HDQRS. MILITARY DISTRICT OF FORT MONROE, VA.,
June 27, 1866.

General E. D. TOWNSEND, *Assistant Adjutant-General:*

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward the report of Surgeon Cooper regarding health of state prisoner Jefferson Davis.

Most respectfully, your obedient servant,

NELSON A. MILES,
Major-General, U. S. Volunteers.

[Inclosure.]

FORT MONROE, VA., *June 27, 1866.*

COMDG. OFFICER MIL. DIST. OF FORT MONROE,
Fort Monroe, Va.:

SIR: I have to report the general health of state prisoner Jefferson Davis as improving slowly but surely. He gives indications of increasing muscular strength in his walk, which is now beginning to be more firm than heretofore. His appetite he states is better and he is evidently mending.

Your obedient servant,

GEO. E. COOPER,
Surgeon, U. S. Army.

WAR DEPARTMENT, BUREAU OF MILITARY JUSTICE,
July 3, 1866.

Hon. E. M. STANTON, *Secretary of War:*

SIR: Referring to the reports made to yourself by this Bureau in the case of Clement C. Clay on the 6th of December, 1865, in the case of Jefferson Davis on the 18th of January, 1866, and in the cases of the said Clay and Davis jointly on the 20th of March, 1866, I have the honor to submit for your consideration the following statements:

It will be remembered that on the trial of the assassins of the late President it was alleged in the charges and specifications that this crime had been committed under the incitement and encouragement of the said Jefferson Davis, Clement C. Clay, Jacob Thompson, and other conspirators named, as combining and confederating together for that purpose; and this declaration the court found to be true, and the opinion has been heretofore expressed by me that this finding was justified by the evidence adduced. Strong, however, as was the proof that led the court to the conclusion which they thus reached, I had reason to believe, from the knowledge of its details acquired in the course of the trial, that yet more conclusive testimony bearing upon the complicity of the rebel leaders, named in the murder of the President, existed, and hence as the head of the Bureau of Military Justice I felt it my duty to pursue the investigation further. The first opportunity enabling me to do so presented itself under the following circumstances:

Among the witnesses examined on behalf of the Government before the military commission which tried the assassins was a man calling himself Sanford Conover. Under this name he gave important testimony on that trial; testimony, however, I may remark, which did not bear on the question of the guilt of the parties on trial as actually concerned in the perpetration of the murder of the President and the attempted murder of the Secretary of State, but related only to the

general conspiracy charged to have been formed for the commission of these crimes and to which it was averred Jefferson Davis, Clement C. Clay, Jacob Thompson, and others were parties. This man, it seems, had been a correspondent of the New York Tribune from Canada, and it was through Mr. Gay, of the Tribune, a citizen of well-known character for loyalty and integrity, that he was brought to the notice of the Government as an important witness. After having heard the testimony on the trial of the assassins I was well persuaded, from his intelligence and apparently intimate association with rebel refugees and conspirators in Canada, that he had possessed unusual advantages for acquiring information in regard to their plots and movements. Hence, when he subsequently wrote me, voluntarily and without solicitation or suggestion on my part, giving assurance as to the existence of evidence implicating Jefferson Davis and Clement C. Clay, and of his ability to find the witnesses, and proffering his services to do so, I did not hesitate to accept his statements and proposals as made in good faith and entitled to credit and consideration. The first letter received by me from him on the subject bore date "New York, July 26, 1865," and is as follows:

Brigadier-General 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. Since my appearance as a witness before the commission I have been engaged, to some extent on my own account, in seeking further evidence to implicate Davis, Clay, and others, and I feel warranted in saying that my efforts have not been without some success. I can promise to find at least three witnesses—men of unimpeachable character—who will testify that they submitted to Davis propositions, which he approved, to destroy the President, Vice-President, and Cabinet, and that they received indirectly from the rebel Government money to enable them to execute the proposed scheme. Letters, I am assured by one of the parties referred to, can be adduced to corroborate a part of their statements. Two of these persons can testify that they were present with Surratt at an interview with Davis and Benjamin last spring, in which the plot under which Mr. Lincoln was assassinated was discussed and approved by both functionaries. These men may be relied on; as I have already said, their character is unimpeachable. They despise and hate Davis now as intensely as they once admired and loved him. Besides, they feel the necessity for doing some meritorious action to insure the forgiveness and pardon of the Government they have outraged.

The interest I have manifested in this case has been prompted solely by a desire to serve the Government, though I must admit that it has been intensified by my hatred of the rebel leaders. The rebellion has ruined me financially and I have suffered much at the hands of Davis & Co. It will be no fault of mine if they escape without their just deserts. You may depend that I can and will, if desirable to you and the Government, accomplish all I promise and more. If it is not intended to try Davis and others for complicity in the assassination I shall be glad to be sent after Surratt. I have ever believed that I could find him and I am confident that I can now devise a scheme for his capture. I do not enter into particulars because I know the value of your time too well to trouble you with a long letter. If the propositions I submit are entertained I will call on you and be more explicit. Please favor me with a reply at once, and in the meantime believe me to be,

Your most obedient servant,

SANFORD CONOVER.

Direct in care of S. H. Gay, Tribune.

On the 2d of August—written "1862," though evidently intended for 1865—he again addressed me from New York as follows:

NEW YORK, *August 2, 1862.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General, Washington, D. C.:*

GENERAL: I proposed by letter a few days ago to find for the good of the Government and people John H. Surratt, one of the conspirators, and to produce unimpeachable evidence sufficient to convict Davis, Clay, and others of complicity in the assassination of Mr. Lincoln. I solicited, indeed expected, an early reply but was disappointed. Surratt has since been captured (so the papers say) so that of

course my services in that direction will not be required. Probably you have also sufficient evidence to convict Davis, Clay, *et al.*, without the testimony—I should say evidence—I proposed to adduce, the witnesses I proposed to produce, and the facts that you could educe under my suggestion from certain disloyalists. If it is all so I am glad. But will you not be kind enough on receipt hereof to inform me by telegraph, directed to Fifth Avenue Hotel, whether or [not] I can be of further service to the Government? If I cannot be of further service I propose to go to Mexico, and my last day, if you do not desire more of me, in New York will be next Friday or Saturday.

I hope I can be of further service. I more than hope that I shall hear from you (by telegraph) before Saturday. If I do not I shall assume that I can be of no further service and act accordingly.

Your obedient servant,

SANFORD CONOVER.

P. S.—This is the fourth letter that I have written you without having received a reply. I do sincerely hope that I may receive an answer to this, if not to those that preceded it.

Respectfully,

S. C.

It will be observed that the writer speaks of this as the "fourth letter." If other than this and the previous one of 26th of July were written they did not reach me.

I laid the substance of the assurances contained in these letters before you, and probably read extracts from the letters to you, and asked that I might be authorized to send for Conover to come to Washington with a view to a conference with him and to his employment as an agent of the Government in the collection of the testimony, should it be deemed advisable to do so, which authority you gave me. I accordingly wrote to him and he came on to Washington, and after an interview with me I recommended to you that his proposition should be accepted and that he should be engaged as a Government agent to find and collect the testimony of the existence of which he professed to have knowledge. To this you assented and he was accordingly so employed. He then went to New York, taking with him transportation from that city to Washington for a Mr. McGill whom he represented to be an important witness. On the 14th of August he telegraphed me from New York that he had found McGill and would start the night of that day for Washington, of which telegram the following is a copy:

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

I have found McGill and start to-night; failed to find him in time to leave last evening.

SANFORD CONOVER.

18 Claremont avenue, Brooklyn.

Subsequently Conover and the witness who called himself John McGill arrived in Washington, and on the 17th of August the latter, under that name, gave his deposition before this Bureau. The striking character of his evidence confirmed the impression previously entertained of the ability of Conover to find the witnesses of whom he claimed to have information. He proceeded South without delay, with authority from me to make diligent search for the witnesses and to report from time to time the progress he was making. His first communication to me bore date Richmond, Va., August 24, 1865, and is as follows:

RICHMOND, *August 24, 1865.*

JUDGE-ADVOCATE-GENERAL:

DEAR SIR: I have been in this city since Saturday, and although I have not succeeded in reaching any of the parties sought for I have received such information of the whereabouts of some of them as will enable me to find them. I shall not fail,

either in whole or in part, you may depend on this. I shall write you every day or two henceforth more at length, informing you of my proceedings, &c.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

SANFORD CONOVER.

On arriving at Columbia, S. C., he telegraphed me under date of 1st of September, 1865, stating that his mission thus far had been successful and that Key and another had been found, and that a witness whom he refers to as C. (meaning Campbell) had been heard from. The following is a copy of the telegram:

Brigadier-General HOLT:

My mission has thus far proved successful. Key and one other have been found and secured. C. has been heard from and will be found. Deeming it unadvisable to telegraph particulars I have written at length.

S. C.

The next communication which reached me from him was a lengthy dispatch dated Charleston, 4th of September, 1865, in which he professed to give the details of the investigation with which he had been occupied and of the successes which had thus far attended him, which dispatch was in the following words:

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate:*

I arrived here yesterday en route for New Orleans, where I am certain of finding C. Found K. at Norfolk and S. at Wilmington. They are both anxious to do what is right. K. wishes to wait and join S. and C. on their way to Washington. As he can be believed I thought better to consent. I have caused S. to accompany me, as his influence and example may prove valuable should C. feel any reluctance to do what is required of him; besides, I do not wish to lose sight of him; he is cognizant of all the facts disclosed to me by C. My funds will not hold out until I reach New Orleans. Owing to the destruction of railroads I have been obliged to travel several hundreds of miles in hacks at expense of 50 cents a mile, and at several points was unable to obtain transportation by there being no quartermaster at hand. At every hotel and lodging house south of Richmond have been obliged to pay nearly double Washington hotel rates. Telegraph me in care of Capt. J. H. Moore, assistant quartermaster, No. 10 Broad street, Charleston—he is also disbursing officer—whom you can direct to furnish [me] with the necessary funds to enable me to proceed at once with my business. There are other persons, as you will learn from my letter, whom it may be important to find when these named have been secured.

S. C.

A long letter dated also "Charleston, S. C., September 4, 1865," was afterward received by me from him, and in this was given a yet more minute detail of his researches and of the favorable results reached, and the purpose on his part was expressed of proceeding thence to New Orleans. The following is a copy of this letter:

CHARLESTON, S. C., *September 4, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

DEAR SIR: On the 1st instant, at Columbia, I prepared a letter for you detailing my proceedings to find and procure the attendance of Campbell, Key, and others, and on the same day telegraphed you that two of them had been found. On reaching the "post-office" with my letter I learned that there was no regular mail from Columbia, and that my letter might not be dispatched for ten or twelve days. The letter is now so worn out from being carried in my pocket from that point to this that I am under the necessity of writing a new one. I met with considerable difficulty in finding Key and Snevel and found it no easy matter to win their confidence and obtain their consent to become witnesses. I ascertained at Richmond that the former was at Norfolk, Va , and the latter at Wilmington, N. C., and that Campbell had gone to his former home, New Orleans. I resolved to endeavor to secure Key first and soon after reaching Norfolk found him. At first he denied all knowledge of any plots for the assassination of the President and his Cabinet, but when I disclosed to him the source of my information, charging him with such knowledge, and assured him that Campbell and others of his acquaintances were to be witnesses of the Government, he admitted his knowledge and stated the facts at large (which are substantially the same as stated to you as learned by me from Campbell), and consented to become a witness if Campbell could be induced to become one also.

He is unwilling to testify to what he knows unless Campbell and others will do likewise, as he fears and dreads being despised and called a traitor by his friends. He was not willing to accompany me to Washington or make a deposition until certain that Campbell—a model of all the virtues with him—would do the same. He promised to join me on my way North with Campbell and I am perfectly satisfied—indeed, I know, as far as it is possible for me to know anything—that he will do so.

You need not apprehend that he cannot be found when wanted. I have more reasons than I need trouble you with for knowing that he may be depended on.

On leaving Key I proceeded as directly as possible to Wilmington, where after much running and trouble I found Snevel. The latter is very bitter against Davis and his leaders and is exceedingly anxious to give his testimony and procure that of others to convict him. He (Snevel) has been ruined by casting his fortunes with the rebellion, and hopes, I imagine, to retrieve some of his losses by becoming a loyal citizen and a witness for the Government. He is very intimate with Campbell and boasts of much influence over him. As he appeared reluctant to go to Washington without others to corroborate his statements I proposed that he should accompany me to New Orleans for Campbell, not that I believe his influence will be necessary (although possibly it might) to induce Campbell to become a witness, but principally because I do not wish to lose sight of him. He is now without business and without money, and might in my absence accept an engagement which would carry him beyond our reach. He assures me that he knows of two other persons in Maryland who will make important witnesses. I trust that my proceedings in regard to him will meet your approbation. I have not been able so far to pick up anything more damaging to Clay. Indeed, I wish to get one case up first.

Owing to the destruction of many railroads in this part of the country I have been obliged to make roundabout courses and ride back and forth many miles in hacks. From Wilmington I started for New Orleans, intending to go via Florence, Kingsville, and Augusta, but on reaching Kingsville I was astonished to find that the cars proceeded no farther and that the remainder of the distance to Augusta would have to be traveled in hacks. Being near Columbia and anxious to visit some acquaintances in that city and believing I could do so without loss of time or extra expense I proceeded to that point, from which I telegraphed you, determined to make for New Orleans via Orangeburg and Charleston. Here I arrived yesterday evening. The whole distance from here to New Orleans can be traveled by rail, except about 50 miles which must be made in hacks. I propose to proceed thither the moment I hear from you and receive the necessary funds. Over some of the railroads I was obliged to pay fare, there being no quartermaster at hand to furnish me with transportation, and it being less expensive as well as saving time to pay fare rather than to wait the return of the quartermaster and pay board. Board and lodging at the South is at a very high figure, being charged for at rates far exceeding that of the Washington hotels. Travelers are outrageously imposed on at every step, the excuse for the extravagant charges being the scarcity of provisions, &c. For these reasons my fund is reduced to a few dollars and I shall require more before proceeding on my business. When I left Washington I had strong expectations of finding all the witnesses named at or near Richmond and believed that I had more money than sufficient to enable me to secure them; therefore I took the liberty of sending $50 of the amount received from you to my family, knowing that they would need some during my absence. I have economized as far as possible, and have kept a minute account of my expenditures which I am confident you will approve.

I have set my heart upon producing witnesses and testimony sufficient to convict Davis and Clay and with what I have already secured I am sure that I shall succeed. The statement that Snevel makes to me is even stronger than that made to me (and repeated to you) by Campbell, and there is not the slightest doubt of my securing the latter. I have telegraphed briefly the result of my proceedings and requesting the necessary funds, and shall be momentarily expecting the needful instructions, &c., to enable me to fully accomplish my undertaking.

In haste, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

SANFORD CONOVER.

From Charleston, S. C., on the 6th of September, 1865, he sent me the following telegram:

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate:*

Do answer my dispatch of the 4th instant. Has it been received? It is very important to the Government that I be instructed and enabled to proceed on my mission immediately. I hope to receive answer by or before evening.

Direct W. E. Harrison, Charleston Hotel, not being prudent to be known here under my own name.

SANFORD CONOVER.

He did not further correspond with me until after his return to New York, from which city on the 10th of October, 1865, he wrote me at length as follows:

NEW YORK, *October 10, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

SIR: It affords me pleasure to report that my efforts to find certain persons as witnesses for the Government have been crowned with complete success. Campbell and Snevel and a Mr. Waddell, of whom I knew nothing when I started on my mission, are now with me in this city. Key is in Norfolk, ready to join us at a moment's notice; while another person named Wright, also unknown to me when I left Washington, will report to me at Washington on the 20th instant. I experienced much difficulty in finding Campbell and more in inducing him to accompany me. He has no sympathy for Davis; on the contrary feels quite bitter against him; but he dreaded and still dreads the obloquy and alienation of his own friends, which he thinks the betrayal of Davis' part in the conspiracy certain to provoke. Having determined to take the stand he is anxious that his testimony be corroborated as far and by as many as possible and that everything proper may be done to insure Mr. Davis' conviction, because his acquittal, or even his conviction on the testimony of two or three witnesses, would afford his (Campbell's) friends and the public at large grounds for suspecting that he, with the other witnesses, had been suborned and had sworn falsely. So sensitive and anxious is he on this point that he insisted on at once visiting New York, where he assured me that he would find a friend who "could, if he would, furnish evidence of the most positive character," and that if this friend could be induced to become a witness he himself could do so without the slightest reluctance or fear of the result. For this reason I came on to New York with him, keeping the other witnesses with me for several reasons. Who this friend is, or the nature of the evidence he is able to furnish, Campbell declines to inform me, answering all my importunities with the assurance that if he cannot induce him to become a witness it would be useless for me to try to do so, and that he could not, without an unpardonable breach of faith, disclose anything which might possibly place his friend in an unpleasant position without his consent.

On inquiry here for this "friend" he was found to be in Canada, whence he will return on Saturday, and as Campbell is so persistent in the determination to see him before making his own deposition I think better to afford him the opportunity. I shall be prepared to ascertain who the mysterious "friend" is in case he declines to join Campbell in becoming a witness for the Government.

The witnesses mentioned by me include all that I have so far obtained, but my investigations have led to the discovery of another plot, approved by Davis, for the murder of the late President quite as diabolical as the one which resulted in his death. The witnesses to establish this charge—one of whom is a Miss Alice Williams, who was commissioned in the rebel army as a lieutenant under the name of Buford, the would-be Charlotte Corday, except that she proposed to employ poison instead of a dagger—being mostly females I thought better not to produce them without a conference on the subject with you. Besides, I have as many in hand as I can well manage. The particulars of this plot and the evidence to be relied on I shall not attempt to disclose till I see you. I shall leave here for Washington on Sunday evening with the three witnesses now in hand. Any instructions or suggestions you may desire in the mean time to address me by letter or telegraph may be sent to the Madison Avenue Hotel, corner Madison avenue and Twenty-seventh street.

Your obedient servant,

SANFORD CONOVER.

He did not come to Washington at the time promised in this letter, but did so later, arriving about the close of October and bringing with him two men calling themselves William Campbell and Joseph Snevel, and who under these names gave their depositions at the Bureau of Military Justice on the 4th day of November, 1865. On or soon after Conover's reaching Washington he addressed me a note bearing date November 1, 1865, as follows:

WASHINGTON, D. C., *November 1, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT:

DEAR SIR: I reached here yesterday with Campbell and Snevel. Another witness who was to have joined us here is in Baltimore and I shall run up for him this morning. The above-named prefer not to report to you in person without me but will appear at any hour you may name to-morrow. Please send me a note to the National Hotel, that I may receive it this evening, stating the hour upon which I shall produce the

witnesses for examination. The death of one of my children prevented my reaching here last week and the witnesses were unwilling to appear without me.

Your obedient servant,

S. CONOVER.

After the taking of the depositions of Campbell and Snevel Conover went to New York, whence he returned to Washington, bringing with him a man calling himself Farnum B. Wright, who on the 23d of November, 1865, also gave his deposition before the Bureau of Military Justice. The witness John McGill, heretofore referred to, having stated in his deposition that a man named Carter was present with him at the interview he had with Clement C. Clay and Captain Kennedy, in Canada, in relation to the assassination of the President and certain other distinguished officials of the United States Government I engaged Conover to proceed to Canada for the purpose of finding and bringing to Washington this man Carter with a view of taking his deposition, and he left Washington under a promise that he would do so. Farnum B. Wright having alleged to me that a man named Patten—whom he had averred in his deposition to have been present with him and others at an interview with Jefferson Davis when the abduction, and if necessary the assassination, of the President were discussed and determined upon—resided in Saint Louis, and that he believed he could find him and secure his attendance as a witness, I employed him as an agent of the Government to go to Saint Louis for that purpose. This I did after a conversation with him in Washington, and after receiving from him the following note:

NEW YORK, *December 7.*

General HOLT:

DEAR SIR: I arrived in New York this morning. I overhauled my papers; could not find the paper that contained the number of the house Mr. Patten lives in, but I am quite sure I can find him as I know the street. If you want me to go after him I am at your service. Send me what funds you think I will require and I will start immediately. Direct your letter to the Westchester House, corner Bowery and Broome street, to be left at the office till called for.

P. S.—If you don't require my services to go to Saint Louis please send some money without fail, and oblige

F. B. WRIGHT.

Among the persons named as present at the interview which Farnum B. Wright, Patten, and others were said to have had with Davis was a man called Lamar. This person, William Campbell, whose deposition has been referred to, stated he knew that he was in Canada and that he believed he could prevail on him to come to the United States and give his testimony and he offered to go to Canada for that purpose. I accordingly engaged him. He set out, and after the lapse of some time wrote me from Saint Albans the following letters:

SAINT ALBANS, *November 15, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

DEAR SIR: I hope you will excuse my long silence but I thought best not to write until I had something to write about. I have received no answer to either my letter or telegraph, but I saw a friend of Lamar's in Saint Albans last night who tells me that he (Lamar) was going to leave Canada soon; he could not tell how soon. He said he had left his old stopping place, and he thinks he is poor; and I think that accounts for my not getting an answer to my letter or dispatch. I fear that he has not received them. I propose to go (or send some one) to Canada to hunt him up. If this meets your approbation you will please telegraph me at once. I telegraphed to you this morning for the necessary funds to carry out my ideas, which I hope will prove satisfactory to you.

I shall anxiously await your answer, and hoping it will meet my ideas,

I remain, your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM CAMPBELL.

Weldon House, Saint Albans, Vt.

SAINT ALBANS, *November 24, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

DEAR SIR: I am in receipt of your letter of the 21st. You appear surprised at my inability to get my draft cashed; not more so than I was myself. The banks here evince no desire to accommodate the Government. At first they appeared to doubt my authority and when I satisfied them on that point they said they did not care to have anything to do with it; they did not see [that] they were going to make anything by it. The Saint Albans bank says they have money to the amount of $1,000 or $5,000 standing out in that way that they cannot collect and do not care to negotiate any more. The First National Bank referred me to the Saint Albans, as that bank had done a great deal of business with the Government, and they (the First National) felt themselves under no obligations to the Government or the War Department. Even your check I had to have signed by a resident of the place before I could get it cashed. Inclosed please find duplicate receipts signed. Since my last I have received a letter from Lamar appointing a meeting in Boston, where he is at present. I will start for there to-night or to-morrow morning.

Hoping my next will be more encouraging,

I remain, very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM CAMPBELL.

On his arrival at Boston he addressed me as follows:

HANCOCK HOUSE, *Boston, November 29, 1865.*

Judge-Advocate-General HOLT:

DEAR SIR: I have seen Lamar to-day. I think everything is all right. He will give me an answer to-morrow. We will start for New York about Saturday, where we will stop for a few days as Lamar wants to see some friends that are stopping there. I did not write to you on my arrival as I expected to see him sooner. I will have to draw on you again this week. You may expect to see us in Washington about the last of next week. Please telegraph on receipt of this as I shall start for New York on Saturday.

Very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM CAMPBELL.

Subsequently I was assured that Lamar on his arrival at New York had declined to come to Washington to testify and had left the United States for Cuba. Still later I was advised that this statement was a misapprehension, superinduced by a false representation of Lamar's, and that he had, in point of fact, come to Washington but refused to give any testimony. I never saw him, and whether such a man existed I have no means of certainly determining.

On the 28th of November, Conover wrote me from New York as follows:

NEW YORK, *November 28, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

DEAR SIR: I did not until this morning succeed in seeing McGill and getting the necessary directions for finding Carter. I shall leave by the next train for Toronto. I shall not only find Carter but I think other witnesses as well. If Wright becomes able to leave for New York before my return to Washington I hope you will see that he is fully reimbursed for expenses, &c. His traveling expenses from Charleston to Washington, and afterward from Washington to New York to find me, were defrayed entirely by himself. But for appearing as a witness he would have sailed directly from Charleston to Halifax, Nova Scotia. If he comes to New York before I return to Washington Snevel will see him and make it agreeable for him to remain until he can be used as a witness. He has already satisfied me of his willingness to do so if his extra expenses can be paid by the Government. Presuming that I should return to Washington before he would be able to leave he made no arrangements about his hotel bill in case he should wish to leave before my return. I trust, therefore, that besides causing him to receive his traveling expenses [you will] see that he has enough to pay his bill at the hotel. I am confident that I shall be able to produce at least two other witnesses against Davis not less important than those you have seen, and I therefore feel the necessity of making everything as satisfactory as possible to those already in hand, that they may not at any time be found wanting.

In great haste, your obedient servant,

S. CONOVER.

His next communication was from Montreal under date of 8th of December, 1865, of which the following is a copy:

MONTREAL, *December 8, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

DEAR SIR: I have found Carter at last. My search for him in Toronto revealed the fact that he had changed his abode to Montreal. I doubted the propriety of my coming here, but knowing the importance of securing the party I determined to take the risk. I found Carter yesterday, made his acquaintance, &c., but only two hours ago did I disclose to him my mission and propose that he should accompany me to Washington, &c. He consents, and assures me that he knows of a score who will testify, if requested, to facts more important than any he can speak of. He agrees entirely with McGill except that he can go a little further. I think I can promise more than Carter; I shall see. The rebs know of my presence here. I am informed that I will be arrested again. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed," and I can reckon myself safe. I shall leave, if permitted, this evening for Toronto again, where Carter assures me there are a dozen who will become witnesses in the matter in question. I called on Mr. Perkins, an eminent lawyer, some months ago counsel for Hon. Joshua Giddings, consul-general here, in a prosecution against him, and have been fortified by a knowledge of my rights under the laws of the Province, and on the strength thereof think I may consider myself safe.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. CONOVER.

Afterward Conover telegraphed me from Montreal as follows:

MONTREAL, *December 13, 1865.*

Brigadier-General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

Have just returned from Quebec. Have three very important witnesses. Require more funds; send $100 by express in care of D. T. Irish. Shall return the moment I hear from you. Expect another witness here. Answer this dispatch care of Mr. Irish.

S. C.

On the 20th of December he wrote me at length from Montreal, professing to give much in detail the very important testimony he had discovered, the character of the inquiries which had led to its discovery, together with the names of the witnesses. This letter, which he stated he would send by the witness Carter, came to me through the mail, accompanied by a note from Carter dated New York, December 27, 1865, of which note and letter the following are copies:

NEW YORK, *December 27, 1865.*

SIR: I send you from here a letter given me for you by Mr. Conover. I expected to stop in this place only one day, but I want to see Mr. McGill before coming to Washington, and he is in Providence and will not get back till Saturday, and I will wait for him and come on next Tuesday. It may be necessary for you to have Mr. Conover's letter before I come, so I will send it to you by mail.

Yours, respectfully,

WM. H. CARTER.

MONTREAL, *December 20, 1865.*

DEAR SIR: Agreeably to my promise in my note of yesterday morning I proceed to report more at length my proceedings under my late missions. Other business prevented my writing last evening, and I shall not leave here for Toronto until this evening. You will receive this letter at the hands of Carter, whom I deem it advisable to forward from here at once, as he is anxious before making a deposition to see McGill and "compare notes," as he expresses it, in order that there may be no unnecessary discrepancy in their testimony. His statement does not differ in the least, if my memory serves me well, from McGill's deposition, except that he recollects one very important fact and occurrence which McGill must have forgotten or inadvertently omitted to disclose. Carter, who is quite intelligent, is confident that he can refresh the memory of his friend and make him recollect all that he does himself, and I think it very important that he should do so. The next witness I have in hand is named Mott. Like McGill and Carter he was seduced into hostility to the United States by extravagant promises by Clay and other prominent rebels. I cannot undertake to give you more than a brief synopsis of his statement. He knew Clay quite well; was several times present at his room when the subject of raids on the frontier was discussed, and had one private interview with Clay on the subject. This interview was just after the Saint Albans raid, and Clay, among other

things, expressed dissatisfaction that the raiders had not burned more houses and spilt more blood. He said that in such a war Yankees should be killed wherever found, whether they had arms in their hands or not.

In November, 1864, a few days after the election returns rendered it certain that Lincoln had been re-elected, he called on Mr. Clay with a letter (of which he has shown me the original draft) written by a Mr. Purcell, of Virginia, proposing by a "grand blow to relieve the country of the seven-headed hydra, Lincoln, Hamlin, Johnson, Stanton, Seward, Grant, and Sherman," if he (Clay) would furnish the necessary funds for the purpose. The letter contained the assurance that the men for the enterprise were already enlisted and promised that if Clay approved the proposition to lay before him in full the plan for its execution. Mott admits that at the time he intended to enter into the scheme with Purcell, but avers that he then believed it would be honorable warfare. The letter to Clay was dictated by himself and Purcell jointly, in his own room, but was, as the original is, in Purcell's handwriting. Clay on reading the letter inquired why Purcell did not call himself and remarked that he had been wishing for several days to see him, and added, laughingly, that he had begun to think he had gone over to the Yankees. Mott explained why Purcell did not call, whereupon Clay wrote a reply to the letter. Mott being interested in the affair the same as Purcell opened the reply as soon as he left Clay's presence. It assured Purcell that his patriotic purpose was heartily approved, and that if on a submission of his plan the scheme appeared practicable the necessary funds would be advanced, and that he (Purcell) would, if successful in destroying the great hydra, be honored as the Hercules of the age. The letter requested that Purcell would call and submit his plan as soon as possible, as the scheme had been proposed before and various plans for its execution had been suggested and were under consideration, and that he (Clay) intended to approve and adopt the one which should most clearly appear feasible. Two or three days later Purcell and Mott called on Clay and laid their plan before him, but after giving it consideration he declared that a plan had been proposed in his opinion more practicable than theirs, and that, while he was obliged to reject their plan, he desired them to unite with others in executing the one approved by him and he promised great honor and reward if they would do so. They proceeded far enough to become acquainted with the "more practicable" plan, which was finally abandoned.

In this condensed report of Mott's statement I have, of course, been obliged to omit most of the details and circumstances necessary to give full force, intelligence, and application to his representations, but I trust I have given enough to show that he will make a valuable witness. Mott is confident that Purcell is in Toronto and that he will readily give his testimony and produce Clay's letter to which I have referred. The next witness is a Mrs. Douglass, who for many months was intimately associated with leading rebels in Canada, and a friend and visitor to the Porterfields, Magruders, and others of their stamp. Her husband, who was devoted to the rebel cause, was sent by Clay on a mission to Richmond, and is believed to have been killed in his effort to get through the Union lines as he has never since been heard from. Mrs. Douglass, however, will not believe him dead, but thinks him in confinement in some Federal prison, and will give testimony only on condition that her husband, if in prison, shall be released. I am certain Douglass is not in prison, but I have not, under all the circumstances, seen fit so to assure Mrs. Douglass. Before being sent on his mission to Richmond, and about the middle of November, 1864, Douglass was engaged with Clay and others in a plot to assassinate the President and his Cabinet. The conspirators met two or three times at Douglass' residence, and the plans for the execution of their schemes were twice discussed in Mrs. Douglass' presence. There was considerable difference of opinion amongst the conspirators as to the best way to effect their purpose. Each appeared to have a plan of his own. Among other ways it was proposed to use air guns, and the power of an air gun was tested in Clay's presence in the rear yard of Douglass' residence. One evening Clay said that it was easy enough to put Lincoln and Grant out of the way, but that no plan would answer but one that would secure the destruction of Stanton, Seward, and Johnson at the same time—that a clean sweep should be made of it.

One afternoon Clay called at Douglass' residence alone. The latter was absent at the time, but as Mrs. Douglass was momentarily expecting him to return Clay concluded to wait a few minutes. The conversation soon turned upon the war, and Clay remarked that if they succeeded in cutting down the Yankee leaders, as he believed they would, the war would soon be over. Mrs. Douglass said to him that she was opposed to her husband engaging in such a project; that it looked too much like murder. Clay replied: "Nonsense, it is nothing like murder; we are at war with Lincoln and his crew, and in war everything is fair that will enable one to beat his enemy. Lincoln would hang your husband and me if he should get us in his power and I would like to know if it would be any worse for us to destroy him. Besides, self-preservation and the safety of the South demand Lincoln's death." He went on to say that Yankee emissaries had previously attempted to destroy President Davis and his whole family by arson, and that that fact would fully justify the

measures he proposed. Douglass afterward quarreled with Kennedy and withdrew from the enterprise, and was subsequently sent by Clay with dispatches to Richmond.

In the early part of December Mrs. Douglass visited Montreal and while there staid most of the time at Porterfield's and Magruder's, and just prior to Clay's departure from the Province, to wit, on the 8th day of December, had an interview with him in which the assassination plot was one of the subjects of conversation. To recount all, or even a tithe, of what was said on these various occasions would occupy more time and space than I have at my disposal; but I have given enough to show the great importance of this woman's testimony. Clay and Thompson both violated their promises to "provide handsomely" for Mrs. Douglass during her husband's absence, and in case of accident to him, and she is now obliged to teach music for the support of herself and children. Having been robbed of her husband and treated with neglect by these scoundrels she feels no reluctance in disclosing all she knows of their infernal machinations.

These witnesses are all of genteel appearance and give their statements with becoming frankness. I have been careful to select none but persons of unsullied reputation. The word "select" I use in its most comprehensive sense, for I have had nearly a score of persons from whom to choose. I have rejected all whose characters for veracity or general character could be assailed. Several have made statements to me which I believe, and have many reasons for believing, to be true, and which, if true, should consign Clay to the severest and most ignominious punishment known to the law; but on inquiring into their antecedents and present standing I have felt constrained to reject, saying to them that I might avail myself of their knowledge by and by. My mission has brought me in contact with four sorts of persons who could be used as witnesses: First, the kind I have engaged; secondly, persons undoubtedly possessed of much knowledge whose present characters and standing could probably be assailed to the destruction of their testimony; thirdly, persons in good standing who pretend to know much and are ready for a consideration to swear anything and everything, when in fact they know, as I satisfied myself, little or nothing; fourthly, persons who evidently possess considerable knowledge, and claim to have important letters and papers which they are unwilling to disclose except for a valuable consideration. Believing that I shall be able to obtain a sufficient number of witnesses of unquestionable integrity to establish Clay's criminality I have not felt at liberty to engage any persons who might possibly be impeached. Yet I am free to declare that of the persons I have rejected there are at least three whose statements under oath I would myself receive with as much confidence as I would the testimony of many of the members of the present Congress. They are, in common phrase, persons of doubtful character—that is to say, men who visit groggeries, brothels, and gambling hells, and do it so publicly that every one who will may know it, and point to them as "doubtful characters"—men who have been ruined by the war, who have been deluded and led away by Clay and his associates, and when of no further use abandoned, like worn-out horses, in Canada, to live by their wits or starve and die in the gutter, yet men who never have, so far as I could learn, robbed or stolen or swindled, and would not to save their lives. Men who, notwithstanding their iniquities, would not perjure their souls or sell their honor for a moderate sum, much less for a trip—a laborious journey—to Washington and back. I have rejected them only because I know there are plenty John Bull Canadians, enemies of the United States, who applauded these men while they were in the rebel service, who would, if they knew of their being witnesses for the United States Government against Clay, or other high rebel functionaries, come forward to impeach them and unhesitatingly swear to whatever might be necessary to do so. Still, I presume an equal, if not greater, number of equally respectable persons could be produced to sustain them. But in view of these facts I know not how to act in regard to them without further instructions.

I shall leave for Toronto this p. m., and from the representations of Mott and others have little doubt but that I shall find Purcell and be able to produce him and Clay's letter to which I have referred. I am also of the opinion that I shall find several other unexceptionable witnesses. I hope to receive a letter from you at Toronto giving me such further instructions as you may deem proper. Direct to G. W. Montague, Queen's Hotel, and if convenient seal with wax—black wax. My letters have become quite lengthy, but I need not assure you that I have written rather for your information than my own pleasure.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. CONOVER.

On the 13th of January following Conover telegraphed me from Albany, N. Y., as follows:

General HOLT, *Judge-Advocate-General:*

I have just arrived here from Kingston, Canada, with four witnesses, and expect another from Montreal to join me here this afternoon. My funds are exhausted.

Please telegraph A. Van Allen, of First National Bank here, a request to cash a draft on you for $125, that I may leave here this evening. Will reach Washington on Monday.

S. CONOVER.

He afterward arrived in Washington, bringing with him two females calling themselves Sarah Douglass and Mary Knapp, whose depositions were taken at the Bureau of Military Justice on the 6th of February, 1866. A few days afterward Conover brought to this Bureau the witness W. H. Carter, the man in quest of whom he had gone to Canada. This person, under the name mentioned, gave his deposition on the 9th of February, 1866. Yet later Farnum B. Wright and Conover came to Washington, bringing with them a man calling himself John H. Patten, who under that name gave his deposition at this Bureau on the 24th of February, 1866. There was nothing in the previous history of Sanford Conover, as known to me, to excite any distrust, either in his integrity, in his truthfulness, or in the sincerity with which he had made his propositions to the Government, that led to his being employed as an agent for the collection of the testimony which was supposed to exist in reference to the assassination of the President. On the contrary, there was much in his intelligence which was marked and striking, and in his apparent frankness and his known connection with important sources of information, to inspire faith in his professions and promises. There was much also to inspire this faith in his correspondence with me, as already exhibited, while apparently engaged in the performance of the difficult and responsible duty imposed upon him. That correspondence was characterized by unusual intelligence, by great variety of detail, and by a naturalness which seemed to protect it from criticism; and my confidence in the testimony was strengthened by my knowledge that it was in accord with, and seemed to be in a large degree a natural sequence from, other facts which had been testified to as having occurred in Canada by witnesses known to the Government, and whose reputation has not been and cannot, it is believed, be successfully assailed.

Under the passage of the resolution of the House of Representatives, appointing a committee to investigate and ascertain what testimony existed in regard to the complicity of Davis in the assassination of the President, I appeared before this committee in obedience to its summons and gave my testimony and produced before it the depositions to which I have referred, together with the reports which I made, and which reports, with the opinions therein expressed upon the question involved, were based upon these depositions and upon the other proofs therein presented and commented on—upon which proofs these depositions were but cumulative, though strongly so. Decided, however, as was my confidence in the truthfulness of these depositions, I was not willing that the committee should accept my estimate of them or base any action of their own solely on that estimate. Hence, I urged—certainly the chairman, and, I think, another member of the committee—that I should be directed or requested to bring before them the more important of these witnesses produced by Conover, who were believed to be within the reach of the Government, in order that by their cross-examination, their bearing while testifying, and by such other tests as they might be subjected to, the committee should be enabled to determine for themselves what degree of credit their evidence was entitled to. In consequence of this suggestion of mine, and of its having been repeated and urged, I received the direction of the Hon. Mr. Wilson, chairman of the committee, to send for these witnesses, or the

more important of them. I accordingly sent to the city of New York Brevet Colonel Turner, judge advocate, giving him, as I now remember it, the names of Campbell, Snevel, McGill, Wright, Patten, and Mrs. Douglass, these being the witnesses that I had reason to believe might be obtained within a reasonable time. It is barely possible that the name of Patten was not embraced in this list owing to my supposing him to reside in Saint Louis, but the most important of the witnesses were certainly included. Colonel Turner on proceeding to New York had an interview with Campbell, who has been repeatedly referred to by me, and in a conversation with Colonel Turner Campbell declared that the testimony which he had given in his deposition before the Bureau of Military Justice was false and that it had been fabricated by or under the supervision of Sanford Conover. This I learned from Colonel Turner, and I learned he made the same statement at the same time in regard to the testimony of Snevel, and expressed the opinion that the other witnesses who had been produced by Conover had also sworn falsely and under assumed names.

Colonel Turner brought Campbell on to Washington, and I then suggested that Mr. Wilson, chairman of the committee, should telegraph for Conover, in order that he and Campbell might be confronted in their examination, and opportunity thus afforded the committee of determining the question of credibility at issue. Conover accordingly came and went before the committee, and while undergoing examination there Campbell was introduced, and, having been sworn, he stated that his deposition given before the Bureau of Military Justice was false in all respects and was wholly and completely the fabrication of Conover; who, then being present, replied under oath that this declaration of Campbell was untrue, but declined to offer any explanation. After, however, Campbell had been withdrawn Conover suggested to the committee, as a reason why he (Campbell) had made his statement, that he had probably been corrupted and supposed he could make more by falsifying his former testimony than he could by sustaining it. I said to Conover immediately after his examination closed that I was utterly astounded at the evidence Campbell had given. His reply was, "You cannot be more so than I am." I then added, "You see the position in which you are placed. Now, if what is charged against you is false your only mode of vindication is to bring before the committee the witnesses whom you produced and whose depositions were taken before the Bureau of Military Justice, in order that they may be examined and reaffirm their testimony." He said he would proceed to New York with the officer of the committee and assist him in finding the witnesses, and would, as I understood him to say, return with them to Washington. He left, as I was told, with the officer of the committee, but on arriving at New York separated himself from him and was not seen by him afterward; and up to this time, although two months have elapsed, he has not communicated with me nor has he made any effort, as I believe, to produce the witnesses, nor has he offered any vindication of his conduct. This action of his, added to the declarations under oath of Campbell, followed up as they were afterward by the testimony of Snevel as to the utter falsity of the depositions which he and Campbell had given, has left a strong impression on my mind that Conover has been guilty of a most atrocious crime, committed under what promptings I am wholly unable to determine.

I employed him under no contract for any stipulated compensation. He had no reason from me to believe that he would receive more for

the purpose of proving the presence of C. C. Clay in Canada for months preceding and up to, probably, a few days after the assassination of the President. With these depositions and affidavits Conover had no connection whatever, and the confidence originally entertained in their truthfulness remains unshaken. The history of Sanford Conover's agency and its results has been given thus circumstantially in order that you may discard the testimony produced by him from consideration, and also in order that you may understand under what constant encouragements and apparently trustworthy assurances the inquiry committed to his hands was continued on my part. These explanations have been made by me as a witness before the Committee on the Judiciary substantially as presented in this report, and in large degree in the same language herein employed.*

All of which is respectfully submitted.

J. HOLT,
Judge-Advocate-General.

HDQRS. MILITARY DISTRICT OF FORT MONROE, VA.,
July 5, 1866.

General E. D. TOWNSEND, *Assistant Adjutant-General:*

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward report of Surgeon Cooper regarding health of state prisoner Jefferson Davis.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

NELSON A. MILES,
Major-General, U. S. Volunteers.

[Inclosure.]

FORT MONROE, VA., *July 4, 1866.*

Maj. Gen. N. A. MILES,
Comdg. Military District of Fort Monroe, Fort Monroe, Va.:

SIR: I hereby report the health of state prisoner Jefferson Davis to be not as good as at my report of the 27th ultimo. For the last three or four days he has given indications of febrile excitement. His appetite is gradually leaving him and the amount he now eats is scarcely sufficient to sustain his system in a normal condition. He still complains of broken slumbers, stating that the hailing of the sentinels breaks his rest and that it is almost impossible for him to sleep when his rest has once been disturbed. To this circumstance of broken slumber he attributes his want of recuperation. His general health is not improving as I would wish to see it, and as it was for a time after his receipt of the parole of the fort during the day.

Your obedient servant,

GEO. E. COOPER,
Surgeon, U. S. Army.

HDQRS. MILITARY DISTRICT OF FORT MONROE,
Fort Monroe, Va., July 10 [11], 1866.

General E. D. TOWNSEND, *Assistant Adjutant-General:*

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward report of Surg. George E. Cooper regarding health of state prisoner Jefferson Davis.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

NELSON A. MILES,
Major-General, U. S. Volunteers.

---

* For report of the Committee on the Judiciary on this subject, see Report No. 104, House of Representatives, Thirty-ninth Congress, first session.