Basic Detail Report

966 HARPER'S WEEKLY. [SUPPLEMENT, DECEMBER 7, 1872.

down street is the flaring public-house lamp—hateful as the fabled jewel in the loathsome toad's head.

I should, however, recommend those gentlemen who are anxious to get at a true idea of the causes of crime, of the influences which foster it, of the natures present to it, and of the surest means of reducing its extension and its gravity, to put themselves in the hands of an intelligent, a reflective, and courageous professional student of the criminal classes, like Sergeant Mickigabb of the detective service. In his company they will see the policeman's bull's-eye turned on extraordinary faces and figures, such as we marked in a card-playing scene, while they will listen to very instructive stories of the devious ways by which men and women reach Newgate.

Such education on the spot would be worth more to our legislators, hereditary and elected, than any number of attendances at Congresses, Charity Organization Associations, committees, and lectures. I remember accompanying Lord Carnarvon to a meeting of ticket-of-leave men which we had convened up a court by Smithfield, and that we learned more about them that night than a year of blue-book and treatise reading could have given us.

"He has never been any thing else but a thief. He was born a thief, and always will be a thief!" said a guide through the low neighborhood of Shoreditch to me one night as we stepped out of a thieves' kitchen. He pointed to rather a handsome lad of twenty, with a piercing, restless eye, and remarkable for the rapid movements of his limbs. He was—compared with the rest of the company—well dressed. I observed this.

"Yes," said the policeman, "he must have done a good bit of work lately; so had those flash pickpockets we met at the Music-Hall just now."

We passed before a crowd grouped round a baked-potato vendor.

"There," said my knowing companion, "are only poor: not thieves."

God help them, and keep them clear of Newgate's lock and key!

But the outer world has very little knowledge of the difficulty. It means every hour of every day. What can come of these frequenters of the penny gaffs of Shoreditch; these Shadwell lounge, chipping of drunken and shameless mothers; these dancers at the Rotcliff hops; these lounge along the Whitechapel Road, all cheapening food for the dismal Sunday they will be compelled to spend in their cellars and attics? The common lodging-houses are, as we see by the familiarity of the police with the landlords and inmates, under severe control; but who is to curb the flow of the conversation when groups of young thieves find themselves upon the same benches before the kitchen fire with poor artificial-flower makers?

"Once they come here," said one of our police guides, "the best of them are lost. They can't help it. Some will struggle for a long time; but unless they are fortunate enough to get away, they are done for. You see, they come into the kitchen early to cook their supper, and then they fall in with all sorts—except those who could do them any good. That's how it begins with many of them. The rest are born in it."

"And God knows," said another guide, "how hard some of 'em—decent creatures who have got into trouble—fight to leave it all. But, you see, there's no place for them as cheap as this."

The bull's-eye rambled along the lines of a series of partitions, each containing a bed and a chair.

ST. PAUL'S FROM THE BREWERY BRIDGE

you commit yourself to the guidance of one of the intelligent and fearless heads of the detective force. He mounts the box of the cab about eight o'clock, and the horse's head is turned—east.

When we move out of Fleet Street toward Smithfield, we have familiar London in a few minutes, and reach the lanes and by-ways, dark and noisy, and swarming with poor, that come under the merciful guardianship of good Mr. Catlin's Cow' Cross mission. The progress of the cab becomes slow and difficult; angry words are exchanged with the driver; groups of gossiping or quarreling men and women block the road; the houses are black and grim, and only at the corners where the gin palaces light up their cruel splendors, can we obtain glimpses of the inhabitants. They are kith and kin of those we have seen as often shuffling about amid the cobblers' stalls and bird-fanciers of Newport Street, Seven Dials, ranging themselves outside the gates of casual wards, or begging their way into a night refuge. They are brothers and sisters and cousins of these hopeless waifs and strays of London life, or of country life drawn to the metropolis by the general desire there is in the country to get "nearer the smoke."

We halt at the opening of a yard, alight, and in a few minutes are in a crowd of tattered and tired-out creatures, who are being filtered into a refuge.

Surely there can be only good in this minimum of relief, offered by spontaneous charity to the homeless, in a whole city full of poor! They pass in one by one: the father and his fast-asleep boy; the mother with her whimpering babe in her arms, that are so lean they must hurt the flesh of the little imp. The superintendent is a mild, but firm, intelligent, and discerning man. He distributes the regulation loaf of bread to the guests, and they pass on, by way of the bath—rigorously enforced for obvious reasons—to the dormitories set out like barracks, and warmed with a stove, which is always the centre of attraction. Here, when all are in bed, a Bible-reader reads, comforting, let us hope, many of the aching heads. The women and children have a ward apart. Some are reading, some are sewing rents in their clothes, some are darning, some have cast themselves to rest under the leather coverings, and, with inexpressible weariness, are in the kind of dreams. I have passed these dormitories early and late, and have been with strong men who have burst into tears as their eyes have fallen upon the rows of sleeping mothers, some with two, some with three infants huddled to their sides for warmth, or folded in their poor arms. Young and old are here, homeless, and with babes to carry forth to-morrow into the east wind and the sleet. This story is told by the coughs that crackle like a distant running fire of musketry all over the establishment. No wonder that many of them dread the bath upon their feeble, feverish limbs, and with chests torn to rags, as many of them must be.

It is a pity that there is not connected with every refuge for the homeless a well-ordered, practical labor agency; for every night deserving and willing men, women, and boys pass in, who would rejoice to be shifted from the streets; but alas! our organizers of charity are only making confusion worse confounded.

From the Refuge by Smithfield we rattled through dark lanes, across horrid, flooding highways, to the Whitechapel Police Station, to pick up the superintendent of savage London. He had some poor, wan specimens—manacling drunk—in his cells already, and it was hardly nine o'clock. We dismiss our cab; it would be useless in the strange, dark by-ways to which we are bound: by-ways, the natives of which will look upon us as the Japanese looked upon the first European travelers in the streets of Jeddo. The missionary, the parish doctor, the rent collector (who must be a bold man indeed), the policeman, the detective, and the humble undertaker are

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHITECHAPEL AND THERABOUTS.

MILLIONS men, women, and children, and a spacious township peopled with them, from cellars to attics—from the roost of the sewer-rat to the nest of the sparrow in the chimney-stack—make up that realm of suffering and crime which adventurous people visit with as much ceremony and precision of preparation as belated travelers across Finchley Common used in the middle of last century. You put yourself in communication with Scotland Yard, to begin with. You adopt rough clothes. You select two or three companions who will not flinch even before the humans and hornets of Tiger Bay, and

A HOUSE OF REFUGE—IN THE BATH.

St. Paul's from the Brewery Bridge, from "London: A Pilgrimage"

Date

December 7, 1872

Primary Maker

Gustave Doré

Medium

Electrotype from wood engraving and text on paper

Dimensions

Sheet: 15 1/2 × 11 in. (39.4 × 27.9 cm) Image (a): 7 1/2 × 5 5/16 in. (19.1 × 13.5 cm) Image (b): 2 1/8 × 3 3/8 in. (5.4 × 8.6 cm) Image (c): 4 × 3 7/8 in. (10.2 × 9.8 cm)

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