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WATER RENT CHARGES IN DIFFERENT CITIES.

The want of an equitable basis on which to levy water rent is strikingly apparent in the various modes of charging the consumer for his supplies, in different places. All the plans that have been hit upon are more or less arbitrary, as perhaps they must necessarily be till some satisfactory means of checking consumption by actual measurement is found. But here, as elsewhere, there are degrees of arbitrary dealing, which may teach us what to shun and what to accept.

In the city of Quebec, the water rate is ten per cent. on the rental. The houses are properly assessed on their rental, not their capital value; and upon the assessors' returns the Water Department bases its figures, the water works being the property of the corporation. The water rate is payable only twice a year; and the proprietor is responsible for water and other assessments on houses, payable by tenants. The effect of this rule is to make proprietors collectors of the taxes and the water rate on rented houses as a means of protecting themselves; they indemnify themselves in the charge they make to the tenant under the general head of rent.

In Montreal, also, the water rent is based on the rental; the amount being 10½ per cent. on the first \$100 and 7½ on dwelling houses rented for every subsequent \$100. On shops it is 6 per cent. on the first \$100, and 4 per cent. on every subsequent \$100; \$4 extra is charged for a water closet. In that city the water works are owned by the corporation, and landlords are not responsible for the water rates of their tenants. A very large amount, which it is impossible to collect, is annually lost.

The Kingston water works are owned by a private corporation. The scale of charges bears more proportion to the rent than to the size of the family, a mode of charging which has not strict equity to recommend it. Taxes payable to the State might fairly be levied on this principle, on the

ground that the expenditure of a man who lives in a house of a given annual value may fairly be reckoned to average a figure which it is possible to assume; and that if it is not actually as much it ought to be, at least the tax-gatherer may be allowed to assume this to be the case. Extra charge for baths and closets are made. A house that rents at \$160 pays about \$18 or \$20 a year water rent.

The water rate in Ottawa is peculiarly arbitrary, the value of the building, not its rental, being the principal basis on which it is levied. A house valued at \$500 pays \$8 per annum, and for every additional \$500, or fractional part thereof, \$2 is payable. This is a discrimination against the poor, and is difficult of justification. The number of a family is not taken into account, till eight have been counted; after that number there is an additional charge of \$1 for each person. Water closets in private houses pay \$4, and in hotels \$10. Vacant lots are charged in the same way, at a lower figure, a charge perhaps the most arbitrary of all. For livery stables, horses, cows, pigs, steam boilers, market-stalls, etc., there are special charges. Breweries, distilleries, tanneries pay from \$50 to \$200 a year; figures which cannot be complained of as high if the establishments be large. A singular discrimination is made in favor of "churches, colleges, schools, nunneries, hospitals, orphan asylums, or other religious or charitable institutions;" a reduction from the ordinary rates, in their case, being made. This discrimination is a sort of supplement to the statutory exemptions. The Ottawa tariff is arbitrary to a degree greater than most, perhaps any of the others.

Complaint has recently been made of the charge of \$4 per annum for a kitchen tap, in St. Catharines, though we fancy this is the lowest charge in the Dominion.

In Toronto the proper mode of charging is not yet considered settled, though it is proper to say that it is intended, in a rough way, to be proportioned to the consumption, if it does not always attain that object. The number of members in a family is certainly a fairer basis than rent or capital value of dwelling. Closets and baths imply specific consumption, of which some estimate can be made. These and similar tests of probable consumption are much fairer than those arbitrary rates which have no direct reference to consumption, and they form the best guides to equitable charges in the absence of that indispensable instrument, a correct and reliable water metre.

Though hundreds of attempts have been made, admittedly with very little success,

to discover an accurate means of measuring the quantity of water served to each building, it will be strange if science should not in the end, overcome the difficulty. But, until we can arrive at something like certainty, the best guides to probable consumption must be followed. These are at best very imperfect, and can only be relied on to strike a general average. Exceptional cases will be constantly arising through the carelessness of individuals. The item of waste, from which nobody derives any benefit, swells the cost of supply, and must considerably increase the rate which consumers are required to pay. Those who fancy they can allow five hundred gallons of water to run away, when the only object of settling it a-flowing was to wash a wine glass, without extra cost to themselves, do but practise self-deception. The effect of their carelessness is to raise the general rate to water consumers; a penalty from which, though it falls on them in an inadequate degree, they cannot altogether escape. To the prevention of wanton waste every water taker should consider it his duty to contribute.

High rates for water are, we think, a mistake. Profit is to be expected from a large number of customers who pay a reasonable rate, not from a comparative few who pay a high rate. Penny postage, the cheap papers of Paris, New York, and London, may all be cited in proof of the correctness of this theory. Where the taking of water is voluntary the price should be low, as a temptation to the mass of the citizens to take it; and if the taking of it be made compulsory, there are still stronger reasons for making the charge low, for then the poorest class has to buy what they have hitherto obtained for nothing. That the taking of water obtained at the general expense of the municipality, might reasonably be made compulsory, we cannot doubt. As a sanitary measure it is of the utmost importance that the mass of the citizens should have the use of good water, and in the interest of individuals it is not less essential. But where compulsion is used it should be as gentle and as far removed from oppression as the circumstances will permit.

PHOSPHATE OF LIME.

SECOND ARTICLE.

The geological situation of our deposits of apatite, appear, to be inseparably connected with certain readily recognizable crystalline schists in the Laurentian rocks, of which pyroxene, hornblende and their allied minerals form the chief portions. These have been traced long distances, and it is asserted