

Through a well-known Chinese interpreter, who writes for the newspapers, I had a talk with the leading actors of the Chinese theatrical company. It is a genuine Chinese concern, and plays at the Theater Tang-wik, in Peking, when it is at home. It is now "on tour," as we say in this country, and has played before coming here in San Francisco, Portland (Oregon), and Denver. Its tour will close here, and it will rest for a time while visits of pleasure are paid to various parts of America. There are no females in the troupe, female roles being assumed by male actors who are especially trained for the purpose from their very childhood. Tak-a-Wing, who plays leading female parts and female "juveniles," is a young man twenty years old, of a remarkably graceful figure and a really handsome face. He was chosen when only six years old to become a female impersonator on the Chinese stage, and was at once put under a course of training by which he learned to walk, talk, and gesticulate like a genuine Oriental lady. His feet were confined in small shoes, so that they are now but little larger than those of the Chinese women I have seen, and he has cultivated a falsetto voice with such success that his natural voice is almost entirely lost. Tak-a-Wing is the star of the company, and draws \$100 every Saturday night. He says that he gets "mash" letters from New York laundrymen just the same as genuine "lady artists" do in other countries, but he regrets that opportunities for advertising enjoyed by American female stars in the way of divorces and the wearing of gauzy gowns are wholly denied to him. The only other high-salaried member of the company is the leading man, Moo-Sun-Gee, a handsome and gaudily-dressed young fellow, who is probably the Kyrle Bellew or the Herbert Kelcey of Peking, and who draws \$75 a week. The other actors receive from \$10 to \$15 a week, and some of them have to do double duty—as musicians and valets for the big guns of the cast. One of them has to cook for the whole company at the old joss house in Chatham square, which they have made their headquarters, and the general utility man upon the stage is the chambermaid at the lodgings, while there are comedians who fill in time as waiters, tragedians and heavy gentlemen who barber the rest of the company, and old men and juveniles who hustle around Mott street for the kind of grub peculiarly grateful to the Chinese palate. There was a rather loud smell of opium in the company's apartments at the old joss house when I called, and I suspect that a large portion of the time of the Oriental thespians is spent in the pleasant pastime of hitting the pipe.