

STORMY PROCEEDINGS AT HILPRECHT INQUIRY

No Effort to Get at Truth, As- serts Dr. Peters.

HIS TIME WASTED, HE SAYS

Accused and Accusers Face Each Other Before University Trustees in Session Lasting Four Hours.

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PHILADELPHIA, April 15.—Accused and accusers in the now famous Peters-Hilprecht controversy faced each other to-day before the Committee of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania appointed to investigate it, and the proceedings were more or less stormy.

The Rev. Dr. John P. Peters and Prof. J. D. Prince of Columbia University had come from New York to attend the hearing, which was held in the board room of the Real Estate Trust Company. All other witnesses against Dr. Hilprecht who had been asked to appear, except Prof. Paul Haupt of Johns Hopkins University, who is in Algiers, and Prof. Albert T. Clay of the Free Museum of Art and Science, Dr. Hilprecht's assistant, were present.

The session, which was secret, began at 10:30 o'clock in the morning, and continued until 2:40 in the afternoon. The greater part of it was taken up with technical queries addressed to Dr. Peters, which he afterward in a hasty interview, while on the way to a train for New York, announced as virtually unmeaning quibbles. He intimated that the time spent by him before the committee was largely wasted.

He criticised the examination as conducted by J. Levering Jones, a trustee of the university and a member of the investigating committee, saying:

"Doubts were cast on my scientific knowledge as well as that of the learned professors who were also present to prove their written charges of Prof. Hilprecht's unscientific methods and un-scholarly actions. There was no effort made to get at the truth. It was nothing but a lot of legal quibbling."

Dr. Peters declined to state what steps he would now take in the matter, but he stated that he was determined not to let the matter rest with the report of the investigating committee, in whom he declared his want of faith.

Prof. Hilprecht, after studying all the statements against him which had been filed with the committee, had prepared a series of questions in writing which Dr. Peters was asked to answer. This he did fully and explicitly.

The immediate object sought by Dr. Hilprecht was to obtain from Dr. Peters some kind of admission that tablets of a character similar to that of those dug up at the supposed site of the "Temple Library" might originally have come from there, although they were found elsewhere and even prior to the date of the first archaeological expedition to Nippur.

Dr. Peters yielded nothing of his position that such an assumption was wholly without justification in the absence of clear and convincing evidence, and that it was furthermore a scientific impertinence.

The two tablets which have been most often cited in this controversy, because they are mentioned in Hilprecht's book on "Exploration in Bible Lands" as part of the evidence of the existence of the so-called "Temple Library," had been brought by him to the meeting. They belong to two small collections in the Free Museum of Science and Art, one of which was presented to the university by Dr. Prince, a member of the first Babylonian expedition in 1889. While he was ill at Bagdad, Prof. Prince caused Dr. Hilprecht to purchase this collection on his account for the university. That was eleven years before, as Dr. Hilprecht avers, he discovered the so-called "Temple Library."

Dr. Prince, in the statement which he laid before the committee, fully identified this, the "Lushtamar," tablet.

Dr. Peters identified the other tablet as one that was bought for the university from an Arab antiquity dealer named Khabaza by Prof. Robert Harper, now of Chicago University, also in 1889, before a spadeful of earth had been turned up at Nippur by the explorers. This tablet, however, is labeled by Hilprecht in his book "Astronomical tablet from the Temple Library, Nippur." Dr. Peters affirms that it was not found at Nippur or near it, but in all probability came originally from Babylon.

Another main point in the questions prepared by Dr. Hilprecht and addressed to Dr. Peters by the committee, was the fact that the tablets in question are themselves correctly labeled, and that Dr. Hilprecht personally labeled them before they were put into the museum cases. No one has thus far disputed the correctness of the labels on the tablets themselves, so far as they go. The labels simply contain certain marks for identification, the title of the collection, and the date of purchase or discovery.

On the fact of the correctness of these labels Prof. Hilprecht founds a claim that his good faith in his treatment of the "astronomical" and the "Lushtamar" tablets is manifest, although his book gives no hint of the date of their acquisition, nor as to where they were really obtained.

Nearly all the time of the hearing was spent in dealing with Dr. Hilprecht's questions, which may be regarded as cross-examination of the complaining witnesses. A good deal of discussion arose and some exceedingly trenchant insinuations were made, it is said.