

## THE AMERICAN SWIMMING APPARATUS.

An exhibition took place last week in Cork Harbour which was viewed with great interest by thousands of spectators. This was the performance of Captain Paul Boyton with the American swimming apparatus of Mr. Merriman. He came over from New York in the steamer Queen, of the National line. There is a corps of "Life Guards," in which he is a captain, furnished with the apparatus to save persons in danger of drowning, at the bathing-places on the Atlantic coast of America.

The apparatus is a complete body-costume, manufactured chiefly of indiarubber, in two pieces, which are united at the waist. The pantaloons include covering for the feet, with strong soles, drawn on over the wearer's ordinary dress, usually of blue flannel, and kept in position by strong suspenders passed over the shoulders and buckled to the insides of the waist. The waist is fitted with a steel ridged hoop, which is a protection to the wearer's person and furnishes a watertight joint to the upper portion of the dress, which is drawn down to meet it. This upper garment is a jacket and headpiece with gloves for the hands all in one piece. At the waist its elastic material is strained tightly over the hoop of the pantaloons, so as to exclude the water and keep in the air, and its adjustment is preserved by another belt or strap buckled over the joining. It hangs loosely all over the person, except at the hands and feet, but in a few minutes, by blowing through the five tubes attached to the outside of its different parts, air is introduced into the chambers, which lie between the outer and inner skin of the costume. The head-piece fills at the back and draws the casque tightly over the face till the edges of the orifice in front press closely against the cheeks, forehead, and chin, leaving the countenance exposed. The body and legs are made perfectly buoyant and defended by elastic cushions and air-filled chambers from external violence. Small pockets are distributed over the outside of the dress, into which are pushed such small articles

as the wearer may wish to have read to hand. If any portion of it become detached, such as the sole from one of the feet, though the water would then enter all over the body, the apertures would still be full of air where it remained intact, and its floating power only slightly diminished. It is capable of sustaining in the water a weight of 300 lb., in addition to the weight of the wearer. The latter can preserve any position in the water he pleases, erect or horizontal; and when erect the waist belt is the water-line, so that he has a clear look-out over the sea. He carries a store of provisions, capable of supplying him for ten days, in a water-tight bag, being towed after him by a strong line across his back. Besides his day's supply of food, this bag contains a number of signal lights, which can be held high over the water, round a small lamp with bull's-eye, which, being lighted, he can affix to his head-piece, and so protect himself from being run down by any craft. He can also store a few books in his little store-room, with which to beguile the time at sea. He also provides himself with a long sheath-knife and an axe. His means of propulsion is a double-bladed panel of wood; and under favourable circumstances, he makes a very fair speed. He can also call the wind to his aid by rigging a small sail to his paddle. Should he be in distress from want of food or having met with any accident, he can signify the fact by hoisting the stars and stripes on his paddle and reversing the jack.

Captain Boyton was dropped from the Citizen steam-boat below Queenstown, and floated up to Haulbowline with the tide, remaining two hours in the water. He ate and drank, and fired rockets, as shown in our Illustration. His clothes, within the indiarubber suit, were kept perfectly dry, and he was not exhausted by the labour of paddling. On his arrival, a week before, in the steam-ship from New York, he landed by means of this contrivance, during a heavy gale. The invention is considered a great success.

[Taken from *Illustrated London News*, Vol. 65, 1874, p.439]