probrious observations upon myself which Mr. Thompson claims to have promptly made. Now, from the *National Intelligencer*, a well known and reliable journal then published in Washington, we learn that the President had his last interview with the Postmaster General at 11 o'clock on the night of the seventh of March, 1859, and that while standing at the bedside and about to take his leave, the Postmaster General said to him: "I have endeavored faithfully to discharge all my duties." To which the President replied that his effort had been successful, and that the whole country would attest "*to his fidelity as a public officer, and the success that had attended his administration of the department.*" Within ten hours thereafter the Postmaster General was no more. Does any man believe that after the utterance of these emphatic and solemn words the President was capable of turning round and saying to his Cabinet that the Post-office Department had "suffered" from Postmaster General Brown's administration of it? But I now propose to show that this Cabinet meeting, with its imputed vileness of speech—inspired by the venom of a Cobra—was a fabrication in the whole and in all its parts.

Mr. Thompson says "the appointment hung fire for several weeks," which is necessarily an averment that "several weeks" elapsed after this pretented Cabinet meeting before my appointment was made—the object of this being to disparage me as far as possible by conveying the impression that the President hesitated thus long before he could bring himself to confer the office upon me. This statement is important to be noted, since it will prove a light to guide us to the truth we are seeking. It is only in the field of vague generalities that the triumphs of fabricators are achieved. They come speedily to grief when they allow themselves to be specific, and Mr. Thompson's fate will not be different, in this respect, from that of the class to which he belongs. By yielding to the temptation to defame me, and so saying that this long period intervened between the Cabinet meeting and my appointment, he unwittingly has supplied a means, at once easy and sure, of exposing the deception which he is attempting to impose upon the public.

It appears from the *National Intelligencer* of the ninth of March, 1859, that Postmaster General Brown died on the *day preceding* at about 9 o'clock in the morning, from a severe attack of pneumonia, and in the same journal of Thursday, the tenth of March, I find this editorial paragraph:

Hon. Joseph Holt, for some time past Commissioner of Patents, was *yesterday* nominated by the President, and *before* unanimously confirmed by the Senate, to the vacant office of Postmaster General. This is commended on all hands and in all respects to be an excellent appointment.

The *National Intelligencer* of the eleventh of March gives a detailed account of the funeral services of Postmaster General Brown, which are represented to have taken place at the white house the day before, and from the account I make the following extract:

About 12 o'clock the President of the United States, accompanied by Secretaries Case, Floyd, Toucey, Cobb, Black, and the new Postmaster General, Holt, entered the room through the recess in the parlors and took their seats near the energy. The Rev. Dr. Hall, of the G Street Episcopal church, and the Rev. L. G. Granberry, the officiating clergymen, then took their position at a small table in front of the coffin.

It is evident, then, from contemporary and unquestionable testimony, that Postmaster General Brown having died on the eighth of March, I was on the ninth nominated by the President to succeed him, and at once unanimously confirmed; that on the tenth I attended his funeral services with the other members of the Cabinet, and that finally, as the record shows, on the fourteenth of March, with my commission in my hand, I went to the department, was qualified, and entered upon my duties as Postmaster General.

What reception is due from the public to a man capable, in the interests of the foulest defamation, of thus misleading them? I look in vain for even the shred of a circumstance that can hide the hideous nakedness of the falsification of history which this simple narrative brings to light. The case, then, stands thus: It is proved that I was appointed on the ninth of March, and that the Postmaster General died only one day before (the eighth.) Mr. Thompson says the Cabinet meeting *in which, Postmaster General Brown's death being recognized, the question of his successor was considered*, was held "several weeks" before my appointment, and *so necessarily the same "several weeks," less a single day, before the Postmaster General actually died!* Could anything be added to the completeness of this exposure? Should he, thus pressed to the wall, strive to escape by suggesting that he was mistaken as to the *time* of the cabinet meeting, and that it must have taken place between the day of the death—the eighth—and that of the appointment—the ninth—the shallow subterfuge would be driven to commit hari-kari, in presence of the unqualified declaration that the "appointment hung fire for several weeks."

Pardon me for again entreating that the rule of law quoted be still held in remembrance, since it will be helpful in estimating aright other statements yet to be examined.

It was my fortune while Commissioner of Patents to render to President Buchanan certain services—not at all in the line of my duty—which were important and relieved him of much personal labor, and for which I received his thanks. From the character of these services and the close and cordial relations into which they brought us, he had the best opportunity of judging for himself of my capabilities and of my fitness for official advancement. That he did so judge and make the appointment on that judgment, without a suggestion from Mr. Thompson or anybody else, I, from the promptitude of his action, have never doubted. The fact that the appointment was made and confirmed *the day after the death* of Postmaster General Brown, would seem to indicate that there was little time or opportunity for intervention from within or without.

On the resignation of Secretary Floyd the President appointed me Secretary of War and gave me constant proofs of his confidence and good will to the close of his administration, and while holding my hand, as I was taking my leave of him when he was quitting Washington, his last words were: "Holt, you have been true." These words were pronounced with an earnestness which left no question but that his heart was in them; they were his judgment on my entire official record.

I will not insult the public intelligence by noticing the driveling story about what Mr. Thompson thought, and everybody know, would be the fate of state bonds in the event of a war.

The gravest of his accusations remains to be responded to. Speaking of me, he says:

"He it was who bribed witnesses to testify that I was the instigator of the plot to assassinate Lincoln."

"Have you any proofs?" asked the interviewer.

"I have this," he said: "The fellow who testified afterward confessed that he had sworn to a lie" (no such confession was ever made), "and was put on trial for perjury. During this trial it was proven that large sums of money had been given the perjurer by Holt, my enemy."

I recognize in this the resurrected cry of a rebel pack that was at my heels seventeen years ago. Furiously and fast they pursued, but their cry proved harmless then, and it will prove harmless now. Of the very large number of witnesses who were examined on behalf of the government during the trial of the assassins of President Lincoln before a Military Commission in this city, but two implicated Mr. Thompson in the general conspiracy alleged to have existed for the commission of the crime. These were Richard Montgomery and a man calling himself Sandford Conover. The first (Montgomery) was unknown to me, but, as appeared by his evidence, he had been previously in the government employ. The character of his testimony will be seen from the following extracts copied from the published record of the trial:

I visited Canada in the summer of 1861, and, excepting the time I have been going backward and forward, have remained there until about two weeks ago. I knew George N. Sanders, Jacob Thompson, Clement C. Clay, Prof. Holcomb, Beverly Tucker, W. C. Cleary, and Harrington. I have frequently met these persons since the summer of 1861, at Niagara Falls, at Toronto, St. Catherine's, and at Montreal. Thompson passed by several other names, one of which was Carson, Clay passed by the name of Hope, also Tracy, and another was T. E. Lacy.

In a conversation I had with Jacob Thompson in the summer of 1864 he said he had his friends (confederates) all over the northern states, who were ready and willing to go any length to serve the cause of the south; and he added that he could at any time have the tyrant Lincoln, and any other of his advisers that he chose, put out of his way; he would have but to point out the man that he considered in his way, and his friends, as he termed them, would put him out of it, and not let him know anything about it if necessary; and that they would not consider it a crime when done for the south.

Shortly after Mr. Thompson told me what he was able to do I repeated the conversation to Mr. Clay, who said: "That is so; we are all devoted to our cause, and ready to go any lengths—to do anything under the sun to serve our cause."

In January of this year I saw Jacob Thompson in Montreal several times. In one of these conversations he said a proposition had been made to him to rid the world of the tyrant Lincoln, Stanton, Grant, and some others. The men who had made the proposition, he said, he knew were bold, daring men, and able to execute anything they would undertake, without regard to the cost. He said he was in favor of the proposition, but had determined to defer his answer until he had consulted with his government at Richmond, and he was then only waiting their approval. He added that he thought it would be a blessing to the people both north and south, to have these men killed. * * * * * * *

I have been in Canada since the assassination. A few days after I met Beverly Tucker at Montreal. He said a great deal about the wrongs that the south had received at the hands of Mr. Lincoln, and that he deserved his death, and it was a pity he did not meet with it long ago. He said it was too bad that the boys had not been allowed to act when they wanted to. The "boys" was an expression applied to the confederate soldiers and others in their employ who engaged in raids, and who were employed to assassinate the President.

I related a portion of the conversation I had had with Mr. Thompson to Mr. W. C. Cleary, who is a son of confidential secretary to Mr. Thompson, and he told me that Booth was one of the parties to whom Thompson had reference; and he said, in regard to the assassination, that it was too bad that the whole work had not been done; by which I understood him to mean that they intended to assassinate a greater number than they succeeded in killing. Cleary remarked, when speaking of his regret that the whole work had not been done, "They had better look out; we are not done yet." And he added that they would never be conquered—would never give up.

Cleary said that Booth had been there, visiting Thompson twice in the winter; he thought the last time was in December. He had also been there in the summer.

Thompson told me that Cleary was posted upon all his affairs, and that if I sought him (Thompson) at any time and he was away, I might state my business to Mr. Cleary and it would be all the same; that I could have perfect confidence in him, and that he was a very close-mouthed man. * * *

During my stay in Canada I was in the service of the United States government, seeking to acquire information in regard to the plans and purposes of the rebels who were assembled there. To do this most effectually I adopted the name of James Thompson, and, leading them to suppose this was my correct name, I adopted some other name at any hotel at which I might be stopping. I was entrusted with dispatches from these confederates to take to Richmond. I carried some to Gordonville, with instructions to send them from there. I received a reply to those dispatches, which I carried back to Canada, bringing them through Washington and making them known to the United States government. I took no dispatches from the rebel government to their agents in Canada without first delivering them to the authorities in Washington.

I frequently heard the subject of raids upon our frontier and the burning of cities spoken of by Thompson, Clay, Cleary, Tucker, and Sanders. Mr. Clement C. Clay was one of the prime movers in the matter before the raids were started. They received his direct indorsement. He represented himself to me as being a sort of representative of their war department at Richmond. The men I have reference to, more especially Mr. Clay and Mr. Thompson, represented that they were acting under the sanction of their government, and as having full powers to act with reference to that; that they had full power to do anything that they deemed expedient and for the benefit of their cause.

I was in Canada when arrangements were made to fire the city of New York. I left Canada to bring the news to Washington ten days before the attempt was made. It originated in Canada, and had the full sanction of these men.

If this evidence has ever been confuted, in whole or in part, it is unknown to me. This witness has never been tried for perjury, or accused of that crime in any legal proceeding, nor, so far as I know or believe, has his character for veracity been questioned in any judicial inquiry. He stood before the Military Commission, and stands now unimpeached. The public has probably long since determined the weight to which his statements are entitled. It is surprising that, in the zeal with which he has pursued and branded "the fellow" Conover "the perjurer," Mr. Thompson should have totally lost sight of Richard Montgomery, with whose testimony he must be familiar, since it was published so long ago.

The other witness (Conover), also a stranger to me, was brought to the notice of the government by a gentleman of New York, who represented him as having been a former correspondent of the *Tribune*, and as altogether reliable. His evidence was more distinctly criminative of Mr. Thompson than that of Montgomery, but because of subsequent events, yet to be stated, I forbear to quote it. Now, both these witnesses were summoned, attended, and gave their testimony in the usual way, and received the compensation allowed by law for such services, and any averment or insinuation that they were bribed or received any money or other consideration from me or by my authority for the purpose of controlling or in any manner affecting the testimony given by them is as utterly false as malignant.

In July, after the trial, Conover addressed a written communication to me from New York, of which the following is the opening paragraph:

NEW YORK, July 26, 1865.—BRIG. GEN. HOLT.—*Dear Sir:* Believing that I can procure witnesses and documentary evidence sufficient to convict Jeff. Davis and C. C. Clay of complicity in the assassination of the President, and that I can also find and secure John H. Surratt, I beg leave to tender the government, through you, my services for these purposes.

It will not escape notice that no allusion is made to Mr. Thompson. He then proceeded to set out in detail what he thought could be proved by the witnesses he proposed to produce. On the second of August following, another letter to the same effect, but more urgent, was received from him, and after a conference with the Secretary of War, with his full approval, the proposal was accepted, and Conover entered upon the fulfillment of his engagement. Some six or seven months were occupied in this, and after all the witnesses produced by him—none of whom were known to me—had been examined, and their depositions filed in the Bureau of Military Justice, Conover, under the supervision of the Secretary of War, was allowed a compensation, which, with what he had previously received, was deemed just, and no more, for his services—such sums as were required for the attendance of the witnesses themselves having been before paid out from time to time. Conover himself gave no deposition. In this there was no departure from the course habitually pursued by all the departments of the government. It was to this compensation that Mr. Thompson, with his customary looseness and recklessness of speech, alludes when he says that it was proven on Conover's "trial that large sums of money had been given the perjurer by Holt, my enemy," though no proof is offered to this effect; nor have I ever heard before, nor have I now any reason to believe, that the matter was alluded to on that trial. But be this as it may, there could have been no truthful representation on the subject at all different from what I have made.

At this time nothing had occurred to excite the slightest suspicion of Conover's integrity in all that he had done, or in the credibility of his witnesses. Some time afterward two of these witnesses, conscience stricken, came and confessed that they had sworn falsely, having been suborned to do so by Conover. Investigation satisfied me that they were sincere in their avowals, and without delay appropriate action was taken. A prosecution was set on foot against Conover, and he was convicted and sent to the penitentiary for perjury and subornation of perjury, and on the margin of all the reports made by me on the depositions of the witnesses he had produced, an indorsement was made stating that the depositions were withdrawn and had been *discredited*. What more could have been done? The antidote was in this manner brought in direct contact with the poison, and so destroying it at once and for all time to come. Fortunately this most guilty deception was discovered so soon that neither the reputation nor the sensibilities of anybody had suffered by the temporary credit given to it. I had acted in receiving and reporting upon the depositions of these witnesses in a strictly judicial capacity, and was no more responsible for their perjury than is a judge for the perjury of a witness committed in a trial before him. It is worth mentioning that, of all these perjured witnesses, but two spoke of Mr. Thompson in connection with the assassination plot, and they testified to nothing they knew, but to something they had heard! Now, although even perjurers do not lie always and in all things, yet it may be and is unhesitatingly conceded that it would be unsafe to credit as a basis of action Conover's testimony before the Military Commission, and this, not because of its improbability—for it was strongly corroborated by Montgomery, who is unimpeached—but because of the personal infamy in which he afterwards involved himself. Still, it remains for a thoughtful and discriminating public to determine how far the clear and incisive testimony of Richard Montgomery can be impaired in its force by denunciations, however well deserved, of another witness with whom he had no connection whatever.

It has not been my purpose in this paper to accuse Mr. Thompson, in regard to his conduct in Canada, preferring to leave this to the events of the past, under such interpretation as loyal and candid men may give them. My leading purpose has been to vindicate myself from a charge as wicked and unprovoked as ever fell from human lips. Some seventeen years ago, in an elaborate publication, I defended myself triumphantly from the rebel criminations of my official conduct in connection with Conover and his witnesses, which were then beating as a storm upon me. These conflicts, with their issues, have passed into history, and Mr. Thompson greatly mistakes if he supposes the judgement of that history is to be reversed or modified by the invectives of to-day, however audacious and vindictive they may be.

But it is proper that I should give the origin of the hatred which Mr. Thompson has so long borne me, and which has just found so unworthy an expression. After it had been determined and announced in the Cabinet that Fort Sumpter should be reinforced, it was arranged by Gen. Scott and myself that this should be attempted by the Star of the West, which, with all the precautions possible, was dispatched from New York for this purpose. Mr. Thompson, being still a member of the Cabinet, with all the obligations of honor and of loyalty imposed by his position resting upon him, telegraphed to Charleston that this vessel was coming and its object. In consequence, when it arrived in Charleston harbor the rebel batteries opened on it, and it was driven back. Up to this time our relations had been friendly—certainly so on my part—but this act separated me from him at once and forever. Having resigned his seat in the Cabinet and returned to Mississippi, he addressed to the people of that state the following language:

As I was writing my resignation I sent a dispatch to Judge Longstreet that the Star of the West was coming with re-enforcements. *The troops were then put on their guard*, and when the Star of the West arrived she received a storm *welcome from booming* cannon, and soon beat a retreat. I was rejoiced the vessel was not sunk, but I was the more rejoiced that the *concealed trick*, first conceived by Gen. Scott and adopted by Secretary Holt, but countermanded by the President when too late, proved a failure.

This was his exultant cry over a stab given to his country at the very moment he was enjoying its confidence, and was clothed with its honors. In his late "interview" he again frankly avows this criminal act, but thinks he should be excused from blame because others had the same information, and *might have communicated it to the enemy*—but did not, doubtless from a sense of duty—a specimen of logic so unique as to be worth remembering. The term "concealed trick" imported and was intended to import all possible unfairness and dishonor on the part of Gen. Scott and myself. Although that grand old soldier certainly needed no defense at my hands, yet it was due to the responsible action which we had jointly taken that it should be rescued from the obloquy sought to be heaped upon it. To this end I addressed a letter to the editors of the *National Intelligencer*, which appeared in that journal on the fifth of March, 1861, setting forth the circumstances under which the Star of the West had been dispatched, and, in doing so, utterly dmolished Mr. Thompson's calumnious accusation, and so set his disloyal conduct in its true light before the country. This was the beginning of a relentless hostility on his part, which—judging from its present vigor—has been carefully nursed through the long years which have followed. Mr. Buchanan, after reading this letter the morning it appeared, said to me: "Your letter is severe, but just." This was the judgment of one who had complete personal knowledge of all the facts on which my defense and the arraignment of Mr. Thompson's action were based. Subsequently I addressed an other letter as the former—and which was a rejoinder to Mr. Tompson's reply to my first—in which the position he occupied was characterized in these words:

It remains, therefore, undenied and undeniable, as a part of the history of the times, that the late Secretary of the Interior, while yet a member of the Cabinet, dispatched intelligence which reached, and must have been intended to reach, those in open arms against the government of the United States, and that upon this information the Star of the West was fired upon and expelled from Charleston harbor, thus defeating the expedition for the relief of Fort Sumter, and jeopardizing the lives of all engaged in it. It is further part of the record thus made by the Secretary himself that in this result, secured by his own act, he "rejoiced."

These words were true then, and they are true now, and history will not fail to make a like record of Mr. Thompson in a book of remembrance which will not perish, and to this will be surely added a branding condemnation so long as the sentiment of loyalty to our country—which, next to the worship of the living God, is the noblest spring of human action—is respected among men. It gave me no pleasure to write these letters. On the contrary, it was painful to be obliged to speak in appropriate terms of an act of official treachery unparalleled in our history, and which I felt to be a humiliation for our country and times, and if these letters pierced the joints of Mr. Thompson's armor, as doubtless they did, he should remember always, amid the ranklings of his resentment, that they were but the rebound from a shaft which had come from his own quiver.

Mr. Thompson speaks bitterly of me as his "enemy," and possibly has been led to believe that I, in common with the loyal people of the North, have been led into unfriendliness toward him because of his distinguished military services during the rebellion. This is a delusion on his part which I hasten to correct. The only history of these services which has reached the North is that given by Gen. Grant in his testimony before the Military Commission which tried the assassins of the President. I copy it from the record of the trial as follows:

I met Jacob Thompson, formerly Secretary of the Interior under President Buchanan's administration, when the army was lying opposite Vicksburg, at what is called Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. A little boat was discovered coming up near the opposite shore, apparently surreptitiously, and trying to avoid detection. A little tug was sent out from the navy to pick it up. When they got to it they found a little white flag sticking out of the stern of the row boat, and Jacob Thompson in it. They brought him to Admiral Porter's flagship, and I was sent for to meet him. I do not recollect the ostensible business he had. There seemed to be nothing at all important in the visit, but he pretended to be under a flag of truce, and he had, therefore, to be allowed to go back again. That was in January or February of '63, and it was the first flag of truce we had through. He professed to be in the military service of the rebels, and said that he had been offered a commission—*anything that he wanted;* but, knowing that he was not a military man, he preferred having something more like a civil appointment, and he had, therefore, taken the place of Inspector General, with the rank of lieutenant colonel, in the rebel service.

The heart of the country has been found large enough and magnanimous enough to forgive these services against its flag, but of course, they were too brilliant to be forgotten.

I cannot close this communication without bearing emphatic testimony to the loyalty of President Buchanan throughout the troubled and trying scenes which marked the last months of his administration. With measureless responsibilities oppressing him; badgered by traitors and by the department of the government which owed him sympathy and a loyal support; and, standing, as he did, on the brink of a great national calamity, the imminence of which was awing all hearts, he was often cast down, but never unfaithful to his duties. Amid the blinding rancor of party strife he was constantly misunderstood and constantly misrepresented. He was not an aggressive man, nor at all given to violent forms of speech or of action. He shrunk from the contemplation of civil war and the bloodshed it would involve, and sought to postpone it to the last possible moment. But in all this there was no taint of disloyalty. While, however, uniformly gentle and suave in his modes, he was not the less firm in view of the ends to be finally attained. And yet it was this very gentleness and suavity—the result, in part, perhaps, of his peculiar temperament, but yet more, it may be, of the training inseparable from his diplomatic career—which often misled men who paused not to reflect that iron hands are sometimes found in silken gloves.

J. HOLT.

The Crowded Museum.

At the time of the completion of the spacious edifice for the collections of the national museum it was hardly thought that its capacity would in a year be taxed to its utmost, but such is the fact. Vast additions to its stores of valuable objects of art and industry have lately been received from the Permanent Exhibition Company of Philadelphia, since the collapse of that establishment, and the question of where to put those additions becomes a serious one, and can only be satisfactorily settled by the erection of another building of the size of the present one.

THE FISH COMMISSION.

Its Summer Labors Nearly Completed—Getting Ready for Carp Distribution.

The United States Fish commission is about winding up its present season's operations at Wood's hall in connection with investigations of the marine products of the New England coast, and will shortly be re-established in its headquarters in this city. Commissioner Baird will most likely visit New York and Philadelphia on official business before returning to Washington.

From a scientific point of view this season's work of the commission has resulted most successfully, large collections having been secured, and among them several products of the deep sea that are new to science.

Fish cars Nos. 1 and 2 are being put in thorough condition for the extensive carp distribution that will shortly be entered upon, while work upon car No. 3 will soon be begun. The efforts of the commission to restock depleted waters, as well as to furnish an excellent table fish for farmers and others at points distant from large bodies of water, are beginning to be appreciated to an extent hardly anticipated at the outset of its work. For thorough equipment both in land and water rolling stock the United States Fish commission has hardly a rival in the world.

Gunners report the underbrush as too thick yet for rabbit shooting. The animals, however, are quite plentiful, as are partridges.

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The National BUSINESS

The business firms appearing in this column are among the best and most reliable in this city.

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AMUSEMENTS.—FORD'S OPERA HOUSE. See advt.

AMUSEMENTS.—NATIONAL THEATER. See advt.

AUCTIONEERS.—DUNCANSON BROS., Ninth and D sts.

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