

THE BLAINE LETTERS.

James G. Blaine was a member of the Fortieth Congress, (March 1867-9) and Speaker of the House in the Forty-first, Forty-second, and Forty-third Congresses (1869-75). Mr. Blaine was also elected to the Forty-fourth Congress (1875), but the House had become Democratic, and elected a Democratic Speaker. Certain charges having been made, Mr. Blaine, April 24, 1876, made a "personal explanation" in the House, in the course of which he said:

"I never had any transaction of any kind with Thomas A. Scott concerning bonds of the Little Rock and Fort Smith road, or the bonds of any other railroad, or any business in any way connected with railroads, directly or indirectly, immediately or remotely."

"To give a seeming corroboration or foundation to the story which I have disproved, the absurd rumor has lately appeared in certain newspapers that I was the owner of from \$150,000 to \$250,000 of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad bonds, which I received in consideration, and that it was from these bonds that Thomas A. Scott received his \$75,000. The statement is gratuitously and utterly false."

"In common with hundreds of other people in New England and other parts of the country, I bought some of these bonds, not a very large amount, paying for them at precisely the same rate that others paid. I never heard, and do not believe, that the Little Rock Company, which I know is controlled by highly honorable men, ever parted with a bond to any person except at the regular price fixed for their sale."

"In addition to my investment in the bonds I united with others in raising some money for the company when it met its first financial troubles. Proceedings are now pending in the United States Circuit Court of Arkansas, to which I am a party of record, for the reimbursement of the money so advanced. All the bonds which I ever purchased I continued to hold when the company was reorganized in 1874. I exchanged them for stock and bonds in the new concern, which I still own. My whole connection with the road has been as open as the day. If there had been anything to conceal about it, I should never have touched it. Wherever concealment is desirable, avoidance is advisable, and I do not know any better test to apply to the honor and fairness of a business transaction. As to the question of propriety involved in a member of Congress holding an investment of this kind, it must be remembered the lands were granted to the State of Arkansas, and not to the railroad company, and that the company derived its life, franchise, and value wholly from the State, and to the State the company is amenable and answerable, and not in any sense to Congress. Since I purchased the bonds but one act of Congress has passed in any way touching the subject, and that was merely to rectify a previous mistake in legislation."

"I repeat, the Little Rock road derived all that it had from the State of Arkansas, and not from Congress. It was in the discretion of Congress to give or withhold from the State, but it was solely within the discretion of the State to give or withhold from the Little Rock Railroad Company."

"Instead of receiving bonds of the Little Rock and Fort Smith road as a gratuity, I never had one except at the regular market price, and instead of making a large fortune of that company, I have incurred a severe pecuniary loss from my investment in its securities, which I still retain; and out of such affairs as this grows the popular gossip of large fortunes amassed in Congress."

"I have never done anything in my public career for which I could be put to the faintest blush in any presence, or for which I can not answer to my constituents, my conscience, and the Great Searcher of Hearts."

Mr. Blaine at the time of making this statement supposed that all letters which had passed between him and Mr. Warren Fisher, Jun., of Boston, a partner of Mr. Blaine's brother-in-law Mr. Stanwood, had been given up.

"There is another reason which made it particularly exasperating to me, that is, that in the month of September, 1872, Mr. Fisher and I had a final settlement, in which we exchanged receipts in full. I think the precise date was September 21, 1872. It was then said that all letters on either side, and all papers and scraps of papers, should be given up, and I supposed they were given up."

In May, 1876, however, the Judiciary Committee was conducting an investigation into certain railroad matters, and subpoenaed Mr. Fisher and Mr. James Mulligan, his book-keeper. Mr. Mulligan brought with him a number of letters, memoranda, etc., which Mr. Blaine procured from him in the famous interview, and from which, under pressure from the press and his political friends, Mr. Blaine read in his second "personal explanation" of June 5, 1876. The following comprise the letters read by Mr. Blaine, that of November 25, 1870, made public through the New York Sun by Mr. Aquila Adams, and the others since furnished to the public by Mr. Fisher and Mr. Mulligan, chronologically arranged. On June 12, 1876, Mr. Blaine had his sunstroke, and the investigation was postponed, and it was never completed, Mr. Blaine having meanwhile been appointed to Secretary Morrill's vacant place in the Senate.

WASHINGTON, May 26, 1864.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your favor received. I am very glad, all things considered, that the Government has accepted your proposition to take all your manufacture till last September, 1865. It gives a straight and steady business for the company for a good stretch of time.

In regard to the tax provision you can judge for yourself, as I send herewith a copy of the bill as reported from the Finance Committee of the Senate and now pending in that body—see pages 148-149, where I have marked. In looking over the bill you will please observe that all words in italic letters are amendments proposed by the Senate Finance Committee, while all words included in brackets are proposed to be struck out by same committee.

The provision which you inquire about was not in the original bill, but was an amendment moved from the Ways and Means Committee by Mr. Kasson, of Iowa, to whom I suggested it. It is just and proper in every sense, and will effect a good many interests, including your company. I am glad to hear such good accounts of your progress in the affairs of the company, of which I have always been proud to be a member.

Tell Mr. Welles that his brother has been nominated by the Senate for commissary of subsistence, with rank of captain. He will undoubtedly be confirmed as soon as his case can be reached. I will advise as soon as it is done.

In haste, yours truly,
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Judiciary Committee (containing schedules of contract of September 5, 1869), and which is labelled on the outer cover:

"Warren Fisher, Jr., private."
[First page of mem.-book.]

Synopsis on next and following pages of the contracts made through J. G. Blaine by Warren Fisher, Jr., as assignee of the contract for building the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad.

[Second and third pages of mem.-book.]

Contracts made by Warren Fisher, Jr., with the following-named person to deliver the stock and bonds named, on their paying the amounts named:

NAME	Residence	To Pay.	TO RECEIVE.		
			Common Stock.	Preferred Stock.	Fort M. Bonds.
A. & P. Coburn	Skowhegan	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Peter F. Sanborn	Augusta	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Alanson P. Morrill	Readfield	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
John C. Johnson	Belfast	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
John R. Hazeltine	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John B. Hazeltine	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John P. Monroe	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John W. Johnson (deceased)	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John H. Johnson	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John Hersey	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John M. Morrill	Augusta	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John A. B. Farnell	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John H. Williams	"	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
John M. Bailey	Winthrop	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
		\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000

[The name Jos. H. Williams, "\$5,000," is erased in pencil.]

[Fourth page of memorandum-book.]

In addition to the common stock, preferred stock, and first mortgage bonds agreed to be delivered to the respective parties named on the preceding page, Mr. Fisher agrees to deliver to J. G. Blaine a similar amount of land bonds and 25 per cent. of first mortgage bonds, viz.:

Land bond, 7s	\$120,000
First mortgage bonds, 6s	32,500

The same to be delivered by Mr. Fisher as soon as ready for distribution.

[Fifth page of memorandum-book.]

The other contracts on different bases are as follows:

1. With Joseph A. Sanborn and Charles M. Bailey, Mr. Fisher agrees to deliver \$8,000 common stock, \$8,000 preferred stock, 8,000 land bonds, 10,000 first mortgage bonds.

All for \$12,300, payable—	
\$300	\$3,000, November 25, 1869.
\$2,200	5,000, December 5, 1869.
\$1,700	2,500, January 5, 1870.
	800, February 5, 1870.
	800, March 5, 1870.
	800, April 5, 1870.
	800, May 5, 1870.
	800, June 5, 1870.
	\$12,300

The amounts inclosed on left-hand margin above, \$600, \$2,200, \$1,700, are payable by Mr. Fisher to Mr. Blaine.

The sixth and seventh pages of memorandum-book contained three contracts similar to the last, in which the amounts to be paid Mr. Blaine were respectively \$3500, \$1150, and \$6000.

AUGUSTA, ME., October 4, 1869.

MY DEAR MR. FISHER,—Find inclosed \$10,000 check in pay't of A. & P. Coburn's subscription.

I presume you will receive by same mail the 20 per cent. due on all the subscriptions already forwarded to you, and also on the following:

Philo Hersey	Belfast	\$5000
A. W. Johnson	"	5000
R. C. Johnson	"	5000
Nahum P. Munroe	"	5000
C. B. Hazeltine	"	5000

This makes \$125,000 in all I have disposed of. It is doubtful if I dispose of any more; but I shall know by to-morrow. So there will be no delay to embarrass you in any way. No one will ever know from me that I have disposed of a single dollar in Maine. So there need be no embarrassment in talking with Mr. Caldwell. I don't wish you to settle that matter with Mr. Caldwell till you hear from me again. Please send receipt to A. & P. Coburn, Skowhegan, Maine. Yours truly,
J. G. BLAINE.

After I rec'd the letter in regard to Mr. Adams's case I telegraphed again. Delano had ret'd, and I think the suspension was at once ordered by him.

P. S.—I send only \$8000 this morning. Will send \$2000 remaining to-morrow morning.

(Personal.)

AUGUSTA, MAINE, Oct 4, 1869.

MY DEAR SIR,—I spoke to you a short time ago about a point of interest to your railroad company that occurred at the last session of Congress.

It was on the last night of the session, when the bill renewing the land grant to the State of Arkansas for the Little Rock road was reached, and Julian of Indiana, chairman of the Public Lands Committee, and by right entitled to the floor, attempted to put on the bill, as an amendment, the Fremont El Paso scheme—a scheme probably well known to Mr. Caldwell. The House was thin, and the lobby in the Fremont interest had the thing all set up, and Julian's amendment was likely to prevail if brought to a vote. Roots and other members from Arkansas, who were doing their best for their own bill (to which there seemed to be no objection), were in despair, for it was well known that the Senate was hostile to the Fremont scheme, and if the Arkansas bill had gone back to the Senate with Julian's amendment, the whole thing would have gone on the table and slept the sleep of death.

In this dilemma Roots came to me to know what on earth he could do under the rules; for he said it was vital to his constituents that the bill should pass. I told him that Julian's amendment was entirely out of order, because not germane; but he had not sufficient confidence in his knowledge of the rules to make the point, but he said General Logan was opposed to the Fremont scheme, and would probably make the point. I sent my page to General Logan with the suggestion, and he at once made the point. I could not do otherwise than sustain it; and so the bill was freed from the mischievous amendment moved by Julian, and at once passed without objection.

At that time I had never seen Mr. Caldwell, but you can tell him that without knowing it I did him a great favor.

Sincerely yours,
J. G. BLAINE.

W. FISHER, JR., Esq., 24 India Street, Boston.

AUGUSTA, October 4, 1869.

MY DEAR MR. FISHER,—Find inclosed contracts of parties named in my letter of yesterday. The remaining contracts will be completed as rapidly as circumstances will permit.

I inclose you part of the Congressional Globe of April 9, containing the point to which I referred at some length in my previous letter of to-day. You will find it of interest to read it over and see what a narrow escape your bill made on that last night of the session. Of course it was my plain duty to make the ruling when the point was once raised. If the Arkansas men had not, however, happened to come to me when at their wits' end and in despair, the bill would undoubtedly have been lost, or at least postponed for a year. I thought the point would interest both you and Caldwell, though occurring before either of us engaged in the enterprise.

I beg you to understand that I thoroughly appreciate the courtesy with which you have treated me in this railroad matter, but your conduct toward me in business matters has always been marked by unbounded liberality in past years, and of course I have naturally come to expect the same of you now. You urge me to make as much as I fairly can out of the arrangement into which we have entered. It is natural that I should do my utmost to this end. I am bothered only by one thing, and that is definite and expressed agreement with Mr. Caldwell. I am anxious to acquire the interest he has promised me, but I do not get a definite understanding with him as I have with you.

I shall be in Boston in a few days, and shall then have an opportunity to talk the matter over fully with you. I am disposed to think that whatever I do with Mr. Caldwell must really be done through you.

Kind regards to Mrs. Fisher. Sincerely,
J. G. BLAINE.

AUGUSTA, ME., 5th Oct., 1869.

MY DEAR MR. FISHER,—I inclose you two thousand dollar check, balance of A. & P. Coburn's installment; two thousand dollars in pay't of Anson P. Morrill's installment; one thousand dollars in pay't of Lot M. Morrill's installment. Lot M. Morrill's subscription of \$5000 is additional to those already advised, making in all \$130,000. There may possibly be \$20,000 more, but \$150,000 will be my limit.

I received yours inclosing P. R. Hazeltine's letter from Belfast. By mail succeeding this you will receive Cashier Check for \$1000, and hereafter you will have no trouble with any of the Maine subscriptions. All will come to you in Cashier Checks or money direct by express.

"My whole connection with the road has been as open as the day. If there had been anything to conceal about it, I should never have touched it. Wherever concealment is desirable, avoidance is desirable, and I do not know any better test to apply to the honor and fairness of a business transaction."

"The transaction was perfectly open and as fair as the day."—Blaine's explanation of April 24, 1876.

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Your action in the whole matter was as open and as fair as the day."—Blaine's explanation of April 24, 1876.

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