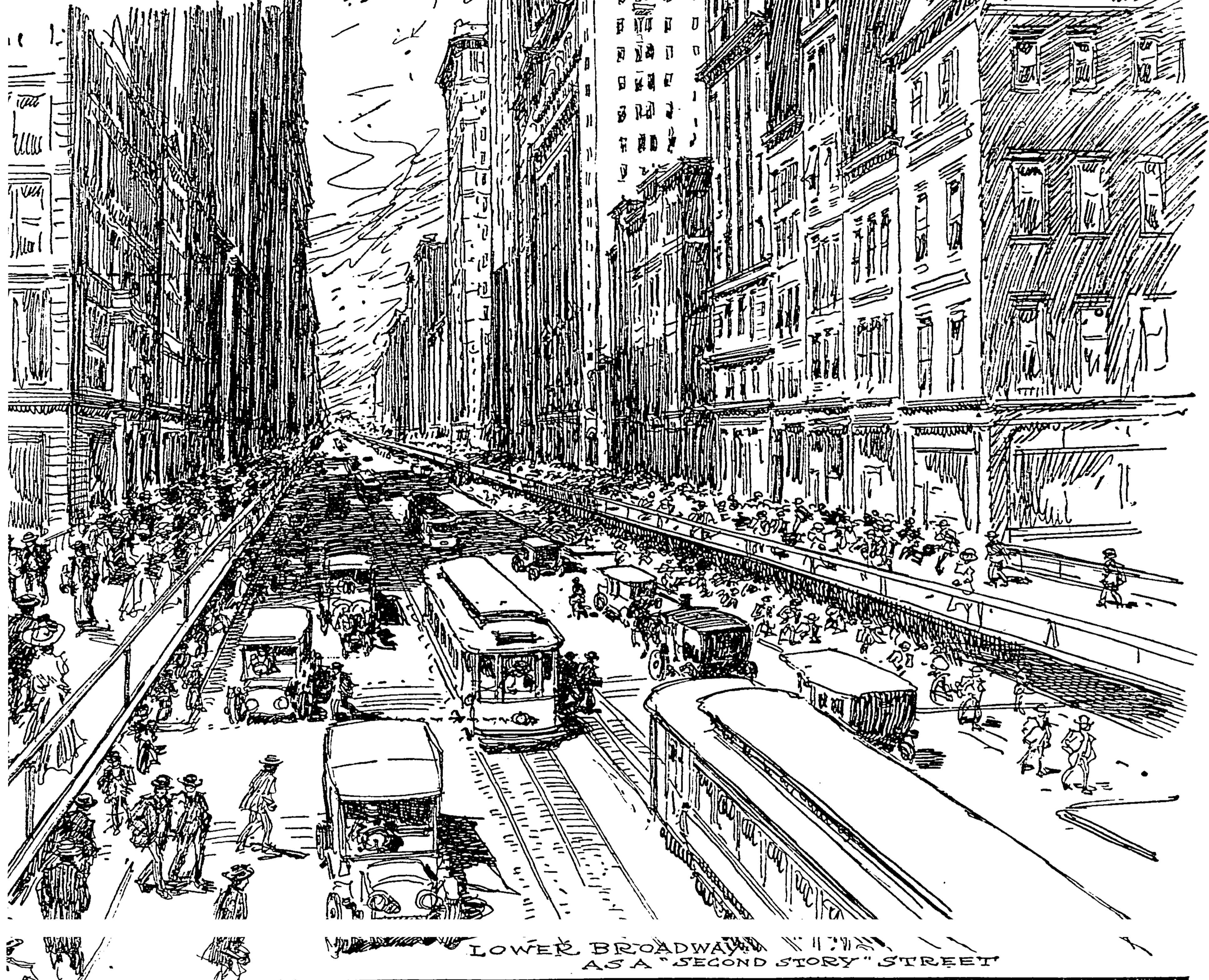
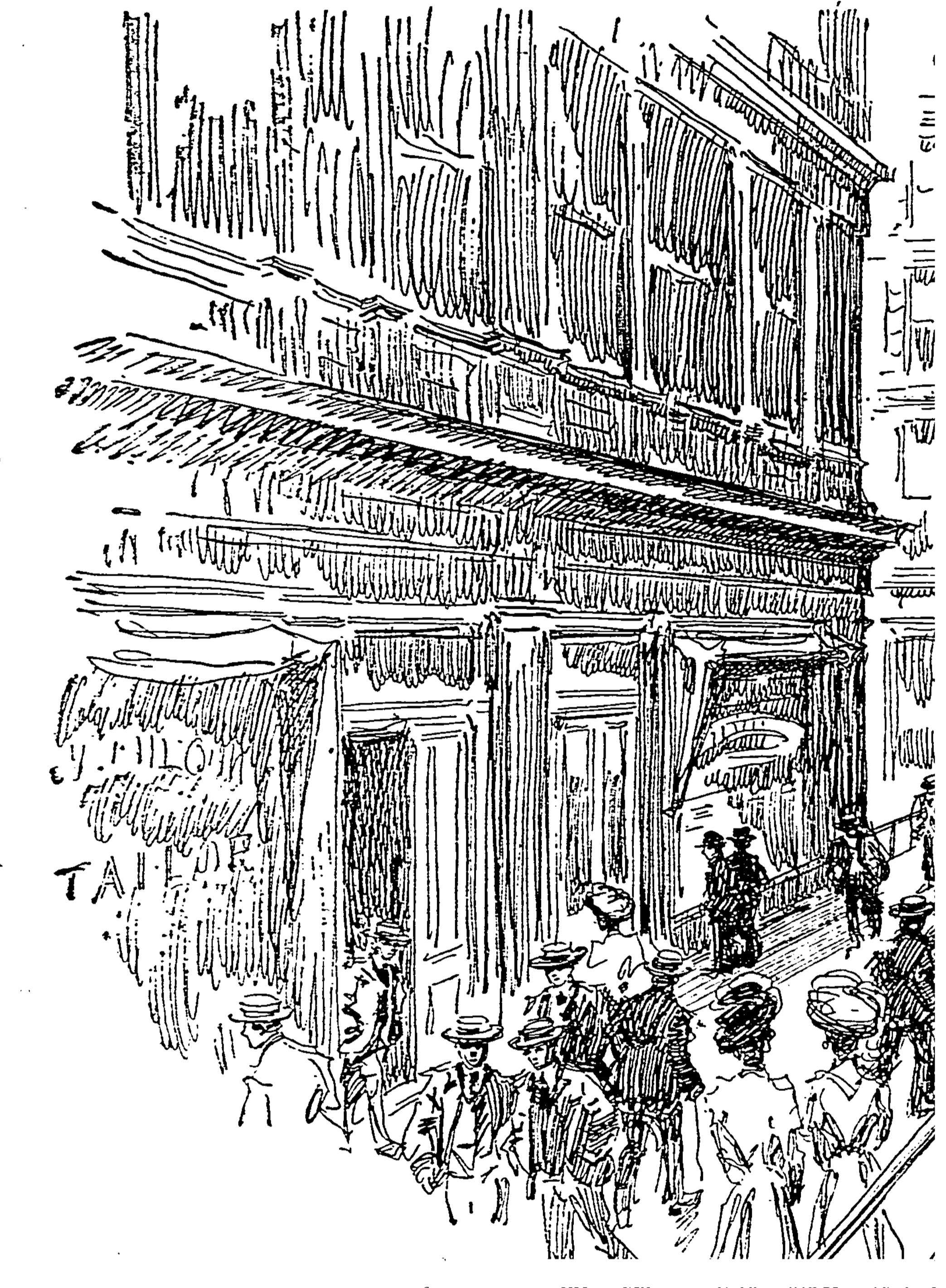
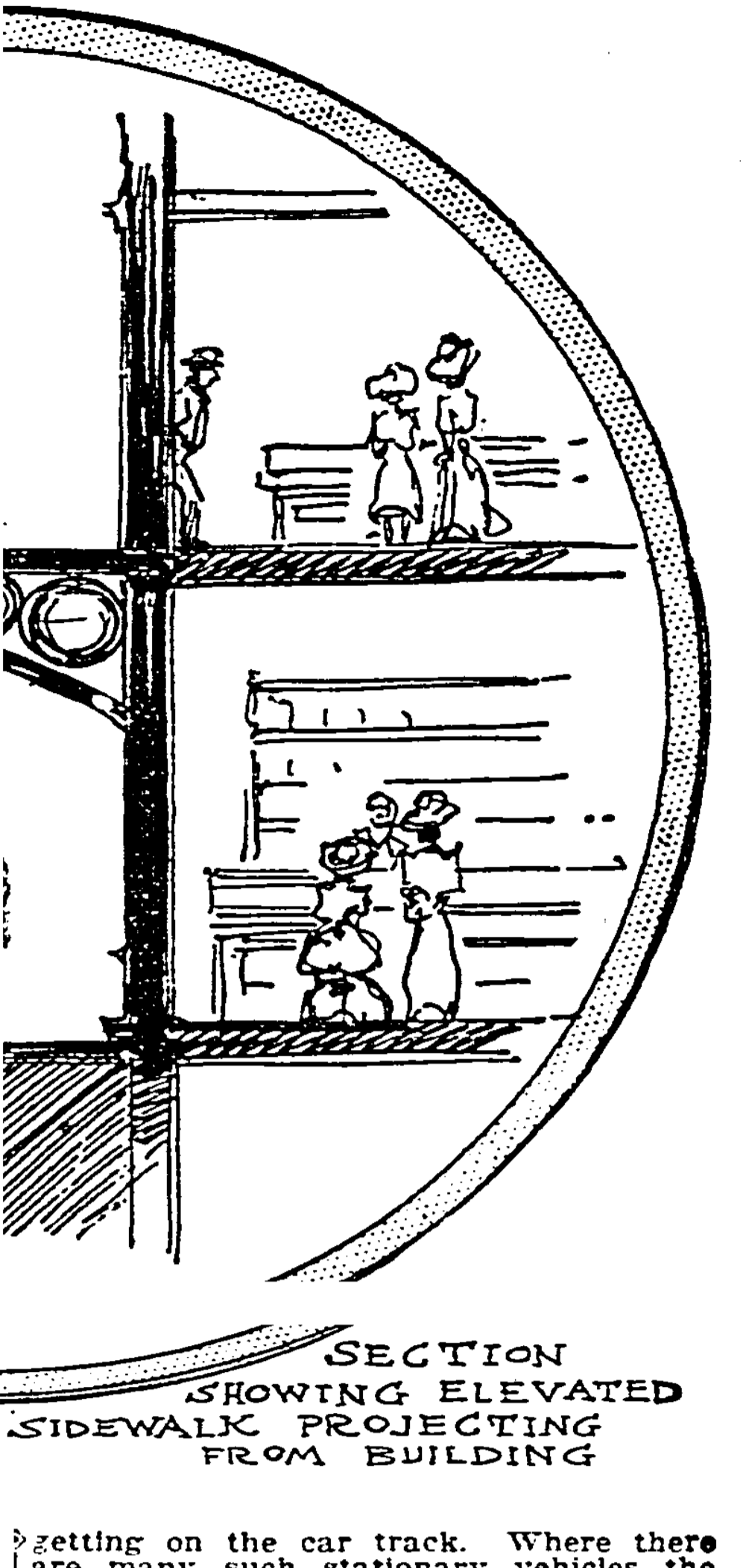
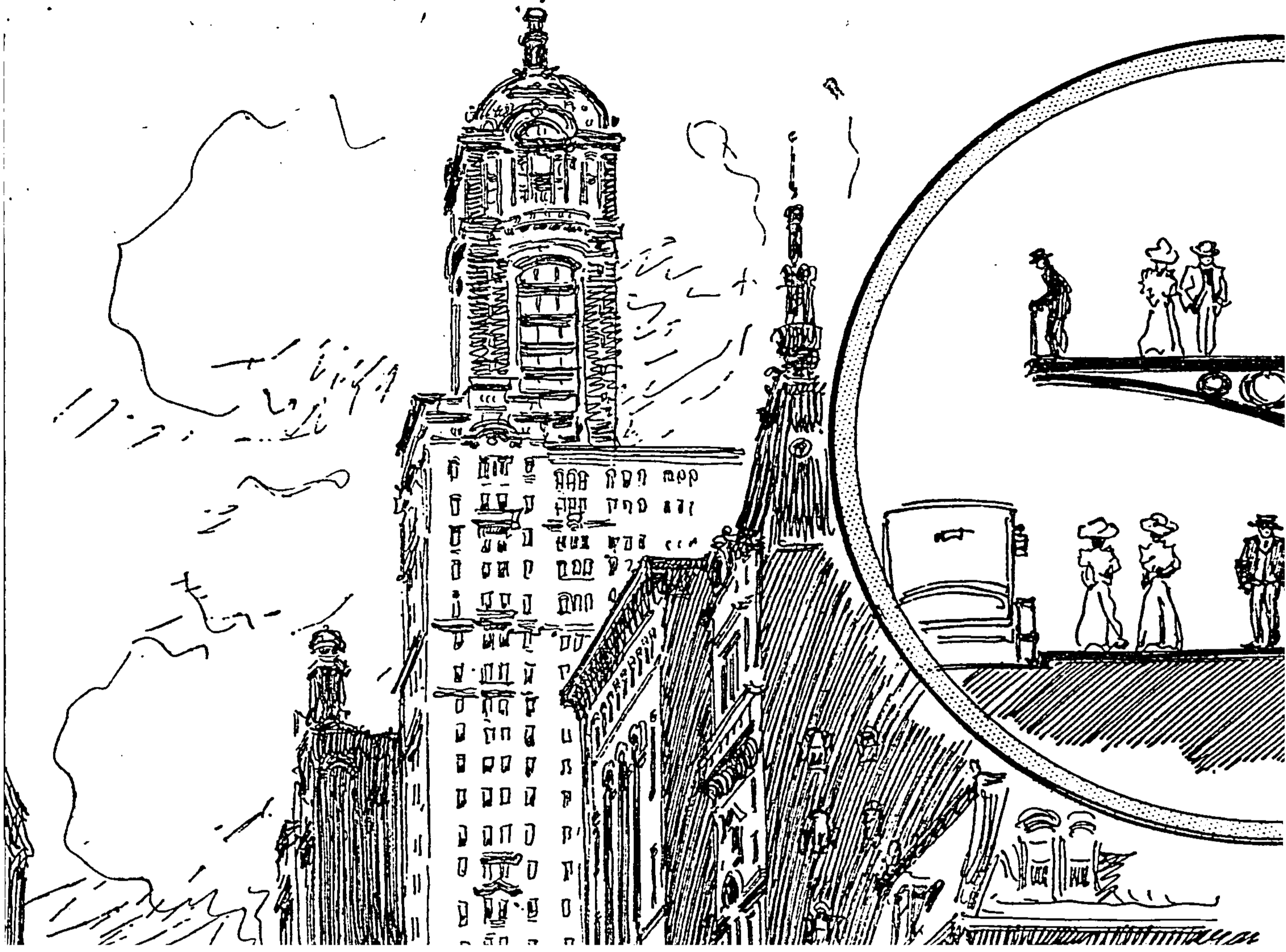
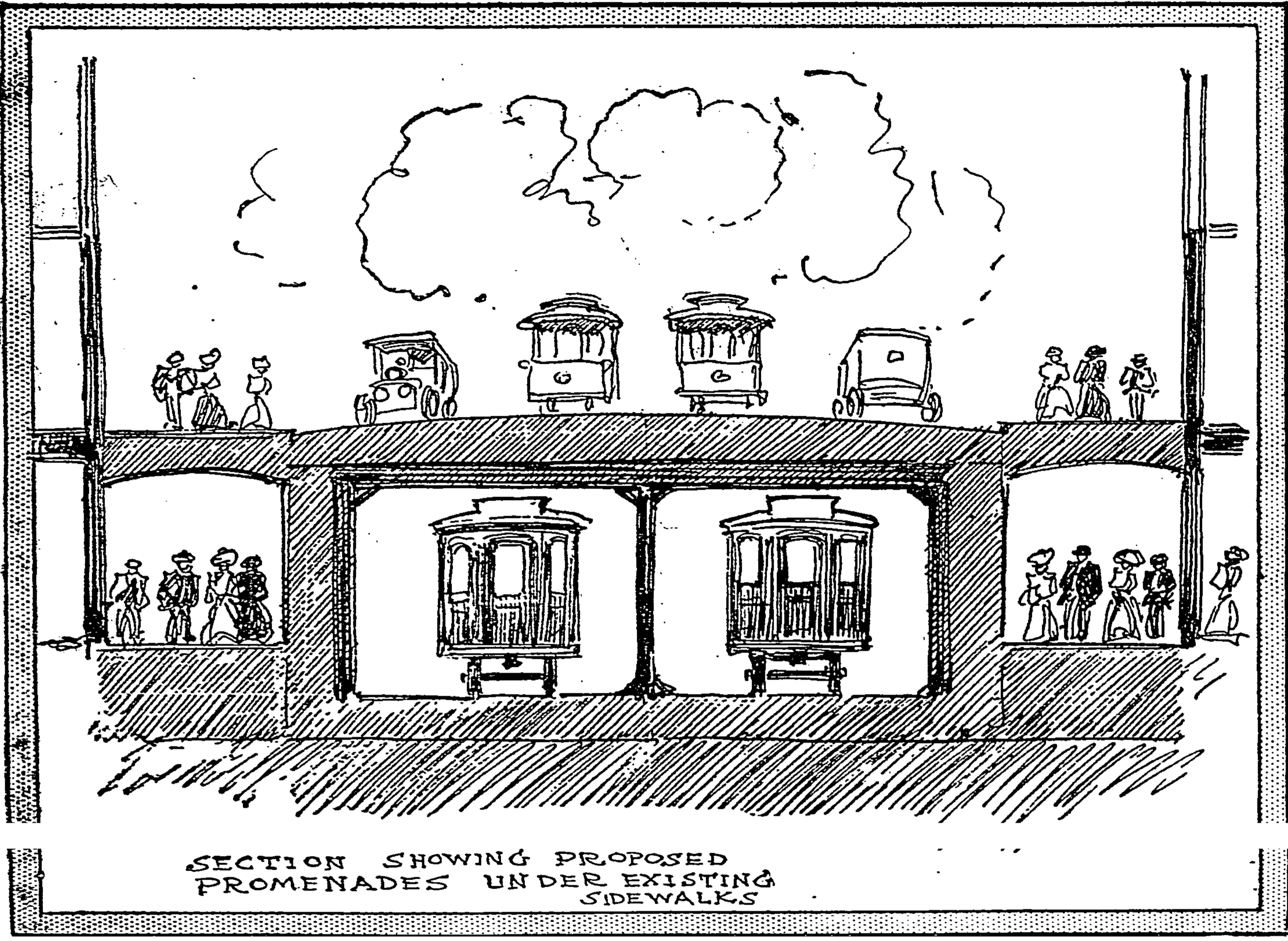


DOUBLE-DECKED STREETS FOR LOWER NEW YORK



Department of Public Works Has Made Plans for Elevated Sidewalks and for Tunnels to Relieve Congestion.

THE Department of Public Works has just taken a step of great importance to the city. It has set about the solution of the problem of congestion in the streets of New York and set about it in a radical way. They do not go in for discussion which we have had for a long time, and which, though valuable, is indefinite, but they have recommended to the Board of Estimate that certain remarkable changes be made in the most congested districts of Manhattan.

E. P. Goodrich, the consulting engineer of the department, has drawn up and submitted to Mr. McAhey a scheme which provides for the erection of elevated sidewalks on some streets and for tunnels suited to the accommodation of foot passengers in others. In addition to this the department has undertaken to make thoroughfares through some of the large office buildings, streets that will be planned by the city although policed by the building authorities, and that will be kept open until 11 o'clock at night for the benefit of pedestrians.

Whether or not this scheme will be favorably received by the authorities cannot at this time be even hinted at, but the mere fact that a city department has recommended anything so radical is most encouraging for the future. Mr. Goodrich says that there is no question in the minds of engineers as to the practicality of the scheme. If New York carries out the plans already drawn up by the department of Public Works she will be, in most respects, merely imitating innovations already successfully put through in Europe, and she will certainly be giving a much needed relief to the people who have to hurry up and down the congested streets of lower New York in by the crowded hours of the noon luncheon and the afternoon home-going.

To the end that everything may be done in the wisest way, the department has been employing observers at the most crowded places in New York. Their statistics have not yet been compiled except in a few cases. It is, however, easy to

see how greatly relief is needed. Already the department knows that from 8 in the morning until 6 at night no less than 120,000 persons pass the corner of Fulton Street and Broadway. This brings at the rush hours the population of a good-sized town crushed together on these small and inconvenient sidewalks. In this particular case it will be noted, too, that the Subway kiosks are built on the sidewalks in such fashion as to take up more than half the already restricted space.

On Nassau Street, where the sidewalk is only six feet wide, the pedestrians are forced into the middle of the street and interfere with the vehicles, while the vehicles interfere with them. It is planned to collect statistics of all crowded streets in lower Manhattan. Then it is proposed to make tunnels underneath or to build another story. In cases where neither of these things is done the traffic of vehicles may be limited to certain hours when they will least interfere with the pedestrians.

"We have persons gathering statistics in the crowded sections," said Mr. Goodrich, "and we are making it our business to find out what sort of traffic is greatest on the various streets and how the public can best be served by the various regulations. In some streets street car traffic is very important and the public is greatly incommoded by trucks that block the way. In other streets street car traffic is not very heavy and the slow-moving various street vehicles are very essential. In other streets there are more foot passengers, and their convenience is especially to be consulted.

"You see, under present conditions, somebody has to suffer. Street cars, trucks, and passengers must have right of way in the different streets according to their relative importance. In the course of time it may be possible to provide for everybody, but at present the problem is to choose as victim that part of the public which is, in each special case, of least importance. I am not yet in a position to give you the figures for publi-

cation, but I will give you an idea of how the work is done.

On the table near Mr. Goodrich was a stack of rolls such as are used to send unmounted photographs through the mail. He reached over and took up one, shaking out a blue print and spreading it on the table.

"This happens to be a section of Nassau Street," he said. "The red lines represent the pedestrians on one sidewalk, the blue lines those on the other. The heavy black lines stand for the vehicular

traffic and the dotted lines for the pedestrians. In the margin these figures from 1 to 12 and from 12 to 1 are the hours of the day. Now you see how the traffic runs on this part of Nassau Street. He reached over and took up one, shaking out a blue print and spreading it on the table.

"Look at the black dotted line. It goes along smoothly, keeping below the red and the blue lines until 12 o'clock comes. Then you see how it jumps up."

And indeed it did jump up. On the stroke of 12 it flew toward the top of the page and stayed there until it dropped again after 2. But at 5 o'clock, it began

to climb once more, and it stayed high until after 6.

"You see," explained Mr. Goodrich, "at the noon hour and at the rush hour for going home at night there are more pedestrians in the middle of Nassau Street than there are on both sidewalks. Then look at the line for vehicles. It is so small. It is quite apparent that the traffic of trucks and carriages on Nassau Street must not be considered at the expense of the traffic of foot passengers.

"We have such diagrams for a number of streets, and I can tell you that we have submitted plans for tunneling or

double-decking half a dozen or more streets in our report to Mr. McAhey. I do not feel at liberty to say which streets these are until we have heard from the Borough President. Our tunneling and double-decking schemes may be described this way.

Mr. Goodrich pulled a sheet of paper and began to draw lines on it.

"Here," he said, "are two lines of street cars, and here on either side are the sidewalks. Here is a truck or cab stationary between the car track and the curb. Now, on many streets there is not room for a truck or a cab which is making to pass a stationary vehicle without

getting on the car track. Where there are any stationary vehicles the whole traffic is congested and conditions become intolerable.

The only way to widen the street is to take a piece of the sidewalk. In cases where there have been encroachments on the sidewalk we could correct the street and pay back to the sidewalk on one side what we took away from it on the other. If we widen the street by chopping off four or five feet from the sidewalk we still have the problem of the pedestrian. These pedestrians we will put up on a platform built above the street. This elevated street then runs along the second stories of the houses. This is not a sidewalk look over the railing at the vehicles below.

But the platform would have to be supported. Would not the posts interfere with the vehicles?

"There would not be any posts," explained Mr. Goodrich. "They would be not enough to count. The platforms would be upheld by strong brackets or would be suspended like marionette strings. This is a perfectly practical idea, and I may say that it has been done in several cities. Every street in the city, for instance, all have these elevated sidewalks in congested districts.

"Would you not double deck every street by an elevated sidewalk. We would tunnel some streets, we would dig under the sidewalk and make a front over it just like the long platforms at Subway stations. You remember, for instance, the platform at Twenty-third Street, with short tunnels on either side. On tunnelled sidewalks would be built along this line. Take the Subway at Fulton Street, for instance. The platform is already more than a block long. So it is at Wall Street. They are more pleasant places than the streets in some kinds of weather.

"Would you always run the underground streets along the line of the present Subway, Mr. Goodrich?"

"No. In a congested district we could not do this. In a congested district, for instance, is just large enough to accommodate the Subway. In other places, if relief for the street is needed, it would be possible to run the sidewalk in the same tunnel as the Subway, but in many of the most congested streets it would go ahead and make a tunnel like the present Subway, but for pedestrians only. This idea of relieving congestion by double-decked streets and tunnelled sidewalks is nearly in line with the department's policy in regard to removing obstructions. I need not repeat how largely private property has been sacrificed in many streets. Where land was of enormous value and its worth was calculated almost in inches, private owners had coolly taken several feet of the city sidewalk to use for their own purposes.

"We have remedied the situation in a great many streets. We have not met with any serious opposition. The churches and the banks and some public institutions have objected to the change more than the ordinary simple citizen. We have widened Fulton Street so that there is room for an additional line of vehicles and we have done this only by giving to the city what belonged to it.

"In lower New York, however, much remains to be done. On Nassau Street there are many store fronts that encroach from two to four feet on the sidewalk. These will have to go. The fire hydrants, too, are going to be moved back to places where they do not obstruct narrow sidewalks.

Even the city departments have not considered the public rights in the matter of traffic. Right at the corner of the Subway kiosks are built on the sidewalk, which is already so full of obstructions. The traffic, and a fire hydrant in one instance takes up a large share of the rest of the room. I know of a case where a man fracturing his kneecap by falling against the hydrant. No," admitted Mr. Goodrich, "in reply to a citizen's inquiry, he was not altogether sober, but all the same the hydrant and the Subway entrance had no business to be taking up all the room.

In the case of the Fulton Street kiosks and others similarly situated, it would have paid the city to buy up property enough to permit entrance to the Subway through the buildings and taken the kiosks altogether off the sidewalk. The initial outlay would have been made up in the increased convenience the public would get.

"Mr. Lamb, the authority on municipal art," put in the reporter, "has suggested that our large office buildings could be used to relieve congestion by making it possible for pedestrians to pass through them."

"That is a very practical suggestion, and we are prepared to practice with a half dozen large concerns. It will permit the public to use these buildings as thoroughfares. They will be kept open all day and until a reasonable hour of the night. They will relieve the congestion, give streets which are cool in Summer, warm in winter, and dry in all seasons. Occasionally this will relieve the rectangular system also, giving short cuts between different points.

"The elevated and tunnelled sidewalks would give the public more chance to inspect show windows than they have at present when everything is over the street. Through the office buildings would open up desirable locations for tradesmen. The scheme would be a general benefit.

Another point that our inspectors are watching carefully is the suggestion that traffic takes on different streets. It may be necessary to restrict certain streets to vehicle going in a certain direction just as they do in Philadelphia.

"That Philadelphia system confuses everybody who goes to the city," suggested the reporter.

"Strangers," said Mr. Goodrich, "are misled. It is a mighty good thing for the Philadelphia system. We are going to do this traffic problem in New York. We are going to take suggestions from any part of the globe where we find them working well."

"How about the double-decked street for vehicles that has been proposed for West Street?"

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Goodrich. "It doesn't seem to me very practical. It is a suggestion of the city like Riverside above North Street. There is a hill, and streets for vehicles are not a natural thing. It is better, in general, I think, if better for the foot passengers to have the elevated sidewalks.

Mr. Goodrich could not be prevailed upon to give even a hint as to what he thought the prospects were for the scheme being approved, but they certainly are getting after it. The Bureau of Highways, and it is a pretty safe conjecture that before long this town of ours will wear a new aspect, at least so far as the congested streets are concerned."

