

A RAID ON THE STALE-BEER DIVES

MIDNIGHT roll-call was over in the Elizabeth Street police-station, but the reserves were held under orders. A raid was on foot, but whether on the Chinese fan-tan games, on the opium joints of Mott and Pell Streets, or on dens of even worse character, was a matter of guess-work in the men's room. When the last patrolman had come in from his beat, all doubt was dispelled by the brief order "To the Bend!" The stale-beer dives were the object of the raid. The policemen buckled their belts tighter, and with expressive grunts of disgust took up their march toward Mulberry Street. Past the heathen temples of Mott Street—there was some fun to be gotten out of a raid *there*—they trooped, into "the Bend," sending here and there a belated tramp scurrying in fright toward healthier quarters, and halted at the mouth of one of the hidden alleys. Squads were told off and sent to make a simultaneous descent on all the known tramps' burrows in the block. Led by the sergeant, ours—I went along as a kind of war correspondent—groped its way in single file through the narrow rift between slimy walls to the tenements in the rear. Twice during our trip we stumbled over tramps, both women, asleep in the passage. They were quietly passed to the rear, receiving sundry prods and punches on the trip, and headed for the station in the grip of a policeman as a sort of advance guard of the coming army. After what seemed half a mile of groping in the dark we emerged finally into the alley proper, where light es-

caping through the cracks of closed shutters on both sides enabled us to make out the contour of three rickety frame tenements. Snatches of ribald songs and peals of coarse laughter reached us from now this, now that of the unseen burrows.

"School is in," said the sergeant drily as we stumbled down the worn steps of the next cellar-way. A kick of his boot-heel sent the door flying into the room.

A room perhaps a dozen feet square, with walls and ceiling that might once have been clean—assuredly the floor had not in the memory of man, if indeed there was other floor than hard-trodden mud—but were now covered with a brown crust that, touched with the end of a club, came off in shuddering showers of crawling bugs, revealing the blacker filth beneath. Grouped about a beer-keg that was propped on the wreck of a broken chair, a foul and ragged host of men and women, on boxes, benches, and stools. Tomato-cans filled at the keg were passed from hand to hand. In the centre of the group a sallow, wrinkled hag, evidently the ruler of the feast, dealt out the hideous stuff. A pile of copper coins rattled in her apron, the very pennies received with such showers of blessings upon the giver that afternoon; the faces of some of the women were familiar enough from the streets as those of beggars forever whining for a penny, "to keep a family from starving." Their whine and boisterous hilarity were alike hushed now. In sullen,

An all-night two-cent restaurant in "the Bend" [flashlight photo, 3 A.M.]