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GENERAL POST OFFICE.

From the Aurora.

THE REPORT REVIEWED. NO. I.

The report of a committee of the house of representatives instituted to enquire in to the conduct of the post office department, is now before the public—and the evidence, such as it was thought fit to give, is given with it.

In the course of the proceedings on this case, the following transactions took place—while the committee was carrying on its enquiries, three of the principal clerks who were examined, and who had upon oath declared and proved abuses, were dismissed from the offices which they filled; some of them had been in office for many years; and every one of them without blemish, or imputation, or suspicion on their characters.

The books of the post office were secreted and placed out of the access of those clerks.

On the books of the public an erasure of an account, involving one of the matters of abuse which was exposed and detected, was erased after the enquiry commenced, and the erasure was at length confessed by a public officer.

Upon the report of the committee of the house of representatives, we have expressed our opinions only in part, and on incidental points as the publication passed through the press. It is our purpose now to go into a more detailed review of the whole proceeding and we shall do it in the order of the report itself.

Upon the report generally, we cannot in justice to the country, or to that truth which the country has a right to expect from the free press, refrain from declaring that it is a reproach to the dignity of the national representation and a humiliating evidence of the growing depravity which appears to pervade in an unprecedented measure, every department of public affairs. Public justice and the obligations of public duty appear to be nowhere regarded in this report; and throughout it betrays the same spirit of suppression which marks the conduct of the persons who were implicated in the enquiry demanded by the head of the department.

After a preamble the report proceeds to state, that the charges before the committee arose out of the suggestions of witnesses called upon by the committee, and from various communications made by the witnesses. The first of these charges the committee state in these words:

1. That certain persons in the general post office, and particularly Abraham Bradley, jun. assistant post master general, had sold post office drafts, checks, and applied the premiums to private use.

The manner in which a proposition is stated, will sometimes very much alter the import of the proposition; if it be generally expressed, a particular point may be seized upon to weaken the force of the remainder; or a circumstance apparently arising out of the matter may be subjoined, and that subjoined matter may be confounded with the whole; in this case the allegations are materially altered, from the true terms in which they were made: this, no doubt, may have arisen from the incapacity of the chairman as well as from design; but from whatever cause it has arisen, the true allegations made were to the following distinct purpose precisely:

That more than 400,000 dollars in post office drafts had been sold since the declaration of war down to the end of 1815, to banks and to individuals who were in no way connected with that office.

That a large portion of these drafts were worth a considerable premium in consequence of the variations of exchange between different parts of the Union, and that some of them had been sold so high as 20 per cent.

That the money was public money—but that no credit whatever was given for those premiums on the books belonging to the public, for those profits made on the sale of the public money; and that many of them had been sold in Washington City.

This was the substance and whole tenor of the allegations; but of these the following facts remain uncontradicted and undisputed by the evidence and by the report—

That post office drafts were sold with in the time alleged, to individuals not

connected with the post office, or that public service:

That a large portion was worth a large premium:

That no credit for the premiums is given on the public books.

These three facts are substantially and incontrovertibly proved, and not attempted to be disproved. The committee themselves made the inference, that the sale was made by Abraham Bradley, or his agents; that the evidence of Mr. Seth Pease, of Mr. Edwards, of Mr. Howard, of Mr. Bestor, fully authorised the belief on the part of the committee; the sales appear to have been conducted through a bank, distant two miles from the general post office, though there are several banks more contiguous thereto; but Mr. Bradley being the president of the distant bank, and his brother and other relations stockholders therein, the committee appear to have drawn their inference from these facts in forming the first charge, although the allegations were as above stated, and no more.

The committee having formed the charge in the fashion most acceptable to its sense of public duty, and their impressions of the facts presented to them for solemn investigation; their report in reply, after enquiry, merits to be particularly examined; and the following is the declaration made in the name of the committee, on the first allegation, as drawn up by the committee.

That in relation to the first charge there is no evidence whatever, to induce a suspicion that he has sold post office drafts or checks for a premium, nor does it appear that any other person in the post office, has sold them other than drafts obtained for their own salaries; except in the case of H. H. Edwards, who bought a post office draft on Boston for district of Columbia paper, disposed of it by an agent in New York (as "he pursues") for a premium.

On the face of this paragraph there is either the most impudent sophistry or the most contemptible stupidity.

1. No evidence whatever!
2. No evidence whatever to induce suspicion!
3. No evidence whatever to induce a suspicion that he had sold drafts for a premium!
4. Nor does it appear that any other person in the post office sold them!
5. Except in the case of H. H. Edwards!

How a committee, on which there were, at least, some liberal and honorable men, should be brought to consent to subscribe, or to silently suffer the passage of such a report to congress, in their names, and without protest is painful to see and to reflect upon. But if men of lives heretofore untarnished, will silently submit to have such a report presented as theirs, their silence makes it theirs; and, however we may have respected them, it does not follow that the imposition should go unexposed to the nation. In order to show the monstrous fallacy of the report, we have analysed the paragraph into five distinct allegations, each of which we beg the reader to refer to, and ask the questions on each as we proceed to review the evidence given. Is there no evidence whatever!

In page 7 of the Report, is the evidence of Mr. H. H. Edwards, who had been several years a bookkeeper in the post office, and whose talents and services were estimated so highly as to authorise a salary of \$150 a year. This gentleman, having no incentive or motive to conceal the truth, or to trespass upon it; without any quarrel or injury to complain of is called forth as a witness, by a committee of congress, and being questioned, upon oath declares,

1. That three drafts to the amount of 280,000 dollars, were sold since the declaration of war.
2. That these drafts on the post master at Boston in favor of S. Elliot, cashier of the Washington bank, were sold at Philadelphia for 20 per cent. premium.
3. That there is an erasure in the cash book of the public books at the post office, where a draft of \$5000 is now entered in the name of the Union Bank, which words are written upon an erasure made by A. Brady, or his order, while it appears that the draft was really drawn in favor of E. Riggs, at George Town.

Yet the committee say,
That there is no evidence whatever!

That there is no evidence whatever to induce a suspicion!

That there is no evidence whatever to induce a suspicion that he, Ab. Bradley, jun. had sold any drafts!

We shall, before we have done with this shameless report, exhibit in detail the drafts sold—we shall exhibit them all, names, dates, and amount; in the present instance, as it goes to four out of five points of allegation in the decision of the committee on the first charge and anticipates a decision on the second, we shall introduce it here.

It is Mr. Edwards, whose fidelity to the public, and to his oaths, has caused him to be expelled from office, proved the erasure on the books; on referring to the correspondence, the following letter, copy of the draft sold, and of the names endorsed upon the draft will show the cause and object of the erasure.

Post Office, New York City, Jan. 30, 1816.
H. H. Edwards, Esq.

Sir—I have just been favored with your letter of the 27th inst. and hasten to answer. The draft of the assistant post master general on me, in favor of Elisha Riggs, merchant, or order, dated the 25th March, 1815, was paid the 4th April, then next, to David J. Greene, cashier of the New York Manufacturing Company, of this city, and a duplicate receipt for the same, was transmitted by me to the general post office, among other vouchers, on or about the 12th of May last. My uniform practice is, to take duplicate receipts in all cases of drafts, though, in strictness, unnecessary, for if the draft in any case, should not be paid, it would be liable for the amount. I send you, under cover, a copy of the draft in question, with the endorsements.

I am, respectfully your most obedient servant,

(Signed) THEODORUS BAILLY.

Will you have the goodness to inform me what is the object of your making the request in relation to this draft?

T. B.

COPY OF THE DRAFT.

General Post Office, March 25, 1815.

SIR—At three days sight pay to Elisha Riggs, merchant or order, five thousand dollars, & charge to account of this office.

(Signed) ABRAHAM BRADLEY, jr.
Assistant Post Master General

Gen. Theodorus Bailly,
Post Master, New York City
(Accepted, March 29, 1815—Theodorus Bailly.)

(ENDORSED.)

E. RIGGS.
G. BROWN & ROGERS.

Received payment, 4th April, 1815.

(Signed duplicate)

(Signed) DAVID J. GREENE, Cash'r.

Here is the evidence of the sale of a draft by A. Bradley to Elisha Riggs. The committee in their report of the evidence, have suppressed the fact, that Mr. Bradley being present at the examination on the matter of this draft in favor of Riggs, acknowledged the erasure in the books, but said it was all right now. How the committee could reconcile it to their oaths, and in the eyes of the country, first to suppress this fact, and then to present a report to congress stating—

That there was no evidence whatever!

That there was no evidence whatever to induce a suspicion that he sold drafts!

That a committee with such facts presented to their senses on oath, should so report, is beyond the necessity of any further animadversion, as it relates to the committee. The affair belongs to the nation; the people will judge.

But there is this further astonishing fact, which the committee appear to have forgotten altogether; it is the fact proved by Mr. Edwards, but which by a failure of the faculty of memory, in which the committee appear to have been peculiarly unfortunate, and to which men in power appear to be lamentably addicted; it was proved by Mr. Edwards, that the draft sold to Elisha Riggs, stood in his name upon the books of the public for ten months, and that it was not until after the enquiry had commenced that the erasure of the name of Riggs was made, and the name of the Union Bank substituted for the words erased.

Yet the committee say there was no evidence whatever!

That there was no evidence whatever to induce a suspicion!!

That there was no evidence whatever to induce a suspicion that he, A. Bradley, jun. had sold any drafts!!!

From the Political Examiner.

We had intended noticing the transactions of the General Post Office ere this. But on reflection supposed it more proper to defer remark till the investigation ordered by Congress had closed. As, however, the committee appointed for a purpose, seem more disposed to scrupulously individuals than to elicit truth, think it high time that public attention should be called to the matter. That no serious and unwarrantable speculation have taken place in the Post Office department, there can be no doubt; and that Bradley, Esq. deputy post master general, as amassed immense sums, by such speculations, at the expense of the public, have no hesitation in believing. Indeed the various publications in the Aurora on the subject have placed the fact beyond dispute. The public have a right to demand the thorough investigation and exposure of a business by which they are materially affected. We are more than half inclined to believe that foul means have been resorted to, to suppress evidence; why else dismiss clerks for testifying to the truth; this single fact is a strong presumptive proof of guilt. We know that some if not all of the dismissed clerks are men of integrity, who scorn a base action; and we cannot perceive either a justice or propriety of dismissing such men for speaking the truth, on oath. A Bradley can scarcely expect to escape public indignation, by a course of conduct towards innocent individuals, so offensive to justice and propriety. It is true, he includes the "good easy men" who have been selected to inspect his conduct. Whilst the people are compelled to pay taxes to government, they will hardly submit under the oppression of speculating deputies. We do not particularize Mr. Bradley because he is a Federalist; were he Republican, and guilty of speculation, should be equally solicitous for his exposure and removal. If others be concerned in the fact of defrauding the public, endeavouring to screen the culprit or a prius, we trust their agency in either will be made known. The Aurora done much to bring the iniquitous business to light; but, in the intricacies of the matter of that paper, although we find much to admire, we also see much to condemn. He appears to be too general in his censures. It certainly cannot be possible that either the executive or the post master general would wink at enormities calculated to destroy all public confidence.

Indian News.

Vincennes, March 30.

To prevent misapprehensions, with respect to the conduct of the Indians, and the result of the late Council at Fort Harrison we are authorised to state the following:—

The object of the meeting was to procure the adoption of arrangements that would enable the surveyors to complete the survey of this public land to the north-west of the wabash without further interruption from the Indians. For that purpose it was proposed for the West and Vermillion Kickapoos, (a respectable deputation from whom, both as to number and character attended) that they should furnish a small guard, to accompany the surveyors and for which they should be liberally rewarded—they appeared to entertain objection to the proposition; but expressed a wish to postpone a final answer until a chief of the Prairie Kickapoos could be present. Being informed that it was considered that they were competent to decide, and that it was expected they would give a direct answer, they then spited their ground; complained that the boundary on the East side of the wabash had been improperly run—that they had been told it was to be a line South from the mouth of Racoon creek, instead of which it had run East—and with respect to the land on the other side of the river, 15 miles in width, from Point Coupe to the mouth of Racoon creek, they had never heard before that it had been sold.—They at length, however,