

# THE WATER QUESTION.

## Discussed by Several of our Leading Citizens.

### At a Meeting in the Court House Last Evening.

Pursuant to notice, those of our people who felt especial interest in the subject of water works, met at the Court House Friday night, and listened to a prolonged discussion of the whole subject, and especially in reference to the propositions submitted by Mr. Billings, of Milwaukee. Dr. Joseph Hobbins presided, and speeches were made by Simon Mills, William F. Vilas, William Welch and others. Finally a series of resolutions were adopted asking the council to lay the matter over until other propositions could be considered.

#### THE MEETING.

At 7:45, Gen. Simon Mills called the meeting to order, and moved that Dr. Joseph Hobbins take the chair; carried.

On taking his seat, the Doctor stated that the meeting had been called by many citizens; he paid a compliment to a letter which Hon. S. C. Pusey had published. He then said that what he wanted was good drinking water, and he favored artesian wells, but thought Fourth Lake water ought to be thoroughly tested before an attempt was made to use it. He also wanted to know who would get water from the works—part of the people would get it, and all would have to pay.

On motion of Simon Mills, Charles N. Gregory was elected Secretary.

Hon. William Welch paid a compliment to Mr. Mills, especially in reference to the Waterworks bond matter, and said that he would like to hear his views.

Mr. Mills said that if the city was going to build a bridge, they would advertise for proposals and let the job go to the lowest bidder; he favored the same plan in reference to this matter. The speaker said that La Crosse had a system of water works, reaching nine miles, and it only cost \$85,000. He thought if we decided to build water works, the city should borrow money and do the work itself. Mr. Mills then read a series of resolutions, embodying his views.

Wm. Welch seconded the resolutions and spoke briefly, favoring unanimity of action in matters of grave interest. He said that the water question was a momentous one; declared that our wells were pure and wholesome. He spoke of the lakes, and favored keeping their shores free to the people, alluding, among other things, to the building of the branch railway in the Third Ward. The speaker said the last Common Council had nearly ruined our water privileges, and said that the law would protect people in forcibly removing the railroad nuisance. He said the policy of the city should be to open all streets to the lakes, where practicable; instead of this a resolution had been engineered through the Council, shutting the people off from the only place in the Third and Fourth Wards where they could drive into Third Lake, but he declared that the Council had no right to permit obstruction to the outlet from a street out to public waters. It being constructed not for a highway, but for private use. The grievance of the people to-day were owing to monopolies, which control nearly all water works and gas works. The Mayors of seventy cities had been written to, and all said that it was a great mistake to let outsiders control water works; the cities should own their own works. The speaker alluded to the sufferings of Chicago from bad water, and said that before we undertake to use lake water, we should have it analyzed. He did not think it good either for drinking or washing purposes. Allusion was also made to the well system, which he said would not do for washing. In any event, we should have to keep our wells and cisterns. He did not think that the saving in the Fire Department would be an object of economy, considering the amount asked by the company. What he considered the best plan would be to lease \$65,000 in bonds, and build our own water works; then if there was any profit, the city would get it. He thought that time should be given, and did not favor rushing the matter through; even if the Council had power to bind the city, which he doubted, saying they would need an act of the Legislature.

Dennis O'Keefe said that every laboring man should favor water works; so that they would be able to extinguish fires, and also get work.

H. M. Lewis being called on, said that the proposition did not strike him favorably; we were asked to pay too much, and did not get privileges enough. He thought action should be postponed, and said that the cost of the hydrants would be greater than the annual losses by fire had been.

Mr. Welch asked if the city could only use them for fire purposes, and being told that was all, said it was time for an adjournment.

George Rhymer, being called on, said he had come to listen, not to talk; but he would say that he wanted water works of some kind. He favored careful consideration.

Alderman Bourke spoke in favor of listening to any person who might wish to be heard.

H. W. Tunney was called on, but only arose to excuse himself, saying that he had not looked over the proposition.

A doubtful talk ensued as to whether water works would pay. W. A. P. Morris read a letter from the City Clerk of La Crosse, describing their waterworks and giving the cost at \$65,000. The cost of running has been \$5,000 per year, and last year the same estimate was \$3,000, with a better prospect for the future. He also read a letter from the Holly Waterworks Company, offering to send an agent here, to exhibit plans.

H. A. Lewis spoke of the necessity of being sure of getting good water while we spent money for works.

Prof. Dominis being called on, said that so one around the University ever thought of drinking the water to the reservoir. He had tested it, and did not find indications of its being bad water, particularly. But said that no water from small lakes is safe to use; artesian wells

were the best for household water. The most important thing for us was to get pure water, and he did not think it possible to get it from Lake Mendota.

Prof. Irving said he did not think the artesian well water could be equalled by any other. What we should do was to get the opinion of some engineer who had made the subject of water a study.

Mr. Welch hoped that those who favored the Billings proposition, would give their views, and called on Col. William F. Vilas.

The Colonel said that in his opinion this meeting was not called to favor the proposition, but if they wished he would say something; his opinions were not hidden, but had been openly expressed. He did not think the proposition had been fought fairly. There are some men who never favor any improvement, who fight special taxes. This, they had a right to do. What he objected to was the opposition of pretended friends to the water works. Let us go on and improve and beautify our city, that we may enjoy life while we are here. He sympathized with the feelings of pioneers, who thought old things were good enough, but we must move with the world, and advance with the needs of civilization. He then gave a history of the introduction of the proposition; told of Mr. Billings coming to him with a letter of introduction; said that he took the gentleman to Mayor Cookin, who at first said, the city could not afford water works. After listening to the proposition, Mr. Cookin decided to call a meeting of business men, at the Park Hotel. The original plan was to use artesian well water, with an opportunity to draw on the lake in case of fire. The artesian wells were opposed, on account of the water not being suited for boilers. He then stated what the lake proposition would involve; how the pipes were to run out into the lake until a depth of forty feet was reached. For nine months of the year, Fourth Lake water was perfectly palatable and wholesome; during the heated term, he said the vegetable matter and the pollen dust did not go down over eight or ten feet, while the pipes would be thirty feet under the surface, and ten feet above the bottom. The water at thirty feet deep was always cool and pure, and had its source in everlasting springs, which supplied at least two-thirds of the water, the rest coming from streams.

With reference to the city building water works, the Colonel said he was opposed to running the city into debt. Under this proposition Mr. Billings takes all the risk; if the works fail or do not fill the contract, we do not have to pay the contractor. He then explained how the pumping engine worked.

Some sparring here ensued between the speaker and Mr. Welch, in which others began to take part.

Alderman Bourke said he would like to have the Colonel finish his remarks without interruptions, and then the others could speak.

The Colonel stated that he did not want to occupy all the time of the meeting, and would close.

F. E. Parkison said that his great objection was there would not be hydrants enough, and asked for an explanation.

Col. Vilas arose and read a statement showing the number of hydrants used in other cities, and the price paid for each.

Mr. Welch asked if in these cities the hydrants could only be used by the city in case of fire.

The Colonel said that such was the case, unless special arrangements were made for their use. He then read from the Billings proposition to show on what terms the city could purchase the works. Interruptions becoming so numerous, Col. Vilas said he would not attempt to speak longer, and left the room.

There was great confusion for a short time, and it looked as though the meeting would break up, but the chair succeeded in restoring order.

The question then recurred on the consideration of Mr. Mills' resolutions. A disorderly vote was taken, that it was impossible to declare, and then, by request, Mr. Mills read the resolutions again.

Some amendments were made, and finally the resolutions were adopted as follows:

*Resolved*, By the citizens of Madison, here assembled, that the common council should not at present accept the proposition of Mr. Billings to construct water works, but that the question of such construction should be open to later competition, to the end that the city should obtain the most favorable terms for the construction of such works, either on private contract, or to be owned and operated by the city when completed.

*Resolved*, That we most earnestly protest against any private contract for the construction of water works on the part of the council, until the proposition of the Holly Water Works Co., proposed to be amended, can at least be received and considered.

*Resolved*, That a committee of fifteen, with the Hon. S. C. Pusey as Chairman, be appointed to present these resolutions to the Council to-morrow evening, and urge the propriety of amending them in the manner aforesaid; provided that if time be granted and further proposals be received, the committee consider the same and report its opinion thereon, to a subsequent meeting called by the Chairman for that purpose.

*Resolved*, That we are in favor of the construction of city water works owned by the city or by some responsible private company, as early as a practicable, and that in connection therewith a system of drainage should be adopted.

W. L. Smith said that after listening to the opinions of various speakers, including two scientists, he had come to the conclusion that water works would be an injury to the city, rather than a benefit.

Richard Basson said that he was in favor of water works that would drain our low places.

The meeting, then adjourned. After the meeting had dispersed, the Chair and Secretary made up the following committee, called for the resolutions:

B. U. Pusey, Wm. Welch, S. Mills, J. A. Johnson, F. J. Lamb, John H. Jones, P. Youv, A. F. Frank, W. A. P. Morris, Charles N. Gregory, H. A. Lewis, Richard Bourke, T. E. Burd, Dr. Clark Cepin and Dr. Joseph Hobbins.

**SAFETY WATER.**—The Anti Valley News says: At the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Thimble Mill, Dr. S. M. Blane, J. O. Egan, Dr. E. M. Irwin, E. Anderson, A. Egan, and S. H. Watson were chosen Directors. The following officers for the ensuing year: Dr. S. M. Blane, President; J. O. Egan, Secretary; A. Egan, Treasurer.

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