THE CITY'S PLAGUE OF FILTH

SHAMEFUL CONDITION OF THE STREETS.

OBSERVATIONS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF NEW-YORK AT ALL STAGES OF THE EFFORTS TO REMOVE REFUSE—VILE HEAPS AND SLIMY POOLS THAT OFFEND BOTH THE EYE AND THE NOSE—THE WAY IN WHICH THE SWEEPERS SLUR THEIR WORK—FOLLOWING THE CARTS TO THE DUMPS—NOW ASHES ARE COLLECTED—THE DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY.

A careful review of the methods by which New-York streets are cleaned, or rather by which it is pretended that they are cleaned, and of the results of these methods, is given below. TRIBUNE reporters have made thorough observations of the condition of various typical thoroughfares, have closely watched the street-cleaners at their work, and have noted the manner in which that work is botched. They have also gone over the ground carefully on the next day after the so-called "cleaning," and they describe the very unsatisfactory state of things that the manipulators of the broom, the hoe and the shovel leave after them. The way in which the refuse is collected in carts, the masses that are left behind, the journey of the carts to the dumps and the scows, are faithfully depicted. A full account of the system of collecting ashes is also given, and the organization of the Street-Cleaning Bureau, showing the division of responsibility, is presented. The officials of that bureau declare that the cause of the present trouble is the lack of proper means for gathering and disposing of the refuse. They hold that they should have more carts and horses and more scows, and make some suggestions as to the final disposal of the dirt and ashes.

HOW THE WORK IS NOT DONE.

THE STREET SWEEPERS — SINS OF OMISSION AND COMMISSION—CHARACTERISTIC NEW-YORK SCENES—ITALIAN AND IRISH KNIGHTS OF THE BROOM AND HOE—THE ASHMAN'S ROUNDS—WHAT THE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SAY.

A standing subject of complaint among the citizens of New-York for years past has been the filthy condition of the streets. Effort has been concentrated, by way of doing a little well in a failure to do all, on Broadway and Fifth-ave., the two great and fashionable thoroughfares. In spite of this, in wet weather lower Broadway especially is plastered with slimy mud, and in dry weather the whole length of the street abounds in dirt and rubbish, with which each wind pelts the eyes and faces of the thousands that daily throng its sidewalks. Fifth-ave. is always less dirty, but not so much so as to deserve the title of the "one clean street of New-York." From these two streets the degree of dirtiness rapidly rises in passing from the main side thoroughfares to the less frequented cross streets and poverty-stricken by-ways, where the superlative of nastiness is reached in the purlieus of Baxter and Mulberry-sts. Filthy pavements are only half of the nuisance. Garbage barrels are mustered daily, frequently for hours at a time, in the most conspicuous places on the curbstones, in front of the habitations of the rich as well as of the poor, and in hideous array offend the eye and give successive shocks to the nose of the passer-by. A stranger visiting the city might take away with him, as his most vivid impression of New-York, a picture of a reeking garbage barrel standing in front of a brown-stone mansion in a fashionable street. Hovering over the barrel is a filthy Italian scavenger, who is looking for food and fuel, and who passes to another barrel only after appropriating a little and scattering more. Citizens have become accustomed to the disgusting sight, and have deplored the fact that garbage and Italians of this class exist. They have tried remedies and failed, and well-nigh concluded that dirty streets are chronic, and not susceptible of permanent cure. There is a Street-Cleaning Bureau, however. It is a branch of the Police Department, and is spending nearly $700,000 a year. Captain Williams was transferred to the head of this Bureau on Tuesday, and streets that had been neglected for several days were visited by the ash-carts on Wednesday and Thursday.

A general order was telegraphed to all Police Precincts yesterday by Commissioner MacLean, directing that sweepers be stationed at all crosswalks where travel is great, whose duty it shall be to keep them clean.

RESULTS OF A TOUR OF INSPECTION.

So many citizens take personal note daily of the condition of the pavement and sidewalks of Broadway, that a detailed account of what was seen in the way of dirt in the main artery of the city is superfluous. Moreover, there are more fertile fields for observation. Broadway is swept every night in the year, except when the weather is very stormy and when the pavement is covered with snow. It is the first street visited by the ash-carts in the morning, and these are expected to empty every ash receptacle in Broadway and Fifth-ave. by 9 o'clock. A good starting point for a tour of inspection is the chief office of the Street-Cleaning Bureau in the Central-Police Office in Mulberry-st., between Bleecker and Houston-sts. Mulberry-st. runs south from that point to Chatham-st. The pavement in front of the Central Office on Tuesday was respectably clean. The next block south needed sweeping. A few well-filled ash-barrels ornamented the succeeding block. Two days afterward an ash-cart came up and emptied these few barrels. The bottom fell out of one barrel after it had been emptied of three-fourths of its contents. Since the driver had no shovel with him he could not take up the heap on the sidewalk, so he brushed the mess off the curbstone with his boot and drove on. On both days the situation remained unchanged in the rest of the street south. The garbage barrels became more plentiful as Canal-st. was approached, and the overflow at the base of the barrel in some cases amounted to two or three barrelsful. Near Canal-st. there was an accumulation in a heap of perhaps two or three months standing. Evidently it had grown so large that the stoutest cartman quailed before it. The succeeding blocks to Chatham-st. were decked out with garbage barrels, standing singly, in twos and in threes, in nearly every instance heaped up until the filth ran over on the pavement. Every few rods there were heaps of refuse on the pavement, of greater age than the garbage in the barrels.

Passing at Chatham into Baxter-st., the next parallel street west, a more filthy sight disclosed itself, after crossing the Five Points, where two dead dogs lay waiting for burial. Between the Five Points and Canal-st. there were great boxes of heaped-up refuse lining both sides of Baxter-st. at intervals of a few feet. The boxes held about the same quantity as was scattered in heaps over the pavement. Perhaps four men might lift one of these boxes and dump the contents into a cart. The stench was awful, though it was considerably mollified by the frost, which had congealed the slime. On Thursday morning two blocks of Baxter near Canal-st. were visited by the carts. The stirring up that part of the street received diminished the amount of the filth, but almost added to the offence to eye and nose.

Chatham-st., the Bowery and Third-ave. form the great East Side thoroughfare from the City Hall Park to Harlem. There were found spots in Chatham-st. only less foul than the milder parts of Baxter. Chatham-square, at the lower end of the Bowery, was in a disgracefully filthy condition. At this point eight streets centre, and the number of persons that pass is very large, as is also the amount of traffic. A suggestion as to how long a time had elapsed since it had been cleaned was found in the fact that the ground beneath the elevated railroad was strewn with chips cut from the beams and crossties—not only fresh chips from work recently done, but chips that had lain so long that they had changed color with age. They were half buried in a quantity of finely pulverized dust, brown clouds of which filled the air whenever a gust of wind swept across the square from any of the numerous intersecting streets.

Ash-barrels were not very numerous in the lower part of the Bowery, but in many places the gutters were very filthy. Between Canal and Houston-sts. an occasional ash-barrel and ash-box met the eye, and bad spots in the pavement collected mud and garbage. Third-ave. presented much the same appearance from Eighth to Thirtieth-st. on Tuesday afternoon. Between the up and down railway tracks there was a uniform layer of thick mud which might easily be removed with the aid of hoe and shovel. The avenue wore a general appearance of being ash-ridden, and the sidewalks were littered. Every block gave evidence of a neglected ash-barrel, sometimes half-full, sometimes overflowing with ashes and refuse. Each place where an ash-barrel had stood and had been emptied was marked by a shovelful more or less of dirt. Where barrels had been overturned and stolen, the contents, instead of being shoveled into the cart, had been left in a pile, and some of these little mounds looked as if they were two or three weeks old. A glance cast through the cross streets in passing seldom failed to reveal barrels on each block. Only a few streets were absolutely clear of the evidence of standing rubbish. In Twelfth-st. a cart heaped up four feet above the boards with manure was proceeding at a leisurely pace toward an East River dump, scattering the filth as it went. Practically this was unloading a good part of the stable refuse in the street. It has been noticed time and again that the manure carts always leave a trail behind them. Third-ave. was very dirty between Twenty-third and Thirty-fourth-sts.

On Wednesday Fourteenth-st., east of Third-ave., was the scene of street-cleaning operations, and it was certainly ready for such visitation. First-ave. from Fourteenth-st., north and south, looked more like a swamp than a city street, owing partially to the upheaval caused by digging foundations for the new elevated road, which passes into Second-ave. at Twenty-third-st. Beyond Avenue A Fourteenth-st. was very foul in three or four places. Near the avenue in particular there were barrels of refuse on the north side, while opposite a dead cat was reposing, and new piles of sweepings appeared, which hens were industriously scattering.

The condition of these streets was bad enough during the middle of the week, when most of the dirt was dry and much of it frozen. Early Friday morning a light snow began to fall, and soon covered the city with spotless white. It was not long, however, before the busy wheels of traffic and the countless feet of pedestrians had churned together the ingredients that lay upon the ground, and produced from the mixture of purity and corruption the unique article known as New-York mud—smooth, pasty, slimy and black. All over the city the fall nastiness of the dirty streets was developed, while on those streets that had been recently cleaned the dirt that had been neglected by the careless sweepers, or had been abandoned because it was frozen and did not show much, was moistened and spread. As for the worse portions of the city, the river-side streets where the sun had never dried and the cold had never frozen the deep mud, this addition of moisture could only add to their filthiness by increasing its depth and slightly liquefying it.

A reporter called on Captain Williams at his new office in the Street-Cleaning Department to ask what was the appropriation for the Department during the current year. "Mr. Green will tell you," he said. "$650,000, less $7,500 appropriated to the maintenance of two barges in the bay," said Mr. Green.

"Is the expenditure limited, or discretionary?"

"Discretionary with the Commissioners."

"Are the ordinary streets cleaned at stated times, Captain Williams, or when they appear to need it?"

"The police report the dirty streets, and we always clean the dirty streets first," replied the Captain, with a pleasant smile.

An attempt was made yesterday by a TRIBUNE reporter to get Captain Williams to give an outline of his plan for cleaning the streets. He was somewhat loth to talk on the subject. "You may say, however," said he, looking at the dream who was blacking his boots, "that this is the first shine that I have had since I left the Twenty-ninth."

Captain Williams said subsequently that during the past week he had been examining the streets and getting his force into working order. This morning the work of cleaning the streets will begin in earnest. A large force of men will be distributed over that portion of the city below Canal-st., and provided the work is not prevented by the freezing of the mud, the streets in that district are expected to be clean by Monday morning. Captain Williams said that when this was done he would be better able to state his plans for the future.

WATCHING THE SWEEPERS AT WORK.

During several days of last week, the various processes of street-cleaning were observed by TRIBUNE reporters, who watched the sweepers at their work; saw the dirt carts filled and followed them to the dumping grounds; and took careful notes of the details of the system of removing the ashes. For this purpose selection was made, not of the cleanest streets in the city, like Broadway, Fifth-ave., and others that receive special attention; nor of those streets near the rivers, which seem, whenever they are examined, to be utterly given over to mud and garbage; but of streets near the middle of the city, occupied for business purposes and by the better class of tenements. Such a street is Forsyth-st., which runs parallel with the Bowery, two blocks to the east of it, extending from Division-st. to East Houston-st. It was a fair specimen of an ordinarily dirty street. Some of the dirt was dry, and had been pulverized by the passing wheels, and thoroughly mixed with refuse. This lay along the middle of the street deep enough to cover the paving stones. At the sides of the street there was the familiar sight of gutters running with slops, or with puddles here and there where there were obstructions to the flow toward the sewers, in which were scraps of garbage, old papers, rags and other discarded matter from the houses; while just beyond the gutter was a strip neither wet enough for mud nor dry enough for dust, but of such a consistency as to be cut by the wheels of vehicles, to freeze in ridges in case of cold, or to soften into mud under a hotter sun—in both cases to present to the street-cleaner his greatest obstacles to success. There were also in the upper part of the street, near Houston-st., a number of the piles of dirt that had been made when the street had been swept. How long before that had been done it was difficult to determine from the varying testimony of the inhabitants, although they all agreed that it was a great many days. When, ever it was, in this portion of the street the piles of dirt had been neglected by the driver of the dirt-cart. One robust Irishwoman, whose patience disappeared as her indignation developed, had gone to work in front of her own house, and was adding to the nearest dirt-heap the accumulations of the week in a manner that would have been instructive to the sweepers as to what could be done with a broom, properly handled. She did not stop her work when the reporter told her that the sweepers were approaching, intimating that "them I-talians" did not understand their business.

Early Wednesday morning two Italians were set at work on this street, each furnished (self-provided) with a broom and a hoe. The brooms were made of small rattan twigs, about fourteen inches long, set into a wooden block a foot and a half long, into which was fastened a long handle. Each man took one side of the street, which he cleaned from the gutter to the middle, or to the track of the Second Avenue Railroad, where that passed through the street. Working with the hoe where there was mud, and with the broom where the dirt was dry, they cleared about twenty feet of the length of the street, making a pile near the gutter of what they gathered, and then brushed into the same pile the sweepings of another twenty feet from the other direction. When the dirt was light they usually obtained most of it in this way, and the appearance of the street was much improved. But throughout almost the entire length of the street the accumulations under the broom became too heavy for the broom to carry, long before the piles were reached, and the pliant twigs took off only a portion of the dirt from the top, leaving the rest behind. The reporter endeavored to suggest that the piles be made nearer together; but his English was not understood, and his pantomime was of no effect. It would have been easy, at some points on this route, to make nearly as many additional dirt piles of the same size—about three feet across and six to nine inches deep—by sweeping after these men. The gutters were generally wet with refuse and slops thrown from the houses, and could only be cleaned with a hoe. A coal cart stood over a very dirty spot, when the sweepers reached Grand-st., but although the cart had been moved away before they had finished the block, they did not return to that spot. They did, however, show that they understood their duty, by leading off a horse and wagon that interfered with their work at another point. A tenant who was moving, or his unpaid landlord for him, had piled a quantity of household furniture on the sidewalk and in the gutter, against which a hand-cart was leaning. By moving this hand-cart, the sweepers might have uncovered enough mud to make a small pile; but they passed it by, and by the following day it had frozen hard and dry. By 2 o'clock the street had been covered by these men throughout its entire length, and the remaining Italian, one having disappeared earlier, shouldered his broom and his hoe and marched off by Houston-st.

While the sweepers were gathering the dirt into piles a dirt cart was at work removing the piles. The driver did not appear to be working in connection with the sweepers; but that street was part of his "route" for the day, and he took what he found there. Up to 6 o'clock in the evening there were several blocks that had not been visited, although by the following morning the dirt piles had all been removed. The driver of the cart had only a large shovel to work with, and he did his work as well as it could be done with this implement alone. With two or three fillings of it he took up a dirt-heap, and if any ashes had been swept upon the heap, he took those also. He then turned the shovel over, and, using it like a hoe, scraped a little more dirt into the gutter, which he took against the curb. This process did not remove all the dirt. If the driver had had a broom, he could have taken up a large shovelful that he did not get, from each of the small piles, and a larger quantity from those that consisted of mud. It would have taken him a little longer, and under the system of measuring a day's work by the number of loads taken to the dump, these drivers are impatient of spending any unnecessary time in collecting a load. The driver said that it took him about an hour to collect one load and deliver it at the dump, at the foot of Jackson-st., unless he had to wait in line, as he frequently did, on account of the scarcity of scows to dump on. Instead of delivering uniformly at the same dump, he said that the men had to go to the nearest one that had a scow in readiness, and they were often very much delayed, having, in some cases, to keep a load on the cart over night.

As he drove off the reporter followed the cart to the dump. It passed through Grand-st., where old, cut-up heaps of dirt were left over from the last sweeping—"done long ago," the people said—and where another sweeping, hoeing and thorough cleaning of dirt, filth and garbage, were already needed again; and through Jackson-st., which crossed such sloughs of mud, that the driver must have wondered why he was sent so far as Forsyth-st. for a load of dirt, and regretted that loads from these streets, which he could gather in a few minutes and within a distance of a few rods, without the necessity of traveling from pile to pile, would not "count" on his day's work.

DUMPING THE LOADS FROM THE CARTS.

At the foot of this street was the dump, which consisted, like all the dumps, of an inclined plank roadway from the bulkhead to a platform built ten or fifteen feet above the pier level. This structure was very shaky, and it seemed as if every cart that struck it would break it down. There was room upon the platform for three carts to dump at once, which was done by backing the carts up to the side, where a stout beam blocked the wheels, and sliding the contents down upon the scow below. The scows are made with a huge "cockpit," through the opened bottom of which most of the load is discharged at sea, while the rest is shoveled off the edge by the men. During the loading of the scows, there are several men engaged in stowing away the load, which they arrange in a long high ridge, like the roof of a house. Their occupation looks by no means attractive, as they stand ankle-deep in an unpleasant mixture of mud, ashes, and all the various sorts of filth that are picked up from the streets or thrown into barrels. As each driver descends from the platform after discharging his load, the superintendent of the dump punches the tally in a green card that the driver carries, upon which each hour of the day is printed in a square with every five minutes of the hour indicated. Upon this the exact time is registered. An inspection of several of these cards showed that, on Wednesday, the men were averaging a load an hour, for the nearer localities, while those at a distance required a longer time.

The number of loads required for a day's work varies according to the distance of the locality from the dumps, and the men are differently paid, as they furnish their own teams or use those of the Department.

On Wednesday 4,000 loads were sent out to sea in two tows from the East River and nearly as much more from the North River. The second East River tow left the foot of Third-st. about 1 p. m. in charge of the tug boat Burke. A patrolman went along to superintend the dumping at buoy No. 4 in the Lower Bay. Three scows were in the lead and a fourth would have been sent if there had been enough Italians to man it. Sixty men were divided among these three scows. They were nearly as dirty as their cargo, but as a rule very good natured. Each one carried a bag containing luncheon and the heaviest clothing he possessed. It was said that as soon as they got well under way they would build fires on the scows, using rags, straw and combustible rubbish. A dog went along for company. Departing at 1 o'clock in the afternoon they were not expected back until 11 or 12 o'clock at night.

HOW A STREET APPEARS AFTER CLEANING.

With the removal of the dirt in the carts, the process of "cleaning" the street is completed; and, to note the result of the operation, the reporter revisited Forsyth-st. on the following morning. The day was the coldest of the week up to that time. The mud was caked and dried, and the appearance of the street was much better than if the dirt that was left in it had been mixed with moisture. If the standard of cleanliness be that the tops of the paving-stones shall be uncovered, then a large part of the street was clean. But there was no part where a stout broom could not have swept up a large quantity of the dust and refuse mixture, or where a hoe could not have loosened much caked and partly frozen mud, on the very same spots that had been swept and hoed and shovelled over the day before. And on the last block at the upper end, where the single Italian worked alone, even by the low standard of cleanliness that calls for the uncovering of the paving stones, the work must be condemned.

Sweeping was further observed in other streets. On Thursday morning Catharine-st. was swept all the way down to the water. This was by special order of Captain Williams, the men said. They were Irishmen, and went to work in a rather more business-like manner than the Italians. Beginning at the middle of the street, like the others, instead of pushing a rapidly accumulating pile of dirt for a long distance, they brushed everything down directly toward the gutter, and there divided it into heaps, using neither the broom nor the hoe alone, but both together. Yet they did not effectually clean the street, nor get up all the dirt their brooms would take. Had they gone over the same ground again, they would, for once, have had the street fairly cleaned, and in condition to be kept so by proper attention. "Why do you make your heaps in the gutters?" was asked one of them. "Oh, the dirt cart is to follow us all the way down, right away," he answered. Later in the day, the reporter returned to this street, to see how the first street-cleaning order traced to Captain Williams had worked, and found that the carts had followed promptly, and that the dirt had been all removed. But the new broom had not swept clean. A policeman and a storekeeper were accosted by the reporter, and were found to be in a discussion about the condition of the street, and there was a unanimous verdict of the three that the work had been incompletely done. The dirt in this street had been mostly fine and dry, well mixed with refuse. Under this to some extent there was mud, caked and slightly hardened. After the dirt heaps had been taken away there was left not only a quantity that had been neglected by the cartman, and that therefore remained in the gutter, but the evidences of insufficient sweeping appeared all the way down the street. A little pile of loose dirt was easily scraped up with the side of the foot, and none of the mud had so hardened with the cold that a slight effort did not release it. The men were asked, while they were at work, if any instructions were given them about sweeping—how thoroughly to do it; where to make the heaps; how large to make them; or any particulars. They said, "No. We are only to make it as clean as we can."

When THE TRIBUNE reporter, in inspecting the condition of the streets, reached Thompson-st., it seemed that he might fairly say it was the dirtiest street he had seen. The mud lay in great masses along the lower part of the street, slightly caked with the cold, but easy to dislodge with the toe of a shoe. The gutters were black with dirt and slimy with garbage; ash-barrels had been tipped over, and the contents left uncollected, or so spilled about in the collecting as to make even a worse disfigurement of the street. But at the intersection of Grand and Thompson-sts., there were seen indications in the mud that pointed plainly to the broom and hoe of the street-cleaner. Unable to believe it possible that such a farce had been performed as pretending to have cleaned this street while leaving it in this wretched condition, the reporter made inquiries in the vicinity. The "intelligent contraband" was not far to seek. He said that the sweepers had been around that very morning. "Where were the carts here?" asked the reporter. "De ashman was just now over dere," he replied, pointing across the way to where the ashes spilled in collection, covering ten square feet of the sidewalk, corroborated his statement. It appeared from further questioning that the dirt-cart had also been around, and that Thompson-st. was on the books of the Street-Cleaning Department as "cleaned!" The driver of the ash-cart was also asked about it, and said he knew the street had been swept that morning, for he had helped to do it. "Do you call it a good job?" he was asked. He laughed, and said the frozen mud was troublesome. But the mud was no more than slightly caked, and could have been loosened by a kick, as experiment demonstrated.

The work in the upper part of Thompson-st., near Bleecker-st., belonging to another precinct, was better done. The men who had swept there were found around the corner in Bleecker-st., having swept that street from the Bowery to Carmine-st. There were three in this gang—two Irishmen and an Italian. One of the Irishmen was engaged in sprinkling the street with a large watering-pot. This was useful not only in the direction in which he explained its purpose—to keep down the dust on this busy street—but also in making the work of the broom more effective. The work was carefully done, and showed that satisfactory results might be obtained where the men understood or were instructed how to labor, and the streets were not neglected so long as to make the process of sweeping a mere smearing over of the mass of underlying dirt, collecting enough to make a heap, but not really cleaning the streets. Near the Bowery end of this street, which had been swept earlier in the day, there were some evidences of the truth of the complaint of the men that when the ground was caked with the cold it was difficult to clean it. There was nothing, however, that a stout hoe would not have removed. No carts were seen removing dirt from this street, and up to 4 o'clock in the afternoon, although there were several clear blocks just west of Broadway, the rest of the street remained untouched.

THE SYSTEM FOR REMOVING ASHES.

The removal of ashes is a distinct feature in street-cleaning. The supposition is that every householder shall have his ashes taken away once every day. Part of this work was formerly done at night, and the necessity of leaving out the barrels, boxes, iron ash-cans, tin pans, basins and other receptacles commonly used for the ashes, with the danger of having them stolen, was an annoyance to the people; and there were many difficulties in the way of doing the work thoroughly in the dark, when it was hard to see all the ashes awaiting removal, or to know how much was spilled in collecting. For about two weeks this work has been done in the day time, beginning at 7 o'clock and ending about 7 in the evening, except in case of delay from lack of scows, or from other reasons, when the men are expected to continue until they have completed their full number of loads. The drivers say that if their day's work is completed before their route has been covered they are expected to report that fact to the foreman of their precinct, in order that other men may be sent to finish the route during the same day. This, however, is not always done, and the barrels remain out all day, all night, and in some cases for several days, without being taken, while the daily accumulations of ashes, and often of garbage, are added to the barrels, already full to overflowing. A quantity then falls upon the sidewalk; or the Italian rag-pickers pull the contents about, and spill what would have remained in the barrel if left undisturbed. Unless the barrels are carefully watched, they are overturned and stolen, or are upset by malicious boys, the contents going into the gutter and on the sidewalk.

The testimony of the drivers on this point is that they are expected to remove not only what is in the barrels, but also what has been spilled; but they either do this carelessly, with a few rapid passes of the shovel, or not at all, leaving the spilled ashes for the dirt carts to remove together with the dirt. They can make up their loads faster by the barrelful than by the shovelful, and they hurry on. If the street happens to be swept after the ash-men have passed through, these ashes are taken up; but if the ashes are spilled after the dirt carts have been around, the ashes remain to disfigure the street during the indefinite time that must elapse before the next cleaning. The careful householders sweep the ashes off the sidewalks, but their more negligent neighbors take no pains to remove the unsightly patches. Diligent inquiry failed to discover that there were any instructions from the Department to the householders about putting out their ashes, more specific than to put them out at 7 in the morning, and leave them until called for. This the householders are often afraid to do, lest their receptacles be stolen, and they watch for the cart, bringing out their ashes on its arrival. The men who collect the ashes go out with the cart alone, or sometimes with a small boy to drive for them. The work is very hard, one man having to lift a heavy barrel full of ashes high enough to empty it into his cart, which is over six feet in height. He lifts the barrel first to the hub of the wheel, laboriously gets it up to the rim and then dumps it. If the barrel is very full he inevitably spills a quantity over his shoulder during the second part of the operation. If the receptacle is broken at the side or at the bottom, as it often is, a large part of the ashes drops down into the gutter. And if the cart is very full a part of the contents of the barrel is spilt over into the street. An ashman was observed at work in First-ave. above Fourteenth-st. He paid no attention to ashes that were spilled in the street, either by himself or by others. A small soap-box that had been full had been broken and two-thirds of its contents were spilled. The man turned into his cart what was left in the box and was about to pass on, when he was asked why he did not finish his work. "The dirt carts will get that," he answered; but in deference to a remonstrance he roughly took up what he could with a shovel, leaving much behind.

In the Bowery, near Broome-st. and below, there was a very large number of very full barrels on Wednesday, which the people said had not been attended to for several days. Seven barrels standing together were emptied by the driver of an ash cart aided by a stout Italian ragpicker, who found his account in the privilege of picking over the contents of the barrels when spread out on the top of the load. No attention was paid to a large bin that stood next them, and the reporter asked the reason of the neglect. "Are they your ashes?" asked the driver. "Well, I want them taken away," was the reply. "We have orders to empty no bins or large cases," said the driver, "they take too long, and are too heavy. But I will get that when I come back, and don't you use it again." The day after, the same man was found at the same place emptying the bin with a shovel. It was slow work, and justified his remonstrance against such receptacles. A little further down, a barrel that seemed to contain ashes proved, on being emptied, to contain the black refuse from a blacksmith's shop, which ought to be removed privately. The ashman, a policeman and the reporter, who had been initiated, exchanged smiles in recognition of this familiar trick. "What are your orders about taking up the ashes that are upset into the street?" was asked. "We have to remove them." "I counted fifteen piles of ashes this morning in Oliver-st. after the cart had been through." "Ah! them boys on Oliver-st. is awful. I used to have that route, and the boys broke my heart."

The only known remedy against the boys was applied by a tall officer of Governor Robinson's staff, recently. As he approached his house he saw an errand boy, who was light-hearted and musical, in the excess of his animal spirits kick over the ash-barrel in front of his house. The General increased the length of his pace to what military men call a "step-out," overtook the boy, collared him and marched him back to apologize, borrow a shovel and carefully replace the ashes in the barrel, while the officer stood over him, cane in hand. The boy said that was "enough barrels" for him.

As the reporter went through Oliver-st. Wednesday morning, he noticed that there was an unusual number of ash barrels out; so full that their contents were freely blown in all directions by the fresh, crisp early morning breeze. Many of them had been upset and refilled, and the street was littered from end to end. Four visits to the street that day proved that nothing was removed up to six o'clock; but by ten o'clock the following morning the ash cart had finished its rounds. No less than fifteen separate large piles of ashes were counted in this street after the removal. Most of them stood in the gutter, and dammed up the slops in which garbage floated near the scum-covered surface. On one of them lay a dead cat, very far gone, and only kept from being offensive by being frozen. The people in the street complained bitterly of the irregularity with which they were served, and of the slovenly manner in which the work was done.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STREET-CLEANING BUREAU.

Rule 733 of the Police Manual describes the institution of which Captain Williams is now the figure-head and executive officer, for he has not yet been clothed with the full powers of an Inspector of Street Cleaning. The rule says:

The Bureau of Street Cleaning—its affairs and operations—are subject in all respects to the supervision and control of the Board of Police, in the charge and under the management and direction of an officer appointed by the Board of Police known and designated as 'Inspector of Street Cleaning,' who is directly responsible to the Board of Police for the thorough performance of all the duties enjoined upon the Bureau, its other officers and employés, and for the proper conduct of its affairs and operations.

Another rule gives the Inspector of Street Cleaning the power of appointing and removing his subordinates, subject to the confirmation of the Board of Police. When there is no Inspector of Street Cleaning, the power of appointment or removal, or "the patronage of the office," as it is called, reverts to the Board of Police. When Inspector Gunner was supplanted by Captain Hedden, Captain Williams's predecessor, Captain Hedden was merely assigned to the duties of an Inspector of Street Cleaning, and was called acting inspector. He, therefore, had no power to appoint or remove, and the patronage rested in the Board of Police, while the chief direction was settled upon the chairman of the Committee on Street Cleaning, Commissioner MacLean, by the two following resolutions. The first of November 5 was offered by Commissioner MacLean himself, and reads thus:

Resolved, That the work of the Bureau of Street Cleaning be performed, and that the assignments and transfers of the officers and employés (other than clerical) herein be made under the direction of the Chairman of the Committee on Street Cleaning.

The minutes of the Board show that on December 5 the following resolution was adopted "on the recommendation of the Committee on Street Cleaning":

Resolved, That there be employed in the Bureau of Street Cleaning hereafter in each precinct on foreman (at the rate of $900 per annum) and one watchman (at the rate of $750 per annum), and that the duties of each foreman and watchman be assigned and performed under the direction of the chairman of the Committee on Street Cleaning.

On Tuesday, Captain Hedden's last day in the office of Inspector, before assuming charge of the Ninth Precinct, he said, not without some feeling: "Captain Williams can clean the streets of New-York; any man of energy can do it if his hands are not tied. The trouble is that the inspector, or acting inspector, under the present arrangement does not have the power that is provided for the full inspector under the rules of the department. He isn't given this because somebody wants to use the patronage of the bureau."

It was acknowledged that he was to step into Captain Hedden's scant shoes, and not into the full powers of the office, that led Captain Williams, in his interview with a TRIBUNE reporter on Monday, to lay so much stress on the importance of his having increased power over the subordinates if he were expected to meet the requirements of his position and to accomplish all that the citizens would expect of him. At the time some of the Police Commissioners were opposed to giving Captain Williams the power of appointment and removal. Commissioners Wheeler and French have said that they favored giving Captain Williams the power to dismiss, to assign and to transfer the employés of his department.

Deputy-Inspector George W. Plunkett is the first officer responsible to Captain Williams. He has had, practically, the entire direction of the out-door work, and has been, therefore, the busiest man in the Bureau. It has been his business to know night and morning the condition of the streets and the dumps; the number and division of the forces employed; the place where every scow lies; to lay out the work of cleaning and dumping to organize the tows of scows to the lower bay, and to oversee their departure. He has a horse and buggy at his disposal, and keeps the horse provided with a ravenous appetite for oats. One hour he is at a dump on the East River, and the next three miles away at a dump on the North River.

In conversation on Wednesday Mr. Plunkett said:

"The weak spot in the street-cleaning system is the manner of disposing of the refuse and the lack of facilities for transporting it to the Lower Bay. I can clean the streets of New-York and remove the dumpings, ashes and refuse to the dumps, within sixty hours. But what am I going to do with the dirt after it reaches the dumps? In the first place I am at the mercy of the wind, the storms and the tide. We can't send a tow to sea unless the heavens and the water favor us. Any system of street-cleaning that depends on these variable conditions must be defective. As I said, I can clean the streets in sixty hours, but I don't believe that any system of cleaning can be drawn up on paper that will not break down inside of twenty-four hours. But if we were not at the mercy of the wind and tide, we would still be crippled for the want of scows. The department owns twenty-two scows. Thirty more ought to be built at once. Business is so brisk in the harbor that it is almost impossible to hire scows. The only two tugs belonging to us are condemned, and will be sold at auction on Friday. We hire three daily, at a cost of $40 to $60 each."

The superintendent of the street-cleaning stables at the foot of Seventeenth-st., East River, Michael McNamara. Two of his clerks, John B. Green, have offices in the Central Office. There are 24 foremen of precincts, among whom are divided the 444 employes and the 365 carts, horses and drivers usually employed. These are sample divisions of precinct forces: The Tenth Precinct, about Hester and Ludlow-sts., known in the slang of the bureau as "the Jerusalem District," has a foreman, 2 watchmen, 22 laborers, 15 ash-carts and 4 dirt carts. The Fourteenth Precinct, between Broadway and the Bowery and below Houston-st., has a foreman, 2 watchmen, 23 laborers, 15 ash carts and 4 dirt carts. The Sixteenth Precinct, between Fourteenth and Twenty-seventh-sts. and Seventh-ave. and North River, known as "the Wheelbarrow District," has 1 foreman, 1 watchman, 19 laborers, 13 ash carts and 2 dirt carts. The Twenty-ninth Precinct, the "Centre Island District," has 1 foreman, 2 watchmen, 22 laborers, 17 ash carts and 4 dirt carts. Broadway, Fifth-ave. and the Bowery, which includes Fourth-ave., are swept by a separate force of 1 foreman, 24 laborers, 3 sweeping machines, 1 water cart and 8 dirt carts.

A special contractor removes all dead animals to Barren Island, where there is a rendering factory. With these the Street-Cleaning Bureau has nothing to do.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS AT WORK.

THE STREETS TO BE CLEANED IN LONDON STYLE—WORK ON BROADWAY LAST NIGHT.

There was unusual commotion about the Street-Cleaning Bureau at Police Headquarters last night. Captain Williams, Inspector Plunkett and several other "notables" of the department were in consultation, and a new plan of cleaning the streets was under discussion. "London style," said Mr. Plunkett, as he jumped into his buggy when the meeting was over. "We propose to clean the streets when they are muddy. I tried it once and it was a success. We will try it again, beginning to-night." It was learned from Captain Williams that it had been decided to make an extraordinary effort, to see what could be done under a high pressure system of removing the dirt. At 11 o'clock last night 140 carts and 160 sweepers were set to work to clean Broadway from the Battery to Thirty-second-st. They worked all night, the carts following immediately upon the gangs of sweepers and receiving the dirt. To-day the entire force of the department will turn out and the work of sweeping the entire lower part of the city from the Battery to Canal-st. will be undertaken. The necessary scows lie ready to receive their loads, and preparations for the work have been completed. Captain Williams and Mr. Plunkett will have charge of the men, dividing the district to be swept between them. The experiment is being watched with interest, as it has heretofore been held to be a waste of time to sweep the streets when muddy, in "soft" weather.

MR. SALA'S LECTURE.

WHAT HE HAS SEEN IN FORTY YEARS.

HISTORICAL SCENES AND GORGEOUS PAGEANTS—FROM VICTORIA'S CORONATION TO THE FUNERAL OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL.

George Augustus Sala, the English journalist, delivered a lecture at Chickering Hall last evening, before a large and highly appreciative audience, on the sights he has seen. Beginning with the coronation of Queen Victoria, the attendant pageantry of which he witnessed while still a child, he spoke in the course of his lecture of the second funeral of Napoleon the First, of the funeral of Prince Albert, the marriage of the Prince of Wales and of his brother the Duke of Connaught, the Paris Exposition of 1867, and the funeral of the Prince Imperial.

SOME OF THE SIGHTS.

This discourse, as lecture I can scarcely call it, said Mr. Sala, is upon the shows that I have seen during the last forty years. I will not say that I was so precocious as to be special correspondent of a daily newspaper when I was in short clothes; in fact, the paper with which I have been connected for twenty-two years did not exist when I saw my first show. But I apprehend that I had some amount of colloidium in my eye, and Providence may have gifted me with a sufficiently retentive memory to garner within myself the impressions of the pageants and shows which I have seen. I hold that there is nothing like a show. It speaks the universal language we all understand; and, though we affect at times to be permeated with other ideas and interested in literary or scientific culture, give us a good show and we are more delighted with it than with all the isms and ologies which science has given us.

It has been my lot, in many countries and during many years, to see some famous shows, as "the shows that I have seen" must serve as my text to-night. I go back so long ago as the year 1838, when I was a small boy arrayed in the preposterous garb known at that time as a skeleton suit. The news came, one hot July day in 1837, that William the Fourth was dead. He was not so bad a king, as kings went, and conducted himself, in fact, as well as one could expect "from a king with a head like a pineapple." He died, and was succeeded by Victoria Alexandria, daughter of Edward Duke of Kent. Forthwith the Nation went mad with joy. They were loyally sorry for the death of the monarch, nevertheless they were exultant that a young Queen had ascended the throne. They were sick and tired of a succession of mad, bad kings, and they rejoiced that the throne was to be filled by a princess instead of by another of the worthless sons of George the Third, and christened her "the bonny English rose."

THE QUEEN'S CORONATION.

At the Queen's coronation I was privileged, as a small boy, to occupy several inches of entire space in a booth in Parliament-st., and to see the royal procession pass by. At this lapse of time I honestly confess that two features only of that wonderful pageant dwell in my mind. I could see, in the first place, the horses. One don't easily forget a horse. First there came the private stud of Her Majesty. Splendid Arabian horses, prancing, maned, and exciting the people's surprise by their wonderful horses, then the great train horses that drew the Mayor's coach, the large black chargers of the Life Guards, the stud of eight cream or coffee-colored Hanoverian horses which drew the great gilded ark in which Her Majesty sat, a pale, trembling, brown-haired girl, the proud ribbon of the Garter crossing her fair, sunny shoulders. This was Victoria, the Queen. I can see her now, on the barrier line between smiles and tears, the lily battling with the rose on that young cheek and struggling for supremacy. Oddly enough that fair young girl still swells in our minds as young, as fair as ever she was. By a curious idiosyncracy the people of England, without any suggestion from any quarter, without any authority or implied wish on the