

May 24, 1917.

of the pumping station by the water commissioners, who waited on him in a body, to inform the Board of Health man that they were running that waterworks; that the water supply suited them; and, State Board of Health or no State Board of Health, he could not install the treatment plant, and the only thing he could do was to get out, which, having no authority under the law, he did.

The second instance is that of a waterworks superintendent of a small municipality which was required by the State Health Department to install a treatment plant. Upon the arrival of the representative of the company furnishing the purification apparatus, the superintendent roundly abused the State Board of Health officials, ridiculed the necessity of treatment, in spite of the prevailing epidemic, and informed the representative that he was not going to permit the State Board of Health to install any more contraptions that would mean more work for him; and that although he would treat the water while the State Board of Health man was around, he would pay absolutely no attention to the equipment at other times. Subsequent experience has indicated only too well that he carried out this threat.

Such attitudes on the part of non-technical waterworks men are only too familiar to those whose work has as its foundation the improvement of water supplies in general, and it can be combatted only by a most aggressive educational campaign which properly should be supervised by this association.

Contrast with this attitude that of the progressive private water company or the water department conducted by a technical man, or by individuals who realize the vital importance of their work. The large, progressive water companies or departments take every possible means at all times to improve their water supplies; to raise the standards by which they are appraised; and, by which the consumers are influenced. Such water companies, by taking the consumers frankly into their confidence, place themselves on such a firm foundation as to be able to withstand whatever adverse criticism may be directed against them.

The experience of the Indianapolis Water Company, of Indianapolis, Ind., which has taken its patrons into its confidence in regard to the treatment of its water supply and has established a reputation in Indiana of furnishing absolutely safe water under all conditions, is worthy of note. This confidence has carried the water company without criticism through two severe epidemics and has been invaluable in the matter of dollars and cents as well as good-will. A similar attitude on the part of other companies has had a comparable result.

Is it not incumbent upon this organization to endeavor to create a similar attitude on the part of every water vendor?

The water standard set by the consumer is for the most part one of appearance. If a water is not turbid or colored, he is usually satisfied. Unless his immediate family has been vitally touched by the effects of an impure water supply, he is not solicitous about the quality of the supply. This matter was discussed at length in Mr. Johnson's paper, "The Typhoid Toll," presented before the last annual convention of this association and was amplified in the printed discussion of that paper.

The consumer is, however, inextricably connected with the establishment of higher standards for a water supply. To obtain better water supplies, money is needed and a considerable quantity of it. A water company cannot improve its supply without incurring expense, which should bring return in the shape of increased rates,

and increased rates can only be obtained with the partial consent at least of the consumer. Similarly, municipal supplies, if improved, increase the tax rate, and here again the consumer is the court of last resort.

The complacent and erroneous impressions that many water consumers have in reference to their supplies must be eliminated by careful, painstaking publicity and education. In discussing water supplies of various communities with non-technical men and water consumers, one is frequently advised that the water supply is the purest in the country; that it is 99 9/10 per cent. pure; or, that it is well water that never sees the light of day and is absolutely safe. The individual cannot be blamed for resting secure in these assertions, for he does not know better.

Most of those present at this meeting, in going into a strange city or town do not drink the water furnished until the nature of the supply has been ascertained. Many of us abstain from drinking water when on road trips, even in territories where other liquid refreshments are not easily obtained, simply because we appreciate the pollution that a water may carry and the danger that may lurk in a tumblerful. The average consumer, however, seldom gives this matter a thought, because his training has not taught him to do so.

Should this association be instrumental in making the water consumer stop before he draws a tumblerful of water and inquire as to the purity of that supply before he drinks the water, it would have a tremendous effect on the improvement of water supplies.

A more complete and masterful presentation of the value of pure water than that contained in Mr. Johnson's paper, "The Typhoid Toll," was probably never presented before any association. In it, Mr. Johnson, in his admirable manner, tells us that more people are killed every year by typhoid fever than by railroads. The water consumer will stop and look before he crosses a railroad track; we must make him stop and think before he drinks a glass of water. Mr. Johnson has shown us that a pure water supply is a good dollars and cents business proposition—why not treat it as such? Why not pattern our conduct as a waterworks association after that of a successful business organization? Are we not all of us, waterworks superintendents, engineers, chemists, bacteriologists, manufacturers, or what not, offering our services and our product—water—to our final customer—the consumer? Being honorable men, we want to give him the best that he will pay for, and he will only pay for the best when he is educated to its need. With the consumer educated, and demanding the best in water supplies, there will be no further danger from the non-technical, disinterested, or slovenly waterworks vendor, for he will not be permitted to do business.

Looking at this matter, then, as a business proposition, seeking to find a market for a water supply of higher standards than most of those at present furnished, should it not be approached in the same manner as any successful business campaign? Given a good product for which there is a market, the success of any business depends on bringing that product to the attention of those using it, and that can only be done by advertising and publicity.

Why not have this association act as an advertising or publicity medium to obtain higher standards on the part of the technical and non-technical waterworks man and also the consumer? Begin with the consumer—advertise to him the value of better water so that he will demand the best, and be willing to pay for it. Then he will get it.