

LIFE-SAVING AGENCIES FOR SHIPPING.

We are now a great commercial people; our flag floats on every sea, and we have the largest commercial navy in the world, with the exception of Great Britain. The dangers of a sea-faring life are well-known, and these are more numerous and imminent according to the extent of our coast line. It is not only humane, but it is the most wise and just policy which can be pursued, to provide the most efficient means not only to prevent shipwrecks, but also to mitigate the calamities which follow when these take place. We have done much to effect these objects, but not a tithe of what we ought to have done. Disastrous storms frequently visit our coasts, and many noble ships, long absent from home, are driven on shore, and their entire crews swept into a watery grave within sight of their native shores. What have we done to save the lives of shipwrecked persons on our coast?

At a late meeting of the Philadelphia Board of Trade, a report was read by a special committee, appointed for the purpose, on this subject; and copies of it were directed to be transmitted to the New York Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Marine Underwriters of New York, and the New York Life-saving and Benevolent Association, and other societies in Boston, Baltimore, and other cities, asking their assistance in urging upon Congress an appropriation of \$50,000 and some effective legislation upon the subject. The report states that, on the 9th of October, 1859, on account of dissatisfaction expressed in regard to the operation of the metallic boat (alleged to be too heavy, and liable to puncture), the Secretary of the Treasury appointed three commissioners to determine upon that form of boat which was best adapted to saving life in case of shipwreck on the coast, who accordingly made choice of the most approved patterns; and though 54 boats have since been distributed on Long Island and New Jersey, they are not of the character thus recommended, and are declared to be of inferior workmanship and of no value as life-boats." It is also stated that neither the mortars nor their accompaniments at the life-boat stations are efficient; and that the keepers and crews are not drilled to execute their duties. Francis' metallic life-cars have been supplied to the stations; they are valuable acquisitions, but their availability depends upon communication being established by a hawser between the shore and the wrecked vessel; and if the mortars and rockets are not well managed, their objects may be entirely defeated.

The best boats and other apparatus for cases of shipwreck should be furnished to all stations on our whole coast, and for accomplishing such objects more effectively, we may refer our readers for some very excellent information on the subject to the operation of the Royal Life-boat Institution of England, which was described in the last number of the *North British Review*, in a very able article by Sir David Brewster. This institution was founded by private subscription; and in the year 1854, there were no less than 89 of these boats under its management. The practice of the institution is to assist local associations in maintaining boat-stations, the sum required for each being about \$2,000; but at least one-third of this amount is expected to be raised in the locality. Since 1824, the institution has awarded 81 gold and 629 silver medals for distinguished services, besides pecuniary rewards amounting to \$1,651 (about \$58,000). Last year there were, at the several stations in England, 115 life-boats; Scotland, 7; Ireland, 14; total, 136. Beside these, there were 216 mortar and rocket stations. The boats are self-righting, being supplied with heavy iron keels and air-cases at the sides, and will carry 30 persons besides the crew. In consequence of the upsetting of some of the best British life-boats in very tempestuous seas, it became a matter of necessity to supply the crews with *life-belts*. Those used were lately invented by Capt. Ward, R. N.; each consists of two rows of narrow pieces of cork, each sewn separately to a strong linen duck belt, which covers the body from the arm-pits to the hips, and is tied round the waist by one set of strings; while another set passes over the shoulder, like braces. The buoyant power of such a belt is 24 lbs.; and 800 of them have been distributed among the life-boat crews. From 1824 up to 1859, the number of 10,902 shipwrecked persons have been saved by this institution. It cannot be expected that such a system as that which prevails in England can be carried out in the United States, because our population is so thinly distributed

along the sea-coast; but we have here an object for imitation, besides carrying out the suggestions of the Philadelphia Board of Trade in seeking government appropriations, namely, voluntary contributions by those wealthy merchants who are so much indebted to our seamen for their fortunes and trade.

CITY NUISANCES—REFORMS REQUIRED.

The following are extracts from the recent report of Mr. Delavan, our city inspector, and they are well worthy of general attention, as the nuisances of which he complains, and the reforms which he recommends, have been suggested and advocated long ago in our columns. All the hints given are applicable to most of our cities:—

STREET CLEANING.

The report states that it is highly necessary that the work of cleaning streets should be performed at night, and completed before 6 A. M. in the summer and 7 P. M. in the winter. Objections to the present system are the fact that the sweepers and carts incommode the travel of the streets, the clouds of dust raised by them injure the goods of storekeepers and the health of those who breathe the particles. The custom of watering the streets before sweeping is complained of by the medical faculty as injurious to public health. The effect of water upon decaying matter, especially during the heat of summer, is to produce decomposition and to create miasma. The night system, it is said, would remedy this evil.

RAIL CAR VENTILATION.

The want of proper ventilation in the rail cars of this city has become a subject of great importance. It is not uncommon for some of the cars to take in invalids who may be on the way to some hospital, without regard to the health of the other passengers. From thirty to forty persons are crowded into the vehicles, the doors are closed, and no escape is allowed to the foul air thus generated. All complaints upon the subject are unavailing to the managers, to whom gain is everything—the public health and convenience nothing.

TENEMENT BUILDINGS.

The extent of misery, filth, destitution and disease which are everywhere met with among the tenement buildings of this city, cannot be described. Many of these dwellings contain from thirty to forty families. In a recent visit to one of these houses, in a room about six feet wide and seven feet high, without light or ventilation other than came from the door, was a family of six persons—two adults and four children. In these miserable habitations, where thousands of the poorer classes of our population are to be found, the children sicken, pine away and die to an extent wholly unappreciated by the public. This evil cannot be done away until the erection of dwellings for the poor is compelled in accordance with the laws of health and life.

SWILL MILK.

"Humanity (remarks Mr. Delavan) calls for the immediate and unconditional abolition of every swill milk establishment. Of the 21,645 deaths during the past year, 12,948 were of children, and a large majority are traceable, directly or indirectly, to the use of swill milk." The inspector characterizes these as human slaughter-house establishments. He quotes at length the opinion of the Academy, and an elaborate report of Dr. Reese on infant mortality, and recommends the prohibition, by ordinance, with severe penalties, the introduction and sale of this pernicious article from adjoining cities and villages.

CESSPOOLS.

The imperfect construction of cesspools is cause of numerous complaints. Old wells and cisterns with imperfect openings, are often converted into receivers of waste and service water. These soon become choked up, and the contents remain to stagnate. Sometimes these connect with the privy, which in turn overflows, or breaks into basements and cellars, generating disease. In all cases where cesspools are required they should be drained by connection with the sewer.

BELGIAN PAVEMENTS.

Much difficulty attends cleaning streets which are paved with cobble stone. Besides, this pavement is wholly unsuited to the wants, if not the actual necessities, of the city, and should be at once superseded by the Belgian. Both on the score of economy and the public health this change is recommended.

MORTALITY.

The number of deaths which occurred in this city last

year was 21,645, which is 688 less than in 1858, although there has been a large accession of population by births and immigration.

DISCOREA BATATAS IN ENGLAND.

A paper has recently been published in the *Iris Agricultural Review*, by Professor Buckman, of the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, England, giving his experience with this Chinese yam in England. As it formed a subject of considerable notoriety in our own country about three years ago, the information we are about to give respecting it (condensed from our contemporary) will be of interest to our farmers.

This plant was introduced into England some years ago, with the avowed object of supplying the place of the potato, and at a time when the extinction of the latter appeared very probable. The *discorea batatas* belongs to an order of plants quite distinct from the potato. The method of cultivation adopted for it, at the garden of the Royal Agricultural College, was by deep digging first; then the ground was laid out in high ridges, and treated with the best barn-yard manure. From one cutting planted in the deeply-cultivated and highly-fertilized soil, one poor yam was grown, which was one foot eight inches long, four inches thick at the greatest girth, and it weighed only eight ounces; it was mostly all spindle. The following are the conclusions of Professor Buckman in regard to its cultivation:—1st. The deep digging is necessitated for a plant which has a direct downward growth of from 18 inches to more than 2 feet; this, then, requires a deeper soil than is usually found to rest upon, at least, the calcareous rocks. The preparation for this crop, then, is more expensive than for any other; and as labor of this kind cannot be done with the plow, this fact alone would militate against its taking the place of the potato in field cultivation. 2nd. This curiously deep growth involves immense labor in getting-up the crop, in our own experiments, certainly more than the result is worth. 3rd. The shortness of our summer for root heat—without which this plant makes but very slow progress—will ever prevent the potato yam from being successfully grown in this country, unless in a few favored spots. 4th. The peculiar growth of the bine or flexible stems, like its cognomen, the black briary, points to the necessity of some support, in order that the leaves or plant lung may be fully developed, without which little root can be expected. 5th. Under the ordinary circumstances of soil and climate of the British Isles, I cannot imagine that its yield will be sufficient, or its flavor so surpassing, as to entitle it to a much higher place than such old garden esculents as *schorzonera*, *salsafy*; or especially the common artichoke, which, indeed, is not unlike the potato yam in this particular, but with a far greater power of fecundity, and much more easy of cultivation."

These remarks, then, point to the general conclusion that the potato yam can never be relied on, to greatly extend the common potato in supplying a vegetable food for the mass of the people; still less can it ever supply the place of, or supersede the widely-spread, easily-cultivated potato.

AGRICULTURE AT YALE COLLEGE.—To see Yale College stepping out from among the mists of antiquity and the graves of dead languages, and "taking up the shovel and the hoe," is certainly one of the signs of the times. She made her *debut* on this new stage on the 1st day of February, having secured the services of 25 leading agriculturists to sustain her in this first effort. These gentlemen are to take up all possible subjects connected with agriculture for the benefit of farmers and gardeners, young and old, and for their own material enlightenment. There are to be three lectures a day for the space of a month, each lecture to be followed by questions and a discussion. The list of names, in which we find Marshall P. Wilder, late president of the National Agricultural Society, Cassius M. Clay, of Kentucky, Lewis F. Allen Esq., of New York, and other eminent men, beside Professors Silliman, Porter and Johnson, of Yale College, give the highest character to the undertaking. The advantages of this course are offered so cheaply (\$10 for a course ticket) that it will draw together large numbers. The idea involved in this enterprise, namely, getting together educational capital by small contributions of knowledge from large numbers, is an important discovery. We do not see why it is not susceptible of very extensive and varied application.