

ELECTRIC LIGHTING BY CITIES

Progress of the Movement for Municipal Ownership.

FACTS AND FIGURES OF EXPERIENCE

An Interesting Discussion of a Live Topic by Victor Rosewater Reprinted from the New York Independent.

The current issue of the New York Independent among other features presents a paper on "Municipal Ownership of Electric Lighting," written by Victor Rosewater of The Bee, giving some results of a study begun many years ago. The article follows: It is now more than twelve years since the Independent published my first article on the subject of municipal ownership of electric lighting. That contribution reviewed the statistics presented in an official report to the common council of Scranton, Pa., drawing from them such forcible arguments in favor of municipal control that it was reprinted widely in the daily papers and precipitated a heated controversy with the champions of private lighting corporations that for a time verged on abusive personalities.

Ten years ago many ardent advocates of municipal ownership were firmly convinced that an irrevocable movement had been started, that was surely and swiftly to wipe out all private electric lighting plants supplying American cities with street illumination and make way for a service owned and operated by each municipality. They thought this the most promising part of a larger movement for the early municipalization of all the franchised corporations depending upon special concessions. How have these expectations been met? What forces have operated to promote or retard the progress of municipal ownership? What results have been produced by the experiments undertaken?

What the Figures Show. Some answer to these questions can now be gathered from the compilation of municipal statistics recently completed by the Department of Labor under the direction of Commissioner Carroll D. Wright, and made public in the monthly Bulletin for September, 1902. This report, the third of an annual series, the value of which to the student of municipal affairs can scarcely be overestimated, covers all the cities in the United States having a population over 50,000 by the census of 1900, which disclosed exactly 135 cities of that class. The period covered in the inquiry is the fiscal year of 1901-2, so that for the purposes of comparison the figures are as nearly satisfactory as could be had.

Table with columns: CITY, Total number of lamps, Total number of arc lamps, Total number of incandescent lamps, Total number of street lamps, Total number of public lamps, Total number of private lamps, Total number of gas lamps, Total number of electric lamps, Total number of gas and electric lamps, Total number of gas and electric street lamps, Total number of gas and electric public lamps, Total number of gas and electric street and public lamps, Total number of gas and electric street and public lamps.

† Not reported. † Built 1887. † Built 1894.

The first question that suggests itself is, is it fair to confine an inquiry of this nature to cities of 50,000 inhabitants? I believe that for general deductions we can hardly afford to take smaller towns into consideration. While hundreds of successful municipal lighting undertakings may be found in all parts of the country outside of these thirteen cities, local conditions affect them more than in larger places. The value of the land occupied by the lighting, the area lighted, the schedule of hours, the smaller salaries and wages and, above all, the direct supervision of the taxpayers themselves—all make for better results from electric lighting plants installed on a small scale for town or village purposes.

If municipal ownership is a practical problem of municipal government, it must relate to communities of urban pretensions, organized on lines of a large business corporation and manned by officers compelled to shoulder responsibility for the public affairs.

Some Points to Be Emphasized. Before discussing the causes that have led up to the present situation, let me emphasize the following points.

First—Only two of the thirteen cities under consideration purchased the property of existing lighting companies, the others building their own plants.

Second—While the original investment is not particularly large, the capital outlay for the year is a considerable item.

Third—The expense of maintenance and operating is in all cases decidedly moderate without outward indications of extravagance or jobbery.

Fourth—Most of these cities rely on their own electric lighting plants for their entire street illumination, spending little in addition for street lamps, and that for gas and oil.

Fifth—Only four of the thirteen cities return an income from sales of electric light to private consumers.

Sixth—Commissioner Wright carefully abstains from venturing on average cost statistics or reducing expenditures to a per lamp basis.

By reference to other exhibits in the same bulletin we find that of the 135 American cities of over 50,000 population, 95 own their own water works plants, while 36 are served by private corporations, 6 own their own gas works, while 136 depend on private corporations. Of the thirteen cities owning their own electric lighting plants, three—namely, St. Joseph, Little Rock and Topeka—are still supplied with water by private corporations, while only Wheeling owns water works, gas works and electric lighting plant.

This exhibit, while it must be in measure disappointing to sincere advocates of municipal ownership, seems to me to indicate that at the start too much stress was laid on the financial saving to be effected by the municipal undertaking and too little account taken of the powerful forces to be overcome before the private franchised corporations could be uprooted.

First Disparity of Cost Reduced. The disparity in cost, comparing public and private ownership, so striking and even startling in the early days, has to a great extent been bridged. This disparity existed not only as to electric lighting by public and private plants, but also as to lighting in different cities under different private services. That the charges exacted through the contract system were in many cases exorbitant and extortionate will now be admitted by the electric light-

ing men themselves; yet, on the other hand, the service was sometimes supplied at rates far below the actual cost of production as a consideration for the franchise or to keep out competition in the field of commercial lighting. To secure an unobstructed license to exploit the commercial business, the street illumination was furnished as a by-product without reference to market value. At the same time it was discovered that the cost statistics of public plants were for the most part worthless, because of inadequate accounting, neglect to figure interest on investment, wear and tear, and general depreciation, and also useless for comparative purposes, owing to the utter lack of uniform methods of municipal bookkeeping. The constant improvements and new inventions in the field of electricity, on one side cheapening the processes used, and on the other, successively forcing the installation of new in place of antiquated machinery, tended both to bring more reasonable and more uniform charges for street lighting contracts and to require greater initial capital investment for an up-to-date municipal plant equipped with modern machinery.

Depends on Commercial Business. Realizing the conditions before them, the private corporations interested in profitable electric lighting franchises in our cities have not been constantly active to obstruct all efforts in the direction of municipalization. Making common cause with the correlated corporations, they have lost no opportunity to block legislation designed to authorize or facilitate municipal undertakings. The success of the private electric lighting concern depends upon the juncture of commercial and street service, yet few cities operating their own plants have been allowed to sell to private consumers. The Department of Labor inquiry developed the fact that only four of the thirteen cities enumerated received any revenue whatever from the electric lighting installations, only two of them doing business on a commercial basis. But these two examples offer the most convincing proof of the economy of municipal ownership.

The city of Tacoma is credited with receipts from sales of electric light aggregating \$50,485 for the year. Its expenses of maintenance for the same period were \$59,251, so that the city secured all its 335 street lamps without cash outlay and had besides a surplus of nearly \$10,000 to offset the interest on its investment and the depreciation of its plant.

The plant of Taunton took in a yearly revenue amounting to \$29,747 paid for commercial lights, while its expenses of maintenance were \$29,247, leaving a difference of \$500 as an offset against interest charges to be balanced against the 247 arc lamps used for street illumination.

Obstructions in the Way.

If tampering with enabling legislation constituted the only obstacle set up by the privileged corporate powers, the movement for municipal enfranchisement would proceed at a quicker pace. The corporation influence is more or less potent with the authorities in every city in the United States. One strategical device is for the companies to make small concessions in charges for contracts covering a period of years with steadily increasing

ing numbers of lamps, and then before the expiration of their agreements cleverly to take time by the forelock to have the contracts stealthily renewed, without affording any opening for municipal ownership agitation to become effective. Another thing that has retarded progress along these lines is the apparently unquestionable demand for enlarged municipal activities in every direction. The pressure of constantly increasing requirements in the exercise of long-conceded functions—pavements, parks and parkways, charitable institutions, public schools, libraries, fire and police departments—has forced a choice between demands of relative urgency and importance. Cities, like individuals and corporations, have debt limits they cannot safely overstep, and it has often become a question whether better pavements and improved streets should take precedence of city water works or municipal electric lighting.

Perhaps, after all, municipal ownership has been making as great headway as conditions have warranted, although not as great as was expected. The steady course of consolidation by purchase or by community of interest plans, by which the control of these franchised corporations in each city is being gradually concentrated, makes the problem of protecting the public against exorbitant exactions and insuring to the community the financial returns to which it is entitled all the more pressing. Every growing American city will have to face this problem during the next few decades. Municipal ownership is still the only satisfactory solution.

SAYS ANYONE CAN BE HAPPY

French Scientists Say It is an Art Which Can Be Acquired if We Know How.

(Copyright, 1903, by Press Publishing Co.) PARIS, Jan. 10.—(New York World Cablegram—Special Telegram.)—Dr. Paul Valentine, leading specialist in nervous diseases, will visit America soon to lecture on psychological science. At present he is giving a series of lectures in Paris on the psychology of the modern woman from the normal and the pathologic point of view. He was the manager of the Revue de Psychologie Clinique et Therapeutique for five years and is the author of numerous scientific, philosophic and critical essays. Dr. Valentine says: "Definite knowledge of the female organism and brain allow us to assert that the evolution of the woman of today tends toward the more perfect utilizing of the marvelous resources with which nature has endowed her. The most recent developments of psychological science enable me to arrive at the practical conclusion that happiness is an art in which all could be past masters if we understood the elements of our very door and knew how to adapt them to our special abilities and varying exigencies of our environment." Mrs. Valentine is widely known in Paris society, and her receptions are popular. She writes under the pseudonym of "Genevieve Lamy." She will accompany her husband to the United States.

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SMART SET HAS A GAY LARK

Story of a Christmas Party Which Was Not Intended to Leak Out.

WOMEN DRESS AS MEN AND MEN AS WOMEN

Titled Ladies Cut a Fine Figure in Tights and Demonstrate They Could Make Good in the Chorus.

(Copyright, 1903, by Press Publishing Co.) LONDON, Jan. 10.—(New York World Cablegram—Special Telegram.)—The facts are slowly leaking out about an extraordinary entertainment gotten up at Lord and Lady Howe's Christmas party at Gosport. This consisted of a fancy dress ball continued to members of the house party, in which all the women appeared as male characters. Lady Howe dressed as a Knight Templar, with a long black cloak, with a white cross, a two-handed sword, bright steel armor and helmet. Her sister, Lady Sarah Wilson, more daring, appeared as Prince Charlie, in kilts, and made a very attractive, well-matched young man, the Princess Henry of Pleas made an extremely graceful Romeo. It was generally voted that she would make the fame of any chorus.

But, historically, the success of the evening was Mrs. George Cornwallis West, formerly Lady Randolph Churchill, who came as a roystering Spanish cavalier. She wore black silk tights, doublet and hose, a dark crimson velvet cloak trimmed with gold; had a sword, a great diamond blazing in her hair, and a brooch with its drooping features; diamond buckles on her pretty shoes, and a black mustache, waxed and ferociously curled like the Kaiser's. The women were at first rather shy about entering the room in their unaccustomed but most becoming costumes, and shrinkingly tried to hide behind the skirts of their companions. But this feeling soon wore off and everything went gaily as possible. It was odd to see what appeared to be men dancing with men partners.

The affair was not to be talked about, it was understood, but has come out, nevertheless, and excites the greatest interest. Countess Howe, Lady Sarah Wilson and Mrs. George Cornwallis West (Lady Randolph Churchill) are aunts of the present duke of Marlborough. Princess Henry of Pleas is a sister-in-law of Mrs. George Cornwallis West. Earl Howe, whose great wealth may be gauged by his ownership of 33,700 acres of profitable land, belongs to one of the proudest families of the United Kingdom and is prominent in what is called the "honorary" list. One of his ancestors, the third Viscount Howe, was a brigadier general in the French and Indian war and fell at Ticonderoga. Another, the fifth Viscount Howe, had the chief command of the British troops in the American war for independence, led at Bunker Hill and captured New York.

LAWYER SEPARATES LOVERS

Exigencies of Divorce Court More Potent Than Conventions of Society.

(Copyright, 1903, by Press Publishing Co.) GENEVA, Switzerland, Jan. 10.—(New York World Cablegram—Special Telegram.)—The crown princess of Saxony and Andre Giron are separated for the time being under the advice of Lawyer Lachenal, who, in pursuance of his view, as expressed in the cable dispatches in last Sunday's World, peremptorily informed them that they must follow his advice while the legal proceedings are pending or find another lawyer. He absolutely shut down on all further interviews and directed Giron to withdraw to Lausanne, where Giron is now established in Hotel Beausite until the divorce case is concluded. The crown princess goes out as usual, and it is believed that every afternoon the lovers have a clandestine meeting at Nyon, a quiet little place about half way to Lausanne, for the crown princess is away from 1 to 5 o'clock each day. At first she talked with Giron through the hotel telephone, but as it is placed in the office and her words were audible in the hall she has given up using it.

The scandal is now in a fair way to be abated, at least in its more flagrant aspect. But the crown princess still turns a deaf ear to all propositions to separate herself permanently from Giron.

Her husband has offered to her a chateau on Lake Gmunden, in upper Austria, with the privilege of having her children with her every other month if she will abandon Giron. She refused.

A dispatch from Dresden reports that the crown princess' mind has been turned by the reading of problem novels and plays. It is significant that Giron recently bought for her here Ibsen's plays and a set of Tolstoy's novels.

He tells his friends that he has been engaged three years on a novel in which he treats the sex and marriage questions from an entirely new standpoint. He has a high opinion of his literary possibilities.

The dream of the princess and Giron is to settle among the literary Bohemian set in Paris.

MRS. POTTER REJECTS OFFER

Previous Contract Compels Her to Decline a Fine Proffered Engagement.

(Copyright, 1903, by Press Publishing Co.) LONDON, Jan. 10.—(New York World Cablegram—Special Telegram.)—Mrs. Brown Potter had an offer of \$1,500 a week to play the leading part in the United States in Tolstoy's "The Resurrection." But she already was under contract for a tour in Great Britain to give recitations under novel conditions, as the recitations are to be accompanied with music. She led off with a great success in London last Sunday. Mrs. Potter was sorely tempted to accept the American offer, but was deterred by recollections of grievous trouble she incurred at the outset of her career by breaking a contract to play Juliet in Mr. Miner's company for the more enticing role of Cleopatra with Henry Abbey.

TRUPTS OUTDO THEMSELVES

Macedonians Punished Whether They Have Firearms or Not.

(Copyright, 1903, by Press Publishing Co.) VIENNA, Jan. 10.—(New York World Cablegram—Special Telegram.)—The Turkish soldiers in Macedonia, on the frontier, have been distinguishing themselves by uncommon brutality. Some Bashibazouks and regulars lately released from service began a sort of foray on their own account among the Christian villages, ostensibly seeking for arms. When so weapons were forthcoming they fogged the owner of the house for secreting them; when the weapons are found he is flogged for possessing them. In the Serbinovo district all the women were driven into the barracks and scandalously ill-treated. Some were strangled. The 10-year-old child of a peasant named Gorgi Gilew was chopped into pieces. In the same village several persons were tor-

WARD HAVING SERIOUS TIME

One Seriously Ill and Another Almost Asphyxiated by Escaping Gas.

PARIS, JAN. 10.—(New York World Cablegram—Special Telegram.)

Countess Ward, better known in America as Mrs. Reginald Renshaw Ward, is the daughter of H. Victor Newcomb of New York and a kinswoman of Ward. She got a divorce November 15. Count Ward formerly lived in Boston, but afterward became a member of the firm of Clark, Ward & Co., brokers and bankers of New York. For years he has made his home in London. It is gossip in London that Ward will marry the Dowager Countess Howe next May and that his divorced wife is betrothed to Nathaniel Greig Ingraham of New York, the wedding having been set to take place February 15 in San Remo, Italy.

This case has called attention to the frequency of such accidents in Paris apartments, owing to defective ventilation or structural flaws, and has caused something like a panic, providing a busy time for the architects. Tenants now refuse to take possession of apartments without a certificate of safety from the architect. The practice of sleeping with the windows closed, almost universal in Paris, greatly increases the danger from defective flues or gas pipes. Countess Ward, better known in America as Mrs. Reginald Renshaw Ward, is the daughter of H. Victor Newcomb of New York and a kinswoman of Ward. She got a divorce November 15. Count Ward formerly lived in Boston, but afterward became a member of the firm of Clark, Ward & Co., brokers and bankers of New York. For years he has made his home in London.

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