

when they heard the noise of his trombone they rose up with one accord and said, "This man is going to die of apoplexy." The people who hanged the Illinois trombonist were his friends and neighbors, but half a dozen blasts upon his instrument convinced them that he had systematically stolen horses from his very cradle.

But it may be asked, Where have the few trombone virtuosi now before the public gained their skill? The answer may be suggested by another question, How is it that the colony at Cape Town has grown so rapidly, and why have the natives so steadily fallen back into the interior? In point of fact, South Africa has been colonized at the mouth of the trombone. The Government has encouraged trombone-players to emigrate to Cape Town, and has supplied them with trombones on condition that they would reside on the frontier. It is the blow of the trombone which has driven Bushmen, and Hottentots, and Caffres howling into the wilderness. Unfortunately, the mortality among the trombone-players has been very great, but three of them who have survived the roar of their companions' instruments have returned to Europe accomplished artists. There is little doubt, from what has actually been done in South Africa; that the trombone would be a most efficient aid to the exploration of that country. Had STANLEY tried to learn the trombone while descending the Congo he would have found no natives to fight, but would have marched through a country deserted by its inhabitants, who would have fled from him as a new kind of demon of appalling hideousness. However this may be, Central Africa is clearly the place designed by nature for students of the trombone. There alone can they practice in safety, and there alone will their brazen discords aid the march of civilization.

LEARNING THE TROMBONE.

Of all the various brass instruments which have been devised by musical or malevolent ingenuity, there is none which in its capacity for inflicting both torture and delight is comparable to the trombone. Those who have heard the trombone only when played by a master never fail to be surprised at its unique beauty of tone and its wonderful singing powers. It so happens that a true trombone virtuoso is a rarity. Indeed, there are probably not more than two persons now in this country who are capable of playing the trombone as it should be played. Hence the great majority of mankind live and die in ignorance of the real merits of the trombone, and whoever hears it well played straightway wonders why it is that so superb an instrument is apparently so neglected by musicians. This is a question which has never been thoroughly examined, and it is full time that a satisfactory answer to it should be found.

The history of trombone-playing in this country is a sad and suggestive one. In 1817, one Elias Brewster, of Boston, announced his intention of learning the trombone, and began to practice in a house on the then lower end of Beacon-street. Long before he had learned the seven positions of the slide he was found dead in his front hall, with the instrument lying much battered beside him. A Coroner's jury of the vicinage found that he died of apoplexy, and after the funeral his ruined trombone was sold as old metal. Two years later another Bostonian, one G. L. Plunkett, undertook to master the trombone. Three weeks after he had sounded his first note he was found dead in his room, with the trombone slide inserted in his mouth, thereby horribly distending his jaws. The verdict in his case was suicide, though at this distance of time the facts do not seem to admit of any such interpretation.

These occurrences put an end to trombone playing in Massachusetts. It was, however, attempted in various other parts of the country. In 1832, Henry Van Schaick, of this City, tried to learn the trombone, but died so suddenly that the Coroner's jury found that he had poisoned himself. Perhaps he did, but why did he first smash his instrument and imbue it in the blood of the back of his head? In 1837, 1841, and 1849, three other men, named respectively Abrahams, Palmer, and Eschenbrodt, died in this City in the earlier stages of trombone playing, and in each case their trombones were irretrievably smashed at or about the time of death. In Illinois, a man who resided in a country town, and who had a trombone sent to him from an Eastern city, was taken out by his neighbors and hung on a tree. This man was charged with horse-stealing, but not a particle of evidence was offered in support of the charge. There are men now living;—the affair occurred in 1850—who saw the man's body hanging, and who distinctly remember that over his head was jammed the bell of a trombone. Not to mention any more cases in detail, it may be summarily remarked that of the eighteen men who have lived to learn the trombone in this country since its settlement, seventeen died suddenly and one totally disappeared. The fatality attending the learning of the trombone in Europe has been even greater, though it is probable that the statistics are not absolutely trustworthy. It is evident, however, that the man who tries to learn the trombone in a civilized community takes his life in his hands and blows himself into a sudden and useful grave.

It is currently believed that, when Barnum's Museum was in existence, persons were allowed to practice the trombone on the balcony in front of the building. This is a mistake. It is true that the balcony was habitually used by amateurs desirous of practicing the cornet, the ophicleide, and certain other instruments, but the effect of the trombone on the animals in the menagerie, even smothered as the sound was by the roar of the street, was so alarming that Mr. BARNUM would not permit any one with a trombone to be admitted to the practicing balcony. The simple truth is that no man has ever learned the trombone in this country with a view to playing it as a solo instrument, and there is little reason to suppose that any man can make the attempt and live.

We thus see why a trombone soloist is so exceedingly rare. The appalling and intolerable sound produced by a raw hand on the trombone uniformly infuriates the public to such a pitch that the unfortunate student suddenly dies. If we combine the yell of the midnight cat, the tearing of a carpet, and the blast of a hoarse steam whistle, we shall yet fall far short of the awful utterances of a trombone in the hands of a beginner. Flesh and blood cannot stand it. The Bostonian contemporaries of Elias Brewster were law-abiding men, but