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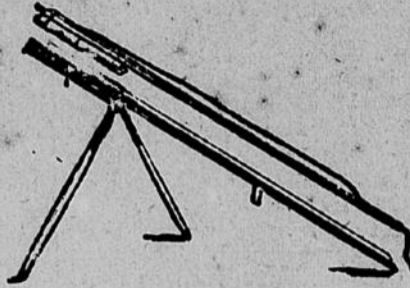
WHICH MEANS THE GOVERNMENT LIFE SAVING SERVICE.

Gratifying Report for the Last Year—How a Line is Sent to a Sinking Ship—Bringing a Passenger Ashore in the Breeches Buoy.

Those who can read meanings that underlie dry statistics must have been gratified at the report of the United States life saving service the past season. It was a stormy year. Terrible winds, mighty waves and freezing cold played havoc with those who follow the seas.

The report shows many wrecks. The lives of nearly 3,000 persons were endangered in consequence. Yet, out of all those thus imperiled, less than 100 really lost their lives. The life saving coastmen are heroes.

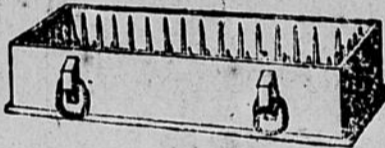
One of the most attractive points of interest in Washington is the headquarters of the chief of the life saving service. In his rooms are models of all the appliances used by the rescuers.



ROCKET AND STAND.

A very important place in the work is filled by the rocket, so called. Observe in the picture the long tube, with rope attached. Just beneath it is the stand from which it is shot. Now fancy to yourselves a ship going to pieces 300 yards from shore. The rocket, with line attached, is shot towards the ship. The aim is always to shoot it over the ship, if possible. Then it will fall upon the opposite side, and the rope will be held in the rigging. It can then be hauled down by the sailors and made fast to the ship.

This first rope is only a slender and light one; another and much heavier one is made fast to its shore end. The slight rope once fast to the ship, by means of it the heavy one can be drawn through the surf and made tight and secure. Then, by means of the heavy cable, the crew can be taken ashore in safety. There was formerly much trouble and delay occasioned by the tangling of the line as it was shot into the air with the rocket. That difficulty has been obviated by a device which appears in the illustration of the rocket line box.



ROCKET LINE BOX.

In the upper portion of the picture is seen the box, with the points of the pegs around which the line is wound. The line is simply carried in and out about these pegs, which are sharpened at the point and reach nearly to the top of the box. In the lower part of the illustration the bottom of the box appears. A diagram of the inside is shown, as it appears looking down into the box. The line passing around the pegs is seen.

When it is possible, the life saving crew row out to a wreck in a self righting boat, specially fitted for shooting the breakers, and bring away men in that way. None but strong, able bodied and skillful men can be trusted for this service. Even then the rescuers themselves occasionally lose their lives. A heartrending instance of this kind it was that happened on Lake Erie a few weeks ago. A crew of heroes, every one of them, were actually lured to their death. They saw a schooner out in the lake suddenly hoist the distress signal. A terrific storm was raging, such that it looked like death to go out in the boat. But the life saving crew did not hesitate a second. They rigged their boat and plowed through the awful waters to the schooner. When near her she suddenly took down the distress signal and sailed away. It was only a dodge on the part of the schooner people to get a tug to steam out and take them in tow. Their lives and their vessel were in no danger at all. Seeing they had been deceived, the six heroes attempted to row back again. Only half of them live to-day. The boat capsized, and three were lost. One of them was the captain of the crew.

It has been found that the five great lakes are more dangerous than the Atlantic ocean. The storms that sweep across them are terrific. They cause more loss of life and shipwreck year in and year out than storms on the ocean do. Lake Erie is the worst. Storms from whatever direction wind up by sweeping across it and down the St. Lawrence valley.

The breeches buoy, shown in the last illustration, is one of the most useful of the life saving devices. Suppose the rocket line is safely lodged upon a ship. A slide is passed back and forth upon the heavy cable which has next been made fast between the shore and the ship. To this slide is attached the breeches buoy. It is an india rubber device, capable of carrying one passenger. The passenger stands in it, his legs go down through holes fitted for them. Hence the name. The buoy comes well up around the arms and shoulders. Planted inside of this the shipwrecked person is drawn with the slide attached to the cable overhead swiftly and surely to shore.

American life saving appliances are probably the best perfected of those of any nation. There is a rubber life saving dress, of the pattern of that in which Paul Boyton floated down the Mississippi and other rivers. Cork life belts are also used to lessen the danger of drowning. For passengers the most conveniently be brought ashore in the breeches buoy there is the life car, which slides back and forth upon the cable in the same manner. The life saving service was first established by government in 1845.

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