

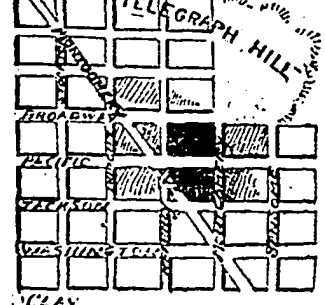
HELL'S HALF-ACRE.

Sights and Scenes on the Barbary Coast.

A JAIL WITHOUT TERRORS.

The Traditions of Sydney Town Still Linger on the Old Spot.

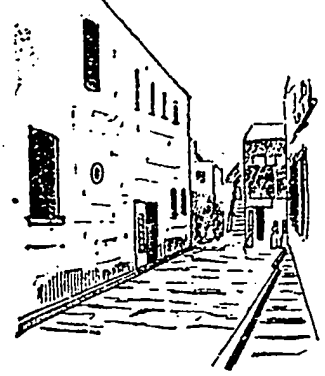
Written for the CHRONICLE.
 It might be supposed that the surroundings of a city and county jail would be such as to prove that evil-doers have a wholesome terror of the "stone jug" in which their brethren are incarcerated in durance vile. So far is this from being the case in San



The Barbary Coast.

Francisco that the three or four blocks surrounding the jail are the chosen resort of the criminal population on the northwest side of the city, and scenes of violence are nightly enacted under the very shadow of the temple of the law, which might challenge the worst records of the Five Points of New York city; Lime street, Liverpool, or Whitechapel, the pride of East London.

And yet the Barbary Coast, as this special section of San Francisco is called, is pure and undefiled as compared with the plague spot of only ten years ago. There are still cutting scenes around the jail almost nightly, and on Sunday mornings, in the wee sma' hours, the region of Montgomery avenue, between Stockton, Broadway, Pacific and Kearney streets, is a satisfactory installment of the Swedenborgian helix.

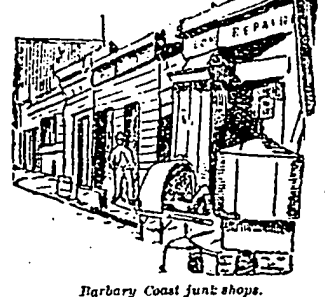


Cuthroat alley.

If, as that august seer has written, the punishment of evil doers is to be put in a place where they can be surrounded by their own kindred and their own chosen companions on earth, then the Barbary Coast, even of today, leaves but little to the imagination.

A CHRONICLE reporter, who made a careful inspection of the locality on four different occasions, twice by day and twice by night, found the devil's regiment of the line undergoing drill with unflinching perseverance and regularity every time. On the last occasion, which fell on a Sunday afternoon, the reporter had the advantage of being accompanied by a guide, to whom every nook and alley of the district had become familiar in a local experience of fourteen years.

"Barbary Coast has seen its best



Barbary Coast junk shops.

days," said the man sadly. "There is only one time of the year now to remind us old-stayers of the good old days. That is when the whalers come in, which will be in about a month's time. It is not exactly healthy to be around Pacific street after midnight just then."

The pilgrimage was begun on Kearney street, near Jackson. The guide pointed to a handsome brick building, now occupied as a French liquor store. "That," said he, "is the place they used to call 'Murderers' Corner.' It was formerly kept by 'Happy Jack Harrington,' who also owned the old dive at the southeast corner of Third and Mission, down in the cellar. Several murders and cutting scrapes occurred at both these places. This store is quite a respectable place now. In fact the opening of Montgomery



Barbary Coast roustabouts.

avenue has broken up the worst resorts on the Barbary Coast."

Entering a saloon on Kearney street near Jackson, on the east side, there were found about half a dozen horribly dissipated looking hags seated at tables with men of the same general appearance as themselves. Gin, rum and bad beer had painted all their faces of a lurid hue, the faithful reflex of evil passions within. "These," said the guide, as he pointed to the women, "are the 'battle-axes' or 'blisters' of Barbary. They live on drink, you may say, and spend about half their time in jail."

It was Sunday afternoon, and as the conversation of these walking delegates of the great Amalgamated Society of Total Depravity was of a character to rarely stir the air and cause a sensation of moral and physical nausea, the exit to the fresh air became a positive relief. The two adjacent saloons were merely glanced at, but little doubt was left in the mind that they were tenanted by beings of the same order.

"About 4000 persons sleep during the year in the lodging-houses up stairs," said the guide, pointing to the words

"lodgings" modestly imprinted on the walls. "The saloons on the opposite, or western side, used to be pretty tough places; and there is a fair chance now for a stranger or 'hoosier' to get robbed in the song-and-dance dives below. But these places are quite respectable to what they used to be."

A little further on, near the corner of Montgomery avenue, a 'hoodlum' beer saloon was pointed out. "It is not a bad sort of place," said the cynical mentor; "that is to say, there's nothing of the kind we shall see presently. It's a great place for 'sitters.' I mean men who go in, get 6 cents' worth of beer once in a while and sleep all they want."

Turning up Pacific street, between Stockton and Kearny, the scene became decidedly more pronounced and lively. But even here it was explained that many places which, ten years ago, had been exceedingly "tough," are now run in most respectable style. Such, for instance, is the case with the house 621 Pacific street, now known as the Hotel des Alpes. It was in the basement of this building that the discovery of Chinese bones in wholesale quantities caused a tremendous sensation in the early days of the anti-Mongolian movement. Right opposite this place is the great cosmopolitan song-and-dance hall, known as Bottle Koenig's. It is not exactly the ideal Bethel of a Methodist missionary, though it is quite as noisy on a Sunday afternoon as a Virginia colored camp-meeting, when watermelon and smuggled five-cent whisky have got in their work. There is not a nation on earth that is not represented some time of the day or night at Bottle-Koenig's. It is a noisy gathering at times, but not tough in the Barbary Coast sense of the term.

Most of the shanties on the same side of Pacific street as Bottle Koenig's,

the jail, and those immediately facing it might have been thoroughly respectable, but the appearance of their female tenants belied it. At nearly every window there was a face, with the suggestion of youth about it; a feminine form invested with gay scarlet attire, after the Babylonian model presumably; a general prevalence of cigarettes pinched between lips whose coral hues were due to art. Clearly the jail had no terrors for these Lusitanian and Mexican brunettes, or for their patrons.

"This is 'Hell's Kitchen,'" said the guide, indicating a beer saloon on Broadway, nearly opposite the embouchure of Kearny street, and right at the foot of the craggy side of Telegraph hill.

"Hell's Kitchen" is not a misnomer in the whaling season. The principal feature is a long bench, on which festive couples sit or recline, while some nautical Bacchanal or frenzied Monard sings a song or twangs a banjo, and Mother S— looks on in serene contentment and approval. It is a tough place, emphatically.

Perhaps the worst part of the entire Barbary Coast, as at present defined, is the hill slope on Kearny street, between Pacific and Broadway. Quite a considerable portion of it was formerly



Little Jim.

occupied by the old Astor House, run by Harry Howard's gang. Most of them found their way to San Quentin, but he "ducked out." To-day there are two or three "hotels" in the block, but most of the houses are occupied by cyprians and persons whose occupation would sorely puzzle a census taker to define. About half way up the hill is a notorious saloon which has acquired its reputation chiefly from the number of men who have been "shanghaied" therefrom. The explanation was in this instance furnished to the visitor by the sight of a number of men lying on the benches in heavy slumber, almost amounting to unconsciousness.

The sides of the hill, especially on the east slope, are full of alleys and mysterious passages, having a usefulness of their own. The Chinese element, which takes as kindly to vicious surroundings as flies do to meat, is represented here and on East Pacific street by several laundries, which do a large business, for their patrons are averse to even that sort of industry which would enable them to be clean as the result of their own efforts. The alleys of the section of Kearny street between Broadway and Pacific are a reproach

to humanity. In them may be seen at all hours wretched little children, driven out of doors to beg, borrow or steal their daily bread, while their fathers and mothers will vile potatoes in the neighboring saloons. The angels and the stars nightly bear witness at the throne of the Eternal that these little children await a day of reward at the bar of divine justice, for they have little hope from man. If there be a fond delusion that the law protects girls of tender years from a life of shame, a very few hours' watching on the Barbary Coast will convey a different notion. The ancient mythology, which represented old Chronos as devouring his own children, failed to find a prototype for the mother who will cheerfully sell her own fifteen-year-old daughter into infamy. In Barbary this is practically an every-day matter.

In the approaches to these alleys, lurking wherever a doorway will screen them from the police, there may be seen all day long the unspeakable villains who make a living by bulldozing the miserable women around them, and robbing the hapless pilgrim or drunken sailor whom fate has cast in their way. It is no exaggeration to say that the tanks at the central station might be filled with these gentry at one haul on this street alone. And this being so, it is not surprising that the police on the division return from duty in a state of complete physical exhaustion, having been during the same night judge, jury, counsel and court of final appeal in a score of cases.

It would seem from an inspection of the locality that there is only one kind of reform that can do any good. In the words of Hamlet the remedy would be "Reform it altogether."

as far up as Stockton street, are now occupied as Chinese stores and laundries. In the days gone by this block contained the creme de la creme of Barbary Coast society. That is to say, it was "tough" beyond all description. In one shanty visited during the quietude of a Sunday afternoon a poker game was going on in which five Chinese and two white men were actively interested. A white man cheered enthusiastically when one of the white players swept away the pot with a full hand—three nines and two fours. In the basement other games were in progress, the Caucasian and Mongolian races mingling most amicably. By some devious rear paths the interior of an opium joint was reached, but it would be easier for an inexperienced person to find his way through Robin



A sketch in Hell's Kitchen.

Hood's maze than to thread again the dark underground alleys which intersect this portion of Chinatown like the tunnels in a rabbit warren, or the branches of the Pennsylvania Railroad in a coal district.

In the same section of Pacific, between Kearny and Stockton, the guide paused and pointed to a large brick building with the Chinese flag floating over it. "That was a celebrated place in its time," said he. "It was the old 'Bull Run' kept by Ned Allen and his brother. I think there were three of them. Two of these brothers were shot. There was any amount of shooting and cutting in the place, which was only closed up about five years ago."

In imparting this cheerful information the guide had unconsciously paused at the door of the house, 634 Pacific. He explained the pause by



Little Emily.

saying that two years ago a barkeeper was killed in the house by some Chinese, who, of course, were never discovered.

Close by was another saloon and house of general resort, pointed out as a great favorite with Tom Dlythe in his days of uncontrolled bilthoseness. It opened conveniently into Montgomery avenue and Pacific street.

The old Barbary Coast having been thus partially investigated, the way to the new was quickly found by turning the corner of Montgomery avenue and Broadway.

"Yonder," said the guide, who spoke throughout in the same tone of listless and perfunctory interest that was formerly evinced by a Mint guide on visitors' days—"yonder is the place where the saginette game is supposed to be played." The reporter took notice that the jail was in the same field of view. "They have never been able to convict; very strange, isn't it?"

There was a merry wink in the fellow's eye, just such as the elder Mr. Weller might have worn when impressing on Mr. Pickwick the necessity and easy procurement of "a halleybi."

Close by the jail, in the same corner



Little Emily's father.

of "hell's half acre," a motion of the mental digit indicated Hinckley alley, the headquarters of the Spanish colony and with a bad reputation for cutting scrapes. The houses around