

BOARD OF ALDERMEN.

A Large Audience Interested With Local Detective Work "After Sherlock Holmes"

Supt. Hutchison States His Case in Detail and Demands an Investigation.

All the members of council and many citizens attended at the arraignment of Electrical Superintendent Hutchison in the council chamber last evening. The superintendent also was there. The proceedings opened with a demand by Ald. Macmillan that the charges, from first to last, be read. Ald. Humphrey pointed out that if read they would probably be published in the papers, and that the council would then have good cause to be ashamed of themselves, especially in connection with the detective work that came before the private meeting. The matter was put to a vote, and by six to three it was decided that they should not be read. Ald. Macmillan then demanded a copy of the charges, declaring that he had not burdened his memory with them and could not otherwise proceed.

The Mayor pointed out that if the members were to individually insist upon their undoubted right to a copy, the result would be that the business could not be taken up that night, as there were not in existence copies of all the documents. For himself he protested against reading the least part of the so-called charges, as he did not think this dirty linen should be washed in public. Ald. Partridge vigorously contended for reading the documents, notwithstanding the vote which had been taken, and when the public reading was refused, he remarked that they must keep quiet or leave the hall.

Ald. Macmillan, after a lot of wrangling about the effect of his demand, remarked in answer to the Mayor's observation, "We did not make the issue."

The Mayor—"No; but you made the dirt."

Ald. Macmillan—"I ask that the statement be retracted. I say it is false. We didn't make the dirt."

The Mayor—"It is not false."

After other compliments had been exchanged a motion of reconsideration of the decision not to have the documents read was made and agreed to, and the City Clerk then read the report, amidst great laughter from the audience.

The "charges" laid before the private meeting of the council were the first read. They consisted of a series of daily reports, commencing early in October and running until near the end of that month, made to the acting chief of police by Constables Clayards and Anderson, who appear to have devoted their whole time to this business. Here is a sample of these daily reports:

"Went out to Henry street where Mr. Hutchison lives, at 7 a.m. sharp; hid on the Gorge road behind a stump."

"9 a.m.—Postman rang the front door bell; no response; letter put under the front door."

"9:35 a.m.—Window shade in Hutchison residence raised about a foot."

"10:35 a.m.—Hutchison came out with a bicycle, and rode to electric light station."

"10:45 a.m.—Left the station and proceeded along" (long list of streets) "and was last sight of behind Colvinton office."

"11:35 a.m.—Located going into Cunningham & Hinton's on Government street."

"11:52 a.m.—Went into the Globe restaurant; 12:10 came out, and went into Salmon's cigar store. Came out and walked along Government street; talked to a man eight minutes; to another man five minutes; and to another ten minutes."

"1:05 p.m.—Went into Cunningham & Hinton's; came out at 1:35 and lost sight on Easton street; subsequently located on Douglas street but lost on Johnson street."

"Found at the electric light station at 4:30."

"4:55 p.m.—Went into Globe restaurant; came out at 5:40 and went into Salmon's cigar store. Came out talking with a man and smoking, and at 6:10 owing to the darkness and our precautions so that we should not be observed, was lost sight of on Johnson street. Reported the facts to Percus, and went off for the night."

The diaries for other days mentioned that Hutchison had spent six minutes looking into a curio shop; that he had "gone into Lowe's photographic studio"; "went half way across Douglas street and started back again"; "walked along the C. P. N. wharf with a yellow paper that looked like a way bill," etc. Time and again the object of the policemen's vigilance was left out of Cunningham & Hinton's or the workshop on Langley street, the inference drawn being that he was working for the firm named and not for the city, as shown by the paragraph from the policemen's report quoted and dealt with in Mr. Hutchison's reply.

Ald. Partridge, when the documents had been read and after some questioning of Ald. Bragg as to his disposition regarding the superintendent, addressing Mayor Teague said, "Now, sir, I wish to ask you one question."

The Mayor—"Be careful, because you might commit yourself."

Ald. Partridge—"My question is, whether it was you or the committee that set the detectives at work?"

The Mayor—"Will you sit down and not interrupt the proceedings?"

Ald. Partridge—"I want an answer."

The Mayor—"I tell you I will not answer that question; if I think it proper to set detectives to watch anyone I am quite prepared to take the responsibility for giving the orders, and I will not be questioned about it."

Ald. Partridge—"Very well, your Worship."

The Mayor—"I want to say, too, that I think you don't come here to deal with this business in the proper manner at all."

The reading of Superintendent Hutchison's reply was then proceeded with, as follows:—

"VICTORIA, B. C., Nov. 12, 1895.

"W. J. Douper, Esq., C. M. C. Victoria, B. C."

Sir:—I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your several communications, of the 2nd and 5th inst., forwarding copies of the various documents therein referred to, and instructing me, in accordance with the wishes of the city council, to attend a meeting of that honorable body to be held this Tuesday evening, for the purpose of furnishing a reply to certain charges which have been made against me. These charges, I understand, as against me, are fully dealt with in the report of the electric lighting committee, dated November 4, 1895, and presented to the council on the evening of that day. I respectfully beg leave to make answer as follows:

I. No books nor accounts have been kept by me.—This is entirely true. When I was appointed superintendent on the 22nd day of May, 1895, no books were provided for keeping records or accounts, and no in-

structions were given me that such records were required. For the first few months I was so busily engaged in the work incidental to the completion of the new station, the moving of the old plant, engine tests, inspection of fire alarm system, and extension of electric light lines, etc., etc., that I did not have time to plan the system on which such necessary records should be kept.

However, in August last, after the plant had been put in running order, I directed my reports and a record which would give complete information as to everything connected with the department. These draft forms were handed by me to the electric lighting committee, and I have no doubt that the committee had decided to recommend to the council their adoption, and I have been waiting for such action and instructions based thereon. I fully appreciate the value of such records, and will have much pleasure in carrying out any instructions the committee or the council may give me in this connection as regards the latter portion of the charge, permit me to say that as soon as the draft records above mentioned (or other similar ones) are adopted, it will be an easy matter, from documents available, to prepare the record since the plant was started with accurate details of all material, coal, etc., used, the only exact information lacking being the run of the machinery which however can be closely approximated.

2. Non-attendance and general neglect.—This charge, however honestly made, is false and unfounded. My outside work has prevented me being at the council as much as may have been expected, but I say that I have done my duty faithfully and well, and I am prepared to face an investigation upon oath. It would be ridiculous for me to spend my time at the station, when there is such urgent work to be done in connection with the system. As a general rule, there is nothing to be done at the station by the superintendent, there being competent men in charge of the various departments there, and I conceive that it should give personal attention to the outside work as well as to the inside work. It is not true that I have not visited the station except at long intervals, as reported. The allegations as to the lamp trimmers never having seen me on duty are wholly false.

3. Re Devonshire Road Circuit.—This matter was fully reported in the regular way at the time of the occurrence. The circumstances are briefly as follows: The dynamo was disabled from excessive floor vibration during the first engine test, a cause completely out of my control. One lamp was burned in the coils, and on the following night the other armature gave out in the commutator. The latter I repaired as soon as I could obtain proper fibre for insulating rings, and half the lights on that circuit were working in the shortest possible time, not being dark longer than seven days. The other armature, for want of time and appliances, I gave out to be repaired, as I considered it in the interests of the city to do so, as there was a great deal of work incident to the completion of construction work, demanding my constant attention. Farther than this, the city had no electrical workshop, and in the erection of the station there was no provision made for a room where repairs can be executed and proper machinery for that purpose kept. What repairs I have done (and the armature in question is the only piece of repair work given out) have been done principally at my old workshop at Langley street, where I still have my lathe and tools.

4. Re Cadboro Bay Circuit.—This also was reported at the time. The dynamo was damaged to the coils of one armature, and was repaired by me as soon as possible at my own shop and with my own lathe and appliances. While these repairs were being made only alternate lamps on the circuit were operated, and the fact that the trimmer passed by those that were not being used gave rise to the report current at the time that the lamps were being left to take care of themselves, and this is but an illustration of how easily even an honest person may be misled.

5. Re "Detectives" reports.—If there are charges to be made against me, I am prepared to meet them, but I must respectfully protest against a system of espionage and a system of "detectives" as was adopted. The most absurd, but, nevertheless, unjust conclusions arrived at by these amateur Pinkertons cannot be better illustrated than by reference to the following quotations from the report of "W. Clayards" to the Chief of Police, dated October 26, 1895, and a copy of which you have been good enough to forward me. He says: "Here his brother left him, and at 1:45 p.m. he (Mr. Hutchison) hired a pair horse truck from the stand and proceeded with the truck down Yates along Wharf to C. P. N. wharf. The truck was down at the wharf for about ten minutes. Came up from wharf, along Wharf to Fort street, up Fort to corner of Langley street (the old electric light building). Here Mr. Hutchison was joined by his brother, and they with the assistance of the driver proceeded to unload several coils of wire and rolled them into the above mentioned building. Mr. Hutchison's brother here appeared to call his attention to me, standing by the Brown Jug saloon, and as I am well known to the brother, I thought it advisable to discontinue the watching. The coils of wire referred to appeared to me to be a great deal smaller than those I have seen on the street belonging to the corporation. I have a suspicion (of course I may be wrong) that the coils of wire were the property of Cunningham & Hinton for use in the principal part of the buildings, for which I believe they have the contract to supply the electric fittings, etc.; their small shop on Government St. being too small to accommodate the coils of wire, they stored the same in the empty building. Mr. Hutchison evidently having some interest in the safe delivery and storage of the wire."

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the electric light committee himself has publicly acknowledged, not so, and the numerous alterations and changes necessary to put things in proper shape have made my duties and responsibilities very onerous. Yet notwithstanding that such has been the case, I say with all respect to the electric lighting committee that there has been no dereliction or neglect of duty on my part, and before the council shall act upon such general charges as have been made against me, I respectfully request that there be a full and complete investigation upon oath, when I shall be prepared to "indicate myself and prove to the satisfaction of all fair-minded men that the charges against me of neglect and general unfitness for the position of superintendent are wholly false."

"I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient servant," M. HUTCHISON, Superintendent of Electric Light Department.

Some discussion ensued as to the procedure now to be followed, in holding the investigation demanded by the superintendent, and finally a suggestion by Ald. Humphrey prevailed, this being that the council shall meet again on Thursday evening, when all the relevant evidence against Mr. Hutchison will be required to appear for examination as to their statements.

THE "ARION" CLUB

The Arion Club, Victoria's now famous male choir, opened their fourth season yesterday evening with a concert at Institute hall that gave genuine and unalloyed pleasure to all who had the good fortune to be included among the invited guests. Prominent among these were His Excellency the Governor-General and Lady Aberdeen, who with their suite arrived just as the first half of the music was being concluded, and remained until the close, highly appreciative of the excellence of the musical fare provided.

The club has changed but little in composition since the close of its last season, though a few new faces are seen in its ranks. Its music is, however, constantly improving in quality, and Victoria's new "hot" opportunities to see and understand how good a work Mr. Greig has done and is doing in the interest of his muse. The Arion club under his direction is not merely a well handled company of singers; it is a factor in music copying its own undiminished position in the province and presenting the works of the masters in such a way that they are thoroughly intelligible and speak to the hearts of all the people. To bring the organization under his direction to its present high level of excellence, the club's members have not only worked long and patiently, but have endeavored to do so with a view to the satisfaction of knowing that they are constantly improving—that the standard of their music is also growing better.

Under their direction, and thanks to their untiring efforts, the club's music is now being heard in all parts of the city, and the public are beginning to ask for and appreciate better music than at any previous period in the history of the city. Of course the club and the leader are mutually dependent—neither could do without the other—and while the club's triumphs would doubtless not have been achieved but for Mr. Greig, on the other hand he has been fortunate in having at his hands so good material. His basses offer a grand foundation, upon which almost any superstructure might be erected, while the other voices are handled with a skill and perfection that is that of a master in conducting his choir, and a true lover of music. And in all their work the value of distinct articulation is never once lost sight of in a striving for effects.

Last evening's programme happily illustrated the wide range of subjects now in the club's command, as well as demonstrated its ability in really classical work. Of the new numbers "Were the Atlantic Main" (Zoller) proved a swinging, tuneful drinking song, well sung and well appreciated.