Millions in Street Corner Business

BOOK STORE ON THE STREET.

ALL THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH.

"NOT in a store, but on the street corner." So reads the advertisement of a book store in the heart of New York City.

The owner of this store, who finds it profitable to spend $100 a week exploiting a business that is conducted from shelves, built along a stone retaining wall, is one of a hundred thousand street corner merchants in the ten largest cities in the United States whose combined properties represent an invested capital of something like $10,000,000.

These figures do not include such petty traffickers as pushcart and wagon pedlers, fakirs of all kinds, and the army of men, women and children who do business on the streets for a part of the day. Nor do they take note of professional men or brokers or others whose offices are in their hats. They deal exclusively with those men who, year in and year out, can be found all day long behind their fixed stands, ready to serve all customers as regularly and systematically as the more pretentious merchants under roofs. Under this head come fruit and flower men, bootblacks and news stand keepers, express and cart men, and even keepers of restaurants and lunch wagons.

New York is the fertile field of these men. In that city 32,851 of them run 15,233 stands, which represent an investment of nearly $3,000,000. Chicago comes next with, in round numbers, 20,000 men engaged and a capital of $2,000,000. Philadelphia is third with 15,000 men and $1,400,000, while in the other cities the figures are as follows:

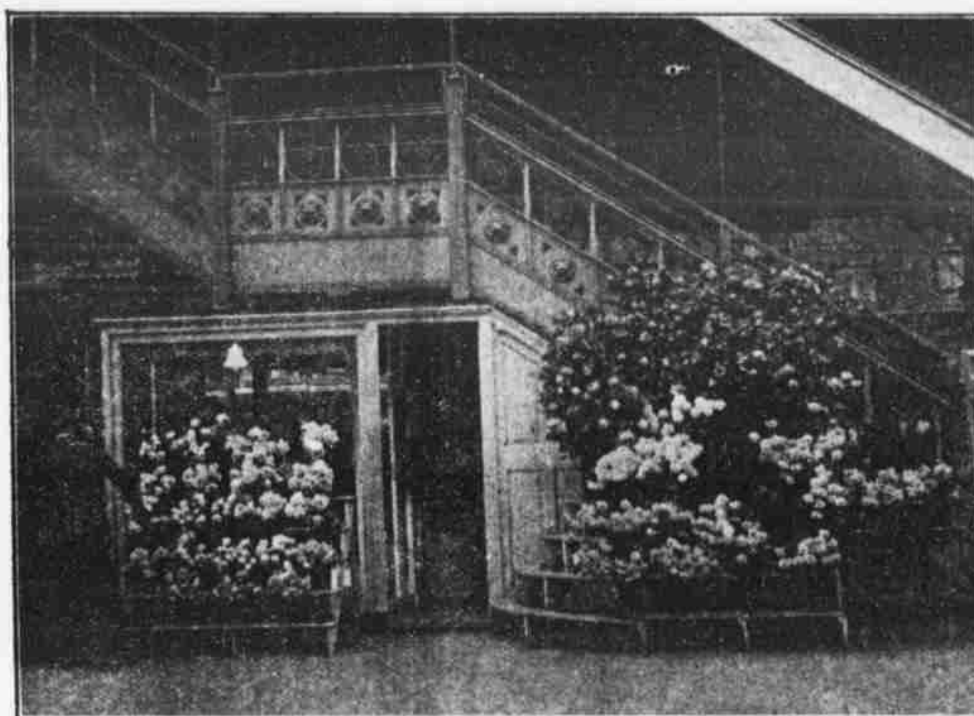
	Men Employed.	Capital.
St. Louis	5,000	$500,000
Boston	5,000	500,000
Baltimore	5,000	500,000
Cleveland	4,500	400,000
Cincinnati	4,500	400,000
San Francisco	4,500	400,000
Buffalo	4,500	400,000

In Pittsburg and Allegheny, practically one town, the figures are 5,000 men and $500,000 capital, and in Minneapolis and St. Paul, also practically one town from a commercial standpoint, 4,500 street corner merchants direct a capital of $400,000.

Thus, all told, in America's ten largest cities, and in these other two communities, this street industry gives work to 106,351 men and aggregates a capital of $10,000,000.

These statistics are based on the New York street business, as shown by the records in that city's license bureau, and on information from a majority of the other cities named.

In New York, for example, 1,449 licenses have been issued for express stands. Before a man can establish an express business on a street corner, or rent space for a sign in front of some store in a wholesale district, he must have wagon, horses and harness. Express wagons capable of doing heavy hauling are costly; therefore an average outlay of $300 is necessary in order to transact business. The sum of $434,700 represents the money invested in expresses in New York City; and, as each express requires two men, 2,898 men are employed.



TYPICAL STREET CORNER FLOWER STAND.

The number of public carts, which do moving and odd jobs in the residential and retail portions of the city, is 10,126. As an average equipment costs $200, the capital invested is $2,025,200, and as here again two men are required for each cart, 20,252 are employed. In fact, nearly every street corner business demands the time of two persons, and all figures showing the number of men employed are on this basis, with one exception.

News and periodical stands number 477. The cost of constructing a stand is $20, the average daily stock is $25, the capital invested is $21,465 and the persons employed are 954.

There are 1,271 fruit stands, representing $95,325, for a stand costs $20 to build and displays $50 worth of stock.

Of the 500 flower stands in the metropolis the average stock amounts to $100 and the stand itself to $50, for it must be better built than a news-stand in order to protect the flowers. Seventy-five thousand dollars is invested in these stands and their wares, which are looked after by 1,000 men.

The bootblack stands also represent a generous outlay. The customary stand has three chairs of the approved type, with accompanying bases, at $50 each. Consequently, $192,750 is invested in 1,285 stands. As a bootblack is necessary for every chair, 3,855 find work.

The outdoor restaurants, usually in lilliputian booths built along store walls, number fifty. Each booth costs $100 and is stocked with $100 worth of eatables, giving a total capital of $10,000 directed by 100 men.

Miscellaneous stands—soft drinks, candies, etc.—number seventy-five, with an average stand cost of $25 and an average stock to the same amount. The investment is $3,750, and 150 men are employed.

All told, the approximate investment in New York's street corner business is $2,858,190.

The enormous outlay of $10,400,000 in the cities named—of which New York's share is about one-fourth the entire amount—is justified by the returns. It is no uncommon thing for many a stand to do a daily business running into several hundreds of dollars. The customers of a bookstand in New York City, on one of the suburban ferry streets, keep five men busy the greater part of the day. A good fruitstand not infrequently clears $10 a day to its owner; a flower stand is reckoned on not to show less than $5 profit at the close of business, and the proprietor of a bootblack stand, hugging the walls of a well located saloon, cannot help making daily profits averaging all the way from $5 to $25, according to the number of chairs.

In fact, the street corner businesses are so remunerative, despite the high rentals for stand space—property owners often charging as much as $75 a month—that the syndicate idea has crept in. This is especially true as regards the expresses and public carts. A New York Irishman, who started in carting with a second-class outfit ten years ago, now controls 500 stands, and is gradually absorbing his immediate competitors. He has over $100,000 invested in carts, horses and harness.

He early saw the advantages of combination, and whenever he could get the money he bought up a cart here and a cart there. His policy has been to employ the men he buys out at good wages, and thus keep them from starting new stands in opposition. He will not say what income he draws from the business, but it is enough to provide him with an expensive suburban home for his family, with horses and carriages, and to keep his sons and daughters at college.

While the cartage business is drifting into the hands of a few Irishmen, the fruit stands of New York are being consolidated by a company of Greeks, who are credited with controlling nearly half of the 1,271 stands.

The head of the syndicate has been in America less than a decade. He began his new world career by peddling bananas from a pushcart. After that he secured employment with a fellow countryman as helper around a fruit stand. He saved his money, and, when he had enough, started in business at a little stand on a side street. He prospered and bought a stand on a busier thoroughfare. After he had been running the two places for a year or more it occurred to him that it wouldn't be a bad idea to own many stores, provided he could get the money. He got it by forming a partnership with a banker of the Greek colony, and today these men and a third, who was taken in later on, are rapidly acquirink comfortable fortunes. They control the majority of the stands along the ferry streets, and these are splendid paying propositions.

What is true in New York is true, in large measure, of other cities, so that the Bootblack trust, in the hands of Italians, is no longer without company among the street corner businesses.

It is a peculiar fact that, barring the express, cartage and news stands, all other stands are pretty generally controlled by the better class of Greeks and Italians. The Greeks have it all their own way with fruit; they divide the honors with the Italians with the flowers, while the latter have no opposition at the bootblack stands, except from an occasional negro. Expressmen, as well as carters, are still largely of Irish extraction, and the news stand people are usually of the same persuasion.

The Evening of a Great Stateman's Life

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A FEW months ago Lord Salisbury swayed the destinies of the British empire. Today he is practically forgotten even by the people of his own country. The long accounts of his career which were published when he resigned the premiership read for all the world like obituary notices, and are remembered as such.

Lord Salisbury has always shunned notoriety, and now that he has retired from politics he is more than ever reticent about his private life. Few people know how he is spending the evening of a life devoted to the service of his monarch and his country.

In politics the late premier was regarded as a bitter-tongued cynic—"the master of the art of jeers and flouts and sneers," Disraeli called him. In society he was the aristocrat par excellence, haughtily scorning the "new rich" and the "smart set." Many of his supporters in the House of Lords and the House of Commons were bitterly incensed because he failed to recognize them in the street or the club, although they had been introduced to him and had spoken to him frequently. Not only is Lord Salisbury near-sighted and absent-minded, but he has a bad memory for faces—a rare defect in a public man. It is said that he once asked Mr. Balfour, when visiting the House of Commons, "Who is that man who spoke so intelligently just now?" That man was Mr. Walter Long, the minister of agriculture, a member of Lord Salisbury's own cabinet.

This absence of mind is partly assumed in order to ward of intrusive intimacies. Similarly, Lord Salisbury's apparent cynicism and hauteur are only a mask covering his real nature. Go to Hatfield, in Hertfordshire, where his favorite ancestral home is situated, and ask the people there about him. They will tell you of a new Lord Salisbury—of the real Lord Salisbury of whom the world never dreams.

The great statesman might forget one of his own ministers, but he never fails to recognize the country people who live round his stately home at Hatfield. He knows them all, from the oldest grandfather to the youngest child, and he takes the keenest interest in their humble lives. He may be cold and distant to a foreign prince of doubtful character or a new peer of the realm, who has made his money out of beer and bought a coronet with his spare cash, but he never holds aloof from the poorest of his neighbors at Hatfield.

When the writer was staying at that place as a boy in July, 1891, he saw Lord Salisbury—then prime minister of England—sitting down on a box in a blacksmith's shop in the village, and helping the blacksmith's little girl to mend a broken toy. Next week he entertained the German emperor at Hatfield house.

Ten years afterwards, on revisiting Hatfield, the writer asked an old villager what he thought of Lord Salisbury.

"Think of him, sir?" was the reply. "Why, he's the finest gentleman God ever made. I don't know what we should do without him. I do believe he knows every soul in the place by name, and he has never been too busy to help any of us when we have needed help.

"And Lady Salisbury was a rare good woman. Her death was a terrible blow to the poor old man. Rare lovers they were all their lives. I grumbled to his lordship

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