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Huntington's Great Rage

Mass Meeting of Californians Call Forth Denunciations From the Magnate

Signers of Memorials He Likens to Chicken Thieves When He is Cornered

Cannot Tell What Became of the Contract and Finance Company's Books Himself

Division of Traffic Questions Prove Puzzling and Show How the Central Suffers

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18—At about 11 o'clock this morning a persistently unfriendly Providence again placed Mr. Huntington between Senator Morgan and the deep blue sea. The Senator resumed his awkward questioning, the railroad man his awkward evasions. It is impossible to give in words any conception of the way in which the witness tried to avoid answering. At last no words but a verbatim report could do so, and now consume about a column of "Examiner's" space for each question.

It was absolutely impossible to get a direct, intelligible statement from the witness to answer to any question whatever. As the replies had to be evolved extemporaneously, and as Mr. Huntington is not quick witted, they were "without form and void."

Not only had they commonly no relevancy to anything asked, but they meant nothing at all. Again and again the senator had to recall the faculties that his question had quandered like a flock of pigeons attacked by a hawk. When the answer was finally got it almost invariably had the form of a confession.

The first subject was the missing books of the Contract and Finance Company, which Mr. Huntington was quite sure that he had never seen, but whose destructions he had first advised, then suggested and finally was not quite sure he had anything to do with. Mr. Huntington's caution grew with reflection, and it is probable that eventually he will sturdily have opposed the destruction of those books. That the books are actually destroyed he professes to know only by "common report." In the atmosphere is a meteorological phenomenon which Mr. Morgan refused to recognize.

When Senator Morgan got on the subject of the popular mass meetings in San Francisco, the resolutions there adopted, the "Examiner" petition and the signatures to the memorial in the Senator's hands, the rage of the witness broke out of bounds. He said as ugly things as he could, denouncing Mayor Sutro as a keeper of gambling halls, and intimated strongly that the Cliff House is a brothel.

Of all the signatories to the memorial he said: "As uncanny a crowd as ever farmer found lurking about his hen roost." Having patiently permitted him to deflate the bellows of his wrath,

Senator Morgan assured him that having wantonly drawn the names and characters of three men into the discussion, he would have to answer their charges to the last one.

Asked if the books of the Western Development Company had been destroyed, Mr. Huntington said he thought not, believed they are in the railroad office in San Francisco and accessible to the committee. The correctness of that conviction will probably be tested. At one stage of the inquiry it looked as if there might be a bit of a row. Seeing the witness in distress, Senator Frye came to his rescue as usual and wanted to know why the witness could not be permitted to answer questions in his own way—"his own way" being not to answer them at all.

To this Senator Morgan replied with some heat that he proposed to conduct the examination according to his own taste, until the committee should overrule him. After that the woes of the witness were visibly and audibly augmented; the sins of Senator Frye were visited upon the head of Mr. Huntington.

The rest of the morning session was devoted to inquiry into the circumstances under which the roads subsidiary to the Central Pacific were built and purchased. From this a man from Mars would have learned that the Stockton and Copperopolis road is a part of the Southern Pacific, and the main line between Lathrop and Fresno a part of the Central Pacific.

He would have learned, too, that the construction cost the shareholders of the Central Pacific \$40,000 a mile, but as to how much it cost the Western Development Company that built it, he would have been no wiser than before.

The afternoon's proceedings were less interesting. The grand inquisitor appeared to have lost something of his ingenuity during the noonday suspensions of hostilities, his instinct for the points of his victim's armor was not so true. Possibly this was due to a feeling of loneliness, for when he resumed inquiry there was not another member of the committee present, and during the afternoon not more than two or three dropped in, even for a moment.

The Senator's efforts were for a long time confined to reading charges from the Metropolitan Temple Memorial and asking Mr. Huntington if they were true. Among the admissions and denials so obtained were the following:

The Pacific Improvement Company owns 16,000 or 17,000 shares of the southern Pacific, worth a dollar a share. It owns nothing in the steamer Piedmont. It owns the building at Fourth and Townsend street, in San Francisco, and the Del Monte Hotel, Monterey. It does not own the depot at Los Angeles, nor that at Sacramento, nor the San Pedro wharf.

It does own the Carbon Hill coal mines in the State of Washington, and sells the product to the Central and Southern Pacific railroads—for fun, apparently, for Mr. Huntington solemnly avers on his oath that the price is only two-thirds what the same coal is worth in the open market. Consequently the profits are small.

Perhaps the most surprising information elicited in this research is that Mr. Huntington has not a cent of interest in the Market Street Railway Company and never had any. This is the smallest appraisal of Mr. Vining that is known to have been made.

Senator Morgan vainly attempted to learn that the general body of the Central Pacific stockholders, or even the Directors as a body, have ever been consulted regarding the various proposals made in their behalf. So far as is known every member of the company except Mr. Huntington may be favorable to prompt and peremptory foreclosure. It would be ordered if the Funding bill should find a zealous and obstinate enemy in that illustrious railway monarch, President Issac Requa.

About an hour was consumed today by Mr. Huntington narrating his adventures in picking up aborted railroads, completing, equipping and selling them. All this was apropos of

nothing particular, and was tolerated, I suppose, because of its intrinsic interest; for it really was interesting.

Having no reason for evasion, concealment or falsehood, Mr. Huntington told the story in a forthright, simple way, with a good deal of rude eloquence born of son to doubt his honest admiration of his own sagacity and energy, and it was not easy to keep from sharing it.

He seems to have had an ambition to build a line from sea to sea, and actually to have completed its several parts, from the Chesapeake to the Mississippi. Whatever rascality may have attended the execution of this daring project was not brought out, and the story was as charming as, to most of us, it was new.

A moment later a few cold questions from Senator Morgan had thrown the narrator into his old state of mind and morals, and he was again floundering in a mire of stupid evasion.

Then the Senator got him on the hip with reference to the reported diversion of traffic from the Central route to the Southern. With infinite pains he got him to admit that Mr. Stubbs is head of the freight department of both lines; that it is in Mr. Stubbs' power to divert much of the through freight over the line at his own sweet will; that he is an employee of the Kentucky corporation, which has a great interest in the profits of the Southern line, and only a little of its profits in the other.

At this point the situation became painful nor was the tension much relaxed by what followed. Mr. Huntington was ordered and compelled to relate what, as President of the company, he had done to promote traffic over the Southern route. He saw the drift and vainly tried to minimize his services in that behalf, but his replies of yesterday were quoted against him, and out of his own mouth he was shown to have performed Herculean labors

But, alas! when asked to mention one act which, as vice president of the Central Pacific, he had done to promote traffic over that line, he was unable to do so. To not even one small service could he "point with pride." At that point Senator Morgan mercifully desisted until Thursday.

(Source: Transcribed from microfilm provided courtesy of the California State Library, Sacramento)