

THE BOWERY.



It was the opinion of the most observant traveler I ever knew that no city in Christendom possesses a street comparable with the Bowery in New York city. His comment on the Bowery was that it is the only noble and important thoroughfare which is foreign to the city and country that possess it. I think it is the belief of nearly all traveled Americans that the Bowery is the most interesting thoroughfare in America. If there are any who are inclined to dispute the belief, it will repay them to consider the Bowery even more closely than did my friend who called it foreign to its country, for he supposed it to be a German street in America. It is largely German, but it is much else besides, and the more it is studied the more cosmopolitan it will seem, and the more peculiarities it will reveal.

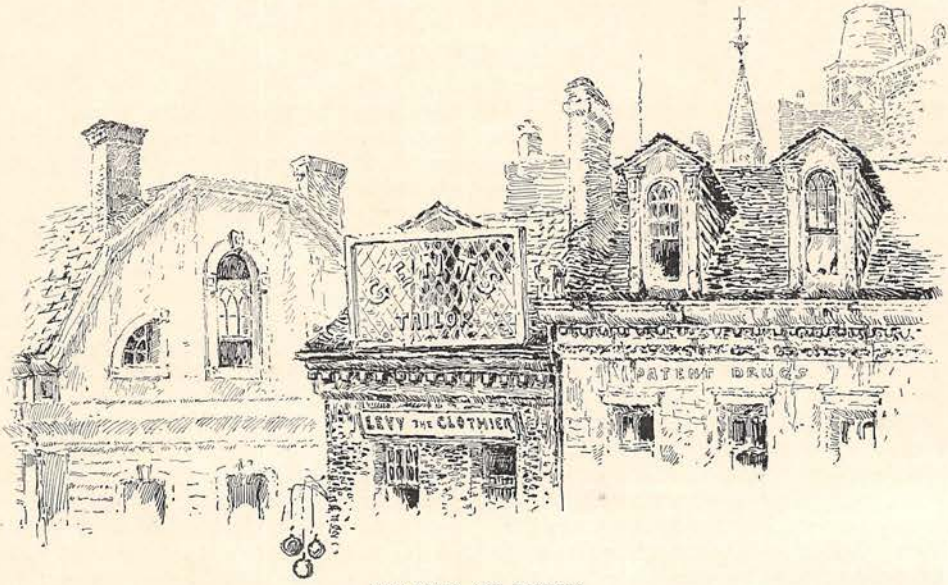
In endeavoring to compare it with some other crowded, humming, Babylonish artery of petty commerce and jostling human surplussage, the mind turns to the Strand in London. But it does not rest there, for though the Strand is about as long as the Bowery, it is a lane by comparison, and though the Strand lives one life by day and another by night, as the Bowery does, it is as English as the rest of London, and it is mainly dignified, respectable, and well-to-do. It is comprehensible to any one who walks the length of it once; but the oftener you walk the Bowery the more heterogeneous and contradictory you will find it. It is good to the pure in heart, criminal to the wicked, abandoned and disreputable to the outcast. It is the main boulevard of a population of nearly 300,000 East-Siders—their Strand for practical, matter-of-fact shopping by day, and for the pleasures of the theater and the concert-garden by night. But they maintain only two sides of it. Its half-dozen other characters rely for maintenance on strangers from every corner of the world—because to the immigrant and the poor new-comer it is the great show street of the town.

The Bowery is very old. It got its name from the first settlers of Manhattan, and dates with them. The word *bouwerij* is Dutch for farm, or country-seat, and our street derives its name from the fact that it ran through the bowery, or farm, of Peter Stuyvesant, Governor-in-chief of Amsterdam in the New Netherlands, and of the Dutch West India Islands.

His estate reached from the highway to the East River, and the Stuyvesant mansion, just north of St. Mark's Church on Second Avenue, remains in a modern and enlarged form. His dust is hidden from us by a great stone that incloses a vault under the east wall of the present church, which is called "St. Mark's in the Bowery," though it was built in 1795, more than a century after the Dutch governor died.

In English colonial days the Bowery was the beginning, or the end, of the Boston Road, and during the Revolution, the present Atlantic Garden was the Bull's Head Tavern, or sojourning-place and exchange of the New York drovers and butchers of that day. Next door, on the site now occupied by the famous old Bowery Theater, was the cattle-market, an inclosed lot for the herding and sale of cattle. There the British made it a custom to enjoy bear-baiting, that sport to which it was afterward so wittily said that the Puritans objected, not because it hurt the bears but because it amused the people.

Then came a period when the Bowery had grown to be not only a long and important street, but a respectable one. Tom Hamblin was the manager of the old Bowery Theater at that time, and the first players of the country and of England performed there to notable audiences. They cannot have escaped severer criticism than their sons, the Booths and Wallacks of our day, have been accustomed to, for a preacher of that time made a solemn sensation by saying that when he passed that theater he saw the people jostling one another down the steps into a great black, yawning hole under the ground, and over their heads he read the awful, the ominous words, "The Pit." In those days many rich and aristocratic families lived over on the East Side beyond the Bowery. The Quakers, now few and seldom heard of, were numerous and notable among them, and East Broadway—the heart of the Polish Hebrew quarter—was a splendid street. But the city grew, and with its growth came the development of the Volunteer Fire Department, and with that the Bowery changed again. Many of the finest young men of the town belonged to the fire-companies at first; sons of rich men and young mechanics pulled shoulder to shoulder at the ropes. But an era of ruffianism was at hand—an era that produced in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore such scenes and conditions as we can scarcely comprehend to-day. Gangs of fighting men infested various localities and terrorized the community. The rivalry and strife of the fire-companies in part attracted them and in part



OLD ROOFS AND DORMERS.

developed them. From striving to see which company could reach a fire earliest they came to striving to prevent each from getting to the fires at all. In some degree they were the cause of fires—when fate was kind, and conflagrations were too infrequent to please them. In this era was developed “the Bowery boy,” the queerest product of America in his day.

The Bowery boy began with more good than evil in his composition. In the daytime he worked for his living; at night he aimed only to be a dandy and a fireman. He sang negro melodies very prettily, danced well, was a devoted patron of the theater, and worshiped good women. But with the growth of the city he came to have his own way to a greater extent than was good for him, and his type grew worse and worse, until the Bowery often became a bloody battle-ground between the police and the ruffians that the Bowery boys had become. In time he became a drinking, fighting, and gambling character, with a modicum of the high principles and stern morality in heroic directions that we afterward found in some of Bret Harte’s Pacific Coast characters. Desirous of punching somebody at all times, he especially liked to punch persons who were rude or cruel to the female sex. He was intensely patriotic if he happened to be American, and it was in his time that Americanism, or Know-nothingism, was very rampant and bellicose. There are men alive to-day—old men, to be found at Washington Market or behind fast horses on “the Road”—who are given to wailing over the degeneracy of the times, and to boasting that they knew the day when the greatest prize-fighters and thugs and punchers were all true Americans!

The Bowery boy was very proud and full of an affectation of rough airs that he considered exquisite. He dyed his mustache jet-black, oiled his hair profusely, and was much given to loud perfume. He wore a lustrous silk hat, a flannel shirt with a huge black-silk scarf under its collar, trousers that were very tight and needed no suspenders, a coat that he usually carried on his arm, well-polished boots (not shoes), and carried a cigar tilted heavenward above his nose, and spread his elbows apart so that nobody could pass him on a narrow pavement without jostling him. Of course if any one jostled him he was insulted, and when he was insulted he fought. In the days of his glory he scorned to use any weapon but his fists. His voice was modeled after that of the fire-trumpet, and he had a language all his own. He called to his sweetheart, “Here, gal,” “Come, gal,” and when he wanted any one to hold the nozzle of a hose he said, “You, dere, take der butt.”

It is said that Thackeray much enjoyed meeting a Bowery boy. The great novelist desired to go to Houston street. He was not certain whether he was right in pursuing the direction he had taken, so he stepped up to one of these East-Side Adonises and said: “Sir, can I go to Houston street this way?”

“Yes, I guess yer kin, sonny,” said the boy—“if yer behave yerself.”

If you walk down the Bowery to-day you will see traces of all these eras except the Dutch, and that remains in the queer title of the street, as I have said. Though no other street shows such a blending of discordant qualities, it is yet true that no artery in the

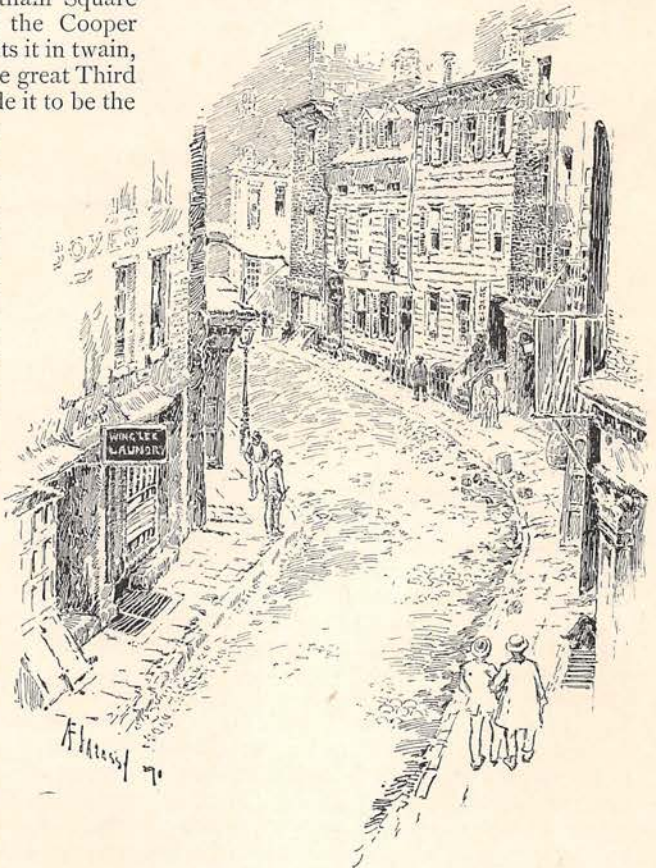
town has yielded so slowly to the modernization that the rest of the city has undergone. It is true the elevated railway, of the original single-legged pattern, skirts each pavement, but it passes many and many an old-time New York dwelling the third story of which still consists of the old dormer windows piercing a tilted roof, which, with the slanting wooden cellar doors, were the characteristics of the best houses of the city fifty or sixty years ago. Farther down the street the railway passes two or three wooden houses of that earlier era when it was permitted to build with wood in down-town New York. It even passes over a mile-post bearing the legend, "1 mile from the City Hall." It rattles the windows in the old Bull's Head Tavern of Revolutionary times, and it keeps a-trembling more than one queer, crooked relic of the English days, like little Doyers street, which is also mainly wooden, and which, though only a couple of blocks long, turns and dodges in several directions like a thief eluding a policeman. It is not a nice street, and it looks as if it were doubling upon its own unsavory reputation.

The Bowery is something less than a mile in length. It reaches from Chatham Square to the little wedge in front of the Cooper Union at Eighth street which splits it in twain, sending one half up-town to be the great Third Avenue, and one half close beside it to be the Fourth Avenue. It has the width of both these wide avenues together. Its width varies, as becomes an ancient thoroughfare, but I think it averages more than one hundred feet from house-line to house-line, sixty-five feet being the roadway. If you are a stranger, and walk down the Bowery in the daytime without a guide, you will be apt to notice nothing more particular about it than that it is an enormous, crowded, noisy street of retail shops, lodging-houses, and museums. Any old New Yorker will show you some very old and respectable shops—notably a grocer's, a baker's, and a shop for the supply of firemen's goods—which were established there in the days of other generations. But these are not so interesting to a stranger as the many little stores that give a distinct character to the street. Except in the main street of Havre, I never saw so many shops for the sale of jewelry as there are on the Bowery. Most of them display

new, cheap, and flashy ornaments; half a dozen are what are called pawnbrokers' sales shops, or shops for the sale of unredeemed pledges; one is a mart for duplicated presents received by persons on their wedding-days, on anniversary occasions, or at Christmas.

The pawnbrokers' sales shops have held me before their windows many and many an hour since childhood, and to-day when I pause before one I feel a keener touch of the impulses of youth than anything else can bring back to me. There is much humbug in the Bowery, but there is no humbug in what these stores display. Pathos and tragedy are constantly exhibited and enacted on every block of that throbbing avenue, but it all seems to me as nothing beside the tragic and pathetic tales that are told by the goods in these store-fronts. The vanity of man is felt by every poor stranger who is knocked about and jostled by the crowds that throng the pavement; but for a sermon upon vanity I know no text in all New York like the contents of one of these windows.

The very manner in which the dealers have shoveled the goods out for exhibition is im-

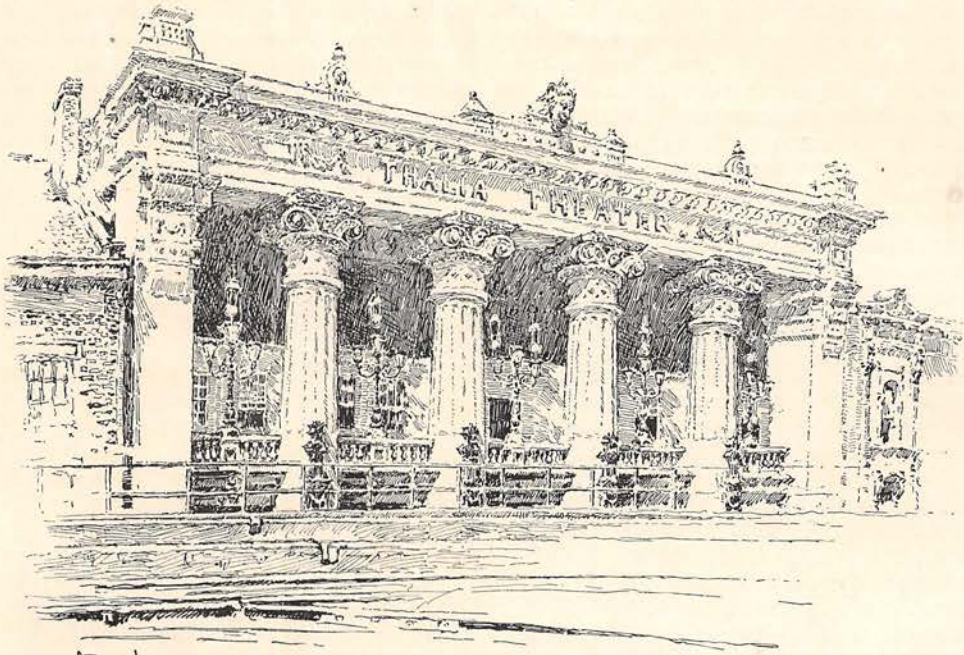


DOYERS STREET.

pressive. It is usually their rule to heap the bottoms of the windows a foot or two deep with the less showy and bulkier relics of misfortune, and then to display the more peculiar and tempting goods on swinging shelves hung close to the panes. Here you see medals presented for heroism in saving life or for bravery in battle, swords given to men for taking part in actions that are household words, badges

was only fancied, of vanity that toppled, or of applause that beckoned anguish.

Whether the taste for cheap jewelry is stronger with our adopted fellow-citizens than with ourselves I am not sure, but one sees the force of foreign inclination unmistakably in other features of the street. The frequency of signs painted with Hebrew characters in German words, even in the windows of the banks,



UPPER STORY OF THE THALIA THEATER. (FORMERLY THE OLD BOWERY.)

of bejeweled gold bearing the arms of petted militia regiments, all showing that their owners were once confident of fortune and yet must have come to desperate passes. A medal of silver to the best scholar in a great sectarian school, one of gold to the champion clog-dancer of Australia, a golden-headed malacca cane won by —, the most popular police officer in —, these call to the mind happy scenes that no one dreamed would have such forlorn sequences. But what of the scores of opera-glasses and bracelets engraved with such mottos as "To Laura on Christmas," or "Isabel," or "With J. M. F.'s love to Sadie"? Rings, bracelets, breastpins, jewels especially devised, and curios which no one would part with except from stern necessity, are in the heaps and on the shelves—literally in burden by the ton when you take them all together; and yet every article in the mass carries its sermon of happiness despoiled, of security that

is no more mistakable than the occasional "delicatessen" shops, as the Germans call those places which are nearly like our "fancy groceries." The number of places for the sale of musical instruments is so great as to indicate that the majority of their customers are from continental Europe, and in the still larger number of cheap photograph-galleries the same influence is apparent. To stop and examine the tintypes and *cartes-de-visite* displayed by the photographers is to carry yourself out of America at once. Not only are the types of faces mainly Teutonic and Slavonic, but the sitters have shown a very foreign fondness for being pictured in fancy costumes and maskers' dresses. They pose as kings and queens, as huntsmen, as Swiss and Polish and Magyar peasants, the matrons and maidens in very short skirts and the men in feathered caps and velvet knee-breeches. Those other men and women who are plainly dressed have kept their

hats and bonnets on more often than is customary elsewhere, and the babies appear to be victims of a strange rule which requires them to be photographed in nudity or the state closest to it. The source of the fancy costumes is seen in the many places for the hire of masquerade dresses that are in the Bowery and close beside it in the cross-streets, these places being always up one flight of stairs. The costumes are hired for use at masquerade-balls, and it is on the morning after such a ball, before the dresses are returned, that the dancers wear them once again in the photograph-galleries.

Dancing is almost as popular a form of dissipation with the people of the Bowery region as with the idlers of fashionable society, but the high rentals and the great space required for the amusement have limited the number of assembly-rooms to one on the main avenue, the dancers finding cheaper quarters in a score of halls near at hand in the side streets. The excuses that these adopted Americans make for associating together are so numerous that it is not at all an uncommon thing for a mechanic to belong to four or five associations of his countrymen, while the shopkeepers, wine-dealers, and politicians who have money to spare and popularity to win often belong to twenty, thirty, and in one case with which I am acquainted to eighty such organizations. The first society such a man must join is that of the people who hail from the same European village, or province, or principality. To such a club the women of each family belong by right and without charge. Next in order is either the singing society, or the sharpshooting club, both of which are almost certain to spring out of the first organization. Then come the branches or chapters of whatever secret societies or mutual-benefit leagues happen to have most attracted the men of that particular body or nationality. There may be half a dozen of these. After these there are neighborhood turn-vereins, or gymnastic clubs, the general associations for bringing men of each nationality together, in a few cases charity or church societies, and so on, until if a man who can afford it has no more clubs of his own to conquer, he is forced to join those that grow out of the union of men from some other city or province whence a friend has emigrated.

Fraternity and fun are at the bottom of all these organizations—a kind of fun we Anglo-Saxons are too stiff to enjoy, and a sort of vigorous and ostentatious fraternity that we do not see the necessity for as clearly as we should if we were, like these persons, beginning life anew among strangers in a foreign land. No matter what the aim or title of the organization, dancing and the drinking of wine or beer seem to us the main purposes of the members.

The so-called home clubs—of people of one district—exhibit the purest democracy that is possible, for they meet upon equal terms, although among the immigrants are well-to-do shopkeepers, educated professional men, poor mechanics, clerks, and a very human mixture of the shrewd, the shiftless, the industrious, the stupid, and the ambitious. I have known a wage-earner to be president or “king” over many men of considerable means and pretensions, and in that case the “queen” who sat beside the mechanic on the coronation day was the wife of an educated and prosperous man, the first or second in his profession in this country. The king was elected, but the queen got her crown by her marksmanship with an air-gun before a paper target. The only object of this society was to bring together the people from a Rhenish village for a grand dance and feast of new sausage and new wine once a year. Thus united, the men established a so-called sharpshooter's club to make an excuse for another annual ball and as many days as possible of drinking in suburban picnic-grounds. They also established a singing club designed to furnish music at all gatherings, solemn, sad, or merry, and for another dance once a year.

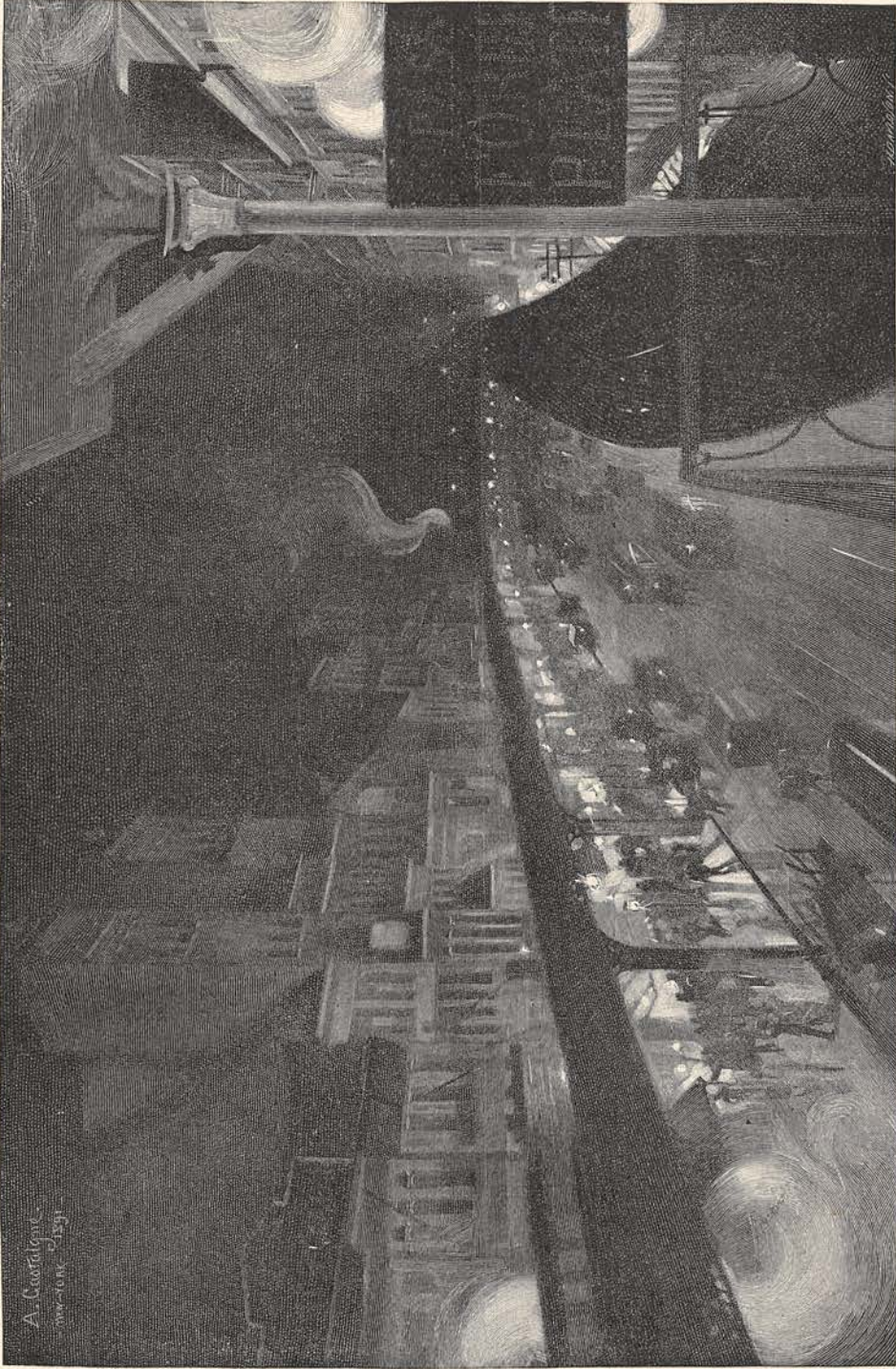
I have accidentally run across many queer clubs among these foreigners, and have learned that there must be five hundred quite as peculiar of which I have never heard. Any excuse is employed for bringing their fellow-countrymen together. In one case a band called itself “The Pfaelzer Humorous Club,” and met around a table whenever a fine was to be paid. The fines were levied in this order: A keg of beer upon the birth of a son, the club tankard of beer (a splendid carved cup holding two quarts) on the birth of a girl, a glass all around for talking politics. If my readers were all New Yorkers I should not need, in parting with this phase of the life I am describing, to say that these clubs and people are nearly all respectable, orderly, industrious, and valuable citizens.

Merely in passing I spoke of the “lodging-houses” as notable features of the Bowery. They are almost peculiar to it. There must be a score of them. Invariably they occupy the upper stories of the larger and newer buildings along the huge and swarming thoroughfare, and therefore passengers in the elevated cars get the clearest idea of their interiors. From the pavement all that is seen of them are their signs, which read about like this:

EAST SIDE HOUSE.
FOR GENTLEMEN ONLY.
Rooms, 15 cents.

or

AMERICA HOTEL.
LODGINGS FOR MEN ONLY.
Nice Rooms, 25 cents.



A. Castaigne
1871

DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE BOWERY FROM THE GRAND STREET STATION OF THE ELEVATED RAILWAY.

ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

Within recent years these have multiplied to such an extent as to bring about a keen competition, and he who runs may read the force of this in single lines that have been added to many of the signs. These addenda all indicate a general desire to do more than supply mere rooms as of old. "Baths free of charge," is the announcement of one landlord; "Reductions by the week," another offers; "A Cup of Good Coffee served Mornings to Each Lodger," says a third. As you look into each house from the Elevated Railway you invariably see a large assembly-room, bare-walled but clean, and set with tables and chairs. There is no hour of the day when there are not many men in each room, some merely lounging in the chairs, some reading papers, some playing dominoes, and nearly all smoking. In passing some of these lodgings a glimpse is had of bedrooms which rent for a quarter of a dollar a night with a cup of coffee gratis. They are mere closets made by running partitions up five feet apart from the floor to the ceiling. Each contains a cot, and sometimes a chair. There is no appurtenance for anything except sleeping, a common wash-room being elsewhere provided. The men one sees in these places are nearly all young, mainly at the threshold of manhood. It is a general impression that they are either criminals or hardened characters, and though I am certain this does them injustice, I have never been able to satisfy myself to what extent they are injured by the suspicion. That there are among them many petty thieves and parasites who live upon outcast women is certainly true, and I suspect it requires great strength of character for a poor, stranded victim of circumstances who drifts into one of these places to resist the overtures that come to him from such wretches. Yet I know that many a poor huckster and sober wage-earner who has only a bare foothold in the town is obliged to put up at these lodging-houses, and it stands to reason that in the course of every year thousands of decent, ambitious strangers who come to the great city to make a living or a fortune must perforce begin their new career in these honeycombs. Now and then such a man shoots himself in one of these places or throws himself out of the window upon the pavement below.

By the way, it would not be easy to make most readers believe how trifling a thing a suicide is in the Bowery. It is not because there are so very many, since death's harvest by that means does not exceed two hundred and forty a year throughout the whole city, but it is rather on account of the preoccupation of the people and the summary action of the authorities. The shot is heard by very few. Neighbors of long standing do not know one another, so

that the persons in the house where the death occurs deal only with the authorities, and no one spreads the news along the block. An ambulance calls for the body, and then there is the greatest stir, for a knot of idlers always gathers to find out what called the ambulance. The little crowd collects, and hides what is brought out of the house. The average busy New Yorker feels no interest at all in the matter, for it is his life habit to avoid crowds. The ambulance drives away, and it is not until they read the papers next day that the people on the very block on which the tragedy occurred become aware that it took place.

Three notable Bowery institutions that attract attention in the daytime have not been mentioned. They are the drinking-places, the dime museums, and the eating-houses. It will seem like an exaggeration, but I carefully counted them before I put down the number of places in which liquor is sold on the ground floors, alone, of the buildings along the Bowery. There are eighty-two such places, or nearly six to every block. The street is fourteen blocks long, and there are sixty-five places where drink is sold on its east side and seventeen on its west side. As there are five blocks on the west side of the street on which no such places occur, the reader can imagine how thick the bars must be on other blocks. This total number includes four music-halls, as many restaurants and oyster-houses where bottled beverages are sold, two or three wine-houses, one wholesale liquor-store, and the bars connected with several theaters and variety-halls. Some of the saloons have glittering exteriors and costly fittings, but not one is of the so-called first class. In the main they are cheap places of a low class, the number of them being so great as to reduce the profits to a minimum. A few staid and respectable German places are in the number, and one orderly resort—the Atlantic Garden—boasts one of the most profitable bars in a city where there are single counters over which \$500 is passed every day in exchange for drinks. Lager beer is of course the standard tippel of the Bowery, and it flows there in such torrents that I am not guilty of the slightest exaggeration in saying that early on Sunday morning, after a busy Saturday night, the very air that is breathed in the great avenue is weighted with the odor of soured beer.

The eating-houses are not nearly so numerous, though their comparison with the drinking-saloons is greater than the proportion of bread to sack which Falstaff deemed sufficient. The lodging-houses support many restaurants, and as the Bowery is a principal artery, the transient trade in food is sufficient to maintain as many more. Again competition shows its paring hand, for in front of some of the eating-houses

one sees announcements that "large portions" of roast beef, mutton, lamb, pork, and veal are offered at eight cents, with bread and potatoes thrown in. Ten cents is the standard price for such provision, and, since milk, coffee, and tea are usually sold at five cents, it is possible to purchase a solid and nutritious meal for a dime and a half. A moment's calculation shows, therefore, that a man may eat and lodge in the Bowery with a good bed and three meals a day for \$4.90 a week, and with a fifteen-cent bed and eight-cent dishes for \$2.73 a week.

It sometimes seems to me that there is no avenue of profit or of commerce that is so illuminated by genius as the Bowery museum business. If ingenuity be a form of genius, there cannot be any doubt that I am right. A few visits to these resorts will satisfy the more intelligent citizens, and the visits will naturally be paid in early youth. But the populace as a whole is not characterized by the greater degrees of intelligence, and it is surprising to note how skilfully the managers of these places keep astir the ready curiosity of the mob. As much color and oil as have distinguished the galleries of the Louvre have been spent upon the huge canvases that all but cover the museum buildings. Sometimes the garish signs and pictures completely conceal the façades of the building and block up the windows, it having been found that many of the wonders on exhibition suffer less by gaslight than by the blaze of day. A museum is fairly started when it has a mass of gorgeous paintings, a tout, or crier, at the door, a ticket-taker in the lobby, and a band of three musicians limping, squeaking, and pounding just within the inclosure. I have known little of the interiors within recent years, but I see the signs frequently, and I have observed the progress that has been accomplished in the science of museum management since my boyhood days. The "fattest woman on earth" was sufficient in that era, but now she is represented twice as fat as of old, and yet dancing like a fay. There is most ingenious "faking" (the museum term for humbug) as of old, but there is also much reality—real "heroes" of trips over Niagara in barrels, of the bridge-jumping mania, of criminal life, and of distorted natural history. The more pretentious of these museums are so conducted that the only advantage that is ever taken of a stranger lies in the presumption that he will believe what he hears and credit what he sees. Yet in at least two of the six museums which illuminate the Bowery a fool or a too trustful stranger will be certain to be robbed. The tricks by which such persons are despoiled of their money are as old as sin itself, yet age does not wither nor custom stale a single one. An example of the dark ways

of the robbers who lurk in these dens is this: Within one of the lower class of museums the visitor will notice a door through which he is invited to pass in order to have his cranium examined by a phrenologist, and to receive a present of a chart setting forth his proclivities and possibilities. Within is a room, a chair, and the alleged phrenologist. The visitor notices that the walls are bare; at least he perceives nothing to interest him as he glances around him. But just as the phrenological inspection is finished, a click is heard, a piece of a partition falls down upon a set of hinges, and the victim reads, "Professor Blinkum's charge is \$2." If the victim is wise he will pay the fee; it will be cheaper than the drubbing and perhaps the actual robbery by violence to which he must otherwise submit.

The museums are brilliant at night, and it is then that the Bowery becomes newly and doubly interesting. It is probably the most brilliantly lighted thoroughfare on this planet. The money spent in lighting it is prodigious; the illumination is prodigal; the effect is dazzling. But the method adopted for this lighting is cheap and vulgar, and emphasizes the popular meaning which the word "Bowery" has taken on. The English word "brummagem" fails to convey half the definition of the term "Bowery." The words lean in the same direction, but to be Bowery is to be twice what is meant when we say a thing is brummagem. Whatever has the Bowery stamp is not merely an imitation, but it is a loud and offensive falsity. In New York, when the people see a great glass stud, cut to look like a diamond worth \$10,000, and worn on the shirt of a store clerk, they call it a Bowery jewel, and they say of the man that he looks very Bowery. The extremes of fashion are caricatured and intensified in the Bowery, where the cut of men's trousers, the size of plaid patterns, the shape and style of the shoes, the gorgeousness of the waistcoats worn by the mock dandies—not to speak of the swagger and swing of the East Side belles—often surpass endurance if not belief. A Bowery dude is constitutionally unable to put on his hat unless he may balance it on one ear. It suits the street, therefore, to boast the most brilliant illumination of the coarsest and most dazzling sort.

I counted its surplus lights the other night,—the mere electric arc-lights which dangle before the stores and resorts,—and I found that they numbered 263. On the west side there were 189, and on the east side 74, or, altogether, about 19 to each block. The arc-light is that variety of electric lamp which is produced between two thick carbon-pencils inclosed in a great cocoon-shaped shell of

glass. Let the reader who is familiar with this added burden upon human existence, this ingenious instrument of torture, fancy, if he can, the hissing and sputtering, the lightning-like starts and jumps, the alternating flashes and depressions that the glare of the Bowery undergoes. A tour of this street by night is a never-to-be-forgotten experience, but in the main the street is like a great electric lantern. It is the most brilliant eye in the Argus head of New York, and it is the eye that never sleeps; for when the rest of the town is dim, and its bustle is all but hushed, the eye of the Bowery looks out into the night with a gleaming stare that only the rising of the sun is able to intimidate.

The great wholesale houses have closed, but the people of a vast network of streets walled with high tenements have come home from work, have supped, and are out on the Bowery for the night's shopping, amusement, or exercise. The sidewalks are almost packed with people bathed in the brilliant light of such a number and variety of shops as are not to be found in any other equal area in the city. But the outcasts of society are in the throng; the tenth of the town that lives by night is astir. Poor creatures, indeed, are these Bowery miscreants—the product of that same tenement region where, a careful missionary says, one hundred thousand persons have moved in and fourteen churches have moved out within the past ten years. The criminals found in the Bowery are of the stunted, half-starved type of which the tenement house is the matrix. Undersized, wizen-faced, aged while yet of tender years, little-eyed, cunning, shabbily dressed and constantly hunted, they are rather like human rats than men and women. Their haunts are in the cellars, the rum-shops, and in the disorderly places on upper floors—for it is a peculiar fact that not only does the Bowery contain liquor-stores side by side in places, but it contains rows of buildings in which every floor is given over to disreputable uses. I shall not dwell upon that phase of the Bowery life except to answer the question that is asked of every citizen by every stranger who is curious to visit that quarter—"Is it safe?" It is. Better than that, it is worth while. It is not well for a lady to walk out alone in any part of the city at night. Yet a woman without an escort, walking briskly along, is less likely to be affronted on the Bowery than on Fifth Avenue, by day or by night. There is one rule for escaping annoyance in New York city. It is the same for women as for men. That is to walk straight along without stopping or staring. It is the gawk, the gaby, the idler, and the over-curious meddler who invites insult and annoyance.

By half-past nine o'clock the shopping-places have closed, and the fourfold procession of

shoppers has come to an end. The last family group, headed by the husband, with the wife a step behind him, and her babies trailing after her, each clutching the other's clothing, has been swallowed up by the darkness of the side streets. The Bowery now belongs to the seekers of recreation and of vice. They are moving in and out of the museums, the gin-shops, the concert-halls, and the theaters. They have the choice of ninety-nine such places. Seven of these are theaters, six are museums, and four are music-halls.

The English theaters (or American theaters in which English is spoken) are what are called "gallery-houses"; that is to say, the gallery forms the most important if not the largest part of each. To enter certain ones costs only ten cents, and fifty cents secures an orchestra chair. In two, which are handsome theaters, the best plays and nearly the best companies are seen. They are operated as the theaters of small cities are, being considered as part of the provincial circuits to which New York successes are sent after their runs in first-class up-town houses. But the other English theaters are for the exhibition of variety-shows, or music-hall performances. What has always interested me most about them is the fact that they attract the newsboys and street Arabs with irresistible magnetism. The average New York newsboy, when he counts the cost of a day's living, includes ten cents for "de tee-ater" as regularly as he figures upon the amount for lodgings and for his three meals of "beef and beans." As there are thousands of these boys, the number that have earned the price of a gallery-seat is very great each night, and in consequence the strife for an early choice of seats is vigorous. The result is that the ragged little shavers form a line long before the theater doors are opened, and this line grows, and lengthens, and tails along the sidewalk until it makes what would be a notable picture for a Mrs. Stanley to fix upon her canvas. There are fights now and then in the line, and a babel of cries and whistles and shouts goes out from it. When the doors are opened the rush up the theater stairs is like a mountain freshet reversed. Like stampeding cattle the boys fling themselves down the aisles and over the seats until there is not a vacant place left. Then they take their coats off and fold them in their laps, and the air fills with the aroma and crackle of peanuts. Monitors, with long ratans and uncommonly bad tempers, endeavor to keep the little savages in some sort of order, and it is to these guardians that reference is made in the frequently repeated cry of "Cheese it! de post!" There is no time here for a study of that queer sentence. "Cheese it" is the warning cry of the New York street-boy, and

though many have guessed at it, I have never known any one who was able to give its derivation. "The post" is the monitor, but why he is called a post in a Bowery theater, and nowhere else, some one else must explain.

The most peculiar of all the theaters in the country are two that are on the Bowery. They are the Polish Hebrew playhouses. The old Bowery Theater was recently given over to that use. There are 37,000 persons who call themselves, or are called, Poles, and who live clan-nishly in a little strip consisting of a few blocks to the east of the Bowery. It is one of the most densely populated parts of New York, for they crowd together, and, being poor, live meanly. Eight tenths of them are Hebrews, and they constitute not much less than half the Hebrew population in New York. As a matter of fact, they hail from Russia, Austria, and Germany, and are of the type and class that aroused our sympathies some years ago when a very large number came here, leading a great exodus caused by outrageous persecution. They contradict many ideas about the Hebrews that have been strongly held among us. They are not rich. They by no means eschew manual labor, nor do they show remarkable genius in trading, for they work at the making of clothing and in other lines that are laborious and poorly paid. Furthermore,—and this is merely my own judgment,—they are not especially prudent or thrifty. They crowd their two theaters, where the plays—at least all that I have read the names of—are based upon biblical or historical subjects, or upon scenes local to New York. They have a drama of their own, and it embraces a great number of plays, but in the Bowery these are altered and lengthened by the introduction of scenes not always strictly connected with the pieces in which they are inserted, and never of the high standard of the original works. Their local plays, usually picturing the adventures of a Polish Hebrew who reaches New York, and starts out upon the streets as a peddler, are of the lightest possible character. In one theater one of the actors is the playwright. The talents of the players vary, some being very clever, born actors, and some being very wooden. The language used on the stage is a strange jargon of bad Russian, Polish, old Hebrew, and one or more other tongues. The programs are printed in Hebrew characters.

It is an interesting sight to see one of their theaters when an attractive play is offered. Almost all the men are tall and spare, with their long black locks unbarbered, and their long black beards uncut. Those who are near middle life are apt to be bent and pallid, with sunken cheeks and hollow eyes, as if they lacked the comforts of life, needed nutritious

food, and had worked and suffered prodigiously. Their faces are distinctly Slavonic. The women are all heavier and stouter than the men, some being fat, and many plump. Very often the matrons wear well-used, coarse, and undeceptive black wigs. Red shawls are a peculiarity of their attire. The young girls have the rare complexion of the Hebrew girl everywhere, and many of them are beautiful. Never were more orderly congregations than these theater audiences. Talking, or interruptions of noise, or disorder are always hissed down. It is evident that these people enjoy music, and their music is most peculiar. It is pretty, very simple, and extremely pathetic, even funereal at times. It always reminds me of the weird and sympathetic tones of the typical Hungarian melodies; but the triumphant, strenuous, heroic element which completes the Hungarian music is not heard in these Hebrew tunes.

More numerous than all others on this great East-Side parade are the people of German origin. There is little about them that is peculiar to us, but they maintain one notable resort, which is known and almost familiar wherever German is spoken: It is the largest of the beer-saloons—the Atlantic Garden. It is not only the resort of the Bowery Germans, but it is the rendezvous for the officers and crews of all the German vessels that come to the port, and for a great many German tourists and travelers who are passing through the country. It is thoroughly German, from the dishes served on the counter near the door to the music played by the orchestra within, or the well-salted pretzels that are consumed with the beer. It is simply a large hall a block in depth, partly surrounded by a gallery, and set with chairs and tables. Its decorations are neither good, bad, nor costly. Its purpose is to afford a place in which an hour can be passed in talking, drinking beer, and listening to the music of a band by night, and of a huge orchestration by day. The band is usually composed of a dozen well-trained young women, dressed neatly, all alike, and as women would appear at a high-class musical entertainment. Breaking the music of this band a balladist or serio-comic singer appears at intervals during the evening. Disorder is almost unknown. Women and children accompany husbands and fathers, and the drinking is performed with a dispassionate, thoroughly European regard for temperance and economy. A glass of beer is made to last a very long time there, and consequently to yield as much refreshment as half a dozen glasses taken as New Yorkers are apt to drink it.

A large body of Hungarians also claim the Bowery as their parade, and as this is written

they are holding a fair there. Two blocks away is "Chinatown," with its swinging lanterns and picturesque bannerets, and with its slippered figures tripping noiselessly about. Quite as near in another direction is the seat of the Italian colony — a street of towering tenements, apparently so crowded that the tenants can find room in them only while lying down, for in the daytime, when all are awake, the houses are swarming, and the sidewalks are all but choked with men, women, and children. However, though these people are in its region, they own no haunt or foothold in the Bowery, and therefore are not eligible to notice in this article.

In parting with the subject, let me add that the survival of the ancient "true American" spirit (always suspicious of danger to the Republic and always belligerent) still leads some good citizens to harbor deep suspicions of all that the Bowery typifies. They tremble lest foreigners, in numbers sufficiently great to maintain Old World customs, should endanger the existence of our own institutions. I do not

read any danger in any feature that makes up the Bowery except in its vices, and they are human rather than peculiar to any nationality. The "true Americans" of the first half of the century were themselves the offspring of foreigners, and so, by no greater removes, are many of those who now carry forward the old patriotism. That is, in some degree, true of all of us except the red men, but it is especially true of New Yorkers. This city has always been an open door to foreign immigrants, and lately it has been their principal gateway. A few always linger here at the threshold of the New World, and, being thrown together again, establish so-called colonies or foreign quarters. Therefore we have the Bowery as it is. It does not offer any new problem or confront us with an unfamiliar condition. For more than two centuries the city's population has contained a very considerable admixture of persons foreign to those who have ruled it, and at times some of the new blood has been far less desirable than any considerable element which we are now taking into the national system.

Julian Ralph.



THE LONG AGO.

WHAT was it made the Long Ago?
 Not summer sunshine, nor autumn rain;
 Not sweet spring budding, nor winter snow,
 Nor still blithe pleasure, nor yet keen pain.

For sure as the years roll round they bring
 Their seasons, fair as the ones of yore.
 But only robbed of that nameless thing
 That Long Ago in its bosom bore.

I know not why I should mourn it so;
 My love of to-day is more strong and true,
 And the love of the distant Long Ago
 Had died ere ever it fullness knew.

But still I yearn as one yearns who lost
 A new-born babe in an earlier time,
 Before these lads, with their locks uptost,
 Were strong to clamber, and brave to climb.

It comes to me oft when I sit apart,
 This tender want for — I do not know;
 It has no place in the Present's heart;
 It only lives in the Long Ago.

Julie M. Lippmann.