DR. GEO. L. PORTER,
266 State Street.

Please return to Miss Ida M. Tarbell
141 E. 25th St
N.Y.C.

Miss or Mrs. Ida M. Tarbell
McClure's Magazine for May 189 7 City
No 155 East 25th Street New York City

Bridgeport, Conn., May 8th 189 7

Madam,

Your endorsement, evidently as representative of the Editors, gives to parts of the "Detective's Story" of the capture of Booth and the disposition of his body, an authority, to which they are not entitled. You state, over your signature, that "we believe that his" (Mr. R. S. Baker) "article is not only historically accurate, but × × such as would be impossible save from one, who had received his information first hand from one of the leading actors." Regarding the incidents antedating the landing of Booth's body at the grounds of what was then called Washington Arsenal I have no personal knowledge, but, after that time from actual observation, and participation I am prepared to prove that the sensational description of taking the body in the darkness of night to Gleesborough Point, of returning with it to the Penitentiary, of finding "a hole in the solid masonry close to the water's edge" of rapping thereby "into a convict's cell" of lifting

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therein "a huge stone slab worn with the pettings of many a prisoner", of finding under it "a shallow grave dug only a few hours before", and of the two officers carrying "back to their boat" and returning to Washington, are baseless fabrics of a dream, the figments of fancy and invention.

I speak by the card because I was at that time the Medical officer stationed at the Arsenal, and was the only commissioned officer, who was present, when the body of Booth was secreted by the orders of Secretary Stanton and I can testify that neither Col. Baker, nor Lieut. Baker were present when the ceremony was performed - and that the body was not carried to, nor buried in, a prisoner's cell as described in the McClure article, ~~or~~ or as originally told and depicted in Col. L. C. Baker's Book - pp - 331 et seq.

The body was brought on a boat to the Arsenal in the afternoon before dark, was landed at the little summer-or boat-house near the quarters of the Commanding Officer, placed under

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the immediate guard of a pretrial, with orders for not to permit anyone to approach", remained there until midnight, was then removed and temporarily secreted, and no one to my knowledge has yet correctly described the exact locality in which it was stored.

The absurdity of the "yarn" of entering the convicts' cells of the Penitentiary by passing through a "hole in solid masonry close to the waters edge," is exposed by the fact, that the landing, at that time, was by quite a long wharf-jutting into the Potomac, backed by a sea wall- behind this a broad drive way and yard before reaching the administrative part of the building - a distance between one and two hundred feet - behind this part another section of the building - then stored with supplies for the Ordnance Department- and finally the Jail proper for the reception of convicts - the entire distance from three to five hundred feet from the waters edge-

This tunnel, according to Mr Baker's

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article, was excavated in one evening, and when his uncle rowed up at midnight, with his grewsome burden, was guarded by an Officer, but it in reality only existed in the mind's eye of the ingenious romancer ~~who told~~ originated ~~the fairy tale to the marines~~. It's unreality however also throws doubt upon the accuracy of other statements, especially that made regarding the dramatic experience of the weary Colonel Baker straying through the lonely roads of Virginia, alone guarding the valuable prize, for which a nation in anxiety waited, and finally leaving it for a time to the custody of an unknown nigro. This reasonable incredulity is intensified moreover by the fact that in the original account published by Col. Baker himself in his book United States Secret Service - page 330 - he states that "all the way" - from the place of the capture to the Potomac - "associate with the ×× went Harold"

I appreciate the unfortunate position in which you have been placed, and out of

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regard to you thus write, in order that you may have the first opportunity to withdraw or modify your endorsement, and also to give ~~my~~ these statements as prominent and wide notoriety as that, which the article by Mr. Baker enjoyed. He had evidently, been misinformed - Historical records are ~~The record~~ ~~It is~~ not ~~a~~ personal matters but ~~only~~ are entitled to and demands reliable proof. Each particular act in the great tragedy should be definately and accurately established, for by minor incidents is history solidified. ~~and~~ No personal narratives contribute to this desirable object, if they rest upon the statements of those, who depend upon memory for their misinformation, and upon imagination for their facts. I enclose the order, by direction of Sect^y Stanton, by which I exercised medical supervision over the prisoners arrested and charged with complicity in the conspiracy, which resulted in the assassination of Pres. Lincoln

I have the honor to remain very resp^ly yr. obt. sot

Geo L. Porter -

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266 State Street.

Copy -

Bridgeport, Conn., 189

Surgeon Generals' Office,
Washington City, D. C. -
April 30 1865

Sir -

By direction of the Hon. Secretary of War you will report to General Hartranft U.S. Vols for the daily inspection of prisoners under his charge. Should medical attendance be required, in any instance, you will give it. While engaged in this duty, you will be careful not to answer any questions addressed to you by the prisoners - nor allow them to make any remarks not connected with your professional duties (to you).

The fact of these inspections will not be communicated to anyone, and your daily official report will be made direct to General Hartranft, who is in command at the Penitentiary, Arsenal Grounds, Washington.

Very respectfully, Your obt servt
By order of the Surgeon General
(Signed) C. H. Crane, Surgeon U.S. Army -

Asst. Surgeon G. L. Porter
U.S. Army
U.S. Arsenal Washington D.C.

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