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PHILADELPHIA:

FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1855.

THE PREVENTION OF FIRES.—The subject of preventing large fires in cities has, for a long period, commanded the attention of many individuals, and while the suggestions of some would, if put in practice, form a cause of saving a vast deal of valuable property, and the lives of our citizens, there is no plan that could be made so effective as to grant additional water privileges to manufacturers and owners of large establishments and buildings. In these privileges, we mean, that the authorities should pass a general ordinance allowing the owners of all large buildings to place a pipe through the residence, factory or whatever else it may be, so arranged as to admit of an attachment of hose of the same dimensions (4 inches) as the fire-plugs in the streets. This privilege to be granted with such restrictions, as to secure the department against fraud, and upon the payment of a tariff, in addition to the water rent charged for such building. It would have a tendency to organize a private fire department, and one decidedly more effectual than our present volunteer system, or a paid one could be rendered.

Wherever the privilege was granted, the proper authorities should exact of the owners of property, an obligation to keep a reel of hose contiguous to the cock or valve of the pipe, on each floor, so that in case of fire, the water, at a moment's warning, could be directed immediately to the fire, and to have proper watchmen constantly on the premises. This method, instead of being one which would cause a loss of water, would be an immense saving; and in every respect, be an advantage to the community.

The *Pittsburg Gazette*, of the 5th inst., contains the following:

“THE PREVENTION OF FIRES.—HOW IT IS DONE IN PITTSBURG.—Hundreds of thousands of dollars are annually swept away by fire, as with a breath, in all our large cities. It frequently occurs that a fire breaks out in an extensive building, a manufactory, a hotel or a warehouse, and from the inefficiency of the alarm system, and the fire department, the flames obtain a disastrous headway before a drop of water is thrown. In our city, a most effective method of protection has been adopted. A gentleman writing from this city to an eastern paper, gives the following information:

“All of our large manufactories are provided with a four inch cast iron pipe, from the main pipe in the street to the upper story of the building, with a cock or valve of the same capacity as the street plugs, to suit the same size hose used by the fire department. They have generally from 20 to 50 feet of hose in each story, screwed in their places, and run on a reel, all ready, at a minute's warning, in case of fire. Some have two mains into their buildings, for different departments. The Banner Mills, of Allegheny, have in the second story of their packing department, a four inch main, connected with ten one inch pipes running 40 feet, with holes in, to let the water on in the form of a shower, all over the room, which was the means of saving it from fire about two months ago. The Eagle, Anchor and Penn Cotton Mills, of Allegheny, are supplied with water all through their buildings, with hose, &c., all attached, ready for use. Also, the Monongahela House, of this city, was saved from fire about five months ago, by having the water in the fifth story, where no engine could get at it. Water is about being introduced into B. A. Fahnestock's new warehouse, through a privilege granted without charge, and recommended by the authorities, as they think they are the gainers by each of the manufactories being prepared to use the water at the proper place, and at the commencement of a fire, when it can be checked without any waste of water.”

This kind of protection is adopted in many of the large manufactories of Boston and New York, and although some of the very places in which the facilities have been introduced have been on fire, yet the loss has proved trifling from the fact of one of the valves having been opened and the stream directed to the fire and not promiscuously on and about the building. The system causes not only a saving of property, but an immense saving of water, and where thousands of hogsheads are wasted at large fires

there would not be required a single barrel to prevent, perhaps, extensive conflagrations. In Chickering's piano manufactory in Boston, every room is supplied with a hydrant to which is attached a three inch hose and pipe, and through which water can be thrown in an instant to every part of that large building. In New York the theatres and large factories are supplied in the same manner, and we hope the time is not far distant when Philadelphia will have similar means provided for protecting property from destruction by fire. Will our Chief Engineer, Mr. Graff, or some member of the Watering Committee move in this work of reform?

LOCAL AFFAIRS.

The Old Independence Bell.—The old bell which first proclaimed liberty to the United Colonies from the State House steeple, and which for years past has been an object of attraction in Independence Hall, now occupies a position in the hall immediately in front of the portrait of Lafayette, close by the statue of Washington, on a pedestal designed for the purpose by Frederick Graff, Esq. The pedestal is octagonal in shape with a double base. Upon the base are placed, at the corners, eight fasces surmounted by the liberty cap and other emblems, and upon the fillets which bind the reads of these fasces, are tastefully arranged the names of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, indicative of the effect of that act in binding the Union together. Upon the fasces are shields—one containing the coat of arms of the United States; a second, the arms of the State of Pennsylvania; a third, the arms of the city of Philadelphia; and the fourth, the following:—“The ringing of this bell first announced to the citizens who were anxiously waiting the result of the deliberations of Congress, (which were at that time held with closed doors,) that the Declaration of Independence had been decided upon; and then it was that the bell proclaimed liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof. The American flag is gracefully festooned between the fasces, and binds them by its ample folds. The carving was executed by a young man in this city named T. Daily. The bell is surmounted by a large gilt eagle. The pedestal is painted with white China gloss, with the coats of arms, names of signers, and inscription on the shields in gilt.

The subjoined history of the bell may not prove uninteresting. The copies of the annexed letters, addressed to Robert Charles, of London, in 1751 and 1753, by Isaac Norris and others, on the subject, explain themselves, and from which it will be seen that the inscription on the bell was ordered to be cast twenty five years before the Declaration was signed:—

November 1, 1751.

Respected Friend Robert Charles:—The Assembly having ordered us (the Superintendents of the State House) to procure a bell from England, to be purchased for their use, we take the liberty to apply ourselves to thee to get us a good bell of about two thousand pounds weight, the cost of which we presume may amount to about one hundred pounds sterling, or perhaps with the charges something more, and accordingly we have enclosed a first bill of exchange by John Porains & Son on Messrs. Thomas Flowerden & Co for £100 sterling. We would have chosen to remit a larger bill at this time, but will take care to furnish more as soon as we can be informed how much may be wanted.

We hope and rely on thy care and assistance in this affair, and that thou wilt procure and forward it by the first good opportunity, as our workmen inform us it will be much less trouble to hang the bell before the scaffolds are struck from the building where we intend to place it, which will not be done till the end of next summer or beginning of the fall. Let the bell be cast by the best workmen, and examined carefully before it is shipped, with the following words, well shaped, in large letters around it, viz:—“By order of the Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania for the State House in the City of Philadelphia, 1753,” and underneath “Proclaim Liberty through all the land to all the inhabitants thereof.” Levit. xxv. 10.

As we have experienced thy readiness to serve this Province on all occasions, we desire it may be our excuse for this additional trouble from, Thy assured friends, Isaac Norris, Thos. Leach, Edward Warner.

March 10, 1753.

In a previous letter I gave information that our bell was generally liked and approved of, but in a few days after my writing I had the mortification to hear that it was cracked by a stroke of the clapper without any other violence, as it was hung up to try the sound; though this was not very agreeable to us we concluded to send it back by Capt. Budden, but he could not take it on board; upon which, two ingenious workmen undertook to cast it here, and I am just informed that they have this day opened the mould, and have got a good bell, which, I confess, pleases me much that we should first venture upon and succeed in the greatest bell cast, for aught I know, in English America. The mould was finished in a very masterly manner, and the letters, I am told, are better than in the old one. When we broke up the metal, our judges here generally agreed it was too high and brittle, and cast several little bells of it to try the sound, and fixed upon a mixture of an ounce and a half of copper to one pound of the old bell, and in this proportion we now have it.

April 14, 1753.

A native of the Isle of Malta, and a son of Chas. Stow, were the persons who undertook to cast our bell. They made the mould in a masterly manner, and ran the metal well, but upon trial, it seems they have added too much copper in the present bell, which is now hung up in its place. But they were so teased with the witticisms of the town, that they had a new mould in great forwardness before Messrs. arrival, and will very soon be ready to make a second essay. If this should fail, we will embrace Lister's offer and send the unfortunate bell again to him by the first opportunity.

In the Pennsylvania Packet of June 7, 1753, the following notice appeared:—“Last week was raised and fixed in the State House steeple, the new great bell, cast here by Pass & Stow, weighing 2080 pounds, with this motto:—Proclaim Liberty through all the land to all the inhabitants thereof.”

From the above it will be perceived that the bell now in the Hall, is the one which announced the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, and the first bell of any magnitude cast on this continent. It was cast by Pass & Stow, whose names appear on it, and is composed, in part, of the original bell ordered by Mr. Norris. In 1777 this bell, with those of Christ Church and others, were removed from the city and buried in the Delaware river, opposite Trenton, in order to prevent their destruction by the British army, which at that period, occupied the city.

Visit of Virginia Military.—The Richmond Light Infantry Blues, of Richmond, Va., under command of Capt. J. Patton, will visit this city

LOCAL AFFAIRS.

Prevention of Conflagrations.—The extensive conflagrations which have swept away millions of dollars' worth of property in this city during the past few years, have given rise to different suggestions as to the best means of preventing similar occurrences. There are frequent instances in which fires occur through accidents as well as from carelessness and incendiarism, where the mischief might be checked at an early stage of the fire.

At Barnum's Museum in 1850, at Sixth and Chestnut streets in 1853, or more recently at Ninth and Chestnut streets, Eighth and Cherry streets, and Fifth and Chestnut streets, if proper remedies had been applied, a great saving of property might have resulted. In this city there have been for years several material drawbacks to everything tending towards a preventive against serious fires. The fire department being deficient in itself, the tardiness of communicating alarms, and other evils which might be enumerated, the public have suffered from and must needs continue to suffer until a thorough change is made in the department and the fire alarm, or some other signal system put in successful operation. But apart from all these considerations there should be in all large buildings, manufacturing establishments, factories, &c., some better arrangement for putting out fires than there is provided in any of the buildings to which we refer in the city. If, for example, large sized pipes were introduced throughout an establishment, with a cock on each floor or in each room, of the same dimensions as the screw on the fire-plugs, hose might be attached and in an instant almost fires could be checked, which, under other circumstances, might prove quite as disastrous as the fires at the points designated. To grant such a privilege, would, doubtless, create jealousies and prejudices, on account, as some would of course surmise, of a desire to clandestinely procure a greater supply of water than the permit for a particular building calls for. This motive might be an incentive to some to fraudulently get a supply of water at a very nominal rent, but the instances are rare, and with proper restrictions a single infraction of the laws and ordinances could easily be discovered, the offender punished and his water privileges (obtained solely for preserving his property from ruin) destroyed. This method of protection is made effective in many of the large manufactories of Boston, New York and Pittsburg, and although some of the very places in which the facilities have been introduced have been on fire, yet the loss has proved trifling from the fact of one of the plugs having been opened and the stream directed to the fire and not promiscuously on and about the building. It is not only a saving of property but an immense saving of water, and where thousands of hogsheads are wasted at large fires there would not be required a single barrel. In Chickering's piano manufactory in Boston, every room is supplied with a hydrant, to which is attached a 3 inch hose and pipe, and through which water can be thrown in an instant to every part of that large building. In New York the theatres and large factories are supplied in the same manner, and the following extract of a letter dated Pittsburg, Feb. 23, 1855, shows how much regard is felt there for the safety of large buildings:

“All of our large manufactories are provided with a 4-inch cast-iron pipe, from the main pipe in the street to the upper story of the building, with a cock or valve of the same capacity as the street plugs, to suit the same size hose used by the fire department. They have generally from 20 to 50 feet of hose in each story, screwed in their places, and run on a reel, all ready, at a minute's warning, in case of fire. Some have two mains into their buildings, for different departments. The Banner Mill, of Allegheny, have in the second story of their packing department, a 4-inch main, connected with ten 1 inch pipes running 40 feet, with holes in, to let the water on in the form of a shower, all over the room, which was the means of saving it from fire about two months ago. The Eagle, Anchor and Penn Cotton Mills, of Allegheny, are supplied with water all through their buildings, with hose, &c. all attached, ready for use. Also, the Monongahela House, of this city, was saved from fire about five months ago, by having the water in the fifth story, where no engine could get at it. Water is about being introduced into B. A. Fahnestock's new warehouse, through a privilege granted without charge, and recommended by the authorities, as they think they are the gainers by each of the manufactories being prepared to use the water at the proper place, and at the commencement of a fire, when it can be checked without any waste of water.”

Now that the Water-works of this city are worked almost to their utmost capacity, the Chief Engineer and Members of the Watering Committee should endeavor to save all the water possible, and we know of no plan whereby a greater saving could be had, in case of a conflagration, than the method of having introduced into large buildings and manufactories, under wise restrictions, attachments from the street mains. For each cock or valve, a section or two of hose could be placed on a reel, in a position where necessity might bring it into service in a very brief space of time.

New Store.—The new building, corner of Fifth