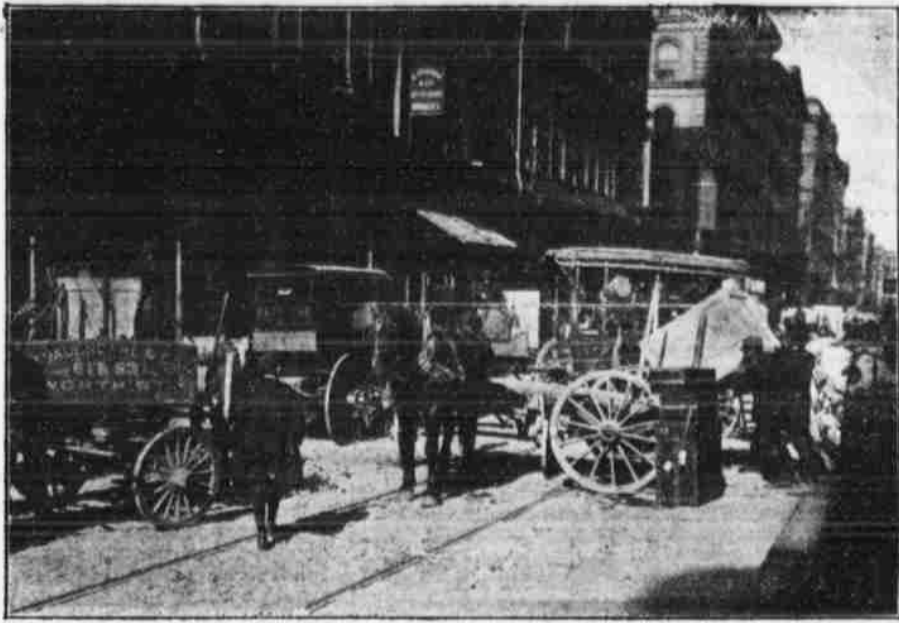


The World's Worst Crowded Streets



A STREET THAT IS CONSTANTLY BLOCKED.



WEST STREET ALONG THE HUDSON AT A BUSY HOUR.

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ENGLAND'S metropolis has always been held up as the city of the most crowded streets. But it cannot begin to compete with New York. That is the testimony of everybody who is familiar with the two places.

The long, narrow island of Manhattan—the smallest area upon which a great city is built—bears a far larger volume of traffic than any other area of equal size in the world. There is a greater congestion of vehicles in New York's streets than in the streets of any other great city.

The far-famed congestion of London traffic, about which American tourists have so much to say when they return to this country, is confined to about half a dozen comparatively short thoroughfares, such as Fleet street, part of the Strand and Ludgate Hill. There is in London no long thoroughfares so constantly packed with traffic as is Broadway, from Bowling Green to Herald Square.

The available figures give but a poor idea of the number of vehicles plying to and fro on New York's streets. According to the bureau of licenses, 22,300 are licensed. They are subdivided, in round figures, into 10,000 public trucks, 1,000 dirt carts (carrying ashes and other refuse), 1,700 express wagons, 700 peddling wagons, 5,000 push-carts, 50 of the antiquated Fifth avenue stages, 800 junk carts and 3,000 coaches and cabs.

It is surprising to find that there are only sixty-five hand-organs, operated in almost every case by Italians. In London there must be literally thousands, for one is to be found at almost every street corner, and certainly in every slum quarter, where the children dance merrily to its strains—the soft pleasure, in many cases, of their gray lives.

But the figures of the bureau of licenses only represent that portion of New York vehicles which operate for public hire. Only those vehicles require licenses. Trolley cars, tradesmen's wagons and carts, contractors' stock, private carriages and vehicles owned by the street cleaning department and other city departments—all these require no licenses.

On a conservative estimate—made by a man who has for years studied the traffic conditions obtaining in the metropolis—they are at least five times as numerous as the public conveyances.

This gives a grand total of over 133,000 vehicles rolling perpetually over the streets of Manhattan. It is possible that there are two or three times as many. If a procession of them were formed, allowing thirty feet for each horse and vehicle, it would be 755 miles long.

One department store in New York keeps 750 wagons, push carts and other vehicles to carry goods to its customers, and it is not one of the three or four largest stores, either.

"The largest stores," said the head of the stable of the store in question, "keep anywhere from 1,000 to 1,500 vehicles each. If the stables of all the department stores of New York were lumped together, I believe they would make a good-sized town, even though a great economy of space has been effected in recent years by replacing many thousands of horses with automobiles.

"Through the department stores of New York alone you have a greater volume of traffic than that of many towns which consider themselves important places. And the curious thing about it is that there is hardly ever an accident of any description through this traffic. Not one of the vehicles under my charge has had a mishap during the past four months, and I believe the other stores have equally clean sheets."

Besides the department stores, there are thousands of smaller retail establishments keeping anywhere from one to a hundred vehicles. Then there is the vast specialized traffic of the dry goods district, the



THE JAM IN THE WHOLESALE GROCERY DISTRICT.

wholesale grocery district, and the iron and steel wholesale district and many other wholesale centers. In each of those districts, street after street may be seen chock full of wagons and carts bearing the products of the particular line of industry with which the district deals. That is a sight which cannot be equaled in London or any other city of the old world.

"Taking it all round," said a veteran police captain, who has served in nearly every part of New York, "I think it is safe to say that somewhere between a half million and a million wheels revolve over the streets of Manhattan every day.

"It is marvelous that there are not more accidents, for New Yorkers are fonder than

any other people I know of taking chances in the midst of the whirl of traffic. It is impossible to control them as pedestrians are controlled in London, when crossing the street. The Londoner is meek and well disciplined in the presence of authority, but the New Yorker delights in defying it on general principles. If a policeman holds up his hand to warn him that it is dangerous to cross the street at the moment, that is an excellent reason to a New Yorker for immediate crossing. There is the same trouble with the drivers of vehicles, but in a lesser degree, for we hold the whip hand of the law over them as we cannot hold it over the pedestrians."

Asked whether he thought that New

York's streets were more crowded with traffic than those of London, the police captain replied:

"Undoubtedly they are. I know London well, and there are only a few streets there which are as much crowded, and as constantly crowded, as practically the whole of the business section of Manhattan. There is one conclusive proof of the truth of this assertion. Thousands of cyclists are to be seen all over London. Even in the busiest thoroughfares, such as Fleet street, they ride about by scores in the thick of the traffic. A cyclist in the business part of Manhattan is as uncommon as an honest man in politics. The danger to life and limb is too great."

Another prominent official of the New York police force said that what struck him most forcibly about the street traffic was the cool courage of the drivers of vehicles.

"Give the devil his due," he said. "I know many drivers are reckless and apparently thoughtless of human life, but on the whole they are the bravest men I know. A dozen times a day, at the least, their nerve has to stand a supreme test, and failures to meet that test are rare, indeed. It may be another vehicle darting across their bows at right angles from a side street, a horse slipping on an ice-covered hill, or a little child standing dazed in the middle of the road right under the hoofs of the horses; but whatever it is, the driver never seems to be at a loss.

"The bravest deed I ever saw was at Herald Square about a year ago. An ambulance automobile was hurrying to a call along Sixth avenue. A little girl ran across the street and stopped, bewildered, in front of the automobile. One side of the thoroughfare was blocked by trolley cars and other vehicles; on the other side, one of the pillars of the elevated railway blocked the way. The driver of the automobile grasped the situation in a flash. It was impossible to stop. Either he must run over the child or he must swerve full tilt into the big iron pillar, wreck his automobile, and probably lose his life. Without hesitating a second, he chose the latter alternative. The child escaped unhurt, but he had his arm broken and sustained several other injuries, as did also the doctor riding on the ambulance. If ever a man deliberately chose death rather than fail in his duty, that driver did so, and he is only a type of the drivers of New York City. Ninety per cent of them would have acted in the same way if they had been in his place."

To the Londoner in New York a markedly noticeable feature of the traffic of the busiest of all cities is the genial good humor with which it is conducted by pedestrians and drivers alike. This is in decided contrast to the spirit which prevails in his own town.

The cockney caddy is famous for his mastery of sarcastic profanity, but he is quite the best-tempered person you are likely to meet with on London's streets. The common remark of the pedestrian is: "Oo the 'ell is yer a-shovin' of?"

The driver pursues his way along a sulphurous streak of profanity, which he directs at the heads of the innumerable people who get in his way. Generally speaking, he is swearing from morning till night in the regular course of his business. It is vicious swearing, too—the kind that frequently ends in a fight and call for the hospital ambulance.

Even the most genial-tempered Londoners seem to catch the infection of ill-humor in the street. They may be as patient as Job at home, but they snarl like jackals over a bone if somebody pushes against them in the crowd at the railway station. "If Londoners had to crowd together as people do in New York," said an English visitor not long ago, "they would probably begin to massacre one another."

DOUGLAS KENNEDY.

Favors for Valentine's Day

THE custom of sending valentines has developed from a laced-edged card, inscribed with a tender sentiment, to the elaborate floral designs made up by florists, the expensive candy boxes with valentine designs and sentiments, and the giving of other dainty favors with beautiful works of art in hand painting and lithograph.

"Violets are the flowers for St. Valentine's day," say all the florists. "Deep purple violets made up into immense hearts, a foot and wider across, and packed in a pretty wicker or grass basket decorated with violet ribbons and violets. These large boxes and baskets are always accompanied by a valentine inscribed with a sentiment suitable to the degree of friendship existing between the giver and the recipient of the violets.

"We also pack up in the same dainty manner smaller hearts of violets and two hearts together, pierced by a golden arrow. These are arranged with ribbon loops and decorations, so that they may be hung up."

Last year was the first time that florists were called upon to make up violet hearts, but this year the demand for these is so great that orders have had to be placed weeks in advance of the day.

In accordance with an old poetical idea, small wreaths of flowers—valentine flowers—are put up in dainty baskets of sweet grass, broad Swedish woven baskets, little wicker baskets and satin boxes, decorated with ribbons and a spray of satin flowers in the corner, or perhaps an orchid.

Violets are favorites because, in the language of flowers, the violet signifies faithfulness. Next in point of popularity is the red rose, signifying love, and the forget-

me-not, whose name speaks of remembrance.

The orchid, which signifies refinement, is not so popular as other flowers for St. Valentine's day, but a great many orchids are being ordered to accompany handsome satin and cardboard valentines.

Some of the florists have prepared fancy baskets and boxes decorated with ribbons and flowers and interwoven with ribbons, as well as hand-painted affairs. These sometimes have little cupids, in bisque, among the decorations.

Candy is a favorite gift for St. Valentine's day. The young man whose fate is undetermined is more apt to send flowers which breathe his sentiments—for it is all the fashion now to send flowers with their sentiments—but the young man whose future is settled by a solitaire diamond ring will send his fiancée one of the boxes of candy especially got up for the day.

These boxes come in many sizes, from a foot and a half across to a tiny red heart with a cupid perched upon the top beside a spray of orange blossoms or lilies of the valley. Valentine candy boxes are all in heart shape, in satin or brocaded silk, and are hand-painted on the top with spring blossoms, or are embroidered in small wreaths and sprays, in fine ribbon embroidery, with fancy embroidered ribbon borders. These boxes are made inside into the handsomest of work boxes, glove boxes, jewel cases and the like, while satin and lace and hand-painted mouchoir cases have a box of candy of any size tucked between the folds. All these tokens are accompanied by suitable verses and sentiments upon dainty lithographed valentines.