the general level of music-hall compositions. Then there is the sentimental song, in which the singer touches his audience by reminding them of

"Friends, deah friends, friends we 'ave left at 'ome!
Though perchance in di-istant la-ands we ro-home!"

And the frankly inane, of which perhaps the following specimen, descriptive of a wedding party, will suffice:

"Uncle Thomas's wooden leg fairly made the
people roar.

Some one at him threw an egg, and it made
them laugh the more."

Chorus.—"Sister Mary walked like that—pit, pat,
pit-a-pat;

Then came uncle, stout and fat—ho, ho!
ho, ho, ho!

Uncle Thomas walked like so—ho, ho!
ho, ho, ho!

And I walked like this, you know—ho,
ho, ho!"

In what the fascinations of some of the female singers precisely consist is a



THE UNRIVALLED NIGGER OF THE "ROYAL STANDARD."



A SERIO-COMIQUE SONG AND DANCE ARTISTE AT "THE MIDDLESEX."

little hard to understand. They cannot sing in tune, their playfulness is of a kind to cause a shiver, their voices are metallic, and even their personal appearance by no means prepossessing, as a rule; but still they are always greeted with applause, and parted from with reluctance. It would be infinitely more difficult to fail than succeed in satisfying a music-hall audience. The songs of the "Lady Serio" are of much the same character, and it is an established rule that two songs cannot possibly be sung without a change of costume, for which a wait of two or three minutes is always allowed. The performer will come on the stage with that peculiar walk, as of a puppet hung on wires, which Lady Serios affect, and a fixed smile of intensely humorous appreciation of nothing in particular, to deliver herself of a ditty with a tantalizing refrain, such as:

"Oh, I dessay you'd like to—I dessay you would!
I dessay you'd try to steal a kiss upon the sloy!"

—a liberty which she is very properly prepared to resent to the utmost.

Comic calamity is of course a favorite topic with male singers, who sing a long song describing, for instance, a visit to the sea-side, when

"Martha swallowed a jelly-fish,
Janie got the cramp,
My ma-in-law began to jaw
Because the sea was damp!
While I was floundering through the waves,
A crab got 'old of me!
And when we looked for the bathing-machine,
It had drifted out to sea!"

Disinterested attachment is another frequent subject. A gentleman in evening dress and a tall hat will come before a scene representing a country lane and describe his courtship of some rustic beauty, called Mary, who is, of course, "like a fairy, the pride of the dairy," and so on. Here are some extracts from a music-hall idyl:

"I leant across the railings, and in conversation got.
She asked me if I'd step inside, as the day was rather hot.
While I was in her company, I own I felt confused.
I made a proposition, which of course was not refused,
That in the evening, after tea, I should meet her again."

He tells his love, whereupon

"She said she'd no objection, if her father would consent.
I said I'd go and see him. To wed her I was bent.

So now it is all settled, and the day is drawing near
 When I shall wed my farm-yard belle. I've not
 the slightest fear
 But what she'll make me a good wife, so I
 never shall repent
 The day I met my Mary working on the farm
 in Kent."

If the reader is spared any further samples from the effusions of the Muse of the music halls, he must not conclude that it is owing to any want of material, which is practically inexhaustible; but probably the specimens that have been given will be found more than sufficient; possibly, too, they will not inspire any great respect for the intelligence of a public which derives enjoyment from these and similar productions.

It has often been said, especially of late, that music-hall audiences are quite capable of appreciating a higher form of entertainment if they were given the opportunity. This may be so, though they seem anything but dissatisfied with the amusement at present provided for them;

but if the songs and entertainment generally were raised to a higher level, one fact is certain—artists of a very different calibre would be required to interpret them. There are a few at present with decent voices, a power of humorous or grotesque invention, and sufficient intelligence to deliver their lines as they are written, but they are the exceptions, and most of them gravitate, sooner or later, to the regular stage.

And, after all, people who are critical in the matter of amusement do not go to music halls, which are chiefly patronized by men who can enjoy nothing without the aid of tobacco, and women who dislike any entertainment which entails the slightest mental exertion. Some people, too, go because although they do not expect to be greatly entertained, they are sure of finding the brightness and comfort which are lacking at home, while others, no doubt, are influenced by motives which it is unnecessary to particularize here.

IN THE "STRANGER PEOPLE'S" COUNTRY.

BY CHARLES EGBERT CRADDOCK.



1.

HO they were and whence
 they came, none can say.

The mountains where they found their
 home—their long home—keep silence.
 The stars that they knew, look down upon

their graves and make no sign. Their memory, unless in some fine and subtle way lingering in the mystery, the pervasive melancholy, the vaguely troublous forecast and retrospect which alternately possess the mind in contemplating this sequestered spot, unhallowed save by the sense of a common humanity, has faded from the earth. None might know that they had ever lived save for a dim tradition connecting them with the ancient history of this old hemisphere of ours that we are wont to deem so new. For this is one of the strange burial-grounds of the far-famed pygmy dwellers of Tennessee; prehistoric, it is held, an extinct but adult race; Aztec children, others will say, of a uniform age and size, buried apart from their kindred, for some unknown, never-to-be-explained reason. And a still more prosaic opinion contends that the curious stone sepulchres contain only infant relics of the American Indian. All I know is, here they rest, awaiting that supreme hour when this mortality shall put on immortality, and meanwhile in the solemn environment of the Great