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RECEIVED
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F. L. BLACK

June 9, 1933

Mr. F. L. Black
c/o E. R. Squibb & Sons
745 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

My dear Sir:

Your good letter of the 7th has just been received, and I wish to thank you for it and also for your offer to let me read your files when you can lay your hands on them. I shall wait for the matter with considerable curiosity.

Seems funny to me that I missed out on those Dearborn Independent articles of yours. The paper came to this place in considerable numbers at the time and although I was not myself a subscriber I did see the paper frequently, and then, too, so many of my friends knew me to be a Lincoln fan for long years and it is singular that some one of them did not call my attention to the articles. Anyhow, when you can lay your hands on the matter and send it to me I will be mighty glad to see it, and of course will use caution to preserve and return it safely to you.

In my first letter to you I mentioned the Reverend Garrett's review of Bates's book. I wonder how you got that? I ask this for the reason that I discovered it only by the merest accident. Nowhere have I ever seen any mention of this review, nor has it ever been published that I know of except in the single instance when it appeared in the Memphis Commercial Appeal, in December 1908. When you get into your files on the subject if you find that you do not have a copy of that review, let me know and I will send you one. The review was written by Garrett in long hand and sent to a gentleman in Memphis and the latter handed the manuscript to a representative of that paper and in some way the manuscript was not returned to him. But I have sent to this gentleman for an affidavit to fix the proof of its existence. In this connection, let me also ask, do you know that the Reverend Garrett received letters from Bates asking him for the facts about Booth's identity? This correspondence was in 1907, at about the time Bates's book came out, or very shortly before. It seems that Bates wrote to him for some matter to be put in the book and Garrett wrote him the facts, telling him that if he would investigate and verify all the statements Garrett made there would be no need for his book. I have the proof of that correspondence in my possession at this time, and if you do not know about it and are still interested in the subject I will be glad to give you more about the point.

It strikes me that there has been a lot of mislead-

ing stuff printed lately about the Booth matter. For instance, I have in mind Shepherd's Harper's Magazine article. When it came out I read it, then read it again and it struck me that the ordinary person who had not given the subject careful investigation from other sources would still be left in doubt, notwithstanding Shepherd does end up by saying that from a comparison of handwriting and color of eyes, the man George could not have been Booth, or that in effect. I could not see why he should credit Bates with so much sincerity of motives, honesty of purpose, and all that rot. Only last night I read again the story of Bates's man St. Helen, where he tells about Vice-President Johnson suggesting the killing of Lincoln, arranging for the escape of the assassin and even for his pardon if necessary. It is beyond me to see how a decent American citizen can read that story and have any faith in Bates's character for integrity. It is the most damnable libel ever concocked in this country. If his man St. Helen told Bates that, Bates should have had something done about it at once. Yet for years after that he and St. Helen maintained an intimate frindship, and later the lawyer wept when he beheld his dead friend at the morgue in Enid. And even if some depraved creature did tell him the story he had no business to publish the monstrous libel. The publication of the story by Bates shows his character. The copy of his book I have shows on the title page that Bates himself is the publisher. No need for wonder that the book was not published by any of the reputable publishing concerns.

There is another point against Bates's character which I have thought about but have never seen touched on in anything in print. Bates was a lawyer when St. Helen is supposed to have told him this cock-and-bull story, and St. Helen had retained him and paid him a retainer fee to act for him in all matters then pending and in the future, and it was a condition precedent to the employment that whatever St. Helen should then or afterward reveal to him in that relationship should be held sacred. St. Helen expressly stated these terms to Bates in advance, and Bates promptly agreed to them. Bates says so himself. I think nearly everybody knows that communications between attorney and client are priviledged communications, as lawyers put it. No court could compel a lawyer to give up such matters passing between him and his client, and no lawyer worthy of the name would ever make them public once he had assumed to receive them as such. In Bates's case we find him receiving all these "facts" from St. Helen, astounding and revolting as they were, remaining on terms of intimacy with him afterward, and then nineteen years later deciding to make public all he knew. Question is, when if ever did Bates's duty to hold that story sacred end? Did that duty ever end? Bates's own version of the mixed-up tale leaves him in poor shape, and there is no excuse for talking about his sincerity, purity of motives and the like, as seems to have been done in the Shepherd article.

I have never been much of an admirer of Andrew Johnson. In his fight with Congress made a lot of foolish speeches and got himself impeached. But he was a immovable Union man during the war, and I believe an incorruptible patriot at all times. Even Charles Sumner in later years admitted that if he had been found guilty in the impeactment trial it would have been a mistake, and Sumner was one of Johnson's most bitter enemies during the years from Lincoln to Grant. Johnson's character made it utterly impossible for him to do the things Bates makes that wretch of a St. Helen say he did. Furthermore, anybody who knows anything about the history of those times knows that the South then in rebellion hated Johnson more than they did Lincoln, and to have Lincoln killed only to put Johnson in his place would have been a bitter pill for them. As it was, I believe had Johnson been endowed with the same kind of fine qualities for mercy and tollerance Lincoln had I believe Mrs. Surratt would not have been executed, although she was proven to be as much in the conspiracy as Herold and Atzerodt. Johnson didn't save her. How much less would he have been inclined then to save the man who fired the shot?

Bates's book has almost enough proof in itself to stamp it a fraud. I shall look forward expecting to have some good reading when I can get your matter on the subject.

I hope you cleared up the question of the St. Helen tin-type. Shepherd has a picture in his magazine article which he labels the St. Helen tin-type. Francis Wilson has that same picture in his book, but in a note says it is one of George, and beside it is one, very evidentally a made-up thing, he labels the one of St. Helen. Can you tell me which is which?

This is a long winded affair and I trust I have not wearied you. Got started on it and kept agoing.

Yours very truly

A. J. Walsmith