

nection with your previous letters inclosing quotations from the Indianapolis News, a paper edited by Mr. Delavan Smith. As Mr. Smith certainly knew that all the statements he made were false, both as to this Panama matter and as to the other matters of which you enclose me clippings, and inasmuch, therefore, as the exposure of the falsity will not affect his future statements, I am not very clear whether good will result from such exposure. But inasmuch as you evidently desire some answer to be made and inasmuch as you say that some reputable people appear to believe the falsehoods of the News and Mr. Smith, and inasmuch as you seem to think that his falsehoods as regards the Panama matter are the most prominent, I will answer them.

"The News states in one of its issues that some of the documents delivered with the matter probably have been destroyed. This is false. Not one has been destroyed. It states that the last documents were sent over in June of this year, the object of this particular falsehood being, apparently, to connect the matter in some way with the nomination of Mr. Taft.

PAPERS ALL ACCESSIBLE

"As a matter of fact the last papers that we have received of any kind were sent over to us in May of 1904, and they have been accessible to every human being who cared to look at them ever since and are accessible now. Any reputable man within or without congress, republican or democrat, has now and always has had the opportunity to examine any of these documents. You quote the News as stating the 'people have no official knowledge concerning the Panama canal deal.' The fact is that the people have had the most minute official knowledge; every important step in the transaction and every important document has been made public in communications to congress and through the daily press and the whole matter has been threshed over in all its details again and again. The News gives currency to the charge that the United States bought from American citizens for \$40,000,000 property that cost these citizens only \$12,000,000. The statement is false. The United States did not pay a cent of the \$40,000,000 to any American citizen. The News says there is no doubt that the government paid forty millions for the property and continues: 'But who got the money? We are not to know. The administration and Mr. Taft do not think it right that the people should know.'

"Really this is so ludicrous as to make one feel a little impatient at having to answer. The fact has been officially published again and again that the government paid \$40,000,000 and that it paid this \$40,000,000 direct to the French government, getting the receipt of the liquidator appointed by the French government to receive the same.

SLANDERS FRENCH GOVERNMENT

"The United States government has not the slightest knowledge as to the particular individuals among whom the French government distributed the sum. This was the business of the French government. The mere supposition that any American received from the French government a 'rake-off' is too absurd to be discussed. It is an abominable falsehood, and it is slander, not against the administration government, but against the French government.

"The News continues by saying that the 'president's brother-in-law is involved in the scandal, but he has nothing to say.' The president's brother-in-law was involved in no scandal. Mr. Delavan Smith and the other people who repeated this falsehood lied about the president's brother-in-law, but why the fact that Mr. Smith lied should be held to involve Mr. Robinson in a 'scandal' is difficult to understand. The scandal affects no one but Mr. Smith, and his conduct has not merely been scandalous, but infamous. Mr. Robinson had not the slightest connection of any kind, sort or description at any time or under any circumstances with the Panama matter. Neither did Mr. Charles Taft.

"The News says that Mr. Taft was a 'member of the syndicate.' So far as I know, there was no syndicate. There certainly was no syndicate in the United States that, to my knowledge, had any dealings with the government, directly or indirectly, and inasmuch as there was no syndicate, Mr. Taft naturally could not belong to it. The News demands that 'Mr. Taft appeal to the evidence,' by which it means what it calls 'the records;' that is, the mass of papers which are stored in the war department, save such as, because of their technical character and their

usefulness in the current work of the canal, it has been found advisable to send to the isthmus.

DOCUMENTS MADE PUBLIC

"All of these documents that possessed any importance as illustrating any feature of the transaction have already been made public. There remains a mass of documents of little or no importance which the administration is entirely willing to have published, but which, because of their mass and pointlessness, nobody has ever cared to publish. Any reputable man can have full access to these documents. If you, or Mr. Swift, or Mr. Booth Tarkington, or Mr. George Ade—in short, any reputable man will come on here, he shall have free access to the documents and can look over everything for himself. Congress can have them all printed if it wishes, but no congressman has ever so far intimated any desire that this should be done; I suppose, because to print such a mass of documents would be a great expense and moreover an entirely useless expense, unless, which is not the case, there was some object in printing them.

"Now, my dear Mr. Foulke, I have answered in detail your questions and the statements of the News. You are quite welcome to print my answer, but I must frankly add that I don't think any good will come from doing so. Mr. Delavan Smith is a conspicuous offender against the laws of honesty and truthfulness, but he does not stand alone. He occupies, for instance, the same evil eminence with such men as Mr. Laffan of the New York Sun, editorials of whose papers you or others have from time to time called to my attention, just as you have called to my attention these editorials of the Indianapolis News. I never see an editorial in any one of these or other papers unless for some reason it is sent to me by you or somebody else, and of the editorials thus sent me there is hardly one which does not contain some wilful perversion of the truth.

CALLED TISSUES OF FALSEHOODS

"For example, I have just made public the following statement concerning a tissue of utterly false statements which appeared in Mr. Laffan's paper, the Sun:

"As the New York Sun story, entitled 'Roosevelt and the Prairie Oil,' has seemed to deceive a number of people, the following statement was made public about it: As soon as the story was brought to President Roosevelt's attention, he not only called for reports concerning the statements from the department of justice and the department of the interior, but also communicated with ex-Secretary Hitchcock so as to be sure that the president's recollection was not at fault. The story is false in every particular from beginning to end. Not only is there no such report in the department of justice, and never has been, but no such report was ever prepared. In granting the franchise of the Prairie Oil and Gas company, the president simply approved the recommendation of Mr. Hitchcock, submitted to him precisely as all other recommendations are submitted. Moreover, in every case referring to the granting of franchises or the adoption of regulations as regards oil and gas franchises in Oklahoma and the Indian territory, the president approved the recommendation of Secretary Hitchcock, with the exception of one small and unimportant grant to a Delaware Indian to whom the Delaware Indians, in recognition of eight years of service to the tribe, had voted in council a fee of \$50,000, which he had declined to accept and who was given twice the usual amount of land. The statement about the alleged promise to a western senator is as ridiculous a falsehood as the rest of the story.

"The fact is that these particular newspapers habitually and continuously, and as a matter of business, practice every form of mendacity known to man, from the suppression of the truth and the suggestion of the false, to the lie direct. Those who write or procure others to write these articles are engaged in the practice of mendacity for hire and surely there can be no lower form of gaining a livelihood. Whether they are paid by outsiders to say what is false or whether their profit comes from the circulation of the falsehoods, is a matter of small consequence. It is utterly impossible to answer all of their falsehoods. When any given falsehood is exposed they simply repeat it and circulate another. If they were mistaken in the facts, if they possessed in their make-up any shred of honesty, it would be worth while to set them right. But there is no question at all as to any 'mistake' or 'misunderstanding' on their part. They state what they either know

to be untrue or could by the slightest inquiry find out to be untrue.

"I doubt if they themselves remember their own falsehoods for more than a very brief period and I doubt still more whether anybody else does. Under the circumstances it seems hardly worth while to single out for special mention one or two given falsehoods, or one particular paper, the moral standard of which is as low, but no lower, than that of certain other papers. Of course now and then I am willing to denounce a given falsehood, as, for instance, as regards this case of the Indianapolis News, or the case I have quoted of the New York Sun, simply because it appears that some worthy people are misled or puzzled by the direct shamelessness of the untruth. But ordinarily I do not and can not pay heed to these falsehoods. If I did I would not be able to do my work. My plan has been to go ahead, to do the work and let these people and those like them yell and then to trust with abiding confidence to the good sense of the American people in the assured conviction that the yells will die out, the falsehoods be forgotten and the work remain.

"Therefore, as far as I am concerned, I would rather make no answer whatever in this case. But I have much confidence in your judgment, and if you feel that these men should be exposed, why, you are welcome to publish this letter. There is no higher and more honorable calling than that of the men connected with an upright, fearless and truthful newspaper; no calling in which a man can render greater service to his fellow countrymen. The best and ablest editors and writers in the daily press render a service to the community which can hardly be paralleled by the service rendered by the best and ablest men in public life, or the men in business. But the converse of this proposition is true. The most corrupt financiers and the most corrupt politicians are no greater menace to this country than the newspapermen of the type I have above discussed. Whether they belong to the yellow press or the purchased press, whatever may be the stimulating cause of their slanderous mendacity, whatever the cloak it may wear, matters but little. In any event they represent one of the potent forces for evil in the community.

"Yours very truly,

"THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

"William Dudley Foulke, Richmond, Ind."

EDITOR LAFFAN MAKES REPLY

New York, December 6.—Mr. Laffan replies to the president's letter as follows:

"The editor of the Sun presents his compliments to Mr. Roosevelt and acknowledges his active sensibility in respect to the attention which Mr. Roosevelt has been good enough to pay him in his letter to William Dudley Foulke of Indiana. Notwithstanding the directness of his challenge, the editor of the Sun declines a controversy with Mr. Roosevelt. He is by no means indifferent to the implied compliment discernible in Mr. Roosevelt's tirade, but Mr. Roosevelt has shown in his frequent collisions with various persons of distinction that he has an overwhelming advantage over any respectable antagonist in his (Mr. Roosevelt's) complete freedom from any sense of personal obligation in respect of the truth.

"The editor of the Sun is fully alive to the extremity of the inconvenience which attaches to a personal controversy with a man who has shown himself capable of suppression and perversion of individual correspondence, an act which in ordinary life would, in the cognizance of any club or association of officials and respecting gentlemen, entail his prompt expulsion.

"In saying these things, we can not disguise our chagrin and humiliation that the person who is addressed is also the president of the United States.

"It is curious that Mr. Foulke is a preferred repository of these confidences of the president. It was to him that Mr. Roosevelt wrote his memorable letter denying that he was using the federal patronage to aid Mr. Taft's candidacy, a letter which at once took its place among the most valued incunabula of veracity."

DELAVAN SMITH EXPLAINS

Cleveland, Ohio, December 6.—Delavan Smith, here today on his way to New York was shown a copy of President Roosevelt's letter, and made the following reply:

"The president's comments on the Panama editorial are based on statements made by prominent New York papers, not the New York Sun, which the Indianapolis News printed at

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