THE RIOT BRIBERY TRIALS.

KEMBLE, SALTER, CRAWFORD AND RUMBERGER PLEAD GUILTY.

HARRISBURG, March 8.—The plea of guilty entered this afternoon by Salter, Kemble, Crawford and Rumberger was unexpected. Mr. Wolfe said it was done because they knew conviction was inevitable and feared further exposure. He claims to have accumulated a large quantity of additional evidence, which would have let in daylight on other men, back of Kemble and the others, which this plea of guilty prevents his producing in Court. All but Kemble made a simple plea of guilty, while he pleaded "guilty of corrupt solicitation, as stated before the committee, and protests that he never offered any money or thing of value to either or any of the persons named in the bill of indictment." This his counsel explained to mean that he plead guilty only so far as "log rolling" was concerned; that is by promising votes for other bills for votes for the riot bill.

Judge Pearson objected to this plea being entered, lest it be used afterward in the Supreme Court to set aside the sentence. He said it means "guilty and yet not guilty."

Ultimately, counsel presented a plea of guilty, accompanying it with a paper which read: "Defendant pleads guilty, and by leave of Court files this protest that the plea is not to be construed as an admission on the part of said defendant that he did corruptly offer any money or thing of value unto any or either of the persons named in the indictment."

None of the defendants named are in the city. Rumberger is in Armstrong county where his wife is said to be lying dangerously ill. Matt Carpenter and Judge Black arrived at a late hour this afternoon. The proceedings did not commence in Court until half-past two P. M., when Messrs. Wm. B. Mann, F. Carroll Brewster, Wm. H. Armstrong, Lewis C. Cassiday, Charles Albright, A. J. Herr and R. A. Lamberton, all of the defense, appeared. Of the defendants, Messrs. Clark, Petroff, Shoemaker, Smith and Leisenring were in the Court. They will plead "not guilty" and stand trial. It is thought none of them can be convicted. Chris. Long's case was called, but postponed because of his severe illness, and the Commonwealth were unprepared to proceed with the other cases, but will go ahead tomorrow.

PETROFF ON TRIAS.

HARRISBURG, March 9.—The selection of a jury in the Petroff case was a matter of considerable dispute. After the first twelve jurors had been drawn, the Commonwealth ordered three to stand aside. Judge Pearson rather sharply said that could not be done.

Mr. Gowen took issue with this decision, and said the Commonwealth was prepared with abundant authority to prove their right to have jurors stood aside.

The Court said they would be bound by authorities, and asked for them, saying it was competent to stand jurors aside in the Oyer and Terminer, but it had never been heard of in the Quarter Sessions.

Mr. Gowen then read a number of authorities, after which Mr. Brewster briefly addressed the Court in an effort to controvert the Commonwealth's authorities.

Mr. Simonton followed and was replied to by Mr. Brewster, during which the Court interrupted, and said that under the authorities cited by the Commonwealth, the three jurors must stand aside. The defence took an exception. Three more jurors were drawn and took their places, and the right to challenge was liberally exercised by both sides, a number of jurors being stood aside on account of having formed or expressed opinions as to Petroff's guilt or innocence. Finally, at half-past 12 o'clock, a jury was secured, and Court adjourned until this aftetnoon at 2 o'clock.

HARRISBURG, March 9.—The morning session of the Court has been frittered away by a little quibbling among the lawyers, and beyond the drawing of a jury to try Petroff's case nothing further has been accomplished. Kemble's plea of guilty has been accepted, and the Judge has announced that it will be time enough to pass sentence when all the cases have been disposed of. Before Kemble's plea was accepted an hour was wasted by counsel for the defense consulting in the ante-room concerning the shape in which they would enter the protest. The Judge's patience was wearied out at last and he exclaimed that enough time had been wasted for an Indian pow-wow to be held. Kemble is not here, nor any of the other defendants who have pleaded guilty. A friend of Kemble's, who came up from Philadelphia this morning, says he saw Kemble at his bank on Fourth street yesterday at 4 o'clock, after the news had been received that the plea of guilty had been entered in his name, and that he seemed as unconcerned and undisturbed as though he were in no way connected with the suit. After Kemble's case was disposed of, the witnesses against Leisenring, of Mauch Chunk, were called for, but one, Representative Zern, not appearing, it was laid over, and the case of Petroff called. He was on hand in the Court room, sitting between his counsel, Judge Brewster and Col. Wm. B. Mann, of Philadelphia. Judge Brewster was at first disposed to ask for the continuance of that case till another day, because of the absence of two witnesses for the defense, but afterwards stated it was believed they were on the road, and therefore the case would be proceeded with.

Judge Brewster desired to challenge for cause each juror as he was called, but Judge Pearson objected until the box was full, when the counsel for the prosecution desired four of the jurors to stand aside, leading to a lengthy discussion of an hour and a half as to their right to make such a demand. The Judge at first ruled against them, but on Mr. Gowan arguing the matter and citing the authorities, changed the ruling in their favor. Then Col. Mann challenged each juror in turn, submitting them to a stringent examination, and in more than one case the jurors answered that they had not read the newspapers and knew nothing whatever about the case. One man had read the papers and had formed an opinion, but thought it would be affected by the evidence, but Judge Pearson permitted him to remain in the box, Col. Mann filing an exception thereto. As now constituted the jury is about as stupid looking a lot of men as one ever comes across. The case will be proceeded with this afternoon, the Court to sit till 6 P. M.

THE AFTERNOON SESSION

of the Court was taken up by the opening address of the District Attorney and the examination of two witnesses, Journal Clerk Allen and Representative Harry Watson, of Mercer county. The District Attorney's address occupied but twenty minutes, and was simply a plain statement of the law in the case and of what the Commonwealth expected to prove by Watson and McClay, the two members Petroff is alleged to have corruptly approached. Harry Watson's testimony was merely a rehash of the evidence given by him before the investigating committee. He swore to three interviews with Petroff concerning the matter, the first taking place about the 1st of March, at the foot of the stairs in the Lochiel Hotel, when Petroff asked him how he would like to be a "rooster," and told him there was business in the bill and that members could make money by voting for it. He stated that this interview took place directly after supper. On cross-examination Judge Brewster called his attention to his testimony before the committee, when he stated he was unable to recollect whether the interview took place before or after supper. He wanted to know how he came to have a better memory a year later than two months afterw rd. He also called his attention to his statement to the committee that Petroff had never offered him money for his vote. This brought Mr. Gowen, of the prosecution, to his feet, who desired to have what followed of Watson's old testimony read. He understood it as an offer, although no actual offer had been made. Judge Brewster objected, as he said the evidence should be as to facts and not as to inferences or the witness' opinions. Matt Carpenter and Judge Black took part in the discussion. Carpenter forcibly stated the case. The prosecution had selected one sentence of witness' former testimony apparently contradicting his evidence of to-day, and he judged it to be the Commonwealth's duty to protect the witness by having read the rest of his evidence at that time, which would show there was no inconsistency. Watson also testified that Petroff came to his room one night after the investigation commenced and pleaded with him to protect him from exposure; that when Petroff entered his room, he found R. S. Frazer, member from Allegheny county, there; that Frazer left before Petroff touched on the subject, and that Petroff remained in the neighborhood of half an hour with him, and then left to take the 12.40 A. M. train for Philadelphia. Mr Frazer is here and will be placed on the stand tomorrow, when he will testify, as he did before the committee, that when he left Watson's room he went directly to his own and immediately rang the bell for a servant, and that before the servant came up Petroff walked in, in less than five minutes after the time he had left him in Watson's room. There was a great deal of quibbling among the lawyers in objecting to the introduction of a printed copy of the House journal in evidence, because it was not a certified copy. The Judge overruled the objection. Journal Clerk Allen was called merely to establish the fact of the introduction of the riot bill, and the subsequent action on it by the House. Watson was on the stand two hours, and his cross-examination is not yet finished. Franklin B. Gowen conducted the direct examination, and Judge Brewster the cross.

It is not anticipated the case will get to the jury before to-morrow night and perhaps not before Wednesday morning. Long speeches are expected when it comes to be submitted finally to the jury.

HARRISBURG, Mar 9.—Judge Pearson, in answer to an inquiry from the District Attorney, said Kemble's plea should be stripped of everything except the formal plea of "guilty," and that his protest be allowed to go on file as a statement for the benefit of the defendant, but it would have no bearing whatever so far as the plea was concerned, and should not be part of the record. The counsel for the defense said they had certainly misunderstood the Court when they presented this plea yesterday. They retired for consultation and were out for an hour before they came to a conclusion. They then came into Court with a plea of guilty and a protest in the form as directed by the Court. The corrected protest is as follows: "Commonwealth vs. Wm. H. Kemble. Defendant at the time of filing his plea to the bill of indictment protests that said plea shall not be construed as an admission that he did corruptly offer any money or thing of value to either or any of the persons named in the bill of indictment, and that said plea to said indictment is pleaded by him *pro forma*, he being unwilling further to contend."

HARRISBURG, March 10.—Interest in the bribery trials, instead of flagging, increases daily, the attendance of spectators to-day being larger than yesterday or the day before. Representative Watson resumed the stand this morning, ready for further examination, but he was excused Representative Maclay, of Mifflin county, was then called, and testified that Petroff, during the pending of the Riot bill in the House, told him that he (Petroff) was authorized to make it interesting for him (witness) if he would vote for the measure. He was not cross-examined.

Judge Brewster then opened for the defense. He urged the jury to divest themselves of all partisan feeling in the matter, and render a verdict according to the law and the evidence. He said the defense would prove that Watson was mistaken when he testified that he had these conversations with Petroff, and that the second one, in which the defendant is alleged to have urged Watson not to expose him, never took place. In conclusion he said there could be no conviction under the Commonwealth's theory, and warned the jury to be careful that they did not wrongfully blast a life and murder justice itself.

The defendant then testified: He denied that either of the interviews mentioned by Watson had ever taken place; he had never attempted to corrupt Watson. He denied having told Maclay that he was authorized to make it interesting if he voted for the bill.

Petroff was cross-examined by Col. Gowen, but nothing new was elicited. Col. Gowen proposed to offer in evidence the testimony of Petroff himself, to show his previous character, with a view to the impeachment of his credibility as a witness, but the Court decided that this was inadmissible. Petroff then retired.

At the afternoon session the Court house was crowded in anticipation of arguments from the distinguished counsel engaged in the bribery cases. As Senator Carpenter had determined to leave for Washington, he made the opening address instead of the closing. He said the question for the jury was, did Petroff use the argument that it would be financially well for the member approached if he voted for the Riot bill? This was a violation of the statute. If the jury believe that such a proposition was made, and acquit the defendant, the action would be a confession that legislators can be bribed with impunity. If they considered the proposition made to Watson was an innocent pleasantry, they should not convict, but it would be well for members of the Legislature if they restrained their joking propensities. Until he came to Harrisburg he was not informed of the definition of the word "Rooster," but he had learned that it was a member of the Legislature who expects to feather his nest with money. The west had no "Rooster." How would you like to be a "Rooster?" Translated into English it simply meant, would you like to take a bribe?"

In this case a regular process of seduction had been practiced. The song of the tempter was, "We get nothing; salaries are small and expenses large; we must do this." It was corrupt persuasion. After the rope began to draw, and the defendant began to fear, he went to Watson to have the matter fixed up. If Petroff had done nothing wrong there would have been no necessity for this.

Senator Carpenter criticised the modern improvement of allowing defendants to testify in their own behalf. It was a benefit to innocent men, but a terrible hardship to the guilty. It offered a premium for forgery. A briber would just as soon commit that crime as not. The exculpatory statement of the defendant should be received with great caution, because of the great temptation to swear falsely. Watson was a disinterested witness, and could have no object in blasting the reputation of Petroff. Defendant was not sufficiently economical in his researches. He made a great mistake in flatly contradicting the testimony of such reputable witnesses as Watson and Maclay. This made two against one.

He referred to the Legislature as having been notoriously corrupt, and expressed the hope that the jury were not so lost to duty as to pronounce the defendant innocent. If you acquit the defendant you will embolden every rascal in the Commonwealth to resume his corrupt work in the Legislature.

Counsel agreed on the 29th of March as the time for sentencing those who have pleaded guilty.

PREVIOUS COLD WINTERS.

ELI PERKINS' EXPERIENCE WITH COLD WEATHER.

[Toledo Commercial, March 8.]

Eli Perkins spent yesterday at the Island House. He was lying still and getting ready for his lecture at Owosso to-night. When a *Commercial* reporter called on the great truth teller he was musing about the weather.

"Then you have seen colder winters than we have had this winter, have you, Mr. Perkins?" asked our reporter.

"Certainly young man. I have seen a great many very cold winters. Now there was the winter of 1558——."

"But you wer'nt alive then, Mr. Perkins, were you?"

"I wer'nt hey! Who says I wasn't? Now if you want information don't interrupt me. I'm telling you the truth. As I was saying, the winter of 1558 I especially remember. That winter I was engaged doing missionary work on a whaling vessel in the Adriatic sea. I remember the Adriatic froze over eighty-four feet thick that winter. Of course we couldn't navigate our boat but we raised it up and drew it over the ice. The ice was very clear, and when we saw a whale frozen up we used to blast our way down through the ice and get him."

"Was that the coldest winter you ever saw, Mr. Perkins?"

"Oh, no. I've seen a good deal colder weather than that. The winter of 1610 was colder. That year the snow drifted so deep down on the equator, that when the sun returned north in the spring we had to all turn out and shovel out a path for her to return through. That year the crater of Mount Vesuvius froze over and they used it for a skating rink. Cows gave frozen milk that winter, and the only way we could raise chickens was to let the hens set in the retorts of the pig-iron furnaces."

"But history don't speak of these things, Mr. Perkins," suggested the reporter.

"Oh, darn history. There ain't any truth in the histories now-a-days. Wasn't I there? Then there was 1761, another cold winter. The temperature changed so suddenly on the 35 of February that the flames in the gas lamps froze stiff. The heat was gone but the light was left. This was the only time I ever saw a cold flame, but frozen light seemed to light the streets as well as warm light. This year Charles Francis Adams was born. He was frozen stiff at his birth and remained so for eighteen years. He informs me that his feet have never been thoroughly warmed since. Boys skated over the crater of Mount Vesuvius again this winter."

"But we can hardly believe these things, Mr. Perkins. History don't substantiate what you say."

"What do I care about history? I tell you, young man, I'm telling you the truth, but if you don't want information you needn't listen. I've been telling you about some pretty cold weather, but the winter of 1801 was colder than any of the others. That year I joined an Arctic expedition but we got stuck in the ice off Florida and remained frozen up in the Gulf of Mexico for four years. The Esquimaux skated down the coast from Greenland that winter and wintered in Mexico. All the rivers and lakes froze solid and liquid water was worth a hundred dollars a barrel. Whiskey barrels froze stiff. The only way I kept thawed out was by saturating my clothes in kerosene and keeping them constantly burning, while my feet hung in a retort heated to boil iron in, and—and—and—"

Our reporter looked up and the old man had fallen asleep. His teeth chattered and his eyes glistened with an unearthly lustre. Too much truth in one day had exhausted him.

—A Shaker—The candidate.

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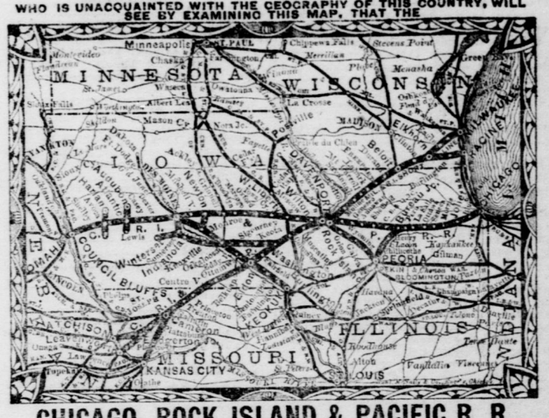

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