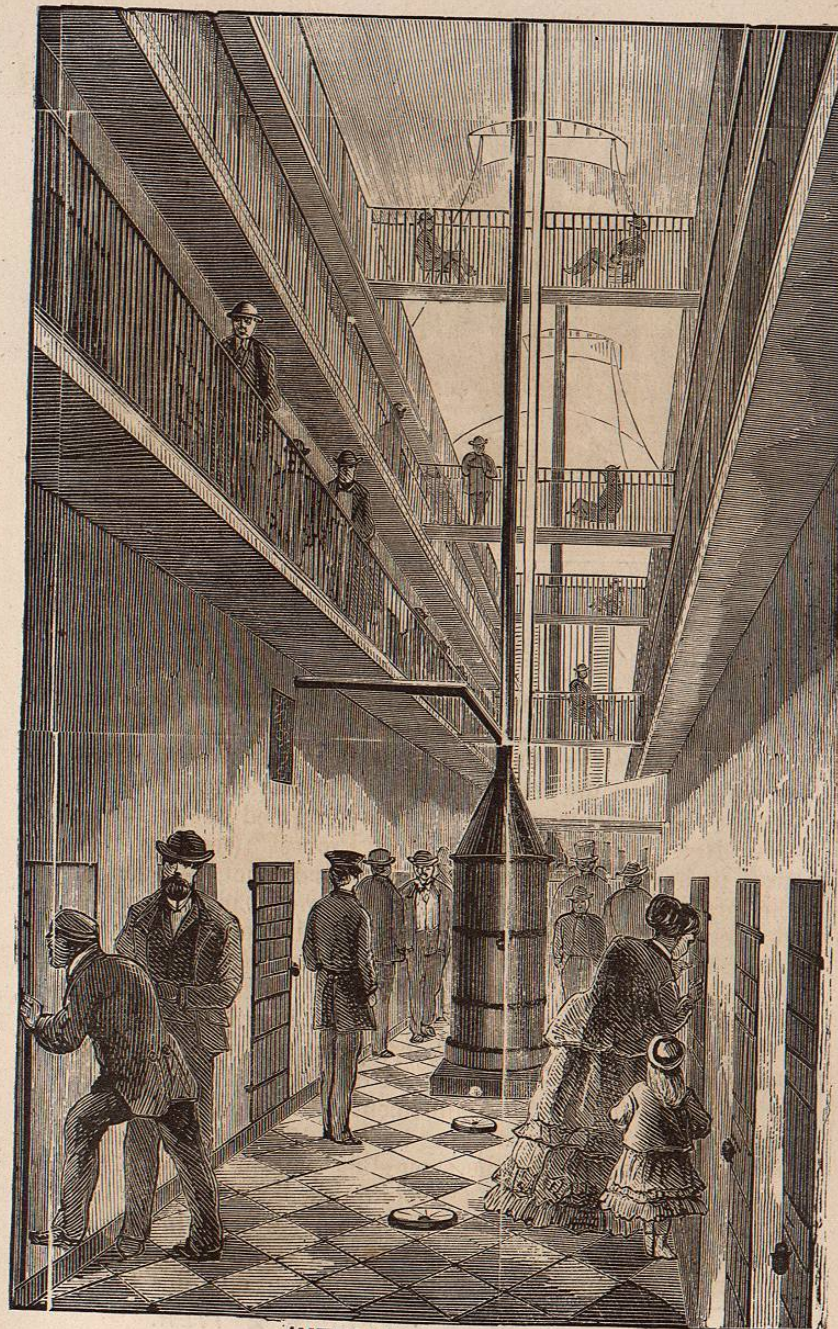


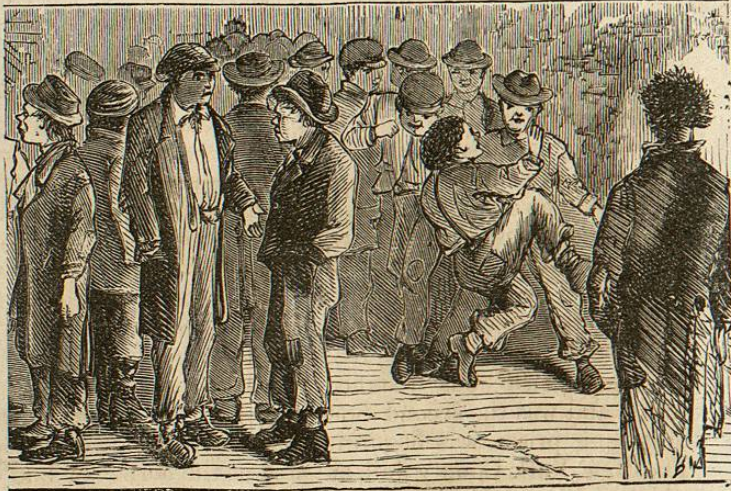
HALLS OF JUSTICE OR TOMBS, CENTRE STREET.

THE CITY PRISONS.

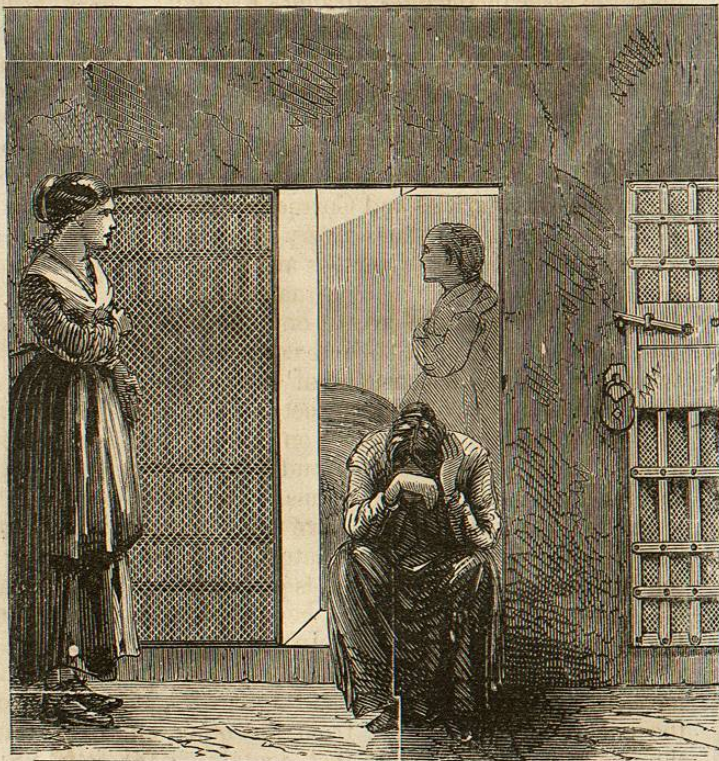
The first building used as a jail on Manhattan was on the corner of Dock street and Coenties slip. After the erection of the City Hall in Wall street, the criminals were confined in dungeons in the cellar, while debtors were imprisoned in the attic apartments. The next prison erected was known as the "New Jail," called also the "Provost" (see page 74), from its having been the headquarters and chief dungeon of the infamous Cunningham, the British provost marshal of the Revolution. It was a strong stone building erected for the imprisonment of debtors, and is now the Hall of Records. The pillars which now ornament it are of later origin. The next was the Bridewell (see page 69), a cheerless, graystone edifice, two stories high, with basement, a front and rear pediment, which stood a little west of the present City Hall. It was erected for the confinement of vagrants, minor offenders, and criminals awaiting trial, in 1775, just in time to serve as a dungeon for the struggling patriots of the Revolution. The building was scarcely finished, the windows had nothing but iron bars to keep out the cold, yet in the inclement season the British thrust eight hundred and sixteen American prisoners, captured at Fort Washington, into this build-



INTERIOR OF MALE PRISON



BOYS HALL.—TOMBS.

FEMALE PRISON 2^d TIER.

ing, where they continued from Saturday to the following Thursday, without drink or food. During these perilous years all the public and many of the private buildings, besides numerous sugar-houses and ships, were crowded with suffering American prisoners of war. New York was indeed a city of prisons. The Bridewell was finally demolished, and much of the material used in the erection of the Tombs in 1838. After the establishment of independence a large stone prison surrounded by a high wall was erected on the west side of the island, three miles above the City Hall, called at that time Greenwich village. It was ready for the reception of convicts in August, 1796, was designed for criminals of the highest grade, and was the second State Prison in the United States. Sing-Sing prison was begun in 1825 and completed in 1831. The New York County Jail, situated at the corner of Ludlow street and Essex Market place, was opened in June, 1862, and took the place of the old Eldridge street jail. It is built in the form of an L, ninety feet on each street, forty feet deep and sixty-five high, leaving a yard of fifty feet square, surrounded by a high wall, in which prisoners are allowed to exercise. The building contains eighty-seven cells. Besides the above there are four other places of involuntary confinement on Manhattan, all of which are under the control of the Commissioners of Charities and Corrections, and in each of which a Police Court convenes every morning to examine the charges brought against persons arrested. The Halls of Justice, the principal building situated between Centre, Elm, Leonard, and Franklin streets, on the site of the old Collect Pond, was begun in 1835 and completed in 1838. It is a two-story building constructed of Maine white granite in the Egyptian order, is 253 by 200 feet and occupies the four sides of a hollow square. The front on Centre street is reached by a broad flight of granite steps, and the portico is supported by several massive Egyptian columns. The windows, which extend through both stories, have heavy iron-grated frames. The female department is situated in the section which extends along Leonard street, and is presided over by an amiable Christian matron who has held her position with great credit for more than twenty years. In the front of the edifice are rooms for the Court of Sessions, the Police Court, etc., which have given it its name, "Halls of Justice." In the centre of the enclosed yard, distinct from the other buildings, stands the men's prison, 142 by 45 feet, containing 148 cells. State

criminals have been executed in the open court. The prison stands on low, damp ground in the vicinity of a poor and riotous neighborhood, is poorly ventilated, was never calculated to well accommodate over two hundred prisoners, yet, the annual average is nearly four hundred, and often greatly exceeds that number. It has lately been condemned by the grand jury of the county as a nuisance, and as the Commissioners have repeatedly recommended the building of a large and well-arranged prison in a more suitable locality, it is not likely that the frowning, dingy "Tombs" will long continue in the city. The building as it appeared some thirty years ago contained a high tower which was destroyed by fire on the day appointed for the execution of Colt, and is believed to have been a part of the unsuccessful plan for his escape. The next largest is the Jefferson Market prison, situated at the corner of Greenwich avenue and Tenth street. Its exterior is of brick, and contains besides its court-rooms twenty-five large cells, a single one of which sometimes contains ten or twenty drunken men. The daily commitments here amount to from thirty-five to fifty, and in seasons of general disorder many more. Adjoining the prison stands engine house No. 11 of the old fire department, which has been arranged for the female prison. This prison is kept remarkably clean, notwithstanding the masses of seething corruption huddled together in it day and night through all the year. The cells are well warmed but not furnished with beds, as the prisoners are usually detained here but one night, and never but a few days. Many of them are so filthy and so covered with vermin, that beds cannot be kept in a proper condition. The third district prison is known as the Essex Market, situated at 69 Essex street, and is a little smaller than the one just described. The fourth is situated at Fifty-seventh street and Lexington avenue; the cells, capable of holding about forty prisoners, are in the basement under the Court-house. Small as these prisons are, no less than 49,423 persons were detained in them during 1870. All classes are seen here, from the ignorant imbruted bully to the expert and polished villain. Some are abashed and sit weeping over their folly; others are reticent and collected. The visitor is often surprised to learn that that handsome female leaning over the banister, clad in rich silks, with gold chain, pin, and bracelets, is a prisoner arrested for disorderly conduct.

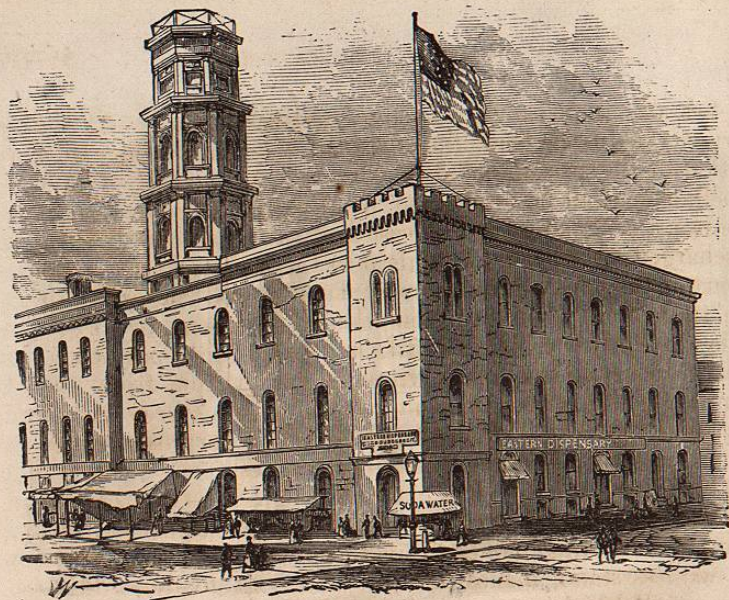
The business at the Police Courts, and also at the Court



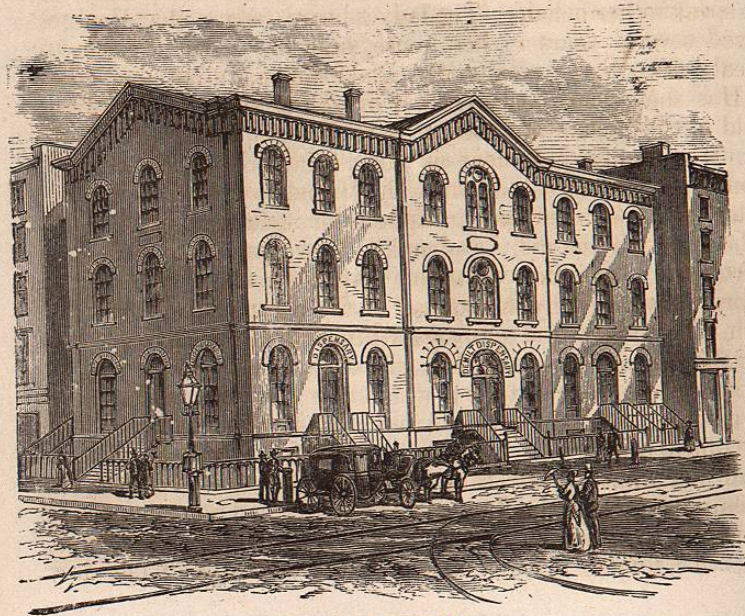
NEW YORK DISPENSARY.
North-West corner of Centre and White Streets.



NORTHERN DISPENSARY.
Waverly Place corner of Christopher Street.



EASTERN DISPENSARY.
No. 57 Essex Street.



DEMILT DISPENSARY.
Corner of Second Avenue and East Twenty-Third Street.

of Sessions, is dispatched with wonderful rapidity. At the former the Justice hears the charge of the officer, the explanation of the prisoner, and decides without counsel or jury whether he shall be discharged, fined, or detained for trial at the Court of Sessions. The vast majority of all arrested are discharged after spending a night in the station-house. The Court of Sessions convenes every Tuesday and Saturday for the trial of all cases involving doubt, argument, or proof. This is strictly a criminal court, and the prisoner is allowed to introduce counsel and witnesses. A visitor from the country where a criminal suit consumes from three to ten days takes his seat in the court-room and is surprised to see six or ten cases disposed of in thirty minutes.

The names of Mrs. Blake and Bridget — are called. Bridget has been the servant of Mrs. B., who has caused her arrest for stealing money from the drawer. Mrs. B. takes the witness stand, makes her full statement to the Judge, answers all his questions as to how she knew Bridget took the money, when she caused her arrest, &c. The policeman is next called, who states that he arrested her and found the money. Bridget, who has been leaning on the iron railing which cuts off the prisoners' space from the main court-room, is now called upon. She has no counsel, but wishes Mrs. R. to speak in her behalf. The lady is heard—states that Bridget lived several years in her house, and was never known to steal. The Judge recalls Mrs. Blake and inquires hurriedly, "Has she ever stolen anything of you before?" On being told that she has not, he turns to Bridget and says, "The Court suspends judgment as this is the first offence, but if you ever come here again I shall send you to Blackwell's Island." Two men are arraigned for striking a policeman who arrested them in a drunken row, swinging a loaded revolver. The officer gives his testimony, after which he is thoroughly sifted by the counsel of the prisoners, who tries in vain to entangle and embarrass him. Next come witnesses for the prisoners (old cronies), who drank freely with them on the occasion referred to, but who know they were not drunk or disorderly—that the pistol fell out of his pocket, and that the officer was wholly to blame. The officer is recalled, and reaffirms what he has said. "Have you no witnesses to sustain you?" says the Judge. The officer had not supposed it necessary to bring any. The Judge wrings about on his chair, runs his fingers through his whiskers and says, "The law