

CROTON WATER DEPARTMENT.

Several interesting points, in connection with the Croton Board, are at present attracting attention.

The ordinance regulating the construction of vaults in front of stores and dwelling-houses limits them to the outer edge of the sidewalk, except by special permission from the Croton Department, and this on payment of a specified fee for the permission. Of late, however, and especially since the mania for marble stores and broad vaults has seized the merchants of New-York, the owners and builders have gradually encroached upon the streets, or rather the *substratum* of the streets, until, in one case at least, the walls of the vaults on either side of the street approach within four feet of each other. This may seem, to the casual reader, very unimportant, but when it is taken into consideration that sewers, gas pipes and water pipes must be laid or repaired, it will be readily seen how much wrong may be done by this encroachment upon the underground rights of the city. In one case—we do not chuse to name the street, lest some of the Insurance Companies might demand a cancellation of their policies—the vaults are so far extended beneath the street, that it was found impossible to place a fire-hydrant at the point designated; and in another case, a party now about erecting a marble store, had the conscience to ask permission to build a vault twenty-nine feet wide, which is exactly half the width of the street. There is now more than one street running across Broadway, and below Reade street, where, if any accident should happen to the gas or Croton pipes, immense damage might be caused by reason of the vault mania. The subject has attracted the attention of the Croton Board, who had a meeting with special reference to it yesterday; and on the representation of Mr. Craven, the Chief-Engineer, whose twelve years' experience in that office qualify him to judge, they decided to grant no more permissions for vaults beyond the limits restricted by the ordinance, which were *two fifths* of the street, measuring from house to house; but by the tenor of the rule now adopted by the Board, no vault will be allowed to be constructed beyond the limits of the curb-stone. There is, however, one singular exception to this rule now existing—a large manufacturing firm, which owns property on both sides of the street, had constructed vaults extending from side to side, and last year, when a sewer was to be made in the street, they offered, at their own expense, to connect the sewer, at either end of their vault, by iron pipes sufficiently large to carry off the drainage which would pass through the sewer. This was permitted for the

double reason that the sewer would disfigure their vaults, and that the nature of their business demanded secrecy in some of its operations, they preferred to meet this expense rather than allow outside parties to examine it. The rule adopted by the Croton Board seems to be just, and to be imperatively demanded by every consideration of expediency.

Another point is the settlement of the question as to who shall be at the expense of supplying water to the convicts incarcerated in the State prison at Sing-Sing. It was generally supposed by residents and tax-payers of the city of New-York, when they assumed a debt of some thirteen millions of dollars (since grown into twenty) for the introduction of the Croton water, that it was intended for their own exclusive use, on payment of a fair and proper equivalent. It appears, however, that the State of New York lays claim to the right of using it, and this claim is to be established by the legislation now in progress at Albany. By an agreement between the State Prison Inspectors and the Croton Board in 1846, the Board agreed to supply the prison at Sing-Sing thirty thousand gallons a day for ten years, at \$750 per year for the first five years, and \$1,250 per year for the balance of the term, which expired in 1857; and this was deemed as an equivalent for the land owned by the State through which the aqueduct passes. In 1858, a law was passed allowing to the Croton Board \$1,240 per year for such quantity of water as might be required for the use of the prison, and this is less than one-half the charge made to consumers in the city. The Board, as a matter of course, protested against such a measure, but it was adopted notwithstanding. The Board then sent in bills for the water actually used, during the year 1857, '58 and '59, (as ascertained by measurement,) amounting to \$11,592 45, and demanded payment at the hands of the State officials. Instead of settling this account, the State Prison Inspectors have caused a bill to be introduced into the Legislature which refers the matter to three commissioners, yet to be appointed, who are to decide upon the amount which the prison ought hereafter to pay for the use of the water for such purposes as may be needed. This gives the power virtually to the State officials to use as much of the Croton as they choose, and to pay what they deem proper, so that if they should determine upon the necessity of laying a thirty-six inch pipe from the Aqueduct to the prison they could do so, and cut off more than half the supply from the city; and once the State lays its grasp upon the Aqueduct, every village between the Dam and the High-Bridge will discover a necessity for the Croton, and obtain it through the Legislature.

The agreement made in 1846 was based on the ground that the State permitted the Aqueduct to be constructed through the Prison Farm without charge, and now, because the Board claim payment at twenty-five per cent. less than is paid by any householder in New York, the State steps in and intends to claim the right to use as much water as its officials choose, paying for it at their own prices, and leaving the Croton Board powerless. The act referred to, if passed, will enable the State Prison Inspectors to use without stint, and at their own price, the water for which the city of New-York has incurred a debt of nearly twenty millions of dollars.

The Croton Board, mindful of the interests of the city, has prepared a counter bill which will be forthwith presented, and which, if there be any sense of honor or honesty in the Legislature, should be promptly passed. Its provisions are, first, that the State shall pay the sum of \$11,592 45, now honestly due for water used during the years 1857, '58 and '59; and second, that the Comptroller shall establish, in conjunction with the Croton Aqueduct Board, a just and equitable mode of ascertaining the quantity of water which may be used during every year in which the prison is furnished with Croton water; and for the quantity which it is found may be used, shall pay at the rate of three-quarters of one cent for every one hundred gallons.