

MR. J. D. ROCKEFELLER, 26 BROADWAY: HERE'S A FAMILY LIVING ON DOG FOOD

Dorothy Day

They're Italians, Like Yours in Bayonne, and Their Diet Is Liver and Chicken
Feet Which They Once Served the Hound.

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Mrs. Salvatore is a little Italian woman who lives down in the Sheepshead Bay region; she has a face like that of Alice Brady, in its uneven prettiness, and a brave little smile that contradicts the struggling expression in her eyes. She said, with the queer smile, that the cost of living did not bother her at all. "You just have to hunt a little longer for cheap stores, and think a little longer for different ways of serving unappetizing, or so-called unappetizing, messes. It's fun." But all the while there was that little crucified smile.

"It's fun;" that was her Americanized way of looking at it.

Eating Dog's Food

"Last year," she went on, "we used to buy liver and chicken feet for the dog. Pretty soon we took to eating the liver ourselves. Then, one time when my husband and I were out of work, and we had nothing else in the house to eat but some chicken feet that were to be cooked up for the puppy I thought of cooking them up for the family. You know, we have six." And she pulled one of them out from behind the table where he was wildly chasing a water bug with a spoon and tweaked his ear and cooed at him for a minute before she went on. "So I peeled them all, cut off the nails and boiled them for a long time; of course it was a long time, but when it was done there was a thick jelly that we could eat on our bread."

"And what about the gas?" she was asked. "Doesn't that cost more than the broth is worth?"

Fire at Least is Cheap

Oh, but we have a stove – a little stove – and the kidlets bring up driftwood off the beach. We always have a fire, so I could cook the soup as long as I wanted to. The time that I just told you about, we had to eat it straight – just with dry bread. Other times we cook it with rice, the loose and broken rice that costs only 6 cents a pound. It's cheaper than potatoes now."

Mrs. Salvatore is a vaudeville singer, and has been ever since she left the circus that she was traveling with till she was twelve years old. Even after the babies came, she went around just the same, staying as near to the babies as she could. She would have like to be with them all

together, but the Salvatore duet pulled in more money than the Salvatore solo. And money was never very plentiful; they worked at every opportunity and saved for the time when their voices should give out. They are living, as was mentioned before, down by the Bay. They had a small bit of property, and as they could not afford to build, they had an old, disused lighthouse pulled up and there they live. It is not a very convenient home, but at least it is a shelter. Mr. Salvatore and the children seem to be a happy crowd. They are none of them fat; they have a lean brown look. Around the corners of the mother's mouth there are little lines, and in her eyes there is an expression that does not disappear even when she smiles that hearty American-Italian smile of hers.

The Hungry Look

A friend of mine who had a homestead and was teaching school up in the wilds of Manitoba once told me of a ghastly experience that she had when her food ran out and an awful storm set in, and neither she nor her two children could get to the town that was three miles away to renew their supplies. All one night, a wolf stood outside the door and howled and snuffled and whined. And all night long, she sat on the edge of the bed, wrapped in a blanket that by no means kept her warm, with a shot gun across her knee and waited and waited.

She must have had the same look in her eyes that Mrs. Salvatore has in hers. There is a long winter ahead and as yet they have no employment. There are six little children that they want to give the same chance in life that they themselves have had. "If there only hadn't been so many," Mrs. Salvatore said wistfully, "And yet I love them all."