LOCAL MISCELLANY.

PROBABLE ACCIDENT TO A STEAMER.

SIGNALS OF DISTRESS HEARD NEAR GREAT SOUTH BAY—IMPOSSIBILITY OF RENDERING ASSISTANCE YESTERDAY.

A dispatch was received at the office of the Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company about 3 p. m. yesterday, from a gentleman living near South Oyster Bay, to the effect that a steamer on the opposite side of the bay was seemingly in distress, as her whistle was loudly sounding, but that, owing to the heavy fog, it was impossible to discern either the name of the vessel or her condition. Immediately after the receipt of this news the Coast Wrecking Company was given notice of the fact, and as soon as the fog lifts will send a steamer to her aid. The dispatch stated that the whistling was at Gilgo Inlet, which divides Oak Island Beach from Jones Beach. On the western side of Gilgo Inlet is a bar, which extends out for a distance of two or three miles from the shore, and it is thought that if the vessel has met with an accident she has struck on this bar. This would make her about twenty-seven miles from Sandy Hook and about seven or eight miles west of Fire Island light. There seems to be little probability of any great loss of life, even though the vessel was in a dangerous position, as there are several life-saving stations in the immediate vicinity. One, No. 26, is situated on the eastern end of Jones Beach; another, No. 25, is on the western end of Oak Island Beach, and a third is on the eastern end of Oak Beach. Jones Beach and Oak Island Beach are on the seaward side of Great South Bay. If the position of the ship was properly communicated in the dispatch, she is about thirty miles from New-York in a straight line.

Among the vessels due at this port to-day is the Nellie Martin, a new vessel, which is to run from this port to Brazil, consigned to J. S. Tucker & Co. She left Newcastle on Dec. 11. Another vessel is the Nevada of the Williams & Guion line, which left Liverpool Dec. 15, and Queenstown Dec. 17. The City of Chester of the Inman line left Liverpool Dec. 16, Queenstown Dec. 17, and is also due. The Parthia sailed from Liverpool on Dec. 18, and is due to-day. The France of the Havre line, and the Hindoo of the Wilson line, are also due. The Hindoo left Hull Dec. 9, by way of Southampton, which she left Dec. 12, and was consigned to C. L. Wright & Co. The Ethiopia of the Anchor line left Glasgow on Dec. 18. It was the general opinion among those interested yesterday that the vessel was either the Nellie Martin or the Hindoo, for it was thought that if a large vessel was in distress there would have been guns, as well as bells, heard. This is simply conjecture, however, as inquiry at the office of the Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company failed to elicit anything more definite than the above.

A gentleman well informed in regard to the locality of the supposed accident stated to a TRIBUNE reporter last evening that in his opinion people need not be at all alarmed so long as the weather continues to be calm. If a strong breeze should set in from the south great damage to the vessel might result, but even then it was not probable that any lives would be lost, as the boats from the life-saving stations would be speedily dispatched to the scene. There was a station on either side within a distance of a quarter of a mile, and assistance could be rendered without much difficulty.

BROOKLYN MUNICIPAL NOMINATIONS.

ATTEMPTS TO AGREE UPON A NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF CITY WORKS—MAYOR HUNTER DECLINES TO YIELD—THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN ADJOURN SINE DIE.

The Democratic members of the Brooklyn Board of Aldermen held a caucus on Wednesday night, in order to take action which should result in the appointment of some person as President of the Board of City Works, before the expiration of the term of the present Council. A committee consisting of President Bergen and Aldermen Clancy and Kenna was appointed to call upon Mayor Hunter yesterday and present for his consideration a list of about 60 names of Democrats with the request that he should select one of them as the President of the Board of City Works. They declared that if any one of them was chosen they would support the nomination. Mayor Hunter, who was present at the caucus, stated that he had no desire to place himself in any hostile attitude, but he considered that he had not been fairly treated by the Democratic members of the Common Council nor received that consideration which, as the Chief Magistrate of Brooklyn and a member of the Democratic party, he deserved. He declared that if the same spirit to consult his wishes had been sooner manifested, the vacant position might have been filled before. At 2 p. m. yesterday the Committee called upon him and submitted the list. The Mayor stated that he would make no selection, and did not know of any provision of the charter which made it obligatory on him to accept any of their nominees. He had named a good Democrat for the Presidency of the Board of City Works, who had been rejected. The Committee then asked him whether, if requested by resolution, he would send to them the name of Alderman Joseph Platt for the position. He replied that he would not admit their right to dictate nominations to him. The Committee then retired, and a consultation was held as to future action. Nominations by many independent and independent citizens signed a petition urging the Mayor to nominate John Gilbertson. The Mayor replied that he would consider the matter.

The Board met at 3 p. m., and on motion of Alderman Howell a recess was taken for one hour. The Democratic members then held a caucus in the Corporation Counsel's office, at which Hugh McLaughlin and other prominent Democrats were present. Aldermen Bergen, Clancy, and Kenna waited upon the Mayor and endeavored to agree upon some name. Mayor Hunter then handed to them his written reasons for refusing their demands. He declared that the executive and legislative branches of the City Government were separate and distinct. He did not attempt to control the Common Council, and it should not control him. He wanted to leave the office as he found it, with a proper record for his successors to follow. He did not desire a conflict, but never believed to take his part when forced to enter into a contest. He had no other name to send in. The Committee then retired. The Aldermen reassembled at 8 p. m. Alderman Clancy, according to an arrangement made by the Democratic members, moved that the Board adjourn sine die. The motion was carried. The appointments for President of the Board of City Works and for Park Commissioner will now have to be made by Frederick A. Schroeder, the Mayor-elect. One of the Republican members stated that Mayor Hunter had assured William Marshall early yesterday morning that he would not be prevailed upon to send in any other name to the Common Council.

SNOW ON STREET RAILWAYS.

A SUIT TO PREVENT INTERFERENCE WITH SNOW-PLOWS AND SWEEPERS.

The Forty-second and Grand Street Ferry Railroad Company has obtained from Judge Donohue, in Supreme Court, Chambers, on motion of John M. Scribner, a temporary injunction restraining the City or the Police Department from interfering with the use of the snow-plow and snow-sweeper. The complaint and the affidavit of the President, Mr. Green, states that the Company must, under the charter, run cars as the convenience of their passengers requires; that it is impossible to run cars when the tracks are clogged with snow, and impossible to clear the tracks of snow except by the plow and sweeper. It is utterly impossible, they claim, to remove promptly the snow by carts. Such a removal must be a work of weeks. The Police Department last Winter could only obtain 600 carts in this city and Jersey City, and with them only succeeded in clearing Broadway and small parts of four or five streets. The plaintiffs complain that the city either has passed or is about to pass an ordinance forbidding the use of the snow-plow and sweeper unless the companies will enter into agreements containing onerous terms and conditions impracticable and impossible of performance, not required by their charters, and imposing on them duties rightfully belonging to the city. The plaintiffs ask that both the city and the police be restrained from enforcing any such ordinance. The motion to make the temporary injunction permanent is set down for next week in Supreme Court Chambers.

CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES.

In the proceeding by the New-York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company to acquire a turn-out to its new grain elevator and stock yards on the Hudson River at Sixty-fifth-st., by taking a part of the block owned by the Metropolitan Gaslight Company between Sixty-fifth and Sixty-sixth-sts. and Eleventh-ave. and the Hudson River—a proceeding which has been fought at every step by the Gas Company—the Supreme Court General Term has sent back the question of the amount of damages to be awarded to the Gas Company to the Commissioners. The land actually taken by the railroad was about 6⅔ city lots, and the referee, according to the opinion of Judge Davis, who gives the opinion of General Term, seems to have merely awarded the value of the property taken without reference to any consequential damages. Judge Davis holds that this was wrong. The Gas Company was entitled to consequential damages for the single block out of which this turn-out is taken, and as the Commissioners seem not to have allowed anything for such damages, the Court refers the case back with orders to accept the old testimony and take such new testimony as may be offered. Enoch L. Fancher argued the case for the Gaslight Company; H. H. Anderson for the Railroad Company.

FAILURE TO LAUNCH THE TRENTON.

A large number of spectators, assembled at the Navy-Yard yesterday to witness the launch of the new sloop-of-war Trenton. Five minutes before 10 a. m. about 300 workmen were stationed around the ways, and began cutting away the shores. At the same time the Marine Band, which was stationed on the deck of the Delaware, struck up "Hail Columbia." Miss Catharine Parker, the daughter of ex-Gov. Parker of New-Jersey, was chosen to christen the vessel, and stood at the bow with a bottle of champagne in her hand, ready to break it on the knighthead the moment the bows touched the water. By her side stood Commander R. L. Meade, with a hammer in his hand to use in case Miss Parker failed to break the bottle, and so remove all cause for superstition, so common among sailors. The vessel was dressed with signal flags, forming an arch from stem to stern. It was supposed that, after cutting away the shores from under the stern, which took about fifteen minutes, the vessel would readily move, but the weight of the vessel being heavier than was expected, it bore down on the forward blocks. These were cut away, and the vessel began to move, but very slowly. From 11 a. m. until 12:10 p. m. the vessel moved only about eight feet; and as the tide had then fallen about ten inches, Naval Constructor Pook decided it would be prudent to hold her fast, and means were then taken to secure her by chains. Upon examination it was found that, owing to the exceedingly wet weather of the past week and the frost in the ways the grease could not be made to stick, and it sealed off like thin ice. The same thing occurred when the Dictator was launched. Mr. Pook expects to have the vessel ready for launching on New-Year's Day at noon.

MR. BRITTON AND THE GRAND JURY.

INDICTMENTS CONCERNING THE GAS MATTER EXPECTED TO-DAY—ALLEGED MISREPRESENTATIONS BY MR. RICHARDS.

The accusations made against Winchester Britton, District-Attorney of Kings County, by 12 members of the November Grand Jury of the Court of Sessions, continued to be the leading topic of conversation among Brooklyn people yesterday. The expectation that the Grand Jury would to-day present indictments against certain officials charged with blackmailing the gas companies also excited interest. A large crowd will undoubtedly be present when that body comes into court. George A. Norfolk, one of the Grand Jurors who signed the communication addressed to Gov. Tilden under a misapprehension as to its contents, called yesterday upon the District-Attorney and made to him substantially the same statements which he made on Wednesday to a TRIBUNE reporter, and which were published in yesterday's TRIBUNE. He declared that Mr. Britton was entitled to an apology. Mr. Richards, he said, called upon him about two weeks ago with a paper for him to sign, and pointed to some signatures which he had already obtained. Mr. Richards asserted that the paper was addressed to Mr. Britton, simply urging him to bring the gas matter to the attention of the present Grand Jury. Mr. Norfolk said that the name of the foreman, Mr. Hicks, should be attached to the communication. Mr. Richards replied that he intended to obtain it at once. In conclusion, said Mr. Norfolk: "I never knew of the existence of any such letter as the one published until a reporter pointed it out to me. I was greatly astonished, for I think, Mr. Britton, that you acted very wisely and kindly in connection with the matter, and there was not a shadow of an excuse for this attack made upon you."

Assistant District-Attorney Snell said: "Richards knew that the matter was before the present Grand Jury at the time he went around with the paper to get signatures."

Mr. Britton stated subsequently that he was aware two weeks ago that Mr. Richards was endeavoring to obtain signatures to a paper relating to him; but from his conviction that he had done no wrong and neglected no duty, he took no action in the matter and let things take their own course. He intimated that after the present Grand Jury had vindicated him from the aspersions cast upon him he should turn his attention to his slanderers. Mr. Richards yesterday denied that in signing the petition to the Governor he was influenced by any feelings personal to Mr. Britton, but thought he was doing simply his duty on account of what he regarded as the District-Attorney's improper conduct.

There appears to be no truth in the statement that John E. Parsons drew up the charges against District-Attorney Britton and that the members of the Brooklyn Tax-payers' Association were active in pressing them in connection with their prosecution of the ring. Mr. Parsons said yesterday that he had had nothing to do with the charges and knew nothing about them, and another lawyer for the people in the ring suits said that it could be said with authority that the Tax-payers' Association had not been instrumental in making the charge against Mr. Britton. The same gentleman remarked that the charges did not bear the external evidence of having been drawn up by a lawyer. A prominent lawyer of Brooklyn also told a TRIBUNE reporter that the charges had undoubtedly originated with Mr. Richards, and not with the Tax-payers' Association.

MRS. WOODHULL'S SECOND LECTURE.

"WOMAN'S CURSE"—SOME ASSERTIONS ABOUT MR. BEECHER.

Victoria C. Woodhull lectured again in the great hall of the Cooper Institute last evening. Her subject was "Woman's Curse." It was after 8 o'clock when the lecture began, and up to that time people rapidly came into the hall until it was about half full. On the wall at the rear of the stage, and just beneath the busts of Franklin and Clay, were placed large engravings of Mrs. Woodhull, and in several places at the front of the platform there were piles of pamphlets containing her addresses, together with cabinet photographs of Miss Claflin and Mrs. Woodhull. Miss Claflin appeared before the audience in a rich brown velvet dress, having a long trail that was borne along with an effusion. She announced that the photographs and pamphlets could be purchased after the lecture, and then read Charles Mackay's poem on the death of Thomas Paine. Mrs. Woodhull came on the stage soon afterward and a large bouquet was passed to her from the audience, while many appended her coming. She read from Genesis iii., 16: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." The main idea she drew from the subject was that the insane asylums, penitentiaries, and workhouses were filled with children whose birth the mothers did not desire. She had spoken a full quarter of an hour before any passage was applauded. Applause was heard when she said that ladies who left the lecture-room while she was speaking were usually such as had suffered from this curse. The interest of the audience was considerably increased when Mrs. Woodhull said: "I will remember when I had a conversation with Henry Ward Beecher concerning the proposition of the race on scientific principles. He said he believed in the doctrine, but could not labor for it, as he would soon be preaching to empty pews. And I, Henry, you will fill your church every Sunday, for the people want to hear this question discussed. But he dared not to come out. He was surrounded by a set of moral cowards, and was trying to hold them up. They dared not say their souls were their own, and did not mean that he should do so. I know a good deal about this matter, for I've been in jail several times on the gentleman's account."

Mrs. Woodhull repeated her assertion of the previous evening, that she had been misunderstood and misrepresented. She said she believed "in the sanctity of marriage that knows no divorce." She would put every diseased man and woman where they could not marry. At present, she said, not one woman in a thousand is fit to be a mother. The number of men fit to be fathers is still less.

After the lecture Mrs. Woodhull's daughter, a young lady of about 16 years, occupied herself, together with Miss Claflin, in selling the photographs and pamphlets from the stage.

ELEVATING AND WEIGHING GRAIN.

At a meeting of the receivers of grain of the New-York Produce Exchange, held yesterday, a resolution was passed requesting the jobbers in grain to rescind their recent notice that the rates for elevating and weighing after Jan. 1, 1876, shall be restored to the old standard of three-fourths of a cent per bushel for elevating, and the same for weighing. The request is urged on the grounds that "the faith of the Exchange was pledged to the Legislature last Winter to secure a reduction in the cost of elevating and weighing grain at this port, provided the joint resolution for the reduction of tolls on the canal were adopted, and it would be unjust to the Legislature and ourselves to consent to a return to the old rates; and that the proposed action of the jobbers will seriously embarrass transactions upon the open market, and will be a great annoyance to Western shippers, who insist upon uniformity of charges in their accounts of sale."

A CONFLICT OF AUTHORITY.

Judge Otterbourg of the Essex Market Police Court and Sergeant Smith of the Court Squad yesterday became involved in a quarrel about the serving of warrants. Sergeant Smith insisted that he had the right to serve warrants as he pleased. Judge Otterbourg said that the Court was the proper authority to order the serving of warrants, and ordered them to be served in rotation, at the same time giving Officer Nevin a warrant, which he ordered him to serve at once. The Sergeant countermanded the order, whereupon Judge Otterbourg ordered them both to leave the room, and not to return until they had learned to obey the orders of the Court. The matter will be brought to the attention of the Police Commissioners and Board of Police Justices.

ATTEMPTED MURDER IN A BARROOM.

William S. Fair, a barkeeper at No. 88 Third-ave., was arrested yesterday on a charge of attempting to kill William Fuller, a painter, of No. 209 East Nineteenth-st. The police stated that Fuller went into Fair's barroom and drank several times. The two men quarreled about payment, and Fair came around from behind the bar and grappled with Fuller. A desperate struggle ensued, and Fair was thrown heavily upon the floor. Furious at his defeat, Fair leaped over the bar, seized a revolver, and, before any of the bystanders could interfere, he fired twice at Fuller. Then he was seized, and the revolver wrenched from his hand. Fortunately Fair was too much excited to aim accurately, but one of the bullets struck Fuller in his left hand, shattering it. Fuller was taken to Bellevue Hospital, and Fair was locked up in the Fifth-st. Police Station.

SUPPOSED LOSS OF A BRIG.

Three miles east of Shinnecock Lighthouse, yesterday afternoon, a bottle was picked up on the beach by one of the crew of Life-saving Station No. 11, containing a paper having on it a written statement to the effect that on Dec. 14, at 10 a. m., the brig Sidney Darcie was two points east of Shinnecock Light, waterlogged, out of provisions, with the pump choked, and sinking very fast. The paper was signed by Capt. John Morrison and Mate Sherwood. Whether or not the paper is genuine is not yet determined. No such vessel, so far as known, has been seen off the south shore.

OBTAINING CARPETS ON FALSE PRETENSES.

Gustavus Abbott of No. 1,200 Washington-st., Boston, was indicted in the Court of General Sessions for obtaining, under false pretenses, $1,500 worth of carpets from C. H. Blake & Co. of Nos. 79 and 81 Worth-st., New-York City. On a requisition from Gov. Tilden, Abbott was surrendered to Detectives Conner and Field of District-Attorney Phelps's office, who brought him to that office yesterday, where he was held in $2,000.

THE COMMITTEE ON CRIME.

MR. TOWNSEND EXPLAINS HIS POSITION.

AN ANSWER TO DISTRICT-ATTORNEY PHELPS'S LETTERS—NO CHARGES MADE, BUT THE EVIDENCE BEFORE THE COMMITTEE SUMMARIZED—CONCLUSION OF THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MR. PHELPS AND ASSEMBLYMAN CAMPBELL.

Below will be found a letter from John D. Townsend, counsel for the Committee on Crime, which replies in detail to the charges put forth against that gentleman by District-Attorney Phelps:

BENJAMIN K. PHELPS, esq., *District-Attorney of New-York.*

SIR: In reply to a polite invitation, extended to you by me as counsel for the Committee on Crime, to appear before them, you have deemed it expedient, while declining it, to set forth in a correspondence with the chairman what you choose to designate your reasons for so doing, and in that connection to attack me over the shoulders of the Committee. I do not propose that you shall do so with impunity. Before directing my attention to the subject of the grievances you have against me, I may be permitted to say that I was selected as counsel by the unanimous voice of the Committee, under the belief, I presume, that I would be faithful in the discharge of my duties and not be biased by political considerations. At all events, I accepted the appointment under such impression, and have endeavored to perform the duties to the best of my understanding. No serious disagreement has at any time occurred between any member of the Committee and myself, and you are the first person who has presented views as to the manner in which my duties have been performed. You have been neither delicate nor truthful in making your statement, and while in my remarks to you I shall speak plainly, I trust I shall do so truthfully. You charge me with a deliberate intention of destroying public confidence in you at the eve of an election, and to accomplish that end that I have suppressed some evidence and colored other, and that through my lamentable ignorance in matters about which the merest tyro in criminal practice is proficient, the proceedings of the Committee have been anything but profitable, and to fortify these grave charges you offer illustrations.

Before reviewing your citations, let me assure you that no one was more surprised than I at the condition which an examination of your department disclosed. Without ever having been upon intimate terms with you, I had imagined our relation toward each other was friendly. I had considered you an honest, indolent, fairly capable man, with an inclination to do right, but with no great strength in resisting influences; and I was prepared to find, if there were defects in the administration of your office, rather those which might be attributed to negligence than anything worse. Not having had much criminal practice of late years, I did not meet you often, but what I was inclined to like you. Imbued with those feelings toward you, I had no motive to seek your downfall. I was not an aspirant for any office, and hence no selfish considerations moved me to such purpose as you impute to me. My first impression that you were not sincere was aroused on the 14th of September, when you appeared before the Committee, and instead of offering yourself as a witness, addressed the Committee as to the manner in which you thought the investigation should be conducted, and attempted to impress the Committee with the idea (evidently as an excuse for your shortcoming which were then becoming apparent) that the facilities for the prosecution of crimes before juries were now precisely the same as they existed in 1868. If the report in the newspapers was correct, you gave about the same testimony before the Senate Committee in your examination before them. I felt convinced that you knew better than to make such assertions, and I immediately asked that you be sworn. Then you admitted that in 1868 a District-Attorney was entitled to but one assistant, while now you have four, and besides that, during your term, you had been empowered, with the consent of the Judges, to hold two terms of the Court of General Sessions where one prevailed, which was not the case in 1868. You testified that during your term you had held over 1,000 extra terms, five such extra terms, and gave as a reason for not holding them monthly that "the necessity of the case had hardly required that labor to be imposed upon the General Sessions." Was not such statement by you an abundant reason for the Committee to infer that, if they wished to find the reason for the hundreds of indictments not tried and complaints not attended to in your office, they must look for other causes than want of facilities? During your address to the Committee you, inconsiderately perhaps, remarked, "If I can give the Committee any information, I should be most happy to do so; if there is anything that requires explanation, I shall be happy to make it when it is requested." After your examination I felt that you were enraged at me, and I was convinced that we should never see your face again before the Committee, however urgently they might request. Time after time, when matters of peculiar moment, emanating from your department, had been or were to be developed, your presence was requested in writing, but you failed to remember your promise, and it will hardly be credited that your reasons for not appearing yesterday, as set forth in your letter to Mr. Campbell, correctly set forth your motives for declining. We are all human, and I am willing to avoid if possible disagreeable situations, and had I anticipated a repulse, I do not know that I would have been called upon to do what I might possibly have done had you asked me to do so, with the exception that I would not have made the mistake of writing such letters. In drawing my impressions of your character, I should have added that I supposed you were endowed with a certain amount of shrewdness, but I find I was in error. Before alluding to some of the subjects upon which you might possibly have been interrogated had you honored the Committee with your presence, let me briefly review some of the illustrations upon which you base your charges against me.

First: You say "the time of the Committee has been mainly occupied in listening to the complaints of convicts, aggrieved complainants, and discharged clerks, and it has been used as a court of review to revise the proceedings of courts in the singular fashion of hearing only one side." In answer to that I will say that I have not been aware that a convict has testified before the Committee in reference to your department. Are you? If so, won't you please give his or her name, and state whether or not, if one has so testified, he or she was not corroborated? I know of no discharged clerks, unless you refer to Mr. Allen, your former assistant; and if you do refer to him, I challenge you to state the true reasons why he left your office. I do know that many, many aggrieved complainants have testified against the manner in which your office has been administered, and with good cause, too, and had their cases been presented on one side only, which, I contend,