

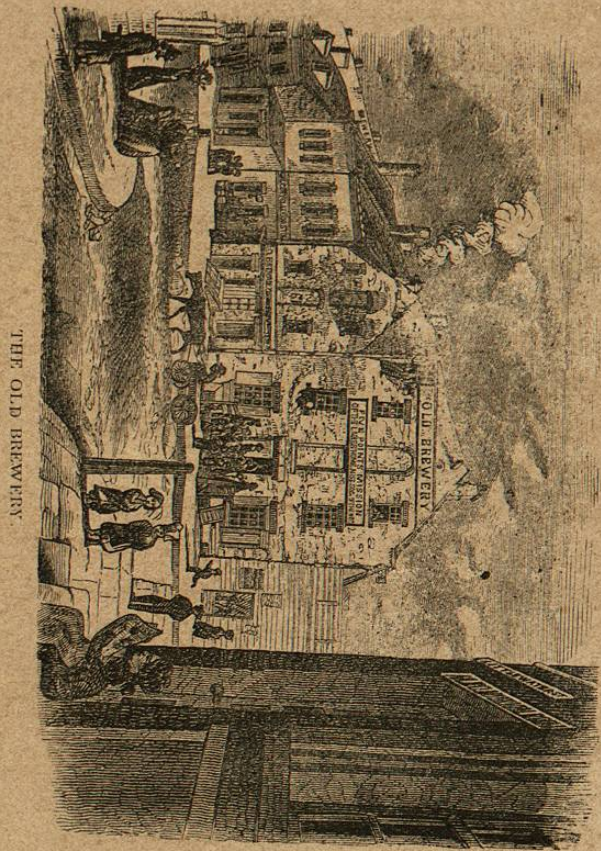
CHAPTER III.

THE OLD BREWERY.

“Work, work with right endeavor,
Walls of brass resist not
A noble undertaking—nor can Vice
Raise any bulwark to make good a place
Where Virtue seeks to enter.”

“I SPENT some days at New York,” writes Miss Bremer in her “Homes of the New World,” “in making a closer acquaintance with that portion of the life of the great city which belongs to its night side; to the dark realm of shadows and hell as it exists on the earth. I wandered through it, however, accompanied by an angel of light. I cannot otherwise speak of the Quaker lady who accompanied me, for her countenance was bright and beautiful as the purest goodness.

“I went with her one day through that part of New York called Five Points, because I wished to see this region, in which the rudest and most degraded portion of the population of New York were thronged together, probably through the attraction which causes like to



seek like. Not long ago it was unsafe for a stranger within these purlieus, but the Methodists of New York conceived the divinely bold idea of building a church to God in the heart of this central point of vice and misery. They hired a house, sent a minister to reside there, established schools, work rooms, &c., which would give ample space for the other master.

“The Five Points is one of the oldest portions of New York and received its name from five streets, which open here into a large square. These streets and especially the square are the haunts of the extremest misery of that great city. Lower than to the Five Points it is not possible for human nature to sink. Quarrels and blows, theft and even murder belong to the order of day and night. There is in the square, in particular, one large, yellow-colored, dilapidated, old house called the Old Brewery, because formerly it was employed as such. This house is properly the head quarters of vice and misery, and the old brewer of all the world's misery has dominion there at this day.

“We—Mrs. G. and myself—went alone through this house, where we visited many hidden dens and conversed with their inhabitants. We considered it better and safer to go about here alone than in company with a gentleman. Neither did we meet any instance of rude-

ness or even incivility. We saw a young lad sitting at the gaming-table with old ruffians—unfortunate women suffering from horrible diseases—sickly children—giddy young girls—ill-tempered women quarrelling with the whole world—and some families also we saw who seemed to me wretched rather through poverty than moral degradation. From unabashed, hardened crime, to those who sinking under the consequences of vice are passing down to death—without an ear to listen to their groans, without sympathy, without hope—there is every grade of moral corruption, festering and fermenting in the Old Brewery; filth, rags, pestilential air—every thing was in that Old Brewery, and yet there, after all I did not see anything worse than I had seen before in Paris, London, Stockholm. Ah! in all large cities where human masses congregate may be found the Old Brewery of vice and misery, and where the Old Brewer distils his poison. The off-scouring of society flows hither, becomes more corrupt, and will thence corrupt the atmosphere of society, until the fresh and better life obtains power over the old leaven—the New Church over the Old Brewery. A great movement exists in this direction at the present time. The Church of Christ extends itself not merely to the soul, but is beginning to comprehend the whole human being, to

develop itself in schools, in sanitary wardship, in every kind of institution which promotes the wholesome work of Christian love on earth, both for soul and body, and repeats the word of the Lord to the leper—"I will, be thou clean."

To this vivid description we add the following picture of the "Old Brewery," taken from one of the daily papers:

"An alley extends all around the building; on the north side it is of irregular width, wide at the entrance, and gradually tapering to a point. On the opposite side the passage-way is known by the name of 'Murderer's Alley,' a filthy, narrow path, scarcely three feet in width. There are double rows of rooms throughout the building, entered by the alley-ways on either side. Some of these rooms are just passably decent; the majority are dirty, dark, and totally unfit for occupation. The dark and winding passage-ways, which extend throughout the whole building, must have afforded a convenient means of escape to thieves and criminals of all kinds; there are also various hiding-places recently discovered, which have also, no doubt, afforded the means of escape to offenders against the laws. In the floor in one of the upper rooms, a place was found where the boards had been sawed; upon tearing them up, human bones were found, the remains, no doubt, of a victim of some diabolical murder. The whole of the building above-ground is rickety and dilapidated—some of the stairs even creak when trodden upon. Our way was explored by the aid of a single lamp, in company with two gentlemen and a guide; beside these there were a number of rather rough-looking customers, who ap-

peared as much interested as any one else. But it was not until one of the gentlemen complained, in one of the dark passage-ways, of a strange hand in his pocket, that these three characters were suspected. Then our guide informed us, in an under-tone, that we were surrounded by a gang of the most notorious pickpockets and thieves of that section, and that we must take good care of our watches, or we would lose them before we were aware. To grope one's way, at night, through the dark passages, when the light was within sight only a part of the time, and to be surrounded with a crowding, pushing gang of desperadoes, was not altogether the most pleasant way of spending our evening.

"The above-ground part of the premises cannot be better imagined than by supposing it just as bad as it can be,—once plastered, but now half the wall off, in some places mended by pasting newspapers over it, but often revealing unsightly holes. The under part, or basement of the building, is even still worse on the south-west corner; in a lower room, not more than fifteen feet square, *twenty-six* human beings reside. A man could scarcely stand erect in it; two men were sitting by the blaze of a few sticks when our company entered; women lay on a mass of filthy, unsightly rags in the corner—sick, feeble, and emaciated; six or seven children were in various attitudes about the corner; an old table covered with a few broken dishes; two women were peeling potatoes, and actually pulling off the skins with their finger nails; the smoke and stench of the room was so suffocating that it could not be long endured, and the announcement that, in addition to the misfortune of poverty, they had the measles to boot, started most of our party in a precipitate retreat from the premises.

"On the front side of the building the basement is deeper, but if possible worse. Here were seen only a few miserable-

looking women—one was drunk and stupid, and lay upon the bare floor in the corner; in a side room, in front of a fireplace, and before a full blaze, sat two women, who looked as low and debased as any human beings could. No furniture was in the room, with only the floor for their bed, and the scant dresses they wore for their only covering.

"But it may be asked: What do these wretched people do for a living? We answer: The men are street-sweepers and thieves, the women beg and steal what they can, the children sweep crossings in wet weather, and cut up the kindling-wood which we all see them carry about the streets. A great deal of this last business, we observed, was carried on in the 'Old Brewery.' What more they do who can tell? Miserable beings! life is at best but an unpleasant necessity, but to them it must be an awful punishment."

This was the state of the "Old Brewery" in 1850, when the Society first entered the field, and for the two succeeding years. We learn from an old inhabitant of New York that it was erected in 1792, and then known as Coulter's Brewery; that it was changed to a tenement-building in 1837, and seems almost immediately to have attained its "bad pre-eminence."

We now return to the history of its purchase and demolition. The advisory committee met to reaceem their promise, mentioned as having been given at the commencement of the enterprise. During the discussion of places and prices, Mrs. D. mentioned the "Old Brewery." The proposition was received with hearty laughter

on the part of the gentlemen, so chimerical at that time seemed the idea. A committee was appointed to survey the premises, to ascertain what was to be sold and at what prices, &c. They met again on February 5, 1852, and reported "that they had examined a number of situations, and in their opinion the 'Old Brewery' was the most eligible place;" and after considerable discussion, it was resolved, "That the business of examining the 'Old Brewery,' and also of waiting upon Mr. Lynch, the owner of the property, to get the refusal of it for a short time, be referred to a committee consisting of Rev. Mr. Luckey, Messrs. W. B. Skidmore, L. Kirby, D. Drew, J. Cornell, N. Worrall, and O. D. M'Clain."

This was a memorable meeting to the Society; for the gentlemen, practical business men, sympathized fully with their ardent wishes, and expressed themselves ready to give their time, influence, and money, to aid to the utmost in this favorite mission. On the evening of February 23d, the following resolutions were passed; and we give them to show how thoughtfully and carefully all these plans were laid, and how judiciously the gentlemen appointed to receive and expend the public funds acted in reference to every point.

First: "That in view of the benefits that have resulted from the experiment of the Ladies' Home Missionary Society

in the establishment of a mission at the 'Five Points,' and also in view of the prospects of its increasing usefulness, we deem it of the utmost importance that a permanent location be purchased—the rooms now occupied being too small and inconvenient for the use of the mission." And,

Secondly: "That we pledge ourselves to purchase the property known as the 'Old Brewery,' situated at the 'Five Points,' on Cross-street, for the use of the Ladies' Home Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, provided it can be obtained for a sum not exceeding \$16,000; and also provided that subscriptions be obtained toward the payment of said purchase of not less than \$10,000 by the 10th day of March next; and we hereby pledge ourselves to use the utmost of our endeavors to obtain the amount by the time named."

After several intermediate meetings, on March 8th, it was moved by Mr. Leonard Kirby, and seconded by Mr. Daniel Drew,

"That the committee forthwith close with the offer made by the owner of the 'Old Brewery,' and agree with him for the purchase at the sum named—\$16,000."

It was carried unanimously; Messrs. Kirby and Worrall were appointed a committee to effect a purchase, and in a few days the joyful announcement was made that the "Old Brewery" was redeemed. But more was to be done; money was to be raised, and this, too, by *thousands*; and the Board of Managers, feeling most deeply their obligations to the gentlemen who, for them, had incurred so heavy a personal

responsibility, aroused themselves to the most vigorous and persevering action.

The public met their appeals nobly, immediately, and before one year had closed the entire sum was subscribed; and then their cautious committee, who had previously resolved not to build until the purchase-money was entirely raised, sounded the note of victory. Ere we proceed, in our narrative, to raze the old building to its foundations, we will give several incidents as a specimen of missionary labor in connection with it before it was redeemed by the Society.

One Tuesday evening, in the winter of 1851, the usual weekly prayer-meeting was in session at the Mission Room, which was directly opposite the "Old Brewery." Two men, under the influence of liquor, abruptly entered, and inquired for the missionary. Mr. Luckey asked them their business. They replied that a sick man in one of the upper rooms of the "Old Brewery" desired his immediate attendance. The appearance of the men, the hour of the night, the locality specified, beside the fact that the prayer-meeting required his presence, caused Mr. Luckey to hesitate, and he dismissed the men with the promise that he would come the next day. In a little time one returned, urging that the man was dying, and must see him

immediately. The call was thus decisive, and, laying aside every personal consideration, Mr. Luckey resigned the charge of the meeting to his wife, and, taking one of the mission converts with him, followed his rough, half-drunken guide. They crossed the street, and entered the dark, narrow passage known as "Murderer's Alley," groped their way back to the "Den of Thieves," and then commenced ascending a creaking stairs. The guide reached back his hand to Mr. Luckey, and, thus escorted, he proceeded. Standing on the first platform, a glimmering light through the cracked walls and the sound of noisy mirth proclaimed a drunken revel. The guide unceremoniously placed his foot against the door, which yielded to the heavy pressure, entered the room, and, snatching a burning brand from the hearth, again appeared, and they continued their upward path until they reached a long, low room, near, if not in, the attic. On entering, Mr. L. found the sick man on a miserable bed, evidently near the grave, agonized with fear and remorse, and a pale-looking wife and daughter almost fainting with fright. The man besought Mr. L. to remove him from that dreadful place; and when he attempted to direct his mind to the Saviour, the imploring response was: "O take me first from here; take me *where Jesus can come.*" Mr. L. proposed prayer. "O!

they will murder us if you pray," was the trembling response, as the sound of oaths and curses from the next room fell upon the ear. The missionary, strong in faith, knelt down—the first words of prayer brought a number of fierce, half-drunken men and women into the room, who, as soon as they recognized him, fell back, whispering "'tis the minister—'tis Mr. Luckey," and as his voice rose in pleading prayer to God for the sick and the wretched around, every sound was hushed, and they retreated to their own dens in perfect stillness. When Mr. Luckey was about leaving the room, the family clung around him, beseeching him not to leave them, but to take them hence; and their fear and importunity were so excessive, that Mr. Luckey despatched a messenger to a neighboring house, to know if they could be accommodated for the night. Receiving an affirmative answer, they took him in their arms, and, followed by the wife and daughter, descended. The man lay with clasped hands and eyes upraised, praying incessantly, and when laid down in a quiet place exclaimed, "Now Christ can save me!" In a few days he was removed to the City Hospital, where Mr. Luckey visited him, and although he sank and died within a week, yet apparently he learned to trust in Christ and rest on Him as his Saviour. The wife (who became

such by Mr. Luckey's performing the ceremony of marriage in the Hospital) survived but a short time, and the daughter is now residing with a respectable family on Staten Island.

On the first establishment of the mission at the Five Points, it was thought extremely hazardous for ladies to visit families in that neighborhood, and to gather in children for the schools. Two of the ladies of the Board, however, years before associated with the New York Clothing Society, were the committee of visitation to the Sixth Ward, which includes the Five Points, and they thought there was no ground for these apprehensions. The first year proved their views correct, as nearly every house and family were visited by some lady of the Board, and no where did they meet with rudeness or incivility. Even the Old Brewery with its numerous cellars, dark passages and attics, became familiar to a few who had moral and physical courage enough to bear the sight, inhale the air and hear the sounds. "Our first introduction to this 'pest house of death,'" writes Mrs. D. "may not be without its moral.

"A person by the name of Brennan, had kept a grocery and liquor store in the lower part of the building for a number of years. He had been irritated by the conduct of the first missionary, employed to

labor in that locality, who had, he said, denounced him from the pulpit, holding him up to the derision and scorn of the children of the school, and it was said that he would not allow ladies to enter the building.

“One morning, several of the children were absent from the school. They lived in the attics of the Old Brewery, passing to their miserable homes through the passage called Murderer’s Alley, or through the other, known as the Den of Thieves. We own to the feeling of timidity in venturing through these darksome ways, without the escort of some gentleman, but what was to be done? No teacher could be spared from the school-room, and no visitor had arrived. I hesitated, my heart began to beat faster, and I found myself involuntarily drawing longer and deeper inspirations while resolving to go alone. I crossed the street, praying as I went, ‘Lord preserve me, O protect me, for thy name’s sake.’

“As I went up Murderer’s Alley, Mr. Brennan, who was the agent for the building, stood with a determined air in my path. I smiled, retraced my steps, and thinking I would reach the attics by the other passage, I entered it, but was again met by Mr. Brennan, who had passed round the rear of the building to oppose my entrance. I then resolved to speak to him.

‘Good morning, sir,’ said I, ‘a beautiful morning, but some of our children are very late at school, and I am in search of them. Can you tell me in what room I shall find Mrs. Heston and Mrs. Sullivan, and is there any danger in my ascending these old rickety stairs to look after them?’

“I appeared very brave, but my heart beat not a little, for the most awful oaths and curses fell upon my ear, from the adjoining ‘Den of Thieves.’ He gave me my directions, and then said very kindly, ‘You may go all over the house, wherever you please, and so may any of the ladies, and if anybody speaks wrong to you, let me know. I am unwilling,’ he added, ‘to allow Mr. Pease to enter these doors, for he never comes to relieve poverty and suffering, but merely to exhibit it to his visitors as he would a menagerie, and when I open a menagerie, I will charge twenty-five cents admission.’ I began to breathe more freely when I left him, although the passages and stairways through which I groped my way were, in some instances, so dark that I had to pass my hands along the wall until I felt the casement of the door opening on some poor family or families—for sometimes there were two or three families in a room.

“On some of the landings I stopped and listened, almost
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afraid of the sound of my own steps; but I reached the attic, and found the families of whom I was in search. Mrs. Heston had her two little girls ready for school, and expressed her surprise that I should have ventured up alone, but I told her nothing had harmed me. She seemed to fear, however, and insisted upon leaving her door open to light the two girls and myself down the stairs. I thanked Mr. B. for his kindness when I returned, and this opened an acquaintance with him of a most friendly kind; and from that time to the present I have found him to be a true friend to the Mission. A few months after this my sister and myself were in conversation with Mr. B., and asked him his views of some of the families, their poverty, improvidence, intemperance, &c. He admitted that intemperance was the cause of nearly *all* their misery. I then took occasion to ask him if he had ever thought he had been the cause of any of that misery. He replied, 'I do not know that I have. I never drink myself, and I often talk to these people about it, but it is of no use; and if I did not sell it to them, *still they would drink.*' 'Yes,' said I, 'that may be so; but your *influence*; did it never strike you that you were making drunkards by keeping a liquor-store? may not the first glass of liquor

you have sold to some boy or girl, by creating a taste for another and yet another, have led to certain destruction? He did not make much reply, but the next time I saw him, he said he had been thinking seriously of the conversation between us. I then tried in the best way I could to show him the influence a bad example would have on all coming time, and that eternity alone could unfold all the evil it had wrought. He admitted he had never taken that view of it before, and promised that as soon as he possibly could he would give up the sale of liquor; for, he continued, 'of all places in the world to rear a family, the Five Points is the very worst, and no consideration could induce me to move my family into its precincts.' His wife and five children resided in another part of the city. A little while after this last conversation, when I met him one morning, his face brightened as he held out his hand, saying, 'I have good news to tell you; I have done with the sale of liquor; I have long despised the business, and have now made up my mind never to sell *another drop while I live.*'

"He was one of those candid, prompt sort of men whose word is believed without question. I bade him God-speed in his purpose. He was as good as his word, although at the time he had no prospect of

support for his family. We had promised to try and provide a situation for him, but he has obtained one for himself in the adjoining coal yard as clerk, which office he still retains. He often expresses his pleasure at having been induced to give up the sale of liquor, and he is a warm friend to the Mission, rejoicing in its prosperity, and declaring that it has been the greatest blessing to the neighborhood.

"This instance has been a source of encouragement to us, and it has not been without its effect in that locality, where the Mission has met with general favor. While the large tent was located in the little park (known as Paradise Square) before the erection of our new mission buildings on the site of the 'Old Brewery,' a grocer at the corner of little Water and Anthony street, kindly sent us coal without charge to supply the furnace lent to us by Keyser & Co. He has since given us a donation in money, and says he wishes us well, which he proves by encouraging the children of his tenants to attend our schools. May we not hope to exert a still greater influence on the retailers of liquors? We believe that nothing but kindness will reach the hearts of these people, and that police restraints are not so powerful as the law of love by which we hope ever to be governed in our work."

We could multiply such scenes if we had room, but deem it best to give a few in the condensed form in which they were prepared to be sung at a public meeting.

The "Old Brewery."

BY REV. T. F. R. MERCEIN.

God knows it's time thy walls were going!
Through every stone
Life-blood, as through a heart, is flowing;
Murmurs a smother'd groan.
Long years the cup of poison filling
From leaves of gall;
Long years a darker cup distilling
From wither'd hearts that fall!
O! this world is stern and dreary,
Everywhere they roam;
God! hast thou never call'd the weary
Have they in thee no home?

One sobbing child, beside a mother,
Starved in the cold;
Poor lamb! thy moan awakes no other,
Christ is thy only fold!
One gentle girl that grew in gladness,
Loved—was betray'd—
Jeers met her dying shriek of madness,
Oaths mock'd the words she pray'd.
O! this world is stern and dreary,
Everywhere they roam;
God! hast thou never call'd the weary?
Have they in thee no home?

Sweet babe! that tried to meet life smiling,
 Smiled nevermore!
 Foul sin, a mother's breast defiling,
 Blighted the young heart's core!
 No holy word of kindness spoken—
 No lisped prayer—
 Law crush'd the virtue want had broken,
 Shame harden'd to despair.
 O! this world is stern and dreary,
 Everywhere they roam;
 God! hast thou never call'd the weary?
 Have they in thee no home?

Foul haunt! a glorious resurrection
 Springs from thy grave!
 Faith, hope, and purified affection,
 Praising the "Strong to save!"
 God bless the love that, like an angel,
 Flies to each call,
 Till every lip hath this evangel,
 "Christ pleadeth for us all!"
 O! this world is stern and dreary,
 Everywhere they roam;
 Praise God! a voice hath call'd the weary
 In thee is found a home!

The last verse is prophetic, but will, we hope, soon be realized—for in the middle of December, 1852, the demolition of the "Old Brewery" commenced, and in a week's time not one stone was left upon another. During the past year, though much hindered by want of room, and misjudged by many who did not understand the reasons which actuated the Ladies' Society in many of their actions, the Mission has nevertheless strengthened its stakes and enlarged its borders, and, judging

from the results of the last great public meeting, obtained an increasing interest in the public mind. Mr. W. E. Harding renewed his offer of Metropolitan Hall for a public demonstration, free of expense; on the 17th of December, a concert was held in the afternoon, and in the evening Mr. J. B. Gough addressed a crowded audience, after which \$4,000 were again subscribed for the building to be erected on the site of the "Old Brewery." The Ragged School is in vigorous operation, containing already one hundred and fifty scholars. The Common Council not only granted \$1,000 to the Society, but also the privilege of erecting a temporary building in the little park, in which to hold the day-school until the Mission Room is completed.