

THE STREETS OF BROOKLYN.

Their Peculiarities and Populations.

MAIN STREET.

It is a peculiarity of Main street wherever you find a Main street, that it never is the main street. Doubtless it once *was* the main street, but cities grow, and men may come and men may go, while Main street sinks into the general rut of bye streets, and its place is usurped by upstart thoroughfares with no distinguishing name. So of Main street, Brooklyn. Time was when it occupied the place Fulton street holds now, and it is not impossible that the march of local improvement may again invest it with a factitious importance (as leading from somewhere to somewhere else). But at present there is not a street in this broad city of so little commercial or social importance as Main street.

To speak truth, it is an unsavory thoroughfare. Cologne itself, the city of seven distinct smells, can produce a thoroughfare to vie with Main street in all that is evil smelling and febrifacient—but Brooklyn can with difficulty do so. By day the garbage of a thousand tenement houses is thrown in the street; that is a physical disease. By night its corners are infested by loafers and its sidewalks peopled by ward politicians; that is a social disease. Altogether, as you might infer, Main street is in a bad way. And yet there are many good people who live in Main street, and many better people (in a social sense) who have lived in Main street, and can look back upon their tenement house experiences from the bow windows of their brown stone fronts. I was about to say that there are those of Main street who example all the Christian virtues, but I bethink me that most of its residents are Jews.

You shall walk up Main street, from Catherine Ferry, on the left hand side, and see more dusky loveliness than can be exhibited on any other thoroughfare in Brooklyn. These Jewesses are lovely creatures, certainly. They sit in the sombre doorways of their parents' clothing stores, giggling and laughing among themselves, and demurely watching the passers by, mayhap exchanging audible notes of exclamation on their personal appearance. Their shining masses of black hair, their sleepy, Moorish looking black eyes, their little feet, their butter pats of hands, their—but why catalogue a lady's charms in this bold, vulgar print?—are enough to make one den the flowing robe, assume the staff, let his beard grow, call himself Rabbi Bill Brown, and attend the synagogue with exemplary regularity. Do you wonder that Brian de Bois-Guilbert went crazy after Rebecca, or that Jews are so seldom converted?

Old Isaac of York, who submitted to have his teeth pulled out one by one by infuriated horses, rather than give up a motty of his immense wealth to the rapacious King John, reminds me of a domestic comedy which erst happened in Main street. Situate in that dusky thoroughfare is the store—a clothing store, of course—of an elderly Hebrew, whom we will call Rabbi Ben Smith. Rabbi Ben Smith is a perfect type of his people; he has a hooked nose, a long beard, a keen, glittering, black eye, a bent form and bald head. Further, Rabbi Ben Smith is a penurious, old man, and has a lovely daughter. And while the old man is higgling for his price for some wretched castoff garment, the lovely daughter sits in the dim store languishingly fanning herself, watched over with jealous eyes by an ancient dame as yellow as the gold rings in her ears, or as the bandanna around her head.

Some little time ago, Rabbi Ben Smith got into trouble. He owed a heavy bill, and his hard hearted Christian creditors were clamorous for their money. Now, the Rabbi was known to be rich; to have many shekels "salted down" against a rainy day; but nevertheless he protested that he was unable to pay. S'help his God of Abraham, he said, he had not the money. The consequence was an execution. The Christians, this time, wanted their pound of flesh. But what was the astonishment of the Deputy Sheriff upon appearing with the warrant of execution, to find the store of Rabbi Ben Smith utterly denuded of its stock, and the lovely daughter wringing her hands with grief,

"What's all this, Benjamin?" said the officer. "Where are your goods? No trifling with the laws of the land, you know! Here is the warrant."

The old Jew moaned piteously. (The villain had had notice of the execution, and had moved all his goods to a neighbor's house by night.)

"Oh, s'help me, Mr. Williams," says he to the Sheriff. "I am too poor. I haf no goods. I haf been jek. And we had only one herring for breakfast—didst we Rebecca?"

The lovely daughter sobbed an affirmative, and went on wringing her hands.

"Oh come," replied Williams, looking around him, "that's too thin. Fetch out your things, Rabbi; they must be somewhere around."

But with many pious asseverations the Jew declares his inability to pay or produce his goods.

"Very well, then," responded the officer, "I sha have to take an inventory of what you have left," and he looked around on the vacant benches and tables.

The Rabbi hastened to assist him, overboiling with nervous excitement, while the lovely daughter brightened up a little.

"Lend me your pencil, Rabbi," said William, bustling about, and pulling out his notebook.

Rabbi Ben Smith pulled out his pencil with trembling hands, believing his deliverance at hand. The officer took it and coolly put it in his pocket.

"That will do, Rabbi," he said, with a laugh. "That pencil will pay all you owe."

The Jew saw his mistake when it was too late. With the fondness of his tribe for display he had had inserted in the head of the gold pencil case a magnificent diamond, worth three times the amount of his debt.

"Oh, Mr. Williams, Mr. Williams," he cried, "gif me my pencil. I will pay your bar hundred dollars, and get out of mine sthore."

And that night the store was stocked again, as usual, and the lovely daughter sat, demure as ever, in the background, her eyes languishingly closed, and her little slippered foot peeping from under her silk dress.

Did it ever occur to you that every shelf of every second hand clothing store in Main street is replete with history? What has become, think you, of the gay dog who wore that uniform rusting on the top shelf? Well, he gambled and drank, and beat his wretched wife—a meekeyed little woman she was.

pale and anxious, but always proud and fond of her scapegrace husband—and died like a dog in the street. And where is the former owner of that lovely white satin dress, that would stand alone?" That was a wedding dress, sure. And how about the navy uniform yonder, and the black dress suits and brocaded silks? Can you fancy the owners of all these fine things slinking into the second hand store and disposing of them for a mere song? But *Ca va la vie*, and your own wedding coat may be there, for aught I know.

And what of it? A gentleman well known in the theatrical world found himself once upon a time very short of money. (He has a house on the avenues now, and drives his team, the rogue.) So he took his watch to a pawnbroker's very stealthily, watching this way and that, lest he should be seen. And when he got there, lo! out came Joe Jefferson, folding up the little yellow ticket for his watch in broad daylight, and counting the money he had borrowed on it, coolly enough.

"Hilloa!" says Jefferson. "You here, C——?"

"Yes," replied the other, hesitatingly. "But for Heaven's sake don't call my name out so loud. I don't want any body to——"

"Oh, boah!" replied the comedian. (He was not the great Jefferson then, but a stock actor, and not infrequently short of ready money.) "What's the odds? It's perfectly fair and business like, isn't it? I have the watch—he has the money; he gets the watch, I get the money; I get the watch back again, and——"

"Not always, Joe," said our friend with a sigh. And passed up the Mont d'Piets.

There are no pawnshops in Main street, but their place is supplied for all practical purposes by the second hand clothing stores, of which there are certainly enough and to spare. The other industries represented in the street are those of the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker, with a slight tinge of the legitimate rum dealer and the illicit whisky distiller. But these are nothing of themselves. The life of Main street is the Catherine Ferry, and while that remains Main street will hold its own as a peculiar and distinctive thoroughfare.

FLANEUR.

AN ARMY OF MERCHANTS,

Who Daily Travel on Catharine Ferry.

**Some Observations of an Industrious Race
Whose Labors Begin With the Dawn and
Close Early After Sunset—Quick and Novel
Methods of Bookkeeping—The Ferryboat Di-
versions of Some of Uncle Sam's Jack Tars.**

Catharine ferry at the foot of Main street is unique among the ferries of the Union Ferry company. This peculiarity concerns itself entirely with the people who use it, and they are in great part of two classes, Uncle Sam's tars and Hebrew peddlers, who hail from the small commercial districts of New York. It is a common saying among old Brooklynites that the first English sentence a Hebrew learns to pronounce correctly is: "Where's Catharine ferry?" and the reader, no doubt, has had occasion to test the veracity of the statement. Hebrews of this character may be met in any part of the city, with no more knowledge of English than is embraced in the words Catharine ferry. Ask them something apart from the query and you get no response, or else a confused jabber accompanied by a pitiful gesticulation, the silent but emphatic meaning of which is that they cannot comprehend what you want of them. Equally unsatisfactory is the attempt to direct them to the ferry, once the question of its location has been asked. Their vocabulary of English in many cases is confined entirely to the ferry's name, and guiding them becomes a problem difficult of solution to one of painstaking habits.

Not a great many years ago Catharine Ferry used to be known locally as the new ferry. As the majority of people know it runs from Main street in this city to Catharine street in New York. Its history is interesting, because of the length of time it has been in existence, and also for the changes in management and motive power which it has seen. It was established on August 1, 1795, by William Furman and Theodosius Hunt, lessees from the corporation of New York. They were succeeded by Noah Waterbury and Henry Stanton. The ferry afterward fell into the hands of Rodman Bowne, who as early as 1811 asked for an extension of the contract to operate the ferry for two years from May, 1812. He had the contract again renewed in 1814 for five years and paid a sum of \$1,275 a year for his privilege. The ferry in the meantime was booming rapidly as a money making factor. New York and Brooklyn were growing fast, and this means of communication was eagerly seized upon and as eagerly supported. In April of 1814 came a big improvement in the running of the ferry boat. It was a change to the horse or what was then known as the team boat. In this type of ferry boat, a horse driven in a circular path caused to revolve a shaft to which the paddles were attached. As they struck the water in their revolutions these early boats were known to make good progress and the invention was everywhere hailed as a valuable addition to science, as well as the convenience of men in general. In March, 1816, the same management secured a lease for eight years from May 1, 1819, at the same rent. It was, however, cancelled in June of 1820 and a new lease to Rodman and Samuel Bowne executed for nineteen years from May, 1820, at a yearly rent for the first seven years of \$1,295. For the succeeding five years the sum was to be \$1,800, and for the last seven years \$2,000. In 1846 Samuel Bowne leased the ferry for seven years at a rent of \$3,500 a year. The property remained in his hands until March 24, 1852 when it was purchased by a firm named Smith & Buckley, who subsequently united with the Union Ferry company. The horse or team system of propulsion was succeeded by steam from its crude forms to the present perfect system now in operation on all the craft plying between this city and New York at the points heretofore referred to. Under the Union Ferry company's management the Catharine ferry has been most improved, so that to-day it drains on the Brooklyn side a busy and respectably commercial thoroughfare and opens up in New York on streets that are, if anything, busier than any on this side of the river.

But to the people who daily use the Catharine ferry as a means to help them to the scenes of their labors, any morning, if the reader rise early and take his station at the foot of Main street, he will see emerging from the ferry gates an anxious looking set, all of whom, or nearly all, are merchants on their own account. They are small commercial men, of course, and their daily earnings are not believed to be large, but in this particular the public is sometimes mistaken. They do not dress well and by no means as substantially as the average mechanic. Their clothes invariably appear as if they were made for other than the men they hang on. Combinations, but not of an edifying character, are frequent. In nearly every case the trousers are of one shade and texture, the vest of another and the coat of another. If an overcoat happens to be a part of the personal decoration, that too will be found to preserve fully its own identity by the contrast. The striking feature of these small merchants is that they all wear beards and carry baskets or packs. The hair is generally kinky and betrays no signs of training with a comb, or brush. It always looks as if the wearer, faithful to nature, just allowed it to grow. The boat having landed at the Brooklyn slip, the men swing their packs across their shoulders, or over their arms and swarm up Main street for a few blocks, when they branch out in different directions and virtually cover the city. Frequently two or three constitute a company and in these cases it will invariably be found that they have three distinct kinds of merchandise to offer for sale. They are not a talkative people. Their faces would seem to betray thoughtful habits, and it has been said jocosely by those who have posed as observers of this class, that before the day's work has begun, they are already computing the gains of their labors. Their appearance and manner are changed very much toward nightfall, when home and a meal are the prominent thoughts before them. They scarcely labor after 5 o'clock, and at this hour usually make tracks for the ferry, no matter in what section they happen to be traveling. Seated in the cabins, toward 6 o'clock, they look fatigued. In nearly every instance the hat has been pushed back off the brow, the legs are crossed and the general demeanor one of restfulness. It is in this attitude that the merchant does his little bookkeeping preparatory to closing the business of the day. It is an amusing sight to see them scan the pack or basket, lean back in their seats

to help recall a sale, and then jot down the result of these investigations in their books. The system they follow is evidently not a difficult one, judging from the size of the books that are used and the small amount of space that is consumed by recording the day's transactions. This duty over they invariably make themselves comfortable and await the arrival of the boat at the New York slip. Before the craft is made secure they are waiting to get a foot on earth, so as to make the quickest bee line for home. As they disappear to the right and to the left they look a scampering crowd, that is soon lost to view, because every moment is saved, since they have no disposition for sidewalk conversation and seldom meet acquaintances who are looking for that particular kind of diversion.

Catharine ferry carries nearly all the sailors that journey to New York from the local navy yard. This circumstance is due entirely to its proximity to Uncle Sam's habitation. Those fellows of the natty blue uniform, cleanly shaven faces for the most part, and rollicking dispositions, never trespass on the women's cabin. They spend the time of the trip in smoking or swapping stories. To see a dozen or more of them lined up together on the benches of the cabin, looking as spick and span as if they were fashionable amateurs of a day, is an interesting spectacle. Uncle Sam's men are good looking fellows, with glowing cheeks, timely built frames, and jovial dispositions. Their costume is a striking one, and they appear on the whole an unanswerable argument to the assertion that food just now in the federal manger is exceeding nutritious. Perhaps the sailor smokes too much but whether he does or not, he makes it a rule of life to discuss a weed during the time he spends on the ferry boats.

STRANGE RESTAURANTS.

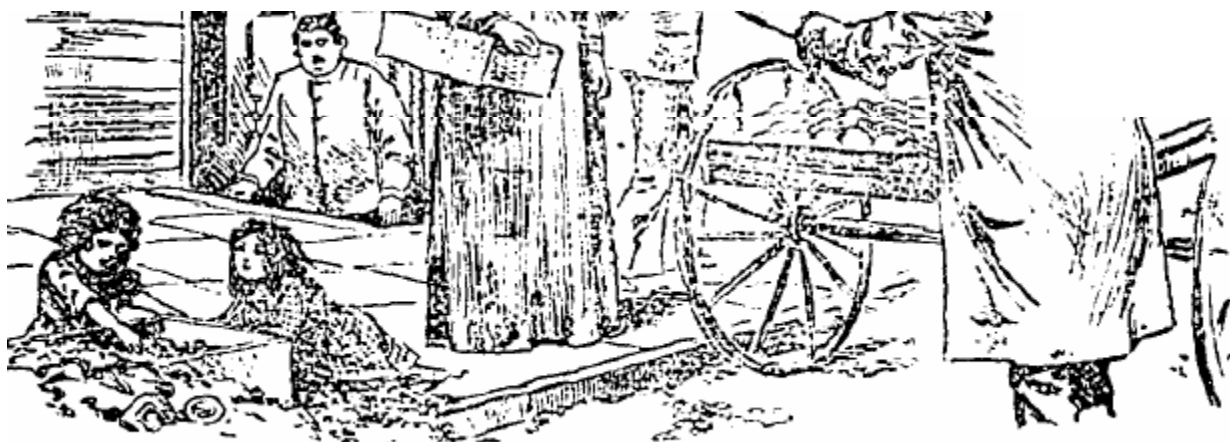
BROOKLYN HAS MANY PECULIAR EATING HOUSES.

Some of Them Are Not Calculated to
Put a Fine Edge on Fastidious Appeti-
tes—Italian, Hebrew, Swedish and
German Tastes Appealed To.

Anyone who wishes to study Brooklyn in its cosmopolitan aspect can adopt no better method than to visit the numerous strange restaurants. This may be attended with discomforts, but will be certainly replete with interest. It will furnish a knowledge of the city which will broaden the sympathies and will give a much better understanding of Brooklyn as it really is.

Jewish eating houses are numerous in Brownsville and along a portion of Moore street and are under the supervision of the synagogue and are known as "kosher" restaurants. They are obliged to buy all their meat from a "kosher" butcher shop or the orthodox Jews will not trade with them. These butcher shops are visited monthly by the rabbi, who sees that the meat has been killed and is cut according to the Jewish rites. If that has been done the rabbi gives the butcher a permit which reads: "Kosher! kosher!" with the official signature of the rabbi underneath. These permits the butchers paste in their windows, so their customers can see that they have conformed with the law. The restaurants must also have one of these permits from the rabbi and it is from these permits they get the name of "kosher" restaurants.

A reporter the other day visited one of these places in Moore street. The restaurant



EXTERIOR OF A KOSHER RESTAURANT.

was on the first floor of a frame house and with the exception of a Hebrew sign it did not look any different on the outside from the neighboring houses. The restaurant was in a small room in the front of the house and contained about half a dozen small tables, covered with particularly dirty tablecloths, which probably had once been white. The walls of the room were not papered and were bare of any ornament. The floor was also bare and was about the only clean thing in the place, not excepting the people. On each table there was a chipped salt seller and a dilapidated looking cask, containing vinegar, pepper and mustard. The proprietor of the place was a particularly dirty looking Polish Jew. He could not speak English and it was with some difficulty that he was made to understand that the reporter wanted something to eat. He did not seem to be at all anxious to serve his new customer, as when he was finally made to understand what was wanted he consulted with his wife and daughter, who

apparently came from the kitchen in the rear and looked as if they had been engaged in scrubbing the floor and had forgotten to clean up. Several oriental looking customers, who were in the restaurant at the time, and who were all remarkable for their fine growth of frowzy beard, also took part in the discussion, which seemed to be rather a heated one and certainly was very noisy. The end was reached at last, however, and as none of the other people could speak English the proprietor came back. Then ensued another long pantomime performance, this time with a large and intensely interested audience. What seemed to bother them all was why the reporter came there for something to eat. Just at this moment another customer came in who could speak English and he soon made the proprietor understand what was wanted and the reason it was wanted was because of the reporter's curiosity to eat a meal in a "kosher" restaurant. After this there was no difficulty and the proprietor brought in a regular dinner, which cost 15 cents.

Another restaurant in this neighborhood that the reporter visited was conducted in connection with a bologna shop, and was also



of the proprietor, who was acting as cashier, finally quieted the dog and a seat was found at one of the tables. This did not have a tablecloth and the castor and salt cellars on it were dirty and chipped. There were about twenty customers in the room and all were busily engaged in eating with apparent enjoyment. Eight or ten waiters were lounging around and all were without coat or vest. Shirt sleeves seemed to be their professional uniform. One of them came over to the table where the young man was sitting and after wiping the table with a particularly dirty towel, said:

"What'll you have?"

"What have you got? Haven't you got a bill of fare?"

"Naw!" replied the waiter. "We don't have no bill o'fare. I keeps it all in me head. We've got lambchopsporkechopsvealchopsbeefsteak roastbeefroast lambbarned beefand cabbagechamandeggs beefstew lambstew porkand beansandmuttonchops."

This was rattled off so fast, without a pause between the items, that it was almost impossible to understand what he said. While wondering over the marvelous flow of language to which he had listened the young man had neglected to give his order, but the waiter became impatient and as he did not look like a man whom it was safe to make impatient and remembering the dog, some mutton chops and a cup of coffee were asked for.

The waiter at last brought the young man four chops and with them three slices of bread, a dish of fried potatoes and a plate of butter, all for 10 cents. The coffee was extra and cost 5 cents. The bread was very good, there is no doubt about that, as the young man ate all three slices, but for the rest -- well, if anybody likes his meat gamey, potatoes fried in grease and butter with a strong oleomargarine flavor to put on his bread information as to the location of this restaurant will be cheerfully imparted.

There is hardly a main thoroughfare in the city where a large number of bakeries, kept principally by Germans, and where they serve a light meal in addition to their regular business, cannot be found. Some of these places