THE FIREMEN OF LONDON.

BRAVE FELLOWS, WELL TRAINED AND EFFICIENT.

But There Number is Far Below the City's Needs — Heavy Cumbersome and Inadequate Apparatus Used.

The Metropolitan fire brigade of London city and London county has proved too small. There are fewer fires in London in proportion to its size, than in any American city of the first class; nevertheless, a "standing fire brigade" equal to all emergencies it has been again and again proved is necessary in the great metropolis. It is a simple question of mathematics as to whether it is cheaper to burn up $10,000,000 every decade in one colossal burst of uncontrolled flame, or to increase the yearly output and keep a "standing force" equal to the crucial test, when that test comes.

The Londoners boast that they have "so few fires." Last year there were 4,845 calls or fire alarms, out of these 925 were false, but had to be answered all the same. Of the 3,920 fires that get a start, only 142 proved of really serious proportions and gave battle to the force; the rest were trifles, most of them merely chimney fires; which speaks rather badly for the London flue by the way.

The Metropolitan fire brigade was established thirty years ago, after the great fire of 1866, at which time St. Catharine's docks were destroyed. The world-famous Capt. Shaw soon took the force in hand and through his services London was content. Nevertheless, in 1887, fifteen millions of dollars went up in smoke in one grand bon-fire, and almost immediately the management of the fire brigade was changed and given into the hands of the county council, which still controls it. So much to past history.

THE PRESENT CHIEF

of the force, L. De L. Wells, R. N., has under him only 820 men and an area of 118 square miles to guard and protect; that means that he has the whole of London, broadly speaking, the city and the county, too. In the thirty years of the life of the brigade it has quadrupled its power and possessions but the frequency of fire has almost quadrupled too, and the brigade is not strong enough.

In London there are to-day but 57 land stations with 17 sub-street stations, and there are something over 40,000 miles of streets to be covered. Last year the engines traveled over 73,475 miles in answering their "few calls" to fire, and they used 103,000 tons of water in putting out chimney fires and the "142 that were serious."

The truth of the matter is that though London is water-logged—for it rains there three-sevenths of the time—though the very air is 82 per cent. water soaked, fire is growing to be daily a more imminent danger. The firemen have to work under the most unfavorable conditions, against material that once ignited would be in our dry atmosphere and frequent droughts, just so much tinder. It is pleaded that the London firemen cannot be expert as they have no great opportunity for practice. Well, that opportunity, will come, is come, in fact, and in time old, narrow, crooked, historical London will all be burned down and rebuilt, which will lessen the fire problems of the future.

Besides the 57 land stations there are five large floating stations, that guard the embankment and the docks where lies London's wealth. They have nine fire engines on barges and eight steam tugs that in case of a water front conflagration rush up and down the Thames, in among threatened shipping, extinguishing or driving off by hose power, floating, burning wreckage or, more dangerous still, the burning oil that usually makes

A FEATURE OF HORROR

in a river fire. To supplement the water force there are 13 barges and 12 skiffs, a force that applied to a lesser need would be magnificent, but London must pay the cost of being the greatest city of the world. Her five floating stations, nine barge engines eight tugs, thirteen barges and twelve skiffs are not enough for the miles upon miles of water front, where are enthroned the money making mills of the nation, the very seat of commerce of the "greatest commercial country of the globe."

Chief Wells, as has been said, has a force of only 820 trained men under him, and some 225 more are being put into working shape. His assistant officer is Sidney G. Gamble, and together they have done all that lay in their power to perfect the force; but for them to charge the possible emergency such as arose in November 19 last, with some six hundred men—for the rest of the city cannot be entirely neglected—is to enact again the famous charge of the Six Hundred. They may do their all, but help must come from outside sources; in this, a wide street, a falling wall and a dead wind; if the wind had risen, if Red Cross street had been narrow, if the wall had stood, the fire might have been double its proportions. Fortune saved the day, not force for it was lacking.

The entire equipment of the department consists of fifty-nine hose carts and thirty-seven miles of hose, hose that is in every way modern and up-to-date, but not enough of it, or men to handle it for London's requirements. The department has but seven long ladders and two ladder trucks, properly speaking, supplemented by nine ladder "vans." The total sounds well, but let the dreaded duplicate fire of size demand a division of apparatus and what would happen? Think only of the miles to be traversed for one of the two huge and efficient trucks to reach a fire, and the force shows up again weak.

The fire brigade has in use what is known as

THE MANUAL ENGINE.

There are eighty of them and for minor calls they are used exclusively and do good work, too. The force possesses, strictly speaking but 57 land engines and is dependent on suburban assistance when these fall short. They have also two engine trollies.

London boasts two hundred fire escape stations and two hundred and thirty-seven fire escapes, but it has only one hundred and fifty-six watch boxes. The brigade has eleven coal vans, the capacity of which was severely tried in this last fire calamity, for the engines ate coal as did the fire the buildings it was reducing to fuel. To drive the rolling stock and pilot the floating stock, the department is furnished with seventy-five drivers and seventeen pilots. The total numebr of horses is one hundred and thirty-seven.

No description of a fire department could be complete without a word about the horses. The London fire brigade has some of the most superb and well drilled animals in the world. The horses are trained as are ours. They know the alarms and go to their places as promptly as do the men. Stubborn or stupid action on the part of a fire horse might at any time mean thousands of dollars of extra loss. The horse, is, of course, utterly ignorant of this, nor has he any interest in the result as have his masters, yet who ever heard of the fire horse that was tardy, that was not willing to use his last breath to get there, who was not in place to have his collar snapped on, and at the sound ready to dart out with his heavy clattering load? More honor is due the fire horse than he gets from the public but he is appreciated by his co-workers, the men, and in London, as here, each station has its idol, and the strife for first place for their horses among the men is strong.

As compared with our home equipments

THE GENERAL VERDICT

in regard to the English fire equipment, is that it is unnecessarily heavy cumberstone, bulky—that there are pounds upon pounds of superfluous weight dragged about, which make the placing and shifting of the engines in the narrow streets almost impossilbe and always a matter of time and delay. If a step is to be made at the back of a truck it is ten times heavier than it need be. It is solid, Englishly solid. It won't break at an inopportune moment, but it and all the fixings of which it stands type make the truck just so much more defeat its own end.

The yearly cost of running this metropolitan fire brigade is $775,000, an enormous outlay yet small as compared with the risk in the great city. Thousands of quarters are in so dangerous a condition, despite the efficient fire force of fog and rain, which the brigade supplements, that the insurance companies will not touch them at all. The government pays $30,000 of this total for the protection of public buildings and $90,000 is paid cheerfully by the insurance companies; the rest, or $655,000 is met by the tax-payers.

But it is to be supposed now that an increased expenditure will be considered an economy. In less than twenty-four hours over ten times the sum total of the yearly cost of the department was eaten up, not because what there was of a defense was not good, but because there is only about half enough of it.

Taken as a whole the fire brigade of London is a superb body of efficient men well equipped. No blame should be put upon them, as a mass. Their discipline is good, they are splendid specimens of English manhood, but they are too few, and unless some steps be taken, an enemy from within may wipe out London which all England's standing army cannot defeat. It were economy for London to keep a standing fire brigade as well.

THIRD CENTENARY OF THE FORK.

Three Hundred Years Ago Lords and Ladies, Even Emperors, Ate With Their Fingers.

There are every day, if we wished to celebrate them, anniversaries of some kind or other. The third centenary of that modest and useful table utensil the fork, is just at hand, and should not be passed by in silence. It is three hundred years since that very necessary instrument was known and used in France. It is much more recent than the spoon, which was obligatory in all ages for the consuming of liquid foods.

As to solid foods, they were eaten in the style of Adam. The nobility and wealthy adopted the fork about 1600; it did not become common among the lower classes for more than a hundred years afterward. For two hundred years it has been in common use. This knowledge does not seem to have been general, for at a representation of Moliere's "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" the characters are represented as eating with forks at a repast served in one of the principal scenes, when to be entirely correct they should pick the dainties out of the dishes placed before them with their fingers.

The fork became a general fashion among the nobility in 1600. Henry IV. used it entirely, because Tallement des Reaux tells us of a plot against the King, in which it was decided to poison him by means of a fork, in the hollow prongs of which the poison was to be inserted, and would then flow into the morsel he was eating.

A curious pamphlet of 1605 pictures a strange country, in which the inhabitants, instead of eating with their fingers, as all the world did, used this strange ute

THE FARM.

COMMERCIAL PEACH ORCHARDS.

For a commercial peach orchard, trees should always be purchased in the fall. Select some dry location and heel them in deeply, having all the roots in contact with the soil. As cold weather approaches, cover the entire top with soil or other material to the point where it is to be cut off at planting time. This protects the trees from excessive evaporation, as well as from severe freezing. By having them at hand in the spring, planting can often be done long before the nurseryman can deliver his trees. Clay lands should be plowed in the fall, as the mellowing by frost will permit of better as well as earlier planting. On our level lands we plow so as to plant the trees on the ridge in the center of a narrow land. This assists in drainage and makes a deeper, mellow soil for the tree roots. The trees were planted one rod apart in all the older orchards. Now the tendency is toward a greater distance.

The selection of varieties is a very important matter. Some of the finest peaches do not bear enough to be profitable. The fruit of some of the best varieties is too tender for shipment. Others ripen at the time when larger and better varieties are in the market. The list of profitable market sorts is small. The phenomenal success of the Elberta has created a large demand for trees of that variety. So far it is the best all around peach grown. A list suitable for one locality might not be the one which should be selected for another. Varieties do not behave alike in all localities. Markets are not alike in their demands. And no list can be given which is adapted to all localities. A good rule is to plant the varieties your nearest successful neighbour has found profitable.

Pruning should begin before the tree is planted and continue during its productive years, but it is most important that it be well done for the first three or four years. The roots may be pruned and most of the laterals may safely be ed before planting. Much of the taproot cut away. If all root pruning is done in the fall, before heeling in the trees, the wounded surfaces will granulate during the winter, and root growth begin much earlier in the spring. At planting time the top should be pruned to a straight whip not more than 24 or 30 inches high. The pruning the first year should consist in shortening the leading branches of the last year's growth, leaving them distributed along the stem left at planting time. Avoid having the branches radiate from a common center. If properly distributed along the trunk, a branch broken by wind or an overload of fruit works no permanent injury to the tree. Pruning after the first year should consist in shortening the main branches so as to form a short jointed, compact head. Continue this shortening process each year, doing the work when the wood is dormant. If vigorous growth is allowed each year without shortening, in a few years the weight of the fruit is borne at the end of long branches, which are sure to break with the first load of fruit, when it ought to be in its prime. An old bearing orchard, which has not been properly trained, should be headed back severely. Should a crop failure follow, it will give the trees a chance to make ready for better crops. Such severe pruning should never be done after the flow of sap has started in the spring, but always when the wood is dormant.

In cultivating peach orchards, it is the common practice to plow away from the trees in the spring, then harrow the ground, and by the middle of June plow again, this time throwing the earth toward the trees, leveling the ground and doing all after-cultivation with the harrow. Some successful peach growers do not plow at all, but loosen the ground in the spring with the disc or cut-away harrow, doing all after-cultivation with the same tool or a common harrow, aiming at all times to have a mulch of mellow earth upon the surface. As soon after every rain as the ground is dry enough to work, the harrow is started to break the crust and renew the mulch at once. Continue cultivation until the fruit is about to ripen. If kept growing all summer the wood will ripen and fruit buds develop in good quantity for next year's crop.

SOME HINTS AS TO PRUNING.

The main thing with the fruit-grower, Dr. Fred. W. Carr, the horticulturist, says, is to watch the habit of growth of the young trees to prevent the formation of undesirable and crowding limbs, and to remove occasional suckers and water shoots which may spring out from the trunk and base of the branches as the tree gets older.

The top of the tree needs to be kept more dense in dry than in moist situations, the fruit being less likely to suffer from shade than from exposure to wind and sun. In the West low-headed trees are in favor, because believed to suffer less from the wind and sun-scald.

When pruning is done in late autumn or winter the wounds must remain exposed to trying conditions, before the chance to heal can come, whereas wounds made in early spring or during summer may begin healing at once.

"As to whether the wounds should be left rough or be made smooth," Dr. Carr says, "the question was submitted to the trees, half of the wounds being left as made by the pruning-saw, the other being smoothed as by a chisel or knife." The difference in healing was slight and in favor of the saw cut, there being less checking, and the preparations used to cover the wound remaining a trifle better.

The next question was with what to cover the wound. To test this five different materials were used, namely, liquid grafting, wax, shellac varnish, white lead paint, pine tar, and coal tar, and as a check, nothing. The wax gave best results, both in aiding the wound to heal and in the durability The shellac-covered wounds did not heal as well as those untreated. Paint did not hinder and there was but little evidence that it favored it. Pine tar was rather worse than nothing, and coal tar proved an absolute hindrance. But, says Dr. Carr, "when we come to the matter of checking, results are different. Untreated wounds check worst of all, while those covered with paint checked least. Wax and coal tar are both decidedly beneficial. To prevent checking is quite as important as healing, the checks serve as starting places for decay, which may, in time, destroy the life of the tree."

In the pruning done the first of the year, when the weather was cold, the wounds not treated with an application very soon began to check. While the applications prevented this for a time the shellac soon began to crack and drop off, when the exposed wood would then crack. The wax showed a tendency to do so, but not so badly.

Coal tar stayed on better than the others, paint coming next. If the wound heals well it does not matter whether the application drops off or not, but it was found that where the cover does not stay the wound is likely to crack open.

Taking everything into consideration, Dr. Carr says nothing seems better for covering pruning wounds than common paint, grafting wax ranking next.

DUCKS AND TURKEY.

The largest flocks and the most thrifty looking turkeys are found on farms having high dry land which has a light growth of grass and where a new breeding gobbler has lately been introduced. They generally do best on land where they have not been kept for years. [illegible] it is more difficult to keep them each year they are kept on a place, especially if a large number are grown. Twenty years ago it was easy for any one to raise turkeys.

When a place or region is overstocked turkey diseases become prevalent. Many in the east have given up turkey raising on account of loss from disease, and those who produced inferior stock on account of western competition. In turkey raising, as in producing any other crop, it pays best to raise the best.

About three-fourths of those who take up artificial duck raising make a failure of it because they are not suited to the business. It requires intense application and constant supervision. All hands must be up early and work early and late. Most people are unwilling to put in the 16 to 17 hours required during the long summer days.

A back lot in a thickly settled place is not suited to extensive duck raising. One should be located in the country, away from near neighbors and where cats are not so plenty. Ponds are not necessary to success, although the plumage of breeding birds that have access to them looks cleaner and in better condition. Young ducks grown for market do best if they have only water to drink.

NEW WAY OF SUPPLYING FRESH EGGS.

A large number of farmers near the cities retail their own eggs, chickens, etc., and have a good trade with the well-to-do families, but from now on they will be absolutely unable to supply all the eggs wanted. As it now is, farmers in remote districts take their eggs to the nearest store once a week or once in two weeks. The store keeper holds them usually a week or longer, the next man a few days longer and so on until these eggs are no longer strictly fresh when they reach the consumer.

Now, if a reliable man would gather eggs once a week from those whom he knows can be depended upon to give him only eggs which have been gathered every day and then express them to the farmer with the retail city trade so he in turn could deliver the eggs before they were 10 days old, a good business, in a small way, could be worked up for the dull months.

The points to be emphasized are: The eggs must be gathered only from reliable producers, and once a week. They must be expressed to retailer same day as received. All business must be done upon honor, as any dishonest methods would ruin the trade at once. As regards profits, a dollar a case should be readily received and two or more cases ought to be easily collected in a day.

PALACE OF VERSAILLES.

The palace of Versailles in Paris is supposed to be the costliest ever built. It is said that Louise XVI., to prevent the vast sums which he spent upon this wonderful palace being known threw all the documents relating to it in the fire.

THROWN ON THE WORLD.

Weary—Yes, mum, I wuz comfortably fixed, but wun day a feller demolished me sleepin' apartments wid an ax.

Lady, in surprise—Why did he do it?

Weary, tearfully—'Cause he needed kindlin' wood; an' dat old hogshead did seem so much like home.

ONE IN TEN MAY SUCCEED

BISHOP ROWE ON THE CHANCES OF FORTUNE IN THE KLONDIKE.

As the Head of the Episcopal Missionary District of Alaska He Utters Words of Warning to Those Who Are Meditating an Invasion of the Northern Gold Fields.

The Right Rev. Peter T. Rowe, Bishop of the missionary district of Alaska, in his second annual report, which he has just transmitted to the Board of Managers of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, has this to say of the Klondike gold fields.

"From the beginning the story of Alaska has been romantic. It has been a story of surprises. The latest one is the almost fabulous richness of the recent gold discoveries. The stories of these read like fables, but they contain much that is true. This is not a pertinent subject, perhaps, for this report ,but the effect which it will have upon our work will justify the reference. The district in which these rich claims are found is Canadian territory. It is undoubtedly rich and of great extent. That other finds as rich as these will be made is an uncertainty, but should they be only one-fiftieth as rich they will be exceedingly valuable.

"A sober estimate of the number of men likely to go to this section within a year is from 100,000 to 500,000. It is more than likely that a large percentage of this number will find their way into some of the large unprospected gold districts of our own territory, Birch Creek, Munook, Copper, etc. Certain it is that a great development is on the way. Here is a large,

RICH MINERAL COUNTRY.

Railroads are being projected, even, The one from near Copper River by the Standard Oil Company is a feasible one. So many persons going in at once are sure to create a serious condition of things. Ground is not, sufficiently prospected, supplies of provisions will be inadequate, the hardships and trials too great for many. Distress and suffering will be the result.

"All these conditions are likely, and are more serious than many realize. No one should give up a living or salary, for an uncertainty—and uncertainty it is. No one should venture to go without taking a year's provisions and $500. While I have all possible faith in the country, yet I fear that nine-tenths of those who venture will fail. I feel compelled to state this that men may not go there ignorant of the true condition of things."

In another part of the report Bishop Rowe says of the railroad already referred to:

"Kyak, a small island nearly opposite the great delta of the Copper River is the place from which the large coal fields and oil wells lately discovered on the coast are reached. These are going to be worked by the Standard Oil Company. From this point, following the Copper River, the same company is projecting a narrow gauge railroad across the country to Forty-Mile or Circle City. One object is to find in that mining region a market for their coal. It is the shortest and most direct route to the interior of Alaska. It will make the supposed mineral wealth of the Copper River district accessible to the miner and pass very near to the gold creeks of the Forty-Mile and the Sixty-Mile rivers.

"In Circle City there was a population last winter of 1,800—now it is deserted and called "Silent City." The wonderful rich finds at the Klondike caused the stampede. The claims back of Circle City are as good as ever, only not as rich as those at the Klondike. They paid from $17 to $30 per day. The district is large; many creeks are not yet prospected and rich finds may yet be made here. There is enough in sight for years of work for several thousand men. I expect that before spring, if not already the population will be returning."

GOT IT AT LAST.

Another Proof That It Pays To Be Truthful.

"Mister please give me a few cents to buy something to eat. I haven't had a bite for two days, and I'm—"

But the man had passed on.

"Mister won't you please give me a few cents to buy a loaf of bread fur me pore old mother? She's hungry, and there hain't been any coal in the house fur—"

But this man also had passed on.

"Mister won't you please give me a few cents fur me blind father? He hain't got no use of his legs, and—"

The third man likewise had failed to yield up.

"Mister, won't you please be so kind as to give a few cents to a pore orphan that hain't got no home, and hain't had nothin' to eat sence last Friday, and can't—"

No response. The fourth man had not seemed to hear him.

"Mister won't you please give a few cents to a man that's dyin' of thirst? I hain't had a whisky fur three days, and I'm mighty near—Thanks! May heaven bless you sir!"

NATURAL COLOR OF SEALSKINS.

Sealskins are originally of a light drab color, but as found in the market are always dyed.