

## XXI.

## THE FIVE POINTS.

A SCENE AT FIVE POINTS.—LADIES' FIVE POINTS MISSION.—ORIGIN OF THE WORK.—THE FIELD SELECTED.—THE NATIONALITY OF THE LOWLY.—THE MISSION BEGUN.—A WALK AROUND FIVE POINTS.—THE MISSION OF THE BEAUTIFUL.—HOW THE WORK IS SUPPORTED.—SUCCESS OF THE MISSION WORK.

## A SCENE AT FIVE POINTS.

As the superintendent of our mission establishment was looking out of his door, he saw a man running up the street, apparently in a state of wild excitement. His coat was off, he had no hat on, and his feet were bare. The superintendent approached him, and led him into his room. He soon sank into unconscious slumber. He remained in this condition an hour. The prayer-bell sounded, and he started in alarm, and cried out, "What's that?" He was told it was the prayer-bell. "Prayer-bell!" exclaimed the man. "Prayer-bell! Do you have prayers in this dreadful locality?" "We have prayers," said the superintendent, and invited the man to go in. He went in, and his sobs and cries so interrupted the service, that it was with difficulty that the parties proceeded. He soon learned where he was: he then made a clean breast of himself.

He was a Western merchant; he had a load of butter on the way to Boston; he was a man of good standing at home; a class leader in the Methodist church. Having leisure, he took a stroll around New York to see the sights. A respectably-dressed and good-looking woman asked him to treat her. As he wanted to get material for a letter that he was to send home, he thought that a compliance with her request would enable him to see a side of life that he could not otherwise see, so he went in to treat. Having drunk, she insisted upon treating him. A teetotaler at home, he complied with her invitation, and drank. From that time till he was awakened by the prayer-bell he had no distinct consciousness. He had an indistinct recollection of being led down some dark, damp steps. He had over one thousand dollars in money with him, and he recollected taking that out. Money, watch, hat, coat,—all were gone. "Can't I get my money and my coat?" he asked. "Yes," said the superintendent, "I can get them for you, but you must go before a magistrate. Your name, place of business, and all about you, must come out and be blazed in the papers." "Then let it all go," he said; "I had rather lose my money than my good name." Money was furnished him; coat, hat, and shoes were supplied, all of which he promptly paid for when his butter reached Boston. His search for things to put into a letter was so amply rewarded, that he will not probably try it again. New York is said to be a very wicked place, full of traps and gins, pitfalls and snares; but gentlemen from the country are the persons who generally fall into them.

## LADIES' FIVE POINTS MISSION. — ORIGIN OF THE WORK.

Seventeen years ago a few ladies assembled in a brown-stone mansion up town, to consult on the best methods of reaching the destitution of the city, and doing missionary work. One of them suggested that it would be better to go where the poor and neglected children really were, and proposed to open a mission at Five Points. It was then a dangerous locality, full of bad men and bad women, the resort of burglars, thieves, and desperadoes, with dark, under-ground chambers, where murderers often hid, where the policeman seldom went, and never unarmed. A person passing through that locality after dark was sure to be assaulted, beaten, and probably robbed. The noise of brawls nightly filled the air; shouts for police and cries of murder brought the inmates from their beds. The proposition that a lady should go into such a locality to do mission work was received with astonishment.

## THE FIELD SELECTED.

Persons who perambulate Broadway, on a pleasant day, who look on the elegantly-dressed throng that crowd the pavement, and through the costly plate-glass at the rich goods displayed, would be slow to believe that within a stone's throw squalid want and criminal woe have their abode. Here lie the Fourth and Sixth Wards, so famous in the history of crime in New York. In this locality one walks amid drunkenness, wretchedness, and suffering, within sound of the rumble of Broadway, within sight of the merry, gay, and well-dressed thousands who move up and down this thoroughfare of the city. No pen

can describe the homes of the lowly where the New York poor lodge. It is a region of wickedness, filth, and woe. Lodging-houses are under ground, foul and slimy, without ventilation, and often without windows, and overrun with rats and every species of vermin. Bunks filled with decayed rags, or canvas bags filled with rotten straw, make the beds. All lodgers pay as they enter these dark domains. The fee is from five to ten cents, and all are welcome. Black and white, young and old, men and women, drunk and sober, occupy the room and fill the bunks. If there are no beds, lodgers throw themselves on the hard, dirty floor, and sleep till morning. Lodging-rooms above ground are numerous in the narrow lanes, and in the dark and dangerous alleys that surround the Five Points. Rooms are rented from two to ten dollars a month, into which no human being would put a dog, — attics, dark as midnight at noonday, without window or door they can shut, without chimney or stove, and crowded with men, women, and little children. Children are born in sorrow, and raised in reeking vice and bestiality, that no heathen degradation can exceed.

## THE NATIONALITY OF THE LOWLY.

Every state in the Union, and every nation almost in the world, have representatives in this foul and dangerous locality. Its tenant and cellar population exceed half a million. One block contains 382 families. Persons composing these families were, 812 Irish, 218 Germans, 186 Italians, 189 Poles, 12 French, 9 English, 7 Portuguese, 2 Welsh, 39 Negroes, 10 Americans. Of religious faiths 118 represented the Protestant, 287 were Jews, 160 Catholics; but of 614 children, only 1

in 66 attended any school. Out of 916 adults, 605 could neither read nor write. In the same block there were 33 underground lodging-houses, ten feet below the sidewalk, and 20 of the vilest grog-shops in the city. During five hours on the Sabbath, two of these grog-shops were visited by 1054 persons, — 450 men and 445 women, 91 boys and 68 girls.

#### THE MISSION BEGUN.

Resolved to attempt mission work in this dangerous and neglected locality, the heroic women who founded the Five Points Mission secured a room opposite the Old Brewery. This famous building stood in the centre of the Five Points. It was filled with a vile and degraded population. Over a thousand persons were tenants in the building. The mission-school opened with a group of rude, untamed children. They were lawless as wild Arabs. The Conference of the Methodist Church assigned Rev. L. M. Pease to this station, and here he commenced the great work with which his Home has been so long and so favorably connected. The ladies purchased the Old Brewery, had it pulled down, and on its site erected the elegant Mission House, which has been such a blessing to the lowly. Besides the school-rooms, and chapel for day and Sunday service, the building contains tenements for sober, industrious poor who are well behaved, and here they find, at a low rent, comfort.

For seventeen years the lady founders of this institution have carried on their great and good work. They still conduct the work. From this institution the first company of sorrowing and neglected chil-

dren were taken to comfortable Christian homes in the West. The kindred institutions of Five Points House of Industry, and others, were founded by men who were once in the employ, and received their lessons from, the Old Brewery Mission. The whole locality has been changed. Nearly twenty years of work, designed to rescue little suffering childhood, and to do good to the perishing, in the name of the Lord, has produced ripe, rich fruit. The Old Brewery has fallen, and a costly mansion, the gift of Christian munificence, occupies its site. The House of Industry stands opposite. Cow Bay and Murderer's Alley, with rookeries and abodes of desperate people, have passed away. Comfortable tenements occupy their place. The hum of busy toil and industry takes the place of reeking blasphemy. Trade, with its marble, granite, and brown-stone palaces, is pushing its way into this vile locality, and is completing the reform which religion and beneficence began. On a festive day, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, the ladies welcome their friends to a sight worth travelling many miles to see. From six hundred to a thousand children, homeless, houseless, and orphaned, each with a new suit or dress made by the lady managers and their friends, singing charmingly, exhibiting great proficiency in education, and a wonderful knowledge of the Bible, sitting down to a well-laid table, it is touching to see. Hotels, marketmen, bakers, confectioners, and friends generally, make liberal contribution to feed the little ones. Loaves large enough for a fancy scull on the Hudson, pyramids of candies, and cakes and good things by the hundred weight, dolls, toys, and presents, are abundant so that each little one bears some gift away.

## A WALK AROUND FIVE POINTS.

A walk through the streets in the neighborhood of this Mission will show where the materials come from of which it is composed. Forty thousand vagrant and destitute children are in this field. Their parents are foreigners. They are too dirty, too ragged, and carry too much vermin about them, to be admitted to the public schools. Their homes are in the dens and stews of the city, where the thieves, vagabonds, gamblers and murderers dwell. With the early light of morning they are driven from their vile homes to pick rags and cinders, collect bones, and steal. They fill the galleries of the low theatres. They are familiar with every form of wickedness and crime. As they grow up they swell the ranks of the dangerous classes. Our thieves, burglars, robbers, rioters, who are the most notorious, are young persons of foreign parentage, between ten and seventeen years of age. The degraded women who tramp the streets in the viler parts of the city, who fill the low dance houses, and wait and tend in low drinking-saloons, graduate in this vile locality. Over a thousand young girls, between the ages of twelve and eighteen, can be found in the Water Street drinking-saloons. To this same character and doom these forty thousand children are hastening. All around this Mission, children can be seen who come up daily from the brothels and dens of infamy which they call their homes, where women and men, black and white, herd together, and where childhood is trained up, by daily beatings and scanty fare, to cruelty and blasphemy. To rescue them, this Mission Home



STREET SWEEPER

was founded. They are made clean, are clad comfortably, and learn to sing the sweet songs about the Savior and the better land. Nearly twenty thousand, since the Mission was founded, have been rescued from these hot-beds of wickedness, and placed in good homes here and at the West. Many, through the kindness of friends, have been sent to seminaries, from which they have graduated with honor. Not a few are first-class mechanics. Some of these hopeless classes, as the world regards them, rescued by the Mission, are clerks and cashiers in banks, insurance offices, and places of trust. Little girls picked up from the streets, found in the gutter, taken from dens of infamy, brought to the Mission by drunken women, — many of whom never knew father or mother, — are now the adopted daughters of wealthy citizens, the wives of first-class mechanics, of lawyers, and princely merchants. They owe their deliverance from disgrace and shame to the outstretched arms of these Missions.

THE MISSION OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

The work of rescuing the fallen and the lost is no longer an experiment. The rooms in which the children are gathered are quite elegant. The decorations are the gifts of friends. If Mary breaks the alabaster box of precious ointment on the Savior's feet, what right has Judas to find fault? It costs him nothing. She will be quite as ready to aid the poor as if she had not given this costly expression of her love. Without pleasant rooms, music, song, and marks of taste, the lower classes cannot be reached. Few are fitted to labor in such mission work. Patience, a loving heart, and

warm sympathy for the distressed, are essential. A teacher neglectful of her dress, untidy in appearance, harsh in voice, and repulsive in manner, can do little good in this field. The children who compose the Mission come from homes of wretchedness and suffering. They know want, they know brutality, they are familiar with cruelty. They enter a new world when they enter the Mission. Kind voices welcome them; tender hands remove the rags and put on comfortable clothes; they are led to the table, where they take the only meal they ever took without stint and without terror. A beautiful lady receives them at the school-room door. The dress and kind tone make the little wanderer think she is an angel. The child never tires looking at her teacher, her ornaments, her pleasant face, and wondering if she will ever be cross, if she will ever strike her, or turn her out of doors. The piano is sounded, and the child is startled as the full tide of song rolls through the room. She has taken her first upward step in life. Could you hear that swelling chorus, so full, so accurate, so joyous, and your eyes were shut, you would imagine that you were in a cathedral, hearing a choir trained by a master's hand, rather than a few hundreds of vagrant children taken from the purlieus of New York.

To-morrow this little rescued one will sing her first song to the Savior. She will try to be like her teacher, and will make an effort at cleanliness. Then she will fix her hair with her fingers, get bits of faded ribbon or colored tissue paper for a rosette, fastened in its place by a pin ornamented with a glass bead. Lord Shaftesbury helped the working-men of England to rise by encouraging a love for flowers, making what were

called window-gardens, and growing brilliant flowers in the windows of the London poor. The labors of a quarter of a century have proved that next to food and clothing the Mission of the Beautiful is the most reforming of all the agencies now employed in London. The lady who founded Five Points Mission carried out the same idea. She opened her school in this degraded locality with the same dress and ornaments that she wore at church or when she called upon a friend. She was received as a visitant from another sphere. Her influence was at once established, and for seventeen years it has remained undiminished. The miserable homes she visited to bless knew that she could not seek the society of Five Points for her own pleasure. Degraded women heard with wonder the story of the Cross from her lips. They believed her when she said she came to them for His sake who left heaven to die for men, and when on earth had not where to lay His head.

#### HOW THE WORK IS SUPPORTED.

Over half a million of property has been consecrated to this great work among the neglected, the abandoned, and the lowly. The whole of it has been a voluntary offering to Christ from the benevolent. This Mission has no funds, but relies upon the voluntary donations of food, clothing, and money which are sent in from every portion of the land. The institution is constantly increasing in efficiency, and enlarging its work. Yet the donations keep pace with its extent. The doors are open to all comers, day and night. Railroads and expressmen bring donations free of charge. The beneficence of our land, in the city and in the country, has

a fitting memorial in this dark and terrible locality of the metropolis.

#### SUCCESS OF THE MISSION WORK.

The leading soprano of one of our largest and most popular churches, who was recently married to the son of a wealthy merchant in New York, was brought to the door of one of the Five Points Mission Houses by a drunken woman, who left her young charge and departed. The little stranger was taken in. She has never known father nor mother: the child of neglect and suffering she evidently was. Scantly clothed with ragged garments, hungry and sorrowful, she found in the Mission the first sympathy she had ever known. She proved to be a bright and cheerful child, and apt to learn. She developed early a taste for music. Kind friends furnished means to cultivate her talent. She has never despised her adopted home, or been ashamed of the friends who rescued her. Had she been born in Fifth Avenue, among the upper ten, her prospects in life could hardly have been fairer.

#### A REMARKABLE MEETING.

On Thanksgiving Day, four young men and their wives met together for a social dinner. One of them was cashier of a leading New York bank, one of them was book-keeper of a large insurance office, another was confidential clerk in a leading mercantile house, the fourth was a rising lawyer. The wives of all were intelligent and accomplished, and moved in good society. The dinner was given at the house of one of the party. It was a genteel residence, handsomely

furnished. The hand of taste and liberality adorned the dwelling and presided over the table. Those four young women were taken out of the slums of New York, when they were little children, by Christian women. They were removed from the reeking atmosphere of vice and blasphemy, and brought under the genial influences of religion. They were turned from the black pathway that thousands tread to the narrow way of intelligence and purity. The young men were born in the dark chambers of lower New York, where the depraved herd by hundreds. They started life with a training that would have fitted them to swell the crowded ranks of the desperate classes, under which they would perhaps have ended their days in the prison or on the gallows. But a kind Providence brought them within the reach of these Mission Homes, and they were saved — saved to themselves, saved to society, saved to their Savior; for all of them are devout members of the church of God, and earnest laborers in the mission work of the city.