

FEEDING A CITY LIKE NEW YORK

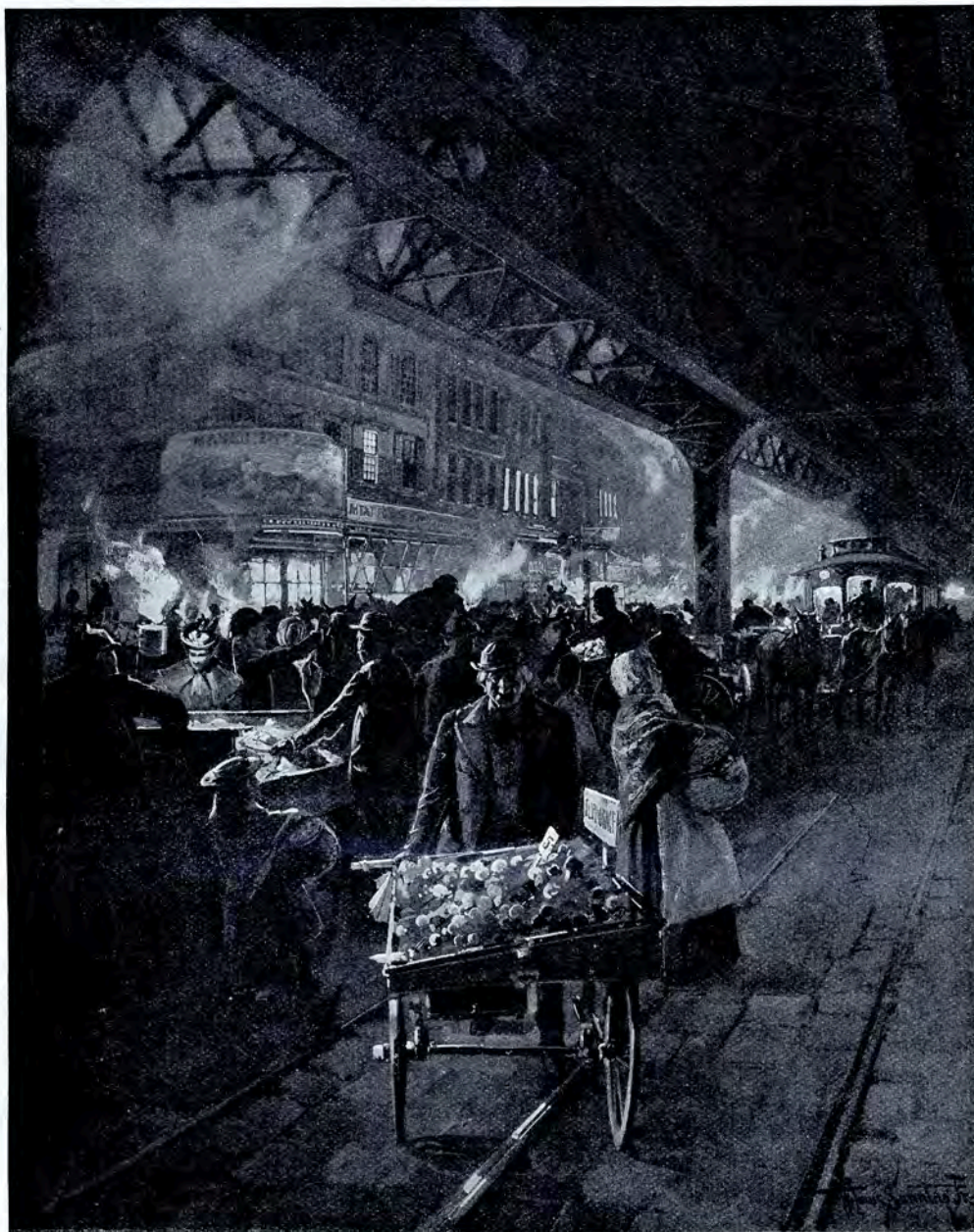
By John Gilmer Speed

DRAWINGS BY W. LOUIS SONNTAG, JR.

IF THE city of New York and the neighboring district, which we have begun to call the Greater New York, were to be besieged or in some other way entirely cut off from the outside world, and therefore deprived of the food supplies which in normal times come in daily in great quantities, how long would it be before the pinch of hunger would be felt? That is a very hard question to answer, for the reason that there are such inequalities of purchasing capacity in New York society that some go hungry in times of greatest prosperity for lack of means, while the very great majority eat more than is good for them. Undoubtedly the number of those who always go hungry would be increased after two or three days of a

the arrangement and disposition of food the Parisians are specially distinguished. But the food supply in New York could be made to last as long as the Paris siege lasted, and the people would still be comfortable.

No observant and contemplative man can walk the crowded streets of New York, at a time when he himself happens to be hungry, without wondering how under the sun these vast multitudes are fed, and how the



SATURDAY NIGHT AT A POPULAR SIDEWALK MARKET—ON NINTH AVENUE

siege, and then day by day this number would increase until the public authorities would feel compelled to take possession of the food supplies and distribute them among the people. But still the question has not been answered as to how long the supply usually on hand would last if not replenished. With the exception of milk and some other things, which will presently be enumerated, the supply of meat, poultry, hardy vegetables and fruits would last for two months at the present rate of consumption. If all the supplies were taken charge of at the beginning of a siege—and this could easily be done—the food within New York could be made to last for four months at least. The siege of Paris lasted only four months. Before two months had passed, high and low, rich and poor had learned what hunger was. And, as is well known, the French are the most thrifty and economical people in the world. In



FISHING BOATS UNLOADING AT FULTON MARKET, EARLY IN THE MORNING

great city in which they live is provisioned. If such a man will be led by that speculation into an examination of the machinery by which this is effected, and a view of the statistics of the results, he will quite certainly be surprised at the vastness of the undertaking, the success of its accomplishment, and the magnitude of the quantities of food consumed by the people day by day. Until such an investigator has gone pretty deeply into the subject he will not be prepared to say that the food supply could last longer than a week. He would be apt to recall the

famous blizzard of March, 1888, and say the people suffered before three days had passed. And so they did; but they suffered mainly because supplies could not be distributed; and then again, 1888 is not 1896—not by a great deal. There were cold-storage warehouses then, to be sure, but the capacity now is ten times greater than eight years ago. In these cold-storage warehouses there are every day in the year supplies of some things great enough to last for a year. Having mentioned this before going to the other branches of my subject, I must say something of the vast value that these cold-storage warehouses are to economical and comfortable living. Fruits, fish, meats, eggs, butter, and so on, which in times of abundance would spoil and be wasted, are now kept to be sold to the consumers when they are in need of them, and also to yield some profit to the producer besides. In the old time surplus supplies of eggs, vegetables and fruits were absolutely wasted, doing no human being any good whatever. It is well known that the industrious hen finds it pleasanter to lay eggs in abundance at certain seasons. Hens are nothing if not fashionable, and, therefore, at those times all the hens are rivaling each other in this fruitful industry. The consequence is that there are soon more eggs on hand than the world cares to eat. Under the old order these eggs were wasted or sold for a price so low that it did not pay to take them to market. Then in the off season, at the times when the dames of the poultry-yard find it more fashionable to change their plumage than merely to lay eggs and cackle the joyful intelligence to an appreciative world, eggs, under the old dispensation, would be so high in price that they were beyond the means of any save the rich—fifty and sixty and seventy cents a dozen, for instance. Now in times of abundance eggs are put away in cold storage and withdrawn as needed in times of stress, with the result that the consumers can always get what they need at a reasonable outlay, and producers can always get a fair profit for their crop. Here is a great and gratifying accession

of wealth—more than a hundred of millions of dollars a year on eggs and other perishable food, it is estimated—an accession with a dual capacity for good, for, like charity, it blesses him who gives and him who receives. As I have spoken so particularly of eggs it may be interesting to state just here that New York consumed in 1894 eighty million dozen eggs, and for these the consumers paid \$14,400,000, or eighteen cents a dozen. The hens of the neighborhood of New York, helped by those in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Kansas and other States, contributed this generous supply.

Before taking a glance at the machinery by which the food supplies are distributed among the people let us take note of the quantities needed, so that we may have some idea of the magnitude of the problem that has been solved. In looking at these figures the reader will see where in a case of siege a scarcity would first be felt. The con-



FROM REFRIGERATOR CAR TO COLD-STORAGE WAREHOUSE

sumption of wheat flour averages 70,000 bushels a week, and the supply averages 975,000 bushels. The wheat flour, therefore, would last fourteen weeks, but as there is generally a vast quantity of unground wheat in the elevators in New York harbor—something like 29,000,000 bushels—it would be a long time before New York people would have to go without bread. Of cornmeal about 10,000 bushels are consumed weekly, and the supply is something like 500,000 barrels. The supply of buckwheat flour in the early winter is usually about 65,000 sacks, and nearly all of this is used up before warm weather. Oatmeal is used in great quantities, 6000 bushels being consumed each week; the supply is usually great enough to last for six months. Of beans, after the crop has been gathered, the supply coming to New York varies from 100,000 barrels to 150,000 barrels. That quantity, be it large or small, is usually eaten by the people of New York and the neighborhood thereof. This supply is four times greater than that consumed in Boston and the outlying towns—the home of the bean-eaters. In these staples, comparatively unperishable, it will be seen that New York is abundantly supplied. But as man cannot live by bread alone let us see some of the other things which are supplied in great quantities.

POTATOES are eaten in vast quantities, the consumption being 24,000 bushels per day, every day in the year. To supply this demand the product of 90,000 acres of land is needed. The potato crop begins coming to New York in quantities in October, and the large arrivals continue till May. During that period the stock on hand usually amounts to about 300,000 bushels, or fifteen days' supply. Potatoes, therefore, in case of the stoppage of supplies would be one of the first things to give out. There are two great potato markets in New York, and at these places the retailers purchase their supplies. Potatoes fluctuate greatly in value, and nearly all who deal in them, sooner or later, make speculative ventures in them. From near-by parts of New Jersey and from Long Island the potatoes are brought to market in wagons; from New York State and other more distant points the tubers are brought in barrels and sacks in boats and by train. The supplying of this indigestible food is an amazingly great industry, and the consumers in New York pay for what they use about \$13,000,000 each year.

Great as is that sum it is less than what the eggs cost, and less, also, than is paid annually for butter, and only a little in excess of that paid for cheese. The butter sold in New York brings annually \$18,200,000, the amount being 290,800 pounds a day. Of cheese 300,000 pounds are sold a day, and for this is paid \$10,000,000 every year. New York is a great distributing point for butter and cheese, and it is quite difficult, in the absence of records kept for the purpose, to say exactly how much is consumed in the metropolitan district. While mentioning these two products of the dairy it is interesting to note that the value of the milk consumed in New York annually is \$16,250,000. This represents the consumption daily of 297,000 gallons of milk, 5600 gallons of cream and 1200 gallons of condensed milk. The handling of this milk supply is of great importance to the railroads running into New York, and all of them have special trains to accommodate this traffic, which is done almost exclusively in the night, as nearly all of the milk is delivered by the dealers to their customers before breakfast in the morning. It is nearly always a matter of surprise to hear what a vast interest in the country that of the dairy is; that \$4,450,000 should be spent in New York alone for milk, butter and cheese indicates the magnitude of the industry tolerably well.

WHEN we approach the meat markets we get into very large figures at once, and we also arrive at one of the most serious economical problems confronting the people in the United States. Of dressed beef, in 1894, there was brought to New York 152,979 tons, or 305,958,000 pounds, representing 509,930 live steers. And of live stock this was the record for the same year: cattle, 564,932; hogs, 1,656,434; sheep, 2,436,742; calves, 284,783; cows, 10,646. The dressed mutton and pork brought from the West was about the same as that slaughtered here; the dressed veal brought in was greatly in excess of that slaughtered in the city, though most of this did not come from the West, but from comparatively near by. Even the farmers prefer to slaughter their own calves because of the cheaper freight on a carcass than on a live animal. Veal does not keep well even in cold storage—it is quite spoiled by freezing—and therefore the supply is never much beyond the daily consumption. Of all this meat how much of it is consumed in New York, beyond the veal, it is difficult to say, but probably in value it does not very greatly exceed that paid for milk, butter, cheese and eggs, namely, \$58,850,000. The remainder is sent abroad, the exportation of meat to Europe from the port of New York being immense. The people who live about New York are quite peculiar in one regard—they one and all demand the very best cuts and will buy nothing else. These good cuts represent but a small portion of a beef; of course, the butchers cannot afford to lose what they cannot sell fresh, so all of these rejected parts are cured or corned, and so sold in New York or sent abroad. This demand for the good cuts is not a new thing in New York, but it is increasing all the time, notwithstanding the fact that as it grows the price of good beef rises. The inability of butchers to dispose quickly of what are considered the inferior parts of the beef makes their business quite hazardous, and men with small capital are more and more forced out of it. A beef which weighs when dressed 1500 pounds will furnish but 60 pounds of tenderloin and 150 pounds of sirloin. These choice cuts, it will be seen, represent but a small part of the whole. The problem of cheaper meat will be helped to a solution more quickly by those "cunning in cookerie" than by either lawmakers or statesmen who attempt to juggle with the inevitable logic of supply and demand. A good cook can make of the four-cent cuts dishes quite as palatable, and quite as wholesome, as many that are served out of beef that costs twenty-five and even fifty cents a pound, the latter being a moderate price for filets.

NEW YORKERS also eat a great quantity of poultry. Live poultry arrives at the rate of from 40,000 to 80,000 per week. This includes chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks. One day in March, 1894, when I was gathering statistics for this article, twenty-three carloads, containing 76,000 birds, arrived. The dressed poultry that arrives in refrigerator cars is about four times as great as this. If it were not for the demand on the part of the Hebrews for live poultry, which can be killed according to their religious regulations, this business would be

inconsiderable, and comparatively few live birds would be brought into the city. The Hebrews purchase eighty per cent. of the live poultry brought to market. The wholesale centre for live poultry is at West Washington (Gansevoort) Market, and on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from four in the morning till midday, the Jews and those who supply them are active in the transactions in fowls. Dealers who keep only dressed poultry get their supply once a week or so. In the better parts of New York there is scarcely a place of supply which does not display an advertisement, "Philadelphia poultry." As a matter of fact not more than one per cent. of the New York poultry supply comes from the State of Pennsylvania. It is likely that Philadelphia eats pretty nearly all of her own chickens. But this representation is not dishonest. The term has come to include all poultry of a very high grade. In Philadelphia the people have always been nice in their taste and have demanded only the best. Generations ago they learned that clean feeding produced in fowls good and sweet meat. They therefore fed fowls properly and did not let their meat become tainted with the refuse of the barnyards. So Philadelphia chickens became famous for their quality. But chickens properly attended to anywhere else are just as good, and therefore they are, with propriety, called "Philadelphia poultry."

The cold-storage warehouses begin to accumulate poultry in September. Before the end of November they have in them at least a seven months' supply. A chicken can be kept for twelve months without injury to its flavor. Game in great quantities is kept in the same way, and quail, grouse, partridge and pheasant are to be had long after the closed season for each has begun, and when it is illegal under the game laws to keep, sell or serve them. The authorities know so well, however, that such game can be kept in cold storage long after the killing time has passed that there is no longer an entirely strict enforcement of the game law in this particular.

LITERATURE and tradition have placed an undeserved reproach upon the manners of the fish market. Fish dealers do not deserve to be spoken of unkindly, for they are as polite as other men of their kind, and their stalls are specially attractive. Fulton Market is the great depot for the reception and distribution of fish in New York. The great bulk of the supply comes to town from the first of April to the end of September. The fresh-water fish and such other varieties that will not keep in cold storage are disposed of as quickly as possible, and at whatever prices they will fetch. After the first of June such fish are peddled about the streets in wagons, and sold at prices suspiciously low. The harder kinds, which do not deteriorate by being frozen, are stored whenever the demand is less than the supply. The total fish supply for a year is about 45,000,000 pounds—I quote Eugene Blackford, a most competent authority—and this includes 11,000,000 pounds of codfish, 5,000,000 pounds of bluefish, 4,500,000 pounds of halibut and 25,000,000 pounds of thirty or forty different varieties. Of this supply of fish 35,000,000 pounds arrives within the six months before named; 25,000,000 pounds of this is consumed during that time, and the remaining 10,000,000 pounds is frozen. As another 10,000,000 pounds comes to market during the other six months it will be seen that 20,000,000 pounds in all are consumed during what in the fish market is the off season. This smaller quantity brings a larger sum than the greater quantity of the preceding six months. The fisherman with his pole and reel may know by his catch what is the season of the year, but in the fish market, with its refrigerating attachment, all seasons are pretty nearly the same. Ninety-five per cent. of the fish that come to market are dead when they arrive; the other five per cent. are alive, and are kept alive in water till killed for cooking; a small proportion of these are killed in the presence of the luxurious gourmets, who will have what they want no matter what the price. A live fish brings from four to ten times the price of a dead one. The great event of the fish market in New York is the trout display on the first of April. On that day fishing is permitted to begin. How the thousands of speckled beauties on review in Fulton Market by daylight of that first day happened to be there has always been a mystery too hard for human penetration. There is no closed season for oysters nowadays, and they are freely eaten all the year round, the old idea about the months with "r" in them having been long since abandoned. But when the warm weather sets in the consumption of oysters falls off almost to nothing. Oyster dealing in wholesale, it may be remarked, is a distinct business from fish dealing on the same scale, and the markets are in quite different parts of the city. But the retailers always deal in both. When the demand for oysters falls off then these same dealers are kept busy with the merry clam. But the consumption of clams is not nearly so large as that of oysters, and its first place does not last longer than three months. Ninety per cent. of the sea food consumed at summer watering-places near New York is bought in Fulton Market.

I HAVE spoken of the bulk of the food supplies consumed in New York except the vegetables. Those that are perishable are shipped to commission merchants, who sell them to jobbers and retailers. When the demand, and, consequently, the price, falls, such things, when possible, are placed in cool storage, not refrigerating rooms, but rooms cool enough to arrest decay without freezing. It would be quite impossible to get at the miscellaneous vegetable supply, except for particular days, as the supply varies very greatly, and no one has been at the trouble to keep the record. Then, again, there are old-fashioned features to the vegetable market, preserved alone in that branch of trade of all those engaged in feeding the multitudes in the great city, for the farmers from Long Island and near-by parts of New Jersey come in their wagons, and at the various markets—West Washington Market chiefly—dispose of their truck to the retailers. This is the only old-fashioned method of marketing that has survived the changes of recent years. At the West Washington Market, when early vegetables are ready to be harvested, there arrive 500 wagons every night, save Saturday. These wagons carry, on an average, ninety bushels each, which makes a weekly total of 270,000 bushels a week of green vegetables brought to that one market alone. That probably represents one-third of what garden truck comes in each week during six or seven months in the year. Probably the yearly consumption is something like 40,000,000 bushels. This does not include potatoes, onions, turnips and some other of the hardy vegetables, but represents the total of the

green things gathered for immediate consumption. The supply of some kinds of green vegetables in storage is generally large enough to last for several weeks.

More pains are taken with keeping fruits. They fetch higher prices, and the owners can better afford to pay the storage charges. The fact that these perishable farm products are kept in such great quantities in these warehouses recalls the fact that the warehousemen are generally also bankers, and that they always stand ready to lend money on fruits or vegetables stored with them and pledged as collateral. Indeed, I was told by the most prominent of these in New York that there was no better collateral than oranges, or apples, or pears, or potatoes, or eggs, or butter; and he even assured me that he advanced money on strawberries, the most perishable fruit that is ever handled in the market.

THE greater part of the hauling of the vegetables and meats from the warehouses and from the farms is done at night, and frequently, indeed, every night save Saturday, processions of wagons rumble over the stone pavements to these great places of distribution. Some strive to get to the markets just before the opening at 3 A. M. and others arrive much earlier, put their horses into stables, and go to bed for a few hours in one or another of the neighboring hotels which are chiefly kept for the accommodation of marketmen. Toward daylight, but before it, whether it be winter or summer, the activity at the markets begins, for then the wholesalers and jobbers begin to fill orders received by post the night before and momentarily coming by telephone. A trifle later the large purchasers among the hotelkeepers and the retail dealers begin to arrive. These are disposed of very expeditiously, for such purchasers almost invariably come with lists prepared and know tolerably well what they want. Later come the marketers for family consumption. The aggregate of these is large, for many men and women delight in looking about the markets, and feel that the time they spend in this is repaid by the bargains they secure. It is a pity to say it, but truth compels the observation, that in nine cases out of ten these bargains are mere delusions. But the marketers who go directly to these great depots for their supplies do not represent five per cent. of the housekeepers. Probably, however, another fifteen per cent. are still supplied directly from these great central stations. They send their orders by postal cards, supplied by the dealers; give their orders to the delivery wagons, which call at the houses at stated times, or send for what they want by telephonic message. The quick delivery of letters and the increased use of the telephone have together created this revolution in marketing methods. The other eighty per cent. of the people are supplied from the numerous shops for meats and vegetables in every neighborhood, however poor, however grand. Bayard Street has its little butcher shops, and Fifth Avenue also. In the great markets the rush of business is over before the wholesale merchants and the bankers have finished their breakfast. Long before that time the small retailers have been to market, and have returned with their supplies, which are arranged on the counters. All of these principals, for the retailer is always his own purchaser, are up long before the lark, for they have driven to the market, have bought what they need and are usually back again before half-past six.

NOTWITHSTANDING the cold-storage facilities there are always by the end of the week quantities of food which it would not pay to put away over Sunday. This must be sold or thrown away. Precious little of it is thrown away. Every Saturday night there are two or three great popular sidewalk markets held, and at these all manner of food is disposed of. The marketmen toward night of Saturday sell to hucksters and peddlers all that they do not care to put away till Monday. These men hurry off to the places where the open-air markets are held, and backing their wagons to the curbstone make a counter on the sidewalk by resting two boards over two barrels. Then each one erects a kerosene torch and he is ready for business. The largest of these markets is in Tenth Avenue, and stretches from Thirty-fourth Street to Forty-second Street, on either side of the way. The scene becomes exciting by half-past eight in the evening, and lasts till close to midnight. Crowds of people, most of them women with baskets, promenade up and down looking for something for the Sunday dinner. They do not pounce down on the first thing that attracts their attention, but usually go the full length on both sides, noting the supply and the prices. After such a promenade a careful housewife is prepared to spend her money advisedly and to the best advantage. At such a market a prudent purchaser never gives without parley what the seller first asks, for experience has taught the observant among them that in such places prices are very elastic, with a wonderful capacity to shrink. There is not in New York a more animated scene than this Saturday night market in Tenth Avenue. When it rains on Saturday night it is a bad thing for the health of the town, for much of this food is not disposed of for immediate consumption, but is kept over till the following week, and in a very damaged condition hawked about the streets.

The problem of feeding the New York multitudes is a great one, but I trust that what has been said in this article shows that in the main it is satisfactorily solved. And I trust, also, that the statistics I have given bear out my statement that in case of siege New York could live in reckless abundance for two months, in plenty for four months, and even manage to get along without emulating the Chinese appetite for rats for half a year.

LEAVE SOMETHING TO THE FANCY

By Edith M. Thomas

I COULD never say what splendor, white, like the rising soul of the frost, shone on the hill one autumn morning, and filled up the intervening distance with misty brightness. I thought I discerned angels, or radiant presences of some sort, walking among the chestnuts and pines that crown the bold ridge to the east. However, I took but one glance in their direction, not wishing to understand by what means such luminous and splendid effects were produced. We should not spoil our mysterious distances by too alert scouting on the part of the inquisitive eye. We should leave something for fancy to conjure with—something to be woven into the fabric of dreams.