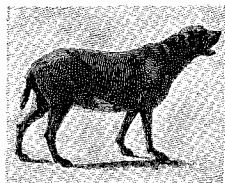


THE PASSING OF CAT ALLEY.

BY JACOB A. RIIS,

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WITH PICTURES BY JAY HAMBIDGE.



WHEN Santa Claus comes around to New York this Christmas he will look in vain for some of the slum alleys he used to know. They are gone. Where some of them were, there are shrubs and trees and greensward; the sites of others are holes and hillocks yet, that by and by, when all the official red tape is unwound,—and what a lot of it there is to plague mankind!—will be leveled out and made into playgrounds for little feet that have been aching for them too long. Perhaps it will surprise some good people to hear that Santa Claus knew the old alleys; but he did. I have been there with him, and I knew that, much as some things which he saw there grieved him,—the starved childhood, the pinching poverty, and the slovenly indifference that cut deeper than the rest because it spoke of hope that was dead,—yet by nothing was his gentle spirit so grieved and shocked as by the show that proposed to turn his holiday into a battalion drill of the children from the alleys and the courts for patricians, young and old, to review. It was well meant, but it was not Christmas. That belongs to the home, and in the darkest slums Santa Claus found homes where his blessed tree took root and shed its mild radiance about, dispelling the darkness and bringing back hope and courage and trust.

They are gone, the old alleys. Three years of reform wiped them out. It is well. Santa Claus will not have harder work finding the doors that opened to him gladly, because the light has been let in. And others will stand ajar that before were closed. The chimneys in tenement-house alleys were never built on a plan generous enough to let him in in the orthodox way. The cost of coal had to be considered in putting them up. Bottle Alley and Bandits' Roost are gone with their bad memories. Bone Alley is gone, and Gotham Court. I well remember the Christmas tree in the court, under which a hundred dolls stood in line, craving partners among the girls in its tenements. That was the kind of battal-

ion drill that they understood. The ceiling of the room was so low that the tree had to be cut almost in half; but it was beautiful, and it lives yet, I know, in the hearts of the little ones, as it lives in mine. The "Barracks" are gone, a little ahead of time, it is true; but it was a good riddance. I believe the courts decided that they might have another chance, but they were gone then. The sanitary authorities were not so long-suffering as the judges, but then they had had the Barracks on their hands for half a lifetime. Child-murder was the profession of the old pigsty. We had almost forgotten that Hell's Kitchen existed till, the other day, it was heard from again in the old way of riot and murder. Never a squeak came from it in the three years of reform rule and Roosevelt. Nipsey's Alley is gone, where the first Christmas tree was lighted the night poor Nipsey lay dead in his coffin. And Cat Alley is gone.

Cat Alley was my alley. It was mine by right of long acquaintance. We were neighbors for twenty years. Yet I never knew why it was called Cat Alley. There was the usual number of cats, gaunt and voracious, which foraged in its ash-barrels; but beyond the family of three-legged cats, that presented its own problem of heredity,—the kittens took it from the mother, who had lost one leg under the wheels of a dray,—there was nothing specially remarkable about them. It was not an alley, either, when it comes to that, but rather a row of four or five old tenements in a back yard that was reached by a passageway somewhat less than three feet wide between the sheer walls of the front houses. These had once had pretensions to some style. One of them had been the parsonage of the church next door that had by turns been an old-style Methodist tabernacle, a fashionable negroes' temple, and an Italian mission church, thus marking time, as it were, to the upward movement of the immigration that came in at the bottom, down in the Fourth Ward, fought its way through the Bloody Sixth, and by the time it had traveled the length of

Mulberry street had acquired a local standing and the right to be counted and rounded up by the political bosses. Now the old houses were filled with newspaper offices and given over to perpetual insomnia. Week-days and Sundays, night or day, they never slept. Police Headquarters was right across the way, and kept the reporters awake. From his window the chief looked down the narrow passageway to the bottom of the alley, and the alley looked back at him, nothing daunted. No man is a hero to his valet, and the chief was not an autocrat to Cat Alley. It knew all his human weaknesses, could tell when his time was up generally before he could, and winked the other eye with the captains when the newspapers spoke of his having read them a severe lecture on gambling or Sunday beer-selling. Byrnes it worshiped, but for the others who were before him and followed after it cherished a neighborly sort of contempt.

In the character of its population Cat Alley was properly cosmopolitan. The only element that was missing was the native American, and in this also it was representative of the tenement districts in America's chief city. The substratum was Irish, of volcanic properties. Upon this were imposed layers of German, French, Jewish, and Italian, or, as the alley would have put it, Dutch, Sabé, Sheeny, and Dago; but to this last it did not take kindly. With the experience of the rest of Mulberry street before it, it foresaw its doom if the Dago got a footing there, and within a month of the moving in of the Gio family there was an eruption of the basement volcano, reinforced by the sanitary policeman, to whom complaint had been made that there were too many "Guineas" in the Gio flat. There were four—about half as many as there were in some of the other flats when the item of house-rent was lessened for economic reasons; but it covered the ground: the flat was too small for the Gios. The appeal of the signora was unavailing. "You got-a three bambino," she said to the housekeeper, "all four, lika me," counting the number on her fingers. "I no putta me broder-in-law and me sister in the street-a. Italian lika to be together."

The housekeeper was unmoved. "Humph!" she said, "to liken my kids to them Dagos! Out they go." And they went.

Up on the third floor there was the French couple. It was another of the contradictions of the alley that of this pair the man should have been a typical, stolid German, she a mercurial Parisian who at seventy

sang the "Marseillaise" with all the spirit of the Commune in her cracked voice, and hated from the bottom of her patriotic soul the enemy with whom the irony of fate had yoked her. However, she improved the opportunity in truly French fashion. He was rheumatic, and most of the time was tied to his chair. He had not worked for seven years. "He no goode," she said, with a grimace, as her nimble fingers fashioned the wares by the sale of which, from a basket, she supported them both. The wares were dancing-girls with tremendous limbs and very brief skirts of tricolor gauze,—*"ballerinas,"* in her vocabulary,—and monkeys with tin hats, cunningly made to look like German soldiers. For these she taught him to supply the decorations. It was his department, she reasoned; the ballerinas were of her country and hers. *Parbleu!* must one not work? What then? Starve? Before her look and gesture the cripple quailed, and twisted and rolled and pasted all day long, to his country's shame, fuming with impotent rage.

"I wish the devil had you," he growled, with black looks across the table.

She regarded him maliciously, with head tilted on one side, as a bird eyes a caterpillar it has speared.

"Hein!" she scoffed. "Du den, vat?"

He scowled. She was right; without her he was helpless. The judgment of the alley was unimpeachable. They were and remained "the French couple."

Cat Alley's reception of Madame Klotz at first was not cordial. It was disposed to regard as a hostile act the circumstance that she kept a special holiday of which nothing was known except from her statement that it referred to the fall of somebody or other whom she called the Bastille, in suspicious proximity to the detested battle of the Boyne; but when it was observed that she did nothing worse than dance upon the flags "*avec ze leetle bébé*" of the tenant in the basement, and torture her "Dootch" husband with extra monkeys and gibes in honor of the day, unfavorable judgment was suspended, and it was agreed that without a doubt the "bastard" fell for cause; wherein the alley showed its sound historical judgment. By such moral pressure when it could, by force when it must, the original Irish stock preserved the alley for its own quarrels, free from "foreign" embroilments. These quarrels were many and involved. When Mrs. M'Carthy was to be dispossessed, and insisted, in her cups, on killing the housekeeper as a necessary preliminary, a study of the causes



THE BIG CHRISTMAS TREE, CAT ALLEY.

that led to the feud developed the following normal condition: Mrs. M'Carthy had the housekeeper's place when Mrs. Gehegan was poor, and fed her "kids." As a reward, Mrs. Gehegan worked around and got the job away from her. Now that it was Mrs. M'Carthy's turn to be poor, Mrs. Gehegan insisted upon putting her out. Whereat, with righteous wrath, Mrs. M'Carthy proclaimed from the stoop: "Many is the time Mrs. Gehegan had a load on, an' she went up-stairs an' slept it off. I did n't. I used to show meself, I did, as a lady. I know ye're in there, Mrs. Gehegan. Come out an' show yerself, an' I've the alley to judge betwixt us." To which Mrs. Gehegan prudently vouchsafed no answer.

Mrs. M'Carthy had succeeded to the office of housekeeper upon the death of Miss Mahoney, an ancient spinster who had collected the rents since the days of "the riot," meaning the Orange riot—an event from which the alley reckoned its time, as the ancients did from the Olympian games. Miss Mahoney was a most exemplary and worthy old lady, thrifty to a fault. Indeed, it was said when she was gone that she had literally starved herself to death to lay by money for the rainy day she was keeping a lookout for to the last. In this she was obeying her in-

stincts; but they went counter to those of the alley, and the result was very bad. As an example, Miss Mahoney's life was a failure. When at her death it was discovered that she had bank-books representing a total of two thousand dollars, her nephew and only heir promptly knocked off work and proceeded to celebrate, which he did with such fervor that in two months he had run through it all and killed himself by his excesses. Miss Mahoney's was the first bank-account in the alley, and, so far as I know, the last.

From what I have said, it must not be supposed that fighting was the normal occupation of Cat Alley. It was rather its relaxation from unceasing toil and care, from which no to-morrow held promise of relief. There was a deal of good humor in it at most times. "Scrapping" came naturally to the alley. When, as was sometimes the case, it was the complement of a wake, it was as the mirth of children who laugh in the dark because they are afraid. But once an occurrence of that sort scandalized the tenants. It was because of the violation of the Monroe Doctrine, to which, as I have said, the alley held most firmly, with severely local application. To Mulberry street Mott street was a foreign foe from which no interference was desired or long endured. A tenant in "the back"

had died in the hospital of rheumatism, a term which in the slums sums up all of poverty's hardships, scant and poor food, damp rooms, and hard work, and the family had come home for the funeral. It was not a pleasant home-coming. The father in his day had been strict, and his severity had driven his girls to the street. They had landed in Chinatown, with all that that implies, one at a time; first the older and then the younger, whom the sister took under her wing and coached. She was very handsome, was the younger sister, with an innocent look in her blue eyes that her language belied, and smart, as her marriage-ring bore witness to. The alley, where the proprieties were held to tenaciously, observed it and forgave all the rest, even her "Chink" husband. While her father was lying ill, she had spent a brief vacation in the alley. Now that he was dead, her less successful sister came home, and with her a delegation of girls from Chinatown. In their tawdry finery they walked in, sallow and bold, with Mott street

and the accursed pipe written all over them, defiant of public opinion, yet afraid to enter except in a body. The alley considered them from behind closed blinds, while the children stood by silently to see them pass. When one of them offered one of the "kids" a penny, he let it fall on the pavement, as if it were unclean. It was a sore thrust, and it hurt cruelly; but no one saw it in her face as she went in where the dead lay, with scorn and hatred as her offering.

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The alley had withheld audible comment with a tact that did it credit; but when at night Mott street added its contingent of "fellows" to the mourners properly concerned in the wake, and they started a fight among themselves that was unauthorized by local sanction, its wrath was aroused, and it arose and bundled the whole concern out into the street with scant ceremony. There was never an invasion of the alley after that night. It enjoyed home rule undisturbed.

Withal, there was as much kindness of heart and neighborly charity in Cat Alley as in any little community up-town or down-town, or out of town, for that matter. It had its standards and its customs, which were to be observed; but underneath it all, and not very far down either, was a human fellowship that was capable of any sacrifice to help a friend in need. Many was the widow with whom and with whose children the alley shared its daily bread, which was scanty enough, God knows, when death or other disaster had brought her to the jumping-

off place. In twenty years I do not recall a suicide in the alley, or a case of suffering demanding the interference of the authorities, unless with such help as the hospital could give. The alley took care of its own; and tided them over the worst when it came to that. And death was not always the worst. I remember yet with a shudder a tragedy which I was just in time with the police to prevent. A laborer, who lived in the attic, had gone mad, poisoned by the stench of



THE ENTRANCE TO CAT ALLEY.

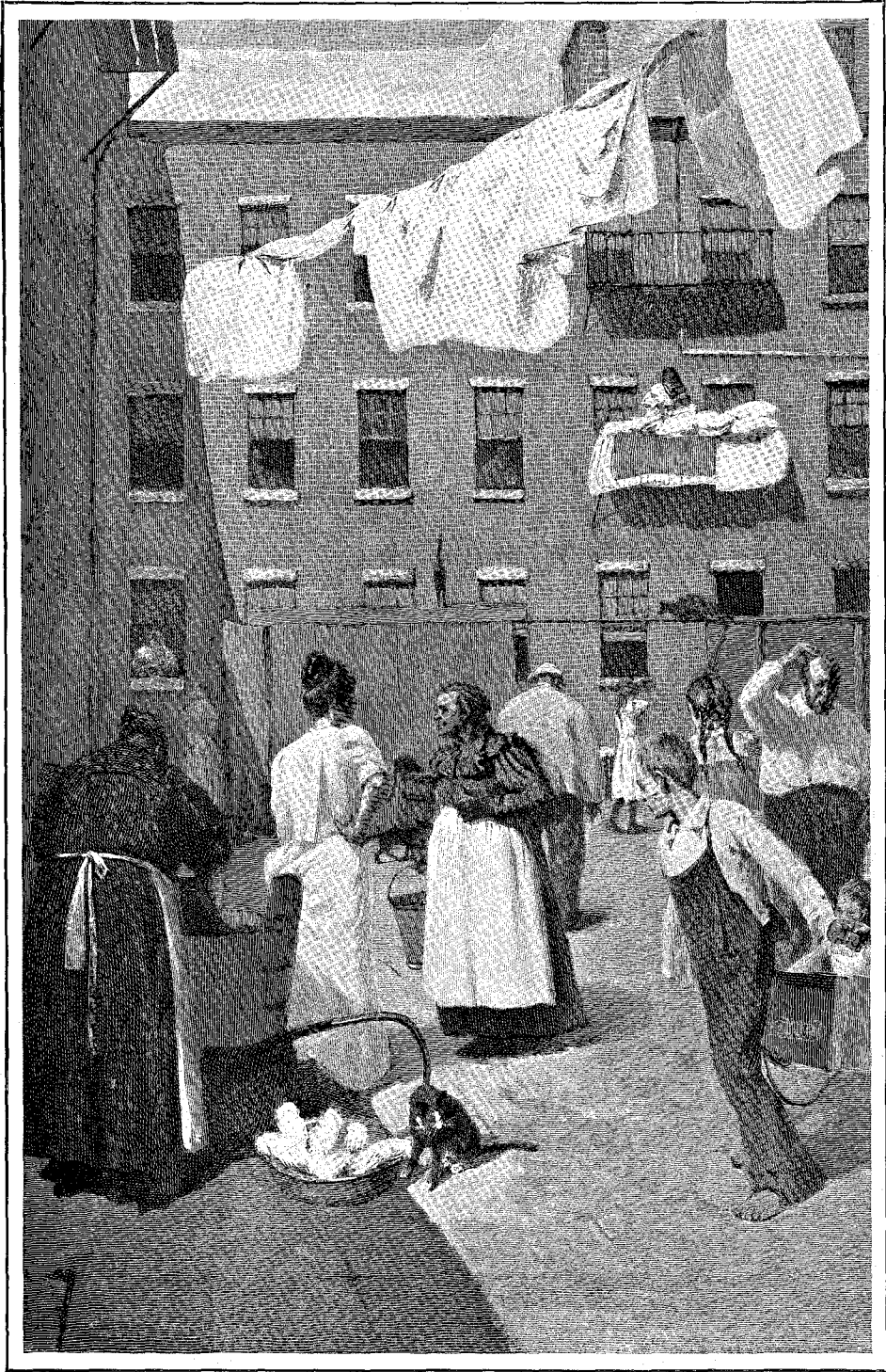
the sewers in which he worked. For two nights he had been pacing the hallway muttering incoherent things, and then fell to sharpening an ax, with his six children playing about—beautiful, brown-eyed girls they were, sweet and innocent little tots. In five minutes we should have been too late, for it appeared that the man's madness had taken on the homicidal tinge. They were better out of the world, he told us as we carried him off to the hospital. When he was gone, the children came upon the alley, and loyally did it stand by them until a job was found for the mother by the local political boss. He got her appointed a scrub-woman at the City Hall, and the alley, always faithful, was solid for him ever after. Organized charity might, and indeed did, provide groceries on the instalment plan. The Tammany captain provided the means of pulling the family through and of bringing up the children, although there was not a vote in the family. It was not the first time I had met him and observed his plan of "keeping close" to the people. Against it not the most carping reform critic could have found just ground of complaint.

The charity of the alley was contagious. With the reporters' messenger boys, a harum-scarum lot, in "the front," the alley was not on good terms for any long stretch at a time. They made a racket at night, and had sport with "old man Quinn," who was a victim of dropsy. He was "walking on dough," they asseverated, and paid no attention to the explanation of the alley that he had "kidney feet." But when the old man died and his wife was left penniless, I found some of them secretly contributing to her keep. It was not so long after that that another old pensioner of the alley, suddenly drawn into their cyclonic sport in the narrow passageway, fell and broke her arm. Apparently no one in the lot was individually to blame. It was an unfortunate accident, and it deprived her of her poor means of earning the few pennies with which she eked out the charity of the alley. Worse than that, it took from her hope after death, as it were. For years she had pinched and saved and denied herself to keep up a payment of twenty-five cents a week which insured her decent burial in consecrated ground. Now that she could no longer work, the dreaded trench in the Potter's Field yawned to receive her. That was the blow that broke her down. She was put out by the landlord soon after the accident, as a hopeless tenant, and I thought that she had

gone to the almshouse, when by chance I came upon her living quite happily in a tenement on the next block. "Living" is hardly the word; she was really waiting to die, but waiting with a cheerful content that amazed me until she herself betrayed the secret of it. Every week one of the messenger boys brought her out of his scanty wages the quarter that alike insured her peace of mind and the undisturbed rest of her body in its long sleep, which a life of toil had pictured to her as the greatest of earth's boons.

Death came to Cat Alley in varying forms, often enough as a welcome relief to those for whom it called, rarely without its dark riddle for those whom it left behind, to be answered without delay or long guessing. There were at one time three widows with little children in the alley, none of them over twenty-five. They had been married at fifteen or sixteen, and when they were called upon to face the world and fight its battles alone were yet young and inexperienced girls themselves. Improvidence! Yes. Early marriages are at the bottom of much mischief among the poor. And yet perhaps these, and others like them, might have offered the homes from which they went out as a valid defense. To their credit be it said that they accepted their lot bravely, and, with the help of the alley, pulled through. Two of them married again, and made a bad job of it. Second marriages seldom turned out well in the alley. They were a refuge of the women from work that was wearing their lives out, and gave them in exchange usually a tyrant who hastened the process. There was never any sentiment about it. "I don't know what I shall do," said one of the widows to me, when at last it was decreed that the tenements were to be pulled down, "unless I can find a man to take care of me. Might get one that drinks? I would hammer him half to death." She did find her "man," only to have him on her hands, too. It was the last straw. Before the wreckers came around she was dead. The amazed indignation of the alley at the discovery of her second marriage, which till then had been kept secret, was beyond bounds. The supposed widow's neighbor across the hall, whom we knew in the front generally as "the Fat One," was so stunned by the revelation that she did not recover in season to go to the funeral. She was never afterward the same.

In the good old days when the world was right, the Fat One had enjoyed the distinction of being the one tenant in Cat Alley whose growler never ran dry. It made no



THE COURT OF CAT ALLEY.

difference how strictly the Sunday law was observed toward the rest of the world; the Fat One would set out from the alley with her growler in a basket,—this as a concession to the unnatural prejudices of a misguided community, not as an evasion, for she made a point of showing it to the policeman on the corner,—and return with it filled. Her look of scornful triumph as she marched through the alley, and the backward toss of her head toward Police Headquarters, which said plainly: "Ha! you thought you could! But you did n't, did you?" were the admiration of the alley. It allowed that she had met and downed Roosevelt in a fair fight. But after the last funeral the Fat One never again carried the growler. Her spirit was broken. All things were coming to an end, the alley itself with them.

One funeral I recall with a pleasure which the years have in no way dimmed. It was at a time before the King's Daughters' Tenement-house Committee was organized, when out-of-town friends used to send flowers to my office for the poor. The first notice I had of a death in the alley was when a delegation of children from the rear knocked and asked for daisies. There was something unnaturally solemn about them that prompted me to make inquiries, and then it came out that old Mrs. Walsh was dead and going on her long ride up to Hart's Island; for she was quite friendless, and the purse-strings of the alley were not long enough to save her from the Potter's Field. The city hearse was even then at the door, and they were carrying in the rough pine coffin. With the children the crippled old woman had been a favorite; she had always a kind word for them, and they paid her back in the way they knew she

would have loved best. Not even the coffin of the police sergeant, who was a brother of the district leader, was so gloriously decked out as old Mrs. Walsh's when she started on her last journey. The children stood in the passageway with their arms full of daisies, and gave the old soul a departing cheer; and though it was quite irregular, it was all right, for it was well meant, and Cat Alley knew it.

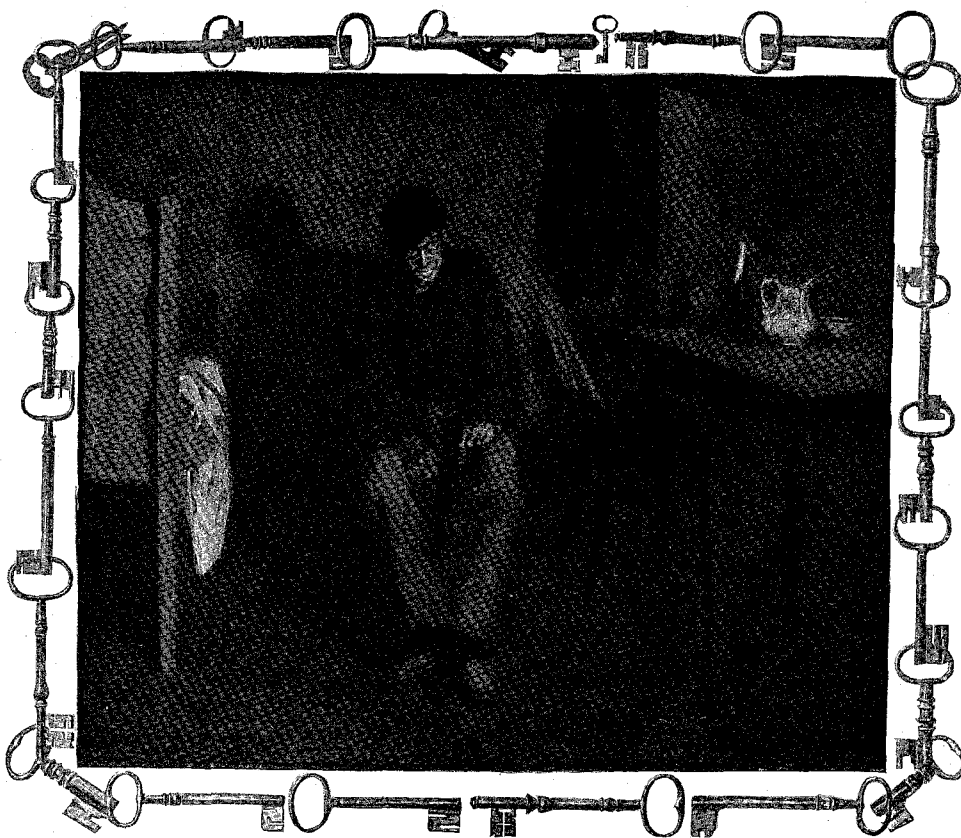
They were much like other children, those of the alley. It was only in their later years that the alley and the growler set their stamp upon them. While they were small, they loved,

like others of their kind, to play in the gutter, to splash in the sink about the hydrant, and to dance to the hand-organ that came regularly into the block, even though they sadly missed the monkey that was its chief attraction till the aldermen banished it in a cranky fit. Dancing came naturally to them, too; certainly no one took the trouble to teach them. It was a pretty sight to see them stepping to the time on the broad flags at the mouth of the alley. Not rarely they had for an appreciative audience the Big Chief himself, who looked down from his window, and the uniformed policeman at the door. Even the commissioners deigned to smile upon the impromptu show in breathing-spells between their heavy labors in the cause of politics and pull. But the children took little notice of them; they were too happy in their play. They loved my flowers,



OLD BARNEY.

too, with a genuine love that did not spring from the desire to get something for nothing, and the parades on Italian feast-days that always came through the street. They took a fearsome delight in watching for the big Dime Museum giant, who lived around in Elizabeth street, and who in his last days



BARNEY INTRENCHED.

looked quite lean and hungry enough to send a thrill to any little boy's heart, though he had never cooked one and eaten him in his whole life, being quite a harmless and peaceable giant. And they loved Trilby.

Trilby was the dog. As far back as my memory reaches there was never another in Cat Alley. She arrived in the block one winter morning on a dead run, with a tin can tied to her stump of a tail, and with the Mott-street gang in hot pursuit. In her extremity she saw the mouth of the alley, dodged in, and was safe. The Mott-streeters would as soon have thought of following her into Police Headquarters as there. Ever after she stayed. She took possession of the alley and of Headquarters, where the reporters had their daily walk, as if they were hers by right of conquest, which in fact they were. With her whimsically grave countenance, in which all the cares of the vast domain she made it her daily duty to oversee were visibly reflected, she made herself a favorite with every one except the "beanery-man" on the corner, who denounced her angrily, when none of her friends were near, for coming in with his customers at lunch-time on pur-

pose to have them feed her with his sugar, which was true. At regular hours, beginning with the opening of the department offices, she would make the round of the police building, calling on all the officials, forgetting none. She rode up in the elevator and left it at the proper floors, waited in the anterooms with the rest when there was a crowd, and paid stated visits to the chief and the commissioners, who never omitted to receive her with a nod and a "Hello, Trilby!" no matter how pressing the business in hand. The gravity with which she listened to what went on, and wrinkled up her brow in an evident effort to understand, was comical to the last degree. She knew the fire-alarm signals and when anything momentous was afoot. On the quiet days, when nothing was stirring, she would flock with the reporters on the stoop and sing.

There never was such singing as Trilby's. That was how she got her name. I tried a score of times to find out, but to this day I do not know whether it was pain or pleasure that was in her note. She had only one, but it made up in volume for what it lacked in range. Standing in the circle of her friends,

she would raise her head until her nose pointed straight toward the sky, and pour forth her melody with a look of such unutterable woe on her face that peals of laughter always wound up the performance; whereupon Trilby would march off with an injured air and hide herself in one of the offices, refusing to come out. Poor Trilby! with the passing away of the alley she seemed to lose her grip. She did not understand it. After wandering about aimlessly for a while, vainly seeking a home in the world, she finally moved over on the East Side with one of the dispossessed tenants. But on all Sundays and holidays, and once in a while in the middle of the week, she comes yet to inspect the old block in Mulberry street and to join in a quartet with old friends.

Trilby and Old Barney were the two who stuck to the alley longest. Barney was the star boarder. As everything about the place was misnamed, the alley itself included, so was he. His real name was Michael, but the children called him Barney, and the name stuck. When they were at odds, as they usually were, they shouted "Barney Bluebeard!" after him, and ran away and hid in trembling delight as he shook his key-ring at them, and showed his teeth with the evil leer which he reserved specially for them. It was reported in the alley that he was a woman-hater; hence the name. Certain it is that he never would let one of the detested sex cross the threshold of his attic room on any pretext. If he caught one pointing for his airy, he would block the way and bid her sternly begone. She seldom tarried long, for Barney was not a pleasing object when he was in an ugly mood. As the years passed, and cobweb and dirt accumulated in his room, stories were told of fabulous wealth which he had concealed in the chinks of the wall and in broken crocks; and as he grew constantly shabbier and more crabbed, they were readily believed. Barney carried his ring and filed keys all day, coining money, so the reasoning ran, and spent none; so he must be hiding it away. The alley hugged itself in the joyful sensation that it had a miser and his hoard in the cockloft. Next to a ghost, for which the environment was too matter-of-fact, that was the thing for an alley to have.

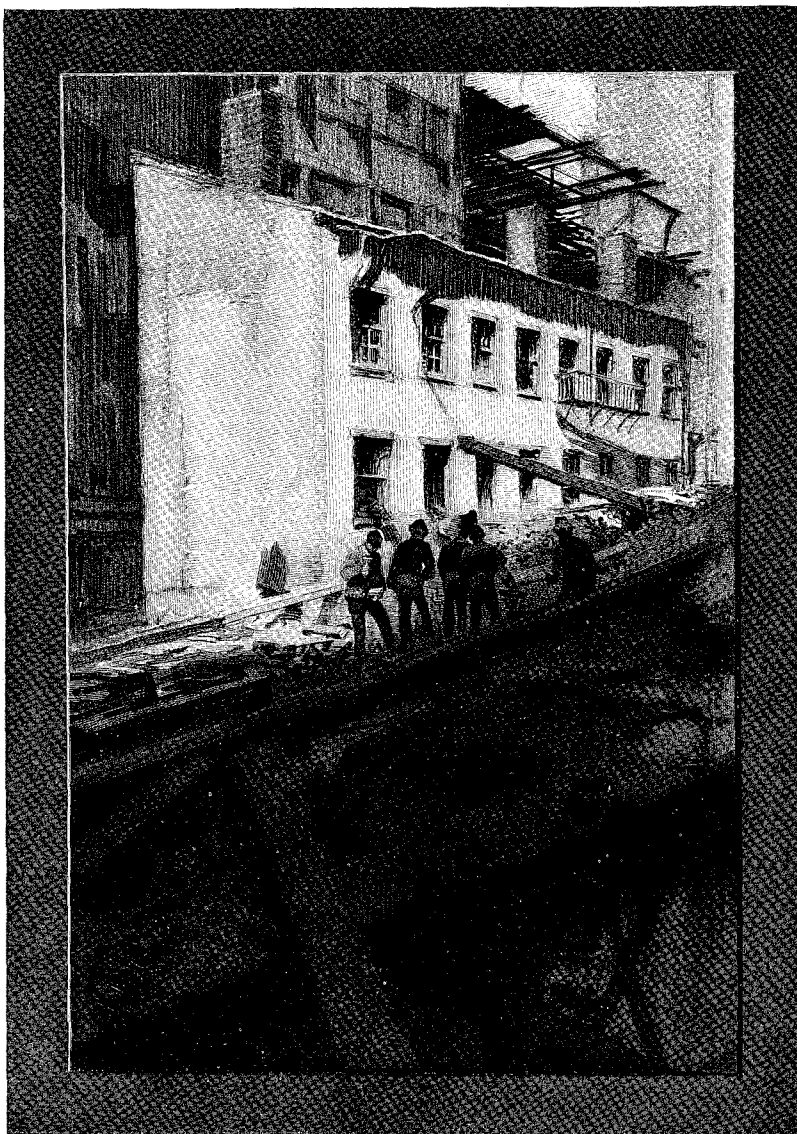
Curiously enough, the fact that, summer and winter, the old man never missed early mass and always put a silver quarter—even a silver dollar, it was breathlessly whispered in the alley—in the contribution-box, merely served to strengthen this belief. The fact

was, I suspect, that the key-ring was the biggest end of the business Old Barney cultivated so assiduously. There were keys enough on it, and they rattled most persistently as he sent forth the strange whoop which no one ever was able to make out, but which was assumed to mean "Keys! keys!" But he was far too feeble and tremulous to wield a file with effect. In his younger days he had wielded a bayonet in his country's defense. On the rare occasions when he could be made to talk, he would tell, with a smoldering gleam in his sunken eyes, how the Twenty-third Illinois Volunteers had battled with the Rebs weary nights and days without giving way a foot. The old man's bent back would straighten, and he would step firmly and proudly, at the recollection of how he and his comrades earned the name of the "heroes of Lexington" in that memorable fight. But only for the moment. The dark looks that frightened the children returned soon to his face. It was all for nothing, he said. While he was fighting at the front he was robbed. His lieutenant, to whom he gave his money to send home, stole it and ran away. When he returned after three years there was nothing, nothing! At this point the old man always became incoherent. He spoke of money the government owed him and withheld. It was impossible to make out whether his grievance was real or imagined.

When Colonel Grant came to Mulberry street as a police commissioner, Barney brightened up under a sudden idea. He might get justice now. Once a week, through those two years, he washed himself, to the mute astonishment of the alley, and brushed up carefully, to go across and call on "the general's son" in order to lay his case before him. But he never got farther than the Mulberry-street door. On the steps he was regularly awe-struck, and the old hero, who had never turned his back to the enemy, faltered and retreated. In the middle of the street he halted, faced front, and saluted the building with all the solemnity of a grenadier on parade, then went slowly back to his attic and to his unrighted grievance.

It had been the talk of the neighborhood for years that the alley would have to go in the Elm-street widening which was to cut a swath through the block, right over the site upon which it stood; and at last notice was given about Christmas-time that the wreckers were coming. The alley was sold,—thirty dollars was all it brought,—and the old

tenants moved away, and were scattered to the four winds. Barney alone stayed. He flatly refused to budge. They tore down the church next door and the buildings on over, he punched a hole in the rear wall and stuck the stovepipe through that, where it blew defiance to the new houses springing up almost within arm's-reach of it. It suggested



THE DESTRUCTION OF CAT ALLEY.

Houston street, and filled what had been the yard, or court, of the tenements with debris that reached half-way to the roof, so that the old locksmith, if he wished to go out or in, must do so by way of the third-story window, over a perilous path of shaky timbers and sliding brick. He evidently considered it a kind of siege, and shut himself in his attic, bolting and barring the door, and making secret sorties by night for provisions. When the chimney fell down or was blown

guns pointing from a fort, and perhaps it pleased the old man's soldier fancy. It certainly made smoke enough in his room, where he was fighting his battles over with himself, and occasionally with the janitor from the front, who climbed over the pile of bricks and in through the window to bring him water. When I visited him there one day, and, after giving the password, got behind the bolted door, I found him, the room, and everything else absolutely covered with soot, coal-black

from roof to rafters. The password was "Let-tér!" yelled out loud at the foot of the stairs. That would always bring him out, in the belief that the government had finally sent him the long-due money. Barney was stubbornly defiant; he would stand by his guns to the end: but he was weakening physically under the combined effect of short rations and nightly alarms. It was clear that he could not stand it much longer.

The wreckers cut it short one morning by ripping off the roof over his head before he was up. Then, and only then, did he retreat. His exit was characterized by rather more haste than dignity. There had been a heavy fall of snow overnight, and Barney slid down the jagged slope from his window, dragging his trunk with him, in imminent peril of breaking his aged bones. That day he disappeared from Mulberry street. I thought he was gone for good, and through the Grand Army of the Republic had set inquiries on foot to find what had become of him, when one day I saw him from my window, standing on the opposite side of the street, key-ring in hand, and looking fixedly at what had once been the passageway to the alley, but was now a barred gap between the houses, lead-

ing nowhere. He stood there long, gazing sadly at the gateway, at the children dancing to the Italian's hand-organ, at Trilby trying to look unconcerned on the stoop, and then went his way silently, a poor castaway, and I saw him no more.

So Cat Alley, with all that belonged to it, passed out of my life. It had its faults, but it can at least be said of it, in extenuation, that it was very human. With them all it had a rude sense of justice that did not distinguish its early builders. When the work of tearing down had begun, I watched, one day, a troop of children having fun with a seesaw that they had made of a plank laid across a lime-barrel. The whole Irish contingent rode the plank, all at once, with screams of delight. A ragged little girl from the despised "Dago" colony watched them from the corner with hungry eyes. Big Jane, who was the leader by virtue of her thirteen years and her long reach, saw her and stopped the show.

"Here, Mame," she said, pushing one of the smaller girls from the plank, "you get off an' let her ride. Her mother was stabbed yesterday."

And the little Dago rode, and was made happy.

CHRISTMAS AT BETHLEHEM

BY J. JAMES TISSOT.¹

THE town of Bethlehem is shaped in the form of a crescent, descending, terrace by terrace, the side of the hill on which it is built. On one of these terraces are grouped the massive buildings of the Latin and Greek convents, between which stands the basilica, charming the eye by the peculiar grace of its lines. All the houses are distinctly Jewish in appearance, with flat roofs capped by cupolas, and many of them have pointed archways which offer pleasant places for repose in hours of sun or shade.

This creeping of the houses down into the very gardens of the valley heightens wonderfully the beauty of the landscape; while in the background, toward the Dead Sea, the mountains of Moab tower majestically above the gentle undulations of hill and vale. Every feature of this never-to-be-forgotten scene

is full of sacred significance. In front of the city you are shown the field where Ruth and Boaz met, and near by is the spot where the shepherds were told of our Saviour's birth. At a point still nearer the crescent-shaped city is the well from which David so desired drink after doing battle. A little farther on, and quite by itself, is the tomb of Rachel, beyond which are other battle-fields mentioned in the Bible. Here one is in the very heart of the country described in the Holy Scriptures, and naturally scores of legends are called to mind, returning again and again to sweeten the soul through the weary hours of horseback journeying across desert wastes.

On the occasion of the Christmas fêtes, I was invited by the late French consul-general, M. Ledoulx, to accompany him to Bethlehem and pass the night at the Casa-Nova. While awaiting midnight, we had supper with the Rev. Father Didon, who, I recall, was fairly teeming with wit and

¹ See articles in THE CENTURY for June, 1894, and December, 1895, on Tissot's illustrations of "The Life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ."—EDITOR.