

TENEMENT HOUSE REFORM.

The Tenement House Commission is preparing its report of the Legislature on radical lines. The recommendations of the sub-committee, which have received the approval of the commission, are of a sweeping character. Among other suggestions are those providing for water-tight concrete cellar bottoms, the removal of vaults in yards, an adequate water supply on each floor, unoccupied space amounting to 35 per cent. of each city lot taken for the building, the ventilation of air-shafts at top and bottom, and enlarged hallways connecting with the open air. The commission must include a number of idealists, if recommendations such as these are to be embodied in an official report with any serious expectation that there will be any practical legislation based upon them. There are other suggestions designed to secure a more thorough inspection of tenement houses and more efficient control over the owners of this class of property. These will be of great practical benefit, if sanctioned by the Legislature, especially the rule making the posting of an order in a tenement house and the mailing of a copy to the owner a legal notice from the Board of Health.

The report of the commission will be awaited with great interest by all who are concerned in the important question of tenement house reform. Much valuable testimony has been collected, and the conclusions of the commission will have unusual weight. There ought, however, to be moderation in zeal for practical reform. Let the idealists exercise self-restraint and not confuse the judgment of the Legislature by making recommendations that cannot be practically carried into effect. The present building law and the requirements of the sanitary code are inadequate in some respects; but while amendments will strengthen the statutes, the pressing need is not so much for more legal authority, as for a more efficient exercise of such powers as been already conferred. A new tenement house built in conformity with the present law will be a safe and wholesome home for working people. It is more important to provide for an adequate inspection of tenements before and after completion than it is to change that law in minor details. The statutes regulating the reconstruction of old tenement houses are not so stringent as they ought to be; but greater benefit will be derived from a more thorough and rigorous application of such legal authority as there is than from final attempts to revise the statutes.—*N. Y. Tribune.*

DARKNESS OF HELL GATE.

The electric light at Hell gate went out on Saturday morning Jan. 3, at 4 o'clock, and the brilliant illumination was withheld until Tuesday evening. The stoppage of the electric light was caused by the fact that a part of the screws attaching the armature to the shaft gave signs of being loose. The attendant engineer noting this, decided that it would be advisable to cut off the light. Owing to the circumstance that there was a lack of proper tools, such as those which are in use at the Cleveland factory, the repairs occupied the time from Saturday until Tuesday.

"Since the light was first placed at Hell Gate last November," said Mr. C. P. Whitney, secretary of the Brush Swan Electric Light Company, to a reporter, "there have been no mishaps worth calling by the name. Once a couple of globes were broken by a bird and the lights went out. Of course the weather has once or twice occasioned annoyance. One night the lights went out owing to the presence of sleet on the elevator, which kept the attendant from going up. The government is perfectly satisfied with the apparatus and its workings, and the plant has been fully settled for."

Mr. Whitney stated that a duplicate apparatus had already been ordered, so that such a delay in electric lighting of Hell Gate could never occur again. "The original objections of the pilots," he said, "which was not very general, is, we are assured by the government officers, entirely removed. During the nights in which the lights were out there were many complaints from parties using the water about Hell Gate. Great regrets were expressed at the absence of the lights. Some of the captains of the Sound boats, I have been told, have concluded that it was a very great advantage to have the Hell Gate electric illumination, and that it was materially useful in navigation. It certainly is," concluded Mr. Whitney, "a permanent institution, and is now generally understood to be such."—*Ex.*

THE BENEFITS OF UNDERDRAINAGE.

The subject of underdraining has, of late, been receiving a great deal of attention in the agricultural press. Much that is written on it is scarcely to the point, and grave errors are given expression to by some writers. Whether to drain or not, and how to drain, are questions which each farmer must decide for himself according to the nature of his land. The depth of the hard pan, where such exists, is an important factor. Sandy lands in general need but little, though there are instances in this Province of sandy land underlain by clay, in which tile-draining has been decidedly beneficial. As to clays there is room for much experiment as to the best depth: while three feet is properly accepted as about the right depth for most clay soils, there are clays so tenacious as to warrant a much smaller depth. The progress made in draining in Ontario in late years has been great, but not one per cent. of the land which requires draining has yet been drained. With the growing competition in grain, our farmers need to resort to every economical method of increasing their crops, and tile draining is certainly one of the very best. Regarding its cost the greatest misapprehension exists in some quarters. The *New York Times*, for instance, estimates the cost at \$50 per acre. This is obviously far too high even for close draining by manual labour. Most lands, tolerably free from boulders, can be drained with three-inch tiles laid not over two rods apart for \$20 per acre; we know of not a few instances of it costing several dollars less. In these cases, however, the ditching machine is used. An increase of only two bushels of wheat per acre amply pays the interest on the cost of drainage; but as on an average clays yield five to ten bushels more where drained and properly farmed, than where undrained, though carefully managed in other respects, the advantage of tile-draining is very obvious. It must always be borne in mind that every bushel over the number necessary to pay cost of cultivation is almost clear profit. If the margin over be five bushels per acre, an increased yield of only five bushels means double the profit in grain growing.

"MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS."

A discussion has taken place in the *Times* this week on the subject of Mysterious Illnesses," which are attributed to arsenical wall paper. Attention was first called to the effects of arsenical papers many years ago, we believe by the late Dr. Taylor, sometime Professor of Jurisprudence at Guy's Hospital, who collected together a large number of striking examples, in some of which fatal consequences had been produced, while in others the timely removal of the paper had been followed by the disappearance of the symptoms which its presence had occasioned. At that time (as the *Times* remarks), the arsenical salt of copper, known as Scheele's green, was largely used as a pigment to produce green colours on paper, and especially for the leaves of the running patterns of flowers and foliage which were then in vogue. In papers of a cheap description, it was not uncommon for the leaves to be absolute masses of a dried arsenical paste, and the effects produced were often correspondingly severe. Arsenical fumes were liberated by the action of lamps or gas flames, and arsenical powdered was detached by all occasions of friction. The dust which floated in the atmosphere of the rooms, or which settled on cornices or furniture, was often very highly charged with arsenical particles, and cases were not wanting in which the disturbance of this dust by housemaids had manifestly been followed by increased derangement of health. The evil, when once attention had been directed to it, was gross and palpable, and the public mind became possessed by a very general distrust of green as a colour for decorative purposes. Since then the conditions have totally changed. The coarse and abundant presence of arsenic is no longer to be feared, and green colours no longer enjoy a monopoly of its presence. Arsenic is employed in the preparation of use of many of the aniline colours, and is often imperfectly removed from them. There is scarcely any colour from which it will certainly be absent, and while it is seldom sufficiently abundant to produce violent illness, its more gradual effects may be no less prejudicial in the long run.—*Ex.*

A BAVARIAN chemist is reported to have invented an enameling liquid which renders any species of stone or cement harder than granite, and gives it the undeliable appearance of any mineral that may be desired.