

still living. This is why there is truth in the old judgment that "history is a lie". In time we shall discover that contemporary writers speak with such knowledge and authority as later historians cannot possess. Many of the decisive facts and incidents which determine the course of human affairs are not contained in any documents that go down to posterity. There is much that the contemporary writer cannot divulge; but he is less hampered by reticence than will be the writer of fifty years hence by ignorance. I think of events within my own knowledge of which I can say little or nothing. Of the real pith, motive and bearing of these events neither this nor any other generation can have full or exact knowledge. What is not disclosed by contemporary writers will never be disclosed. Hence history never can be a true record, and the exact relation of public men to the causes in which they are concerned never can be determined. If there is reticence in the present and ignorance in the future, at best we can have only light in the darkness. The law from which no man can escape is that what he learns in a confidential relation he may not disclose to the discredit or injury of men still living, and that he is bound to observe a decent discretion even when death has removed the actors from the stage where we all appear so often with painted faces and borrowed costume. Subject to this law these Reminiscences will be frank and open, but, I trust, free from temper or malice, from detraction or adulation.

As long ago as 1872 I attended my first political meeting. I had walked four miles from my home near Hills-green, on the boundary between the townships of Hay and Stanley, in Huron county, to the village of Varna. I was just fifteen years of age, and to me Varna, with two general stores, a shoemaker, a blacksmith, a wagon-maker, a tavern, two churches and an Orange hall, was a considerable community. This day a rough

frame hustings stood at the cross-roads by the village tavern. A group of men sat upon the platform, and in front and around were a crowd of people with eyes fixed upon a man who was speaking.

I knew at once that it was not a camp-meeting, for there was no suggestion of the fervour and solemnity which distinguished such events. There was occasional laughter and cheering, but I thought that some of those who listened did not like the behaviour of their neighbours. I was interested in the statement of the speaker that wherever he had gone throughout the county he found that someone else had been there, and that many calves and steers had been bought at very high figures. Who was this mysterious person? Why should he buy calves and steers? Why should he pay such high prices? Finally the speaker sat down to much clapping and cheering. Another man arose, and there was even more cheering. As he spoke it was remarkable that he agreed with nothing that the first speaker had said, while those who had been silent now became happy and demonstrative. But the light was breaking. I recalled many a fireside controversy, and almost instinctively I knew what game they were playing.

Before the second speaker had finished a buggy, turning from the Bay-field road in a cloud of dust, stopped on the edge of the crowd, and a heavy figure, with flowing mutton-chop whiskers, under a wide soft hat, jumped to the ground and made his way to the platform. In a moment there were wild shouts of "Speak now", "Big Thunder", and a tempest of booing and cheering. When he rose to speak the cries of "speak now" were renewed with noisy and angry vehemence, and apparently by those who did not seem to be willing that he should speak at all. I could not understand, but probably I alone among those who stood around the hustings needed enlightenment. I gazed at the bulky figure on the plat-