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121 Devonshire Street, BOSTON, Mass., U.S.A. DECISIONS IN COMMERCIAL LAW.

JOHNSTON V. CONSUMERS GAS Co. TORONTO.—Ferguson, J., gave judgment for the plaintiffs upon a special case in an action brought by J. T. Johnston and the Toronto Type Foundry Co. (on their own behalf, as well as on behalf of all other consumers of gas furnished by defendants in the City of Toronto), on the ground of non-compliance, by the defendants, with the terms of "an Act to extend the powers of the Consumers Gas Company of Toronto," 50 Vict., ch. 85 (O.), for an account, repayment of moneys alleged to have been overpaid to the defendants, an injunction, mandamus, and other relief. The plaintiffs alleged that the defendants, by their method of dealing, had violated the provisions of the Act, and used the moneys received by way of premium on the sale of their stock, and also their profits, in a manner not authorized by the Act, and thereby had lost large amounts which should have been applied towards the reduction of the price of gas furnished to plaintiffs and other consumers, and had improperly, and by ultra vires acts, deducted from their profits large sums of money for depreciation in plant. The defendants questioned the stat us of the plaintiffs to bring the action and denied that they had violated the terms of the Act. The judgment of Ferguson, J., directed a reference to Edward Morgan, one of the junior judges of the County Court of York, to take an account (a) of all moneys received by the defendants from all sources from 23rd April, 1887, until judgment; (b) of all moneys disbursed by defendants in their business, and in the purchase of buildings and plant (1) from and out of their paid-up capital, (2) from and out of the reserve fund, (3) from and out of plant and buildings renewal fund, (4) from and out of all other moneys, including moneys received from premiums on sale of stock from 23rd April, 1887; (c) an account of the actual profits made by defendants in their business each year since 23rd April, 1887; (d) an account of the amount standing to the credit of the contingent account on 1st October, 1886; and several other accounts of a like nature. The Consumers Gas Co. appealed to the Court of Appeal, contending that plaintiffs either on their own behalf, or on behalf of other consumers, had no cause of action; either the Attorney-General or corporation of City of Toronto should bring the action; also, that provisions of the statute respecting formation of and dealing with a reserve fund are merely permissive, and not compulsory; that it is competent for defendants to invest the reserve fund in their own business, and supported the appeal on other grounds. The Court unanimously held the view that the plaintiff had no locus standi himself, and could not maintain the action on behalf of the other consumers. The plaintiff having accepted a reduction on account of having accepted a reduction on account of over-payments in previous years, was not en-titled to bring an action for an account for the purpose of obtaining further relief in respect of over-payments.

CONTRIBUTORY NEGLIGENCE.

A Wisconsin appeal court has given a decision which is of interest to railway employees and railway companies. It was rendered in the case of the Terre Haute and I.R. Company vs. Mansberger, and the conclusion reached is that where a brakeman is injured by the breaking of a defective coupling-pin, the fact that he was at the time on top of the car, instead of on the ground beside the car, as the rules of the railroad company required, does not constitute contributory negligence, since his improper position was not the proximate cause of the injury. In this matter the decision in Phillips vs. Railway Co., 25 N. W., 544, 64 Wis., 475, was followed.

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