

THE HILL ON THE CONTRACT.

It Was More Than Usually Lively and Interesting Yesterday.

The Lawyers Opened Proceedings with the Usual Spirited Wrangle.

Then a St. Louis Lawyer Took the Stand and Refused to Testify to Anything.

The Secretary Sat Down on the Chicago Trip—A Witness Called a Liar.

When the Hill investigating committee met yesterday morning the chairman asked if Mr. Coleman wished to see Mr. Bliss. If so, he would send for the gentleman, who was in the secretary's office. Mr. Coleman answered in the affirmative, but Mr. Bliss had gone, and a messenger was sent in search of him. Meanwhile Mr. Totten discussed with Mr. Coleman the contents of the paper filed Monday relating to the nature of the evidence to be taken in Chicago. In answer to an inquiry from Mr. Totten Mr. Coleman said that the witness, King, would testify that he had been discharged because he would not do what Newton did.

Mr. Hill said he did not believe that Mr. King had been employed upon the heating apparatus.

Mr. Alexander said that he had conferred with the secretary the day before in regard to the proposition to adjourn to Chicago, and the secretary, after expressing his belief that the witnesses in that city could be induced to come here, had telegraphed a request to that effect.

Mr. Coleman remarked that he had not named all of the witnesses whose attendance was desired, but presumed that they could be brought here.

Mr. Totten said that he was tired of the frequent delays. Ten weeks was long enough for a man to be searched and roasted on a gridiron. It was unnecessary to go to Chicago, because nothing had been shown to the committee—not even a card—warrant the trip. They had been in session for ten weeks and nothing had been done. Now the prosecution wanted to investigate the whole city of Chicago in their endeavor to blacken the name of the defendant. If any wrong had been done, it had been done here, and if witnesses were necessary they could be brought here. He should continue every day to protest against this eternal daily-dallying. There was no reason to believe that the committee's sense of fair dealing would impel them to do it.

Mr. Coleman replied that he had heard enough of this honest effort wanting to be investigated. Every morning Mr. Totten had said that he would do the investigation. If he thought the investigation was proving nothing, why was he here. The committee did not request him to attend, and if Mr. Hill's acts were in any way not barred by the statute of limitations. The counsel did not want to go to Chicago, although he knew the testimony there to be taken would show that the government had been defrauded.

Mr. Totten rejoined that the government had spent money in a conspiracy, according to his client's (Murch) testimony. If it was entitled to belief, it showed that he entered into a conspiracy with seventy men to defraud the government.

He did not want to stop this investigation; he wanted it to go on, and did object to the frequent stoppages.

Mr. Bliss appeared at this stage, and retired with Mr. Coleman for consultation. They returned in a few minutes, and Mr. Coleman asked that Mr. Bliss be examined by the committee.

Mr. Bliss was accordingly sworn. He said that he was United States district attorney for the eastern district of Missouri. He read the interview published in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on June 23.

Mr. Coleman asked if he knew of any witness who would appear before the committee either in St. Louis or Washington in connection with the facts mentioned in his interview.

Mr. Bliss, I shall decline to answer and would like to give my reason. I understand that this committee is investigating specific facts which I know nothing whatever, and in connection with which I can give no competent or relevant testimony.

The chairman then asked Mr. Bliss if he was investigating certain charges, but if you know of any wrong action on the part of Mr. Hill, the committee will inquire.

Mr. Bliss, I presume that the committee is acting according to the rules of evidence. The chairman then asked Mr. Bliss to hear anything you may know of concerning misconduct by Mr. Hill.

Mr. Hill, I know of nothing. I will answer any question touching facts of my knowledge, but do not propose to give incompetent testimony.

Mr. Coleman asked if Mr. Bliss was correctly reported in the interview published in the Post-Dispatch.

Mr. Bliss declined to answer. He did not concede the right of the counsel or the committee to inquire about what passed in a newspaper interview.

Question. Are the facts herein set out true, accurate, or do you decline to answer, because, if true, they are not relevant to the pending issues.

Mr. Coleman made some inquiries touching the charges against Mr. Hill, but the witness continually declined to answer, for the reasons above mentioned.

Mr. Totten then asked if the indictments obtained in St. Louis some years ago were not predicated upon facts occurring before Mr. Hill assumed office, but the witness answered that he could not tell without consulting the record.

Mr. Alexander, referring to the newspaper article, inquired if it was true that Mr. Isaacs (a former superintendent of the St. Louis Mint) had asked if he would make himself a party to the fraud, if there was one, if he gave his approval to the vouchers for stone work.

The witness answered in the affirmative. Mr. Totten wanted to be absolved from the matter, but he had nothing to do with the case, and endeavored to have the question and answer stricken out. He said that Mr. Hill was obliged to have anything investigated, but objected to this inasmuch as the witness had reported in favor of transforming those contracts. They thought that such modification would be for the interest of the government, and that it could best be effected through an arrangement with the contractors. The opinion of the attorney general to the contrary notwithstanding, the committee believed that the government could be held to the terms of the original contracts, and it was thought best to make an amicable arrangement with the contractors by allowing them a fair compensation. There were other reasons why a controversy should be avoided, such as the delay consequent upon a breach of contract, and the amount of money that would be required to pay the contractors. Of course witness knew nothing of the amount that should properly be paid for stone work, but Mr. Hill and Col. Casey fixed the prices in the new contracts at rates that they regarded as advantageous to the government, although not as good as might

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