

PIG ALLEY FOLKS.

I.

One of the queerest, dirtiest, meanest streets in the city is Pig Alley. It is not exactly a street, nor an alley. It has queer turns and crooks in it and one never knows when he reaches the end. There are many corners—the German corner, the Irish corner, the Russian corner, and the “nigger” corner, and in between the corners are the dwellings of the poor whites. It is a motley crew that lives there in Pig Alley.

There is no paint wasted on the houses in Pig Alley. They are all black and ugly, and the soot and smoke from the engines that go whizzing by all the time make the houses blacker and uglier every day. They do not all face the street, some do not face anything. They are just huddled together as if they were trying to keep warm. Pig Alley folks often use rags instead of window glass, and let their chimneys tumble down, and “stop a hole to keep the wind away” with rubbish that I fear has no connection with the imperial Cæsar.

The Alley can boast no sidewalks save rickety ones, and of these not many. In summer time the trees—for there are trees even in Pig Alley—hide some of the ugliness, but in winter they show it more painfully. Then the snow comes, and makes even Pig Alley look clean and pretty for a while but it does not last long. In summer the Alley is the very paradise of dirty people. The dirty children play and quarrel and cry in the dirty street by day and the dirty men and women quarrel and fight there by night. New Pig Alley folks are born and old ones die, but the Alley only stops and says that it has to be so, and life goes terribly on again.

II.

The children in Pig Alley are many—a whole regiment from each of the corners. They are a good deal like other children. They like to tear their ragged clothes and get their dirty faces dirtier. They like to

fight, and throw stones at each other. They like to make a noise—all children do. They like to get old tin pans and beat on them and march around the Alley like “sogers.”

Sometimes there is war among the youngsters of the Alley. The corners do not get along very well together. The Biddies and Mikes hate the George Washington Thomas Jefferson Perkinses, and the Heinrichs and Minas hate the Biddies and Mikes, and they all hate the poor little Russian children with the unspeakable names. When the floods come up into Pig Alley from the creek not far away, the Heinrichs are glad because it's “fun to see the Russian women cry.”

Sometimes the children go to school, if they can get clothes enough. The teacher asks them who was the greatest man that ever lived, and Germans and Irish and Russians and all vociferate “George Washington.” Then the teacher has them sing—

Let Englishmen fight for Victoria their queen,
Let Russian hurrah for their Czars,
Let Irishmen fight for their banner of green,
But *we* for the stripes and the stars.”

And when you hear the “we” come out so strongly you may begin to have faith in these little Pig Alley folks, to think there is hope for them.

III.

Little Martha Washington Perkins is the blackest little girl in the school. Her dress is always neat and clean, though patched with varied colors, and her calico apron is as stiff and shiny as starch and a patient ironer can make it. She is the cleanest of all Pig Alley children, but her face—it is oh, so black! And I fear that not even the most infallible soap could make it white.

She hates the little Biddies and Mikes who live down on the Irish corner. They called her “Snowball” once, and now they always call her that—only sometimes they say “nigger Snowball.”

The fine gentleman who came to visit the school one day did not know all this. He thought he was very kind when he patted her on the head and picked up her book