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### CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, Sept. 15th, 1877.

#### THE PROPAGATION OF DISEASE THROUGH LAUNDRIES.

This is a new point of caution in sanitary science, and the *Lancet* has lately given it much attention. It appointed a special commission to investigate the subject, and their report is very painful indeed. It clearly establishes that, though cleanliness is the best safeguard against disease, it is nevertheless an undoubted fact that clean linen is often the medium for propagating small-pox and other similar complaints. Under these circumstances, the recklessness and ignorance displayed, not only by common washerwomen, but even by the managers of model laundries, are totally out of keeping with the progress achieved in other sanitary matters. The smallest rooms, the most unwholesome back kitchens still seem good enough for the washing of linen; and the same is dried in passages frequented by the lowest class of persons, and hung between walls on which the dirt of ages has accumulated. The clothes that go nearest to the skin, that are the most likely therefore to introduce through the pores any germs that may fall on them, are thoughtlessly entrusted to a laundress without any inquiry being made as to the suitability of the place where they are to be washed. If they are taken to the suburbs it is simply because rents are cheaper in those districts; but there, as in town, clean and dirty clothes are brought into constant contact, and the washerwoman's family, perhaps also some of her assistants, sleep, eat, sicken, and die, with their customers' linen lying round about them. Innumerable laundries have been visited by the Commission, and what is described is not the exception, but the rule.

For instance, at Kensal New Town, a district especially favoured by washerwomen, they inspected a row of dilapidated cottages, each containing four rooms, with a little yard behind, and a plot of ground in front, called, by courtesy, a garden. The two central cottages were occupied by washerwomen, each washing for from twenty to thirty families, according to the season. During the month of March last a boy, living in the first of these cottages, was taken ill with small-pox, but, fortunately, the sanitary inspector of the district received timely information, and acted with commendable energy. The linen in the house was all seized and disinfected, and the washing for customers abandoned during the course of the illness. But the inspector had no power to interfere with the neighbours, who still

continued washing as usual, hanging up their clothes to dry almost immediately under the window of the room where the patient was lying.

They visited several other laundries where there had been cases of small-pox or scarlet fever, and in every instance the clothes there washed must in all probability have been contaminated with the germs of disease, and the action of the authorities was not always sufficient to entirely dispel the danger. They discovered, near the Blackfriars' road, a woman who took in washing for several families for a children's school, and dried the clothes in her small cottage, in the passage or in the backyard—the latter barely twelve feet square, and containing the dustbin and the closet. This woman had five children and, some weeks ago, one of her boys was severely attacked with small-pox. Two other children were also unwell, but their symptoms were so slight that the mother let them run about as usual, and it was not till they were nearly cured that the attending practitioner saw them and succeeded in persuading her that they also had the small-pox. How far this woman continued washing while the small-pox was raging in her tiny and overcrowded home is a moot question, as she, of course, would not give all details.

Other cases conclusively prove how often infected clothes are taken to public baths. A woman, who washed for several families in Soho, related that she had two or three times taken and washed clothes at the Leicester-square public laundry which emitted so peculiar an odour that her suspicions were excited, and, on making inquiries, she ultimately discovered that there had been fever or small-pox among her customers.

#### SWIMMING AND FLOATING.

The sketches of the Montreal Swimming Club, which we published a couple of weeks ago, have attracted much attention, and we are pleased to learn that the Club is daily increasing its roll of membership. We ourselves have taken interest in the subject, reading up the science or art of swimming, and from three or four different sources, have gathered valuable rules both for learning natation and for keeping up in the water in the hour of danger.

First, work up theoretically and practically (as far as may be out of the water) the position of the body in swimming, and the rhythmical extension and adduction of the legs and arms. Then boldly walk into the water, when it is rather calm, up to the chin, turn to the shore, and fall forward on the chest, letting the arms cut the water before the body, and practise the motions made beforehand. Never mind swallowing a little water. Persevere in this for several days in succession, and then, if possible, get a swimmer to support your chest for a minute or two. Or, better still, as man is nearly of the same specific gravity as water, the addition of a very few pounds of cork will make him float. Get several pieces of cork, therefore, and fasten them to loops in which the arms can be inserted, and with the addition of these you will find, when the "stroke" is once familiar, that you will easily float, and what is more, make progression through the water. Stick to this plan for a few more days, and then try your own unaided powers again, and you will be astonished to find that you can swim. In this way, without any swimming-master or parade of any kind, swimming is easily learned, and then what a treat, and what a charming mode of gaining exercise, does a bath become! Instead of being a shivering duty, the daily bath is eagerly welcomed, and the whole system invigorated and braced up by it. For the swimmer leaves the water with every muscle and limb aching with his exertions, and the whole body pervaded by a healthy glow, of which he will feel the beneficial effects throughout the day. When once the stroke is familiar to a man—comes, as it were, by instinct to him—all that is needful is to set one's self

daily the task of a stroke or two more, and soon the learner will find himself able to swim any reasonable distance, not now near the side, but boldly dashing out among the waves. Thus, if he finds he can only struggle on for six strokes to-day before his face sinks and he gets a ducking, to-morrow let him set himself the duty of struggling on through seven strokes, eight strokes next day, and so on, never being satisfied with his efforts until he has succeeded in performing his daily number of strokes. In this way a visit to the river or the sea becomes a happiness to be looked back upon ever after in a man's life with pleasure. How much better it is thus to have acquired the mastery over a strange element than to have lounged up and down the beach for many mornings, listening to Italian organ-grinders and smoking innumerable cigars.

Now, as to the manner of keeping afloat in time of danger. Men are drowned by raising their arms above water, the unbending weight of which depresses the head. Other animals have neither motion nor ability to act in a similar manner, and therefore swim naturally. When a man falls into deep water, he will rise to the surface, and will continue there if he does not elevate his hands. If he moves his hands under the water in any way he pleases, his head will rise so high as to allow him free liberty to breathe, and if he will use his legs in the act of walking (or rather walking upstairs), his shoulders will rise above the water, so that he may use less exertion with his hands, or apply them to other purposes. These plain directions are recommended to the recollection of those who have not learned to swim in their youth, as they may be found highly advantageous in preserving life.

#### THE LATE NEW YORK FIRE.

If the widespread depression under which the American continent has so long suffered fails to bring on a calm review of the various economies by which its industries are carried out, the result will be disappointing, and a great opportunity will have been thrown away, for in times when trade is brisk and speculation rife, it is difficult indeed to get men to listen to the claims of common sense in their dealings with the various classes who have interests concerned. The good-will that Christianity has always preached calls for new interpretations of its practical bearing with the fresh industrial developments of each succeeding age, but the law of kindness and humanity remains always the same in its essential requirements, and demands that we look about us and see what are the arrangements chiefly demanding attention. Life and health in multitudes who are more or less dependent have to be protected, and if possible advanced—and there are few things that will better tend to heal the differences that have arisen—multitudes receive with encouraging interest the instructions of the pulpit and the Bible class, who scarcely make direct applications of what they have been hearing to the life they are living and the life they see around them. But this was not the way of the Saviour of men. He went about doing good, and the good he effected was exactly that which the population of the day and the land stood in need of. If, as instructed by His teachings, we also seek to do good, we no doubt find ourselves greatly circumscribed, and sometimes subjected to neglect or opposition, calling the more for patience and discretion. In some things, chiefly matters of omission, a whole continent will show itself in the wrong. When this is so, it is discouraging enough, and with many would be thought deterrent. Still our Reformers should persevere. Everything must have a beginning, and it is not always well to attempt too much at once. Tongue and pen have not yet lost their faculty of usefulness, and truth is great and will prevail in the end. All this is *à propos* of that sad burning of the Hayes Piano-Forte Manufactory in New York. Could not the building have been made less comfortable, we say involuntarily

Could it not have been better provided with means of escape? The contingency was so serious! Why did not the people concerned think of these things? Ah! why! Because it was only a contingency. We do not provide for contingencies as a rule. The habit has not yet grown upon us, because we have not yet felt our consciences distinctly impressed with the duty. Clergy and laity alike shrink from enforcing civic duties involving expenditure. Governments pass them aside, and interest themselves about the little group of "coming events" in the political world. Let the political student take his paper and write down a list of these interesting matters which are conceived to come on the  *tapis*. Let him take another paper and inscribe what he conceives to be the most urgent wants of society as now constituted, and if the two at all correspond, we can only say it will surprise us. The social needs of the time have to be both thought and talked over before they become political questions, and of such, in the department of public health and safety, are tiled floors and stairs, and safety towers for buildings of wide extent and many stories.

The transcript of the photograph, by NORMAN, of the Indian Boys, which appeared in our last number, was inadvertently styled "Oka Indians"—the fact being that they are the portraits of the little Indian scholars of Rev. Mr. Wilson, Episcopal missionary to the Algoma District, and were lately brought by him to Quebec and other cities and towns in the Province where they excited attention by their gentlemanly bearing, intelligence, and healthful appearance. The burning of the late school-house in Algoma was described in the NEWS, and it was in connection with the increased expenses of the Mission that Mr. Wilson's tour was undertaken. There can be no charitable effort more deserving than this, or more appropriate to the times we are living in.

#### OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE RUBENS TRIESTE ENALY.—The great demonstration which we illustrate on our front page, as having taken place at Antwerp in the third week of August, calls for a few lines of biography of the immortal Rubens. It has been considered hitherto doubtful whether he was actually born at Antwerp or at Cologne, or at another place on the Rhine. The precise date of his birth, in 1577, was June 29. His father, John Rubens, was a citizen of Antwerp, and son of the municipality, but had been compelled, by the political disturbances in the Netherlands, to remove to Cologne shortly before Peter Paul Rubens was born. It has now, however, been ascertained that the wife of John Rubens, and mother of Peter Paul, had been left at Antwerp, and it is certain that the families of both parents belonged to that city. In his sixteenth year he was placed as a page in the household of the Countess of Lalaing, but disliked that service, and soon returned home. He chose to become a painter, and was the pupil successively of Tobias Verhaeght, Adrian van Oort, and Otto Venius, till the age of twenty-three, when he went to Italy. He had letters of recommendation from the Archduke Albert, the Austrian Viceroy of the Netherlands, to the Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, of Mantua, who appointed him a gentleman of the chamber at his Ducal Court. Rubens now devoted himself to studying the pictures of Giulio Romano, of Titian, and of Paul Veronese, as well as other great Italian artists, both at Venice and Rome. In 1605 he was sent to Madrid, on a special mission from the Duke, his master to King Philip III. of Spain. He had by this time acquired high reputation as a Court portrait-painter. Returning to Antwerp, he finally settled in his native place, under the patronage of the Archduke Albert and the Archduchess Isabella, an Infanta of Spain. Rubens about this time married his first wife, Elizabeth Brant, who died in 1626; his second wife, Helen Forman, was much younger. Both wives are depicted, with himself, in several of his pictures of domestic scenes. He was a very prosperous man, and renowned all over Europe. Between 1620 and 1625 he was much employed in Paris in painting historical pictures for the decoration of the Louvre and the Luxembourg. At Paris he gained the personal acquaintance of the Duke of Buckingham, favourite of James I. and Charles I. This led to his being sent to England, in 1629, as Ambassador to the last-named King, who bestowed a knighthood upon him, and commissioned him to paint the ceiling of the Banqueting-house at Whitehall. The allegorical picture of "War and Peace," which is in the National Gallery, was also painted for Charles I. Rubens was again and again called upon by the Infanta Isabella to exert his talents