

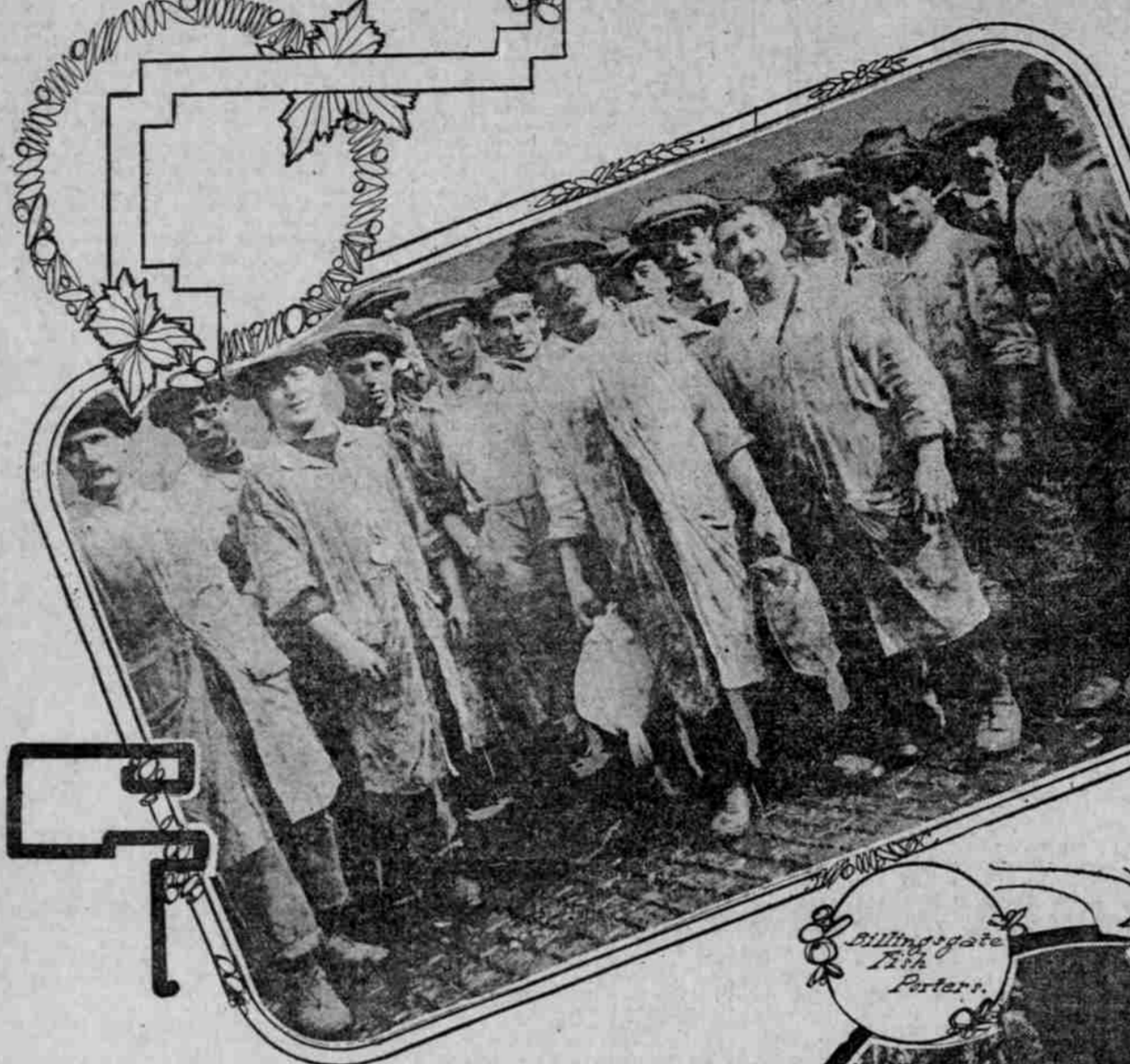
Feeding London's Millions

How the World's Metropolis Lives.

An Account of Billions in Food Products—Ten Acres of Meat Markets—Huge Meat and Bread Bills—Duke Who Takes Toll From Every London Dinner Plate—Amazing Growth of Cold Storage.



Part of the London Meat Market



(BY RIPPERT NEVILLE.)

LONDON, November 1.—(Special Correspondence.)—Everybody these days is feeling the nip of soaring prices. The outcry comes from all countries, most of all from the cities. Many have wondered how great cities obtain and distribute their supplies. How, for instance, does great London live?

When, last Summer, a strike broke out among the London transport workers it was startlingly demonstrated to the people of England that their capital might as easily be placed in danger of famine by a strike along the Thames as through a blockade by a foreign foe. No more than a month's food supplies are held in the storehouses and wharves of London, and long before that time the citizens would have to cut down their demands to short rations.

For every day London's five million residents consume 435 tons of mutton, 390 tons of beef, 70 tons of bacon and ham, besides great quantities of pork, rabbits and poultry. On that head alone the daily bill is \$250,000. Every 24 hours fruit to the value of \$40,000 passes from the market and store to the home. In the same time London consumes 160 tons of butter, 162 tons of cheese, 1700 tons of sugar, 312,000 pounds of tea, 14,000 tons of meal, rice and sage, 2600 tons of wheat, 60 tons of coffee and 114,000 pounds of cocoa. The fact that nearly half of the huge daily supply comes by way of the river Thames proves once more how powerful is the influence of that busy stream on the life of the British people.

At a time when New York and other great cities are considering the reform of their means of food distribution, an outline of how London manages to supply five million hungry mouths will be of more than usual interest. It should be borne in mind that London is an accretion produced by time. Not so very many years ago there were meadows running down to within easy distance of Trafalgar Square. But today London reaches far out into Middlesex, Essex, Surrey, Hertfordshire and Kent—and is ceaselessly extending all the time.

London's Narrow Limits.
Thus the old authorities have been outgrown and London now is administered by several bodies, not counting the Port of London Authority, which keeps watch and ward over the interests, trade and commerce of the great Thames waterway. Visitors to London often are surprised to find how small a space in reality is covered by the corporation of the City of London—that portion of the brick and mortar ruled by the Lord Mayor. Roughly speaking "the City" proper is but a square mile, from Temple Bar in Fleet street to Aldgate in the East. Beyond that lies a great expanse of urban area administered by the London County Council, whose authority extends over 115 square miles, while outside that again is the irregular belt of Greater London, consisting of rapidly growing suburban areas, extending from 25 to 30 miles into the country and forming the outer dormitory of London's business population.

It follows that in that great triple area there is some confusion of interests, and the vast, unwieldy whole is not served as comprehensively by its markets as would be the case if a freestart were to be made today. But like everything else in London the markets have risen with the town. Like Topsy, they have simply "grown." Still, even so, something of an orderly plan is discernible.

In way back times the erection of

markets and fairs formed part of the King's prerogative, and none could exist except by direct grant from the crown. Henry III. covenanted by charter with the City of London not to grant permission to anyone else to set up a market within a radius of seven miles from the city, and this privilege was subsequently confirmed by charter granted by Edward III. in March, 1326.

This power, more or less, remains today; and, while the corporation has from time to time waived its rights in order to permit of the establishment of markets in London by private enterprise, where a special demand existed, its franchise as the market authority for London has been recognized and confirmed by recent acts of parliament and decisions of the law courts. As a matter of fact the value of all markets for London have been recognized and must be governed by some such power as that, for unless there is immunity from competition within a given area there will always be a region abutting thereon which will tend to weaken the market itself by evading tolls and diverting business.

Cattle Market Old One.
The corporation controls the live cattle market at Islington, the foreign cattle market at Deptford, by the Thames side, the great wholesale central meat markets at Smithfield, the retail meat, fish, game and fruit markets at Farringdon street and Leadenhall, the vegetable market at Spitalfields and the famous fish market at Billingsgate. Of these the most important is the Central Meat Market, covering 10 acres of historic ground that was formerly part of a vast open space just outside the city walls. Smithfield was the scene in those days of many tournaments and fairs, and archery contests. In 1231 the Lord Mayor, Sir William Waiworth, killed the rebel Wat Tyler there.

As long ago as 1150 it is known that horses and cattle were sold at Smithfield. After Charles I. gave the corporation control, his successor deprived them of their rights, but William and Mary restored them, and since then nobody has seriously contested their powers. For a long time it was a live cattle market. In 1853 a writer named John Erwick wrote "There were 60 butchers, freemen of the city, who each killed five oxen daily, or 300 per week; the non-freshmen, or 'foreigners,' as they were called, killed altogether four times as many as the freemen, or 1200 weekly." Hardly anything could demonstrate more effectively the growth of London's population and food demands than those figures in contrast with the figures of today.

The time came when a live cattle market in the heart of London could no longer be tolerated. So the dead meat markets were established at Smithfield and the present buildings were erected in 1860 at a cost of \$10,000,000. All rentings in the market are weekly, the charge averaging 4 cents per square foot for ground-floor space, including complete fittings and a supply of water. Besides that a further charge of 1 cent for every 42 pounds of meat, poultry or provisions is made on all that enters the market.

The scene here between 8 and 11 in the morning is impressive in its stir and activity. Compared to the quieter doings of the great fruit and vegetable market of Covent Garden, London's meat emporium is a throbbing hive—weekly, the charge averaging 4 cents per square foot for ground-floor space, including complete fittings and a supply of water. Besides that a further charge of 1 cent for every 42 pounds of meat, poultry or provisions is made on all that enters the market.

Kingdom is dealt with at Smithfield. Last year 435,316 tons of meat were thus handled, on which tolls were paid to the tune of over \$735,560. Of this the fresh killed supplies totalled 124,941 including the live stock imported and killed at the Deptford slaughterhouses. Real English supplies were only 66,870 tons.

Nowadays the cold storage companies handle most of the supplies, and South America, New Zealand and Australia are the lands of origin of the greater part of it. No less than 80 per cent of the supplies are brought in refrigerated chambers from overseas, and the last official report gives the startling fact that the whole supply of foreign imports, "London's mainstay as regards meat, depends upon open unobstructed sea passages ranging up to the voyages of six weeks' duration." The United States, up to 10 years ago, produced 41 per cent of these supplies, but "the population and requirements appear to have overtaken that country's surplus meat production, and it may safely be said that the United States of America, in particular for domestic needs, is within measurable distance of becoming a competitor with ourselves for the output of South America."

Food From the Dutch.
Formerly, too, the continent of Europe used to loom largely as a supplier of London's meat market, but Germany now eats the products of Schleswig-Holstein herself. Only from the Netherlands does considerable meat now reach London, and these supplies are in admirable condition; indeed, after the Scotch, Dutch mutton, veal and pork are considered the best in the market. For the future Australia and South America are mainly looked to for supplies—Hill they too are exhausted, and then what is to be fed to the great mass of the metropolis no one knows. Australia and New Zealand supply already most of the mutton, while the Argentine sends nearly half the beef. As the meat shortage in Germany, France, Austria and Italy is driving those countries into the market as buyers, there is keen competition coming for the world's available meat product.

It was not further back than 1850

that the first consignment of frozen meat was imported—about 40 tons in all. The London corporation did not grasp the importance of the new development, with the result that they let private companies step in with cold storage accommodation and today a rich reward is being reaped by these concerns, for there are now over 200 specially fitted steamships engaged in the trade, capable of carrying 13,000,000 carcasses. To accommodate this huge bulk of frozen meat there are 30 large cold stores within the city area, able to accommodate over 3,000,000 carcasses; but the strike in the early Summer demonstrated the need of more and it is being urged that the corporation should provide them.

Besides the central meat markets, the corporation has public slaughterhouses and chill rooms at Islington, built at a cost of \$200,000, designed to secure the most cleanly and hygienic methods. In these 27,370 cattle, 101,648 sheep, 11,722 calves and 34,931 pigs were slaughtered last year. All carcasses, whether killed in England or not, are inspected and, if found in any way unsound, are condemned to be destroyed. This is done by throwing them into a huge machine along with the inedible offal, subjecting them to steam pressure and then crushing them into powder for agricultural fertilizing purposes. Whatever offal parts are edible, however, are sold to the poor, and it is calculated that the edible offal of a steer provides a meal for 40 people and that of a sheep for eight people.

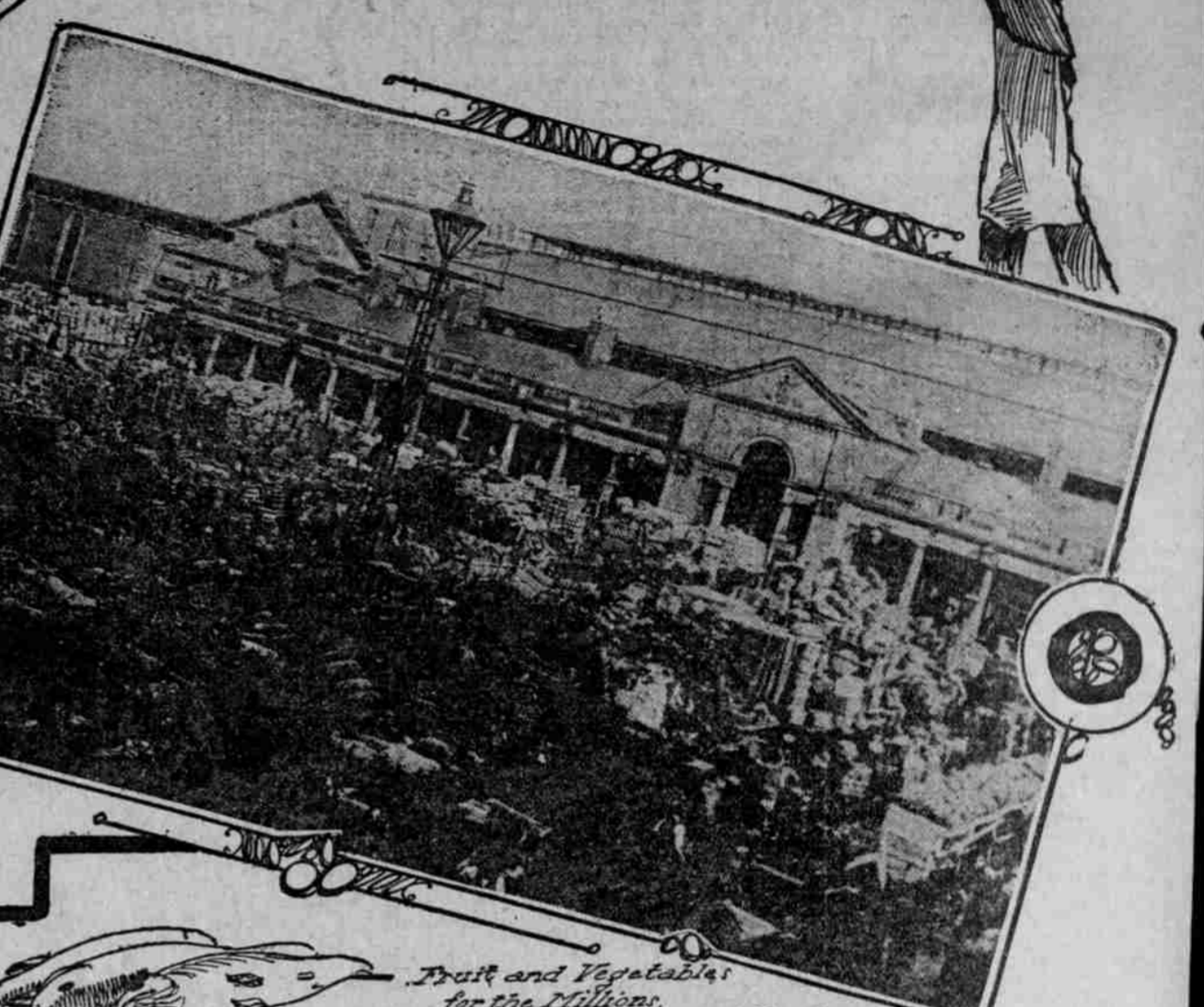
So much for London's enormous meat bill. As to fruit and vegetables, the markets are more widespread. Covent Garden is, of course, the most famous and most important, and as an early morning spectacle draws every visitor to London who can rise early enough to its locality. But it is by no means the only market. There are others at Spitalfields and Stratford, in the East End, the Borough, south of the Thames, and at Kew, on the West. But these are mainly for the rougher supplies—potatoes, cabbages and the like, that



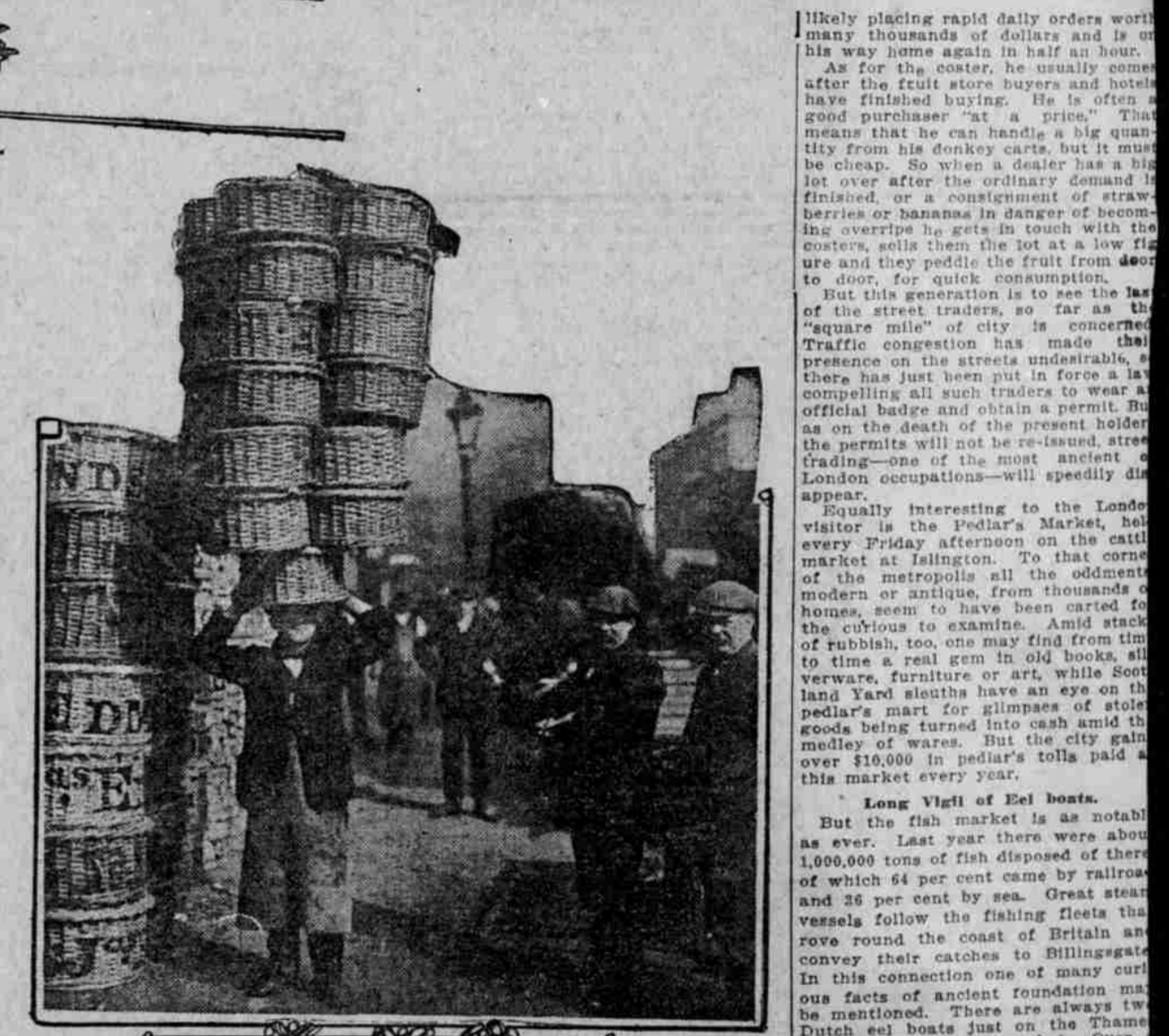
Carrying



Food for the Poor—Cows' Heads—Livers and Such—In the London Central Meat Market



Fruit and Vegetables for the Millions—Scene Outside Covent Garden Market at Daybreak.



Carrying Covent Garden Baskets

are brought in by wagon overnight from farms in Essex, Kent and Middlesex. Covent Garden remains the clearing-house of all the Continental produce and the finer supplies of home-grown fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Duke Reaps Big Toll.
Covent Garden was once attached to Westminster Abbey and was then known as Covent Garden, but on the dissolution of the monasteries this garden, together with a neighboring field known as Seven Acres, now called Longacre, was given by Edward VI to Edward, Duke of Somerset, and, when that dignitary was condemned in 1552, they were transferred by the monarch to John, Earl of Bedford, who built a house at the bottom of what is now Southampton street, leading from Covent Garden to the Strand. Ever since that time the Bedford family have held the place and today the present Duke of Bedford draws a huge income from this and the adjacent neighborhood. Field it has historic associations, and more than one duel was fought there in olden days. Today the nearest approach to dueling is found in the National Sporting Club, the headquarters of British boxing, located in an adjacent street.

likely placing rapid daily orders worth many thousands of dollars and is on his way home again in half an hour. Every Friday he usually comes after the fruit store buyers and hotels have finished buying. He is often a good purchaser "at a price." That means that he can handle a big quantity from his donkey carts, but it must be cheap. So when a dealer has a big lot over after the ordinary demand is finished or a consignment of strawberries or bananas in danger of becoming overripe he gets in touch with the Duke, sells them the lot at a low figure and they peddle the fruit from door to door, for quick consumption.

But this generation is to see the last "square mile" of city is concerned. Traffic congestion has made the presence on the streets undesirable, and there has just been put in force a law compelling all such traders to wear an official badge and obtain a permit. But as on the death of the present holder the permits will not be re-issued, street trading operations of the most ancient London occupations will speedily disappear.

Equally interesting to the London visitor is the pedlar's market, held every Friday afternoon on the cattle market at Islington. To that corner of the metropolis all the oddments of modern or antique, from thousands of homes, seem to have been carted for the curious to examine. Amid stacks of rubbish, too, one may find from time to time a real gem in old books, city ware, furniture or art. While Scotland's slouches have an eye on the pedlar's mart for glimpses of stolen goods being turned into cash amid the medley of wares. The Duke's gain over \$10,000 in pedlar's tolls paid at this market every year.

Long Vigil of Eel boats.
But the fish market is as notable as ever. Last year there were about 1,000,000 tons of fish disposed of there of which 64 per cent came by railroads and 28 per cent by sea. Great numbers of vessels follow the fishing fleets that rove round the coast of Britain and convey their catches to Billingsgate. In this connection one of many curious facts of ancient foundation may be mentioned. There are always two Dutch eel boats just on the Thames side of Billingsgate market. Over a century ago, the right was given for two such boats to be located there but the fear of the owners was that if they ever vacated that position the eel boats come in from Holland and the two empty ones slip out, to return with another Billingsgate brings in nearly \$175,000 a year, and 1200 porters, with their distinctive leather headgear, are employed in the market.

Time was when fighting and horseplay were the constant accompaniments of the market, and a stranger ran some risk of being pelted with fish and assailed with foul epithets. But today dauntless women may pass through without any violence to their eyes or ears. As one of the salesmen remarked to an overseas visitor the other morning, "Billingsgate is changed to what it was 30 years ago. Now it's fit for any lady."

Thus, on all sides London has its distributing centers. The "right little island" does much better in a self-supporting way than many people imagine. Indeed, the amount of home produce consumed as \$90,000,000 and the imported produce at \$100,000,000. Nevertheless in 100 years the amount of imported foods has trebled. Canada is regarded as the most trustworthy source of wheat supply and last year the Dominion sent abroad more wheat than any other country in the world. But England does not take it all. In fact, only 3 per cent of England's food comes from British possessions. Englishmen eat 130 pounds of meat per head every year and 343 pounds of wheat and flour. Thirty per cent of the butter used is home produced; more than half the cheese is Canadian. The decreasing production of butter and cheese in England is due to the increasing demand for fresh milk, the supply of which annually has to be augmented by 120,000 gallons from France and Holland. Adding condensed milk, England consumes 800,000,000 gallons of milk every 13 months.